Medieval Scandinavia
An Encyclopedia

Edited by
Phillip Pulsiano and Kirsten Wolf
First published in 1993, *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia* covers every aspect of the region during the Middle Ages, including rulers and saints, overviews of the countries, religion, education, politics and law, culture and material life, history, literature, and art. Written by a team of expert contributors, the encyclopedia offers those who lack command of the various Scandinavian languages a basic tool for the study of Medieval Scandinavia from roughly the Migration Period to the Reformation.

With full-page maps, useful supplementary photos, cross-references and a comprehensive index, this work will be a valuable and absorbing volume for students of the Norse sagas, the Viking age, and Old English history and literature, and for anyone interested in the cultural and historical heritage of Scandinavia.
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Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia offers students who lack command of the various Scandinavian languages a basic tool for the study of medieval Scandinavia, or more precisely, Norden (comprising Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden) from roughly the Migration Period to the Reformation. As the twenty-one volumes of the Kulturhistorisk Leksikon for nordisk middelalder attest, the subject is both complex and vast. We thus make no claims to completeness, but strove to present a balanced, informative, and up-to-date reference work. While the volume is directed toward students, we hope that scholars too will find the work a useful tool, one that offers not only a synthesis of current scholarship, but new views on a variety of subjects.

The volume was begun in 1985, and its initial scope and design were markedly different from the final product; it was, in all, to be a much slimmer volume—roughly one quarter the size of the present work. The volume grew as our own understanding of the complexity of the task matured. Yet, from early on in the project, we stayed firm in our belief that the reader would best be served by generally lengthier entries rather than by a proliferation of brief entries; breadth without depth seemed a compromise ill-suited to the needs of our intended readers. Although this decision meant that fewer entries would be included, we believe that the reader, especially students at various levels of skill, will come away from the volume better-informed and with a clearer sense of direction in pursuing further a given topic. The decision to expand the scope of the volume while maintaining a balance among its entries posed numerous obstacles, not the least of which was locating contributors for the growing variety of topics. As our list of entries grew along with the number of contributors to the volume (of which there are over 250), earlier estimates for the work's completion were set aside; further delays were caused by aging computing equipment. More decisive were the delays caused by the necessity of checking bibliographical citations, which, as one would expect, are extensive in such a work.

Entries within the volume are arranged alphabetically as follows: a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r, s, t, u, v, w, x, y, z, á, ã, å, Æ, Õ, Ò, Ò, Õ, Õ. No distinction is made between short and long vowels in alphabetization. Icelandic conventions are adhered to in the treatment of Icelandic personal names as headwords and within the bibliographies. Thus, a reader would look under Bragi Boddason, not under Boddason, Bragi, for the entry on this particular skaldic poet. Entries range in length from ca. 150 words to ca. 5,000 words.

Each entry is accompanied by a bibliography. While readers unfamiliar with the Scandinavian languages and with German may express frustration at the inclusion of foreign titles, the editors nevertheless remained conscious of their needs while seeking to avoid misrepresenting scholarship by restricting bibliographies to works written in English. Encyclopedias often contain bibliographies that are highly abbreviated, thus requiring a reader to turn continuously to the prefatory list of abbreviations; and even with this aid, bibliographical entries are often so severely clipped as to lead the reader into confusion. We have brought some relief to the reader by spelling out bibliographical citations in full, including, for books, series titles, editors (where appropriate), and publishers. For articles, pagination and volume numbers are supplied. We use only one abbreviation in the bibliographies, since the work is commonly cited: KLNM = Kulturhistorisk Leksikon for nordisk middelalder. Bibliographies are divided into a number of sections: Editions (Ed.), Lexicographical aids (Lex.), Bibliographies (Bib.), Translations (Tr.), and Literature (Lit.). Some bibliographies contain subsections, which we have indicated in boldface. Cross-references to other entries within the volume appear at the end of an entry and are complemented by an index appearing at the end of the volume. Additional cross-references as headwords appear throughout the volume. The cross-references to other entries or headwords within the volume are uncomplicated and should present no problems for the reader. Where appropriate, by-names and foreign terms are translated parenthetically within the entry.

Although the editors played a very active, at times perhaps overbearing role in the execution of their tasks, the entries nonetheless reflect the scholarship and views of the individual writers. While contributors were free to choose their own method and focus, the particular views of an author are generally set within a balanced critical context. Thus, readers can expect to find in these pages traces of critical debate upon a variety of issues as well as a
synthesis of scholarship. Entries range from detailed discussions of, for example, individual works, artifacts, and historical figures to broad surveys of a variety of subjects, such as genres, historical movements, art, and, broader still, particular countries.

We would like to thank the Fulbright Foundation for a collaborative research grant for 1985-86, which allowed for two of the editors to conduct preliminary research in Iceland on the project. Jakob Benediktsson graciously discussed with us his own experiences as one of the editors of the Kulturhistorisk Leksikon for nordisk middelalder; his advice and wit were welcome antidotes to the difficulties such a project as this one posed. We are grateful for the courtesy shown to us by the staff of the Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Islandi in according us a place in the institute in 1985-86, and to Helgi Porlaksson in particular for drafting an initial list of entry-titles for the historical items in this volume. Knut Helle has been a wellspring of sound advice and did much to identify contributors to the project. The editor and co-editor also wish to express their thanks to Richard Perkins and Peter Foote for an invitation to discuss the project at University College London in 1987 and to Anthony Faulkes for extending his hospitality to them at the University of Birmingham. Mary Ellen Faturri worked as a research assistant on the project in 1989-90, and René Luthe picked up the banner in 1990-91; both provided valuable assistance in searching out bibliographical references. Mary Quilter, formerly of the interlibrary-loan office at Falvey Memorial Library, Villanova University, was enormously helpful in securing items for the volume. Villanova University was especially supportive throughout this project, providing support services, research assistants, leave of absence in 1985-86, and a Summer Faculty Research Assistantship in 1985. Sincere thanks are also due to Gary Kuris of Garland Publishing for his support and patience and for his careful reading of the manuscript in its final stages, to Chuck Bartelt, who moved the volume through the press, and to Jón Skaptason for his assistance with computer problems at various times throughout the project. We are also grateful to Mary Catherine Staples for her help with certain technical terms. Finally, we would like to thank the contributors for their willingness to write for the volume and for their patience over the years it has taken to prepare this work.

It is difficult to detail the various duties of each of the editors, since overlap is inevitable in a project of this sort. While the task of editing the entries fell to each editor, Donald K. Fry was responsible, in the main, for matters of style, and Paul Acker, who worked with the editor and, later, with Kirsten Wolf on developing the initial list of entries, devoted much of his attention to bibliographical matters in the early and middle stages of the project. Kirsten Wolf's broad knowledge of Old Norse, her attention to detail, and her bibliographical work brought decided focus to the editing of the entries. She was also responsible for the bulk of the translations of the entries, for which she has this editor's deepest gratitude. For the editor's part, after the many years of daily work on this project, he wishes only to say jucundi acti labores. Deo gratias!

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Adam of Bremen, known solely by his work *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, was presumably a canon from a cathedral school in Bavaria or Franconia (Bamberg). He arrived in Bremen 1066/7 at the request of Archbishop Adalbert of Hamburg-Bremen (1043–1072) and became the archbishop’s “expert” in missionary matters. After extensive studies in his new field, he wrote the *Descriptio insularum aquilonis*, which forms the fourth book of his *Gesta*. The first three books contain the story of the archbishops, beginning, after an introduction on the Saxons, with the first three bishops of Bremen (~845) (Book 1:11–23). Adam deals extensively with Ansgar (d. 865), the monk of Corvey and missionary of Scandinavia, thereby reproducing the general portrait of the tragic decline of Archbishop Adalbert and his brethren (1047–1074/5), whom he visited in Denmark probably around 1068/9. Missionary bishops returning to Bremen with reports also afforded valuable information. In Book 3:1–71 (3:72–78 is a transitional passage to the *Descriptio*), Adam, in a grandiose way, creates a description of the pagan temple of the Sueones, Ubsola, thereby demonstrating that conversion is necessary. His famous description of the pagan temple of the sueones, Ubsola, incorporates material from myth, and could be a literary fiction to enhance the urgency of missionary efforts. Especially in Books 1–3, Adam displays his classical reading; the influence of Cicero, Sallust, Vergil, Lucene, Horace, Ovid, Persius, Statius, and Juvenal is clearly discernible (Piltz). The geographical information on Scandinavia is valuable, since in most cases it is the earliest we have. It rests upon hearsay, except for parts concerning the Danish islands, which Adam may have visited himself. Adalbert died before the *Gesta* was finished, and the work was dedicated to his successor Liemar. Adam is believed to have lived into the 1080s, since he seems to have been the author of many of the added *scholia*. The MS tradition begins around 1100 with part of Book 2, and has been divided into three branches: the A group (most original), the B (Danish), and the C (German) MS (Schmeidler).

Tore Nyberg

[See also: Church Organization and Function; Conversion]

Adonias saga ("The Saga of Adonias"), an indigenous Icelandic riddarasaga from the late 14th century, is extant in forty-five MS copies, eight of which are vellums that all show lacunae or are otherwise defective. Of these, the oldest is probably AM 567 vi b 4to, a single-leaf fragment from about 1400; all the remaining vellums evidently were written at various times later in the 15th century. AM 593 4to, uniquely among the preserved vellums, contains a prologue as well as a provisional conclusion given by the copyist in a set of three rhyming couplets. The only edition, admittedly a "provisional" one, so far printed of Adonias saga is based on this MS, and it is from the text given there that the following summary is made.

In the prologue, the copyist complains discursively about the amassing of worldly goods and about pride and avarice. The following chapter details the division of the world by the sons of Noah.

The saga proper begins in the next chapter. King Marsilius of Syria is told by his wife, Queen Semera from India, who is versed in astrology, that in a year's time the stars will be especially propitious for the childless couple to conceive a child who eventually will rule the realm, and also that his own life will be short. Constancius, a powerful, sinister duke, overhears the conversation, and on the specified day he has Marsilius forcibly taken into a building where he is locked in a bedchamber with Remedia, the duke's daughter. Smitten by her beauty, Marsilius deflowers the reluctant maiden, who then informs him that baleful things lie in store for him. At the same time, the duke, unrecognized by the king's wife, impregnates her. After Marsilius is taken back to his court, he is silent about what has happened. Semerae gives birth to a son who is named Constancius, while Remedia secretly bears a son named Adonias. At a banquet at which the infant Constancius is brought forward, Marsilius, unable to control his rage, calls the lad a whoreson and also insults Constancius. After lashing at the latter with his sword, the blustering Marsilius is killed by Constancius, who soon thereafter ascends the throne.

Adonias is reared in seclusion by his mother until, out of increasing fear that Constancius will kill them both, she entrusts him to the safekeeping of King Lodovikus of Spain, whom she subsequently marries. Adonias and Constancius grow up apace in their respective lands with neither having an equal in physical or mental prowess. Each is dubbed a knight and given a castle with a retinue. But while Constancius stays at home because his father does not wish him to take part in an offensive against Lodovikus, Adonias shows more initiative. On learning that Syrian forces are approaching Spain, he gathers a large force of giant warriors with whose aid the invaders are repelled. After a long series of military actions, Adonias and Constancius finally meet face-to-face in single combat. Constancius is vanquished, but his life is spared by Adonias, who takes him into his retinue. Another lengthy string of offensives and counter-offensives follows, which at the end results in victory for the Spanish forces and ignominious death for Constancius. The saga concludes with the marriage of Adonias to Albaria, daughter of Emperor Teodosius of Italy.

Adonias saga, which runs to seventy-one chapters, is unnecessarily prolonged by its unrelenting account of large-scale military preparations and actions as well as duels and other single encounters. It is also overloaded with the stock banquets, hunting scenes, and hyperbole associated with the genre to which it belongs. Attention is given to descriptions of crude violence and horror for their own sake, as when Constancius is systematically tortured, maimed, and mutilated before at length being hanged, and when defeated and disgraced combatants bow to the victors and beg for decapitation. Thematically, the saga focuses on the struggle between the báskonungur, the evil usurper of a throne, who vainly attempts to thwart fate through deception and the use of brute force, and the rightful, foreordained claimant and his trusted helpers. The presentation of parallel pairs of simultaneous occurrences, e.g., defloration of Remedia and seduction of Semarae, birth of Constancius and birth of Adonias, does more than point up the role of chance in human affairs. In Adonias saga, it is a structural device that provides a contrasting double perspective. In the later action as the narrative shifts in place but not in time from one encampment to another, the parallels serve to reduce somewhat the unrelieved monotony of an otherwise strictly linear plot.


Otto J. Zitzelsberger

[See also: Riddarnsögur]

Aggesen, Sven, is known as the author of the Brevis historia, a history of Denmark, ending at 1185. Born about 1140–1150, Sven was a Danish nobleman, the contemporary of Saxo Grammaticus, whom he described as his "contubernalis" ("comrade"). Sven belonged to the Thrugotsen family, which had produced men in high positions, such as the brothers Archbishop Asser of Lund and Bishop Sven of Viborg, and Christian, whose son Eskil became archbishop of Lund (1138–1177) and whose other son Agge was Sven's father. Perhaps both Sven and Saxo were the king's men, perhaps not, as "contubernalis" may only signify that they were in some sense "colleagues" as writers. Saxo may have studied in France, judging from his knowledge of the school of Bernard of Chartres (d. ca. 1126). Like Saxo, Sven gave an account of the law of the hird, the Lex castrensis or Vederlov, of which a third contemporary Danish version exists (and perhaps a now-lost fourth, somewhat longer Danish version existed). These three versions are related in some way, although not in the sequence of clauses or in exact wording. They may rest on a common oral tradition, or just be recording the same facts, or they may be interdependent as written sources (Saxo never copies any text word for word). Many of the possible combinations of the three MSS into a stemma giving the line of descent have been tried;
ultimate proof remains lacking. The reliability of the information supplied—e.g., whether this law really goes back to Knud (Cnut) the Great and his børn, the Pingalid—is in question.

Both the Lex castrensis and the Brevis historia are found together in two MS traditions, designated A and S. These are quite dissimilar (Gertz 1915, 1917). Sisa heavily adapted version from who was educated as a theologian and became royal historiographer. Probably around 1570, he copied it from a now-lost medieval MS whose many abbreviations and conventional signs he did not understand; so MS A is entirely unintelligible. MS A was reconstructed by Gertz in 1915 as the version X. Sometimes the S version gives the clue to the correct solution in the reconstruction of A; in other cases, the X text rests entirely on Gertz's skill and ingenuity. The two versions S and A (X) differ in the arrangement of the parts; in S, the Lex is placed at the end, but in A (X), at the beginning. In X, the introduction to the Lex mentions the author's plan to make a genealogy of the Danish kings, but the Lyschander copy only has a short introduction to a genealogy that itself is missing; S has a genealogy, but apparently a different one, based on Saxo. Probably, the Lex was written first, around 1178–1185, and the Brevis historia shortly after 1185, perhaps with a Genealogia written in between.


Agriculture. Barley was the most commonly grown grain in Sweden and Denmark. Rye had an early breakthrough in Finland about 1000–1200. In eastern Sweden and also in parts of Denmark at that time, the cultivation of rye spread more generally in the late Middle Ages and in the 16th century. In Norway, oats were extensively cultivated, together with barley, probably already in the high Middle Ages.

Animal husbandry occupied a strong position in northern Sweden, Finland, and Norway. These regions concentrated on dairy farming, with cows as the most important animal, although goats were also used as milk-producing animals. Even in the woodlands in southern Sweden, northern Scania, and the heaths of Jutland, livestock breeding dominated, although in a more diverse form. Besides milk cows, sheep were also bred in some regions, providing wool and meat. Pigs were raised for their meat. In the late Middle Ages and to a growing extent in the 16th century, oxen were exported in oxen-drives from Denmark and southern Sweden to distant towns and markets.

1. Approximate spread of the plow with a mold board ca. 1200 and 1500.
In Iceland, grain cultivation disappeared during the late Middle Ages, but animal husbandry had always dominated. From the 15th century, sheep raising expanded at the expense of cattle breeding.

Associated with this new type of "swidden" agriculture were several other changes. Rye was replacing barley as the most important grain. The rye mostly used was of a special kind well adapted to swidden agriculture. It had a very coarse straw, but gave high yields. This change was associated with the introduction of a new and better type of sickle, the bow sickle, thus allowing the rye straw to be more easily cut than with the older angled sickle.

The most important implement was the ard, or plow, and even here new technology followed. Use of the sokska, an ard with two shares, spread in the eastern parts of Finland. This type of ard suited slash-and-burn culture, where the ground often remained uncleared of stones and tree trunks. Perhaps a simple type of harrow, the twig harrow, was introduced at the same time. This development can be described as a complex of new agricultural techniques, and it spread to Finland from northern Russia in about the 12th century. This technological complex also played a great role in the rapid colonization of northern Russia. Together with the changes in corn growing, a special type of flail was probably also introduced, facilitating the threshing of a growing grain production.

In Sweden, a new technological complex was introduced about 1000–1200, but with a different content. Even here, the clearing of new land was essential. The ironshod spade did not exist in Sweden or in Scandinavia before 1000, but it then spread generally. This tool facilitated clearing, but was also crucial for the making of ditches. The laws from the 13th century show that ditches had great importance, especially in the eastern parts of Sweden. Archaeological remains indicate that ditches were not introduced on a larger scale until after around 1000. Ditching of the arable lands made it possible to cultivate rather humid soils.

Ard shares were made considerably longer. In the early Middle Ages up to the Viking Age, iron shares had a length of about 10 cm., in the high Middle Ages, they were normally 20–30 cm. long. This lengthening allowed improved cultivation of the soil and was probably associated with the general introduction of the two-field system in eastern Sweden. In the early Middle Ages, the arable land was planted every year, followed by a long period of fallow. There was no need for tilling the fallow every year as in the two-field system. That greater parts of the arable land were laid fallow and broken every year implied a need for a more effective tilling implement. In southern Scandinavia, we find the plow with a moldboard as the new implement.

Connected with this Swedish shift in soil-tilling technique was the development of improved techniques of grain processing. The flail came more generally into use, replacing the earlier threshing stick. Furthermore, the watermill, and in the 14th century the windmill, was introduced and replaced the handmill, which allowed a dramatic growth of productivity in milling.

In Denmark, the changes were as great as in the northern parts of Scandinavia, but shared more similarities with changes in the rest of western Europe. A strong resemblance was that the introduction of the plow played a major role. The plow spread from the south to the whole of Denmark, including Scania, about 1000–1200 and also spread to western Sweden (Västergötland) and southern Norway during this period. This development meant that tilling was improved. The ridging of fields to counteract moisture was also introduced, and facilitated the introduction of a more developed system of crop rotations. The two-field system spread, and the three-field system also came into use together with an increase in rye cultivation. Another resemblance between Den-
mark and other parts of western Europe was the reclaiming of arable land from the sea, with dikes built in the fenlands of southwestern Jutland.

The harrow probably belongs to the technological system shift in Scandinavia. In the early Middle Ages, the soil was most likely prepared with earth rakes after the fields had been plowed. The iron-shod spade, the watermill, and presumably also the flail were introduced in Denmark about 1000–1200.

The technological development in Norway is less well known, but seems to have been mainly similar to the change in the rest of Scandinavia, with the introduction of iron-shod spades, longer ard shares, and, in the south, the plow, connected with an extended land reclamation.

There is a less dramatic change in the late Middle Ages. During the 15th century, the plow spread in a second wave of extension to central and northern Sweden and probably also to central Norway. In Finland and eastern Sweden, the ard and the sokha still dominated until the 18th and 19th centuries.

Another common change in the late Middle Ages was a more extensive use of iron. For example, harrows with iron teeth were introduced around 1500, but wood harrows were used along with the iron harrows until the 19th century.

From the 13th century at the latest, the bow sickle gradually spread in Denmark and large parts of Sweden, replacing the angled sickle. This change eventually became associated with the expanding cultivation of rye as a winter crop in these regions during the Middle Ages. A winter crop had coarser straw than a spring crop. Barley and oats were always sown as a spring crop.

In livestock breeding, technical equipment had less importance than in grain growing, except in haymaking. The cattle shed was introduced in most of Scandinavia 500 B.C. – A.D. 500, and therefore haymaking was essential during the Middle Ages.

The development of the scythe in the early Middle Ages was connected with the strong position of livestock breeding at that time. But the technical advances in grain growing led to its increased importance over haymaking or livestock breeding, which had no comparable innovations.

The agrarian crises of the 14th and 15th centuries turned many farms into meadows or pastures. This shift resulted in a relatively stronger position for animal husbandry. In this period, there was probably a change of scythe types in Sweden and Denmark, when the still-used type with a long handle was introduced.

In the high Middle Ages, and certainly also before that, cattle were herded by adult herdsmen. But after the Middle Ages, children and women normally herded the cattle in Norway and Sweden. The first evidence of cattle being tended by women or children comes from the 15th century, and perhaps this change is related to the agrarian crises of the late Middle Ages, with the period's shortage of manpower and growing importance of cattle breeding.

Technology and society, however, cannot be seen in isolation from each other. The technological leap forward about 1000–1200, which has been called the agricultural revolution of the Middle Ages, was contemporary in western Europe and Scandinavia, but it took a rather different form in each region. These differing technological systems suggest that external causes, such as social and economic change, played a decisive role in their development. At the same time, technological change in general, which brought about an increase in the clearing of land and richer crop yields, provided the basis for economic and social changes, such as the founding of towns and the building of castles.


Janken Myrdal

**Ágríp af Nóregs konunga sögum** ("Summary of the Sagas of the Kings of Norway") is a late title (17th century) for the oldest preserved history of the kings of Norway in the Old Norse vernacular. **Ágríp** means "summary"; this designation is, however, not really appropriate, even though the work is much shorter than other sagas of the Norwegian kings. Many of its stories are detailed and even verbose. Its proportion is imperfect, and important events may be treated summarily, while minor episodes may receive a substantial presentation.

**Ágríp** is preserved in only one MS, AM 325 II 4to (Copenhagen), which appears to be an Icelandic copy of a Norwegian original, though hardly the author's own MS. Probably written in the first half of the 13th century, it now contains twenty-four leaves but was originally considerably longer. The first leaf has been cut away as has one leaf later in the text, and a gathering of most likely eight leaves at the end and probably an additional four leaves at another place have been lost. The sagas seem to have begun with Halfdan svarti ("the black"), the father of Haraldr hárfragr ("fair-hair"), and it now ends in the mid-12th century. The original saga is assumed to have come to an end in 1177, like Fagrskinna and Heimskringla, which, in view of the probable age of **Ágríp**, assumes that its author knew that Sverris saga was being written. The original **Ágríp** may have been composed as early as the last decade of the 12th century, and most likely in Niðarós (Trondheim). It is reasonable to assume that the author made use of oral traditions about the kings, but it is obvious that he also employed written sources, chiefly the Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagensium by Théodoricus Monachus, probably written shortly before 1188, and the Historia Norwegiae, which is difficult to date precisely, so that an unknown common source cannot be excluded. **Ágríp**'s author may also have used a saga about Hákon Ádalsteinsfóstri ("Ethelstan's foster-son"), and most likely lost historical works by the Icelanders Ari Porgilsson and Sæmundr Sigfusson. Many passages are close translations of the Latin works, but the sources are also used freely with many additions that are not found in comparable sources.

**Ágríp** is a patriotic Norwegian work. The vocabulary and the style of this saga are unlike the ordinary Icelandic sagas of the 13th century. **Ágríp** was used extensively by the authors of Fagrskinna, Heimskringla, and Morkinskinna. They presumably had access to a better text than the surviving one, which has many faults and omissions that can be attributed to a sloppy copyist.
**Agríp af Noregs konunga sögum**


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**Ála flekkssaga** ("The Saga of Spotted Áli") is an anonymous Icelandic *riddar saga* or *foraldrar saga*, composed probably around or shortly before 1400 (perhaps in Oddi in South Iceland). The saga survives in more than thirty-five MSS; the oldest (AM 589e 4to) is dated to the second half of the 15th century. Between the 17th and the 19th century, three cycles of *Rímur af Ála flekki* were composed based on the material of the saga.

King Richard of England exposes his newborn son. The child is, however, found by an old couple, who raise him and name him Áli flekkr because of a birthmark on his right cheek. At the age of eight, he is taken into the king's household, but the wicked maid Blátnn binds Áli by a spell and sends him to the troll-woman Nött. Áli escapes and comes to Tartaria, where he marries the maiden-king Pórbjorg. Áli is then transformed by Blátnn's brother Glóðaruga into a werewolf and causes much damage in his father's kingdom. Áli is finally caught, but his foster-mother recognizes him, and Áli takes off his woodskin. In a dream, Nött flogs Áli; he wakes up seriously wounded and travels to India, where he is healed of his wounds by Nött's brothers. Eventually, Áli returns and becomes king of England.

In spite of the dominance of the (probably Celtic) magical spell motif (*dlog*, Irish *geis*), the saga is not a translation of a foreign story but an Icelandic text based on themes and narrative patterns of various older sagas. Like other *riddarasögur*, *Ála flekkssaga* is difficult to classify. On the basis of its motifs and the structure of its contents and narrative, it can be grouped with both the original *riddarasögur* and *foraldrar saga*. Few texts demonstrate as much as *Ála flekkssaga* the tendency in late-medieval Icelandic sagas to merge several mutually related literary traditions. Fairy-tale elements are found in the exposure motif, the magic spell, and the werewolf theme; the last two elements are probably due to Irish influence. The account of Áli's first spell resembles a wicked-stepmother fairy tale. The battle scenes and the maiden-king theme belong to the *riddarasögur* tradition. Apart from a number of motif-parallels with *Islandingsögur* (e.g., *Finnbogasaga*, *Gunlaugs saga*: exposure of a child), *Ála flekkssaga*
saga also shares characteristics with a number of fornaldarsögur, such as Hröll's saga kraka and Hálfdanar saga Brunfúsóstra, which contains an episode in the hall of the troll-woman, and which is further related to Ála í fækses saga through a genealogical connection. Some MSS of Hálfdanar saga state that Hálfdan was Áli's grandfather (likewise Bósa saga and Vilmundar saga viðtuna).

The narrative style of Ála í fækses saga is simple and popular. It exhibits few of the stylistic traits found in riddarasögur. Accordingly, the saga has been called "the most Icelandic lygtsaga."


Jürg Glauser

[Alexander's saga ("Alexander's Saga") is a prose translation of Alexanderis, a Latin epic about the life and career of Alexander the Great. The Latin poem was written in dactylic hexameters by Gaius Julius Caesar in the 1st century BC. It tells the story of Alexander the Great, born in Pella, Greece, in 356 BC, and his rise to power. Alexander's military campaigns include the conquest of the Persian Empire, the establishment of the Hellenistic world, and the spread of Greek culture. The poem is famous for its vivid descriptions of Alexander's campaigns and his interactions with the peoples he conquered.

The translation is characterized by its beautiful language, and the condensed style of the poem is often expanded to give a more diffuse narrative. While Galterus expects his readers to be familiar with Middle Eastern topography, classical mythology, and the story of Alexander in general, the translator finds it necessary to add the explanations. Where rhetorical exclamations occur or where Galterus's opinion is clearly stated, the translator frequently adds that these passages are not his own but those of Galterus. The translation fluctuates between very accurate rendering and paraphrase. The expression is almost always idiomatic, with occasional Latinisms. Both alliteration and rhyme are used now and again. The ten books of the poem are not all equally and thoroughly translated. Book 1 is abridged, mainly by the omission of two long passages. Books 2-6 are translated with the greatest fullness, from Book 7 on, there is a notable tendency to abbreviate.


Régis Boyer

[See also: Bible; Homilies (West Norse); Jónsbók; Laws]
At the end of *Alexanders saga* in AM 226 fol. and Stock. Perg. 4to no. 24 (but not in AM 519a 4to), a note says that Bishop Brándr Jónsson translated the saga from Latin into Norse. The same is said in all the MSS of *Gyðinga saga* that preserve the epilogue, except for DKNVSB 418vo, Lbs. 714 8vo, and Lbs. 4270 4to. According to *Gyðinga saga*, Brándr Jónsson translated both sagas: "... but it was translated into Norse by the priest Brandr Jónsson, who was later bishop of Hólar, and [Brandr] then translated Alexander the Great at the command of the honorable lord King Magnús, son of King Hákon the Old." It seems natural to take the appended phrase, "at the command of ... King Magnús, son of King Hákon the Old," as applying to both sagas. Since it is known that Brándr Jónsson was in Norway 1262–1263, the translations were probably made during this year.

Some scholars have maintained that *Alexanders saga* is superior to *Gyðinga saga* in style and thus that the translations are not the work of the same man. In such a comparison, however, the differing nature of the originals must also be taken into account. The source for *Alexanders saga* has an extensive and colorful vocabulary and contains many emotive passages and pieces of rhetoric; it is thus only natural that a translation of this work would have a much more flexible and imaginative use of language than that of the more chronicle-like source texts of *Gyðinga saga*. The possibility that the same man was responsible for both translations cannot be excluded, therefore, on stylistic grounds alone.

*Algorismus* is the only known medieval Scandinavian treatise giving the principles of the Hindu-Arabic place-value numeral system, and instructions on how to calculate using this system. The complete text is found in several Old Norse MSS: AM 544 4to (fols. 90r–93r), AM 685d 4to (fols. 24r–29r), and Glks 1812 4to (fols. 13v–16v), whereas AM 736 111 4to contains only a fragment. AM 544 4to forms part of *Hauksbók*, named after the Icelandic lawman Haukr Erlendsson. He probably compiled and maybe even edited some of the texts while staying mostly in Norway from 1301 until he died in 1334. *Algorismus* is considered to have been written by Haukr’s “first Icelandic secretary” sometime during the period when Haukr was domiciled in Norway, while the other versions are supposed to be younger.

The treatise is named after the most famous mathematician in Baghdad about A.D. 825, Muḥammad ibn Mūsā al-Khwārizmī. His name was latinized to “Algorismi,” the origin of the title *Algorismus* as well as the word “algorithm.”

How the Hindu-Arabic numerals initially came to Europe is a debated question. We know, however, that al-Khwārizmī’s treatise on the Hindu art of reckoning was translated into Latin in Spain during the 12th century. This version laid the foundation for a series of texts. About 1300, the two most influential works of this kind were Alexander de Villa Dei’s *De arte numerandi*, and Johanns de Sacrobosco’s *Tractatus de arte numerandi* (also called *Algorismus vulgaris* and *De algorithmo*). Both these works must have been known to the Old Norse translator, as well as fragments from the Greek mathematical traditions, probably transmitted via Boethius.

The most important source for the Old Norse *Algorismus* is the *Carmen de Algorismo*, which shows a high degree of correspondence on central points. As in the *Carmen*, we find seven different branches of reckoning: *vidrāngen* (addition), *stvrlð* (subtraction), *tvrfaldan* (doubling), *helmingaskipti* (mediation), *marginfaldan* (multiplication), *skiping* (division), and *taka rót undan* (“to take the root of,” a branch that describes how to calculate square and also cube roots).

Sacrobosco gives nine different branches. In his work, as in the older tradition, the zero is not regarded as a numeral, as opposed to the *Carmen* and to *Algorismus*. Although admitting that the zero is special in some respects, both treat it as a numeral. *Carmen* and *Algorismus* state as a fact the Hindu origin of our numerals; in *Tractatus de arte numerandi*, the art of reckoning is ascribed to “an Arabic philosopher called Algos.” Sacrobosco provides several fanciful etymologies for the term “algorismus.”

One common trait in all these three works is the total lack of calculation by fractions, except for a comment in *Algorismus* about a certain mark signifying one half, while al-Khwārizmī presents several such calculations. The three works also introduce terms for the different numeral systems. The translator of *Algorismus* calls every number less than ten a “fingar” (*fingr*, Latin *digitus*), every number corresponding to an amount of tens a “joint” (*lidr*, Latin *articulus*), and a number that consists of both, a “composite number” (*samsætt talr*; Latin *compositus*).

Unlike all its known sources, *Algorismus* ends with a section on God’s creation of proportional relations among the four elements, an idea that probably goes back to Plato’s *Timaeus*. The very last sentence of the text promises a figure called the “perfect cube.” Unfortunately, this figure is lacking in all the MSS.

The great advantages of the Hindu-Arabic place-value notational system were not readily recognized in medieval European
society, the competing system being the Roman numerals with their simple rules of addition and subtraction. Despite the invention of printing in Europe and the wider diffusion of algorithmic texts, the superiority of the system of calculation represented by *Algorismus* was not universally recognized until about 1600.


**Otto B. Bekken and Marit Christoffersen**

[See also: *Hauksbók*, *Numenals*]

**Alphabet.** Latin script came to Scandinavia along with Christianity via the Continent (Germany) and England. Denmark received the art of writing mainly from Germany, although some letters (y, perhaps also æ and ø) suggest Anglo-Saxon insular influence. A typical feature of Danish script is that insular ß (ß) is lacking, and that th is used for the voiceless dental fricative, and occasionally for its voiced counterpart. The thorn sign (þ) never achieved currency in Danish script, although it does occur in some law texts, following Swedish or Norwegian models. It is used virtually throughout *Skjoldlagen* (SKB B 76), from the early 14th century, and sporadically in some MSS from Zealand, the youngest from the start of the 15th century. As in contemporary German script, w occurs initially and after consonants in Danish texts. Crossed f and n (f, n) are used to indicate palatalization in a few MSS (e.g., SKB 74 B). Slashed a replaces the earlier æ; in the 16th century, this sound is represented by o with a superscript dot or stroke. The letter æ is written as a ligature of a and e, the sound could previously be denoted by hooked e (e-caudata), or hooked æ (æ) adopted from Carolingian script. The crossed vowels u, v, y (u, v, y) for front-mutated u are peculiar to Danish script. The rounded vowel that developed out of long a was written aa, a practice that survived until the present century, when it was replaced by a with a superscript o (ð).

Sweden, like Denmark, received the art of writing largely from Germany. The oldest MSS in Swedish, however, show West Norse influence, including insular features that reached Sweden via Norway. For example, in the fragment of the older *Västgotalagen* (SKB B 193), we find the runic character þ, ð, insular l, s, æ, æ, the ligature of s and k (k), and the runic character y for malart 'man.' Soon afterward, however, Swedish loses insular l, ð, and the ligature k. In the later Middle Ages (ca. 1370–1526), þ is replaced by th initially and dh medially and finally. As in Denmark, the predominant script in 15th-century books and documents is Gothic hybrid. Typical features of this style are that a has a single chamber (like the cursive form); that the stems of fand tall s(þ) project below the line; that b, d, and sometimes l have loops; that k has a raised loop; and that final m and n often have the last minim prolonged. At the time of the Reformation, Swedish differed from Danish script in replacing the medieval forms æ' and ø' (originally a and o with superscript c) with the German a and ð. In addition, Swedish acquired a new letter with the substitution of ð for aa.

Icelandic script has a dual origin: continental Caroline minuscule and insular English script (partly transmitted via Norway). From English or Norwegian writing came the runic character þ, which in the oldest MSS appears in all positions in the word. Some of the oldest texts have a w similar to that used in England and Norway. Norwegian influence in the 13th century led to the adoption of more insular letters, ð, f, þ. Following East Norse usage, ð became more common than þ in medial and final positions. Around the middle of the 14th century, Icelanders ceased to write ð (although the sound was retained); they used d instead, and continued to do so until some time into the 19th century. Insular v is rare after 1350. Insular f, which was introduced in the 13th century, did not disappear from cursive script until the 18th century, surviving a little longer in book script. After 1800, this character was used only for calligraphic purposes. Vowel signs in medieval Icelandic are used as in contemporary Norwegian. One difference is that ø, the sign for back-mutated a, is more common in Iceland than in Norway. This sound probably developed early into a mid-rounded front vowel; it was replaced by ð in the 16th century. Otherwise, the modern Icelandic alphabet is virtually identical to that used in Old Icelandic.

Norway was the part of Scandinavia where insular script was most prominent. In the oldest, particularly East Norwegian, texts (ca. 1150–1225), we find the insular letters þ, ð, long r(þ), l, v, æ, and English usages like u for y, e or æ for a, the use of the nasal bar for m, and more rarely for n. West Norwegian MSS also have insular letters, although less frequently. The period had no specific documentary script. During the period 1225–1300, the insular letters fand v are in full use, ð is increasingly being replaced at the end of the period by round d(ð), several letters change their shape, and cursive script starts to appear in diplomas by the end of the period. In the Gothic period (ca. 1300–1350), cursive script also becomes standard in books, the insular letters disappear, and the Danish alphabet is introduced at the end of the Middle Ages. Norwegian writing came under the influence of Danish in the 16th century. As in the other Nordic countries, neo-Gothic script prevailed from the Reformation until the 1780s. Latin style was used for texts in Latin or Romance languages.

On the Faroes, the Norwegian alphabet was used in the Middle Ages, later to be replaced by Danish script. In 1846, a new alphabet with a standard orthography was created by Dean V. U. Hammershaimb. It was based on normalized Old Icelandic, from which ð (but not þ) was adopted, although it is now silent. The orthography is largely etymological. The only medieval linguistic monuments that survive are a few parchment letters from around 1400, but no MS books.

The Alþingi, or the Alþing, was the national legislative and judicial assembly of medieval Iceland. The "thing," or voting assembly of thing-assemblies throughout Scandinavia, and Norse settlers frequently established things abroad. The Icelandic Alþingi was unusual, however, in that it united all regions of an entire country under a common legal and judicial system, without depending upon the executive power of a monarch or regional rulers.

The Alþingi was established around 930, but little is known about its specific organization during the earliest decades, because the constitutional reforms of the mid-960s. The Alþingi met for two weeks every summer at Pingvöllr on the Áxará (Axe River) in southwestern Iceland, a site easily accessible from most of the island. The convening of the Alþingi before 999 cannot be precisely dated, but in that year the opening day was set as the Thursday after the first ten weeks of the summer, that is, between June 18 and 24.

The site of the Alþingi was hallowed, and the proceedings were set in motion by the allsherjargodi, a man distinguished as the holder of the godar, established by Ósvald Ingólfsson, a leader instrumental in the founding of the Alþingi and a son of Iceland's first settler. A truce was observed during the session, and all freemen, except those under sentence of outlawry, attended. The lawspeaker (logsgúumáðr) presided over the Alþingi and made the practical arrangements. Either he or the allsherjargóði closed the meeting. The Alþingi officially ended with a ceremony called vápnatak (weapon taking), when men struck their weapons together, presumably signifying agreement with the work accomplished during the assembly. Although weapons were banned at Alþingi meetings in 1154, the available evidence suggests that the new ruling was soon ignored.

Along with the lawspeaker, the island's chieftains or godar (sing. godi) were required by law to attend the Alþingi. Each godi could demand that every ninth thingfararkaupsbóndi ("thing-tax-paying-farmer") among his thingmen accompany him, and he levied a thing-attendance tax called thingfararkaup on those thingfararkaupsbóndi who did not attend. The funds so collected were used to offset the travel expenses of those followers who accompanied their godar to the Alþingi. Chieftains embroiled in feuds or contentious lawsuits could bring larger followings with them. Attendance at the Alþingi was not limited to participants in politics, disputes, and legal cases. The assembly drew craftsmen, ale brewers, vendors, and peddlers from all over the island, and sometimes from foreign lands. It was a lively scene, marked by buying and selling, exchange of news and gossip, courtship, and the making and breaking of friendships and alliances. At times, emissaries from foreign lands attended, as well as Icelanders recently returned from abroad.

Pingvöllr is a site of great beauty, as well as a natural amphitheater. The heart of the assembly was a small hill with grassy slopes and with a rock outcropping called the "Logberg" (Law Rock). A massive rock cliff stands behind the Logberg, and the voice of the speaker standing at the Law Rock can be heard at a distance. The Alþingi sessions were held in open air. Although the setting was not urban, the annual meeting was an impressive gathering that fulfilled many functions of a national capital and contributed significantly to the island's unity. With wood given by St. Ólaf of Norway, a church was built at Pingvöllr a few decades after the conversion, and there is some evidence that a second church was later erected. Except for these and a local farmstead, Pingvöllr had no permanent, year-round buildings. Most of those attending the assembly pitched tents, but leaders were obliged to maintain turf booths (bódir, sing. bóð) for themselves and their most important followers. Booths were roofed with homespun cloth when the weather turned cold.


[Lars Svensson]

[See also: Palaeography; Runes and Runic Inscriptions]
had occurred. This arrangement proved inadequate to cope with the feuds between opponents living in different districts, and efforts to solve this and related problems led to the constitutional reforms of the mid-960s.

The reforms gave Iceland an extensive system of regional and national courts. As part of the new arrangements, the country was divided into four geographical quarters. Three local assembly districts were established in three of the quarters, but the North, due to topography and the dispersion of its population, requested four, and this request was granted. In each local district, a springtime assembly (vârping) was held. Some of these local assemblies are known to have predated the reforms, while others may have been newly formed. Four new law courts were established at the Alþingi to provide a more impartial setting than at the district courts. Called fjôrdungsdômar, these new "quarter courts" of the Alþingi were named for the island's four geographical quarters and were referred to as the Court of the North Quarter, South Quarter, and so on. Cases were brought to the court of the quarter in which the defendant lived.

The quarter courts functioned both as courts of first instance and as courts of appeal for cases not settled at the vârping. Holders of the thirty-six "full" or original chiefalties (godörr) that predated the reforms appointed the judges for these courts. Although each court was named for a specific quarter, the judges were selected on an island-wide basis. A party to a lawsuit could challenge any judge whose impartiality was in question. A decision in the fjôrdungsdômar had to be nearly unanimous.

About 1005, a court of appeals, the límtardôm or fifth court, was created at the Alþingi to handle cases deadlocked in the quarter courts. Here, verdicts were decided by a simple majority. After Christianity took hold, a priest's court (prestadômr) was also established. Like the quarter courts and the fifth court, it sat before a panel of judges composed of farmers. These additions completed the court system at the Alþingi as it existed in the Free State period.

From the 9th to the 13th century, Iceland maintained its independence, with the Alþingi as a public arena for resolving disputes and regulating power. In the 13th century, the importance of the Alþingi diminished as the power of the group referred to in modern studies as the stóðgerðar (literally "big chiefalties") grew, and the disruptions of the Sturlung period became more frequent. When Iceland succumbed to Norwegian power in 1262–1264, the independence of the Alþingi was severely curtailed. The Norwegian Crown abolished the old chiefalties. New royal officials, frequently Icelanders, then dominated the assembly. In 1271, with the introduction of a new Norwegian-inspired law code, the Alþingi relinquished its role as a general assembly. With few exceptions, it met for only three to four days each year, and for the most part boths were no longer maintained. The Alþingi became a representative body functioning somewhat like a Norwegian lagting, with proceedings devoted largely to judicial matters. Under the Norwegians, and later under the Danes, the assembly also served as the usual forum for promulgating official acts. The Alþingi continued to meet at Pingvöllr until 1798, when it was disbanded, only to be revived in 1845 in a changed form in Reykjavík.


Jesse L. Byock

Alvíssmál ("The Lay of Alviss") is the last of the wisdom poems preserved in the Codex Regius of the Poetic Edda. Two stanzas are also preserved in MSS of the Snorra Edda, where they are quoted (under the title Alvíssmál) to illustrate poetic terms for wind and night. The poem is usually classed among the later eddic poems, composed perhaps in the early 13th century. Alvíssmál takes the form of a poetic dialogue, in jöðuhátur meter, between Pórr and a dwarf, Alviss ("all-wise"). The first eight stanzas and the final stanza constitute a narrative frame. Alviss is about to carry off Pórr's daughter, apparently with the gods' consent. Pórr claims that only he has the right to give away his daughter; he will do so only if the dwarf can tell him all he wants to know from each of the world's regions. At this point, the wisdom section of the poem begins. In a series of thirteen questions and answers, Pórr asks for the names of such things as heaven and earth, the sun and moon; Alviss tells him what they are called by men, gods, giants, dwarfs, elves, and denizens of hell. In the final stanza, Pórr says he has never seen such wisdom, but that too much talk has trapped the dwarf: he has been caught above ground after daybreak, and "now sun shines in the hall." Apparently, this means that Alviss, who lives "beneath the earth under a stone," himself turns to stone when struck by sunlight. Such a final transformation occurs more explicitly in the heroic eddic poem Helgaþvamál Hjörvarðasonar (sts. 12–30), in which a giantess turns to stone at daybreak, having been delayed by the taunts and questions of Atli and Helgi.

Among eddic wisdom poems, Alvíssmál bears some comparison with Vafsrúðnasími, in which Óðinn questions a giant about mythological lore. Indeed, many scholars have sometimes thought that Óðinn, who often quested after wisdom, would have made a more appropriate main figure in Alvíssmál than Pórr, who elsewhere is treated as a comic dupe of clever giants. But Pórr does not really match wits with the dwarf; he only questions him as a diversionary tactic. Alviss knows all things; Pórr need only know one thing, the dwarf's vulnerability to sunlight, which Alviss overlooks. Pórr thus exemplifies the advice given in the wisdom poem Hávamál (sts. 54–56) that one should be "moderately wise" rather than "all-wise." Pórr also fits the frame story of Alvíssmál in that here, as in Pýrmnskviða, he must stop an otherworldly creature from marrying a goddess.

Some scholars have seen the wisdom section of the poem as reflecting either an old belief in separate languages for the gods and men, or a system of taboo words such as were still used by Shetland fishermen in the recent past. Others have seen the wisdom section as a versified handbook of poetic terms, similar in spirit to Snorri's Edda. Further, this section has attracted attention as one of the most rigorously schematic or formulaic of all eddic compositions.

A few details suggest that the poet attempted to integrate the
wisdom section and the narrative frame. Pórr asks Alviss for the terms for "night" but not for "day," as if to avoid reminding the dwarf of his vulnerability to daylight. Pórr asks thirteen questions, which may reflect a familiar superstition; certainly the nineteenth and final stanza proves unlucky for the dwarf. Alviss tells Pórr that dwarfs call the sun "Dvalins leika" ("Dvalinn's plaything"). Dvalinn, a dwarf whose name probably means "the delayed one," was presumably also delayed past sunrise. This allusion to Dvalinn may then foreshadow the demise of Alviss at the end of the poem.


Paul Acker

[See also: Codex Regius; Eddic Meters; Eddic Poetry; Hávamál; Helgi Poems; Snorra Edda; Prymskvida; Vatnsóðumál]

America, Norse in. The earliest seemingly reliable, if fragmentary, descriptions of any part of North America and its inhabitants were a by-product of the discovery and colonization of coastal Greenland by Icelanders. The chance discovery of American shores by Bjarni Herjólfsson, and the subsequent expeditions by Leif Eiríksson, the latter's brother Órvarr, and his kinsman by marriage Ófeigsson Ófeigsson Karlsefni, are variously narrated in the two so-called "Vinland sagas." Through these partly contradictory and fictional but in many ways realistic Icelandic prose narratives emerges the picture of a sparsely inhabited and almost endless territory that grew more attractive as the explorers and settlers proceeded southward. Pasturage for dairy cattle, forest trees for ship building and house timbers, an abundance of fish and game, wild berries in profusion, along with the possibility of agriculture, were powerful initial inducements to attempted colonization. There is no record of the diseases that afflicted later European settlers; the Norse tenure many have been too short for evidence of medieval Norse penetration of the Arctic. It now appears that northerly travels on both sides of Davis Strait by hunting and adventurers must have led to the frequent contact with the natives of the Dorset and Thule cultures, who, irrespective of tribe, were referred to by the Norsemen as skraelingar 'wretches.' Conducted with due caution on both sides, such contacts would have led to trade. Of principal interest to the whites was the acquisition of pelts and the ivory of walrus and narwhal. Ivory was not only carved by Eskimo and Norse craftsmen, but also used by the latter to pay tithes to the Church, and in quantities impressive enough to support the notion of considerable trade between the two races.

Recent warming of the Arctic and sub-Arctic climate has led to the discovery of numerous articles of Norse manufacture at Eskimo dwelling sites on the Arctic mainland and neighboring islands. The exact significance of terminal location for easily portable objects is not easily determined, although trade, pillage, and the careless dropping or discarding of artifacts during camping or travel are among the obvious explanations. Items have been picked up from the east and west coasts of Ellesmere Island, which faces northern Greenland across Kane Basin. Most are from the vicinity of Bache Peninsula, especially from winter houses of the Thule culture on Knud Peninsula and Skraeling Island. The artifacts include ship nails, pieces of woven cloth, fragments of smoked iron and copper, bits of chain mail, blades, and a carpenter's plane. A European figureine of wood was found on Baffin Island, a bronze bowl on Devon Island, and part of a merchant's scale on the Cumberland Peninsula. All of the foregoing test as medieval.

The claim of Norse origin for structures in the Ungava Bay region has not been sustained, and the only confirmed early Norse habitation site is at L'Anse-aux-Meadows, near the shallow Épaves Bay, northern Newfoundland. Here H. and A.-S. Ingstad have uncovered a number of structures, including turf-built houses,
workshops, smithy, bath-house, charcoal kiln, as well as small artifacts. These finds include a spindle whorl of soapstone, a needle bone of quartzite, jasper and iron pyrites for striking fire, badly corroded iron rivets, scattered nails, scraps of worked wood including a ship's rib, slag, and incinerated animal bones. All criteria support an approximate date of 1000. No region of grapevines, L'Anse-aux-Meadows probably served for a few short years as a boat repair station for expeditions into the St. Lawrence Valley. H. Ingstad considers it the site of Leif Eiriksson's houses. Now restored, the L'Anse-aux-Meadows cluster is maintained as a public exhibit by Parks Canada.

Despite the recent discovery of smelted iron pieces at Silimiut on the west coast of Hudson Bay, popular theories regarding early Norse pushes into the Dakotas or Minnesota are supported neither by archaeological evidence nor by historical probability.


†Erik Wahlgren

[See also: Greenland, Norse in; Kensington Stone; L'Anse aux Meadows; “Maine Coin”; Viking Hoaxes; Vinland Map; Vinland Sagas]

**Amicus and Amileus** is a tale about the self-sacrificing friendship between two knights, Amicus and Amileus, contrasting their mutual loyalty with a number of betrayals of the trust and obligations of love by other characters. The numerous translations of the tale into almost all European languages attest to its popularity. The interest in the tale is further indicated by the fact that it was repeatedly adapted into different narrative forms, such as miracle play, exemplum, prose tale, and ballad.

Traditionally, all versions of the Amicus and Amileus tale are assigned to one of two categories: romance or hagiography. The romantic group adds new elements; the theme is an exposition of the virtues of the two friends, who are so dear to God that miracles are worked on their behalf, and so zealous in the cause of the Church that they are rewarded with martyrdom (Leach 1937: ix).

A comparison of the oldest extant version of the tale, that of Radulphus Tortarius in verse from about 1090, with the younger versions, e.g., the *Vita Amici et Amelii* from the 12th century, in which the two friends are clearly presented as saints, reveals that originally the tale lacked the hagiographic character of the later versions, i.e., the romantic versions represent more nearly the original form of the tale, which is thought to have come into existence, probably as a *chanson de geste*, in southern France in the 11th century.

The East Norse versions of the tale can undisputably be classified as belonging to the hagiographic group. The Old Swedish version, "Aff Amelio oc Amico," is found in *Sielinna thröst* from about 1420. The work is essentially an exposition of the Ten Commandments and is based chiefly on the Low German *Der grosse Seelentrost*; the story of Amicus and Amileus is found in connection with the Eighth Commandment. Although much material is drawn from the *Seelentrost*, which for this section is based on Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum historiale*, the Old Swedish version is primarily a translation of the *Vita* from the 12th century. The exact source of a Latin verse summarizing the content of the legend that is appended to the Swedish story remains obscure. The Danish version, "Aff amicus oc amelius," is found in *Sielæ træst*, extant in two fragments from about 1425. The work is a translation from the original of the Swedish *Sielinna throst*; the Amicus and Amileus legend contains the same Latin verse at the end of the story.

The story appears in West Norse as a short, incomplete saga and a long, elaborate cycle of *rimur*. The two West Norse versions have generally been classified as hagiographies, but they contain features so characteristic of romance that they both, in particular the saga, may be better labeled as romance (Hume 1970: 80). *Amicus saga ok Amilus* was probably translated during the later years of the reign of Hákon V (1299-1319). According to Hamer (1985), the narrative technique suggests that the translation was originally made in Norway. According to Köbling (1877), the saga may share a common source with Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum historiale* (itself an abridged version of the story a few removes from the *Vita*); Leach implies that the saga descends directly from the *Speculum historiale*. The saga is found in one MS only, Stock, Perg. 4to no. 6 (fols. 1-3r) from the 14th century, which is defective at the beginning because of a lacuna before fol. 1. The so-called *Rimur af Amikus og Amilus* in AM 690c 4to from the 17th century are not based on the story in the *Speculum historiale*, nor on the Icelandic rendering of it, but stem ultimately from a Latin *vita* of the type edited by Köbling (1884: xcvi-cc).


Kirsten Wolf

[See also: Old Norse-Icelandic Literature, Foreign Influence on]

Amicus saga ok Amilussee Amicus and Amelius

Anders Sunesen see Sunesen, Anders

Annals

1. DENMARK. For a long time, it was a common belief that every medieval monastery kept annals year by year, independent of other written source material. A hundred years of study has completely overthrown this theory. In spite of the fact that the period of annal writing lasted from approximately 1130 to 1400, with an aftermath of learned compilations from the 16th century, the number of genuine annals is no more than seventeen. Since about seventy medieval monasteries can be located in the map in Denmark, it is clear that not all of them produced annals, taking into account that some may be lost. The remaining annals show much interdependence, so few entries can be considered firsthand information.

Most of the Danish annals belonging to the period up to the middle of the 13th century were written at the archiepiscopal see at Lund. The earliest ones are the so-called "Colbaz annals." After a preface on the history of the world, they cover the years 1130 to 1177. At that time, they were transferred to Pomerania, where they were continued in the Cistercian monastery of Colbaz. The original version is now preserved in the university library of Marburg. Basically, these annals are an Easter table with interlinear and marginal additions, all with considerable confusion among the entries. Perhaps a copy of the Colbaz annals was made before they were removed from Lund, which would explain curious similarities between these annals and Danish annals from the beginning of the 13th century.

One of the Danish annals is Valdemars jordebog ("The Annals of Valdemar," king of Denmark, 1202-1241). This book seems to have been written in the royal chancellery, since it shows special interest in dynastic events and wars, and since a copy of it is found in the Valdemars jordebog ("Valdemar's Land Register") containing lists of royal incomes during the 13th century. These annals cover the years 1130 to 1219, after which they suddenly stop, thus providing a terminus ad quem for their composition.

During the following decades, the Valdemar annals were used alongside the tradition from Lund for annals from Næstved and Søren. The middle of the 13th century saw the appearance of two new Lund annals. One of them, which treats the period 1074-1255, is the only one to include entries for 1074-1130. Its sources are the Necrologium Lundense and the Roskilde Chronicle (Roskildekrøniken). The annals from 1074 to 1255 are known only in a Danish translation from about 1400. The other set of annals from Lund is an elaborate piece of work, covering the time from the Creation until the year 1267. The oldest MS dates from about 1300, and is part of a collection kept in the German town of Erfurt. The earliest part of these annals is based on Isidore of Seville's Etymologiarum (5:39; ca. A.D. 600), on Bede's Historia ecclesiastica (731) and Chronica maiora (725), and on various other chronicles. At the entry for the year 767, Danish material begins with the Leje Chronicle (Lejekronikken) and excerpts from Adam of Bremen. From 1074 onward, the text shows heavy exploitation of the predecessors from Lund and the Valdemar annals.

The combination of chronicle with annal is characteristic of the annals written down about 1300 and during the first half of the 14th century. These writings include Danish legendary history from Saxo's Gesta Danorum, supplemented by legends, probably of recent invention.

About the year 1300, the center of annal writing seems to have shifted from Lund to Søren. Vetus chronica Sialandiae ("The Old Chronicle of Zealand") was written in Søren. The Annals of Ryd (Rydarbogen) are based upon Søren history writing, and the Jutish Chronicle (Jyssel kramrike) depends on the Ryd annals as well as on materials from Søren. Finally, there is the Younger Zealand Chronicle (Den yngre Sjællandske kramrike), which includes the Older Zealand Chronicle (Den ældre Sjællandske kramrike).

The Annals of Ryd were written in the Cistercian monastery of Ryd at the fjord of Flensburg. Three versions are known, all beginning with a legendary history, but each with a different closing year. One of them, in Latin, stops at 1288. It seems to have been written during the second half of the 13th century. The oldest MS of this work from after 1300 is kept in the Stadtsbibliothek of Hamburg. Of the two versions in Danish, one stops in 1226, the other in 1314. The Annals of Ryd offer rather personal impressions, and are strongly biased against the Teutons.

A complete, abbreviated version of Saxo's work constitutes the first half of the Jutish Chronicle. The second half comprises annals covering the time from about 1100 to 1340, most detailed for the last twenty years, but still without coherence and causality. Events taking place in Jutland receive particular stress during the period when Denmark was dissolved into several mortgaged crown lands. This chronicle was widely known in Denmark, Sweden, and northern Germany, as may be seen from several 15th-century MSS as well as two printed versions in Low German from the 16th century.

A little younger than the Jutish Chronicle is a Zealandic Chronicle, the last part of which contains entries up to the year 1282. The Younger Zealandic Chronicle covers 1308 to 1363, and is assumed to be the work of three authors. No MSS survive, and...
the texts of the *Older* as well as the *Younger Zealandic Chronicle* are extant only in print from 1695. The latter is considered the peak of Danish annal writing: the entries are strictly chronological, but rich in detail and with strongly expressed opinions about King Valdemar IV (1340–1374). This work was the culmination of Danish annals in their medieval form.


**Inge Skovgaard-Petersen**

[See also: Adam of Bremen; Chronicles; Land Registers; Monasticism; Saxo Grammaticus]

2. ICELAND (AND NORWAY). The medieval Icelandic annals can be divided into three groups (using Storm's numbering):

(a) The oldest annals: (I) Resensannall (Annales Reseniani), (II) Fornt annall (Annales vetustissimi), (III) Høyers annall, and the oldest part of (IV) Konungsannall (Annales regii). These four annals were written down at the end of the 13th and the beginning of the 14th century. Annals I and II are preserved in vellum MSS. I exists in an accurate copy made by Arni Magnússon, and III in a copy from about 1600. Annal I ends in 1295, II in 1314, and III in 1310; the oldest hand in IV ends in 1306, while the younger hands continue until about 1341. Annals I–III are very closely related until about 1280; IV seems to have been founded on another source.

(b) Annals written at the end of the 14th century: (V) Skálholtsannall. (VI) A fragment of another annal from Skálholt, (VII) Logmannsnannall (with the continuation, Nyi annall), and (IX) Flateyjarannall. With the exception of Nyi annall, they are preserved in vellum MSS, all more or less defective, apart from IX. Until about 1300, these annals are based on annals related to I–III and/or IV, and for the 14th century are partly related. None of them goes farther than the year 1394, except for Nyi annall, which continues until 1430 and was originally in the same codex, although now existing only in copies. Nyi annall is an independent work written in Skálholt, while VII originates in the northern part of the country, compiled by the priest Ólafur Halldórsson (d. 1393), mostly written down by himself.

(c) Two annals written in the 16th century with the use of lost medieval annals: (VIII) Gotskálksannall, written by the priest Gotskálk Jónsson (d. 1590), preserved in the author's autograph. It goes to 1578, but until 1394 copies a lost annal; for the 15th century, it has only scattered entries, but is fuller in the 16th century. (X) Oddaþervja annall is a chronicle-like compilation from the end of the 16th century, which, along with numerous other sources, uses both VII (including Nyi annall) and a lost annal related to IV.

All the oldest annals and most of the later ones contain a brief annal extract about foreign events from the birth of Christ (IV and IX from Caesar). In IV, these entries are in Latin, in the others mainly in Icelandic. In I–III, they are concerned primarily with the names of emperors and popes, containing among other items a complete list of popes. The foreign material is drawn from medieval chronicles and annals, probably through intermediaries. Much of the older material is found in Ekkehard of Aura; parallels are also found in Peter Comestor's *Historia scholastica* and in Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum historiale*, as well as in Danish and Swedish annals. The Icelandic *Veraldar saga* is used in V and VII. Annal IV, and thereafter IX, are introduced with a survey of the first ages.

The Icelandic annals have a common chronological system based on the Easter cycle; individual years are indicated by Dominical letters and Lunar letters ("príktafir") according to the system used in the Icelandic Easter tables. Years are normally added every tenth and twentieth year.

The Icelandic and Norse material derives primarily from Icelandic historical works. For the oldest period, *Islandingabók* is the main source; later sources include *Hagraskvi* and the Icelandic *biskupa sögur, Islendinga saga* and other sagas included in the Sturlunga collection, *Heimskringla, Knýtlinga saga, Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar, Magnús saga lagabættis*, and various *Islendingasögur*.

Storm (1888) and Finnr Jónsson (1920–24) argued that no annals had been written before the MS tradition from which I–IV derive. The assertion was called into question by Beckman (1912), who demonstrated that certain annal entries from the 12th century (e.g., on solar eclipses) had to be based on contemporary records; these entries could originally have been inserted into the Easter tables. Hermann Pálsson (1965, 1970) has argued that much of the material found in IV and not in I–III in the 12th and 13th centuries must originate in the monastery at Pingeyrar. Jónas Kristjánsson (1980) has examined Beckman's theories and established the influence of the archiepiscopal see in Lund in the first half of the 12th century, where the recording of Danish annals began at exactly the same time. A large number of entries from the 12th and 13th centuries cannot be derived from known historical works or sagas.

Ólafía Einarsdóttir (1964, 1965, 1967) has supported the theories of Storm and Finnur Jónsson, asserting that until the end of the 13th century the Icelandic annals appropriated their material from known historical works and sagas. Her opinions have been criticized by several scholars (Axelson 1968; Portelius Haucksson 1972; Jónas Kristjánsson 1980).

Several scholars have associated the annal tradition with Sturla Póðarson (d. 1284) or his nearest circle. This ascription seems likely, even though convincing arguments are lacking. The composition of the MS in which Annal I is found could suggest that it was undertaken by a man with comprehensive historical interests (see Storm's edition, p. ix).

The Icelandic annals are very important historical sources, but the analysis of their interrelationships and their relation to the various sources is far from complete.


Jakob Benediktsson

[See also: Biskupa sögur; Hákonar saga gamla Hákonarsonar; Heimskringla; Hungvaka; Islendingabók; Islendingasögur; Kyrlinga saga; Magnúss saga lagabœcis; Sturla Dóðarson; Sturlunga saga; Verakald saga]

3. SWEDEN. Swedish annals are short notices in Latin con­cerning historical events chronologically arranged, year by year. The custom of writing annals was brought to Sweden from Den­mark by monks in connection with the expansion of monasticism. The oldest parts of the first Swedish annals are not much more than copies of Danish ones. Nine annals are preserved in Sweden, along with a number of more fragmentary ones. They may be divided into two groups, an older one consisting of three annals wholly or partially written shortly after their last events (with the end years 1263, 1288, and 1136, respectively), and a younger group produced in the 15th century or later. Most of the MSS are copies of the common type; four annals, however, are preserved in MSS where different hands have succeeded each other. A docu­ment of the last kind is Cod. Ups. C 70, which includes the oldest Swedish annal, covering the period 916 (the year when Denmark is said to have been christianized) to 1263. The original of the Danish part of the annal was probably written in a Dominican convent or at the archiepiscopal see in Lund; a copy of it is sup­posed to have been brought by a Black Friar to a Dominican monastery in Sweden, perhaps Skånninge in Östergotland. Another of the oldest annals, which covers the period 1160–1320 plus a solitary notice for 1336, is preserved in Cod. Ups. C 92, together with a table of popes and a table of kings.

The relationship among the different annals has been the subject of much discussion. All are compilations, and there are many common notices. A firm chronological framework is con­structed by use of lists of bishops, popes, and kings. Some data have been taken from calendars, chronological records, necrologia, and obituaries, especially those kept in monasteries (e.g., Skånninge, Stockholm) and cathedral chapters (esp. Uppsala).

The annals play an important role for our knowledge of Sweden’s medieval history; they have been extensively used by historians from the 16th century (Erichus Olai) up to the present. The authors of the medieval rhymed chronicles benefited from annals. Ingvar Anderson (1928), for instance, found that the author of the Erikskrônikan had made use of certain annals, both for the chronological order and for many historical details.

As a rule, the individual notices for a given year have no mutual connection. The entries for the year 1275 (Cod. Holm D 4), for example, read as follows: Bellum fuit in Hofwum, Eodem anno obit domicellus Ericus (“There was a battle at Hofa. The same year Prince Erik died”). But exceptions may be found, such as the following notices for the year 1344 (in Cod. Ups. DG 26:12): Mortuus est dominus Wlpho Gudmard maritus beate Birgittae, Eodem avtem anno primum factae sunt revelationes eidem beate Birgittae (“Ulf Gudmarsson, the husband of St. Birgitta, died. The same year the holy Birgitta had her first revelations”).


Gösta Holm

Áns saga bogsveigis (“The Saga of Án Bow-bender”) belongs to a group of fornaldrásögur known as Hrafnsstumanna sögur (“sagas of the men of Hrafnist”), which also include Ketils saga bænts, Gýrtrás saga loðviksana, and Órvar-Odds saga.

The oldest extant recension of Áns saga bogsveigis is preserved in MS AM 343a 4to from the early 15th century. Orthographical variations in the text suggest that the scribe had access to two earlier MSS. The saga exists in some form in forty-six paper MSS of later date. In addition, there exist eight fits of rtmur, composed in the beginning of the 15th century and based on an earlier version of the saga.

The narrative is reminiscent of the style of many Islendingasögur, but in terms of content the saga is a typical fornaldrásaga. án is a stock figure, the youth with no skill or promise, ridiculoulsly dressed in tatters, despised and insulted.
His enormous strength is a secret, since he takes no part in manly sports, and his ultimate success is a surprise only to the other actors in his story. As a youth, he meets a dwarf, Litr, who gives him a great bow and some arrows in the tradition of the Gissuratadar ("gifts of Gusir"), the arrow that Orvar-Oddr took from Gusir, king of the Finns. When he is grown up, Anh has his brother Póitr take him to the court of the bad King Ingaldr, where he receives the name "bogsvigir" ("bow-bender") after a silly trick he performs to attract the attention of the warriors. Anh is outlawed for killing the king's two half-brothers by shooting magnificently, but illegally, from hiding. He flees the king's vengeance, but has started a lifetime feud, which is eventually ended when he has his revenge on the king through his son Póitr halegr ("long-leg").


_Discussion._

Calum Campbell

[See also: Fornaldarsögur, Gríms saga løþinkanna, Ketils saga hemings, Ritmúr, Orvar-Odds saga]

**Ansgar, St.**, also known as the "Apostle of the North," was born in Picardy around 801 and died in Bremen on February 3, 865, the date of his feast day. He was educated at the Benedictine monastery at Corbie, and in 822 was sent as a teacher to the monastery of Corvey in Westphalia. When King Harald Klak of Denmark converted to Christianity in 826 at the court of Emperor Louis the Pious, Ansgar was recommended by Archbishop Ebo of Reims and was sent to Denmark as a missionary by Pope Pippin II. After the expulsion of Harald from the country, Ansgar traveled to Denmark, where King Björn permitted him to found the first church in Scandinavia at Björkó. In 831, Ansgar was consecrated first bishop of Hamburg, and in 832 was named by Pope Gregory IV as papal legate for the Scandinavian and Slavonic mission. Ansgar entrusted the mission of Sweden to Gausbert, and focused his attention on converting Denmark. In 834, through the patronage of Emperor Louis, the monastery of Turnhout, Flanders, was assigned to Ansgar as a training center and source of revenue for the Scandinavian mission. But in 845, the Christian mission suffered a severe setback when the Vikings plundered Hamburg. In 847, Ansgar was appointed to the see of Hamburg, which was united with Hamburg in 847/8, and he began his missionary efforts anew. He succeeded in founding churches in Schleswig, Ribe, and Sigtuna.

Ansgar probably wrote many volumes, including extracts from devotional texts and perhaps also a booklet on his visions by which the whole of his life was guided. But only one letter, some prayers (pigmentum), and a life of St. Willehad are preserved. The main source about Ansgar's life is Rimbert's Vita Anskarii, which contains much valuable information on the history of the Catholic mission in early-medieval Scandinavia.


_Peter Dinzelbacher_

**Arabic Sources for Scandinavia**. The age of Islamic expansion (7th and 8th centuries) resulted in the spread of Arabic-speaking and Islamic peoples over an area stretching from the Atlantic to the borders of China, from the Sahara and Sind to the Volga, the Caspian and Black Sea area, Baghdad, Spain, the Mediterranean, and North Africa. Later, Scandinavians traveled to the Holy Land as crusaders and pilgrims. There was, then, considerable scope for direct contact between Scandinavians on the one hand, and Islamic/Arabic-speaking peoples on the other; and information about the former and their homelands naturally also reached the latter indirectly. The "Golden Age" of Arabic literature (750–1055) corresponds relatively closely with the Viking Age, and the authors of the Arabic "Silver Age" (1055–1258) also sometimes offer information about Scandinavia and Scandinavians. Arabic sources refer to Scandinavians mainly under two names: ar-Rūsîya (also: ar-Rūsî), particularly those in Russia and easterly areas; and al-Majûs, used particularly in Andalusian or North African sources and/or of Vikings in the west. Other names for Scandinavia (ns) also appear, e.g., Waranck (cf. Old Norse væringar) and al-Umrâ (cf. Latin Nordmanni, etc.).

It is primarily the works of Arabic-writing geographers, his-
torians, and travelers that are of interest in this context. Perhaps the oldest notice appears in a work (essentially a list of post-routes) compiled by Ibn Khurradadhbih (ca. 825-912), which tells how the Rûs merchants carry their wares (furs, swords) along the Russian rivers to the Black Sea and the Caspian; often they travel the length of the Caspian to Jurjân and thence by camel to Baghdad. The historian al-Yaŷqûbî (ca. 890s) is the first to tell of Viking activity in Spain and makes a positive identification between ar-Rûs and al-Majûs. Of several later Arabic historians who also tell of the various Viking attacks on Spain during the 9th and 10th centuries, Ibn al-Qûtiyya (d. 977) gives an especially detailed account of the Majûs attack on Seville in 844. Ibn Rusta’s geography (written ca. 903–913) contains a quite detailed ethnographical account of the Rûs, perhaps those from Novgorod. It mentions, for example, their attacks on the “Slavs” (as-ṣaqūlība), their slaves, their many towns, their physical appearance, clothes, system of arbitration, duels, medicine men, sacrifices, and burial customs (cremation and sutte). Undoubtedly, the most sensational source in this context is Ibn Fadlán’s firsthand account of an embassy sent by the caliph in Baghdad to the Bulgars on the Volga in the early 920s. Ibn Fadlán gives an eyewitness description of the Rûs merchants he encountered on the Volga and the ship-burial cremation of one of their chiefmen with the concomitant sacrifice of one of his slave girls. He also gives secondhand information about the Rûs king and his lifestyle Al-Mas’ûdî (d. 956), one of the most important figures of medieval Arabic letters, mentions both the Rûs and the Majûs as well as northernmost Europe in his works. He tells, e.g., of Rûs mercenaries in Byzantine service and of an ill-fated Rûs expedition to the Caspian in 912. Rûs activity on the Caspian is also mentioned by the historian (Ibn) Miskawayh (d. 1030). He describes in detail how the Rûs occupied the town of Bardhâ’a (Azerbaijan) in 943, but were eventually forced to withdraw by disease and by the local Muslim ruler. Al-Idrîsî’s Kitâb Rûjûr (“Book of Roger”), written for Roger II of Sicily (completed 1154), describes a Ptolemaic world map. This map covered Iceland, the Faroes, and the rest of Scandinavia, and featured various Scandinavian towns (e.g., Oslo, Sigtuna). The account by Ibn Dîbîyâ (d. 1235) of a handsome Andalusian poet al-Ghazâlî’s (9th century) diplomatic mission to a country of the Majûs in the north should be treated with extreme circumspection as a historical source. Al-Qazwînî’s (d. 1283) geography contains descriptions of, inter alia, Norse whaling off Ireland and probably (on information derived from a 10th-century Spanish Jewish traveler, Ibrahim ibn Yaŷqûb at-Turtûshî) the Danish Viking Age town of Schleswig. The greatest interest of medieval Islam, Ibn Khaldûn (d. 1406), also mentions the Rûs and interestingly dates a Majûs attack on Nakûr in present-day Morocco as early as about 760. He, as well as previous writers (most notably Ibn al-Athîr [d. 1223]), refers to the crusader attack on Sidôn of 1110, in which the Norwegian king Sigurðr Jórsalafari (“crusader”) took part.


Richard Perkins

Architecture. By and large, Scandinavia, comprising Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Finland, remained a wood-building area throughout the Middle Ages. Only churches and the most important castles and palaces for the king, the bishops, and, in the late Middle Ages, the nobility, were built in stone. In Finland, Sweden, and Norway, the majority of the churches were built in wood. Wood also remained the building material as far as vernacular architecture is concerned. Only toward the end of the Middle Ages did stone buildings appear in the towns, especially in Stockholm and Malmö. A survey of architectural developments may be divided into three parts: churches (discussed in separate entries), castles and palaces, and vernacular buildings.

Castles and palaces. Broadly speaking, the evolution of military architecture in Scandinavia in the Middle Ages followed the general European pattern. As early as the 11th century, fortifications of the motte type, earthen mounds crowned by wooden towers and surrounded by ditches and palisades, must have existed in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway (Oslo). The first Danish stone constructions, dating from the 12th century, were freestanding, mostly circular, towers, probably surrounded by palisades or even walls (Seborg 1 and Bastrup at Zealand). Square towers
tower, Gurre in Zealand; and Kårmans near Helsingborg, now Sweden. A late example is Gjørslev castle, Zealand, built around 1400 by the bishop of Roskilde on a cruciform plan with a massive tower over the crossing.

Fortified manorhouses are known in Scandinavia from around 1400 onward. Good examples still preserved are Vik's house in Uppland and Glimmingehus in Scania (1499). Even the Rosenkrantz tower in Bergen, built by Scottish craftsmen as late as in 1562–1565, must be said to represent a late-medieval type of building.

Around 1500, castles with gun towers appear in Scandinavia. Steinvickholm, Trendelag, Norway (1525–1527), is a good example. It has a fairly regular trapezoid plan with two diagonally placed projecting round towers modeled on castles built by the Teutonic Knights in the Baltic area (Riga). Another castle of this kind is the mighty Olofsborg in the eastern part of Finland.

**Vernacular architecture.** Four different building techniques were in vernacular use in Scandinavia in the Middle Ages: corner timbering (i.e., walls of horizontal logs notched together in the corners), stave building (frame building with vertical planking), frame building with horizontal planking, and half timbering. Corner timbering was widely used within the Scandinavian pine-forest area, while the frame-building techniques, including half timbering, were mostly used in the southern and western areas, where oak was the dominant tree. In Norway, however, the stave building technique with pine as building material, reached a peak of perfection in the stave churches. Buildings in frame construction with horizontal planking are also occasionally found along the coast where wood was sparse.

The longhouse (hall, skåle, sal) was a frame building, often with a series of internal posts supporting the roof. Usually it was divided into areas or quarters for both men and cattle with communication between the areas. The type goes back to prehistoric times, but it seems to have been in use, especially in Denmark and along the coast and in the mountain areas of Norway, in the Middle Ages as well.

Within the pine areas of Finland, Sweden, and Norway, the gård (farmstead) seems to have consisted of a series of relatively small timber buildings, each built for a special purpose and placed independent of each other, either within the frame of a rectangle, or in Norway more at random. Besides buildings for cattle and for crops, the buildings were stöve ("dwellings-house"), elsdus ("fire-house"), bur (storage house, usually one-storied), and loft (storage house, usually two-storied). Similar types of buildings were also used in towns. The ground plan of the stöve may differ, but the two- or three-room plan was most common, especially in Norway.

Árna saga biskups ("The Saga of Bishop Árné") is one of the Icelandic biskupa sögur, and narrates the life of Árné Forklaksson, bishop in Skálholt 1271–1298. The saga is preserved in forty MSS and MS fragments, including two parchment fragments from the 14th century, i.e., two leaves in AM 220 VI fol. and three leaves from the so-called Reykjafjarðarbók (R) of Sturlunga saga, AM 122b fol. All known versions of the saga are derived from the latter MS mainly through two copies (*B, *J) made in the 17th century.

Árna saga is both a political document and a traditional biography, following the hero’s life in strict chronological order. His youth is described briefly, apart from some minor incidents showing his piety or forwarding his elevation. Once Árné has been consecrated bishop at age thirty-four, the author concentrates on his role in the disputes between the Church and the leading laymen, especially over property donated to the churches, but owned and administered from the beginning by powerful families. The consolidation of ecclesiastical and secular power was the period’s most important political issue, after Iceland had come under the Norwegian throne. The saga’s meticulous account of this protracted struggle is therefore an invaluable source of Icelandic history for the years 1270–1290. Árna saga abounds with references to letters and documents; sixty-eight written sources are directly quoted, and more than twenty are mentioned. The author goes so far as to reconstruct the speeches of the bishop and his antagonists in a true classical tradition. The access to written sources locates the author in Skálholt and in Bishop Árné’s immediate surroundings. As a chronological source, the author used a chronicle closely related to the Annales regni.

The terminus post quem for the writing of the saga is fairly well defined. It was written after Árné Helgason, Árnó Forklaksson’s nephew, succeeded him to the bishop’s office (1304–1320). For the terminus ante quem, we have to rely on indirect evidence. Various points in the saga indicate that Árné Helgason was alive when it was written, and that the great struggle between bishop and laymen was still fresh in the author’s memory. Árné Helgason himself seems to be the informant for a few incidents. The saga was written most likely in Skálholt during Árné Helgason’s term in office, either by Árné himself or under his auspices.

In its preserved form, the narrative ends in 1290, seven years before the church farm dispute was settled. Scholars have disagreed as to whether the saga originally extended up to Árné’s death or whether it went any farther than 1290. This question is difficult to decide, but certain facts can be mentioned: Árna saga was placed at the end of MS R. The copy of R that is thought to be the oldest, J, has one short additional chapter, which is a digression from the main subject and does not form a convincing conclusion. Still, there is no reason to consider this chapter a later addition. Material that could be derived from the saga looms large in chronicles of the period 1290–1297. But the settlement of the church farm dispute, which took place in Norway in 1297, is nowhere mentioned in the chronicles. We may thus suppose that something was lost from the end of the saga, and that the saga never extended to the settlement of the church farm dispute and the death of Bishop Árné.

**Hans Emil-Liden**

[See also: Churches, Stone; Fortification; Fortresses, Trelleborg; Houses, Stave Church]

**Arinbjarnarkviða** see Egill Skalla-Grimsson

**Arnór Pórhársson jarlaskald** (after 1010—after 1073). The son of the skald Póról Kolbeinsson, Arnór grew up at Hitarness, West Iceland. In early adulthood, he sailed to Norway (and possibly Denmark) as a merchant and skald, making an exuberant appearance before Magnús Óláfsson goði ("good") and Haraldr Sigurðarson (later hardráði, "hard ruler"). His nickname, "earls’ skald," celebrates his service of the earls of Orkney, Rognvaldr Brúsason (d. ca. 1045), to whom he was related by marriage, and Porfinn Sigurðarson (d. ca. 1065). His (now vestigial) memorial poems for Icelanders who died around 1055 and around 1073 might suggest that he resettled in Iceland in later life. Arnór’s verse survives in 581 and one-half lines of fragmentary quotations in vellum MSS of the late 13th to 15th centuries and in 17th- or 18th-century paper copies. The chief sources are Flatyjarbók (108 half-strophes), Hrókkinssínna (38), Hulda (68), Morkviskisnna (33), and MSS of Heimskringla (41), Orkneyisaga saga (38), Snorra Edda (18 and 3 couplets), Fagrskíð (16), and Snorri Sturluson’s separate Olds saga helga (15).


**Perleifur Hauksson**

[See also: Biskupa sögur; Jønsbok]

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Arnór's poetry richly exploits skaldic tradition with motifs of weapons flying, carrion beasts scavenging, or ships being launched; a great variety of heiti, including nine for "sword"; and some 150 kennings, from the obvious Áelís sorn to the esoteric erði Óstrua ("burden of [the dwarf] Óstru = "sky"). He also employs more unusual items, including images of sparks flying from weapons and horns sounding, and several rare and unique words. Fleeting allusions to the gods Öðinn, Njóðr, or Baldr, to Valkyries, or to pagan creation myths, belong, like those to such legendary heroes as the Burgundian Gjúki, purely to the level of diction. The numerous Christian references, including one to God and St. Michael judging mankind, seem by contrast substantial and sincere. The poetry is by skaldic standards moderately ornate in diction and word order, rather than extremely artificial. There are verbal resemblances to lines by the 11th-century skald Hallrœfr vandneðskald ("the troublesome skald"), Sighvatr Pórðarson, and Pjóðlfr Arnóðsson. The hrynhent poems by Markús Skággesson (ca. 1104) and Sturla Pórðarson (ca. 1262) echo Arnór.

Four main poems can be reconstructed from the fragments, all panegyrics on contemporary Norse rulers and all in the dróttkvætt meter except Hrynhenda, which is the first surviving panegyric in hrynhent. Hrynhenda (ca. 1045) begins with fleeting references to Arnór's own trading voyages, but mainly concerns Magnús Ólafsson: his boyhood journey out of exile in Russia, conquest of Norway, triumphant voyage to Denmark, suppression of Wends at Jóm (Jomme) and Hlyrskó^heiÕr (Lyrskovsheden), andousting of Sven Estridsen from Denmark, especially at Helganes (Helganes). The only major poem by Arnór to address directly a living hero, Hrynhenda is distinguished by extravagant praise (in apostrophes and second-person verbs) and seafaring descriptions both precise and imaginative. Named for its novel meter, Hrynhenda has a strongly trochaic pulse and relatively straightforward word order.

Magnússdrâpa (ca. 1046/7) covers much the same events, but offers more factual detail and close-up battle description, including macabre images of the wolf scavenging on the battlefield. Porfinnsdrâpa (ca. 1065) commemorates Porfinnr Sigurðarson's victories against the Scots at Dýrne (Deerness) and Torfnes (Tarbatness), defeat of his nephew Rognvaldr off Rauðbjarg (Roberry), and raiding at Vatnsfjarð (Loch Vatten) in the Hebrides and in England. It has an unusually personal tone of lament, and Arnór recalls winter drinking scenes and his own presence at Vatnsfjarð and (reluctantly) at Rauðbjarg. Battle descriptions are enlivened by short clauses focusing on graphic details and sharpened by specification of place, time, and numbers of ships. The general praise includes the impossibilita topos, "the sun will turn black, the earth sink in the sea, and the sky be rent". echoes Vóhus ofor a common source.

Haraldsdrâpa (ca. 1066), called simply an erfridrâpa 'memorial poem' for Haraldr in the MSS), covers Haraldr Sigurðarson's later career: his struggle for Denmark against Sven Estridsen (especially a raid on Fjón [Funen] and victory at the Niz [Næ/Nissan] estuary), home policy (suppression of an Upland rebellion), and attempted conquest of England (triumphant journey near York, defeat and death in the unnamed battle of Stamford Bridge). There is one personal prayer for Haraldr, but otherwise the treatment is distant and vague, padded out by generalized praise and heroic clichés. Here, Arnór uses interesting compound adjectives, but fewer and plainer kennings than elsewhere.


Diana Edwards Whaley

[See also: Christian Poetry, West Norse; Fragskiðina; Flateyjarból; Hallrœfr Öttarsson; HeimsÞringla; Heitt; Hulda-Hrokkinskýna; Kannings; Lausavár; Morkinskyina; Ólafs saga helga; Orknýeyinga saga; Sighvatr Pórðarson; Skald; Skaldic Meters; Skaldic Verse, Snorra Edda; Sturla Pórðarson; Póðr Kolbeinsson]

Arors saga hjórlifssonar ("The Saga of Aron Hjórlifsson") tells the story of Aron Hjórlifsson (1199-1255), a vigorous young warrior whose family loyalties led him to become an adherent of Bishop Guðmundr Arason in his conflict with Sighvatr Sturhson and his sons Tumi and Sturla. Aron played a leading part in the killing of Tumi at Hólar in February 1222, and was seriously wounded in the reprisal raid on Grimsey that Sighvatr and Sturla mounted in April that year. Aron was then outlawed, spending the next four years evading Sturla's pursuits, and narrowly avoiding death on several occasions. In 1226, he escaped to Norway and set out on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. On his return, he joined the household of King Håkon Håkonarson in Bergen, enjoying royal honor and patronage, and finally reconciling with Sturla's brother Póðr.

Because of its connection with the Sturlungs, Arons saga is usually printed as an appendix to Sturlunga saga, though there is no MS connection. The text of the saga has to be reconstructed from an early 15th-century vellum fragment (AM 551d Æ 4to), from 17th-century paper copies (AM 212 fol. and AM 426 fol.), and from Guðmundar saga biskups in Codex Resensianus (AM 399 4to). The unknown author's generously partial treatment of the bishop suggests that the saga might have been composed in the context of the campaign for Guðmundr's canonization, toward the middle of the 14th century. This dating would also fit with the use of extracts from two poems by the priest Þormörk Öðlason, who was alive in 1338 and is credited with a verse in praise of Gunnarr of Hildarendi in the Úllskáld;jarbók MS (AM 133 fol.) of Njáls saga from about 1350.

The question of the saga's sources is made more complicated and more interesting by the existence of Sturla Póðarson's earlier and complementary treatment of Aron's exploits in Islendinga saga.
The accounts differ in various respects: they each contain some material not in the other; they offer divergent information on the same events; and their emphases and interpretations do not always agree. Sturla’s account is more sober in tone, as befits the historian. He tends to be more logical and probably more accurate, and to present Aron in a less heroic light than the biographer, whose urgently special pleading involves a glorification of his hero and an attendant blackening of his enemies. At the same time, the two accounts are remarkably similar in some places, even showing close verbal agreement, and there is clearly some connection between them. A tentative conclusion would be that both authors had access to common written sources, but that the biographer relied on oral sources.

In his vivid handling of dramatic action, his detailing of the tensions of heroic conflict and the frustration and danger of outlawry, and in his grasp of the connection between personal and political concerns, the author measures up to the model of the classic Islendingasögur. In his clerical persuasiveness, however, he lacks their rigorous objectivity.


John Porter

[See also: Gaðmundur sögur biskups; Njáls saga; Sturla Pórhárson; Sturhunga saga)

Art see Viking Art

Ásbjarnar þátr selsbana (“The Tale of Ásbjörn Seal-slayer”), which appears in Snorri’s saga of St. Ólafr, stands as one of the high points of his narrative art. Crop failure in Hálogaland forces Ásbjörn Sigurðarson from Prándames to travel south to his maternal uncle Erlingr Skjálgsson at Jaõarr in search of grain supplies. On his way back, he is robbed of his cargo and insulted by the king’s steward, Pórir selr (“seal”) of Kormt. In a subsequent revenge action, Ásbjorn kills Pórir in the presence of the king.

In Snorri, the episode is more than twice as long as in the Legendary Saga, which is more interested in the conflict between Erlingr and the king. Note the concluding words: “From these sorts of things one can observe something about the dealings between King Ólafr and Erlingr. They had many other dealings with each other.” The opening and conclusion of the story are no doubt a condensed version of a longer story. Practically all the material dealing with Pórir hundr has been omitted. Comparative study of the two episodes suggests that they derive from a lost older exemplar, a written saga set in Hálogaland, in which Pórir hundr is one of the principal actors.


Alfred Jakobsen

[See also: Olaf’s saga helga; þátr]

Ásmundar saga kappabana (“The Saga of Ásmundr the Champion-slayer”) is a fornaldarsaga. The main MSS are SKB 7 4to of the early 14th century and AM 586 4to of the 15th century. The saga revolves around the notion that fate shapes events. The workings of fate begin and end with stock characters and traditional motifs. King Buólfr of Sweden is a tyrannical and covetous king. Despite warnings, he forces two supernatural smiths to forge a pair of magical swords. He then spoils the swords in capricious trials of the iron’s strength and resiliency, and commands that they be reforged. In an imprecisely worded curse, the second smith vows that his sword will be the death of the king’s grandson. Ch. 1 ends with the king sinking the sword into the sea, in a futile attempt to avert the curse.

King Buólfr’s only daughter is the mother of the saga’s cham-
Asmundr, despite numerous allusions and hints, remains oblivious to Asmundr. Hildibrandr develops into a renowned warrior and is staged just prior to Asmundr's wedding. With this celebration, pseudo-heroic. Accordingly, the nontragic slaying of Hildibrandr by a close kinsman in a duel, the saga is entertaining. Its fairy-tale fate and the saga have run their course.

Despite its ostensibly tragic theme, the reluctant slaying of a close kinsman in a duel, the saga is entertaining. Its fairy-tale setting initiates a swiftly moving plot that features lively dialogue and some carefully structured scenes.

Criticism of the saga has focused less on its literary qualities than on the few narrative elements that are relics of the heroic age. These include the saga's main theme; the thematic relationship to the Hildebrandslied, the sole, fragmentary, Old High German heroic lay, in which a father is forced by fate to kill his son, and a related heroic tale in Saxo's Gesta Danorum (Book 7:IX.2–X.1); the name Hildibrandr; and the elegiac eddic verses commemorating the death of Hildibrandr.


Marlene Ciklamini

[See also: Formáldar sögur, Saxo Grammaticus]

Atlakviða ("The Lay of Atl") is one of the earliest heroic lays of the Poetic Edda. It was probably composed around 900 by Porbjorn hornklofi, known as "horn-clawed," or perhaps earlier if Porbjorn was merely influenced by it, and not actually its author. Atlakviða is preserved in the Codex Regius, where it is described as originating in Greenland. However, Greenland was not settled until about 985, and a Norwegian provenance is likely.

The lay tells how Atl, lord of the Huns, invites the Burgundian rulers, the Nifling Gunnarr and Hogni, to visit him and to accept wealth and costly gifts. Gunnarr asks his brother Hogni for advice, suggesting that they are as wealthy as Atl himself. Hogni indicates a ring entwined with a hair from a wolf sent by Atl's queen, their sister Guðrún, interpreting it as a warning of treachery. Gunnarr accepts the invitation in a mood of heroic defiance. They ride to Atl's court, extensions and after a further warning by Guðrún, Gunnarr is seized without resistance, and Hogni is eventually overpowered. Gunnarr is offered his life in return for the Nifling treasure, but he insists on first holding Hogni's bloody heart in his hand. The heart of the cowardly Hjalli is brought to him, but Gunnarr sees through the deception. When Hogni's heart is finally cut out and shown to him, he exults that now he alone knows where the treasure lies hidden; never will he reveal his secret. Gunnarr is thrown into a snake pit, where, bravely playing a harp, he meets his end. Guðrún avenges her brothers on Atl by giving him the hearts of their two sons to eat, and then stabbing him. She sets fire to the royal hall, and perishes in the flames.

Gunnarr has to accept Atl's invitation or be labeled a coward for avoiding the associated treachery and danger. Gottzmann proposes a more complex motivation, based on the assumption that Atl's offer of gifts implies a demand that Gunnarr submit to Atl's overlordship.

Atlakviða provides the earliest version of the legend dealing with the Burgundian rulers at Atl's court and with Guðrún's vengeance. In its original form, it can be thought of as an early Norse redaction of a West Germanic, possibly a specifically High German, tradition deriving from Burgundian heroic legend, inherited in the historical interaction of Burgundians and Huns in the 5th century. Some argue for a Low German exemplar, and others for the transmission to Scandinavia of continental heroic Germanic material, including Atlakviða, through lost Gothic lays via the Baltic area, without any West Germanic mediation. The Norse poem may have been influenced by Hamðismál.

The style and meter of Atlakviða present something of a mosaic, so much so that multiple authorship by as many as four poets has been suggested. The use together of both formyðsöl and málháttr meter along with quite startling stylistic variations do not inevitably lead to that conclusion.

Largely as the result of the vagaries of oral and written transmission, Atlakviða in its extant form contains obscurities and other defects, yet it remains an effective and vigorous statement of heroism triumphant in defeat and of implacable vengeance. Atlamál provides an essentially later and very different treatment of the same legend.


TR. G. Finch

[See also: Atlamál, Codex Regius; Eddie Meters; Eddie Poetry, Porbjorn hornklolj]

Atlamál ("The Lay of Atlí"), of unknown authorship, dates from no earlier than the 12th century, and is one of the youngest poems of unknown authorship, dates from the Greenlandic action, which makes the Greenlandic ascription credible. Atli orders that Hogni's heart be cut out, that Gunnarr be hanged, to increase Guorun's grief, stricken, warns them. They kill him. Atli and his men attack, overpowering, but neither this, nor her ill-omened dreams, nor those of brother manifest. Feigning meekness, Guorun lulls Atli into a false sense of security, and avenges her brothers by giving him the blood of the sons she bore him to drink as wine in goblets fashioned from their skulls. Hogni's son Hniflungr and Guorun both to present to King Sven. In passing through Norway, he encounters King Haraldr, who tries to persuade him to part with the bear. Gunnarr plays the harp with his toes until he succumbs to the serpents. Further recriminations between Atli and Guorun make Guorun's affection for her slain brother manifest. Feigning meekness, Guorun hails Atli into a false sense of security, and avenges her brothers by giving him the blood of the sons she bore him to drink as wine in goblets fashioned from their skulls. Hogni's son Hniflungr and Guorun both to present to King Sven. In passing through Norway, he encounters King Haraldr, who tries to persuade him to part with the bear. Gunnarr plays the harp with his toes until he succumbs to the serpents. Further recriminations between Atli and Guorun make Guorun's affection for her slain brother manifest. Feigning meekness, Guorun hails Atli into a false sense of security, and avenges her brothers by giving him the blood of the sons she bore him to drink as wine in goblets fashioned from their skulls. Hogni's son Hniflungr and Guorun both to present to King Sven. 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the end is known to have died in the year 1190. On the other hand, the events in it bear a strong resemblance to many European folktales (Stefán Einarsson 1939). The interpretation of the story is made somewhat more difficult by the MS tradition. The versions in the three main MSS, represented by the letters M, F, and A, are in general agreement as to the main events of the story, but each includes some details not mentioned in the others. The twelve later MSS play no role in establishing the text.

From the beginning, the story has been read as a study of character and conduct. Thorlacius (1818), who translated it into Latin, saw it as a model of behavior for king and subject. Taylor (1947–8) regarded it as a study of character. Harris (1976) stressed the interplay of structure and content. Fichtner (1979) viewed it from an anthropological perspective as an account of a young man’s initiation into adulthood, specifically into the adult custom of gift giving. Each of these interpretations illuminates a different facet of this appealing story of a young man who makes his way with courage and dignity through the hazardous world of medi eval Scandinavia.


Edward G. Fichtner

[Austfararvísur see Sighvatr Þorðarson]
Baldr, according to the Prose or Snorra Edda, was the son of Óðinn (st. 22), husband of Nanna, and father of Forseti (st. 32). The skaldic poet Þjóðólfr of Hvin speaks of Pórr as Baldr's brother in his Haustlöng (st. 17); Völuspá (st. 33) and Lokasenna (st. 28) seem to indicate that Frigg is Baldr's mother. The story of Baldr's death and the gods' failure to accomplish his return from Hel provide the pivotal catastrophe in the preparation for Ragnarök in both Snorra Edda (chs. 49–50) and Völuspá (sts. 31–33) (see Ciklamini 1978: 57). Other sources for Baldr include Baldrs draumar, where Óðinn learns from the volva ("prophetess") that Baldr has had bad dreams about his impending death; the Old High German Second Merseburg Charm, in which the magician Óðinn heals the hoof of Phol, Baldr's horse, the injury also being prophetic of some future harm to come to Baldr; Hyndluljóð (st. 29), where mention is made of revenge on Höðr as Baldr's murderer; Eiríksmál (st. 3), which prophesies Baldr's return to the new world after Ragnarök. Quite another story emerges in Saxo's Gesta Danorum, where Baldr becomes a heroic semideity who is killed in his quest for the woman he loves (Book 3). Here, Baldr is stripped of all mythological significance.

Schier summarizes four suggested etymologies for Baldr's name: (1) *bléir 'white, shining,' indicating his possible function as a sun-deity; (2) Old English bealder 'lord, prince,' interpreted as a projection of the characteristics of Christ onto Baldr; (3) Old Norse baldr, Old High German bald 'bold, brave,' referring to strength or warlike qualities; and (4) *blérsprout, germinate, bud,' indicating his function as a vegetation or fertility god. Some scholars have thus interpreted the Baldr story as the essential narrative in a Scandinavian fertility cult or as a cyclical myth of the seasons (see Kroes 1951, Schneider 1947).

Snorra Edda provides the longest version of the story of Baldr's death, similar to that of Völuspá, but the numerous details and the arrangement of events have resulted in scholarly skepticism about its value in the reconstruction of pre-Christian Germanic mythology. Because Baldr had dreams portending injury, the Aesir extracted oaths from everything in the universe not to harm him. The mistletoe is overlooked because Frigg thought it too small to do Baldr harm. The gods then make sport by throwing things at Baldr as he stands in the ring, since nothing can harm him. Loki, however, goes to Frigg disguised as an old woman, and tricks her into telling him the secret of the mistletoe. He quickly brings it to the ring and places it in blind Höðr's hand, encouraging him to do honor to Baldr as the others are. Höðr's throw kills Baldr. Although all the gods mourn, Óðinn knows best what harm the Aesir have suffered through Baldr's death. Hermóðr rides to Hel on Óðinn's horse Sleipnir to see what ransom she will accept for Baldr. In the meantime, Baldr's body is burned on his ship, along with that of his wife Nanna, who has died of grief. An extended narration of the funeral procession follows. Hermóðr tells Hel of the great mourning among the Aesir, but she responds that everything in the world must prove its love for Baldr by weeping for him. The Aesir then send messengers out who convince everything to weep, except the giantess Polkki, who refuses. So Baldr remains in Hel. Because the Aesir suspect that the giantess is really Loki in disguise, they search, but Loki hides in a mountain, occasionally turning himself into a salmon. The gods pursue him and Pórr catches him by the tail. Loki is chained to three rocks with the entrails of one of his sons; poison from a serpent drips in his face. Loki's wife holds a bowl under the serpent's mouth, but when she goes to empty it, Loki cries out in such pain that the earth quakes. He must remain bound until Ragnarök.

This story, Pórr's visit to Útgarða-Loki, and Pórr's fishing expedition are the three longest narratives of Snorra Edda. The lack of clear support in the eddic poems for many of the details and the sequence of events has led critics to attribute much of Snorri's account to the influence of Christianity (see Bugge 1899, Frazer 1919). But in recent years, archaeology and comparative mythology have argued for the antiquity of many of the details of the myth (see Hauck 1970, Dumézil 1948). Particularly, Hauck's successful interpretation of three distinctive amulet types of the 3rd and 4th centuries demonstrates that many motifs, such as Loki's disguise as an old woman, originate in pre-Christian Scandinavia. Dieterle's (1986) taxonomic investigation of the underlying structure in Snorri's account also provides a convincing demonstration of Loki's original role in the myth. The Christian influence in Snorri's narration may then be a matter of style rather than substance, i.e., the author organized the elements of the myth in a way that profoundly reminds the Christian reader of the Crucifixion, while remaining faithful to the mythological tradition (see Turville-Petre 1964, Mosher 1983).

Arthur D. Mosher

[See also: Baldr’s draumar; Eiríksmál; Hnudljuðó; Lóki; Mythology; Óðinn; Saxo Grammaticus; Snorra Edda; Þjóðólfur af Hvin; Þýslspa]

**Baldr’s draumar** ("Baldr’s Dreams"), also called Vegatamskviða ("The Lay of Vegtamr"), is an anonymous eddic poem traditionally ascribed to the late 12th century and preserved in a 14th-century MS (AM 748 1 4to). The poem relates Óðinn’s ride on his eight-legged horse Sleipnir to Niflheim, the abode of the dead, after the gods and goddesses had met to discuss Baldr’s threatening dreams. Óðinn first encounters a hellhound. Then, using necromancy, he will kill Baldr? (answer: Hóðr); and who will avenge Baldr? (answer: Vali, Baldr’s half-brother, the son of Óðinn and the giantess Rindr). A fourth question reveals Óðinn’s true identity (he has called himself Vegatarm travel-tame), and provokes the sibyl’s angry and ionic demand that he ride home proudly, to return only at Ragnarök ("the doom of the gods").

Among the other Scandinavian sources that shed light on this incident, Snorri Sturluson’s *Edda* provides the fullest account of the Baldr myth. Baldr is praised by all as the best of the gods. He is also the wisest, the most excellent of speech, and the most merciful; but none of his judgments are ever fulfilled (ch. 22). His death occurs in chapter 49. Alarmed by his dreams, the gods attempt to avert disaster by having his mother, Frigg, take an oath from all creatures, animate and inanimate, not to harm Baldr. Only the mistletoe, considered too young, is exempted. In disguise, the evil Loki discovers from Frigg the lethal character of the mistletoe. During a game in which the gods pelt the apparently invulnerable Baldr with deadly objects, Loki promises the blind Hóðr to throw a stalk of mistletoe at Baldr and guides his aim. Struck dead, Baldr is laid to rest on a ship with great pomp and sorrow. Meanwhile, Hermóðr (a brother of Baldr) rides Sleipnir to Hel and negotiates Baldr’s return, with the condition that all creatures, the quick and the dead, must weep at his death. All comply save the giantess Þókk (Snorri implies she is Loki in yet another disguise); consequently, Baldr must remain in Hel.

Other eddic poems confirm the traditional nature of Snorri’s account without adding anything significant (see Voluspa sts. 31–35, Sktirnismsl st. 21–22, Lokasenna st. 28, and Hnudljuðó st. 29). The eddic poem *Vaftrudningsmál* resembles *Baldr’s draumar* in its question-and-answer structure that ends with Óðinn’s revealing his identity by posing a riddle to which only he can answer the question: "What did Óðinn whisper into Baldr’s ear before he was laid on his funeral pyre?" In addition, *Prymskviða* shares with *Baldr’s draumar* three lines (in st. 14 and 1, respectively), and *Helgavíð* Hundingsbana II st. 44 is reminiscent of *Baldr’s draumar* st. 5. Literary borrowing cannot be ruled out, but is an unlikely, certainly unnecessary, notion, given the formulaic character of the poetry. Finally, *Saxo Grammaticus* (Book 3 of his Gesta Danorum) offers a euhemerized version of the Baldr story.

Despite the insights gained by comparison with other sources of the Baldr myth, the ending of the poem remains obscure. How Óðinn’s fourth question ("Who are the maidens who weep so passionately, who throw their kerchiefs in the air?") betrays his identity has never been convincingly explained. Indeed, the significance of the maidens and the act they perform is unclear. The parallel with *Vaftrudningsmál* shows how Óðinn could reveal his identity with an unanswerable question, but does not clarify why he should want to do so here. Perhaps, as some commentators have observed, the poem has been garbled in transmission; nevertheless, it reads as a unified, if problematical, work.


Fredrik J. Heinemann

[See also: Baldr; Eddie Meters; Eddie Poetry; Helgi Poems; Hyndluljóð; Lokasenna; Saxo Grammaticus; Skírnismál; Snorra Edda; Prýmskvida; Vafnþúaðsl; Vþluspá]

**Ballads**

1. **INTRODUCTION.** Folksong fragments in medieval MSS are few, but they suffice to prove that the style of the Scandinavian ballad has a medieval origin. The style defines the genre, justifies its name, and readily distinguishes it from other folksong genres in the same postmedieval sources: ballads in broadside, literary, or international (particularly German) style, or lyrics. The style of the ballad has more than preserved the identity of the genre; it is the means by which this kind of folksong has thrived longest in an oral tradition. This is achieved by simplicity in oral presentation; ballads keep to a narrow range of stanzaic forms with refrains, a formulaic diction, and a "balladic" narrative technique that makes heavy use of type scenes and commonplaces for presenting stereotypical kinds of action. The complete dominance of narrative commonplaces over ornamental formulas reflects the recreation of the ballad in performance by memory rather than by improvisation, although creative singers seem to have improvised on their own the version that then remained as their "own." The narrative employs the objective, "behavioristic" narration and scenic structure familiar from saga style, but each scene is typically articulated by minor episodes, which are indicated occasional dancing. The *ronde* texts are, moreover, formulaic type scenes similar to the stanzaic commonplaces, which are so characteristic of the Scandinavian genre that they can be recognized when they occur, often rather awkwardly, in a Swedish romance translation from 1303. Another ballad type reproduces that of the *chanson de toile* (or *d'histoire*), and several ballads (Jonsson et al. 1978 = TSB D 23—24) are to all intents surviving *chansons de toile* in such a way as to exploit their narrative possibilities, for instance by resining as ballads the sort of bridal quest tales related by Saxo (e.g., TSB D 44—56 "Knight comes just in time to rescue his beloved from a forced marriage"). Like the *chansons de toile*, true-love ballads explore the ethical consequences of love in an artistic kin society, but in greater detail.

The (idealized) mimetic portrayal of the rural aristocracy has given us the term *riddervis* (ballad of chivalry or knightly ballad, TSB D 1—440). Its predominant theme is love (TSB D 1—268), but it also treats ethical themes involving questions of justice and various forms of honor: chastity, kinship, and fealty. Its two keynotes are truth and honor (*tro og ære*). The group is finally elaborated by international epic and folktales motifs in the novelistic ballads (*romansvisor, TSB D 380—440*). Many historical ballads (TSB C 1—41), like the Danish royal-wedding ballads, have assimilated historical events to these traditional ballad themes; the Swedish abduction ballads (*klosterrosvvisor*) develop the elopements of the bridal-quest ballads, and can probably be dated to the 14th century. There are, in addition, a few semiliterary chronicle ballads. In certain of the ballads of the supernatural (TSB A 1—77), all norms, and the ballad themes with them, are turned upside down; love becomes sex, chastity turns into lust, and so on. The heroic ballads (*kæmpeviser*) subordinate love, justice, and honor to the heroic mettle, displayed in the troll ballads (*trolkvvisor, TSB E 113—167*) through encounters with supernatural beings, and in the ballads of champions (TSB E 1—112) through the adventures and conflicts of prodigious warriors. Many represent heroic, marvellous, and romantic sagas resung as ballads, and their multi episodic narratives owe much to saga narrative art. The Faroese long heroic ballads (*kvischer*) are perhaps best characterized as a genre of *ritur* resung by a preliterate society, sometime before 1425 (the date of Claudius Clavus’s Greenland stanza [see below]), in the style of the knightly ballads in Icelandic tradition.

Ballads are *folk*-songs in the same sense that they exist within an oral community, including the only marginally literate "aristocratic folk." Medieval evidence cannot determine the social context of the ballad, although its dance situation is somewhat better in evidence as a courtly than as a popular entertainment. Internal evidence, however, argues for an aristocratic milieu as the only plausible context for the mimetic portrayal of medieval rural aristocracy and the thematic role of kin society in the knightly ballads, just as the fantastic scene of the heroic ballads (and of knightly ballads of Iceland origin) has its natural origin in a free peasant society.
To judge from the wealth of postmedieval texts, ballads have flourished in inverse proportion to the vernacular literary output during the Middle Ages. While literate Iceland was busy translating and adapting the French romances, Latinate Denmark was adapting French folksongs, just as the pretiterate Faroes later adapted the *trettur*. Denmark is clearly the center for the knightly ballad, just as the Faroes are for the heroic ballad; thus, 208 knightly ballads occur only in Denmark, and 104 heroic ballads only in the Faroes. By the 19th century, ballads were centered in traditional communities that remained relatively isolated, geographically and socially, from the effects of literacy. Yet these centers were not isolated from one another, because ballads were often fetched by one center from another. Ballads from the Vedel-Syv volume (see below) were sung in Norway and in the Faroes in the literary language (Danish), while those from oral tradition were gradually assimilated into the borrowing dialect. Much of the seemingly archaic ballad diction could be a result of incomplete assimilation, preserved in tradition as a poetic jargon. Despite regional dialect differences and thematic preferences, the Scandinavian ballad area, like the genre itself, is an interrelated whole, quite distinct from German on the south, Finnish on the east, and Scots to the west.

Most collectors, like their informants, have been musically illiterate, and melodies were collected even later and more sporadically than texts. Yet even recent ballad melodies can have such archaic traits as modal and pentatonic tonality, or make use of formulaic intonations. The melody tends to remain subordinate to the narrative, asserting itself only in the lyrical refrain.

The Faroese ballads function as dance songs, which were presumably more widespread at one time. A letter from 1538 places a ballad stanza at an aristocratic wedding feast, and later in the century we hear of ballads from the serving men’s quarters (borgestueviser). Only in the Faroese (and Manx) dance did ballads retain a communal function. As individual solo song, from which come most recordings, the medieval ballad had to compete at a disadvantage with the subjective, sentimental, and sensational broadside ballad.


David Colbert

2. DENMARK. Denmark’s preeminence among ballad communities is the result of its many aristocratic songbooks. Of its 569 medieval ballad types, only 230 occur in recent tradition, whereas 475 were written down before 1700. Beginning in 1553 with the *Heart Book*, four spontaneous courtly garlands included medieval ballads among many love lyrics and other newfangled songs. By the 1580s, antiquarian interest had inspired two large collections, mostly of ballads, by the historian Anders Sørensen Vedel and by the Norwegian Margrete Lange. Vedel published a book of 100 ballads in 1591, which prompted a ballad revival among the ladies of the landed gentry, from whom we have eighteen major MSS by 1660. After this date, the aristocratic MSS began to stagnate, while the peasant songbooks that succeeded them rarely include more than a single medieval ballad. Yet this same period brought a boom in the market for broadside prints, among which ballads were the steady sellers, as was Peder Syv’s 1695 revision of Vedel’s edition with an additional 100 ballads. This authoritative edition long hampered the further collection of texts in Denmark, but an augmented reissue in 1814 by Rasmus Byerup offered over 100 melodies, where only eight had previously been noted. Text collection began again in earnest only after Svend Grundtvig’s appeal for fresh versions in 1844 in connection with his mammoth edition *Danmarks gamle Folkeviser* ("The Ancient Folksongs of Denmark"), abbreviated "DgF"), begun in 1853. His correspondents sent him the bulk of the material now known from Zealand, Funen, and South Jutland. But from 1868 on, the richest harvest was coaxed from the rural proletariat of central Jutland, especially in the Hammerum district around Herning, by Evald Tang Kristensen. By the turn of the century, texts from popular tradition outnumbered those from aristocratic MSS, although representing fewer ballad types. In his edition, Grundtvig launched the principle of printing every text in full, reflecting the authenticity of versions in oral tradition; however, hypothetical archetypes reconstructed on various principles remained the goal for most popular editions until the 1960s.

The masters of ballad tradition have been the womenfolk. The many true-love ballads and resolute heroines in aristocratic tradition certainly reflect their role, and three-fourths of recent informants knowing more than two ballads are women.

The gulf between an early aristocratic and a late popular tradition is probably more apparent than real. Vedel especially must have gathered many of his texts from the "common man," to whom he acknowledges a debt for heroic ballads. A text of "Lave Stisn og fru Eline" (TSB D 229), gathered locally in eastern Scania
about 1600, demonstrates both the terser style, and the height-
ened drama this style made possible, within the popular tradition
of the Renaissance. Many "medieval" ballads are newer songs in
old ballad style, for instance, an aristocratic jewel-like "Torbens
cutter og hendes faderbane" (TSB D 332), or a highly popular
international ballad like "Redselille og Medelvold" (TSB D 288).
Nevertheless, when compared with the aristocratic songbooks,
texts from popular tradition are typically briefer, usually with
the dramatic tension relaxed in favor of a more lyrical style. By weak-
ening the scenic structure and using repetition of commonplaces,
the social scene becomes more abstract and less mimetic. In short,
the characteristic Scandinavian knightly ballad is assimilated here,
both in style and content, to the international ballads that figure
so prominently in popular tradition.

Both the scenic, formulaic aristocratic style and the terser
popular style were probably medieval. Claudius Clavus’s Greeneland
stanzas (1425–1450) and the simplified cast of characters that it
implies reappear about 1700 in a short heroic ballad (TSB E 90)
from popular tradition in Småland, while the seven-stanza frag-
ment of "Ridders i hjorteham" (TSB A 43) from about 1500 is
wholly in the style of the aristocratic songbooks. Which of these
two styles is the earlier has often been debated, and can be an-
swered only by a theory of generic origin. The aristocratic MSS
leave at least an initial presumption that the marginally literate
aristocratic oligarchy in 1660. Subsequently left to popular tradi-
sion alone, the ballad tended to lose much of its Nordic character
in favor of a more lyrical, abstract, and international material and style.

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Essays in Appreciation of W. Edson Richmond. Ed. Carol L. Edwards

David Colbert

3. FAROES. The Faroe Islands offer a treasure trove for bal-
lad research. Scholars interested in ballads as literary history, records
of style, and performed songs will find exceptional research oppor-
tunities in the Faroes. Faroese ballads also offer insight into the
common Scandinavian past underlying them. In modern Faroese
society, ballads serve as reminders of a past heritage and also offer
a sense of individual and collective identity. Faroese ballads have
played a role in the islands’ transition from Danish-dominated
outpost to modern society.

For centuries, Faroese ballads continued to be sung and
danced, but remained uncollected. In 1639, the Danish scholar
Ole Worm published several Faroese ballads. The Romantic
Movement in Denmark led to the publication of Faroese ballads
that were still being performed. The first significant collection of
Faroese ballads was that of Jens Christian Svabo. Svabo classified
songs into kvæði (heroic ballads), Rírmur (epic ballads), and Taattir
(satirical ballads). The Danish pastor H. C. Lyngby followed Svabo’s
lead with his publication of heroic ballads concerning Sigurðr
Fáfnisbani ("Fáfnir’s killer"). The Faroese then began collecting
ballads actively, often drawing on their own repertoires. Faroese
editions stimulated active performance among the Faroese.

Scholarly interest in Faroese ballads continued with the edi-
tions of Venceslaus Ulricus Hammershaimb, principally known as
a student of West Scandinavian languages. The Danish ballad
scholar Svend Grundtvig and a colleague, J. Bloch, compiled a
diplomatic edition of Faroese ballads, Faroys Kvaði: Corpus
Carminum Færoënsium. The work consists of sixteen volumes,
indices, and 234 ballad types, and provides an introduction to
Faroese tradition. Later works of the musicologist Hjalmar Thuren
complement Grundtvig’s edition by focusing on dance and melody.

Faroese kvæði (sing, kvæði) are well represented within the
corpus, multi-episodic songs called taattir (sing. táttir) form cycles of
kvæði. The kvæði reflect medieval traditions of such champions as Sigurðr,
Charlemagne, and Roland. After 1600, Danish heroic ballads became part of Faroese culture, often displacing
kvæði. In addition to kvæði and Danish ballads, the Faroese
corpus contains distinct epic songs, the rimur (sing. ríma), and
taattir, still sung very occasionally. The ballad community now
selects songs from a limited number of kvæði and taattir.

The multipoetic Faroese ballads stand in contrast to East
Nordic monopoetic ballads. Within the "cantos" (taattir) of the
kvæði are many dramatic events that the "supra" hero of the
kvæði binds together, as individual taattir weave from scene to
scene. The tendency of the Faroese ballad to employ multipoetic
themes has led to ballads of greater length, often several hundred
stanzas.

The kvæði exhibit the same basic stanzaic forms as those of
Danish kamppeviser (heroic ballads). Ballad stanzas comprise ei-
ther two end-rhyming lines, or four lines with end-rhyme on al-
ternating lines. In addition, the Faroese ballads employ refrains
that are often elaborate, reflecting the role of the chorus and the
song’s intricate melody. In two-line verses, the refrain either inter-
weaves between strophic lines, tvillættad (Hammershaimb ÆLI),
or appends to each stanza, as in four-line ballad strophes.

The Faroe Islands reflect the wider Scandinavian tradition of
dancing to ballads. The traditions of evening-long dancing to the kvæði, of a kvæðakempa ("lead singer") who leads the way, and of extended celebration, are admittedly on the wane. However, ballads are still sung and danced, for, like the quintessentially Faroese grindadrap ("pilot-whale hunt"), heroic ballads communicate Faroese identity to the Faroese, and to others. The ballads also give singers a chance to perform, win renown, and communicate key Faroese traditions and values.

The Faroese kvæðakempa is the central figure in performance; as such, he prides himself on a distinctive repertoire, the result of many performances. Each singer's songs vary, yet certain traditional themes recur. The kvæðakempa "owns" the ballads of his repertoire, jealously guarding them and singing them sparingly. Such kvæðakempa as Hans Jønnesen or Jens and Albert Djurhúss have enriched common Faroese traditions. Their role as traditional performers still commands much community respect.

Modern ballad researchers have drawn attention to another performance context involving the Faroese ballad, namely the kvoldsetsa, a family singing activity that represents a ballad setting removed from communal celebration.

With its close connection to dance and legendary past, the Faroese kvæði enjoys a unique place. Not only does the ballad symbolize Faroese and common Scandinavian medieval tradition, the kvæði also constitutes an important foundation for national identity and for a modern society's self-esteem.


Lanae H. Isaacson

4. ICELAND. The standard edition counts 110 ballad types, but some twenty of these are either fragments of only one stanza or likely to be late and literary ballad imitations. Collection began in the 17th century and was done systematically in the middle of the 19th century, when the tradition was already declining. Ballads of chivalry are by far the largest group, and even the smaller groups of supernatural and legendary ballads often have a chivalric setting. Erotic themes dominate all these groups of ballads. Passionate love is a favored subject, as well as the hatred arising from frustrated love or enforced sexual union. Erotic themes also abound, although treated in a lighter vein, in a handful of jocular ballads that demonstrate human weakness and folly. The smallest group is heroic or champion ballads, their function being fulfilled instead by rimur.

Most Icelandic ballad types are known elsewhere, and were not composed originally in Iceland. Icelandic ballads follow the same matical patterns as ballads in Scandinavia, and always seem to have been sung. Only a few melodies have been preserved.

Communal dancing was practiced in Iceland in the Middle Ages and down to about 1700. Dance gatherings are described in some sources, and ballads were probably one of the several kinds of poetry sung to the dance.

It is impossible to know the origins of all ballads preserved in Iceland, but the largest group that can be traced seems to have come to the country through Norway, in some cases possibly the Faroes, before the mid-16th century. Ballads no doubt became known in Iceland soon after they first appeared in Norway. A somewhat smaller group shows closest kinship to Danish tradition and seems to have arrived later. A dozen or so types appear to be indigenous. They are composed mostly in quatrains and sometimes without refrain, and are generally in a more traditional Icelandic style and a more regular meter than the rest.

The transference of a ballad to Iceland usually involved a shortening or trimming of the stories, seldom compensated for by new material. Sometimes this brevity resulted in a clumsy or incoherent text, but in other cases the trimming enhanced the poetic effect of the ballad's swift narration. In the context of Icelandic poetry, the ballad is a thing apart: it uses free rhythms and abstains from alliteration, besides taking a number of liberties with grammar and conventional usage. When the liberties taken are moderate, they add to the charm and exotic flavor of the ballads, where not only language but also human emotions have a freer play than is common in Icelandic poetry from the period. These characteristics may have helped the ballad to survive in surroundings that were not altogether favorable.
5. NORWAY. We have little direct evidence for Norwegian ballads from the Middle Ages. But that such ballads were well known is attested by postmedieval ballads and certain linguistic features of Middle Norwegian. Before the middle of the 19th century, no organized collecting of ballads took place. In contrast to Denmark and Sweden, where the aristocracy committed them to writing up to the 16th century, it may be an advantage that the oral tradition was not collected before a more scholarly methodology had emerged. The late recording of the Norwegian ballads, therefore, both shows the continuing strength of the ballad tradition and allows a glimpse of the earlier tradition as it existed in text and melody.

The first large edition appeared in 1853 (Landstad), and in 1858 a specimen of a scholarly edition appeared (Bugge). The collections gradually became large, and scholarly investigation was a very important addition to ballad research. Liestøl demonstrated that the large group of ballads about trolls and giants was largely of Norwegian or Norwegian-Faroese origin. This opinion has prevailed, so that one can speak of West and East Scandinavian ballad composition. Most of the famous Scandinavian ballads treating subjects from the age of chivalry and Norse literature was a very important addition to ballad research. Liestøl demonstrated that the large group of ballads about trolls and giants was largely of Norwegian or Norwegian-Faroese origin. This opinion has prevailed, so that one can speak of West and East Scandinavian ballad composition. Most of the famous Scandinavian ballads treating subjects from the age of chivalry and many of a historical content belong to the East Scandinavian group. Scandinavian ballads treating subjects from the age of chivalry and ideas that could lend subjects for composition. The natural-mythical ballads are therefore an important group within the Norwegian ballads.

We also have a number of legendary ballads. In this group is found Draumkvaede, a visionary poem that is unique in Scandinavian ballad tradition. We have more than 100 recordings of the poem, most of them fragmentary. The first scholars tried to find direct models in Irish–Scottish visions from the early Middle Ages. But, in light of the poem’s distinct Catholic allusions, later scholars reexamined the dating of the poem, and it is now believed that it was composed relatively soon after the Reformation in 1537. Much of the content is visionary, and some of it is derived from mythological conceptions and from popular beliefs.

The Norwegian ballad tradition is not as rich as the Danish and Swedish; around 200 types are known. One reason for this lack is the late collection, but we have evidence of many ballads that have been lost.

Much the same can be said about the melodies. There are known tunes for most of the ballads, but often it happens that the same melody is used for several ballads. In the other Scandinavian countries, the chain dance disappeared, probably as early as the 17th century. We must go to the Faroe Islands to find the chain dance in an unbroken tradition.

Formally, the Norwegian ballads are very similar to the ones found in other Scandinavian countries and in Great Britain. The refrain is often unknown, partly because it was not so important when the chain dance disappeared. The rhyme forms seldom show a full rhyme, because of the linguistic change from Middle Norwegian to the more recent dialect forms. Most of the Norwegian ballads are written down in a central area in South Norway, Telemark.

Ballads from Denmark and Sweden have also received dialect forms in the Norwegian tradition.

6. SWEDEN. According to the type-catalogue of the Scandinavian medieval ballad, 260ballad types are represented in Swedish tradition. Most of them belong to the common ballad stock of Scandinavia, yet thirty-four are exclusively Swedish. Although there is evidence that ballads existed in Sweden as early as the beginning of the 14th century, the oldest known record is found in a MS...
from about 1550: a fragment of "Sankt Göran och draken" (TSB B 10). Remarkably enough, it is preserved with a fragmentary tune; only four other ballad tunes have been recorded in Sweden before 1800. The most important old ballad text sources are the song MSS kept by men and women of the nobility in the 16th and 17th centuries, the oldest of which is that of Harald Olufsson (ca. 1570–1590) in the Royal Library of Stockholm. In the 17th century, for antiquarian reasons, collecting folklore was carried out on the initiative of the Swedish government. Thus, at the end of the century, several ballad texts were recorded, especially in Västergötland, now preserved in MS Vs 20 in the Royal Library. Also of great importance is the collection of Petter Rudebeck from Småland (ca. 1690–1700).

Influenced by German and English romanticism, a group of young Swedes in the 1810s began collecting folksongs, mostly ballads. Great collections were brought together by Råf, Wallman, Afzelius, and others. Together with the poet and historian Geijer in 1814–1818, Afzelius published the first edition of Swedish ballads, Svenska folkvisor. Twenty years later, Arwidsson began publishing Svenska fornvisningar (1834–42), where texts from the 16th- and 17th-century MSS were edited together with the recordings made by Råf and others. Important collections in the 19th century also were made by Hytén-Cavallius, Dybeck, Djurklou, Säve, Wiede, Ericsson, Wigström, and in Swedish Finland by Welvar. In the first decades of the 20th century, Andersson, Dahlström, and Forslin continued the collecting work in Finland. The Swedish ballads of Finland were edited in 1934 by Andersson (and Forslin). Since the 1950s, most valuable material has been tape-recorded, especially in provinces far from Stockholm, such as Bohuslän, Dalsland, Blekinge, Jämtland, and the Swedish-speaking archipelago of Finland.

Some of the ballad types can be studied in a great number of variants, such as the ballads of the supernatural "De två systrarna" (TS A 38), "Näcken bortförg jungrun" (TS A 481), the legendary ballads "Sankte Staffan" (TS B 8), "Liten Karin" (TS B 141), the ballads of chivalry "Krestans död" (TS D 280), "Herr Peders sjöresa" (TS D 361), "Liten båtsman" (TS D 3991), and some jocular ballads, such as "Bonden och krâkan" (TS B 58). Several ballad types have survived up to the present times because they were repeatedly printed in broadsheets, or because they were elements in popular culture, like "Sankte Staffan." On the other hand, several ballad types are preserved only in one or two variants recorded in the 16th or 17th century. The historical ballads are known only in a very few variants, and from the last 100 years only in a couple of trivial fragments.

How the ballad genre was introduced in Sweden remains an unsolved problem. It is usually maintained that the ballad reached Sweden from Denmark some decades after its introduction there, probably in the second half of the 13th century. Although there is no hard evidence, in Sweden the ballads may also have once been sung by people while dancing, although they were only recorded in solo performance.

According to an opinion now often disputed, the ballads were created by the nobility and long cherished only by the upper classes. But the preserved material shows that in Sweden they were orally transmitted by the peasantry at least from the 17th century. The oldest known informant is a peasant woman from Västergötland, Ingied Gunnarsdotter, born 1601/2. From the modern ballad material (19th and 20th centuries), it is obvious that ballads during the last 200 years were popular in all strata of society. The majority of informants mentioned for the Swedish material are women. Ballads about the unlucky fate of women, such as the legendary songs "Herr Peder och Kerstin" (TS B 20), "Maria Magdalena" (TS B 16), and "Liten Karin," seem to have been especially appreciated by the female sex. Inversely, more men than women sang the ballads "Sankte Staffan" and "Jungfru Maria och Jesus" (TS B 4), which were performed in popular settings where for the most part only men participated.


Sven-Bertil Jansson

[See also: Dramkvæde; Folklore; Love Poetry; Ritmur]

Bandamanna saga ("The Saga of the Confederates") is one of the shorter Íslendingasögur.Oddr, son of the poor but wise farmer Ófeigr Skúlason, leaves home in defiance of his father. He first tries his hand at fishing, but soon becomes a rich merchant, trading with foreign countries and owning his own ocean-going ships. Finally, he buys the large estate of Melr in Mýrafjarðar in northern Iceland and becomes a chieftain (goði) in the district. But before leaving for another voyage, he hands over the control of both estate and chieftaincy to a man whom he prizes far too highly, the energetic but treacherous Ósakar Guðmundsson. When Oddr returns home from his journey, he has to force Ósakar to give back the farm and the chieftaincy. Ósakar takes revenge by stealing sheep and killing Oddr's kinsman and best friend, Váli. Oddr prosecutes Ósakar for the crime. But when his case comes before the judges in the þing, Oddr nearly loses because of a minor error in procedure. Then Oddr's old father, Ófeigr, who is well acquainted with
the law, suddenly turns up in court. He pleads the case for his son, and saves the day. By means of cunning persuasion and illegal gifts of money to the judges, Ófeigr gets them to declare Óspakr an outlaw. Eight other chiefs envy Oddr and would like his riches. They band together into a confederation and prosecute Oddr for offering illegal bribes. The case is heard in the þing the following year. But on this occasion, too, Ófeigr manages to use bribery and cunning to overcome the confederation of chiefs. To crown his victory, Oddr receives the hand of the daughter of the most noble and likable of the chiefs who had sworn against him, and father and son become friends.

Bandamanna saga is one of the greatest works of art in the saga literature. Ófeigr is one of the many outstanding old men described in this literature, equal to Egill Skalla-Grimsson and Njáll Porgeirsson. The main part of the saga, and the most original part, deals with the proceedings in court, where Ófeigr's astonishing knowledge of his fellow men, his cynicism, and his fantastic eloquence overcome the most insurmountable obstacles and turn imminent tragedy into a happy ending. Such pure comedy is very rare in the Islendingasögur. Also unusual is the date of these events, the middle of the 11th century, somewhat later than the period when most of the Islendingasögur take place. Unusual, too, is the social satire and the sharp stabs at the chieftains as a class. Bandamanna saga is a work of fiction. But the author's main characters are persons who really lived at the time he is writing about, and the environment is typically Icelandic. Bandamanna saga was probably written during the latter half of the 13th century. As in the case of all the Islendingasögur, the author is unknown. The main text of Bandamanna saga is found in thevellum codex Móðruvellabók, from the middle of the 14th century. There is a shortened version of the saga in a MS, Konungsþátr, from the 15th century. In this more recent version, much of the artistic value of the saga is lost. But it contains certain details that seem to be more original than the account in the same Móðruvellabók.


Hallvard Mageøy

[See also: Islendingasögur; Móðruvellabók]

Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss ("The Saga of Bárðr Snæfells-god"), a late 13th- or early 14th-century "postclassical" Islendingasaga, is preserved in five vellum fragments and twenty-two paper copies.

The earliest MSS, with the possible exception of AM 564a 4to (late 14th or early 15th century), date from the 15th century (AM 489 4to, AM 162h fol., AM 471 4to, and AM 551a 4to). Among the paper MSS, the most important are AM 158 fol. and AM 486 4to; Guðbrandr Vigfússon takes the latter to be a copy of AM 564a 4to while it was still whole.

Finnur Jónsson suggests that the author of the saga was also the author of Víglundar saga, based on a reference to Bárðr in Víglundar saga and a reference to Víglundr in Bárðar saga. This evidence is slim, making the case for common authorship tenuous. Finnur Jónsson suggests further that the second part of the saga, which he takes to be a tasteless appendage, was written by a different author. Yet none of the older MSS (AM 489 4to and AM 162h fol., which cover the point of division) divide the saga into two parts. The question of whether Bárðar saga is one or two sagas is a major issue in the interpretation of the theme of the work. The first part of the saga tells of Bárðr Dumbsson, who, upon dreaming about King Haraldr Halfdanarson and the coming to the throne of King Óláfr Tryggvason, leaves Norway to explore and settle parts of Iceland. No sooner has he established himself than his daughter Helga disappears, and Bárðr, unable to contain his grief, severs himself from society. Yet he inexplicably reappears throughout the saga to aid his friends when they are in need, becoming in effect a bjargvættir ("guardian spirit") like his father, Dumbur, and gaining the nickname "Snæfellsáss" ("Snæfell," after Snæfellnes, the western peninsula that forms the setting for most of the story, and ás 'god'). The second part tells of the adventures of Bárðr's son Gestr, who travels to Norway and enters the service of King Óláfr Tryggvason. One evening the revenant King Ragnar appears at court offering the treasures stored in his barrow "to the man who dares get them from me." Gestr accepts the challenge and, accompanied by twenty men and the priest Jóseinn, journeys to the barrow. In the ensuing struggle with Ragnar, Gestr calls on Bárðr for help, but for the first time, Bárðr's powers fail him. Gestr then calls on Óláfr, and vows to accept Christianity if he is saved, which he is. The night following Gestr's baptism, Bárðr returns as an avenging spirit: the next day Gestr's eyes burst, and he dies in the gowns of his baptism.

Bárðar saga draws upon a wide range of folklore motifs and incorporates material from a variety of sources, most notably Landnámabók. Readers of Old English will discover parallels between Beowulf's descent into Grendel's lair and Gestr's descent into Ragnar's barrow. So too, the entrance of Ragnar into Óláfr's court resembles the entrance of the Green Knight in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. The similarities, however, are only suggestive at best. Bárðar saga is a fast-paced, absorbing story marked by characteristically dry and sometimes grim humor and by careful attention to descriptive detail.

36 BÁRDAR SAGA SNÆFELLSÁSS


Philip Pulsiano

[See also: Islendingasögur, Landnámabók, Viglunda saga]

Barlaams ok Josaphats saga (“The Saga of Barlaam and Josaphat”) is a religious tale based upon legends of the life of Buddha. It probably originated in Central Asia, dating back to the 6th century, and is later found in both Christian and non-Christian versions. The original author is unknown. The tale was translated into most European vernaculars, among them Norwegian, Icelandic, and Swedish.

According to the saga of Guðmundr Arason, bishop of Hólar, the Old Norwegian translation of Barlaams ok Josaphats saga must have been undertaken by King Hákoni ungi (“the young”); cf. Biskupa sögur 2, p. 54. Hákoni ungi must have been the son of Hákoni Hákásonarson. He was born in 1232, appointed king in 1240, and died in 1257. Whether Hákon performed the actual translation personally or had it translated by others cannot be determined.

The Old Norwegian translation is preserved in three medieval MSS and thirteen fragments. The Norwegian MS, Stock. Perg. fol. 6, is the oldest, dating from about 1275. Stock. 6 is the basis of the editions of Keyser and Unger (1851) and Rindal (1980 and 1981). This version is based primarily on the Latin translation from the 12th century, but the author must also have utilized other sources, notably the Speculum historiale, Stjórn, and various legends of saints. The Old Norwegian translation is rendered in a particular type of prose style known as “florid style.” The Icelandic version is preserved in MS Stock. Perg. fol. 3, published by Loth (1969). She contends that the Icelandic magnate Þjóðór Porleifsson (ca. 1470–1550) both translated the tale and wrote MS Stock. 3 personally. The main source of this MS is a German legendary Passional or Der heiligen Leben. The Icelandic version is much shorter than its Norwegian counterpart, being completely independent of the latter.

There are also two Swedish versions extant, the older being found in the Old Swedish Legendary from the end of the 13th century (edited by Stephens 1847 and 1858) and based on the Legenda aurea. The younger was probably translated by Olaus Gunnari about 1440 (edited by Klemming 1887–89). The main source of the later version is the Speculum historiale, but there is evidence that MS Stock. 6 was also used.

The Old Norwegian translation relates the story of Josaphat, the Indian prince, and the Christian hermit Barlaam. At Josaphat’s birth, it is prophesied that he will become a Christian. His father tries to isolate him from Christian influence and from all evils of this world. Despite these precautions, Josaphat discovers the existence of suffering, evil, and death. Barlaam then comes to him in disguise and converts him to Christianity by learned conversations and parables. Josaphat is baptized, and later manages to convert his father to the new faith. Subsequently, he succeeds his father on the throne, and has his realm convert to Christianity. Then he relinquishes his kingship and goes out into the desert to look for Barlaam. They meet, and live together as hermits until their death.

The tale is essentially an encomium on Christianity, martyrdom, and hermit life, with the lessons to be learned made explicit in classical dialogue form.


Magnus Rindal

[See also: Old Swedish Legendary, Reykjaholabók, Saints’ Lives, Stjórn]

Bede. Medieval Scandinavian writers knew the Venerable Bede (673–735), the premier historian, scientist, and theologian of Anglo-Saxon England, mostly as a scholar of chronology. Landnámabók begins: “In the book De Ratione Temporum [Aldafarsbók] which the Venerable Bede composed, there is mention of an island which is called Thule, of which books record that it lies six days’ sail north of Britain. There, said he, there came no day in winter, and no night in summer when the day is at its longest. . . . Now according to what is written, Bede the priest died 735 years after the Incarnation of our Lord, and more than a hundred years before Iceland was settled by Norse men” (Jones 1986: 156). Bede’s chronology influenced the Icelandic Easter tables, and the Dionysian dating from the birth of Christ used by Ari Porgilsson in his Islendingabók. The Icelandic annals use Bede’s chronology and mention him often, recording his death under 735: “Andlát Beda prester.” The Gottskálks annáll lists 722 as the composition date of Bede’s Martyrology and Calendarium. The Oddvarjea annáll for 870 repeats Bede’s Thule reference, noting that he died 121 years earlier, or in 749(!). Benedike comments that the annalists “rested
... firmly on his authority, even if they got his obit anything up to five or ten years out and were often none too sure of what he actually said in his treatise on chronology" (1976: 338-9).

Benediktz (1976: 340) speculates that Ari and the early Icelandic historians knew Bede's Historia ecclesiastica. Saxo Grammaticus refers to it in Book 1 of his Gesta Danorum, as does the Rhymed Chronicle, which calls Bede "the honest man," or "Venerable." The story of the inspired poet Hallbjorn in Porleifs páttrjarlsskáldsmay derive from Bede's story of Caedmon in Historia ecclesiastica, although Jónas Kristjánsson (1956: c. 213-29) attributes it to the miracle story of Bede's unfinished tomb inscription.

Scandinavian homilists drew extensively on Bede's sermons, genuine and spurious. For example, a sermon for the Feast of All Saints (a altra heligræ messu) survives in the Icelandic Homily Book (ca. 1200), SKB 15 4to, and in the Norwegian Homily Book (after 1200), AM 619 4to; both stem directly from Bede's (spurious) homily 3.71: "Legimus in ecclesiasticis historiis" (Migne 1862: vol. 94, cols. 452-5).

AM 676 4to, a 14th-century miscellany, contains on fol. 36r a short paraphrase of chs. 38-39 of Bede's Vita Cuthberti, and a short life of Bede, including the miraculous angel finishing his tomb inscription and blind Bede preaching to the stones (Turville-Petre 1959: 106-8). Martú sagan (ch. 61) contains Hermann of Tournai's story of the canons of Laon, which includes this remark about Bede's supposed tomb: "At Wilton, in Somerset, they were shown the grave of the Venerable Bede, beside whom rested a famous poetess, Murier" (Turville-Petre 1959: 110, Unger 1871: 56-57). Egil Skallagrímsson (e. g., Eyrbyggja saga, ch. 19) or an elite band of troops acting as a bodyguard (e. g., Hrólfs saga kraka, king's bodyguard) with the berserker, although without specifying the exact number. Porbjom equates King Haraldr's berserker, "with the berserkir Úlfhednar with the berserkir and the Wolfhetan or berserkir. Numerous variants are known from the 6th and 7th centuries in both Berserker

The stereotypical berserker of the sagas is a ferocious warrior. When he goes into battle or is otherwise denied what he wishes, he falls into an ecstatic battle fury (berserkgang) in which, as Snorri states, "they were as mad as dogs or wolves, bit into their shields, and were as strong as bears or bulls. They killed men, and as Snorri states, "they were as mad as dogs or wolves, bit into their shields, and were as strong as bears or bulls. They killed men, and neither fire nor iron affected them" (Ynglinga saga, ch. 6). This figure occurs most often in the role of uninvited suitor, where he challenges a man (usually either very old or very young) to a duel for the man's property, wife, and/or daughter. A hero, usually a visitor in the home of the challenged man, replaces his host in the duel, slays the berserker, and thus wins for himself fame, fortune, and often also a wife.

Such stereotyped berserks generally occur in pairs or groups of twelve. If there are two, they are brothers (e. g., Eyrrbyggja saga, ch. 25); if there are twelve, they generally form a band of outlaws (e. g., Grettis saga, ch. 19) or an elite band of troops acting as a king's bodyguard (e. g., Hrólfs saga kraka, ch. 24). The earliest recorded use of the term berserker, in Þorbjorn hornkkolli's ("horn-clawed") poem Haraldskvæði, refers to King Haraldr hafgræg ("fair-haired") Hálfdanarson's elite troop of berserker, although without specifying the exact number. Þorbjorn equates King Haraldr's berserker with the Ullideðnar (literally "wolf-skins") as the berserks fought in the battle of Hrafnjörðr in the late 9th century. The figure of the berserker and the Ullideðnar must be older than the 9th century, however. The German cognate name Wölfehainen and numerous variants are known from the 9th, even possibly the 8th, century. Moreover, graphic representations of Ullideðnar or berserker are known from the 6th and 7th centuries in both Scandinavia and Germany. A bronze matrix found in Torstånda in
Oland depicts a figure dressed in an animal's skin, complete with animal's head and mask yet with clearly human arms and legs, carrying a sword and a spear, and accompanying a one-eyed dancing figure (Óðinn or one of his worshipers). Similar figures have been found in Germany at Obrigheim and Gutenstein. This widespread distribution would seem to indicate a Germanic origin for the berserkr/Ulfheðinn figure.

Two etymologies for berserkr have been proposed. The first derives from the adjective *ber* 'bare' plus *serkr* 'shirt,' indicating "one who fights without protective armor," a meaning that was endorsed by Snorri Sturluson. This interpretation is possible, but is more likely a folk etymology based on the language of the 13th century. According to the second and more likely etymology, berserkr is derived from *berr* or *beri* 'bear' plus *serkr,* indicating "one dressed in a bear's skin," and thus parallel to Ulfheðinn 'wolf-skin.' The existence of such Old Norse forms as berseri*beri* 'bear, little bear' and *beri* 'bear,' and such compounds as berhardr 'bold as a bear' and berfell 'bear hide' are ample evidence for assuming the earlier existence of *berr* or *beri* in the Old Norse period.

The cultic origin of the berserkr and his role in the initiation rituals of the Germanic Männerbünde (secret male societies) have been demonstrated in the works of a number of scholars. By the 13th century, however, the berserkr had become a purely literary figure. This older and more positive view of the berserkr and his relationship with the belief in shape shifting are reflected in several sagas where the hero himself shows berserk-like qualities. In Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar, for example, Egill's grandfather Úlfur is known as Kveði-Úlfur ("evening wolf"), because he takes on the shape of a wolf at night (ch. 1). Later, he has an attack of berserkr fury during a fight with King Harald's men. After the fury has passed, he is so exhausted that he never recovers, and he dies on the way to Iceland. His son Skalla-Grimr similarly rages against Egill and a playmate, and Egill is saved only by the quick thinking of a self-sacrificing maid.

Volsunga saga also reflects this older belief when Sigmundr and his son nephew Sinfjotli put on wolfskins and become wolves for a period of time (ch. 8). The Icelandic lawbook Grágás specifically outlaw the practice of berserkgang.

Most sagas, however, know only the stereotyped berserkr. He becomes the foil for Christian missionaries who slay berserkr, thus convincing the heathen of Christ's superiority (Njáls saga, ch. 103; Kristni saga, ch. 2; Vatnsdœla saga, ch. 46). Especially in the late fornaldarsögur, the berserkr becomes a magician or just one more fabulous monster among the other exotic (see, e.g., the character Ógmundr in Orvar-Odds saga or the brothers Gautan and Ógautan in Þorsteins saga Víkingssonar).


Benjamin Blaney

Bersoglsvisut see Sighvatr Pórðarson

Bevers saga see Bevis saga
Bevis saga ("Bevis's Saga") is a 13th-century riddarasaga translated from a lost version of the Anglo-Norman Boeve de Haumtone. The saga survives in two nearly complete texts, Stock. Perg. fol. no. 7 (late 15th century) and Perg. 4to no. 6 (ca. 1400); in two fragments, AM 567 II 4to (14th century) and AM 567 VII 4to (ca. 1400); and in a copy made in 1690, Papp. fol. no. 46. of the version in the now-lost 14th-century compilation known as Ormsbók. The saga also exists in a number of later paper copies.

The text of the saga contained in Perg. 4to no. 6 begins with the marriage of the aging and childless Earl Guion of Hamtun to the daughter of the king of Scotland, although she has been promised to the emperor of Germany. They have a son, Bevis, but in her growing unhappiness in the marriage, Bevis's mother arranges for Guion to be killed by the emperor. Bevis discovers the crime and accuses his mother, who then orders his death. Ignoring the advice of his knight Sabaoth to flee the country, Bevis kills the emperor.

The other material comprises chiefly Bible texts used for devotion or liturgy. A number of psalms, which were an important part of the hours, were translated in the prayer books, among them the seven penitential psalms, which are also found in the miscellanies AM 76 8vo (from ca. 1450-1500) and Stock. A 29 (from ca. 1450). The Gospel and Epistle texts for the Sundays of the ecclesiastical year are found in two collections of sermons translated from Swedish (Upps. C 56, from ca. 1450, and Gks 1390 4to, dated to the 15th century) and in Christiern Pedersen's Jættestegnspostil, printed in 1515 and 1518 in Paris and Leipzig. The Gospel and Epistle translations are paraphrastic; moreover, the Danish reviser of the sermons in Upps. C 56 approached a popular narrative style. There is a paraphrase in a legendary style of Matthew 26-27 in a collection of legends (in Stock. K 4, from ca. 1450). In very free renderings of various kinds, there are sections of the apocryphal gospels on Mary's childhood and Assumption (in Stock. K 4 and Jesu Barnsdoms Bog, printed in 1508), on Jesus's childhood (in the same works) and his descent into Hell (in Stock. A 115 from ca. 1325), and on Pilate (in Sjælens Trost). Finally, many biblical quotations are found scattered in sermons and other religious literature; whether they are momentary creations or excerpted from elsewhere is unknown.

Direct traces of the Danish Bible translations of the Middle Ages are hardly to be found in the translations of the Reformation period (e.g., the New Testament in 1524 and 1529, and the entire Bible in 1550); but with the Reformation, there is no thorough change in the form of the biblical language.

**Phillip Pulsiano**

**Bible**

1. EAST NORSE: DENMARK. Examples of Old Danish biblical translations are late and scarce in comparison with those in other Nordic languages. The reason may not only be that much material has been lost, but also that the Bible was not translated until late because those able to read and write also knew Latin.

Biblical translation proper is found in only one MS, Thott 8 fol., the provenance of which is unknown, but which has been dated by means of its watermarks to around 1475-1490; it is written in three hands. It contains a fragment of a translation of the Vulgate, which may never have been completed, from Genesis 2:9 to 2 Kings 23:18 inclusive, along with a number of primarily narrative additions. Its linguistic form shows both East and West Danish features. The translation bears witness to the use of a glossary (Catholicicon) and is done throughout according to the *verbum de verbo* principle, but with such clumsy results that the choice of this method has been ascribed to inexperience or pedagogical aims rather than the common reasons: a respect for the sacred text and a humanistic endeavor to imitate Latin. The mixed language and the errors that are not mistranslations suggest that this MS is a copy (of a not much older original). However, since some of the errors may be interpreted as errors in hearing, it has also been suggested that this MS may have been written at the dictation of the translator, or someone working from a rough draft of the translation.

The other material comprises chiefly Bible texts used for devotion or liturgy. A number of psalms, which were an important part of the hours, were translated in the prayer books, among them the seven penitential psalms, which are also found in the miscellanies AM 76 8vo (from ca. 1450-1500) and Stock. A 29 (from ca. 1450). The Gospel and Epistle texts for the Sundays of the ecclesiastical year are found in two collections of sermons translated from Swedish (Upps. C 56, from ca. 1450, and Gks 1390 4to, dated to the 15th century) and in Christiern Pedersen's *Jættestegnspostil*, printed in 1515 and 1518 in Paris and Leipzig. The Gospel and Epistle translations are paraphrastic; moreover, the Danish reviser of the sermons in Upps. C 56 approached a popular narrative style. There is a paraphrase in a legendary style of Matthew 26-27 in a collection of legends (in Stock. K 4, from ca. 1450). In very free renderings of various kinds, there are sections of the apocryphal gospels on Mary's childhood and Assumption (in Stock. K 4 and Jesu Barnsdoms Bog, printed in 1508), on Jesus's childhood (in the same works) and his descent into Hell (in Stock. A 115 from ca. 1325), and on Pilate (in Sjælens Trost). Finally, many biblical quotations are found scattered in sermons and other religious literature; whether they are momentary creations or excerpted from elsewhere is unknown.
40 BIBLE


Britta Olof Frederiksen

SWEDEN. King Magnus Eriksson (1316-1374) and St. Birgitta (1302-1373) both appear to have possessed a large Swedish Bible. The king’s book is called “unus grossus liber bibliæ in norvecæ” and has been compared, for example, with that of the provincial Swedish translation. An abridged translation of the Acts of the Apostles belongs to the first half of the 15th century. The Old Swedish collections of sermons contain the text of the Gospels for all the Sundays and festivals of the ecclesiastical year.

The medieval sermon contained many biblical quotations beyond the texts of the individual days; they also contained a great number of quotations from other sources. But a translation from the Latin was possibly made on that occasion. The question whether the large number of relatively long quotations go back to now-lost Swedish translations of the books of the Bible remains open.

The biblical translations of the Reformations, the New Testament in 1526, and the entire Bible in 1541, may linguistically be connected to the medieval biblical quotations. The Pentateuch paraphrase may have had a stylistically favorable influence on the reformers.


Christer Laurén

2. WEST NORSE. It is not known for certain, and probably never will be, whether the entire Bible was translated into Old Norse; but the evidence is largely against it. The published lists of book collections in medieval libraries in Norway and Iceland seldom make reference to the possession of a complete Bible; and

There must have existed translations of the Gospels, which were read frequently, of the other books of the New Testament, and of the Psalter, since the books of the Old Testament, which are less frequently read, were also found in translations. But one can also see the Book of Judges as a natural continuation of the Pentateuch. The Gospel of Nicodemus describes the death of Jesus, and the Acts of the Apostles give an account of the oldest history of the Church, and the Books of the Maccabees are about religious heroes. The books of Judith, Esther, and Ruth were probably considered suitable reading for the Brigitte sisters. Finally, the Apocalypse may have suited the literary taste of the Middle Ages. Thus, one does not necessarily have to presuppose lost translations in order to understand the selection.

In addition, there are translations of Bible texts in other preserved Old Swedish literature. A MS of the Skämtninge Legendary contains the first chapter of the Gospel according to Luke, and many psalms form part of the Old Swedish translation of Virgin Mary’s Hours, printed in 1525. The Old Swedish collections of sermons contain the text of the Gospels for all the Sundays and festivals of the ecclesiastical year.
most of those that are mentioned were probably Latin bibles. In the countries of western Europe that principally influenced Norway and Iceland in the medieval period, a complete Bible in the vernacular is a late phenomenon; in France and Germany, the first ones date from the end of the 13th century, while the first complete English Bible appeared a century later. Not until the 16th century do the first vernacular bibles appear in Norway and Iceland; in the MS collections in Copenhagen, Reykjavik, and elsewhere, there is no evidence of a medieval translation.

On the other hand, it has long been known that certain parts of the Bible were translated into Old Norse; and it is very probable that other parts were also. In the countries of western Europe, the parts of the Bible most commonly translated at an early date were the historical books of the Old Testament and Apocrypha, the Psalter, and the Gospels, either individually or in the form of a gospel harmony, principally Tatian's Diatessaron. This is largely the picture that has emerged in the West Norse area. The compilation known as Stjórn comprises substantial fragments of three separate versions of part, or the whole, of Jewish history from the Creation to the Exile (Genesis–Exodus 18; Exodus 19–Deuteronomy; Joshua–2 Kings). Brandr Jónsson, bishop of Hólar (d. 1264), is credited with the translation of the Maccabean materials that form part of the so-called Gyðinga saga. In certain MSS, notably AM 226 fol., these translations are included with Rømverja saga and Alexanders saga in a Bible-based world history up to the time of Christ. The recent publication of a substantial part of an Icelandic text of the Book of Psalms, copied by a 16th-century hand into a 13th-century Latin Psalter to function as a gloss but taken from a translation that is almost certainly pre-Reformation, establishes beyond reasonable doubt that the Psalter was translated in the medieval period. This assertion is borne out by the frequent mention of psalters in the medieval book collections, some of which may well have been Norse. And the remarkable similarity between certain quotations from the Gospels in Grimr Þölsteinsson's 13th-century life of John the Baptist and Oddur Gottskálksson's 16th-century translation of the New Testament makes it virtually certain that Grimr was making use of a Norse translation of the Gospels, even though no such translation is known at the present day. It is impossible to say for certain how early translations of parts of the Bible into Old Norse began to be made; but the importance of such books as history, and for liturgical and evangelical purposes, suggests an early date, perhaps even in the 11th century.

Apart from translations proper, the Bible is represented in Old Norse by a multitude of quotations, some short, some long, some close to the Bible text, some in the form of reference, incorporated into other works, and principally in the religious prose that has survived from the medieval period. The shorter saga of the apostle Paul (ed. Unger 1874: 216–36) is little more than an adaptation of the events of Paul's life as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, and the lives of other apostles also incorporate substantial passages from this source. On the other hand, many works of religious prose are taken directly from a Latin work, and the Bible quotations are merely translated ad hoc from the original; this is the case, for instance, with Alcuin's treatise De virtutibus et vitis and the Elucidarius of Honorius Augustodunensis. Only occasionally does it seem probable that the Norse writer was using a Norse text of parts of the scriptures, although this is true of Grimr Þölsteinsson and probably the author of Konungs skuggsjá, who seems almost certainly to have known the 13th-century translation of the books of the Kings. Otherwise, it is probable that the Vulgate text of the Bible was used for quotations, though there is some evidence that texts of the Old Latin Bible were also known and used. On occasion, it can be shown that the Latin text was the ultimate rather than the immediate source of a given quotation. Evidence has been traced of the use of Tatian's Diatessaron in the homilies, as well as use of the individual Gospels, and of the psalter version of the Psalms of David as well as the Vulgate text; the Bible text used by Comestor in his Historia scholastica is the direct source of many quotations, while the source of the Bel and the Dragon story as found in Haukabók is Ælfric's Old English homily "De falsis dis." The liturgy of the Church is also a common direct source of material ultimately biblical: the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Hail Mary, and common bidding prayers (such as which goes back to Ezekiel 33:11), and exhortations for the offertory (Tobit 4, 7, and 8) are cases in point. The use made of the Bible, directly or indirectly, in Old Norse literature is substantial and on the whole impressively accurate.

Birgitta, St. (St. Bridget of Sweden; 1302 [1303?]–1373), was a Swedish saint and mystic and founder of the Brigittine Order. 

Born in Finsta, Uppland, she was the daughter of a Swedish saint and mystic and founder of the Brigittine Order. 

In the province of Närke. There were eight children of the marriage; the best known was the second-eldest daughter, St. Katarina, who became the first abbess (although never consecrated) of the monastic foundation at Vadstena in Östergötland. Ulf died in 1344, and shortly afterward Birgitta received her “vision of calling.” She renounced her worldly possessions, and took up residence near the Cistercian monastery of Alvastra in Östergötland. 

Here, she received some of her most important visions, including the revelation of the Rule for a new monastic order. She was supported by spiritual counselors and confessors, including Mathias, canon of Linköping, Sweden’s foremost theologian of the time, and two clerics with the name Petrus Olafsson, who were authors of the Vita, the earliest biography of the saint. In 1349, Birgitta was instructed in a vision to go to Rome, and she arrived there in time for the holy year of Jubilee in 1350. She remained in Rome with a small following of Swedes for the rest of her life, and never returned to her native country. In Rome, she was involved in seeking papal authorization for her new order, which was granted in 1370. But it was not until 1419 that the order was formally constituted by Pope Martin V. Birgitta made occasional visits abroad, to Cyprus and Sicily. In 1372, she traveled to the Holy Land, where she received an important cycle of visions relating to the nativity and life of Christ. Toward the end of her life, she made the acquaintance of Alphonso of Pech, formerly bishop of Jaen; he edited and published her collected revelations and promoted her case for canonization. After her death on July 23, 1373, her relics were translated to Vadstena. She was canonized in 1391, and her official feast day today is July 23. 

Altogether, Birgitta received some 700 visions, many of which were extremely influential long after her death. They vary considerably in length, and cover an enormous range of material, from questions of theology, to descriptions of heaven and hell, to judgment scenes of church and political magnates, to highly personal spiritual experiences. Nearly all of the recorded visions are occasional pieces, and rarely do they contain circumstantial details. Birgitta’s revelations came to her in different ways: she would appear as one half-dead, or she would experience God through her senses, or feel Him as a palpable movement in her breast; or she would simply become rapt in ecstatic prayer. When she was roused from a vision, she wrote it down immediately in her native tongue, and her confessors translated it into Latin. During her lifetime, her revelations remained as private documents. The canonization edition of eight books, the last of which contains revelations concerning kings and church leaders that are of political interest and relevance, and other works, such as the Regula salvatoris and the Sermo angelicus, is a collection of daily readings to be used during the night office at the monastery. 

St. Birgitta’s spirituality is characterized by a strong interest in the humanity of Christ, who is perceived as a crucifying knight impatiently waiting to do justice. She also identifies closely with the Virgin, who is the central devotional figure in the Brigittine Order. Her Marian revelations were popular throughout Europe during the 15th century. Her legal background is reflected in another cycle of visions that involve judgment scenes of the souls of the departed. Another characteristic is the practical interest she takes in temporal matters. Hers is a missionary mysticism, and she is intent upon regeneration and reform. Like the Old Testament prophets, she puts special emphasis on God’s severe judgment of the wicked, and she strives to save human souls, to renovate the Church militant, and to raise the degenerate moral standards she observes all around her, among clergy and laypeople alike. The monastic order she founded is a testimony to her lasting influence not only in Sweden, but also throughout Europe. 


Bridget Morris

[Birka. Rimbert's Vita Anskarii (ca. 870) and Adam of Bremen's Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum (ca. 1075) mention many places in Scandinavia, including Birka, the town of the Svear and the most important harbor of the Baltic. It was abandoned before 1000, but even in the Middle Ages was identified with the island of Björkö in Lake Målaren, about 30 km. west of Stockholm.

This island of about 1,500 m. in width contains an occupation deposit ("Black Earth") about 13 hectares in extent and up to 2 m. deep, a town rampart, a fortress, and 2,000-3,000 burial mounds. The bays around the shore shelter harbors and stone jetties, which, because of the land elevation, now lie about 5 m. above sea level.

In 1871-1895, the Swedish naturalist Hjalmar Stolpe excavated about 4,500 sq. m. of the occupation deposit and about 1,100 burials. The Black Earth contained large quantities of refuse, including tens of thousands of animal and bird bones, many hundreds of bone ice skates, combs, bone pins, metal objects, and pottery. Tools, molds, and crucibles show that industrial processes had been carried on.

The burials indicate a native and a foreign tradition. The "native" consists of cremation cemeteries under mounds and occasionally boat-shaped stone settings or triangular stone settings with concave sides. The "foreign burials," inhumations in coffins and chamber graves, were confined to areas on the edge of the town.

These graves are probably of foreign merchants, craftsmen, and their families, either Christian or Muslim, who came from East and West. They may also have been the graves of Scandinavians newly converted to Christianity.

The inhumation burials contained many well-preserved details of clothing and equipment that, although belonging to foreigners, provide information about Viking Age chronology, culture, and customs of dress. The graves also contained much imported jewelry, glass and bronze vessels, weapons, pottery, and so on (see particularly Birka II). The finds are stored in Statens Historiska Museum, Stockholm.


A trench dug through one of the jetties in the Black Earth in 1969-1971 revealed stratigraphy useful for Birka's chronology, but much remains to be done. Stolpe's discoveries must be studied and trial excavations made to establish the town plan and its stratigraphy, and to answer questions about visible earthworks.

The finds from Birka date from the Viking Age. The site was settled by around 800 and was abandoned in the 970s, when a large hoard of Arab coins and silver rings was deposited. Birka was permanently occupied, averaging 700-1,000 inhabitants. Vita Anskarii mentions a reeve and a "thing," a king living nearby, and Christians before Ansgar's mission. The mission had little success outside the town. The earliest Swedish town law is the "Björkobrott," perhaps deriving from Birka.

Birka played an important part in the hinterland of the Mården. In exchange for simple manufactured and imported products, its inhabitants acquired such necessities as provisions, fuel, hay, and raw materials that could not be produced on the small island. Its situation on the route from the iron- and fur-producing forests of northern Scandinavia was also important. Raw materials were transported to the town in winter and exported overseas in summer. The many luxury articles found in the Birka graves illustrate surplus from this trade.

Birka also had a significant role in Viking Age trade between East and West, probably largely in the form of valuable, easily portable commodities, such as silver, silk, swords, and slaves.

Birsay has been described as "one of the most nunimous of Scotland's archaeological sites," and it has received considerable attention, both historical and archaeological, over the years. Mentioned in Orkneyinga saga especially in relation to the building of a minster dedicated to Christ by Earl Porfinnr, it has a rich history stretching both forward and backward. The site of both a Norse minster and palace, it was later the location of the Stewart Earl's palace, and had formerly also been a major cultural center of the particularly significant Early Prehistoric midden site, economically at its peak. The site has identified two major mound sites, multiperiod in date, to the north of the Village. Saevar Howe was examined in the 19th century, when a cemetery of long-cists and artifacts included at one of these sites in particular indicates a degree of cultural interaction, if not integration, that suggests an absence of violence in the relations between native Picts and incoming Vikings.

Although this interpretation is still controversial, many of the same artifactual forms can also be identified in the assemblages from the long-running excavations on the Brough of Birsay. Here, surrounding a small stone chapel, dated variously to the 11th and 12th centuries, is a small Christian graveyard, with two levels of graves, Pictish and Norse. The latter presumably date from the 11th century onward, but there is no sign of pagans here before this date. Indeed, a series of Norse burials, of various dates but presumably all part of the farmstead, appear to respect the lines of the churchyard, although much clearance and reconstruction have taken place on the site. An earlier chapel and churchyard have been identified, below the later structures and graves. Artifacts from older excavations and both buildings and artifacts from recent work indicate a flourishing Pictish-period community, displaced in the Viking period. Debate continues as to whether this evidence should be interpreted in terms of a "Celtic" monastery. Recent survey and excavation work has also extended the area on this island known to have been occupied in the Viking period.

The buildings on the Brough of Birsay also clearly include finely built structures, which have therefore been identified with the Early Pictish and Norse finds from the Brough of Birsay. The buildings also clearly include finely built structures, which have therefore been identified with the Early Prehistoric midden site, economically at its peak. The site has identified two major mound sites, multiperiod in date, to the north of the Village. Saevar Howe was examined in the 19th century, when a cemetery of long-cists and artifacts included at one of these sites in particular indicates a degree of cultural interaction, if not integration, that suggests an absence of violence in the relations between native Picts and incoming Vikings.

Work since about 1970 has widened the perspective. Debate has occurred on the location of both the Norse palace and, more particularly, the minster, with alternatives promulgated for both the Village area ("Palace" or "Place") near St. Magnus Parsh Church, and for the Brough of Birsay, a tidal island at the northwest extremity of the Bay of Birsay. Recent archaeological investigation has identified two major mound sites, multiperiod in date, to the south of the Village. Saevar Howe was originally examined in the 19th century, when a cemetery of long-cists and artifacts including iron bell were found and identified as pre-Viking. These cists are now clearly Christian Norse in date, and succeed settlements of both the Viking and Pictish periods. Similarly, at Beachview, buildings and midden deposits indicate a Late Viking settlement overlying a long archaeological sequence. To the north of the Village, on the coastal margins of the Point of Buckquoy, a number of Pictish and Viking sites have been identified and partially examined. These sites include Pictish-period burial cairns, Viking cist graves, Norse settlement debris, and remains of both Viking farmstead buildings and Pictish buildings, essentially cellular in form. It has been postulated that the artifactual material from one of these sites in particular indicates a degree of cultural interaction, if not integration, that suggests an absence of violence in the relations between native Picts and incoming Vikings.


Christopher D. Morris

[See also: Orkneyinga saga; Scotland, Norse in]
Bishops' Sagas see Biskupa sögur

Biskupa sögur ("Bishops' Sagas") tell of Icelandic bishops from the 11th to the 14th centuries. They were written down from around 1200 until the middle of the 14th century. Many of them were composed by contemporaries of the bishops, and some of the authors, who were all educated as clerics, are known. In addition, short biographies of the last Catholic bishops were written in the 16th and 17th centuries.

The sagas that are normally considered as belonging to the bishops' sagas are: (1) Sagas of the bishops of Skálholt. Hungvraka contains short biographies of the first five bishops of Skálholt, i.e., Ísleif Gizurarson, Gisur Ísleifsson, Páll Jónsson, Ólafur Rúnólfsson, Þorsteinn Einarsson, and in the period from 1056 (the establishment of the episcopal see in Skálholt) to 1176 (the death of Klöngur Rúnólfsson). The saga of Páll Jónsson (d. 1193), 
Pórlakssaga helga, is the life of the first Icelandic saint. It exists in three redactions; the two youngest are more detailed and fuller than the oldest. The youngest versions tell of Pórlak's headstrong disputes with the chieftains, especially Jón Loptsson, over the administration of churches and their properties, and over the moral standards of both clergy and laity. Jón Loptsson's missire, Ragnheiðr, was none other than Pórlak's sister (cf. Oddaværinga þáttr). In the oldest version, these disputes are only briefly mentioned. In addition, fragments of two different lives of Pórlak in Latin are extant. Páls saga is the biography of Pórlak's successor in the episcopal see, Páll Jónsson (d. 1211). 
Pórlakssaga, Hungvraka, and Páls saga are sometimes considered to have been written by the same author. Some scholars have argued with more certainty that Hungvraka and Páls saga are by the same author. In any case, it seems certain that the intention was to write a continuous history of the episcopal see of Skálholt, a kind of "gesta episcoporum," which was begun when Bishop of Skálholt became a saint. Much emphasis is placed upon the welfare of the Church, its growth, and prosperity in these three sagas. The youngest saga about a Skálholt bishop is the saga of Æstri Pórlaksson (d. 1298), Arnarsaga biskups. It was composed around 1300, and its author is possibly the bishop's successor and relative, Æstri Helgason (d. 1320).

(2) Sagas of the bishops of Holar. The life of Jón Ogmundarson (d. 1121), Jóns saga helga, was originally written in Latin by the monk Gunnlaugr Leifsson (d. 1218/9), but the saga is preserved only in Icelandic in three sections. There is a considerable difference in style among the three versions. Þór Grímsdóttir (d. 1345) has been suggested as the author of one of them. The oldest saga of Guðmundr Arason (d. 1237), the so-called Prestssaga ("priest's saga"), was written shortly after his death, but was not completed. Its author is possibly Abbot Lambkarð Porgilsson (d. 1249). Later, four different Guðmundr sagas were written in the period 1315–1360. The author of the youngest saga was Ægir Grímsson Brandsson (d. 1361), and it is possible that Bergr Sokkason wrote the oldest. The saga of Laurentius Þálfssson (d. 1331), 
Laurentius saga Þálfsssonar, is the youngest of the actual biskupa sögur. It was written by Óláfr Hakklsson (d. 1393).

In addition, two þáttrir have been regarded as belonging to the biskupa sögur: Ísleifis þáttrir biskups and Jóns þáttr Halldórssonar, both treating bishops of Skálholt. Ísleifis þáttr is preserved in Óláfs saga helga in Flateyjarbók (end of the 14th century) and also independently in a 15th-century MS. Jóns þáttr Halldórssonar tells in exempla-style of some events in the life of this Dominican. The þáttr was composed shortly after Jón Halldórsson's death (1399).

Moreover, Ari Porgilsson's Islendingabók and Kristni saga also tell of the bishops. In Islendingabók (1122–1133), there is a list of names of foreign bishops, after which the work tells of the first two Icelandic bishops, in particular of Gizur Ísleifsson. Kristni saga (13th century) describes the introduction of Christianity and, like Ari, gives a brief description of the bishops.

In some of the biskupa sögur, in the Latin fragments and the oldest version of Pórlakssaga, Hungvraka, Páls saga, Jóns saga helga, and in Prestssaga Guðmundrar Arasonar, the "computatio Gerlandi" is used, i.e., the years are seven years less than in the normal Christian calendar. All the biskupa sögur that are preserved in their entirety are in Icelandic. Lives about the saints Pórlak and Jón were written in Latin, and a Latin Guðmundar saga was also composed. One of the reasons for writing these sagas in Latin may have been to obtain the pope's acceptance of the holy men. This acceptance was, however, not given in the Middle Ages; the Icelandic saint-bishops were not canonized. On the basis of the Latin life, liturgical texts were composed for use on the saints' feast days.

The earliest critical work on the biskupa sögur is the preface to the first edition of biskupa sögur as a corpus (1858–1878), with main interest on dating and authorship. Sigurður Nordal (1933, 1953) first drew the literary-historical connections between the composition of biskupa sögur of the northern and southern parts of Iceland. His ideas about the origin and development of the biskupa sögur agree with his theories about the three "schools" of Icelandic saga composition. Thus, he considered the biskupa sögur of the southern school to have been composed under the influence of the artistic clerical school of the north, with Jóns saga helga as the model for Pórlakssaga helga. Bjarni Ásbjarnarson (1958), however, was the first to take the Latin fragments into consideration and to draw attention to the fact that since St. Pórlak was the country's first saint, his life should be regarded as the oldest biskupa saga.

Scholars now agree that Pórlakssaga is the oldest biskupa saga, since the origin of the genre can be traced to the important historical event when Pórlak Pórhallsson, bishop of Skálholt, became the country's first saint. He was declared a saint at the Alþingi in 1198, and elevated in the same year. A year after Pórlak's consecration as a saint, Páll Jónsson read at the Alþingi some of the saint's miracles, which form the core of the oldest extant book of miracles. Along with the book of miracles, the oldest preserved works about Pórlak are some Latin fragments from two different lives and also a number of lectiones. One Latin fragment of Pórlakssaga reveals that there was an introduction about Pórlak's predecessors in the episcopal see, and might thus be the first sign of the composition of a "gesta episcoporum." It is possible that an account of Pórlak's elevation along with his miracles was written in Latin, and that the description of the events found in one of the Latin lectiones may be based on such a work.

The biskupa sögur are often divided into two categories: saints' lives and historical works. But despite the different aims of the composition of the sagas, it is risky to draw such a decisive distinction between them. The sagas of the holy men were written first and foremost as hagiography. These sagas are, however, also church-historical sources, although in a somewhat different way. Pórlakssaga has, for example, been considered a trustworthy source, because it is written so shortly after Pórlak's death. Many of the sagas in the latter category, which normally are considered historical works, i.e., Hungvraka, Páls saga, and Laurentius saga, are nonetheless influenced in style, structure, and ideology by saints' lives. It is important to bear this influence in mind when their
value as sources is evaluated. But *biskupa sögur* are nonetheless significant sources. In many respects, they form the basic source of Icelandic church history and also the history of the people, because the bishops took some part in the secular administration. 

**Hungryvaka**'s words about Bishop Gizurr give some idea of the high esteem in which the bishops were held: "He received high rank and so much honor already early in his episcopate, that every man would sit and stand as he requested, young and old, wealthy and poor, women and men, and it was correct to say that he was both king and bishop over the country while he lived." The sagas are no less important as sources of knowledge about the educational standards of their authors and their audience. Their literary importance naturally varies, and they seem hardly as attractive as the *Islandingsagur* and the *konungsagur* at first sight. Since the oldest *biskupa sögur* can be dated to about 1200, they play an important role in the evolution of Icelandic saga writing. Their importance is not least due to the fact that they are contemporary sagas. The miracles that follow the sagas of the saint-bishops give a unique insight into the daily life of the time. As such, they are an invaluable addition to the picture that their secular parallels, e.g., the *Sturlunga saga*, give of the life and mentality of the people in Iceland in the Middle Ages.

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**Bjarkamál** ("The Lay of Bjarki") is a Latin poem of 298 hexameters appearing near the end of Book 2 of Saxo Grammaticus's *Gesta Danorum*. Saxo tells that he had completed the poem on the basis of small vernacular strophes. Short quotations from *Bjarkamál* are found in Snorri Sturhison's *Edda* and in his *Heimskringla*.

The poem takes the form of a dialogue between two housecarls of King Rollo (Hrólfr kraki). During the last fight of the Danish king, the two housecarls incite each other to fight a Swedish army clandestinely attacking the royal residence at Lejre. In the course of their dialogue, they hear that the king has fallen; now his men must avenge him in return for the golden rings he had presented them. During the battle, the warrior Biarco (Bjarki) suspects Óðinn's presence, and he utters a threat to the god. He orders Hialto (Hjalti) to fight on until both of them lie dead beside their king, as noble warriors should. Before and after the poem, Saxo tells in prose about the antecedents and the consequences of the battle. In broad outline, the story agrees with the last part of *Hrolfs saga kraka* (ca. 1400); at least this part must have had an original older than Saxo. Whether it was written down, we do not know, nor if it was Icelandic or Danish.

The poem as presented in *Gesta Danorum* has been a Latin translation of a Nordic original. But according to Fries-Jensen (1987), Saxo has the full responsibility for its style, meter, and most of the content. Stephanius, in his 1645 edition of Saxo's Danish history, identified numerous quotations from classical and medieval authors. Among the latter, Galterus de Castellione's *Alexandris* from 1182 marks a terminus a quo for Saxo's work. At the same time, the *Alexandris* emphasizes that fame after death is ensured by beautiful poetry. Saxo mentions this thought several times, as well as other ideas common to the two authors, e.g., the fidelity expected of the housecarls and the nobility of the warriors. The classical ideals are of no less importance for *Bjarkamál*. Fries-Jensen (1987) calls the poem a small-scale Latin epic emulating Book 2 of Vergil's *Aeneid*. For instance, the battle is fought in the middle of the night, and the darkness is suddenly ruptured by the flaming town or castle in both poems. No other description of the fall of Lejre refers to this fire. In that way, Saxo made Lejre parallel to Troy.

Galterus's *Alexandris* was translated into Icelandic (*Alanders sögur*) in the mid-13th century by Bishop Brandr Jónsson.
Perhaps this text was the source of the quotation from "Master Galterus" in *Hrolfs saga kraka*.


Inge Skovgaard-Petersen

[See also: *Alexanders saga*, *Fóstbrœðra saga*, *Hrolfs saga kraka*, *Saxo Grammaticus*]

**Bjarnar saga Hítdevlakappa** ("The Saga of Bjorn Hítdevlakappi") belongs to a group of skaldasögur sharing essentially the same narrative. In common with two of these (Kormáks saga and Hallfredar saga), *Bjarnar saga* is considered to be among the earliest *Islandesögur*, as its loose construction and unsophisticated style suggest. Together with the later Gunnlaugs saga, these sagas each relate a poet's lifelong love for a woman who becomes another man's wife. In *Bjarnar saga* and *Gunnlaugs saga*, the husband is himself a poet and poetic rivalry is an important theme. Bjarni Einarsson's attempt (1961) to derive this narrative from the European Tristan romance, through the medium of *Kormáks saga*, is unconvincing; the diverse use of narrative motifs suggests more complex relationships, involving extensive preliterary interchange of verses and anecdotal material among various traditions.

While Bjorn Arngeirsansson *Hítdevlakappi* is virtually unknown outside the saga, his adversary Pórð Kolbeinsson is a well-known court poet. The saga presents Pórð unambiguously as a villain, maintaining throughout his obsessive aggression toward Bjorn despite his own physical cowardice. He treacherously marries Bjorn's betrothed wife, Oddny, persuading her by a lie about Bjorn's death. After several adventures abroad (most, including the duel in Russia by which he wins the title "kappi" and the sword Maeriggr, despite his own physical cowardice. He treacherously marries during his disastrous winter sojourn in Pórð's household, in the course of which, the saga implies, he and Oddny become adulterous lovers.

Poetic rivalry achieves prominence as the feud begins with an exchange of libelous attacks, or níð. Most explicitly, Bjorn carves an effigy depicting Pórð in a pose suggesting a homosexual act, symbolically attributing to Pórð both cowardice and the sexual humiliation represented by Bjorn's appropriation of his wife. But níð also permeates the saga's structure through a pattern of verbal exchanges in which taunting verses, often in symmetrical pairs, are quoted or alluded to. Reminiscences of the poet's ancient role as practitioner of níð, with its essentially erotic symbolism, may account for the association of love with poets in these skaldasögur, although only in *Bjarnar saga* is níð so prominent.

The feud modulates into a more conventional series of armed attacks on the hero, at first instigated indirectly and then personally led by Pórð. After winning the friendship of the influential Porstein Kugsson, an interlude that Sigurður Noral (1938) probably wrongly believed to be based on a lost *Porsteins saga Kugssonar*, Bjorn dies in a heroic last stand, alone and almost unarmed against twenty-four attackers. The narrative abounds with archetypal motifs, such as the hero's prophetic dreams, the failure of his borrowed sword, and the recognition by Kolli, ostensibly the son of Pórð, that he is attacking his true father.

*Bjarnar saga* was probably written before 1230 in Hitdalr in western Iceland, where its action takes place. The author may have belonged to the Pingeýrar monastery, but attempts to discern traces of clerical style have been inconclusive. Some hagiographical leanings are revealed in the hero's devotion to St. Óláfr, his building of a church, and his composing a drápa in honor of St. Thomas the Apostle.

The saga is poorly preserved in late, incomplete paper MSS, the best being a 17th-century copy of a 14th-century vellum, of which a fragment survives. Modern editors substitute for the lost beginning an extract from an extended version of Snorri Sturluson's life of St. Óláfr, which includes a summary, probably closely based on *Bjarnar saga*, of the hero's early life and adventures abroad. A second, shorter lacuna is irrecoverable. Poor preservation may explain the saga's relative neglect, despite its considerable literary merit and influence on later sagas: Gunnlaugs saga, Porsteins saga hvita, and, most notably, *Laxdœla saga* and the account given in *Eyrbyggja saga* of another poet and lover, Bjorn Breiðvikingskappi, to whom are attributed three of the same verses in variant forms, probably as a result of confusion between the poets' traditions before either saga was written.

Bjarni Kolbeinsson was the son of a well-known Norwegian Orkneyan chief Kolbeinn hrágis ("heap") and a great-granddaughter of Páll Porsteinsson, earl of the Orkneys. Bjarni thus came of a mighty family in the Isles, as states, and Orkneyinga saga stanzas which eighteen stanzas saga, ch. 109). From 1188 until his death (September 15, 1223), daughter of Pall Þorsteinsson, earl of the Orkneys. Bjarni thus Kolbeinsson, Páll Porsteinsson saga hvíta.

At the end of the Snorra Edda in Gks 2367 4to are preserved forty stanzas of a poem called Jómsvíkingadrápa, together with thirty stanzas of an unnamed poem, most commonly called Málsháttakvædi. The stef ("refrain") stanza of this last poem is also quoted in Gks 2367 4to, are by the same skald. Málsháttakvædi, in MS AM 510 4to also contains an allusion to the drápa that Bjarni biskup ... ortium Jómsvíkinga.

The stei ("slim end"; the stef stanza. 1, 4, 5, and 8 of each drápa stef with in the odd lines and hendingar in the odd lines and with skotendingar instead of adalhendingar in the even lines. The poem tells part of the story of the Jomsvikings, and seems to refer to oral tradition in numerous phrases such as fráki ("I heard"), frágum vér ("we heard"), and sega menn ("men say"). The poem probably was composed in the same period as the written sagas about the Jomsvikings, and it seems to have been influenced by them or by traditions used by them, e.g., in the mention of the skalds Vigfús and Hvarðr (st. 34). On the other hand, the poem differs from the prose tradition, e.g., in the prominence given to the Norwegian chef Armbrōr, forefather of the well-known Armæðlingar (sts. 21, 29). The main subject of the poem is the Jomsvikings' attack on Norway and the battle against Earl Hákon in Hjǫrungavágur (Sunnmøre). In particular, it concentrates on Vagn Ákason, who, despite the Jomsvikings' military defeat, succeeded in realizing his vow to marry Ingibjørg, the daughter of the Norwegian chief Pórkeilli leira ("loam-field").
Bjorn Arneirsson Hitdœlakappi ("champion of the people of Hitardalr") is known principally as the protagonist of Bjarnar saga Hitdarœlakappi, written possibly by or under the auspices of one or more of Bjorn's descendants in the Hitardalr region of western Iceland (Sigurður Nordial 1938: xc-xcv).

Traditionally accepted as a more or less faithful record of oral traditions that attached themselves to poetry probably composed by Bjorn himself (d. ca. 1204), Bjarnar saga characterizes Bjorn as a valiant and respected champion who becomes embroiled in a bitter, frequently petty, and to him ultimately fatal conflict with a fellow skald, Pórõr Kolbeinsson. Recently, however, the biographical truth of this picture has been questioned, most seriously by Bjarni Einarsson (1961), who nevertheless accepts Bjorn Ásgeirsson as a historical personage. Bjorn's reputation as a skald depends largely on Bjarnar saga. Outside the saga, two vsorð of his incompletely preserved fifteenth lausavísara are cited in the Third Grammatical Treatise by Óláfr hvitaskáld ("white skald") Pórõr Harðarson (d. 1259). Unlike his saga rival, Pórõr Kolbeinsson, Bjorn is not mentioned in the list of poets entitled Skaldatal.

Although the saga describes Bjorn's visits to several foreign courts, we have no record of any court poetry, extant or otherwise, anywhere attributed to him. Bjarnar saga does, however, refer to two lost poems by Bjorn: a drápa to the apostle Thomas (ch. 19); and Eyykynilvsir" ("Island-candle Visur," ch. 23), in Oddný's honor. Bjorn's extant corpus, recorded in Bjarnar saga, comprises three nunhent strophes of Grímagallítt ("Lump-sucker Sætre"), and twenty-four lausavísar, one (st. 4) in fornyðrslag meter, the remainder in dróttkvétt meter (stanza numbers refer to Finnur Jónsson's 1912 numeration). With few exceptions (notably those that refer least directly to Pórõr), the vehemence of the feelings expressed in these strophes is more impressive than their artistry or dignity. Some (particularly Grímagallítt) are coarse, and many are abusive. Only stanzas 1, 2, and 13 could possibly be described as love poetry, despite the saga's love interest.

In spite of Bjarni Einarsson's (1961) attempts to prove otherwise, a number of stanzas have apparently been inappropriately or incompletely assimilated into the saga (e.g., sts. 1, 9, 11, 13), which suggests that they were borrowed rather than created by the saga writer, and so predate the extant prose account. Removed from their prose context, many stanzas do seem to offer independent testimony to much of the saga's material. But this assessment is not tantamount to accepting that any stanzas were composed during Bjorn's lifetime, much less by Bjorn himself. Stanzas in oral circulation may have become attached to those traditions concerning Bjorn that they seemed or were adapted to fit (variant forms of lausavísar 1, 10, and 19 are apparently attributed to Bjorn Breidvikingakappi in Eybyggja saga, chs. 40). All in all, we are best advised to think in terms of oral traditions surrounding Bjorn Ásgeirsson that incorporate poetry probably about, and possibly by, the subject himself.


Mary Malcolm

[See also: Bjarnar saga Hitdarœlakappi; Lausavísar; Skald; Skaldic Metres; Skaldic Verse]

Bjorn Breidvikingakappi ("champion of the people of Breidvikk"), one of the few love poets of the Islandssögur, is identified in Eybyggja saga as the son of Æsbrand of Kambri, living on Snæfellnes in western Iceland at the end of the 10th century. The story recounts his adulterous relationship with Puríõr Barkardóttir, half-sister of Snorri goõi ("the priest"). In the saga, Bjorn leaves Iceland to become a Viking adventurer, while ïmrior returns to Iceland, where he sees Kjartan and comments on the mysterious land where the local chieftain turns out to be Bjorn. In spite of Bjorn's lifetime, much less by Bjorn himself. Stanzas in oral circulation may have become attached to those traditions concerning Bjorn that they seemed or were adapted to fit (variant forms of lausavísar 10, 19 and 22 are apparently attributed to Bjorn Breidvikingakappi in Eybyggja saga, ch. 40). All in all, we are best advised to think in terms of oral traditions surrounding Bjorn Ásgeirsson that incorporate poetry probably about, and possibly by, the subject himself.
illicit love for Púrðr parallels in many respects Bjarnar saga, while verses 27 in Eyrbyggja saga are love for Oddny eykyndill ("isle-candle"). Verses 28 and 29 are so similar that they have generally been regarded as two versions of the same stanza. Bjorn himself is not found in any source outside of Eyrbyggja saga, although his father Ásbrandr, his sister Púrðr, his brother Arnbjörn sterki ("the strong"), his paramour Púrðr, and her husband Póroddr are all found in Ljóðastríðabók, in which Kjartan also figures, but as the legitimate son of Póroddr and Púrðr. These facts, combined with the evident literary creativity of the author of Eyrbyggja saga, make it quite likely that the story of Bjorn Breiðvikingskappi has been assimilated to Bjorn Hvitfeldakappi’s, if indeed the former ever even existed.

If Bjorn did exist, he was unusual among contemporary skalds. Five of the stanzas attributed to Bjorn deal in some way with love, a rare theme in Viking Age verse. Whether genuinely with love, a rare theme in Viking Age verse. Whether genuinely

Galls mundum vit vilja
vibi ok blíku í miili,
(grand fæk af stóð stundum stènna)
denna dag lengst,
alls f aptan, þélia,
et tegumk sjálfr at drekka
opt hófinnarr erli
arnlims, gleði minnar.

[We two would wish this day to be the longest between the golden forest and the dark (?); I sometimes get pain from the prop of the ribbon, for this evening, tree of arm-serpent, I shall make myself ready to drink to the memory of my joy which has often passed. (Turville-Petre 1976: 64)]

Stanza 30 is in the rare meter known as hálfnæppt, of which the earliest other example, aside from one attributed spuriously to Haraldr hárfagri ("fair-hair") Hálfdanarson, occurs in a verse by Óttarr svarti ("the black"), from about 1018, some twenty years later than the supposed date for Bjorn’s stanza.

Boethius de Dacia was a Danish philosopher active at the University of Paris in the 1270s. "Boethius" is a latinization of the Nordic name "Bo." Because of a misinterpretation of the epithet "de Dacia/Dacus" = "from Denmark," some scholars have called him "Boethius of Sweden." Nothing is known about Boethius's life except that he was a master of arts, the author of some thirty learned works (ten preserved), and with Siger of Brabant became one of the main targets of the condemnation issued by the bishop of Paris in 1277. He may at some later time have become a Dominican. Boethius was an important linguistic theoretician who contributed to the development of the theory of "modi significandi." The theory distinguishes between a word's lexical meaning (the thing it signifies) and its secondary semantical components (the ways in which it signifies the thing, "modi significandi"). Grammaticality depends exclusively on concord of "modi significandi." The "modi significandi" were supposed to be linguistic universals, although not having the same sort of morphological expression in all languages. The "modi significandi" reflect ways of understanding ("modi intelligendi") common to all mankind, and they in turn are based on real features of things ("modi essendi"). Boethius is best known for his theory of knowledge and science, which makes each science an autonomous system ("modi scientiae") into which it is impossible to incorporate nonscientific facts known only through revelation. Thus, Christian beliefs about a temporal beginning of the world, about the existence of a first pair of human beings, or about the resurrection and the ultimate good of the individual are true, but it would be an error to try to assign them a place in scientific theories.


Sten Ebbesen

Bondakonst see Swedish Literature, Miscellaneous

Boði (pl. boðar, also boði, boándi, and boándi) was a term widely used throughout the Scandinavian cultural area to denote a free farmer. Specific rights and privileges varied from place to place. In medieval Iceland, a boði was usually the head of a household. The word derives from the verb boða, meaning "to prepare" or "to fix one's abode." According to the eddic poem Rígþula, the social classes in Old Scandinavia descended from the god Ægir, or Heimdallr. One of his offspring was Karl, a freeholding farmer. Karl and his children represent the freeholding class. One of Karl's sons was named Boði.

In medieval Iceland, everyone was required by law to be domiciled in the household of a boði. A household legally existed wherever an individual, a farmer, often referred to as a húsbóði, owned either land or milking stock. The term boði thus applied to both landowners and tenant farmers. Among the tenant farmers were householders who sometimes rented sizable parcels of land. If a renter, called a leglendingur, leglaðið, or landseti, possessed sufficient milking stock or fishing equipment, he enjoyed the full rights of freeman. A renter whose wealth was insufficient had his rights curtailed, especially those allowing full participation as juror or judge in court proceedings. The law further distinguishes boðar from two categories of freemen who had no land and insufficient stock: laborers (gríðmen) and cottagers (búðsetumenn). Both groups were banned from serving on several types of kviður (sing. kviði), the juries and panels of judges so important to Icelandic legal and political life. Leytingjar (sing. leysing), or freedmen, were another category of farmers. A leysingi who owned or rented sufficient property to form a household was called a boði. During his lifetime, however, a leysingi remained connected with, and at times dependent upon, the manumitter, who retained inheritance rights if his former slave died without an heir. The connection was broken in the second generation, and the offspring of freedmen assumed the rights that accrued to their property status.

Farmers who owned a legislated minimum of property (the value of a cow, a boat, a horse, or a net for each member of the household) were called þingafararkaupsboðar, or "thing-taxon-paying farmers." These boðar were required to pay the thing-attendance tax, or þingafararkaup. This large group of substantial householders enjoyed full rights under the law. They were eligible to participate, not only in local assemblies, but also in all judicial and legislative proceedings open to farmers at the Alþingi. Only those who qualified to pay þingafararkaup were allowed to serve on a þingveld, a jury or panel of five or nine neighbors who handed down verdicts on questions of fact. þingafararkaupsboðar were also responsible for specific public duties: to contribute to the upkeep of the poor (mannaleið), to assist in beaching ships (skógasprætt), and after 1096, to tithe. Þingjöldingabók reports that, around the year 1000, the number of boðar eligible to pay þingafararkaup stood at 4,560. The þingafararkaupsboðar and their households thus made up a very large part of the population. þingafararkaupsboðar were
not separated into groups or classes by formal legal distinctions, although the sagas reveal marked differences in wealth and prestige among farmers. The godar (sing. godi), or chieftains, legally belonged to this broad group; and in the sagas it is often difficult to determine whether a böndi was also a godi. The legal distinction between godar and böndi is minimized in the laws, which set the same compensation for injury, six marks (48 legal ounces), for all freemen, including godar.

_Landnámabók_ tells us that women settlers had the right to claim land, and the sagas give numerous examples of women functioning as heads of households. Women householders, nevertheless, cannot be counted as full pingmenn because of their exclusion from many aspects of the judicial process. _Eyrbyggja saga_ tells us that after the late 10th century women were denied the right to lead a prosecution for manslaughter. _Grágás_, in its written 13th-century form, specifies that a woman was excluded from becoming a judge or serving as a member of a vetríð, and in most instances was barred from acting as a witness. Such restrictions may have applied in the earlier period as well.

_Böndr_ were required by law to declare themselves “in thing with” (j þing með) a godi, and, at least in theory, a böndi was free to choose his chieftain. Apparently, some farmers chose not to join any chieftain’s following. As followers of a chieftain, farmers were known as pingmenn (sing. pingmadr), and in this capacity they assumed certain duties. They had to accompany their chieftain to the þings, the local springtime assembly. A chieftain could also require a ninth of his followers to accompany him to the Alþingi. In addition to serving on vetríð, böndr also composed the panels of judges in courts at the local assembly as well as in the quarter courts and the fifth court at the Alþingi. Judges had to be free males at least twelve years old, have a fixed domicile, and be responsible for their oaths and commitments.

The thing-attendance tax was one of the few imposts a chieftain could legally demand from his thingmen, and was paid by those propertied farmers who did not attend the Alþingi. The funds so collected were used by the chieftain to defray travel expenses for those thingmen who did accompany him to the national assembly. The tax does not seem to have been large enough to place undue burden on farmers. In levying it, as in making other demands, the godar were solicitous of the farmers’ wishes, because the bond between chieftains and their pingmenn was voluntary during much of the Free State’s history, and could be terminated at will by either party. Legally, böndr were permitted to change chieftains as frequently as once a year.

The status of farmers as free agents was probably reinforced by the _hreppr_ (sing. hreppr), local communal units that provided fire and livestock insurance, and administered poor relief. A hreppr included a minimum of twenty pingfararkaupsbœndr, and was independent of the godar and later of parish arrangements. The _hreppar_ were self-governing, but precisely how they functioned is unclear. Also obscure is when and how they came into being, although Iceland seems to have been divided into _hreppar_ as early as the 900s, _i.e._, before the introduction of Christianity. The law stipulated that a hreppskólnarmadr, the major official of a hreppr, be a landowner. A renter (leiglending) could, however, be elected as hreppskólnarmadr if the landholders chose to waive the property requirement.


**Bookprose/Freeprose Theory.** The two terms were first used by Heusler in his 1914 book _Die Anfänge der isländischen Saga_ to designate two different theories about how the sagas were created. Heusler used the term “freeprose” to designate the older theory that sagas were created in oral tradition. He used the term “bookprose” to designate a new theory, for which the leading spokesman was the founder of the so-called “Icelandic school,” Björn Magnússon Ólsen. According to this theory, there were no oral sagas, only disconnected oral traditions, which an author drew upon in composing a written saga. At the earliest stages of saga research, scholars held that all kinds of sagas were created in the oral tradition. In Heusler’s time, the old theory that written sagas were something very close to a copy of the oral sagas was modified in several ways.

Heusler, who favored freeprose, emphasized that the theory was relevant only in connection with the genres _Íslandisgöngur_, _konungasögur_, and _fornaldarþögur_. But in all these genres, there were sagas that should be regarded as works by individual authors. None of the _konungasögur_ fully reflected the old oral form; only minor parts of some _konungasögur_ could be regarded as freeprose. Among the _fornaldarþögur_, only those based on written sources, such as _Völsunga saga_, were to be regarded as bookprose; for the rest, Heusler assumed an underlying oral saga. The question was most complicated concerning the _Íslandisgöngur_, which were at the center of the discussion.

Heusler thought that many sagas lay between the typical freeprose saga based on an oral saga and the typical bookprose saga based to some extent on oral tradition but the work of an individual author.

While favoring freeprose, Heusler was free to regard individual sagas as bookprose. Concerning the larger _Íslandisgöngur_, Heusler, like many of his predecessors, considered the contribution of an individual author extensive. The freeprose theory, as Heusler defined it, claimed that a saga writer might have recorded an oral saga, but he might also make changes in areas beyond the saga teller’s competence concerning structure, style, language, and use of sources.

A scholar favoring bookprose, on the other hand, could never hold a freeprose view on any saga, since the bookprose theory denied the possibility of an oral saga. While the two theories could come very close to each other, the fundamental difference concerned the matter of sources for the written saga. According to the
bookprose theory, the main sources were oral prose tradition, poetic tradition, and written sources. According to the freeprose theory, the main source for a freeprose saga was an oral saga, but the saga writer could use as secondary sources all the material that the bookprose theory regarded as main sources.

According to the freeprose theory, the distinctive saga style was formed at the oral stage, while the bookprose theorists were more inclined to regard this style as literary. Heusler and Liestøl believed that the parallel passages, even long ones like those in Ljósveininga saga, were oral variants, and a proof of the existence of oral sagas. In the view of the bookprose school, parallel passages, at least the longer ones, resulted from literary or scribal variation. In this discussion, the bookprose theorists gained the upper hand. In accordance with their theories, they preferred the word "author"; the freeprose scholars preferred the phrase "saga writer" to designate the person who had written the sagas.

Since a freeprose scholar could hold a bookprose view of individual sagas, since not a whole genre of the sagas in question could be defined as freeprose or bookprose according to the freeprose theory, and since many Islandingsörgur in Heusler's opinion were neither freeprose nor bookprose sagas, but rather something in between, these terms (especially "freeprose" and "bookprose") proved inexact and unfit for a scientific discussion. But Heusler also used the terms in a different way. "Freeprose" to designate what in each saga could be defined as the result of oral creation, and "bookprose" to designate what in each saga could be defined as the result of an individual author's work. But few later scholars followed him in the use of this more precise definition.

The problem of historical truth was not part of the bookprose/freeprose theories as Heusler defined them. But since there was a logical connection and since many of the freeprose advocates, among them Liestøl, Heusler's successor on the freeprose front, were interested in the question of the sagas' historical truth, the two problems were soon mingled. In the polemics between freeprosists and bookprosists, the latter under the leadership of the scholars in the Icelandic school, among whom Sigurður Nordal took the leading position after Björn Magnússon Ólsen, freeprose was very often defined as a theory that presupposed an oral saga very much like the written saga behind almost every Islandingsörgur, a theory that gave the author no credit; and a very naive belief in the sagas' historical truth was made part of the freeprose theory. The same confusion of ideas did not take place with the bookprose theory. Among the supporters of this theory, there have been scholars who looked upon the oral tradition as a very important source for the author, and scholars who did not pay much attention to oral tradition, holding the opinion that it had little or no influence on the author's final result. This radical form of the bookprose theory is sometimes called the "fiction theory."


Else Mundal

BORRE

(Bold Norse Borro) was a necropolis on the Oslofjord, Vestfold, Norway, for Norwegian members of the Swedish dynasty of Ynglings.

Ynglingatal (st. 32) mentions a Hálfdan, son of Eysteinn, who was buried "á Borrói." Tradition from the 1820s (possibly earlier) linked this reference to the county of Borre in northern Vestfold. Here on the shoreline of the Oslofjord, in front of the medieval church of Borre, a group of nine large barrows, two large cairns, and twenty-three smaller mounds were discovered in 1852. Originally, there must have been more barrows, destroyed by the farming of the land. Today, the group consists of five barrows, two cairns, and the smaller mounds. The largest of the barrows measures about 50 m. x 7–8 m. In 1852, a magnificent ship burial came to light in one of the large barrows. Unfortunately, we do not know which mound, for the "excavation" was done during sandmining on the spot. An archaeologist was called in at the very last moment. Only a small part of the grave goods was rescued. The most precious item preserved is remnants of a claw beaker, rare in Norwegian contexts, but common in Swedish chieftain's graves. There are also at least four pairs of stirrups, parts of a beautifully decorated bridle, and a series of decorated gilt bronze mountings for at least one harness. Skeletons of horses were also found.

The bridle and the harness mountings are decorated in a pattern different from that on the Oseberg carvings, but very similar to some of the bronze mountings from the Gokstad ship. These mountings had given name to a specific stylistic group, the "Borre style" of ornament. The new and most characteristic element in the Borre style is the "ring-chain," a ribbon pattern consisting of twisted double ribbons, ending in en face animal heads. Animal heads seen en profile were also used by the metalworkers of the Borre style. They also applied "gripping beasts" adapted from the Oseberg style of ornament. A certain "hatching" of the ornaments shows that filigree work should be seen behind the ornaments in the Borre style group. The style became very popular and is found on metalwork all over Scandinavia. It is also found on the monumental stones on the Isle of Man. The Vikings brought it with them to the colonies in eastern Europe. The Borre style was already developed in the 9th century (Wilson 1970) and remained in use in the 10th century, partly parallel with the Jelling style.

It may be safely supposed that a chieftain and his warriors were buried in the ship, of which nothing is left. According to the report, it was smaller than the Oseberg and Gokstad ships (17–21 m.), but of the same construction. It seems reasonable to believe that the other large barrows contained ship(?) burials of the same high standard, but this guess has not been confirmed by excavations. The very monumentality of these large barrows links them to people belonging to the highest level of society, as in the Oseberg and Gokstad finds not far from Borre.

The 1852 grave cannot be dated earlier than about a.d. 900, contemporary with the Gokstad grave. In 1921, the better part of the smaller mounds was excavated. Nothing was found except some rivets, dated to the Viking Age. The shoreline tells us that all barrows, large and small, must belong to this period. All in all, it
seems reasonable to connect the Borre find with the Vestfold branch of the Yngling dynasty (Brøgger 1916), which has long been regarded as the cradle of early Norwegian history. King Haraldr hárfaingr (“fair-hair”) Halfdanarson belonged to this dynasty. He set out to conquer and unite all Norway into one realm, probably from Vestfold.

Snorre based his Ynglinga saga on Ynglingatal, a laudatory poem about persons living long before the poem was composed (ca. 890). The proof of its reliability should obviously be based on archaeological data. In 1987, a new research project started, applying modern archaeological surveying methods. It aims to collect as much information as possible about the original landscape, the construction and dating of the barrows, traces of grave robbing, possible traces of buildings (the royal farm?), and traces of possible harbors, without large-scale excavations, at least in the initial stage. The results of the 1988 campaign were promising, but so far nothing has been published (communication by Bjørn Myhre).

After their return, the blood-brothers participate in the famous Bravalla battle. In the meantime, Hringer is killed, and Heiðr is kidnapped.

The brothers pursue the abductors and arrive at the right moment at Heiðr’s party, in which they participate as musicians without being recognized. They manage to bring back the bride, who is smuggled out of the party hall in a harp box. Earlier, the sexual athlete Bósi again had seduced a farmer’s daughter, a narrative sequence that is repeated until he finds a wife and forces the princess Edda to marry him.

In a fantastic naval battle, in which monsters attack from both sides, the blood-brothers conquer the enemy, and the couples are finally united in a double party. In the meantime, a young dragon has hatched the gammsegg, which Herrauðr gives to his little daughter. Of her later suitors, only the one who can conquer the serpent may approach her. This is the Danish dragonslayer Ragnarr loðbrókr.

The saga is the prototype of the fairy-tale-like bridal-quest narrative. The triple kidnapping of the princess contrasts with the sexual scenes with the farmer’s daughter. It is not the invention of the author, but rather the prose paraphrase of a widespread type of erotic popular song. In addition, the author uses Oberon motifs, as in the Old French Huon de Bordeaux and the Middle High German König Rother.

The knowledge of the mythical Bravalla battle and the Jómali temple, which is also mentioned in Óláfr saga helga, has its origin in Norse tradition. The concluding genealogical literary play shows the connection with Ragnars saga loðbrókar. With the Busheseen curse, formulas in eadic verse are preserved. The narrative perspective emphasizes the activities of the nasty, violent, but witty farmer’s son Bósi and not the aristocrat. The sarcastic humor and the burlesque scenes have contributed to the long-lasting popularity of the often-told and well-composed saga.

Charlotte Blindheim


Charlotte Blindheim

[See also: Pjóðólfr of Hvín; Viking Art; Ynglinga saga]

Bósa saga (Herrauðs saga ok Bósa) (“The Saga of Bósi” or “The Saga of Herrauðr and Bósi”), an anonymous fornaldarsaga composed sometime before 1350, is extant in two independent recensions. An older form is found invell MSS from the 15th century (AM 586 4to, AM 343a 4to, AM 510 4to, AM 577 4to). A later, different, and much expanded form is found in paper MSS from the 17th and 18th centuries. The anonymous Bósa rímir, composed around 1500, is based on the older recension. The rich and complicated textual history shows that the material was popular in Iceland until recent times.

The saga treats two different heroes: the undaunted Viking son Óláfr and the knightly Prince Herrauðr. When King Hringer of Óstergötland wants to hang the two blood-brothers for manslaughter, Busla, Bósi’s foster-mother, forces the king to yield through her magical runic saying (Buslubœn). In repentance, both must get the gammsegg, a kind of dragon’s egg, from Bjarmaland.

On the journey, Bósi seduces a farmer’s daughter and re­ceives information from her about the gammsegg. They steal the egg from the temple of the heathen god Jómali. At the same time, a kind of dragon’s egg, from Bjarmaland.

The knowledge of the mythical Bravalla battle and the Jómali temple, which is also mentioned in Óláfr saga helga, has its origin in Norse tradition. The concluding genealogical literary play shows the connection with Ragnars saga loðbrókar. With the Busheseen curse, formulas in eadic verse are preserved. The narrative perspective emphasizes the activities of the nasty, violent, but witty farmer’s son Bósi and not the aristocrat. The sarcastic humor and the burlesque scenes have contributed to the long-lasting popularity of the often-told and well-composed saga.


Hans-Peter Naumann
earliest skald whose compositions have been preserved, although Bragi Boddason (the Old), a Norwegian poet probably of the semimythological stories exist, linking him in one case with ancestors of settlers in Iceland (Landnámabók, 5112, 1186, M30; Hálfs saga ok Hálssrekkja, ch. 11; Geimundar þáttir heljaršáglas, ch. 2). Skáldatal, an Icelandic catalogue of poets and their patrons, names him as a court poet of Ragnarr loðbrókr ("haughty-breeches"), Eystrheim beli ("belly"), and Bjorn at Haungi (Edda Snorra Sturlusonar, ch. 3, pp. 251–69). Snorri Sturluson also connected Bragi with Ragnarr loðbrók and attributed two groups of stanzas to a Ragnarsdrápa, a drápa or sequence of stanzas with a refrain, in honor of Ragnarr. Snorri suggests these stanzas in chs. 52 and 62 of Skáldskaparmál (Finnur Jónsson 1931: 134, 155; Faulkes 1987: 106, 123–4). Although Ragnarr was a hero of the Danes, recent scholarship indicates the probability of a Norwegian origin for this legendary Viking (Smyth 1977).

Bragi's Ragnarsdrápa is thought to have been a shield poem, which gave verbal representation to a set of pictures and mythological subjects painted on a leather-covered shield that the poet had received from his patron. The resulting poem was the skald's counter-gift to his lord. A similar context underlies Pjöððill of Hvin's Hausfløng. In 1860, Gisli Brynjulfsson proposed that such shields were divided into four fields and hence had four poetic subjects. Subsequent editorial arrangement of the hypothetical Ragnarsdrápa has followed this view, even though Snorri clearly admits only the stanzas mentioned above (3–7 and 8–12 in Finnur Jónsson's Skáldaledging as part of this drápa. Following Finnur Jónsson's arrangement, Ragnarsdrápa's four subjects were the encounter between the heroes Hámr and Sórlí and the Gothic tyrant Jormunrekkr (Ermanric), also subject of the eddic poem Hámhímismál (sta. 3–7); Hildr's incitement to battle of her father, Hogni, and her abductor, Heðrun (8–12); how Gejjon and her giant oxen won land from the Swedish king Gyll (13), and a version of the god Þór's fishing expedition to catch the World Serpent (14–19). Convention has also allocated to the drápa two half-stanza introductory verses, in the second of which the poet thanks the "son of Sigurðr" (Ragnarr's father is said to have been Sigurðr hringr ["ring"]) for the shield (1–2), and finishes off the drápa with a half-stanza (20) on the metamorphosis of the giant Þjazi's eyes into a pair of stars. Hence the Ragnarsdrápa we read in the standard editions is a scholarly reconstruction for which there is only partial authority in the work in which its component verses are to be found, Snorri Sturluson's Edda (ca. 1225).

Other medieval texts in which stanzas attributed to Bragi occur are MSS F (Codex Fritsians, AM 45 fol.) (Jófraskíntana, AM 38 fol.), and K (AM 35 fol.) of Heimskringla (Yraglinga saga, ch. 5) for Ragnarsdrápa 13; the Fourth Grammatical Treatise (Olsen 1884: 129) for Ragnarsdrápa 3; MSS of Landnámabók, Hálfs saga and Geimundar þáttir (for details see paragraph 1) for a lausavís on the twins Geimundr and Húmundr heljaršágnin.

Brandkrossa þáttir ("The Tale of Brandkrossi") is not a self-contained narrative, but was devised, probably late in the 13th century, as an amplifying prologue to section traces Helgi Asbjamarson's descent from his grandfather, is referred to in the tecedents of the main characters of Droplaugarsona saga. The displaced former pâttra Helganna saga. It provides more detail, sometimes in contradiction to the saga's own account, of the antecedents of the main characters of Droplaugarsona saga. The first section traces Helgi Ásbjarnarson's descent from his grandfather, the hero of Hrafnkels saga, but this saga was clearly unknown to the author of the þáttir, whose source was some version of Landnámabók. An outline of Helgi's character and early life culminates in his acquisition of a farm at Oddstadbak. The displaced former occupant sacrifices a bull to Freyr, ritually cursing his supplanter, an incident possibly deriving from a comparable event in Viga-Glúms saga.

The second, more fantastic section, by the author's own admission entertaining rather than factual, turns abruptly to an an­ecdote involving Grimr, maternal ancestor of the sons of Droplaug. Grimr possesses a remarkable ox, Brandkrossi, after which are ends, "to test him." Brands þáttir is virtually a paradigm of the utanferðar þáttir, a short narrative about an Icelandic's journey to Norway, encounter with the king, successful outcome of that encounter with concomitant reward, and (in this case implicit) journey back to Iceland. As is made explicit, the encounter takes the form of testing by the king, and here the testing is tripled. Tests and tripling connect the text directly with the realm of folktale, and further connection might be found in the rewards the king gives to Brandr. However, the þáttir lacks the advance in social status of the protagonist common to þáttir and folktales, perhaps because the author begins by identifying Brandr's generosity and kingly nickname, "the generous."

Brands þáttir orva ("The Tale of Brandr the Generous"), well known as a short tale of high stylistic value, is found in Morkinskinna and Hulda-Hrokkinskinna, in versions that differ only slightly. The Icelanders Brandr inn prví ("the generous") arrives in Níðröss (Trondheim) on a trading voyage. His friend, the poet Þjóðólfr, boasts to King Haraldr hardrát ("hard-ruler") Sigurðarson of Brandr's generosity and suggests that no man would be more fitting a choice if Iceland were to have a king. Haraldr sends Þjóðólfr to ask Brandr to give him first his cloak, then his as chasing with gold, and finally his precious tunic. Brandr compiles wordlessly with all three requests, but tears an arm from the tunic. The king responds: "This man is both wise and noble. It is clear to me why he has torn off the arm; it seems to him that I have only one arm, and that one only to receive, but never to give. Bring him to me." The king rewards Brandr, "and this was done," the text ends, "to test him."

Brávallapula ("The Metrical Name List of Brávellir [Brêvall]") tells of the legendary battle of Brâvellir, where Harald Wartooth (Hilditorn) lost his life to his nephew Sigurðr hringsr ("ring"), king of the Swedes. The Æala is known from Saxo's translation into Latin in Gesta Danorum. Here, Saxo enumerates the champions (some 160 are named), and their nicknames and places of origin are often added. The same list is given, although in shorter form, in the so-called Sogubrot preserved in an Icelandic MS of about 1300 (AM 1e β 1 fol.).

The origin of the Æala is disputed. Some scholars argue that the work displays traces of Norwegian or Telemarkian patriotism, while others, on the basis of linguistic analyses, maintain that the work originated more specifically in southeastern Norway, where Saxo and the author of Sogubrot had models available in MSS written in that region. However, recent scholarship has demon-
stratified the unreliability of these claims, since knowledge of early Norwegian dialects is defective. From the perspective of literary history, the *Julia* fits easily into an Icelandic setting, where such metrical name lists flourished in the 12th century, and it is to this period that we can assign the *Brávallapula*.

The differences between the two versions lie in the description of the battle and its antecedents and in the enumeration of the chieftains. If we follow Saxo's story, Öðinn, who impersonates Brun(ö), Harald's servant, sows strife between Harald and his nephew. Harald is now blind, but still able to fight, and the two armies meet at Brávellir. Starkad is on the side of the Swedes, and it was said to be in his verses that the story of the battle was recorded. Multitudes fall on either side, and, in the end, Harald learns that the Swedish army is deployed in a wedge formation like his own. Only Öðinn could have taught them this formation, and Harald knows now that the god has turned against him. Öðinn, who is now acting as Harald's charioteer under the name of Brúni, batters the king to death with his own club. His nephew gives him a magnificent funeral, which is fully described by Saxo and in *Sogubrot*. Contrary to Saxo, *Sogubrot* does not mention any divine intervention in the battle: Harald is killed by a certain Brúni, but his identification with Öðinn is not noted. Whereas Saxo names Icelanders on both sides, none are named in *Sogubrot*; generally, there are fewer names in the latter text. The description of the combat also differs. In Saxo, one duel follows the next, whereas in *Sogubrot*, the fighting is more complicated. Minor distinctions can be observed in the descriptions of Harald's funeral. In both versions, Sigurðr asks the chieftains to present the deceased king with costly objects so that he can enter Valholl in style. In *Sogubrot*, Harald is buried in a mound at the battle field, but in Saxo he is cremated and his urn brought to Lejre.

The differences between the two texts suggests that Saxo expanded the mythological element of the poem, introducing the Brávellir theme as part of his overall plan for Book 8. In this book, several episodes resemble the Ragnarök myth; one story is reminiscent of the Fimbul winters, another of the wolf Fenrir. The myth also depicts a great combat in which the gods and the einherjar (fallen warriors in Valholl) meet. In having the names contained in *Brávallapula* reflect those of men and women who appear in the *Trójumanna saga*. In the first ten books of *Gesta Danorum*, Saxo is able to spread the combatants over several hundreds of years and superimpose the great battle of the Ragnarök myth upon ordinary chronology. The battle at Brávellir thus becomes a turning point in history when paganism is ended and Christianity introduced.

Both national and historical considerations can explain why *Sogubrot* does not mention the Icelanders. The whole story is meant to have taken place in the old days, i.e., before Iceland was inhabited, so it stands to reason that no Icelandier could participate in the Brávellir battle. Nationalism can explain Öðinn's subordinated role.

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**Bretasögur** (*The Sagas of the British*) is the title, as transmitted in *Hauksbók* and AM 573 4to, of an Old Norse rendering of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae* (ca. 1136), with additions from other sources. The text of *Bretasögur* is poorly preserved. In the MSS, it is linked by the *p*-version of *Trójumanna saga*, and, like the latter text, it is extant in both a shorter and a longer redaction, the shorter of which is found only in *Hauksbók* and in transcriptions of this MS. Hauk Erlendsson copied the *Trójumanna saga* and *Bretasögur* portions of *Hauksbók* between 1302 and 1310 and, as he did with other texts that he copied, considerably shortened them. The *Hauksbók* redaction of *Bretasögur* contains a large number of mistakes, some of which probably result from being condensed. The abbreviation is especially pronounced toward the end, which is all the more unfortunate since *Hauksbók* is the only extant MS of *Bretasögur* to contain the last chapters of the work. Furthermore, the text of *Hauksbók* is difficult to read in many places, partly because of wear and tear, and partly because of 17th-century attempts to touch up the worn passages.

The longer redaction is represented by two MSS, both defective: AM 573 4to (14th century) and Stock. Papp. fol. no. 58, a 17th-century copy of the lost *Ormr Snorrason's book* (*14th century*). The text in AM 573 4to has several lacunae and ends defectively within *Valvers pâttr*, which in this MS follows the account of King Arthur's death (*Historia*, Book 11). The text of Stock. Papp. fol. no. 58 breaks off in *Historia*, Book 5. A badly mutilated and partly illegible fragment of an otherwise lost 14th-century MS of *Bretasögur* was discovered in the binding of an Icelandic MS in Trinity College, Dublin, in 1968. The text of this fragment (as yet unpublished) is fuller than that of AM 573 4to, which seems to indicate that both of the preserved redactions go back to an abridged version of the original translation; Stock. Papp. fol. no. 58 does not cover the relevant part of the narrative.

The first chapters of the saga, which summarize the story of Aeneas and Turnus, are directly or indirectly derived from Vergil's *Aeneid*, and continue the tale as told in the concluding chapters of the *p*-version of *Trójumanna saga*. Two items are found only in the *Hauksbók* redaction: the poem *Merlinuspa* and a short catalogue listing the West Saxon kings from Caedwalla to Athelstan. This regnal list, of uncertain provenance, is surely a later addition to the original translation of Geoffrey's *Historia. Merlinuspa* is a free metrical rendering of Geoffrey's *Prophetiae Merlini*. Written sometime before the *Historia*, the *Prophetiae* were later inserted into Geoffrey's work as part of Book 7. The MSS of *Bretasögur* ascribe the poem to the Icelandic monk Gunnlaugr Leifsson of Pingeyrar (d. 1218 or 1219). Some scholars have assumed that...
Gunnlaug Leifsson's *Merlinusspa* opened the way for a translation of Geoffrey's *Historia* in Iceland at the beginning of the 13th century. Chiefly on the basis of stylistic arguments, however, Halvorsen feels inclined to count *Breta sogur* and *Tröjumanna saga* (i.e., the β-version) among the pseudo-historical works that were translated at the behest of King Hákon Hákonarson of Norway (1217-1263).


*Jonna Louis-Jensen* [See also: *Grípijspå, Hauksbók, Merlinusspa, Tröjumanna saga*]

**Brunkebergsvisan** see Swedish Literature, Miscellaneous

**Brynhildr** see Volsung-Niflung Cycle

**Burial Mounds and Burial Practices.** In some areas of northern Europe from the Early Bronze Age to the Viking Age, burials were covered with mounds. Two kinds of mounds may be distinguished on the basis of the materials used in their construction: first, those exclusively made of stone (called "cairns") after the Celtic word for megalithic stone monuments; the Norwegian and Swedish term is *rõse*; second, those built of earth, turf, and stones (called "mounds" or "barrows"); Danish *høj*, Norwegian *huug*, Swedish *hög*). Generally, these cairns and mounds/barrows have a domed profile (Fig. 3), but there are stone settings that may be filled with stones or earth and turf, and that show a flat profile. These cairn- or mound-like stone settings are known from many Late Iron Age cemeteries in Scandinavia in different forms: circular, triangular, square, rectangular, ship-formed, or triangular with concave sides; they are often raised up without any covering (Fig. 3). Cemeteries with Viking Age mounds, cairns, and stone settings are preserved in many parts of Scandinavia, especially in central Sweden (Mälaren area), where in view of their topographical connection with medieval villages they are called "village grave fields" (Swedish *bygravsfält*). The cemeteries of the Early Iron Age (Pre-Roman, Roman Iron Age, Migration Period) are characterized by stone settings with low or flat profiles, varying forms (circular, rectangular, square, triangular), and upright stones (Fig. 4); they contain cremation burials (deposits on ground surface, in pits and urns), mostly with few grave goods. From the Migration Period on, mounds with domed profiles become predominant, and are accompanied by stone settings of varying forms (circular, triangular, square, and ship-formed; Fig. 4). Cremation burials, mostly deposits on the surface, are common. Some inhumation graves occur in the Migration and Vendel periods; their number increases in the Viking Age, especially in the late phase. The grave goods of the Late Iron Age are far richer and more differentiated than in the Early Iron Age, and include costume, multiple grave goods, and animals.

Excellent examples of Viking Age mounds can be found at the grave fields of Birka (Björkö), where 465 mounds with cremation burials and 176 mounds with inhumation graves have been excavated. The mounds are usually of a more or less regular circular outline. The diameter of the circular mounds with cremation burials varies from 1.8 m. to 16.8 m., with the large majority between 3 m. and 6 m. The height varies from 0.15 m. to 1.95 m., mostly between 0.30 m. and 0.90 m. The mounds with inhumation burials have diameters from 3 m. to 14 m.; the mounds with chamber graves tend to be larger (5-14 m.).

A small group of Viking Age mounds can be classified as "great mounds" (Swedish *storhögar*, Norwegian *storhøyer*) or "king" or "royal mounds" (Swedish *kungshögar*, Norwegian *kongshøyer*), which are characterized by their monumental size. Notable examples are the two "royal" mounds at Jelling, with a diameter of about 70 m. and a height of about 11 m., the northern one with a large chamber grave, and the mounds of Gokstad and Oseberg, Vestfold, southern Norway, with a diameter of about 45 m., a height of 5-6 m., and containing ship burials. Generally, large mounds are defined as being more than 20-25 m. in diameter. In Sweden, most of the mounds are distributed in the Mälaren area and adjoining regions, where excavations have brought to light burials from the Migration Period and Late Iron Age. The best-known mounds are those from Gamla ("Old") Uppsala, containing richly equipped cremation burials from the 6th century. Another example dating to the Migration Period is the grave field with large mounds from Hög, Medelpad, in northern Sweden. Many large mounds are registered in southern, western, and middle Norway. In Vestlandet (northern Rogaland, Hordaland, Sogn and Fjordane, and Møre and Romsdal), about 300 mounds are known with a diameter of more than 22 m. and a volume of more than 400 cubic m. (height 2.2 m. and more). Only one third of these mounds have been excavated, mostly partially. About 50 percent of these belong to the Early Iron Age (Pre-Roman Iron Age to Migration Period), 25 percent to the Late Iron Age (Merovingian times and Viking Age), and the rest to the Iron Age and Bronze Age. Without question, the burials in large mounds generally represent members of leading "aristocratic" and "royal" families; they
are interpreted as visible signs of consolidated power and territorial claim. Additionally, they functioned as religious, juridical, and political centers (cf. Old Uppsala in the Viking Age and large mounds from the Migration Period).

Attempts have been made to differentiate the grave mounds and grave furnishings on the basis of regional archaeological data and to offer a sociological interpretation by connecting the archaeological sources with historically known groups of a stratified society (Norwegian lagdel samfunn). Scholars have attempted, for instance, to assign the standard accoutrements of 10th-century warrior burials (often with horses) in the Old Danish realm with the group of hemþægi ("home-companion"). Pegr, and dregn (both terms denote dependence on or sworn loyalty to the king) of the written sources (runic inscriptions) who were active in royal service. On the other hand, there are burials without any grave goods, but that are closely connected with rich burials, and that are often interpreted as burials of slaves. The interpretation of Viking graves is complicated by religious ambivalence or change from heathendom to Christianity. As several studies of the last years show, a complex pattern is emerging, where religious, social, economic and other factors must be taken into consideration.


Michael Müller-Wille

(See also: Graves; Religion, Pagan Scandinavian)

Bæring's saga (“The Saga of Bæring”) is an anonymous Icelandic dirkaðasaga probably from the beginning of the 14th century, the date of the oldest MS, AM 580 4to. The saga is extant in more than fifty-five MSS and in different redactions. Between the 16th and the 19th centuries, six rfmur-cycles were composed based on the material of the saga, as was the short Bæring's vsa (CCF 42) composed in the Faroe Islands in the 19th century.

The saga can be summarized as follows: The knight Heinrekr takes possession of the royal throne in Saxonland. Meanwhile, in England, Bæring is trained to become a brave knight. At the age of twenty-three, he attempts to recapture his father's kingdom, but his fleet sinks. While in France, Bæring gains the friendship of the king of Constantinople; he becomes engaged to the king's sister Vindemira, and returns to Saxonland. On his journey, Bæring defeats a number of adversaries and rejects gentle ladies, who fall in love with him because of his good looks. With God's help, he finally defeats the sorcerer Heinrekr in a great battle. Bæring marries Vindemira and becomes the emperor of the Roman Empire.

Of the stories composed in Iceland around 1300 and based on material from older texts, Bæring's saga is considered among the oldest. It draws on motifs found in Rémundar saga keisarasnor (the series of battles and journeys), Mírmanns saga (the chaste, Christian knight), Ívens saga (the easily consoled widow), and Pòrekss saga (for its North German roots). It is possible that certain features of the conflict as described in the saga may go back to historical events in North Germany.

As in Siggrárðs saga ok Valbronds and Adonis saga, the plot of Bæring's saga develops as a consequence of the initial villainy (usurpation and murder, flight, exile) in a series of conflicts and flights until the victory and the final progress at the end. Two elements of the saga are particularly noteworthy. First, because of the physical attraction of the knight, the conflicts with the adversaries are not limited to the male sex only, but also include love intrigues (the "Potiphar" motif). Second, the text, unlike other sagas, merges the plot involving the courtly milieu with a Christian moral attitude. Occasional proverbs and, in particular, the distinctive expression of the narrator emphasize and elucidate the thematic and ideological structure of the saga: in the character of the hero Bæring, superior to all other Heathens, Christian chivalry is effectively glorified, and its superiority as a belief system establishing guidelines of moral conduct is firmly demonstrated.


Jörg Glauser

[See also: Adonis saga, Ívens saga, Mírmanns saga, Rémundar saga keisarasnor, Riddarasögur, Ítvur, Siggrárðs saga ok Valbronds; Pòrekss saga af Bern]

Bølgunga sogur ("Sagas of the Baglar"), one of the konungsásgur, is the most important source for Norwegian history 1202–1217. During this period, political power in Norway...
was divided between two factions, the Birkibeinar ("birch-legs"), with their center in central Norway (Proendalpg), and the Baglar (from bagall, i.e., Crosier), who usually controlled southeastern Norway. The saga deals with three Birkibeinar kings, Hákon Sverrisson (r. 1202–1203), Guttormr Sigurðarson (r. 1204), and Ingi Bárðarson (r. 1204–1217), and three Baglar kings, Ingi Magnússon (r. 1196–1202), Erlingr steinveggr ("stonewall"; r. 1204–1207), and Philippús Símonarson (r. 1207–1217). It consists primarily of the historical reporting of military and political events, and is based on information from participants in the activities. Detailed accounts of the constant battles between the two parties comprise the first part of the saga (1202–1209); a truce in the fall of 1208 puts a stop to the hostilities. The rest of the saga relates more episodically political events and court intrigues in the Birkibeinar empire, but also includes passages concerning the Baglar.

_Bøglunga sögur_ is a direct continuation of _Sverris saga_, although it does not attain the earlier work's status as literature. The Birkibeinar kings receive a continuous presentation of their reigns, but the reigns of the first and last Baglar kings are only fragmentarily presented. Both of the Birkibeinar kings who died as grown men receive honorable necrologies, in accordance with European literary tradition, whereas none of the Baglar kings receives a necrology. It appears, then, that _Bøglunga sögur_ was conceived as a work where the Birkibeinar kings were the central characters.

Nowhere is _Bøglunga sögur_ transmitted in its original and complete form. There are two main redactions, one longer one, which covers the entire period 1202–1217, and one shorter one, covering only the years 1202–1210. Four parchment fragments of the longer version are preserved, but this version is most completely preserved in a translation from Old Norse into Danish by the Norwegian priest Peder Clausson Friis (d. 1614) and printed in Copenhagen by the Danish scholar Ole Worm in 1633. The shorter version is preserved in two large Icelandicvellums containing collections of _konungasögur_, _Eirspennill_ and _Skálholtsbók yngsta_, and a parchment fragment.

_Bøglunga sögur_ most likely was written in stages, like _Sverris saga_. The fuller initial part was probably composed around 1210, whereas the final part seems to have been written very shortly after Ingi Bárðarson's death in 1217. Both parts were most likely written by one or more Icelanders. The scholarly consensus has been that the shorter version is more original; however, the shorter version must have come about by a revision of the initial part of the longer version. Some of the events in _Bøglunga sögur_ are also presented in other Old Norse sources, especially in the beginning of _Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar._


Hallvard Magerøy

[See also: _Eirspennill, Hákonar saga gamla Hákonarsonar, Konungasögur, Political Literature; Sverris saga_]
**Caithness**, the most northeasterly province of mainland Scotland, was more heavily settled by Vikings than any other part of the mainland. The Old Norse name **Katanes** ("The headland of the tribe of Cats") incorporates the name of one of the seven provinces of the Picts, which originally covered the area north of the Oykell River (Dornoch Firth). The name "Caithness" may have been applied first by the Norse to Duncansby Head, but was extended in its application to the northern half of the former Pictish province as Scandinavian settlement spread south. The southern half of the province came to be called "Sutherland" (Suðrland), and even in the later Middle Ages Sutherland and Caithness were referred to as "the two provinces of the Caithness-men." Both the earldom and bishopric of Caithness covered the entire area north of the Oykell River, although the earls lost control of Sutherland in the 13th century.

The date at which Norse settlement occurred in Caithness is not clearly specified in any historical or saga source. It can be assumed to be later than in the islands, and likely to have followed the successful campaigns of Sigurðr inn riki ("the mighty") Eysteinsinn, earl of Orkney, and Porsteinn rauði ("the red") Óláfsson in the late 9th century. Strong saga tradition recorded their conquest of Caithness and Sutherland to the banks of the Oykell. Archaeological evidence broadly supports a 10th-century settlement period: the pagan graves are nearly all clustered close to the northern and eastern coastal zone and in southeast Sutherland, and none of them suggests an early Viking date. The distribution of Norse place-names provides a much more complete picture of the total settlement by settlers of Norse speech. These place-names suggest that there was an obliteration of older place-names in the low-lying arable lands of northeast Caithness. As the terrain becomes higher to the south and west, Celtic place-names appear in increasing numbers, and at the 400-m. contour line Norse place-names fade out. Such a demarcation zone between the two languages may suggest a situation of confrontation between the two cultures. The Celtic place-names are not, however, pre-Norse but of a later Gaelic type, which suggests a spread of Gaelic speakers into the totally Norse-speaking province later in the Middle Ages. Elsewhere in Caithness, Norse place-names are scattered along the coastal zone and up river valleys, heavily intermixed with Celtic names. These are areas where the Gaelic language was spoken until comparatively recently.

Despite the early conquests of Sigurðr and Porsteinn, the earls of Orkney had a long battle to assure themselves of political control in Caithness. Their protagonists were native "kings of Scots" (so-called in Orkneyinga saga and *Njáls saga*) and are thought to have been rulers of the province of Moray, south and west of Inverness. One of them is likely to have been the famous MacBeth. This struggle continued through the late 10th century and the first half of the 11th. During this period, the earls are said to have received support for their claim to authority in Caithness from the southern line of kings in Scotland, whose assertion of hegemony to the whole of Scotland was challenged by the Moray dynasty. The marriage of Earl Sigurðr digri ("the stout") Hlóðvisson (ca. 985-1014) to a daughter of Malcolm II of Scotland is strong evidence for the alliance of Norse earls and south Scottish royal dynasty. This alliance inevitably led to the situation of the earls submitting to the kings of Scotland and eventually being in the position of vassals who held their earldom by royal grant. Porfinnr Sigurðarson's close relationship with his grandfather Malcolm II strengthened Scottish control in Caithness, and he is said to have been given Caithness and Sutherland along with the title of earl by the king, who appointed counselors to govern the land with him. Formal acknowledgment that Caithness and Sutherland and other parts of the Scottish littoral settled by Scandinavian-speaking colonists were in fact part of the kingdom of Scotland was made in 1098, when King Magnus berføttr ("bare-leg") Óláfsson of Norway agreed in a treaty with the king of Scots that only the offshore islands came under Magnus's rule.

Formal submission to Scottish overlordship did not mean that the kings immediately had direct authority in Caithness. In all political and social respects, Caithness was a part of the Scandinavian North until the 13th century and closely tied to the islands across the Pentland Firth. It formed one half of the joint earldom of Orkney-Caithness until the late 14th century, and when the islands were divided among joint heirs Caithness seems usually to have been attached to the southeast portion of Orkney. The earls' administration and defensive system was established throughout Caithness and Sutherland following the recorded incidence of the territorial divisions of ounce lands and pennylands, which were to become the basis of the payments of *skatatr* (tax). The earls had various administrative centers and residences: in the 11th century, Earl Porfinnr resided at Duncansby; an important earldom castle...
5. Caithness

at Thurso was first recorded in 1154; and Murkle, east of Thurso, was also a residence. But Brawl near Halkirk was perhaps the most important comital seat in the later Middle Ages.

The 12th-century section of Orkneyinga saga and the shorter Haralds saga Maddadarsonar give much information about the contemporary situation in Caithness. In fact, the saga writer’s knowledge of Caithness, both its geography and genealogies, is so specific as to suggest that he stayed there for a time with some branch of the family of Sveinn Ásleifason. Several stirring events took place in Caithness during this period: the murder of Earl Rognvaldr Kali Kolsson at Forsie in 1158; the battle of Earl Haraldr Maddadarson with the claimant Haraldr ungi ("the young") Eiríksson near Wick in 1198, showing how important retention of control of Caithness was for an earl’s power.

Another marked feature of the history of Caithness in the 12th and early 13th centuries is the situation of permanent tension between earls and bishops. This tension resulted from the appointment of Scottish bishops as part of the Scottish Crown’s determination to draw the area more firmly under its own control. It is more than likely that prior to the appointment of Bishop Andrew (1147/51) the area had lain within the jurisdiction of the bishops of Orkney, who cannot have welcomed this development, nor did the earl, who frequently exercised some control over the appointment of Orkney bishops at this time. The tension that erupted between Earl Haraldr and Bishop John (1187/9–1202) and Earl Jón Haraldsson and Bishop Adam (1213–1222) was primarily over financial matters, and in the latter case over the question of tithes, which were increased perhaps to put them in line with Scottish practice. The maiming of Bishop John and the murder of Bishop Adam that followed provided the Scottish kings with the opportunity to exercise financial and judicial control over the earls and their earldom. But the power of the earls was most
particularly curbed by the establishment of a feudal power center in Sutherland, which was detached from the earldom of Caithness and made into a separate earldom for a vassal of the king. At the same time, the bishop moved his see to Dornoch in Sutherland, which was detached from the earldom of Caithness particularly curbed by the establishment of a feudal power center. Hákon Haraldsson's expedition to Scotland in 1263, Caithness had been securely turned into an integral part of the medieval Scottish kingdom.


**Barbara E. Crawford**

*Calendar and Time Reckoning*. The sun year played an important part in the conception of time in medieval Scandinavia. There was a time of light and a time of darkness, and both summer and winter solstices were ritually marked. But the year was also a framework of social activities, and we would be wrong in assuming that the year was just time.

The old Nordic concept of the year was ár. As a time indicator, it comprised the solar year, but, like many other key concepts in the semantic field of temporal and spatial categories, it had multiple reference. First and foremost, ár was a qualitative rather than quantitative entity, concerning the content and the yield of the year as much as its length. Ár meant "fertility" and "abundance" and was related to the cycle of farming life. The best wishes for one another and for society was ár og fridr, "abundance and peace." Apart from meaning "peace," fridr also denoted kinship, friendship, and love. The yield of the year was not only a question of the harvest but also the ability to harvest in the proper and peaceful country of friends. This required a law. The law was decided at the bing, or people's assembly. The bing was not just a place, but also a time of the year. It was the time when news and goods were exchanged, and when the calendar for next year was determined.

As a time indicator, the half-year was of equal importance. It would be wrong to say that the year was divided into two. Rather, summer and winter made up the year. If we regard the year from the point of view of the yield, the summer was production time, and winter consumption time.

The transition from summer to winter and vice versa was socially marked. Even today, the Icelanders celebrate the first summer day (sometime in April), and in Norway the 14th of April is still called sommermålt 'summer measure.' The passage of time implied recurrent leaps from one qualitative state to another.

The dual nature of the year can be read directly from the old month names. In the summer half-year, beginning mid-April, most months were named after economic activities. During winter, from mid-October, most months had noneconomic names. In summer, there was a "sowing month," a "sheep month," and a "hay month," for instance. At the point of intersection between summer and winter, there was a "slaughtering month" in the pastoral areas of Iceland, Norway, and Sweden, while the agricultural country of Denmark had a "seeds month." In winter, there was a "yule month," and months like þorri (Torre or Torsmâned), göi (Gjõ or Gøjemâned), and single month. The point is that these months hardly were months in our sense of the term. Rather, they indicated seasons of particular activities. In summer, most activities were connected to production. In winter, various rituals had more significance than economics. Þorri and göi are of obscure origin, and may derive from a prehistoric calendar. There were sacrifices connected with them, and even today a þorriblit, literally "sacrifice," is the name of a popular, revitalized feast in Iceland held in February. The yule month is the time of the ancient celebration of winter solstice, conflated with the Christian Christmas in the Middle Ages.

Like the solar year, the day was also marked by a cyclical character. It comprised a time of light and a time of darkness. Thus, the day was defined by the visible movements of the sun, directly acknowledged in its name, sólarhringr, or "sun-ring." Apart from being divided into day and night, the sólarhringr was divided into eight parts, named by the cardinal directions. Each eighth had either a physical fact, like midvåg,
'midday,' or a meal, like dag-mál and nátt-mál ("day-") and "night-
meal"). Meal, or mãl, also meant measure, and clearly activities
like eating were measures of the time of the day.

From a modern point of view, neither the months nor the
meals were precise indicators of time. Yet in the medieval Nordic
perspective, they were by no means imprecise. Hay month
occurred when time was ripe for the harvest; and dag-málahappened
when the first meal of the day was taken. Thus, time reckoning
was generally connected to social activities rather than to abstract
notions of time. When the Julian calendar was introduced in the
wake of Christianity, attempts were made to calibrate the two
scales, but in popular usage the old names of months, days, and
meals persisted.

An example of calibration was found in the rímstaf "rhyme-
staff," a calendar stave known also from southern parts of Europe,
but assuming a separate Nordic identity. The stave had a summer
side and a winter side, upon which both the old feasts and the new
Christian holidays were marked by various symbols. It was in use
among Scandinavian peasants until the 17th century, and is the
oldest known example of an abstract measuring of time that was
truly popular.

Generally, in medieval Scandinavia time was measured from
the ego standing at the center of its own world. Time of the day
was measured either by the position of the sun on the horizon or
by the meal one was to have. Time of the year was measured
according to social activities, as defined by people. The scale was
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Kirsten Hastrop

Carving: Bone, Horn, and Walrus Tusk

Carved objects in bone, horn, and walrus tusk are known from the Viking
Age and the Christian Middle Ages. Walrus ivory was a very valu-
able material that became particularly prevalent after the Norse
colonization of Greenland from the end of the 10th century on-
ward. Whalebone was most suitable when the carver needed larger
slabs. Animal horn was used throughout the Middle Ages, es-
specially for drinking vessels, which might also be decorated with
carving. To some extent, carvings may have been inspired by ivory
carvings from more southern areas, but the expensive ivory of the
African elephant was late in coming to the Nordic countries, and
was little used.

In contrast to the art of wood carving, carving in bone, horn,
and tusk was restricted to small objects by the limited size of the
material. But the same four categories of carving are found: incised
work, relief, openwork, and sculpture in the round. Our knowl-
edge of this art is based on a limited number of objects and on
information from written sources. Many of the objects, however,
are difficult to date.

1. NORWAY. The decorated objects in bone known from the
early Viking Age, combs and other items from the 9th and 10th
centuries, have a simple, incised ornamentation of circles, dots,
and lined borders. Animal heads also occur. Similarly, the deco-
rative styles of the late Viking Age also appear on small objects in
bone. The decoration may consist of plaited ribbons and animal
ornamentation. But only a few objects preserved are of certain
Norwegian origin.

There is rather more Norwegian material from the Christian
Middle Ages, although the majority of these objects are doubtless
lost. Almost without exception, the most representative carvings
(of walrus ivory) are now found in museums outside Norway. On
stylistic grounds, these objects have been assigned to Norway and
the North Sea area. These pieces include objects for ecclesiastical
purposes and the treasures of affluent people, suitable as gifts
between kings and other prominent persons. It is probable that
alongside these rich examples there always existed less luxurious
objects with simpler decoration.

The form of many of these objects is adapted to the natural
shape of the walrus tusk. They are long and slender pieces, either
straight or curved, and tapering at one end. They were hollowed
out and, among other things, have been used as bugles or reliquar-
ies. The outside may be chamfered in different ways, making them,
for example, octagonal in cross-section. The carved ornamenta-
tion in relief that decorates the outside of the older pieces in
particular has a dense, intricate pattern. On some of the objects,
it is possible to recognize the figure-of-eights and animal figures
marking the latest period style (Urnes style) of the Viking Age,
while the dragon wings, vines, and lions are distinctive of the
Romanesque style, in particular as expressed on the portals of
Norwegian stave churches. Some of the carvings even show the
characteristic pattern known from many of the church portals of
a foliate scroll emerging from the mouth of a beast and following
an undulating path, with spirally coiled lateral branches inhabited
by four-legged animals and winged dragons in complicated inter-
lacing.

Some objects seem to point to workshops in the city of
Niðarós (Trondheim), since the motifs and the style of the or-
namentation are similar to the stone carver's art as expressed there
in the 12th century. This ornamentation includes scrolls intertwined
with small lions and beasts. Examples include the head of a staff,
possibly an abbot's staff (Tau cross), and a bugle. The head of the
staff (Fig. 6), dated to the end of the 12th century, confirms the Nordic origin.
This piece may have been a gift from a Norwegian to a French
king. It is uncertain, however, whether the carving and the runes
have a Norwegian or Icelandic origin.

The head of a crozier (Fig. 8) has been found in Garðar
on Greenland, in the grave of Jón smyrill ("merlin"), who was bishop
there from 1188 to his death in 1209. The actual crook ends in a
Norwegian or Icelandic origin.

The head of a crozier (Fig. 8) has been found in Garðar
on Greenland, in the grave of Jón smyrill ("merlin"), who was bishop
there from 1188 to his death in 1209. The actual crook ends in a
large tuft of lobed leaves, a motif commonly found in the carving
on Norwegian stave churches. The rest of the ornamentation
consists of simple geometrical patterns. In addition to Niðarós in
Norway, Greenland and Iceland have been suggested as countries
of origin.

Views also differ concerning the origin of a large number of
crossmen in walrus ivory, found on the island of Lewis in the
Hebrides (Figs. 9a and 9b). The different categories of figures,


kings, queens, bishops, knights, and soldiers (castles), are easily recognizable by their clothing; the pawns are octagonal, with a rounded top. The figures seem to be more typically Norwegian than English. This opinion applies in particular to the ornamentation (foliate scrolls and animals) on some of the backboards of the sitting figures. There are similarities with the wood carving from the stave churches and with the stone carving on the older parts of the cathedral in Trondheim (1150s). The figures must have been carved in the second half of the 12th century, or a little later.

Walrus ivory was also used for lidded boxes. Three such boxes with carving in relief are thought to have a Norwegian origin. They show human figures and beasts entwined in foliage richly supplied with rows of beads and bunches of grapes. Their style places these carvings at the transition into the Gothic period.

Crucifixes made from walrus tusk are also known, although only fragments remain. The style of a torso of Christ crowned with thorns, found buried in the ground in Trondheim, is English-influenced Early Gothic. Of greater repute is the much discussed "Bitter Christ," a torso of Christ from a crucifix, a work of high quality. Recent studies have shown, however, that this work may well have an English origin.

A bugle shows Gothic influence, and has been linked to Erik of Pomerania because his Norwegian coat-of-arms is carved in one of the three blazons. The other two blazons are empty, and were possibly intended to hold his Danish and Swedish coats-of-arms. He was chosen in 1389 as king of Norway, and of Sweden and Denmark in 1396. The ornamentation has been carved with a minute exactness of detail, but the motifs include foliate decoration in Romanesque style.

A much discussed diptych of walrus ivory, bone, and wood is known as "Christian I's portable altar," although it has not been possible to establish that it ever belonged to this monarch, king of Denmark and Norway 1448/50-1481. This carving is considered to be of Norwegian workmanship from the 14th century. It consists of small plates of walrus tusk, framed in the same material. The two wings did not belong together originally, however, and the outer frame of oak is secondary. All the plates are carved in relief, with representations of figures in Gothic-type frames of different patterns. The one wing, depicting scenes from the life of St. Óláfr, with female saints and Christian symbols on the surrounding frames, seems somewhat older than the other wing because of the Romanesque details in the ornamentation, among other reasons. This wing, at least, may possibly have an Icelandic origin. The other wing depicts scenes from the life of the Virgin Mary. Both the figures and the ornamented frame reflect a purer High Gothic style.

A splendid work in walrus ivory is the head of a crozier known as the Digby crozier after its English owner. It is of Romanesque type, with rich Gothic and Romanesque foliage, both in relief on the shaft and as openwork branches extending from the main spiral. At the center of the vegetation, we find two figures, on the one side of the crozier a bishop in vestments, and on the other side a king with a crown, orb, and long-handled axe, undoubtedly St. Óláfr. For stylistic and iconographical reasons, this work is assumed to have a Norwegian origin and to be an archbishop's crozier from Niðaróss. The main indication that the staff originated in Norway at the end of the 14th century is the mixture of older and newer styles.

A small box made from elephant ivory, with lid and gilded silver mountings, is said to have been presented, together with its content of relics, to the cathedral of Lund by Bishop Aslak Bolt of Bergen sometime before 1430. The box is hollowed out of one piece of ivory, but the outside surface is octagonal. Each of the eight sides contains two standing figures in relief on a crosshatched background: Christ and the twelve apostles, the Virgin Mary and Child, and John the Baptist and St. Anthony. The style is Late Gothic, of North German character, and the box is thought to have been carved in Bergen, where the German influence was especially strong in the late Middle Ages.

Most Norwegian drinking horns preserved from the Middle Ages belong to the goldsmith's art, since most of the various kinds of ornamentation are found on the metal mountings, while the horns themselves are smooth and unornamented. The known carvings are relatively late, and almost all have a simple, incised ornamentation that classifies them as folk art. They were, in fact, carved in Norwegian rural districts, and the style of the carving is retarded, making it difficult to establish if the horns are actually from the Middle Ages. The ornamentation is dominated by the Romanesque twining stems and leaves.

2. ICELAND. In Iceland, excavations have brought to light some bone combs dating from the 10th and 11th centuries and ornamented with incised lines. An example of sculpture in the round is a statuette in whalebone of a sitting, male figure. This sculpture was found in a grave from the 10th century, together with pieces for a game and a die. The statuette may have been the "king" in a board game.

We know the name of a female Icelandic carver from Christian times, the priest's wife Margrét in hága ("the skillful"), who did work for Páll Jónsson, bishop of Skalholt from 1195 until his death in 1211. His biography, Páls saga biskups, written shortly after his death, says that Margrét was the most skillful carver in the whole of Iceland. Specially mentioned examples are a particularly fine crozier of walrus tusk presented to the archbishop of Niðaróss, and a splendid altar frontal obviously designed to be made in gold, silver, and walrus tusk. Nothing has been preserved, however, that can be said with certainty to come from her hands. Of particular interest in this connection is the head in walrus tusk of Bishop Páll's crozier, found in his grave (Fig. 10). The volute ends in an animal head (dragon or lion?) gaping above a small figure of a lion carved in relief on the staff itself. Several small lions in relief are carved on a raised belt farther down the staff.

Croziors of walrus tusk are also mentioned in written sources referring to Iceland's other bishopric, Hólar, but only from the 14th century.

Paxes (tabulae pacis) of different materials were commonly used in Icelandic churches from the middle of the 14th century onward. Several known examples are of whalebone, with religious motifs carved in relief. A particularly large and elaborate tablet survives from Breiðabólstaður church in Fljótshlíð in southern Iceland. The tablet (Fig. 11), which is composed of several plates like the diptych linked to Christian I (see above under Norway), seems to have its roots in the same tradition as the "St. Óláfr wing" of the diptych, but the work is simpler and less detailed. The tablet was probably carved in the 15th century. There are only four plates, with narrative scenes under tripartite arches: the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Road to Calvary, and the Resurrection. The smaller, dividing plates carry pictures of Christ on the Cross and Christ as the Savior of the World.

The Icelandic drinking horns are of particular interest. At least ten of the thirty-three horns known today from the period
1400–1650 have carving from the Middle Ages.

Characteristic of this carving is the division into zones or belts, as found on many South European, more or less typical Byzantine, elephant ivory ("oilphtns") from the early Middle Ages. The different zones containing representations of figures are separated by belts of ornamentation. The figures are often placed in chains of rings or scrolls, sometimes under arches supported by columns. Several of the horns are twisted toward the narrow end.

Most of the carving of the figures, ornamentation, and inscriptions is in low relief. The figures are biblical characters or male or female saints (Fig. 12), and the inscriptions contain prayers to God and to the saints. In the Middle Ages, ceremonial drinking was essential in religious gatherings, and there is no doubt that the horns were used for "commemorative drinking," where people toasted the Trinity, the Virgin, and the saints.

Icelandic handicraft was marked by conservatism. The human figures on the horns reflect a range of styles, Early, High, and Late Gothic. The most ancient motifs reflect the Romanesque style. The last applies especially to "a dragon devouring a human being" and "a human being in combat with an animal" carved in the round on some of the tips of the horns, as well as fabulous creatures in relief. The ornamentation shows a strong tendency to keep to one of the distinctive types of Romanesque plant ornament found in Europe and to ancient motifs of interlaced ribbons. The inscriptions are sometimes decorative, like the ornamentation, and many are interlaced with ribbons. The most commonly used script developed from the Gothic minuscules.

Some of the horns are of normal size and must have come from inland cows or oxen, but some are very large and may have been imported from the Continent. The largest known Icelandic drinking horn, called the "Trinity Horn" from its principal motif, is about 86 cm. long and may be an aurochs horn (Fig. 13). It has a great wealth of carved motifs, probably dating from the first half of the 16th century. The main source of inspiration is found in books of hours and liturgical books printed in Paris around 1500. This horn must be one of the latest from the Middle Ages. Many of the horns from after 1550 are also marked by the medieval tradition, as the carvers kept mainly to ancient motifs and features of style.


ellen Marie Magerøy

[See also: Iconography; Viking Art; Wood Carving]

Chancery. Because of their firm organization and continuity, episcopal sees and cathedrals have been models for lay society, and often placed their resources at the disposal of royal power. Letters providing donations, granting privileges, and so on, written in the king's name for the benefit of spiritual institutions, were often composed on the initiative of the recipient.

The king's and the nation's chancery took place within the framework of capella regis, the clerics who acted as servants to the king. Chancery varies in its forms during the period and is difficult to follow without thorough investigation.

In Denmark, the activity of the chancery can be observed from the beginning of the 12th century. Chancellors came into existence in the latter part of the 12th century, based probably on a German model. During the 13th century, the chancellor was an important adviser, for a long time a bishop and later, during the ecclesiastical controversy, a learned cleric. Apart from that pattern, the organization appears to have been vague. After a period of decline, a new chancellorship came into existence at the end of the 14th century held by the bishop of Roskilde, soon becoming an honorary position (sumnum cancellarius). A justitiarius, a secular man, who gradually came to be called the chancellor of the kingdom, had the responsibility for written judgments. The current chancery was administered through a royal chancellor and his assistants, clerics with spiritual sinecures. From around 1510, we know of an instruction for the chancery, which at that time had been moved to the castle in Copenhagen, where a royal archive was established.

In Norway, chancery appears around the middle of the 12th century. One hundred years later, it was highly developed within the framework of the hird. A capella regis was organized with papal
approval. It was exempted from episcopal jurisdiction and comprised fourteen churches throughout the kingdom, especially the Apostles' Church in Bergen and Mary's Church in Oslo. As a part of the displacement of the government work from Bergen to Oslo, the chancellorship of 1314 combined with the provostship in Mary's Church. That the chancellor and the scribe signed outgoing letters makes it possible to follow closely the activities, which were performed with striking continuity by a small number of clerics.

From the end of the 14th century, when the government work was moved to Denmark, the establishment changed character. Except for Erik of Pomerania's time, when the bishop of Oslo was the chancellor, the work was conducted by the provost of Mary's Church, but corresponded more to the Danish justitiarius.

In Sweden in the beginning of the 13th century, bishops occasionally carried the title of chancellor, but this designation must probably be taken as an indication of the extent to which the weak royal power was dependent on the support of the Church in the performance of written activity. Royal chancery does not take firm shape until 1278, when a royal position as dean of the cathedral of Linköping was established. During the following half-century, the chancellorship united with this position. Around the middle of the 14th century, Magnus Eriksson created with papal assistance a capella regis modeled on that in his Norwegian kingdom: he could have at his disposal bursaries for his clerics, and the chancellorship was held by a dean. After declining, chancery almost ended during the time of Margrethe and Erik of Pomerania, when the government work was moved to Denmark. During the revolt of the 1430s, Bishop Thomas Simonsson in Strängnäs played an important role in the national council (riksråd). He administered a new great seal and guarded the kingdom’s documents. His successors from the 1470s also had the duty of keeping the register of the kingdom and were called “chancellor of the realm,” receiving a small fief in compensation. The domestic leaders, whether they were kings or regents, had their own organization of clerics, connected to themselves but often supported through ecclesiastical charges. The chancery in the service of the kingdom took place through collaboration among the regent, the archbishop in Uppsala, and the bishop in Strängnäs.


Herman Schöck

Childbirth see Pregnancy and Childbirth

Christian Poetry

1. EAST NORSE: SWEDEN. The earliest poetry comprises the rhymed Offices in Latin, which became popular in the 13th century, and are based largely on established European liturgical models. The earliest extant Offices honor the local saints Botvid, Sigfrid, Erik, and Henrik. The first named Office writer was Brynolf Algotsson, bishop of Skara 1278–1317. Four Offices are attributed to him (but see Milveden 1972): two in honor of the Swedish saints Helena of Skövde and Eskil to be used on their feast days, one to the Blessed Virgin, and one celebrating the donation to Brynolf by the Norwegian king Hákon Magnusson of the relic of a thorn from the Crown of Thorns at Lódøse in 1304. Nikolaus Hermansson, bishop of Linköping 1374–1391, is another acclaimed author of Offices, the most famous of which is an Office in honor of his close friend St. Birgitta, composed sometime before her canonization in 1391, perhaps in connection with the official consecration of Vadstena monastery in 1384. The Office, which makes constant use of Birgitta’s revelations to illustrate her life, was widely used in the dioceses of Linköping (and thus at Vadstena), Skara, and Åbo. The alliterating opening lines of the antiphon for the first vespers are among the most celebrated lines of medieval Swedish poetry:

Rosa rorans bonitatem stella stillans claritatem. Birgitta, vas gratiae, rora celi pietatem, stilla vite puritatem in vallem miseriae.

[Rose, distilling dew of goodness/ Star, pouring out brightness./ Birgitta, vessel of grace./ Bedew the piety of heaven./ Pour purity of Life./ Into the vale of tears.]

Nikolaus also wrote Offices in honor of St. Anne, whose cult was strong during the 14th century, and St. Ansgr, who enjoyed a revival of interest in the liturgy during the later Middle Ages. According to the documents relating to his canonization, Nikolaus is also the author of the two first nocturnes and six antiphons and responses of an Office in honor of St. Erik.

Another Office praising St. Birgitta was written by Birger Gregersson, archbishop of Uppsala 1367–1383, and is known by the words of its opening antiphon “Birgite matris inclite.” A carefully composed work that makes elegant use of cursus, it was used in the dioceses of Uppsala, Strängnäs, and Västerås, and also in Brigtette daughter-houses abroad. It gives details of her childhood, travels abroad, and miracles. Birger is also author of an
Office to St. Botvid. At least four Offices were written in the 15th century by the Vadstena monk Johan Benekinsson (d. 1461), although only one survives, praising St. Birgitta’s daughter, Katarina Ulfdotter.

Other works composed by medieval ecclesiastics are preserved, in some cases in modified form, in the collection Piae cantiones ecclesiasticae et scholasticae veterum episcoporum published by Jakob Fenno in Åbo in 1582.

Several poems in the vernacular survive, most of which are translations or adaptations of foreign material (ed. Klemming 1881–82). The majority are poems and prayers addressed to Christ and the major saints, but there are a small number of rhymed meditations about the Virgin Mary, biblical stories in verse, and an exposition on the Ten Commandments attributed to Bishop Henrick Tidenmann (d. 1500). Den vise sten, which survives in MS Cod. Ups. C 391, written at Vadstena around 1379, consists of twelve verses and tells of a precious stone with healing powers, which is guarded by a wise man. Poetic renderings of the popular didactic work Kroppens och själens träta ("Debate of the Body and Soul") exist in Swedish and Danish versions; and En syndares onmåndelse ("The Conversion of a Sinner"), which tells in knutelvers of the salvation of a sinner Vratslaus, is the first known drama in Swedish.

DENMARK. Rhymed Offices in Latin include celebrations of Kjeld of Viborg, Knud (Cnut) Lavard, St. Knud, and Thoger of Vestervig. About 1196–1206, Anders Sunesen, archbishop of Lund, composed his Hexaemeron, an exegetical account of the creation, comprising twelve books in 8,040 hexameters. With the growth of the cult of the Virgin toward the end of the Middle Ages, a large number of hymns and sequences about her were produced; many of them are contained in prayer books, and some include musical notation. In Latin, for instance, Jacobus Nicholai wrote a Salutatio beate Marie virginitatis gloriosa (MS SKB A 39, late 14th century); and in the 15th century, there are additional hymns and sequences. There are extant translations into Danish of some of the popular Marian sequences, such as one on the seven joys of the Virgin (Gaude virgo, mater Christi, translated first into Swedish and then into Danish), and the Franciscan sequence Stabat mater. Several macaronic poems also survive. Two vernacular poets are known by name: Per Ræf Lille, who is thought to have composed five lengthy Marian poems contained in MS AM 76 8vo ("En klosterbog" ["A Monastic Book"], ca. 1470–1500; the MS also contains a litany poem in twelve verses); and Herr Michael, priest at St. Alban’s Church at Odense, who wrote a poetic version of Almus de Rupe’s meditation on the rosary entitled En skøn udtægning af den salige jomfru Marias rosenkranz ("A Glorious Exposition of the Blessed Virgin Mary’s Rosary") in 1496, just after the founding of a Rosicrucian brotherhood in Odense. He is also the author of a poetic collection about the creation, Om tingenes skabelse ("On the Creation of Things"), and an account of the stages in human life, Om menneskets leven ("On the Life of Man"). All three works were printed in Copenhagen in 1514–1515.

Apart from the Marian poetry, a small but significant amount of poetry exists in the vernacular. Within the general tradition of the ballad, there is a distinct group, the legendary ballads; circulated in Sweden as well as Denmark, these contain stories from the life of Christ, saints’ legends, and visionary tales. From the early 14th century, there is a fragment of a rhymed version of the Gospel of Nicodemus (Gammeldansk digt; SKB A 115, ca. 1325). Gamle Sang, som haffue varit brukt i Palliedommet, which was compiled by Hans Thomesen in 1569, contains five medieval hymns in Danish, the most celebrated of which is the dagvise that opens with the words Den signede dag som vil nu se. The earliest known copy of this hymn is in Swedish (MS Cod. Ups. C 4, ca. 1450), and contains five of the nine verses that survive in two 16th-century versions in Danish. Whether the poem is originally Swedish or Danish is an open question. Other didactic poems dealing with death and judgment occur in early 16th-century books printed by Gottfred of Ghemen in Copenhagen.


*Bridge Morris

[See also: Ansgar, St.; Ballads; Birgitta, St.; Erik, St.; Knud, St.; Nicodemus, Gospel of; Saints’ Lives; Sunesen, Anders; Vadstena; Vadstena Language]

2. WEST NORSE. The earliest surviving examples of poetry on Christian themes are fragments of skaldic poetry from the conversion period (ca. a.D. 1000). Perhaps the oldest is Christian only by context: Landnamabók reports that Gllimar Porkelsson, the grandson of the settler Svartkell, "prayed to the cross" with these lines (ed. Jakob Benediktsson 1968: 1:56):

Gott ey gomlum munnum

gott ey cérum munnum

[Good luck to the old; / Good luck to the young.]
There is no reason to doubt the authenticity of these lines, but their relationship to the cross remains to be demonstrated. An early drottvætt verse by Porvaldr Koðbrússon (ed. Finnur Jónsson 1912-15: 1A:110, 1B:105) on the difficulties of evangelization is preserved in Kristni saga (ed. Kaale 1905: 9) and Olafs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta (ed. Óláfur Hallurðarson 1958, 1961: A1:290–1). Porvaldr complains about the mockery he received at the Alþingi, and concludes with a curse on the pagan priestess Fríðgerðr. Three helmingr preserved in Skaldskaparmál also deal with 10th-century Christianity. Porþjorn disaðskáld ("skald of the dis") describes the baptism of a Viking (ed. Finnur Jónsson 1912–15: 1A:144, 1B:135), and Eilifr Guðrúnarson’s poem contains an obscure kennng for Christ (ed. Finnur Jónsson 1912–15: 1A:152, 1B:144). Porleifr jarlskáld ("earl’s skald") tells how God helped Sven Haraldsson (Forkbeard) in battle (ed. Finnur Jónsson 1912–15: 1A:141, 1B:133; ed. Jónas Kristjánsson 1956: 219), but this poem may be later and wrongly attributed to Porleifr.

Poetry from the 11th century reflects the growing acceptance and influence of Christianity in Iceland and Norway. The transition is typified by Hallfreðr Óttarsson, the favorite skald of Óláfr Tryggvason. Hallfreðr was inclined to paganism, but struggled to accept the new faith at his king’s insistence. Hallfreðr records a series of four verses that show his gradual and reluctant response to Óláfr’s command that he give up the old gods (ed. Finnur Jónsson 1912–15: 1A:168–9; 1B:158–9; ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1939: 157–9). According to the saga, Hallfreðr composed a vísu suggesting that he preferred the old religion. Óláfr told him the poem was bad and ordered him to do better. Hallfreðr responded with two vísur reluctantly acknowledging that he was now a Christian, but Óláfr demanded a firmer assent and finally got it in two more vísur denouncing the old gods in favor of Christ. But this concession was not the end of the matter: a few years later, Hallfreðr was told to compose the now-lost *Uppreistardrápa as a penance for backsiding (ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1939: 178). His last poem, composed on his deathbed, expresses his fear of hellfire and a somewhat shaky confidence that God will save him (ed. Finnur Jónsson 1912–15: 1A:173, 1B:163; ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1939: 199).


Þórarinn loftunga ("praise-tongue") developed this theme in his Glelognskviða, also composed shortly after Óláfr’s death (ed. Finnur Jónsson 1912–15: 1A:324–7, 1B:300–1; ed. Bjarni Óðarbjarnarson 1941–51: 2:399, 406–8). If the poem was composed for Sven Álífuson, as Heimskringla says, then it can be dated between 1031 and 1035. Its subject is Óláfr's sanctity: Þórarinn enumerates Óláfr's posthumous miracles and boldly urges Sveinn to pray to the saint for permission to rule Norway. Glelognskviða shows that within five years of Óláfr's death he was venerated not only as a saint, but also as rex perpetuus, the guardian of the land and the source of its prosperity. Glelognskviða is also remarkable for its meter, which is kvöðuhattir, the syllable-counting development of fornýðislag best known from Ynglingatal and the poetry of Egill Skalla-Grimsson. Perhaps Þórarinn used this meter ironically to instigate that the bastard Sveinn's rule was an undesirable break in the Yngling line.

Arnór Pórarson did not compose poetry on specifically religious themes, but his poems are Christian in the sense that they presume a Christian point of view. Apart from a fragmentary helmingr on St. Michael's role in the Last Judgment (ed. Finnur Jónsson 1912–15: 1A:353, 1B:326), his poetry consists of conventional drápur in praise of the rulers who employed him. But three of these poems (Rognvaldsdrápa, Pórfínnsdrápa, and the Erfídrápa on Haraldr harðráði ["hard-ruler"] Sigurðarson) conclude with a prayer for the salvation of the man celebrated. Arnór may also be responsible for a metrical innovation that had tremendous influence on the development of Christian skaldic poetry. His poem Hrynhexanda, on King Magnús inn góði ("the good") Ólásson, is the earliest example of hynhet meter, a modification of the drottvætt that expands the line to eight syllables and four stresses. The other features of the drottvætt are retained, but the longer line results in a falling meter, clearly in imitation of the trochaic dieter used for Latin hymns and sequences. The Hafrgerðingadrápa (ed. Finnur Jónsson 1912–15: 1A:177, 1B:167; ed. Jakob Benediktsson 1968: 132, 133, 134), a six-line fragment that Landnámabók ascribes to "a Christian man from the Hebrides," was long thought to be the earliest example of hynhent, but recent scholarship suggests that this anonymous Christian's prayer for a safe voyage is much younger than the text surrounding it. It may have been composed as late as the 12th century. Another versified prayer, the famous kredda of Prándr in Gata, is found in Færeyinga saga (ed. Finnur Jónsson 1912–15: 1A:211, 1B:202; ed. Óláfur Hallurðarson 1987: 110). The form of the seven-line verse and its integrity have been disputed; it seems to be in a rough ljoðahatt and may well be intact, the number of lines being symbolic. Far from being a credo, it is a simple, popular invocation of God, Christ, and the angels, to be prayed in the morning or at the beginning of a journey.

The 12th century was the great age of Christian skaldic poetry. This period included the consolidation of the Church in Iceland, and the establishment of the monasteries made possible both the learning on which the poetry is based and the preservation of texts. The 12th-century skalds had access to European education, but were not yet dominated by European literary tastes. Their poetry is utterly Christian yet authentically skaldic. These poems are significant for study of the drápa form because they are the earliest drápur preserved as intact units rather than as vísur journey.
scattered piecemeal through the prose texts. Most of them were recorded in MSS as soon as they were composed, so the texts are much less corrupt than the non-Christian poetry modified by the memories of generations of skalds. Even though their authors must have been known when they were copied down, the anonymity of the majority of these texts reflects the monastic ideal of humility and a sharp departure from a tradition in which the names of skalds were remembered longer than their verses. Two Christian 

drápur dating from the first half of the century are Plactitus drápa and Geisli. Plactitus drápa, the earliest written text of a skaldic poem, survives in AM 673b 4to, dated at about 1200 (ed. Finnur Jónsson 1912–15: 1A:607–18, 1B:606–22). The drápa lacks both its beginning and conclusion, but fifty-five 
vísur survive. It is closely related to Plactitus saga, which tells the legend of the Roman martyr Placidus (St. Eustace), who was converted when he realized that the hart he was hunting was Christ in disguise. The anonymous author of Plactitus drápa uses complex mythological kennings, although perhaps from an antiquarian point of view. But he augments the skaldic vocabulary by introducing words from everyday speech. Other innovations include the use of direct discourse and sentences that stretch across the boundaries of helmingar and even vísur.

Geisli, an encomium on St. Ólafr, is the earliest skaldic poem to which a definite date can be assigned, as well as the earliest drápa preserved intact (ed. Finnur Jónsson 1912–15: 1A:459–73, 1B:427–45). It was composed by Einarr Skólabóson, who recited it at a gathering of dignitaries including kings Eysteinn, Sigurór, and Ingó, and Archbishop Jón on the Trondheim cathedral in 1153. The complete text survives in two 14th-century codices, Flateyjarbók (GkS 1005 fol.) and Bergsbók (Stock. Perg. fol. no. 1). Einarr adheres strictly to the traditional drápa form, but he avoids mythological kennings and instead creates elaborate metaphors and symbols based on Scripture and the Latin poetry of his time. He was a priest, and the influence of theology and the liturgy is evident. The primary theme of Geisli is the typological relationship between Ólafr and Christ, and Einarr develops this theme with remarkable subtlety and complexity.

The MS AM 757a 4to, dating from the 14th century, is an anthology of Christian poetry of the 12th and 13th centuries, containing three long drápur and parts of three more. Harmsól (ed. Finnur Jónsson 1912–15: 1A:562–72, 1B:548–65), a late 12th-century drápa, is ascribed to the anonymous "Gamli kanóki" ("old canon"), presumably an Augustinian affiliated with the house at Pykkvavörs in Iceland. The theme of Harmsól is sin and redemption, but the skald also deals with salvation history from the birth of Christ to the Last Judgment, with particular emphasis on the latter. The tone is both personal and homiletic, and the style is traditionally skaldic. The author's diction shows the influence of Plactitus drápa and Geisli, but he also makes his own contribution to the development of a vocabulary for Christian poetry.

Leiðarvísan (ed. Finnur Jónsson 1912–15: 1A:618–26, 1B:622–33), an anonymous drápa roughly contemporary with Harmsól, is a skaldic version of the legend of the Sunday epistle. It tells of the letter that miraculously fell from heaven, urging the observance of Sunday as the sabbath. The skald proceeds to recount a series of events in salvation history that supposedly occurred on Sunday. Leiðarvísan lacks the beauty of Harmsól, but its structure is impressive. The drápa form is neatly symmetrical and is based on ingenious repetitions of the symbolic number three.

Líknarbraut (ed. Finnur Jónsson 1912–15: 2A:150–9, 2B:160–74) is a much later poem, probably composed in the late 13th century. Primarily a poem on the Cross, it reflects changing sensibilities in its portrayal of Christ as crucified and suffering rather than as creator or judge. The influence of earlier Christian drápur (especially Harmsól and Leiðarvísan) is apparent, but the poem also owes much to the Good Friday liturgy. The learned content of Líknarbraut leaves little doubt that the skald was a cleric, and its devotional tone suggests that it may have been composed for use in paraliturgical celebrations.

Hælings anda vísur (ed. Finnur Jónsson 1912–15: 2A:160–2, 2B:175–80) also dates from the 13th century. The poem is fragmentary, but the eighteen surviving vísur are a free translation of the Latin Veni creator spiritus, the earliest translation of a hymn into Icelandic and the only known translation of a foreign poem into the drottkvætt meter. Mártiðrápa (ed. Finnur Jónsson 1912–15: 2A:464–72, 2B:496–505) is a 14th-century drottkvætt poem in praise of Mary. Its mood is joyful, and the themes conventional. It draws on Latin poetry, especially the Gaude virgo gratiosa, the Ave Maria, and the Ave maris stella, and emphasizes Mary's role as queen of heaven and mediatrix of grace. The last poem in AM 757a 4to is Gýdingavísur (ed. Finnur Jónsson 1912–15: 2A:539–41, 2B:597–99), a fragmentary 14th-century poem of eight vísur. The verses tell the beginning of a well-known miracle of Our Lady: a Christian borrows from a Jew, giving a picture of the Virgin as security. When they later dispute the repayment of the loan, the picture testifies on the Christian's behalf, whereupon the Jew and his family are converted.

Sölviðjóð (ed. Finnur Jónsson 1912–15: 1A:628–40, 1B:635–48), probably the best known of the Christian poems, is one of the most difficult. The earliest MSS date from the 17th century, but it may have been composed as early as the 13th. The meter of the poem is ljóðháttur, an eddic meter rarely used by the skalds. Sölviðjóð is an archaizing poem, an attempt to present a Christian theme in eddic style. It has affinities with Hælings and Völuspá as well as with European vision literature. The speaker is a dead man who appears to his son in a dream to show him the way to salvation. The father gives precepts for good living and describes his own life and death, followed by a visionary account of the otherworld. The mythological imagery makes the poem vivid and powerful, but also adds an element of obscurity.

As the Church became more firmly established in Iceland and monastic education replaced the traditional skaldic training, the vernacular poets gradually abandoned the ideals of the old style and began to base their work more and more on continental models. The drottkvætt gave way to hrynhent as the predominant meter, and kennings gradually disappeared. Eysteinn Ágrímsson's Lilja, composed in the mid-14th century (ed. Finnur Jónsson 1912–15: 2A:363–95, 2B:390–416), epitomizes this development. Lilja is a hrynhent drápa of 100 vísur on the main events of salvation history, focusing especially on the conflict between good and evil. Its structure employs number symbolism, and the diction reflects principles of classical rhetoric. Lilja has been widely admired and imitated from the time of its composition down to the present; it gave the nickname líjulog to the hrynhent meter.

About the same time Eysteinn composed Lilja, there was a movement in the Icelandic Church to canonize Bishop Guðmundr inn góði ("the good") Arason. This development is significant for literary history because following the translation of his relics in 1344 a number of poets joined in the effort to promote his cause. In 1345, Arngrímr Brandsson, the abbot of Pingeyrar, composed

Lilja steered Icelandic poetry so powerfully out of the skaldic tradition and into the high Middle Ages that never again could dróttkvætt and the kennng regain their normative role. The poets of the 14th and 15th centuries, all anonymous, drifted nearer to the mainstream of European poetry. Their themes followed the tradition and into the high Middle Ages that never again could steered Icelandic poetry so powerfully out of the skaldic tradition and into the high Middle Ages that never again could dróttkvætt and the kennng regain their normative role. The poets of the 14th and 15th centuries, all anonymous, drifted nearer to the mainstream of European poetry. Their themes followed the
Christian Prose

1. EAST NORSE: SWEDEN. Most of the extant religious prose was produced at the late 14th-century Brigittine foundation at Vadstena, and although other monastic and diocesan scriptoria did exist, few MSS from them survive. The great bulk of the vernacular prose literature consists of translations from Latin and in some cases from German, and was intended primarily for use by the Brigittine nuns. The surviving literature can be divided into several categories.

(a) Saints’ lives, biographies, miracles, and canonization documents relating to the national saints are all in Latin, although some were later translated into the vernacular. The earliest saint’s life is probably that of St. Botvid (d. ca. 1120), which was written in connection with the consecration of a church dedicated to him in 1176, although the earliest extant MS dates from the late 13th century. The most important collection of miracles concerns St. Erik, and contains some fifty miracles, many of which were written by a Dominican prior in Sigtuna, Israel Erlandsson, around 1300. The substantial material relating to the canonization of St. Birgitta, which took place in 1391, includes a life, testimonies of the many witnesses, and evidence of miracles after her death. In the vernacular, the oldest preserved religious work is a collection of saints’ lives known as the Fornsvenska legendariet (“Old Swedish Legendary”), which was written by a Dominican cleric sometime between 1276 and 1307, and is based principally on Jacobus de Voragine’s Legenda aurea.

(b) Revelation texts include some of the most original religious prose in Sweden. Petrus de Dacia (d. 1289), a Dominican from Visby who studied in Cologne and Paris, recorded his meetings and correspondence with the mystic Kristina of Stommeln in a work that reflects much of 13th-century spiritual and cultural attitudes. Two leaves containing St. Birgitta’s revelations in her own hand survive in MS Cod. Holm A 65. The great bulk of her 700 or so revelations exists in copies in Latin, which are translations of her original utterances in Swedish, made by her confessors and gathered into eight books; there also exist translations of her revelations back into Swedish, which were undertaken during the 1380s for devotional use at Vadstena. A particular interest in mystical literature was shown by the Brigittine monk Jons Budde of Nikndal monastery in Finland, who around 1480 translated into Swedish Claustrum animae (Stårens klosteväg), some of the visions of St. Mechthild of Hackeborn, and the Horologium sapientiae (Gudeliga snilles vackare) of Henry Suso. In the MS known as Jons Budde bok ("Jons Budde’s Book", MS Cod. Holm A 58, 1487–1491), there are, among other prose texts in Swedish, apocryphal legends, such as the vision of Tundale, the revelation concerning Guido’s soul, excerpts from the work of St. Bernard, and part of Honorius of Autun’s Elucidarium. Other mystical writings were translated into Swedish, most notably works by Bonaventure and Jean Gerson. Three works in particular, Speculum virginum (Jungfruspegeln, translated by Mathias Laurentini), Alanus de Rupe’s meditations on the rosary (Jungfru Marie pastor), translated by Johannes Matthei (d. 1521), and the Vadstena Breviary Cantor sororum (Jungfru Marie Oratog), are characterized by a marked asceticism and Marian devotion. Two tracts on the Passion date from the beginning of the 16th century: "Den korsfäste Jesu ljuslyckiga samtal med en syndare" ("The Wondrous Conversation of the Crucified Christ with a Sinner") and "Om Jesu lidandes bagare och hans blods utgjutelse" ("On the Cup of Jesus’s Suffering and the Spilling of His Blood").
Homiletic literature in Latin and Swedish comprises a significant part of the extant prose literature. Much of it is still unresearched. There are several collections of exempla that were available to preachers, such as the *Copia exemplorum* by Birgitta's confessor Mathias of Linköping (d. ca. 1350). The German collection *Seelentrost* (*Solace of Souls*) was translated around 1420 and is preserved in MS Cod. Holm A 108, which was written at Vadstena around 1440.

Bible texts in Latin include parts of a commentary on the Apocalypse and a concordance to the Bible, both written by Mathias of Linköping. A Swedish paraphrase of the Pentateuch was written by an unidentified but certainly accomplished cleric at the beginning of the 14th century. It draws on patristic and scholastic writings, in particular Thomas Aquinas' *Summa theologicae*, but also shows considerable independence of its sources. There are translations of Judith, Esther, and 1 and 2 Maccabees by Jøns Budde in 1484, and of Joshua and Judges by Nikolaus Ragnvaldi of Vadstena in about 1500. The New Testament translation was printed at the Royal Press in Stockholm in 1526, and the first translation of the entire Bible was the so-called *Gustaf Vasa's Bible*, printed in Uppsala in 1541, based mainly on Luther's 1534 translation.

Theological manuals include *Summa de ministris et sacramentis ecclesiasticis* and *Sullfragium curatorium*, guides to practical theology by the Dominican Laurentius Olavi (d. 1332), who was dean in Uppsala; Bishop Brynolf of Skara's (d. 1317) work *Notulae Brynolfr*, and Mathias of Linköping's *Homo conditus*, a catechetical manual for preachers. In Swedish, there are a number of tracts for services and clerical instruction that deal with the sacraments, the mass, and Church ceremonies. There are also a number of prayer books in Latin and Swedish, many of them ornately decorated by Brigettine nuns.

DENMARK. Danish religious prose literature was produced in the diocesan and monastic schools, the most important scriptoria being at Lund and the Benedictine foundation of Skovkloster, near Næstved. The original collections are no longer intact, and very little of what is assumed to have been written now survives. Contemplation of the Passion and devotion to the Virgin are dominant features of later medieval prose literature.

From the early Middle Ages, there are several saints' lives in Latin recording the pious deeds of devout clerics and kings, the most celebrated of whom is St. Knud (d. 1086). Although not a candidate for canonization himself, Bishop Gunner of Viborg (d. 1251) had a biography written about him by a monk from the Cistercian monastery of Ørn, near Silkeborg, and the same MS (DKB E don. var. 145 4to) contains a colorful account of the founding in 1165 of Ørn monastery, entitled *Exordium carae insulae*. Several fragments of saints' lives and miracle collections survive in the vernacular; the most important are the collection known as *Hellige Kvinder* (*Holy Women*; MS SKK K 4), which contains several legends and miracles concerning female early Christian martyrs, and the *Mariager legendarium* (Gks [DKB] 1586 4to), which contains the lives of St. Jerome and St. Catherine of Siena, copied in 1488 by Niels Mogensen for a Brigettine nun, Lisbeth Hermansdatter, at Mariager monastery.

Theological manuals and edificatory tracts include the Dominican Augustinus de Dacia's (d. 1285) guide to Christian doctrine entitled *Rotulus pugilarius* and an important collection of sermons by Matthias Ripensis, written at the end of the 13th century and preserved in two 15th-century copies, Cod. Ups. C 343 and C 356. Additional Dominican sermons and other religious texts are contained in MS AM 76 8vo, dating from the end of the 15th century; this MS also includes the earliest extant copy of the *Elucidarium* in Danish, thought to have been translated around 1350. Another popular edificatory work, in similar style, is *Sydrak. Siela trast*, which was translated into Danish from Low German and is more popular in style than the Swedish version, is preserved in MSS Cod. Ups. C 529 and Cod. Holm A 109, both originally part of the same MS, written around 1425. Other edificatory works are included in the important MS AM 783 4to, written between 1430 and 1460 at the Augustinian monastery of Grinderslev. It contains contemplative works in Danish by St. Gregory, Thomas à Kempis, Bonaventure, and Suso. In fragmentary form, there are translations of the revelations of St. Birgitta.

Of the Bible texts in the vernacular, only a fragment survives, dating from around 1475–1490 and containing a translation of the Vulgate from Genesis 2:9 to 2 Kings 23:18. It was probably translated in the late 15th century. In 1524, the New Testament was translated into Danish by Christiern Vinter and Hans Mikkelson, and printed at Wittenberg; and the entire Bible, known as *Christian III's Bible*, was translated and printed in Copenhagen in 1550.

Prayer books in the vernacular, which fostered private contemplation and prayer, were quite common among noblewomen in the later Middle Ages. The most ornately produced prayer book was that commissioned by Anna Brahe, abbess of the Brigettine monastery of Maribo, in 1497.

Printing increased the distribution and number of religious books, especially liturgical books in Latin and Danish. In 1514, Christiern Pedersen (ca. 1480–1554) translated the prayers of the canonical hours, and in 1515, a book of homilies known as *fætegnespilis* (*Homilies with Exempla*), both of which were printed in Paris. Another influential pre-Reformation writer was Paul Helgesen (ca. 1480–1534).

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**Ed.:**


**Bridget Morris**

[See also: Amicus and Amileus; Bible; Birgitta, St.; *Elucidarius*; Erik, St.; Knud, St.; Miracles, Collections of; *Nicodemus, Gospel of*, Old Swedish Legendary; Petrus de Dacia; Prayer Books; Saints' Lives; Vadstena; Vadstena Language; *Visio Trugdali*]
2. WEST NORSE. A considerable amount of religious prose has survived in Norse MSS in collections in Copenhagen, Reykjavik, Stockholm, Oslo, and elsewhere. Much of it was published in the 19th century, principally by C. R. Unger. Modern editions are available of some works; many of the MSS await publication. Any account of the religious prose must therefore be partial. New works are discovered from time to time, generally in fragmentary form: for example, the existence of a medieval version of the Book of Psalms, and of a Norse commentary on the Pentecostal Psalms, has been demonstrated in recent years. The earliest surviving MSS contain material of this kind: AM 732a VII 4to has an Easter Table, and dates from between 1121 and 1139; AM 237a fol., from the middle of the 12th century, contains fragments of homilies, while the somewhat younger AM 655 IX 4to has fragments of the sagas of the apostle Matthew and the saints Blasius and Placidus. It is not known for certain when religious prose began to be written in Norse; most probably, it followed on the establishment of schools and monasteries in Iceland and Norway, and thus dates from the middle of the 11th century onward. Much of it is anonymous: a few authors are known, particularly from Iceland in the latter part of the period, and some works have been attributed to known authors by critics past and present. Many Norse texts are little more than translations of Latin works, ancient and medieval; and some of those texts for which a precise source cannot be traced rely heavily on one, or several, Latin texts. Original works of religious prose are relatively uncommon.

Much of what has survived falls into the common medieval categories of homiletic and hagiographical literature. From the period around 1200, two books of homilies survive, commonly referred to as the “Icelandic homily book” (Stock. Perg. 4to no. 15) and the “Norwegian homily book” (AM 619 4to). The Norwegian book has a de tempore sequence that makes considerable use of the 8th-century homiliary of Paulus Diaconus, which comprises homilies by Gregory, Augustine, Bede, and others. Gregory is particularly well represented in Norse literature. His thirty-fourth homily is found in a number of MSS, including the Norwegian and Icelandic books and the above-mentioned AM 237a fol., while there is a translation of his Dialogues in the defective MS AM 677 4to (early 13th century). The Icelandic book likewise contains homilies for particular days in the Church calendar, or concerning individual saints; many of these homilies can also be traced, in whole or in part, to known Latin homilies by the above authors and others. Homilies are also occasionally found incorporated into other works: for example, there are two Lenten homilies in the first part of Stjórn.

Hagiographical material, in different forms, appears in the 12th century and continues to be produced throughout the mediæval period. In its earliest form, it probably represented close translation of Latin lives of the apostles and saints; the early 13th-century MS AM 645 4to contains relatively straightforward translations of Latin passio material on Peter, Paul, and other apostles, and on Pope Clement and Bishop Martin. Later, this kind of material was reworked and amplified, and a greater degree of freedom becomes apparent in the handling of source material. The Norse version of the legend of Barlaam and Josaphat is a case in point. Later still, a new approach became popular in which copious additions from the Church Fathers and more recent writers, such as Peter Comestor and Vincent of Beauvais, transformed the genre into a much more individualistic one. Grímr Holmsteinsson’s saga of John the Baptist and Ægir Sokkason’s lives of Michael the Archangel and Nicolas are just three instances of this kind. Akin to the lives of saints and apostles are those of some of the bishops of Iceland, with Jón, Porlák, Guðmundur Arason, and others receiving detailed treatment. Mention may also be made of such individuals as Earl Magnus of Orkney, Archbishop Dunstan, Edward the Confessor, and Thomas à Becket, whose lives relate closely to this genre.

Works of religious prose that fall outside these two categories include translation of parts of the Bible and a few individual works of various kinds. These works include a translation of Alcuin’s Latin treatise De virtutibus et vitis, which was made before, and perhaps well before, 1200; a translation of the Elucidarius of Honorius Augustodunensis; fragments of a translation of the Physiologus; Gregory’s Dialogues; and a certain amount of liturgical and associated material, notably mass commentaries and a harmonized version of Christ’s Passion. "Visio" literature is represented by a translation of Visio Pauli and by a vision of heaven and hell granted to a certain Douglag, a somewhat free translation of Visio Taugdali. More peripheral to the genre are Veraldar saga, an Icelandic history book based partly on the Bible, and Konungs skuggsjá, in the second part of which the responsibilities of a king are illustrated with substantial reference to the Old Testament.

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I. J. Kirby

[See also: Alcuin: De virtutibus et vitis; Bible; Biskupa sögr; Elucidarius; Gregory, St.; Dialogues; Guldmundur sögr biskups; Gyðinga saga; Homilies; Hungervalk; Jóns saga ens helga; Konungs skuggsjá; Laurentius saga biskups; Miracles, Collections of; Nicodemus, Gospel of; Páls saga biskups; Physiologus; Postola sögr; Prayer Books; Reykjalahóðak; Saints’ Lives; Stjórn; Völúks saga helga; Veraldars saga; Visio Tnugdah; Visionary Literature]

Chronicles

1. DENMARK. Adam of Bremen’s Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum provides the earliest description of a relatively
long sequence of events in the history of Denmark. The work aims at emphasizing the importance of the Hamburg-Bremen
archbishopric for missions in the Nordic countries, from the time
of its establishment in the 9th century until the change of archbishops in 1072. This emphasis leads to the inclusion of a
long sequence of events in the history of Denmark. The
contains useful information about the geography of the Nordic
countries. Both content and form of this work left their marks on
the development of Christianity in Denmark until about 1040, with a later addition ending in 1157. The first part is
to a great extent based on Adam’s work, which stops in 1072, so
the Roskilde author had to build on local tradition. Although
the history of the Church is the main topic of the work, the
importance of the kings to the Church, and here particularly to the
bishops of Roskilde, is clearly stressed throughout the book, a
fact that makes it a kind of history of Denmark. The personal views
of the author are unmistakable: his sympathy lies with kings who
lend particular support to the bishopric of Roskilde, often at the
cost of other dioceses, especially the newly created archbishopric
of Lund. The Gregorian reforms pertaining to celibacy do not
enjoy the sympathy of the author. In other ways, the Roskilde
chronicle contrasts with those of Sven Aggesen and Saxo from the
late 12th century, both of which favor a powerful Crown.

The Chronicon Lethrense ("The Chronicle of Lejre"), a work
that treats legendary history, covers a period from the foundation
of the kingdom under King Dan "in the days of King David" to the
legendary battle of Bràvalla. None of the kings listed is historical,
but it is historiographically interesting to see that they all rule from
Lejre near Roskilde and were rulers of the entire country of Den­
mark. Here and there, the history of the kings is interspersed with
fairy-tale-like anecdotes.

The Chronicon Lethrense is usually dated to 1170 on the
basis of Saxo’s having used the chronicle in his Gesta Danorum,
though the chronicle is found only in MSS of the Annals of Lund
from the 1250s. The entire idea of the "kingdom of Lejre" is central
to the pre-Christian part of the Gesta Danorum, which seems to be
an elaboration and adaptation of the Chronicon Lethrense. The
connections between Saxo and Sven Aggesen, however, are even
closer: they must have known each other, and Saxo borrowed
several new additions to the history of Denmark from Sven’s
chronicle. Furthermore, both of them drew upon the Icelandic
tradition.

Sven Aggesen belonged to one of the powerful families of the
12th century, the Trugotsons, as did archbishops Asser (arch­
bishop 1104-­1137) and Eskil (archbishop 1137-­1177). Despite
these ecclesiastical connections, the family was known primarily
as warlike aristocrats. Several of them belonged to the royal
housecarls, in whom Sven displays an interest. He wrote a Lex
castrensis ("law pertaining to a camp"), and in his writings many
details originate from housecarl circles, including his own family.
Whether he was in fact a royal housecarl himself is not known, nor
whether he was a member of the clergy, although his familiarity
with Latin indicates that he had enjoyed the best education of his
time. His book, Brevis historia regum Dacie, gives even less of a
clerical impression than Saxo’s. Its title and likewise the entire text
are known only in postmedieval MSS.

The chronicle of Sven Aggesen begins with King Skjold,
probably based on an Icelandic pattern, and ends with a battle
against the Pomeranian princes in 1185. The chronicle was prob­
ably written shortly after that year. Long sequences are pure gene­
alogy. The ordinary (i.e., nonlegendary) history contains three
"short stories" with a literary stamp, and the legendary history also
includes one. Source study shows that Sven built on detailed
models: the legend about Uffe probably derives from an English
chronicle; the story of Queen Thyra and the German emperor
from Virgil’s Aeneid; and the history of Sven Haroldsson
(Forkbeard) from Adam of Bremen and a saga about the
Jomsvikings.

As mentioned above, Saxo’s Gesta Danorum is to a large extent
based upon earlier historical writings together with materials whose
sources are unknown. A great part of the latter group must be taken as the author's independent work. A number of poems are apparently independent treatments of sparsely attested sources.

Just as Saxo's work draws on previous historical writing, so succeeding chronicles tend to build upon Gesta Danorum. This is the case with the chronicle part of the Annals of Rye (Rydårboegen), the Old Zealandic Chronicle (Den ældre Sjællandske krønike), which has several word-for-word quotations from Saxo, and especially the so-called Jutish Chronicles (Jyske krønike), the beginning of which is simply an abbreviated version of Saxo's chronicle (Compendium, or Abbreviatio Saxoni).

The Old Zealandic Chronicle stops at the year 1307, and was presumably written shortly after this time. It was continued by the New Zealandic Chronicle (Den yngre Sjællandske krønike) until 1363, which for the last years expresses personal views upon the politics of its time and upon the character of King Valdemar Atterdag ("ever-day"). The Jutish Chronicle continues Saxo until 1340, with particular expansiveness about conditions in Jutland during the kingless period from 1332 until 1340.

In Denmark, as in other countries, the late Middle Ages are characterized by an ambition to write history in the vernacular. Like the Jutish Chronicle, the Annals of Lund ends in the beginning of the 14th century. This chronicle is known from two MSS from about 1400.

Finally, there is the Danish Rimkrønike ("Rhymed Chronicle") from 1460, again based on Saxo; each king (including HlAmleth) steps forward to describe his deeds in knittel verse. The inspiration for this form may have come from Sweden, where rhymed chronicles flourished during the 14th and 15th centuries, directed against the Danish supremacy in the union of the Nordic countries. There are certain features of the Danish book that indicate it may have been meant as a reply to the Swedish chronicles.

In addition to the national chronicles, there is also a small group of local ones, all connected with religious institutions. One such chronicle, the Exordium caræ insulae, describes the establishment of the Cistercian monastery at Øm, was begun in 1207 and continued until it ended abruptly in 1274. It gives a picture of life within the monastery and relations with the outside world, particularly with the bishop of Århus. This chronicle is occasionally lively and dramatic, in contrast to the contemporary chronicle of the diocese of Ribe, a survey of the long history of this diocese from about 860 until about 1230.


Inge Skovgaard-Petersen

See also: Annals; Adam of Bremen; Aggesen, Sven; Chronicles, Rhymed; Encomium Emmae reginae; Knittel(vers); Saxo Grammaticus

2. SWEDEN. Sweden has no high-medieval historiography corresponding to the one that reaches its climax in Denmark with Saxo Grammaticus's Gesta Danorum, and in the Norse area with Snorri Sturluson's konungasögur. The oldest examples associate themselves through the literary vernacular with the Norse tradition. Around 1240, the three closely connected Västgötà chronicles about the Västgötà lawmen, the bishops in Skara, and Sweden's Christian kings came into existence. The chronicles go back to around 1000, but only for the last century are the brief notices now and then expanded into real portraits, such as of the lawmen Karl and Eskil, and of "the good" Bishop Bengt. Guta saga, an appendix to the Guta Law (Gutalagen), describes the history of Gotland from a mythical origin until the 13th century, with the relations to the king of Sweden and the bishop of Linköping in view. The chronicle was written in 1285 at the latest, possibly as early as the first quarter of the 13th century.

The most distinguished chronicle in medieval Sweden, the Erik's Chronicle (Erikskronikan), which remained influential until the end of the epoch, belongs to quite a different tradition, the German rhymed chronicle. Its approximately 4,500 verses are composed in a subtly treated knittel. It presents the political course of events in Sweden from the middle of the 13th century until Magnus Eriksson's election as king in 1319. The main part deals with the period after the turn of the century, i.e., the disputes between King Birger and his brothers; Duke Erik is the hero of the chronicle. Negotiations and feasts are presented according to the style of the courtly culture, but still with freshness and engagement. The chronicle is first known in a copy from the late 15th century. Much of the research on this chronicle has concentrated on its origin, milieu, sources, and authorship. The chronicle clearly came into existence in the aristocratic circles surrounding Duke Erik. It is primarily based on the oral tradition in these circles, and the author, a layman, worked during Magnus Eriksson's time of minority (~1331/2). The chronicle apparently had no immediate distribution and influence.

The other historical-political works of the 14th century do not take the form of the chronicle. This applies to Konunga styrelsen, an independent reworking of the widely known De regine principum, compiled as a "mirror" for the young Magnus Eriksson, or, rather, for his sons; the controversial pamphlet against Magnus Eriksson, Qualiter regnavit rex Magnus, which originated within an aristocratic circle that had Birgitta Birgersdotter (St. Birgitta) as spiritus rector; and several of Birgitta's revelations, which can be considered political treatises, directed against a tyrannical royal power. That there was a need at that time for historical-political literature of a more analytic nature is evident from the section of the Visby minorities annals called the Visby Chronicle (Visbykrønikan), an elucidation of the political course of events in the Baltic area 1360–1395.

When the knittel rhymed chronicle from the 1430s appears as a historical-political mode of expression, it has changed character, even though the Erik's Chronicle is a model. It is now less
courtly and stylized, addressing itself in less refined style; and its
more openly propagandist content is directed toward a broader
public. The revolt against the monarch of the Scandinavion union,
Erik of Pomerania, created the immediate need. Work on the cre-
ation of an actual national chronicle can be followed closely from
the original MS of the complete Karl's Chronicle (Karlskrrokeran);
SKB D 6), into which older MSS have been incorporated and re-
vised.

The Engelbrekt Chronicle (Engelbrektskrrokan) is a pre-
sentation of the political developments from Queen Margrethe's
accession in 1389 until the murder of the captain of the realm
Engelbrekt in the spring of 1436. It is characterized partly by
a juridical argumentation for the righteousness of the revolt, partly
by a glorification of Engelbrekt. The author obviously had access
to the documents of the Council of the Realm (Riksråd). Strong
reasons suggest that he is the same person who wielded the pen in
SKB D 6: Johan Fredeborn, known as the scribe in the service of
the Council. The Engelbrekt Chronicle came into existence soon
after its final entry for the year 1436; the same applies to its con-
tinuation until the end of 1439. The latter was produced in the
regent Karl Knutsson's (Bonde) chancellery, and gives a strongly
biased picture of the Swedish power struggle. After Karl Knutsson
became king, these two texts were incorporated into a larger
chronicle of around 9,500 verses, the Karl's Chronicle, which
continues to the fall of 1452; it is also a chancellery product,
finished soon after the date of its final entry. Even though the
chronicle is well informed, the added text is still a coarser produc-
tion than the Engelbrekt Chronicle. Karl Knutsson is praised, and
his enemies inside and outside the kingdom are attacked and
slandered.

During his first period as a king (1448-1457), Karl Knutsson
had great ambitions about building a Swedish national history.
The next step was to combine the Erik's Chronicle with the new
chronicle with the help of a newly written section for the period
1319-1389, Förbindelsedikten ("the Connection Composition").
This work possesses neither historical nor literary value. Of inter-
est from a historiographical point of view are two brief chronicles
from the same workshop: the Prosac Chronicle (Prosakkronikan)
and the Small Rhymed Chronicle (Lilla rinkronikan). The history of Sweden is here traced back to mythical times, in the
former even to the Flood, and a great number of ancient Gothic
ingles are included. The Small Rhymed Chronicle introduces the
popular monologue form, in which the kings briefly characterize
themselves and their time.

The national chronicle is continued by the Sture Chronicle
(Surekrrokan), in reality two chronicle works, one treating the
years 1452-1487, the other the years 1487-1496. The former
praises the regent Sten Sture and came into existence in his circle;
the latter, thought to have been inspired by Archbishop Jakob
Ulfsön, is critical of him. Its historical and literary value is not
great. This judgment applies to an even higher degree to the chronicle texts that continue the national chronicle until 1520
(Cronica Sweciae).

Historical-political works were written at the end of the Middle
Ages outside the national leadership. Rhymed chronicles were
written about Skara's and Linköping's bishops, and a prose
chronicle was written about the Åbo bishops. A chronicle text in
Latin, treating the unsettled years 1463-1467, is found included in
Diarium Vadstenense ("The Memorial Book of Vadstena Abbey"). Widespread and authoritative for a long time, however, was
the main historical work of the epoch, Chronicon regni Gothorum
("Chronicle of the Gothic Kingdom"), written by Ericus Olai, pre-
late at the Uppsala cathedral, later professor in theology at the new
(1477) university. Unlike its predecessors, this is a learned work,
tended for a European public. It praises the ancient Swedish
kingdom and its Christian Church, both centered in Uppsala. While
the Gothic tradition is developed from literary sources, the histori-
cal material is compiled from annals and chronicles, most of which
are still preserved. Most valuable is the description of contempo-
rary times (~1467), which is characterized by a national religious
sentiment.

The historiography of humanism finds expression in three
works from the middle of the 16th century. Around 1540, Olaus
Petri, the evangelic reformer, composed a Swedish Chronicle
(Svenska kronikan) from ancient times until 1520. He joins the
German humanists, and bases his work on comprehensive, varied,
and well-selected material, which is used with critical acumen.
The intention is religious, ethical, and didactic, combined with
sharp criticism of the secular regime, but also with an understand-
ing attitude toward the Church. The Swedish Chronicle, of great
historical and literary value, was suppressed by the royal power.

The works that the two exiled prelates and brothers Johannes
Magnus and Olaus Magnus completed in Rome paradoxically re-
ceived greater importance in both Europe and Sweden. The Historia
de omnibus gothorum sveonumque regibus (printed in Rome in
1554), a work of humanistic rhetoric, written by Johannes, in-
troduced the Gothic historical tradition into the learned European
debate with a large amount of scholarship and fantasy. Similar to
Johannes Magnus's less well known Historia metropolitana ecclesi
Upsaliensis (printed in Rome in 1557), about the archbishops at
Uppsala until his own time, the Gothic history is a controversial
pamphlet against the new political-religious regime in Sweden,
that of Gustav Vasa. In the same spirit, Olaus Magnus gives in
Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus (printed in Rome 1555) a
varied, vivid description of "the Scandinavian peoples," primarily
the Swedes, their way of life, institutions, material culture, and so
on. The source material derives both from the classical authors
and from personal knowledge and experience.

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In the European Middle Ages, different types of rhymed chronicles were composed, ranging from extensive "world chronicles" to chronicles about the history of a single abbey. The Scandinavian examples belong to the most frequent type, which relates the history of a country, county, town, or similar unit. Its representation of historical or pseudo-historical matters, however, is to a large extent limited to the deeds of the "sires and princes" in Sweden have lived, and at the very end they briefly describe their own lives and how they died. At the very end because of its monologue form. Beginning with the kings of a mythological past, the Swedish regents up to King Christoffer, then himself king. The chronicle is a result of the lively propaganda disseminated by Karl to confirm his position as king in the 1450s. As in all Swedish chronicle texts from the late Middle Ages, the versification of Karlskrönikan is rather poor. Stylistically, it is more heterogeneous than Erlikrönikan, mingling realistic features with those typical of metrical romance.

The period 1452–1496 is treated in Sture's Chronicle (Sturekrönikan), which was composed in three or more stages, shortly after the events. The political tendency of vv. 1–3,381, covering the period 1452–1487, goes in favor of Sten Sture, the leader of the group that wanted independence for Sweden; in the rest of the text, the tendency is against Sten. Among the sources were annals and propaganda pamphlets. Most likely in the 1450s, the gap between Erlikrönikan and Engelbrektskrönikan was filled out with a text, now called Förbindelsediktet (The Connection Composition), covering the period 1319–1389. It thus became possible to create one large chronicle of Swedish history spanning the period 1230–1452 by combining the existing texts. This merging was undertaken on the initiative of Karl Knutsson. The combined chronicle is preserved in four MSS; in nine more, Sturekrönikan is added to it.

The Small Rhymed Chronicle (Lilla rimkrönikan; 451 lines composed in the 1450s) differs from the chronicles mentioned above because of its monologue form. Beginning with the kings of a mythological past, the Swedish regents up to King Christoffer briefly describe their own lives and how they died. At the very end of the Middle Ages, another large chronicle was put together. This chronicle combines versions of Lilla rimkrönikan with the great
text suite (from Erikskrõnikan to Sturekrõnikan) and a new continuation up to 1520. The texts were recast in the monologue form of Lilla rimkrõnikan, and a new prologue was composed. This text combination, often called the Youngest Rhymed Chronicle (Yngsta rimkrõnikan), is preserved in three MSS.

The Danish chronicle, Den danske Rimkrønikae, is also written in monologue form. In about 5,000 lines, it tells the life and death of the Danish kings, starting in the mythological past with the first king, Dan (and his father, Humle), and ending with Christian I (d. 1481). The main sources are the Latin Compendium Saxonis and its continuation the Jutish Chronicle (Jyske krønike; up to 1340) and annals. Scholars have argued that the main part was composed at the beginning of the 15th century, the concluding section added later. The most complete version, based on a now-lost MS ending with the year 1481, was printed in 1495 by Godfred of Ghemen. Three MSS are preserved, offering more or less fragmentary versions, and there is a translation into Low German (up to 1477). As is the case with the Swedish chronicles, the author is unknown. According to Brandum-Nielsen (1930), more than one author may have been at work during the reign of Christian I. The discussion about the time of composition has also been coupled with the question of form. There is no agreement about which chronicle, Lilla rimkrønikan or Den danske rimkrønikae, introduced the monologue form to the Scandinavian chronicle. Another important problem, not yet solved, is raised by the resemblances between parts of the chronicle and ballad texts. Like the Swedish chronicles of the 15th century, the Danish one also bears witness to the contradictions of the Kalmar Union. Some sections of the text (such as the rhymes of Christian I) were revised so as to display hostility toward the Swedes.


Sven-Bertil Jansson

[See also: Annals; Chronicles; Eufemiasvisororna; Knittel(vers); Sweden]

Church, Stave see Stave Church

Church Organization and Function

1. DENMARK. The expansion of the Frankish empire was followed by missionary efforts. Bishop Willibrord of Utrecht paid an unsuccessful visit to a Danish king in the early 8th century; a hundred years later, in 823, Archbishop Ebo of Reims had just as little luck even though the Danish pretender Harald embraced the Christian faith. However, the missionary Ansgar visited the Scandinavian kingdoms from 826 on, founding churches in the more important market towns, such as Schleswig, Ribe, and Birka (Sweden).

Of more lasting importance was the conversion of several Viking settlers on the British Isles, and the continual contacts between Danelaw Vikings and their relations at home had a significant impact. The Ottonian emperors of Germany used this as a political instrument. In 948, Otto I founded missionary bishoprics with titular seats in Schleswig, Ribe, and Åhus. Like the kings of Poland (968) and Bohemia, King Harald of Denmark was baptized at this time (as the runic stones at Jelling tell us). A bishop of Odense is recorded in 988, but little is known of this early period. The new Church was formally subordinated to the archbishop of Hamburg-Bremen, although the kings wanted a more independent Church.

When Sven Forkbeard and his son Knud (Cnut; r. 1013–1035) conquered England, the German influence was replaced by that of the Anglo-Saxon Church, whose importance can still be seen in the Danish language, where everyday Christian terms are generally of Anglo-Saxon origin. The German tradition was hostile to this encroachment upon the right of the archbishops of Hamburg. Bishops appear in Zealand (1022 and Scania (1048), and in the 1060s we find a regular ecclesiastical organization with the traditional eight dioceses of Lund, Roskilde, Odense, Schleswig, Ribe, Åhus, Viborg, and Vestyssel (originally in Vestervig, but in the 12th century translated to Børglum). The parish organization must have been completed before 1100, and from this time onward wooden churches were replaced by buildings in stone, later in brick.
The growing tension between Danish kings and German emperors made the subordination of the Danish bishops under the archbishop of Hamburg-Bremen intolerable. As several popes were sympathetic to any curtailment of imperial sovereignty, a Danish province was established in 1104 with Lund as the metropolitan center, originally for all Scandinavia. But since a Norwegian province (in Nidaros, present Trondheim) was founded in 1152 and a Swedish province (in Uppsala) in 1164, the archbishops of Lund continued to claim the title of primate of Sweden.

It is reasonable to suppose that this early Danish Church had to accept increasing international ecclesiastical organization. According to tradition, King Knud tried to introduce some sort of ecclesiastical jurisdiction (and probably tithes too). With the establishment of a Danish province, the principle of paying tithes must have met with some success. When the sources become more specific, we find a Danish system in which the tithes were divided into three equal portions among bishop, mensa, and church (fabric). In the so-called Ecclesiastical Law of Zealand (1171) and of Scania (perhaps a few years later), we find an agreement by which the rights of the bishops were accepted in exchange for reduced fees for episcopal visitations, consecrations of churches, and so on. But in Jutland, the bishops had to be content with an "episcopal donation," which probably meant only that the farmers were in a better position to make a bargain, since commutation must have been common from the earliest-known evidence of tithe paying.

In the 11th century, the first monasteries were founded, especially by the Benedictine and Augustinian canons, and in the 12th century it is possible to see the outlines of ecclesiastical organization. Generally, a diocese was divided into several provostships with some archdiaconal functions, in Jutland often based on an older territorial system of a syscel (cf. English "shire" or German Gauf), and cathedral chapters come into existence (in Ribe in 1145), initially wavering between a regular and a secular organization.

The changing foreign influences are especially evident in the history of the chapters; in the English tradition, the Benedictines on an older territorial system of a syscel (cf. English "shire" or German Gauf), and cathedral chapters come into existence (in Ribe in 1145), initially wavering between a regular and a secular organization.

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The crusades against the heathen Slavonic tribes on the Baltic coastlands added the island of Rugen to the diocese of Roskilde (1169), and several Cistercian houses in the north of Germany were founded from Denmark (e.g., Colbatz in 1175 and Olivina in 1186). And at this time, the Hospitalers of St. John founded the priory of Dacia with its seat in Antvorskov.

During the time of archbishops Absalon (1177–1201) and his nephew Anders Sunesen (1202–1223), the Church worked hand in glove with the royal power, and the claims of an independent ecclesiastical legal system were fully accepted. When the Lateran Council of 1215 prohibited the use of ordeals, Danish law was changed at once in this respect. And as the folk laws (Zealand and Scanian Laws, ca. 1200; Jutland Law, 1241) make no mention of marriage and other matters of domestic relations, such problems must have been treated by ecclesiastical courts according to the principles of canon law (in its local application). The idea of legitimatio per subsequens matrimonium now became a permanent part of Danish law.

The crusade to Estonia in 1219 resulted in the foundation of the diocese of Reval, which at least formally continued to be part of the Danish ecclesiastical province, even if regular relations broke off when after 1340 the territory came under the military Order of the Brothers of the Sword (affiliated with the Teutonic Knights). The friendly relations between secular and spiritual powers were suspended in the middle of the 13th century, in many respects a local parallel to the international antagonism between popes and emperors, the Investiture conflicts, and so on. The archbishops Jakob Erlendsen (1253–1274) and especially Jens Grand (1291–1302) strove to preserve and increase the ecclesiastical privileges and immunities against secular and especially royal pretentions.

Not intimidated by sacerdotal interdicts (e.g., 1266–1275 and 1299–1303), the kings had the upper hand, since the bishops stood divided. The Jutland bishops, in particular, supported the kings, who could afford better lawyers and establish permanent ties to the Roman Curia. And not only did the popes have great political problems, they needed money. Accordingly, the kings succeeded in finding a working agreement with the papacy.

The kings were able to claim the rights of presentation to all rectories in chartered towns founded on royal lands, and, together with founder's right to several canopies and monasteries, the kings could later claim rights of presentation to about 10 percent of all parishes (especially in the diocese of Odense). But even if chapters and monasteries appropriated another 10–15 percent, most parishes were served by rectors appointed by the bishop (probably after local presentation) and administered by two churchwardens with annual visitation and auditing by the provost.

Most of the leading churchmen in this period studied abroad, especially in Paris. From 1200 onward, we find a whole group of Danish (at least Scandinavian) scholars in France, including philosophers (Boethius, Johannes, and Martinus de Dacia, the latter for a period as royal chancellor) and astronomers (Petrus Philomena, ca. 1300, and Johannes Simonis, 1417 in Vienne).

The chapters must have played an important role in training new clergy. By local statutes, scholars were obliged to maintain residence in the cathedral city for several years before taking up their vocations. In the High Middle Ages, the great abbeys were of considerable importance, assembling enormous landed wealth and appropriating churches and tithes. Even if many of the greater
Cistercian houses often were founded on an older Benedictine institution, we may later count about twenty-five Benedictine houses (about half of which were nunneries), eleven Cistercian houses (one nunnery), six Premonstratensian houses (one nunnery), and perhaps six Augustinian houses (especially among the poorer nunneries, it is extremely difficult to establish the order with any certainty).

There were enormous differences in wealth and importance between, for example, the Cistercian abbey of Soro and the priory of the Hospitallers in Antvorskov and on the other hand the numerous nunneries, which often just managed to survive as "rest homes" for the wealthy gentry, and their daughter houses. In the early 13th century, the Mendicants arrived, and in time the Dominicans (arrived 1222) may have had as many as twenty houses (two nunneries) and the Franciscans (arrived 1232) perhaps twenty-eight, and in the later Middle Ages the Greyfriars had a provincial organization divided into five custodies.

In the early 13th century, the diocesan synod appears as a regular part of the ecclesiastical administration, generally as a biannual synod (e.g., with a Trinity and a Michaelmas term). Together with provincial councils, the synods played an important part in introducing and applying international canon law in Denmark.

At the end of this century (perhaps in 1298), officials were introduced. An official general took over most of the administrative affairs of the diocese, especially the legal business, but also economic matters and estate administration, while a local official was appointed for each hundred as a supervisor of the clergy (later "provst"); these officials were often chosen from among the local incumbents.

Already by the early 13th century, the archdiocese established its own administrative system. The older provosts (with some semiarchdiacal powers) were supplanted by a system of rural deans in each hundred. Still remote parts of the archdiocese (the province of Halland and the archiepiscopal pallate Lordship of Bornholm) had their own deans, who were members of the cathedral chapter, and they may have held some archdiocesan powers, perhaps by special delegation. In the later Middle Ages, the officials in Lund were by and large secular, often chosen from among the petty gentry, who made a career in the archiepiscopal household and the estate administration. Their office must have been a secular one, involving the collection of income (e.g., fines) and other duties. Little is known about the ecclesiastical courts here, which were headed by the anonymous Curia Lundensis (probably a group of delegated canons).

In the island diocese of Odense, we find special synods on the major islands of Lolland and Falster, held at the same time as the synod of Odense. When officials are introduced, we find not only hundred-officials here, but also special officials-general on all major islands.

Where the oldest provosts still survived, as in Ribe and Schleswig, we have evidence of concurrent jurisdiction, since the officials of both bishoprics and provosts claimed the fines. The bishops were probably victorious in the long run, since later only the provosts had undisputed rights of visitation of the parish churches.

In the wealthy diocese of Roskilde, the older provosts disappear in the 13th century (perhaps after the reform in 1225); but here the four prelates and the dean of the collegiate chapter of Copenhagen had divided the island of Zealand into five districts where each dignitary claimed concurrent jurisdiction even in marriage cases, pretentions that the bishop tried to suppress. Even if the prelates in 1460 received papal confirmation of their time-honored right of jurisdiction (among others, in cases of incest, perjury, defamation), the diocesan statutes of 1517 granted them only the lesser (but probably more numerous) cases together with the visitation of the fabric.

As soon as we can establish a picture of the Danish Church, the scanty sources notwithstanding, we get an impression of the usual medieval piety. The popularity of special saints might change through the ages, but the worship of saints remained an integral part of the religion. From baptism to burial, the Church followed the people, and annual confession was mandatory. People who had been interdicted for a longer period without seeking absolution (in the 15th century, for a whole year) might simply be "signified" to the secular authorities, as this was considered a capital offense. Disputes over tithes and rectorial fees never involved the principles, but the exact amount might give rise to discussion during the negotiations on commutation and so on, and it must have been the general opinion that salvation could be obtained only through the power of the Church and its ordained clergy.

The 14th century was one of general decline, only partly through the plague, because a general agrarian crisis affected all landowners and especially the Church, which might have owned about one third of all landed property. Not all the 2,000 village churches could be maintained; in some parts of Jutland, several were closed down. In such areas, a parish priest might have to serve two or even three churches at the same time. And in the poorer chapters, as in Ribe, the number of canons might be cut by half.

The conflicts in the high Middle Ages between Church and state ended in a theoretical victory for the Church. But in its struggles for immunities and independence from the secular powers, the Danish Church had become increasingly dependent upon Rome. Instead of royal taxes, the bishops had to pay considerable amounts of annates for papal confirmation. The popes interfered in episcopal elections, claimed rights of provision, and through appeals to the Curia made their power felt in everyday life. Especially unpopular were the numerous papal crusade taxes; and since the 14th century was filled with crises, warfare, and civil war, culminating in an interregnum in 1332–1340, this might explain why the later-medieval clergy generally supported a strong monarchy as the only power that could protect the Church and thereby make its extensive privileges a reality.

The new king Valdemar IV (1340–1375) established friendly relations with the popes of Avignon, which gave him influence on the appointment of new bishops. His daughter Margrethe (de facto ruler 1375–1412) especially enjoyed strong support from the Church, and many bishops began their careers in the royal household or even as royal chancellors. Her founding of the Scandinavian Union (Kalmar, 1397), with her nephew Erik of Pomerania (1389–1439) as king of all three northern kingdoms, enhanced her influence, and the Scandinavian bishops were generally among her strongest supporters in the common councils (parliaments). Her wealth enabled her to make the last of the great donations to the Church. But her successor, King Erik, may not have possessed her diplomatic tact. The Swedish clergy, in particular, opposed his interference in episcopal elections, and in time this was one of the reasons why Sweden was plunged into a continuous civil war for or against the increasingly unpopular Union.
Since the bishops played such an important part in the affairs of state, they needed help in the administration of their dioceses, as consecration of new clergy, confirmations, and so on were episcopal prerogatives that could not be delegated to officials. Just before 1400, we find suffragans, at first with oriental titles. But since many bishops from the North Atlantic sees were frequent guests at court, they may have paid their episcopal hosts for hospitality received by performing suffragan work (such as consecrating churches), and as the Greenland routes were forgotten, the bishops of Gardar (Greenland) from then on were constantly found in Danish and Norwegian dioceses as ordinary suffragans.

Scandinavian bishops were also active in the great councils, in both Constance and in Basel; but when the councils had had their day, King Christian 1 (1448-1481) reestablished the former cordial relationship with the Curia, and during his visit to Rome in 1474 the Gold Rose was bestowed upon him together with substantial privileges, such as the presentation of all postmortem dignitaries in chapters, and later his queen brought back the privilege of founding a university in Copenhagen (established 1479).

Since the Danish bishops were ex officio members of the Council (which held power during the interregnum, until a new king had been elected and signed a coronation charter, in which the privileges of the aristocracy were specified), the popes must have understood the importance of appointing only royal nominees. Generally, the chapters were cooperative, since most royal chancellors ended their careers as bishops. Especially during the Schism, when Denmark invariably supported Rome, later Pisa, then the reform movement within the Franciscan order was extremely violent and ultimately led to its division. Supported by the royal family, the Spirituals gradually took over all Danish houses, while the opponents joined the Conventuals in Sweden.

Danish liturgy followed its North German neighbors in the traditions, which only gradually and to a lesser degree became influenced by Roman centralism (accordingly, much medieval church music is preserved in the post-Reformation Church). Together with the royal saints King Knud and Knud Lavard, traditional saints, such as Michael, Martin, and John, enjoyed uninterrupted worship, but for practical reasons village churches had to rely on the inexhaustible supply of relics from the 11,000 virgins or the 10,000 knights. Holy wells survived for centuries as places of veneration, and pilgrimages flourished. In the last century of the Middle Ages, the Church found its most popular saints in Severinus and Erasmus, whose worship is little known but who must have been extremely popular among the common people, as witnessed by name-giving practices among the peasantry.

Even if too little is known in detail, it is evident that the Church played an important part in the history of Danish law. Since the increasingly obsolete folk laws grew unable to cope with the problems of a modern society, the spiritual courts came to their assistance, especially in more sophisticated economic affairs. About 1376, the royal council referred matters of usury to the ecclesiastical courts, and the Church must have played an important part, since it was the only institution with courts that could, with the threat of excommunication, enforce the payments of debts.

In the later Middle Ages, the Danish Church depended on the royal power increasingly as its only protector in a often hostile and litigious world. Bishops often had difficult times dealing with local magnates or the independent Cistercian abbeys, which claimed immunity from the episcopal power. Most bishops were former royal officials, generally taken from the ranks of the lesser gentry, and the secular and spiritual affairs became so integrated that bishops took the secular fines from their own peasants, and noble landowners seem to have kept the spiritual fines from the dependents.

When the evangelical preachers arrived in Denmark after 1517, they found a general interest in "reform." But with the exception of the Erasmian Bible humanist Paulus Helie (Poul Helgesen), who could follow Luther a long way but not into schism,
they found few competent opponents. Most bishops were university graduates, but generally in canon or Roman law: able administrators and loyal royal councillors, but men not in a position to take part in a theological debate. Such matters were left in the hands of the suffragans and mendicant preachers.

Library lists give evidence that the Danish Church was well versed in its traditional and ordinary obligations, but without any pretensions of originality. When for purely political reasons King Frederik I (1523–1533) separated the Danish Church from Rome (1526/7), all his bishops and most of the clergy obeyed the royal policies. A law reform began with a royal ordinance of 1527, which at last made it possible for secular courts to grant execution of debts. The secular and spiritual aristocracies happily competed in the suppression of Franciscan houses (probably under suspicion of being loyal to Rome), and as the higher clergy felt more loyalty to the king and to their Danish aristocratic families than to Rome, the Danish Reformation arrived in 1536 by royal order and the peaceful resolution of a diet.

The missionary Church was under the leadership of the king. The christianization was part of the inclusion of the local communities under the royal power. The king had the first local churches built. The missionary bishops were members of the king’s hird, and were elected by him when the bishops from the reign of Olaf Tryggvason ("peaceful," 1066-1093) began taking residence at established episcopal seats in Nidaros (now Trondheim), Bergen, and perhaps somewhat later in Oslo. The first cathedrals were erected at or near central royal estates in the towns. In the earliest period, the bishops had several residences, and traveled either in the king’s following or on their own missionary journeys. In the beginning, their activity was not territorially defined; but from the second half of the 11th century, we can glimpse an emerging episcopal organization based on the division into lgping regions. Like the king and his representatives, the bishops had close contact with the lgtings in order to gain access to the farming society and have legal rules sanctioned as obligatory.

The king had Christianity adopted as the only permitted religion in Norway. However, the christianization of the people took centuries. Olaf Haraldsson’s hird-bishop Grimkell was clearly active in the establishment of a Norwegian ecclesiastical organization and law. The missionary Church was a national Church ruled by the king, and the oldest ecclesiastical decisions for the individual lgping regions probably go back to Olaf Haraldsson and Bishop Grimkell.

Not only did the king profit politically from introducing a new religion; he also found valuable advisers and helpers among the clergy. The priests could write, had contact with foreign countries, and could serve as the king’s spokesmen to the people. Gradually, the country became covered with local churches, owned and administered either by the parishes themselves jointly or by private church builders and their successors. The privately owned churches were called "convenience churches" (hoegendiskirkjur), many of which later became parish churches. Gradually, the local churches came under the control of the bishops, thus laying a foundation for a nationwide church organization.

The king controlled the Church in the 11th century and the beginning of the 12th primarily through his appointing of bishops. At the same time, the farmers had influence on church and religious life. Christianity and church organization were made law at the secular lgtings. The provincial laws included special church laws with provisions governing the relationship between the Church and the people, as well as religious life generally. They regulated the observance of festivals, mass-days, and fasts; set forth prohibitions against the exposure of deformed children, marriages of close relatives, and heathen cults; gave orders for burial in the churchyard; and the like. The Church still did not have any inner legislation based on the universally recognized canonical principles. With the help of the king’s authority, it had to get its program and its organization sanctioned at the legal lgting by representatives of the free Norwegian farmer society. Therefore, the older church laws were formed differently for the individual lgtings. Individual church laws came into existence for the Gulåping Law in Vestlandet, the Froståping Law in Trøndelag, the Elåsvåping Law in Oppland, and the Borgåping Law in Viken. The farmers also influenced the appointment of priests, who were gradually recruited from the local community and attached to it through marriage. The priests were supported by the farmers, who were responsible for the building and maintenance of the local churches, which were their common property.

Troels Dahlerup

2. NORWAY. The contact of the Vikings with Europe in the 9th and 10th centuries allowed Christian impulses to reach the coastal areas of Norway. In the middle of the 10th century, foreign missionaries were probably active in Viken and on Vestlandet. But it was the missionary kings Håkon Abaelsteinsföstr ("Ethelstan’s foster-son"), Olaf Tryggvason, and Olaf Haraldsson who adopted Christianity as the sole religion in Norway and who established the foundations for the oldest church organization, based, in the main, on English models. They had converted to Christianity abroad, and had both religious and political reasons for introducing Christianity. From other countries, they were acquainted with a pattern for collaboration between kingdom and Church under the king’s leadership that they sought to adapt to Norwegian conditions. The introduction of a new religion could also break down a heathen social organization where it was in opposition to the king. The unification and christianization of Norway in the 11th century led to the confiscation of the farms of heathen landowners. Later, the royal power transferred a good portion of this property to the Church.

In the first half of the 12th century, the Church became more independent of the Crown, and at the same time more firmly allied to the international papal Church. Originally, the Norwegian Church had been under the archbishop in Hamburg-Bremen, and since 1104 under the archbishop in Lund. In 1152 or 1153, the papal legate Nicolaus Brekepeare came to Norway to establish a Norwegian archbishop's seat in Nidaros. The Church received its own national organization with parishes and bishoprics under the leadership of the archbishop, and became a public authority parallel with the kingdom. The Norwegian church province comprised eleven bishoprics, five in Norway proper—Nidaros, Bergen, Oslo, Stavanger (established in the 1120s), and Hamar (established at the time of the foundation of the archbishopric)—six in the Nordic island communities in the west—Skalholt and Holò in Iceland, and in Greenland, the Faroe Islands, the Orkneys-Shetland, and Hebrides-Man. This new arrangement had its basis in the pope's policy of separating smaller provinces on the fringes of Europe and drawing them into a firmer subordinate relationship with Rome. In 1152/3 and under Magnus Erlingsson (1161–1184), the kingdom made concessions on three important points: the Church should have decisive influence on the choice of bishops and abbots; it should have administrative and financial jurisdiction over churches and church property; it should have jurisdiction over its own personnel and in ecclesiastical matters. From the earliest times, the Church had only had a certain judicial authority through the penitential discipline connected with confession.

The Church freed itself from its dependence on the farmer community. The proprietary church system gave way to an ecclesiastical proprietary right. During the 13th century, the farmers' influence on legislation disappeared. The more independent Church continued to be an important collaborator with the kingdom. Through support from King Magnus Erlingsson, the Church increased its freedom and rights. In collaboration with Archbishop Eysteinn Erlendsson (1161–1188), the king revised the Church laws. According to the law of succession of 1163, the bishops were to have a decisive influence on the accession of a new king.

King Sverrir Sigurðarson (1177–1202) refused on important points to accept the ecclesiastical reform of 1152/3 and the advantages the Church had achieved under Magnus Erlingsson. He demanded that the Church should submit to the king's leadership as it had earlier, and refused to accept the concessions that previously had been made to the Church to the extent the Church itself interpreted them. This applied primarily to the election of bishops, appointment of priests, ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and income derived from fines. This action led to the Church's political and military opposition to the king, and developed into the most bitter conflict between Crown and ecclesiastical authorities in medieval Norway. It was not until after Sverrir's death in 1202 that the conflict died down. King Hákon Sverrisson's reconciliation with the bishops in the same year was, however, more of a ceasefire than a solution. In the shelter of the ceasefire, it appears that the Church itself interpreted them. This applied primarily to the election of bishops, appointment of priests, ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and income derived from fines. This action led to the Church's political and military opposition to the king, and developed into the most bitter conflict between Crown and ecclesiastical authorities in medieval Norway. It was not until after Sverrir's death in 1202 that the conflict died down. King Hákon Sverrisson's reconciliation with the bishops in the same year was, however, more of a ceasefire than a solution. In the shelter of the ceasefire, it appears that the Church strengthened its position in the first half of the 13th century. In the collaboration with the Crown, the Church was probably the weaker partner, not least during Hákon Hákonarson's stable absolute monarchy after 1240. But the king gradually accepted the notion of a more autonomous ecclesiastical organization with greater freedom and more extensive privileges than under King Sverrir.

Hákon's son and successor, Magnus lagabœtir ("law-mender"; 1263–1280) was more sympathetic than any previous king in his dealings with Archbishop Jón rauði ("the red"; 1268–1282). They resulted in a concordat in 1277, the Treaty of Tonsberg, where older ecclesiastical privileges were confirmed and new ones were made. The freedom of the Church in relation to the secular community was expressly recognized in a number of areas. Of the old privileges, the ecclesiastical election of bishops and the appointment of priests were reestablished as a matter of principle.

The new advantages were primarily financial. The clergy, which from the second half of the 12th century was exempted from military leidangr service and leidangr taxes, had later achieved tax relief also for laypeople in the service of the archbishop. It now obtained the provision that the episcopal settuvæinar, or men fit for military service, such as the "king's men," should be exempted from leidangr taxes. The archbishop received tax exemption for 100 men, the bishops for forty men each. The Church gained ground also in the area of independent jurisdiction, but it is debated to what extent this took place in relation to earlier theory and practice. Politically, King Magnus was unwilling to accept ecclesiastical influence to the detriment of the monarchy on the matter of succession to the throne and in legislation. His concessions were made from a strong royal position.

The barons and lird officials, who, as members of the king's council, took over the reign for the underage Eiríkr Magnússson in 1280, were unwilling to accept the Church's jurisdiction and economic gains even though they had participated in sanctioning them. Nor would they accept Archbishop Jón's demand for rule over the ecclesiastical legislation. This refusal led to a short but bitter struggle in the early 1280s. Archbishop Jón and two of his bishops were exiled. Shortly after, he died in Sweden. When the relations between the royal power and the Church had gradually become normal again, the Church could practice a high degree of autonomy, although not quite according to the agreement of 1277. During the rest of the high Middle Ages, there continued a struggle over the boundaries of this autonomy.

In the collaboration between Church and kingdom, significant advances had been made toward both an ecclesiastical and a royal national organization. The Church played an active role in the development of the royal ruling apparatus after the civil wars ended in 1240. With the exception of the struggle in the early 1280s, the bishops served as the king's advisers. Clerics served him on missions and in administrative matters. Nonetheless, only a small number of the Church's personnel were at the kingdom's disposal. The Church used the clerics first and foremost for its own purposes. This explains why the kings, from Hákon Håkonarson on, more systematically developed their own clergy associated with specific royal chapters.

**Organization of the Church.** The organization of the Church was hierarchical, with the local church parish as a basic unit. The church laws in the logtgirg regions presuppose larger parish churches or main churches. In the beginning, it seems that there was such a church in each of the small Trondelag counties. In the much larger counties on Vestlandet, it is likely that there was more than one main church in Oppland, it seems that there was such a church for each third of a county, and in Viken two main churches. The first county churches were most likely normally built on crown lands. In the 11th century, they probably had the status of a mother-church, and functioned as centers for baptism and burials for larger areas. In the 12th century, however, it appears that they had the same function and rights as parish churches. But they ranked higher, and the priest of the main church had both visitation and supervision rights over the other parish churches. The maintenance of the main or county churches was the farmers' responsibility.
A prerequisite for the arrangement with main churches is the existence of smaller parish churches with lower rank and for smaller areas. How far back status as a main church goes is uncertain, but certainly early in the 12th century local churches of a lower rank were common. "Convenience churches" are mentioned in all the church laws. They were built by magnates on their own farms and by the king on royal estates in the countryside and in the towns. In the 12th century, the convenience churches were increasingly converted into parish churches with churchyards. This process seems to have been particularly common in Oppland and in Trøndelag. Since there were relatively many main or county churches in these areas, we find here only main churches and converted convenience churches as parish churches. Nonetheless, there is reason to believe that most of the convenience churches also in Viken and on Vestlandet gradually received parish-church status. In addition, in Viken a number of churches have an intermediate position between the main churches and the convenience churches, the so-called heradskirkjur ("district churches"). i.e., churches for a specific jurisdiction within a district (herad), which became parishes when a firmer parish division was introduced in the high Middle Ages. Heradskirkjur appear also in the Gulaping Law together with quarter and eight churches within a county, in an intermediate position between county and convenience churches. Because of the large and topographically divided Vestland counties, the quarter churches in the Bergen bishopric received certain administrative main-church functions in line with the main or county churches in Trøndelag and Oppland. The local churches in Norway in the early 12th century were thus in the main of three kinds: main or county churches, smaller parish churches, and private convenience churches. Convenience churches were, along with the ground on which they stood, the property of the individual who built the church and his heirs; the others were the property of a farmer collective. The local churches were thus originally a kind of proprietary church, owned either individually or collectively. There is reason to believe that the county churches were originally royal proprietary churches. This system gave certain rights, for example in the appointment of priests. But it is unlikely that it was especially lucrative for the owners, and it hardly came into existence for that reason. Indeed, its abolition took place without struggle, in contrast to a number of other European countries. In Iceland, the Church managed only partially to abolish the proprietary-church system after conflicts in the 12th century and in the last decades of the 13th (Staðarmál). Nevertheless, under King Sverrir, there were conflicts over the royal proprietary churches despite the fact that in 1152/3 the kingdom had renounced its proprietary-church authority. In the high Middle Ages, the parish and diocese division assumed a definite form, and the administration came to be more in accordance with the norms of the Church. The proprietary-church system was replaced by the ecclesiastical proprietary right to the churches and their wealth. The bishops received the right to appoint priests, but the owners of the earlier convenience churches received patronage rights. The priests were to live in celibacy, although this was not really carried into effect. In the first half of the 14th century, churches in what is now Norwegian territory numbered approximately 1,200.

The central diocese organization had the bishop's office as its most important authority. During the high Middle Ages, the right to appoint bishops went first from the king to the clergy and people in the bisphoric; finally, the chapters secured, after the pattern of the universal Church, decisive authority in the election of bishops, but not without continued royal influence. The church administration in each bishopric was brought under the bishop and, after 1152/3, the chapter clerical college of canons, or kősbærðir, who were obligated to attend to the services in the cathedral and serve as the bishop's advisers. The bishops were consecrated by the archbishop. At the top of this nationwide hierarchical pyramid was (after 1152/3) the archbishop in Nidarø (Trondheim). He was usually selected by the chapter in Nidarø, but on several occasions the king appointed a new archbishop in the same way he retained the influence on the election of bishops. The archbishop was consecrated by the pope. The national assemblies of the high Middle Ages served also as national synods, but from 1280 they were replaced by a series of purely ecclesiastical provincial councils, which became an organ for ecclesiastical legislation.

Monasteries gained a foothold in Norway from the beginning of the 12th century. Monasteries and nunneries of the Benedictine order or its reformed branch, the Cluniacs, were established first. In the 1140s, the Cistercians gained a foothold from England. In the second half of the 12th century, the ordained Augustinians established monasteries, and from around 1240 the mendicant orders, Dominicans and Franciscans, established themselves in Norwegian towns. They were relatively independent of the episcopal Church. In the first half of the 14th century, there were about thirty monasteries in Norway. They were few and small in comparison with southern countries, but played an important role as centers of learning and points of contact with European religious life. The expansion of monasteries took place in collaboration with the bishops, and monasteries contributed to the disengagement from the secular community and the strengthening of the episcopal Church. The independent mendicant orders soon came into a tense relationship with the secular clergy. Their aim was to propagate the faith among the people, and they poached on the secular clergy's preserves. They functioned in the towns, where the parish division was threatened by their activity. There were signs of struggle over rights and authority in the Norwegian Church from the end of the 13th century between individual bishops and chapters and between the bishops and the secular clergy, on one side, and, on the other, the royal free chapel clergy that the kingdom organized from the second half of the 13th century. A royal and an ecclesiastical national organization still could not have come into existence without the kingdom and the Church's having taken on important social functions and achieved a deep rooting in the broad layers of society.

Ecclesiastical functions. The initiative for the creation of a Norwegian ecclesiastical law lay with the Church and kingdom but with rights of resolution of the logping. After the establishment of the archbishop's seat, the influence of canon law increased. Through papal bulls and decisions at general councils, Norwegian church-meeting decisions or statutes, and the bishops' pastoral letters, canonical influence extended over a broad social range. Inner ecclesiastical legislation increased, and the right of decision of the logping disappeared during the high Middle Ages. From the 1260s, the Church demanded independent legislative power. Archbishop Jón rauði completed in the first half of the 1270s a specific ecclesiastical law for Trøndelag in the canonical spirit. King Magnús lagabøttir reacted strongly against this, and appears never to have accepted Archbishop Jón's ecclesiastical law. But
since he could not agree with the archbishop on this matter, he abstained from completing the ecclesiastical legislation he had begun in 1267–1268, when he revised the lawbooks including the ecclesiastical laws for the western and eastern parts of the country. Magnús lagabøttr's Landslag (1274) thus does not contain a specific church law. In 1280, Archbishop Jón began the tradition of issuing the provincial statutes at purely ecclesiastical provincial councils. The push to an independent ecclesiastical church law legislation was repelled, and after 1290 the formal rule was that former old church law from before Magnús lagabøttr's and Archbishop Jón's time, should apply. In practical terms, the situation was unclear, however, with the existence of several concurrent versions of church law.

The Church could, as mentioned above, require atonement for sins through the penitential discipline. But punishment for breach of the church law had originally to be judged at the pings. From the time of the establishment of the archbishop's seat, the Church gradually developed independent judicial authority in clerical matters and also over laymen in the spiritual matters pertaining to church law. Ecclesiastical jurisdiction was headed by the bishop. Under his leadership, a judicial apparatus was developed with several similarities to the royal one. From earlier times, the bishop's bailiff (armadr) had to detect and examine breaches of church law, institute proceedings, and decide settlements. In the first half of the 13th century, the rural deans appear in the sources, clerics who were clearly considered superior to the bailiffs in the ecclesiastical administration of justice, with specific duties in the final phase: legal proceedings, judgment, and settlement. It is, however, only for the Oslo bishopric that a firm division into rural deaneries can be demonstrated. Otherwise, it seems that the priests at the main churches could look after functions pertaining to the office of the rural dean. From the end of the 13th century, an official also appears as the representative of the bishop. The establishment of the office of official probably aimed at centralizing the administration of justice within the bishopric in that the biggest cases and sinners were summoned to the bishop or official. Gradually, ecclesiastical assemblies got to institute proceedings, judge, and initiate punishment in addition to the imposition of atonement through the penitential discipline.

The Church became the country's greatest landowner in the late Middle Ages. Early in the 14th century, it owned approximately 40 percent of the nation's land estimated on the basis of the assessment of landholdings. It thus received extensive and varied economic rights and functions. It appears that from the beginning the king gave land for the episcopal churches. Moreover, the king and secular magnates established monasteries and local churches and donated lands to them. During the Middle Ages, the Church's property increased, especially through donations and by the Church's own purchase of land.

Under the proprietary-church system, the priest received his maintenance from the founders of the churches. The farmers paid a more or less firm annual amount of food, prestreida, in addition to fees or once-only payments for specific ecclesiastical service. To replace this system, the tithe was introduced as the first fixed tax in Norway from the time of Sigurð Jórsalafari ('Crusader'), and from the time of Magnús Erlingsson it became nationwide. The tithe was divided into four portions, with one quarter for the bishop, one for the priest, one for the parish church, and one for the poor. The tithe was to be one tenth of the yield of the field, and was paid mainly as corn tithe. A new regulation from 1277 decided payment for almost all economic activity, as well as trade and income from rents. But the Church had enormous difficulties in implementing this regulation in practical ways. Nonetheless, the tithe was the most significant tax in the medieval society and, after land rent, was the heaviest burden on the tenants.

The primary task of the Church was its religious function: to be instrumental in conversion to Christianity, to organize the worship of God, and to administer the Christian law. The Norwegian high-medieval Church managed to a great extent to affect the other forms of European, Catholic religious life. A sign that the ministry had deep roots is reflected in the contributions it received for prayers and masses for the deceased. As a religious institution, the Church was strong in the conscience of the people. Only in this way can one explain its power and influence, which it also used to pursue its earthly interests. The Church held a more important place in the individual's life than did the royal power, and contributed to developing a more integrated society.

Connected with the religious function of the Church were its social tasks. And here, as in many other things, it collaborated with the secular society. A quarter of the tithe was, as mentioned earlier, earmarked for the poor. The farmers themselves were to administer and distribute this tithe. Moreover, the Church received funds to distribute among the needy, and it administered hospitals for the poor and ill and provided medical help. Elderly people who could afford it could buy accommodation in ecclesiastical institutions.

The Church had an important cultural function. Christianity brought Norway into regular contact with European spiritual life. It was primarily clerics who received a higher education in Europe at the universities that became established from the time of the second half of the 12th century. The Church brought the art of reading and writing to the country, and thus established the basis for the written literature of the high Middle Ages. Together with the Crown, the Church created the milieu for this literature, and provided the impetus for some of the best examples of architecture and pictorial art. Preaching comprised the only contemporary vehicle for enlightenment of the people through the exposition of the Christian faith with rote learning of the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Hail Mary. With their cathedral and monastic schools, the ecclesiastical institutions organized nearly all education in the Middle Ages. Education was aimed mainly at clerics, but the royal household, royal administration, and secular aristocracy profited from it as well.

In the 14th century, clerics numbered approximately 2,000. At the top of the hierarchy, there was a group of about 100 prelates: archbishop, bishops, abbots, abbesses, cathedral canons, chapel deans, and the college of priests at the most distinguished royal chapels. Most of the clerics had more modest economic and social positions.

The Church in the late Middle Ages. The Black Death, which in the years 1347–1351 decimated most of Europe, reached Norway in 1349 and spread over most of the country. The following decades saw new attacks, followed by scattered outbreaks until the middle of the 15th century, and possibly longer. The mortality rate is considered to be between half and two-thirds of the population. The economic, social, and political effects were enormous. Between half and two-thirds of the farms and about two-thirds of the holdings from the high Middle Ages were still deserted around 1520.

The decline in population and agricultural production was
followed by a drastic decline in land prices and land rental. The income on rent from inhabited farms fell to around one quarter of what it had been before 1350. If one includes the deserted farms, on which little or nothing was paid, the landowners received probably one fifth or less of the earlier land rent. All landowners, the Crown, the nobility and aristocracy, the Church, and clerics were affected. In addition, the Church and the Crown suffered in the decline in income from taxes: the tithe fell to around one third of what it had been before the plague, and the fixed state taxes to around half. But the farmers were in an economically better situation than earlier. They had more left for their own consumption because of better access to land as a result of reduced land rent and tax, which consequently allowed for increased production. The landowning aristocracy sank to the status of large farmers through the loss of land rent and income from royal service.

When the ecclesiastical basis for income became weakened, there were fewer clerics, and the organization became simpler, both centrally and locally. The loss in income and the decline in population resulted, at the local level, in more churches being served by a single priest. Centrally, there was a tendency to combine the income from several services in order to create an economic basis for a smaller number of clerical offices. The monasteries, which quite one-sidedly based their economy on income from land rents, were especially hard hit by the fall in land rent. In order to establish the religious service and tend to other duties, they needed convents of a certain size. When the economic prerequisite failed, the result was disintegration and reduced prestige. This is the main reason why several monasteries ceased to function before the Reformation.

The personnel of the Church was nonetheless so strong in numbers and the organization so closely woven that it could be regulated in relation to the decline in settlement and population without losing influence. It seems, in fact, that it became stronger in the late Middle Ages. The Church's part of the country's landed property grew to about half, not least through donations. The Church strengthened its position as an independent, official authority, and also increased its influence in the secular government. The Norwegian Council of the Realm, the country's ruling organ, gradually came to consist of a small number of high noble magnates together with the high clergy and with the archbishop as the council's leader.

On the whole, the Church was both in terms of organization and resources less hard hit by the late-medieval crisis than the kingdom and the secular aristocracy. When after the middle of the 14th century it tried to assert its rights according to the treaty of 1277, it met with less resistance. However, in Norway, as in the neighboring countries, the Church had to subject itself to the late-medieval papal right to appoint bishops and increase taxes.

The archbishop and some of the bishops received royal estates. The archbishops Aslak Bolt (1430–1450) and Olav Engelbreksson (1523–1537) had funds to initiate large architectural projects, and they had at their disposal military resources. In 1458, King Christian I confirmed the treaty of 1277 as compensation for the Council of the Realm's agreeing to accept his son Hans as successor to the throne. The demands of the Church that had not previously been met with were thus partly granted. In the time that followed, the Norwegian Church governed its inner affairs with no interference from the royal power. Bishoprics and other important ecclesiastical positions had been filled largely by Norwegians. But during Christian II's Norwegian rule (1506–1513), the Church was pressured by a royal power that increasingly sympathized with Lutheranism and wanted to decrease the Church's economic and political privileges. The economic basis of the Church was undermined and its organization weakened. From the end of the 1520s, the royal power prepared for the Reformation in Norway. Lutheran preachers were allowed to be active in the country, secular administrators were appointed in some of the monasteries, and the estates were taken away from the bishops. In the spring of 1537, Norway's last archbishop, Olav Engelbreksson, fled with his battle fleet from Nidaros to the Netherlands, where he died in exile the year after. In the course of just over one year, the Catholic bishop-church organization of the Middle Ages fell apart. The king appropriated the power earlier enjoyed by the pope and the bishop. Norway became a dependency within the Danish-Norwegian orthodox common state.


**Magnús Stefánsson**

*[See also: Conversion; Denmark; Finland; Iceland; Monasticism; Norway; Sweden]*
Churches, Stone. The first stone churches in Scandinavia were built in the second half of the 11th century. In Denmark, these churches comprise a group, especially around Roskilde, built of calcareous tufa. The most important was undoubtedly the bishop's church at Roskilde, built by Bishop Sven (1074–1088) as a basilica with transeptal chapels and a so-called "westwork" forming the western termination of the church. Another Roskilde church built by Bishop Sven was St. Mary's, a regular basilica without transepts.

Around 1090, a wooden church in Odense, dedicated to St. Alban, was replaced by a stone structure. Early Jutlandish stone churches include Asmild, Venge, and Tamdrup. Asmild was a basilica of Saxon design with a west choir, while Venge, which is still preserved, has a single nave with transeptal chapels, apsidal chancel, and a west tower. The details show English influence. In Århus, an aisled crypt, originally part of the 11th-century church of St. Nicolas, has been excavated.

In Scania, parts of an early bishop's church in Dalby (later an Augustinian foundation) are still preserved. The church was an aisled basilica without transepts, terminated in the east by a square-ended chancel, all built of granite and sandstone.

In Sweden, St. Per in Sigtuna is the only surviving member of an early group of stone churches with aisled naves, transepts with apsidal chapels, small chancels with or without apses, and west towers furnished with galleries for the church patron. This group included the first bishop's church at Linköping and the royal churches of Gudhem and Vreta, later to become monastery churches. The earliest single-nave churches also had towers of this kind (e.g., Rydaholm in Småland and Husaby in Västergötland, where the stone tower originally was added to a wooden church).

The first Norwegian stone churches were a series of 11th-century bishop's churches in Trondheim, Selje (on the west coast of Norway), and Bergen. The churches in Bergen and Trondheim have vanished, but Selje, which had an aisled nave, perhaps with a central tower resting on six slender piers, is still standing as a ruin. A little later, the present cathedral of Stavanger was built as a regular basilica with a west tower, but without transepts and with a small, square chancel. The first stone churches in East Norway, from around 1100 or a little later, seem to be a group in Oslo, including the cathedral of St. Halvard, a parish church dedicated to Clemens, and the royal chapel of St. Mary together with a small church at Hovedøy, later to form the core of a Cistercian abbey church just outside the town. Apart from St. Halvard's, which was a basilica with regular transepts, these churches were single-nave, although St. Clemens's and the church at Hovedøy had a series of pillars in the middle of the nave that carried roof beams, or, more probably, small vaults.

The most important buildings undertaken in Scandinavia in the 12th century were the new cathedrals erected especially in Denmark (including Scania). Among them, Lund in Scania, from 1104 the seat of an archbishop, was the first, and probably the most influential one. Here, masons of Rhenish-Lombardic origin built an aisled church with transepts. No central tower was built, but the nave was terminated by a western twin-tower front. The eastern part of the church was in many respects modeled on the cathedral of Speyer, Germany. The cathedral of Ribe, Jutland, reflects German influence from the Rhine-Maas area. It is even built of stone imported from Germany. Unlike Lund, the apse springs directly from the east wall of the transepts, the crossing of which is covered by a dome and crowned by a central tower. Besides Lund and Ribe, new cathedrals were built in Viborg (heavily restored), in Århus (rebuilt) and, late in the century, in Roskilde. In Trondheim, Norway, the building of a new cathedral started around 1150 with the erection of a transept by English masons, probably from Lincoln. Monastic churches also played an important part in the development of Scandinavian stone architecture. St. Alban's, Odense, and Venge were early Benedictine foundations. Later foundations of great importance were Ringersted (Benedictine) and Sorø (Cistercian). Munkeliv near Bergen (Benedictine) is a key monument for understanding the 12th-century architecture of Bergen and West Norway. In Sweden, Cistercian abbeys like Alvastra and Varnhem become equally important.

The 12th century saw the building of many parish churches in stone. In Denmark alone, some 1,500 churches were built, the majority of them consisting of a single nave, a chancel with or without apse, and sometimes a west tower. Usually, their details reflect stylistic influence from the local cathedral. In Sweden, churches with east towers occur (e.g., Hossmo, Småland). The churches of Gotland are characterized by masonry and sculptural details of especially high quality. At Bornholm, a special type of round church was built, obviously for defense purposes. In Norway, parish churches made of stone are found on both sides of the Oslo fjord, along the coast of West Norway and in Trøndelag, where a series of large parish churches reflect Anglo-Norman influence probably conveyed by masons from Trondheim.

Around 1160, brick was introduced as a new building material in Scandinavia, first in Denmark, a little later in Sweden, and from around 1250 in Norway. In Denmark, brick became the dominant building material; in Sweden, it was generally used except in northern Götaland and Gotland, where good building stone was abundant. In Norway, brick was to some extent used in the eastern part of the country and in Bergen and Trondheim, but the majority of the Norwegian stone churches were built in coursed rubble or dressed stone throughout the Middle Ages.

An early, unique Danish church made of brick is the church of Kalundborg, dating from the last quarter of the 12th century. It is built over a cruciform ground plan, probably Byzantine-inspired. The equally long cross-arms terminate in octagons that, together with the crossing, are crowned by towers.

Another early Danish brick building is the cathedral of Roskilde (1170–1220), the design of which seems to reflect Early Gothic stylistic ideals as manifested in some North French cathedrals (Noyon, Laon, Arras). Of a similar French design is the cathedral of Uppsala (ca. 1250–1350), which in part was built by the French architect Étienne de Bonneuil, who worked in Uppsala from 1287 to 1300. The cathedral of Trondheim (1180–1320) could, on the other hand, be labeled as typically English. It was built in dressed stone. Both general design and ornamental details show close resemblance with Lincoln and, as far as the western part of the building is concerned, Westminster Abbey. The octagonal termination of the choir is, however, a unique construction unparalleled among European cathedrals, while the choir extension of the cathedral in Stavanger (1273–1300) is less original. Its east front is probably inspired by Lincoln.

The cathedrals mentioned above were all basilicas. So was also one of the most important late 13th-century Danish churches, the cathedral of St. Knud (Cnut) in Odense, and two other large churches, the town churches of St. Peter's, Malmö and St. Mary's, Copenhagen, both built in the 14th century. In other Danish towns, a sort of "pseudo-basilica" with triforium galleries but without
clerestory windows was built, e.g., in Slagelse and Koge. Ordinary hall churches also occur, e.g., St. Olav’s, Elsinore.

In Sweden, hall churches were introduced by the mendicant orders, the Dominican church of St. Mary’s in Siguna (1230–1240) being the first. The type became common, e.g., St. Mary’s in Visby, Gotland, the cathedrals of Linköping, Strängnäs, and Åbo in Finland. The Brigettine churches of Vadstena, Sweden, and Maribo, Jutland, both 15th-century, were also built as large hall churches. But the most spectacular Danish example is perhaps the 15th-century choir of Århus cathedral (1460–1470).

Apart from the cathedrals of Roskilde and Uppsala, which were inspired by French models, the majority of Danish and Swedish brick churches are offspring of North German brick architecture. St. Mary’s, Visby, and other Gotlandish stone churches have their closest parallels in Rhineland-Westphalia. Masons from Gotland also introduced this style in Linköping and even in Uppsala.

The period 1300–1500 saw practically no church-building activity in Norway. In Sweden and Denmark, relatively few new churches were built, but many churches were enlarged and vaulted. New and larger choirs were built, and towers were added in the west. Some new churches of particular importance have already been mentioned. Others include the cathedral of Haderslev and the well-preserved Carmelite church of St. Mary’s, Elsinore.

The available evidence can, however, give important clues as to how the climate may have varied. Because of lack of evidence for precipitation, the discussion will center on temperature variations. Over the entire period (ca. A.D. 500 to ca. 1700), decadal averages of annual-mean temperatures, while appearing quite variable, probably deviated by at most a few degrees Celsius from those prevailing during the 20th century.

Different types of proxy data include tree-line fluctuations, pollen records, documentary evidence, glacier oscillations, and tree rings. For example, the widths of annual growth rings of certain trees in continental Scandinavia correlate well with summer temperature. One interesting long tree-ring series, spanning 436 to 1981 and based on pine (Pinus sylvestris), has been produced by Bartholin for the area around Lake Torneå in northern Sweden. This series indicates a period of cold temperatures around 550. A warmer period then lasted to about 780. From that time, temperatures remained cooler until about 930. A warm period set in then and lasted for twenty to thirty years. From about 950 to 970, it was cooler again. From then to around 1140, a distinct mild period is suggested, followed by a short cold spell lasting perhaps ten years. From about 1130 to about 1560, the climate appears rather variable, but tending toward the mild side. The coldest summers of this time were probably around 1350, 1400, and 1470. The most marked cold period of the entire series is from about 1560 to about 1740. If these climate variations in northern Sweden are correct, similar conditions are likely to have prevailed in northern Finland. A study by Sirén, based on pines from a number of sites in northern Finland, concluded that the 1200s were colder than the 1300s, and the 1400s colder than the 1500s. An oak chronology from the Gota River area in western Sweden suggests that temperatures between 1450 and 1700 were somewhat lower than those after 1700.

Indications of climate changes may also be drawn from studies of glacier moraine positions and mass balance estimates because glacial advance and growth generally signify a response to a colder climate. Conversely, a shrinking glacier suggests a time of warmer climate. There may, however, be a time lag of some years between a change in climate and a glacier’s response. A number of methods are used to date glacier fluctuations, the most important of which are radiocarbon dating and lichenometry. Radiocarbon dating relies on measuring the proportion of the isotope C14 (radiocarbon) in the carbon contained in a particular material, for example, from buried soils or pieces of wood in glacier moraines. Lichenometry makes use of the fact that, in any given location, lichens, which can live for many centuries, grow at a rate that is roughly constant. Their size is therefore an indication of their age. Using these dating techniques, Karlén and other researchers have built up a guide to past glacier variations in Sweden and Norway. Several advances are indicated from about 550 to 950. Possible glacier advances between 800 to 900 would accord well with the dendrochronological evidence for a cooler climate in northern Sweden around 780 to 930. A radiocarbon date from Ritajärvi in Sarek National Park points to another advance around 1290. It also seems likely that glaciers were relatively large during a period of cool summers from 1350 to 1400. Glaciers in Sweden probably reached their...
greatest extent in historical times in the 17th and early 18th centuries.

From 950 to 1590, glacial advances in Norway appear to have been better defined than in Sweden. Seven radiocarbon dates associated with moraines give ages around 1330 and 1490, and these data are believed to reflect periods of maximum glacier extent. The former of these dates is supported by a Norwegian document from 1340, which mentions a glacier advance of Jostedalsbreen in southwestern Norway (see Eide 1955). Research by Karlén also shows evidence for an advance at this time from Vuolep Allakasjaure in northern Sweden. However, climatic changes in northern Sweden and southern Norway may not be synchronous. Following the advance of about 1490, it is possible that a warm spell occurred in southern Norway at the beginning of the 17th century, succeeded by a cold period. Another cold period is indicated from the late 17th century, with a warmer period separating the two.

Other documentary evidence from Norway includes sporadic references to weather in early sources, such as Heimskringla. This work refers to severe years around A.D. 961 to 965, 974, 1020, 1030-1035, 1047, 1207, and 1213. Good years are said to have occurred shortly after about 885 and from 1103 to 1130. These weather references cannot be regarded as reliable, however. A recent project led by Knud Frydendahl of the Danish Meteorological Office has attempted to gather all medieval historical references to climate in Denmark. Only isolated descriptions referring to individual years exist. Years that may have been severe in the Dano-Norwegian Baltic region include 1307, 1323, 1356, 1408, 1426, 1460, 1547, 1555, 1570, 1600, and 1608. However, the data sources used for this information have not all been historically verified.

Both Iceland and Greenland have high-resolution proxy-climate records that are among the longest in the world. The Iceland record is based on historical evidence, and Greenland has a number of records based on isotope data from deep ice cores. The evidence from Greenland will be considered first. The concentration of oxygen and deuterium isotopes in high-latitude precipitation is determined mainly by the temperature of its formation. This factor causes seasonal isotopic variations in snow and ice as well as long-term variations due to climatic changes. According to Dansgaard, ice-core data from Crête, central Greenland, suggests a considerable and rapid warming late in the 9th century. He argues that this rise may well have facilitated the Norse settlement of Iceland at this time. The name of Greenland, when this country was in turn settled by Eiríkr rauði ("the red") around 985, may have developed reality. Dansgaard suggests that, when this happened, Greenland was at the end of a warm period longer than any that has occurred there since. A deterioration in the climate may have begun around 1030, with the climate remaining generally cold to about 1520. The coldest years of the period were around the late 1200s and the late 1300s. During this time, however, there were mild spells around the early 1100s and the early 1400s. From about 1520 to about 1740, temperatures remained on the cool side, but not markedly so. A cold period is seen from about 1740 to about 1900. Dansgaard suggests that the cold climate of the 14th century played an important part in the tragic end of the Greenland Norse colony. McGovern, however, while conceding that climate may have played a certain part, emphasizes the importance of economic and social factors.

As documents referring to climate in Iceland are both sparse and noncontemporary until the late 12th century, evidence for a mild climate for the first few centuries of settlement (from ca. 870 to 1170) is circumstantial only. The fact that the settlers not only traveled to Iceland but also chose to remain, and that they were able to grow barley, are examples of this evidence. From 1180 to 1210, sources suggest a period of cold climate, and from 1212 to 1232 a milder one. Over the next few decades, there are sporadic references to severe seasons. The 1280s and 1290s were undoubtedly severe, while the years 1300 to around 1320 were comparatively mild. The early 1320s, on the other hand, were harsh, with sea ice off the coasts and severe weather. The 1330s and 1340s are likely to have been mild. From around 1350, the climate seems to have become colder, and the 1370s were particularly harsh. The frequent presence of the sea ice off the Icelandic coast during the 14th century may also be inferred from two geographical descriptions; one is in a version of Guðmundar saga, the other is attributed to Ívarr Bárðarson. The period from about 1380 to 1430 was comparatively mild. There is some evidence for a mild climate between 1430 and 1560. For the latter part of the 16th century, sources suggest a comparatively harsh climate. The early and latter part of the 17th centuries were cold, but a mild spell occurred around 1640 to 1670.

From the research that has been done, it is evident that the climate of the Scandinavian regions varied considerably over the centuries from about 500 to 1700 and that these variations were spatial as well as temporal. It does seem likely, however, that there was a prolonged time of mild climate common to both the North Atlantic region (ca. 870 to 1050 or later) and to northern Scandinavia (ca. 950 to 1150). The available evidence is not yet sufficient for us to know whether southern Scandinavia was similarly affected. However, evidence for mild temperatures in places like England at this time suggests that this was possible. Subsequently, a number of alternating mild and colder intervals lasting for decades or longer occurred in the North Atlantic area. Over this period, the climate of northern Scandinavia also appears to have been variable, but may have remained milder than cooler. The "Little Ice Age" was undoubtedly a very real climatic event, but the time of its onset and duration appears to vary considerably in different geographical regions. According to Dansgaard's ice-core records from Crête, Greenland, the coldest years of the entire series (which runs from 600 to the present) occurred during 1150-1400. The period from about 1450 to 1700 was not particularly cold. The Iceland record suggests that the climate was always very variable on all time scales, and that cold periods from about 1610 to 1640, from about 1670 to 1700, and from about 1720 to about 1770 were interspersed with milder periods. In northern Sweden, however, a more protracted and very distinct cold period starts around 1570. In southern Norway, a cold period is indicated from around 1610, but it appears to have been relatively mild from the mid- to late 17th century, after which it became colder again.

Clothmaking was in many respects similar among the Nordic countries. Tools are more common in Norwegian Viking Age graves than in graves in other countries, while implements used by professional crafts in central parts of Europe seem to be documented at an earlier date in Sweden. Finland seems to have been influenced by eastern neighbors as well as from the West.

The sources for knowledge of textile work are of three kinds: archaeological, including tools and cloth mainly from Viking Age graves and medieval settlements; written sources, such as laws, official documents, and literature; and living tradition, where tools known from the Middle Ages continued to be used alongside more modern equipment.

According to the sources known at present, it seems unlikely that any professional clothmaking existed in the Nordic countries in the Middle Ages. The production of cloth for everyday use seems to have been a home craft. Both archaeological finds and written sources suggest considerable importation of professionally produced textiles, including woolen cloth of different qualities, often named after the place of production, such as amsterdams or sperst. It has not been possible, however, to identify any of these cloth types in archaeological finds, and it is often difficult to form an opinion about whether a fragment of cloth is imported or locally produced. The construction of the cloth is in most cases the same.

Sheep wool is the main domestic textile material. Some examples of very coarse goat-hair fabrics have been found in city excavations (Lund in Sweden: Blomqvist 1963: 228 et passim; Bergen in Norway: Schjølberg 1984: 79 et passim).

Find of seed from vegetable fibers like flax (Linsu usitatissimum) and hemp (Cannabin sativa) shows that these plants were grown. Both were paid as tithes according to church law (Archbishop Jón’s Kristnsetr [ecclesiastical law], Norway [Rpt. in Keyser and Munich 1846-95: 2: 355.19]). Sweden: Uplandslaget 6.5 (Rpt. in Strömback 1960)—both 13th century. Vegetable fibers are seldom preserved in the soil in the northern countries, but importation of linen is known from the written sources. It seems likely that even nettle (Urtica dioica) was utilized for textiles.

Tools are the most important indication of local textile production. In most cases, only those made of imperishable material are preserved, but finds of wooden objects do occur, as in the famous Oseberg (Norway) barrow from the 9th century.

15. Traditional weaving on the warp-weighted loom, Stord, western Norway, 1956. The weaver beats up the weft with a sword beater while standing on a low bench to reach the first rows of the weft near the beam. Courtesy of Norsk Folkemuseum, Norway.


18. Skein-winding reel from the Oseberg barrow; 9th century. Courtesy of the University Museum of National Antiquities, Oslo.
men. For preparing wool for spinning, a pair of combs with long iron teeth were used to separate the long from the short wool and to lay the fibers even and parallel. Combs have been found in several Viking Age graves, even with wooden parts preserved, very similar to those known from professional clothmaking in more recent times. Wool combs are mentioned in the sagas (e.g., \textit{Grettis saga}). Cards are first mentioned at the beginning of the 16th century.

The wool was spun on a dropped spindle, one complete example of which was found in the Oseberg barrow. Finds of whorls made of stone, clay, or bone are common both in Viking Age graves and in medieval settlements. The Oseberg spindle had a carved notch in top for holding the thread, and the stone whorl was attached to the upper part of the spindle, much like those found in folk museums in Norway, Iceland, and other Nordic countries. Even the distaff for fastening the wool during spinning is of the same type as more recent ones, with notches carved along the upper part, as seen from the finds from excavations of Oslo.

The yarn was made into a ball or a skein, both of which are known from finds from prehistoric times. Bobbins of weft thread, a skein-winding reel of the "niddly-noddy" type, and a swift are documented in the Oseberg find.

In Iceland and Norway, in the Middle Ages and later, the warp-weighted loom was the common instrument for weaving ordinary everyday cloth, like wadmal (2/2 twill) and tabby. In Norway,loom weights have been found in abundance in Viking Age graves and also in medieval settlements, while they are rare in medieval sites in Sweden and Denmark. The great majority of the Norwegian loom weights are soapstone, easily worked and provided with a hole for fastening the warp threads. In Iceland, lava stones were used. Loom weights made of fired clay are the common type in all other countries.

The warp-weighted loom consists of two uprights, about 2.2 m. high, carrying a revolving beam, between 2 and 3 m. long. Along the beam is a row of holes. During warping, a band was woven that arranged the threads in a regular row. The band was sewn to the holes in the beam, forming a starting border, a third selvage. The loom stood in a slanting position, leaning against the wall or a beam. It was equipped with a shed rod and from one to three heddle rods. The weaving started at the top and proceeded downward, while the weaver walked back and forth along the loom, inserting the weft. The weft was beaten up with a sword-like beater made of iron, whalebone, or wood. Instead of a woven selvage, a corded band could hold the warp and be sewn to the beam; in both cases, a closed selvage was the result. Fragments of such starting borders can in many cases determine the use of the warp-weighted loom. In Iceland, this loom was the only one used until the 18th century, and the operating of it for weaving wadmal is known from written descriptions in the last century, when the tradition was still extant. The weaving of tabby is still practiced in certain areas of Norway, and the two types of binding, 2/2 twill and tabby, were representative of products of the warp-weighted loom.

This loom allowed a person to weave both cloth of great width as well as narrow pieces; very little waste was incident. The pieces were short, perhaps up to 3 m. The long weaves for unspecified use belonged to the horizontal loom.

Iceland was the only Nordic country that had a large export of cloth to western and central Europe. Wadmal (\textit{vaõmál}) was the main export article of the country, woven on the warp-weighted loom by women. Influenced by the long weaves in the European market, the Icelandic women succeeded in weaving up to twenty ells in one piece. Wadmal was woven in several qualities, one of which was a standard of value in Iceland, as it had been even in the other Nordic countries in the early Middle Ages. Length, width, thread count, and weight for different qualities were fixed by law (Hoffmann 1964: 194--226). As an example of export, the receipt for nine years of papal tithes from Iceland amounted in 1337 to 12,164 ells of wadmal in three different qualities.

In central parts of Europe, the warp-weighted loom had long since been replaced by the horizontal loom with treads, operated by male weavers, as is documented from 11th-century France (Carus-Wilson 1971: 165 \textit{et passim}). Around 1200, the new loom seems to have appeared in Sweden, as evidenced by a couple of finds of single pulleys, which have been interpreted as part of a horizontal loom. This evidence might perhaps mean that individual professional weavers, immigrant craftsmen with their new, effective loom, made their first appearance in the North at this time. Apparently, these weavers were isolated craftsmen. Weavers' guilds are unknown in Scandinavia in the Middle Ages. A new type of binding construction in twill seems to indicate a new technology connected with the horizontal loom. A great amount of asymmetrical twill, 2/1 or 1/2, has been brought to light in excavations in medieval cities (e.g., Bergen and Oslo in Norway, Lund and Gamla Lôdöse in Sweden). Very little of this material has as yet been published (see Lindström 1982: 180 \textit{et passim}, Kjellberg 1979: 85, 102, \textit{et passim}).

The quality of the twill varies a great deal, from coarse to very fine. The latter is a worsted, sometimes in a lozenge pattern, and both spinning and weaving are exquisite. The fabrics were doubtless imported from a well-established foreign center of professional weaving. The warp-weighted loom is not well suited for asymmetrical bindings, and it is inconceivable that the fine medieval three-shed twills could be woven on this implement. A few simple fragments of this construction, with the characteristic starting border of the warp-weighted loom, have been found in Sweden (Lund) and in Norway (Bergen and Oslo). They were most likely imitations of the imported cloth, woven by women who did not own the new horizontal loom. A recent theory, which must be regarded with skepticism, advocates that a group of very fine quality twills found in rich Viking Age graves, and similar to the ones mentioned above, were woven in western Norway (Bender Jørgensen 1987: 120).


Marta Hoffmann

[See also: Crafts; Fashions; Guilds; Textiles, Furnishing]

**Codex Frisianus** see Frisbók

**Codex Regius** of the Poetic Edda is an Icelandic MS of ninety small quarto pages, but the fifth gathering, probably sixteen pages, is now lost. The MS is written by hand, not otherwise known, and is dated palaeographically to about 1270–1280. **Codex Regius** is the most important MS of eddic poetry. It now contains twenty-nine poems in systematic order: the first ten lays are about the ancient Norse gods, but the remaining part is about ancient heroes. **Codex Regius** is a copy of an older MS now lost. The fragmentary AM 748 1 4to contains, in no particular order, seven eddic lays, and one of them, Balders draumar, is not preserved elsewhere. This MS is dated to about 1300 or a little later. The textual relationship between the two MSS points to a common written original. In the 1220s, Snorri Sturluson wrote a textbook on poetry, called Snorra Edda or the Prose Edda. It is almost certain that he used the text of the mythical poems Vafþrúðnismál and Grímnismál from the common written source underlying the Poetic Edda. Finnr Jónsson believed (latest 1933) that Snorri had used a large collection of eddic poems when he compiled Snorra Edda. Bugge (1867) thought that the collection in **Codex Regius** was younger than Snorra Edda and from about 1240, but that older copies of some lays might have been used. Wessén believed that the writing of Snorra Edda gave the impetus for collecting the eddic poems. Researchers have concluded for literary (Heusler) or orthographical (Lindbladh) reasons that **Codex Regius** is made from several collections of poems, the oldest from about 1200. Lindbladh concludes that **Codex Regius** had two main sources, a heroic one from about 1200 and a mythological one from about 1240–1250. He considers influence from Snorra Edda to play a lesser role than do most other researchers.

It is not known whether **Codex Regius** had a name originally. In 1623, Jón Guðmundsson læði ("the learned") mentioned for the first time an Edda by Sæmund Sigfússon fróði ("the learned"); 1056–1133, older than Snorra Edda. In 1643, when Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson in Skálholt obtained Codex Regius (we do not now know from where), he believed that it was the Edda by Sæmund, although it is now thought that Sæmund played no part in collecting or writing **Codex Regius**. A name and a note in the MS indicate that it had been in Skagastórhúi (in the north) or on the Reykjanes peninsula (southwest) during the previous years.

The last poem before the lacuna in **Codex Regius** is Sigrdrífrmál, with the last part of it missing. This poem is preserved complete in paper copies from the 17th century. The explanation seems to be as follows. The lay is found in Volsunga saga as well, but in 1641 Brynjólfur Sveinsson received the only parchment MS of this saga, and at least two commentaries on Sigrdrífrmál were written for it. It seems certain that there is a direct connection between the copying of the complete text of Sigrdrífrmál and the activities in connection with Volsunga saga after 1641. The lacuna in **Codex Regius** accordingly occurred after 1641 but before 1643. Brynjólfur Sveinsson presented the MS to the king of Denmark in 1662, hence the name **Codex Regius** ("King's Book"). In the Royal Library, it was given the number Gk 2365 4to. It was brought back to Iceland on April 21, 1715, and is now in the Árni Magnússon Institute in Iceland.
with bibliography; supplement to Islandica 13 and 37 is in preparation by J. Harris; Einar G. Pétursson. "Hvenær rýndist kvæði úr Konungsþók Eddukvæða?" Grípla 6 (1984), 265-91.

Einar G. Pétursson

[See also: Baldurs draumar; Eddic Poetry; Grímnismál; Sigdrífumál; Snorra Edda; Völundarkviða; Völsunga saga]

Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh ("The War Between the Irish and the Foreigners") was written around 1114-1116, possibly in the monastery at Killaloe, Ireland. It survives in three imperfect MSS: L, a leaf of the Book of Leinster (1160); D, part of a 14th-century compilation MS (T.C.D. H.2 17); and B, a copy transcribed by Friar Michael O'Clergy in 1635, now preserved in the Royal Library of Albert 1, Brussels (MS 4639). Textual criticism reveals that while D and B were transmitted independently of each other, both ultimately derive from L.

Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh is a propagandist work designed to enhance the prestige of Muirchertach O'Brien, king of Munster (r. ca. 995-1022) in order to highlight the prowess of Brian and his dynasty. Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh greatly exaggerates the scale and intensity of the Viking onslaught on Ireland. It creates the illusion of a systematic invasion in which the whole country is subjugated, and the population is reduced to horrendous servitude, until Brian Boróimhe leads the Irish to freedom at the epic battle of Clontarf (1014).

In reality, the Danish conquest of Ireland is entirely fictitious, and Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh's climactic battle between the Irish and the Foreigners at Clontarf is a fraud. The actual battle of 1014 was merely another clash between Irish provincial kings (with Norse mercenaries) competing for national supremacy. Clontarf marked no turning point for the Irish and Hiberno-Norse communities.

Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh and the poems it inspired, particularly Cath Ciúana Taírbh, captured the imaginations of the Irish people during subsequent centuries of English oppression. More than any other work, it shaped the image of the Vikings in Ireland until very recent times.


Henry A. Jeffries

[See also: Ireland, Norse in]

COINS AND MINTS 101

Coins and Mints. Scandinavian coinage began in the Viking Age. The Vikings' worldwide expansion and enterprise brought foreign coins to their homelands. French deniers, Anglo-Frisian sceattas, and Anglo-Saxon pennies occur in some small finds of the early Viking Age from western Scandinavia. To Haithabu we can assign the earliest Scandinavian coinage, anonymous strikings imitating, from around 825, Carolingian denier types. This coinage developed, accompanied by declining weight standards, and spread to other, as yet unidentified Danish mints, perhaps at Jelling.

Around the year 1000, or shortly before, pennies were issued for the first time in the names of Scandinavian kings: Sven Haraldrsson (Forkbeard; r. 985-1014) in Denmark, Ólaf Tryggvason (r. 995-1000) in Norway, and Olaf Skötkonung (r. ca. 995-1022) in Sweden. Sven and Ólaf had been commanders of the Viking army that attacked England and forced the English king, Æthelred II (978-1016), to pay tribute (Danegeld) to the aggressors. The two first Danegelds were paid in 991 and 994. The English penny type of that period, the CRVX-type, so named after the explanatory legend of the cross in the reverse field, became the prototype for the earliest pennies of the three Scandinavian kings. Some of their moneys have Anglo-Saxon names. The late Anglo-Saxon circulation of pennies over a fixed period seems not to have been established in Scandinavia.

The many rich silver hoards from Viking Age Scandinavia reveal a significant increase in the import of Anglo-Saxon pennies to Scandinavia from the 990s onward. Within Scandinavia, the Anglo-Saxon coins mingled with German and other continental pennies.

With the Anglo-Saxon and German coins are also found, in declining percentage of the total number, Arab silver dirhems (also called "Kufic coins" from the epigraphy), originating almost without exception in the eastern parts of the Muslim world.

The period of essential import of Kufic coins was about 870-960. From the silver hoards, we learn that coins now played an important role as means of payment in Scandinavia. The Kufic coins, as later the Anglo-Saxon and German pennies, were convenient pieces of coveted silver, not difficult to adjust to accustomed weight units. Silver was the precious metal of value to the Scandinavians of the period, and these coins were usually of a high and stable fineness. Nonetheless, the foreign coins found in Scandinavian Viking Age hoards show that they have been tested for purity in many cases.

In this period, the native coinage continued in Denmark and Norway. In Sweden, however, coinage at the mint of Sigtuna came to a stop around 1030, and it was not taken up again until around 1180. On the island of Gotland, native coinage seems to have been begun around 1140. In Norway, as we can see from the composition of the coin hoards and from the coins themselves, a national currency was definitely established during the reign of King Haraldr hárfagr ("hard-ruler") Sigurðarson (r. 1047-1066). The Norwegian pennies were issued to a standard of about 0.89 grams, 1/240 of a Norwegian mark. The silver content, at first remaining at the international level of about 90 percent silver, dropped successively down to a mean of about 33 percent silver. These coins of more than 50 percent copper are identified as the Haraldsslatta in Morkinskinna "being mostly of copper, at its best, it was half silver." Coins of this low silver content were continuously issued in considerable quantities throughout the reign of Ólafr kyrri ("peaceful") Haraldsson (r. 1066-1093). Only a small number of these national pennies still have legible legends. We can see that Níðarnes (= Ínróss, now Trondheim) was the mint of the
earliest issues. The Hamar mint signature is found on three pennies of King Haraldf's later issue of lower silver content, and is written in the native Norse language: Óláf r Hamari ("Óláfr at Hamar"). This signature is the main Norwegian mint of the Haraldsklatta period. The same mint is also mentioned on specimens of the reformed pennies of Magnus berfettir ("bare-leg") Óláfsson (r. 1093–1103), but is now called "Kaupangen." By this reform, the Norwegian penny had its weight reduced by half, 0.44 grams, but at the same time the approximately 90-percent silver content of the old standard was reintroduced.

The old coin reckoning (1 mark = 8 aurar = 24 ortogar = 240 pennies) was now changed, as far as the reckoned penny is concerned: 1 mark = 8 aurar = 24 ortogar = 480 pennies, the penny still being the only unit to be coined.

Within the Danish coinage, two parallel standards developed. In Jutland, a penny weight of 0.76 grams corresponded with a reckoning of 288 pennies to a Danish mark (ca. 0.218 grams). A different reckoning in the eastern provinces of the country (Fynen, Zealand, and Scania), 192 pennies to the mark, gave a heavier penny of 1.14 grams. The time of Sven Estridsen (1047–1074) is famous for an impressive group of imitations of Byzantine coin types. The Byzantine prototypes rarely, if ever, occur in Scandinavian hoards, where Byzantine coins generally are not common. For a short period in the later part of Sven's reign, Danish pennies have legends in runic characters, which are also found on contemporary Norwegian pennies. During the reign of Harald Hen (r. 1074–1080), Denmark saw a development toward a national, exclusive coinage similar to, if not so distinct as, the Norwegian coinage under Haraldf hardraði. Down to King Niels (r. 1104–1134), coins had been issued at the following mints: Lund, Roskilde, Ringsted, Slagelse, Odense, Ribe, Viborg, Órbæk, Gort (presumably in Scania), Ålborg, Ærø, Toftum, Borgholm, and Thrumtorp.

The 12th century saw a development of bracteates within Scandinavian coinage. Bracteates are coins struck on one side only and on a flan so thin that the design is clearly visible in negative on the other side. Such one-faced coins were first struck in Norway for Óláfr Magnússon (r. 1103–1115). Some beautiful bracteates, obviously inspired by German models and their highly artistic execution, were issued in Denmark (Ålborg, Ærø, Hjæring, and Horsens) about the middle of the 12th century. In the great period of the Valdemars, from Valdemar the Great (r. 1157–1182) to Valdemar the Victorious (r. 1202–1241), two-sided coins of normal penny weight and size occur again. As time went on, the coins were debased, and especially the following period, 1241–1340/77, saw a dramatic decline in the "Civil War coins," as they are usually called. The mints were in Lund, Roskilde, Schleswig, Ribe, and somewhere in North Jutland. Notable, too, is the counterfeit minting by outlaws on the island of Hjelm.

When the Swedish coinage was resumed around 1180, by King Knut Eriksson (r. 1167–1195), bracteates were the only coins to be issued both in Svealand (Uppsala) and Götaland (Lödöse, near present Gothenburg). Bracteates mention Nyköping and Sigtuna as mints around 1230. In the testament of Magnus Birgersson (r. 1275–1290) from 1285, eight mints are mentioned in Svealand: Nyköping, Örebro, Uppsala, and Västerås; in Götaland: Jönköping, Skänninge, Skara, and Söderköping. Throughout Sweden, the reckoning of 1 mark = 8 aurar = 24 ortogar prevailed, but the number of pennies to the mark varied: in Svealand 192, in Götaland 384, on Gotland and Oland with some neighboring part of continental Sweden 288. The Svealand reckoning was introduced in Götaland around 1290, but Gotland stayed with its own reckoning until after 1361, when the Danes took over the island. In this period, Swedish coinage consists mainly of anonymous bracteates and coins, and, during the reign of Birger Magnusson (r. 1290–1318), two-sided coins. These anonymous bracteates and coins bear no kings' names, only a single letter that may sometimes be interpreted as the initial of some coinage authority (e.g., B = King Birger Magnusson; uncial E = Duke Erik, his brother; M = Magnus, Birger's son; R = Rex, W = Duke Valdemar, Birger's brother). Other letters are assumed to refer to mints (I = Jönköping; K = Kalmar; L = Lödöse; O = Örebro; S = Skara, Söderköping and/or Stockholm). Anonymous two-sided coins attributed to the reign of Magnus Eriksson (r. 1319–1364) have some parallel types of undisputably Norwegian provenance. Magnus was king of Norway as well (r. 1319–1355), and from the coins it has been demonstrated that there must have been a monetary union between the two countries down to the 1360s. The national provenance of some types of this period is still questionable.

In Norway, Sverrir Sigurdarson's (r. 1184–1202) two-sided pennies of the halfpenny standard supplemented the monotonous series of penny-fracion values (1/2 and 1/4 pennies); the same dies also produced bracteate strikings. Known mints were Niðardsson, Trondheim and Bergen; Oslo, Tønsberg, and Vetby have been suggested on the basis of questionable legends. The bracteates attributable to the reign include farthings of a mean weight of about 0.06 grams, among the smallest coins ever struck. Among the great variety of types is a large group of single letters (A, B, E, G, H, K, M, N, S, T, V), interpreted as initials of mints, earlier partly also as initials of princes with coining authority.

From the time of Håkon Håkonarson (r. 1217–1263), only anonymous bracteates are known, except for very few with the king's name and title (Rex Haco, Rex Haco). The legend Rex et Comes ("King and Earl") may allude to the period of the king's minority (1217–1222/3), when Earl Skuli Bárðarson, the king's father-in-law and later opponent, acted as regent. The silver content of the bracteates now dropped to one third, which may have some connection with the value reckoning in fomgild mark, one third of a mark of fine silver.

Magnús lagabætur ("law-mender") Håkonarson (r. 1263–1280) again introduced two-sided pennies, whose cross form and legend (Rene Deus et Domini benedictum) may reflect the gros tournois, introduced in France in 1266. The earliest penny type of Eiríkr Magnússon (r. 1280–1299), minted at Bergen and Tønsberg, is a very close imitation of the English stervins from the time of King Edward I (1279). The next type of Eiríkr, from around 1285, of unknown mint (Bergen?), is famous for showing the first time the coat of arms of Norway, the lion rampant with an axe in its forepaws. This type was also issued in three denominations: penny, halfpenny, and farthing, as was also the corresponding type (profile bust) of Duke Håkon Magnússon, the king's brother and, as it seems from the evidence of the coins, the only Norwegian prince below the rank of king to enjoy the right of coining. Oslo was the ducal mint, and it was also one of the mints (with Bergen) of Håkon when he became king of Norway (Håkon V; r. 1299–1319). In 1319, his daughter's son, Magnus Eriksson, became king of both Sweden and Norway, which introduced a very long period (to 1905) when Norway stayed in union with one of the two other Scandinavian kingdoms, or both of them, political circumstances that necessarily had a decisive impact on the coinage.
In the late Middle Ages, from the 14th century, Scandinavian coinage was dominated by multiples of the *penny* value. The Gotland *ortog* or *gote* was issued as Visby presumably from the second quarter of the 14th century. King Albrecht, of the Mecklenburg house (1364–1389), introduced shortly before 1370 the *ortog* on the Swedish mainland, minted at Stockholm and Kalmar. This *ortog* coinage was to continue until 1534, the most important mints under the Swedish Crown in this period being Stockholm, Västerås, and Åbo (in Finland). In periods of native rebellion against the Scandinavian Union and the Danish Union and the Bishop, the patron of Finland. Leaders of the ami-Danish move­

important Kalmar. St. Erik the King; the Abo coins, however, show St. Henrik the rebellion against the Scandinavian Union and the Danish Union Stockholm, Vãsterãs, and Abo (in Finland). In periods of native

nectio
ekings, the coin types aim at representing the patron of the realm, witten  and later, he went on striking sterlings of pure copper. Because of this monetary policy, Erik came into a long-lasting conflict with the Hanseatic cities. His successor, Christoffer, of the Bavarian house, resumed the coinage of *witten*, or *hvid* as it was called in Danish. The Hanseatic *schilling* (= 12 pennies) was a model for the Danish *skilling* now introduced. In the interregnum following King Christoffer's death in 1448, the Privy Council issued coins with the obverse legend running *Moneta Regni Dacie*. Malmö (Scania) became the leading Danish mint, and continued to be so during the reign of Christian I (r. 1448–1481), renowned for a prolific coinage of *hvid* coins.

Hans I (r. 1481–1513) continued the *hvid* coinage at Malmö, but mints were established in Copenhagen and Ålborg as well. The *skilling* denomination was again issued, but this king is especially famous for having introduced a coinage in gold, comprising the values of noble and Rhenish *gulden*. The latter was also issued in Norway (a unique specimen in the Dresden collection), when Hans renewed the activity of the mints (Bergen, Niðaróss/Trondheim, and possibly Oslo), which had been idle for more than a century. With his noble dies, Christian II (r. 1513–1523) struck the first Scandinavian silver *gulden* (Malmö 1516, 1518). Silver coins of about the same size struck in Stockholm in 1521 for Sten Sture the Younger vary considerably in weight and have been regarded as multiples of the *mark* value.

The introduction of larger silver coins, the forerunner of the Taler (*daaler*), marks the end of medieval Scandinavian coinage. The borderline is usually drawn in Sweden by the year 1521, when Gustav I came into power, and in Denmark-Norway by 1540–1541, when Christian III began his monetary reform.

The three Scandinavian archbishops, and occasionally some bishops, apparently obtained coinage rights or shares of the coinage. Some bracteates of ecclesiastical types (e.g., a hand holding a crozier, a bishop's head facing a crozier) from around 1190–1215 were probably issued by the archbishop of Uppsala (Sweden). The archbishop of Niðaróss (Norway) was given the right of coinage about 1220, according to a royal charter, although Norwegian coins of undoubtful ecclesiastical provenance are known only some fifty to sixty years later, when bracteates of a bishop's head facing were issued, most probably by Archbishop Jón rauði ('the red'; 1268–1282). King Eiríkr Magnússon withdrew the coining right of the Norwegian archbishop in 1281, and this right was not restored until 1458, at a time when the Norwegian mints were idle. Therefore, only the last three archbishops of Niðaróss, Gaute Ivarson (1474–1510), Erik Valkendorf (1510–1522), and Olav Engelbreksson (1523–1537), were able to make use of this right, issuing coins in the name of St. Óláfr, the patron of the country and the archbishops. The last two also had their own names, titles, and family arms included in the coin design. The Danish archbishop of Lund (Scania) had a share in the coinage from the middle of the 12th century until about 1400, as had also the bishops of Roskilde and Ribe. The coin types clearly reflect the joint royal and episcopal coinage when the king, through his picture and/or symbol(s), occasionally with name and/or title, occupies one side of the coin and the (arch-)bishop the other. A coin with a crown on one side and a mitre reads *Anno Domini MCCXXXIII*, thus having a dating unique within European numismatics. The coin may have been struck for Bishop Niels Stigen of Roskilde. While the bishop of Ribe had to give up his share in the coinage (1234–1280), the Roskilde bishop kept his, and perhaps he celebrated this event by issuing the *Anno Domini* coin.

Throughout the Middle Ages, foreign coins played an important part in Scandinavian numismatic history as prototypes to coin types and design, but also, especially in the Viking Age and the late Middle Ages, as means of payment. English sterlings (late 13th–14th centuries) and nobles (14th century), and German and Dutch *gulden* (14th–early 16th centuries) ought to be mentioned. North German coins of lower denominations also circulated within Scandinavia, one group, the "bole Pennies" of the Mecklenburg (crowned) Bull Head type, so frequently that the the question has been raised if they were (partly) Scandinavian imitations.

The basic sources for the coin history of medieval Scandinavia are the coins themselves, as they are preserved and/or kept on file in their systematic context (even better if also in their find) in public and private collections. The three national Scandinavian coin collections are, ranked by seniority: The Royal Coin Cabinet (*Kungl. Myntkabinettet*), Stockholm; The Royal Collection of Coins and Medals (*Den Kongelige Mønt- og Medeallesamling*), The National Museum, Copenhagen; and The University Coin Collection (*Universitetets Myntkabinett*), Oslo. Supplementary evidence is available in preserved contemporary documents, such as law texts and diplomata (see *Diplomatarium Danicum*, *Diplomatarium Norwegicum*, and *Diplomatarium Suecunam*). For Denmark, a series of selected documentary sources to medieval coin history has been published, "Kilder til Danmarks Møntvæsen," *Nordisk Numismatisk Årskrift* 1955, 1960, 1961, and 1982, with index.

COINS AND MINTS

English abstracts of books, papers, and articles on Scandinavian numismatics (included in "Western and Central Europe"); see indices are currently published in Numismatic Literature, edited semiannually by the American Numismatic Society, New York. The chief Scandinavian numismatic journals are Nordisk Numismatisk Årsskrift [Nordic Numismatic Journal (1936-)], and Nordisk Numismatisk Unions Medlemsblad (Copenhagen 1936-).
KLNM (1956-78: 22 vols., including index) contains articles on numismatics in Scandinavian languages. An index to these articles is published in Nordisk Numismatisk Unions Medlemsblad (1979), 132-5.


Commemorative Poetry. The survival of a quantity of skaldic poetry, much of which was committed to writing centuries after its supposed composition, attests to the genre's capacity to produce durable memorial songs to significant events and figures, contemporary or otherwise. However, the combined, sometimes contradictory, testimony of fragmentary primary and comparatively late secondary sources to the original social, political, and artistic functions of individual skaldic compositions, and therefore to the contours of the memorial tradition as a whole, is all too often either unconvincing or inconclusive. Thus, while Bjarni Kolbeinsson's Jómsvíkingadrápa and Óskull Gisla's Búadrápa are confidently accepted as 12th-13th-century accounts of the unsuccessful 10th-century Norwegian enterprise of the Jómsvíkingar, the seven extant helmingardrapa on Óðinn Skolmson's heroic death at Fitjar (961) could belong either to a tribute rendered in memory, or to a later (11th-century) commemoration of Óðinn's heroism.

Kolbjörn Skare

[See also: Hoards]
Memorial compositions (lausavísur and strophic sequences) abound, ostensibly prompted by the deaths of those whose lives they commemorate. The drowning of his son Bpõvarr, for example, apparently prompted Egill Skalla-Grimsson to reflect upon death’s decimation of his family (Sonatorrek, 10th century). To Pormóðr Kolbrúnsarskóld is attributed a 10th-century memorial (Porgísteðr) to the warrior life by which Porgeirr Hávarsson lived and eventually died (Jón Helgason 1953 lists further examples).

Memorials to kings and leaders represent a particularly thematically consistent group. Individual treatments vary: contrast Markus Skeggsson’s Eiríksdrápa with Gisl Þluguðason’s tribute to King Magnús berfœtr (“bare-leg”) Óláfson, both from around 1103. The pressure of political and particularly religious circumstance may be marked; compare the thoroughly pagan tone of Hákónarnamál, 10th century, with Ívar Ingimundarson’s Sigurðarbálk, from around 1139. Characteristically, the extant texts supplement traditional skaldic panegyric with a sometimes terse, sometimes plaintive, occasionally plangent elegiac note, and thus seem to reflect the approaches of tunic memorials (Eiríksmál, 10th century, and Hákónarnamál are notable exceptions).

Distinguishing memorial sequences associated with the Norwegian kings from historical compositions, and particularly from nonposthumous panegyric, is frequently problematic. Sjúfolðarþlép, for example, which is attributed in Flateyjarbók to King Haraldr hárfagri (“fair-hair”) Halldasonar, seems, in fact, to reflect a later (12th–13th-century) antiquarian interest in Haraldr’s legendary mourning of Snejfríðr. Treatments of the battle of Svóldr (Svöld, 1000) include the tribute of Hallóðr okrísini (“unchristian”) to the (presumably still living) victor, Earl Eiríkr (d. 1016); Hallfríðr vandráðskáld’s memorial to the defeated Óláf Tryggvason; and strophes mistakenly attributed in their source (Bergsbók) to Hallfríðr, but now dated to the 12th century.

While certain strophes, particularly those cited in Islendingasögur, may be spurious, the extant primary evidence suggests that the tradition of composing memorial poems to recently deceased relatives, comrades, and prominent persons (e.g., Pormóðr Tobjíouson’s Hræfurðr; Sighvattr Póróarsson’s Erlingadrópr) survived the 12th-century emergence of a strongly antiquarian interest, and, for a time, the increasing post-Conversion dominance of religious themes, and thrived, both in Norway and in Iceland, until the late 13th century (see, for example, Ingjaldr Geirmundarson’s Brandsflokkr; Skáld-Hallr’s Brandsflokkr, and the anonymous hrynhent tribute to Magnús lagabætur [“law-mender”] Hákonarson).

Conversion of the Scandinavian world occupied the whole of the Viking Age. Early 9th-century missionary attempts were hindered by Scandinavian aggression against the Saxons, Frankish, and English realms that supplied the missionaries. Subsequent Viking conquest in the British Isles, Ireland, and France resulted in mixed communities in which the Scandinavian element soon tended to conform to the Christian practice of the native population. Elsewhere, Norse pagans rubbed shoulders with Christians in markets, camps, and courts. Some added Christ to their pantheon, some were prime-signed (a preliminary to christening), and some baptized. The presence of Christian captives and traders in Scandinavia added diplomatic weight to missionary interest. Tenth-century conditions were more favorable, and by the beginning of the 11th century a decisive "moment" of conversion had been reached in Denmark, Norway, and the Atlantic islands. The pace was slower in Sweden.

Archaeological evidence can illustrate Christian encroachment and advance in the North, but it is haphazard, and its significance is often obscure. Native contemporary sources include runic inscriptions and poetry, as much as can be counted reliably transmitted. The two most substantial external sources are both recognizable tendentious: the Vita Ansvari (d. 865) by Rimbert (d. 888) and the Gesta Hammunburgensis ecclesiae pontificum by Adam of Bremen (ca. 1075). Some Norwegian and Icelandic laws show concessions made by churchmen to pre-Christian custom. Narrate sources from continental Scandinavia, almost all in Latin, date from around 1100 and later; the ample histories in Icelandic, from around 1220 and later. All should be approached with the greatest caution. By and large, trustworthy evidence of the conversion process is scant, random, and enigmatic.

Christianity offered beliefs and practices that could answer in different ways to the religious forms and expectations of paganism, at the level of personal dedication and domestic cult, and, at a public level, in the ceremony needed to establish peace at assemblies and to make legal oaths effective. The Church could replace seasonal sacrifices and feasting with festivals, major and minor, of its own, and it introduced a perpetual cycle of intercession and a daily bloodless sacrifice for the well-being of all.

The "moment" of conversion came when men at the apex of society, whom missionaries most sought to influence, decided to abandon their sacrificial celebrations and to seek peace and prosperity by Christian rites only. We may take it that when the "moment" occurred, some larger or smaller sections of the community had already accepted Christianity, but it was only on its heels that any steady advance could be made, by persuasion or coercion or both, in changing the outward observance of the whole population.

In Denmark, the "moment" came in the 960s, when Harold Gormsson was baptized by Poppo, a German cleric who had undergone an ordeal to demonstrate the superiority of Christian belief. King Harald had buried his pagan parents in a great mound at Jelling; he now added a church to their memorial site and moved their bodies to it. He set up a grand rune stone, one face filled with a triumphant Christ crucified, and recorded on it, among other achievements, that he had "made the Danes Christian."

In Norway, the "moment" occurred in the reign of Ólaf Tryggvason, 995-999/1000; in Iceland, it happened in 999/1000, and at about the same time in the Faroes and Greenland. The conversion in these countries was fully confirmed in the reign of Ólaf Haraldsson, 1015-1030. He died in battle against his countrymen, but a year later his body was exhumed and his sainthood acknowledged; he was soon widely venerated. Both the Ólfars became militant Christians while campaigning in the West, both had household bishops of Anglo-Saxon origin, and both appear to have found the doctrine of compelle intrare congenial to their own regnal ambitions.

A rune stone set up about 1030 on Frösön in Jämtland, a northern buffer province between Norway and Sweden, proclaims that Austmaðr Guðfjölstsson "had Jämtland made Christian." Probably most of the chief men in Västergötland and on Gotland were Christian by 1050. Pagan and Christian coexistence lasted longest in central Sweden. Members of the ruling dynasty there were baptized from about 1000 onward, and rune stones show that many well-to-do families were Christian and that churches existed. But the heathen temple at Uppsala was still being used in the 1070s, and at about that same time the Christian king was ousted by a pagan kinsman, who reigned for a few years and was remembered as "Sacrifice" Sven.

Missionary work before and after the conversion "moment" was undertaken by Anglo-Saxon clerics, heirs to a long missionary tradition, and by others sent from the archiepiscopal church of Hamburg-Bremen. This center had been formed by amalgamation after the Danes sacked Hamburg in 845, and had the specific task (and, as the clergy there saw it, the specific prerogative) of bringing pagan Scandinavians and Slavs into the Christian fold. Christian terminology adopted in Scandinavia came from both English and Low German, but the two cannot always be distinguished, and dating the loanwords is often difficult.

The period of Christian "consolidation" lasted about 150 years in each of the northern countries. In that time, dioceses were organized, churches built, clergy trained, native bishops consecrated, tithe introduced, parishes formed, monasteries founded, and cults of native saints instituted. The development, though still rudimentary in many respects, culminated in the elevation to archiepiscopal rank of the see of Lund in Denmark in 1103/4 (it was the metropolitan see of all Scandinavia for half a century), of the see of Niðhárrs (Trondheim) in Norway in 1152/3, and of the see of Uppsala in Sweden in 1164. Niðhárrs had the bishops of Orkney, the Faroes, Iceland, and Greenland as suffragans along with those of Norway itself.

Simple instruction could lead to baptism, for which renunciation of the Devil (or old gods) and affirmation of the faith were requisite. Every Christian should know the Pater noster and Creed as a minimum, along with the formula for baptism in case of emergency, and should show punctilious respect for the fasting and other rules of the calendar; confession and communion were expected at least annually. Existing legal systems were used to punish breaches of church observance. The practices taught as essential for personal salvation also made part of the never-ending opus Dei, performed by consecrated men in consecrated houses, handling sacred paraphernalia and drawing liturgy and lore from sacred books in a special language incomprehensible to most people.
A church did not have to be big and was not difficult to build, but the owner would usually wait a long time to get it properly staffed. There must have been a vast outlay on relics, vestments, books, and other necessary equipment, and great efforts must have gone into education to provide enough men with sufficient knowledge of Latin, liturgy, and computus to maintain the services. One priest to every 150–200 inhabitants is a plausible estimate for the post-"consolidation" period, but the build-up to that figure was obviously gradual. Priests married and led ordinary laboring lives; their social status depended on their birth and means. Most were privately employed; many were menials. There were many other novelties in the new dispensation. Some kinds of food, including horsemeat, were forbidden; frequent periodic abstinence from other kinds of food and from work were ordained. Private penance might have to be publicly performed; marriage within certain degrees of kinship and affinity became unlawful. Good works were preached as having assured benefit to the soul, with most emphasis on feeding the hungry, helping the traveler, redeeming captives, and freeing slaves. Rune stones and early laws reveal the strong impression made by the call to show charity. In the long run, of course, Christian teaching profoundly affected many other realms of thought, custom, and law.

Among the many Icelandic works that have some bearing on the conversion of Scandinavia, a few contain a limited amount of what must be judged authentic information about the progress of Christianity in Iceland from about 980 to 1120. They are *Íslingabók* (ca. 1125–1130) by Ari Porgilsson; *Hungvaka* (ca. 1215); *Porvalds þáttir* Kóðránsunar; and a lost work from which matter is thought to be derived in *Kristni saga*, *Njáls saga* (ca. 1280), and *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* (the compilation made ca. 1300 that is also our only source for *Porvalds þáttir*). The lost work and the *þáttir* were written before about 1250; both are thought to be related, in ways difficult to ascertain, to the lost Latin work on *Óláfr Tryggvason* that Gunnlaugr Leifsson (d. 1218/9) composed around 1200. *Kristni saga* survives only in *Hauksbók* (ca. 1300); it is usually ascribed to Sturla Þórðarson (d. 1284).

Two considerations make Ari’s well-known account of the conversion “moment” at the *Alþingi* of 999/1000 remarkable. The first is that we can trace its source and transmission. Guizur Tómasson, a baptized godi, was a Christian leader at that Alþingi meeting. He sent his son Ísleifr to school in Saxony; Ísleifr came back as a priest around 1025 and in 1056 became Iceland’s first native bishop. His son Gizurr succeeded him as bishop (1082–1118). Another son, Teitur (d. 1110), was a priest who lived and taught in Haukadalr, where Ari was at school from the age of seven until he was twenty-one (1075–1089). Ari says that his account of the acceptance of Christianity was how Teitur told it. He also says that *Íslingabók* was approved by Sæmundr Sigfússon of Oddi (1054–1133), Bishop Porlák of Skálholt (1086–1133), and Bishop Ketill of Holmar (1075–1145). The learned Sæmundr was closely associated with Skálholt; Porlák had been educated in Haukadalr and was picked by Bishop Gizurr himself as his successor; and Ketill, a northerner, was married to Bishop Gizurr’s daughter.

The conclusion that Ari’s account, as far as it goes, has unassailable authority is reinforced by the second consideration. As a conversion narrative, his report is quite unconventional. He describes how pagans and Christians came to a sober compromise, thanks to the acumen of the lawspeaker, who was not baptized at the time, and to the desire for peace and respect for law of moderates on both sides. Baptism was to be universally accepted, but private sacrifice, consumption of horsemeat, and exposure of infants remained lawful; some years passed before these practices were finally proscribed.

_Hungvaka_ is indebted to Ari but adds more material from the Skálholt-Haukadal tradition, especially on missionary bishops in Iceland in the 11th century and on Bishop Ísleifr’s problems. The other texts have material, more or less lurid, on the central conversion period, particularly on the mission of Friðbróður, a Saxon bishop, merely mentioned by Ari, who apparently met with some success in the four winters he is said to have spent in Iceland in the early 980s with his Icelandic companion, Porvaldr, the mission of the Icelandic layman Stefnr Porgilsson, emissary of Óláfr Tryggvason; and the mission of Pangbrandr, a Flemish or Saxon priest, also sent by King Óláfr. Ari says he spent one or two winters in Iceland just before the year of the decisive *Alþingi*. Some of what these accounts tell is evidently inferential embroidery on Ari’s report, some of it is literary construction, and little can be tested against other sources. Some anecdotes have details hard to dismiss: Hjalti Sveggisson’s mocking comment on Rúnólfr godi mumbling the salt he had to taste as part of the baptism ritual; northerners putting off baptism until they reached a hot-spring area after leaving the *Alþingi*. Accounts of stress on St. Michael in missionary preaching might rest on genuine reminiscence; runic inscriptions show the importance attached to his role as the protector and conveyer of souls in Sweden’s conversion age. The most significant material in these texts is found in some skaldic stanzas in which the hostility that Christian preachers might meet from Icelanders appears to be authentically reflected: the kind of _nótt_ that, according to Ari, led the militant Pangbrandr to kill “two or three men” before returning to Norway to give Óláfr Tryggvason a gloomy report on the prospects of conversion in Iceland.

Coronation. Although the crown, the most important of the coronation symbols, is known in Scandinavia from coins, seals, and other artifacts from the 11th century, the coronation ceremony itself was introduced in the North only in the 12th century; it was, however, used extensively in Europe from the 8th century. Combining biblical and Roman themes, the Church had developed a complex coronation ritual to promote families to kingship and emperors in turn employed similar ceremonies as means of consolidation. During the 12th century, German emperors in turn employed similar ceremonies as means of controlling Danish kings and subkings on whom they conferred crowns in return for oaths of obedience. Thus, Knud Lavard (d. 1131), Danish royal prince and count of Schleswig, was crowned by Lothair and awarded a German fief north of the Elbe. In 1134, Lothair used the excuse of Knud’s murder by his rival Magnus Nielsen to exact an oath of obedience from Magnus, in return for which Magnus received a crown from the emperor. In a similar way, Sven Grate was crowned by Frederick Barbarossa in 1152. These secular coronations serve as the first Scandinavian contacts with the foreign ceremony.

In the following decades, full ecclesiastical coronations were introduced into Norway and Denmark as a consequence of the Church’s increased power and the inability of native rulers to cope with the succession problem. The combination of these two elements is particularly clear in Norway in the 1160s, when in 1163 or 1164, Archbishop Eystein Erlendsson of Trondheim crowned the young boy Magnús Erlingsson in an attempt to stop the civil wars that had been devastating the country. In return, the Church received extensive privileges from Magnús and his father. Further demands were made by native churchmen in 1247 as a condition for the coronation of Hákon Hákonarson by a papal legate, but by then the monarchy was strong enough to decline the offer.

In Denmark, the first ecclesiastical coronation took place in 1170 in Ringsted, where the ruling king, Valdemar I, secured his lineage’s claim to the throne in a double ceremony whereby his murdered father, Knud Lavard, who had not been a king himself, was elevated to sainthood, and Valdemar’s young legitimate son Knud was crowned as future king. Similar conditions may have prevailed in Sweden when Karl Knutsson benefited from the first coronation in 1210.

International in origin, coronation rituals changed little over time. The lost medieval texts used in Scandinavia can be reconstructed from Reformation versions and seem to derive from Otonian manuals of the 10th century. In the ceremony, the candidate swore an oath, was robed in special clothing and bore the royal insignia, including the crown, and was anointed with holy oil. Afterward, he or his father hosted a great banquet. The oath sworn by Magnús Erlingsson in Norway (preserved in a MS in the British Library from 1200) was given in Latin, as were similar promises made by other European kings, but English kings used vernacular French. Of ecclesiastical origin, the special clothing was enumerated for Birger Magnusson’s coronation in Sweden in 1310. The garments used in the crowning of the eight-year-old Magnús Erlingsson in the 1160s apparently traveled with him for the next twenty years, after which they were taken by his rival Sverrir as war booty in battle. Håkon Håkonarson’s coronation in 1247 is fully described in Hákonar saga (gamla) Håkonarsonar.

As in Europe, Scandinavian queens were also crowned, although they were included in the ceremony at a later date. In Denmark, Margrethe of Pomerania, wife of Christoffer I, was crowned with him in 1252; in Norway, the Danish princess Ingeborg received a crown with her husband, Magnús Håkonarson, in 1261; and in Sweden, Helvig of Holsatia was crowned with King Magnus Ladélás in 1281. Anointing was the most important part of the coronation for queens because it was regarded as a fertility rite. This function is particularly clear for Magnús Håkonarson and Ingeborg. Magnús had already been accepted as king in 1257, but the mutual coronation took place three days after their wedding at the instigation of Magnus’s father, Håkon, who was eager to secure the continuity of his lineage.


Peter Foote

See also: Adam of Bremen; Ansgar, St.; Biskupa sögur; Church Organization and Function; Harald Gormsson (Bluetooth); Hauksbok; Hungvaka; Islendingabók; Njál saga; Oláfr, St.; Ólaf Tryggvason; Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar; Saints’ Lives

Cosmography. The oldest sources on the Nordic world as a distinct place in the cosmos are of foreign origin. To Romans like Tacitus and Arabs like Al-Mus‘ūdī, the northern peoples were on the margins of civilization. They were “others” and “wild.”
From the northern perspective, this view of the world was reversed. When the first local sources appear, they bear witness to a specific Nordic cosmography in which the Norsemen inhabited the center of the world, externalizing their own "Others" to the periphery. The clue to the cosmology is found in Snorri's Edda. In Gylfaginning, he specifies a cosmological model of concentric circles. In the inner circle is Miðgarðr, "the middle yard," while the outer circle is Útgarðr, "the outer yard."

Miðgarðr is inhabited by humans and gods, while giants and other nonhumans reign in Útgarðr. According to the myths of creation, this initial division of cosmos into two separate spaces was made by the gods (Æsir), who subsequently built their own abode, Ásgardr, somewhere inside Miðgarðr. There was no topological distinction between Miðgarðr and Ásgardr, and consequently no absolute separation between humans and gods in this horizontal model of the cosmos. The model was supplemented by a vertical model, however, in which a distinction between an "upper" and a "lower" world placed gods and humans in separate regions. Above was Valhöll, the abode of the gods and the place where hero warriors who died on the battlefield spent their afterlife. Even here, men and gods could merge into one category of inhabitants of the "upper" world.

In regard to the social aspects of the cosmography, the horizontal model was by far the most significant, with a whole series of parallels in Nordic society. First and foremost, it was reflected in the distinction between law and non-law. Most medieval law books from the Scandinavian countries open with the proverb með log skal land byggja ("with law shall the country be built"). This admonition was meant to be taken literally. The law was the defining feature of society, and bounded "the social" from "the wild" in a way that is clearly parallel to Snorri's cosmological model. At both levels, the central space was defined as controlled and familiar, while the peripheral space was uncontrolled and alien. Inside, law and peace reigned; outside, lawlessness and war flourished.

The outlaws were exiles from society. They had been expelled because of their nonsocial behavior, and had been absorbed into the wild. The general Norse word for outlaw is útlagen, which literally means "outside law." In Iceland, outlawry was known by the term skógarmaðr ("forest going"), and the outlaw was referred to as skógarmaðr ("forest man"). In this conceptual invention on the part of the Icelanders, there is an implicit recognition of the nonsocial as identical with the natural wilderness. This equation points to the significance of the opposition between society and nature at a general level.

Closely associated with the notion of útlaga is the Old Norse concept of utilega ("lying out"). Originally, the term was used about anyone who left ordinary human company and went his own ways. It relates to logga uti ("lie out of doors"), and it gave rise to the notion of utilegumadar ("out-lying man"). The original meaning of someone choosing to leave society on his own account later attained a more pejorative meaning, and the category came to embrace outlaws and supernatural beings in addition to robbers and pirates.

Clearly, the "outside" is associated with danger and lack of control. Once man left the social space defined by the law, he was reclassified as wild. Outside was also the space where the supernatural powers reigned, and where man had to capture them if he was to direct these forces to some purpose. Thus, there was a notion of setja uti til froðleiks ("to sit out for wisdom"). Sitting out for wisdom implied that man temporarily left the social and voluntarily entered the wild to get in contact with the supernatural forces. "Wisdom" in this sense meant magical knowledge about, for instance, how to waken ghosts.

At yet another level of the social geography, the concentric model is operative also in distinguishing the farmstead and, by implication, the household from the nature in which it was embedded. The boundary was drawn at the garðr, meaning both "fence" and "enclosure". The separation between innangard ("inside the fence") and útangard ("outside the fence") had a whole series of legal implications. Inside was peace and social control; it was an inviolable space in which the members of the household worked and lived. It was nature domesticated. Outside the fence was the untamed nature, where man had to supplement the income of the household even at the risk of encountering the dark forces of the outside. Among the uncontrolled beings living outside the fence were the huldufólk ("the hidden people"). They were dangerous to women in particular; if women left the controlled social space at the farmstead and its immediate surroundings, they were liable to seduction by the huldufólk. Women attending the seister, or summer sheltering, at more or less distant mountain pastures were vulnerable to their assaults, and during the Middle Ages quite a number of pregnancies were the alleged result of such encounters.

The opposition between "inside" and "outside" in the Nordic cosmography thus mirrored an opposition between the familiar and the dangerous at a whole series of levels. The closer a person was to the center of the world, the less dangerous it was. Closest was the family, which was the social framework of daily life. The household consisted of those people who lived inside the same fence, which also meant "on the same farm." It was not only the most significant social unit for the people, but also the center of each individual's world view. In a more comprehensive circle around the individual was the kin group or the ætt as a whole. The kin group represented a "we-group" in relation to which all others were foreigners and potential enemies. One could also make allies with them, and marriage was an important means to this end. But in case of conflict, the individual often found himself in a defensive position, not unlike Pór's when he had to defend Miðgarð against the Miðgarðsormr, the giant serpent who lived in the sea separating Miðgarðr from Útgarðr.

There is a remarkable consistency in the horizontal model of the Nordic cosmography. The farmstead represents a microcosmos that confirms and continues the macrocosmic model depicted by Snorri. Both as an individual and as a species, the Norsemen lived in the center of their own world. This placement is directly attested to by the notion of verplki ("world"). This word is composed from verr "man" and old "age." The world was the age and the condition of mankind. Man himself was the ultimate center of the cosmos.


Kirsten Hastrup

[See also: Cosmology; Laws; Mythology; Outlawry; Snorra Edda]
Cosmology. Most of the surviving Norse scholarly texts on geography, cosmography, and astronomy date from the 14th century, but they reflect notions already prevalent in Iceland in the late 12th and 13th centuries. These notions are far removed from the heathen mythological cosmology of the early Middle Ages, although some old Germanic names both in astronomy and geography continued to be used for concepts and places now firmly embedded in Latin Christian learning. Like many of the sagas, nonfictional vernacular texts display a strong interest in geographical and cosmographical information. Abbot Nikulás from the North Icelandic Benedictine monastery in Órsk made an extensive journey to Rome and the Holy Land. Upon his return in 1154, he had the itinerary of his journey written down for the sake of later travelers; soon afterward, a cluster of geographical works began to accumulate around this text. These texts, although mostly very short, contained information on such matters as the various countries situated in each of the three continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe; the rivers and lakes in the world; which nations, derived from Noah's sons, live in which parts of the world; how many languages there are on every continent; what fabulous races live in foreign parts; which towns contain the most famous relics of holy men; which are the routes to Rome; where are the climatic zones; where the earthly paradise is and what it looks like; a map of Jerusalem and other matters of similar interest.

All these texts may have been included in a lost 13th-century MS, called Grikki, that comprised a collection of geographical works, including material on Greenland; from this MS, extracts were copied again and again, and are now partly preserved in various encyclopedic MSS of the early 14th century, such as Hauksbók. The popularity of these geographical texts can be seen from the short cosmographical text found among them, which is preserved in four different redactions in well over twenty MSS.

From a different tradition come the six preserved Old Icelandic mappae mundi, or highly stylized world maps, conforming to three basic patterns. Three are found in the fragments united in the MS Gks 1812 4to, which are obviously remnants of copies of an illustrated encyclopedic MS modeled closely on the Latin illuminated encyclopedias. The largest is a rather detailed map of the inhabited world. A "T-O" type with well over 100 entries, mostly in Latin, it is one of the very few double-page maps found in medieval European MSS. The same MS contains a colored astronomical drawing, which in its center shows the whole earth, divided into the climatic zones with an inhabited southern continent south of the equatorial ocean. A similar concept is found in the mappae mundi of three other MSS (AM 732b 4to and 736 4to, both from the 14th century, as well as in a young copy of the latter); at the center of an astronomical illustration showing the movement of the sun and moon, there is a mappa mundi roughly divided into the climatic zones, depicting the northern hemisphere with the three known continents, Asia, Africa, and Europe, while the southern hemisphere shows one big inhabited continent. These maps showing the climatic zones were modeled on maps found in the works of William of Conches and Lambert of St. Omer. A very small map of the inhabited northern hemisphere with the traditional tripartite division is found in a schematic drawing of the wind rose in Gks 1812 4to. Comparison with the corpus of over 1,200 continental mappae mundi shows that these few Icelandic maps cover more or less the whole range of iconographic possibilities.

The picture of the physical world that can be gleaned from medieval Icelandic scholarly texts is a fairly factual, but geocentric world view, as represented also by the mainstream Latin literature of the high Middle Ages, but revised to accommodate experiences collected by Scandinavians on their journeys.

This cosmography depicts a spherical world as the center of the universe, divided into the climatic zones much as we know them, containing the three known and inhabited continents. Asia, in the East, is by far the biggest, separated from Africa by the Nile. Europe, separated from Africa by the Mediterranean Sea and from Asia by the River Tanaí (= Don), also includes the Atlantic isles as well as Greenland, which is connected with Bjarmaland east of the White Sea by a strip of land (making the Atlantic Ocean a sort of Scandinavian inland sea), and the islands of Helluland and Markland south of Greenland. Vinland is located south of these islands, and there is some speculation as to whether this area is an island or is connected with Africa. These three continents are thought to lie in the northern hemisphere; the smaller mappa mundi mentioned above, however, also show an unspecified inhabited area in the southern hemisphere.

Most of this geographical information was taken from well-known Latin handbooks, which were wholly or partly known in both Iceland and Norway in the Middle Ages, but rarely translated into Old Norse in their entirety, with the notable exception of Euclidarius (which contains little cosmographical information). The medieval Norwegians and Icelanders did, however, combine this knowledge with their own experiences acquired on their extensive voyages to the countries east, north, and west of Scandinavia. Thus, we find Old Norse texts derived and compiled from the writing of Honorius Augustodunensis, Bede, and Isidore, supplemented with details about the Baltic, the farthest North, and Vinland. The description of Europe, therefore, achieves far greater detail than in the Latin sources.

In cosmology and astronomy also, the scientific information handed down in the Middle Ages from antiquity through the Latin handbooks was enriched by popular knowledge. A portion translated from Honorius's De imagine mundi shows the cosmos built like an egg in which the earth is the yolk. From Elucidarius, one could learn that man was created as a microcosmos mirroring the macrocosmos; hence, his head is round, just as the earth is. But the roundness of the earth was obvious to northern seafarers, and is explained quite soundly in texts that describe the different range of visibility from a ship's deck as compared to the top of the mast.

Further popularization was achieved through native vernacular handbooks, such as the Norwegian Konungs skuggsjá, dating from about 1260. In this handbook for the education of a young prince, the earth is likened to an apple warmed and illuminated by a candle, giving the living image of the half-illuminated, spherical earth. Herein we also find an awareness of the climatic zones dividing the earth, and the cause of the seasons. The simile of the apple and the candle is also found in Old English texts, but many such notions, while distinctly tasting of native popular explanations, are in fact gleaned from Latin handbooks. A fetching explanation of the movement of the planets (contained in the same MSS as the translation from Honorius) is found in Alexander Neckham's De naturis rerum.

Not all aspects of astronomy and cosmology lent themselves to popularization, and some aspects of the more sophisticated medieval science, which were part of the renaissance of the 12th century, were probably limited to a few clerics. The proper observance of Christian ritual demanded an accurate reckoning of the calendar synchronized with the solar and lunar cycles, and the knowledge of arithmetical reckoning of the time (computus) and...
astronomy needed for this reckoning was vital for the Church in Iceland as elsewhere. MSS surviving from the late 12th and 13th centuries show a distinct interest in these questions and a clear dependence on the encyclopedic and astronomical authorities of the Middle Ages: Isidore, Bede, Honorius, Helperic, Sacrobosco, and Gerlandus. In astronomy, the dependence on Latin texts was stronger than in general cosmology, and the astronomical terminology was either borrowed or translated from Latin, the role of the native authors being mostly limited to translating and compiling. Of these educated Few practicing the arcane art of astronomy, only rarely have the names come down to us. In Iceland, one such person, Stjornu-Oddi (“Storn-Oddi”) Helgason, was reported to have regularly taken lunar and solar observations in the late 12th century, recording azimuths in solar diameters and half-diameters, a measurement naturally suited to the task. At the same time, Abbot Nikulas used very simple methods to achieve quite an accurate reckoning of latitude while he was in the Holy Land. In the late 13th century, the Dane Petrus de Dacia became the first Scandinavian astronomer of continental fame, but he is an isolated phenomenon. By this time, however, there are records of observations made with the aid of an astrolabe in Denmark, and we can suppose that astronomy was becoming more sophisticated and a little more regularly practiced. Yet even as late as the 15th century, the Dominican Nicolaus de Dacia in Lund, who wrote about astronomy and astrology, was the only noteworthy Scandinavian astronomer of the period.


Rudolf Simek

[See also: America, Norse in; Cosmography; Elucidarius; Hauksbok; Konungs skuggjæt, Leiðurvísir; Petrus de Dacia; Vinland Map; Vinland Sagas]

Costume see Fashions

Council of the Realm (Rikskans). Among the best men of the Danish kingdom (meillores regni), a permanent group of councilors developed after the German pattern. This device may have been the king’s answer to the National Assemblies (Danefol) and the annual meetings. Guardianship for a minor king may have contributed to strengthen this development that took place in Denmark at least from the time of Erik Menved, 1286–1319. The power struggle between the king and the aristocracy was, during the following centuries, the crucial subject of domestic policy in the history of Denmark. The evolution of councils in Scandinavia takes two main directions during the Middle Ages: the councilors’ monarchical official group, and increasingly their authority as an aristocratic representative national assembly that replaced the Danefol or other National Assemblies.

King Valdemar Atterdag (“ever-day”; 1340–1375) created a strong Danish royal power. During the king’s journeys abroad, the rule was entrusted to the Council of the Realm and to the Seneschal, the king’s substitute. Symbolic of the shift in power, the term changed from the “king’s councilors” to the “national councilors,” and at the Peace of Stralsund in 1370 the authority of the Council culminated. The Council also played an important role in 1370, when Oluf was appointed successor of Valdemar. However, during the reign of Queen Margrethe, the Council, with new, aristocratic members, was pushed somewhat into the background. The queen chose, with a marked preference, the court officials in her administration. Even in Sweden and Norway, she felt free to appoint Danish and foreign officials. The Kalmar Union (established in 1397) of the three Nordic countries was gradually becoming a Danish supremacy.

In the reign of Erik of Pomerania, the Danish supremacy was extended within the Kalmar Union. The Crown tried to unite the kingdoms into one centralized state, by establishing, for example, council meetings for the entire Union. In these endeavors, Erik of Pomerania was actively supported by the Danish Council of the Realm especially from 1423–1425 and onward. The group of councilors had now become a more permanent organ. The councilors participated, to a still larger extent, in the administration, and a good relationship prevailed between the king and the councilors, until the Union crisis in the 1430s. Insight into the administration, the discontinuation of the National Assemblies, and the decreasing importance of the Landsting on behalf of the legal courts conformed, together with the diffusion of the influence of the Council of Basel, the opinion of the Council as the representative of the kingdom and the people, and also the Council as court and judge vis à vis the Crown.

The members of the Council of the Realm were appointed by the king, and councilors took an oath to the king. Primarily, they were a well-educated aristocratic assembly of about thirty people who had ecclesiastical or secular status. The archbishop of Lund, together with his six ordinary bishops and the bishop of Roskilde, who held the office as the highest chancellor of Denmark, were members of the Council. In the reign of Erik of Pomerania, the abbots and the priors from the largest monasteries were appointed members of the Council; neither the king’s chancellor nor the Chancellor of the Realm (Rikskansler) had status as councilor. A concentration of families belonging to the high nobility took place in the reign of Erik of Pomerania, and the group of bishops belonged to the high aristocracy. For a number of the families, membership on the Council became somewhat hereditary. The councilors appeared as a homogeneous group by virtue of these family groups with interrelations in marriage. Their use of the lesser nobility, especially as servants and officials on the episcopal estates, together with their military position and their possession of the most important castles and the entailed estates, gave them a key position in society.

In the reign of King Christoffer of Bavaria (1440–1448), the Council of the Realm was dominated by the Gyldensjærme, Rosenkrantz, Thott, Frille, and Rønnow families. They controlled most of the important castles and entailed estates. After the de­thronement of Erik of Pomerania, the family of Gyldensjærme and their supporters took up, to a considerable extent, a leading posi­tion, and, together with Archbishop Hans Laxmand (d. 1443) and
other bishops, this family conducted the actual policies of the Council. The family Rosenkrantz strengthened their influence in the reign of King Christoffer, and so did the Thott, Frille, and Rønnow families. The number of secular councilors was sixteen in the second half of 1447, which was a fourth less than in the last years of the reign of Erik of Pomerania. During these years, the Council of the Realm resembled a landed, high-aristocratic government.

When Christian 1 was appointed Danish king in 1448, the position of power in the Council of the Realm was strengthened for the Rosenkrantz, Thott, Frille, and Rønnow families. Several new members of these families found their way into the council, and others were also admitted because of their support of the new king. In 1451, the number of ecclesiastical and secular councilors had increased to at least thirty-five, which marked a return to the size of the Council in the reign of Erik of Pomerania. The admittance of new members heralded a beginning of "democratization" of the Council. Several representatives from the middle layer of the nobility were admitted to the Council in these years, but also some who can be described as "the king's servants" because they owed their position mainly to the king. The means of strengthening the Danish Crown against the old families belonging to the high nobility was thus formed.

King Christian 1's clash with the Thott family (1468–1469), his intervention against the entailed estates, and his shifted political course also had consequences for the Council of the Realm. The official element was intensified, and central power shifted back to the remaining elderly secular councilors and the bishops. The five leading families' share of the entailed estates decreased from a half to an eighth, and no new concentrations of castles around individuals or families were created.

Until Christian 1 became king, the Danish kings are, in connection with the election, known to have made a vow by word of mouth. However, the vow was so indefinite that, as early as the 14th century, a more explicit formulation of coronation charters was felt necessary (1320, 1376). King Christoffer of Bavaria promised in 1440 to issue a coronation charter, but this never happened. Between 1440 and 1536, the Council of the Realm demanded from every new king a coronation charter. The Council, which was responsible for the administration in periods of interregnum, in 1448 declared the country a "free country of election." This provision was carried into the coronation charters made by Frederik 1 and by Christian 11, but the terms were made more rigorous: the king was not allowed to choose his son as his successor while he himself was alive. Moreover, the Council tried to strengthen its negotiating position from 1483 by making it a condition that the castles should revert to the Council of the Realm at the king's death. In the coronation charter of 1483, it was established that the members of the Council of the Realm should belong to the nobility. An appropriate distribution of members in the different parts of the country was sought.

The Council took over the legislative work of the old National Assembly and the Danenhof, and the members acted as judges in the king's court. From 1448, the consent of the Council had to be obtained for appropriation of extra taxes; it was also applied when deciding on warfare.

In Sweden and Norway, the pattern of the Council of the Realm is very similar to the one found in Denmark. In Norway, foreigners, especially Danes, were admitted to the Council in the capacity of bishops and royal deans of monarchical chapels from the time of King Håkon VI and Queen Margrethe. While Margrethe's and Erik of Pomerania's political goal had been to eliminate the Council in Norway as a factor of power, Christoffer of Bavaria tried, by enlarging the Council with new members, to gain influence on the Council's disposals; but after 1445, no new councilors were appointed. After the death of Christoffer of Bavaria, the Council in Norway was divided into two groups. However, the pro-Danish party asserted its political strength and had Christian I crowned king (1448–1450). During this period, the Norwegian Council became a numerous assembly. But after this time, the secular membership declined, and after the year 1500 there were probably not more than ten.

The Norwegian Council's political influence was in general declining after the middle of the 15th century, in spite of the short periods of independence and considerable royal concessions in relation to the accession of new kings to the throne. The coup d'état by Archbishop Olav Engelbrektsson in 1536 split the Council, and an incorporation of Norway into the Union with Denmark was desirable from the king's as well as from the Danish Council's point of view. Christian III's coronation charter (1536) made Norway a province under the Danish Crown. In reality, this provision implied that the Norwegian Council ceased to exist as an independent factor.

In Sweden, including Finland, Albrecht of Mecklenburg and Erik of Pomerania admitted a few Germans to the Council, and in the 15th century some Danish-born nobles appear as members of the Swedish Council. Several of Karl Knutsson's and Christian I's councilors belonged to the second or third generation of immigrant German or Danish families. In the reign of Sten Sture the Elder, the number of secular councilors is relatively constant, about thirty persons until 1494, but during the following three years, the number was halved. Primarily, the new recruiting of members to the Council took place especially in connection with the changes of the regent in 1504 and 1512. The old Council families were still dominant. At the beginning of the 1520s, the composition of the Council changed radically because Gustav Vasa appointed councilors mainly from families that had not previously belonged to the Council nobility. The struggle to control the entailed estates and the question of whether the king should be Danish or foreign characterized Swedish politics in the 15th century, especially the 1430s and 1460s. In the time of the Scandinavian Union, the Council in Sweden often exercised royal legal power and other functions when the king was absent.


Crafts. The development of crafts in Scandinavia was to a great extent determined by the market and available resources: raw materials, tools, and materials for processing. The dominant materials in Scandinavia were hides from domestic and wild animals, metal (iron and copper primarily from Sweden), clay (primarily in Denmark), wood, and coal. Written sources and archaeological evidence show a flourishing production of shoes, belts, purses, furs, kirtles made from hide, pottery, and iron and copper wares, but relatively few artisans working with precious metals even fewer involved in lacemaking, gold embroidery, and other fancy textile production. No trace of glass production has been found, although the materials (sand and fuel) were available.

Written sources for artisans exist, but only concerning those organized, a minority of artisans. Archaeological findings give a much broader picture of craft production but not of the producer. They show that specialized artisans existed in prehistoric times; a goldsmith named Lægest carved his name in runes in the 5th century A.D. During the Middle Ages, there was a clear distinction between the artisan, who made a living by producing for a market, and the person engaged in handicraft for personal/household use, a distinction based on gender more than on work performed. The artisan producing for a market was male, the household producer female, such as the housewife making cloth and other items for her household. The woman’s work in the household (weaving, sewing, baking, brewing) was performed by male artisans once it became a professional craft. An exception was the female brewer, who dominated the trade until the 16th century.

In Denmark, artisans tended to congregate in the cities. Artists’ quarters are found in the early towns of Ribe (8th century) and Hedeby (9th century). From the mid-14th century, urban authorities attempted to eliminate rural craft production, allowing only the village smith. This continued, primarily by the authorities in the 16th century, appears to have been fairly successful, partly because the city offered more opportunities for an artisan than rural areas. The rather dense urbanization, especially on Zealand and in Scania, meant that the rural population could comfortably
ably reach a city regularly, providing a sizable consumer
group.

This development was not true for the other Scandinavian
countries. In Sweden, no attempts were made to keep craft pro-
duction within city limits during the Middle Ages. Itinerant crafts-
men were found as well as regional settlements of artisans, such as
the workmasters of Dalarna, the stoncutters of Öland, and the
coppersmiths of Hälsingland. In Norway, much of the craft pro-
duction remained in the hands of the village artisans or the
housewife, undermining the market for the urban artisan, whose
customers were the relatively few urban inhabitants. The same
held true for Finland. In Iceland, where raw materials were sparse,
each farmstead produced what it needed or bought finished prod-
ucts from visiting merchants. References to Icelandic artisans are
few and indicate that they were seasonal workers.

In the city, artisans had sales booths grouped together near
or on the market square, but workshops scattered all over town,
with certain processes (e.g., tanning) taking place at the outskirts
of the city to avoid pollution. Only the butchers of Copenhagen
lived together in a compound. The artisans made up the middle
layers of the urban population. In Denmark, a royal decree from
1422 prohibited any artisan from becoming a member of the city
council and limited him to one craft. This prohibition seems to
have created some dissatisfaction, and was possibly one of the
causes for the generally peaceful uprisings of the urban population
during the 15th century to protest the power of the city council-
ors, all members of the mercantile elite, but at no time did the
situation change. Artisans also made up a majority of the stable
taxpayers and formed a solid part of the city’s economic base.

Within the artisanate, a clear sense of social and economic ranking
can be found in documents and tax records from the early 16th
century. Goldsmiths were at the top of the ladder, with economic
and marital ties to the mercantile elite. Bakers came second, fol-
lowed by smiths, shoemakers, tailors, and cordwainers. On the
bottom rungs were ropers, chandlers, coopers, and tinkerers. Within
each craft, even organized ones, there should be a great variation in
the economic and social standing of the masters. Surnames of
merchants and councilors indicate that it was not uncommon for
some of successful artisans to move upward socially. Downward
social mobility is harder to discern in the sources.

The training of an artisan came through apprenticeship and
a period as itinerant journeyman until the presentation and accep-
tance of a masterpiece made him a master. The training was pri-
marily practical, though some skill at reading and writing or carving
signs, numbers, and letters was also required. The Danish artisans
used runic signs well into the 13th century, the best-known example
being the smith Jakob Rad (early 13th century), who wrote Latin
inscriptions and his name in runes on a group of censers. Guild
statutes provide some details concerning the education of the
organized masters, especially the length of apprenticeship (two to
six years) and the relationship between masters and journeymen.
Problems in this relationship seem to have arisen as a result of a
generation rather than a class gap. There is no evidence that quali-
fied journeymen were excluded from the ranks of the masters
during the Middle Ages.

The much-studied and high-quality Viking artifacts may give
the impression that craft production reached its peak artistically
and technically during the Viking Age only to decline later. This
picture may not be quite accurate, and as far as ceramic wares are
concerned, positively false. The Viking raids and trade did bring
more precious metals into the North than was brought in later,
and from these metals the jewelry was produced. It is not known
if the producers were native or foreign workers. Artifacts from the
high and late Middle Ages are of a much more varying quality and
may seem less spectacular, especially against the broader Euro-
pean background.

Leather. Domestic and wild animals provided an abundance
of fur and hide for shoes, belts, purses, gloves, saddles, reins,
cords, and other items of leather. The most common artisan in the
Scandinavian cities was the shoemaker, and shoemakers’ guilds
are most frequently mentioned in the sources. The northern cli-
mate demanded good footwear. When the Greyfriars arrived in
Denmark in 1234, a chronicler noted with surprise that they came
barefooted. Export of shoes seems not to have taken place, whereas
Scandinavian hide and fur were in demand. The leatherworkers
were specialized. By the late Middle Ages, the sources mention
furriers, skinners, cordwainers, glovers, pursers, poulchmakers,
saddlers, beltmakers, and slipper makers along with shoemakers.
Tanning, in contrast, did not become a separate craft until the
17th century. Each leatherworker did his own tanning with some
processes (chamoising, tawing) reserved for certain artisans (glo-
vers, pursers).

Metal. Metalcraft was the most specialized craft in Scandinavia.
The smith’s guilds of Odense and Flensburg had as members by
1496 and 1514, respectively, blacksmiths, locksmiths, cutters,
lorimers, boilermakers, armormers, swordsmakers, pewterers, and
gunmakers. These artisans were found in practically all towns,
even if not always organized in guilds. Production, ranging from
sewing needles (made on small forges fired with acorn shells) to
large brewing vats, was geared primarily toward the peasants (ap-
parently the village blacksmith produced only horseshoes and
ploughshares), the urban population, and the Church. Only the
smiths of Odense and Copenhagen appear to have had noble and
royal customers. While iron and copper could be found in
Scandinavia, gold and silver had to be imported. Goldsmiths were
closely supervised by royal magistrates to prevent cheating and
forgery, but in return they received privileges and monopolies on
their craft, and often belonged to the urban elite.

Wood. Turners, fletchers, wheelwrights, and cofferers are
rarely mentioned in the written sources, but archaeological finds
show extensive production of plates, cups, bowls, and chests for
daily use, made from native as well as imported wood. The great
fisheries at Skanar (the Scania Fair) and the Lim Fjord placed a
heavy demand on barrels of a certain standard and weight for
exporting the salted herrings. A few cooper’s guilds were formed,
but the merchants made certain that barrel production and prices
did not present an obstacle to the profitable herring trade. Toward
the end of the Middle Ages, cabinet makers and joiners appear in
the sources and in the guilds, indicating a growing demand for
furniture, fancily carved. But the joiners who in 1490 had formed
a guild with the painters, master glaziers, and goldsmiths of
Flensburg most likely had churches as their primary workplace.
Combs for hair and weaving made from antlers and bones were
also a commonly found craft, although the combmakers are rarely
mentioned in the written sources. The same holds true—surpris-
ingly, given the importance of ships and sailing to the Nordic
people—for the shipwright. Archaeological excavations have un-
earthed a shipyard in the Danish countryside from the Viking Age
and the early Middle Ages, indicating production of ships and
boats for local trade and fishing.

Ceramics. Another rural craft that did not move into the
cities was pottery. Near the clay deposits, on Zealand especially,
pottery workshops arose, producing cups, bowls, plates, and jugs for the household. Most of this production was geared to the local market, but some inter-Scandinavian trade took place. In Norway, all ceramic and stone ware seems to have been imported during the Middle Ages, part of it from Denmark. Pottery was, in contrast to other craft production, at a fairly low stage during the Viking Age, but began flourishing during the high Middle Ages. The kilns also produced tiles and bricks for building once the arts of making them became known in Scandinavia (mid-12th century), and some Danish tiles were exported to Sweden.

Textiles. Textile production remained a home or cottage industry until the late 15th century. Archaeological finds of medieval textiles are few in contrast to the preceding periods (Bronze and Iron Ages). Prehistoric finds indicate that Nordic women knew how to use sophisticated spinning, weaving, and treatment techniques to produce a warm, durable, and presentable cloth. These techniques would in all likelihood have been preserved into the Middle Ages, whereas the price and scarcity of dyes would have limited the choice of colors. The horizontal loom was introduced into Scandinavia during the Middle Ages, except in Iceland, where the upright loom continued in use. Written sources refer only to imported Flemish and English cloth, a luxury item subject to taxation and coveted by the nobility and the urban elite. The locally produced cloth, known as vadmal, must, however, have covered the needs of the majority of the population. According to Olavus Magnus (Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus, ch. 55), the Nordic women excelled in weaving wool and linen cloth (cotton remained a rarity in the North). Weaving became a professional craft during the final decades of the 15th century, when Scottish weavers settled in East Danish towns. Weavers' guilds were founded, the earliest in Copenhagen in 1550, in which women, rarely, could become masters and girls apprentices. Tailoring had earlier become a professional craft, and was closed to women who were not wives or daughters of masters. Seamstresses who made linen clothes (shirts and undergarments) were permitted to exercise their trade.

Food. Among the artisans of the medieval towns were also the bakers, butchers, and brewers. They are frequently mentioned in written sources, and their trades were closely supervised by the magistrates to ensure that bread and meat were available to the urban population at an affordable price. Bread riots appear to have been rare in Scandinavia, and the upswing in trade of oxen and domestic or wild animals in his possession.

Crime and Punishment. Medieval Scandinavian laws were in written sources, and their trades were closely supervised by the magistrates to ensure that bread and meat were available to the urban population at an affordable price. Bread riots appear to have been rare in Scandinavia, and the upswing in trade of oxen and increased cattle holdings in general during the late Middle Ages meant that meat, in Denmark at least, was relatively inexpensive, in fact, cheaper per pound than wheat bread. The variety of bread was not great, limited to wheat and rye breads of various shapes. But there are few references to cakes and pastries. The female baker appears to have been a common sight in Swedish towns, but rarely found in Danish sources. The brewer, who appears in the early towns, was not organized in guilds but licensed and supervised by the urban magistrates. During the 15th century, the merchants sought to gain a monopoly on brewing along with their control of the import of hops and German beer. By the 16th century, they had become successful, establishing brewers' guilds and reducing women who were not wives or widows of master brewers to working as tapsters and innkeepers, serving the beer imported by the merchants or brewed by the brewers.


Grethe Jacobsen
change in the structure of the society. The old family community was dissolved, and the legal power that had been vested in the extended family was superseded by newer forms of royal legislation taken mainly from Roman canonical law. Collective responsibility was replaced by individual responsibility, and only the criminal was punished. In cases of manslaughter, however, the culprit's relatives were responsible for parts of the ensuing financial settlement (wergild). Efforts were made to restrict blood feud, and the old system of self-help was gradually replaced by public prosecution, although a form of self-help still remained in force in the sense that the execution of a sentence passed in court was usually left to the plaintiff. The criminal could be killed with impunity by the offended party only when he was caught in the act, for instance, in cases of theft, rape, or violation of domestic peace. As the people were compelled to refrain from using the ancient right of self-help, the king was obliged, in return, to punish the criminal by fines, outlawry, death, or corporal punishment.

**Fines.** In the Swedish and Danish provincial laws, as well as in the laws of the Icelandic free state (Grágás) and in Old Norwegian law, fines were the most common form of punishment. In earlier and more primitive stages of the law, fines had been one of the established means to settle an issue between two families. Because most injuries originally were regarded as an infringement of the individual's interests, fines were granted to the plaintiff as a form of moral satisfaction and financial compensation for the injury sustained. Later legislation often prescribes the division of the fine between the plaintiff and the king (the representative of the judicial system), or between the plaintiff and the Church (for church crimes). As the result of the influence from canonical law, a distinction was made between actions committed with criminal intent and accidents. The latter were judged more leniently than the former, and the fines incurred for such grievances went to the plaintiff in their entirety.

**Outlawry.** Medieval Scandinavian laws mention a series of crimes that could not be atoned for with fines; they incurred outlawry and loss of property. There is no legal evidence suggesting that outlawry could take effect without a prior legal verdict. In Denmark, outlawry as a form of punishment (e.g., for manslaughter at the legal assembly, violation of peace of the household, arson, rape, and high treason) was probably introduced shortly before the codification of the provincial laws, reflecting the effort of Church and monarchy to confirm legal authority by intervening in criminal cases that violated society as a whole. The Swedish provincial laws mention two types of outlawry, an older, restricted form, according to which the criminal is outlawed from the province, and a more recent form that can be traced back to the royal peace legislation (eiðsore) from the middle of the 13th century. The latter prescribes full outlawry and loss of property. The Icelandic Grágás distinguishes among three types of outlawry: sköggangr (full outlawry and confiscation of property), fjöraugaðar (lesser outlawry, i.e., three years' exile and confiscation of property), and henræð (exile from the district). In Norway, fines and outlawry were the oldest and most frequently used forms of punishment. Usually, fines could replace outlawry, and, conversely, outlawry could be incurred by fines outstanding. In Norway and Iceland, outlawry might be regarded as an alternative to the death penalty, because an outlawed individual could be killed with impunity.

**Capital punishment.** In pre-Christian times, the death penalty had a modest sphere of application. The punishment of a crime usually bore the character of a private settlement, and the killing of the offender terminated (or perpetuated) the conflict. Gradually, the plaintiff's execution of the death penalty was legitimized by the jurisdiction of the popular courts. Later, when the execution became a public legal action, it was incumbent on the royal official to provide an executioner.

The Swedish and Danish provincial laws contain the following forms of the death penalty: beheading, hanging, breaking on the wheel, burning, stoning, and live burial. Often crimes that incurred capital punishment could be expiated with fines, especially if the plaintiff interceded on behalf of the defendant. In the Icelandic Grágás, there is no death penalty, but there are indications that executions took place as part of a private system of self-help, e.g., in cases of rape and theft. Medieval Norwegian law contains little information about the execution of the death penalty by public authority, but certain sections in the penal codes prescribe, for example, drowning for sorcery, beheading for a slave caught stealing, and hanging for theft. On the whole, capital punishment appears to have been less important in Norway and Iceland than in Sweden and Denmark. Throughout the Middle Ages, there was increased recourse to the death penalty in Norse law. That development must be seen in light of the tendency to inflict more severe punishments as part of the general principle of deterrence.

Because certain crimes appear to have incurred certain forms of execution, scholars have attempted to establish a connection between penal actions and sacrificial rituals. Allegedly, specific types of criminal outrages, such as theft, murder, and rape, were liable to evoke the wrath of the gods, hence the perpetrators of such crimes were sacrificed to alleviate the guilt of the society and to placate the offended deities. This "Sacral Theory" was favored by legal historians, but has since been rejected.

**Corporal punishment.** Corporal punishments were originally enacted on slaves and unfree members of society, and such forms of punishment carried very derogatory connotations. The Danish provincial laws give few examples of corporal punishment, but petty theft was punished with flogging or mutilation. The earliest Norwegian laws mention running the gauntlet as a form of punishment for petty theft, and bestiality was punished with castration. In the later laws, flogging was used as a means to punish petty theft (combined with branding and mutilation for repeated theft), failure to pay debts, and certain sex crimes. The Icelandic Grágás prescribes mutilation for a slave who murdered his owner or one of the owner's relatives, and the nature of the punishment, the loss of hands and feet, suggests that it was intended as a form of death penalty. In the Swedish provincial laws, corporal punishment was the most common form of punishment next to fines. Such crimes as petty theft, robbery, illicit intercourse, and the failure or inability to pay fines were often punished with mutilation, entailing the loss of such body parts as hands, ears, or nose. Petty theft, forgery, battery, and defamation could incur flogging.

Corporal punishments were executed in public and formed an important component in the systems of shameful punishments, i.e., punishments that symbolically reflect the types of crimes they punish. Such punishments flourished during the later Middle Ages, probably as a result of the principles of deterrence and retaliation from Mosaic law.


Kari Ellen Gade

[See also: Grágás; Laws; Outlawry]
Dámusta saga ("The Saga of Dámusti") is an anonymous riddarasaga, probably from the 14th century. With a total of only seventeen preserved MSS (only one fragmentary vellum MS, AM "The Saga of Dámusti") is an anonymous redaction in several redactions: an older redaction (14th century), an abridged redaction from the 17th century, and finally, a synopsis from the end of the 18th or beginning of the 19th century under the title Sagan af Danusta Josephssyni ("The Saga of Danusti Josephsson"). The Dámusta rímur, which probably date from the first half of the 15th century, belong to the oldest group of this Icelandic ballad genre.

Gratiana, the daughter of King Katalaktus of Greece, has until now rejected all suitors. Dámusti is the son of one of the king's wise men; he prays daily to the Virgin Mary. King Jón from Saxony courts Gratiana and obtains her consent. The marriage is scheduled to take place in the fall, but Dámusti, who also loves the princess, with the approval of the wise men kills the bridegroom in an ambush. The emperor forgives the murder, but Gratiana soon falls fatally ill. The Virgin Mary appears and instructs Dámusti to go to the graveyard where Gratiana is buried. There, Dámusti defeats the monster Alhemir, who caused Gratiana's death so that he could marry her. The giant gives Dámusti a potion that brings Gratiana back to life, and he soon marries her. After Katalaktus's death, Dámusti becomes emperor, but soon hands over the kingdom to his son, and he and Gratiana live out the rest of their lives as penitents.

The religious and moral elements of the saga make the work difficult to classify. It has been considered a pseudo-legend of Mary, and its author an unknown Icelandic clergyman. Nonetheless, Dámusta saga can be grouped with the Icelandic riddarasögur. Even though there are certain parallels, especially in the second part, between the saga and Amadad et Ydoin and other French works, the saga cannot be considered a translation. On the contrary, it represents an original Icelandic text, and shows how polyfunctional the structure of the medieval romances could be. The fairy tale bearing the title "Inntak úr sögupætti af Jóni Upplandadöngi" ("Contents of an Episode About Jón, King of the Uplands"), which is directly derived from Dámusta saga, demonstrates that many Icelandic popular tales had their origins in the late-medieval saga literature.


Jürg Glauser

[See also: Old Norse-Icelandic Literature, Foreign Influence on; Riddarasögur]
Danevirke is a set of ramparts protecting the southern border of medieval Denmark, one of the largest of northern Europe's ancient defensive works. The entire complex consists of several ramparts and ditches with a total length of about 30 km., built at various times. The ramparts functioned from about A.D. 737 into the 13th century. In 1864, the Danevirke was rebuilt and used against Prussia, and during World War II the German army constructed a tank trap there.

The oldest known versions of the name "Danevirke" date from the 12th century: Danxwirchi ("Defense of the Danes"), Latin form opus danorum (Chronicon Leithense), and daniuerki (Sven Aggesen's Brevis historia regum Dacie).

The Danevirke runs from the head of Schlei (or Slien) fjord in the east to the rivers Rheide and Treene in the west. It effectively controlled the land approach to Denmark, because rivers and marsh areas already made a western approach difficult. The main north-south traffic route, the Hærvej ("army-road") or the Ox-road, passed through the Danevirke in the Hedeby area. Forests covered the 20-km.-wide areas down to the border river, the Eider. Beyond this lived the Saxons, to the west the Frisians, and to the east Slavic tribes.

Excavations over many years have yielded much information on the construction of the ramparts. By means of dendrochronology (tree-ring dating), the year of construction of some of the phases is now established. The political background of the Danevirke is illuminated by various written sources.

The Danevirke is best explained by dividing it into three successive complexes (Danevirke 1, 2, and 3), each functioning at different times.

Danevirke 1 consists of the North Wall (which has only one phase) and the earliest phase of the Main Wall. It was built in 737 and is, according to present knowledge, the oldest part of the Danevirke. It was constructed of earth faced with timber and was about 7 km. long, 10 m. wide, and 2 m. high. To the south was a ditch. No written sources say who had this great wall structure built or why, but probably the Danish king was responsible.

Danevirke 2 is also called "Kovirke," apparently raised during a single building phase and following an uncompromisingly straight line. It is about 6.5 km. long, constructed of earth faced with timber and with a ditch to the south. There is no definite dating evidence for Kovirke, but it is just possible that this is the rampart that, according to the Royal Frankish Annals, s.a. 808, the Danish King Godfred ordered built against threats from Charlemagne. There is, at present, no other good candidate for such a rampart.

Danevirke 3 comprises the Main Wall and to the west the Crooked Wall, to the east the Connecting Wall and the ramparts and ditches of Hedeby. It is about 14 km. long, forms a vast zigzag line, and has many phases. The oldest phase seems to date from around 968; the construction of the Connecting Wall is dated by dendrochronology to that year. It was 12-13 m. wide and about 3 m. high, built of earth faced with turf and probably crowned with a wooden palisade. The political background for this vast construction must be the confrontations between Denmark and the German Empire described in the written sources (e.g., Widukind and Thietmar).
Through the 11th and 12th centuries, the Danevirke was reinforced several times, and became more than 20 m. wide and 5 m. tall; the first time with turf fronts and later, at the Main Wall, with a stone front, and finally with a 7-m.-high brick front. This was the Valdemar's Wall, built by King Valdemar the Great (r. 1157–1182). At some stage, a fortress or castle, Thyraborg (undated), was built into the Danevirke. The political background to the 11th- and 12th-century phases of the Danevirke known from written sources, such as Sven Aggesen and Saxo, consists of threats from Slavic or German princes, or from the German Empire.

The Danevirke functioned as a military border rampart eleven times (in the years 815, 834, 974, 1043, 1066, 1113, 1131, 1147, 1156, 1171, and 1193) and was overrun four times (in the years 934, 974, 1043, and 1156). The last known occasion of a Danish army gathering at the Danevirke was in 1231.

With a Danish royal line ruling also as hereditary dukes of South Jutland, with close links to the South, and often hostile to Denmark, the political situation of the border area changed and the military significance of the Danevirke dwindled.


**Else Roedahl**

**Darraðarljóð** ("Dorrúð's Lay"), a poem in praise of an unnamed "young king" who has won a victory over the Irish, survives only in *Njáls saga* (ch. 157). The young king is identified there as the Viking Sigtryggr silkskegg ("silk-beard") and the battle as Clontarf, fought in 1014. These identifications are difficult to harmonize with the other sources on Clontarf; there is a better match with the victory won by Sigtryggr caech ("squinty") in the battle of Dublin of 919, although this identification also creates problems.

The central figures in *Darraðarljóð* are the Valkyries who assist the young king in battle. The poem appears to be built on an extended metaphor in which the tenor is the Valkyries' wielding of weapons and the vehicle their work on a piece of weaving. *Darraðarljóð* is consequently a uniquely rich source for medieval terminology related to the warp-weighted loom. In *Njáls saga*, the Valkyries are depicted as literally engaged in weaving, apparently so as to determine the outcome of the battle by magic; this reading of the poem is probably overly literal.

The poem opens in the manner of a work song, with the Valkyries as speakers. In verse 1, they describe the *skothröð*, or initial volleys of thrown weapons. In verses 2 and 3, they urge each other to join in the ensuing hand-to-hand fighting. In verses 4 to 6 occurs the famous refrain *vindum, vindum / vef darrarð*. "Let us wind, let us wind / the interweaving of the pennant.[s]." Here, if the rare word *darrarð* is correctly interpreted as "pennon," the entire spectacle of battle is epitomized as an intertwining of the various banners carried by each force. In the terms of the metaphor, the Valkyries as weavers wind up this "fabric" on the windlass-like beam at the top of the loom, so as to facilitate the weaving of a further length of fabric. The prose narrative introduces a person called Dorrúðr, who bears the Valkyries' song; the name Dorrúðr probably represents a folk etymology on *darrarð*.

Verses 7 and 8 announce the defeat of the Irish and the death of an earl, evidently on their side, and foreshadow the death of a "mighty king," presumably their high king; people hitherto confined to the coastal fringes (presumably the Vikings) will rule "the lands." In verses 9–11, the Valkyries predict fresh victories for the "young king," concluding with an invitation to ride "out," interpreted in *Njáls saga* as meaning an exit from the hut where supposedly their loom is situated.

In meter and style, *Darraðarljóð* resembles the poems of the *Poetic Edda*. The narrative technique is the "running commentary" found in *Líðsmennaflokkr*, where the actions seem to unfold as the speakers speak. The original milieu for the poem was probably the British Isles, with special ties to the joint kingdoms of York and Dublin. Walter Scott testifies, not very reliably, that a version of *Darraðarljóð* was still being recited on Orkney during the 18th century.


**Russell Poole**

**See also:** *Eddic Meters; Eddic Poetry, Líðsmennaflokkr, Njáls saga*
De moribus et actis primorum normanniae ducum
see Dudo of St.-Quentin

De virtutibus et vitis see Alcuin

Demography. Historical demography studies populations in the past, with respect to size, composition, and distribution, but also with respect to the patterns and causes of change or stability. The latter fields of research involve the study of fertility, mortality, and migration, which are determined by biological and societal structures, and so must be examined within the framework of human physiology and society. This approach is called "social demography." Medieval demographic structures in Scandinavia were shaped by the basic socioeconomic fact that at least 90 percent of the population lived in the countryside and subsisted on the meager rewards of primary agricultural production. As all preindustrial and prescientific populations, they had only the most rudimentary rational knowledge of disease.

Medieval demography in Scandinavia has made tremendous progress during the last decades. This advance is due primarily to the development of a new scientific discipline, osteoarchaeology, which uses skeletal remains of people living in the past to determine sex, age at death, and health of their "producers."

The most important problem faced by osteoarcheological research is that skeletons of infants and young children tend to disintegrate (see, e.g., Holk 1970a, Sjøvold 1987b, Jensen 1979, Persson 1976, Persson and Persson 1981). Moreover, excavated skeletal populations tend to be unrepresentative reflections of the structure of mortality in living populations because death of infants and young children is so usual as to produce a significant frequency of irregular burials (Graslund 1972–73, Holck 1987). Unwanted neonatals were exposed in pagan times and, probably still to some extent illegally after the introduction of Christianity in the 11th century (Benedictow 1985, Mundal 1987). Stillborn and unbaptized children, as well as suicides and some categories of criminals, were not buried in Christian cemeteries (Bøe 1963, Rosen 1969). The problems caused by underrepresentation of infants and young children in skeletal populations are usually overcome by comparison with populations with similar life expectancies for adolescents and adults, and good information on infants and children. Life tables have been produced providing such data on a regular and systematic basis (Coale and Demeny 1966, Henry 1970). This approach is acceptable when used with caution (Sjøvold 1987a).

On the basis of a general assessment of the osteoarcheological data available in 1970, average life expectancy in medieval Scandinavia was determined to be between twenty and thirty years (Holck 1970a). Using the data produced in more recent studies and applying the life-table technique, we can now conclude that within this range of variation life expectancy most usually and on average was between twenty and twenty-five years (cf. Jensen 1979). This conclusion corresponds closely to the preplague results for England based on written sources (Ohlin 1966, Miller and Hatcher 1978, Razi 1980, Hatcher 1986).

A small medieval cemetery containing the skeletal remains of 364 individuals has been excavated at Frösön in Jämtland, a region of central Scandinavia that in the medieval centuries belonged territorially to the state of Norway, but ecclesiastically to the Swedish archbishopric of Uppsala. The cemetery had been used in the period around 1050/1100–1350 by a small but socially differentiated peasant population on a few nearby holdings containing twenty-five to forty-five persons: 184 of the individuals, 50.3 percent of the total cemetery population, had died before the age of seven; twenty-seven (7.4%) had died between the ages of seven and fourteen; fifteen (4.1%) between the ages of fourteen and twenty; sixty (19%) between the ages of twenty and forty; sixty-five (17.8%) between the ages of forty and sixty; and only five (1.4%) died at an age above sixty years (Gejvall 1960).

While the proportion of children dying below the age of seven may seem astonishing, one should note that an average life expectancy at birth of twenty years, the highest considered by the author, corresponds, according to life tables, to a death rate of children during the first seven years of life of about 625–650 per 1,000 (Coale and Demeny 1966, Henry 1970). This comparison suggests a significant deficit of children's skeletal remains in the graveyard at Frösön; a small deficit also of adults, mostly male, is probably. A country parish cemetery at Mære (central Norway) contained the analyzable skeletal remains of sixty-nine individuals buried between 1100 and 1550. Of these, 52 percent were children below the age of fifteen (Holck 1970b). The life expectancy of the adults, nonetheless, indicates a general level of mortality suggesting a probable deficit of infants.

A considerable increase in infant mortality must have been caused by a change in the pattern of breast feeding during the Middle Ages. Norwegian studies show that there was a shift away from immediate to delayed breast feeding and other means of feeding neonatals. The general view of physicians in classical antiquity was that the first milk of women, colostrum, was harmful to babies. This view, uncritically accepted by medieval physicians, was part of a massive importation of European culture into Scandinavia in the high Middle Ages (Weiser-Aal 1973). However, colostrum is highly important for the protection of neonatals against infections and also contains high amounts of important nutrients. The significance of such a change in breast-feeding customs can be surmised from the effects of the change back to immediate breast feeding (ca. 1680–1880). English data suggest that the change from immediate to delayed commencement of lactation caused an increase in medieval neonatal mortality during first month of life of between 50 and 100 percent, and in general infant mortality of between 10 and 25 percent (Fildes 1980, Benedictow 1985, Helgi Porlaksen 1986).

The high level of infant mortality must be seen in light of poor hygienic standards, causing frequent acute gastroenteritis and epidemics of dangerous intestinal diarrhoeal diseases like dysentery and typhoid fever. Epidemics of other children's diseases, such as measles, diphtheria, whooping cough, and scarlet fever, undoubtedly also took their toll, while smallpox probably did not arrive until about 1500 (Cartwright 1977).

The mortality level experienced by the peasant community at Frösön is on plausible grounds considered to have corresponded to an annual rate of forty to fifty per 1,000 (1.8–1.2 burials a year). This turnover had to be compensated for by the reproductive performance of women. Fertility may be measured as the number of births per 1,000 population per annum (producing crude birth rates that may be easily compared with mortality rates), as the number of births per 1,000 fertile women, or in a number of other ways (Hawthorn 1970). One should note that medieval populations do not seem to have known effective means of contraception, birth rates being the outcome of natural fertility.

A population will reproduce itself when fertile women on an average raise about 2.1 children who reach maturity. In a population with an average life expectancy at birth of twenty years, the
maximum at Frösön, about 640 per 1,000 children will die before the age of twenty, implying an average number of six live births per fertile woman to compensate for this level of mortality. On average, about 35 percent of all persons reaching the age of twenty will die before attaining the age of forty (Coale and Demeny 1966). Moreover, a significant number of women will die from pregnancy-related causes. The implied substantial deficit of live births will have to be compensated for by the reproductive performance of other fertile women surviving to the age of forty to balance the pattern of death in the population. In all, the data suggest a mean number of about eight births per fertile woman surviving her reproductive period, in order to compensate for a general level of mortality producing a mean life expectancy at birth of twenty years. Medieval and early modern data from other parts of Europe and modern data from developing countries show that the average birth interval of poorly fed breast-feeding peasant women is about twenty-nine months, breast feeding causing a delay in resumption of ovulation of about eight months (lactational amenorrhea) (Benedictow 1985). First confinement after wedding on average takes place after about seventeen months. According to this pattern of birth intervals, eight births, on average, require 220 months, or 18.3 years. Women beginning their reproductive performance well before the age of thirty will, on the average, have their last child before the age of forty. This means that a population experiencing an average life expectancy at birth of twenty years will not be able to reproduce itself if the average age at marriage for women is twenty years.

The solution to this problem of biological-genetic and social survival for populations experiencing such levels of mortality and life expectancy is early and (almost) universal marriage of women (Naraghi 1960, Hawthorn 1970). While in a society where average life expectancy at birth is twenty years, about 640 of 1,000 children born will die before the age of twenty, about 620 will die before the age of fifteen, about 7.8 live births being sufficient to produce a stationary population. However, we must take into account the considerable subfecundity of females during the first postmenarche years, making it likely that first confinement will occur at the age of seventeen. A reproductive career beginning at this age will quite likely satisfy the demands outlined above, i.e., comprising, after the first at about age seventeen, seven births with mean intervals of about twenty-nine months, in all 203 months, or 16.9 years, still leaving room for one or two confinements. This alternative, therefore, also includes a potential for long-term population growth, e.g., of the type experienced by the Scandinavian countries in the high Middle Ages of the magnitude of 0.2–0.3 percent a year. If life expectancy at birth was twenty-five years, 46 percent of children would survive to the age of fifteen, 44 percent to the age of twenty, easing noticeably the socially conditioned demands on the fecundity of women.

The lower the life expectancy at birth and the higher the mortality rates of infants and young children, the higher that birth rates will need to be to reproduce a family, lineage, kinship group, clan, or population, making age at marriage a crucial variable. The biological survival of social collectives will also depend on proportions of women married, female nuptiality. No registration of marriage existed in medieval Scandinavia. One may, however, note the strong view in both medieval and early modern Scandinavia that it was impossible for a single person to work a holding, and that in case of the death of one of the spouses rapid remarriage was a practical necessity (Benedictow 1985, Leijonhufvud 1921, Gaunt 1983). The Íslandasögur, we are told, "contain not a single old maid" (Frank 1973), indicating universal marriage.

During classical antiquity, when average life expectancy at birth was about twenty years (Brunt 1971), the usual age at marriage for women was twelve to fifteen years (Hopkins 1965). In medieval Scandinavia, correspondingly, women might be expected to marry at an early age, in order to compensate for the high general level of mortality. In Scandinavia, no systematic data on age at marriage exist suitable for answering this question. It seems, according to Danish law, that girls might be expected to be married at the age of eighteen (Jacobsen 1982). The fact that the Icelandic sagas contain a considerable number of cases where girls married at the age of twelve or in the early teens (Sigurður Líndal 1976) is suggestive, and makes it clear that there was no normative resistance to such a practice. These indications of early marriage for women are strengthened by osteoarchaeologically obtained data showing supermortality for adolescent girls fourteen to nineteen years of age (Persson 1976). Age- and sex-specific structures of nuptiality, therefore, have probably been shaped by mortality and socioeconomic circumstances, the high mortality levels characteristic of these societies typically creating broad opportunities for early marriage by causing a low age of coming into inheritance and a good supply of vacant tenancies. As mentioned above, only 1.4 percent of the cemetery population at Frösön had reached the age of sixty. A medieval cemetery with 389 skeletons classified with respect to age as sixty-plus, two others classified as fifty to seventy, and one classified as fifty to sixty-five (Anderson 1986), indicating that proportion of population reaching the age of sixty years can hardly have been higher there than at Frösön. In England, in the 13th century, half of all boys of the feudal aristocracy were fatherless by the age of seventeen. As Berkener (1973) states: "Few parents lived to see their children marry, and even fewer lived to see more than one grandchild."

This conclusion may explain another important finding. In accordance with the usual conclusions of skeletal studies all over the world (e.g., Acsádi and Nemeskéri 1970, Brothwell 1971, Hassan 1981), Scandinavian osteoarchaeological research pertaining to the medieval centuries regularly finds that men lived significantly longer than women (Holck 1970a, 1970b, 1986, 1987, Gejvall 1981, Persson 1976, Persson and Persson 1981, Jacobzon and Sjögren 1983, Tkokz 1985, Moller-Christensen 1982, Sellevold 1987 and 1989). An exception to this pattern has been registered in skeletal material from Danish grave mounds of the Viking period. The material is so small and socially skewed (Sellevold et al. 1987) that the modest difference in favor of female longevity seems to be covered by the fairly wide margins of uncertainty. However, it is likely that this finding reflects demographic reality and is caused by a high incidence of violent death in this belligerent upper-class population (cf. Hollingsworth 1957).

The typically longer life expectancy of men is usually explained by reference to confinement-related mortality (see, e.g., Holck 1986, Anderson 1986, Högberg 1983; Sellevold 1989, disagrees). This argument is relevant but insufficient. Confinement-related mortality increases strongly with early marriage because young, often not fully grown females have a particularly marked pregnancy-related supermortality. Women at the end of their reproductive careers also experience a pronounced pregnancy-related supermortality as the health hazards due to a large number of pregnancy-related experiences increasingly manifest themselves, the number of such experiences obviously being connected with
age at marriage. In developing countries of our own day that encourage early marriage of women, studies show a "natural maternal pregnancy-related" mortality rate of six to seven deaths per 1,000 births (see, e.g., Kamel 1983, Chen et al. 1974), indicating that 4–7 percent of married fertile women will die from such causes. It has been suggested that female supermortality is due to food discrimination against women (e.g., Wells 1971, Shorter 1984, Sellevold 1987 and 1989). A number of arguments dispute this view, only a few of which can be mentioned here. First, both Icelandic and the Free State period (Grágás) and of the early modern period (Rúlög) contain provisions specifically aimed at protecting the food intake of pregnant and lactating women, i.e., most married fertile women. The southeastern Norwegian regional law code, the Borgarping Law, exempts lactating women from two periods of Lent fasting for the same child (Jon Steffensen 1963, Benedictow 1985, 1988, 1989). Such provisions attest to a general concern for the nutrition and health of women and children. Second, medieval female skeletons do not generally exhibit more indications of malnutrition than those of men (Sellevold 1987).

Third, no differences in stature have been registered exceeding the normal difference of 4–11 percent in favor of men (Gejvall 1960, Boldsen 1979, Persson and Persson 1981, Tkoce 1985, Sjögren 1983). In fact, the evidence rather supports the opposite case, as the stature of men falls significantly while the stature of women is steady. Fourth, women and girls also have as one of their particular tasks nursing of the sick, implying increased exposure to infectious diseases and resultant supermortality.

In international research, this point has been generally confirmed (Tabutin 1978, Henry 1987). The significance of the higher risk of exposure to infectious diseases is considerably strengthened by the phenomenon of pregnancy-related immunosuppression. This is a physiological reaction serving to prevent abortion due to the fact that fetuses differ genetically from the mother, but depressing at the same time the natural resistance to infectious diseases (immunodeficiency) (Weinberg 1984). One should note, however, that the tendency of female supermortality found regularly in osteoarchaeological studies and repeatedly in modern studies in developing countries seems to commence before the age of menarche (Henry 1970, Nagheri 1960, Stolnitz 1956). Socially conditioned causes may, therefore, be at work as well.

Although there exist no statistical data on family structure in medieval Scandinavia, it is clear that it predominantly was of the nuclear type. Persons living alone and all persons living in the same dwelling unit constitute a household. Nuclear family and household on average a somewhat larger social unit than the family. The degree of nuclearity is a historical and socioeconomic variable.

Families, at a given point in time, have only completed on average two-thirds of the process of raising children. An average of 1.5 children, consequently, indicates that completed families probably will comprise 2.25 children, and so implies population growth. If we add to this figure an average of two adults, which allows some to be widows or widowers and others to have extra adults in the family beyond a married couple, average household size will be 3.5 (Hollingsworth 1969). It is important that additions to this figure be specified and explained.

To approach more concretely the problem of household size in medieval Scandinavia, we have to rely partly on material from the 17th century and partly on osteoarchaeologically obtained demographic medieval data. Estimated on such premises, household size was much the same as in the rest of Europe, i.e., containing on average between four and five persons in all (see, e.g., Hollingsworth 1969), in the higher range in periods of population expansion, in the lower range in periods of stationary or diminishing population.

Norway. Useful data on the size of national population can be computed only in the case of Norway. This computation is possible because at least 90 percent of the population lived in the countryside and because the topography of the Norwegian landscape strongly restricts the choice of sites for farmsteads and cultivated areas. Holdings tend to be stable territorial units. Different types of sources, when brought together, allow quite a good enumeration of family holdings at the time of maximum expansion in the high Middle Ages, around 1330, and at the time of maximum contraction in the late Middle Ages, around 1450–1500. The figure is, within the present borders of Norway, 60,000 and 23–24,000 respectively, plus or minus 10 percent (Sandnes 1981).

Using a household multiplier of 4.5 (plus or minus about 10 percent), assuming a stationary population, and the median figure of holdings (60,000), we find 270,000 rural sedentary inhabitants in 1330. This figure covers about 90 percent of the population, and additions will have to be made to include town populations, fisher communities, hunters and gatherers, and mendicants, bringing the population total up to about 300,000. It is assumed that the territories lost to Sweden in the 17th century, mainly Bohuslan, Jämtland, and Härjedalen, constituted about one eighth of the total population (Lindseth 1987), indicating a maximum for medieval Norway of about 343,000 persons, a figure that may be rounded upward to 350,000. This is the most plausible computation, but diverse factors of uncertainty indicate that the populations might have been as low as 275,000 and as high as 420,000. Although these margins of uncertainty are not exhaustive, this computation of the population of Norway can be usefully applied in many types of contexts and arguments.

The late-medieval minimum population, caused mainly by recurrent plague epidemics and reflected in mass desertion of holdings, caused comprehensive and far-reaching socioeconomic structural changes. Marginal holdings were massively abandoned, and the population concentrated on the good central holdings. The sharp reduction of population caused a high demand for labor, which produced strongly increased wages and a steep fall in land rents compared with the preplague levels, when demographic overexpansion caused intense competition for work and tenancies (Sandnes 1981). As labor became abundant and cheap during the high Middle Ages, resident servants probably became usual on the more substantial farms, tending to increase the average size of households. Some of the servants may have been married, increasing the proportion of holdings containing multiple households. At the time of the late-medieval minimum population, only the small and economically depressed secular and ecclesiastical aristocracies (Benedictow 1970, 1971, 1977, 1987) and very substantial peasants could finance resident servants. The average number of persons coming to join the basic biological family to form the household was probably quite small. The late-medieval population contraction coincides with the high point of the nuclear family holding. As the population concentrated on the best agricultural units and the resident households strongly tended to be constituted by nuclear families having to rely on their own working power, their ability to exploit the resources of the holdings diminished.

Assuming a stationary population at the time of population
minimum, everything considered, average household size probably tended to be somewhat smaller than 150 years earlier. A reduction of the number of farmsteads within the present borders of Norway from 60,000 to 23,000-24,000, or by 60–62 percent, implies, using a multiplier of 4.25 and adding one-eighth for the areas ceded to Sweden in the 17th century, a population reduction within the medieval borders of Norway from 343,000 to about 125,000, or by around 63 percent. This magnitude of population decline corresponds remarkably closely to the conclusions of Hatcher with respect to England.

Denmark. In the last half-century, one serious attempt has been made to calculate the medieval population of Denmark (including Scania, Halland, and Blekinge, areas lost to Sweden at the middle of the 17th century) (Christensen 1938). The computation is founded mainly on four elements: (1) a tax register for Halland that is assumed to record accurately the number of adult men in 1232 (9,200–9,300 "rustici"); (2) the number of churches in Denmark; (3) the proportions of all Danish churches situated in Halland and the rest of Denmark, estimated to be 3.2 and 96.8 percent, respectively, preparing the ground for a calculation of 290,000 adult men; (4) this figure, when multiplied by the assumed quantitative relation between number of adult men and general population, 3.3, finally produces a computation of the size of the population of medieval Denmark at its maximum, around 1250–1300, of approximately one million inhabitants.

Iceland. Iceland was settled in historical times by culturally advanced people. Landnámabók contains, however, only the names of a small fraction of the early colonists, and osteoarchaeological studies and studies of blood types in the present Icelandic population make it clear that the number of immigrants of Irish and Scottish stock must have been substantial (Steffensen 1953, Jón Johannesson 1974).

The number of peasants liable to pay a duty to finance those participating at the meetings of the Alþingi (þingfararkaup) is said in Íslendingabók to have been 4,560 in 1097. This duty was paid by those not attending in person, and only those paying could participate at the Alþingi and at the local moots as moot-men. It was collected and the proceeds disbursed by the local chieftains. We do not know the amount paid or if the chieftains made a profit from it, or, as Íslendingabók points out, the proportion of those choosing to stay at home instead of going to the moot. And we do not know the quality of the process of registration and the social criteria used, i.e., the rate of evasion and the rates of exemption because of poverty or social position, and how many were overlooked because of ignorance on the part of the recorders (Ólafur Lárusson 1936, Jón Steffensen 1963).

Such a piece of information may seem a rather foolhardy basis for the calculation of population size. What is further required is information as to household size. This type of information is provided by archaeologists, whose choice of sites for excavation usually is not governed by statistical notions of representativeness, but who tend to be attracted by the conspicuous and spectacular. On the basis of excavations of large farm sites, Icelandic archaeologists suggest fifteen to sixteen persons as household multiplier. This enormous figure requires particular comment. In the first centuries after settlement, the social scene in Iceland was dominated by intensive rivalries between kinship groups, making feuding, killings, and carnage an integral part of daily life. This situation acted as a strong incentive for people to seek collective solutions to their need for protection and defense, coming together in expanded groupings consisting of multiple households, genetically related or not. Recently, arguments have been presented supporting a case for a significant incidence of joint families (Miller 1988). Calculation of household size on the basis of very uncertain notions as to the relation between space and household members inevitably comprises wide margins of uncertainty, margins compounded by extensive uncertainty connected with questions of representativeness. While household size may have been unusually large at those times, reflecting a considerable frequency of multiple households, the figure of fifteen to sixteen must be considered only as a "guestimate," and quite probably considerably exaggerated. The multiplicative effects of the wide margins of uncertainty involved in the constitutive assumptions may legitimately discourage researchers from seeing much use in such a computation.

This situation is not much improved by information as to the number of taxable peasants in 1311, which, revised to take account of the whole country, may be assessed at about 3,800. We do not know how many were exempted for reasons of poverty or immunity, and have no means of controlling the quality of registration, and other factors. This figure cannot, therefore, be taken to imply a population reduction since 1097. Some comfort may perhaps be derived from the fact that the figures do not differ by more than 17 percent.

According to Jón Steffensen (1967, 1968), a maximum population in medieval Iceland of close to 80,000 inhabitants was reached about 1200. The merits of this estimate are clearly subject to the qualifications of extensive margins of uncertainty, particularly downward. The highest estimates of the high-medieval Icelandic population suggest around 100,000 inhabitants. In our opinion, it never exceeded the population size recorded by the Census of 1703 of 50,400 persons (Mannal 1924, Mannahl 1960).

Iceland was hit by plague only twice, in 1402–1404 and 1494–1495. Although both epidemics were severe, the demographic consequences of two such episodes, as should be expected, were mostly temporary.

Sweden. No sources exist suitable for assessing the size of the medieval population of Sweden (Hecksher 1935–36, Schön 1938, J. Rosén 1969). The relative political and military strength of the Nordic countries indicates that the population of medieval Sweden was considerably smaller than Denmark's, while probably somewhat larger than Norway's. The population of Sweden must have been severely affected by the considerable number of plague epidemics that ravaged the country in the late-medieval period.

The size of the medieval population of Finland also remains unknown; it must have been quite small, exceeding only that of Iceland. The population of Finland consisted partly of Finns and partly of Swedes, who settled along the southern and southwestern coasts. Finland experienced population increase and settlement expansion in the late-medieval period, the only Nordic country and probably even the only European country to do so. The number of holdings at the middle of the 16th century is estimated at 33,000 (Orman 1981). The probable explanation for this highly unusual pattern is that Finland, like Iceland, was relatively insulated from international trade, and so did not, or only rarely, import plague.

The relatively small size of Nordic populations has certain general epidemiological implications of considerable interest. Acute infectious diseases that cause permanent immunity, such as measles and smallpox, require populations of 500,000 to one million to
become endemic. Smaller populations do not have a large enough annual input of susceptibles, and the disease will die out. When reintroduced, people born since the previous epidemic will all be immune, preparing the ground for malnutrition, starvation, and related epidemic diseases. In epidemics of this type, parents will be affected as well as their children, giving rise to considerable supermortality, especially among infants and young children, as parents will not be able to take care of them. Adults will also suffer supermortality from lack of care. Endemicity ensures that adults are usually immune, transforming the social pattern of acute infectious diseases that cause permanent immunity into that of children's diseases. Thus, as population increases, these diseases tend to become endemic and common in childhood, and, as such, they are less lethal. Epidemic diseases, therefore, quite likely took a greater toll on populations in the medieval period than later. This probability may help explain the low average life expectancy at birth and the high levels of childhood mortality in medieval Scandinavia, as exemplified by the finding in a medieval graveyard excavated in Trondheim of a proportion of young children that seemed surprising to the osteoarchaeologist (Anderson 1986). Årni Magnusson's dramatic description of the effects of an epidemic of smallpox in Iceland in 1707–1708 that caused a considerable desolation of holdings, reflecting substantial adult mortality, is well known. The special epidemiological background has been less well understood.


**Ole Jørgen Benedictow**

[See also: Family Structure; Marriage and Divorce; Plague; Pregnancy and Childbirth]

**Den uttro Hustru** see Drama

**Denmark.** Medieval Denmark was founded by its early Christian kings. Three major figures were Harald Blâtand ("Bluethoot"), who in the late 900s received baptism, Sven Estridsen, who in the mid-11th century divided his realm into bishoprics, and Knud, who in 1085 richly endowed the cathedral of Lund in Scania, which in 1104 became the first archiepiscopal see in the North. King Knud died in 1086 a Christian martyr. Christian Denmark, once founded, was shaped, primarily on the model of the kingdom of France, most effectively in the latter part of the 12th century with the Protestant Reformation in 1536.

Politically, the Middle Ages in Danish history is a process of unification, up to 1157, and one of integration, then and later, into the affairs of the European continent. Not all Danish Viking Age kings had wielded authority over the whole realm, even if King Harald Blâtand in his famous Jelling inscription had declared himself to have "conquered all Denmark and Norway and christianized the Danes." Kings Sven Tveskæg ("Forkbeard") and Knud (Cnut) den Store ("the great") in the early decades of the 11th century were dominated in their politics by their English ambitions, and utilized their Danish territories only as bases of operation. Even if the British Isles remained within the Danish political sphere of interest, Danish involvement beyond the North Sea after 1066 became critical. Danish kings from about 1100 onward turned their attention to the Baltic, where they competed with growing German influence for supremacy in missionary efforts and mercantile ventures. The Baltic, a corridor between western Europe and the East in the Viking Age, became in the 12th century the object of a German invasion that subjected an older Slavic population of the region to Christianity. During the 12th
century, a series of German mercantile cities were founded along the southern coast of the Baltic from Lübeck to Riga. Danish bishops and princes, along with German princes, took part in military and missionary efforts in the area. In the first decade of the 13th century, the Danish king Valdemar Sejr (“the victorious”) was chosen overlord of the city of Lübeck, and from the mid-13th century the Hanseatic League became the most important factor in Danish foreign politics. Medieval political development in the North gradually resulted in a weakening of Denmark’s ties with the British Isles, the North Atlantic, and the principalities of Inner Russia.

British culture, however, maintained a dominant influence upon church organizations in Denmark until the end of the 11th century. The account given by Adam of Bremen in his *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum* (ca. 1075) testifies to concurrent British and German missionary attempts with regard to Denmark, e.g., in the years 1060–1066, when there were two bishops of Scania: Henrik, an Englishman, formerly bishop of the Orkneys, residing in Lund, and Egino, dependent on the church of Hamburg and residing in Dalby. Adam’s account, however, is hostile to British influence over Denmark, which was finally set aside by the establishment in 1104 of the archbishopric of Lund, and no impartial account of British ecclesiastical activity in Denmark during the earlier Middle Ages has survived. When in 1086 St. Knud was killed by his Danish subjects while preparing for a naval attack on England, his death was interpreted by official royal spokesmen as a death suffered in promulgating the Christian faith, i.e., a martyrdom. And when, after 1095, his cult became established at Odense, English priests and monks were summoned to Denmark to establish an ecclesiastical center, a royal monastery (the monastery of St. Knud), which was to function also as cathedral chapter to the bishopric of Odense. The first substantial account of the martyrdom of St. Knud was written by Atlnoth, an English Benedictine, who wrote probably in the second decade of the 12th century, and who had no personal experience of the age of King Knud.

During the 12th century, Danish kings were confronted continuously with papal and imperial claims to supremacy over Denmark. King Valdemar den Store and his successors finally sided with the pope against the emperor in the Investiture Conflict, and thus managed to repel any imperial claims to taking their realm in fief of the Empire. Having obtained the throne in 1157, King Valdemar den Store succeeded in 1158 in having his friend and close ally Absalon elected bishop of Roskilde. The two set up the well-functioning kingdom of the Valdemars, conducted an imperialist policy in the Baltic, and succeeded in 1170 in having the king’s father, Duke Knud Lavard, canonized. On the same day, the king’s son, grandson of the new saint, appropriately named Knud, was proclaimed king, an event that represents the first culmination of the Valdemar Era. Before 1170, Absalon and King Valdemar faced an opponent to major features of their policy in Archbishop Eskil of Lund, a close friend of Bernard of Clairvaux, and to some extent spokesman for ecclesiastical independence. But 1170 also witnessed Archbishop Eskil’s surrender to royal power, and in 1177, upon resigning from the archbishopric, obviously with papal consent, and with unanimous support of the king, the clergy, and the people, Eskil appointed Absalon his successor. As archbishop, Absalon continued to function as principal adviser to the king, and he commissioned Saxo, the historian, to write the *Gesta Danorum* to promulgate an authoritative view of modern Danish culture in terms compatible with 12th-century European state philosophy and legal thinking, all to the glory of the Valdemar kings. Absalon belonged to a major Danish family, later known as the Hvide kin, and after having been elected archbishop, he was allowed for fifteen years to govern also his former diocese of Roskilde, where eventually he was succeeded by his nephew Peder Sunesen. After Absalon’s death in 1201, Peder’s elder brother, Anders Sunesen, succeeded him at Lund. Both of them, like Absalon himself, were educated at Paris and well versed in 12th-century political, theological, and legal thinking. Before his election to the archbishopric, Anders Sunesen had been chancellor to the king and was a prominent theologian and jurist. His major works were a poetical description of the seven days’ work of Creation (the *Hexaemeron*), apparently a performance of his youth and intended for teaching young clergymen, and a Latin paraphrase of one of the most important legal works of medieval Denmark, the Law of Scania. Anders received his juridical education at the University of Bologna around 1190, under the guidance of Huguccio of Pisa, who was also the teacher of the later Pope Innocent III. Later, as archbishop of Lund, Anders, in collaboration with the king, created a modern crusading nation of Denmark, highly favored by the pope, who repeatedly responded to all wishes put forward by King Valdemar and his archbishop to strengthen the inner structure of kingdom and Church in Denmark. However, the king’s last desire, to depose bishop Valdemar of Schleswig, a descendant of one of his father’s rivals for the throne, whom the king had held imprisoned for fourteen years, continuously met papal refusal.

Valdemar Sejr originally looked to the emperor for support and, on several occasions, obtained imperial concession of the overlordship over all territories north of the Elbe and Elde (confirmed 1214). But his aim was to gain the Baltic by military conquest and missionary campaigns, and for these objectives, papal benevolence was essential. During the first decades of the 13th century, he extended his power over the entire coastal region south of the Baltic, until finally in 1219 he conquered Estonia. This action gave rise to a German countertmove. Count Henry of Schwerin captured the king in 1223 and imprisoned him for two years with his son and coregent, King Valdemar den Unge (“the young”). They were released on the condition that they refrained from any attempts at revenge; an obligation that, however, was set aside in 1227, when King Valdemar entered Holstein with an army, only to suffer his decisive defeat at Bornhœved (July 22, 1227). He was forced to relinquish all conquests in Germany, apart from the island of Rügen, which had come to Denmark in the day of Valdemar den Store (1169).

After the death of King Valdemar Sejr in 1241, the throne became an object of strife among three branches among his descendants. Kingship eventually fell to Christoffer I, his son Erik Klipping, and his grandson Erik Menved, but twice in these years the archbishops of Lund sided with enemies of the realm. The controversies between Erik Klipping and Jakob Erlandsen, and between Erik Menved and Jens Grand, respectively, destroyed previous harmony between king and Church in Denmark and resulted in profound political crises. The conflicts were ended in favor of the royal position before papal tribunals of arbitration in 1274 and 1302. From substantial royal and aristocratic gifts in the foundation period, the Church of Denmark had become very rich. But at all stages of medieval political development in Denmark, the Church was under royal domination or, at least, under severe royal control. In the second decade of the 14th century, there was a minor outburst of the controversy once again, this time between...
Erik Menved and Esjer Jul. King Valdemar Atterdag ("ever-day"), on succeeding to the realm in 1340, found all sources of royal income pawning to the counts of Holstein, but in twenty years the kingdom was completely restored. He managed, with the support of the Avignon popes, to bring all material church resources to his own political use. However, controversy between king and Church in Denmark remained latent throughout the Middle Ages. The Protestant Reformation of 1536 in its turn was accompanied by a total confiscation of episcopal estates in Denmark.

Socially, the Middle Ages signifies the transformation of Viking Age kinship society in Denmark into a commonwealth of four estates: clergy, aristocracy, burghers, and peasants. This process was launched and furthered by the kings, who, since the establishment of kingdom in Denmark, had tied all prominent individuals and families to their authority, substituting old kinship legal traditions with royal legislation and jurisdiction on the basis of written revisions of Danish common law. Originally, the bishops, like the secular aristocrats, had been members of the royal household, even if their recruitment followed rules other than those guiding succession among feudal lords. In fact, the development of ecclesiastical institutions and the inalienability of ecclesiastical property contributed highly to the transformation of Danish society during the Middle Ages. Members of noble families remained in a privileged position for obtaining ecclesiastical office, but the estates and income they were to administer as bishops or prelates were to be kept intact for their respective successors and could not be divided, or submitted to structural changes. Thus, ecclesiastical institutional estates would always have an heir whose rights and position were to be exactly the same as those of the actual holder. Nevertheless, several bishoprics in Denmark were in practice in the possession of the same kin for several generations, such as the diocese of Roskilde since the election of Absalon in 1158, and far into the 14th century.

Important stages in the social transformation processes are:
(1) the revision in the late 12th century of the old military code for the king's men (Vederloven); (2) the codification by King Valdemar Sejr in 1241 of the old Law of Jutland, especially with its regulation of the ancient rules of the leading (keðinge), the naval force that was to be at the disposal of the king for sixteen weeks every year; (3) the Royal Decree of 1276 concerning crimen laesae majestatis, which placed the king's men under more severe criminal jurisdiction than ordinary inhabitants of the realm; (4) the so-called Håndfestaing of 1282 (which has been termed the Danish Magna Carta), which restricted the king's prerogatives in respect to his men; (5) the conditions to which kings Christoffer II and Valdemar III submitted themselves upon their elections in 1320 and 1326, which further reinforced the rights to be enjoyed by the king's men and the king's obligations toward them; (6) the contract set up by King Valdemar Atterdag with his subjects in their various groupings in 1360 (LandeFreden 1360); and (7) the acts of the Kalmar Union of 1397 (Unionsbrevet and Kroningsdokumentet), which in a Scandinavian context mark the establishment of aristocratic rights with regard to noblemen's disposal of their possessions, their participation in royal elections, and their eligibility to royal office. Unionsbrevet, although an act written on paper, in contrast to the Kroningsdokumentet (vellum), seems to have acquired constitutional status in the Union in the early 15th century, and was given a series of confirmations until the dissolution of the Union on the eve of the Reformation.

Economically, from the 13th century Denmark became integrated into the Baltic community, which came to furnish the areas of growth in western Europe (England, Flanders, and northern France) with necessary foodstuffs and raw material. From the Dark Ages, Denmark had, at the southwestern corner of Scania, an important international trading place that was remodeled from the beginning of the 13th century according to European standards into the Fairs of Scania on the peninsula of Skåne and Falsterbo. Like the Champagne Fairs in northern France, they furnished foreign trade with necessary conditions of security and favorable opportunities for international exchange of goods. The Scanian Fairs derive their existence from the abundant autumn fisheries of the Sound, but they were not limited to the trade in herring. The fish was caught each year, from Midsummer's Day onward, by Danish peasants on leave from their landlords and on license from the king. It was prepared and salted down by Danish women and sold to German merchants at the fairs that opened each year on Assumption Day (August 15). Here, all trade was carried out in the king's coinage, for which the king imposed an exchange rate favorable to the Danes. During the entire Middle Ages, the Scanian Fairs constituted a major link between Danish and European economies. The Wendish cities, i.e., Lübeck, Wismar, Rostock, Stralsund, and Greifswald, came to constitute the most privileged group of Hanseatic cities at the Scanian Fairs. At an early stage, they were given autonomous jurisdiction on their allotted grounds (led), and Lübeck was largely dealing in herring, which became a favored Lenton diet in most of northern Europe after Lübeck took pains to standardize measures and quality, and invested in the preservation process by procuring salt from Lüneberg. However, the other Hanseatic cities that won positions at the Fairs shortly after Lübeck were less interested in the trade in herring, and concentrated on grain and timber in exchange for western European cloth and other industrial or quasi-industrial products.

In the Middle Ages, Denmark underwent a process of urbanization. Archaeological evidence proves that the city of Ribe existed already in the late 8th century, Schleswig-Hedehusby dates from about the same period, Århus, Viborg, and Ålborg existed in the 10th century, while Odense, Roskilde, and Lund can be documented with certainty only to the 12th century. When in the 12th century the Valdemar kings constructed a series of strong fortresses throughout the realm, new mercantile centers grew up under their protection. In the 13th century, a large number of minor mercantile cities were founded, characterized by their easy access to the sea and their orientation toward a central marketplace. Most Danish cities in the 13th century acquired some sort of autonomous governmental rights and specific trading privileges, under inspiration from urban conditions in nearby northern Germany. They adopted statutes providing for representative city councils resting mainly on the merchant class.

Medieval Denmark remained an agrarian economy, but, around 1300, emphasis shifted from corn production to the raising of cattle and the production of butter. German mercantile presence at the Scanian Fairs led to an intensive German representation in Danish cities, and permitted Danish peasants to obtain current world-market prices for their products. The 15th century experienced a heavy increase in the export of live cattle, primarily through Ribe and Kolding, to northwestern Europe, due not least to the involvement from the 14th century onward of the Holstein nobility with royal Danish administration, initiating also considerable immigration from Holstein into Denmark.
Danish medieval population figures can only be grossly estimated, but doubtless Denmark followed the general European pattern of development; in the 14th century, the country experienced its agrarian crisis like the major part of western Europe, with falling agrarian income and desertion of villages. This process seems to have been accompanied by a shift in population density from western toward eastern Denmark, and reduction in population seems to have begun before the Black Death.

In its lay and ecclesiastical culture, Denmark in the 10th and 11th centuries seemingly bore a strong British imprint, even if testimony is not abundant. This influence was substituted in the 12th and 13th centuries by French cultural and academic ideals, when sons of Danish noble families began to frequent the University of Paris in considerable numbers, qualifying not only in theology, but also in philosophy and natural sciences (e.g., the philosopher Boethius de Dacia, the astronomer Petrus Philomena, and the philospher-linguist Martinus de Dacia). The law school of Bologna was attended by Danes from the 12th and 13th centuries onward.

Furthermore, priests sought theological education at Rome, and Danish involvement in the Crusades resulted in a development especially of technical culture, medicine, and the art of warfare. Local Danish academic teaching is less well known, although schools of considerable importance must have existed at the cathedral chapters from about 1200. At Roskilde, Jens Grand, upon becoming archbishop of Lund, founded in 1290 a separate department of the chapter, consisting of six canons richly endowed and directed toward university studies, international pilgrimage, and diplomacy. Since 1253, Roskilde had offered a scholarship founded by Bishop Jakob Erlandsen to enable the Zealand diocese each year to send two of its best scholars for further training at Paris. Cathedral libraries, insofar as their contents are known to us, spanned all branches of medieval academic learning, and this is true also of several of the Danish Cistercian monastic libraries. The workings of the royal Chancery, the functions of royal diplomacy, and judicial practice under lay and ecclesiastical authority all implied continuous and systematic reference to current European conditions.

Danish political and commercial involvement in the affairs of the Baltic from the 13th century onward assimilated Denmark in various aspects of daily life and material culture to conditions in the German territories. This process of assimilation has special importance in the organization of trade, in military administration, and in the life of the cities. A list from about 1370 of burghers in Copenhagen indicates that an important German colony existed there; and at least about half of the Copenhagen burghers in 1370 bore German names. The Kalmar Union in the late 14th century may be interpreted also as a factor of political and cultural balance against German influence. Shortly after 1400, King Erik of Pomerania negotiated an English marriage for himself, which at the outset was intended to be a double marriage alliance, and eventually brought back a British orientation to Danish state life. With King Erik's deposition in 1439, the Danish kingdom went to a German prince, Christoffer of Bavaria. He died in 1448, however, without descendants and, on the initiative of the count of Holstein, was succeeded by King Christian 1, who became the founder of the Oldenburg Dynasty. In 1460, he even succeeded to the County of Holstein, and became deeply dependent in his financial policy upon the Holstein nobility and, likewise, upon German capital interest. The Oldenburg kings of Denmark up to the Reformation sought to contain Hanseatic influence in Danish commerce and urban life, especially by compelling German merchants to join the Danish guilds if they wanted to remain in Denmark for more than one season. Hanseatic commercial initiative and German investment interests, however, remained of the utmost importance to Denmark until late into the Early Modern period, even if they were met with fierce Dutch competition from the middle of the 15th century. Low German must have been spoken in all major Danish medieval cities, and Dutch and English may also have been well known.

**Dialects.** From a strictly linguistic point of view, all the continental Scandinavian languages are dialects, since they are to a large degree mutually intelligible. This circumstance is partly due to their natural development from a common, North Germanic mother tongue, and partly to a set of common external influences from central and southern Europe in the Middle Ages.

Our earliest evidence for a Scandinavian language, Proto-
Scandinavian (PSc), is derived from some 150 inscriptions on stone, bone, and metal, written in a twenty-four-letter alphabet known as "the older runes" (called a futhark after the first six letters). The runic inscriptions date back at least as far as A.D. 200. A few loanwords in Finnish also reflect early Scandinavian forms, e.g., kuningas 'king,' which has lost its final syllable in the later Scandinavian languages (cf. Old Icelandic konungr). The runic inscriptions are the earliest written evidence of any Germanic language, antedating even Gothic (4th century A.D.), but they do not permit any important conclusions about internal dialect divisions.

The Viking Age (800–1050) was marked by notorious raids of plunder, trade, and exploration from Scandinavia to the rest of Europe: Swedish raids across the Baltic, Norwegian across the Atlantic, and Danish in both directions. But this expansion also led to a gradual christianization, which brought with it writing in the Latin alphabet on parchment. Early documents in Icelandic refer to the language as "Danish" (donsk tunga), perhaps because Denmark was the first Scandinavian country to receive Christian missionaries, from about 820.

The earliest preserved MSS (1150–1200) already show a dialectal split between East and West probably going back to at least 800: West Scandinavian (WSc) versus East Scandinavian (ESc). There were still overlappings, disputed areas, and no clear isoglosses, since internal wars were being fought, and borders were not fully stabilized until the 19th century. In general, ESc included Sweden and Denmark and parts of Finland; WSc included Norway and its Atlantic colonies, Iceland, Greenland, the Faroes, the Hebrides, the Orkneys, and parts of England known as "the Danelaw."

Some important isoglosses distinguishing WSc from ESc were: (1) Long u versus o: WSc ku 'cow' acc., bru 'bridge,' tru 'faith,' bia 'dwell' versus ESc ko, bro, tro, bo. (2) Varying rules for the application of umlaut (influence of unstressed vowels on preceding stressed vowels): WSc tekr'takes,' stendr 'stands,' gebr 'goes' versus ESc taker, stander, ganger, Norwegian oedi 'point of land;' botn 'bottom' versus Swedish udde, Danish bund; WSc forum 'we go' versus ESc farum. (3) Breaking (following a or u causing e to break into two sounds): WSc stela 'steal,' ek T versus ESc sjtela, jak. (4) Nasal assimilation before stops: WSc bekkr 'bench,' kletr 'cliff,' soppr 'mushroom' versus ESc bänker, klintar, swamp. (5) Pro­nominal lowering: WSc vjr 'we,' er you' pl. versus ESc vir, it (6) Monophthongization: WSc graut 'porridge,' ey 'island,' bein 'bone' versus ESc graut, e, ben. These relatively minor linguistic differences reflect the Baltic orientation of ESc and the Atlantic of WSc, with the Kjølen Mountains as a significant linguistic boundary.

While some of these isoglosses are later reflected in the standard languages that began appearing in the 1400s, the geographical and historical influences of the Middle Ages led to a quite different orientation of the spoken dialects. Icelandic maintained a very homogeneous dialect, with minor differences from south to north. The Faroe islands, however, split into marked dialectal differences, while maintaining some of the old structure. The mainland areas developed a highly analytical grammar with the loss of inflections for nouns (cases) and verbs (person and number), except for local relics. They also fell under the strong influence of their Low German neighbors, through invasion, immigration, and trade; and they participated in the general European infiltration of classical (especially Latin) culture. The result through the medieval period was a popular speech that split into a great variety of local dialects used by the agricultural majority of the people, with islands of educated, i.e., upper-class speech developed by the literate elite that ruled the countries. To clarify the picture, it will be necessary to discuss each country separately, as they developed into modern times. We may assume that by the end of the Middle Ages the dialects had become substantially what they are today.

The Middle Ages ended with a union of the Scandinavian peoples under the scepter of Queen Margrethe of Denmark from 1387. The union was a purely dynastic one, and it lasted only until 1520, when the young nobleman Gustav Vasa led the Swedes in a revolt against Danish rule. He succeeded in establishing himself as king of Sweden, and in 1527 led the country out of the Church of Rome into a national Swedish Church that accepted the leadership of Martin Luther. In 1537, the Danish king followed suit, thereby making all Scandinavia Lutheran; the last Catholic Icelandic bishop was beheaded in 1550. For the time being, Norway, Iceland, and the Faroes remained under Danish hegemony, and Finland was part of Sweden. Swedish rulers gradually overcame Danish preeminence, by taking an active part in the German religious wars and by defeating Danish forces. The art of printing was introduced, and a new, modern era dawned in the North with the Renaissance and the Reformation.

Danish. Today, the Danish dialects are divided into three areas: West, Central, and East. The West includes Jutland; the Central, the Danish islands Zealand, Funen, and the southern islands; and the East, the island of Bornholm. Actually, the East also includes the dialects of southern Sweden, which until 1638 was a part of the Danish realm. The speech of Scania, Halland, and Blekinge still shows strong traces of Danish influence. Swedish dialectologists refer to this area as "South Swedish." The East dialects are marked by having retained unstressed -a, while in the West and Central1, all unstressed vowels are reduced to a schwa [a]: skriva vs. skrive. The East has ja for "I," the Central ja, the West ae or a. All Danish dialects have voiced postvocalic stops p t k > b d g, as in krybe 'creep,' fod 'foot,' bag 'hawk' (cf. Swedish krypa, fot, hok); this includes also the south coast of Norway. In Danish proper, the voiced stops generally suffered a further weakening to become spirants, although the spelling remained the same: b > w (sometimes), d > ð, g > wj (cf. gribe [griwa] 'seize,' gade [gaω] 'street,' bog [bow] 'book,' nagle [noja] 'key'). Jutland is characterized by apocope of unstressed vowels: bag [bag] 'bake.' Jutland is divisible into West, East, and South Jutland. West Jutland is the only Scandinavian area with a separate definitive article: æ mand 'the man,' æ tre 'the tree,' contrary to the usual postposition: manden, treuet. It also lacks the usual gender distinction. Except for some southern dialects in Denmark that still distinguish two musical accents, most of the dialects in Denmark mark their Accent 1 with a glottal stop (staed), as in the word itself: [staω]. In modern times, all Danish dialects have acquired a uvular r [R], as have the neighboring south-coast Norwegian and South Swedish dialects.

Norwegian. Norway remained united with Denmark after the Middle Ages until 1814. We shall not discuss here the considerable consequences of Danish hegemony. In spite of acquiring a Danish written form after 1450, most Norwegians continued to speak a variety of local dialects. In urban centers like Bergen and Oslo, a new modern standard arose, but the overwhelmingly ag-
20. Location of dialects in the Scandinavian region.
The Norwegian dialects remained closer to Swedish and did not share in the radical developments of Danish. Major lines of division coincided with the central mountain chain, which split the country into West and East Norwegian, with some mountain dialects in an intermediate "Midland" position. In the West, the dialects remained closer to Old Norse, although not maintaining the conservative grammatical structure of Icelandic. In the East, the innovations were closer to Swedish, including a tendency to reflex *l* ("thick l") and *r* before dentals (*rd* > *d* or *l*, *m* > *n*, *ns* > *s* or *z*, *rt* > *t*). As in Swedish, the vowel system was shifted away from the European system to lower and fronted vowels. In the West, unstressed *a* and *u* remained, while in the East they split into leveling *a'u* (or *o*) after short syllables, but a schwa after long syllables: *lana > larmuth* 'fear, go, vera > vara/vara* 'be', *vika, viku > vegka/vekkve/vekkvikke* 'week vs. bita > bite/bye, kasta > keste 'throw.' As noted earlier, Norwegian generally retains the old diphthongs: *au, ei, ey* (> *øy*), which were lost in Swedish and Danish. Norwegian also retains the feminine gender of nouns; and the preterite and personal verb suffixes are reduced to a single vowel: *-a* (Old Norse -ada, etc.: kastade > kasta, *pragma*). Another dialect boundary is the Dovre Mountains in north-central Norway: north of this area are the Trønder dialects, characterized by many of the same features as East Norwegian, but also by apocope: *sit'sit, kast/throw* (West Norway where East Norwegian has schwa. An isogloss runs across the northern parts of both East and West, and includes Trønder and Nordland dialects: extensive palatalization of double consonants: *n > nณ, ll > lil, nn > nn, tr > tt* (vide 'width', *all* > *all* pl. *mann 'man, sitj/sit*. Case endings are lost, except in some northern dialects: *pa dag 'in the day,' *i hus 'in the house.' Nearly all Norwegian dialects distinguish two tonal accents, known as Accent 1 and 2.

While the upper-class urban dialects have influenced the rural dialects in modern times, the latter are still extensively used, and are even promoted in the schools.

**Swedish.** The development of a standard Swedish around the court and administration in Stockholm has given the language of the east-central area great influence. But dialects persist in rural areas. As in general, Swedish is more conservative than Danish, but has also changed from a synthetic to an analytic language. It has retained greater variety in its unstressed vowels (*a e o*), but like Norwegian, has shifted its stressed back vowels. All dialects except East distinguish clearly between Accent 1 and 2. The *r* and *l* are still those of Old Scandinavian, except in South Swedish, where *r* has become uvelar. But after vowels both have been reflexed (*l* and *nd* > *l*, *rd* > *r* and *ns* as in Norwegian). Masculine and feminine genders have been merged into a common gender having the form of the masculine: def. art. sg. -*en* or *-n*; masc. *han*; fem. *hon.*
which foods were produced and which types of foodstuffs the
we still know very little about the nutrition of the majority of the
detail the everyday diet of the ordinary person in the Scandinavian
The lack of available source material
Diet and Nutrition.
Gregory, St.
sulting from well-documented archaeological excavations. Yet,
analyses of this type have only been made at a few of the major
Scandinavian population during this period. The composition of
Stockholm in Sweden, and Oslo in Norway (Jensen 1979, Jorgensen
Viking period. The description is based primarily on archaeologi­
cal finds because the written sources from this period are scarce.

Salt, honey, and various herbs were used as spices. Meat was pre­
served by drying, smoking, or pickling in brine or whey, and
somewhat less often by salting. Vegetables were preserved by be­
ing dried. Drink consisted primarily of fermented beverages; usu­
ally ale, but also mead and, more occasionally, the strong and
sweet björr, although milk products and plain water were also
consumed. The food was either prepared in clay or soapstone
pots, or else roasted directly over the fire on a spit. Another popu­
lar way of preparing meat was to fill a pit halfway up with heated
stones, place the meat wrapped in leaves or clay on top, and then
fill the pit with soil or turf to conserve the heat. Fluids were heated
by pouring them into suspended animal skins and dropping hot
stones into them.

The medieval period is characterized by the striving toward
self-sufficiency in the supply of foodstuffs, for which efficient
storage was crucial. However, the task was impossible. For instance,
the harsh climate in wide areas of Scandinavia altogether precluded
the cultivation of grain. Furthermore, despite the great numbers of
domestic animals being kept in the cities, and the various crops
being grown in and around them, regular supplies from outside
were essential. Effective preservation of foodstuffs and adequate
storage were necessary to meet the need for provisions throughout
the whole year. As in the Viking period, plants and fruit were
dried. Fruit was also preserved in honey or sugar, and meat and
fish were salted, dried, or smoked.

As imposed by the Church, fasting was a characteristic fea­
ture of the medieval diet. Fasting was observed during Lent, dur­
ing a certain period prior to the other annual festivals and holidays,
plus every Friday: 180 days altogether. The rules governing what
might be eaten during a fast were not always interpreted the same
way, but mostly they advocated total abstention from meat or
poultry, and sometimes even from milk products or eggs. Eating
fish was allowed. Seafish were the norm, although freshwater fish
were probably preferred. Cod and herring, either fresh, dried, or
salted, were the most commonly consumed saltwater fish in
Scandinavia. Written sources, however, also mention a long list of
other species found in surrounding waters, many of which have
been confirmed through excavation. Some, such as the sturgeon
or ling, are seldom seen today. Finds of shrimp, common mussels,
and oyster shells indicate that shellfish were widely consumed.
The Danish queen Christine enjoyed shrimp in 1504, while Peter
Breughel's painting The Poor Kitchen of 1563 raises the question
of whether mussels and oysters were really considered poor man's
food. Marine mammals were also regarded as fish, which meant
that such animals as porpoise and seal were eaten during a fast.
While salmon is frequently referred to in written sources as be­
coming expensive toward the end of the period (Christenssen 1904),
perch and pike are the most commonly found freshwater fish at
archaeological sites.

In areas where agriculture is dominant, meat comes most
often from domestic animals, while game is only found in small
amounts. However, in such areas as Nordland in northern Swe­
den, Troms in Finnmark, Nordland in northern Norway, and in
the north of Finland, a prehistoric type of hunting still prevailed
throughout the medieval period. In farming areas, skeletal remains
indicate that pork was consumed just as much as beef. In monas­
teries, castles, and urban areas, though, pigs account for only about
20 percent of the skeletal remains, sheep and lambs for an addi­
tional 20 percent. While pigs, cattle, and sheep were often slaugh­
tered in autumn to avoid feeding them during winter, fowl, such
as hens and geese, presented the possibility of fresh meat through­
out the year. Hens, of course, also provided eggs as a nourishing supplement to the diet. Remains of wild fowl, especially ducks, are not unusual in the excavated material either. As in the previous period, milk and dairy products played an important role in medieval society. Both cow's milk and sheep's or goat's milk were drunk or processed. It was often separated into curds and whey or buttermilk, and made into various other products besides cheese or butter, or else it was used in the preparation of other dishes.

The staple cereal was barley. In Iceland, it probably was the only grain cultivated until all grain growing was finally abandoned at the end of the 14th century. Much of the barley was used for brewing ale, by far the most common beverage, but together with rye it was also baked into bread. According to the written sources, oats were used as animal feed, but at Hamar, in Norway, the remains of a kind of dry oatmeal bread have been found. Oats were probably used for porridge as well. Although wheat is known to have been grown in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden, none of these countries' domestic harvests had any significance. Wheat, as a nutrient, is mentioned in the written sources, but since it was rare and expensive, it seems to have had an impact only on the upper classes, who could afford the even rarer "white bread" (known as "wheat cake" or just plain "cake"). To a lesser extent, other cereals, like rice (imported from Italy), millet, and buckwheat, were also consumed.

Vegetables were probably far more common than the sources imply, and were presumably home-grown, used since they are rarely mentioned. The terms idl ('kale' or "cabbage") and kabudsekdal (common cabbage; "kabudse" from the Latin caper 'head') crop up, as do beets, which were used like cabbages, and onions. Peas and beans, which were well suited for storage when dried, are also mentioned, as are endives, which have been found at Svenborg on the island of Funen. Several different herbs were probably also grown, including lovage, dill, parsley, cress, horseradish, mint, marjoram, and thyme. Both mustard and vinegar were very popular as flavorings, as were hops and bog myrtle, which were used to flavor ale. Wild caraway is also mentioned in the written sources. Account books mention a number of imported spices, some from as far as the Moluccas. These include cumin, pepper, saffron, ginger, cardamom, grain of paradise, cloves, nutmeg, mace, cinnamon, aniseed, and bay leaves, many of which were discovered by the Europeans during the Crusades. Since these spices were expensive, they probably had no great significance for the majority of the population. However, there are many indications that flavorings were widely used, not only sour (vinegar) and strong (mustard), but also sweet. The traditional sweetener was honey, used since the early period. Sugar was known at least from the 14th century, but is seldom mentioned in accounts until the early 16th century. Like salt, sugar and honey were used liberally in many kinds of food, especially confectionary, which although expensive was quite popular.

As previously mentioned, ale was the staple drink of all the classes. Even children drank it daily (especially in urban areas). The wealthy, on the other hand, could also afford to drink wine, which was, of course, imported in limited quantities.

An important nutritional supplement was provided by fruit, berries, and nuts. Wild fruits, such as apples, pears, sour cherries, bullaces, cly bedrooms, blueberries, sloes, raspberries, brambles (blackberries), and woodland strawberries, could be picked by anyone wherever they grew. Cultivated fruits or imported fruits, like figs, grapes (raisins), or bitter oranges, would have been too expensive for the commoner, but the cultural layers of medieval towns have nevertheless turned up fig seeds and grape pits. Walnuts have also come to light in these layers, but the only known wild nut in Scandinavia at that time was the hazelnut. Account books also mention the use of almonds and chestnuts, which, like walnuts, had to be imported.

According to Kjersgaard (1978), the composition of the diet underwent a radical change in Denmark during the Middle Ages. He contends that the plague and the agricultural crises resulted in a remarkable decrease in cultivated land, which, among other things, prompted a shift in emphasis from growing grain to rearing livestock. Kjersgaard's hypothesis states that while in the 13th century the ratio between cereal and meat was 1:1, it developed into a ratio of 1:2 over the next two centuries. It is quite likely that this conclusion could apply generally to the rest of Scandinavia, even though the "Helgeandsholmen" survey in Stockholm shows a different result (Dahlbäck 1982: 276). Local variations might easily be the explanation for this difference.

No studies of the development of the Scandinavian diet from the 11th century to the 13th century are available. Archaeological evidence from northern Germany indicates that the proportion of cereals to meat in their diet grew during this period. For the rural population, this meant that their staple diet consisted of bread and other cereal products like groats at the time just before the agricultural crises set in (Janssen 1981). Surveys of southern Scandinavia would most likely yield similar results.

Three unique sources detail the cooking and serving of food. Two are cookery books recorded around 1300 and 1350, making them some of the oldest surviving records of medieval cookery in Europe (Kristensen 1908–20). The third is a list of meals served during the course of a year for the Swedish bishop Hans Brask around 1520 (Hildebrand 1885). The two cookery books share a common French origin, and contain recipes for sauces, milk and egg dishes, and chicken dishes. Characteristic of these dishes was the elaborate preparation involved. The ingredients were processed to the point of unrecognizability by either being cut, shredded, or ground to bits, or by being wrapped in pastry before being cooked. The list of meals records the composition of the menu at a wealthy table for most days of the year. The bishop ate two main meals every day. Each meal comprised several courses with meat, such as pork, beef, or mutton, either fried or boiled. During a fast, he ate fish, but generally avoided eggs and milk. Each meal was then rounded off with cheese and/or fruit.

Large numbers of different cooking utensils have been found at archaeological sites. At the same time, written sources provide us with descriptions of fully equipped kitchens, all of which indicates that cookery was already highly developed.

There is nothing to indicate that poor-quality food, or cookery, was accepted during the Middle Ages. Spices were not used to disguise the taste of food gone bad, but rather to enhance the taste. During the Middle Ages in Scandinavia, the possibility of a nourishing and varied diet existed, but we simply cannot say how much of the population was able to take advantage of it.

Lit.: Hildebrand, H., ed. "Matordningen i Biskop Hans Brask Hus." Køgl. Vitterhets Historie og Antiquites Akademiens Månedsskrift (January, February–March 1885), 1–21, 141–2; Christensen, W., ed. Dronning Christines Hofholdningsregnskaber. Copenhagen: Gyldendal,
Dinus saga drambláta ("The Saga of Dinus the Haughty") is an Icelandic ríðararsaga from the 14th century preserved in forty-five MSS. Like Sigurðar saga þofla or Mágs saga, for example, Dinus saga drambláta is transmitted in three redactions that differ considerably from each other: (1) the oldest and lengthiest (the oldest vellum MS, AM 575a 4to, from the end of the 14th or the beginning of the 15th century); (2) a middle redaction, abridged, probably from the 17th century (MSS AM 184 fol. and AM 185 fol.) with independent interpolations especially from Alexanders saga; and (3) the youngest redaction, also abbreviated, which probably came into existence in the 18th century (MSS JS 270 8vo, Lbs. 2319 8vo, etc.). The distribution of the MSS suggests that Dinus saga had its origin in the western part of Iceland, perhaps in Reykhólar at Breiðafjörður, but that the youngest redaction came into existence in the southern part. Dinus rítmur are transmitted from the 16th and 17th centuries.

The haughty Prince Dinus of Egypt is bound by a spell by the equally haughty Princess Philotemia of Bláland (Ethiopia), so that he is overcome by a burning desire for her. With his followers, Dinus goes to Bláland, but is duped by the princess. Dinus takes revenge with the help of a counterspell, which makes all the courtiers dance naked. Philotemia again binds the prince by a spell, and uses a magic bag and succeeds in de-powering the men grow painful horns. Dinus counters by transforming Philotemia and her maids into crows. At the third encounter, Dinus goes to Bláland, but is duped by the princess. Dinus takes revenge with the help of a counterspell, which makes all the courtiers dance naked. Philotemia again binds the prince by a spell, and uses a magic bag and succeeds in de-powering the men grow painful horns. Dinus counters by transforming Philotemia and her maids into crows. At the third encounter, Dinus takes revenge with the help of a counterspell, which makes all the courtiers dance naked. Philotemia again binds the prince by a spell, and uses a magic bag and succeeds in de-powering the men grow painful horns. Dinus counters by transforming Philotemia and her maids into crows. At the third encounter, Dinus:

A Greek-oriental source for all of Dinus saga is out of the question. The sources that serve as a basis for this new, original story are translations of French and Latin works. Klári saga served as a model for the material and structure, but also Kirialax saga, Alexanders saga, Römundar saga, and perhaps Rémundar saga and Karlamagnús saga were used.

Of central importance in this text is the bridal-quest plot connected with the meykhó ("maiden-king") theme, whereby the extreme form of sexual aggression is considered sometimes as vulgar, sometimes as an expression of a mycogenic or general misanthropic violation in the universe of these sagas, and sometimes as parodic.

The special connection among Dinus saga drambláta and Klári saga, Kirialax saga, Rémundur saga, and also Alexanders saga was recognized long ago. On the basis of the close lexical parallels between Dinus saga and Nikulás saga, it has recently been suggested that Bergur Sveinsson, abbot of the monastery of Munka-Pétra and author of Nikulás saga, or at least of its prologue, or some person within the abbot's circle, might have been the author of Dinus saga. This identification, however, would push back the date of the origin of the saga to the first half or the middle of the 14th century. Furthermore, the composition of the MS tradition in the western part of Iceland makes it unlikely that Dinus saga originated in Eyjafjörður in northern Iceland.

The narrative style of Dinus saga drambláta has been characterized as subjective, "ornate, opposed to [the] classical saga style," and rich in foreign words and loanwords.

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[See also: Agriculture; Fishing, Whaling, and Seal Hunting]
string and seals for the use of certain sorts of official documents.

Diplomatics is the study of medieval diplomas (charters) and letters, especially as sources for historical research. In the Roman Empire, the Latin word diploma (Greek διπλός) signified a pair of leaden or wax slabs with inscribed texts held together by a string and seals for the use of certain sorts of official documents. Since the publication of Jean Maillot's De re diplomatica (1681), the word diploma came into common use as a technical term for medieval letters patent, especially documents of privileges. In medieval times, such a document was named charta, instrumentum, or praeceptum, whereas other letters were named litterae. Old Norse documents valid in law were in part named skjal. But in all Nordic languages, documents of this type as well as written information of other kinds most often were named bref, or else skrift or skrifi. Modern Nordic languages generally use the words diploma or brev for all sorts of medieval documents and letters (also Swedish urkund, from German Urkunde).

The art of preparing written documents and letters in the Latin alphabet was inherited from Roman antiquity and spread to western and northern Europe together with Christianity and Latin writing. At the outset, Latin was the only language of diplomas in northern Europe. But around 1200, the Old Norse language began to be used in diplomas in the Norwegian kingdom and in Iceland. The medieval Norwegian written language lasted longest in practical use in diplomas. Royal gríðabréf (charters of truce, delay of penalty) and landsvitaðráðabréf (charters securing inviolability of a person within the kingdom) were written in the Norwegian language until the 1570s. Swedish and Danish languages came into use in diplomas in the 14th century.

In Carolingian times, a special handwriting was used in diplomas, in several respects different from the letters of books. In the 13th century, the older diploma writing was followed by Gothic cursive writing.

In northern Europe, parchment or skin, mostly from calves, was the common material for diplomas before 1200. After 1300, paper came into use alongside parchment in the Nordic countries.

The seals were usually made from wax. On parchment diplomas, they were attached to the lower edge of the diploma by means of parchment straps, on paper letters stamped to the paper beneath the text.

On the basis of the contents ("internal criteria") in diplomatics, a difference is drawn between two main types of documents, named charta and notitia.

The charta is a document of value by itself. In the charta, the expeditor notifies that he by means of the document accomplishes a disposition defined in the document, for example, transference of ownership, pronouncing of a testament, a sentence, an appointment, and so on (dispositio). In such documents, the expeditor normally names himself in the first person; in charters given by popes, bishops, and princes, in the first person plural. The charta is the most common type of document in western Europe, also in Denmark and Sweden. Such documents were destined to be preserved as constant evidence of the validity of the disposition that was introduced by means of the charter. The addressees of such documents are very often all persons living in a named area, and principally all these persons have to gain knowledge, or have the right to gain knowledge, of the contents of the document.

The notitia, as opposed to the charta, is principally a document that by itself has no value as an instrument of decision. A notitia only brings information of a valid disposition that has taken place beforehand. The partakers of the disposition are named in the third person, and the verbs have pretetite form. Among Nordic diplomas, the examples of notitia in its strict sense are relatively few.

In the Old Norse area, however, especially in Norway and Iceland, a special type of document developed that has important qualities in common with the notitia, the vitnebrev ("letters of witnesses"). In these countries, Christianity and literature in Latin were introduced relatively late, and well-established legal communities existed long before the introduction of Latin writing. Legal institutions and traditions without the aid of script and knowledge of literature were especially well established. In these countries, the nonliterary judicial practice continued to work to the very end of the Middle Ages, several hundreds of years after the introduction of Latin writing. The use of script and written documents has to a great extent only a literary superconstruction upon a judicial practice that was principally still nonliterate, one that preserved old oral formulas and inherited jurisdictional symbols. The vitnebrev was the common form of private document in the Old Norse area, especially in documents of lawful acquisition.

In the vitnebrev, one or, most often, more than one named witness report that they were present as certain named persons performed a judicial act or a disposition legally and solemnly, normally confirmed by handahandband ("shakehands"), and corroborate their witness by attaching their seals to the document. In the vitnebrev, the testimony with the verbs in pretetite form replaces the dispositio of the charta. The vitnebrev was the normal way of preparing documents in the Old Norse area, but the document of disposition, the charta, was at times used by the clergy and the nobility. In the Swedish area, many documents from before 1350 had a structure that in its fundamental principles is consonant with the Old Norse vitnisbréf.

In late-medieval times, literature of letters became much more extensive and varied, not least by the constantly increasing number of letters that had no juridical function and that were less marked by formulas, epistolary letters.

In diplomatics, a difference is also drawn between two types of letters on the basis of the material form ("external criteria"). One type are the "open letters," litterae apertae or patentes, where the material is not folded together and not closed by seals, to the effect
that all persons who are able to read, having got the document in their hands, can get knowledge of the contents.

Contrary to litterae apertae are the litterae clausae, closed letters, also named missive. Here, the parchment or paper is folded together and closed by the seal of the expeditor, the name of the addressee often written on the unused outside of the document. This arrangement was useful when the document had to be sent by letter carriers (bræfamenn, bræfaseinare) to an addressee far away (sendibœl), and also useful when the contents of the document were secret.

With regard to the contents, it can be generally stated that the nature of litterae apertae most often is dispositive, whereas litterae clausae normally were epistolary, i.e., contain a message especially addressed to the addressee.

The medieval art of preparing documents was influenced by medieval Latin rhetoric and stylistic construction, and became in time strongly marked by tradition and fixed formulas. The art of preparing a document was named ars dictandi. Often, older documents were used as patterns. But in medieval times, special instruction books on document formulation were written (dictamen, summa dictaminis). The system of formulas of the document, however, was marked in many ways by place and time of expedition and by schools of writing and seals; the formula system, therefore, is important for scholars who want to ascertain if a document is authentic or falsified.

As written documents were used as proofs of the validity of rights and advantages of many kinds, falsified documents always existed. Pope Innocent III (ca. 1200) is said to have tried to uncover false papal documents, and French Benedictines, among others, were interested in distinguishing between Mabillon and the Dutch BoUandists on the authenticity of some old Benedictine documents. Important contributions were also made early in German territory to the development of diplomatics. Mabillon established that diplomas were built up by series of formulaic expressions, to which he assigned special designations. Since the 17th century, scholarship has developed the systematic and comparative analysis of medieval documents and the terminology that is specific to that study. Important subjects of research auxiliary to diplomatics are palaeography, or research on ancient writing, sigillography, or research on seals; heraldics, or research on arms and devices; numismatics, or research on coins; and chronology.

The contents of a diploma are generally divided into three main parts: (1) Protocol, with the names of expeditor and addressee and greeting formula; (2) Text—here, the number of formulas can vary according to the nature of the document; and (3) the Eschatocoul, which gives the names of the persons who have attached their seals to the document, if they are not named before, and also information on when and where the document was prepared.

In ancient times, the preparation of written documents was very expensive, and the documents were often of great value for a long time, especially documents warranting legal property and rights. Received documents and letters were therefore often preserved, not least in ecclesiastical and secular institutions. From the outset, the papal court was especially important in this connection. Thus, in many places, great collections of documents came into existence, developing in later times into regular archives. But it is generally supposed that regular royal archives did not exist in Nordic countries until the 13th century. Older documents were not only preserved, but also copied. The copy was often framed by a new letter with new seals, confirming that the copy was a correct rendering of the substance of the original document (vidisse, transcript). But especially in Permanent institutions, such as chanceries, in medieval times the production of copy books came into use, with copies or abstracts (regestas) of letters that had been sent from the institution.

In the Middle Ages and after, people's interest in old documents was mostly connected with their value as substantiation of private or political rights. The jurists were interested mainly in single documents. But the humanists' more critical attitude to historical tradition awoke an interest in old documents as sources of historical information. As a consequence of this development in the 18th century, the scholars of the Nordic countries began to gather and put in order extensive collections of old diplomas and letters, originals as well as copies. In Denmark, pioneers in this field were the famous Icelander Arni Magnusson and the Danes Hans Gram and Jakob Langebek; in Sweden, Sven Lagerbring. From this time on, the term diplomatarium was used to denote such unprinted or printed collections of old documents (chartularies).

The first printed diplomatarium was Diplomatarium Arma-Magnuarum (Copenhagen 1786), by the Icelander Othmar Thorkelin. After this printing, in the 19th century, the great Nordic edition series were started, Diplomatarium Suecicum (1829–), Diplomatarium Norvegicum (1847), and Diplomatarium Islandicum (1857). These series are still being continued or supplemented. Published in the 20th century are Finlands medeltidsurkunder (1910–35), Diplomatarium Danicum (1938), Diplomatarium Færoense (1997), Diplomatarium Groenlandicum (1936), and Diplomatarium Orcadense et Hålländense (1907–42). Comprehensive renderings of the contents of all sorts of written medieval historical sources are to be found in Regesta Danica (1938–), and in Regesta Norvegica (1898, and from 1978–).


Hallvard Magerøy

[See also: Chancery; Palaeography; Seals]
Dísir see Supernatural Beings

Divine Heroes, Native

(1) Harald Wartooth (Hildiðønn) is mentioned in Saxo's Gesta Danorum and in the defective Sogubrot derived from the lost *Skjoldunga saga* (early 13th century). Whether Harald ever existed cannot be ascertained with certainty, and, if he did, he is difficult to place in history. Some scholars have assigned him to the 6th century, others to the 8th or 9th century.

According to the written sources, Harald was born through the intervention of Óðinn, who granted him victory in every battle. In return, Harald was to dedicate all who fell in his battles to Óðinn. Óðinn also taught Harald warfare, and, like Starkad, he was granted three times the span of a mortal life. While Harald was still a youth, two of his teeth were knocked out, and two enormous molars grew in their place, hence his nickname "wartooth."

Harald conquered Denmark, Sweden, and other areas, and placed Hring in charge of Sweden. According to Saxo (Book 7), Harald's servant Brun(i), who was in reality Óðinn, caused strife between Harald and Hring, and eventually the two met in battle at Brâvalla (Old Norse Bravellir). Seeing that Hring's army was deployed in wedge formation (*svínfylking*), Harald knew that only Óðinn could have taught them this tactic and that the god had now turned against him. Óðinn, who was acting as Bruni, Harald's charioteer, battered Harald to death with his own club. Hring gave Harald a magnificent funeral, which is described in great detail in both the Danish and Icelandic texts.

(2) Hadding (Hadingus) is not mentioned in Norse tradition. Apparently, he and his exploits are made up to introduce Scandinavian gods into Danish history. In Saxo's Gesta Danorum, he is the son of the Danish king Gram. After Gram's death at the hands of the Norwegian king Svipdag, Hadding was sent to Sweden, where he was raised by his giant foster-mother Harthgripa (Har Morgrip). After her death, Óðinn appeared to Hadding and brought him into foster-brotherhood with the Viking Liser. The two were defeated by Loker, but Óðinn rescued his favorite, carrying him off on his supernatural horse. Óðinn taught Hadding how to deploy his forces and to break his letters, and assured him that he would never fall into the hands of an enemy. Óðinn also told Hadding that he must kill a lion and eat its flesh and drink its blood, for this would give him strength. At first, Hadding lived as a Viking, but subsequently he killed Svipdag and won his hereditary kingdom.

Hadding's wife was Regnilda (Ragnhildr), daughter of a Norwegian king, who had been raped by giants. Hadding rescued her, and in gratitude she nursed his wounds and sealed up a ring in his leg. When her husband later permitted her to choose a husband, Regnilda chose Hadding by the ring in his leg. The marriage was, however, an unhappy one. Hadding longed for the sea, but the shrieking seagulls were hateful to Regnilda, who longed for the mountains. One day, a woman appeared to Hadding bearing herbs. Hadding wanted to know where the herbs grew in winter, and went with the woman under the earth. The story as recorded by Saxo is difficult to understand, but Hadding's visit to the underworld echoes a number of tales known from Norse mythology, notably Hermóðr's journey to Hel to ransom Baldr (cf. Gylfaginning, ch. 34). The story is most similar to the sixth song of Vergil's Aeneid.

Hadding's death was fitting for a hero of Óðinn (cf. Hávamál, st. 138). King Hunding of the Swedes had heard false reports of Hadding's death. He then prepared a feast in Hadding's honor, and filled a gigantic jug with beer. During the feast, Hunding and Fjònir, another king of the Swedes, fell into the jug and drowned. When Hadding heard this news, he hanged himself in public.

There are striking similarities between Hadding and Njörðr of the Vanir: Njörðr married the giantess Skaði, and Hadding took his wife from the giant world; Skaði chose Njörðr as her husband from his legs, and Regnilda recognized Hadding from the ring in his leg; Skaði and Regnilda complain of the shrieking gulls, and Njörðr and Hadding complain of the hills and the howling wolves. Njörðr took his own sister as his wife, and Saxo states that Harthgripa claimed Hadding's embraces. Saxo also records that Hadding established the annual sacrifice of Freyr in Sweden.

(3) Starkad (Old Norse Starkadr) is a legendary hero mentioned in some fornaldarsögur and in Saxo Grammaticus's Gesta Danorum. The latter can be traced to an original written about 1200, whereas the Norse tradition is not known until 100 years later, though it seems to stem from narratives of the 12th century. According to Saxo, rumor has it that Starkad was born a giant with six arms. The god Óðinn cut off four of these arms and gave him human proportions. The god Óðinn taught him poetry and warfare, and rendered him three times the span of mortal life with the sinister provision that he was to commit a nefarious deed in each lifetime.

In his youth, Starkad lived as a Viking. At first, he was a follower of the Norwegian king Vikar, until Óðinn ordered him to kill Vikar treacherously. Later on, he raided in eastern Europe until one day, shipwrecked, he landed in Denmark. Here, he became a friend of the king, Frode IV (Old Norse Froði); he was absent when Frode was killed by a Saxon rebel, Sverting. To Starkad's dismay, Frode's son Ingellus (Ingold; Old Norse Ingjaldr) failed to avenge the murder. On the contrary, he made peace with Sverting's sons and married their sister. Starkad felt obliged to reestablish the honor of the Danish kingdom. He had to start by teaching Ingellus's sister to reject the courtship of a low-born goldsmith. Saxo describes this incident both in prose and in verse. In the same way, Saxo tells how Starkad exhorted Ingellus and helped him fight Sverting's sons. Into this "Lay of Ingellus" are woven verbal attacks upon various German customs, such as gluttony.

After fulfilling his mission, Starkad again deserted the Danish court to raid under the leadership of other kings. Once, he fled from a battle in Zealand without any obvious reason. Perhaps this was the second crime of the three Óðinn had prophesied. At last, he followed the Norwegian king Olo in the great battle of Brâvalla, about which Starkad is said to have composed a poem. Afterward, he was bribed to kill Olo. His repentance for this third crime and his longing for death are again told in prosimetrum. At last, he finds an ideal opponent, Hatherus. They fling invectives at each other; then Starkad gives Hatherus his sword, and sticks his neck out to be killed.

Some of the incidents from Saxo's tale are also found in Norse literature. Starkad's origin, the hanging of Vikar, and the Viking raids resemble what is told in the middle part of Gautreks saga. Saxo must have known at least this part of the saga, perhaps in a slightly different form. The Ingellus episode—the killing of Frode by Sverting, Starkad's exhortations, and the fight with Sverting's sons—are with some alterations rendered in the *Skjoldunga saga*, as is the murder of Olo. There can be no doubt about the Norse origin of these parts of the Starkad story, even if the "Lay of Ingellus" is built on a long tradition mentioned in the Old English poems *Beowulf* and *Widsith*. Two separate stories may have been put together by...
Saxo, who supplemented his version with some of his favorite topics. Because of some curious similarities between the lives and characters of Starkad and Eskil, archbishop of Denmark from 1138 to 1177, it has been suggested that Saxo may have modeled his figure of Starkad on Eskil.


Inge Skovgaard-Petersen

[See also: Foralldarsögur, Gautreks saga, Håvamál, Mythology, Saxo Grammaticus, Skjóldunga saga, Snorra Edda]

Divorce see Marriage and Divorce

Doktor Hjælpeløs see Drama

Dorotheæ Komedie see Drama

Drama. Printed drama is not found in Scandinavia until about 1550; there is, however, evidence of early theatrical forms. Of special interest in this connection are some of the frescoes on walls and vaults in, for example, Danish churches from the 12th century and later (Kaspersen 1988).

In general, early European drama was closely connected with the Church and expressed a cosmological rather than an individual view: man as part of a universe, created by God. The sources of drama, especially in France and England, confirm this universal point of view. Although Scandinavian medieval history is not identical with European, the same universal idea and institutional praxis can be seen in the oldest Scandinavian sources. After the Reformation, a more individualistic and psychological view can be observed, as a consequence of new social, economic, and political conditions, and perhaps influenced by Luther’s psychological interpretation of the Christian creed (sola fide, i.e., one can be saved only by personal faith). Most of the North European dramatic works from between 1550 and 1600 demonstrate a blending of the old and the new conception, thematically and formally.

The central idea of early-medieval drama is exemplified by two main forms: as an important part of the Catholic mass, and as folk customs with pre-Christian elements, ineffectually prohibited by the higher authorities. During the Easter mass, for instance, a regular drama was performed in the church, not for an audience but with the congregation actively taking part in the action. They are reported to have “run from Herod to Pilate,” following the clergyman, monk, or layman who represented Christ in scenes depicting his torture and crucifixion, and ending up at the high altar, where the archangel cried out, “He is resurrected,” and everyone sang “hosanna.” The angel may well have become impatient when delayed by burlesque scenes in which, for example, the three Marys buy fragrant herbs at the apothecary on their way to the sepulcher on Easter morning. We know that such scenes were popular, and in one case were ordered not to continue for more than half an hour.

The whole Passion of Christ was reexperienced, past time lived through as present time, filled with hope for life and death in the future. Time was eternal, and place was universal. The set was visible during the whole play, with the church symbolizing the universe.

Later on, when the stage was placed outside the church, in the graveyard or the marketplace, the idea of simultaneity was shown according to a scenographic principle of houses: to the left the house of heaven, to the right the house, or mouth, of hell, and in the middle the house of earth. The staging provided a visible expression of the period’s understanding of history: all times are now, and all the regions of the universe are here, within one and the same space.

Another main form of sacred drama, known from about 1100 especially in England and France, was the Feast of Fools (festum stultorum, asinarium festa, festum subdiaconorum). The presupposition of the comical, often obscene, and even blasphemous elements was a sincere belief of the participants in this drama as sacred, the idea of life as both holy and holy, involving humor and sensual pleasure, although threatened by the Devil.

In Italy from about 1400 and in Scandinavia from the middle of the 16th century, a new understanding of history can be traced in architecture, writing, painting, and scenography, an empirical comprehension of nature and man (ratio naturae). The adoption of central perspective, for instance, gives evidence of an optic rather than a purely artistic point of view of art. In stage setting, simultaneity of time and space gave way to a principle of succession. The actors were not allowed to be visible on stage until the logically and chronologically constructed action demanded their presence. Instead of a stage with cosmological houses, the Terence stage was introduced: an elevated platform with a backstage curtain, split up and leading to various nonvisible localities, often private houses with signboards advertising family names, testifying to a more “realistic” (bourgeois) style. This drama form might be called “early modern,” if by “modern” is meant before 1900.

As far as we know, the first printed drama in Sweden is Tobiae Comedia (1550). The preface mentions that drama has “always” been performed inside and outside the church “to inform layfolk about right and wrong.” Theater, of course, is much older
than printed drama. Jugglers, market artists, and mimics (joculatorum, scurnae, mimn) had been active throughout Europe, often in connection with music and ballads, sung and danced. As for folk drama, in Scandinavia only a few traces are found of the Feasts of Fools. Perhaps the Kjippardance, still danced in Fløy, Norway, has its origin in one of the New Year customs.

With regard to church drama, one of the oldest known Danish plays is based on an ordinarium, i.e., rules for a Catholic mass, from Ringsted (1170). Another ordinarium, from Linköping, Sweden, gives evidence of a liturgical Easter drama (Quem quæritis in sepulchra, Christiciæ), "Whom are you seeking in the sepulcher, Christian women"). Two variants exist, both from about 1300. In Flensburg, Denmark (now Germany), a holy shrine "for the person of Jesus Christ" was used dramatically until 1527. In Århus in 1501 and at the University of Copenhagen in 1521, there were performances, probably acted in Latin by the students. In Norway, we read in a diary from Bergen: "I, Master Absolon, had a play acted on the churchyard with great pains and expense." And on March 25, 1506, Hans Jacobi, a priest in Søderkøbing, Sweden, records that he had procured a ludus resurrectionis, a resurrection play.

Each of the four oldest extant Danish dramatic texts represents one of the main genres of medieval drama: saint's play (about the legend of a saint), mystery play (about the Passion), morality play (an allegorical personification of virtues and vices), and farcical play or burlesque. The saint's play, Ludus de Sancto Canuto Duce ("A Play on the Holy Duke Knud," i.e., Knud [Cnut] Lavard, 1096–1131) is known from a 16th-century transcript, but probably dates back to before 1500. It was performed outside the church, the scenography was simultaneous, and it contained a prologue and epilogue delivered by Preco, the messenger. Dorotheæ Komedia ("Dorotheæ Comedy"), a mystery play, is a translation from a German prose drama in Latin (1507), about the chaste saint Dorothea and her terrible sufferings. It is called a "comedy" because of its happy ending, theologically speaking. The morality play is entitled Paris's Dom ("Paris's Judgment"); which draws upon the classical myth about Paris as judge in the contest among three Greek goddesses. The farcical play Den uto Hustru ("The Unfaithful Wife") is a witty and coarse burlesque on a theme from Boccaccio's Decameron; it was performed at Shrovetide. The three last-mentioned plays are written in knittel, i.e., a four-beat rhythm with free use of varying numbers of weak syllables. They are preserved in a MS (DKB Thott 780 fol.) from Odense, about 1531; the burlesque, however, is definitely older than that.

A late printed text, dating from Århus (1637), is the Danish burlesque Doktor Hjælpelæs ("Doctor Helpless"), based on a farce from the 16th century and still found on "the farmer's bookshelf" in 1706. It is about a quack doctor healing a farmer's wife of her shrivelledness; the last words are in Latin: finis materiae, non malitiae ("here the story ends, but not the problem").

The Danish Dødedans ("Dance of the Dead"), preserved in a printed edition from Copenhagen (1555), with wood engravings of the dramatis personæ, doubtless was meant for performance, although none is known. The text is a dramatized Lutheran sermon with satirical undertones. The scenography probably was intended to be simultaneous; there are many examples of direct address to the public.

Scandinavian drama after the Reformation (in Denmark and Norway 1536, in Sweden 1527) is influenced by the Humanistic-Protestant secular drama in central and northern Europe (Austria, Switzerland, Germany, the Netherlands, and Scotland). Written in Latin and very soon in the national languages, this didactic drama was performed in close connection with grammar schools and universities; actors were students and their teachers. It was based on the model of the Roman comedy writers Plautus and Terence. The performances show, however, a dramatic and scenographical blending of new and old elements: devils, angels, and buffoons play an important role; burlesque and Protestant teaching are mixed; and simultaneous and successive scenography are both employed.

This "school theater" was very popular; it was played in the marketplace and the churchyard as well as in the town hall, and in Denmark at the court. From the middle of the 16th century, all the larger grammar schools in Denmark had performances, in Copenhagen, Odense, Ribe, Viborg, Randers, Ringsted, and Helsingør (Elsinore). It is, however, characteristic of the drama from the last decades of the 16th century, the secular comedy, that the audience is no longer a congregation taking part in the action, but a much more mixed group of citizens being entertained, more or less passively, by the play. The old anonymous drama is replaced by texts written by individual authors whose names are known, and who have left their personal stamp on the works.

The two most competent Danish dramatists of the period were Hieronymus Justesen Ranch (1539–1607) and Peder Jensen Hegelund (1542–1614). Both of them were clergymen, Ranch a vicar in Viborg, Hegelund bishop in Ribe, at the time a center of trade and culture, as well as witch burning. The known works by Ranch include Kong Salomons Hylding ("Homage to King Solomon"), performed in Copenhagen, 1585, and Samson's Fængsel ("Samson's Prison"), performed in 1599 and printed in Århus in 1633. Its original source was the Randers MS from 1599. It is a biblical drama with songs, a sort of early musical. A third work is Karrig Niding ("Avaricious Bastard"), a very well made original comedy in the manner of Plautus, probably printed in Århus in 1633. The edition is lost, but was used in preparing the 1664 edition. A Tobiae comedy may also be by Ranch.

Hegelund was very active as an organizer and leader of school theater. His own contribution as a dramatist is Susanna, performed in Ribe in 1576, and printed in Copenhagen in 1579. This "comicotragoedia" is a very complicated composition; the dialogue has the usual doggerel meter, supplied with many learned quotations and other marginal notes. The most original part is a long monologue by Calumnia, the Fama Malum from Vergil, the demon of slander. This personification of the wickedness in this world is depicted with shocking brutality.

Other Danish dramatists and theatrical practitioners from the last part of the 16th century include Søren Kjær, Peder Thøgersen, Hans Christensen Stehn, and Anders Tybo.

The Protestant-Humanistic drama and theater became, under the influence of Melanchthon, an educational instrument of the learned elite to advance civilization, answering to a new social and economic reality. But devils, angels, and buffoons, the heritage of the Middle Ages, continued to speak behind the didactic message. The burlesque-comical elements, jeering, devilish torture scenes, luxurious banquets, music, and the dance, made this theater extremely popular among all classes of people.

Rigid dogmatism triumphed, however, and from the beginning of the 17th century, the theatrical interest of the governing class shifted to opera, ballet, and foreign (English, German, and French) theater groups. Not until the middle of the 18th century, the time of the Norwegian-Danish Ludvig Holberg, did a revival of original Scandinavian drama take place.
Drama-Jóns saga ("The Saga of Dream-Jón") is a very short Icelandic *riddarasaga* composed in Iceland, probably at the beginning of the 14th century. The hero, a young man named Jón, can interpret dreams and guess other people's dreams. Earl Heinrekr of Saxland is jealous of him, and thinks to obtain Jon's talent by murdering Jón in his sleep, deceives her husband and helps Jón at a dream, which Heinrekr admits he cannot interpret. He discovers two lovers are put on a ship, never to return, and Heinrekr is to five vellum MSS, the saga is presented in about forty-five paper MSS. Two *rimur* that were inspired by the saga date respectively from the 13th and 17th centuries.

The tale must have been very popular in Iceland. In addition to five vellum MSS, the saga is presented in about forty-five paper MSS. Two *rimur* that were inspired by the saga date respectively from the 17th and 18th centuries.

The opinion of scholars has long been that Jón's story had an oriental origin, even though the role of dreams in the *Islandings sagas* and many heroic eodic poems casts some doubt on this view. David Erlingsson (1979) concludes that the composition of the saga is not the work of an Icelandic author, but that the story is foreign and a widely known folktale; the Icelandic author turned the saga into the style of an exemplum. It gives us, accordingly, an interesting example of the way the sagas could use popular as well as learned sources to create their works.

**Draumkvæde** ("Dream Poem") is the most common title of the best known of the Norwegian legendary ballads, being a description of an ecstatic otherworld journey recorded in many variants in Telemark from the 1840s onward, but most probably stemming from the high or late Middle Ages.

The more than 100 extant versions differ markedly in extent, sequence, and completeness of motifs. But one may follow Moe's reconstruction of what was probably the ballad's original structure: a certain Olav Asteson went into a trance lasting from Christmas Eve to Epiphany, during which his soul came "up to the clouds above and down to the dark, blue sea" and saw "the flames of hell and of heaven likewise a part." He had to travel the difficult and painful route awaiting the souls of the deceased, "through briar and thorn," crossing "Gjallarbrú ["bridge"] . . . with sharp hooks in a row," wading "the miry marsh" until he reached "the cove of leal, burning clay, the fiery pit, toads and serpents, which only the charitable need not fear.

Most features of *Draumkvæde* are found in the numerous Latin accounts of otherworld visions circulating during the Middle Ages, derived ultimately from the eschatology of the apocryphal apocalypses so popular in Judaism and Christianity especially between 200 B.C. and A.D. 200. But there are also some elements that reflect pre-Christian Germanic conceptions. The name Gjalabrun and its golden decking are taken from Scandinavian mythology, but its function, *i.e.*, the punishment of sinners, comes from Christian visions, such as Tundale's vision (1149), or Thurkill's vision (1206), the one most comparable to *Draumkvæde*. *Draumkvæde* stands out against the majority of that genre.

**Draumkvæde's** main content accords well with the more popular teachings of the medieval Catholic Church: there are allusions to the beatitudes of Christ, to St. Michael, to the Last Judgment, and so on, even if a special poetic touch often makes *Draumkvæde* stand out against the majority of that genre.

Comparison of the motifs and the structure of *Draumkvæde* with the corpus of medieval visionary literature suggests that the work was probably based on a lost account describing an ecstatic experience of an otherwise unknown nobleman, Olav Æsteson (or something similar), who may have lived in Norway sometime in the 13th to 15th centuries. Given that many of the medieval Latin prose visions were versified by clerics who used these texts for

**See also:** Exempla, *Riddarasögur*
religious—didactic purposes, Olav’s revelation may have received the same treatment. The vision would then have found its way into the repertory of the singers of folktales, as must have been the case with the other religious ballads. *Draumkvaede* presumably underwent the changes, amplifications, and shortenings usual in any oral tradition.


Peter Dinzellbacher

[See also: Ballads; *Viso Trungdor*, Visionary Literature]

**Droplaugarsona saga** (“The Saga of the Sons of Droplaug”) is considered among the oldest *Íslendingasögur*, because of its primitive style and heroic materials, and its reference to a certain Porvaldr, “er sagõi sogu J)essa w (“who told this story”). Unfortunately, the genealogy linking Porvaldr with the characters appears in the saga is corrupt, possibly omitting one or more generations; nor is it clear whether the narrative referred to is the saga in its entirety, or an oral or written source. Nevertheless, the saga’s composition early in the 13th century is likely in view of the other sagas influenced by it: *Ísafjarðinga saga*, *Laxdœla saga*, *Ljósvetninga saga*, and, most notably, *Gísla saga*, which probably derives its account of Gísl’s night killing of Þorgímir Porsteinnsson from that of Helgi Æsbjarnarson by Grímur Droplaugarson.

After a preamble relating the marriage of Ketill Jórmr (“dín”) to an enslaved Hebridian noblewoman encountered abroad, the saga narrates the feud between Ketill’s great-grandsons, the sons of Droplaug, and the chieftain Helgi Æsbjarnarson, a powerful liggant, but slow to take physical action. Exiled as a result of a lawsuit prosecuted by his namesake, Helgi Asbjarnarson is ambushed and killed after a defense against heavy odds at Eyvindardalr. The battle is foreshadowed by prophetic dreams, and abounds in heroic devices and stoical rejoinders. It is balanced in the saga’s structure by the revenge taken by Grímur Droplaugarson, who, apparently fatally wounded, is nursed back to health and awaits his opportunity. From an underground retreat near Helgi’s home, he attacks by night and, with his dead brother’s sword, kills Helgi as he lies in bed with his wife. Grímur spends some time as an outlaw in Iceland before escaping to Norway, where he dies after killing a malevolent Viking in a duel.

Among the saga’s sources were probably oral tales concerning historical persons and places in the east of Iceland at the end of the 10th century. Jón Jóhannesson (1950) considers Porvaldr’s narrative a short ævi (“life”) of the sons of Droplaug, which formed the source of all or some of the main events of the saga. Three stanzas of Haukr Valdisarson’s *Íslandingadrápa*, referring to the deaths of the two Helgis, must be based on traditions predating the saga. Folktales elements are discernible in the introductory story of Ketill and Arneblr. The saga includes six *lausavísur* (“verses”), one spoken by Helgi Æsbjarnarson and five by Grímur. But all but 3 are inappropriate to their contexts and thus unlikely to have been composed by the saga author; nor is it plausible that they originated with those to whom they are attributed. Verses 4 and 5 are believed to be interpolated (Jón Jóhannesson 1950: lxxi), and 4 and 6 show signs of 12th-century origin (de Vries 1967: 433).

The only complete text of the saga, in *Móðruvellabók*, is believed by Jón Jóhannesson to be an abridgment, with some omissions, of the original saga. The fragment AM 162c fol. preserves a longer, older, and stylistically simpler version of part of chs. 3 and 4, which, he argues, is closer to the original text.


Peter Dinzellbacher

[See also: Ballads; *Viso Trungdor*, Visionary Literature]
Dudo of St.-Quentin: De moribus et actis primorum normanniae ducum (**Concerning the Deaths and Deeds of the First Norman Dukes**). Dudo, born around 960, probably died before 1043. A monk from Vermandois, he was not a Norman, but a frequent visitor to the Norman court after 986 and a recipient of benefices from the dukes before 1015. Richard I (d. 996) commissioned him in 994 to write a history of the rulers of Normandy, and he was encouraged to continue by Richard II and his half-brother Rodulf, "hujus operis relator" ("the relator of this work"). He probably completed the first redaction by 1015 and an extended version before 1030.

Of fourteen surviving MSS, ten are 11th- and 12th-century, two are known to be lost, and not all are complete. Dudo's *De moribus et actis* was reproduced in abridged form by William of Jumièges, and much of its information recurs in other late histories. *De moribus et actis* was edited in 1619 by Duchesne, who gave it its title and divided it into a Prologue and three books, using two MSS. Lait's edition (1865) has a Prologue and four books, retaining Duchesne's title, collating seven MSS. The Prologue is dedicated to Archbishop Adalbero of Laon, and tells of the inception of *De moribus et actis*. Book 1 gives an account of the mythical, Trojan ancestry of the Daci (Danes), a description of their homeland and customs, and the exploits of a band of Danes marauding in Europe from about 850. Books 2-4 describe the expulsion of Rollo and his followers from Dacia (Denmark), their wandering in England and Flanders, arrival in what later became Normandy (876: Dudo's date), and subsequent events until the death of Richard I.

*De moribus et actis* is a panegyric and blatant political propaganda, which clearly attempts to establish Rollo's descendants as a legitimate dynasty and Normandy as a political and cultural entity. It is written in prolix Latin prose interspersed with fulsome verse apostrophes, contains many errors of fact and much information not supported by other evidence, and is difficult to use as a source. It has been much criticized and frequently dismissed as worthless. *De moribus et actis* is, however, the only surviving, consistent, inside source for early Norman history, and much of it appears based on eyewitness accounts and Norman family tradition. It may also contain information on 9th-century Viking activity in England and Europe; the nature and extent of the Scandinavian settlement in Normandy; the survival of Scandinavian language, customs, and institutions; the origin of the settlers and of Rollo; and Scandinavian laws, land tenure, warfare, marriage customs, and religion.


Kirsten Williams

[See also: William of Jumièges: *Gesta Normannorum ducum*

Duggals leïðsela see Visio Tnugdali

_Dunstanus saga* (**The Saga of Dunstan**): tells of St. Dunstan (ca. 909–988), Archbishop of Canterbury (feast day May 19). The saga was compiled by the monk Ærni Laurenttiussen (b. 1304), a son of Laurentius Kállisson (bishop of Hólar 1323–1330). Ærni entered the monastery of Pingeyrar in about 1317, and was ordained a priest in 1323.

The saga is preserved in a single MS, AM 180b fol., from the 15th century. It was written on fols. 1r–5v; fols. 2 and 3 are damaged, and some of the text has been lost. A paper copy (NKS 267 fol.) was made from this MS in the 18th century by Guðmundur Isföld. The saga begins with a prologue in the form of a letter in which Ærni Laurenttiussen identifies himself as the compiler, and gives reasons for composing a life of St. Dunstan. St. Dunstan's life is exemplified by a number of lections retelling some of his visions and miracles: his vision of his mother and father in heaven and his meeting with an angel who teaches him an antiphon; the miracle at Candelmas before Dunstan's birth when all the candles in the church are extinguished, but Dunstan's mother's candle is rekindled by a divine light; Dunstan's encounter with devils in the guise of dogs; his unorthodox entry into the monastery at Glastonbury via the scaffolding and roof; his vision of the apostles Peter, Paul, and Andrew, after he refuses a bishopric; the presence of the Holy Spirit in the likeness of a dove hovering over Dunstan; the death of Dunstan; and the miracle of the healing of a monk who was possessed by a devil.

Ærni compiled and translated _Dunstanus saga*_ from a number of different Latin sources. The main source is a life of St. Dunstan written between 1006 and 1012 by Adelard, a monk of St. Peter's monastery in Ghent. Ærni also used a life of Dunstan by Eadmer of Canterbury, written in the 12th century. Ærni probably knew Eadmer's life, and also excerpts from Osbern of Canterbury's *Vita et miracula Sancti Dunstani* (written ca. 1080), via Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum historiale*. For his reference to King Edgar, Ærni uses the *Passio Sancti Edvardi*. He probably also made use of Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiarum* for his account of the six ages of man. His digression on Thomas à Becket may have _Thomas saga erkibiskups_ as its source. Ærni may have known _Nikulás saga erkibiskups_ and _Jóns saga helga_ by the monk Gunnlaugr Leifsson of Pingeyrar.

Helen Caron

[See also: Jóns saga ens helga; Laurentius saga biskups; Saints' Lives]

Dwarfs see Supernatural Beings

Dyrerim, De gamle danske ("The Old Danish Rhyming Bestiary") is a modern editor's name for an unnamed text in the Stockholm MS K 46 4to (pp. 45-114). The scribe was either the Naestved Franciscan Olaus Jacobi, who wrote the Stockholm MS K 31 4to (of Mandevilles Rejse) in 1459, or a contemporary from the same scriptorium. Because of a number of apparent misreadings, it must be a copy, but is probably not much younger than the original. The dialect has been identified as primarily that of South Zealand.

The Dyrerim are written in knittelvers without stanza division, but with a variable use of end-rhyme, which occasionally gives the impression of a stanza structure. The work begins with a prologue in the form of a dialogue about celibacy between a young girl, who disapproves of it, and a youth, the author of the book, who approves of it. Next follow 100 poems, which are all supplied with a bird or animal name as their title. Some poems have a concluding Latin prose commentary, which gives natural-historical information about the bird or animal of the title. According to the prologue, the aim of the poems is to describe the difficulties of bird life in order to contradict the girl's assertion that birds have an easier life than human beings, with their constant conflicts between soul and body. In accordance with this frame, the first poems are monologues, in which each bird describes the adversities of its species. Soon four-legged animals are also called upon to speak, and gradually the poems dissolve into independent, moralizing, or satirical short stanzas with social or sexual success or fiasco as their preferred themes. Some of the short stanzas are reminiscent of prophecies, which form part of actual books of prophecies (e.g., the Danish Lycke bogen, printed in the 16th century).

No direct foreign model has been demonstrated for the text as a whole, but it is most nearly related to the German "Vogelparlamente" ("parliaments of fowls," i.e., poems that describe a deliberation among birds). The Latin quotations are derived from two scientific compilations from the 13th century with roots in antiquity: Albertus Magnus's Opus de animalibus and Bartholomaeus Anglicus's De proprietatibus rerum. The uniformity of the poems, their use of native proverbs and popular beliefs, along with their popular, straightforward, and idiomatic language, suggest that the Dyrerim is an independent Danish work.


Britta Oliak Frederiksen

[See also: Knittel(vers); Mandevilles Rejse]

Dødedans see Drama
Ectors saga ok kappa hans ("The Saga of Ector and His Champions") is a native Icelandic riddasaga dating from the late 14th or early 15th century. It is preserved in forty-five MSS, the most important of which are the fragmentary Cod. Stock. Perg. fol. no. 7 (15th century) and AM 152 fol. (ca. 1510), where the saga is preserved in its entirety.

After a brief survey of the events of the Trojan War, the saga relates how King Karnotius of Thecisia marries Gelfríõr, a Trojan hero. He is educated in the liberal arts and dubbed a knight at age seventeen. At a tournament, Ector defeats six princes, who afterward offer him their service. They live together in a castle his father had built for him.

The seven knights decide to go off in search of adventure, agreeing to reunite after a year. Their seven adventures are then related in turn. Vernacius, for example, is defeated by the giant Nocerus and imprisoned. The princess Almaris, also a prisoner, gives him a sword with which he kills the giant. They are betrothed and Vernacius returns to Ector's castle. Of the other knights (Florencius, Fenacius, Alanus, Trancival, Ector, and Aprival), only Aprival is unable to return at the appointed time.

Aprival has been told of the great king Troulis and his beautiful daughter Trobil. Disguised as the merchant Valentinus, Aprival offends Troilus by praising Ector above all others. He agrees to marry Ector. They all return to Ector's kingdom, and it is decided that Aprival will marry the princess Valdre, who had been rescued by Ector.

The saga concludes with the information that the author found his material in the Trójumamna saga and in the story of Ector as told by master Galterus de Castellione and gives the date of the great battle as July 1, 378 B.C.

This saga, with its seven tales of adventure, represents the sole Icelandic expression of the medieval frame narrative and, as such, invites comparison with such works as the Seven Sages, a medieval bestseller that may have been known in Iceland in the 14th century, but exists only in post-Reformation translations in German or Danish chapbooks. One is struck in Ectors saga, as in roman à tirois in general, by the structural similarity of the episodes. In Ectors saga, this basic structure is that of the most common type of folktales: the hero sets out, and either alone or with a helper defeats an opponent who is menacing a kingdom, and as a reward is granted the hand of a princess, returning finally to his point of departure (cf. Glauser 1983: 149ff.). Unity is achieved in the saga through the frame, but also through the device of interlacing, such as when the hero of the sixth adventure gets the bride of the seventh and vice versa.

The material used by the author of Ectors saga appears to originate from an unusually eclectic variety of sources, among them Alexanders saga, Trójumamna saga, and Karlamagnús saga. The lion and several other motifs derive apparently from Chrétien de Troyes's Yvain, which was widely known in Iceland, and possibly also Le Chevalier de la charrette, which appears not to have been (cf., e.g., Schlauch 1965).


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Eddic Meters. The poetic forms of the Codex Regius are derived from common Germanic meter, which employs pairs of "verses" or "half-lines" joined into "long lines" by alliteration. The following four lines of Prymskviða illustrate the essential features of this ancient metrical tradition, which was also inherited by Old English, Old Saxon, and Old High German poets:

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seinn víóro Hafra
Heim um reinnr,
Scyndir at Scócolm,
Scyldo vel renna;
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Biorg Brotnóð, Brann íórð loga,
Oc Oðins sonr í løtunheima.

[Neckel and Kuhn 1983: 114]

[At once the goats were driven home, hurried into harness—they would have to run well—Mountains shattered, earth burned, Oðinn’s son drove to the giants’ land.]

The gap in the middle of each line indicates the boundary between half-lines. Alliterating stressed syllables are here indicated by capital letters. The first half-line of each line is called the "a-verse," the second half-line the "b-verse." An a-verse can have either one alliterating syllable (as in the first line above) or two (as in the others). A b-verse always has just one alliterating syllable. The rule for alliterative matching usually requires identity of the first consonant of the root syllable (lines 1, 3); but sp-, st-, sc- (= sk-) alliterate only with themselves (line 2). Any stressed syllable with an initial vowel is considered to alliterate with any other stressed syllable with an initial vowel. Note that the Norse y-glide spelled with an i or o in forms like Ióþunhia (line 4) counts as a vowel for the purposes of alliteration.

Outside Scandinavia, alliterative poetry of the traditional Germanic type survived in a single meter. Three eddic meters are usually recognized, however: fornyrðislag or fornyðrslag ("old story meter"); málaháttr ("speech meter" or "sententious meter"); and ljóðaháttr ("song meter" or "stanzaic meter"). Snorri Sturluson used these terms in his Hátatal, which gives an example of each form.

The four lines quoted above are in fornyrðislag, the Norse meter most closely related to the meter of such West Germanic works as the Old English poem Beowulf. Half-lines of fornyrðislag usually fit into the familiar system of "five types" proposed by Sievers. Below are simple examples of each type, with a notation for the corresponding verse patterns.

Type A: iarðar hvergi (1/4/2)

["neither on earth," Prymskviða 2:6]

Type B: oc Angantyr (1/2)

["and Angantyr," HynRhjóð 9:4]

Type C: oc qvennuvíðr (1/2/1)

["woman’s clothes," Prymskviða 16:3]

Type D: oxn alsvarri (1/2)

["oxen all black," Prymskviða 23:3]

Type E: gulfurhýðr kýr (1/2/1)

["golden-horned kine," Prymskviða 23:2]

Three kinds of metrical position are distinguished in verse patterns: the primary arsis (/), usually occupied by a syllable with primary stress; the secondary arsis (\), usually occupied by a syllable with secondary stress; and the weak position (x), usually occupied by an unstressed syllable. The metrical positions of a given verse pattern are organized into two feet, with the boundary between feet indicated by a vertical bar (|). The treatment of types B and C above follows Pope (1966) and Taylor (1971) rather than Sievers (1893), who analyzes type B as x/2x and type C as x/x. For recent criticism of Sievers’s analysis, see von See (1967: 5) and Russom (1987: 17–9, 141–4). Sievers’s system allows for many "subtypes" differing significantly from the simple examples provided here.

Eddic fornyrðislag gives a general impression of brevity when compared with West Germanic verse. The Scandinavian material tends toward organization into succinct four-line stanzas, as opposed to the long verse paragraphs of works like Beowulf. Poetry in fornyrðislag is also relatively concise with respect to the number of syllables in the half-line. If we apply the procedures normally used for interpreting skaldic texts to Snorri’s example of fornyrðislag, each half-line will fill just four metrical positions, with no "extrametrical" unstressed syllables or "expanded" verse types of the sort frequently encountered in Old English, Old Saxon, and Old High German poetry. Such concision is much less evident in the poems of the Codex Regius, however. The aggressive philology of emendation employed by Sievers and others to reconcile eddic texts with the paradigms in Hátatal has long since fallen into disrepute (Heusler 1925: 224–5).

Particularly puzzling to metrists are a number of fornyrðislag verses that do not fit into the five-type scheme. Verses like Freyja at qvan ("Freyja as bride," Prymskviða 8:8) testify to a pattern /xx/ that is rare in Beowulf. One also encounters a significant number of three-syllable verses like breiddi fadm (1/2/1) ("braided the yarn," Rígsþula 16:3). It would be implausible to dismiss these as errors because they are subject to a special stylistic constraint favoring placement of a trochaic word before a monosyllable (Heusler 1925: 178).

In Snorri’s fornyrðislag stanza, the a-verse always has single alliteration, and the b-verse always begins with an unstressed syllable. This arrangement is common in the Codex Regius poems, but it is not carried through with anything like the consistency found in skaldic poems.

Snorri’s example of málaháttr consists entirely of lines that fill five metrical positions when interpreted according to the skaldic criteria. The only eddic poem employing lines of similar length consistently is Atlamál, and considerable emendation is necessary to "restore" a five-position meter in this work. Cautious modern opinion is represented by Turville-Petre (1976). The Atlamál-poet, he says, "seems to have been conscious that the number of syllables in his lines must not be less than five" (xiv).

Kuhn’s studies of word placement in Germanic verse (1933, 1936, 1939) showed that several peculiarities of málaháttr can also be found in fornyrðislag based on legends from south of Scandinavia. Kuhn argued that the peculiarities resulted at least in part from translation of imported West Germanic poems into Scandinavian languages, and he consequently favored a distinction based on content rather than on Snorri’s terminology. One distinction between fornyrðislag and eddic málaháttr is generally acknowledged, however. In fornyrðislag, the half-line tends to be
a subject, predicate, or other subconstituent of a sentence, as in West Germanic verse. In Atlamál, on the other hand, the poet shows a strong preference for half-lines consisting of complete clauses, as in the following example (Neckel and Kuhn 1983: 249):

Gíðr var oc Glaumvor, er Gunnarr ætti.
(*gláð was also Glaumvor, whom Gunnarr had married.* Atlamál 5:6–6).

This line exemplifies two additional stylistic traits of Atlamál: (1) a strong preference for an a-verse with two alliterating syllables; and (2) employment in the b-verse of the pattern x̄/x̄/x̄ (type A with anacrusis).

In ljóðaháttr, the smallest repeated unit has a three-part rather than a two-part structure. Two alliterating half-lines resembling those of fornyrðislag are followed by a “full verse” with no prominent internal boundaries. The full verse normally has its own system of alliteration, which can involve two, three, or even four alliterating syllables. There is a strong tendency in ljóðaháttr toward pairing of two three-part structures to form a stanzaic unit expressing a complete thought, as in the following passage from Hávamál (Neckel and Kuhn 1983: 29):

Deyr fe, Deyia frendr;
deyr Sálfir it Sama;
Ec veit Einn, at Aldri deyr:
Dýmr um Daðhán hvem.
[Carle die, kinsmen die, one dies oneself as well; I know of only one thing that never dies: every man’s fame.]

Sievers and others noticed a tendency toward regular metrical transformation within the three-part unit. The first half-line usually begins with an alliterating stressed syllable. The second half-line tends to begin with an unstressed syllable (cf. at Aldri deyr). The full verse shows a marked tendency toward rising rhythm, typically opening with a weak syllable and closing with a stressed monosyllable or “resolvable” disyllable. In deyr Sálfir it Sama, the short stressed syllable and following unstressed syllable of Sama are regarded as the “resolved” equivalent of a single long stressed syllable. Note that the weakly stressed verb deyr, by a general poetic convention, counts as unstressed when it appears without alliteration at the beginning of the verse. The first half-line of the three-part unit has in general the fewest syllables, while the full verse is normally the most syllabic. The lines are joined together to form couplets by means of a regular application of alliteration, which can involve two, three, or even four alliterating syllables. There are no more than tendencies.


**Geoffrey Russom**

**EDDIC POETRY**

**EDDIC POETRY** Originaly, the name *Edda* was applied only to Snorri Sturluson’s treatise on mythology and poetic diction, written during the 1220s. The etymology and meaning of the term are disputed. In 1643, the Icelandic bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson obtained an old codex with poems about Nordic gods and legendary heroes. He thought this anthology was compiled by his famous countryman Saemundr fróði (“the learned”) Siglússon (1056–1133), and that the numerous quotations from the same poems in Snorri’s *Edda* were extracts from Saemundr's supposed work. Although this association with Saemundr is completely unjustified, the name *Edda* (*Saemundar Edda*) for contents of the newly discovered MS became conventional. To distinguish it from Snorri’s prose *Edda*, it is nowadays usually referred to as the *Poetic Edda*.

This anthology, the *Codex Regius*, the main source of our knowledge of eddic poetry, is thought to date from the late 13th century. But characteristic scribal errors reveal that the MS is a copy of an older original no longer extant. A large number of eddic poems are also referred to and quoted in Snorri’s *Edda*. The MS tradition goes back no farther. But most scholars assume that many eddic lays must have been preserved through oral tradition for a very long time, before they were finally recorded on parchment.

Much ingenuity has been devoted to trying to establish a chronology for the eddic poems, if not an absolute one, then at least a relative one. Among the criteria that have been applied are the relation of various poems to: the development of the Scandinavian languages; archaeological facts; the Scandinavian landscape with its flora and fauna; historical events; and Christian thoughts and beliefs. Scholars agree on the whole that the genesis of the eddic poems covers a considerable space of time, perhaps from the 9th to the 13th century.

**Prosy and style.** The two chief metrical verse forms of eddic poetry are *fornyrðislag* ("old story meter" or "epic meter") and *ljóðaháttr* ("song meter" or "chant meter"). The former is a stanza of eight lines, each of which has two stressed syllables and a varying number of unstressed syllables. The lines are joined together to form couplets by means of a regular application of alliteration, the only indigenous form of rhyme in Old Germanic and Norse poetry. In a few cases, we find a variant of *fornyrðislag* named *málaháttr*; it permits more syllables per line. *Ljóðaháttr* differs from *fornyrðislag* by replacing the second and fourth couplets by a so-called “full line.” Thus, this verse form
has six rather than eight lines, and the full lines alliterate within themselves. In both fornyrdislag and jódaháttr, there is a marked tendency to make the half-stanza a syntactical and somewhat independent unit within the stanza.

The division into stanzas, which characterizes all eddic poetry, seems to be a distinguishing feature of Old Norse verse; it is otherwise extremely rare in the Germanic area.

The two main forms of stylistic adornment in Old Norse poetry are heiti and kennings. The former device simply means selected and unusual appellations for common concepts, for instance, archaisms that may perhaps have been preserved only in poetic diction. Far more specific are the kennings, the typical form of Old Norse imagery, also well known from Old English poetry. Primarily, the kenning consists of a main word plus a modifier in the genitive, which are sometimes welded together to form a compound noun. Blood may be called hjerfrígr "fluid of swords," battle naddel "storm of spears." On the whole, eddic poetry makes sparse use of kennings, and always in simple and transparent forms, far from the complicated and enigmatic instances of skaldic drottkvætt-stanzas.

As for style in a broad sense, both narrative and dialogue are extraordinarily terse and concentrated. Episodes usually follow one another abruptly, without connecting links, in sharp contrast to a more flowing epic form.

The poems in the Codex Regius are arranged according to a definite plan. First, there are poems about the ancient Norse world of the gods, followed by a section of poems with themes from heroic legend. Of these two major genres of eddic poetry, the mythological poems stand out as specifically Nordic. The heroic lays, on the other hand, have counterparts in other Germanic literatures.

Mythological poetry. Voluspá ("The Prophecy of the Sibyl") deserves its initial position. The creation of the world, the dissolution of the world order, the destruction of the world, and the emergence of a new world make up its theme. Its name derives from the völva ("sibyl") who speaks in the poem, an aged seeress who remembers the ancient destinies of the world, and with her vision penetrates the veils of the future. In prophetic tones, she invokes the attention of all listeners. Many things she says are obscure to a modern audience, but the main line is clear. First, there is a description of the great void before the creation of the world. Then the thriving green earth, the Miõgarõsormr, the common home of gods and men, is raised out of the abyss. Three gods breathe life into the first pair of human beings, Askr and Embla, who correspond in Norse mythology to Adam and Eve. An essential element in the vision of the seeress is the picture of the World Tree, the ash Yggdrasill, which spreads its enormous crown over the earth, standing like a guardian of our whole existence. At its foot, three norns sit: "Laws they made there,/ and life allotted/ to the sons of men,/ and set their fates." Then follows the most difficult part of the poem, in which it is suggested that the gods have slain a sorceress and then broken agreements and oaths. The condition of innocence is past. Among the human beings, moral and lies. Despite his misanthropy, however, the poet is well aware that "man is the joy of man," that human beings need each other. In an evil and hostile world, there is all the more reason to cultivate one's ties of friendship. Hávamál is strongly earth-bound. There is no hint of a life after death, and its philosophy of life completely lacks the heroic perspective. The demands of life are reduced to statements like: "The blind man is better / than one that is burned, / no good can come of a corpse." After being treated to such skeptical wisdom for more than seventy stanzas, one is quite surprised to be at last confronted with the following lines, some of the most magnificent in the whole Edda: "Cattle die,/ and kinsmen die,/ and so you die yourself,/ one thing I know/ that never dies, / the fame of a dead man's deeds." In the end, even the poet of Hávamál directs his view from practical needs to that which transcends the life of the individual.

Voluspá and Hávamál, each in its own way, are the most universal poems in the Codex Regius. The remaining mythological lays present various episodes in the life of the gods. In two of them, Øinn plays the principal part. Under the assumed name Grimnir ("the Disguised One"), in one of many such quick-change performances, he holds forth in a king's hall on the world of the gods and other elevated subjects (Grimnismál). On another occasion, he conquers, again incognito, the giant Vafprúðnir in a dramatic duel of knowledge and wits (Vafprúðnismál).

The poems with Pórr as protagonist usually have a humorous tone. In Hymiskvida, he goes out fishing with the giant Hymir, and terrifies his companion when he almost catches the huge Miõgarõsormr ("World Serpent") with a bull's head as bait on his hook. In Prymskvida, Pórr has to visit the giant Prymir, reluctantly disguised as the goddess Freya, in order to deceive the lovesick giant and regain his stolen hammer. Thanks to the wits of his companion, the artful Loki in the shape of his bridesmaid, the...
pretended bride Þórr’s astonishing carryings-on at the wedding feast can be explained away. With the famous hammer at last safely in his lap, he takes revenge for his ignominious role and reveals his true nature in the giant’s hall.

In contrast to Brynñskviða, which is certainly among the youngest mythological poems, Skttnismal impresses one as being archaic. It deals with the god Freyr’s consuming desire for the giant maiden Gerðr, whom he has only seen from a great distance. His servant Skirmir is sent to prevail upon her to grant Freyr his desire. The messenger is successful, but only after resorting to the most drastic of spells and threats. He can return home with the reply that Gerðr has promised to meet his master in the grove called Barri nine nights later. It has been suggested that Skttnismal should be interpreted as a cult poem, as the text for a fertility rite. Freyr, son of Njórðr and brother of Freyja, belongs to the family of the Vanir among the gods. He is the lord of sunlight, vegetation, and procreation. His cult seems to have had a strongly erotic character. If seen in the light of the Freyr cult, Skttnismal would represent the marriage of the earth-goddess (Gerðr) to the sun-god (Freyr).

Outside the Codex Regius, we find a few specimens of mythological eddic poetry, which for some reasons were not included in the collection. The two most important of these poems appear in MSS of Snorri’s Edda. Rígsplula (“Rigr’s list [of names]”) treats the origin and structure of human society. Rigr is another name for the god Heimdallr. The poem relates that, while on a journey, Rigr visits three different farms, and that the housewife in each of them gives birth to a boy nine months later. At the first farm, the boy is named Prell (“thrall”), at the second, Karl (“free-man”), and at the third, Jarl (“earl”). Rígsplula thus gives poetic form to a myth about three social classes and affords interesting glimpses into what was considered typical in appearance, food, and occupations for the different estates. Jarl and his wife have twelve sons. The youngest is called Konr ungr (“young son”), with a name symbolism that can easily be interpreted as konungr’king.” Thus, the poem sketches the social hierarchy from thrall to king.

Rígsplula reveals a certain sympathy for the aristocratic ideal. In Grottasaongr, on the other hand, the point of view is that of the oppressed. According to Snorri’s prose introduction, the Danish king Fröði had got possession of two enormously strong female slaves named Fenja and Menja. He made them turn a mill whose stones were so huge that no one else was strong enough to handle them. The mill, named Grotti, had an extraordinary quality: it could grind out whatever the owner wished for. The slaves first grind gold and happiness for King Fröði and peace in his kingdom. That is the famous period of the “Peace of Fröði.” But the king yields to the temptation of exploiting his slaves too greedily and ruthlessly. At last, the oppressed rise from their debasement. Instead of gold and happiness, they will now grind out vengeance and destruction. The powerful intensity in this poem resembles the apocalyptic vision in Volundarkviða.

**Heroic poetry.** In the Codex Regius, Volundarkviða has been placed in the penultimate position among the eleven poems in the mythological section, although it could as well have introduced the heroic section. In fact, it is difficult to place this lay in either of the two main categories of eddic poetry. It deals with the skillful smith Volundr, known also from sources outside Scandinavia. He is captured by a king, who has Volundr’s knee sinews cut and isolates him on an islet. There he is compelled to forge treasures for the king. But Volundr broods about revenge. He manages to cut the heads off the two young sons of the king and to violate his daughter. In due time, he escapes in flight on a pair of wings he has created. Volundarkviða has a general resemblance to the Greek tale about Daedalus, who rose out of the labyrinth where he had been imprisoned, on wings that he had made himself. The similarity was observed quite early in the North; in Iceland, a labyrinth is still called volundarháts.

The heroic section proper of the Codex Regius is introduced by three poems about two exclusively Norse heroes, Helgi Hjorvarðsson and Helgi Hundingsbani (“killer of Hundings”). The remaining sixteen poems and fragments revolve around Sigurðr Fáfnisbani (“slayer of Fáfnir”), the best-known hero of the entire cycle of Old Germanic legend. A genealogical link is established to Helgi Hundingsbani by making him Sigurðr’s older half-brother. Both are said to be sons of a certain King Sigmundr, but by different mothers.

In a long sequence of poems, partly linked together and supplemented by short paragraphs in prose, one can follow Sigurðr’s life from his youthful accomplishments, his slaying of the dragon Fáfnir and the acquisition of his enormous gold hoard, through his connection with the Gjukings dynasty and his marriage to the king’s daughter, Guðrún, up to the time of his death at the hands of his brothers-in-law. The remaining poems deal mostly with Guðrún’s later fortunes, her two subsequent marriages, first to King Atli and then to King Jónakr. The whole bloody chronicle comes to a close in Hamðismal, where Guðrún’s sons with Jónakr are slain.

This main body of the heroic section originates in Old Germanic legends that reached Scandinavia early in some form. They reveal dim and very much transformed memories of historical persons and episodes from the 4th and 5th centuries among the Goths, Huns, and the South Germanic dynasty of the Gjukings; the Gjukings have been associated with the Burgundians, who had a kingdom on the Rhine at the beginning of the 5th century. Various women are deeply involved in the tragic course of events. On his journey south, young Sigurðr meets the shield-maiden Brynhildr in a castle, and they fall passionately in love. Their meeting ends with an exchange of oaths, and Sigurðr gives her a ring as a token of fidelity. The next stage of his journey takes place at King Gjúki’s court. Queen Grímhildr would like to have the hero and owner of the famous gold hoard as her son-in-law. One night, she gives him a drink from a horn, which makes him forget Brynhildr. He marries Gjúki’s daughter, Guðrún, and enters into foster-brotherhood with his brothers-in-law, Gunnarr and Hogni. Queen Grímhildr urges her son Gunnarr to woo Brynhildr. But the wooer has to ride through the burning fire that surrounds her castle. Gunnarr tries, but fails. Then he and Sigurðr exchange appearances (Grímhildr has taught them to do this), and Sigurðr breaks through the barrier of fire. Afterward, the two men assume their normal appearances. Brynhildr is bewildered and somewhat suspicious. She had expected nobody but Sigurðr, “the one to whom I swore oaths on the mountain,” “my first husband,” to stand the test. She marries Gunnarr. Later on, in a dispute between the sisters-in-law Guðrún and Brynhildr, the former shield-maiden learns that she has been deceived. Consumed by jealousy and fury, she incites her husband to slay Sigurðr.

In a series of poems, the ladies bemoan the loss of the incomparable hero, with Brynhildr in a proud and hateful mood, Guðrún in a more elegiac vein. Brynhildr, while dying, gives directions that her body be placed on the funeral pyre beside Sigurðr. Guðrún lives on and marries Atli, king of the Huns. That marriage ends in catastrophe.
Atli invites his wife's brothers, Gunnarr and Óttarrn, to his court. The invitation is a trap. Atli is intent on acquiring the immense gold hoard, in the possession of the Gjukings after Sigurðr's death. Guðrún warns her brothers by a message. But, according to the heroic standard, they defy the warning and set out on the journey. At Atli's court, they are both killed without having revealed the hiding place of the treasure. It will remain forever in the waters of the Rhine, never to be found again. Guðrún takes a horrible revenge on her husband. After having secretly slaughtered her two little sons with Atli and served them to him as a meat dish at his victory banquet, on the following night she burns her drunken husband and all his followers to death in the castle.

This episode is narrated in two parallel poems, the older Atlakvitr and the younger Atlamál, which provides a unique opportunity for studying the same eddic motif in two different versions. Not only has Atlamál over twice as many stanzas as Atlakvitr (105 versus forty-five), it is also the only eddic poem that makes use throughout of the fuller meter málaháttr. With its greater epic breadth, it appears as rather wordy and trivial in comparison with the concise heroism of Atlakvitr.

Gudrúnarsvøtp (hávtr 'incitement') and Hamdismál, closely related to each other, comprise the epilogue to the heroic poetry. Guðrún has married anew, to King Jónákr. Her daughter by Sigurðr, Svanhildr, married to Jormunrekkr the Mighty, has been accused of adultery with her husband's son and shamefully executed, trampled to death under horses' hooves. Guðrún incites Hamró and Sótrial, her sons by Jónákr, to take revenge for her beloved daughter. They set out for Jormunrekkr, succeed in mutilating him, but are themselves stoned to death. The Poetic Edda concludes with these laconic words: "There Sótrial fell/beside the gable/and Hamró sank/at the back of the house."

The traditions underlying eddic poetry were widespread in Scandinavia. Thus, for instance, Pórr's fishing adventure with the World Serpent in Hymiskvitr is depicted on picture stones both in Denmark and Sweden. And a huge petroglyph on a rock face at Ramsundberget in Sweden, in close accordance with the eddic poem, represents in great detail Sigurðr's killing of the dragon Fáfnir. But whatever share the other Nordic peoples may have had in the legendary traditions, it is a fact of literary history that it is in Iceland, and there only, that the poetry itself has been preserved to our time.

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**Peter Hallberg**


**Education.** Scholarly education was introduced in the Nordic countries by the Church, which also remained the most important educational institution and the greatest "consumer" of educated personnel during the rest of the Middle Ages. In the first period after the introduction of Christianity, priests probably received elementary instruction in Latin, mass reading, and liturgical chant by the local priest they were going to succeed. Formal schools apparently began to be organized around 1100.

There were three kinds of such schools: cathedral schools, monastic schools, and town schools. The third Lateran Council (1179) decreed that every cathedral chapter should appoint a magister to give free education to the clergy and poor students of the diocese. Probably some education was given at most or all cathedral chapters in the Nordic countries, though lack of sources makes it difficult to tell when this practice started. The earliest evidence for Denmark and Iceland dates from the late 11th or early 12th centuries, for Norway from the late 12th century, and for Sweden and Finland respectively from the early 13th and early 14th centuries. Though the direct evidence is slight, we may assume that most priests were eventually educated at these schools.
By contrast, the monastic schools are little known and seem mainly to have been intended for members of the monasteries. Monastic schools for a broader public were apparently largely the products of competition or inspiration among the mendicant orders from the 13th century. The latter attached great importance to scholarly education, and there is evidence, even from the Nordic countries, that friars were sent for studies at the universities or were formally appointed teachers in the local houses.

As in the rest of Europe, there were numerous town schools in Denmark and Sweden during the later Middle Ages, while there seems to be no evidence of them in the later Nordic countries. These schools were founded by the city councils, but often received approval or financial support from ecclesiastical authorities. They served as a preparation for the cathedral school, but also had a more independent function in giving elementary instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic to ordinary children of the town. According to Danish sources (from Malmö) from the early 16th century, such education seems to have been fairly normal at the time.

Less is known of the education of the laity in the earlier Middle Ages. It may be pointed out, however, that the higher aristocracy, at least in Iceland and from the mid-13th century also in Norway, was an administrative more than a military class, and that a considerable part of the Icelandic and Norwegian literature was written for and to some extent also by laymen. From this point of view, it is no coincidence that members of the Norwegian aristocracy are found as law students at Bologna around 1300. We do not know whether such men usually received their elementary education from private teachers or also attended ecclesiastical schools.

During most of the Middle Ages, studies abroad were necessary to create the kind of educated ecclesiastical elite that integrated the Nordic countries in the universal Church. Pope Gregory VII seems to have sketched a program to this effect in his letters from 1079 to the kings of Norway and Denmark, but the results of this initiative are unknown. A similar program, however, was carried out during the following century. Both the Norwegian and Danish higher clergy had close connections with the leading centers of learning in northern France in the 12th century, and several Icelandic bishops of the late 11th and early 12th centuries had studied in Germany or France. By contrast, the clergy of Sweden, including landic bishops of the late 11th and early 12th centuries had studied in Germany or France. By contrast, the clergy of Sweden, including Iceland and Norwegian literature was written for and to some extent also by laymen. From this point of view, it is no coincidence that members of the Norwegian aristocracy are found as law students at Bologna around 1300. We do not know whether such men usually received their elementary education from private teachers or also attended ecclesiastical schools.

In the later Middle Ages, a number of new universities grew up in Germany and eastern Europe, and most Nordic students went there. After a temporary drop because of the Black Death, the number of students seems to have risen during the 15th century and to have been considerably higher around 1500 than in the high Middle Ages, at least in Denmark and Sweden. We know the names of 2,146 Danish, 724 Swedish, 219 Norwegian, and ninety-seven Finnish students from the matricula of German, eastern European, and Dutch universities in the period 1350–1536. In addition, thirty-one Danes, thirty-one Swedes, one Norwegian, and eighteen Finns are known to have studied in Paris during the same period. The foundation of the universities of Uppsala (1477) and Copenhagen (1479) indicate the importance the secular and ecclesiastical authorities attached to higher learning, but the institutions themselves were fairly insignificant as intellectual centers. Most students therefore continued to seek their education abroad.

The traditional disciplines in the schools, passed on from antiquity, were the seven liberal arts. They were divided into two groups, the trivium (grammar, rhetoric, and dialectics) and the quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy). But there was considerable variation, both locally and over time, in what was actually taught, and we know little of the particular Nordic varieties. Generally, scholarly education had a dual purpose, the transmission of the central values of European culture derived from both Christian and classical sources, and the practical purpose of giving future priests the necessary education to perform their duties. Since the educational standard of ordinary priests, as opposed to the higher clergy, was usually low in the Middle Ages, the success of the latter part of the program should not be overestimated. The content of the education and the success or failure of the program as a whole must be judged less from exact information on the teaching in schools than from examining the learning of the Nordic countries in general, as expressed, for example, in literature produced in these countries and the books that were available, and in the use of canon law and the Latin language.


Sverre Bagge

Egill Skalla-Grimsson is the chief character of Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar. According to this work, he died in old age a few years before Christianity was accepted by the Icelanders (A.D. 1000). Egill owes his fame as a poet (skald) and hero entirely to the saga, which, however, must be considered a very unreliable biography. The historical authenticity of several of the Æsáusvir (occasional verses) spoken by Egill and a few others in the narrative, and even of the six poems ascribed to him there, has been questioned by several scholars.

As we have no means to discriminate between the historical Egill and the Egill of the saga, nor any safe criteria by which to identify authentic or non-authentic verse spoken by Egill and other persons, we are perhaps best advised to accept the poems as integrated parts of the saga and to set aside the question of their authenticity.

According to the saga, Egill composed six major poems. Three of them are found in various redactions of the saga, two others are quoted with one stanza from each, and a third is quoted with one stanza and a refrain. In addition, the best redaction of the saga has Egill speak forty-eight stanzas (Æsáusvir), but the original may have had fifty in all, since in two cases a space for a stanza has been left blank.

The first of the three preserved poems is Höfuðlausn ("Head Ransom"), comprising twenty stanzas in runenmet line. The only other case of runenhet in the saga is a stanza spoken much earlier by Egill's father, Skalla-Grimr, but scholars have tended to ignore...
that fact and grant Egill the honor of introducing end-rhyme in Norse poetry. Needless to say, the introduction of end-rhyme as early as the late 10th century is difficult to believe. According to Egils saga, Egill saved his life when he was in the power of King Eiríkr blóõox ("blood-axe") Haraldsson in York by composing Höfðaðlausn in one short night and reciting it before the king and his court. This poem is apparently preserved in its entirety, although its text in two redactions of the saga seems to have originated from two independent traditions, whether oral or written. As there is not one line of it quoted in the best redaction, and no space left for Egill to state his intention of composing a memorial poem and thus obtained control of his court. This poem is apparently preserved in its entirety, although that fact and grant Egill the honor of introducing end-rhyme in Norse poetry. Needless to say, the introduction of end-rhyme as early as the late 10th century is difficult to believe. According to Egils saga, Egill saved his life when he was in the power of King Eiríkr blóõox ("blood-axe") Haraldsson in York by composing Höfðaðlausn in one short night and reciting it before the king and his court. This poem is apparently preserved in its entirety, although its text in two redactions of the saga seems to have originated from two independent traditions, whether oral or written. As there is not one line of it quoted in the best redaction, and no space left for any specific battle. In this respect, the only comparable praise poem about a king is Snorri Sturluson’s in honor of the young King Hákon Hákonarson (the first thirty stanzas of his poem Háttatal). This poem names no enemies or battlefield despite repeated descriptions of fighting and the king’s prowess.

Sonatorrek is a memorial poem in honor of Egill’s two sons, Boõvarr, a favorite who drowned at sea, and Gunnarr, who had died a little earlier. The poem comprises twenty-five stanzas in kviðuháttr meter. It is badly preserved in two almost identical 17th-century copies of a 15th-century MS. The first stanza is quoted in the Egils saga text of Móðruvallabók, and one stanza and a half are found in Snorra Edda. The poem concerns mainly Egill’s own feelings, and it has been called the most lyrical product of Norse poetry. According to the saga, Egill had decided to starve himself to death after the drowning of Boõvarr, but was induced to compose a memorial poem and thus obtained control of his emotions. Toward the end, there is a remarkable reckoning with Óðinn. In stanza 22, Egill states that he had good relations with Óðinn before “the victory-lord broke friendship with me.” But in stanza 23, Egill states that nevertheless the god has recompensed him for his injuries; and in stanza 24, he says that the god gave him Ýþrótt varmi fyrða ("flawless art," i.e., the gift of poetry). In the last stanza, the poet says that although things are hard for him, the goddess of death is waiting, skal ek bó gladur / með gódan vilja / ok drýggur / heljar bóða ("yet I shall, glad with good will and in good heart, wait for death").

On the basis of this poem, there has been much speculation about Egill’s religion. Some Christian ideas have been noted (cf. ss. 10, 21, and 25). For example, the sixth line of stanza 25, með gódan vilja ("with good will"), is reminiscent of the last words of Luke 2:14 in the Vulgate concerning men of good will (bonae voluntatis).

Arinbjarnarkvida is a poem in kviðuháttr meter, badly preserved in Móðruvallabók, as a page after the end of the saga. The two apparently last stanzas are only found in the Third Grammatical Treatise. Arinbjorn was Egill’s lifelong friend, according to the saga. He was a Norwegian hersir ("chieftain"), a henchman of King Eiríkr blóõox, and later of his son King Haraldr grafdís ("greycloak"), and his death in battle together with the king is mentioned in Heimskringla. In spite of its poor preservation, Arinbjarnarkvida is an impressive poem owing to its noble language and elevated style. In the final stanzas, the poet states that he has built a monument of praise that will long stand in the land of poetry, a statement that has often been compared with the famous lines of Horace: Exegi monumentum aere perennius.

Egill’s lausavísur are spoken on various occasions in the saga. His first two stanzas, at the age of three, are spoken as a contribution to the entertainment at a feast at his grandfather’s, and they are composed in intricate drottkvætt meter, like most of his later lausavísur. His last lausavísi, about his helplessness as he is lying bedridden owing to old age, is in the simple fornyrsólausn meter. Among the other stanzas is a deeply tragic stanza (17) about the death of his brother Pórólfr in the battle of Vínheðr in England, two stanzas of very moderate passion, confessing to Arinbjorn his love of Æsgerðr, who becomes his wife (sts. 23-24), a stanza (28) in which he asks the gods to drive the king (Eiríkr) into exile, and a fine stanza (51) of dignified restraint about the loss of Arinbjorn.

A sign of Egill’s self-centered interest is his inclination to describe his own looks with a metaphoric kenning, most often a metaphor from a mountain landscape: his dropping brows are called hronórs landspíl / skathri dýkki ("the hanging mountains of the land," i.e., of the face). He calls the wrinkles on his forehead ennis ósléttur ("the unevenness of the forehead"), his nose brúna miõstallr ("the rise in the middle of the brows"), and his head hjálma klettr ("the rock of the helmets").

Many of Egill’s kennings are very apt, as when he describes in stanza 8 of Arinbjarnarkvida his recitation of Höfðaðlausn in the court of King Eiríkr blóõox in York: "Yet I dared to offer the poetic mast [the storm] files merciless with blasts the beak of the ship." Another stanza with metaphors of extraordinary concreteness is Egill’s famous sailing stanza (32): "The furiously blowing enemy of the mast [the storm] cuts energetically with a storm chisel a file in front of the stem on the even road of the ship, and the enemy of the tree [the storm] files merciless with blasts the beak of the ship."


Bjarni Einarsson

[See also]: Commemorative Poetry: Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar; Kennings; Lausavísur, Móðruvallabók, Skálóki; Skálóskógar; Skaldic Meters; Skaldic Verse; Snorra Edda]
and the giantess Arinnefja. The stories are set within a narrative frame consisting of the adventures they have in recapturing two princesses abducted by two giants in the shape of flying dragons (flugdrek). During the search in Jotunheimr, they tell each other their past adventures. Ásmundr tells of his exploits on Viking trips with his blood-brother Aran, and of the killing of two berserks, from which he derives his nickname. Egill's story reports how he is captured by a giant at the age of twelve and how he escaped by blinding the giant (a variant of the Phylphemus story); later, he loses his right arm in the fight with a giant, and is afterward called einhendi. Arinnefja's adventures are more colorful, as she has to procure three exotic treasures as a punishment for sorcery; in the course of the search, she has to fight three giantesses single-handedly and to sleep with the Lord of Darkness, whom she identifies as Öðinn. It turns out she is the giantess whom Egill tried to protect from the giant when he lost his arm, which she has miraculously preserved with magic herbs so that he can now be healed. All three set out to free the princesses, and they overcome the trolls with the help of Arinnefja's sorcery.

All parts of the saga are strongly reminiscent of fairy tales, and the author may have indeed connected the various fairy-tale plots and added a substantial number of fantastic elements as well as some rather gory details to create his saga. Quite a number of motifs show the interdependence of the text with the other late formaldarssögur (e.g., Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar), but it is difficult to establish any concrete links. Although this saga is far removed from the terse realism of the older sagas and has all the marks of escapist and trivial literature, the author has succeeded in creating an exciting story by skillfully combining elements of various origins and carefully avoiding loose ends in the plot.

Egils saga einhenda is well documented in over forty MSS, the oldest (AM 343a 4to, AM 597 4to, AM 598e 4to) dating from the 15th century.

**Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar** ("The Saga of Egill Skalla-Grimsson") is one of the major Islandsogur from the golden age of saga writing, the 13th century. It is preserved in three main redactions from the 14th century and later. Their relationship is intricate, but the text of the 14th-century MS AM 132 fol. (Mððnuvatlabok = M) is the best redaction, since the other two are either fragmentary or defective texts that omit certain episodes and stanzas compared with the M-redaction. Nevertheless, the secondary redactions are valuable, since in many cases they have undoubtedly preserved more original phrases and single words than the text of M; and they are also useful in providing substitutes for missing words in M. Last but not least, they preserve two of the major poems ascribed to Egill in the saga, Sonatorekk and Hofudlausn.

Although the text of the M-redaction is clearly superior to the other recensions, it appears to be the result of consistent stylistic abbreviation, sometimes even to the detriment of the content. It is fair to add that the writing of the stanzas in this text appears to be exceptionally conscientious, and in several cases a blank space has been left for a stanza to be filled in by an assistant scribe.

Egils saga is one of the so-called skaldasogur ("sagas of skalds"), because the chief character, Egill, acts as a skald. In the M-redaction, he speaks in all forty-eight stanzas (probably fifty originally, as a space for a stanza has in two cases been left blank); eight stanzas are spoken by other persons. Furthermore, according to the saga, Egill composed six major poems, and in the M-redaction a stanza is quoted in three of these cases and a stanza with one refrain in one. Also, a poem is written after the saga in the M-redaction: Arinbjarnarkvida, which has left no remnants in the other redactions. Of the two famous poems, the M-redaction has preserved only the first stanza of Sonatorekk, but nothing of Hofudlausn.

Egill's birth is related in ch. 31 of the saga, and after that, the saga traces his career to his death and burial in ch. 86, and adds a concluding chapter about his descendants. The saga is unlike other Islandsogur in that most of it takes place abroad. Before the emigration from Norway to Iceland, Kveld-Uljfr, Egill's grandfather, a rich farmer and man of rank in Firõir, and his son Skalla-Grimr had become mortal enemies of King Haraldr hárfagri ("fair-hair") Hálfdanarson of Norway, following the killing of Pórólfr Kveld-Ulfsson by the king and his men. Much later, Pórólfr, the son of Skalla-Grimr, travels abroad and becomes an intimate friend of the young King Eiríkr blóðax ("blood-axe") Haraldsson of Norway. On his first travel abroad with his brother Pórólfr, Egill incurs the enmity of King Eiríkr, and many years later their enmity culminates with the king making Egill an outlaw in Norway. Egill subsequently kills one of the king's sons and some of his relatives and friends, and then utters the curse against the king and queen that they shall be driven out of the country. In a following chapter, the king and the queen are forced to leave the country after the arrival of the king's brother Hákon, who then becomes ruler of Norway.

After more travels abroad and various adventures, Egill settles at Borg, the family estate, as a peaceful farmer. The saga now describes him as an old man interested chiefly in poetry. But at a given occasion, he shows himself capable of defending his family's interests when they are threatened after he has handed over the estate to his son Porstein.

Egill is said to have been dark-haired and very ugly like his father, while Pórólfr, his brother, is described as fair and hand-
some, and very much like his uncle Pórólfr Kveld-Úlfsson. The last chapter of the saga adds that among Skalla-Grím's descendants were the handsomest people in Iceland, but more were very ugly. The older and the younger Pórólfr are both short of luck and are killed in the prime of life, while Skalla-Grím and Egill remain the pillars of the family and die in old age. Both Skalla-Grím and Egill and even his grandfather Kveld-Úlf have the poetic vein in them, and Egill is versed in runic magic.

It has been suggested that the description of Egill and his father and grandfather is indebted to medieval descriptions of melancholy persons in the literature concerning humors, and that the author of Egils saga and the authors of the other skáldasøgur were familiar with the Aristotelian connection between melancholy and poetic frenzy through the writings of the 12th-century authors.

Of all the poets in the skáldasøgur, Egill fits this model by far the best. The strange thing is that the saga author has contrived to create a convincing character of extreme contrasts, in early years a ruthless fighting man who in mature years is occupied mainly with poetry.

Egill is described as avaricious and as a killer of men already in childhood. He is already a poet at the age of three. His verse is highly self-centered: he likes to describe his looks, and only there does he reveal his softer feelings.

The predominant view among scholars used to be that Egils saga must be considered a comparatively trustworthy biography of Egill, as his own verse together with family traditions were assumed to have been the main source of the saga author. On the other hand, it had been admitted that the prehistory of the family in its original home in Norway can hardly be reliable except in the outlines, especially the emigration to Iceland because of the enmity between them and Haraldr hárfagr.

As a matter of fact, the historical authenticity of much of the verse in Egils saga is highly questionable, and nothing can be known about the amount of family tradition available in the days of the saga author, nor about his dependence on it. On the other hand, a great deal can be inferred about his use of written sources of various kinds. For instance, the main model for the consequential slander episode beginning in ch. 12 is found in Pínga saga, which is preserved in Morkinskinna and related redactions of konungsasögur, but has presumably been an independent work. The outlines and several details of the famous disabók ("sacrifice to the disir") episode (ch. 44) and others are appropriated from Orkneytinga saga. The sagas of the skalds Kormákr and Hallfreðr have also influenced episodes in Egils saga. The author had access to some redaction of Landnámabók and some works about King Haraldr hárfagr and King Hákón góði ("the good") Haraldsson, and most likely also Ágrip, Morkinskinna, and Sverris saga.

The author has in most cases refashioned the material he borrowed from his various sources to such a degree that it can be difficult to detect, but, once found, the source material as a rule appears obvious. The use of these sources for an entirely new artistic whole reveals the genius of the author. It is apparent that the verse in Egils saga is not among the sources of the author. The stanzas, whether spoken by Egill himself or somebody else, are an intrinsic part of the artistic fabric, and they are never quoted as evidence, which is almost the rule in konungsasögur.

Egils saga's descriptions of events in the history of Norway have parallels, even verbatim, in Heimskringla, the sagas of the kings of Norway by Snorri Sturluson, which prove that there is some literary relation between Egils saga and Heimskringla, but it does not follow that Egils saga is a historical work on a par with Heimskringla. It is obvious that the author of Egils saga has arbitrarily connected Egill, and his forebears as well as his uncle Pórólfr, with well-known events of Norwegian history. It does not seem likely that Egill's connections with persons and events in English history are better founded.

Considering the political situation in Iceland in the first half of the 13th century and the growing interference of the king of Norway, Egils saga may be seen as a warning against intimate relations with the royal power, and on the other hand, a glorifying of the old aristocratic system in Iceland.

Above all, Egils saga may be considered a monument to the greater glory of Myramenn ("men of Myrar"), the descendants of Skalla-Grím. It is noteworthy that the saga extends Skalla-Grím's settlement (landnám) to the south bank of the river Hvítá and hints that he dominated most of the Borgarfjörður district on both sides of that great landmark, which contradicts the statement of the original text of Landnámabók (cf. chs. 28, 29, 39, and 83 of Egils saga). It is certainly no accident that the settlement in the south of Iceland of Ketill hёнgr ("salmon"), a relative of Skalla-Grím and, according to the saga, a great friend of Pórólfr Kveld-Úlfsson, is in Egils saga extended in a similar way. In the early 13th century, Ketill hёнgr was counted among the ancestors of the Oddavarjar ("men of Oddir"), whose domain was coextensive with hёнgr's settlement as described in Egils saga.

At the end of ch. 84, it is stated that Tungu-Oddr, who had been the most dangerous of Porsteinn Egilsson's adversaries, ruled over the Borgarfjörður district south of Hvítá, and that every man paid dues to the temple of which he was in charge.

The saga stresses repeatedly that all the descendants of Skalla-Grím belong to his clan, the Myramenn. In the early 13th century, a descendant of Skalla-Grím resided in Reykjahlótt, which had earlier replaced the former manor of Tungu-Oddr, south of Hvítá, and he dominated the Borgarfjörður district on both sides of the Hvítá for about thirty-five years. At the same time, he controlled the church of Reykjahlótt, which had great revenues from the tithe and other sources. This man was Snorri Sturluson, the historian, who had as a young man and protegé of the Oddavarjar come to Borgarfjörður to marry a rich heiress and settle in Borg, her estate. Snorri gradually acquired the chiefship over most of the Borgarfjörður district and moved to Reykjahlótt.

Snorri may have considered it advantageous to consolidate his unique position in Borgarfjörður by writing a saga enhancing the renown of the Myramenn, his clan according to the definition of the saga, and at the same time justifying his lucrative control of the church in Reykjahlótt by alluding to a historical precedent.

It has been maintained that even if Snorri had written Egils saga, he could not have written (i.e., composed) the best of the verse ascribed to Egill, as his own incontestable poetry did not indicate the necessary poetic ability. It has also been claimed that Sonatorek is too imbued with personal grief to have been composed by any other man than Egill himself.

There is little doubt that Snorri has until recently been underestimated as a poet. Fidjestøl (1982) maintains that in Húttatal there are stanzas that are not inferior to the best in the genre. It should also be remembered that Snorri himself experienced the loss of a favorite son, when Jón murr ("trout") died in Norway of a wound received in a drunken brawl. This tragic episode in the life of Snorri has its counterpart in ch. 38 of Egils saga, where Skalla-
Grímr tries to persuade his son Pórólfr to desist from his planned voyage to Norway. In both cases, the father offers to grant the son the means to establish himself in Iceland if he gives up the trip. The son nevertheless stands by his decision, travels to Norway, and is killed abroad.

A study of the vocabulary of Heimskringla and Egils saga has revealed considerable similarity in spite of the fact that both works are found only in comparatively late copies.

The poetic nature of Egils saga was demonstrated by Bley (1909). If, nevertheless, most scholars have in the past been unable to realize the true nature of the saga, it is not least owing to the saga author's accomplishment of a perfect artistic deception. Writers of fiction have always asserted that they tell nothing but the truth. The author of Egils saga makes no such statement, but sometimes when he feels that he is approaching the limits of plausibility, he states that "some people say." No one among his audience would have been able to impugn his story. Thus, Egill Skallagrímsson became the paragon of the old-world heathen hero and skald in the imagination of the Icelandic people.


Eilifr Godrúnarson. We owe almost everything we know of the skald Eilifr Godrúnarson and his work to Snorri Sturluson's Edda (ca. 1225). The only other medieval text to mention him and his poetry is Skáldatal, where he is listed among the poets who composed in honor of Earl Hákon Sigurdarson (d. ca. 995), a ruler who strongly supported the cause of paganism against the increasing influence of Christianity in Norway. Eilifr's extant poetry shows his awareness of the religious diversity of his age, the late 10th century, though his major work, Pórsdrápa ("Pórr's lay") has been the subject of differing judgments of its religious perspective. Almost nothing is known of Eilifr's life, and it is not known for certain whether he was a Norwegian or an Icelander.

All of Eilifr's extant verse has been preserved in MSS of Snorra Edda. One half-stanza, quoted in Skáldskaparmál 11 among examples of kennings for poetry, is usually understood to contain a cryptic allusion to Earl Hákon, though Lie (1976) has argued that the allusion is to Pórr. Another half-stanza occurs in Skáldskaparmál 65 among skaldic terms for Christ, as an example of how early poets referred to Christ in both pagan and Christian terms. Eilifr's lines claim that the "powerful king of Rome" has established his rule over the lands and shrines of the heathen gods: "he is said to have his throne south at Uðr's well."

The political and religious upheaval of late 10th-century Norway is palpable in Pórsdrápa. This powerful, moving, but intensely difficult skaldic poem represents Pórr's journey to the home of the giant Geirröðr, his crossing of a raging river, and his defeat of the giant and his two daughters. Snorri gives a prose account of this myth in Skáldskaparmál 27, and three Edda MSS (R, W, T) follow it with twenty dróttkvætt stanzas from Pórsdrápa. Two other half-stanzas, usually considered part of the poem, and conventionally numbered 21 and 16, are quoted elsewhere in Skáldskaparmál.

Our difficulty in gauging Eilifr's perspective on his subject stems partly from the poem's abstruse complexity and partly from our lack of an earlier treatment of the myth, apart from a couple of eddic stanzas that Snorri quotes in his text. Many of the dróttkvæt's elaborate giant- and Pórr-kennings seem to carry contemporary political allusions. The overwhelming power the poem has for most modern readers derives from the fact that Eilifr was using myth to explore the common ground between Christ and Pórr in an age where the two were seen to be divine complements, the one harrowing hell and Satan with his cross, the other routing Geirröðr and his giant crew with staff and hammer.

EILÍFR GODRÚNARSON


Margaret Clunies Ross

[See also: Kennings; Skáld, Skaldic Meters; Skaldic Verse; Snorra Edda]

Unfortunately, the poem has not been preserved as a whole; yet, many of the stanzas are quoted in the biographies of the Norwegian kings Haraldr graefldr ("grey-cloak") Eiriksson and Óláf Tryggvason in Heims skringla and in that of Earl Hakon in Fagskina. The introductory stanzas and those that deal with the battle of the Jómsvíkingar are preserved in Snorra Edda. Certainly, the poem in its present state is not complete; for example, the "stef"-stanza, which is essential for a drápa, is lacking.

Although the original structure of Vellekla is uncertain because of the poem's state of preservation, it is possible to offer a synopsis of its contents. After a comparatively long introduction (six stanzas) containing the customary elements, such as the request for silence, the praise of the sovereign, and the announcement of the theme, the drápa depicts the events that mark Earl Hakon's advance to power over the whole of Norway: the wars with Haraldr graefldr and his brothers, the sons of Eirikr blóðax ("blood-axe") Haraldsson, during which he took vengeance on his uncle Grjótagarðr and Haraldr for his father's, Earl Sigurdur's, death; the battles with Ragnfrøðr, another of Eirikr's sons, who tried to reconquer Norway; the victorious battle at the Danefjorde against the German emperor Otto II, which he fought in the service of the Danish king; the long expedition through the unknown Gautland back to Trondheim. It is doubtful whether the stanzas relating to the battle of the Jómsvíkingar under Earl Sigvaldi belong to this poem, since they are cited neither in Heims skringla nor in Fagskina, some of these stanzas describe the beneficial consequences of the earl's government. He restored the old pagan cults that had been abolished under Eirikr's sons, which returned good harvests to the country. Usually, these stanzas are placed after the successful war against Haraldr in accordance with the historical accounts of Heims skringla and Fagskina. However, considering the present tense used in these stanzas, they could also be regarded as a praise of the earl's rule at the moment when the drápa was written, and therefore placed just before the concluding praise of the sovereign.

Thus far, no satisfactory explanations of the title of the poem, Vellekla, meaning "shortage of gold," have been found. Either it expresses the poet's hope for a reward from the sovereign (but in the preserved stanzas this theme takes no more space than is usual in panegyrics), or it could be an ironic allusion to some unknown situation. There is a third possibility: Vellekla could be part of a kenning for the sovereign (e.g., "remover of shortage of gold"). It is also somewhat difficult to date the poem. Supposing that the stanzas about the battle of the Jómsvíkingar were part of the original poem, it must be dated in the years after 985. In this case, chronological problems arise concerning the episodes related in Egils saga, but this objection may not prove serious, because these episodes are partly typical skaldic anecdotes whose content is historically doubtful. If the contested stanzas do not belong to the poem, it must be dated to the years after 975.

In Vellekla, Einarr skálaglamm proves to be a remarkable artist. He creates a brilliant poem by the sophistication of his language and metrics, especially by extensive and ingenious kennings, which he intended to equal the glory of his sovereign.

Vellekla is also important as evidence of the late Old Norse pagan religion. It shows the connection between political power and religion in the concept of the sovereign who is guided by the gods, and who reintroduces the old cults that are the fundamental condition of the prosperity of the country. A literary allusion to Voluþa suggests that the poet wanted to praise Earl Hakon's rule as comparable to that of the god Baldur, who returns after Ragnarök.

Einarr Helgason skálaglamm was one of the most notable poets of the 10th century. He was of a distinguished family of western Iceland, the brother of Öskv, father of Guðrún, whose life is depicted in Laxdæla saga. Little is known about Einarr's life, except some episodes connecting him with Egill Skalla-Grimsson, whose influence is apparent in Einarr's poetry. Presumably, he spent a great part of his life at the court of Earl Hakon (d. 999). According to Jómsvíkinga saga, Einarr was first known as skjaldfóðr ("shield-maker") Einarr, but was later called skálaglamm ("scale-tinkle"), because Earl Hakon gave him a pair of scales that gave a tinkling sound and foretold the future. Apart from Vellekla, a panegyric on the Norwegian sovereign Earl Hakon, some other stanzas by Einarr have been preserved: two stanzas of a panegyric on the Danish king Harald Blátand ("blond") (Blætand), a stanza of another panegyric on Earl Hakon, and some lausavísur. Vellekla is one of the most important skaldic poems of the 10th century.
Einarr Skúlason was the most prolific skald of the 12th century. He was a favorite of Snorri Sturluson, who in his Snorra Edda quotes twice as many verses from Einarr as from any other skald. In the surviving corpus of skaldic poetry, Einarr's verses are outnumbered only by those of Sighvatr Pórõarson.

Little is known of Einarr's life. He was a member of the Kveld-Úlf family and, as a descendant of Skalla-Grím, was a kinsman of Egill Skalla-Grimsson, Snorri, and Óláfr tórarson. The date and place of his birth are obscure, but he was probably born in the last decade of the 11th century in the area around the Borgarfjörður. By 1114, he was in Norway with King Sigurðr Jórsalafari (“marshall”). Einarr probably remained with King Eysteinn (“blind”) until Eysteinn’s death in 1157, and then he may have left Norway to travel through Denmark and Sweden. Skaldatal reports that he composed poems for King Sørkrút of Sweden and his son Jón, and for King Sven of Denmark, although none of these poems survives. At some time, he returned to Norway and was with King Ingí and Grégoríus Dagsson: his poem Ellarfíður was composed for Grégoríus sometime between the battle of Elfr (1159) and the fall of Ingí and Grégoríus in 1161. It is not known whether Einarr then went home to Iceland or remained in Norway, but he would have been an old man and cannot have lived long after.

Einarr's masterpiece is Geisli, the long drápa on St. Ólav Haraldsson, which he composed for a meeting in Trondheim in 1152 or 1153. The poem emphasizes Ólav’s sanctity by comparing him to Christ in an elaborately wrought typological parallel. Geisli may be the earliest of the Christian drápur; its influence can be seen in all the others. In addition to Geisli, a number of the poems Einarr made in praise of his patrons survive: fragments of the two drápur on Sigurðr and of two on Haraldr Gilli Magnússon (one in taglag meter); the fragmentary Haraldssonakvæði; fragments of a poem in runbent meter on an unknown prince; the Ellarfíður; and the fragments of an Eysteinndrápa and an Ingadrápa. His most difficult poem is the Ötoddókr, containing extremely complex kennings, many in the metonymic style that Snorri calls ofljóst (“unclear”). Although the content of Einarr’s poetry (apart from Geisli) is mundane, his verses show a remarkable facility with skaldic diction, rhyme, and meter.

Sometime during the joint reign of the Haralds, Einarr returned to Norway. He composed poems for all three, as well as a Haraldssonakvæði. But his principal patron and great friend was Eysteinn, who, according to Morkinskinna, made Einarr his stallari (“marshal”). Einarr probably remained with King Eysteinn until Eysteinn's death in 1157, and then he may have left Norway to travel through Denmark and Sweden. Skaldatal reports that he composed poems for King Sørkrút of Sweden and his son Jón, and for King Sven of Denmark, although none of these poems survives. At some time, he returned to Norway and was with King Ingí and Grégoríus Dagsson: his poem Ellarfíður was composed for Grégoríus sometime between the battle of Elfr (1159) and the fall of Ingí and Grégoríus in 1161. It is not known whether Einarr then went home to Iceland or remained in Norway, but he would have been an old man and cannot have lived long after.
Einars þátr Skúlasonar ("The Tale of Einarr Skúlason") tells of Einarr, Icelandic court poet to a number of Norwegian kings in the first half of the 12th century. The tale was probably written about fifty years after the events it records. It is incorporated in thevellum collection of sagas of Norwegian kings known as Morkinskinna, dating from the second half of the 13th century. Written by two contemporary hands, Morkinskinna now contains thirty-seven leaves, though the original volume probably had fifty-three. In his introduction to the edition of 1932, Finnur Jónsson states that Einars þátr Skúlasonar, found toward the end of the book among material concerned with the joint reign of the brothers Eysteinn (1103–1123) and Sigurðr Jórsalafari ("crusader") Magnússon (1103–1130), is clearly an interpolation, which is found nowhere else. It contains three anecdotes illustrating the verbal dexterity of Einarr as an improviser of occasional verses in the complex skaldic meter with its alliteration, full-rhyme, and half-rhyme, each incident being linked to a verse.

In the first anecdote, the poet comes late to a dinner at Trondheim, Norway, and is condemned to pay a sconce unless he can compose a verse before King Eysteinn has emptied his wine vessel. In the second, set in Bergen, a traveling player is to be flogged for eating meat on Friday. When Einarr vouches for him as a fellow entertainer, the king declares that the culprit shall be as a fellow entertainer, the king declares that the culprit shall be flogged for as long as it takes the poet to compose a verse. Einarr manages to complete the task by the time five strokes have been given. In the third anecdote, also set in Bergen, the king invites Einarr to compose a verse about a lady of unusual magnificence appearance who is sailing out of the harbor, and to complete it before her ship passes the island. As a fee, he agrees to give Einarr a pot of honey for every line of the eight-lined verse that neither he nor his guard can remember. Einarr then recites the poem, and the king can remember only the first and last lines, but the guard none.


Alan Boucher

[See also: Einarr Skúlason; Morkinskinna; þátr]

Einars þátr Sokkasonar ("The Tale of Einarr Sokkason") is preserved in Flateyjarbók in the latter part of the MS, written by Magnús Pórhallsson, under the heading Grenlandinga þátr. The story takes place in Greenland. Two men of great authority are introduced at the beginning, Sokki Pórisson and his son, Einarr, who lived at Brattahlíð (Qagssiarssuk). Sokki obtains the Greenlanders' consent to try to get a bishop for Greenland, and for that purpose sends his son Einarr to Norway. In Norway, Einarr visits King Sigurðr Ægissiðarson ("crusader"), who persuades a Norwegian priest, Arnaldr, to take on the bishopric. The same summer that Einarr and Arnaldr set off for Greenland, a Norwegian merchant, Arnbjörn, sails with a costly and splendid ship and heads for Greenland, but the ship and crew disappear. The ship and the men's bodies are later found in a firth near the glacier Hvítserkur by a Greenlandic huntsman, who brings the bones, the ship, and the crew's valuables to Garðar and gives the ship to the bishop's see for the good of the dead men's souls. When news of this wreck comes to Norway, Arnald's kinsmen sail to Greenland and make a request to the bishop for Arnbjörn's inheritance, which the bishop refuses. This decision leads to a feud between the Greenlanders and Norwegian merchants, who at this time were present in great numbers in Greenland; the feud ends with a battle in which some of the men from both sides are killed, among them Einarr Sokkason. These events took place in the years 1124–1136.

There is every reason to believe that Einars þátr Sokkasonar was composed by a man who had access to oral sources from both sides, the Greenlandic and the Norwegian. The þátr contains quite a number of personal names and place-names, and the description of events and circumstances is frequently detailed to such an extent that one might conclude that some people who experienced these events were still alive when the þátr was composed. There are some inconsistencies in the narration, but otherwise the þátr is readable and well written. The author is unknown, but there are some striking similarities in style and vocabulary between the þátr and Morkinskinna, in particular Morkinskinna's insert from *Hryggjarstykki*, indicating that the þátr probably dates from the late 12th century.


Olafur Halldórsson

[See also: Flateyjarbók; Morkinskinna; þátr]

Eiríks saga rauða see Vinland Sagas

Eiríks saga viðforla ("The Saga of Eiríkr the Far-traveler") is a short Icelandic saga, written probably around 1300 by an anonymous author. The story tells of Eiríkr, son of King Prándr of Óland (Trondheim) in Norway, who makes a Christmas vow to find the heathen Óðins ákr ("pasture of immortality"). On his
journey south and east, he stops in Constantinople, where he is taught about theology, geography, and cosmology by the king, and where he converts to Christianity. Eiríkr also learns that Öðáins akr is identical to the Christian earthly paradise and is told where to seek it. He continues his journey and comes to a river, beyond which he sees a beautiful country. In an attempt to pass the bridge leading there, Eiríkr is swallowed by a dragon guarding the bridge, and passes through darkness into a place he believes is paradise. However, in a dream conversation with his guardian angel, he is rewarded him for his toil. Given the choice of staying or returning, he chooses to go back to Norway in order to prepare the people there for the acceptance of the Christian faith. Ten years after his return, he is carried off by the spirit of God.

The saga exists in three medieval versions, A, B, and C, and is preserved in more than fifty MSS, the oldest of which is the B-manuscript AM 657c 4to (ca. 1350). All versions go back to one written original, and even though the C-version is extant only in (ca. 1350). All versions go back to one


tHelle Jensen

[See also: Barlaams ok Josephats saga, Elucidarius, Formaldarsögur, Konráðs saga keisaranorson; Visionary Literature]

Eiríksdrápa see Þorð Kolbeinsson

Eiríksmál ("The Lay of Eiríkr"), a panegyric poem in honor of the late Norwegian Viking king Eiríkr blóðæx ("blood-axe") Haraldson, has been handed down to us in Fagrskinna (Red. A) and one stanza in the MSS of Snorri's Edda. Unlike Hákonarmál, Eiríksmál is anonymous. Its brevity in comparison to Hákonarmál has led to the assumption that the stanzas preserved are no more than a fragment (cf. Hollander 1932–33).

The poem consists of one single scene taking place in Valholl, a conversation among Öðinn, Bragi, the god of poetry, and the hero Sigmundr. After a dream about preparations for a feast, Öðinn is now waiting for Eiríkr. When Eiríkr arrives with a loud noise, Bragi thinks that the god Baldr is coming back. Öðinn tells him that it is not Baldr but Eiríkr, whom he has chosen to be one of his warriors in Valholl. Sigmundr, who is assigned to welcome Eiríkr, asks the question that certainly also moved Eiríkr's followers: Why did Öðinn withhold victory from him? The answer hints at the imminent Ragnarök, embodied in the grey wolf who is threatening the gods' dwellings. The last stanzas contain the welcoming of Eiríkr, who gloriously marches in, followed by five kings, perhaps killed with or by him.

Fagrskinna relates that after the death of Eiríkr blóðæx during the battle of Stainmoor (Westmorland, England, 954), the king's widow ordered a poem to be made for his obsequies. Scholars have questioned whether this information is historically true. If one accepts the information given in Fagrskinna, the poem can be dated to the year 954. The language, strongly influenced by Anglo-Saxon (cf. Hofmann 1955) suggests that the poet lived in the Danelaw for a considerable time. But some scholars (Wadstein 1895, von See 1963) believe the poem is an imitation of Hákonarmál. In this case, it must have been written during the reign of Eiríkr's sons in Norway (after 961, the fall of Hákon göði ("the good") Haraldson). Their main arguments are the more archaic conception of Valholl in Hákonarmál and the higher poetic quality attributed to that poem (cf., however, Wolf 1969, Marold 1972).

The poem is one of the "eddic poems," the others being Hákonarmál and Haraldskvæði. It differs in several respects from the skaldic panegyrics. The metrical form of the stanzas (lómymrðlag and ljóðaluþatr) is typical of epic poetry, as is the scenic presentation of the events in dialogues. The vocabulary and the style also distinguish the poem from skaldic poetry.

The fact that Eiríkr was a baptized Christian did not prevent the poet from using the conception of the dead hero's glorious reception in Valholl as a means to praise the fallen Viking king. None of the dark sides of Öðinn as god of the dead is mentioned here, as is the case with Hákonarmál. The poem does not stress the terrible god, who himself inflicts death upon his own heroes, a characteristic trait of the "warriors of Öðinn." The emphasis lies on the hero's triumphant entry to Valholl as well as the eschatological theme of Ragnarök and the last battle against the monsters, for which Öðinn is gathering his heroes. By including these themes, the poem overcomes the terror of death, giving it a sense of purpose.
EIRÍKSMÁL

Eirspennill presents Sverris saga, Bogulnas sagor, and Hâkonar saga in condensed and abbreviated versions. Eirspennill takes care to leave out everything that may be filled in by an imaginative reader: the protagonist's thoughts and reflections, motives for deeds done, explanations of the purpose of actions performed, and various minor circumstances. A few of the omissions and changes in Sverris saga were evidently made with a view to eliminating any doubt as to Sverri's royal ancestry.

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Eldar Saga see Eldar Poetry

Elis saga ok Rásamundu ("The Saga of Elis and Rósamunda") is an Old Norse adaptation of an Old French chanson de geste, Elie de Saint Gille. The saga appears to derive from an earlier (probably 12th-century) version of the work than that preserved in the single extant French MS, BN 25516, dating from the 13th century. The first fifty-nine chapters of Elis saga are found, along with Strengleikar, in the Norwegian MS De la Gardie 4-7 fol. (ca. 1250). The explicit to this section names King Håkon Håkonarson (r. 1217–1263) as the commissioner of the work and the writer as "abbot Robert," probably to be identified with the "brother Robert" to whom the composition of Tristrams saga is attributed. The next eleven chapters, which deviate from the contents of the French Elie, are found only in Icelandic MSS, principally Stock. perg. 4to no.6 (ca. 1400), Stock. perg. fol. no.7, and AM 533 4to (both 15th century). These MSS provide Elis saga with a continuation and a second conclusion after the somewhat abrupt ending of the Norwegian text. They were probably inspired by the closing reference in ch. 59 to the further trials of Elis and Rósamunda, which are said to precede a happy outcome, but are not recorded ("på er æggi å bök þessi skrifat").

Elis saga is written in the "court style" of a number of translated rídlarinsögur and marked by a high degree of alliteration. The retention of the narrating persona of the French source, with its initial direct address to the audience and later appeal for attention, is an unusual feature.
The saga combines the theme of Christian-pagan conflict, characteristic of French epic, with motifs more typical of original Icelandic *riddarasögur*, particularly in the last eleven chapters. As a whole, *Elís saga* conforms to the pattern of Exile-Testing-Return found in many medieval romances. The story concerns the testing of the newly dubbed Elís, who refuses a reconciliation and goes into exile after a quarrel with his elderly father, Duke Julis of helga Egidie (French St. Gille). Julis has publicly questioned his son’s chivalric ability and been proved wrong. In the manner of a hero of chivalric romance, Elís travels alone, undergoing a series of tests of strength and courage that will provide ultimate refutation of his father’s unwarranted criticism and eventually lead to marriage with the princess Rósmunda and a triumphant return to France. Elís begins by overcoming the heathen guards of four French knights, among them Vilhjalmr of Orengiborg (French Guillaume d’Orange), who have been taken prisoner after the defeat of the French by the advancing forces of Maskalbret. Captured by the enemy after a heroic stand, Elís escapes, and, in an episode more characteristic of romance than epic, acquires a helper figure in the form of Galopin, a reformed robber of noble birth. Wounded in a fight with a group of pagans beneath the walls of Sobriegif, Elís is rescued and tended by the beautiful Rósmunda, who is already enamored of the description she has heard of him from her father, King Maskalbret. In single combat, Elís defeats her unwelcome suitor, Julien (a pagan king, not Duke Julis of helga Egidie), refuses to marry the unconverted princess, and retires with her to a fortified tower to await reinforcements from France. Rósmunda agrees to be baptized after the inevitable defeat of the heathen. The Norwegian text ends here, at a point corresponding to line 2,417 in the French.

The Icelandic chapters describe Galopin’s trip to France to seek the aid of Duke Julis and Vilhjalmr, their arrival with an army, and resounding victory over the heathen, who surrender to Elís. At Rósmunda’s request, he shows mercy to Maskalbret and restores his kingdom to him. In the tradition of medieval romance, but in contrast to the source, where the hero’s role of godfather to the duly baptized Rosamonde prohibits marriage, they are wed. The Norwegian text ends here, at a point corresponding to line 2,417 in the French.

The author’s overtly partisan attitude toward the hero in his battles with the heathen, his fortitude, prowess, and mercy all serve to glorify Elís as a model knight and worthy Christian ruler.

**Elucidarius** (or Lucidarius) is a title given to two separate, popular medieval works. The first and older is a Latin *summa*, generally attributed to a monk calling himself Honorius Augustodunensis and dated to the very early 12th century. Written in the form of a dialogue between a master and a pupil, this *Elucidarius* was translated into a number of European languages, among them Old Icelandic and Swedish. The second work, entitled *Lucidarius*, was written in German in the late 12th century at the request of Henry the Lion. This work also uses the form of a dialogue between a master, who calls himself Lucidarius, and a student; it was translated into Danish, Dutch, Icelandic, and Bohemian. The German *Lucidarius* combines portions of Honorius’s *Elucidarius* with other sources to produce a vernacular *summa*.

Both works are divided into three books and cover the general topic of theology in the thorough encyclopedic fashion typical of the medieval *summa*. Specific topics include the nature of the Trinity, the Creation, the Incarnation and Redemption, the role of the Church and the sacraments, the Last Judgment, and the end of the world. The German *Lucidarius* contains a lengthy survey of world geography in the first book, which is considerably shortened in the Danish translation. No doubt because they give simple and reassuring answers to a large number of common questions, both works achieved a popularity as reference sources among the unlearned laity that continued even after the Reformation. Among the earliest translations of Honorius’s work into a European vernacular must have been the Old Icelandic *Elucidarius*. The oldest extant MS of this text, thought to be a copy of a copy of an original, is dated to around 1200. The MS evidence does not tell us clearly whether the original translator was an Icelander or a Norwegian. There is no complete version of the text in Old Icelandic, but portions of the translation, ranging in size from thirty-three leaves to a single paragraph, and in date from approximately 1200 to the 16th century, are preserved in eight parchment MSS. The two oldest defective MSS are extensive. AM 674 4to, dated around 1200, consists of thirty-three leaves and was undoubtedly copied
in Iceland, possibly from a Norwegian original. AM 675 4to, which now constitutes the third part of the Hauskö, is dated to the early 14th century and consists of sixteen leaves. The following six Icelandic MSS contain portions of the text: AM 544 4to (early 14th century); AM 229 IV fol. (late 14th century); AM 685b 4to (second half of the 15th century); AM 685d 4to (second half of the 15th century); AM 238 XVIII fol. (16th century); AM 238 XIX fol. (15th century).

The Swedish translation of Honorius's work exists in two versions. The older, entitled Lucidarius, is extant in fragmentary form in the paper MS Cod. Holm D 4, housed in the Royal Library in Stockholm, and was written around 1430–1440. The younger version, entitled Elucidarius, covers the entire original text. It was translated in 1487 by the monk Jøns Rack (or Budde) in the cloister Nådendal, and is found in the paper MS A 58 4to in the Royal Library in Stockholm.

The German Lucidarius was probably translated into Danish around the turn of the 14th century. It exists in two versions: an older version found in the paper MS AM 76 8vo from the end of the 15th century, as well as in a printed edition by Gottfried of Ghem; and a younger, shortened version suitable for a Protestant audience, published about 1534 in Roskilde and edited by the printer Hans Barth. The Icelandic translation is extant in two as yet unpublished MSS from the 17th century and later.


Kaaren Grimstad

[See also: Bible; Eiriks saga völflora; Encyclopedic Literature; Hauskö]

Elves see Supernatural Beings

Encomium Emmae reginae (or Gesta Cnutonis regis) deals principally with Knud (Cnut) the Great and his progress to the English throne. It also tells something about Emma as Knud's queen, but nothing about her as the widow of King Æthelred II, Knud's adversary. Commissioned by Emma, the book was written in Latin prose around 1040–1041, probably in the monastery of St. Bertin in the city of St. Omer in Artois (Emma had been a refugee in Bruges). The text bore no title originally. The main MS (BL Add. 33241) and a number of copies are preserved. Its value as a historical source is debatable, because the narrative is highly biased in an effort to glorify Knud and conceal Emma's connection with Æthelred, as well as to denounce Harald, Knud's illegitimate son by Ælfgyfu. The precise purpose of the text with respect to the relationship between Hardacnut, Emma's son by Knud, and Edward the Confessor, her son by Æthelred, remains open to debate. The text was written at a time when Emma had followed Hardacnut back to England, where he reigned only two years, until 1042. The last year, he reigned together with his half-brother, Edward the Confessor. This fact (but not Hardacnut's death) is recorded in an addition to the main MS. As the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records (C1043, D1041 [1043]), tension rose between Emma and Edward because of her lack of support of his claims, by 1043 leading to King Edward's dispossession of his mother. As the bias in the text lies more in concealing some of the truth than in flagrant lying, some of the historical information it conveys may perhaps be trusted.


Søren Balle

[See also: England, Norse in; Knud (Cnut) the Great]

Encyclopedic Literature. The medieval encyclopedia presented the arts and sciences that the Greeks considered essential to a liberal education in a form acceptable to the Christian Church. It was not arranged alphabetically, as modern encyclopedias are, but to act as a repertory of information on all branches of knowledge, but concentrated on presenting a digest of all the arts.

In the period up to the 12th century, the two most influential Christian encyclopedists in western Europe were Isidore of Seville and Bede. Isidore's two major works in this field, the Etymologiae (ca. 600) and the De natura rerum (ca. 613), particularly the former, were widely known and used. There is some evidence that the Etymologiae was the ultimate source of certain Icelandic encyclopedic writings, including some of the texts in the encyclopedic section of Hauskö.

The Etymologiae sive origines sets out in twenty books a succinct summary of the classical inheritance in the liberal arts, like grammar, music, and mathematics, as well as fundamental knowledge in fields that included the natural sciences, like geography, lists of the races and nations of men, kinds of animals, precious stones, and minerals, and the nature of agriculture and warfare. In De natura rerum, Isidore attempted a reconciliation of pagan science with Christian allegory. He was followed by the Anglo-Saxon scholar Bede, who, in a work of the same title from around 703, adapted classical natural science to the stringent re-
quirements of the monastic vocations. He incorporated the study of natural science into that section of the curriculum dealing with computus, the reckoning of times, seasons, and astronomical occurrences, and in other of his works introduced elements of natural science into the genre of the exegetical biblical commentary, especially on the Book of Genesis. Hence, in Icelandic MSS as well as in those from other parts of western Europe, encyclopedic writing may appear in a variety of contexts and has connections with diverse bodies of knowledge, including biblical commentary, the lapidary, and the treatise on regions of the world and their inhabitants.

Elements of the classical encyclopedic tradition were also transmitted to the Middle Ages through a number of classroom sources, including glosses on hard words and unfamiliar terms, problems in the tradition of hexameral exegesis, and brief catalogues of encyclopedic subjects in works like Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a text that was probably known in medieval Iceland. The ordering of the traditional encyclopedic subject matter in these and other medieval texts still bore a close relationship to that of the classical treatises, most of which were directly or indirectly modeled on Aristotle's *Meteorologica*.

In the 12th century, there arose a renewed interest in scientific inquiry, both for its own sake and for the light it might shed on the mysteries of the Book of Genesis and the nature of the cosmos. Thus, old myths and new science were often brought together by commentators on the sacred page, and the encyclopedia received a new lease on life in a more up-to-date form. We may detect its influence in writings as diverse as Bernardus Silvestris's *Cosmographia* (ca. 1147–1148), the *Speculum historiale* of Vincent of Beauvais (ca. 1190–1264), and the *Elucidarius* and *Imago mundi* (De imagine mundi) of Honorius Augustodunensis (ca. 1080–ca. 1137). The last two were extremely popular works known in Iceland, and several translations of the *Elucidarius*, more or less complete, exist in medieval Icelandic MSS. The *Elucidarius* was the only medieval Latin handbook translated into Old Norse in its entirety, but most other important encyclopedias and compendia seem to have been known in Iceland to some extent and were used by authors as sources both for scholarly knowledge and for the edifying or historical tales contained in them (others include Pliny's *Naturalis historia*, Solinus's *Collectanea rerum memorabilium*, Hrabanus Maurus's *De rerum naturis*, Lambert's *Liber floridus*, and Peter Comestor's *Historia scholastica*). It seems, for example, most likely that the author of *Stjórnriddari*, the voluminous Old Norse Bible compilation, made use of all the above-named authors apart from Pliny, Lambert, and Hrabanus, but even these may have been known to some Icelandic scholars, possibly acquainted with them through various *florilegia*, if not directly.

Some encyclopedic writing appears in a group of Icelandic MSS that date from around 1200 or a little earlier. These texts are thus among the very earliest translations from Latin into Old Icelandic and include parts of *Verulamia saga*, the earliest MS of the Icelandic *Elucidarius*, AM 674a 4to, and the oldest parts of Gks 1812 IV 4to, which includes a treatise on computus with accompanying encyclopedic glosses. It seems likely that several other seminal encyclopedic works were translated into Icelandic during the late 12th century, even though we now know only fragments of them from much later MSS. In addition, a recent study of the *Edda* (ca. 1225) of Snorri Sturluson has indicated that encyclopedic writings probably had a formative influence on both the content and arrangement of material in that work, especially in *Gylfaginning* (Clunies Ross 1983).

Whereas the Old Norse *Elucidarius* is a rather close translation of the Latin dialogue of the same name, Icelandic compilers often found their own means of producing compendia combining both native Old Norse works and translations of Latin texts, rather than by direct translation of an existent Latin work. There are two major types of medieval encyclopedic literature: the collections and compendia aimed at producing micro-libraries; and the descriptions or “mirrors” of the whole world, represented by the voluminous continental encyclopedias of the 12th and especially 13th centuries. Medieval Norwegian and Icelandic authors seem to have been more interested in the former.

Traces of attempts at reproducing encyclopedic knowledge are to be found in the Norwegian *Konungs skuggsjá* (ca. 1260). This didactic dialogue combines chapters on secular topics (such as the shape of the world, the climatic zones, the geography and natural history of Iceland, Greenland, and Ireland, and the duties of traders and courtiers) with stories from the Old Testament and prayers, thereby creating a catechism of the basic secular and religious knowledge suitable for a Norwegian prince.

*Hauksbók* (1306–1308) contains a number of Old Norse translations of Latin historical works (like the *Trefjumaranna saga*, a translation of Dares Phrygius's *De excidio Troiae historia*, and the *Breca sögur*, an Old Norse version of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*, including the poem *Merlinsögur* by Gúni and Leifsson, a translation of Geoffrey's *Book 7*), as well as native Icelandic historical works (*Laundrátnamábók*, *Kristni saga*, *Eiríks saga rauda*). Haukr also included (though possibly at a later date) the poem *Voluspá*, probably because of its summary of heathen cosmology and because he seems to have known the encyclopedias of Hrabanus or, more likely, Lambert, which also include prophetic poetry. To deal with Christian cosmology, he copied the Old Norse *Elucidarius* into his work. The rest of *Hauksbók* is given over to translations and compilations of Latin scholarly texts: a short cosmography and a plan of Jerusalem, a list of marvels of the East, an algorism, texts on computistics, and a lapidary. Jón Helgason (1960: xii–xiv) has summarized the contents of the encyclopedia section of *Hauksbók* and has noted that some of the texts of this 14th-century compilation are to be found in older MSS like Gks 1812 4to (item 1, on the course of the sun) and AM 673a 4to from around 1200 (item k, on the rainbow). The item on the course of the sun also serves to demonstrate that the Icelandic encyclopedic tradition was not entirely derivative but could generate original observations; the piece gives an account of Stjórnú-Oddi's original observations; the piece gives an account of Stjórnú-Oddi's astronomical observations in the north of Iceland. Christian religious learning plays a very minor part in this "gentleman's library" and is represented only by a few sermons and a dialogue between soul and body, a translation of another Latin text.

More religious lore is to be found in AM 764 4to (14th century, still unedited), which presents a mixture of historical and geographical writings (a short history of the world, extracts from Nennius's *Historia Brittonum*, annalistic notes, two versions of a cosmography) and saints' lives (*Remigius saga*, *Malcus saga*), as well as a substantial number of religious exempla.

A strong interest in natural history is the distinguishing feature of a small Old Norse handbook in AM 194 8vo, which, apart from annals, contains a great number of short texts comprising Old Norse writings on geography (a brief cosmography, a description of paradise, Abbot Nikulás's itinerary to the Holy Land, the origin of nations, marvels of the East), on history (the ages of the world, the Councils of the Church), and on computistics, but also on natural history itself (e.g., stones, snakes, springs, rivers) and
medicine. Although AM 194 8vo was written in 1387, most of its
texts stem from the early 13th century at the latest. Abbot Nikulaš's
itinerary dates from the years between 1159 and 1159.

Fragments of an encyclopedic collection are preserved as part of
the MS GKs 1812 4to. This collection appears to have been
modeled on one of the few large illustrated encyclopedias, the
earliest known MS of which is an 11th-century codex of Hrabanus
Maurus’s De rerum naturis; these were followed by the 12th-cen-
tury encyclopedias like Lambert’s Liber floridus and Herrad of
Landberg’s Hortus deliciarum. This Old Norse MS of thirty-six
parchment leaves contains remnants of three older MSS, written
by four hands between 1200 and 1350; the two younger parts still
contain over twenty illuminations depicting the twelve signs of the
zodiac and four constellations, as well as a number of astronomi-
cal drawings (e.g., concerning the phases and the eclipse of
the moon and the course of the planets) and also the three oldest
existing examples of Old Norse world maps (mappae mundi),
including a double-page map with well over 100 entries as well as
a small map of climatic zones. These fragments of varying age,
which also contain a schematic division of the seven liberal arts
and a number of combinatoric and annalistic texts, were bound
together in the later Middle Ages, but are in great part most likely
the remains of copies of a more voluminous encyclopedic codex
written in the late 12th century. Other fragments of copies of this
Old Norse illustrated encyclopaedia are found in AM 732b 4to and
in AM 736 1 & III 4to.

Additional encyclopedic texts are of varying MS age, mostly
from the 14th and 15th centuries. Nevertheless, many of them
probably had older exemplars, like the 15th-century AM 685d
4to, which is a free translation of the first part of Honorius’s
Imago mundi (1:1), where we find reference to the Platonic idea of
the cosmic egg. An Icelandic translation of the Imago mundi is likely
to have been made in the 12th century, and there seems to be a
close correspondence between the Imago mundi and some parts of
Snorra Edda.

Some of the cosmographical, astronomical, and other early
scientific texts included in these Old Norse handbooks certainly
date back to the 12th and early 13th century and were copied as
independent texts in dozens of MSS down to the 18th century, but
few other attempts were made to gather them in encyclopedic
collections.

In all probability, medieval Icelandic knowledge of encyclo-
pedic writings is likely to have been more extensive than the often
fragmentary MS remains would indicate.

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Margaret Clunies Ross and Rudolf Simæk

[See also: Breта сага; Conversion; Eiríks saga rauda;
Euckaruns; Hauksbók; Konungs skuggsjá; Landsmambók;
Merlinusspí, Snorra Edda; Sjóm; Trjóumanna saga; Véraldar
saga, Vinland Map; Volsuşpa]

England, Norse in. The history of Anglo-Saxon England is
marked by over two centuries of Viking raids and Scandinavian
settlement, culminating in the ascendency of Sven Haroldsson
(Forkbeard) to the throne in 1013 and of his younger son, Knud
(Cnut) the Great, in 1016–1035 and ending with the successive
reigns of Knud’s sons, Harald and Hardacnut (d. 1042). The Anglo-
Saxon Chronicle records the first attack by Norwegians in the
entry from 787 (789), when three ships from “Hereða lande”
(Hørdalând) put to shore near Portland and their companies killed
the reeve who came to question them. The next raids followed in
rapid succession: Lindisfarne in 793, Jarrow in 794, and Iona in
795. Alcuin, in a letter to King Æthelred, wrote of the attack upon
the monastery at Lindisfarne: “Lo it is nearly 350 years that we and
our fathers have inhabited this most lovely land, and never before
has such terror appeared in Britain as we have now suffered from
a pagan race, nor was it thought that such an inroad from the sea
could be made. Behold, the church of St Cuthbert spattered with
the blood of priests of God, densoiled of all its ornaments; a place
more venerable than all in Britain is given as a prey to pagan
peoples” (English Historical Documents, p. 842). In a section of
the Historia regum, the account of the early raid drawn from Simeon
of Durham’s History of the Church of Durham reiterates more
forcefully Alcuin’s description: “In the same year the pagans from
the northern regions came with a naval force to Britain like sting­
ning hornets and spread on all sides like fearful wolves, robbed,
tore and slaughtered not only beasts of burden, sheep and oxen,
but even priests and deacons, and companies of monks and nuns.
And they came to the church of Lindisfarne, laid everything waste
with grievous plundering, trampled the holy places with polluted
steps, dug up the altars and seized all the treasures of the holy
church. They killed some of the brothers, took some away with
them in fetters, many they drove out, naked and loaded with
insults, some they drowned in the sea” (EHD, p. 273).
These early raids stand as isolated instances. But beginning in 835, England found itself under constant threat of attack by Danish armies, commencing with a raid on the Isle of Sheppey. Danish armies wintered on the Isle of Thanet in 850 and on Sheppey in 854. The period from 835 to 865 shows at least twelve raids in various parts of the country. But the autumn of the year 865 saw the arrival of the "Great Army," as the Chronicle states, from East Anglia, including among its leaders the sons of Ragnarr loðbrók ("hairy-breeces"), and initiating a campaign that would lead to Danish victory over the territory. Using East Anglia as a base, the invading force equipped itself, and within the next twelve months embarked on a campaign to conquer Northumbria. Where earlier attackers established winter quarters at river basins or offshore sites, the army of 865 was continually on the move each autumn and was now attacking vital centers within the Anglo-Saxon kingdom (Brooks 1978: 9): York in 866 (with its defeat in March 867), Nottingham in 867–868, York again in 868–869, Thetford in 869–870, Reading in 870–871, followed by a movement into the Berkshires, where the invaders encircled West Saxon troops led by the ealdorman and joined by larger forces under Alfred and King Æthelred. The Anglo-Saxon victory was short-lived, for soon afterward they were defeated by the Danes in a second encounter (Blair 1977: 71–2, Stenton 1971: 249–9). Subsequent attacks were launched by the Danes against London in 871–872, Torksey in 872–873, and Repton in 873–874. During the nine-year period of 865–874, the Danish army operated as a united force, moving between East Anglia and Northumbria and leading southwest from East Anglia to Wessex and thence to Mercia. In 874, the Danish host split into two forces. One force, under the leadership of Halfdan, turned toward establishing settlements, and the Chronicle for 876 relates that the Danish leader "shared out the lands of Northumbria, and they were engaged in ploughing and in making a living for themselves" (876A) in the area of southern Northumbria corresponding to modern Yorkshire. The remainder of the Great Army traveled south to Cambridge in 874–875 and began a series of renewed attacks upon Wessex at Wareham in 875–876, Exeter in 876–877, Chippenham in 877–878, and Cirencester in 879–880. The diminished Danish forces met with the West Saxon army at Wareham and were compelled upon their oath and with the exchange of hostages to leave Wessex, only to slip away in the night toward Exeter. Anticipated Danish reinforcements were destroyed when the fleet encountered storms off Swanage, and in 877 the army entered Gloucester in Mercia. Under the leadership of Guthrum, the Danish army again launched an invasion of Wessex in 878, forcing King Alfred (r. 871–899) to fall back to Selwood and establish a stronghold at Athelney. In joining with forces from Somerset, Wiltshire, and Hampshire, Alfred engaged the enemy in a decisive and victorious battle at Edington. After a brief interval during which the dispirited Danish forces retreated to Chippenham, Guthrum agreed to be baptized and to remove his forces from Wessex, finally establishing them in East Anglia.

The victory at Athelney did not bring an end to Viking attacks. In 884, Rochester was attacked, but the enemy was fended off with aid from Alfred's troops; and the threat remained that marauding Viking troops would be given support from Guthrum's army. Throughout this period, Alfred actively set about fortifying southern England, building fortresses and using earlier Roman walls, as at Bath and Winchester, as part of the defensive works. The year 886, however, saw Alfred taking the initiative and securing London, followed by a treaty between Alfred and Guthrum. The treaty established the boundaries dividing Anglo-Saxon and East Anglian territories. Beginning at the Thames estuary, the boundary extended west along the Thames, then northerly along the River Lea, thence north to Bedford, where it turned westward to follow the River Ouse to Watling Street, and continuing northwest across the country. The territory north of the boundary became known as the "Danelaw." Alfred consolidated his position by entering into an alliance with Æthelred of Mercia, to whom he entrusted the defense of London. Threats from Danish armies nevertheless remained a constant reminder of the nebulosity of the boundary line. Compounding the uneasy situation was the presence of Danish forces off the southeastern coast who were meeting with increased resistance on the Continent.

Following Alfred's death in 899, his son, Edward the Elder, ascended the throne of Wessex. By the end of his reign (899–924), Edward succeeded in annexing to Wessex all Danish holdings south of the Humber. In 909, Edward took the offensive against the Northumbrian Danes and secured a peace on his own terms. The next year, however, the Danes, seeing that Edward was in Kent, harried extensively throughout Mercia, but were defeated near Tattenhall in Staffordshire. With the northern armies severely weakened, Edward could consolidate his movement against the southern Danes. An extended series of campaigns, coupled with the establishment of fortifications, extended Edward's control, and at his sister Æthelflaed's death in 918 he was chosen king of the Mercians. The remaining four Danish armies capitulated in the same year. The climax of Edward's consolidation of power came in 920 with the submission of the Scots under Constantine, the Scandinavians under Ragnald (Rognvaldr) of York, and the northern English under Ealdred of Bamborough, and also "of all the people of Northumbria, whether English, Danes, Norsemen, or others, and of the king of the Strathclyde Welsh and all his people" (Blair 1977: 81; cf. Stenton 1971: 333–5, Loyn 1977: 64).

Æthelstan (r. 924–939) extended Anglo-Saxon control farther west and north. In 927, his rule extended throughout Northumbria, including the Norse center at York. A decisive victory came in 937 in the battle of Brunanburh, where the combined forces of Olaf (Anlaf, Óláfr) Guthfrithson, ruler of Norse Dublin, Constantine, king of the Scots, and the king of the Strathclyde were routed. Although Olaf returned two years later and gained recognition from Edmund, Æthelstan's successor, of his overlordship of York and the Five Boroughs, his death in 941 allowed Edmund to recover his losses within the next three years. Edmund's death in 946, however, opened the gateway to Scandinavian rule of York once more: the Norwegian Eiríkr blóðøx ("blood-axe"), son of Haraldr hárfagri ("fair-hair"), gained control, followed by Olaf Sihtricson of Dublin, and by Eiríkr again, ending in 954. Eiríkr's death brought to a close Scandinavian power in the North and marked the beginning of a period of peace until renewed Scandinavian attacks in 980, two years after Æthelred Unræd ("unready, no-counsel") succeeded to the throne.

Following the death of King Eadred in 955, Edgar succeeded to the throne of Mercia and Northumbria, and at his brother Eadwig's death in 959 succeeded to the rest of the kingdom. Edgar's relationship with the Danelaw as expressed in his law code, IV Edgar, merits comment. Edgar was keenly aware of the autonomy of the Danelaw and that "for him to legislate for the Danelaw is a violation of legal privileges previously granted to that region" (Lund 1976: 184). IV Edgar does not legislate, but may in fact be confirmation of Danelaw privileges in recognition of support given him by the provinces (Lund 1976: 187), and thus ensure that he would
not encroach upon these rights. After setting forth general principles of rights, Edgar repeats his assurance of a policy of nonencroachment: "Further, it is my will that there should be in force among the Danes such good laws as they best decide on, and I have ever allowed them this and will allow it as long as my life lasts, because of your loyalty, which you have always shown to me. And I desire that this one decree concerning such an investigation shall be common to us all, for the protection and security of all the nation" (EHD, p. 400).

The differences between the laws governing the Danelaw and those of Wessex and Mercia can be seen most clearly in the imposition of fines, which were much higher in the Danelaw, and in determining certain penalties (Stenton 1971: 507; cf. Fenger 1972, Kristensen 1975). It is perhaps, in part, as a result of Edgar's official recognition of Danelaw autonomy and his acknowledgment that the Danish territory was an integrated part of the realm (Stenton 1971: 371; cf. Stenton 1970: 163-4) that peace between Danelaw and Wessex and English Mercia was maintained for so long.

After the death of Edgar in 975 and of his son and successor Edward in 978, Æthelred, Edgar's son by Ælffryth, succeeded to the throne; and in 980, a new wave of attacks commenced. Southwark was, the Chronicle states, "plundered by a pirate-army, and most of the population slain or imprisoned." The Isle of Thanet and Cheshire suffered raids in the same year; in 981, Devon and Cornwall were attacked, and in 982 Dorset (cf. Chronicle). The records are silent for the next six years, until 988, when the southwest was attacked. Ipswich followed in 991, as did Maldon, an encounter memorialized in the Old English poem The Battle of Maldon. It is significant that the Chronicle for the same year records the first payment of tribute to the attackers: "In this same year it was resolved that tribute should be given, for the first time, to the Danes, for the great terror they occasioned by the seacoast. That was the first 10,000 pounds." The payment of "danegeld" became a common means of buying off the invaders throughout Æthelred's reign. Between 991 and 1018, a total of about 219,500 pounds was paid as tribute; the largest sum, 72,000 pounds plus an additional 10,500, was paid in 1018 after the succession of Knud the Great (see the Chronicle for the years 991, 994, 1002, 1007, 1009, 1012, 1018).

It is possible, too, as Lund (1976) suggests, that Æthelred exacerbated the situation by encroaching upon the privileges of the Danelaw in his attempts to introduce English law there (193) and thereby effect greater centralization of government (189).

Viking attacks following the battle of Maldon came with swiftness and precision, with larger numbers of forces than England had witnessed in the past. The Chronicle records a long series of raids culminating in Knud's succession to the throne. In 994, the Vikings harried Essex, Kent, Sussex, and Hampshire, taking winter quarters in Southampton and exacting 16,000 pounds in tribute. For the year 997, the Chronicle records the invaders in Cornwall, Devon, Liddyford, and Tavistock, and moving into Dorsetshire and to the Isle of Wight in 998. The Chronicle for the year 998 paints a picture of low English morale and poor leadership in the face of the powerful and sustained Viking onslaught: "Thus in the end these expeditions [of the English troops] both by sea and land served no other purpose but to vex the people, to waste their treasure, and to strengthen their enemies." The sentiment is forcefully reiterated in the entry for the year 1011: "All these disasters befell us through bad counsels." Æthelred's attempts to deal with the attackers betray not a decisive plan of defense and attack, but a series of temporary measures, some perhaps unwisely undertaken, others coming too late to change the course of England's defeat. In 1002, Æthelred paid 24,000 pounds to the Viking fleet, and in the same year ordered that all Danes were to be slain: "This was accordingly done on the mass-day of St. Brice; because it was told the king, that they would beshrew him of his life, and afterwards all his council, and then have his kingdom without any resistance." The Chronicle report is confirmed by a royal decree that "all the Danes who had sprung up in this island ... were to be destroyed by a most just extermination" (EHD, pp. 545-7). In 1004, Sven Haroldsson arrived with his fleet in Norwich and Thetford. But it was not until 1008 that, as the Chronicle records, Æthelred systematically set out to have ships built, only to find his navy divided and fighting one another: "Thus lightly did they suffer the labour of all the people to be in vain" (Chronicle 1009). The following year saw raids on London (a failed attempt), Oxford, Thetford, Cambridge, Bedford, and Northampton. The Chronicle for the year 1011 sums up the extent of their devastation: "They had now overrun East-Anglia, and Essex, and Middlesex, and Oxfordshire, and Cambridgeshire, and Hertfordshire, and Buckinghamshire, and much of Northamptonshire; and to the south of the Thames, all Kent, and Sussex, and Hastings, and Surrey, and Berkshire, and Hampshire, and much of Wiltshire."

Under the leadership of Sven Haroldsson, the events of the last fifteen years of renewed Viking attacks came to a speedy resolution. In 1013, Sven's fleet sailed to Sandwich, thence around East Anglia into the Humber to Trent and Gainsborough, securing the submission of the Northumbrians, the people of Lindsey and of the Five Boroughs, and then all the army to the north of Watling Street, the dividing line between the Danelaw and the southern kingdom. Soon after, Oxford also submitted and later London, giving hostages and tribute. Æthelred sent Queen Emma and his sons Alfred and Edward (later the Confessor) to Normandy; Æthelred himself soon followed. The political situation was again to change dramatically with the death of Sven on February 3, 1014, leaving an open gateway for Æthelred's return: "Then sent the king hither his son Edward, with his messengers; who had orders to greet all his people, saying that he would be their faithful lord—and would better each of those things that they disliked—and that each of the things should be forgiven which had been either done or said against him; provided they all unanimously, without treachery, turned to him. Then was full friendship established, in word and in deed and in compact, on either side. And every Danish king they proclaimed an outlaw for ever from England" (Chronicle 1014). Æthelred returned to be acknowledged king once again; yet still he conceded to the attackers, paying 21,000 pounds to the army at Greenwich.

Sven's son Knud, meanwhile, having escaped to sea, soon returned to take the offensive, plundering in Sandwich in 1015, then in Dorset, Wiltshire, and Somerset. Æthelred lay ill at Corsham, leaving Edmund Ironside in command. But by then it was too late. Knud arrived in Mercia in 1016 with 160 ships and proceeded to Warwickshire. Edmund's efforts to gain the support of an army failed. Although Edmund was named king at his father's death in 1016, Knud's power was by now extensive and well matched against Edmund's. Peace was established between the two leaders, whereby Edmund was to rule Wessex and Knud Mercia and Northumbria. On November 30, 1016, however, Edmund died, and Knud succeeded to the throne of all England. For the next twenty-six years, England would remain under Danish rule.

Knud quickly applied himself to consolidating his power and
gaining the respect of the Church. After dispatching his enemies within the first year of his reign (see Chronicle for 1017), he married Æthelred’s widow, Emma. In 1018, he engaged Wulfstan to draft a new set of laws modeled on the code of Edgar. In 1023, we find Knud attending the translation of St. Ælfheah’s relics from London to Canterbury; in 1027, he visited Rome, issuing upon his return a letter reporting his journey, and reminding his subjects of his concern for their interests and of their obligations (EHD, pp. 414–6).

Along with his religious fervor, Knud remained a strong military leader. In 1019, he returned to Denmark to affirm his rule after the death of his brother, Harald, and again in 1023. In 1026 and 1028, he was forced to contend with possible attacks against Denmark from Sweden and Norway, ultimately gaining control of military leader. In 1019, he returned to Denmark to affirm his rule after Knud’s death, Magnús Óláfsson succeeded to the throne of Iceland, Knud’s consolidation of control was unimpeded, and in 1028 he invaded Scotland and secured the submission of Malcolm.

At Knud’s death, Harald, Knud’s son by Ælfgifu, was named king at a council meeting in Oxford in 1036, against the wishes of Emma and Earl Godwine, who supported the succession of Hardacnut, Knud’s son by Emma. Alfred, Æthelred’s son by Emma, arrived in England to visit his mother at Winchester, and was brutally tortured by Godwine. Harald was formally recognized as king in 1037. His death in 1040 cleared the way for Hardacnut’s succession; his reign was to last only until 1042. On June 8, 1042, Edward the Confessor, Æthelred’s son, came to the throne, thus bringing to an end Danish rule in England.

The effects of the Scandinavian presence in England were extensive, and can be most clearly observed through linguistic and place-name evidence. Linguistic influence is most clearly evidenced in loanwords, words showing semantic contamination, and words showing phonological influence. For example, English owes to Scandinavian influence such words as egg (Old Norse egg), loan (Old Norse lån), skin (Old Norse skín), call (Old Norse kalla), take (Old Norse taka), thrive (Old Norse þriva), thrust (Old Norse þrysta), and rotten (Old Norse rotinn), to name but a few. Semantic contamination is shown in Modern English dream, which derives its meaning not from Old English drým, which means “joy,” but from Old Norse draumar. Old English steorfan and swelcan, both meaning “to die,” eventually lost their initial meanings, while Modern English “to die” derived from Old Norse dýja, its adoption receiving support from Old English dead (adjective) and dead (noun). Among personal pronouns, Old Norse þær ‘they’ (nom. pl. masc.), þær ‘them’ (dat. pl.), and þær ‘their’ (gen. pl.) replaced Old English he ‘they’ (nom. acc. pl.), him ‘them’ (dat. pl.), and him ‘their’ (gen. pl.) (see Loyn 1977: 114–8, Baugh 1978: 96–106).

Personal names and place-names provide rich resources for the study of Scandinavian settlement. Place-names in -by and -borp, for instance, not only reveal Scandinavian influence, but can also be used to document different stages of settlement. The forms are ubiquitous in the Danelaw area. In Yorkshire, of 402 Scandinavian habitative names, 196 are in -by and 176 in -borp; in the East Midlands, of 467 names, 285 are in -by and 157 in -borp; and in the Northwest, of 246 names, 100 are in -by and nine in -borp (Fellows-Jensen 1985: 45). The evidence suggests that the first stage of Scandinavian colonization “is marked by the by’s, while the borp and many other habitative names seem to derive on the whole from a later period, when there was an increase in the amount of land under exploitation” (Fellows-Jensen 1972: 251). The evidence of place-names indicates active Scandinavian colonization, with settlers at times establishing new settlements or taking over preexisting English settlements and compounding a Scandinavian name with an English one (e.g., -tun), retaining the English names, or adopting new names. In her discussion of North Riding place-names, Fellows-Jensen concludes: “The majority of the hybrid and scandinavized names are borne by older English vills whose names were partially adapted by the Vikings, while the majority of the by’s mark the subsequent occupation by the Danes of the best available vacant land. A third stage in the Viking settlement, characterized by the exploitation of less favourable land, is marked by place-names in thorp” (1978: 38).

Although Scandinavian rule in England was short-lived, the more than 200 years of Scandinavian activity and influence contributed vitally to the development of English culture in the Middle Ages.

In its present state, Erex saga is the most abbreviated of the translated riddarasögur, and structurally the most divergent from its source. There is some reordering of the hero's adventures, with two more added (in ch. 10). Another innovation in the saga is an epilogue that gives a brief account of Erec's later career and that of his descendants. Erex saga is also distinguished from its source by the addition of a number of overtly didactic passages about the moral responsibilities of kings and noblemen, spoken by or otherwise attributed to a number of characters, including King Arthur. The work has fewer rhetorical embellishments than some of the other translated riddarasögur, but it does contain a relatively high proportion of present participles, a feature more characteristic of Latin than of Old Norse prose style.

The story concerns the early success, followed by a knightly lapse, self-imposed exile, and eventual reintegration into chivalric society of the Round Table knight Erec (Old Norse Erex), who succumbs to uxoriousness after his marriage to Enide (Old Norse Ívèn). Stung by criticism from his bride for his self-indulgent withdrawal from public life, he embarks with her on a hazardous journey, which tests his prowess to the full. Finally, with reputation restored and enhanced, he resumes his rightful place in the Arthurian world and succeeds to the throne of his father, King Lac (Old Norse Ílax).

Erex saga limits itself to the question of the hero's damaged reputation and shows no interest in Chrétien's broader subject, the proper role of love and marriage in the chivalric life. This restriction of theme in the saga tends to resolve ambiguities in Erec et Enide. Chrétien, for example, deliberately obscures Erec's motives for ordering Enide to accompany him on his travels and to remain silent in the face of approaching danger. The clear implication in the saga, however, is that she is joining him as an equal partner on the quest to regain his honor.

The saga's demystifying approach to the "courtly dilemma," i.e., the problem of reconciling the often conflicting demands of love and chivalry, is clearly demonstrated in its treatment of the last of the hero's adventures, the enigmatic "Joy of the Court" (Old Norse hirdar fagnadr). In this bizarre episode, Erecexdefeats a hitherto invincible knight whose sweetheart has compelled him to live with her in a walled garden and to remain there until he meets a challenger who can overcome him. In Chrétien's poem, this couple, whose selfish isolation parallels that of Erec and Enide in the early part of the work, seem to personify negative aspects of "courtly" love. The saga, however, rejects the love-inspired motive for their retreat and substitutes a simple social one: the aristocratic lady fears disgrace if anyone discovers that her lover is a mere knight.

In Erec et Enide, the hero's task is to find the proper balance between love and prowess, and to retrieve his honor. In Erex saga, he seeks only to restore his reputation. Whereas Chrétien is concerned with both the public life of his hero and heroine and the maturation of their relationship, the saga's interest is solely in the principles and demonstration of chivalric conduct.


Phillip Puliano


Tore Nyberg

[See also: Liturgy and Liturgical Texts; Miracles, Collections of; Monasticism; Saints' Lives]
Norwegian prose already in the first half of the 13th century, perhaps the main reason why the queen chose this very work for her intended gift. The dates 1308 and 1311–1312 may also be connected with certain important events in the history of the Swedish-Norwegian dynastic relations at that time. Eufemia was born a princess in Germany, and probably she had become acquainted with *knittel* poetry in her fatherland.

The European poetry of chivalry was known at an early time in Norway not only through *Yvain* but also through a number of other works, mainly French metrical romances, translated into Norwegian prose at the instance of King Hakon Hakonarson. But the *Eufemiavisorna* were the first representatives in Scandinavia of such literature in poetic form. They influenced to some extent the medieval literatures in the rest of Scandinavia, especially Denmark, where they were translated into Danish. In the later Swedish *knittel* epics of the Middle Ages, one can hear the echo of rhymes, formulas, and epithets introduced in the *Eufemiavisorna*.

The style, rhyme technique, and vocabulary of the *Eufemiavisorna* are to a great extent influenced by German patterns; the translator(s) must have been well acquainted with the culture of the South. Thus, French originals have had a surprisingly insignificant influence on the form of the *Eufemiavisorna*.

As suggested above, it is not quite certain whether all three poems were translated by the same person. According to V. Jansson (1945, summary, pp. 313–8), many facts speak in favor of the single-translator theory. Some details point to the possibility that the author-translator had a more than average interest in religion and was familiar with church services. Hence, it has been suggested that he was a priest.

Like the English adapters of the 13th and 14th centuries, the author of the *Eufemiavisorna* possessed a weak sensitivity to the subtle and refined aspects of courtly romance. The intricate analysis of the emotional life of characters, especially women, in the best French romances, was foreign to the author of the *Eufemiavisorna*. Instead, he was very fond of mainly sports, *torney, dyost* (**tournaments, jousts**), and the like, fights, grand assemblies, and vivid scenes in the knights’ castles. In short, the main themes of the *Eufemiavisorna* are adventures, fights, and love.

**Herr Ivan**, the oldest of the *Eufemiavisorna*, consists of no less than 6,645 lines. It describes the adventures of Ivan (Yvain), the bravest of the knights associated with King Arthur. In the presence of the queen, Ivan is scornfully accused by a fellow knight of having boasted while drunk of his intention to fight with a terrible knight, Wadein ræde (*"the red"*), the owner and guardian of a miraculous fountain. In secret, he rides away, comes to the fountain, wounds its owner mortally, and pursues him into his castle, where Wadein falls dead in the courtyard. A maid, Luneta, hides Ivan from the vengeful inhabitants of the castle. After a time, he comes to know the chaste Laudine, Wadein’s deeply mourning widow. He falls in love with the “fru(gha)" (*"noble lady") and succeeds in winning her with the help of the cunning Luneta. But he loses her again, because he departs, together with his friend and kinsman Gawain, in search of adventures, and does not keep his promise to return within a year. In despair, he roves about in the wilderness, but is brought back to his senses thanks to the help of a merciful “frugha" and her healing unguent. He regains his knightly honor through a long series of noble and heroic deeds, much helped by his faithful lion, whose love he had won by saving him from being killed by a serpent. The combined achievements of the lion and Luneta enable Ivan to win back both Laudine and his honored place at King Arthur’s court.

It is generally maintained that the Swedish translator used MSS both of the Old French *Yvain* and of the Old Norwegian *Iven*. The end of the poem states that it was translated *af valske tungo* (**"from the French language"**). The translator deals freely with his originals; he shortens, revises, and makes additions. The narration is more expansive in the latter part. The additions are often mechanical and especially frequent in rhyme position.

**Hertig Fredrik** (**av Normandie**), “Duke Frederic (**of Normandy**),” was written, according to its own declaration, in the year 1308, and comprises 3,310 lines. Like Ivan, the leading character, Duke Frederic, was one of the knights at the court of King Arthur. Once while hunting, he went astray and came to the realm of the dwarfs, who lived in a mountain. Like a medieval Gulliver, he helps their monarch, Malmir, win back his kingdom from rebellious vassals and restore feudal order in the state, which gradually develops into an ideal society in miniature. The grateful King Malmir gives Frederic a magic ring, capable of making people invisible. By means of that ring, Duke Frederic succeeds in entering a tower, where the king of Ireland had imprisoned his beautiful daughter, Flora. The invisible duke gets an opportunity to enjoy the favors of Flora. After a series of adventures and difficulties, he comes back to Normandy, bringing with him not only Flora but also a great fortune. Frederic and Flora, now married, become a good ruling couple, anxious about their subjects and the Church. Growing older, they become pious, and Flora enters a monastery.

It has been maintained that the poem was partly intended as a sort of King’s Mirror, demonstrating how the good ruler should and should not behave. Certainly, however, the poem was appreciated not only by regents for its descriptions of feasts, erotic pleasures, and other popular entertainments. On the whole, it is more artistic than its Swedish forerunner, *Herr Ivan*.

The end of the poem states that it was first translated *af valska jytta malm* (**"from French into German"**), at the instance of Emperor Otto. This information is generally accepted by scholars, although no German text is known.

**Flores och Blanzeflor**, the youngest and shortest of the *Eufemiavisorna*, consists of 2,192 lines, and was written *ij then timi liith for sen [Eufemia] do* (**a short time before Eufemia died**), which was in 1312. Flores (**"flower"**) is the son of the pagan king of "Apolis." During a ravaging expedition into Spain (**"the land of St. James"**), the king kills a French pilgrim, whose little daughter he brings with him back to his country. The girl is given the name Blanzeflor (**"white flower"**). She is brought up together with Flores. The two youngsters fall in love so passionately that they vow they will never be separated. Flores’s father, King Fenix, strongly disapproves of his son’s infatuation, because he has planned to marry him to a foreign princess. On a pretext, Flores is sent to a relative for some time, and Blanzeflor is handed over to a foreign merchant, who sells her to the king of Babylon. There, she is placed in his harem, and the king plans to make her his wife for the next year, at the end of which she will be killed in accordance with the king’s peculiar habit. Flores, however, returns to his parents, who tell him that Blanzeflor is dead. Desperate, he threatens to kill himself, and the parents are forced to tell him the truth. He sets off to find his beloved, and his search is successful. Helped by a man in Babylon, Darias, and by the *portinar* (**the guard at the castle gate**), he manages to gain access to Blanzeflor’s room in a tower, hidden in a basket of flowers. Unfortunately, the king happens to find the loving couple in bed. The situation is dangerous for Flores, but he saves both himself and Blanzeflor by killing in a tournament the most valiant of the knights at the court. Flores and Blanzeflor
are allowed to leave Babylon. They come home to Apolos, where
Flores's parents have recently died. Flores and Blanzeflor marry
and take over the government of the kingdom, soon distinguishing
themselves, like Frederic and Floria, as an ideal ruling couple,
introducing Christianity and establishing charitable foundations.
In the end, they entrust the government to their three sons, and
join a monastery and a nunnery, respectively.

The poem is based, as Herr Ivan partly is, mainly on an Old
Norwegian prose version of a French rhymed original, in this case a
roman d'aventure, Flore et Blancheflor, from the 12th century,
which, moreover, was the source of one of the stories in Boccaccio's
Decameron.

The Eufemiavisora are preserved, wholly or in part, in the
following MSS: Cod. Holm. D 4 (ca. 1410) [Iv, Fr, Fl]; Cod. Holm. D 4a (1457) [Iv, Fr, Fl]; Cod. Holm. D 3 (1476) [Iv, Fr, Fl]; Cod. Skokloster 156 (ca. 1450) [Iv]; Cod. Skokloster 115, 116 (ca. 1500) [Fr]; Cod. Holm. K 45 (ca. 1500) [Fr]; Cod. Holm. D 2 (ca. 1523) [Fr]; AM 191 fol. (1492) [Fl]. An old but very small
fragment of Flores from about 1350 is kept in the University
Library, Helsinki.

The Danish translations exist in the following MSS: Cod.
Holm. K 4 (ca. 1450) [Iv]; Cod. Holm. K 47 (ca. 1500) [Iv, Fr, Fl].
Furthermore, a now-lost Danish MS was used when Flores
was printed in 1504 and 1509. Since the Danish texts are independent
of any preserved Swedish MS, they are also valuable for the textual
consideration of the original Eufemiavisora.

Ed.: The Swedish Eufemiavisora have been edited twice in the series
Samlingar utgivna af Svenska fornskrift-sällskapet. The second set of
these editions are: Olson, Emil, ed. Flores och Blanzeflor. Kritisk
upplaga. Samlingar utgivna af Svenska fornskrift-sällskapet, 46. Lund:
Berilng, 1921; rpt. as Samlingar utgivna af Svenska fornskrift-sällskapet, 61;
Noreen, Erik, ed. Hertig Fredrik av Normandie. Kritisk upplaga på
grunvald af Codex Veredelianus. Samlingar utgivna af Svenska fornskrift-
sällskapet, 49. Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1927; Noreen, Erik, ed.
Herr Ivan. Kritisk upplaga. Samlingar utgivna af Svenska fornskrift-
sällskapet, 50. Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1931; a short extract from
Herr Ivan is to be found in Noreen, Erik, ed. Fornsvenska läsebok. Andra
bearbetade upplagan utgiven af Svens Berson. Lund: Gleerup, 1962,
p. 62–70 [Ur Herr Ivan: Kalgewranwz' berättelse], the Danish translations
of the Eufemiavisora are edited in Brandt, C. J. Romantisk
Digtning från Middelalderen. 3 vols. Copenhagen: Samfundet till den
danske Literaturen Fremme, 1869–77 [Ivan Lævridder, vol. 1, pp. 1–
204; Hertig Fredrik af Normandi, vol. 1, pp. 204–84; Flores och
rörande Eufemiavisora. 1. Tekniskt kritiska anmärkningar till Flores och
Blanzeflor. 2. Bidrag till Hertig Fredriks teckniskt. 3. Tekniskt
studier över Herr Ivan. Skriften utgivna av Kungl. Humanistiska
Vetenskapssamfundet i Uppsala 22, 22.7, 26.1. Uppsala: Almqvist &
Wiksell, 1923, 1927, 1929; Sawicki, Stanislaw. Die Eufemiavisor.
Studien zur nordischen Reimliteratur des Mittelalters. Skriften utgivna
av Kungl. humanistiska vetenskapssamfundet i Lund, 28. Lund: Gleerup,
Uppsalas Universitets Årsskrift 1945:8. Uppsala: Lundequist; Leipzig:
Harrassowitz, 1945; Frappierjean. Des lettres, 50. Paris: Hatier-Boivin,
1957; Hunt, Tony. "Herr Ivan

**Exempla** are short tales with explicit moralistic or didactic in­
terpretations. The basic story could be drawn from history, leg­
cend, the Bible, saints' lives, classical or vernacular literature,
folktales, and even from fables, bestiaries, lapidaries, and pro­
verbs. Exempla were used by oriental and classical writers as well
as by the early Fathers of the Christian Church. Pope Gregory the
Great especially recommended the use of exempla and employed
them in his homilies and in the Dialogues. Although collections of
exempla are known from the beginning of the 12th century (e.g.,
Petrus Allonisi’s *Disciplina clericalis* and William of Malmsbury’s
*Gesta regum Anglorum*), it was not until the advent of the preaching
friars, who used exempla in their sermons (e.g., Jacques de
Vitry, *Sermones vulgares*, *Sermones communes*), that the popular­
ity of the exemplum burgeoned all over Europe. From the 13th
century, numerous collections of exempla were produced that
circulated around the Continent, including Caesarius of Heisterbach
(*Dialogus miraculorum*), Jacobus de Voragine (*Legenda aurea*),
Vincent of Beauvais (*Speculum historiale*), and Etienne de Bouron
(*Tractatus de diversis materia praedicabilibus*).

Translations of Gregory's Dialogues served as an introduc­tion
the genre to the genre in England by the late 9th century, and in
Scandinavia, where the Dialogues were translated into Norwegian
by 1150, although preserved only in Icelandic MSS after 1200.
Other early West Norse examples of the genre in the vernacular
occur in *Konungs skuggsjá*, where the exempla are drawn chiefly
from the Bible, and in the miracles of the Virgin Mary. In East
Norse, the exempla continued to be preserved in Latin with little
divergence from the standard continental collections. A Low Ger­
man source, *Seelentrost* (ca. 1350), was responsible for 15th-
century translations into Old Swedish (*Sieluna thwst*) and into
Old Danish (*Siaela transt*).

The influence of the preaching friars in Europe led to in­
creased popularity of the exemplum in Scandinavia as well. Col­
clections of exempla were preserved especially in Iceland, where
over 150 such tales in the vernacular have been found and edited,
although several different exempla can sometimes be found grouped
under one rubric. The texts themselves often refer to the exempla
by different names, including *sælentyr* (e.g., abjur, *dæmir*,
exemplum, *frösóg*, *fróbagir*, and *ævisuga*), but they were evi­
dently felt to be short tales quite distinct from the *járn* which
focused on local heroes, strong in the Germanic warrior tradition,
as opposed in the exemplum to foreign characters with obvious
weaknesses that allowed religious moralizing.

Close to two dozen complete and fragmentary vellum MSS
containing exempla are preserved in Iceland, although the num­
ber of medieval MSS as sources employed seems to have been
considerably smaller. Twenty-eight exempla are directly indebted
to the *Vita patrum*, and another fifty or so comprise a 15th-century
translation from a Middle English prose MS indebted to
*Handlyng Synne*, to the *Gesta Romanorum*, and to an expanded redaction
of Odo of Cheriton. Many of the other exempla were probably 14th-
century translations of a few Latin collections whose ultimate
sources were Caesarius of Heisterbach, Martin of Troppau, and
Vincent of Beauvais. Over a dozen Icelandic exempla appear to be
based on oral tradition, and some of these are attributed in the
MSS themselves to Jón Halldórsson, a Norwegian Dominican monk
who had studied in Paris and Bologna, and who left Bergen in
1323 to become bishop of Skálholt.

In Norway and Iceland, the exemplum also made its way
from religious works into the secular literature. Exempla could be
loosely attached to a saga (as in the beginning of just one MS of

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Gösta Holm

[See also: Flores saga ok Blänzelfor, Ívensa saga, Knitell(vers),
Riddarasögur]
Adonias saga), they could supply integrated episodes (e.g., chs. 13–15 in Viga-Glúms saga from exemplos nos. L and XC in Gering's edition; the Samarian and the flying-carpet interlude in Viktors saga ok Blávus from Jónatas avéniytr), and they could also be turned into rimur (Jónatas rimur from before 1600, and later poetic versions of exempla nos. LXXXII and LXIX in Gering's edition).


**Peter A. Jorgensen**

*Eyrbyggja saga* ("The Saga of the Men of Eyrr") or, more accurately, "Saga Pórsnesinga, Eyrbyggja ok Álptfirõinga* (*The Saga of the Men of Pórsnes, Eyrr, and Álptafjõrõr") is one of the most remarkable features of the *Íslendingasögur*. It tells the story of the people of Pórsnes, Eyrr, and Álptafjõrður, all on the northern shores of the Snæfellsnes peninsula on the west coast of Iceland. The action begins in 884, the date of the arrival in Iceland of Póðlifr Mostrarskegg ("Master-beard"), and continues with an account of the feuds that take place in the neighborhood, most of which are concerned with or mediated by Snorri goði ("the priest"). At first, Arnkell goði, whose father, Pódlifr basgíftar ("lame-foot"), becomes a troublesome ghost after death, appears to be the more important figure; he is, however, killed in the course of his second quarrel with Snorri. A subplot concerns Snorri's sister, Purðr, her romance with Björn Breiðvikingakappi ("champion of the Breiðvikings"), and the hauntings at the farm of Fróða, where she lives. The action ends in 1031, the year in which Snorri died.

Three versions of the saga survive, the best in copies of the *Landnámbók* (Styrmir died in 1245 and was probably writing 1235–1240). The style, more elegant than that of earlier sagas but still free of the influence of medieval chivalry and romanticism, and the diction, largely free of southern loanwords, also point to a mid-13th-century date. Accurate topographical references suggest that *Eyrbyggja saga* was composed in the area where the events described took place. The author may have been a monk at the Benedictine monastery at Helgafell. He appears to have had access to a library of sagas, for he summarizes and sometimes corrects material that had been treated in detail elsewhere; on two occasions, in the story of Viga-Styr's slaying of the berserks and in chs. 13–15, he expands an incident. He shows a particular interest in the supernatural and in antiquarian lore. His description of a pagan temple and pagan worship are so convincing that they were long regarded as authentic; they are, however, adapted from Snorri Sturluson's *Hákonar saga góða*. The saga also contains a large number of skaldic stanzas (thirty-four).

The most remarkable feature of the *Eyrbyggja saga* is its lack of unity. Of all the *Íslendingasögur*, it is the only one that does not concentrate on the fate and fortunes of a single man or single family. Snorri goði is probably the most dominant figure, although events in which he played a major role are not mentioned, and his later life is treated cursorily. Equally unusual is the lack of traditional structure; the episodes in *Eyrbyggja saga* do not conform to the traditional pattern (in Andersson's [1967] terms) of Introduction, Conflict, Climax, Revenge, and Aftermath. Andersson has counted ten conflicts, and Hollander (1959) eight separate interwoven stories. Nineteenth-century scholars postulated interpolated chapters or a lost or unfinished ending, whereas modern critics have tried to find a unifying force in such varied elements as the location, the chronology, the history, the use of the supernatural, and the verses. The structure remains an enigma.

Hâlogaland, whose mother was a descendant of Haraldr hárfagri, Norwegian poet of the 10th century, a man of noble descent from Eyvindr Finnsson skáldaspillir ("fair-hair") Hálfdanarson. He was a skald at the court of Hákon Heimskringla, of the earls of Hlaõir, who supported Hákon against the sons of Eirikr blóõox (ublood-axe") Haraldsson, his brother and adversary. The poem is contained in the MSS of Heimskringla. (A, B) and in some stanzas of it also appear in Fagrskinna (F A).

The poem Hákonarmâl is a panegyric on the dead Norwegian king Hákon goði (935–961), who was killed in the battle of Storð against the sons of Eiríkr blóðax ("blood-axe") Haraldsson, his brother and adversary. The poem is contained in the MSS of Heimskringla (J, K, F) and some stanzas of it also appear in Fagrskinna (A, B) and in Snorra Edda.

The poem consists of three parts: the battle; the king's ensuing dialogue with the valkyries which have decided that he is to go to Óðinn, and the king's welcome in Valholl and among the gods; and the concluding praise of the greatness and uniqueness of the late king, followed by words of grief over the situation of the country now enslaved. This three-part structure is also underlined by the meter. The traditional epic meter fornyrkling is used for the battle section; the parts in which mythical persons are protagonists and the concluding praise use ljóðaháttr meter. For that reason, some scholars have assumed that two different poems have been combined in Hákonarmâl (Sahlgren 1927). But this change of meter is characteristic of the genre of "eddic panegyrics," as well as the epic presentation and the use of mythical scenes and motifs for the purpose of praise. In the battle scenes, however, the poem is influenced to a greater extent by skaldic metaphors and kennings used to create impressive imagery.

As to the themes, the poem is cognate with Eiríksmál, although there are considerable differences. Whereas Eiríksmál is confined to a single scene, the entry of the king into Valholl, Hákonarmâl also contains the battle and the praise of the king. There are also differences in religious attitudes. Valholl and Óðinn are presented very unfavorably. The valkyries, not Óðinn, choose the hero, and they also determine victory or defeat. Whether because of his Christian faith or his fear, the king does not want to go to Óðinn. Moreover, the king's welcome in Valholl is surpassed by his reception among the gods, for whom the poet uses the collective terms characteristic of the late-pagan religion of the environment of the earls of Hlaõir (bônd, regin, rôð, heimdir god). Unlike Eiríksmál, the poem reveals intense national feelings. The king is shown as a sovereign defending his kingdom, protecting the sanctuaries. His character is praised; there is no better king to come after him. And the gods who have invited him to join them are the gods worshiped in the environment of the earls of Hlaõir.

Taking into account the last stanza, where the poet speaks of the enslaved people, we have to assume that the poem was composed for the earls of Hlaõir after Hákon's death, when Haraldr gráfeldr's rule had become increasingly oppressive. Most scholars accept the statement in Fagrskinna that Eiríksmál was the model for Hákonarmâl. There are some very obvious parallels between the two poems. But there have also been voices in favor of the priority of Hákonarmâl (Wadstein 1895, von See 1963); they argue that the poem's conception of Valholl is more archaic, and its poetic quality greater. Yet, both lines of argument are unconvincing, and it seems more correct to assume that the author of the Hákonarmâl deliberately made his poem different from Eiríksmál, and had political motives for surpassing his model (Wolf 1969, Marold 1972).

Eynvindr’s Hálegjatal was composed for Earl Hákon after his victory over the Jomsvikings in 985. This poem, as the opening stanza announces, traces the earl's ancestors to the gods. Only fragments are left: nine complete stanzas and seven half-stanzas are contained in Heimskringla, Snorra Edda, Fagrskinna, and Flateyjarbók. A 13th-century Icelandic MS (cf. Storm 1899: 111, Anm. 4), whose author probably used Hálegjatal to enumerate twenty-seven earls of Hlaõir, permits the conjecture that the poem also enumerated twenty-seven ancestors of Earl Hákon, just as Ynglingatal, which was presumably the model for Hálegjatal, does for the Ynglingar. The kvöðuháttr meter also follows Ynglingatal (cf. Storm). The stanzas preserved show that Hálegjatal also relates how each of the princes met his death. The burial place of a prince is mentioned in only one case. The first of Hakon's ancestors is Sæmingr, the son of Óðinn and the giantess Skaði. The opening stanzas contain two traditional elements: the request for silence and the paraphrasing of "poem" by the myth of Óðinn's mead, the...
drink of poetical inspiration; this pattern shows clearly that the poem was composed as a panegyric.

The poem is connected with Ynglingatal by the meter, the genealogical content, and the concentration on the deaths of the princes. There are also certain similarities between the kennings and other metaphorical phrases in the two poems. Therefore, it has been generally supposed that Háleygjatal was composed for political reasons, following the model of Ynglingatal, in order to prove that the family of the earls of Hlaõir was just as old as the Ynglingar’s, their rivals for the power in Norway, and that the earls were also descended from the gods. However, it has sometimes been argued that Ynglingatal is later than Háleygjatal (Wadstein 1895).

The fact that Eyvindr was called “skaldaspillir” plays a certain role in this discussion. The term was interpreted as “destroyer of skalds,” and it was thought that this name implied that the poet had imitated older poems, especially their kennings. But since the style of skaldic poetry was highly traditional, we must beware of regarding these analogies from a modern point of view and dismissing them as lacking originality. It would be better to interpret the name of "skaldaspillir" as "who puts the other skalds in the shade" (Wadstein 1895, M. Olsen 1916).

Eyvindr’s lausavísir are composed in dróttkvætt meter, the ceremonial, courtly style. The first six of them have to do with the battle of Fjîdar: the first announces the arrival of the enemies’ army to the king, the second calls the warriors to the battle. Stanzas 3–5 focus on one episode of the battle, the encounter of Hákon góõi and Eyvindr skreyja (“bragger”). Stanza 6 is an answer to a well-known poem by Glúmr Geirason, skáld of Haraldr gráfeldr, which praised his victory over Hákon. Eyvindr answered with a stanza recalling a previous victory of Hákon over the sons of Eiríkr.

Stanza 7 is a conventional praise of Haraldr gráfeldr. In stanza 10, the cool relation between king and skald is obvious. The remaining stanzas could be regarded as reflecting the author’s critical attitude toward Harald’s rule. In stanzas 8 and 9, he complains about the greed of the king, to whom he must even give his own gold (st. 10). Stanza 12 complains about the bad weather, for which in the contemporary view the king was responsible (cf. the fact that in Vellekleða Earl Hákon was praised for bringing back good harvests). Stanzas 13 and 14 may also be read in this light: they deal with fishing and buying herring, partly in humorous paraphrases. In exchange for herring, the poet is forced to give a needle, which he had received as a present from the Icelanders. Seen in connection with the preceding stanzas, stanzas 13 and 14 could imply that the poet has lost his fortune as a consequence of his conflict with the king, and is forced in bad years to live by fishing for herring and selling his last possessions.


**Edith Marold**

[See also:] Commemorative Poetry; Eddic Meters; Eddic Poetry; Eiríksmál; Fagrskinna; Flateyjarbók; Heimskringla; Íslendingadrápa; Kennings; Lausavísir; Skaldic Meters; Skaldic Verse; Snorra Edda}
Fáfnismál see Regínsmál and Fáfnismál

Fagrskinna ("fair parchment") is a title employed since the 17th century for a history of the kings of Norway that appears to have been called Nøres konunga tal ("Catalogue of the Kings of Norway") in the Middle Ages. It begins with Hallódr svarti ("the black"), father of Haraldr hárfragr ("fair-hair"), and it ends with the battle of Ré in 1177, in which Magnús Erlingsson defeated Eysteinn Íeystinsson, the leader of the insurgent faction known as the Birkbeinar ("birch-legs"). Thus, both the author of Fagrskinna and of Heimskringla concluded their histories where they knew the continuation was to be found in Sverris saga.

Fagrskinna is preserved in various manuscript copies of two Norwegian vellums that perished in the Copenhagen fire of 1728. The older codex, of which a fragment exists (NRA 51 [Oslo]), was probably written about the middle of the 13th century, and the younger in the first half of the 14th century. The difference between the two versions is not great, but the younger one is transmitted almost complete, while the older one has several lacunae, amounting to about eighty printed pages. The younger redaction was, therefore, chosen as the basic text for the first edition in 1847. Nevertheless, the older redaction is preferable, and has since been published twice, with the lacunae filled in with text from the other redaction. Stanzas are quoted 272 times (including half-stanzas and two-line citations) when the sometimes supplemental skaldic material from both versions is counted; but the author knew many more stanzas and poems, and made use of their content without quoting. In general, he follows the practice of quoting stanzas basically as evidence, although several stanzas are included as an integral part of the story.

Fagrskinna was probably written in the early 13th century, most likely in Niðaróss (Trondheim), or at least in Prándheimr (Trøndelag), by either an Icelandic or a Norwegian scholar. There are many Norwegian word forms in the MSS, but they are no sure indication of Norwegian authorship, because we do not have the original text. The author had several written sources in more original material from both versions than are now preserved, for instance: Morkinskinna, Ágríp af Nøres konunga sogum, Jónmorkíninga saga, a saga about Óláfr Tryggvason, another about St. Óláfr, and most likely a saga about the earls of Hlaðir (*Hladrjarsla saga). There are also indications that among Fagrskinna's sources were the lost historical works by the Icelanders Ari Porgilsson and Semundr Sigfússon. There are some striking parallels between Fagrskinna and Heimskringla, some verbatim, probably due to common sources. Fagrskinna is most likely the older of the two works, but there is no evidence that it was known in Iceland at the time of the composition of Heimskringla.

Fagrskinna is a well-written history; the narration is cogent and well arranged, without digression, free of superstitition, and moderately pious. The author's chief interest is the high repute of King Hákon Hákonarson (r. 1217-1263), who may have wished to have a complete history of the kings of Norway who preceded his grandfather Sverrir, whose saga he must have had.


Bjarni Einarsson

[See also: Heimskringla, Konungasarógr]

Family Sagas see Íslandingsarógr

Family Structure. The concept of family denotes all relatives living together in the same dwelling and recognized as a single social unit. In its most basic sense, it comprises husband, wife, and their offspring, called "nuclear family" or "conjugal family." The term "extended family" denotes the addition of one or more rela-
vertical extensions often reflect the family developmental cycle, where successor offspring living at home marries while one or both of parents are still alive, often in connection with some form of retirement contract. This type is called "stem family."

Two or more nuclear families living together in the same dwelling, whether vertically or laterally organized, are usually called "joint families" or "multiple families." In Scandinavia, the term "grand family" has generally been used in this sense. These terms denote a system of family organization that is principally different from the type based on the nuclear family. We will use the terms "joint family" and its Nordic equivalent, "grand family," to denote biologically related coresident families as defined by recent research, and the term "multiple family" to denote other types of coresident families (slave family—owner family, peasant family—lodge family, food-and-work community = matlag, bolagafamilj).

Solitary persons and all persons living in the same household unit, biologically related or not, constitute a household. Household and nuclear family may be identical social units (simple family household). As servants, lodgers, and siblings with families may coreside with families, households will tend to be larger social units than nuclear families. The term "inmates" denotes coresident servants, lodgers, and other persons who are relatively casually connected with households. As the basic social and economic unit in large parts of the Nordic countries is the detached holding, and since a holding may be inhabited by two or more households dwelling in buildings at a distance from each other, the term "farmful" has been created by analogy to the established term "houseful" (Laslett 1972), when discussing the mean size and composition of the social unit inhabiting holdings. This term may cover all types of coresident social constellations defined above.

The concept of coresidential structure has demographic, sociopsychological, and sociological dimensions. We will here concentrate on the basic demographic connotations, mainly discussing the problem of size, composition, and development.

**Grand family, joint family, multiple family.** The concept of grand family has played a disproportionate role in Nordic historiography, often supposed to represent a primeval or early phase in the evolution of family organization prior to the emergence of the nuclear family, which is supposed to be closely related to modernization and industrialization. Recent Swedish and Finnish research has exposed the lax definitional classifications, unstringent analytical approaches, and undemanding empirical attitudes characteristic of this insouciant usage (Lôfgren 1971: 4–10, Lôfgren 1974a: 18–27, Lôfgren 1974b: 59–61, Tornberg 1972: 4–17, Gaunt 1983).

Swedish ethnologists and historians commenting on problems relating to the grand family like to begin by quoting from a letter by King Gustav I (Vasa) (1523–1560), stating that in Norrland, Dalsland, and Värmland, "an evil and pernicious custom has arisen . . . that four, six, eight or more, occasionally a whole kin group, want to squeeze themselves into one holding and will not let their parts of the inheritance be bought off, but claim that they nowhere else can live as well as where they have grown up." The king then demands that siblings divide their inheritance and split it up to form new holdings. The purpose of the royal writ obviously is to increase the tax base. According to Lôfgren (1972, 1974a, 1974b), the purpose of those who formed these, as it seems, laterally organized grand families, was to avoid carving up the productive assets on which the social position of the kin group was dependent.

When the sources begin to flow more copiously, in the 17th and 18th centuries, the incidence of grand families is quite low, and is registered mostly in the forest districts of Norrland. These examples typically pertain to well-to-do peasants. However, many of the households labeled as grand families have probably reflected transitional stages in the family cycle (Lôfgren 1972: 234). The seemingly higher incidence of grand families at the time of Gustav I may have been caused by the strong relative increase in animal husbandry and the price of hired labor in the late-medieval period, both reflecting the demographic and economic upheavals of large-scale population contraction.

The view that the grand-family system was the predominant domestic group from the Merovingian and Viking centuries down to the period of industrialization is, in Norwegian historiography, as in Swedish and Finnish, founded largely on conceptual ambiguities and anecdotal evidence recorded 1,000 years later (Frimannslund 1972: 231). In this tradition, it is erroneously assumed that the stem family represents a type of grand family, while modern demography, social history, and ethnology have pointed out that it reflects a cyclical phase of the nuclear family. Highly exaggerated relative frequencies of stem families in particular, but also of other types of multigenerational families, are arbitrarily assumed to be standard features of family organization in the past without any reference to substantiating demographic studies. We will, therefore, present some types of data and considerations that should be included in discussions of such problems in order to reach valid conclusions.

Outside Italy, medieval records containing systematic registration of agricultural populations, family by family, are exceedingly rare. However, three censuses made in 1268–1269 of the bondmen of the Benedictine priory at Spalding in the Lincolnshire fenland are extant. This is an area where a noticeable Nordic influence is still traceable at that time. Hallam (1957–58, 1961–62, 1963) has studied this unique census material for high-medieval northern Europe. We will use his findings to illustrate problems and perspectives relating to demographic structure of rural populations in the northern part of Europe about 1300.

Hallam (1957–58: 351–3) concludes that out of the 252 households surveyed, only four, or 1.6 percent, were three-generational. This figure is so low that under-registration of elderly people might be suspected, or a skewed social composition of the population due to influx of young adults. However, even if we assume gross under-registration, which is not suggested by any of the scholars who have examined these censuses, the resultant figure will still be quite small. Hallam's conclusion on this point agrees, in fact, roughly with the findings of the Scandinavian osteoarchaeologists, who indicate that only 1.5–3 percent of medieval populations in the Nordic countries reached the age of sixty years. According to the polyptych (survey of monastic estate) of the estates of St. Germain-des-Prés undertaken at the beginning of the 9th century, there are only twenty-six grandmothers among the 3,404 women recorded, making the researcher conclude that "the classical stem family was not present on the estates of St. Germain" (Herlihy 1978: 70–1).

In an agricultural population in modern Iran (1950) with demographic characteristics relatively similar to the one indicated by osteoarchaeology for medieval Scandinavia, the proportion of
population above the age of forty-five was 15.5 percent (Naraghi 1960: 40–2). According to model life tables (South and East), the proportion of population above the age of forty-five in populations with life expectancy at birth of 22.5 years is 16 percent, 56 percent of all men reaching the age of twenty will die before the age of fifty. The corresponding rates for women will be still higher, due mostly to gender-specific reproduction-related supermortality, probably in the range of 4–7 percent, and a gender-specific increment in the level of exposure to infectious diseases due to the gender-specific role of nursing the ill. Mortality rates increased sharply after the age of forty. Hallam (1957–58: 349–50, 355–60) furnishes several telling indications of this high turnover rate of adult population.

Proportion of population above the age of forty-five or fifty years in medieval Scandinavia will, according to the skeletal studies, probably have been of the order of 15 percent to 10 percent, respectively. The proportion of those reaching this age and entering the role of grandparent in a household founded by offspring will depend on the chance of not being childless, and, if having mature offspring, on whether successor offspring was expected to postpone marriage until death or disablement of father (cf. Hallam 1957–58: 351). This material makes it clear that three-generational families, i.e., stem families, were a relatively marginal phenomenon in medieval Scandinavia.

Where the stem family is relatively common, a large mean household size is not implied. In the 18th century, mean household size in Alsken and Lye on Gotland was less than five, although more than a third of all households contained three generations or more at the time. Studies of socioeconomically “old-fashioned” agricultural communities in Central Sweden in the first half of the 17th century show 4.5 as mean household size, although more than 20 percent had a complex structure (extended, stem, joint, and multiple families), and almost 50 percent contained servants (Gaunt 1978: 74–8; cf. Friberg 1953: 229–38). A census was taken in 1645 of the population of five rural parishes on the Danish island of Møn (south of Zealand) This population likewise exhibits many archaic demographic features, i.e., corresponds in important respects relatively closely to the demographic structures uncovered by osteoarchaeologists on the basis of medieval skeletal materials. In this census, households contained on average of about four persons. The relative size of the earliest cohorts indicates a significant deficit of infants and young children in the registers. The proportion of people recorded as reaching the age of sixty in these communities was far higher than in any medieval-population studies by Scandinavian osteoarchaeologists, which is quite likely due in part to a tendency to exaggerate length of life at advanced ages because old age in these societies provides prestige.

In a population with a life expectancy at birth of 22.5 years, a man marrying at twenty-five years of age could (according to life tables), on average, expect to live for another thirty years at the most. As infant mortality correspondingly would be about 300 per 1,000, generational relations would typically not be strongly encumbered with clashes of interest over rights of disposal of productive resources and income and over opportunity for marriage. The high general mortality rates also caused a considerable number of vacant holdings, creating opportunities for marriage for younger siblings, who, therefore, would tend to move out of the parental household earlier than in the 17th and 18th centuries. This process is much enhanced by the custom of partible inheritance, which was generally practiced in all the Nordic countries.

No household consisting of three conjugal families of different generations, and so being a genuine vertically organized grand family, was registered by Hallam (1957–58: 352–3), and must have been a rarity also in the Nordic societies where mean life expectancy at birth was twenty to twenty-five years. Friberg (1956) registered on the basis of exceptionally good demographic material a proportion of only 3.4 percent above the age of sixty-five in the population of Grangårde in western Bergslagen in 1677, the proportion of the population older than fifty years being 11.5 percent. To the extent that grand families existed, they will mostly have had to consist of families and siblings practicing joint tenancy. This conclusion has been confirmed by much research on Nordic preindustrial peasants.

The grand family in early modern Finland. Only in some districts of Finland, Österbotten, eastern Tavastland, and southeastern Karelia (Kexholm), has the grand family been shown to have been common, and so constituting an alternative system of family structure and organization to the otherwise overwhelmingly dominant nuclear-family type in the Nordic countries. Only in Karelia has this situation been shown to go back at least to 1500, the relative number of grand families and multiple families then being 23 percent. Of these complex families, more than 70 percent consisted of brother families and 14 percent of work-and-food communities (matlag, bolagsfamilj), which might or might not also contain biologically related parts. Some 80 percent of brother families consisted of the nuclear families of two brothers. This is the only part of the Nordic countries where the grand family has been shown to have been common and an alternative system of family organization at a time stretching back into the medieval period (Tornberg 1972: 4–17). Work-and-food communities are unstable social units tending to reflect temporal adaptations. Doubts have been voiced as to whether they should be considered a genuine subtype of family organization.

All notions of a linear evolutionary development of family organization throughout history from large domestic groups to simple nuclear families are dispelled by the Finnish material, showing that grand-family types of family organization developed in southeastern parts of Österbotten and Tavastland in the 17th century, constituting, in 1634, at most 20 percent and 5 percent, respectively, of all families. In central and northern Österbotten, the grand family originated in the 17th century and grew in relative importance throughout the 18th and into the next century, when the trend was reversed (Tornberg 1972: 7–9). Joint families/grand families ought to be viewed as special socioeconomic adaptations, not as representing a stage in a deterministic evolutionary process (Löfgren 1974a: 21–30).

Ethnological studies have shown that there is a close interaction between peasant ecotypes and the development of specific systems of family organization, in casu the grand family. As the institution of grand family is so intimately connected with particular periods and areas, those factors which have affected its occurrence may have varied greatly. It is, however, possible to discern common traits on a more generalized level of analysis: “The common distinguishing features of the Finnish areas of grand families were that those economic activities which demanded large input of labor power within the framework of the economic structure also were important as subsidiary sources of production and income.” Slash-and-burn agriculture is characteristic of the old Karelian core areas of the grand family as well as of many areas where this institution developed in the 17th century. Later, when the grand
family became more common, this development was closely connected with intensive animal husbandry (Tornberg 1972: 14–5).

This point has been developed by Lõfgren, who emphasizes four categories of common features: (1) Grand families have mostly been registered in sparsely populated regions; (2) they are characterized by a high degree of economic differentiation within the household; (3) they are markedly associated with labor-intensive modes of production, particularly slash-and-burn agriculture, in which pooling of scarce family labor is highly advantageous; (4) they often represent the higher social classes of local peasant society, where families, by staying together, i.e., practicing joint tenancy or joint ownership, could avoid splitting up the means of production, keeping and running together, at least temporarily, land, cattle, and other productive assets in order to gain economies of scale (Lõfgren 1972: 233–4, Lõfgren 1974a: 21–2).

Recent research has uncovered interesting material in Icelandic law and sagas. Complex household types are indicated by the terms tvíbyli, félagbúi, búlag, and the phrase eiga búa saman. Tvíbyli seems to have involved unified management and separate ownership and use of cattle and tools by each bóndi. A Félagbúi and a búlag seem to indicate partnership in work and property. We are also told in one of the sagas that “it is best for the property of brothers to be seen together.” This introduced the concept of féreche also in the Germanic part of the medieval Nordic area. The laws, moreover, assume occurrence of in-living married servants, partly corroborated by scattered saga evidence. In accordance with one of the main parameters of the Finnish pattern, joint and multiple households were closely related to intensive animal husbandry. There was some grain production in early high-medieval Iceland, but it was largely abandoned in the 13th century. Production of meat and dairy products was of paramount importance, shaping social and economic organization. Fishing and production of coarse woolen cloth played significant subsidiary roles.

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As in Finland, there was a strong correlation between substantial holdings and wealthy households and occurrence of complex household arrangements. Not only economic conditions contributed to the forming of complex households. In Iceland, intensive feuding induced households to merge for reasons of defense. While there can be no doubt that single households were the dominant residential unit, a combination of law texts and incidental social information in sagas furnishes a good case for assuming a substantial frequency of complex households, and that intensive animal husbandry was the primary or basic cause of this phenomenon (Miller 1988: 321–35).

Modern Scandinavian medievalists without exception consider the mean household size in the medieval period to have been six persons or between six and seven persons, compared with the ten to thirteen persons suggested by many researchers for the Viking period, and more generally for the Merovingian period. However, even the much-reduced high-medieval mean-household size of six to seven persons claimed by Nordic historians seems to assume a record-breaking level.

Household size and composition: proportion of children. According to the demographic pattern emerging in the data provided by osteoarchaeologists, children below fifteen years probably formed around 45 percent of the population. The number of children per family can be estimated only when the number of households is known, including the number of inmate families. What seems to be generally overlooked in studies of medieval demography is the effect of high general levels of mortality on the distribution of children in households (see, however, Howell 1983: 212). As mentioned earlier, about 45–50 percent of those reaching twenty years of age would be dead before reaching their fiftieth birthday. The high turnover of adults implies a considerable frequency of marriages broken by the death of one of the spouses before completion of reproductive period, or even, to some extent, extinguished by the death of both spouses. Because there was a general opinion in old-time peasant society that neither a man nor a woman could run a holding single-handedly, remarriage usually followed quite soon after the death of a spouse (Hallam 1963: 349, Benedictow 1985: 49–50, Vejde 1938: 193–4, Leijonhufvud 1921: 183). The children of the former marriage(s), accordingly, were redistributed among new reproductive alliances, or in the case of the death of both parents, often among households headed by relatives. In short, households comprised a hidden demographic structure, the reproductive remains of broken and extinct families.

The mean number of children per household reflects a larger number of reproductive alliances than those actually in function, and, correspondingly, the mean number of children per household is larger than the mean number of surviving children per reproductive alliance. Otherwise, the basic rule is that families at a given point will, on average, have completed only two-thirds of the process of rearing children (Hollingsworth 1969: 115), the figure of 1.4 indicating a stagnant or stationary population, 2.2 children per completed family. Such a figure indicates, of course, that completed families tended to have considerable reproductive success, but that the average number of surviving children per established reproductive alliance was being appreciably reduced by a large number of families who were reduced by mortality before their reproductive capacity had been exhausted, including also the proportion of young married girls who died at childbirth.

In the censuses of 1268–1269, Hallam (1957–58: 353–6) found 859 children distributed among 252 households, producing the enormous average of 3.4 living offspring per family, irrespective of age, marital status, and place of residence, in three manors at Spalding. Hallam does not seem to recognize the extraordinary (although not impossible) nature of this proportion of children living in the population, and that the mean number of 3.4 living children per household signifies explosive population growth, if taken at face value, i.e., as the children of the existing married couples.

The English demographic data, founded on written sources, and the Scandinavian data, founded on human skeletal sources, agree remarkably well. When roughly half of all married persons die while still having small or young children, roughly 40 percent of all marriages will be broken by the death of at least one spouse/parent, 10 percent extinguished by the death of both spouses/parents. In the case of the three manors at Spalding, the 859 living offspring recorded do not reflect the reproductive activities of the 252 married couples recorded, as Hallam thinks, but comprise the outcome of an additional number of marriages, perhaps not far from 100; in that case, the mean number of living children per household is about 2.5.

This is still a high figure, but can be explained by the intensive reclamation of wasteland and the attendant strong movement of colonization in the Lincolnshire fens, making it in these respects highly atypical in England at the time. The number of households increased six times at Spalding between 1086 and 1287; at nearby Pinchbeck, the corresponding growth rate was eleven times. These growth rates are typical for the Lincolnshire fenland (although
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much higher rates are known), and continued for some decades after the censuses of 1268-1269 (Hallam 1961-62, Miller and Hatcher 1978: 30-1, 35-6). This situation makes for considerable immigration of young adults at a time when population pressures elsewhere were becoming fierce (Titow 1961-62: 218-24), and permits universal marriage and low age at marriage. This scenario may also help to explain why Hallam found only four three-generational families among 252 households (1.6 percent).

Age distribution. The significance of the problem may be indicated by the age-related results of osteoarchaeological research. Although infants are greatly under-represented in the skeletal material exhumed in Tønsberg and Trondheim, adults above the age of forty constitute only 16 percent and 26.5 percent, respectively, of the total skeletal population. At Frösön in Jämtland, where children are satisfactorily represented in the skeletal remains, the corresponding figure is 19 percent (Gejvall 1960: 35-6, Anderson 1986: table 3, Holck 1987: 34-5; cf. Friberg 1956: 10).

The skeletal populations excavated in Lund, dating to around 1050-1100 and the last 100 years of the medieval period, respectively, exhibit a slightly different pattern, persons having died above the age of sixty constituting 5 percent and 4 percent, respectively, of the cemetery population. Children below the age of fifteen form close to 30 percent of both populations and so are markedly under-represented (Persson 1976: 173, Persson and Persson 1981: 151-70), although not as strongly as quite often is the case (Holck 1987: 34, Sjovold 1978a: 167). This type of local variation is to be expected within the general pattern of demographic systems, the homogeneity of the other data giving more reason for surprise. In this case, the general commonality of demographic structure can, for example, be seen in life expectancies at birth of 26.9 and 24.9 years, respectively; and if the deficiency of children is compensated for by increasing proportion of children from 29 percent to about 45 percent, mean life expectancy at birth will be appreciably reduced. Such a correction of the deficiency of children will, correspondingly, cause the proportion of persons above the age of sixty to diminish substantially, bridging much of the age divergence in relation to the other data. The same type of distribution of the older parts of populations may be easily recognized also in "old-fashioned" populations in developing countries (Kpedekpo 1982: 40-1).

In light of this evidence, persons above forty-five years are assumed to constitute 15 percent of the population. After fifteen years, only 2.5 percent are left. We cannot assume that all marriages are complete at all times. In a society experiencing life expectancy at birth of 22.5-25 years, persons reaching twenty years of age will in the ensuing thirty years experience a mortality rate of about 50 percent and 45 percent respectively corresponding to, on average, about 1.66 percent and 1.5 percent per year. The parental generation (i.e., comprising both parents and step-parents) is assumed to constitute roughly 42.5 percent of the total population.

The grandparental generation makes for only a small average addition to households or population according to the data presented above about the basic demographic structure of the medieval Scandinavian populations. Average life expectancy at birth of 22.5 years corresponds, according to the Life Tables South, for persons reaching twenty years of age, to a mortality rate of about 45 percent during the ensuing three decades. Persons above forty-five, fifty, and sixty years of age will constitute about 15 percent, 10 percent, and 2.5 percent, respectively, of the population. We have assumed that the grandparental generation constitutes 5 percent of the population, perhaps only half of these living with their married children and grandchildren forming stem families, often because they do not have surviving offspring, or because offspring had left local society due to migration, vagabondage, and so on. These assumptions imply that about 10 percent of households were stem families, about 10 percent of these, or about 1 percent of all households, containing two grandparents. These assumptions are quite generous; compare, for example, the 1.6 percent of families registered by Hallam as containing a grandparent at Spalding in the Lincolnshire fenland, and none of them contained two grandparents.

Although this is a society characterized by high nuptiality, there will always be a social residue of persons who do not marry for various reasons.

The last category of persons to be considered is unmarried youth above the age of fifteen. The cohort of those fifteen to nineteen years is assumed to contain 10 percent of the population equally divided by gender. Universal marriage is assumed, and early marriage, particularly for girls. All girls are assumed to be married by the age of twenty, half of them at the age of 17.5 years, and this half will have to be considered as included in the estimate of the proportion constituted by the parental generation. Also a significant proportion of men will be married by the age of twenty, only a few by the age of 17.5. The remaining 7.5 percent of the population so far unaccounted for will have to be found in the category of unmarried youth and young adults.

We can thus conclude that the medieval population consisted mainly of children below the age of fifteen (45 percent) and (step)parents (42.5 percent), these two categories between them constituting roughly 87.5 percent of the population.

We may now calculate the mean household size and mean number of persons per merkarbol. A Norwegian holding of average size, 1.5 merkarbol (somewhat smaller in the west country), would, at a given point around 1300, on average be populated by 0.93 male (step)parent (einvikr) and 0.87 female (step)parent, having 1.91 live children below the age of fifteen, 0.32 unmarried youth, and 0.21 representatives of the grandparental generation, in all 4.24 persons.

On the basis of size and social distribution of holdings, it is possible to approach the question of incidence of multiple households in order to calculate the mean number of persons inhabiting holdings, i.e., mean farmful size. Such a calculation has been performed for the district of Eidsvoll in southeastern inland Norway. The outcome indicates that we can assume twenty grand families and inmate-families of both categories in Eidsvoll around 1300, comprising eighty-five-persons. This number represents an average addition of 0.38 persons per holding. While mean household size was 4.25 persons, mean farmful size was 4.6 persons. The addition is the outcome of an estimate considered to represent a realistic maximum, and so is quite probably on the high side, producing a somewhat exaggerated farmful size. However, these calculations have no pretense to an accuracy that permits fine-tuning of figures. One should note that the agricultural resources of the district of Eidsvoll, and the relative number of large holdings, were markedly above average in Norway.

A mean household size of 4.25 and a mean farmful size of 4.6 implies a slight population growth, which probably is correct with respect to inland southeastern Norway, where, at the time, there
still was room for some colonization, but which may not reflect quite as accurately the apparently stagnant populations of western and central Norway. In the latter regions, the number of children per reproductive alliance represented by children in local society at a given point will have been around 1.4, the mean number permitting a population barely able to reproduce itself. This relative diminution is the workings of Malthusian pressure mechanisms, an increase in age at marriage reducing fertility, or an increase in mortality of infants and young children due to malnutrition, or both. Older elements of the population probably were little affected. Female mortality may actually have subsided slightly and female life expectancy has edged upward as marriage tended to be postponed, in the process reducing marginally maternal pregnancy-related mortality. For the country as a whole, therefore, slightly reduced mean household and farmful figures will probably better reflect the overall demographic situation, indicating, in rounded figures, mean household size and farmful size of four and 4.5, respectively. This must be close to a minimum figure for the high Middle Ages, indicating a stationary population. Mean number of persons per merkbröl correspondingly is 2.66.

Between 1050 and 1250, when the population of Norway generally was increasing briskly, mean number of children per actually reproducing family at any given point may at times have tended toward 1.8. The mean number of children per household including the children of broken or extinguished reproductive alliances will in that case tend toward 2.5. Mean household size, accordingly, will approach five persons, the proportion of children below the age of fifteen in the population consequently being about 50 percent, and mean farmful size being around 5.3.

In conclusion, our computations on the basis of the demographic structural indications provided by Scandinavian osteoarchaeologists and the economic structural indications provided by agricultural historians suggest that in the couple of centuries preceding the Great Pestilence, mean household size and mean farmful size in Norway may have varied between four and five persons and 4.5 and 5.5, respectively, the minimum figures probably being realistic around 1300.

Late-medieval developments. The dramatic reduction in the size of population caused by plague epidemics in the second half of the 14th century also affected the size and composition of households and farmfuls. Good holdings fell vacant in large numbers, and the rents were reduced to a small fraction of their level before 1348, to about 20–25 percent (Salvesen 1978: 137–40). Inmate households of both categories, therefore, might be expected to move out and establish themselves as independent substantial tenants.

The economic development in the same period is characterized by a marked change from arable farming to animal husbandry. According to the postmedieval Finnish experience, intensified animal husbandry might have stimulated a relative increase in frequency of grand families/joint families. In other European countries, there was a strong increase in the frequency of this type of coresident constellation after the Great Pestilence, particularly in southern France and in parts of Italy. It is remarkable that constellations of brother households increase particularly strongly. The close connection with the demographic and socioeconomic effects of the plague epidemics is not only suggested by coincidence in time, that the proliferation of this phenomenon commences around 1350, but is evident from the fact that the decline is coincident with renewed population growth at the end of the 15th century, and that it almost disappears after the preplague population level had been reached around the middle of the ensuing century (Le Roy Ladurie 1966: 162–8, Klapisch and Demonet 1970: 415–28).

Whether a corresponding development took place in the Nordic countries in the late-medieval period, particularly in areas practicing intensive animal husbandry, is one of the questions that researchers should address in the future. A. E. Christensen's observation has been ignored: "A one-sided understanding of deserted holdings as a reflection of a deficit of peasants can be directly disproved, as it is not rare in the manorial rentals at the same time to find deserted holdings and holdings containing two tenants; indeed, coresidence of peasants, in fact, has been so usual that the archbishop of Lund, in the years 1499–1500, found himself compelled to issue provisions regulating the extent to which coresident tenants should pay dues" (1938: 36).

Possibly, the comprehensive fiscal registers and land registers compiled by government officials and some of the cadasters and rentals compiled by major ecclesiastical institutions and noblemen in the 16th century would yield interesting information if studied closely. The use of the word ibidem to denote additional household(s) may contain important clues. Undoubtedly, this usage mostly refers to divisions and subdivisions of a “named farm” (a term used to designate the originally colonized, individually named independent agricultural unit, that might or might not have become divided and subdivided into independent holdings [gårdsbruks]) and, consequently, to a separate household running an independent holding carved out from the original area of a “named farm.” But some “named farms” not known to have been divided are recorded as containing more than one household.

Another indication of accumulation of persons within the framework of the non-deserted substantial holdings is the explosive growth of population registered in some Norwegian localities in the second half of the 16th century and the beginning of the 17th century, reflecting rates that can hardly be explained as the outcome of natural fertility alone (Holmsen 1939: 273–89, Fladby 1977: 112–22, Fladby 1978: 31–50, Fladby 1986: 71–81, Martinussen 1979: 38–51, Aarseth 1981: 400–8, 414–5). But that may be explained if part of the demographic dynamics is derived from the dissolution of grand families. This analysis indicates an interesting field of research that so far has been completely overlooked.

As in England, the late-medieval Norwegian society saw considerable upward mobility of the poorest sections of society, day laborers, kotkarlar, crofters, etc., as they moved into the best of the numerous vacant holdings produced by the recurrent plague epidemics. The extant Norwegian sources do not permit analysis of this social process, but only register its outcome. It is, nonetheless, as indicated above, probable that inmate-families now would move out and establish themselves as substantial independent tenants. Although the mean size of the late-medieval peasant household probably tended to diminish, this development may not have been so pronounced as might be assumed, because the effects of plague and out-migration of inmate-families might have been partly offset by an increased relative frequency of grand families.

In the 15th century, when population size was stationary or, more likely, in the long run slowly dwindling, mean household and farmful size may not have been much smaller than around
1300, perhaps advisable by a factor of about 0.25 percent. At least, caution seems advisable, and we will indicate 3.75--4.0 and 4.25, respectively, as sensible suggestions for the time being.

3.75

Lit.: Leijonhufvud, Karl Kson. "Pesten 1710–1711 och prästeskapet i Strängnäs stift." Karolinska Förbundets Årsk (1921), "156--95


Ole Jørgen Benedictow


Faroe Islands. Until recent years, traditional work on the history of the Faroe Islands has connected the first Norse settlement with the Norwegian king Haraldr hárfagri ("fair-hair") Hallfdanarson's seizure of power in the battle of Hafrsfjørð in the last years of the 9th century. The main source for this supposition was Færeyingsa saga, written in Iceland about 1220, preserved and handed down as fragments in other sagas, especially Flateyjarbók, Ólafsf saga Tryggvasonar, and Heimskringla.

The Flateyjarbók version mentions the name of the first settler of the Faroe Islands, Grimr kamban. The first name has a Norse origin, the second a Scottish-Gaelic origin, indicating that this man did not come directly from Norway, but from the Norse settlements in the Celtic areas in the South. The fact that Landnámabók counts Grimr's grandson among the first colonists in Iceland spoils the chronology of the saga, and the traditional Icelandic causal relations in general.

Recent studies in the saga material (Ólafur Halldórsson) have made a new interpretation possible. The most reliable source, Ólafsf saga Tryggvasonar, makes no connection between Grimr's settlement in the Faroe Islands and mass emigration from Norway, caused by Haraldr's violent rule, thus eliminating all sure evidence of simultaneous Norse settlement in the Faroe Islands and Iceland.

Proofs of earlier settlement come from the Irishman Dicuil, living in the learned environment at the Carolingian court in Aix-la-Chapelle. In his De mensura orbis terrae, written about 825 and preserved in a MS from about 950, he describes a group of islands north of Scotland, having obtained his information from a devout Irish priest who had been there himself, and in a country farther north, which must be Iceland. The distance and the information that the group consists of many small islands separated by many narrow sounds and has an abundance of seabirds and sheep, make it certain that these are the Faroe Islands. Dicuil says that for 100 years hermits from Ireland (Scotia) had sought solitude there, but had by 825 fled from the islands because of the invasion by Norse bandits. He had never seen these islands mentioned by previous authors ("auctoritates").

This account is strengthened by the information given in Íslandinabók and Landnámabók that the first Icelandic settlers found Irish hermits, whom they called papa, in their new country. That fact is also made credible by philological evidence, especially in place-names beginning with papa.

This evidence should date the first habitation in the Faroe Islands back to about 700 and the first Norse settlement to about 800. However, archaeological research has not been able to find evidence of settlement earlier than about 900. Slabstones found in Skúvoy (one of the islands/villages mentioned in the Færeyingsa saga) have carved wheel- or sun-crosses showing Celtic influence. But this influence should not be dated to the "papa-time" (Sverri Dahl), but rather is due to contact after the permanent Norse settlement.

The discussion about the time of the first settlement was renewed and intensified during the 1980s, when pollen analysis (Johannes Johansen) indicated permanent settlement as far back as 600–650. Botanic research has established the cultivation of oats and vegetational changes due to the grazing of sheep at that time, implying the presence of human beings. From about 950, there is a shift to the cultivation of barley. A historical evaluation of these provocative scientific results must await further archaeological research.

The first proof of Viking Age settlement was found in 1942 at the village of Kórvik: a farmstead comprising two parallel structures, one of them a hall (skáli), another the combined cowhouse and barn. The construction proved to be typical of the Viking Age: curved long walls, with the gable walls curved on the outside and straight inside. The walls are made of an outer and an inner layer of stones and turf, the space between filled with small stones and earth. In the Viking Age, or shortly thereafter, people settled in the outer fields of the original landnam-farmsteads, in inferior houses.

Until 1899, only one graveyard from the Viking Age had been found, near the village of Tjørnuvík. Here, the Celtic influence can be registered from a ringheaded pin of bronze with an ornamented head, a design well known in Scotland and the western Norse settlements. In 1899, an early medieval (Christian) graveyard was discovered at the village of Sandur, belonging to the first of six churches excavated on the same site; it can be dated to the first half of the 11th century. Recent excavations at the village of Leirvík have revealed bronze pins of the same kind. Typical finds in the houses are cooking vessels, train-oil lamps, spindle whorls, loom weights, sinkers for fishing lines, all made of soapstone or pumice. For some purposes, basalt and lead were also used. Finds of bones of sheep, cattle, pilot whales, seals, pigs, cod, and different kinds of birds give a clear picture of the diet of the Viking Age Faroese, which continued the same during the later Middle Ages and for centuries thereafter.

The lack of wood, iron, and grain made the Faroese especially dependent on foreign trade. They bartered for these commodities with cloth (as the manyloom stones suggest), wool, and feathers. The find at Sandur of ninety-eight coins from many countries (dated to 950–1050) proves wide commercial contacts. Such trade implies ships and navigation, and while no ships or boats have been found, small toy ships reflect the reality of their existence.

Færeyingsa saga, law texts, and comparison with analogous cultures give a fairly reliable picture of the social and political structures of the Viking Age and medieval Faroese society. This society was dominated by chieftains and large landowners whose extensive landed property was cultivated by people of inferior social status. Legislative, executive, and judicial powers were administered by the Alting (later Logting), held in the capital, Tórshavn, and presided over by the Lawman (Logmadur), attended by thirty-six assessors (Logsetnumen). The court was in session every summer at St. Olaf's Wake (July 29), which is still celebrated as the National Day in the Faroe Islands, marked by ceremonies connected with the new session of the Logting (parliament).

Relations with Norway were always crucial. The incorporation of the islands into the Norwegian Church Province (1152) under the archbishopric of Niðarós (Trondheim) also had political consequences. By 1180, the islands seem to have become a "taxland" under the Norwegian Crown (Historia Norwegiae, Sverris saga), as a result of continuous efforts by Norwegian kings to extend their power to include the islanders in the west. This dividetetimpera policy, instrumented by the imposition of taxes and the introduction of Christianity, is the theme of Færeyingsa saga. However, the Faroese probably managed their own affairs, "paying off" direct Norwegian rule. The relations between the Faroese and the Norwegian Crown were not formalized until 1270 by a special treaty between King Magnus lagabær ("law-mender") Hákonarson and the Faroese, imposing mutual obligations. At the same time, Greenland (1261) and Iceland (1262–1264) were incorporated into the Norwegian Empire ("Noregsveldi"), not as provinces, but as "lands.

When in 1380 the Norwegian and Danish crowns were united
21. Place-names not in parentheses are mentioned in Færeyinga saga. An asterisk indicates places where archaeological research has proved or indicated settlement in the Viking Age and/or the early Middle Ages. A dot signifies "ærgi," a word of Gaelic origin meaning "shielings."
by dynastic accident, the Faroe Islands followed Norway, as did the other possessions in the west. But by that time, the Faroese had developed a culture of their own, expressed especially in their language, which has basically preserved its Old Norse origin. Later, the language became the most important element in the formation of the Faroese nation.


Fashions in the Nordic countries cannot have differed appreciably from those prevailing elsewhere in Europe, although they probably changed less rapidly than on the Continent, and the more extreme manifestations were probably less widespread here. During the Viking era and the early Middle Ages, men wore long trousers and tunics reaching down to about the knees. The full-length garments of Byzantine origin that became fashionable in central Europe during the 12th century also entered the Nordic countries eventually. The new fashion was adopted exclusively by kings and princes of princely rank, but by about 1200 it had been adopted by the Scandinavian magnates. Long trousers were unnecessary under these long garments, and so long stockings were worn instead. Long garments remained the fashion throughout the 13th century and into the 14th.

Women wore long gowns all through the Middle Ages. During the 13th century and the first half of the 14th, men and women dressed so similarly that the two sexes tended to be indistinguishable in pictures from the time, but women's garments were somewhat somewhat longer than men's, reaching all the way down to the floor, while men's reached to the ankles or calves.

Continental fashions were radically transformed in the mid-14th century. Men's outer garments became so short that they ended at the small of the back, leaving the legs completely exposed. At the same time, the outer garment was made to fit more closely. It was open at the front and provided with buttons. The use of this new button-up garment in the Nordic countries from the mid-14th century onward is confirmed by written records of the period, which frequently mention costumes with silver buttons. For most of the medieval period, popular costume consisted of a short tunic and trousers.

Women's costume changed in the mid-14th century, when waists were drawn in, and skirts became wider.

Surviving garments. More medieval garments have survived in the Nordic area than in the rest of Europe combined.

The largest collection of garments comes from the Scandinavian colony in Greenland. Excavations in Herjólfsnes (Igkiti) churchyard in 1921 yielded fifteen more or less well-preserved body garments, seventeen hoods, an assortment of other headgear, and some stockings. No complete costume is extant. The garments were used as shrouds. The material is invariably wool fabric, mostly in four-ended twill, less frequently tabby.

The cut and style of the body garments conform to European fashion. In terms of cut, they can be divided into two principal groups. The older and more numerous group consists of garments that were pulled over the head. These are usually cut in two parts, front and back, joined together by a seam at the shoulders. They have been widened at the bottom through the insertion of a number of gores, usually cut in the sides and in the middle, both front and back. The sleeves are generally cut in one piece, with a gore underneath. The other group, characterized by garments...
opening at the front, includes a man's costume consisting of long, narrow strips of cloth. This coat has a stand-up collar. The short century is not represented at all in the Greenland material. Liripipe men's costume that came into fashion in Europe in the mid-14th century is not represented at all in the Greenland material. Liripipe hoods are the main article of headgear, with two different kinds: a hood with a large shoulder-piece and gored inserted in the middle front and back, and hoods with a small shoulder-piece and shoulder gored. In addition to liripipe hoods, there are long cylindrical caps with a flat upper part and a fairly high conical cap.

Hoarse of various kinds: long stockings (reaching up to the thigh) with feet, long stockings with strips, short stockings with feet, and short stockings with strips. The Herjolfsnes garments are believed to date from the 14th and early 15th centuries.

Sweden has a virtually complete man's costume from the Bocksten bog. This outfit consists of a mantle, a liripipe hood, a tunic, and hose of what is now brown woolen fabric woven in three-ended twill, together with shoes and a belt of leather. The mantle is cut in a semicircle and held together at the right shoulder. The liripipe hood has a large shoulder-piece. The tunic has no shoulder seams. The hose are cut into a point at the front and extended far up the thigh. They were kept up by leather strips, secured to a belt. This costume probably dates from the first half of the 14th century.

A gown of Italian gold brocade, now in Uppsala cathedral, probably belonged to Margrethe, queen of Sweden, Denmark, and Norway (1353-1412).

Two garments that are probably of Swedish origin are now in other countries. Both are believed to have belonged to St. Birgitta (1302[1303]–1373). The "cloak of St. Birgitta," as it is called, is in the convent of St. Lucia in Selci, Rome. This is an outer garment of dark blue cloth, made up of gored turned into a cloak. The other garment is a small linen tabby cap with delicate small braids at the ears, complete with strings. This cale or colf is now in the convent of Maria Refuge in Uden, Holland.

Norway has a medieval costume consisting of a hood, tunic, and skirt, plus breeches, all of woolen fabric woven in four-end twill. Both the dating and ethnic origin of this costume are uncertain.

Denmark has three garments recovered from peat bogs, two almost-complete outer garments from Kragelund and Moselund, respectively, and a fragmentary garment from Rønbjerg. The Kragelund garment has no shoulder seams. It has been dated to the 12th or 13th century, possibly later. The other two costumes have the same cut as some of the Herjolfsnes garments. They are both of uncertain date.

No complete garments have come down to us from Finland. The archaeological finds include quite a few fragments of costume, due not least to the practice, from the 9th century onward, of decorating garments with small rings and spirals of bronze wire, which have had the effect of conserving the textile material. The women wore long skirts, comparable to the ancient Greek peplos. This garment was a large, square piece of fabric that could be folded double at the shoulders and secured with buckles. Not until the 12th century did people begin sewing skirts together at the shoulders. In the east of Finland, the antiquated peplos skirt remained in use throughout the Middle Ages. Woolen coasts, with small bronze buttons, began to be adopted by men at the end of the 11th century or the beginning of the 12th, an eastern innovation that did not become widespread in western Europe until later.


Margareta Nockert

[See also: Clothmaking]
main political results of feudalism. The fiefs seldom became inheritable, and the realms as political entities never disintegrated, although such tendencies became threateningly dominant in Denmark in 1241–1340, a period that has been regarded as having effective politically feudal tendencies that, however, never undermined the political structure. In general, fief holding in medieval Scandinavia was only temporary, and hereditary rights were not rooted. Many of the conflicts between kings or regents and various factions of the aristocracy in the later Middle Ages concerned control over the fiefs. The fief holders exercised fiscal and military authority in varying degrees over the fiefs, but they never acquired political, jurisdictional, and legal authority. From this point of view, Scandinavian feudalism can be regarded as either nonexistent or at least incomplete. The institutions and the political concepts derived from the European continent, but the fief-holding elites of the Scandinavian realms never acquired control over the public power and the executive-political governmental structure. Regarding feudalism as a type of society with specific social and economic relations, medieval Scandinavia can definitely be regarded as feudal, although with its own peculiarities. The nobility and the clergy owned lands held by the peasantry. In medieval and feudal Scandinavia, a small-scale peasant production predominated. A manorial system is discernible from at least the 12th and the 13th centuries in Denmark and the central parts of Sweden. Demesne production was of some importance, but declined during the later Middle Ages. A determinant factor in many definitions of feudalism as a societal system is the presence of a dependent peasantry, performing labor services on the lord’s demesne, a position of personal dependency toward the lord (villeteinage or serfdom), subject to the jurisdictional power of the lord, and so on. In this respect, the Scandinavian feudal system exhibits some peculiarities. The manorial structure was very weak or even nonexistent in parts of Scandinavia. Labor services were in general insignificant. The nonallodial peasantry was personally and legally free. No manorial courts existed, with some minor exceptions. Contrary to the circumstances sometimes regarded as archetypal for feudal societies, the peasants in general never became subjects of the lord’s jurisdictional power. The tenants held land on rather precarious conditions, at least in Norway and Sweden. The peasants were formally free to leave the land and could easily be evicted after rather short intervals. On Zealand and adjacent islands in Denmark, regulations were imposed during the 15th century aiming to tie the male population to the land (vornedskab). Since the peasantry was regarded as belonging to the land, it was a form of serfdom.

One of the most characteristic features of the medieval Scandinavian societies was that a large portion of the peasantry remained not only legally free, but also owned their land. The proportions of ownership varied in the three kingdoms and is difficult to estimate with accuracy for the medieval centuries. In the first decades of the 16th century, however, around 10 percent of the land was owned by the peasantry in Denmark, in Norway around 40 percent, and in Sweden (including Finland) around 50 percent, with great regional discrepancies, especially in Sweden. A free, allodial, and non-manorialized peasantry might be regarded as contrary to a feudal system. This allodial peasantry was, however, liable to fiscal and other duties to the Crown from the 12th to 13th century onward. They were, therefore, in a Marxist sense of the terminology, subject to feudal exploitation, not by a lord but by the Crown. Allodial and nonallodial peasants were equally free and legally competent.


Thomas Lindkvist

[See also: Land Tenure and Inheritance; Landownership]

Finland. In Finland, settlement was established in the Stone Age during the so-called Suomusjärvi culture of approximately 6500–4200 B.C. From the linguistic point of view, the settlement of the subsequent cultural phase at the latest, that of the Comb-Ceramic culture (4200–2500 B.C.), is today regarded as Finno-Ugric. The European Battle-Axe culture reached Finland about 2500–2000 B.C. Finland received population from the Baltic area, which introduced more intensive agriculture and animal husbandry. After the subsequent Stone Age cultural phase of Kilukainen, Finland entered the Bronze Age (ca. 1500–500 B.C.). At that time, a vigorous culture was born on the west and south coasts of Finland, and this culture had close connections to Scandinavia. The Bronze Age in the inland areas had a strong eastern character. In the early Iron Age, the Germanic migration brought a great number of loanwords (of which 450 have been preserved) and other cultural influences to Finland. Grain cultivation increased considerably.

As the Iron Age began in Finland approximately 500 B.C., settlement decreased first, and the culture became poorer, but the connection to the culture of the Bronze Age and, in addition, to the Stone Age remained. Iron objects appeared alongside bronze objects, and the making of iron started also in Finland as early as about 500 B.C. The great rise of culture began in southwestern Finland during the Roman Iron Age (a.d. 1–400). People began to bury the deceased in rich graveyards. The graveyard culture spread inland to southern Ostrobothnia and Hämee (Tavastland). The cultural connections to Estonia, the Weichsel and Elbe river mouths, and Sweden were close. A new influx of settlers came to Finland from these areas.

During the migration of peoples (ca. 400–600), the center of culture was still in southwestern Finland, but the settlement in Hämee and southern Ostrobothnia increased and became wealthier because of the peak prosperity of fur trading. Small population centers were developed here and there even farther north, as far as southern Lapland, but here the culture did not yet become established. The Åland Islands inherited the culture of the Iron Age.

In the Merovingian era (600–800), Finnish culture became independent. Population grew and became more prosperous. The cultivated area was increased in Varsiniis-Suomi (the southwest-
ern corner of Finland) and Häme. Cultivation by burning was replaced by field cultivation to a considerable degree. Germanic migration was still going on; a few new cemeteries where graves are found in rows have their best equivalents in the Germanic graveyards of western Europe. At the end of the period, the rich culture of southern Ostrobothnia declined. In the east, however, West Finnish graveyard culture spread as far as the shores of Lake Ladoga. There, a powerful Karelian culture rose and developed from the local culture and from new West Finnish and, in the Viking Age, Scandinavian elements.

During the Viking Age (800–1050), the settlement in Finland became ever more powerful, consisting of three distinct areas: Varsinais-Suomi, Häme, and Karelia. The Åland Islands had already become fully Swedish. The areas inhabited by Finnish, Häme, and Karelian tribes constituted types of prehistoric provinces that were not yet politically strictly organized, but in which there was large cooperation under the lead of governors for purposes of cult, castle building, and organization of defense, as well as for military expeditions, hunting, and trade.

Areas north of the established agrarian settlement were inhabited by Lapps, who practiced hunting and to whom tradesmen and tax collectors traveled from the centers of the south. At this time, permanent settlement of Häme began to stretch into the great river valleys of southern Lapland, especially into the Tornionjoki river valley. During this and the subsequent periods, the people from Häme competed with the Norwegians for the taxation of the Lapps and for the fur trade in Lapland. The Norwegians used the name *evenir* ("lowlanders") of the Finns and the name *Kvenland* ("Lowland") of the area populated by them on the east and north coast of the Gulf of Bothnia.

With the Viking raids to the east, Finnish tribes made fresh and active contact with the outside world on the southwestern and southern coasts. It was a question, above all, of commercial connections. In the heart of Häme, in the vicinity of the later medieval castle, there was a strong and long-lasting trade center, which has been excavated in recent years (Varikkoniemi). The position of Vikings as intermediaries in Finnish foreign trade in the early Middle Ages was inherited first and foremost by Gotland. But the Scandinavian governors also made expeditions to conquer Finland and to convert Finns to Christianity (e.g., the expedition of St. Ölöf ca. 1007, and by Anundi, the son of the king of Sweden, ca. 1050).

Christian burials became common in the northern part of Varsinais-Suomi (Vaakka-Suomi) by the middle of the 11th century and in the early 12th century throughout all Varsinais-Suomi and Häme. The period between 1050 and 1150 may be called "early Christian." Part of southwestern Finland was from time to time liable to pay taxes to Sweden (Svealand) as early as the 11th century and that the influence of Novgorod and the Eastern Church reached as far as eastern Häme.

*Swedish domination.* The victory of the Christian faith and the ecclesiastical order marked the end of prehistory in Finland and the beginning of the Middle Ages.

In the 1150s, Erik, king of Sweden, and Henrik, bishop of Uppsala, tried to introduce ecclesiastical and political order in Finland (the so-called "first crusade"). Sweden was not able to subjugate Finland, but missionary work and establishment of the first parishes were initiated in Lower Satakunta and the northern part of Varsinais-Suomi. The missions under the leadership of bishops, and perhaps also the crusades waged by the Swedish aristocracy, continued in Finland all through the latter half of the 12th century. Ecclesiastical order was also established in spite of the harassment of Novgorod and paganism.

Because of the conquests by the Germans and the Danes in the Baltic countries, Sweden also launched her operations in the coastal countries of the Gulf of Finland at the beginning of the 13th century. They had been initiated mainly in the dioceses of Gotland and Linköping. From about 1220–1245, the bishop of Finland was the energetic Thomas; and as a result of his efforts, the diocese of Finland came to comprise the provinces of Varsinais-Suomi and Häme. Thomas sought support particularly from the German rulers in the Baltic countries, and probably also received armed assistance for his operations from the order of the Brethren of the Sword against paganism in Häme and against Novgorod during the 1230s. The diocese of Finland does not seem to have been under the authority of the bishop of Uppsala in his time, although the connection was established soon after Thomas at the end of the 1240s.

Around 1230, the bishopric of Finland was transferred from Nousiainen to Koroinen at the Aurajoki river mouth, from where it was transferred farther down the Aurajoki river mouth to Turku (ca. 1290). The significance of this river mouth grew with the arrival of German merchants. The Germans took over Finnish foreign trade during the 13th century, mainly via Visby, Riga, and Tallinn, and it remained under their control until the 16th century. A great number of German merchants settled down in Finland to act as merchant intermediaries, and they introduced the forms of the European town system to Finland. Turku, which received its town privileges in the 1290s, was at that time the only town in Finland. In addition, there were many important trading centers on the coast that still lacked the characteristics of a town.

Earl Birger, who was the virtual leader of Sweden 1248–1266, incorporated western Finland permanently into Sweden, to be governed by the Crown, Varsinais-Suomi in the late 1240s and Häme in the 1250s. Toward the end of the 1250s, he probably brought a fairly large group of Swedish crusaders to Häme to secure defense against Novgorod. He started to settle crusaders on the coast of the Gulf of Finland, named Nyland ("Newland"). The building of the strong Häme castle began. Swedish colonization continued later on the coasts of the gulf of Finland and Bothnia in the 13th and 14th centuries.

The Häme and Turku castles were constructed as strong central castle towers around 1270–1300, and were the basis on which the castle-province administration under the leadership of governors was created. The control of the Swedish kings over Finland was thus strengthened. As a result of the conquest, Novgorod was forced to retreat from eastern Häme and even from western Karelia, which received a great number of settlers from western Finland. The Karelia of the Ladoga area was instead subjected to the permanent influence of Novgorod. The influence of Novgorod also stopped expanding in southern and northern Lapland because the Swedish authorities won the local Finnish settlement over to their cause by granting it large privileges to tax the Lapps and to trade with them. These were rights based on the old-established *birka* legal praxis; those who had been granted the privileges received the name *birkarlar* ("birkarls").

In 1240, Bishop Thomas failed to conquer Karelia and to expand the sphere of interest of the west as far as the Neva River. King Magnus Ladulás had similar plans. In 1293, Torgils Knutsson, lord high constable of Sweden, organized a successful military
expedition and had Viborg castle built to secure the conquest of western Karelia. After long conflicts, Novgorod acknowledged the conquest in the Treaty of Nöteborg made in 1323, the first written conclusion of peace between Sweden and Novgorod. The boundary between the countries was set northwest from the bottom of the Gulf of Finland through the wilderesses to the Gulf of Bothnia. Virtually, Finnish colonization and Swedish political expansion were permanently established across the border in Ostrobothnia and Savo as early as the latter half of the 14th century.

All of Finland, which was divided into several castle provinces, formed one diocese, the diocese of Turku. This situation created connections between different areas and made Turku the center of Finland. To assist the bishop, the cathedral chapter was founded in 1276. Finnish bishops were Swedes until 1291, when the first Finn, Magnus I, was elected bishop.

**Finland as part of Sweden.** Even in the Middle Ages, the name “Finland” meant primarily the southwestern part of the country (Varsinais-Suomi), the focus of settlement and economic life. But in the 15th century, the concept was extended to the whole area populated by Finnish tribes. The more accurate medieval term was “Osterlandia” (“Eastland”), mentioned for the first time in 1344. Here, the name “Finland” is used for the whole Finnish territory.

Finland was not incorporated into Sweden as a country conquered, but became an equal part of the kingdom. When King Magnus Eriksson was under age, Finnish affairs were managed by the governors of the Turku and Viborg castles as “heads of Finland” (capitaneus Finlandiae) fairly independently. In the 1330s and 1340s, Magnus Eriksson pursued significant reforms in Finland in taxation, trade, and administration of justice; new national laws, common law, and city code were put into effect. Ullsbys and Borgå were granted a town charter in the 1340s.

Finland was an important stronghold for the king in the struggle against the aristocracy, and from Finland he attempted to extend Sweden’s sphere of influence to the commercially important Neva line. In the 1350s, Finland was the duchy of Bengt Algotsson, favorite of Magnus Eriksson. Finland, or “Eastland,” benefited from the internal power struggles of Sweden, so that the country and its inhabitants received full right to vote in the royal election on February 15, 1362.

Albrecht of Mecklenburg, who had been elected king in 1364, considered it important to assume strict control over Finland. For this purpose, he stayed almost the whole of the year 1365 in Finland. He made many decisions that particularly advanced trade. The king attempted to increase the efficiency of the feudalistic castle administration by having new castles constructed, but because of opposition from the peasants the project had to be abandoned. The Swedish heritage in Finnish administration and jurisdiction remained strong. The germanization of the burghers in Finnish towns continued, however, and the castles of Finland often received German governors, but nowhere near as many as in Sweden.

In the 1370s, a significant feudalistic concentration of power took place when all Finnish castle provinces were placed in the charge of Bo Jonsson Grip, a Swedish aristocrat. Bo Jonsson made local administration more efficient by constructing Raseborg castle as the center of Uusimaa and by organizing Korsholm as the northernmost castle province. It comprised mainly the coast of the Gulf of Bothnia, which in the course of the Middle Ages became the object of intensive colonization, primarily from southwestern Finland. A large part of the settlement and the castle province was on the Novgorod side of the boundary fixed in the Treaty of Nöteborg. In the contest in 1370, the ownership of the area was settled in Sweden’s favor, but it was only in the Treaty of Täysinä in 1595 that Novgorod’s successor in power, Moscow, finally recognized Swedish supremacy over northern Ostrobothnia.

When Bo Jonsson died in 1386, he tried with his will to keep his provinces in the hands of the Swedish aristocracy, but King Albrecht succeeded in thwarting the plan as far as Finland was concerned. He was supported by Bero II Balk, bishop of Finland, and Jeppe Djåkn, the Finnish governor of Turku castle. To forestall this development in other provinces, the aristocratic party of Sweden resorted to joint Nordic concentration of power against German and Mecklenburgian rule and also against the strong royal power.

When the Nordic troops of Queen Margrethe had defeated Albrecht, Jeppe Djåkn recognized Margrethe’s domination in Finland in 1389, and all castle provinces except Viborg came under her control. Albrecht and his followers did not, however, give up easily, and in the conflicts that began, they aimed at isolating Finland from the country that was being concentrated in the hands of Margrethe with the support of the Vital Brethren. The western center of Finland came to Knut Bosson, a knight supporting the Mecklenburgian power, in 1395. The bishop of Finland and the lords of the Viborg and Raseborg castles were instead supporters of Margrethe and Erik of Pomerania; even Finns participated in the royal election in 1396. After the Union of Kalmar had been founded in 1397 and Margrethe had occupied Stockholm in 1398, the position of Knut Bosson and the Vitals in Finland lasted only to the year 1399.

**Union of Kalmar.** The country in a leading position in the Union of Kalmar was Denmark, where the ruler of the union also lived. The Union meetings held there were often attended by the leading figures of Finland. Formally, Finland was part of Sweden, but the Union rulers, Erik of Pomerania in particular, ruled Finland often as an entity unto itself. The ties of Finland to Sweden were loosened, and in practice Finland was almost “the fourth Union country.”

Margrethe and Erik of Pomerania saw to it that Finnish castles came to be governed by men whom they trusted absolutely. Some of the governors were Danish and German, but a considerable number were Finnish. Erik of Pomerania practiced significant reform in Finland. He promoted settlement, restored tax-free landed property to the Crown, reformed taxation and local administration (division of castle provinces into administrative parishes), began to have coins minted for Finland (in Turku), and organized administration of justice in district courts, courts of appeal for civil cases in rural areas, and in the Common Court of Turku, which from now on represented the court of last resort, the justice of the king.

When the autocratic administration of Erik of Pomerania led to a revolt in Sweden in 1434, Finnish leaders under the strong bishop Magnus Tavast were loyal to the king to the very last, and made attempts at mediation. Finally, when Sweden had fully disclaimed the obstinate king, Finland did the same. In 1438–1439, peasants in Finland rose in local rebellion because they found their taxes heavy.

The new king, Christoffer of Bavaria, managed to have only the western part of Finland under immediate dominion, for he was forced to enfeoff the eastern half of the country (the Viborg
castle province) to Karl Knutsson, the head of the national party. Later, the feudalistic division of Finland lasted until the end of the Union. The foremost bishop in the Middle Ages in Finland, the prestigious Magnus II Tavast (1412–1450), was an important supporter of the king in Finland. The lord of the Viborg castle province was independently permitted to expend all tax revenue from his area, but in exchange he was responsible for defending his area and the whole of Finland and the country against Novgorod and Moscow. From Viborg, Karl Knutsson managed to become king of Sweden and the state leader several times after 1448.

For longer periods, only the western part of Finland was actual "Union Finland," whose tax receipts went to the king, but from time to time all Finnish castles were under the control of Karl Knutsson. After him, Erik Axelsson Tott (d. 1481), a Danish-born knight, became the virtual leader of Finland. For decades, he ruled the province of Viborg in particular, but every now and then also the province of Turku, and even the whole country as a protector. Erik Axelsson's eastern policy was fairly active; to secure the defense against the rising Moscow, he had Olaf's Castle built in 1475 in an area behind the boundary fixed in the Treaty of Nöteborg, where settlers from Savo had steadily arrived since the 14th century.

After the death of Erik Axelsson in 1491, Sten Sture, the protector of Sweden, finally took command of all the main castles in Finland. Under his leadership, the country for a short period changed over to a fairly centralized national state, a state that later on was realized by Gustav Vasa. The emphasis of foreign policy in the country shifted east when Moscow, which had annexed Novgorod to itself, took steps to claim that the old Treaty of Nöteborg be recognized and put into effect. The dispute was aggravated and developed into a war in 1495–1496. Finland suffered much from the war, but was spared conquest. A new boundary was not established, nor was a permanent and lasting peace.

In the final battle over the Union between Denmark and the protectors aiming at national Swedish kingship, Finland joined the latter particularly because Denmark had entered into alliance with the hated Moscow against Sweden. In the combat that ended in a military solution, Christian II, the king of Denmark, gained a victory. November 1520 marked the period of Danish occupation in Finland. However, the ferocious revenge that the king took on his opponents, the so-called Stockholm Massacre, aroused Sweden to violent rebellion against the Danish power. Finland was the last area to come into the hands of Denmark, for only in autumn 1523 did the forces of Gustav Vasa take command of the Finnish castles. The policy of Gustav Vasa to construct a national centralized state, and the fact that such supranational powers as the Union of Kalmar, the Hanseatic League, and the Catholic Church withdrew, marked the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of modern times in Finland as well.

Economy and society. The foundation of Finnish medieval society consisted of free peasants who in the late Middle Ages owned well over 90 percent of the roughly 35,000 taxable farms of that time. Freehold estates owned by the peerage and other noblemen totaled some 3 percent (970 in number), of which 250 were farms cultivated and inhabited by the owners, and 720 were tenanted farms. In addition, the Church owned about 800 farms, or 2.5 percent of the total number. At the turn of the modern age, only about 50 percent of the farms were owned by peasants in Sweden.

In the Middle Ages, Finland also developed the structure of European class society; but toward the end of the period, the nobility, clergy, and burghers accounted for only a few percent of the population, which had increased perhaps to 300,000.

The leading noble families were of Swedish, German, and Danish descent. But in the late Middle Ages, many domestic families were also exempted from land dues to the Crown (i.e., they rose to the freehold estate, the so-called frälsde), and many of their members became holders of the highest posts. In the late 15th century, the flood of foreign noble families subsided, and the Finnish nobility began to be self-sufficient. The six towns in Finland in the Middle Ages (Turku, Ullsfby, Borgå, Viborg, Rauma, Nåndeval) were trifling small, and the regional differentiation they represented was insignificant. Many of the burghers, especially in Turku, Viborg, and Ullsfby, were of German and Swedish birth throughout the Middle Ages. During the Union, all Finnish bishops and nearly all members of the cathedral chapter were Finnish learned men. Continuous colonization altered the dynamics of medieval Finnish society. The settlement became denser in the old heartlands, whereas about half of the farms were in the southwestern center (Värmska-Suomi, Satakunta, Hämee) at the end of the Middle Ages. All the time, however, settlement and cultivation expanded to new areas in the northern and eastern directions in Ostrobothnia, Savo, and northern Karelia. In the 15th century, enthusiasm for settlement in central Finland was shown particularly by the tribe from Savo, a tribe that developed in an area between Hämee and Karelia. Colonization from Savo was most intense in the 16th century, when it was also concentrated in the forests of central Scandinavia. There is no indication that the agrarian crisis of the late Middle Ages would have brought about an interruption in colonization in Finland, or such depopulation as in Scandinavia, although it is probable that development was retarded toward the end of the 14th century. But colonization was very vigorous again in the 15th and 16th centuries.

Finnish economic life was based on the trades of the peasants. The economy of the Crown and the Church, the existence of towns, and trade were all based on the yield from agriculture, fishing, and hunting. Peasant households were to a great extent self-sufficient, so there were many subsidiary trades, but usually there was one principal industry that yielded surplus for payment of taxes and trading.

Regional differences in the significance of different trades were great because of historical development and natural conditions. In southwestern Finland, field cultivation was the primary trade, and had great significance also in central Finland in the area inhabited by people from Hämee, where hunting, fishing, and fowling were also important. In Savo and Karelia, the basis of economic life lay in cultivation by clearing and burning woodland, hunting, and fishing. In northern Finland, a fairly pure hunting economy was prevalent among both Finns and Lapps. Fishing was the chief industry on the coasts and the islands. Animal husbandry had great significance throughout medieval Finland. Tools, dishes, textiles and clothes, boats and small ships, iron, and so on were made by hand. Actual handicraft industry was reflected in the wooded-dish industry in Vakka-Suomi, where products were exported, for example, to Germany.

The importance of trade grew during the Middle Ages. Finland imported salt, cloth, hops, wines, spices, and various kinds
of objects, as well as grain in bad years. The most important export articles were butter, fish (salted salmon, Baltic herring, dried pike), furs, pelts, seal oil, and horses (from Karelia). Foreign trade was mediated mainly by the Hanseatic towns (Danzig, Lübeck, Tallinn) and Stockholm, but peasants themselves took to the sea a good deal in trading affairs.

**Culture.** Medieval Finnish culture can be divided into “advanced culture,” represented by the Church, nobility, and burghers, and the culture of the peasants. Influences passed mostly from the former to the latter, but, on the other hand, the upper social layer received many influences from abroad.

The most perceptible and impressive form of culture was represented by the building of castles and churches. Some 250 wooden and eighty stone churches were built in Finland in the Middle Ages. Of the wooden churches, the “St. Henrik’s sermon room” in Kokemäki has been preserved. The first Finnish episcopal church in Koroinen was wooden. Around 1280, the construction of the Turku cathedral of brick began. Building and renovation of this impressive central church continued throughout the Middle Ages. Building and decoration (altars, sculptures, and wall paintings) of stone churches were influenced by European stylistic tendencies, which the master builders and artists brought particularly from Sweden, the Baltic countries, and Germany.

The first generation of Finnish castles is represented by six well-known early-medieval prehistoric castles in southwestern Finland from the 12th and 13th centuries. Around 1270–1300, three central castles were built (Turku, Hämä, and Viborg). For the needs of administration and feudalistic exercise of power, six new castles were constructed mainly on the southwestern and western coasts in the 14th century. Of these, Raseborg in Uusimaa and Kastelholm on the Åland Islands became important central castles, but others fell into disuse. To defend the country against the rising state of Moscow, the strong Olaf’s Castle was built on the eastern border in the 1470s, receiving stylistic features of the Renaissance. In the late Middle Ages, the high nobility had private stone dwellings built in southwestern Finland.

The Dominicans and Franciscans founded several monasteries in Finnish towns, and the Swedish order of the Brigitines founded a convent in Näändyl near Turku in the 1440s. The Dominicans were a particularly significant factor in conveying the influences of religious culture from Europe to Finland. In the Karelia that lies behind the boundary fixed in the Treaty of Nóteborg, Orthodox monasteries were constructed, the most important of which were Valamo and Konevitsa on the islands of Lake Ladoga. A great number of Russian and Byzantine cultural influences spread there.

In Finland, the beginnings of education were provided by monastery schools, town schools, and the cathedral school of Turku. Reliable information exists that about 140 Finns continued their studies in foreign universities, at first particularly in Paris and Prague, but in the late Middle Ages mainly in Germany. The Finnish Olof Magnusson served as rector in the University of Paris twice in the 1430s. The coming of humanism to Finland is indicated by the fact that the schoolmaster of Viborg, Clement, taught his boys Vergil and Terence at the end of the 15th century.

The literary culture was based chiefly on literature from abroad. Finnish bishops and other men of power had considerable libraries ever since the early 13th century. Especially toward the end of the Middle Ages, a large number of texts were written in Finland in Latin, Swedish, and presumably even in Finnish, but only Swedish translations of Latin texts by the monk Jöns Budde 1461–1491 have been preserved. The Church of Finland had a missal printed in Lübeck in 1488 (Missale Aboense) and a manual in Halberstadt in 1522 (Manuale Aboense).

Finland enjoyed a rich indigenous peasant culture. Many of the teachings and views of the Church were adopted, but the old popular faith remained very strong. Although written medieval Finnish literature does not exist, the “unwritten literature,” i.e., folk poetry, was plentiful and rich in meaning. Epic and lyric poetry dating from the Viking Age and even earlier was sung, as well as magic verse. The poems were expressed in Finnish four-trochee meter, which is over 2,000 years old, the so-called “Kalevala meter.” (The work known to modern readers as The Kalevala is a conflation of traditional oral songs, lyrics, and narrative first collected in the 19th century.)

Influenced particularly by Christianity, a new verse form was born, the Kalevala-type of legend poetry. Its themes were very international, but came into existence independently. The “Hymn to the Death of Bishop Henrik” is an important source from the early Christian time. In addition to legend, another medieval literary fashion, the ballad, was expressed in the Kalevala meter. Medieval ballads and legends reveal the rich world of the saints, knights, Hanseatics, priests, and monks. A massive spectacle of the presentation of ballads and legends was the Rivitala Whitsuntide Festival in Hame. A fine piece of Finnish poetry from the Middle Ages is the ballad “Death of Elina.”

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FINLAND


Jouko Valtola

Finnboga saga ramma ("The Saga of Finnbogi the Strong") is classed as one of a group of younger, or "postclassical," Icelandic sagas. Finnbogasaga ramma is preserved on one vellum leaf, AM 162c fol., dating from the quarter of the 14th century. Primary MSS are AM 132 fol. (Môdruvallabôk), written not later than 1350, and AM 510 4to (Mõdruvallabôk), quarter of the 14th century. Primary MSS are AM 132 fol.

The eponymous hero, Finnbogi, is an Icelandic farmer's son, but his life is a particularly adventurous one, especially his exploits abroad. Finnbogi has all the traits of the true saga hero, in particular great physical strength, and his life is a series of feats of strength and responses to challenges. Many motifs in the saga are known from other sources, and similarities between Finnboga saga and other sagas (e.g., Gunnlaugs saga, Kjalnesinga saga, and Hallfreðar saga) have been noted. Verbal parallels are few, however, and instances of direct borrowing are difficult to establish.

Finnbogi is a hero who is rejected as a child. He is exposed as an infant, but found by a poor, old couple. Later, through his valor, he gains his father's favor. His name and nickname ("the strong") are given to him by important men who value him highly.

In Norway, he fights with bears and blámen (literally "blue-men"), and in Greece represents the king of Norway, at the same time converting to Christianity. Everywhere, his strength and noble-mindedness win him admiration.

Events in Iceland are on the whole less grand. Finnbogi is involved in a series of disputes with the Ingimundarsons. This feud is also described in Vatnsdœla saga, where the account is very much biased in favor of the Ingimundarsons. Ölsen (1937-39) has suggested that Finnboga saga was written in response to Vatnsdœla saga, to exonerate Finnbogi, as it were; but it is equally plausible that the two versions represent oral variants of the same story (van Hamel 1934). In the end, Finnbogi is reconciled with his enemies and lives to an old age.

Finnbogi ramma is mentioned in Landnámabók and in the Islandingsdrápa of Haukur Valdiflassson, and there can be little doubt that the character is based on a historical person, however fictionalized the account may be in its present form. Influence from the forntaldarsôgur and voldarsôgur is apparent both in the style of the saga and in a few incidental details, such as when Finnbogi is said to have lain under a silk blanket. One unusual aspect of the saga is its colloquial style, its use of words thought to have been common in the spoken language of the time, but rare in the literary language (Schach 1985).

Finnboga saga ramma is not one of the better-crafted Islandingsôgur. Characterization is flat, and the plot little more than a repetitious series of episodes designed to present the hero in a favorable light. The narrative is nevertheless lively and makes good reading.

The oldest rímur based on the saga were composed by Guðmundur Bergþórsson in 1683. A ballad found in the Faroe Islands is thought to have been based directly on the saga or another source common to both (Poulsen 1963).


Margret Eggerstsdottir

[See also: Islandingsôgur, Môdruvallabôk, Rímur, Vatnsdœla saga]

Fishing, Whaling, and Seal Hunting. The fish resources along the Atlantic coasts of Scandinavia are special in a European, and perhaps also in a global, context because they are so rich and at the same time so close to the shore. In eastern Scandinavia,
there are also fish resources close to the shore, although not as rich as in the west. Consequently, great quantities of fish could be taken with small boats and inexpensive fishing equipment by peasants along the coast. In Scandinavia, even commercial fishing was almost exclusively done by peasants who owned their own boats and sold the catch to merchants. This situation contrasts with England, Holland, Flanders, and Germany, where commercial fisheries were organized after 1370 by town merchants sending large fishing vessels out in the North Sea and to Icelandic waters on trips lasting for weeks.

The most important fish species for medieval Scandinavian fishermen were cod and coalfish in the west (Iceland, Faroe Islands, Norway, western Jutland), herring in the east (Bohuslän, Danish waters, the Baltic), and salmon in rivers and lakes. The richest catches were taken in seasonal fisheries on the spawning grounds. For cod, the principal ones were on the southwestern coast of Iceland, and in Norway from Troms to Møre, with the greatest concentration along the southern shores of the Lofoten Islands. The greatest shoals of spawning herring were found near the towns of Skanör and Falsterbo in Scania. The principal commercial fisheries took place on these spawning grounds. But for local consumption sufficient resources could be found along most of the Scandinavian coastline.

Boat and fishing tackle belonged mostly to the fishermen. In the cod fisheries, Scandinavian fishermen used lines with one or two hooks. In the herring fisheries, seines and nets were the tackle most commonly used. Lines and nets were so cheap that every farmer could afford them. The seine was divided into several parts, each of which could be owned by separate farmers. The fishing boats were usually manned by two to four men. Most coastal peasants owned boats of varying size. The members of the crew, which usually included the boat owner, divided the catch according to a prearranged share system. Servants were paid a fixed sum, and the share belonged to the master. The fish was partly consumed by the fishermen and their families, partly bartered or sold at local or international markets.

Coastal farmers in western Scandinavia ate astonishingly large quantities of fish. Along the northern and western coast of Norway in the 18th century, it was usual to have herring for breakfast and cod or coalfish at a meal later in the day. Fish must have provided about 25 percent of the caloric demand of these peasants' households in normal years. In years when the grain crops failed, fish could save the peasants from starvation. There are reports of peasants surviving difficult winters on fish and water. This large consumption of fish was most certainly the same in the Middle Ages and even earlier. In Denmark and Sweden, fish consumption was smaller, but still important.

Local barter, where coastal farmers gave fish in exchange for timber and other products from inland farmers, is found all along the Scandinavian coasts. The townspeople were important consumers of fish. In Norway and partly in Sweden and Denmark, peasants from the surrounding countryside caught the fish and sold it in the town. In Denmark and Sweden, fishermen often lived permanently in towns. In the fishing season, townspeople manned boats with their servants and sent them to fishing villages. For example, merchants of the Lake Mälar district traveled up to harbors along the Gulf of Bothnia, where they fished herring and traded with the local population.

The commercial revolution of 1100-1350 opened up European markets for Scandinavian fish. The development started at the Lofoten Islands, because here marketable fish was simplest to produce.

In northern Scandinavia, the climate is so cold and dry that it is possible to dry fish in the wind without the use of salt. The procedure required no investment and was so simple that the fishermen did it themselves. The dried cod was called stockfish because it hung over a rod, or stock, while drying. As early as 1100, cod was caught at the Lofoten Islands, dried there, brought to Bergen, and sold to exporters. This was the first fishery in northern Europe to acquire an international market. In the following period up to 1300, stockfish production spread southward to the coast of Møre.

The export of stockfish from Iceland via Bergen started around 1320-1340. The main fishing villages were on the Westman Islands and Snaefellnes. In 1412, the first English merchants appeared in Icelandic waters. Icelandic fishermen got better prices from them than in Bergen, and in the following period stockfish production increased. The English built trading stations in the Westman Islands, Grundavik, Rif, Hafnarfjörður, and other places. In addition, in 1409, foreign fishermen started to fish in Icelandic waters with large fishing ships. They salted the fish on board and did not have bases ashore.

About 1450, stockfish production also spread to northern Troms and Finnmark. Earlier, there seem to have been no Norwegians living permanently there. Then Norwegian fishermen settled in fishing villages on the outer coast where the distance to the best fishing grounds was shortest. In 1520, there were fishing villages all along the coast to Vadsø. They had a population altogether of 2,000-3,000, which drew its main income from stockfish. Operating on a far smaller scale was the export of dried cod and flounder from western Jutland via Ribe to northern Germany at the end of the Middle Ages.

Herring for European markets was generally salted, some of it also smoked. Salting demanded salt and tuns, and this investment was risky because the herring shoals were irregular. The peasants could not afford it, and nearly all the salting was done by merchants. This situation gave the herring fisheries at Scania particular advantages. They were comparatively regular and were near the Hansa towns of northern Germany where the herring merchants lived. Commercial fisheries are first mentioned there around 1200. The value of the herring production at Scania soon surpassed the stockfish exports from Bergen. The fishermen sold the catch fresh to the merchants when they landed it at the end of the day. At Skanör and Falsterbo, the fishermen were peasants from Scania and above all from the Danish islands of Møn, Lolland, Falster, and southern Zealand. Although Skanör and Falsterbo were the two most important fishing villages, there were other smaller ones along the Sound. On Møn alone, there were eleven villages at the end of the Middle Ages. From 1370, at the latest, fishing boats from Hansa towns also participated, at the end of the 14th century, 400-500 from Lubeck alone. In the 1520s, the German bailiff at Scania claimed that one autumn a total of 7,515 boats participated with an average of five fishermen in each. Of all the fisheries of northern Europe in the Middle Ages, those of Scania probably had the largest participation. In value, however, the Dutch and English North Sea fisheries with larger fishing ships surpassed it in the 15th century.

Shoals of spawning herring came to the coast of Bohuslän in 1288-1341. The fisheries were organized in much the same way as at Scania, with foreign merchants and local fishermen. After 1400, the Hansa merchants also organized the salting of herring in the Liiim Fjord. Fishing with nets in the fjord was open to all. Most
of the fish was taken with seines and fish traps along the shore, but this area was reserved for the owners of the land.

Fish was important for the coastal population as a source of food and cash. With this money, they could buy, among other things, imported grain. It is therefore surprising to see how few professional fishermen there were in medieval Scandinavia. In Denmark, there were a few of them living in the towns. They provided the comparatively stable and protected town markets with daily provisions. In Germany, it was usual for town fishermen to form guilds; in Scandinavia, we find this trend only in Vejle. In the 15th century, we get the first reliable evidence of professional fishermen in the Icelandic and Norwegian fishing villages. Most of them lived in Finnmark, where we find about 500 fishermen’s families at the end of the Middle Ages. But even on these barren settlements close to the ocean, people were reluctant to abandon all ties with agriculture. Almost all had some sheep and perhaps a cow that were fed on seaweed, fish, moss, and grass, which often was brought long distances by boat.

The great majority of medieval Scandinavian fishermen combined fishing with other occupations, above all with farming, because all the great fisheries were seasonal. The cod spawned in January to April and the Scania herring from the middle of August to October. In these periods, there was little to do on the farm. The peasants could thus skim the cream off the fishing resources without neglecting agriculture. It was also risky to rely exclusively on irregular fish shoals and on merchants who could be prevented from coming by war or accident. Coastal farmers consequently settled where they could find the best conditions for agriculture. But for some weeks or even months every year, they moved out to the best fishing districts. If there were farms there, they lodged in the farmhouses. But near the best fishing grounds, villages of fishermen’s huts grew up that were used only in the fishing season. In Iceland and in Finnmark, they were built of stones and turf, farther south of timber.

Whaling. Several forms of whaling were practiced in Norway, Iceland, and the Faroe Islands. The oldest and most primitive method was to cut the blubber off dead or dying whales that had run themselves aground. Floating dead whales could be towed ashore. The law gives detailed rules for the division among the king, the landowner, and the finder. Many bays and inlets were so situated that whales often swam in, but did not find their way out again. Then it was easy for neighboring peasants to scare the whale aground or shoot it with poisoned arrows.

More active forms of whaling were also known. In the Old English Orosius (1:1), the chiefian Óttarr from northern Norway tells that he, with six of his men, hunted sixty large whales in two days. If the statement is true, they must have met a flock of smaller whales, such as pilot whales, scared them to the shore, and killed them there with knives and spears. This procedure is known in the Faroe Islands up to the present day.

The most risky form of whaling was harpooning on the open sea. Both Icelandic and Norwegian laws regulated it, but Konungs skuggsjá ascribes it to Icelandic waters only. In Norway, it is not mentioned in other medieval sources. It is safe to assume that harpooning on the open sea was very rare there.

In Iceland and the Faroes, whaling may have been economically important in parts of the islands. In Norway, the hunt was too passive and occasional to have any consequence.

Seal hunting. Before firearms made hunting more effective in the 16th century, there were more seals along the coasts than in recent centuries. Ice hunting of seals was important in the Baltic when the sea was frozen. In the Gulf of Bothnia, the peasants went out in teams equipped with sledges and small boats. When the seals lay on the ice far from open water, they could be killed easily by clubs or spears. Seals living under the ice had to breathe regularly in small holes in the ice, where they could be harpooned. In summer all over Scandinavia, they were clubbed or harpooned while lying on skerries or shores. Often, iron hooks were fastened to the rocks, and when the seals were scared and hurried to the sea, they were hooked. Special seal nets were commonly used.

On some skerries or shores, the seals lived for longer periods and bred their baby seals. Most such skerries were privately owned, with exclusive hunting rights. Seals were protected by law during two periods of the year, including the last weeks before they bred.

The most important seal product was blubber. It was eaten instead of butter, used for frying, in oil lamps, and to grease skin clothes. In coastal districts where wood was scarce (Greenland, Iceland, northern Norway), it was used instead of tar to smear boats. Seal meat was not valued highly, but was eaten by the peasants because other meat was scarce. Seal skins were used for shoes, gloves, caps, covers, bags, sacks, and watertight clothes. Seal products could in most cases be replaced by cattle and sheep products. Seals were of most use for the poorer part of the population.

Sealing and hunting have been subsidiary sources of income for coastal farmers up to modern times. But during the last two millennia, there has been a gradual shift from seal hunting toward fishing, first for local consumption and after 1100 also for an international market. Hunting had probably already reduced the number of seals in prehistoric times and throughout the Middle Ages, and certainly after 1500 and the introduction of firearms. Because seals consume vast quantities of fish, fewer seals meant more fish. Exploitation of sea resources has contributed to changing the ecological balance along the coast as far back as recorded history.


Avned Nækvitne

[See also: Trade]

Five Boroughs. Within the English East Midlands lies a group of five sites—Derby, Leicester, Lincoln, Nottingham, and Stamford—that became Scandinavian power centers following the Viking “Great Army’s” settlement of this region in 877. Their individual importance is clear from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle record of the English counterattack on the area in the second decade of the 10th century, which concentrated on capturing them either through direct attack or by intimidation and negotiation. They were first
the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle entry for 942, which celebrates in verse how King Edmund freed the Danes in the area from Norse tyranny, i.e., from the rule of York’s Viking kings. Subsequently, the people and territory of the Five Boroughs are mentioned in the Chronicle entry for 1013, while in 1015 the related phrase “the seven boroughs” occurs, although it is not made clear which two sites are grouped here with the original five.

To previous generations of historians, the Five Boroughs seemed primarily military and administrative centers of Danish origin, which provided the example for Alfred the Great’s fortress-building policy, but more recent historical and archaeological research has thrown new light on their historical origins and function, although there is still much to be learned.

It is now clear that each of the Five Boroughs had a long pre-Viking pedigree as a local or regional center. Derby, Leicester, Lincoln, and Nottingham were all occupied to some extent in the Iron Age. Both Leicester and Lincoln became substantial Roman walled towns, and there were Roman fortifications within one km. of Derby at Little Chester. Pagan Saxon cemeteries are known at Little Chester, and a 6th–7th-century cemetery, perhaps continuously Christian, has been found at St. Paul-in-the-Bail, Lincoln. All five sites have produced evidence for occupation in the immediately pre-Viking, middle Saxon period. At Derby, there was an important church, and Leicester was the seat of the Middle Anglian bishopric from 737 and perhaps earlier. Defended enclosures have been located at both Nottingham and Stamford, ranging in area from approximately 1.1 hectares at Stamford to about 1.5–3 hectares at Nottingham. There is evidence of activity within the standing Roman walls at Lincoln. In spite of the limited and varied evidence, it may be suggested that each of these sites was a secular and ecclesiastical focus for its region in the 7th–9th centuries, a center of power and wealth requiring the provision of services, including the fabrication of objects, and attracting visitors, including interregional and perhaps even occasionally international merchants. Lincoln, for a mixture of geographical and historical reasons, perhaps saw more mercantile activity than the others, but on the present evidence none of the sites should be described as towns before the Vikings’ arrival.

The development in the four decades of Viking rule until the recapture by the English is mostly unclear. A pottery kiln at Stamford suggests the initiation of the notable Stamford pottery industry from approximately 1.1 hectares at Stamford to about 1.5–3 hectares at Nottingham. There is evidence of activity within the standing Roman walls at Lincoln. In spite of the limited and varied evidence, it may be suggested that each of these sites was a secular and ecclesiastical focus for its region in the 7th–9th centuries, a center of power and wealth requiring the provision of services, including the fabrication of objects, and attracting visitors, including interregional and perhaps even occasionally international merchants. Lincoln, for a mixture of geographical and historical reasons, perhaps saw more mercantile activity than the others, but on the present evidence none of the sites should be described as towns before the Vikings’ arrival.

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The “Viking” phase in the Five Boroughs effectively came to an end with their recapture by the English in the second decade of the 10th century. Yet the frequency with which moneys’ names of Norse derivation appear on the coinage minted there in the late 10th and early 11th century suggests that Scandinavians continued to form an important and numerically significant element in the population.

Lincoln’s Flaxengate excavations provide the best index of urban and commercial development during this period, and indeed Lincoln was clearly the largest and most prosperous of the Five Boroughs, rivaling York as the second city in England, after London, by the time of the Norman Conquest. Flaxengate has produced evidence for a range of manufacturing industries closely comparable in many respects to those discovered at Coppergate, York. Lincoln’s inter-regional and overseas links also correspond to York’s. Elsewhere in the Five Boroughs, there are again signs of manufacturing and trading activities, for example, pottery kilns at Leicester, Nottingham, and Stamford, which also has evidence of iron working.

By the Norman Conquest, the Five Boroughs embraced a series of places varied in their size and economy. Four had given their names to the surrounding shires that they served as administrative and legal centers, while the fifth, Stamford, may also have been once designated for that role. It is not clear whether their grouping together originated in their late 9th–early 10th-century Viking phase, or whether this designation was given by the English in an attempt to foster unity in a crucial buffer zone against the influence of York, but both their pre-Viking origins and their development into towns during the Anglo-Scandinavian phase of their existence are becoming more comprehensible.


[See also: England, Norse in; Stamford Bridge, Battle of; York]

Fjolsvinnsmál see Svipdagsmál

Flateyjarbók (“The Book of Flatey”) is an Icelandic parchment (GKS 1005 fol.) consisting of 225 large folio sheets with two wide columns on each page, now bound in two volumes. Flateyjarbók was written by two priests, Jón Pórardarson and Magnús Pórhallsson, in 1387–1390, the annal entries for 1391–1394 at the back of the book being added piecemeal during those years. Magnús also illuminated the entire book and wrote a preface that describes the contents of the book and the division of labor between the two scribes. Here, the owner is named: Jón Hákonarson (1350–before 1416), a wealthy farmer in Víðidalstunga (northern Iceland), for whom it is presumed that the MS was written.

Nothing is known concerning the history of Flateyjarbók after the death of Jón Hákonarson until the latter half of the 15th century, when the book was in the possession of Porleifur Björnsson, the governor at Reykholar (western Iceland), who had twenty-three sheets with new material inserted into the original 202. The work was thereafter owned by Porleifur Björnsson’s descendants until 1647, when Jón Finnsson on Flatey, the island that gave its name to the book, in Breiðafjörður (western Iceland), gave the codex to Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson. In 1656, the bishop sent it as a gift to the king of Denmark, Frederik III. It remained in the Royal Library in Copenhagen until 1971, when it was deposited at the Arni Magnússon Institute in Reykjavík.

Flateyjarbók is the largest of all Icelandic parchments, and, with its Gothic illustrations, one of the most beautiful. The text is characterized by an attempt to present a continuous history of Norway by combining the biographies of individual Norwegian kings, into which are woven paettir, sections of other sagas, and
even entire sagas that in some way concern the lives of the kings. The basic framework consists of four large sagas: Óláfs saga Tryggvaesenar en mesta (the so-called Longest Saga), Óláfs saga helga (the so-called Separate Saga), Sverris saga, and Hákkonar saga Hákkonarsonar. The twenty-three most recent sheets contain, in addition to some Ættir, the Morkinskinna version of the sagas of the kings Magnús góði ("the good") and Haraldr hárfraði ("hard-ruler"). These sagas compensate somewhat for the fact that the MS probably the MS now known as Hulda (AM 66 fol.). The sagas about the two Ólafs are the most expanded of the four framework sagas. Related versions of these two sagas are preserved in other MSS, but nowhere with the same amount of expansion as in Flateyjarbók. Among the additions are Jónsvikinga saga, Færeyinga saga (in a version that in the main seems to be original text, and that is not preserved elsewhere), Orkneyinga saga (including sections not found elsewhere), Hallrèðra saga (partially an independent version), Grenendlinga saga (preserved nowhere else), and Fóstbrœðra saga (with sections not included in other MSS of the saga). Among the Ættir rare Porleifs Ætt jarlsskálds, Porsteins Ætt, Orms Ætt Stórólfssonar, and Vols Ætt, none of which is preserved elsewhere. As a kind of conclusion for all the previous material and at the same time a bridge to the following saga, the poem Núregis konunga tal is placed after Óláfs saga helga; this skaldic work is found nowhere else, and is especially noteworthy because it must be based on the oldest Icelandic historical writing, the lost work about the kings of Norway by Sæmundr fróði ("the learned") Sigfusson. Following the four framework sagas, there are, among other items, some passages from the otherwise lost saga about St. Óláfr by Styrmir Kárason, and, finally, the Annals of Flatey. Preceding the sagas are, among other items, the only extant texts of the eddic poem Hymdufljóð and of Óláfs ríma Haraldssonar, the earliest recorded poem of the rímur genre.

The entire contents of Flateyjarbók could have been copied from some forty to fifty MSS, therefore, one must assume that the scribes of Flateyjarbók found their material in the library of a cloister or at an episcopal center, possibly the monastery at Pingeyrar, or at Reyningur, or the bishop's see at Hólar (northern Iceland).

Flateyjarbók preserves a great deal of material that exists nowhere else. Not least on this account, it has always been considered among the most exceptional MSS in Icelandic literature.


Kolbrún Haraldsdóttir

[See also: Fóstbrœðra saga, Færeyinga saga, Hákkonar saga gamla Hákkonarsonar, Hallrœðra saga, Hynduljóð, Játvarðar saga, Jónsvikinga saga, Konungasögur, Morkinskinna, Óláfs saga helga, Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar, Orkneyinga saga, Ritmar, Sverris saga, Ættir, Porleifs Ætt jarlsskálds, Vinland Sagas]

Fljótsdœla saga ("The Saga of the People of Fljótsdœlir"). What is now called Fljótsdœla saga probably never existed as a self-contained narrative, but was conceived as it now survives, as a sequel to Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða. It may be considered the youngest of the Icelandic sagas, dating from no earlier than the end of the 15th century, and assigned by its first editor (Káull Kámundsson, 1883) to the first half of the 16th. In the main surviving MS, a copy made in the 17th century, possibly from the author’s own version, it forms the continuation of an altered and expanded text of Hrafnkels saga. The saga is incomplete, and may have been left unfinished by the author, although there are indications that he had intended to continue the narrative well beyond the point reached in the existing text.

Despite its late provenance, the saga is surprisingly lacking in the romance influence frequently found at the end of the classical period of saga composition. With the exception of the account of the rescue of a jarl’s daughter from the bondage of the giant Geitir, perhaps derived from Brandkross jarl, although there are few distinct parallels, the narrative is realistic, and almost entirely set in Iceland. Although he failed to achieve a comparable economy of style and clarity of structure, the author clearly modeled his work on the classical saga literature, in which he was demonstrably well versed. Internal evidence suggests acquaintance with
besides those works from which his narrative material is chiefly derived, *Hrafnkels saga*, *Droplaugarsona saga*, and *Gunnars þáttir (saga) Pòðrandabana*. He may have known the compilation *Mððrvallabók*, which incorporates many of these sagas.

The author's use of his sources is far from slavish, including variant versions of the characters' names and relationships, and adding much circumstantial detail. The main personages are those which incorporates many of these sagas. *Mððrvallabók*, tended *Droplaugarsona saga*, sons of Droplaug, and the pursuit of his killer Gunnarr. Although *Droplaugarsona saga* is clearer in such its ity, and late as an attempt to revive rather than to continue the tradition which Jón Jóhannesson (1950) judges to have been *Hrafnkeb saga*, containing, fictional synthesis of material from older sagas, composed *Fljótsdcela saga*.

The saga survives in two versions. The shorter version is found in full in a number of late paper MSS. The most important are AM 517 4to, which *Ásgeir Jónsson* (ca. 1657–1707) prepared from the now-lost *Vatnsbýr* (ca. 1375–1400) in the possession of P. H. Resen, and AM 516 4to, which is not, as was earlier assumed, a copy of *Vatnsbýr*. The MS was written by Ketill Jórundarson (ca. 1603–1670); Ámi Magnússon compared it with *Vatnsbýr* and corrected it. The longer version has survived only in fragmentary form. Two pages of an extensive saga MS (the so-called *Pseudo-Vatnsbýr*) survive in AM 455b 4to (fols. 4–5rb; ca. 1390–1425) as well as in Einar Eyjólfsson's (ca. 1641–1695) copy (AM 515 4to) of two additional pages of the same MS, which he inserted into the text of the shorter version. Current scholarly opinion considers the longer version closest to the original, which probably dates from between 1290 and 1350.

Based on the hagiographical characteristics of the saga, scholars consider it likely that the author was an ecclesiastic from the south of Iceland. Perkins indicates a probable connection with Haukr Erlendsson (d. 1334) as well as with the farm Gauverjáhr.

**Flóamanna saga** ("The Saga of the Men of Flói") focuses on the life and deeds of Porgils Órbeinsföstri ("-foster"). At the age of sixteen, his demand for his inheritance from his forefathers leads him to Norway. In the British Isles and Ireland, Porgils wins a precious sword and the sister of a Scottish earl. In Iceland, Porgils marries again after giving his first wife to his best friend. His conversion to Christianity leads to conflict with the god Pórr, who appears in his dreams and threatens revenge. Porgils staunchly defends his loyalty to the new faith. His attempt to settle in Greenland ends in disaster. Shipwrecked on a rough coast, Porgils loses a large part of his crew to epidemic, and his wife is murdered by servants. Only after great difficulties do the survivors reach inhabited districts. Porgils's relationship with Eiríkr raðuð ("the red") becomes cold and unfriendly, so his stay in Greenland ends quickly. After adventures in Ireland and Hålogaland, he reaches Iceland. The last part of the saga reports on Porgils's last marriage and on further conflicts with various opponents, until he finally dies at the age of eighty-five.

For the first nine chapters, the saga relies mainly on Sturla Þórarson's version of *Landnámabók*. One episode in the story of Porgils's youth indicates that the author was acquainted with *Grettis saga*. Porgils's attempts to obtain his Norwegian inheritance recall those of Egil in *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*. The related battles with revenants and Vikings are paralleled in *Íslendingasögur*, such as *Reykjóls saga*, *Hávarðar saga Ísflórs*, or *Viga-Glúms saga*, and in *Íslendingasögur*, such as *Ovrar-Óðils saga* and *Fridþjófs saga*. Models and analogues to the events in Greenland are found especially in those sagas that deal with this district, i.e., *Íslendinga saga* and *Eiríks saga rauda*. The saga uses hagiographical and religious literature, even the New Testament, for those passages that tell of Porgils's conflicts with Pórr. The same is true for some of the thirteen dreams. In addition, the characterization of the hero shows the stylistic influence of *ríkstageir*. Even this brief survey shows the extent, otherwise unparalleled among Icelandic sagas, to which "set pieces" drawn from widely divergent genres have been brought together here. Especially for a modern reader, this practice lends charm to the saga, even though it does not meet the aesthetic standards of the classical *Íslendingasögur*.
Flores and His Sons) is an Icelandic dating from the end of the 14th century. This text was very popular, since we know of at least forty paper and three vellum copies (AM 343a 4to, end of the 14th century). While certain motifs and characters point to a possible for­
adaptation, but an original composition.

Duke Sintram falls in love with the princess, but his marriage proposal is met with refusal. With the help of his brothers, Reinald and Bertram, and three knights, Únus, Sekúndus, and Tertíus, he wages war on Flores. After a fierce battle, Flores is victorious. He takes prisoner. The night before their execution, Flores overhears Sintram and his three knights telling each other their life stories.

He confesses that the events he tells “are considered by some as lies,” but he dismisses such judgments.

It is difficult to trace the numerous sources of this rich and clearly composed text. Some motifs, such as the father who refuses to give his daughter in marriage and the fight against the drake, are ubiquitous in western literature. Some, such as the struggle between father and son(s), seem to be more Germanic. Still others, such as the exile of the hero during his youth, followed by his subsequent recognition, may be Byzantine in origin.

Flores och Blænzelof

Flores saga konungs ok sona hans ("The Saga of King Flores and His Sons") is an Icelandic riddarasaga dating from the end of the 14th century. This text was very popular, since we know of at least forty paper and three vellum copies (AM 343a 4to, AM 577 4to [defective], and AM 586 4to, all from the 15th cen­
tury). This difference is due most likely to influence from European languages not only of Scandinavia and England, but also of Germany, Italy, Spain, Greece, the Netherlands, and other lands. Only the

Flores saga ok Blankiflúr ("The Saga of Flores and Blankiflúr") is a Christian romance about the young, loving couple Flores and Blankiflúr, composed in Old Norwegian prose probably between 1220 and 1230. The saga has as its source Floire et Blancheflor, a French romance composed around 1150. The tale was a medieval bestseller; translations exist in the vernacular languages not only of Scandinavia and England, but also of Germany, Italy, Spain, Greece, the Netherlands, and other lands. Only the final part of the Old Norwegian saga, from the single combat onward, differs from the original French tale (ed. Leclanche 1980). This difference is due most likely to influence from European translations of the second French version of Floire et Blancheflor from around 1200 (Leclanche 1980).

Flores saga ok Blankiflúr ("The Saga of Flores and Blankiflúr") is a Christian romance about the young, loving couple Flores and Blankiflúr, composed in Old Norwegian prose probably between 1220 and 1230. The saga has as its source Floire et Blancheflor, a French romance composed around 1150. The tale was a medieval bestseller; translations exist in the vernacular languages not only of Scandinavia and England, but also of Germany, Italy, Spain, Greece, the Netherlands, and other lands. Only the final part of the Old Norwegian saga, from the single combat onward, differs from the original French tale (ed. Leclanche 1980). This difference is due most likely to influence from European translations of the second French version of Floire et Blancheflor from around 1200 (Leclanche 1980).

Only one fragment of the Old Norwegian version survives: NRA 65, from the early 14th century; its text is close to, if not identical with, the original translation. Other Icelandic MSS are AM 575a 4to (fragmentary) and AM 489 4to, both from the 14th century. The name of the clerk who transformed the poem into a saga remains unknown.

The names of the couple are explained by the fact that the Christian Blankiflúr ("white flower") and the heathen (i.e., Islamic) Flores ("flower") were both born on Palm Sunday, the day on which Catholics carry blessed branches and flowers. Blankiflúr's mother is taken prisoner on her pilgrimage to Compostela in Spain, and Blankiflúr is brought up together with Flores at the royal court.
of Flores’s father. Mutual love forms a natural part of their lives. Yet the king does not want his son to marry the daughter of a youngest of the three romances of the saga of Flores and Blankiflur, which is the youngest of the three romances of the Eufemiaviisnor.

Before 1500, the Swedish poem was translated into Danish. The Danish translation is found in two versions, one in Cod. Holm. K 47 from about 1500, the other in two printings from 1504 and 1509. These texts are based on a Swedish version older than the ones now extant.


Flóvent’s saga Frakkakonungs (“The Saga of Flóvent, Ruler of the Franks”), a riddarsaga from the 13th century, survives in two main redactions, which often complement each other. These versions are represented best by the texts given by AM 580 4to (i) and Stock. Perg. 4to no. 6 (ii), from 1300–1350 and around 1400, respectively. A sister MS to AM 580 4to, commonly referred to as “Ormr Snorrason’s Book,” also contained a text of the saga; however, this MS was lost in the Stockholm fire of 1697 and survives only in independent copies made prior to its destruction, AM 152 fol., AM 570a 4to, Stock. Papp. fol. no. 47, and in snatches of text excerpted therefrom by Swedish lexicographers in the 17th century. In all, twenty-one MSS are extant for the saga text (see Kalinke and Mitchell 1985), as well as a composite Latin translation, extant in two copies, made in the 18th century by Jón Ólafsson of Gannnavik on the basis of six MSS. Faroese ballads and Icelandic rimur based on Flóvent’s saga also survive.

At a yuletide feast in Rome, Flóvent, the fifteen-year-old nephew of Emperor Constantine, accidentally spills wine on a haughty duke. Enraged, the duke insults and strikes Flóvent, prompting the latter to strike back so forcibly that the duke’s eyes spurt out. After Flóvent leaves the hall, the emperor swears an oath to have him killed and soon sets out after him. In single combat, Flóvent is victorious and takes the ruler’s swift steed. Accompanied by his comrades, Otun and Jofrey, Flóvent rides north and finds lodgings at a hermit’s house, where he learns that the heathen king Salatres has subjugated most of Frakkland (France), forcing King Flóvent to flee to Paris. During the night, an angel appears to the hermit announcing that if Flóvent trusts in God’s mercy, he will eventually defeat the heathen king and become ruler of Frakkland. After Flóvent defeats Korsablin, one of four petty rulers allied to Salatres, the heathen king dispatches his nephew of Emperor Constantine, accidentally spills wine on a haughty duke. Enraged, the duke insults and strikes Flóvent, prompting the latter to strike back so forcibly that the duke’s eyes spurt out. After Flóvent leaves the hall, the emperor swears an oath to have him killed and soon sets out after him. In single combat, Flóvent is victorious and takes the ruler’s swift steed. Accompanied by his comrades, Otun and Jofrey, Flóvent rides north and finds lodgings at a hermit’s house, where he learns that the heathen king Salatres has subjugated most of Frakkland (France), forcing King Flóvent to flee to Paris. During the night, an angel appears to the hermit announcing that if Flóvent trusts in God’s mercy, he will eventually defeat the heathen king and become ruler of Frakkland. After Flóvent defeats Korsablin, one of four petty rulers allied to Salatres, the heathen king dispatches his son Korduban to wreak vengeance, but he is duly routed at Kourbille. Salatres now enters the fray and is himself wounded in the battle. In a final battle, Salatres surrenders and promises the hand of his daughter Mariabilia to Flóvent. After Mariabilia is baptized, she is wed to Flóvent, now king of Frakkland, who has all the pagan temples either destroyed or turned into churches.

An epilogue recounts the victory of Flóvent over Amiral, king of Spain; Flóvent’s reconciliation with his uncle; his coronation in Rome by Pope Marcus; the marriage of Otun and Faustena and of Jofrey and Florenta, King Flórent’s daughter; and con-
cludes by mentioning that Marsbilia and Flovent had splendid sons, and that he died of old age and was buried in Notre Dame.

Despite the insertion at one point in one vellum MS of a proverbial saying given in Old French and then freely rendered in the vernacular, *Flovents saga* is probably not a translation but, as its rabbling style indicates, an adaptation of a lost *chaslon de geste*, made in all likelihood during the latter years of the reign of Hákon Hákornarson of Norway (1217-1263). There is no connection, other than that of the hero's name, with the *Chanson de Flovanant*. The mischievous prank of cutting the sleeping tutor's beard that sets in motion the stock banishment of the hero found in the French work is quite unlike the evil deed that precipitates exile in the saga. There are some correspondences between *Flovents saga* and later Middle Dutch and Italian versions, but not enough to indicate direct dependence. The saga operates with such stocks in trade of the *chaslon de geste* as the rescue of the Christian warrior by a heathen princess, her conversion and marriage to the hero, the frequent suspension of combat for elevated prayer and lengthy declamation, the enumeration of military forces, the often lavish expressions of mutual admiration by brothers-in-arms, fondness for carnage and mutilation (a quarter of Korsálnin's face and the Hero hand are slashed off), and loud tauntings and ravings, especially on the part of the infidels. But there are some features that are strikingly northern. Here belong such similes as "yía sem hundar/vargar" ("howl like dogs/wolves"), "bliek sem nár" ("pale as a corpse"), "hoggr Saxa sem naefrar" ("hews down Saxons like pieces of birch bark"), and certain touches of sly humor. The biblical references, Flovent's prayer in the Muslim temple, the description of the hero's plain fare, and, above all, the general tone of the work, suggest a pious clerical author who turns to a make-believe world rich in adventure, in which Christianity is militantly triumphant.


Folklore. The term "folklore" refers to the nonmaterial manifestations of belief, custom, and artistic creativity in the life of traditional communities. Each of these principal categories of folklore embraces a number of subcategories. Thus, the forms of traditional artistic expression include folk music, dance, and drama, as well as the various genres of what is usually termed folk literature.

The genres of folk literature in their turn comprise not only narrative forms like folk epic, folktale, ballad, and legend, but also nonnarrative forms, such as the proverb, riddle, and other "minor genres," including traditional sayings, rhymes, and magic incantations.

Some information on the folklore of Scandinavia in the Middle Ages can be gleaned directly from the testimony of written sources surviving from the period, and more can be deduced from a comparison of this testimony with the folklore records of modern times. The text of this article deals chiefly with the testimony of Old Norse-Icelandic sources, and with the narrative forms of folk literature. The bibliography, on the other hand, lists source materials and studies of Scandinavian folklore in a much broader sense, including East Scandinavian (Danish and Swedish) tradition.

The repertoire of mythological and heroic poems of the *Poetic Edda*, preserved mainly in the *Codex Regius* of the late 13th century, must to a greater or lesser degree reflect traditions of medieval Scandinavian folk epic extending as far back as the Viking Age. These traditions were handed down orally until they were recorded in writing by Icelandic antiquarians of the time of Snorri Sturluson (1178/9-1241). The eddic lays deal with legends of Norse gods and ancient Germanic heroes, such as Sigurd and Ermanaric. They are compact and often allusive, and there is no evidence that the ancient Scandinavians developed long verse epics comparable to the poems of Homer. The sagas of medieval Iceland indicate a taste for extended prose narratives in epic style, but the relationship between existing saga texts and their postulated oral antecedents remains a matter of dispute.

Folktales. According to the international classification developed by Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson, the most important folktales types known to modern tradition can be categorized under the headings of animal tales (AT 1-299), tales of magic (AT 300-749), religious tales (AT 750-849), romantic tales (AT 850-999), and jokes and anecdotes (AT 1200-1999). The folktale as a genre flourished among the ordinary people of Iceland as early as the time of the antiquarian revival around 1200, when Oddr Snorrason in his *Oláf's saga Tryggvasonar* and the anonymous author or re­ductor of *Sverris saga* both referred condescendingly to popular tales about cruel stepmothers (*stjúpmœdrasögur*). This dating does not, of course, imply that all the folktale types known to modern Scandinavian tradition were already in existence in the high Middle Ages. The group of animal tales, for example, seems to have been little known prior to the English translation of the international exemplum literature of the Church and of the collections of fables originating in Greek and Roman antiquity. Traces of the oriental tradition of animal tales have been seen in *Aðunar Jættir vestfirzka* and its analogues in *Gautreks saga* and Saxo's *Gesta Danorum*, which would point to an awareness of this tradition in the late 12th century. The main impact of the exemplum literature must, however, be dated to the 14th and 15th centuries, and the classical fable books did not penetrate Scandinavia until after the invention of printing. In general, there seems to be a marked discontinuity
between the medieval and modern traditions of animal tales in Scandinavia. Thus, two international tale types probably deriving from the exotemplum repertoire (AT 32. *The Wolf Descends into the Well* and AT 47E *Ass's Charter in His Hoof*) are extant in late-medieval Icelandic translation, but have left no trace in modern West Scandinavian tradition.

Reminiscences of popular tales of magic are more frequent in medieval sources. Saxo's story of Frotho can be linked with AT 300 *The Dragon-Slayer*, the frame tale in *Egils saga einhenda* or *Ásmundar berserkjabana* resembles AT 301 *The Three Stolen Princesses*, the motif of the life-egg associates an episode in *Bósa saga ok Herraud* with AT 302 *The Ogre's (Devil's) Heart in the Egg*; and the *Bjarka þáttir* in *Hróls saga kraka* has several motifs in common with AT 303 *The Twins or Blood-Brothers*. The prose explanations accompanying *Völundarkviða* and *Grottasongr* in the *Poetic Edda* appear to be early forms of the Swan Maidens (cf. AT 400 *The Man on a Quest for His Lost Wife*) and AT 565 *The Magic Mill*, respectively, while AT 510 *Cinderella* is recognizable in the plot of *Vilmundar saga víðhaut*.

The literature of medieval Scandinavia is rich in religious tales. The attitude of the reformed Church was, however, doubtless partly to blame for the loss in more recent centuries of tales with a Roman Catholic flavor. It may be significant that the grateful guest in a genuine Icelandic folk variant of AT 750A-B *The Wishes; Hospitality Rewarded* is neither Christ nor St. Peter, but an anonymous stranger. This variant shares with Irish hagiography and with Snorri's *Gylfaginning* the distinctive motif of breaking the bones of a magic animal to extract the marrow, as related in the episode of Pörr's visit to the giant Útgarða-Loki. Reminiscences of folktales from the other major groups have also been discovered in Old Norse-Icelandic literature: the girl Kraka in *Ragnar saga lóðbrókar* resembles the heroine of AT 875 *The Clever Peasant Girl*; the plot of *Klári saga* is a variant of AT 900 *King Thrushbeard*, and has entered modern Icelandic tradition from the saga text despite the fact that the latter bears the hallmarks of literary translation; and among the jokes and anecdotes, we find analogues to AT 1415 *Lucky Hans in Gautreks saga*, and to AT 1533 *The Wise Carving of the Fowl* in *Mágs saga*.

Examples like these allow us to form some notion, however hazy, of the content of the medieval folktales repertoire, but they tell us nothing whatsoever about form. As far as Iceland is concerned, it seems reasonable to assume that indigenous oral storytelling shaped the style of the sagas when they were not under the direct influence of foreign models; the evidence of recent folktales hardly has independent weight in this context because of the uninterrupted reception of the sagas at all levels of Icelandic society right up to modern times.

**Ballads.** In the case of the ballads, we can have more confidence that the medieval form of the genre is reflected in existing records, though it is often difficult to prove that specific ballads in the documented tradition originated in the Middle Ages. Apart from the survival of some few MS fragments from the 15th century, the principal arguments for the existence of ballads in medieval Scandinavia are linguistic archaisms in some of the inherited texts, the apparent influence of the ballad style on the Swedish *Euelemia* romances from the early 14th century, and the striking fidelity to actual history in some of the ballads purporting to relate events from the 14th, 13th, or even 12th centuries. These arguments are supported by international parallels, especially in the thematically and stylistically related balladry of Scotland and England.

The consensus holds that the ballad genre was fully developed in continental Scandinavia and the Faroe Islands by the 14th century at the latest, whereas the evolution of the genre in Iceland may have been delayed until the end of the Middle Ages. The East Scandinavian ballad corpus is copiously recorded from the 16th century onward in the form of MSS anthologies and broadside prints. Icelandic ballads begin to appear in significant quantities in MSS from the second half of the 17th century. In the Faroe Islands and Norway, records commence only with the romantic interest in peasant tradition that was awakened in the late 18th century and flourished in the 19th century. The ballad genre seems to have remained productive longest in the Faroe Islands, where it has maintained its functional relationship with the ring-dance on occasions of public festivity. Distinctively characteristic of the Faroese tradition is the evolution of an extended ballad form subdivided into cantos (*taettir*); a genetic relationship has been postulated between this form and the strophic narrative poetry of late-medieval Iceland (the *rimur*) and England (minstrel romances and ballads).

Following the principles established by the Danish folklorist Svend Grundtvig (1824-1883), modern Scandinavian ballad scholarship commonly classifies the traditional corpus thematically, with ballads of chivalry, legendary ballads, and ballads of the supernatural standing alongside historical, jocular, and heroic ballads. The last-mentioned class is apparently typical of the West Scandinavian area, and draws heavily on material supplied by the late-medieval *fornaldarsögur* and *riddarasögur*. Ballad singers of modern times have thus preserved the substance of narratives dating back four or five centuries, thanks to the remarkable stability of the song tradition in places remote from the main centers of cultural development. At the same time, the ballad repertoire has been enriched by many new compositions in explicit or implicit continuation of the medieval tradition.

**Legends.** Legends of the mythical and heroic variety are retold in Saxo's *Gesta Danorum*, in Snorri Sturluson's *Gylfaginning* and *Skáldskaparmál*, and in the *fornaldarsögur* and related ballads. The international corpus of medieval religious legends is extensively represented in Old Norse-Icelandic homiletic literature, and in the compilations conventionally referred to as *Maríu saga*, *Heilagra manna sögur*, and *Postola sögur*, while the regional traditions of the Church in Iceland are incorporated in such works as *Ari Porgilsson's Islendingabók* and the sagas of Icelandic bishops. The *Landsnámbók* records innumerable legends connected with the settlement of Iceland; some are local etiological legends, such as the many explanations of place-names, while others are migratory legends, like the tale of a newly arrived settler's encounter with a prophetic merman, a creature of the fisherman's imagination still known until quite recently in Norway. Settlement legends also figure largely in the preambles to the *Islendingasögur*, which can be viewed in a general way as the epic codification of legendary traditions attaching to the major landowning dynasties of the country. Such codifications of tradition based on local political and economic interests are also documented from Norway in the postmedieval period, although the level of epic elaboration is not comparable to that of the *Islendingasögur*. Other points of contact between modern folk legend and the *Islendingasögur* may be found in the analogies of the supernatural and of outlaw existence in works like *Eyrbyggja saga* and *Gísla saga Súrssonar*. A contributing factor in the preservation of ancient legends up to the time of the compilation of the *Islendingasögur* in the 13th century seems to have been the circulation of skaldic strophes (*lausavísur*) in which
the kernel of a given legend was encapsulated.

Nonnarrative genres. The nonnarrative genres of folklore literature are more sporadically mirrored in medieval written sources. Proverbs are reproduced in some of the eddic lays, most strikingly in the first and third sections of Hávamál, a poem that expresses the cynicism of the Viking Age and undoubtedly transmits indigenous material. The proverbs scattered through legal texts, sagas, and other medieval Norse–Icelandic documents may also be partly indigenous, but at the same time we must reckon with the influence of the sententious literature in Latin that became known through the medieval school curriculum. An unusual literary composition is the Málsháttakvæði, an alliterative, rhyed poem of thirty strophes consisting largely of proverbial expressions. This humorous jeu d’esprit is often attributed to the 13th-century Orcadian skald Bjarni Kolbeinsson. Systematic collections of proverbs appear in the East Scandinavian area in the late Middle Ages in connection with the name of Peder Lále (original Danish redaction probably of the 14th, Swedish version of the 15th century). The first Icelandic proverb collection is written in the margin of a postmedieval MS of rimur. The reception of medieval proverbs in more recent folk tradition has unfortunately not been thoroughly investigated.

Old Norse–Icelandic literature does not preserve much in the way of popular riddles. Of the riddles quoted in a well-known episode of Hervarar saga ok Heidreks, not more than one sixth are known to younger Nordic folk tradition. The situation resembles that in the examples of the riddling ballad known from mainland Scandinavia and the Faroe Islands. Another of the “minor genres” of folk literature about which little information can be extracted from medieval sources is the incantatory list of names associated with religious and magic practice; examples are, however, found in the so-called julur embedded in the eddic lays of Völuspá and Grímnismál. Incantations recorded in modern times have a different frame of reference, often being constructed in imitation of the litanies and prayers of the Church.

Medieval men of letters were in a majority of cases didactists and exegetes; they had no mission to preserve the lore of the people for its own sake and in unabridged form. Viewed from this perspective, our knowledge of medieval Scandinavian folklore is in fact greater than might have been expected. We owe it to two complementary factors: the eclecticism of medieval authors and compilers, and the relative stability and conservatism of the younger regional tradition.

Cornell University, 1967; Tryggvi Gislason. "Islensk-Málfræðiheiti málalda­

Margaret Clunies Ross

[See also: Grammatical Treatises; Heiti; Kennings; Snorra Edda]

Fornaldarsögur ("sagas of antiquity"), also referred to as Mythi­
cal-Heroic Sagas and Legendary Sagas, comprise a group of ap­proximately thirty late-medieval Icelandic texts. Neither the term fornaldarsögur nor the genre designation is traditional; both de­rive from modern treatments and collections of secular romances, especially those of Müller (1818) and Rafn (1829). Few critics would disagree, however, that these narratives, with their fond­proximately thirty late-medieval Icelandic texts. Neither the term fornaldarsögur nor the genre designation is traditional; both de­rive from modern treatments and collections of secular romances, especially those of Müller (1818) and Rafn (1829). Few critics would disagree, however, that these narratives, with their fond­ness for ancient settings, far-flung geographies, and one-dimen­sional heroes, do constitute a separate category of sagas. Although there is consensus as to the texts that should be regarded as fornaldarsögur, attempts to articulate a definition of the genre have been notably few. Based on the most important features the genre displays, the fornaldarsögur can, however, be characterized as Icelandic prose narratives based on traditional heroic themes, whose numerous fabulous episodes and motifs result in an atmo­sphere of unreality.

Any such designation must exclude tales that are similar in many formal respects, but that have borrowed their themes and heroes from abroad (e.g., Hýlmpþæs saga ok Ólvis, Eiríks saga víðförla, Friðþjófs saga þreks, all of which have at one time or another been included among the fornaldarsögur). Although tales with such foreign origins often center on quests and contain folk­loric materials, recurrent characters, and stylized narration, they should not be confused with the indigenous fornaldarsögur, whose materials display a lengthy continuity within the Nordic cultural context and project a different ethos. While the fabulous nature of the fornaldarsögur can be evaluated only from the modern point of view, it is likely that similar judgments would have been made by contemporary Icelanders as well. The assessment of what a medieval Icelander would have believed possible or impossible is naturally a relative one, but one need only compare the soberness of the Islendingasögur with the time compressions, talking animals, pagan theophanies, metamorphoses, and supernatural beings of the fornaldarsögur to see how uncomplicated this division is. Even where the Islendingasögur treat the supernatural (e.g., premonitions and visions), they tend to do so for specific dramatic effect, unlike the comic and mystifying impression often generated in the fornaldarsögur.

Temporally and spatially, the fornaldarsögur are unique among the native sagas as well. Time is frequently treated in the fornaldarsögur in the same way it is dealt with in folktales: it is simply ignored at the narrative level. When, for example, the hero of Gongu-Hrólfis saga has his feet cut off and later reattached, the text has no interest in letting us know whether this event takes place on the same day or several days, perhaps even weeks later. Likewise, the historical settings of the fornaldarsögur are either left unspecified or, where indicated, said to be some remote period before the colonization of Iceland. In either case, time references have a completely different nature from the nearly ubiquitous opening "þat var á dogum Haralds konungs ins hárfagra" ("It was in the days of King Harald Fair-hair") and the like of the Islendingasögur. The treatment of geography in the fornaldarsögur is also reminiscent of folklore attitudes: although countries and cities are commonly named, they are merely ciphers for exotic settings, not carefully detailed locations. What they lack in preci­sion, however, the fornaldarsögur make up in breadth, for the action of these sagas frequently occurs outside Scandinavia; France, Ire­land, Russia, the Holy Land, and the otherworld all figure in them. But here, too, there is an air of unreality about these sagas that derives from what has been called the undefined landscape of Teutonic epic; it evokes a mood, but it does not detail a setting. Both features stand in stark contrast to the elaborate networks of temporal and spatial frames of reference in which the realistic saga genres, Islendingasögur, konungsögsögu, biskupasögu, and Sturlunga saga, delight.

Several prominent, and occasionally overlapping, subcatego­ries of fornaldarsögur exist: the "Adventure Tales" and the "Heroic Legends." To some degree, these designations correspond to comic and tragic modes within the genre. Occasionally, a third group ("Viking Sagas") is culled from among the previous two based on the hero's vocation. The "Adventure Tales" can be identified by such elements as the closeness of their structures and heroic biog­raphies to the folktale and by the generally happy conclusion to the hero's quest: the acquisition of a wife and kingdom, the release of a companion, and so on. They include Ans saga bogsveigs, Bósa saga, Egils saga einhenda ok Asmundar berserkjabána, Gongu-Hrólfis saga, Gríms saga loðinkuña, Hálfdanar saga Bòrnufræsta, Hálfdanar saga Ýsteinnssonar, Hrólfis saga Gautrekssonar, Hrómundar saga Gripssonar, Illuga saga Gríðarfætra, Ketils saga hængs, Sturlaugis saga starfsama, Sólar saga sérku, Porsteins jatt berjármagns, Porsteins saga Vigskonnar, and Órvar-Odds saga. The "Heroic Legends," on the other hand, are usually tragic, with the hero's death often brought about through treachery, and their protagonists are frequently paralleled elsewhere in Germanic liter­ature; they include Æschundar saga kuppabana, Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekkja, Hervarar saga ok Heldræks konungs, Hrólfis saga kraka, Ragnars saga loðbrókar, Sólar jatt, Völsunga saga, Yngvars saga víðförla, and Páttar af Ragnars sonum. In addition, Normagest jatt and Tóka jatt Tókasonar might well be added to this list. These two works deal with legendary figures (e.g., Sigurðr Fáfnisbær, Hrólfir kraka, Hálfir Hjórleifsson), but such epic characters are used only as a means of establishing the venerable ages and remarkable careers of the protagonists. The placement of the tales among the "Heroic Legends" is troublesome, since while the Páttar are clearly related to such works, they are themselves hardly "Heroic Leg­ends."

Indeed, none of the assignments suggested above should be regarded as rigid; legitimate arguments can, for example, be ad­vanced for designating a text like Sólar jatt an "Adventure Tale" and for deleting Yngvars saga víðförla from the "Heroic Legends," although it by no means fits easily into the "Adventure Tale" cat­egory. Helga jatt Porissönon has its closest structural and them­matic analogues among saints' legends and local legends and cannot be easily placed within any of the normal subdivisions of the fornaldarsögur. A work like Gautreks saga defies simple classifi­cation: its first section, which treats the hero Starkaðr, belongs among the "Heroic Legends," while its latter portion, the so-called
were to be included by virtue of contents, but to a much lesser extent form and style, Tale." Moreover, three Old Norse texts, Fundin Nóregr, Hversu Nóregr byggðask, and Sogubrot af fornkonungum, are not properly fornaldarsögur since they are nonnarrative, but treat materials of great relevance to the fornaldarsögur. The number of fornaldarsögur would increase considerably if texts closely related by virtue of contents, but to a much lesser extent form and style, were to be included (e.g., Yningina saga, Pídreks saga af Bern). However, other than similarity of subject matter, there appears to be little justification for reckoning these works among the actual fornaldarsögur. The difficulties involved in arranging the fornaldarsögur into neat subdivisions have led some modern critics to discuss the fornaldarsögur in terms of their relation to such external categories as myth, folktale, history, and heroic poetry.

In addition to the texts enumerated above, a number of "lost" fornaldarsögur are known to have existed. Most important among these vanished texts is *Skjöludunga saga, ample evidence of which exists to establish the outline of its contents. With varying degrees of certainty, the following texts can also be suggested as "lost fornaldarsögur": *Andra saga jarls, *Asmundar saga flagfagæfi,*Gríms saga ok Hjálmars, *Haralds saga Hríngsbana,*Hróks saga svarta,*Huldrar saga,*I咄ga saga eldhússgöða,*Ormars saga, Úlfhamssaga, and *Póris saga hálægg. In some instances, these works are referred to in other sagas, while in others we have only the testimony of the lost saga's legacy in other, later genres.

The extant fornaldarsögur date largely from the Icelandic 14th and 15th centuries, but the traditions on which they are based are well attested throughout northern Europe and can, in some instances, be reliably dated to much earlier periods. Thus, while a well-known work like Volsunga saga exists only in a single medieval MS, the narrative that forms its core is documented over vast expanses of time and space and in a wide array of media: in plastic representations (e.g., the Ramusund petroglyph in Sweden, the Andreas carving on the Isle of Man, Norwegian stave-church carvings); in other genres of Norse literature (e.g., the Poetic Edda, the Prose Edda); and in related Germanic traditions (e.g., Beowulf, Das Niebelungenlied).

Continuity or traditionality is, then, a key concept in the delineation of the fornaldarsögur as a group; but while the extant texts are traditional at base, they belong to an acquisitive and highly eclectic genre. Thus, while mythological, folkloric, and native literary traditions from earlier periods are used in composing these narratives, so too are literary texts from abroad and components of the learned clerical culture (e.g., encyclopedic literature). It is difficult to read Yngvars saga viliðfjörd, for example, without believing that its authors were familiar with Alfreði ísenzk (AM 194 8vo) or some similar compendium of learned lore from which certain details have been culled. Typically, however, such foreign sources play only an ornamental, and not a substantive, role in the fornaldarsögur.

The fornaldarsögur enjoyed great and enduring popularity, a fact attested to by the substantial numbers of MSS in which they survive, including many from after the Reformation. Some of their titles even appear in inventories of the holdings of medieval Icelandic church libraries. The MS preservation of the fornaldarsögur as a group defies simple description, although it may be said that there are several medieval codices that tend to be made up solely of fornaldarsögur and other "romantic" sagas (e.g., AM 152 fol., AM 343a 4to, Gks 2845 4to). In general, the MS histories of the individual fornaldarsögur are highly varied. Hrolfs saga kraka is known only in post-Reformation MSS; Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekkja has but one extant medieval attestation; Helga þjótr þóttisnar is an embedded tale within the Longest Saga of Óláfr Tryggvason in Flateyjarbók; and Órvar-Odds saga exists in five medieval MSS containing several highly distinct versions. As this last example indicates, the recensions of the fornaldarsögur can vary widely with regard to expansions, interpolations, and interpretations.

The considerable age of the settings of the sagas and the dates from which the historical figures occasionally encountered in them originate (e.g., Ragnar loðbrók ["hairy breeches"]) often result in the impression that the fornaldarsögur constitute the oldest group of sagas. In fact, the opposite situation obtains, for while the traditions on which the texts are based are typically archaic, the written fornaldarsögur themselves are among the most recent innovations of saga literature. There is evidence that fornaldarsögur were recited orally (e.g., Porgils saga ok Halldís, Sturlu saga), but of these oral versions we know little of substance, other than their existence. And despite the fact that the heroes and villains of the tales are commonly Norwegians, Danes, and Swedes, the fornaldarsögur are a decidedly Icelandic genre, although much can be learned about the traditions behind the fornaldarsögur from such non-Icelandic works as the Gesta Danorum of Saxo Grammaticus.

The fact that the fornaldarsögur flourished in the postclassical-saga period indicates a kind of revitalization in Icelandic literature. To a large extent, these sagas may justifiably be regarded as a literature intended to entertain, rather than to edify or inform. Unfortunately, the tendency of many modern critics has been to assume that the fornaldarsögur may thereby be dismissed as escapist literature (referred to as the "Verfall theory"). In fact, while there is little reason to doubt that these narratives were pleasantly diversionary, their function in late-medieval Icelandic literature was multifaceted. In a period of national distress and cultural retrogression due to geological, meteorological, political, and demographic factors, the fornaldarsögur represented a conduit to a glorious heroic past. As an antiquarian literature that developed in the postclassical-saga period, the fornaldarsögur fulfilled an important cultural and psychological function in addition to their robustly entertaining value. Certainly, leading Icelanders would have been well served by the recording of their legendary ancestors' exploits; such an argument may be made, for example, for the family of the Oddavarjar in the case of *Skjöludunga saga. No doubt, prominent Icelanders found the fornaldarsögur useful amplifications of information contained in family genealogies. One notes, for example, that Ari fróði ("the learned") does not hesitate to trace his own genealogy back to the legendary heroes and pagan gods in Islendingabók; the impulse for the Icelanders to prove that they too, like their more established Nordic neighbors, had connections to the Scandinavian heroic age must have been powerful. One MS of Landnámabók suggests that just such a motivation accounts for the Icelanders' unparalleled interest in history and legend: "Enn uier þikumst helldur suara kunna utendum monnum. Pá ët íðr bregda ózi þui ad uier siuem komner af þreitum eda illemnum, ef vitum vijst vorar kynferdir sannat" ("But we can better answer the criticism of foreigners when they accuse us of coming from slaves or rogues, if we know for certain the truth about our ancestry"); Melabók, ch. 335).

The materials on which the fornaldarsögur are centered also find expression in the ballad traditions of the Faroes, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark and in the Icelandic metrical romances.
Among the fornaldrarsögur with rímur from before 1600 are Árs saga bogsvegis, Bósa saga, Egils saga ok Ásmundar berserkjabana, Göngu-Hrólls saga, Hálfdanar saga Brónufóstra, Hálfdanar saga Eysteinsonnar, Hrólls saga Gautrekssonar, Hrólls saga kraka, Sóra þáttir, Sturlaugs saga starsams, Volsunga saga, and Porsteins saga Vikingsögon. The following fornaldrarsögur are paralleled wholly or partially by non-Icelandic ballads: Ásmundar saga kappabana, Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekkja, Hervarar saga ok Heidrekks konungs, Hrólls saga Gautrekssonar, Illuga saga Gríðarföstra, Ketils saga hængs, Normagest þáttir, Ragnarss saga lodbrokr, Sóra saga sterka, Volsunga saga, and Orvar-Odds saga. Curiously, only Hrólls saga Gautrekssonar and Volsunga saga are represented in both categories, and it should be noted that only a very few texts do not have analogues or descendants in one or the other of these genres.

When modern, non-Icelandic interest in the sagas was ignited in Denmark and Sweden in the 17th century, the focus was largely on the fornaldrarsögur, for they were believed to contain testimony about the earliest histories of the two kingdoms. Once the value of the fornaldrarsögur as historical documents had been cast in doubt, however, the tales generally fared poorly in the hands of critics, except insofar as they were believed capable of shedding light on important heroic figures like Sigurðr-Siegfried. Modern critical reactions to the fornaldrarsögur have been quite negative overall: judged by the Aristotelian views that are appropriate largely to the Islandingsögn, the fornaldrarsögur can hardly escape critical condemnation, given the affection they evince for recurrent tale types (e.g., AT 1137, The Ogre Blinded [Polyphemus], well-worn motifs (e.g., R53.1 Woman Hidden in Underground Chamber, Hill, or Mud Cabin), and stock characters (e.g., the "donor" figure). Part of this misevaluation of the fornaldrarsögur can no doubt be traced to a generally inadequate appreciation for the relationship these texts bear to folklore forms. Moreover, there is a tendency to regard the fornaldrarsögur as relics of the Viking Age, but they will only be understood when they are approached as the means by which late-medieval Icelanders themselves looked back at the Heroic Age. As these two aspects of the fornaldrarsögur are incorporated into our views of them, the fornaldrarsögur will take a more highly regarded place in our discussions of Icelandic literary and cultural history.


**Stephen A. Mitchell**

[See also: Árs saga bogsvegis, Ásmundar saga kappabana, Bósa saga (Herrauds saga ok Bósa), Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana, Eiríks saga völöförla; Folklore, Friðjófs saga ins frekra; Gautreks saga, Gríms saga lodökningsa; Göngu-Hrólls saga, Hálfdanar saga Brónufóstra, Hálfdanar saga Eysteinsonnar; Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekkja, Helga þáttir Porrsonar; Hemings þáttir Áslákssonar, Hervarar saga ok Heidrekks konungs, Hjálmpés saga ok Herrauds, Hrólls saga Gautrekssonar, Hrólls saga kraka, Illuga saga Gríðarföstra, Ketils saga hængs, Normagest þáttir, Ragnarss saga lodbrokr, Rúnur, Skjóldunga saga; Rúnur, Sturlaugs saga starsams; Sóra saga sterka; Sóra þáttir, Fóðraks saga af Bern, Porsteins saga Vikingsonar; Porsteins þáttir bejmagns; Volsunga saga; Ynglinga saga; Yngvars saga völöförla; Orvar-Odds saga]
**Fornsvenskt Legendarium** see Old Swedish Legendary

**Fortification.** During the Viking Age and the Middle Ages, a wide range of types of fortification were used in Scandinavia. The borders of the individual countries must be understood as their medieval borders; the area of modern Finland is, however, not considered in the present survey. Fortifications were built in response to particular political situations in the local areas, or in the kingdoms of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. Their type, their shape and size, and the building materials reflect the local topography and the natural resources, the structure of society, the period’s military and general technology, the social status and economic means of those who built them, and sometimes, particularly in the Middle Ages, fashions prevailing elsewhere in Europe. There were many fewer fortifications in Norway than in Denmark and Sweden, and fewer types; the main reason for this scarcity is the country’s topography.

Some fortifications functioned for only a very short time. Others were reused and rebuilt after periods of desertion. Others again were in continuous use through several centuries, being modified or rebuilt after time. But none is known to have functioned from the Viking Age until the end of the Middle Ages.

Remains of a very large number of fortifications are known, but it is often impossible to establish their period(s) and type(s), for only a small proportion have been investigated, and usually only little survives. It is often difficult to establish and date the various phases of the long-lived ones. Many excavations of important castles and other fortifications took place long ago and were often poorly documented, while the interpretations were often based on written sources barely mentioning the site or the area, or on foreign structural parallels, not on the excavated evidence itself. Modern comprehensive and critical studies are needed, especially for Sweden, as well as new excavations and a clear terminology.

**Linear earthworks.** Among the linear earthworks in Denmark, only the Danevirke is known to have functioned in the Viking Age and the (early) Middle Ages, but there may have been more. The Danevirke is by far the largest, and protected the country’s southern border. In Norway and Sweden, such earthworks from Viking or medieval times are not known.

**Sea barriers.** Sea barriers, or ship blockages, prevented sudden attacks from sea-borne enemies by barring the passage of their ships and other floating means of attack. They are known from Europe and elsewhere over a wide span of time, and the Scandinavian evidence (archaeology, written sources, place-names, and pictures) comprise a number of barriers from both Viking and medieval times. One group seems to belong to the period of the Slav attacks in the 11th and 12th centuries.

A sea barrier might protect a particular harbor or town, for example in Hedeby, Birka, Kalundborg, Visby, Bergen, and Stockholm, and sometimes combined with a land fortification. Or it might protect an area, for example, around the inner Roskilde fjord or around Hellerumsviken in Blekinge. Sea barriers might be constructed in the forms of bridges, rows of piles, stone caissons, sunken ships, floating booms, solid chains, or combinations of these. Some were permanent, others temporary. People with local knowledge knew the openings in permanent barriers or used other, often very complicated sailing channels. Some types of barriers are vividly illustrated and described by Olaus Magnus (1555), as well as the means of overcoming them.

**Fortified refuge camps.** Temporary refuge camps for the inhabitants of a settlement or an area together with their animals and other important belongings, and used in times of unrest, existed in many regions of Scandinavia. A number of such fortifications have been identified: they were often to a large extent based on defensive elements provided by nature. Few are excavated, but while most are undoubtedly of Iron Age date, some have been demonstrated to be multiperiod places, repaired and used in the Viking Age and/or the early Middle Ages. Others may have been constructed in these periods.

The fortified hill plateaus Borg and Hochburg, just outside Birka and Hedeby, respectively, were probably refuge places for the inhabitants of these trading centers until their ramparts were built in the 10th century; they also possibly housed semipermanent garrisons. The largest refuge camp known to have been refortified in the Viking Age is Torsburgen on Gotland, covering 112.5 hectares and situated on a cliff plateau with a 2-km-long stone wall; perhaps it was meant for the whole population of Gotland. Gamleborg in Almindingen on Bornholm, also situated on a cliff, covered 2.5 hectares. It was probably used in the early Viking Age and certainly reinforced in the Middle Ages. Virket on Falster is another example; about 1,200 meters of its rampart is preserved. Saxo tells that it was used in the mid-12th century during Slav attacks. It appears from other written sources that some old fortified refuge camps were used in times of trouble in the late Middle Ages. But their main period was clearly earlier, before the time of castles, siege warfare, and large armies.

**Fortified churches and churchyards.** Defensive features of churches and churchyards have often been exaggerated, but there is no doubt that some fortified churches and churchyards did exist in parts of medieval Sweden and Denmark. None is known from Norway. In all three countries, however, a stone church was often the strongest building of a village or area, and also sacred, and the door could be barred from the inside by a heavy boom. An unfortified church might be used for refuge; examples are mentioned in written sources.

Fortified churches are mostly, but not exclusively, known from the Baltic area: Bornholm, Öland, and the coastal region of Småland around Kalmar. These are dated to around 1170–1250 and are commonly believed to have been built or fortified against pagan pirates from the East Baltic area. On Bornholm, they were round tower-like churches, while the defensive elements elsewhere were in the tower(s) of a rectangular church. Some of the free-standing stone towers in churchyards in Gotland and elsewhere probably also served defensive purposes. In the troubled 14th century, the churchyard of Malling (East Jutland) was fortified with a solid stone wall. Some other churchyard walls in this region and elsewhere may have had a similar, partly military function.

**Urban defenses.** The main forms of man-made urban defenses were earth ramparts, ditches, walls of stone or brick (12th or 13th century and later), sea barriers, and fortresses or castles (mainly 12th century and later). Complicated water defenses, sometimes in connection with a water mill, were also used (e.g., in Ribe). Trondheim was provisionally fortified with wooden structures about 1180, during the civil war between King Sverrir and Archbishop Eystein, but permanent urban earth ramparts or walls of Viking and medieval times are not known in Norway.

**Ramparts and walls.** The earliest known urban ramparts are of the mid 10th century and protected the great trading centers of Hedeby and Birka, while Århus, which was fortified at about the same time, was probably a fortress then. The ramparts were semicircular. They were built of earth, partly from the ditch, and

24. Part of Torsburgen, Gotland, and its south wall, seen from the east. The fortification (probably of late Iron Age date) was reused and the stone wall enlarged during the Viking Age. Photo: Peter Manneke, Riksantikvarieombetets Gotlandsundersökningar (RAGU) (1975).


probably crowned by a timbered palisade; possibly there were also wooden towers. Timber-lined gateways were excavated at Heideby, whose defenses were extended many times. Its 1,300-m.-long rampart is now about 8 m. high and 25 m. wide.

From about 1000 onward, the number of towns grew enormously. But not all were fortified. The purpose of many minor ramparts, ditches, or fences was rather to create a borderline between the jurisdiction of town and countryside, and a custom line, and to keep out thieves and unruly elements during the night.

A number of towns were, however, fortified and refortified, most of these in the medieval Danish area, and particularly during times of unrest. Some towns got an earth rampart during the Danish civil wars of the 12th century or just after (e.g., Viborg, Roskilde, Copenhagen, Lund); and some towns were fortified or refortified during equally troubled times in the late 13th and the 14th centuries (e.g., Ribe and Lund). Walls were expensive and only for very important towns: only Stockholm, Kalmar, and Visby in Sweden are known to have been entirely walled; in Denmark, only Copenhagen and Kalundborg. The 3.5-km.-long wall of Visby is well preserved. Its oldest parts are possibly of a late 12th-century date; it was strengthened and modernized several times during the Middle Ages.

**Fortresses and castles.** While a castle is today often defined as a fortification with a lord’s private residence, or as a fortified lordly residence, this is not necessarily the case with a fortress or fort. Because of the often fragmentary evidence, the distinction is not always clear-cut; there is also a tendency to label too many fortifications as castles, if they date from after about 1100. The Scandinavian word for both is **borg**. Some forts or castles became the nucleus of a town.

Few fortresses have been identified, all of Viking or early-medieval date, and no castles are known in Scandinavia before the 12th century; these are characteristic medieval phenomena. There is no clear typology for Scandinavian castles, and they follow the western European lines only to some extent. For example, no motte (a tall earth mound for the support of a tower) is known to date from the 11th and 12th centuries; most of the many Danish mottes clearly belong to the late 13th or the 14th century. None is known in Norway; in Sweden, there are probably a few. And while the castles of Norway were built almost exclusively by kings, there are many in Denmark and Sweden built by the nobility, but very few before the 13th century. In 1396, Margrethe of Denmark, then the regent of all Scandinavian countries, forbade the building of private castles, and, in the case of Sweden, also ordered the demolition of existing ones. This ban lasted to 1483 and seems to have been effective in Denmark and Norway, while less is known about the effect in Sweden.

Strong houses and moated sites with a lordly residence and with a weak and sometimes partly symbolic fortification, perhaps just a moat, will be treated only in passing below. They were largely prestige architecture and not proper castles, although some are known to have withstood attacks of peasant revolts. They belong mainly to the late Middle Ages, during and after the ban on private castles. By this time, fortification and residence gradually separated.

**Fortresses.** One distinct group from the Viking Age is the four Danish geometrically planned Trelleborg fortresses built by the king around 980, with large equal-sized houses regularly placed in blocks within a circular rampart. Men, women, and children lived here, including craftsmen. These fortresses were probably built to keep control of the country, and functioned for a short time. Around the mid-10th century, a semicircular rampart was built at Århus, which seems to have been mainly a fortress then, but developed into a town. At Borg (now Sarpsborg) in Østfold, Norway, St. Ølafr is said to have built a fortification in about 1016. Eketorp, one of the Iron Age fortifications of Öland, was rebuilt about 1000. It was constructed of local stone and had two ring-walls; the inner area had a diameter of 80 m. and long, close-set, radially placed buildings, leaving only the central area free. Eketorp functioned into the 13th century and probably held a garrison. The background must be this period's troubled situation in the Baltic and the exposed nature of the narrow, flat island. The larger Öland fortress of Gråborg was reused during the Viking Age and rebuilt in the Middle Ages, but little is known about it.

A German source of the 1120s, *Herbordi dialogus de Ottone episcopo Bambergensi*, says that in Denmark, castra were fortified with palisades (ligno) and moats (fossatis) and had no walls (muros) or towers (turrebis). The exact meaning of castra is, however, uncertain. Saxo mentions, under a slightly later date, a tower near the harbor of Schleswig and a strange fortification near Roskilde, called Haraldsberg. Some fortifications built by the Danish king against pirates in the mid-12th century are also mentioned by Saxo, but their location and appearance are unknown, and they were perhaps forts rather than castles. The same may be true about the castellum built on the tiny island of Sprogø by King Valdemar 1 (1157–1182).

**Castles, Denmark.** The oldest castles seem to have been dominated by a tower; the largest is the stone tower at Bastrup, North Zealand, probably of the early 12th century. In the second half of this century, castles were built by King Valdemar 1 and his closest supporters for the protection of the realm and their own power after civil wars and pirate attacks. These castles were either tower castles or had a solid wall, e.g., Tårnby, Vordingborg, Kalundborg, and Copenhagen, all on Zealand. A town developed next to them. The Danevirke was modernized, and brick building was introduced in this period.

Many new castles were built during the century of political instability from around 1250. The archbishop built Hammershus on Bornholm about 1250; it had a strong keep and became one of the largest castles in Scandinavia. "The outlaws" built a castle on the island of Hjelm after the murder of King Erik Klippping in 1286. After a revolt in 1313, King Erik Mened built castles near the towns of Viborg and Horsens, and further, Ulstrup and Kale, all in Jutland. During the dissolution of the realm under Christoffer 11 (1319–1332) and after, and during its reunion under King Valdemar IV (1340–1375), castles were built by the nobility, and built or reinforced by the Crown. There were many types, including wooden towers on mottes (e.g., Kærsøgard); artificial islands in lakes and swamps, with palisades and wood or turf buildings (Hedegård/Halkjær and Solvig); brick castles with walls and towers, including round wall towers for flaming fire (Kalø and Vordingborg). The earthworks were sometimes very large (e.g., at Erkilsøde).

During the ban on private fortification (1396–1483), some bishops' castles remained castles, such as Hammershus. But the new Gjørslev on Zealand, for example, was not really fortified; it was an aristocratic residence. Among the few new castles built by the Crown were Krögen in Elsinore and Duborg in South Jutland. The abolition of the ban did not create a boom in private castle building. The well-preserved Glimmingehus in Scania, for example,
was rather a strong house or a "mock castle." Because of the development of artillery, some castles were provided with earth ramps and some with gun towers in the unstable times of the early 16th century, as at the Viborg bishop's Hald and Spectrup in Jutland. After the establishment of a new regime under King Christian III (1534–1559), a systematic castle program for artillery warfare was launched, with new castles, for example, Landskrona, or modifications of old ones, such as Malmøhus, both in Scania.

Castles, Norway. These castles were mainly royal and the number not large, the most important being in or near the towns of Trondheim, Bergen, Tønsberg, and Oslo, or along the borders, such as Vardøhus in Finnmark and Ragnhildsholmen and Bohus in the south. The walled town residences of kings and bishops, for example, in Trondheim and Oslo, can hardly be called castles. The same is true for the seats of the lay nobility.

Sagas mention a kastala at Kungahalla near Ragnhildsholmen built by King Sigurðr Þorsteinnsson ("crusader") Magnusson (1103–1130); it was destroyed in 1135. King Sverrir (1177–1202) realized the importance of castles and had one built near Trondheim (Sverresborg) and one at Bergen, both of stone. The first and best known was on a steep plateau, with walls following the natural features and a gate tower, a type that became common in Norway. These castles were soon destroyed but rebuilt by King Håkon Håkonarson (1217–1263) in Bergen with a prestigious residence, of which Håkonshallen is partly preserved. He also built a castle at Tønsberg; it developed into the largest in Norway. About the mid-13th century, Ragnhildsholmen was erected. This was of a regular, four-sided (ca. 37 × 40 m.) type unusual for Norway; a small outer ward and a tower were soon added. It played an important role for a short time in Scandinavian wars and politics.

Vardøhus and Bohus were built in the early 14th century. Bohus replaced Ragnhildsholmen and was a traditional castle. In Oslo, a new and more modern castle (Akerhus) with many defense arrangements was erected on a long, narrow cliff plateau at the waterside. A modernization of Tønsberg castle of the 14th century included round wall towers for flanking fire. By 1319, royal power moved outside the country, and the great period of castle building ended. A last one, an artillery castle with gun towers, was built by the archbishop on the island Steinvikholm in Trondheim fjord in the unruly years around 1530.

Castles, Sweden. It is a current theory that King Knut Eriksson (1167–1196) started castle building by erecting a series of stone towers (Modern Swedish kastaler) to protect coastal areas against pirate attacks. The round early towers at Kalmar, Borgholm on Öland, and Tre Kronor in Stockholm are attributed to him and believed to have been forts, which soon developed into castles with walls and residences. Krutorna, a four-sided stone tower at the harbor of Visby, probably of the 12th century, was also first freestanding but soon integrated into the town wall. A number of other freestanding stone towers are known, many of them on Gotland and all next to churches.

In the middle and the second half of the 13th century, a series of stone castles of regular four-sided plan were built, for example, in Stockholm (incorporating Tre Kronor), Nyköping in Södermanland, Örebro in Närke, and Aranäs in Västergötland, the last being a private castle of the powerful Torgils Knutsson. Kalmar castle was rebuilt by King Magnus Ladulás (1275–1290) and was given an irregular four-sided wall with two rectangular gate towers and round corner towers for flanking fire, probably the first in Scandinavia. It was the country's strongest and most modern castle.

Stårkölvik near Västervik, Småland, an almost square castle, was probably built by King Albrecht (1369–1389). At Visby, King Erik built Visborg in 1411, a large, four-sided castle, which included parts of the southwest corner of the town wall. Among the later medieval private castles (or strong houses) is Wiks hus in Upland, a rectangular (40 × 20 m.) keep or tower house of nine stories with hanging corner turrets.

There were also castles built by bishops, and castles of irregular plan and, throughout the Middle Ages, timber castles. Even the important border castle Älvsborg at the mouth of Götaelven was of timber, as shown in a drawing from 1502. It was also provided with guns. Castles for modern artillery warfare were built, or old ones were modernized, by King Gustav Vasa (1523–1560), as at Kronoberg in Småland and Kalmar.


(e) Fortresses and castles: Hahr, August. Skånska
Fortresses, Trelleborg. The designation refers to four geometrically planned fortresses in Denmark: Trelleborg on Zealand, Nonnebakken (of which very little is known) on Funen, Fyrkat in northeastern Jutland, and Aggersborg in northern Jutland. They were all built around 980, of timber, turf, and earth, and they lasted for only a short time. They were never repaired.

The Trelleborg fortresses differed in size (the inner diameter of Aggersborg being 240 m., of Trelleborg 134 m., and of Fyrkat and Nonnebakken 120 m.) and in various details. But they had the same strict overall plan, for which no exact parallel is known: a circular rampart with gates at the four points of the compass; the sides of houses arranged in regular quadrangles. A full-scale reconstruction of such a house was built at Trelleborg in 1949 and at Fyrkat in 1985. The cemeteries of these two fortresses have been found outside the ramparts. The Trelleborg fortresses are not barrack and training camps for the Vikings, who raided and conquered England under Harald's son Sven (Forkbeard) finally conquered England under Harald's son Sven (Forkbeard) and Kenneth Williams. London: British Museum, 1982, pp. 147-55; Roesdahl, Else. "The Danish Geometrical Viking Fortresses and Their Context." Anglo-Norman Studies 9. Proceedings of the Battle Conference. Ed. R. Allen Brown. Woodbridge: Boydell, 1987, pp. 208-26.

Else Roesdahl

[See also: Danevirke; Fortresses, Trelleborg]
30. Reconstructed plans of the Viking fortresses Aggersborg (top), Fyrkat (center), and Trelleborg (bottom). Scale 1:4,000. Drawing: Holger Schmidt.
31. The Viking fortress of Trelleborg from the east, situated between two converging rivers. At the bottom of the photograph, outside the outer ward, is the reconstructed house from 1948. Photo: Hans Stiesdal, The National Museum of Denmark.
and accretions reflecting the gradual "spiritualization" of the saga by clerical copyists.

An early date for the original Fóstbroðra saga is suggested by its primitive structure, ill-defined conflict, lack of motivation, and especially by its intimate relationship with the St. Óláfr legend. A dramatic Pormóður {fattir comprises fragment II (5) of the oldest Ólafs saga and ch. 58 of the legendary saga of Ólafur; and the account of Pormóðr's death in this work is similar to that in his saga.

Major sources for the saga beside the Ólafur legend are Pormóðr's skaldic stanzas, especially those about Porseirtir, but they were sometimes misinterpreted by the author. The sworn brothers play minor roles in Grettis saga, and Snorr Sturluson borrowed the death scene in Fóstbroðra saga for his Ólafs saga helga. Although not a major saga, Fóstbroðra saga does not lack dry humor, pithy dialogue, and memorable scenes, the most magnificent of which is Pormóðr's demonstration at Stiklestad of loyalty, which, as stressed by Schier (1964), is the unifying theme of the saga. The heroic nature of Fóstbroðra saga inspired Hallur Laxness to write his satirical Gerpul, the English translation of which bears the apt title The Happy Warriors (1959).


Paul Schach

[See also: Bjarkamál, Codex Regius, Flateyjarbók, Haukeljóh, Íslendingasögur, Íslensvætur, Móðruvallabók, Ólafs saga helga, Skáldasögur, Skaldic Verse]

France, Norse in. From the beginning of the 8th century into the 10th century, France was one of the main targets of Norse raids in western Europe. In this period, the land that we call France today was part of the extensive Carolingian Empire, which ranged from the Atlantic to the Elbe, from the Danish border far into Italy. After long internal conflicts, this Imperium Francorum consisted of three parts: the western kingdom, which in time became France, the eastern kingdom, which formed the basis of a later Germany, and the middle kingdom of Lotharingia (Lorraine), which extended on both sides of the Rhine from its estuary into Italy. Lotharingia soon disappeared as an independent kingdom. At the time, it comprised regions that today belong to Holland and Belgium, and that became the target of frequent Viking raids in the 8th-10th centuries. To simplify matters, the term "France" is used here to describe the whole territory from the Atlantic coast to the Rhine, even though it does not coincide with modern political borders.

Our main source for the activities of Norsemen in France are the reports of contemporary Frankish chroniclers, who wrote with bitterness about the heathen enemies from the North raiding their monasteries, churches, and towns to pillage and destroy. Naturally, their reports are not considered objective as defined by modern historical science; the chroniclers were personally affected and may well have exaggerated sometimes. But by examining hundreds of isolated descriptions, and with the aid of archaeological finds, it is possible to reconstruct the course of the Norse raids and the greed and toughness of the Vikings. Other sources, such as reports written by the Norsemen themselves at the time of their raids, are not available.

In 799, a small fleet of Norse ships appeared on the south-west coast of France to loot offshore islands. They may have been Norwegians, although in the following decades France was mostly ravaged by Danish Vikings. Other attacks at that time took place near the Rhine estuary. They were directed primarily against trading ports like Dorestad (near Utrecht), where people as well as all sorts of goods were seized. Even these first, limited raids showed quite clearly that loot was the main object of the Norsemen in France as well as elsewhere. Charlemagne organized coastal defenses. After his death in 814, however, there gradually began the long period of struggles against his heirs that frequently saw fights of supremacy contested on the battlefield and gradually came to break up the Carolingian Empire. For that reason, a united, vigorous defense against outside aggressors like the Vikings could not be maintained. The Norsemen could operate in France with less and less danger to themselves, while both their numbers and radius of action increased. They were not organized in a single fleet, but in several normally separate groups, although they united occasionally to achieve their objectives.

After the first attacks on coastal sites, a second phase began in the 830s. A considerable number of Norsemen established themselves on the island of Noirmoutier in the Loire estuary and turned it into fortified winter quarters that served as a base for raids in the spring and summer. Ultimately, the booty was hoarded in the camp, a Viking tactic observed all over western Europe. From 834 onward, the Norsemen raided up the Loire from Noirmoutier, attacking places like Nantes and Orleans. They occasionally left their ships for forays on land, returning to them afterward; this tactic also formed part of the usual Norse fighting style. The Vikings stayed in the Loire area for decades, until about 890. Despite local attempts at defense, no one could drive them off. They exercised regional control, but definitely did not settle as farmers.

Another important invasion target was the area between the mouths of the Seine and the Rhine. Here, too, the rivers served as gateways to the interior. From 834 onward, Frisia, a part of Lotharingia, was repeatedly attacked, while the domestic situation in France reached a critical state, as the Norsemen well knew. In this emergency, King Lothar I invested the Viking leader Rorik
with part of Frisia, hoping (as it turned out, correctly) that this move would cause the attacks to abate. At the same time, increasing numbers of Norsemen arrived in France. Between 841 and 879/80, they plundered extensively in the whole area of the Seine and the Somme, with fortified camps like that on the Seine island Oscelle providing the necessary support according to Viking custom. Often the Franks had to pay large sums in tribute to buy peace at least for a while.

From 865 to 880, the Norsemen of northern France operated mostly in England. The return of a strong fleet in 879/80 introduced a third phase, namely that of the "Great Army." that was to last until 892. Several groups had joined forces to act together as a large unit under leaders like Sigfred and Godfred. This action affected particularly the area of Schelde and the Meuse, where a camp was established in Elsloo on the River Meuse, and forays were undertaken in all directions. However, the period of violent fratricidal wars in France was coming to an end. In 881 and 891, the Norsemen for the first time suffered heavy defeats, which at least indicated an alteration, even though they did not yet bring about a complete change of the situation. To be sure, Emperor Charles III let slip the chance of annihilating the "Great Army" while it was surrounded in Elsloo; he turned to negotiations and permitted it to withdraw, an event that contributed to his own deposition.

A famine caused the Army, together with the Norsemen from the Loire, to leave France in 892. Some settled in England; the remainder returned. Thus, the last phase in France ended in serious defeats for the invaders. In 911, a treaty between the Norsemen and King Charles the Simple was agreed upon: the Norsemen became Christians, ceased their attacks, and in return were allowed to settle in an area that bears their name to this day, Normandy. In time, Normandy turned into a French duchy and the Vikings into French knights and peasants, thus bringing to an end their history in France.


Horst Zettel

[See also: Norman Literature, Norse Influence on]

Freeprose Theory see Bookprose/Freeprose Theory

Freyja see Freyr and Freyja

Freyr and Freyja

In Norse mythology, the brother and sister Freyr and Freyja and their father, Njörðr, are the principal members of the Vanir. According to Völuspá and such other texts as Snorri Sturluson's Edda and Ynglinga saga, the Vanir and Aesir fought a war near the beginning of mythic time. A female figure, perhaps Freyja, played an important but unclear role, and the cessation of hostilities involved an exchange of hostages that sent Frey and Njörðr to the Aesir and ultimately led to the creation of the mead of poetry. The Vanir, therefore, were initially distinct from the Aesir and were incorporated with them by means of myth.

Many observers regard the Aesir as gods of war and the Vanir as gods of fertility.

Ample evidence associates Freyr and Freyja with fertility. In his Edda, Snorri Sturluson remarks that both are fair of face and powerful. Freyr, the noblest of the gods, rules over rain, sunshine, and the growth of the earth, and may be invoked for good harvest and peace; he controls the wealth of men. Freyja, Snorri adds, is the noblest of goddesses. She dwells grandly, shares half the dead with Óðinn, travels behind a cart pulled by cats, and is invoked for love. She is equal in dignity to Frigg, Óðinn's wife, and is herself married to a mysterious figure called Óðr (perhaps a double of Óðinn). Their daughter was so fair that she was named "Hnoss," meaning "jewel." Freyja's most important accoutrements are the brisingamen, a valuable object of unknown form, perhaps a necklace. She also possesses a shape-changing garment.

Freyr's greatest moment is his wooing of the giantess Gerðr, as told in the eddic poem Skírnismál and paraphrased in Snorri Edda. Even if one sets aside the interpretations associating the story directly with fertility ritual, there can be no doubt that sex and fertility lie at its core. In Lokasenna, Loki accuses Frey of giving up his sword to obtain Gerðr, and Snorri makes much of Freyr's lack of a sword.

Freyja had marital problems, too. She wept tears of gold while Óðr was away and apparently gave herself to (or was taken by) Óðinn's brothers. Freyja, Loki says in Lokasenna, had slept with all the gods, including even her brother, Freyr; and Snorri notes that Óðinnr had slept with his unnamed sister, for that was the custom among the Vanir. The giants' desire for Freyja is a mythic commonplace.

The sagas tell of horses sacred to Freyr (e.g., Freyfaxi in Hrafnkel's saga) and a cult based on a horse's phallus. Place-names like "Freyr's field" suggest, in turn, an association with fertility of the earth.

The names Freyr and Freyja mean simply "lord" and "lady," which suggests that they may recapitulate Njörðr and his unnamed sister/wise (perhaps Nerthus, mentioned by Tacitus, whose name is etymologically identical with Njörðr) or other earlier deities. Frey is sometimes called Yngvi-Freyr and is therefore presumably connected with the Ynglingar, the first Swedish dynasty. Indeed, kennings in Ynglingatal and Háleggatal with the meaning "Freyr's descendant" or "Freyr's relative" link the god with the Swedish kings and also with the Hlæðir earls. The name Ingumar-Freyr suggests association with the legendary Ing of Old English tradition. Freyja has apparently little to do with dynasties, but her shape-changing garment and association with the dead imply a connection with shamanism.


Lit.: Olsen, Magnus. "Fra gammelnorsk myte og kultur." Maa og
Friðþjófs saga ins froekna ("The Saga of Friðþjófr the Bold") concerns the love of Friðþjófr, the son of Porstein, a prominent landowner in Sogn (Norway), for the beautiful Ingibjórg, daughter of Belli, the king of Sogn. While still a youth, Friðþjófr's prowess earns him the epithet inn froekni ("the bold"). Friðþjófr and Ingibjórg fall in love while under the fosterage of a farmer in Belli's kingdom, and the rest of the saga relates the circuitous path by which they eventually join in marriage.

The first part of the saga treats the wooing of King Belli's daughter, Ingibjórg, by the low-born Friðþjófr. His action prompts the enmity of Ingibjórg's brothers, Helgi and Hálfdan, who have promised her in marriage to King Íringer. They assign Friðþjófr the task of collecting wedding tribute in the Orkneys, and while he is away, they destroy his hereditary estate. Upon his return, Friðþjófr starts a fight in the temple, setting the building on fire and destroying all its contents. The saga describes Ingibjórg and Friðþjófr's fall in love while under the fosterage of a farmer in Belli's kingdom, and the rest of the saga relates the circuitous path by which they eventually join in marriage.

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Friðþjófs saga ins froekna survives in two prose redactions: an older, shorter version composed in Iceland in the late 13th or early 14th century; a longer version composed probably in the early 15th century. The later version exhibits textual influence from rimur concerning Friðþjófr, which in turn draws elements from Porsteins saga Vikingssonor. While the older version describes Íringer as a Swedish king, the later version situates the second half of the action in the Norwegian district of Hringariki and supplies Norwegian place-names for locations otherwise unspecified in the earlier version; also, personal names are given for a number of characters otherwise nameless in the older version.

More than twenty MSS or MS fragments contain texts of this saga. The oldest surviving MS of the earlier redaction appears in AM 510 4to (end of the 15th century), as well as in AM 568 4to (paper), along with two other younger paper MSS and three vellum fragments from the early 16th century (now in the Royal Library in Stockholm). The longer version exists only in paper MSS: AM 173 fol. and Stock. Papp. fol. no. 56.

The saga exhibits careful artistic craftsmanship. Its plot uses the common romance device whereby a low-born character raises his status by marrying into nobility. The saga was widely translated during the 19th century, and achieved perhaps a greater than usual popularity among the fomaldarsõgur largely as a result of Esaías Tegnér's dramatic poem "Frithjof" (1825), which romanticized the saga material.


Friðþjófr...
Iceland or Norway. If it was written in Iceland, it was most likely exported to Norway quite early, possibly even immediately after completion. In Norway, it was used both by Laurents Hanson and Mattis Storsson in about the middle of the 16th century, probably in Bergen, but it was exported to Denmark around 1600. The first known owner of the MS was the Dane Otto Friis from Salling, from whom it has taken its present name. The Danish nobleman Jens Rosenkrantz (1640–1695), his relative and a great book collector, obtained it from Friis. After Rosenkrantz’s death, Arni Magnússon acquired all his MSS, with the purpose, it is said, of getting hold of Fríssbók.

In the first part of Heimskringla, completed with Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar, the text of Fríssbók belongs to the same class of MSS as “Kringla,” and is more closely related to AM 39 fol. than any other extant MS. In this first part, there are two minor interpolations (23vb 37–24ra 3 and 33ra 1–23, ed. 109.14–18 and 148.27–149.12). After this first part, there is a note: “her skal in koma saga Ólafs konungs hins helga” (“St. Ólaf’s saga is to be inserted here”). But immediately thereafter follows Magnúss saga göða. The second part of Heimskringla, i.e., Ólaf’s saga helga, was never entered in the codex, probably because it was not to be found in its exemplar. In the text of most of the third part of Heimskringla, i.e., from Magnúss saga göða to Haráldsson's saga, Fríssbók contains a series of interpolations drawn from a redaction of Morkinskinna older than the existing one. Hâkonar saga Hâkonarsønar in Fríssbók is related to the text preserved in Eirspennill, an abridged version compared with the more original redaction in other MSS, e.g., Flateyjarbók and AM 81a fol.

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Ólafur Halldórsson

[See also: Eirspennill, Flateyjarbók, Hâkonar saga gamla Hâkonarsonar, Heimskringla, Morkinskinna]

Fylgja see Supernatural Beings

Færeyinga saga (“The Saga of the Faroe Islanders”) has to be assembled from passages incorporated in Snorri’s Ólaf’s saga helga (separate and in Heimskringla) and in Ólaf’s saga Tryggvasonar en mest; the prime source is Flateyjarbók. The medieval editors of those compilations must have introduced changes, but not enough to obscure the distinctive attitude and technique of the original author. He wrote about 1200, certainly before Snorri composed his Ólaf’s saga helga in the 1220s. His themes are rivalry between Faroese chieftains from the mid-10th to the mid-11th century, conversion of the islanders to Christianity, and, interwoven with both these themes, the relations between Faroese leaders and Norwegian kings. The author cites no verse and apparently had no written sources; the anecdotes he built on must have come from the Faroes, but he evidently did not know the islands at first hand. The author succeeded in sustaining a narrative that did equal justice to imposing missionary kings, Ólaf Tryggvason and Óláf Haraldson, and to their wily Faroese protagonist, Prándr i Gptu, presented as a man of superb cunning and supernatural power, who detests the Christianity forced on him. In the end, of course, Prándr loses and dies, and paganism and Faroese independence, whatever that may have meant in the early Middle Ages, die with him. The author tells many entertaining tales, most of them too good to be true, often with Prándr the trickster at the hub. We cannot tell whether the saga itself was especially influential, but it certainly belongs to a seminal “school” of narrative technique; Orkneyinga saga and Jómsvíkinga saga have some similar features and were written in the same generation. The author is particularly skillful in maintaining suspense by keeping his audience (and usually some of his cast) in ignorance or misled for as long as possible, a technique well known to saga writers, but seldom carried to such lengths as in Færeyinga saga. Another significant feature of the saga is the rounded romantic folktales that explain the origins of Purrðr megnekkla (“the great widow”), and is told as a “story in the story” by her father, Porkell. Both the manner and the matter of this episode (unconquerable love, abduction, death of father at hands of suitor, the forest life of an outlaw) offer further evidence of the variety and sophistication that existed in the literary milieu of the author of Færeyinga saga.


Peter Foote

[See also: Christian Poetry, West Norse; Faroe Islands; Flateyjarbók, Heimskringla, Ólaf’s saga helga, Ólaf’s saga Tryggvasonar]

For Skírnis see Skimismál.
Gamli kanóki, an Old Icelandic skaldic poet, is known as the author of a drápa in the hrynhent meter on St. John the Apostle, of which four stanzas are quoted in Jóns saga postola IV ("Litla-Jóns saga"). Of Gamli himself, nothing is known, except that, according to the Jóns saga postola, he was a canon "ausri lýkubere" (east in ðykubøeare), an Augustinian cloister founded in 1168. The saga to Úiejóns saga postola, a dating of this poem between 1168 and 1208. According to Skard, Bergsson (d. 1159) and another from Kolbeinn Tumason (d. 1208). Paasche took this ordering as an indication of chronology, implying a dating of this poem between 1168 and 1208. According to Skard, this date is corroborated by a comparison between Gamli's poetry, on the one hand, and Leiðarvísan and similar poems that seem to have influenced it, on the other.

Litla Jóns saga, with the fragments of Jónsdrápa, is preserved in the MS AM 649a 4to from the 14th century. As in the other poems quoted in the same context, the apostle is apostrophized in the poem. The final stanza, said in the saga to come "near the end" of the poem, is in bœnarform, the form of prayer. The stef (refrain) seems to be lost, and nothing can be said of the original drápa form of the poem.

Besides alluding to Christ's particular love of the apostle John, who, in accordance with the legend, is considered the Lord's cousin, the poem mentions the unsuccessful persecution of the apostle by an evil king, identified in the saga as Domicianus keisari, as well as St. John's visions, recorded in the Book of Revelation. With the possible exception of Halgerðingadrápa, this poem seems to be the oldest known religious poem in the hrynhent meter.

Harmsól is preserved in AM 757a 4to, a MS from around 1400 containing grammatical literature and religious poetry. The name of the skald, Gamli kanóki, is given in the MS.

The poem takes the form of a drápa with two stefs, each repeated three times (sts. 20, 25, 30 and 35, 40, 45), giving an inngangr (beginning) and a slejmr (end) of twenty stanzas each and a stefjabáiðir (the "stave-section," consisting of several equal sets of verses) of twenty-five stanzas (provided that st. 20 is counted with the inngangr; cf. Schöttmann 1973).

As in most cases, the ordering of the content corresponds only roughly to the drápa organization. After an introductory prayer to God for help in composing the poem, and a general statement on the importance of confession in stanzas 4–6, the poet confesses his sins in stanzas 7–16. General sinfulness in thought, word, and deed as well as particular sins, like swearing, taking part in the Holy Communion unworthily, and hypocrisy, are mentioned. Subsequently, Christ's work of salvation is described (sts. 17–29), his Incarnation and Birth, Passion and Crucifixion between the two thieves (who, by their contrasting deaths, announce the subsequent judgment theme), and finally Resurrection and Ascension.

Up to this point, the poem is a prayer, in which Christ is apostrophized in virtually every stanza (except stej-stanzas), whereas the following part is directed to the skald's fellow men, systkin mt (33). The following two stejfamilyar describe Christ's return for the final judgment and the separation of God's children from the damned. The last stejfamilyar is an exhortation to the congregation for conversion.

The slejr opens with a consoling series of examples of God's mercy on King David, Peter, and the penitent Mary. From stanza 53 on, the poem takes again the form of a prayer to Christ for mercy and a blessed departure from life, and to the Virgin Mary and all the saints for help and intercession. In stanza 64, the poet refers to the name of his poem, Harmsól, and begs his listeners to pray for him, a reason, incidentally, why the skald's name had to be transmitted together with the poem (Paasche). The last stanza gives a prayer for all Christians.

According to its content, Harmsól is a poem concerning confession and grace, corresponding to the two parts of the Christ-kennings in the poem's title. Mainly owing to its numerous kennings, it is, furthermore, a Christian praise poem, in which Christ is praised in more than eighty different kennings, most of them variations of the type "king of the heavenly hall," for example, hreggtjalda stillir, "king of the tent of the storms" (st. 1), and elan runna runna ansgrstirðir, "destroyer of the sorrow of men (the trees of the wave-horse)" (st. 21).

In the history of skaldic poetry, Harmsól occupies an important transitional position. The numerous kennings, which include a number of heathen base words, as well as the drottkvætt drápa form, demonstrate the skald's commitment to the traditions
of skaldic poetry. But his themes are new, and transform the poem into an important example of the religious inwardness characteristic of the late 12th century. Stylistically new propositions, (sts. 22–23) are also a comparatively new phenomenon.


Bjarne Fidjestøl

[See also: Christian Poetry, West Norse; Kennings; Leiðarvísan; Postula sognur; Skáld; Skaldic Meters; Skaldic Verse]

Gamli konung. "Gjafa-Ref's Játtr," or "The DEALINGS between the simpleton Refr and Earl Neri. Refr gives Neri a bullock, a very costly present, and expects a costly present in return. But Neri, although very wise, is very parsimonious and cannot bring himself to give away anything but good advice. This good advice nevertheless helps Refr to win both wealth and Gautrekr's daughter.

"Vikars Játtr," in the longer version of the saga, is about Vikarr, one of the minor Norwegian kings, and his foster-brother Starkaðr, who is compelled by the gods to betray Vikarr and sacrifice him to Óðinn. One of the very few links with the other parts of the saga is the presentation of Neri as a son of King Vikarr.

The saga is also connected to Hrolfs saga Gautrekssonar. The first chapters appear to continue and/or recapitulate the story of Refr and Gautrekr. Many scholars are convinced that Hrolf's saga is older than Gautreks saga and that the latter was written as a kind of introduction to the former.

The subject matter of the saga is related to certain folktales and fairy tales of the "Hans im Glieck" type (Grimm) and also to certain Icelandic short stories, like Audunar þáttar vestraðaka and even Króka-Refs saga, all having as a main theme the acquisition of wealth through the giving and receiving of presents. In both "Gauþ þáttar" and "Gjafa-Refs þáttar," the theme is presented as sets of opposites: parsimonious versus generous, and wise versus unwise.

Gauti, Gautrekr, and Refr are also known to the Danish historian Saxo Grammaticus, as testified by a short story in Book 8 of his Gesta Danorum. King Gautrekr was famous for his generosity, as evidenced by this story and also by a stanza in the Icelandic poem Hrólfs þáttur (ca. 1150).

"Vikars þáttur" is based on a poem in fornøydislag meter, called Vikarsbálkr, which is interwoven with the text of the Játtr. The poem is a monologue by the mythical hero Starkaðr about his life. It is thought to be older than the saga and usually supposed to date from the late 12th century. Starkaðr is also known from Gesta Danorum and from Skjaldunga saga.

As a historical source, Gautreks saga has no importance. It was probably primarily meant to be "kâtlig frásggn" ("an amusing story"), as its introduction says.

Gerhard Kneissl and Einar Nordhagen

**Geographical Literature.** Nordic medieval literature includes a considerable amount of geographical material, divisible into three main categories: descriptive accounts of regions, countries, and the world; travel writing; and miscellaneous geographic-ethnographic information.

Examples of the first category are found in Snorri's *Ynglinga saga* (ch. 1) and in the prologue to his *Edda* (ch. 2). AM 736 4to, from around 1300, also includes a brief description of the world. Saxo's *Gesta Danorum* is prefaced by a description of the geography and ethnography of the Nordic countries. Norway is described in the introduction to *Historia Norwegiae* and in *Oláls saga Trygvasons* (ch. 22; AM 310 4to) by brother Oddr Snorrason. Snorri also accounts for the geography of Sweden and its dioceses in *Oláls saga Haraldssonar* (ch. 77). *Knýtlinga saga* includes a chapter on Denmark and its administrative division, dioceses, and the number of its churches, obviously modeled on Snorri's chapter on Sweden. *Landnámabók* may be seen as a sort of coherent geographical survey of Iceland. The author of *Konungs skuggsjá* tells about "wonders" in Iceland, Ireland, Greenland, and the adjacent seas. *Flateyjarbók* is also the subject of ch. 2 of *Gudmundar saga biskups* by the abbot Armgírmur Brandsson (d. 1361). This passage was apparently written with a foreign audience in mind. An account of Greenland by the Norwegian Ivar Bárðarson, dating from the middle of the 14th century, is extant in a Danish translation. Regional accounts include the Finmark passage in *Egils saga* (ch. 14).

The second category, travel writing, is clearly the largest. One of the earliest contributions is the 9th-century story by Óttarr from Hالogaland about his journey past the northernmost tip of Norway to Kvitsjøen (Gandik). This story is extant in the Old English translation of Orosius's *Historiarum adversum paganos* by Alfred the Great. The sagas include numerous examples of travel writing. *Egils saga* tells of various kinds of sea voyages (Viking raids, military conquests, diplomatic missions, abductions, trading expeditions, colonization, foreign travel). *Grenælinga saga* and *Eiríks saga nuadaur* record voyages of discovery to America. Several accounts are extant of crusades to the Holy Land. *Orkneyinga saga* deals with Rognvaldr Kali Kolson's expedition there in 1151–1153, and the sagas of the Norwegian kings include the story of Sigurðr Jørslafarli ("crusader") Magnusson's crusade in 1108–1111. *Historia de protectione Danorum in Hierosolymam*, dating from around 1200, deserves special mention. This work records the crusades undertaken by Norwegian and Danish chieftains in 1191–1192.

The last category includes, for instance, *Fjardal*, a record of the Icelandic fjords, and *Fylkjatatal*, listing the districts of Norway (preserved in AM 415 4to and in *Hauksbók*). Greenlandic churches are recorded in *Flateyjarbók*. In *Norges gamle landtindi* 1387 (2:487–91), the late 13th-century border between Norway and Sweden is drawn. Of special interest is *Leiðarvísir* (*itinerarium*), a guide to the Holy Land written by the Icelandic abbot Nikulás Bergsson around 1155 (in AM 194 8vo). *Hauksbók* includes a brief *Veður til Róms*.

Norsemen drew this geographical material from erudite works in Latin by Solinus, Orosius, Isidore, Bede, and Honorius Augustodunensis. To these they added information acquired personally both at home and on journeys abroad as Vikings, traders, and pilgrims. On the whole, Scandinavia, the Atlantic islands, and the Baltic area are described fairly correctly, except for the assumption that an unbroken bridge of land extended all the way from Russia (Bjarmaland) to Greenland. In general, however, they adopted an uncritical attitude to the numerous fabulous and marvelous tales of remoter and unexplored parts, including tales of one-eyed creatures or humans with dog's heads, and so on.

Of all Old Norse writers, Snorri best knew how to use geographical descriptions with maximum effectiveness. For example, *Heimskringla* makes several passing references to *Kormi* (Kormay) with its royal estate, Osgvárn (Asgvárn), merely recording their geographical names. Only in the context of Æsbjörn Sigurðarson's revenge mission against Póról's selr ("sea") do we find a more detailed description of the topography and settlement of the island.


**Alfred Jakobsen**

*See also:* *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*; *Flateyjarbók*; *Gudmundar soga biskups*; *Hauksbók*; *Heimskringla*; *Historia Norwegiae*; *Knýtlinga saga*; *Konungs skuggsjá*; *Landnámabók*; *Laws*; *Leiðarvísir*; *Óláls saga helga*; *Óláls saga Tryggvasonar*; *Orkneyinga saga*; *Profectio Danorum in Hierosolymam*; *Saxo Grammaticus*; *Snorra Edda*; *Vinland Sagas*; *Ynglinga saga*.

**Germany, Norse in.** The term "Germany" here implies territories of modern Germany. In the 9th century, part of this area, roughly speaking that between the Rhine and the Elbe, corre-
sponded to the eastern parts of the Carolingian Empire.

The Norsemen's raids in Germany differ in various respects from their actions in France, England, and Ireland, where the major Viking groups established themselves, sometimes for decades, using fortified camps as their bases. The number of Norsemen operating in Germany also was smaller, all in all, than west of the Rhine. Nevertheless, the eastern part of the Frankish Empire did not remain free from Viking incursions.

In 845, a large fleet entered the Elbe estuary and proceeded to Hammaburg (Hamburg), then a small trading post and an episcopal see, the main base for mostly vain attempts to convert Scandinavia. However, the attack was certainly no pagan reaction to Christian efforts, but simply one of the usual Viking forays. Neither was there any question of a policy of military expansion by the Scandinavian kings. The East Frankish rulers had come to an agreement with the Danes by which the Eider was accepted as the border.

Intent on looting, the Norsemen raided Hamburg. Bishop Ansgr only just managed to have the most important relics taken to safety, while he, his clergy, monks, and part of the town's inhabitants had a narrow escape. But following the destruction of Hamburg, the Viking unit was defeated by a Saxon army centered on the northwest of present Germany, which in 854 belonged to the territories ruled by the East Frankish king, Louis the German.

Shortly afterward, negotiations took place between Louis and the Danish king Horik, who obviously feared being held responsible for the attack on Hamburg, since that blame implied the danger of a German attack on Denmark. The result of these negotiations is not known, but it must have been positive, since no military engagements took place on the Eider.

The year 858 saw another foray into Saxony. Reports concerning this raid are confused: Bremen may have been hit, the Weser offering as good a target to aggressors as the Elbe. Yet this attack was also finally repelled.

In 862/3, a Viking fleet sailed up the Rhine, ravaged Xanten, and established a short-lived camp on a Rhine island, presumably near Neuss. Cologne was looted, but attacks on territories east of the Rhine again achieved no result. The Norsemen realized that Saxon defense measures were after all quite effective, and that easier prey was available elsewhere. Only around 880 did Norsemen again appear in Saxony, and this time they were partially successful, managing to defeat a Saxon army. Even so, they were soon driven off.

The worst incursions into Germany involved the activities of the "Great Army," which had settled in the area of Meuse and Schelde between 880 and 892 and undertook devastating raids from its bases into the surrounding areas, sometimes including East Frankish territory. Many towns and monasteries in that region were affected, among them Aix-la-Chapelle, Bonn, Cologne, and Trier. Here, unlike Saxony, the marauders met with little resistance. But in 891, the German king Arnulf of Carinthia achieved a decisive victory over the Norsemen at Louvain. In 892, the "Great Army" retreated to England. By and large, this date marked the end of Norse raids in Germany, except for the occasional local incident. Basically, one has to differentiate between advancing groups of the "Great Army" and direct Danish invasions into Saxony. Elsewhere, no incursions took place. That is to say, the territories of the Rhine, Weser, and Elbe, particularly near the river mouths, were the Viking theater of operations in Germany.

The reason for this limitation probably lay in the numbers concerned. There simply were not enough Vikings to secure a good hold for any amount of time on the extensive German territories in addition to France, England, and Ireland. We are dealing not with hundreds of thousands, but rather some tens of thousands. Moreover, the Vikings were confronted with a very rigorous defense at least in Saxony, where the aristocracy enjoyed the king's full support. One may find evidence in many sources to corroborate the fact that the Norsemen were realists. They certainly did not court death. Where, as in Saxony, too many risks were involved, they retreated. There was less to be done against the large conglomerate of the "Great Army" than against the smaller groups appearing in northwestern Germany. Thus, the defenders triumphed in some places and suffered defeats in others.

Altogether, Germany was less affected by Norse raids than other countries. Yet where they did occur, the consequences were quite as terrible as elsewhere in Europe.

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Gesta Danorum see Saxo Grammaticus

Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum see Adam of Bremen

Gesta Normannorum ducum see William of Jumièges

Giants see Supernatural Beings

Gibbons saga ("The Saga of Gibbon") was composed in Iceland in the 14th century and is preserved in twenty-three MSS and fragments, the most important of which are AM 335 4to (vellum, ca. 1400), AM 529 4to (vellum, 16th century), and Cod. Stock. Perg. fol. no. 7 (late 15th century), a MS containing a total of eleven riddarasögur. There is also a very early fragment, AM 567 XVI 4to (one leaf, late 14th century). The remaining MSS are paper, dating for the most part from the 18th and 19th centuries.

Gibbon, son of King Vilhjálm of France, pursues a beautiful deer while hunting one day and becomes separated from his companions. On the evening of the second day, unable to find the deer, he sees a cloth spread out on a cliff. Lying down upon the cloth, he is transported magically to Greece through the agency of Greka, the fairy-like daughter of King Filipus of Greece, who explains that she has chosen Gibbon as one of the princes in the world as her husband. During the lengthy liaison that follows, Greka remains invisible to Gibbon, and he in turn invisible to the Greeks. She finally makes herself visible to him, but as a result he is made visible to the king, who forces him to return to France.

Back in France, Gibbon hears of the beautiful maiden-king Florentia of India, whom he vows to marry "or at least deflower."
Gibbon journeys to India and presents his suit. Realizing that his intentions are not honorable, Florenta challenges Gibbon to a harp-playing competition. Gibbon is victorious but must meet the giant Eskopart in single combat. He fatally wounds the giant, who asks that the son of Gibbon and Florentia be named after him. Furious at Gibbon's victory, Florentia assembles a huge army. After three days of fighting, only Gibbon and his companion Kollr remain. They are rescued by Greka and her flying carpet.

Returning to India, Gibbon, disguised as a monk, forces Florenta, the author at this point observing: "eigi var klaustra regula vel halldin a þessarri natt" ("the monastic rule was not well kept that night"). Gibbon remains with Florenta for a year, at the end of which she bears him a son, who is duly named Eskopart. Gibbon is again magically transported to Greece, and he and Greka are married.

Meanwhile, Eskopart grows to manhood, ignorant of his paternity. Having learned the truth from his mother, he vows to kill Gibbon, but following a hard battle in which each believes he has killed the other, the two are reconciled. Eskopart succeeds his father as king of Greece. According to one MS, Gibbon and Greka enter a cloister in their old age, and Eskopart becomes king of Greece.

As this synopsis makes clear, Gibbon's saga is a not entirely successful amalgam of two basic motif patterns: maiden-king romances and tales of the union between human and fairy. For the latter, and indeed several other motifs, the saga is indebted to Partalopa saga. For the maiden-king elements, the saga is indebted to Klári saga (Wahlgren 1938). Gibbon's saga also shares with Rémundar saga keisarasonar an overall plot structure and a number of incidental details, some of which probably represent cases of independent borrowing from the same source (e.g., the name Eskopart occurs in Bevis saga). A number of elements also seem to have been borrowed from Viktors saga ok Blávus (e.g., the flying-carpet motif) and from the shorter version of Sigurðar saga þögla (Einar Ö. Sveinsson, 1964: cxxvii-viii).


After a short prologue about the hero's ancestors and their emigration to Iceland, Gísli's sister, Þóðrís, marries Pórgímir, a member of one of the most noble families in Iceland. Gísli and his brother, Þórkell, also marry. An illicit affair between Pórgímir's wife and Véstein, Gísli's brother-in-law and close associate, is revealed during Véstein's absence from Iceland, which causes Pórgímir to move to Pórgímir's home. At Véstein's return, Gísli tries to warn him off, but in vain. During a great seasonal feast, Véstein is killed under mysterious circumstances. The murder is evidently a joint undertaking of Pórgímir and Pórgímir, who had shown unfriendliness to Véstein before, but it is not certain who the actual killer was. Gísli wants Véstein to be avenged, but since it is impossible for him to turn against his brother, Pórgímir, he murders his sister's husband, Pórgímir, while the latter is lying in bed at his wife's side. Gísli recites an incriminating stanza that is overheard by his sister, the victim's wife, and that revelation leads to his outlawry.

In the second part of the saga, Gísli defends himself against his enemies in a series of episodes reminiscent of folktales. The saga comes to a climax with Gísli's heroic death after a long fight with a band of enemies.

Scholars have seen affinities between Gísla saga and heroic poetry. Some important parallels in the Nibelungen story have been pointed out, such as the murder of Sigurðr in his bed. But the whole purport of the saga seems to be that the standards of heroic legends cannot be applied to an everyday Icelandic environment. In this respect, the author shows a marked individuality. Moreover, he is a master of focusing on certain matters, while in other cases leaving it to readers to decide what actually happened.

Gísli is said to have been a poet, and the saga contains many stanzas attributed to him. These stanzas must be later, although they cannot have been written by the author of the saga, since there are inconsistencies between the stanzas and the saga prose. Unique are the stanzas said to have been composed by Gísli during his outlawry, in which a dark woman, who resembles a valkyrie, embodies his fear and despair, whereas a white woman brings him hope of a better life in the hereafter. Here, the influence of Christianity is clear. The saga says that Gísli learned about this religion during a journey through Denmark, and accepted some of its values. This sympathy clashes with his conservative upholding of the old values and attitudes.

There are two versions of the saga. The shorter one is found in thevellum MS AM 556a 4to, dated to the 15th century. The longer one, now lost, must have been in a 14th-century vellum in the Royal Library in Copenhagen. It is known from two paper copies written by the librarian Ásgír Jónsson (18th century) and one other paper copy. The prevailing opinion among scholars is
that the shorter version is the more original one, and that the longer version is an elaboration of the shorter one. But not all and there are fantastic motifs in it, such as are usual in theference: the story about the cursed weapon Grásíõa that the family
ments. The fourteen other paper MSS are copies either from AM
The vellum AM 761b 4to contains only some frag­
556a 4to or from the copies of Asgeir Jónsson.

vives in two vellum MSS: AM 66 fol., known as
and ending with

hagiographie version is Jón  Qgmundarson, who reputedly had a hand in saving Gisl's life at the court of Magnus berfoettr ("bare-

Glass. Although never a part of the Roman Empire, Scandinavia maintained important trading links with the Ro-
man world, and glass vessels were first introduced as a luxury commodity in the early centuries of the Christian era. Some of the earliest examples probably originated in Syria, and found their way into the rich inhumation burials of Denmark; but others, especially in the later 3rd and 4th centuries, were the product of glass centers based within the western empire it-
self. Their wider distribution in Scandinavia reflects both the development of the North Sea and Baltic trade routes and the increasingly commercial nature of glass output.
These new production centers appear to have been most dense in the Low Countries in the region bordered by the Rhine and the Seine, supplying both military and civilian needs. They seemed largely unaffected by the demise of the empire and continued to export to a new barbarian market, whose tastes in form and decoration differed vastly from the more sophisticated vessels of the old classical world. Scandinavia became an eager importer of prestige wares, typically tall beakers and small jars and flasks in old classical world. Scandinavia became an eager importer of prestige wares, typically tall beakers and small jars and flasks in old classical world.

The ability to produce glass at this time appears to have languished somewhat, and there is only slight evidence to show manufacturing houses outside the former Roman centers. Similar typological sequences occur in all regions throughout the Continent, and common sources of manufacture must therefore be assumed. In this respect, Scandinavia is particularly important because the pagan burial, the single most useful archaeological context for the recovery of glass vessels, persisted in Scandinavia for several centuries after most of the rest of Europe had been converted to Christianity. After the beginning of the 7th century, therefore, Scandinavia is the only region where the output of the Rhineland glasshouses can be found in anything approaching complete form. The seriations show a marked deterioration in variety of types; generally, the drinking vessels become wider at the rim, lose the standing area, and ultimately emerge as the developed funnel beaker of the 10th century.

Throughout the first millennium, the materials of production seem to have remained largely unchanged. Like most glass found elsewhere in northwestern Europe, composition was of the high soda-lime-silica type produced by using a pure sand component and an alkali derived from natron, a saline evaporate, the closest source of which is located in Egypt. Although it seems improbable that natron continued to be shipped across Europe throughout the millennium, analysis of glasses has not identified a substitute, and no other solution has been found. A more important change, however, took place in Europe between the 9th and 11th centuries; new materials were introduced as alkali sources, namely forest products, typically wood ash or the ashes of bracken, hence the term “forest” glass. The difference between the two types of glass is largely one of durability; the earlier glass tends to survive well in most buried contexts, whereas the later “forest” glass has a tendency to surface weathering, which causes opacity and eventual decomposition. The majority of glass of the medieval period proper is of this latter type, and its survival is often a matter of chance, giving rise to the poor record of glass-vessel remains known from Scandinavia during this period. Window glass, introduced at this time with the development of church building, suffers a similar fate and rarely survives in anything approaching its original condition. Both window and vessel fragments are frequently weathered to the extent that only a central core of opaque vitrification survives; in many cases, total disintegration must be assumed.

The use of these new alkali materials did, however, enable glass production to be decentralized and to occur in a much wider spectrum of locations where both sand and woodland supplies were plentiful. It effectively localized production, particularly in the forests of Germany and southern Sweden, and provided a semi-nomadic occupation for glass workers who might move from place to place according to the supplies of available woodland. Greater output of glass subsequently created new markets for window and vessel glass alike.

The manufacture of glass entails a chemical reaction between the two raw materials, sand and alkali, under specific redox conditions and according to strict timing. It was not an activity that could be carried out easily, and the processes were recorded in a number of manuals, notably by the monk Theophilus writing in the 12th century. In his De diversis artibus, he describes not only the materials to use, their amounts and coloring effects, but also the different methods necessary to produce vessel and window glass, respectively. The furnace, which contained separate compartments for fritting (the solid-state reaction between the two raw materials), melting, and cooling the finished products, seems to conform to a type found throughout northern Europe. The furnaces are poor archaeological survivors and, in the later period at least, were mostly temporary.

Furnace remains tend to be characterized by waste material from the production process, usually melted or twisted blobs of glass, and by the presence of cullet, fragments of vessels that were added to the glass melt to assist in the melting. These were sometimes imported specially for the purpose, and there are records of such trade. Many sites, particularly those occupied toward the end of the first millennium, undertook glassworking activity by melting down cullet and recycling it into beads, mounts, and other glass objects. This procedure could be carried out at a relatively low temperature, required considerably less skill than glassmaking proper, and was not dependent on specific locations for supplies of natural materials.

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John Hunter

Glossography denotes a scribal practice, widespread in antiquity and in the Middle Ages, consisting in providing particularly difficult or important texts with glosses, i.e., words written between the lines of the text (interlinear glosses) or in the margins (marginal glosses) in order to explain words or passages. Sometimes, lists of glosses, not necessarily referred to any definite text, were written down on full pages or in the blank spaces of MSS;
collections of this kind are called glossaries. The explanations of words could be made either by means of synonyms and paraphrases in the same language as the main text or by translation into another language. As far as the Christian West in the Middle Ages is concerned, most of the texts subject to glossing were written in Latin, the "language of culture" par excellence, while glosses were frequently written in the vernacular languages.

Compared with the rest of the Germanic-speaking areas, Scandinavia has not left us much evidence of glossographic activity from the medieval period.

The earliest relevant records come down to us from Iceland, where three MSS containing Latin-Icelandic glosses from about 1200 have been preserved. One MS is the renowned Icelandic Homiltubók ("Book of Homilies"; cod. Stock Perg. 4to no. 15), showing on fol. 68rv interlinear and marginal glosses to the Latin Credo. The other two MSS, each containing a collection of glosses, are GkS 1812 4to (formerly in the Copenhagen Royal Library, now at the Arni Magnússon Institute of Iceland, Reykjavík) and the fragment AM 2491 fol. (also in Reykjavík). Careful examination of the writing and composition of these two MSS has shown that the sections containing glosses were written by the same hand, and that they originally belonged to a single MS. This identification also applies to the glossaries themselves, which are only slightly later than the main text and may originally have been parts of a single glossary. A total of about 260 Latin words, for the most part nouns, with their respective Icelandic equivalents are included in a single glossary. A total of about 260 Latin words, for the most part nouns, with their respective Icelandic equivalents are included in a single glossary. A total of about 260 Latin words, for the most part nouns, with their respective Icelandic equivalents are included in a single glossary. A total of about 260 Latin words, for the most part nouns, with their respective Icelandic equivalents are included in a single glossary.

Bilingual glosses are also attested sporadically in later Icelandic MSS. For example, in the 14th-century AM 671 4to, interspersed among Latin marginal annotations in a section devoted to theological matters, appear several Icelandic glosses translating terms denoting "God's benefits" (fol. 5r). A series of Latin-Icelandic glosses are also found at p. 120 of AM 242 fol., currently known as the Codex Wormianus of Snorri's Edda (second half of the 14th century). The glosses, added to the MS by a mid-15th-century scribe, consist of three verbal forms and three adjectives.

As far as Norway is concerned, mention may be made of a small collection of Latin-Norwegian glosses written, presumably by a mid-14th-century hand, on wax tablets, known as Hopperstadavleme. Beside terms belonging to domestic and rural life, we find here names of animals, especially birds. Words are grouped, here as in other glossaries of this kind, according to diverse criteria (semantic affinity, metonymical relationship, rhyme, alliteration, etc.), which makes it impossible to trace them to a continuous Latin text. Rather, they are likely to be jottings made by some student or scholar for personal use. In other words, the glosses may reflect vocabulary exercises.

In the 14th-century Codex Wormianus of Snorri's Edda, Latin-Icelandic glosses to Priscian's grammatical writings. AM 11 8vo, also dated to the 14th century, consists for the most part of a Latin translation of the Jutish Law (Jyske lov). A number of marginal annotations, including Latin and Danish glosses, were added in the 15th century.

The earliest evidence of glossing in Sweden is provided by the oldest extant Swedish MS, Stockholm codex B 59, a well-known MS of the so-called Older West-Götaland Law (Áldre Västgötalagen), written in the late 13th century. Latin-Swedish glosses, dating from the first half of the 14th century, are found in two different places in the MS (ols. 67v and 77v). Particularly interesting is the glossary on fol. 77v, divided into two sections, each of which has close correspondences with two analogous collections of glosses found in the Danish codex AM 202 8vo. The glosses in the first section (a list of verbs) also occur, with only slight variations, in a Swedish glossary from the second half of the 15th century (AM 792 4to, fol. 142v; the same glossary also includes many names of aromatic and medicinal plants). Finally, mention must be made of a Latin-Swedish glossary preserved in the early 15th-century codex C 22 of the Uppsala University Library (ols. 69r-77t). Its special importance lies in the fact that it represents the earliest extant collection of glosses of wider range from the Scandinavian Middle Ages, including some 800 words of miscellaneous content, almost a dictionary on a small scale.

Glymdrápa see Þorbjørn hornaklofi

Glælognskviða see Þórarinn loftunga

Goði (pl. goðar). In the Icelandic Free State, a goði was the holder of a goðord (roughly translated "chieftaincy"), a position of political and social preeminence among the free landowners or besti (sing. bóndi). Originally, the goðord appears to have been a sacred office, as its names implies (goði derives from goði 'god').
carrying the responsibility for maintaining a local temple and holding sacrificial feasts. In Free State Iceland, the official duties of the godar, sometimes called holdningsgar ‘leaders’ (sing. holdningi), primarily involved the functioning of the legal system.

During the early history of the Free State, a godor was a prize, in theory and sometimes in fact, within the reach of enterprising free farmers. The office could be bought, shared, traded, or inherited. At any given period, several people might share in the control of a chieftaincy, although only one individual at a time was permitted to fulfill the official responsibilities of each godar at the assemblies. If a woman inherited a godar, she had to let a man take charge of the office (Grágás 1a, p. 142).

The godar were required to convene the local springtime district assembly (vâringi; each local assembly district included three godar. The godar were also required to hold the local fall assembly (kend), but they could do this individually for their own followers. At the Alþingi, the annual national assembly, the godar were the voting members of the logrétta. There, they reviewed the national laws and made new ones, determined forms of mulct or control of a chieftaincy, although only one individual at a time was permitted to convey the office. The godar could be bought, shared, traded, or inherited. At any given period, several people might share in the control of the office, including the godar, who could command superior manpower, for aid. At the Alþingi, the national assembly, the godar also nominated judges to the court of appeals (limtardómr) after it was established at the start of the 11th century.

Icelandic government lacked an executive branch, but a godi had a few formal executive duties, for instance, conducting the féránsdómr or “court of confiscation” to confiscate the property of someone who had been outlawed. The godi also had a large informal executive role: a bóni who won a legal judgment against an opponent was then himself responsible for carrying out a sentence (for instance, killing an outlaw), and he often turned to his godi, who could command superior manpower, for aid.

The exact number of the first godard established at or after the founding of the Alþingi (ca. 930) is uncertain, although later Icelandic writings treat the number as having been fixed at thirty-six. About the year 965, as part of a series of constitutional reforms, the country was divided into quarters and the number of “full” chiefaincies was fixed at thirty-nine. The western, southern, and eastern quarters each had nine godar, but for geographical reasons, the northern quarter received an additional springtime assembly (vâringi) and hence three additional godar. To balance these three extra godar, three “new” godar were added to each of the other quarters, but the powers of these additional chiefaincies were limited to participation in the logrétta; they could not nominate judges to quarter courts or take part in local assemblies as godar.

A godi’s relationship to his píngmenn or followers was a contract that could be canceled from either side. Every bóni who owned a certain amount of property was required to be lón ping móð (“in the assembly with”) a godi. But, according to the law and the sagas, he could choose which one (Grágás 1a, pp. 136–7; II, p. 273). A píngmadr (“thing-man”) must either accompany his godi to assemblies, including the Alþingi, or pay a thing-attendance tax called pingarfankeupa, which the godi used to defray travel expenses for those who did attend. As frequently as once a year, a bóni could break relations with one godi and transfer his allegiance to another. Likewise, a godi could sever relations with a particular píngmadr (Grágás 1a, p. 140; II, pp. 277–8).

A chieftain’s authority was derived from control of all or part of a godard, but his power was based on overlapping networks of political, friendship (vinfengi), and kinship ties. A godard was not a geographical unit; the pingmenn of different godar often lived interspersed in a district. A godi looked to his pingmenn for armed manpower in pursuing feuds, exerting pressure in court cases, or carrying out legal sentences. A bóni (and sometimes another godi) sought a chieftain’s aid to bring his case before the courts, to help him enforce his rights, or to carry out his feuds. Successful godar often played the role of power broker.

The godor was described in the laws as “power and not wealth” (‘veldi er þat en æggi fæ,’ Grágás III, p. 44; lb, p. 206; II, p. 47), and, although otherwise treated as a private possession, it was exempted from being counted as taxable for the tithe. Godar nevertheless often expected to be paid for their services to others, and the sagas show godar frequently concerned with money matters. A crucial role of the godar was to facilitate the redistribution of wealth. They held feasts, gave gifts, made loans, and extended hospitality. Through participation in feuds, they frequently had a decisive say in the transfer of land. The godar were also largely responsible for pricing and helping to distribute imported goods.

By the 13th century, a new, smaller group of more powerful godar emerged as five or six families gained control of all of the country’s godar. Called stórgodar or stórhofdingar in modern studies, these “large” godar or “large leaders” often controlled several of the older godar. After 1220, the stórgodar fought among themselves, seeking regional, or in some instances national, overlordship. Many of these later leaders sought to increase their power by becoming retainers of the Norwegian king, but their aspirations for independent rule ended when Iceland submitted to Norway’s king in 1262–1264. The Crown abolished the chiefaincies.


Jesse L. Byock

[See also: Alþingi; Bóni; Grágás; Iceland; Laws]
Gokstad is a Viking Age burial on a farm of the same name in Sandar, Vestfold, Norway, excavated in 1880 by N. Nicolaysen as the result of treasure seekers finding the stem of a ship. The burial is generally dated to around A.D. 900. For the burial, a ship 24 m. long (Fig. 32) was pulled ashore and let down into a shallow trench. A burial chamber was built aft of the mast, and grave goods placed in the chamber, in and around the ship. The grave was plundered at some time, and there was considerable damage to the burial chamber and its contents. It is believed that the dead person was placed in his bed in the chamber. Skeletal remains are of a sixty-to-seventy-year-old male, and show signs of rheumatism.

The grave goods included ship's equipment, oars for thirty-two rowers, sixty-four shields, a gangway, remains of the mast, and decayed textiles that are probably the remains of the sail. Two rowers, sixty-four shields, a gangway, remains of the mast, wrought iron chain may be part of the ship's regular equipment, while a large tub and several buckets made in white cooperation technique are probably additional equipment taken on board for the burial. The tent and beds may be part of the equipment carried on board. Gilt-bronze mounts for a horse harness (Fig. 34) show decoration in the Borre style, while some mounts recovered during restoration work on the site around 1930 are in Jelling style. The presence of both styles makes this an important find for the dating of early Viking Age art. Some iron tools and a number of unidentified wooden objects were also found.

For the burial, twelve horses, six dogs, and a peacock were sacrificed. Most of the organic material and the metals are excellently preserved because of the blue clay that was used for the mound. When the ship was restored in 1930, nearly all the wood could be reused; only the stem tops and parts of the ship damaged by the grave robbers had to be replaced by new wood where the old was missing. Two upper planks were also replaced, and the old brittle wood kept in storage. Two of the small boats have also been reconstructed. The ship, burial chamber, small boats, and most of the objects found are exhibited at the Viking Ship Museum, Bygdey, Oslo, a department of Universitetsoldsaksamling.

The ship was taken as typical for all Viking vessels, until the Skuldelev finds from Denmark, excavated in 1962. They showed that the late Viking Age had ships of different types for war and trade. The Gokstad ship may be of the type known as karve; according to the early-medieval sagas, these were the private traveling vessels of chieftains. The materials and workmanship of both the ship and all other grave goods are of very high quality, and the owner must have been in a position to demand the best. A replica of the Gokstad ship was sailed across the Atlantic to the Chicago World's Fair of 1893, and proved beyond a doubt that ships of this type were excellent seagoing vessels.


Arne Emil Christensen

Gorm was a 10th-century king of Denmark, and father of Harald Gormsson (Bluetooth).

According to Adam of Bremen, Gorm belonged to a dynasty that, coming from Nortmannia, displaced the so-called Swedish dynasty from Denmark in the second decade of the 10th century. From the text, it is difficult to ascertain whether the Hardogan mentioned is Gorm himself or, more likely, his father. If Gorm was no more than fifty years of age when he died in 938 (see below), he was born between 908 and 918.

Gorm is commemorated in two runic inscriptions at Jelling. One of them he himself made in memory of his wife, Thyre, "Denmark's ornament"; the other was erected by his son Harald in memory of his parents. Little more is known with certainty about Gorm than his marriage to Thyre and his fatherhood of his successor, Harald. His accession must have been sometime before 936, when he gave a hostile reception to Unni, archbishop of Bremen, who wanted to resume missionary work in Denmark. No source dates his death. According to Adam, Harald may have been Gorm's consort for some time, but Adam was keen to highlight Christian Harald at the expense of pagan Gorm. Dendrochronology has now revealed that the timber used to build Gorm's burial chamber was felled in 958, which is, therefore, the likely year of death. Some years later, he was transferred to a new grave in the first wooden church in Jelling. Parts of his skeleton have been recovered, and show that he was forty to fifty years old when he died. He was about 172 cm. tall and, like most middle-aged Danes of the time, suffered from osteoarthritis in the lower part of the spine.

The extent of Gorm's power eludes us. There are no reasons to believe that the previous dynasty ruled only the Hedeby area, nor that the "Swedish" dynasty and the Jelling dynasty were contemporaneous. Gorm is thus likely to have had authority throughout Jutland. His son Harald claimed to have won for himself "all Denmark," but what that phrase actually means is much debated. Many solutions have been suggested, such as the reconquest of the Heideby area from the German emperor, Zealand from the Norwegians, or the addition of the provinces east of the Great Belt to a Jelling-based kingdom of Jutland.


33. Two of the three small boats (reconstructed) found with the Gokstad ship. The smallest, 6.5 m. long, in the foreground. Photo: Jac. Brun. By permission of Universitets Oldsaksamling.

34. Bronze strap mounts from the Gokstad find. Photo by permission of Universitets Oldsaksamling.
Gotland. The name "Gotland" appears for the first time toward the end of the 9th century in Wulfstan's account in the Old English translation of Orosius's *Historiarum adversum paganos* (Book 1:13) of his travels from Hedeby across the Baltic to Truso. According to Wulfstan, Gotland was at that time loosely attached to Sweden. Not until the 11th century was a treaty made by which the island agreed to pay an annual tribute of sixty marks of silver to the Swedish king to have his protection and to be able to travel freely throughout all parts of his kingdom. During the 12th century, the island was also required to participate with six ships in sea expeditions, or to pay a fleet levy (*ledungslation*) of forty marks for each ship. After 1285, the *ledungslation* was established as an annual tax in addition to the yearly tribute. In this way, Gotland was formally included in the Swedish taxation system, even though the island retained its status as an independent republic.

Territorially, the island was divided earliest into three tricestions, and a number of assizes (thing-moots), of which there were twenty in the 15th century. Each thing had a judge, elected by the people, who conducted the thing and represented it at the general thing (*landsting*). At the *landsting*, judgments in serious cases were delivered collectively under the direction of the High Court judge, new laws were established, and decisions regarding the island as a whole were made. The tricestions were subdivided into parishes called "settings," with each parish paying ten marks silver of the tribute. The parishes had administrative duties, and were also required to equip the six ships or secure the *ledungslation*. A seventh ship was added later, and was equipped by the Visby guild.

During the Middle Ages, the farmers lived on individually situated farms, where a patriarchal great-family system prevailed. The farmers devoted themselves early to prolonged trade journeys. Silver mined in the Arab caliphate and the Byzantine Empire, especially from the time before the mid-10th century, were brought to Gotland through Russia. After the mid-10th century, German, Anglo-Saxon, and Bohemian coins were also brought to the island. The many magnificent medieval churches on Gotland bear witness to the wealth of the island.

The Gotland mercantile travelers were acquainted with Christianity early. According to tradition, the Norwegian St. Ólaf's visit played a decisive role in the christianization of the island, but this attribution is historically doubtful. The Danish king Valdemar Atterdag's ("ever-day") capture of Gotland in 1361 did not bring about radical changes in the conditions on the island. During the reign of King Valdemar (1340–1375) and Queen Margrethe I (1375–1412), there was continuous disagreement among Denmark, Mecklenburg, and Sweden about Gotland, with the result that the Tyska ("German") order intervened in 1398 and occupied the island, but handed it over to Erik of Pomerania (1397–1438) in 1408 as part of a ransom agreement. For Gotland, this situation led to great changes. King Erik had Visby castle built, and introduced a new annual tax to maintain it. In addition, royal bailiffs were installed on the island. After King Erik was dethroned, he resided at Viborg until 1449, when he handed over the island to Denmark. Danish provincial governors were installed in his place. During the following years, the old system of self-government was further decreased. The central power received greater authority, thus diminishing the power of the thing-judges, and the royal edicts diminished the authority of the *landsting*. Gotland did not become Swedish again until 1645.

The mercantile journeys ceased in the first half of the 14th century. The main reason for the Visby trade had been the general rise of trade in the Baltic, which had its origin in the establishment of Lübeck. German merchants made use of Visby as a center for trade, and Visby soon became the most important transit port in the Baltic. In the 14th century, Visby's importance decreased. Reval, Riga, and Dorpat took over the control of the Novgorod trade, and the German merchant ships sailed less frequently to Novgorod. The wealth of Gotland thereby belonged to the past.


Hugo Yrwing

[See also: *Guta saga, Leidurg*; Margrethe I, Ólafr, St.; Sweden; Trade; Valdemar]

Gotlandsvisan see Swedish Literature, Miscellaneous

Grágás. The laws of the Icelandic Commonwealth are generally known by the name *Grágás* ("grey goose"), which dates back only to the 16th century. *Grágás* is not a unified corpus of law; the name applies to some 130 codices, fragments, and copies made during the centuries. The two principal MSS are Gks 1157 fol., usually named *Konungsbok* or *Codex Regius* because of its residence in the Danish Royal Library, and AM 334 fol., named *Stadsholöshbok*, after a farm in the West of Iceland. Both MSS are masterpieces of Icelandic bookmaking. They are generally dated mid-13th century, with *Stadsholöshbok* somewhat later than *Konungsbok*. The first scribal hand (pp. 1–26) of *Konungsbok* may, however, be as late as 1325.

We do not know who wrote these MSS or for whom. They
are quite different in the arrangement and their actual contents. *Konungsbók* contains sections on Christian law, assembly procedures, homicide, a *wegilgift* ring list, trace and peace speeches, sections on the lawspeaker, the law council, inheritance, incapacible persons, betrothal, land claims, investments, searches, duties of communes, tithes, as well as a number of miscellaneous provisions. Certain sections and paragraphs can be found in both codices, others in only one; for example, *pingskapapattar*, the section on assembly procedures, *logosogumannspattar*, the section on the lawspeaker, and *baugatal*, the *wegilgift* ring list, are not preserved in *Staðarholshbók*, whereas its regulations are often more detailed than those in *Konungsbók*. According to Finsen, both versions are recensions of material relating to the same original MS. There was much dispute about the character of this original version, and our actual MSS, which are considered private collections, are thus more or less detailed at the whim or the memory of the scribe. Other sources have been suggested, such as lawspeakers’ notes, customary practice, or judgments. Vilhjálmur Finsen (1852–83), on the other hand, conceived of *Grágás* as the laws accepted by the Law Council. Their development can be studied in some detail. Few laws can be dated. Many new laws are expressed than its early continental Scandinavian counterparts.

It has been suggested that *Grágás* acquired a bookish appearance because of various revisions of the originally oral law, perhaps as early as 1117/8, when the laws were first committed to writing by Halldír Másson as related in Ari's *Íslendingabók*, ch. 10. Our texts presumably represent the law of the 12th century basically in the form that was recited by the lawspeaker. Even if it is difficult to imagine that extensive passages had to be remembered in a style with few mnemonic devices, recent research points out that there is a correlation between the age of the texts and the amount of rhetoric applied to them.

After the Icelandic submission to the Norwegian king in 1262–1264, *Grágás* was soon superseded by *Járnmót* (1271–1281), and eventually replaced by *Jónsbók*. Both law codes did not replace the Christian-law section of *Grágás*, which remained in force until 1234 in the diocese of Hólar, whereas in the diocese of Skálholt, Bishop Ární issued his own church law in 1275.

*Grámagafilm* see Björn Angelson Hítdeilakappi

**Grammatical Treatises.** Old Icelandic literature has handed down some of the earliest and most remarkable instances of the application of medieval linguistic thought to the description of European vernaculars. This type of learning, which is the only direct evidence of native language studies in the whole of medieval Scandinavia, is essentially preserved in four writings, traditionally known as "grammatical treatises" (Icelandic *málfræðitgerðir*).

This body of writings, datable approximately between the middle of the 12th and the middle of the 14th century, is transmitted in its entirety in only one MS, AM 242 fol. (from the second half of the 14th century), better known as the *Codex Wormianus* of Snorri's *Edda*. Here, the four treatises are introduced by a "Prologue," which is found only in this MS. Since none of these works bears a title of its own, they were named by early researchers according to their succession in the *Codex Wormianus*: the names "First," "Second," "Third," and "Fourth Grammatical Treatise" (here abbreviated FGT, SGT, TGT, FoGT, respectively) have since become canonical, not least because for a long time it was taken for granted that this was their actual chronological order.

For two of the treatises, the FGT and the FoGT, the *Codex Wormianus* also represents the only witness. The SGT is known in a somewhat different version, apparently nearer to the original and accompanied by two illustrative figures, also from the codex *De la Gardie 11* in the Uppsala University Library (early 14th century), currently referred to as the *Codex Upsaliensis* of Snorri's *Edda*. More articulated and complex is the MS tradition of the TGT, which, in addition to being part of the collection in the *Codex Wormianus*, is also transmitted in two other *Arnamagnæan* MSS, AM 781 I 4to (early 14th century), in a version that is regarded as the nearest to the original, and AM 757a 4to (late 14th century). The tradition shows several lacunae and, even though a reciprocal integration of the three witnesses is possible in the majority of cases, a part of the text, albeit reasonably limited (about one MS page), is unrecoverable. All the witnesses of the Old Icelandic grammatical treatises invariably appear in MSS containing Snorri's *Edda* or parts of it, which clearly points to the fact that the ancient Icelanders used to associate them with this work and consequently with the theory of Old Norse versification.

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35. Figure showing the interaction between vowels and consonants in the *Second Grammatical Treatise* (De la Gardie 11).
The four treaties were written with the primary purpose of providing young Icelandic students with basic instruments for learning writing and the correct use of language, particularly in view of its application to literary composition, without resorting, at least in the initial stage of their curriculum, to Latin textbooks. Yet each treatise has a well-defined character that differentiates it from all the others, especially if we consider it beyond its merely didactic aspect.

The FiGT, written around the middle of the 12th century, may be viewed as an early attempt to establish a firm and unambiguous orthographic norm by adapting the Latin alphabet to the actual needs of the Icelandic language, on the example of what other western nations, notably the Anglo-Saxons, had already been doing for centuries. Yet the author went far beyond this practical aim, attaining results in the method of phonological analysis that were quite extraordinary for the time.

As to the aim of the SGT, scholars disagree. Some ascribe to it the predominant intention to reorganize and rationalize an orthographic practice that, since the introduction of writing into Iceland, had become increasingly inconsistent and confused; others have seen in it a sort of linguistic introduction to the Háttatal, i.e., the section of Snorri's Edda dealing with types and structure of meters. More recently, others have inferred from its plain orthographic pattern a sophisticated treatment of distributional phoneme analysis and of minimal-syllable structure. Opinions also diverge concerning its date of composition: the datings proposed so far oscillate between the close of the 12th century and the last three decades of the 13th century.

The TGT is the only one with a known author. It was written around 1250 by Óláfr Pórõarson, the famous skald and Snorri Sturluson's nephew. Divided into two main sections, traditionally referred to as Málfraðinnar grunndvöllr ("the foundations of grammar") and Málkrúðafræði ("the science of language ornament"), this is the most comprehensive of the four treatises and, in fact, the only one that fully deserves the name "grammatical." In its first section, in addition to a general treatment of the various types of sounds occurring in nature, of the letters, the syllable, and the eight parts of speech according to the Latin tradition, it includes a thorough comparison between the Latin alphabet and the Old Scandinavian (Danish) fúlark. The second section is entirely devoted to the exposition of the principal figures of speech, thoroughly in line with the tenets of classical rhetoric, but fully illustrated by examples drawn from Old Norse poetry.

The FoGT is practically a continuation and a completion of the second part of TGT. Since it was composed about one century later, it partly draws its illustrative material from later Icelandic poetry, often of a religious nature, and, when no suitable examples are available from tradition, the author introduces verses apparently composed ad hoc by himself.

The Prologue preceding the four grammatical treatises in the Codex Wormianus, whose function and significance are still a matter of discussion, seems to originate from the same author as the FoGT.

Concerning the sources, or, to use a more appropriate term, the theoretical foundations of the Old Icelandic grammatical treatises, it may be said, as a general rule, that they largely rely upon the classical grammatical tradition as transmitted by eminent medieval authors, such as Donatus Aelius, Priscian of Caesarea, Petrus Helias, Alexander of Villedeiu, and Eberhard of Bethune. Nevertheless, all of them are characterized, to a more or less considerable extent, by a marked tendency toward interpretative autonomy and originality of elaboration, as well as by the imprint, not always plainly observable on the surface, of a preexisting attitude toward an accurate linguistic analysis, fostered by an age-long acquaintance with runic epigraphy and skaldic poetry.


Fabrizio D. Raschella

Graves. In northern Europe, numerous cemeteries with inhumation and cremation burials are known from the Viking Age, containing grave goods that can generally be dated to the 9th, 10th, and early 11th centuries. After Christianization (from the end of the 10th century onward), cremation burials and grave goods disappear. In some regions, however, graves were equipped with goods up to the late 11th and 12th (Gotland, Dalarna, western Finland) and 13th centuries (Karelia), or even later (Saami regions in northern Fennoscandia). The diversity of cemeteries and grave forms may be illustrated by two local and regional examples in Hedeby and Viking Age Denmark (southern Scandinavia), as well as Birka and the Malar region (middle Sweden).

Hedeby, Viking Age Denmark. In connection with the protourban settlement of Hedeby (late 8th–11th century), six cemeteries of varying size have been found (Fig. 36). The largest cemetery (Fig 36, F) was detected south of the semicircular wall surrounding the main settlement areas, where about 700 graves
have been excavated: cremation deposits on the ground surface, in pits, and in urns, inhumation burials with or without coffins, rarely in wooden chambers (chamber graves), and in one case in a chamber, which was covered by a boat or ship. Most of the inhumation burials were oriented west-east (head of the deceased in the west); many of them were dug in a north-south direction. Both cremation and inhumation burials were set up as flat graves or covered by low earthen mounds that were limited by closed or interrupted ring ditches. Inside the main settlement area existed one cemetery (Fig. 36, C) with inhumation burials, mostly without coffins (about 350 excavated graves), another (Fig. 36, D) with chamber graves (ten excavated graves), and a third one (Fig. 36, E) with some inhumation burials not far from the harbor. North of the semicircular wall were found a cemetery (Fig. 36, A) with low mounds covering cremation deposits inside a walled area ("Hochburg") and some inhumation burials (Fig. 36, B) south of the Hochburg. Some single burials outside the settlement area proper may also be connected with Hedeby (Fig. 36, nos. 3–4).

Only a small part of the cemeteries has been investigated (about 1,500 excavated graves); the total number of graves is estimated at 7,000–13,000. In Hedeby, as in the adjacent South Scandinavian regions, cremation burials were usual in the late 8th and in the 9th centuries, whereas inhumation burials predominated in the 10th century, mostly in the form of oriented burials. Cremation burials in the form of deposits on the ground surface, in pits and urns, are known from more than fifty cemeteries in Schleswig-Holstein in Denmark, being flat graves covered by low mounds (diameter normally about 10 m., height about 0.3–1.0 m., often with limiting ring ditches), or set up as secondary burials in older mounds. In Denmark, one also finds stone settings of varying forms (circles, ovals, triangles, squares, rhombus or boat shapes; cf. the cemetery of Lindholm Høje), which can also be seen in Sweden, Norway, and, selectively, in the West Slavonic area. Cremation burials in wooden buckets came to light mainly on the North Frisian islands. In some cemeteries, cremation and inhumation burials are set up side by side (so-called biritual or mixed cemeteries).

Most of the cemeteries in southern Scandinavia (over 200) are characterized by inhumation burials, mainly in the form of graves with or without coffins. The orientation of the graves changes: north-south (south-north), west-east (southwest-northeast), the latter orientation current from the 10th century onward (Christian burials). The transition from heathen cemeteries with grave goods to Christian cemeteries and churchyards can be shown at several places in southern Scandinavia (Stengade, Thumby-Bienebek, Fyrkat, Trelleborg, Lund). In the 10th century, wooden chamber graves (length 1.8–3.0 m., breadth 1.0–2.2 m.) were reserved for members of leading families (male graves with weapons and horses, female graves in bodies-of-wagons, i.e., the upper or movable part of a wagon or cart). Royal monuments of this type are the chamber graves in the north mound and the early wooden church of Jelling. More than sixty burials in chambers and more than twenty burials in bodies-of-wagons are known from the Old Danish realm. Concerning the grave forms, analogies can be drawn to continental cemeteries of Merovingian times. On the other hand, boat and ship burials, as testified at Hedeby, Ladby on Funen, and other places, are characteristic of Scandinavia. Viking Age parallels to the grave monuments of Hedeby and Ladby (with warships, length 20 m. and more) include Borre, Göktad, and Oseberg in southern Norway, all of them with burials of royal families. Stones with runic inscriptions are sometimes connected with burials, as at Svensberg near Hedeby, Jelling, Glavendrup, Funen, and other places.

**Birka and the Mälar region.** On the island of Björkö, several cemeteries are, as at Hedeby, connected with a Viking Age trading place. In this case Birka (9th–10th centuries). There are at least 2,300 graves, most of them visible; about 1,100 of these burials have been excavated (Fig. 37). The largest cemetery is situated east of the settlement (Svarta jorden, the Black Earth area) at Hemlanden (Fig. 37, 1), with about 1,600 graves; the majority are circular mounds, some triangular, four-sided, or boat-shaped stone settings, containing cremation and inhumation burials. Flat graves with inhumation burials were found in the western part of the grave field. The cemetery north of the hill fort Borg contained almost exclusively flat graves with inhumation burials (Fig. 37, 2), whereas inside the hill fort were found one inhumation and some cremation burials (Fig. 37, 3). The cemetery south of Borg, with about 400 visible graves, consists mostly of circular mounds, several triangular, and some four-sided and boat-shaped stone settings. The excavated graves all revealed cremation burials (Fig. 37, 4). The Grundsäbacka cemetery includes about sixty visible graves, consisting of circular and four-sided stone settings. Of the excavated graves, twenty-three were inhumation and twelve cremation burials. The cemetery was perhaps the youngest part of the Hemlanden cemetery after the decline of Birka (Fig. 37, 5). The Kårrbacka cemetery consists of stone settings with varying forms (mostly four-sided, some boat-shaped, circular, and triangular), most of them with inhumation burials, one with a cremation burial (Fig. 37, 6). The Osmunhöns cemetery probably does not belong to the Birka complex (Fig. 37, 7).

Inhumation burials (554 graves excavated) are recorded in the following forms: (1) graves in pits, without coffins, sometimes with fragments of a shroud or a cover, and underlay of textiles or birch bark; (2) graves in pits with coffins, which usually are rectangular, sometimes trapezoidal, with varying details (widenest in the middle, slanting sides, rounded ends), one riveted coffin may have been a body-of-wagon; (3) graves in wooden chambers, measuring 1.5–3.95 m. in length and 0.9–2.8 m. in breadth. The inhumation burials are normally oriented west-east with the head of the body at the west end; some graves are oriented east-west and in other directions.

Cremation burials (566 excavated graves) are known in the following forms: (1) cremation deposits, with remains of the pyre with burned stones, fragments of grave goods, usually scattered on the ground surface, with or without urns, many of them with rivets, which may indicate the burning of a boat; (2) cremation burials without cremation deposits, the residue of the pyre being put into an urn or a pit; (3) cremations at the burial place (cremation *in situ*) or on a special site.

Concerning the external structure of the graves, low earth mounds are most common, while stone settings with circular, four-sided (rectangular, square shape), triangular, and boat-shaped forms represent only a small proportion. Most mounds contain cremation burials, but inhumation burials are also found since stone settings were raised over both inhumation and cremation burials. Flat graves with no external structure are generally represented by inhumation burials, but some cremation burials also occur.

By far the most common burial custom in the Mälardalen area in the late Iron Age (Migration Period to Viking Age) was the creme-

settings. Viking Age inhumation burials in boats are known from several cemeteries; they continue a tradition from the Vendel Period.


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**Michael Müller-Wille**

[See also: Birka; Burial Mounds and Burial Practices; Gokstad; Hedeby]

**Greenland, Norse in.** From written sources and archaeological evidence, we know that people of Scandinavian extraction came to Greenland around the year 1000 and lived there for about five centuries. According to the written sources, these people came from Iceland and colonized two districts on the southwestern coast of the country, **Eystribyggð** (the Eastern Settlement, Julianehåb's district) and **Vestribyggð** (the Western Settlement, Godthåb's district). The earliest surviving record mentioning Greenland is a papal bull dated January 6, 1053 (Lappenberg 1842, no. 75), and some twenty years later, Adam of Bremen wrote a short notice about Greenland in his *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificium*. Both sources count the inhabitants of Greenland among other Christian Scandinavian people.

The oldest Icelandic record of the discovery and settlement of Greenland is a small entry in *Íslandshøkk* saying that Eiríkr enn raði ("the red"), a man from Breiðafjörður (in western Iceland), went there, gave the land a name, and settled at Eiríksfjörð (Eric's Fjord, Tunugdilark). The settlement is said to have taken place fourteen or fifteen years before Christianity came to Iceland, i.e., 985 or 986, but the dating is not well founded. *Landnámabók* and *Eiríks saga raði* contain fuller descriptions of Eiríkr raði and the circumstances that led to his searching for Greenland. According to *Landnámabók*, fourteen ships with people from Iceland followed Eiríkr to Greenland; some of the settlers of the Eastern Settlement are named, but some are said to have gone to the Western Settlement.

*Eiríks saga raði* and *Grønlandings saga* take place partly in Greenland, but because the main topic of these sagas is the description of the Vinland voyages, their information about the fate of the first settlers in Greenland is restricted to short remarks and anecdotes, such as the famous story about the sorcerer Porbjorg Ítilvölv ("the little sybil") in *Eiríks saga raði* and the description of the sickness in Lysufjörðr in both, probably based on oral tales of Guðrøðr Porbjarnardóttir. But neither of these sagas gives any information about the growth of society or constitutional matters in Greenland. A national assembly (*álfing* at Garðar in Einarsfjörðr (Igaliko in Igaliko Fjord) is mentioned in *Fóstbrœðra saga* in the years 1025–1028. Although this source is not reliable, the Icelandic settlers may have founded their own national assembly shortly after the colonization. The earliest reliable source about these matters is *Einars þáttr Sokkaasonar*, where special laws of Greenland are mentioned in connection with a dispute at the assembly at Garðar in the years around 1130. As in Iceland, this national assembly was called the *Alþingi*; it is last mentioned in a document written 1389 (*DI* 3, no. 367).

Written sources unanimously state that the first settlers of Greenland were pagans, and that the inhabitants of Greenland were converted to Christianity not many years after the colonization. This assertion has not been confirmed by archaeological evidence; neither heathen graves nor anything else to indicate that heathens of Scandinavian extraction ever lived there has been found in Greenland.

Churches in Greenland are listed in a small entry in *Plateyarbôk*, together with the names of fjords and farms where they were situated, twelve in the Eastern Settlement and three in the Western. Another list of fjords and churches in Greenland has been adopted from an old parchment, now lost, in Armgirmir Jónsson's *Gronlandia* (written ca. 1600) and Jón Guðmundsson lækri’s ("the learned") *Greenlands annal* (probably compiled in 1623). According to this source, which may have been written around 1200, there were 210 farms in the Eastern Settlement and ninety in the Western. This count tallies fairly well with the num-
ber of Norse ruins of farms and churches found in Greenland. A small entry in Historia Norwegiae says that Greenland was discovered, colonized, and strengthened with the Catholic faith by Icelanders. The Norwegian Konungs skuggsjá (Speculum regale) says the inhabitants are Christian and have their own churches and priests and even a bishop, although it is no more than one third of an ordinary bishopric. From other sources, deeds, and so on, we know that the first bishop of Greenland, Arnaldr, was consecrated to the bishopric of Gardar in the year 1124. An earlier bishop of Greenland, Eiríkr upski Grýnþsson, is mentioned in Landnámabók and Icelandic annals, where he is said to have gone in search of Vinland in the year 1121, but otherwise nothing is known of him or where he had his bishop's seat. The last bishop known to have stayed in Greenland was Álfr (1368-1377, consecrated 1365).

From ruins of the cathedral and other buildings at Gardar, it can be deduced that this bishopric was relatively rich; according to a 14th-century description of Greenland attributed to Ívar Bárðarson, the cathedral of Gardar possessed the whole district of Einarsfjörð and, besides other properties, various hunting grounds both in the inhabited and uninhabited parts of the country.

Information about the way of life of the Norse Greenlanders comes from archaeological investigation of the farmhouses and from written sources. Konungs skuggsjá says that the farmers in Greenland "raise cattle and sheep in large numbers, and make butter and cheese in great quantities. The people subsist chiefly on these foods and on beef; but they also eat the flesh of various kinds of game, such as reindeer, whales, seals, and bears." For grain, iron, and some of their timber, the Greenlanders had to depend on import. In exchange, they exported walrus and narwhal ivory, wool, ropes made of walrus hides, live polar bears, and falcons. The best hunting grounds were at the so-called Nordrsetur, the Northern Settlement in the environs of Disco, where they also obtained driftwood for their buildings, which otherwise were made of stones and turf.

In 1261, the Greenlanders accepted the sovereignty of the king of Norway, who afterward monopolized the Greenland trade. This political move, together with changes in the ice conditions of the shipping routes, caused less communication with other countries and diminishing import of supplies. The Western Settlement seems to have been abandoned about the middle of the 14th century; and at the beginning of the 15th century, many years passed without any merchant vessel coming to the Eastern Settlement. The last surviving record of a communication between the Norse Greenlanders and the outer world is an entry in an Icelandic annal telling of a party of Icelanders on a ship that was storm-driven to Greenland on its way from Norway to Iceland in 1406, who had to stay there for four years. It is, however, not unlikely that the Norse Greenlanders had contact with foreign ships after that time, such as English fishing vessels. But when the Englishman John Davis came to the Eastern Settlement in 1585, the Norse population had disappeared. How and exactly when it disappeared is still an unsolved riddle and will not be answered without extensive archaeological investigations of the Norse ruins.


Olafur Haldorson

Gregory, St.: Dialogues, or Dialogi de vita et miraculis patrum Italicorum, is the best-known work of St. Gregory the Great (ca. 540-604), who became pope after Pelagius in 590. The Dialogues relate moral tales and edifying anecdotes that became the model for the very popular genre of the exemplum. The Dialogues were translated into Icelandic as early as the end of the 12th century, although only a few fragments of the original survive (AM 677 4to, AM 921 IV 4to, NRA 71, 72, 72b, 76, 77). The Dialogues appear to have been common reading in medieval Iceland. Scholars have found traces of Gregory's work in many Islendingasögur, including Njál's saga. The work also played an important part in the homiletic and hagiographical literature of Iceland.


Régis Boyer

Greittis saga ("Greitir's Saga") is one of the four major Islendingasögur, along with Njál's saga, Egils saga, and Laxdela saga. Greittis saga differs from them and from other Islendingasögur
in its extensive use of supernatural creatures (ghosts, trolls, berserks) and folklore motifs. As in Egils saga, the focus is on a single hero, but Grettir seems more a figure from mythology than a realistic Icelander of the 11th century. There can be no doubt, however, that there was a real Grettir Ásmundarson who was born around the year 1000, for he is mentioned in other sources, some earlier than the saga. He seems to have been a well-known character, about whom many oral stories circulated. Gisla saga, which is earlier than Grettis saga, mentions casually (ch. 22) that only Grettir exceeded Gisli in the number of years spent in outlawry.

Grettis saga was composed sometime around 1310-1320; this date, late for the Islendingasögur, can be deduced from internal evidence, especially a reference in ch. 49. The unknown author collected tales about Grettir from both written and oral sources and shaped them into the present saga, adding some preliminary matter about Grettir's forebears (especially his great-grandfather Ómundr tréfótr ["tree-foot"; chs. 1-13]) and some final chapters (83-93) telling how Grettir was avenged in Byzantium by his Norwegian half-brother Porstein, and how Porstein engaged in a love affair there with a married lady named Spes.

Extant today are four more or less complete vellum MSS of the saga and one vellum fragment of six leaves, all from the 15th and 16th centuries, as well as forty paper MSS. The vellum manuscripts divide into two groups that go back to a single MS and do not differ from each other extensively, so there is in fact only a single version of the saga.

The main part of Grettis saga (chs. 14-82) is a biography of Grettir from his boyhood pranks to his death on the island of Drangey. It divides into two parts, the first leading up to his outlawry in ch. 46 and the second describing his nineteen years as an outlaw, many of them in the bleak central highlands of Iceland.

Grettir's youth begins with three sadistic pranks against his father (ch. 14), continues with a trial of strength (ch. 15), and culminates in the slaying of a servant, for which Grettir is sentenced to three years of exile (ch. 17). During his stay in Norway, he breaks into a burial mound and beholds the revenant ghost Kárr after a difficult fight (ch. 18). This is the first of Grettir's encounters with supernatural beings. He also slays twelve berserks and kills a troublesome bear (chs. 19-21). The latter episode brings him into conflict with a malicious Norwegian named Björn, whom Grettir is forced to kill (ch. 22). When he is also provoked to kill Björn's equally nasty brother (chs. 23-24), he is obliged to leave Norway.

Back in Iceland, things go just as badly, and Pórir of Garðr manages to get Grettir declared an outlaw (ch. 46).

Grettir returns to Iceland (ch. 47) to find his father dead, his brother Atlí slain, and himself outlawed, in effect a death sentence, for anyone could kill him with impunity. He first avenges his brother Atlí (ch. 48) and then begins the long period of moving from one hiding place to another, fleeing from his enemies and coping with the dark. Some of his adventures belong in the realm of folklore: when Pórir of Garðr attacks him with a force of eighty men, Grettir wards them off with the unexpected aid of a powerful and shadowy man named Hallmundr, who lives in a cave with his daughter (ch. 57). Later (ch. 61), Hallmundr directs him to a warm and fertile valley within the glacier Geitland, presided over by a blendingr (half-troll, half-man) named Pórir, and Grettir spends a winter with him and his daughters. The slaying of the two trolls in Bárðardalur (chs. 64-66) is one of the high points of the saga (see below).

Eventually (ch. 69), Grettir, together with his brother Iñugi and a servant named Glaumr, moves to the island of Drangey in Skagafjörður (north of Iceland), where he holds out against his enemies for three years. His enemies then enlist the services of a witch named Puríðr, who curses him (ch. 78) and bewitches a tree stump by carving runes on it. In trying to chop it, Grettir inflicts a wound on his leg (ch. 79), which refuses to heal and so weakens him that his enemies are able to kill him.

The saga says that Grettir "was unlike other men when it comes to size and strength" (ch. 72), and that "he was more suited for slaying revenants and monsters than are other men" (ch. 93). Like the hero of the Old English Beowulf, he put his unusual strength to use as a protector of men, cleansing the land of bloodthirsty superhuman creatures. But he was dogged by bad luck, especially in being sentenced unjustly to outlawry, and the words of his uncle Jókull, "luck and prowess are two distinct things" (ch. 34), are a major theme in his saga. His enemies, gained through no malice on his part, are not able to get the better of him, however, and it is only by supernatural forces that he is overcome: Glámr's curse, the boy in the Trondheim church who is said to be an "unclean spirit," and the witchery of Puríðr.

Several details of the saga relate to foreign literature, especially the resemblance of the troll slayings in Bárðardalr (chs. 64-66) to Beowulf's feats against Grendel and his mother. Both episodes consist of two separate fights, the first inside a building against a monster of one sex, and the second in a cave under or behind water against a monster of the other sex. In both works, the opponent of the first fight comes away alive, but having lost an arm. Both heroes are deserted by their companion(s) when blood succeeds to the surface of the water during the second fight. There are further resemblances that point to a connection, but the nature of that connection remains elusive.

The final section of the saga, the Speesarjáttr (chs. 83-93), is set in Byzantium and contains two motifs from the Tristan legend: the ambiguous oath by the unfaithful wife and the fragment broken from a sword, by which the killer is identified. Finally, Grettir's sexual adventure in Reykir (ch. 73) has been compared to Boccaccio's Decameron 3:1 (Glendinning 1970).

GRÍMS SAGA LODINKINNA

When he learns who he is, but falls on his sword and dies. Öðinn's torture and recitation has been interpreted as an example of shamanistic performance and as a reflection of the ritual education or consecration of a royal heir. It is more likely, however, that the myth is an abstract reflection of Scandinavian concepts of sovereignty rather than a report of an actual ritual. The frame story in Grímnismál is one variant of a widespread Scandinavian mythic pattern centered on the motif of Öðinn in disguise. The core of the myth is Öðinn's mastery of sacred knowledge; this knowledge warrants his sovereignty over gods and men. Other versions of this myth may be found in the eddic mythological poem Vafþrúðnismál, Hervarar saga, and in a number of other texts. An interesting parallel to the rivalry between Öðinn and his consort may be found in Paul the Deacon's History of the Lombards (Book 1, ch. 8), where the Lombards get their name as a result of a trick played by the goddess Frey on her husband Woden to defeat his favorites, the Vandals.

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Part of stanza 47 is quoted by Óláfr in the Prose Edda. This recitation, which makes up the bulk of the poem, is preceded by a short prose narrative that is

One of the anonymous mythological wisdom poems of the Pórõarso

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Grímnismál

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fornyrdislag.


Robert Cook

[See also: Berserkr, Gísla saga Súrssonar, Íslendingasögur, Old English Literature, Norse Influence on, Outlaw Sagas, Outlawry]

Grímnismál ("The Lay of Grímr" or "Gríms saga lodinkinna") is one of the anonymous mythological wisdom poems of the Poetic Edda. It is the fourth poem in the Codex Regius MS (Gks 2365 4to). MS AM 7481 4to, designated A, also contains the full text of the poem. Snorri Sturluson quotes twenty-two stanzas in whole or in part in various places in his Prose Edda to illustrate particular myths, and draws on at least six other stanzas. Part of stanza 47 is quoted by Óláfr Fjördson in the Third Grammatical Treatise. The meter is principally þóðskáttur, but a few stanzas are in other meters, notably fornyrdislag.

The number and selection of wisdom stanzas undoubtedly varied among oral performances of the poem, but there is no reason to discard stanzas as interpolations or to treat the extant written text as anything other than a coherent whole.

Grímnismál is preceded by a short prose narrative that is younger than the poem, but represents a reliable tradition. The prose tells how a young king's son, Geirðr, is fostered by Öðinn, and later claims his true father's kingdom. Frigg, Öðinn's consort, slanders Geirðr, telling Öðinn that he tortures his guests, and then tells the king he is to be visited by a magician. Öðinn (under the name Grímr) visits Geirðr, who, thinking Grímr is the magician of whom he has been warned, has him seized and set between two fires. As the poem begins, Grímr has been pinned between the fires for eight nights. Geirðr's son brings Grímr a drink, and the stranger rewards him with a recitation of mythological lore. This recitation, which makes up the bulk of the poem, concludes with lists of Öðinn's names, through which Grímr's identity is gradually revealed, and with allusions to Geirðr's fate. A prose conclusion explains that Geirðr attempts to free Öðinn...
Grímr's story begins with the mysterious disappearance of his fiancée Lofthaena. Next follows an unrelated interlude in which Grímr kills some marauding trolls while staying at an isolated house, and then tracks an injured ogress to her cave, where he slays her father before wrestling with and decapitating the mother. On the next day, Grímr comes upon a beached whale, and, after slaying twelve men in defense of it, he is healed of his injuries by a particularly ugly ogress. After sharing her bed, he awakes to find Lofthaena at his side and learns that she had been cursed by her wicked stepmother. Grímr burns Lofthaena's troll-skin, returns to her father, and learns that she had been cursed by her.

Grimr bums Lofthaena's troll-skin, returns home to have the evil stepmother stoned to death, and marries Lofthaena. Some twelve years later, Grimr defeats in single combat the unwanted suitor of his daughter Brynhildr.

Grímr's ancestry is not related in detail in the saga about him, but the first and third members of the Hrafnistamanna trilogy supply the story. Ketils saga relates that Grímr was the offspring of Ketill hœngr ("salmon") and a troll from Finnmark, and implies that his chin, hairy from birth and impervious to iron weapons, was due to his mother's heritage.

Three different poetic treatments of the saga material are extant: a five-canto rímur by Þorvarðr Hallsson (d. ca. 1758); a ten-canto rímur by Vigfús Jónsson (d. 1728) and his brother Magnús (d. 1694), which adds the material from Ketils saga hœngs; and a fragmentary rímur by an anonymous 19th-century poet, which includes the story of Òrvar-Odds along with that of his two famous ancestors.


**Peter A. Jorgensen**

**[See also:]** Ærs saga bogsveigis, Fornaldarsögur, Ketils saga hœngs, Rímur, Órvar-Odds saga

**Gripißspá** ("The Lay of Gripir") dates from the end of the 12th century and was composed in Iceland. It is preserved in the *Codex Regius* and in a number of paper MSS, which supply the title. The poem was called Sigurðarkvida Fáfnisbana in fyrsta by earlier editors, and grouped with the legendary poems of the *Poetic Edda* that recount the life of Sigurðr Fáfnisban. It is a later addition to the eddic corpus, and draws upon earlier poems. Apparently, it was included for summarizing purposes and as an example of the prophetic poem, or *spá*, a literary form popular in medieval Iceland.

Both *Volsunga*, in the former, mythological section of the *Edda*, and *Gripißspá*, in the latter, legendary section, were used in Gunnlaugur Leifsson's (d. 1218/9) rendering of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Prophetiae Merlini* (ca. 1200) into the Old Norse *Merlinus spá* in the late 12th century. A reference to the work in *Bretha sogur* states that many knew the poem by heart, a fact more likely attributable to interest in the genre than in the somewhat confused content of that work itself.

The poem comprises about fifty verses in the eddic meter *fornyrðislag.* The young Sigurðr, on a visit to his maternal uncle Gripiñ, learns from his precocious kinman of his heroic destiny. The ensuing episodic narrative, delivered as dialogue, is roughly divided into seven parts: Sigurðr's vengeance on the sons of Hundingr, Sigurðr's killing of Fáfnir and Reginn and seizure of the gold, the meeting with the king's daughter on the mountain, the visit to Heimir and meeting with Brynhildr, the visit to Gísli and the marriage to Guðrún, the fetching of Brynhildr for Gunnarr, and the vengeance of Brynhildr with its aftermath. Much of the narrative of *Gripißspá* seems to be drawn from the now-lost portion of the *Codex Regius* containing *Sigurðarkvida* in metri, for the content of which *Gripißspá* is seen as providing important evidence.


**Richard L. Harris**

**Grógaldr** see *Svipdagsmál*

**Grottasongr** ("The Mill Song"). This twenty-four-stanza poem in the meter *fornyrðislag* and its accompanying prose tale are variously preserved in MSS of the *Skálholtssprámal* section of Snorri Sturluson's *Prose Edda*. "Grottí," derived from "to grind," is the name for a mill (hence the usual English title). One version authenticates the prose tale by quotation of the opening stanza only in the midst of the prose narrative; this device probably represents Snorri's own style. The full poem is transmitted in two
MSS of the *Prose Edda* in a less integrated fashion appended to the end of the prose tale. Prose-only versions are found in three more MSS of the *Prose Edda*.

The prose tells how the mythical Danish king Fróði, son of Fróðleif, ruled during the world peace caused by the birth of Christ. In Sweden, Fróði acquired two huge slave women, Fenja and Menja, whom he set to work turning two gigantic millstones. The mill would grind out whatever it was commanded to. Fróði ordered the slaves to grind gold, peace, and happiness, but he granted them no rest. So, in the dead of night, they changed the course of their work song and produced a surprise attack by a Viking named Meysingr, who killed Fróði, ending the era of Fróði's Peace. Meysingr took the mill Grotti and the slave women aboard his ship and ordered them to grind salt. He too refused them rest, and Fenja and Menja ground on until the ship sank. This disaster caused the sea to be salty, and the currents passing through the enormous eye of the millstones still cause a maelstrom. The prose caused the sea to be salty, and the currents passing through the enormous eye of the millstones still cause a maelstrom. The prose

...
saga by Sturla Póðarson (d. 1284). Other sagas that inform us about shorter periods of Guðmundr's life are 
Hrafnis saga
Sveinbjarnarsonar, from about 1230, and
Arons saga Hjørleifssonar, from the early 14th century. A miracle book, partly written as a supplement to Sturla Póðarson's account of Guðmundr's life, was probably composed in the opening years of the 14th century and expanded about 1320 after the exhumation of the bishop's relics in 1315.

It is unlikely that any Guðmundar saga covering the bishop's whole life was written before the exhumation. There are four surviving
Guðmundar sögur, A, B, C, and D, different mainly in style and structure. The designations do not necessarily mean that these four recensions were written in the order above, but they imply an assessment of how far they are removed from their principal sources.

**Guðmundar saga A** (the so-called "Oldest Saga") was written in the first half of the 14th century, perhaps most likely around 1320–1330. A is a compilation of the
Prestssaga, Hrafnis saga, Islendinga saga, Arons saga, and annals, containing only a few original sentences from the compiler himself. The chief MS, AM 399 4to (ca. 1330–1350), is deficient, but the gaps, except at the end, can be filled from a later copy.

**Guðmundar saga B** (the so-called "Middle Saga") was probably written shortly after 1320. B is a compilation of the three first-mentioned sources of A, interpolated with some additional material and authorial comment; at the end, both parts of the miracle book were added. B represents an unsuccessful attempt to write a saint's life about Bishop Guðmundr. The chief MS, AM 657c 4to (ca. 1350), is deficient, and only the missing end of the miracle book can be supplied from other MSS.

**Guðmundar saga C** was written around 1320–1345, perhaps early in that period. It is based upon B and/or mainly the same sources together with some additional, partly written, material. Contrary to the compilers of A and B, who have copied their 13th-century sources, written in classical saga style without any conscious alterations, the author of C produced a consistent style by omitting material that he did not find appropriate for the saint's image. The composition and the style have been altered and made still more florid than in C. D is preserved in several MSS that can be divided between two almost contemporary versions. The oldest MS, Stock. Perg. fol. no. 5 (ca. 1350–1360), represents a complete text of the less original version, containing many verses written by the author himself and another 14th-century poet. D was certainly written with a foreign audience in mind as an attempt to acquire a papal canonization of Bishop Guðmundr, but no Latin version has been found.


Stefán Karlsson

[See also: Arons saga Hjørleifssonar; Biskupa sögur; Legenda; Miracles, Collections of; Saints' Lives; Sturlunga saga]

Guðrún see Völsung-Niflung Cycle

Guðrúnarkviða I–III ("The Lay of Guðrún") is a group of three lays preserved in the *Codex Regius* together with other anonymous lays comprising the *Poetic Edda.* Numbered "First," "Sec-
GÚDRÚNARKVÍDA I–III 247

and,” and “Third,” or “I,” “II,” and “III,” for convenient reference by modern editors, the poems deal with the fate of Gúdrún Gjúkadóttir after the murder of her husband, Sigurðr, by her brothers. The content of the three poems spans both halves of the Nibelung cycle: the murder of Sigurðr by Gúdrún’s brothers, and the murder of the same brothers by Atli, Gúdrún’s second husband. This fact bears witness to the Scandinavian striving to harmonize and unite the disparate, originally unconnected stories into a single continuous narrative. Yet a solution to the contradiction in the material such as that found in the German Nibelungenlied (the creation of a Gúdrún who uses her second husband, Atli, to take vengeance on her brothers for the murder of Sigurðr) was never fully realized in Scandinavia, at least not in surviving texts. The dominant image of Gúdrún in the Poetic Edda remains that based on the Atli poems. Despite her mourning for the murdered Sigurðr, Gúdrún attempts to protect her brothers from Atli’s scheming thirst for treasure, and murders Atli, her husband, to avenge his murder of her brothers.

The Gúdrún lays are late elegiac poems of the 11th and 12th centuries. Like the majority of the eddic poems, they are composed in the fornyrslag meter, which superseded the older málaháttr of the Atli poems. In their emotional tone, these compositions enshrine a quality seldom found in the earlier, more heroic poems. Moreover, in their choice and treatment of subject matter, their secondary motifs, their vocabulary, and their turn of phrase, they frequently show the influence of Danish and German ballads and Spieimannslieder ("minstre's songs"). The enigmatic moral and psychological position of Gúdrún in the three poems, especially in Gúdrúnarkvíða II, may thus be attributed at least in part to direct or indirect contact with the German "modernization" of the story.

Gúdrúnarkvíða I. The twenty-seven strophes of this 12th-century composition convey Gúdrún’s inconsolable grief as she sits at the bier of the murdered Sigurðr. Women of the court relate their own misfortunes, but the heroine is unable to weep, her feelings frozen in suffering. When the shroud is finally removed from the corpse and Gúdrún is urged to kiss her beloved, she does so, and a torrent of tears bursts forth. Especially memorable in its dramatic and heroic tenor, contrasting but not conflicting with the earlier lyricism of the poem, is the final scene in which Gúdrún is confronted by her rival, the tempestuous Brynhildr, her eyes alame with hatred and jealousy. Such rivalry and confrontation characterize the late German telling of the story, culminating in "Aventiure 14" of the Nibelungenlied. The stimulus for the composition of the poem appears to have been Gúdrún’s terse observation in Gúdrúnarkvíða I, that she did not "weep and wail [for Sigurðr] like other women."

Gúdrúnarkvíða II or Gúdrúnarkvíða forn ("The Old Lay of Gúdrún"). This poem appears to be the oldest, probably dating from the 11th century. Poorly preserved, its forty-four strophes are marred by many corrupt passages and lacunae. The theme of the poem is apparently the heroine’s memory of and mourning for Sigurðr and her implacable hatred of her brothers. Her family, wishing to see her marry Atli, attempt to suppress these emotions by various means, including an óminnisveig ("draught of forgetfulness"). Notwithstanding their failure in this attempt, the marriage to Atli takes place; later, the brothers attend his court and are killed.

In view of the poem’s dominant theme, Gúdrún’s murder of Atli at the end of the poem, as if to avenge his murder of her brothers, appears illogical. There have been various scholarly attempts to find plausible psychological motivation for Gúdrún’s role. These interpretations invoke either the Scandinavian Gúdrún, whose loyalty to her brothers is thought to take precedence over her grief for Sigurðr, or the late German Gúdrún, who is irrevocably committed to taking vengeance on her brothers, with the aid of Atli, for the murder of Sigurðr. The latter reading leaves Gúdrún’s final killing of Atli an unexplained remnant of the Scandinavian tradition, unless, as in one interpretation, Atli is seen as implicated in the murder of Sigurðr.

Gúdrúnarkvíða III. Gúdrún, now Atli’s wife, is accused of adultery with þjóðrekkr, a German guest at the Hunnish court. She protests her innocence in lively fashion, and substantiates it by the ordeal of the boiling kettle, plucking a stone from the seething water with unscathed hand. Atli registers his pleasure, and the accuser, Atli’s former concubine, after failing the same test, pays with her life in a "foul swamp." As in the case of Gúdrúnarkvíða I, the impulse for this lay appears to have come from Gúdrúnarkvíða II. Gúdrún admits to having embraced þjóðrekkr "on one occasion," apparently the same on which she related her woes to þjóðrekkr (see Gúdrúnarkvíða II and its prose introduction). Whether þjóðrekkr is to be seen as having participated in the killing of the brothers at Gúdrún’s urging (as in the German version of þjóðreks saga and the Nibelungenlied), or in spite of her loyalty to them (as in the Scandinavian tradition) is difficult to ascertain. The poem contains evidence to support both conclusions. With its eleven stanzas, this 12th-century composition is the shortest of the Gúdrún lays. Despite this brevity, a highly dramatic situation is evoked with an admirable economy of means. Presumably, the poem’s present ambiguity did not exist for its original audience.

The three poems are not grouped together in the Codex Regius, but rather are placed among the other heroic lays in a manner reflecting the narrative context of these lays as a whole.

Guðrúnarhöfund ("Guðrún's Lament") is part of the Sigurðr-Guðrún cycle of poems contained in the Codex Regius (13th century). The poem was written probably in the late 12th century by an anonymous poet, who appears to have been put to death by her husband, Jormunrekkr, the king of the Danes. The king had killed her sister Svanhildr to avenge her death. Svanhildr, whose story is told in the poem "Guðrún's Lament," was killed by Gunnarr and Hogni. Guðrún accuses her sons, born of her third marriage, to Jónakr, of cowardice, comparing them unfavorably to their uncles Gunnarr and Hogni. Guðrún accepts the challenge, and Guðrún, laughing, brings armor from the Hunnish treasure hoard. Hamðir predicts that he and his brothers will die in their attempt at vengeance. Guðrún's laughter turns to tears as she begins yet another bitter lament.

She lists the three hearths she has known, first as bride to Sigurðr, then as the unwilling wife of Atli, and finally as Jónakr's wife. She recounts her sorrows: the murder of Sigurðr, and of her brothers, Gunnarr and Hogni, the revenge she took on Atli by killing their sons, and her most recent sorrow, the brutal murder of her beautiful daughter. Now she realizes that her last two sons are to die as well, leaving her alone and unprotected. Guðrún concludes her lament by remembering the idyllic days with Sigurðr. She then commands that a funeral pyre be built for her. Only the flames can now melt the ice of her tormented heart.

The poem's theme is the epic magnitude of Guðrún's griefs and her inability to create happiness for herself. The most powerful moment in the poem is the contrast between her laughter as she brings armor out to her sons in order to avenge Svanhildr, and her weeping when she realizes that they, too, will die.

**Guilds**, corporations formed by merchants and artisans, are urban phenomena and in Scandinavia are thus found primarily in Denmark (including Scania), in a few Swedish towns, and in Bergen, Norway.

The medieval terms (spelling modernized) are *gilde* and *lav* (or *laug*), and are used interchangeably for the organization. Historians have used *gilde* to indicate confraternities and merchants' guilds, and *lav* for craft guilds. The term *embele* (or *embede* for craft guilds) is contemporary and refers to the craft itself (akin to the English "Mystery"). The term *skot* refers to the statutes of a guild or fraternity.

Guild development in Denmark follows the continental pattern. The earliest guilds were established in the 12th century at the time of Danish trade hegemony in the Baltic. They were called "St. Knud (Cnut) guilds," and are first mentioned in a document from 1177, at which point there was a St. Knud's guild in many Danish towns. This document and the five oldest extant statutes, compiled during the 13th century, show that these were merchants' guilds. The patron saint was Duke Lavard (murdered 1130, canonized 1170). Prior to 1170, another murdered and canonized Knud (d. 1086, canonized 1100) may have been the patron saint. With the loss of trade hegemony to the Hanse merchants during the second half of the 13th century, the St. Knud guilds lost their commercial aspect and became exclusive confraternities for the urban elite during the later Middle Ages. Some guilds survived into the early modern period, and a few are still in existence. Any male merchant could become a member, whereas women could only participate in social and religious activities as wives and daughters.

Specific trade guilds with special rights and privileges for its members were formed during the late 14th and 15th centuries by the minor tradespeople, such as drapers, mercers, and fishmongers. Women could become full-fledged members as active traders during the 15th century, but this situation changed during the 16th century, when their access to guild membership was exclusively through marriage or birth.

Craft guilds were also founded in the 14th and 15th centuries, but may have begun as confraternities during the high Middle Ages. Early attempts by artisans to organize were suppressed. A 13th-century town law from Roskilde prohibits the bakers' guild. The first known craft guild is that of the Tailors and Shearers of Ribe, who in 1349 were granted permission to organize a guild with monopoly on cutting and sewing new clothing. The most frequently organized artisans were those working in leather (shoemakers, in particular), fur, and metal (smiths). Craft guilds were founded primarily in the larger towns of eastern Denmark (Zealand and Scania). By the early 16th century, some seventy Danish craft guilds are mentioned. In Sweden, twelve guilds existed in Stockholm by the 16th century (earliest guild founded 1356, most from the 15th century), one in Arboga (shoemakers, 1485) and one in Kalmar (cordiners, 1428); in Norway, only the German shoemakers in Bergen organized.
Craft guilds were organizations of male masters. No women’s guilds existed, but, as wives and daughters, women performed an important function as transmitters of workshops and privileges (through marriage) from one generation of masters to the next, and as partners in the workshop. Widows usually had the right to continue the workshop, but for a limited period only, between one and three years or until remarriage. As wives and unmarried daughters, women shared in the religious, social, and economic benefits enjoyed by the guild members.

Guilds played an important role in protecting urban craft production, and aided development and specialization within the individual craft. They appear to have had no political role. Disputes between the merchants and the craftsmen did occur during the 15th century, but no guild rule was ever imposed on Danish towns, where the merchants remained firmly in control.


Gull-ðóris saga (*The Saga of Gold-ðóris*) is preserved in a singlevellum MS, AM 561 4to, dating from around 1400, but was probably composed in the early part of the 14th century. It is thought to be a reworking of an older saga. There is a lacuna in the MS from the end of the 10th chapter to the beginning of the 12th. Since parts of the saga take place in northwestern Iceland, in the area around Porskafjörður, it is also known as Porskafjörðursaga.

Like Finnboga saga ranna, Þóðar saga hreðu, and other "postclassical" Islendingasögur, Gull-ðóris saga contains a num-


**Joseph Harris**

[See also: *Hulda-Hrokkiskaenna; Konungasogur; Þóðar àttir*]

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ber of dissimilar elements and shows strong influence from the 
*fornaldarsögur* and *riddarsögur*, particularly in scenes set abroad,
which contrast markedly with episodes taking place in Iceland.

The saga begins with a superficial description of the hero 
Pórir Oddsson: he is handsome and brave. Together with nine 
blood brothers, Pórir journeys to Norway during the reign of 
Harald hárfagr ("fair-hair") Hálfdanarson. At first, they occupy 
them-selves with fishing, but feel it is little to their credit. 
They decide to break into a grave mound said to contain a berserk and 
large amounts of gold. The berserk turns out to be a kinsman of 
Pórir's named Agnarr, who tells him of another mound containing 
much gold, but warns him that the gold will not bring him luck. 
Pórir does not follow Agnarr's instructions exactly, however, and 
must fight a dragon, using marvelous articles given him by his 
father and a relative. He wins a great deal of gold, most of which 
he keeps for himself.

The story now turns to Iceland and tells of a feud in the area 
around Porskafjördur. This part of the saga, although related to 
the rest because Pórir's aviricte precipitates the conflict, has a much 
more realistic nature than the episodes in Norway. However, the 
events in Iceland include elements of the fantastic: men are changed 
into swine, and women put a cloak of invisibility over a ship and 
render weapons useless. Pórir seeks the advice of a sibyl, and in 
battle he and his opponents change shape.

Pórir's kinsman Gunnarr suddenly appears on the scene. 
Gunnarr is depicted as a troublemaker, and Pórir as a peacemaker 
interested primarily in his farm, unlike the young Pórir, who 
chose to look for gold rather than to fish. Toward the end of the story, 
Agnarr's prophecy regarding the curse on the gold hoard is ful-
filled. Following a series of conflicts and difficulties and ultimate 
dishonor, Pórir becomes malicious and petulant, and finally van-
ishes with his gold, changing, some say, into a dragon lying on his 
hoard.

Gull-Pórir and the events in Porskafljördur are mentioned in the 
Sturlubók version of Landnámabók, but in an account differing 
considerably from the story as presented in *Gull-Póris saga*. In all 
likelihood, the account in *Sturlubók* is based on an older 
*Porskifjördinga saga*, now lost, upon which the present saga was 
also based. There seem also to be connections between *Gull-Póris saga* 
and *Hálfdanar saga* and *Skáldasaga* preserved in 
*Haukbók* (ca. 1300). Many critics have compared the dragon 
and gold-hoard episodes to those in the Old English poem *Beowulf*.

Ed.: Maurer, Konrad, ed. *Die Gull-Póris saga oder Porskifjördinga saga*. 
Leipzig: Hinrichs'schen Buchhandlung, 1858; Kállund, Kr., ed. *Gull-
Póris saga eller Porskifjördinga saga*. Samfund til udgivelse af gammel 
nordisk litteratur, 26. Copenhagen: Møller, 1898. Tr.: Garmonsway, 
Dutton, 1968; rpt. 1971, pp. 324-7 [excerpt]; Evans, Mary Virginia. 
Lit.: Kállund, Kr. *Om læknerine i Gull-Póris saga.* Årkfr for nordisk 
fílologi 1 (1882), 179-91; Porleifur Jónsson. *Endnu lidt om læknerine 
in Gull-Póris saga.* Årkfr for nordisk fílologi 3 (1886), 286; Bjørn 
Magnússon Olsen. *Landnám og Gull-Póris (Porskifjördinga) Saga.* 
Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie (1910), 35-61; Bjørn 
Sigfusson. *"Gull-Póris saga."* KLMN 5 (1960), 594-5; Schach, Paul. 
*"Gull-Póris saga."* In *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*. Ed. Joseph R. 

Margret Eggertsdóttir

**Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfils** (*The Saga of Gunnarr, the Fool of Keldugnúp*). The events related in the saga of Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfils take place in the 11th century. The saga's date of composition is difficult to determine; the earliest preserved MSS date from the 17th century, and the saga contains a number of elements that indicate a rather late date of composition, probably not earlier than 1400. Four MSS preserve a text thought to be 
closest to the original, AM 496 4to, AM 156 fol., AM 443 4to, and 
AM 554 4to. These MSS vary little in terms of plot, but there are 
significant differences in wording, particularly between the first 
and last named.

This short saga is characterized primarily by its use of epi-
isodes and motifs known from other sources. In the beginning 
of the saga, Gunnarr is the typical *kolbítr*, or "male Cinderella," 
depicted by his father and ridiculed by others, until he proves him-
self by killing a man. He and his brother Helgi, who is unlike him 
in every respect, escape from those wishing to avenge the slaying 
by hiding in a cave. Gunnarr befriends a merchant, who has arrived 
in the district, and he and his brother take passage with him. 
Before leaving the country, however, Gunnarr betroths Helga, the 
sister of his enemies. In a curious, perhaps tongue-in-cheek scene, 
the saga relates how Gunnarr kills the two brothers one after another 
just outside the door, enters the farmhouse, and is greeted warmly 
by Helga. Gunnarr plights his troth and promptly departs, leaving 
Helga crying. They are shipwrecked, but manage to reach an un-
known country of glaciers and polar bears. Gunnarr kills a bear 
and has dealings with giants, killing many of them, but befriending 
the giantess Fála, who later proves a valuable ally. This episode 
is reminiscent of the first chapter of *Jokuls játtr Básason*. In 
Norway, the brothers meet Earl Hákon, who takes an immediate 
dislike to Gunnarr, for which no reason is given in the saga other 
than that he fears Gunnarr's strength. Gunnarr is made to fight a 
blámadr (literally "blue-man"), whom he is able to defeat with the 
help of a magic cloak given to him by his friend, the merchant. 
Gunnarr and his brother now embark on a Viking expedition that 
ends in a great battle. This section corresponds closely to episodes 
in *Hjālmyndes saga ok Olvis og Porsteins saga Vikingsonnar*, both 
classed as *fornaldarsögur*. All three sagas are thought to derive 
from a single source, now lost. Gunnarr and his companions 
return first to Norway, where they are reconciled with Earl Hákon, 
then make their way back to Iceland, where Gunnarr is married. 
Gunnarr kills one of his old enemies, whose sister tries to avenge 
him through witchcraft, but without success. Gunnarr, however, 
offers a settlement, which is accepted in the end.

Parts of the saga are reminiscent of episodes in *Jokuls játtr 
Básason*, a kind of continuation of *Kjalneisinga saga*, with which 
Gunnars saga also has many elements in common. Although much 
of the material in the saga is known from other sources, only one 
character, Earl Hákon, is mentioned elsewhere.

Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfils was written primarily as an 
entertainment, and there is little original in it. Nevertheless, the story 
is well told with a fair share of quips.

The saga formed the basis for a number of *rímur*, the oldest of 
which, now lost with the exception of two verses, date from the 
16th century. In addition, there are several groups of *rímur* from 
the 18th and 19th centuries (Bjørn K. Pórólsson 1934:508-9).
Gunnlaugr ormstunga ("serpent-tongue"), an Icelandic skald, appears to have flourished around the year 1000. Any search for a "historical Gunnlaugr" is beset by problems. The main source for his life is the highly romantic Gunnlaugs saga, extant in a late 13th-century redaction, which centers upon his alleged rivalry with Hrafn Quondarson, a fellow skald, over Helga Porsteinsdottir. Some of the verses embedded in this saga appear to antedate the prose narrative and may have some historical value as sources. But convincing corroboration of their authenticity is lacking; only two of them are known elsewhere. Other minor sources are Landnamabok, Skaldatal (older redaction), Egils saga, and Snaor Edla. Landnamabok confirms the saga on Gunnlaugr's genealogy and on Hrafn's status as a poet, and supplements it by making Gunnlaug a kinsman of the skalds Bragi Boddason and Tindr Hallkelsson. The older version of Snorri's Skaldatal includes Gunnlaug in its list of the court poets of Earl Eiríkr of Haþòr (d. ca. 1023) and King Olaf of Sweden (d. 1022), supporting the saga, which brings his hero into contact with these and other leaders and ascribes several fragments of political verse to him. One of these verses shows him as an itinerant poet planning visits to three kings (presumably Æthelred II of England, the "Unready", Sigtrygg silikiskegg ["silk-beard"] of Dublin; and Olaf of Sweden) and two earls (Sigurðr Hløðvisson of Orkney and Earl Eiríkr, although in the saga the latter has been replaced by an otherwise unknown Earl Sigurðr of Gautland). Only two fragments of poems for these patrons are cited, both datable to around 1002 according to the internal chronology of the saga. They afford a small insight into Gunnlaugr's political and poetic affiliations. The stef ("refrain") of his Adalráðsdrápa has the ring of propaganda, extolling Æthelred's receipt of loyalty from his family and awe from his subjects. This expression of the "vicarius Dei" ideology of kingship belongs in a tradition of skaldic praises for English kings, stretching from Æthelstan to Knud (Canut). The fragments of Gunnlaugr's Sigtryggdrápa, a frankly petitionary poem, contain what seem to be reminiscences of Egil's Hofðaðlausn, notably the rare runensta stanza form; a tradition special to the joint kingdom of York and Dublin is perhaps indicated.

Because of the uncertainties regarding the Gunnlaugr canon, little more can be said about his place in the history of skaldic poetry. Of the other political verses in the saga, one (doubtfully authentic) is a flying (a ritualized insult) and the other a comparison of rival leaders, a genre exemplified in Liðsmannaflokkr. Where Gunnlaugr's later career is concerned, the story of tragic love told in the saga has the same stereotypic traits as the sagas of such skalds as Bjørn Hitðcelakappi, Hallfreðr Óttarsson, and Kormákr Ogmundarson. The prose narrative appears to be corroborated by frequent citations of verses purportedly by Hrafn Quondarson, Pórðr Kolbeinsson, Porkell Hallkelsson, and Gunnlaugr himself. But one of these verses is a borrowing from Kormáks saga, and some others are probably 12th- or 13th-century compositions. External corroboration of the account of Gunnlaugr's rivalry with Hrafn appears in Egils saga and Snaor Edla. Snorri agrees with the saga in assigning a verse about this rivalry to Gunnlaugr: problematic, however, are the reliability of Snorri's attributions and the autobiographical status of the verse, even if correctly attributed. Whatever their authorship or date, some of the love verses contained in Gunnaugs saga, with their bold dramatization of the speaker and striking combinations of kennings, rank among the finest skaldic compositions in that genre.


Margrét Eygertsdóttir

[See also: Hjálmar’s saga, Íslandingasögur; Jókuls þáttr
Bássonar, Íslenzsinga saga, Rimur; Porsteins saga
Víkingssonar]

Gunnars saga Piðrandabana ("The Saga of Gunnarr, Slayer of Piðrandi") is actually a þáttr rather than a saga. The central figure of the tale is more or less the object than the subject of the action, which is disjointed and largely unmotivated.

Björn Kóreksson gives Piðrandi a horse as a token of friendship. A farm laborer named Ásbjörn becomes a small landholder, but is soon deeply indebted, especially to Björn and his brothers, including Piðrandi, who go to Njarðvík to summon Ásbjörn for non-payment of debt. On the way, they see Asbjörn digging peat, and one of them hurls a spear through him. Asbjörn manages to reach Njarðvík, and when the summoners arrive there, Ketill rushes out of them to avenge Ásbjörn. After Ketill and several other men have been slain, the summoners withdraw. A woman servant incites Gunnarr to kill Piðrandi as fitting vengeance for Ketill's death, a common motif in saga literature. Piðrandi finds refuge with Ketill, and his sons and their companions, including Piðrandi, go to Njarðvík to summon Ásbjörn for non-payment of debt. On the way, they see Ásbjörn digging peat, and one of them hurls a spear through him. Ásbjörn manages to reach Njarðvík, and when the summoners arrive there, Ketill rushes out and kills one of them to avenge Ásbjörn. After Ketill and several other men have been slain, the summoners withdraw. A woman servant incites Gunnarr to kill Piðrandi as fitting vengeance for Ketill's death, a common motif in saga literature. Piðrandi finds shelter with a farmer named Sveinki, who successfully conceals him three times from his pursuers. Also a saga motif, this episode occupies over one fourth of the saga, followed by a second detailed concealment episode. Piðrandi's final shelter is at Helgafell, where Guðrún protects him from her husband, Porkell, and, with the help of Snorri goði ("Chieflain, priest"), enables him to return to Norway, where Sveinki joins him.

Gunnarr's story is more fully told in Fljótsdeildala saga than in his own þáttr. The Helgafell scene is well developed in Laxdeila saga, where the heroine Guðrún plays a much more prominent and independent role. As his source, the author of Laxdeila saga mentions *Njarðvíkingasaga, which must be identical with Gunnars saga. This work was probably written around 1200 in western Iceland, since the author had scant knowledge of the scene of action, which takes place, for the most part, in eastern Iceland. The tale is preserved only in later paper transcripts of a lost MS about which nothing is known.


Paul Schach

[See also: Fljótsdeildala saga, Laxdeila saga; þáttr]
Gunnlaug Saga Ormstungu


Russell Poole

[See also: Egíls saga Skállagrímssonar, Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu; Kennings; Kormáks saga, Landmælabók; Lausavísur, Skáld; Skaldic Meters; Skaldic Verse; Snorra Edda]

Gunnlaug Saga Ormstungu ("The Saga of Gunnlaug Serpent-Tongue") tells the story of an Icelandic skald in the early 11th century, his rivalry with another skald, Hrafn, over Helga in fagra ("the fair"), his visits as skald to foreign princes, and his death at the hand of his successful rival. Gunnlaugr saga belongs to the group of Ísle má r s sögur called skaldasögur, and has special relations with one other, Bjarman saga Hítdekkalappa. Both are written in the same pattern as the main plot, the love story. Two skalds meet at the court of a king, one of them has a betrothed maiden waiting for him, and the other skald goes back to Iceland and persuades the relative of the girl to give her to him in marriage. The outlines of this pattern probably have their origin in a short story (játte) in Morkinskinna. In that story, an Icelandic skald and his brother are staying at the court of the king of Norway. The brother returns to Iceland, and before he leaves the skald asks him to take a message to an Icelandic maiden, asking her to stay unmarried until he returns. As soon as the brother arrives in Iceland, he proposes to the girl himself and is accepted. This sequence seems to be the plot in its most original form, a version of the well-known story of the wooer by proxy who becomes the lover of, in some variants marries, the desired maiden. The motif itself and the continuation of the story in Morkinskinna suggest that the original source is the romance of Tristan. The famous story of the thwarted love of Kjartan and Guðrún in Laxdœla saga follows the same pattern.

Gunnlaug Saga Ormstungu begins with a prophetic dream by Porsteinr, son of Egill Skalla-Grimssonr, and the father of Helga in fagra. The dream is interpreted to predict that a yet-unborn daughter of Porstein's wife will be fought over by two valiant men, eventually killing each other, and that she would be married to a third man. The dream is modeled on a dream in Trojumanna saga and on another in Nibelungenlied, although the latter dream is only partially found in Old Icelandic literature (Volsunga saga, ch. 26).

The author of Gunnlaugr saga knew many sagas and made use of some of them, not least Egíls saga Skálagrímssonar. Nevertheless, the rivalry of Gunnlaugr and Hrafn over Helga is mentioned twice in Egíls saga (chs. 79 and 87). This reference has been explained by oral tradition about this rivalry. The first half of the stanza spoken by Gunnlaugr in the saga (st. 19) is quoted in Snorra Edda, which has also been explained by oral traditions. Sagas of skalds entangled in a love triangle were apparently in vogue in Iceland in the early 13th century. Therefore, it is hard to believe that the mention of the rivalry of Gunnlaugr and Hrafn over Helga in Egíls saga derives from oral tradition. The stanzas spoken by Gunnlaugr and others in the saga are as unlikely to be authentic (i.e., early 11th-century poetry) as the content of the saga in general.

Gunnlaug Saga Ormstungu is preserved in two Icelandic parchment MSS, Stock Perg. 4to no. 18, probably written in the early 14th century, and defectively in AM 557 4to, probably from the early 15th century. The text of the older MS seems to be the better, more original. Nevertheless, both contain obvious errors. The MSS disagree most in ch. 1, where the older MS has some “learned” digressions and where the heading has the absurd information that Gunnlaugr saga has been told by Ari prestr inn fróði ("priest Ari the learned"). The text of the younger MS seems to be abbreviated.

The romantic and sentimental flavor of Gunnlaugr saga, together with its obvious use of early sagas as models (Bjarnar saga Hítdekkalappa, Hallfreðr saga vandaðalskalds) and direct and indirect references to others (Laxdœla saga and Egíls saga Skálagrímssonar), have caused most scholars to assume that it must have been written late, i.e., probably in the last decades of the 13th century. But Finnrur Jónsson (1916) denied any romantic influence, and although he conceded that Gunnlaugr saga had affinities with other sagas, he maintained that they were mostly based on oral tradition. In his opinion, the saga was a "masterpiece," and belonged to the "best original saga-writing, around 1200."

The two conflicting views of the age of Gunnlaugr saga, early 13th and late 13th century, may both be partially right. Gunnlaugr saga may belong to the group of Ísle má r s sögur that Sigurður Nordal considered to be late adaptations of older sagas. The learned digressions and not least the curious naming of Ari fróði as the man who told the story, would fit well in this connection.
Gotland, survives as a text of about 2,000 words, primarily in MS itself dates to the early 14th century, although (Gutalag) almost certainly composed in something like its current form in medieval translations, based on B 64, survive: three in Old Danish, history of the Baltic island-state, from its first settlement, when, the first quarter of the 13th century. In addition to according to legend, it sank by day and rose again by night, through some of the more important episodes in the island's history to one in Old Swedish, and one in German from the early 15th century. events nearly contemporary with the compilation of the current text.

rituals of the island, its christianization, and its ties to the Swedish tion of a third of the residents and how these emigrants came to very few original, nonlegal prose works from the Old East Scandi­

kingdom. The last two sections detail the reciprocal obligations of

events of conquest and expansion as well as the rise and decline of

and the origin of the Seleucid Empire, it describes Antiochus IV's oppression of the Jews and their resistance under the Maccabees ends with a note stating that Emperor Tiberius sent Pontius Pilate associated with the life and career of Pilate, including a short bi­

as procurator to Judaea, and the rest of the saga deals with events

and Peter Comestor's (3) Chs. 33-38, giving an apocryphal story of the lives of Pontius

it is found in Jón Sigurosson's catalogue, AM 394 fol.), and the saga was edited under this title by Guðmundur Porlaksson.

Gydinga saga covers about 220 years of Jewish history. After an introduction sketching the conquests of Alexander the Great and the origin of the Seleucid Empire, it describes Antiochus IV's oppression of the Jews and their resistance under the Maccabees until Jewish independence in 142 B.C. The story then records the work of conquest and expansion as well as the rise and decline of the dynasty of Herod the Great and the reduction of Judaea to a Roman province. The actual historical narrative of Gydinga saga ends with a note stating that Emperor Tiberius sent Pontius Pilate as procurator to Judaea, and the rest of the saga deals with events associated with the life and career of Pilate, including a short biography of Judas Iscariot.

In AM 226 fol., Gydinga saga is divided into thirty-nine chapters. Although there are no other formal divisions, the saga falls naturally into three main parts. (1) The first twenty-one chapters form a unit and are based on 1 Maccabees with additions from 2 Maccabees and Peter Comestor's Historia scholastica. (2) Chs. 22-32 make up a middle section derived from Historia scholastica. (3) Chs. 33-38, giving an apocryphal story of the lives of Pontius Pilate and Judas Iscariot, are based on a certain "historia apocrypha," a precursor to the version of the legends in Jacobus de Voragine's Legenda aurea. There is no strong evidence that Flavius Josephus's De bello Judaeico and Antiquitates Judaeicae were sources for some of the additions in (1) and (2). The last chapter contains a brief account of the Roman em­
Gydinga saga at King Magnús Hákonarson’s request. As Magnus assumed the title of king in 1257, and since Brandr is referred to as a priest rather than a bishop, the time of composition seems to be between 1257 and 1263. In 1262, Brandr went to Trondheim to be consecrated bishop; it is possible that Gydinga saga was written in the time between his arrival in Norway in 1262 and his consecration as bishop on March 4, 1263.

The style of Gydinga saga in AM 226 fol. is plain and undecorated; but the fragments AM 655 XXV 4to and AM 238 XVII fol., preserving a more original text, clearly show that it is wrong to deny Gydinga saga all stylistic forms. In these fragments, the condensed style of the originals of Gydinga saga is amplified to give a more diffuse narrative with a frequent use of alliteration.


Kirsten Wolf

See also: Alexanders saga; Bible, Christian Prose; Stjórn

Gyðinga saga ("The Saga of Hrólfr the Stamper") is an anonymous fomaldrarsaga from the beginning of the 14th century, preserved in AM 152 fol., AM 589f 4to, Gks 2845 4to, and Bl. Add. 4857.

The title of the saga refers to the size and weight of the supernatural hero, whom no horse can carry. He is identified as the Viking leader Rollo (Gyðinga-Hrólfs Rognvaldsøn), who in 911 was granted areas at the mouth of the Seine and who established the Norman duchy. Apart from the similarity between the names, there are, however, no historical points of connection. The saga represents a much larger extent the type of the bridal-quest tale with numerous characters and scenes set in Scandinavia, Russia, and England.

The main theme is a fantastic journey of courtship to Garðariki (Russia). Hrólfr, son of Sturlaug and Ása (Sturluæga saga starsfæma includes them), undertakes the task for Earl Þorgeir of Jutland after a swallow brings him a lock of Princess Ínghildr's golden hair. During the journey, Hrólfr is outwitted by the Danish farmer's servant, who forces his master to switch roles with him. Ingfríðr heals him by a magical remedy, and, with the help of the dwarf Móðvin, Hrólfr hangs the underhanded Dane. Before Hrólfr can get away with the princess, he must leave for Russia once more to averge her father's death. He succeeds in this undertaking in a three-day battle described in detail. Finally, Hrólfr goes on a campaign to England to reestablish the deposed successor to the throne. In this concluding section, a detailed geographical digression on England and Denmark is incorporated from Knýtlinga saga.

The saga, which is rich in motifs, uses at least three fairy-tale sources to fulfill the bridal-quest pattern: the material of oriental origin about the demonic seducer in the figure of the dwarf, the tale about the unreliable servant (adopted as a German variant in the Grimm brothers' Kinder- und Hausmärchen), and finally the well-known tale from Egypt about the faraway maiden with the golden hair. The saga offers the oldest variant of the tale type of the unreliable servant, who forces his master to switch roles with him on a journey. The immediate source of the tale about the maiden with the golden hair has been debated; presumably the author knew a Norse version of the Tristan story.

The borrowings suggest a well-read author who also knew the learned and historical Icelandic works and related genres (Sturluæga saga starsfæma, Yngvars saga Viðhróls, Hrómundarsaga Grássonar). Descriptions of parties with new musical instruments and exotic food (ch. 37), tournaments (ch. 21), courtly language, along with geographical digressions, indicate an attempt to expand the fictional potential of a fomaldrarsaga, and to create an equally entertaining and instructive narrative.

See also: Fornaldar sögur; Hrómundar saga Gripssonar; Knýtlinga saga; Old Norse-Icelandic Literature, Foreign Influence on; Sturlaug saga starfsama; Yngvars saga víðförla.
Hadding see Divine Heroes, Native

Haithabu see Hedeby

Hákon góði ("the good") Haraldsson (ca. 920–960) was a younger son and successor of Haraldr hárfagri ("fair-hair") Hálfdanarson, who first brought Norway under a single kingship. Hákon was also called Æthelstan's foster-son," because he was fostered in England at the Christian court of King Æthelstan of Wessex. Around 935, Hákon learned in England of his father's death, and returned to Norway to regain the throne from his half-brother, Eiríkr blóðax ("blood-axe") Haraldsson. Hákon sought the support of Earl Sigurðr Hákonarson in Trondheim, and was named king in Trondelag after promising the farmers that he would restore their patrimonial rights (óðla). When Hákon moved south and seized power in Oppland and Vík, Eiríkr, without further resistance, fled from Norway to York. Hákon became king over Norway, but in reality his power lay in the southwest; he allowed Earl Sigurðr to retain sovereignty in Trondelag, and he gave his nephews, Tryggvi Óláfsson and Guðrør Bjamarson, virtual autonomy over parts of southeastern Norway.

Hákon's popularity has been traditionally ascribed to his achievements as a lawgiver and organizer of military defense. The poet Sighvatr Þórðarson's Bersóglvísur ("Plain-speaking Verses," ca. 1038) extol Hákon for his justice and his laws. The histories Ágríp, Fagrskírnna, and Heimskringla variously credit him with establishing the Gulaþing Law for the fylkjur("districts") of Rogaland, Hordaland, Sogn, and the Fjords, and the Frostþing Law for the fylkjur of Trondelag together with Nordmøre, Namdal, and later Romsdal. But these histories are not wholly accurate, for the Gulaþing, at least, had probably been established in the 930s. It is more likely that Hákon reorganized existing law federations (the Gulaþing in western Norway, Frostþing in northern Norway, and Eiðsþvang around the southeastern Lake Mjøsa area) by extending their reach into neighboring districts and changing them into representative and consultive bodies. Each district was required to send a certain number of delegates (nefndarmenn) to the þing. The integration of fylkjur into larger regions and the reorganization of the law federations on a more representative basis enabled the monarchy to consult more easily with the several regions and thereby seek both legal and popular approval for national as well as local matters. Thus, Hákon can probably be credited with introducing the principle of representation into the Norwegian social order.

According to Heimskringla and Fagrskírnna, Hákon also re-organized the military defense set up by his father, Haraldr Hálfdanarson, into a levy system (leiðangr), by which the king could summon a proportional basis a levy of ships, warriors, weapons, and equipment. Hákon divided all the coastal lands into skipreidur ("ship-providing [districts]") and stipulated by law the number of warships and men to be supplied by each district. He also instituted a system of war signal fires along the mountaintops to warn of approaching enemies.

Although Hákon had been raised a Christian, his attempts to introduce Christianity into Norway did not succeed. According to Heimskringla, Hákon invited priests from England and built churches in western Norway. Further evidence of English mission activity in mid-10th-century Norway may be provided by the listing of a "Sigefridus norwegensis" among the names of Glastonbury monks who were bishops during the reign of King Edgar (d. 975). When Hákon proposed at the Frostþing that the people accept Christianity, however, he reportedly met with great resistance and was forced to abandon his attempt. Hákon presumably left the faith himself, for the memorial poem Hákonarmál (ca. 961) commemorates him as a staunch upholder of pagan sanctuaries, although this poem may reflect the poet's sentiment more than the historical accuracy of Hákon's return to paganism.

Around 955, Hákon repelled the first of many attacks on Norway by his nephews, the Eiríkssons, who had taken refuge in Denmark with their uncle, King Harald Gormsson. Hákon retaliated with raids on Denmark, but when the Eiríkssons (ca. 960) renewed attacks at Fitje (Fitjar) on the island of Stord (Stø) off western Norway, Hákon was mortally wounded. Heimskringla reports that he was given a pagan burial, and lauds Hákon as a king who brought peace and good seasons. His famous eulogy Hákonarmál states: "Unbound against the dwellings of men / the Fenris-wolf shall go / before a king as good as he / walks on that empty path."
Hákon Hákonarson, king of Norway 1217–1263, was born in 1204, the son of King Hákon Sverrisson, and grandson of Sverrir Sigurdarson.

After King Ingi Bárðarson's death in 1217, the Birkibeinar ("birch-legs") disagreed on his successor. The choice was among Hákon Hákonarson, Ingi's son Guttormr, and Ingi's brother Earl Sigurdarson. Sigurdarson advised to the young king, responsible for the rule of a third of Norway, became a major reason why the king and Skuli supported each other.

In 1222, Hákon was recognized as the lawful successor. He became uncontested king of Norway. In Hákon's reign, the people of Lübeck began trading with Norway. The importance of this trade increased, and in 1250, Hákon signed a treaty with the city.

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Based on the lost Fagrskinna, the political thought of the king's mirror. Mediaeval Scandinavia Supplements. 3. Odense: Odense University Press, 1987.

Jón Viðar Sigurðsson

[See also: Hákonar saga gamla Hákonarsonar, Konungs skuggjá, Norway; Riddarasögur, Tristráms saga ok Ísundis]

Hákonjarl ("earls") Sigurðarson (ca. 940–995), known as Hákon inn ríki ("the great"), was the last pagan ruler of Norway (r. ca. 970–995). He was a member of the powerful Trondheim-based Hlaðjarlar ("earls of Lade"), who rose to prominence in Hákon Jarl ("earl") Sigurðarson as Hálogaland, northern Norway during the reign of King Harald hárfagri ("fair-haired") Hálfdanarson and King Hákon góði ("the good") Haraldsson. Around 962, the Eirikssons, successors to Hákon Haraldsson, attacked Norway at Hjórgungavágr (Liavåg). After a bitter fight, Hákon vowed revenge. Earl Hákon fled to King Harald Gormsson in Denmark, and according to accounts in Heimskringla and Fagrskinna (probably based on the lost *Hlaðjarlarsaga*), he engineered through shrewd machinations the deaths of King Harald's two nephews, Haraldr Eiriksson and Haraldr Knútssson, both contenders for the Norwegian throne. King Haraldr rewarded Hákon with the restoration of his sovereignty over northern Norway, and gave him rule over southwestern Norway, in return for payment of tribute. When Hákon reestablished pagan sanctuaries that had been destroyed by the Christian Eiríksos, his popular reign was accompanied by bountiful harvests and large catches of herring, according to Fagrskinna and Heimskringla.

Around 974, Hákon aided Denmark against the invasion of the German emperor Otto II, who reputedly forced the Christian baptism of King Harald and Earl Hákon as a condition of peace. On his return to Norway, however, Hákon cast off the Christian faith. Because Hákon had by now rejected Danish overlordship, King Harald Gormsson sent a fleet against him, but failed to re-capture any territory. From this time on, Earl Hákon exercised full sovereignty over Norway (with the possible exception of the Danish-controlled Vik area in the southeast), but he never assumed the title of king, probably because of his strong family identity. The greatest threat to Hákon's rule came around 985, when a powerful naval force of Danes and Wendish Jomsvikings ("Vikings of Jom") attacked Norway at Hjørrungavær (Liavåg). After a bitter fight, Hákon won the most important victory of his career and confirmed Norwegian independence. According to Jomsvikingsaga, Hákon triumphed only after sacrificing his son to his tutelary goddess.

Heimskringla records that Hákon later forfeited his popularity with the people because of his greed, lawlessness, and lechery, but the real reasons for Hákon's eventual downfall may have been the rivalry of the northern Hlaðjarlar with the Yingling dynasty in the south, and the rise of Óláfr Tryggvason, great-grandson of Haraldr Hálfdanarson and son of the petty king Tryggvi Óláfsson of Vik. In 995, Óláfr Tryggvason attempted to seize the throne of Norway, and Hákon fled to Gauldarlár, where his mistress, Póra, hid him in a pigsty. There the earl met an ignominious death by murder at the hand of his thrall.

Earl Hákon was famed as a brilliant political strategist and, above all, as a fervent champion of his ancestral pagan religion. According to his court poet Einarr skálaglamm ("scale-tinkle") in Vellekla (composed ca. 986), Hákon derived his mandate to rule directly from the pagan deities; the gods rewarded his correct religious performance with fertility in the land and success in war. A lasting legacy of Earl Hákon is the exceptional poetry that has survived from his unusually large retinue of skalds. The poems not only attest to the earl's sophisticated use of poetic propaganda to gain political ends, but are also in themselves a most valuable repository of pagan myths.

Hákonar saga gamla Hákonarsonar ("The Saga of Hákon Hákonarson the Old") is a biography of the Norwegian king, Hákon IV (r. 1217–1263), who was the son of Hákon Sverrisson (r. 1202–1204). Commissioned by Hákon's son Magnus lagabætur ("law-mender"; r. 1263–1280), this detailed chronicle was compiled in 1264–1265 by Sturla Þórðarson (d. 1284). The trying circumstances under which the Icelandic poet and historian performed this task are recounted in Sturlu þáttr and in other parts of Sturlunga saga.

King Hákon had instigated the death of Sturla's uncle, Snorri Sturluson, in 1241. Sturla rightly regarded Hákon as his most dangerous enemy, for he had steadfastly resisted the king's subjugation of Iceland to Norway, which was accomplished in 1262–1264. Skúli Bárðarson (d. 1240), Hákon's most dangerous rival for royal power, was the maternal grandfather of Magnus, who supervised the composition of his father's biography, much as King Sverrir is said to have "sat over" Karl Jónsson as the Icelandic abbot wrote Sverrir's biography.

Although Hákonar saga lacks the vivid drama of Sverris saga, it has much in common with this work. Sverrir had succeeded in reestablishing the supremacy of the king over both the Church and the landed aristocracy, which often supported the Church, headed by the archbishop. Hákon IV maintained this royal supremacy and completed the unification of the country. The death of Skúli in 1240 is generally regarded as the end of the civil-war period in Norway (1130–1240).

During the reign of Hákon IV, Norway emerged as a Euro-
pean state. The Norwegian king was on good terms with Henry III of England, and trade between the two countries flourished during this time. Unlike Sverrir, Hákon was able to maintain a good relationship with the Church, while at the same time refusing its claims for independence. Several long passages emphasize the high regard in which Hákon was held by Emperor Frederick II (d. 1250). In 1250, Hákon concluded a treaty of commerce with Lübeck, and from then on trade with the Hanseatic cities increased. Hákon sent gifts of Icelandic falcons to the Beq of Tunis and to Henry III of England. Hákon's daughter Kristin married Prince Philip of Spain. Iceland and Greenland became tributary to Norway around the time of Hákon's death.

Quite aside from the fact that Sturla had to extol the virtues of his most feared enemy without severely condemning the king's most dangerous adversary, there is much irony in this work. The most obvious example is the ambivalent role played by Skúli: after successfully protecting Hákon for years against his enemies, Skúli's greed for power and prestige finally led him to open revolt and death. How skillfully Sturla dealt with this sensitive situation can be seen in Skúli's eulogy. Skúli would have been called one of the greatest men ever born in Norway, "if this unfortunate deed (ógeitruverk) had not overcome him in the last days of his life" (ch. 214, Guðni Jónsson, ed.).

There are several scenes and episodes in which Sturla waxes eloquent, such as the spirited exchange between Hákon and William of Sabina, the pope's envoy who crowned Hákon king of Norway. The chief importance of Hákon saga, however, lies in the fact that it is an important historical document. This badly neglected chronicle has been preserved in three redactions found in Eïspennill, Codex Frisianus, and Flateyjarbók.


Paul Schach

[Hákonardrápa see Hallfreð Ottarsson]
Hákonarmál see Eyvind Finsson skáldaspillir
Háleygjatal see Eyvind Finsson skáldaspillir
Hálfdanar saga Brønufóstra ("The Saga of Hálfdan, Foster-son of Brana") is a fornaldarsaga composed in Iceland around the year 1300 or shortly thereafter. It follows the life of young Prince Hálfdan in Denmark, whose father is killed by marauding berserks led by the evil Viking Sóti. Hálfdan and his sister, Inghild, are hidden in a farmhouse protected from searchers by fortuitous snowstorms, before being sent by their foster-father to his brother in Bjarmaland. At the age of twelve, Hálfdan is given four ships of his own, but fog and storms combine to drive him and his lone surviving ship to Helluland. While hunting one day, he comes upon a cave containing two trolls, whom he slays with a gold-adorned sword found there. In a side cave, he finds a Scottish earl's abducted daughter and twin sons. While hunting with the latter, he encounters the half-troll Brana, daughter of an abducted

Morkinskinna into a series of events motivated by ambition and vengeance. By representing Hákon, a belated Viking from eastern Norway, as a scion of the dynasty of the earls of Hlaðir (Lade, near Trondheim), the saga author identifies a petty personal dispute with a protracted feud of national significance. By relating Hákon to Einarr jambarskelfir ("paunch-shaker" or "bowstring-trembler"), he transforms Einarr's murder by the king, which remains inconsequential in Morkinskinna, into the impetus of the action. Thus, Hákon receives an earldom and the king's niece Ragnhildr in marriage, not as rewards for military support, but as compensation for the slaying of a kinsman. During the battle of Nissan River, King Sven Estridsen of Denmark narrowly eludes capture by King Harald, with the help of Earl Hákon, according to the saga. The king is enraged by people's praise of Hákon, and when he learns of the earl's complicity in Sven's escape, he launches a surprise attack upon the man he regards as a potential rival for the Norwegian throne. Hákon escapes, and the story ends with his return to Norway following Harald's death at Stamford Bridge (1066).

Composed around 1210, Hákonar saga Ívarssonar is preserved in four fragments (six leaves) of AM 370a 4to from around 1480. The lacunae can be filled from a Latin compendium in Gks 2434 4to (fols. 15r–18r), and from Snorri's account in Heimskringla. Snorri followed the saga in his presentation of these events in Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar, even though Morkinskinna is historically more reliable. Snorri abridged the saga account, condensed the circumstantial style, and purposefully refined the character portrait of Hákon. Hákonar saga Ívarssonar is the only independent historical saga about a Norwegian who was not of royal status or a pretender to the throne.
princess from Valland. Since Brana has been badly treated by her troll family, Hálfdan and his two companions slay her sisters and numerous other trolls, but they are unable to kill her father, Járnfrír, vulnerable only to the sword given to Hálfdan by Brana, which she then wields herself to do him in. Hálfdan spends the winter with Brana, who, after informing him that she is carrying his child, gives him a ship she had made, as well as three magic gifts, and sends him off to marry the beautiful Marsibil, daughter of King Olaf of England. He uses love-inducing herbs to overcome Marsibíl's initial antipathy and enjoys favor at the court. The king's evil counselor Aki challenges Hálfdan, but loses badly in a swimming match and a joust. Aki then accosts Hálfdan's sister, but she invokes Brana, who uses a magic spell to transfix Aki to the door for the night while sending freezing weather to add to his discomfort. Somewhat later, Aki invites Hálfdan and his friends to a feast and sets fire to their quarters, but Brana miraculously appears to carry them all to safety.

On another occasion, Aki ambushes Hálfdan, but Hálfdan's clothing is impervious to all weapons except his own sword, and he easily slays all of Aki's men, while reserving for Aki one of the two trolls he has slain with Marsibil. But a curse by the dying Sóti prevents Hálfdan from returning to his love. Brana finally arrives to counter the curse, and the story ends in a flurry of marriages.

Many well-known folktale motifs can be found in Hálfdanar saga Brónufóstr, but these are not always skillfully juxtaposed. Also included are a ring able to detect an opponent's evil intentions (which is not used in the saga), a premonitory dream, and a spell making one unable to stand the sight of human blood. From a literary point of view, the most important passage is the hero's encounter with two trolls in a cave, a motif closely connected to the Old English epic Beowulf than corresponding passages in any other Norse saga, including the often-cited Grettis saga. Verbatim parallels to passages in this episode exist in Grímms saga loðinna and in Ála flekkjá sofa, and indicate conscious literary borrowing in the writing of these sagas, possibly from an even older, lost original. It is also probable that Hálfdanar saga Brónufóstr was known to the author of Sörla saga sterka.

Hálfdanar saga Brónufóstr is preserved in three vellum MSS from the 15th century, but its later popularity is attested by some four dozen paper MSS. In addition, the material was given poetic form on four occasions, as rímur of sixteen, seventeen, and fourteen cantos from the first part of the 16th, the 18th, and the late 19th centuries, respectively. During the third quarter of the 18th century, the saga served as the model for the forgery Halgeirs saga Flateyings.

HÁLFDANAR SAGA EYSTEINSSONAR


Hans-Peter Naumann

[See also: Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss, Foraladarsögur, Gungur-Hrolfs saga, Landnámabók, Rimur, Völsunga saga, Ynglinga saga]

Hálfs saga ok Hálfreki ("The Saga of Hálfr and His Champions") is an Icelandic foraladarsaga, preserved in one vellum MS (Gks 2845 4to, written around or after 1450) and in more than forty later paper MSS, all derived from the vellum.

The central part of the saga relates the story of the tragic fate of the Norwegian Viking King Hálfr and his warriors. After eighteen summers of successful plundering in distant countries, they fall victim to a treacherous invitation in their own country, Norway. Hálfr's stepfather, Ásmundr, sets fire to the hall when his guests have fallen asleep after much heavy drinking; they succeed in breaking out of the burning building, but in the ensuing battle Hálfr and most of his champions are killed.

This main part is preceded by a series of anecdotal accounts dealing mainly with Hálfr's ancestors, among them his father, Hjórleifr, and his adversaries, as well as a short chapter on a disastrous Viking expedition conducted by Hálfr's elder brother Hjóleifr. Following the main part, there is an account of how Hálfr's death was avenged and how his descendants settled in Iceland.

The story of Hálfr proper (Viking raids, final battle, revenge) consists of three longer poems in eddic style (Insteinskviða, Ústeinskviða, Hróskviða), connected by comparatively short prose paragraphs. The genealogical anecdotes at the beginning and the end of the saga consist of prose with interspersed lausavísur ("single stanzas").

The story of Hálfr's death is one of the earliest documented traditions in Old Norse: the skaldic poem Ynglingatal (9th century) uses the kenning Ynglingsbani ("Hálfr's bane") for "fire." Hálfr is mentioned in various other Old Norse works, such as Snorra Edda and Landnámabók, but all these references are quite stereotypical, which indicates that the Hálfr tradition cannot have been very rich in literary times. The anecdotal parts rely on genealogies, and make use of motifs from folklore (e.g., the laughing sage), mythology (Öðinn helping to brew ale), and heroic tradition (account of Víkárr's birth).

An older version of the saga, referred to as Hróks saga svarta ("The Saga of Hrókr the Black") in Sturlunga saga, seems to have been written between 1220 and 1280; the extant text very probably dates from the 14th century.


Hubert Seelow

[See also: Foraladarsögur; Lausavísur; Sturlunga saga]

Haldórs þátrr Snorrasonar ("The Tale of Haldórr Snorrason") is the title of two þátrr about Haldórr Snorrason, in modern times designated I and II according to the chronology of Haldórr's life. I is retained in MSS associated with Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar, primarily Flateyjarbók; II in Morkinskinna and Hulda-Hrókkinskinna. In Haldórs þátrr I, Haldórr is at odds with King Haraldr harðræði ("hard-ruler") Sigurðarson and seeks out the Norwegian noble Einarr þambarskelfir ("paunch-shaker" or "bowstring-trembler") for protection. Haldórr is insulted by one of Einarr's retainers, kills him, and appeals to Einarr's wife, Bergljót, for help. She advises Haldórr to throw himself on Einarr's mercy, and Einarr recounts this story: he was once released from slavery by a masked man who turned out to be Óláfr Tryggvason, who bade him apply the same mercy to someone later. That someone is Haldórr.

Haldórs þátrr II tells an entirely different story. Haldórr has served King Haraldur harðræði, but grows increasingly impatient in the king's service and increasingly less satisfied with his rewards. Finally, he bursts fully armed into the king's bedroom and takes a gold ring from him. Haldórr returns to Iceland and is never reconciled with Haraldur.

Several other medieval Icelandic sources mention Haldórr, including Heiðarvíga saga, Laxdela saga, Heimskringla, Hemings þátrr Æslakssonar, and Islendinga þátrr fróða. I and Islendinga þátrr associate him with an oral saga about King Haraldr's stay in Constantinople, and it makes him a gifted raconteur. The historical Haldórr may therefore have been an important link in early Icelandic oral tradition.

Since Einarr met the disguised Óláfr Tryggvason after the battle of Svöðr (Svoð), some scholars assigned I to circles around the monks at Pingeyrar in northwestern Iceland who wrote early sagas about Óláfr and perpetuated the notion that he survived the battle. Other scholars believe that I antedated I. Most would agree to date both texts to the 13th century.
Hallfreðar saga ("The Saga of Hallfreðr") belongs to that group of Islendingasögur known as the skáldasögur ("skald sagas"). Like others of its kind (e.g., Kormáks saga, Fóstbrœðra saga, and Gunlaugs saga), it relates in a roughly biographical frame the life and deeds of a man renowned equally as a poet and an adventurer-hero. Like his fellow skalds, Hallfreðr is physically flawed: large, of brow and ugly nose. He was a fine poet, the saga tells us, but like his fellow skalds, Hallfreðr was a hard bargain; he agreed on the condition that the king be his ally stand as godfather. At the bishop’s urging, the king agreed, pressed was the king with Hallfreðr’s poetic skill that he over­stanza in which every line contained the word “sword.” So im­around 996. On one occasion, the poet extemporized a}; see Em. & 313 (1975). For further information on skaldic poetry, see Scroll 116: Studies in Skaldic Literature, ed. John Lindow. Pétur: Hrafnkel’s Saga and Other Icelandic Stones, trans. 9 [//only].


Carol J. Clover

厅freðar saga, an Icelandic skald (966–1007), is the leading character of the Hallfreðar saga, and is mentioned in several other sagas and in historical documents such as Flateyjarbók and Heimskringla.

Hallfreðr Óttarsson lived during a stormy period of West Nordic history. Through his work as skald, first for the archpagan Earl Hákon Sigurðarson (d. 995) and then for his victorious adversary Óláfr Tryggvason (d. 1000), Hallfreðr was closely affected by the upheavals of this transitional period. He started his career as a court poet when he was scarcely twenty by celebrating Earl Håkon in a dýpa. Nine strophes of this poem are preserved in Snorri’s Edda. Four of them form a sequence where the king’s conquest of the country is viewed in a cosmic perspective. Using erotic metaphors, the poet develops the idea, known from other parts of the world, of a holy wedding between the ruler and the land, the latter identical with the earth, seen also as a female being, the earth-goddess.

As court poet to King Óláfr, Hallfreðr began his service with his first Ólafsdrápa, of which a small number of strophes have been preserved. They make a conventional impression, perhaps because of the restraints the poet had to impose upon himself in his new spiritual environment. He admitted that he had deep roots in the religion of his fathers, and his poetic gifts were very dependent on the inspiration he could draw from pagan mythology. To serve a master who carried out his work of conversion with the zeal of

HALLFREDR ÓTTARSSON 263
a fanatic was bound to lead to complications, and in several lausavísur (occasional verses) Hallfreðr openly confesses his doubts and hesitations. The poet agreed to be baptized only on condition that the king himself would stand as his godfather. His final rejection nicknamed him vandrseõaskáld ("troublesome skald").

On another occasion, when the poet had been away for a long time in heathen Västergötland (western Gautland), the king demanded that he compose a poem as penance for his lack of faith; the poem, called Upprestiardrápa, was famous for its perfection but unfortunately has not survived. After Öláfr Tryggvason's death in the battle at Svolbr (Svolv), Hallfreðr composed his memorial lay (eritídrápa), of which large fragments have been preserved.

Hallfreðr shows his literary personality most completely in his lausavísur. Psychologically the most interesting are those that reflect the problems of his conversion. His last poems, from his deathbed, have a moving tone. Here, he confesses his fear of what hell might have in store for him.

Hallfreðr's erotic poetry is intimately linked with his satires. Like his older colleague Kormákr Ógmundarson, he was strongly attracted to a young woman, the beautiful Kolfinna. Even before his first journey abroad, he began to court her, but she was suddenly married off to a hated rival, Griss Sæmingsson. In the same verses in which he sings the praises of Kolfinna's beauty, Hallfreðr excels in the coarsest satire directed against her husband.

Hamðismál in fornu ("The Old Lay of Hamðir") is a heroic poem preserved in the Codex Regius of the Poetic Edda. A "younger" Hamðismál is no longer extant, but attempts have been made to reconstruct it on the basis of Snorra Edda and Völuspa saga. The first episode in Hamðismál tells, as in the eddic poem Guðrúnarhvöt, how Guðrún incites Hamðir and Sørlí, her two sons by her third husband, Jónakr, to avenge their sister Svanhildr's death on King Jormunrekkr. On the journey, they meet their half-brother Erpr, who offers his help in words that they obviously misunderstand. After a short argument, they begin to fight, and Erpr is killed. Jormunrekkr sits in his hall at a drinking bout, and when he hears of Hamðir's and Sørlí's arrival, he laughs and boasts that he will hang them both. The avengers succeed in cutting off Jormunrekkr's hands and feet. But then Jormunrekkr roars like a bear that they must be stoned since weapons cannot harm them. Now they realize that they have caused their own death through the killing of Erpr. The poem reaches its climax with the words "Off would be his head now, if Erpr were living." The poem is then quickly, almost abruptly, brought to an end. After a heroic battle, Sørlí falls at the gable end wall, Hamðir at the back of the hall.

The story treated in Hamðismál belongs to the oldest group of Germanic heroic legends. Jormunrekkr has been identified as the historic king of the Goths, Ermanaric, who, according to Ammianus Marcellinus, committed suicide before the attack of the Goths in 375. Around 551, Jordanes gives a more detailed account of Ermanaric's end, which agrees with Hamðismál in terms of characters and motifs, so that we can hypothesize a Gothic poem in the 6th century.

The first evidence of the legend of Hamðir in Scandinavia is found in Bragi Boddason's Ragnarssógr: Snorra Edda, Völuspa saga, and Saxo's Gesta Danorum give more detailed accounts.

No eddic text has been studied more critically than the thirty-one stanzas of Hamðismál. Several places are obscure; moreover, the text was considered defective and the order of the stanzas erratic. But recent studies suggest that on the whole its transmission is intact (Dronke 1969). The poem elucidates only the main incidents of the plot and presupposes knowledge of the legendary background of the saga. Metrically, Hamðismál presents a mixture of fornýðíslag and málaháttr. It has usually been regarded as belonging to the oldest group of heroic eddic poems (10th century). Von See argues that individual words suggest a relatively late date for the poem.

Throughout the poem, a reflective, antiheroic tone is combined with proverbial wisdom. The idea that sober-minded reason is more important than unrestrained heroism is stated several times. The climax is reached in stanza 29, a ljóðaháttr stanza, which is probably lifted from elsewhere without the meter being altered.


Folke Ström

[See also: Christian Poetry; Commemorative Poetry; Hallfreðr saga, Lausavísur; Love Poetry, Skáld, Skáldasögur, Skaldic Meters; Skaldic Verse; Snorra Edda]

Otto Gschwantler

[See also: Bragi Boddason; Codex Regius; Eddie Meters; Eddie Poetry; Gudrúnarhvót; Saxo Grammaticus; Snorra Edda; Völsunga saga]

Hanseatic League, or German Hansa, was a confederate association of cities and their merchants participating in the trade of regions extending inland from the Baltic and North seas. The Hanseatic League controlled much of the North European international commerce in the 13th, 14th, and early 15th centuries. It resembled a giant cartel, gradually evolving out of smaller associations formed in northern Germany during the 12th and 13th centuries.

The two principal hanses, or groupings of towns and merchants, were those in northwestern Germany and the Rhineland, led by Cologne, and those along the Baltic coast, led by Lübeck.

The Confederation of Cologne, named from the city in which it was convened, was formed in 1367 at a general meeting of delegates from the constituent organizations. The Articles of Agreement bestowed a formal institutional, and even a constitutional character, upon the league. Although occasionally distracted by internal disputes, the Confederation functioned as a major economic and political power in northern Europe for about a century and a half thereafter, waging war and signing treaties, conducting diplomatic missions, raising military and naval levies, and obtaining special trading rights for its merchants in four important port cities: London, Bruges, Novgorod, and Bergen. Commercial concessions granted to merchants from Hanseatic towns in each of the four ports included permanent quarters for their residence and business.

The towns belonging to the league lay, with few exceptions, in the regions known today as Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Estonia, and Latvia, with a preponderance in Germany, as the term "German Hansa" suggests.

From the 11th century, movements of significant numbers of persons from the Low Countries and northern Germany eastward into Slavic and other territories and extending finally as far as the Gulf of Finland resulted in the formation of town settlements and landowning and mercantile classes of German origin. The demographic expansion was paralleled by increasing participation of German ships and merchants in the commerce of the North and Baltic seas, as well as the acquisition of exclusive rights to import and export of valuable commodities and products, such as the case of the four foreign ports where Hanseatic Kontore, or trading establishments, exercised strong influence on the economies of the host countries and hinterlands.

In the 11th and 12th centuries, Hanseatic maritime expansion gradually transcended in volume the international commerce carried on by Scandinavians. By the 14th century, the Hanseatic towns and merchants had arrived at a paramount position. Economic ascendancy was accompanied by the military victory of the league over Valdemar Atterdag ('ever-day') of Denmark, resulting in the Peace of Stralsund (1370), whereby the Hansa gained freedom of passage through the Sound, control of the Scanian region with its lucrative herring fisheries, and other valuable concessions. This agreement was probably the high-water mark of Hanseatic power. In the 15th and 16th centuries, the Dutch were expanding their industry, commerce, and shipping, becoming ever more competitive with the Germans. The rise of nationalistic aspirations in Denmark, the union of this kingdom with Sweden and Norway in 1397, and the aggressive pursuit of Baltic trade by English and Dutch merchants and ship captains contributed to the gradual dissolution of the quasi-monopoly held by the Hansa. Tactics employed to protect their privileged position, such as embargoes, blockades, and favors to persons of high rank and influence, became less effective, and the position of the League more clearly defensive. Nature contributed to the League's difficulties with the sitting up of the port of Bruges and the migration of the great herring catch from the Sound to the North Sea. In 1494, Ivan III of Moscow, having suppressed the independence of Novgorod, closed the Kontore there and expelled the German merchant monopoly. In 1556, the Germans lost their privileges in England, and by then the Dutch were the main carriers in the Baltic. Lübeck, which had been the leading city almost throughout the history of the Hansa, fought an unsuccessful war with Denmark. Decline continued until the final session of the Hanseatic diet, to which only six cities sent delegates in 1669, whereas at its height more than 100 towns had been enrolled as members of the League.

For more than four centuries, the Hanseatic city groupings were a potent force in the political and economic life of northern Europe. They initiated an increasingly viable, and in a sense, modern alternative to the dominance of that region by feudal and manorial interests. They promoted, even if sometimes by stimulating local or national opposition, the gradual emergence of artisan and mercantile classes, industrial and bourgeois society, a permanent result surviving the demise of the Hansa itself. This development is reflected in the domain of law, where its social contribution may have been inestimable. A few basic law codes bearing the names of principal towns became the underlying law of a great many Hanseatic cities, furnishing in part the practical equivalent of a constitutional apparatus, particularly in the judicial sphere and in the implementation of policies dictated by the convergent interests of the rising mercantile classes.

The original focus and purpose of the Hanseatic compacts had been the protection of intercity trade from attacks on land or sea, provision for safe navigation, and securing the most favorable terms and conditions possible for their business operations. For three or more centuries, the Hansa were mostly responsible for the transport of commodities essential to the development of North European civilization: grain, furs, timber, wax, honey, pitch, tar, and potash from the East; copper and iron from Sweden; herring from Scania; salt from Lüneburg; Flemish and English cloth; and whale oil and cod from Norway.

Hanseatic history is intimately interwoven with virtually all the North European nations, perhaps, however, affecting Scandinavia the most. Bergen had one of the four great Kontore, and Stockholm had a large number of German merchants residing within its jurisdiction. With connections to Riga, Reval (Tallinn), and Novgorod, Visby on Gotland was, until its seizure by the Danes, the central entrepôt of the Baltic and the major emporium of Sweden. Tamsberg and Oslo in Norway and Ålborg in Denmark were local trading ports.
The great age of Hanseatic maritime and mercantile power lay between the decline of the world-roaming Scandinavian naval exploration, conquest, colonization, and trade, and the rise of the centralized monarchical state, which brought new political and economic vitality to the Nordic countries. In the interim, the Hansa played an important role in their trade and industries, handling much of the international traffic and transport, until it came to be regarded as an economically colonizing and exploiting organization, and its external commercial supremacy was progressively challenged and reduced by policies of the nationalistic Swedish and Danish monarchies.

Harald Gormsson (Bluetooth), a son of Gorm the Old, died on November 1, 985/8, having reigned fifty years, according to Haraldr hardiádi ("hard-ruler"). He was exceedingly skilled in arms, and victorious in his undertakings ... He was also exceedingly skilled in arms, and victorious in his undertakings ... He was also exceedingly skilled in arms, and victorious in his undertakings ... He was also exceedingly skilled in arms, and victorious in his undertakings ... He was also exceedingly skilled in arms, and victorious in his undertakings ... He was also exceedingly skilled in arms, and victorious in his undertakings ... He was also exceedingly skilled in arms, and victorious in his undertakings ... He was also exceedingly skilled in arms, and victorious in his undertakings ... He was also exceedingly skilled in arms, and victorious in his undertakings ... He was also exceedingly skilled in arms, and victorious in his undertakings ... He was also exceedingly skilled in arms, and victorious in his undertakings ...
In 1045, Haraldr returned to Norway and made a treaty to share the rule with Óláfr's son Magnús inn góði ("the good") until the latter's death without male issue, when Haraldr became sole ruler. The years of Haraldr's rule in Norway are characterized by his repeated campaigns against Sven Estridsen in Denmark, including the burning of Hedeby in 1049. The two finally reached a treaty in 1064. Haraldr's mobilization against Denmark was made possible by his consolidation of control over Norway itself, in what Icelandic authors, at least, perceived as a harsh and overbearing manner. He was also known for his influence over the Norwegian Church, building churches and handpicking bishops and other officials. According to the sources, he founded Oslo and introduced coins as a common means of payment, although other rulers had struck coins previously. His reputation, which has come down to us mainly through Icelandic literature, is generally favorable, since he is credited with saving Iceland from famine. But some of the *þættir* included in the *Morkinskinna* version of his saga depict his personality rather unsympathetically. His nickname reflects the harshness many authors attributed to him.

Haraldr had a claim to the English throne by virtue of a treaty between his nephew Magnús and Hardacnut, son of Knud (Cnut) the Great. Upon the death of Edward the Confessor in January 1066, Haraldr saw an opportunity to make that claim. He landed in Yorkshire, and was eventually defeated by Harold Godwinsson at the battle of Stamford Bridge. But the English army's desperate ride north, losses sustained at Stamford Bridge, and rapid return south weakened it greatly just before Harold Godwinsson had to meet William the Conqueror at the battle of Hastings. Haraldr harðráð's invasion was thus the determining factor in Harold Godwinsson's loss to William, which changed the political face of Europe.

Haraldr's death at Stamford Bridge is often taken as symbolizing the end of the Viking Age in Scandinavia. His was not the last major overseas Viking campaign, but it was the last, perhaps, with some chance of success, and the sagas of subsequent kings do not paint the same sort of pictures of Viking heroes.

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Haraldr the Hard-Ruler and His Poets.

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Haraldr hárfagr ("fair-hair") Hálfdanarson was the king credited with unifying Norway. According to his saga in Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla*, the fullest account of Haraldr's life although not to be taken as accurate in historical detail, he descended from the Yngling dynasty and came to the throne of his father's kingdom of Vestfold at the age of ten (scholars estimate the date of this accession at c. 860–880). Haraldr desired to become king over all of Norway, and swore a vow not to cut or comb his hair until he had achieved this goal, hence his nickname. The story is legendary, and it is doubtful anyone had a concept of Norway as a unity before his conquest of the different regions.

The *Heimskringla* version is based on a lost *Haralds saga*, as is *Fjatjarbók*. Haraldr's saga recounts a series of campaigns against various petty kings and his alliance with the powerful northern Earl Hákon Gjødgarðsson, as well as his conflicts with the Swedish king who was his rival for the eastern districts of Norway. At the battle of Hafsfjörð (Havsfjord), now dated between 885 and 890, Haraldr defeated a coalition of kings and earls and established his hegemony.

The political significance of Haraldr's unification of Norway was not as great as the Icelandic saga literature implies. Haraldr's hold upon northern and eastern Norway was never firm. Traditionally, the settlement of Iceland by Ingolfr Arnarson and others around 870 was attributed to their desire to escape from Haraldr's tyranny. However, the battle of Hafsfjörð cannot have been fought that early, and the settlers must have had motives other than fleeing the unified kingdom. Many leading Norwegians did flee after Hafsfjörð, to Shetland, Orkney, and the Hebrides, if not Iceland. According to Snorri, they continued to conduct raids upon Norway from there until Haraldr strengthened his navy and put a stop to this Viking activity. But scholars now doubt whether Haraldr actually made any expedition to Britain. Many of the original settlers of Iceland came not from Norway directly, but from the British Isles. To support the myth of Haraldr's tyranny as the cause of settlement, Icelanders probably invented an extension of Haraldr's power over the islands.

Snorri's account of Haraldr's establishment of a Norwegian state is most likely anachronistic. Haraldr was accused of having appropriated the *ódal* land of all the farmers, making them his tenants, and of imposing heavy taxation. The system of taxation and military organization Snorri describes, however, is probably a reflection of Snorri's own time. The accusations of tyranny may be due to an Icelandic tradition of hostility toward Haraldr, which allowed Icelanders to hearken back to a Golden Age of freedom. But society before Haraldr was dominated by chieftains, earls, or petty kings, and was not as egalitarian as Snorri indicates.

Haraldr's unified Norway did not survive his death (between 930 and 940), largely because he left so many sons, as many as twenty according to some sources. Snorri recounts his division of the realm among his sons and the sharing of his revenue with them before his death, assigning Eiríkr blóðax ("blood-axe") to be high...
king. While this account is not likely to be accurate, the sons certainly all believed themselves entitled to the dignity of king. Upon Harald's death, his sons sought power in various of the petty kingdoms their father had controlled. Any governmental reforms he made formed the end of his personal rule.


In a more recent contribution, Clover (1979) regards the lay as a parody of the sena-manndjafnaðr (insult-contest) genre. According to Clover's analysis, two important rules of the genre are violated. Óinn playfully violates the rule that sexual achievement is not a proper topic to boast about (see sts. 18, 20, 30). These departures so baffle dorr Þórr that he can only react with lame rejoinders, thus violating the rule that each of the contenders should be eloquent.

Although pursuing the line of argumentation that Clover initiated, Bax and Padmos (1983) arrive at strikingly different conclusions. Approaching the dialogue from the perspective of pragmatics and discourse analysis, they contend that Hárbarðsljóð embodies elaborate and valuable versions of both the sena genre (sts. 1-14) and the manndjafnaðr genre (sts. 15-46). In the remaining stanzas (47-60), Þórr, having lost the verbal duel, withdraws from the encounter. The sena part makes clear that both Þórr and Óinn are proficient flyters. The verbal interaction is tightly structured rather than a random collection of boasts and insults. At the end of the sena, the score is tied; the subsequent manndjafnaðr is then undertaken to settle the matter. This part of the duel consists of six marked rounds, each of which exposes the fixed basic pattern of interactional "moves" or speech actions. The match can be followed by the audience: the first two short rounds (sts. 15-18, 19-22) are won by Óinn. But the third exchange (sts. 23-28) is harder for Óinn to win, and in the fourth round (an even longer one, sts. 29-36), Þórr wins. Þórr quickly wins the fifth exchange, too (sts. 37-39), so that Óinn has nearly lost his chance. Yet in the long and final encounter (sts. 40-46), Óinn eventually manages to outwit his adversary (see Bax and Padmos 1983). In all, if one compares the exciting exchanges in Hárbarðsljóð to other manndjafnaðar, one is apt to conclude that the lay embodies the most developed version of this ancient verbal ritual.

Marcel Bax and Tineke Padmos

[See also: Codex Regius; Eddic Poetry; Sena—Mannaþáfr]

Harðar saga ("The Saga of Horðr") survives complete in only one medieval MS, AM 556a 4to, written late in the 15th century, where it is called Hólmverja saga ("The Saga of the Islet-Dwellers"), referring to the refuge in Hvalfjarðr in western Iceland used by the hero and his friends. There is also a single-leaf fragment of a shorter version of the beginning of the saga in AM 564a 4to, written about 1400, where the title is given as Harðar saga Grímkelssonar. There are about forty paper MSS written in the 17th century or later, all derived from AM 556a 4to. Four sets of ritmr, composed in the 18th and 19th centuries, are based on the saga.

In the form in which it survives in AM 556a 4to, the saga contains many episodes involving the supernatural and sensational, with fantastic Viking adventures (covering fifteen years of the hero's life), encounters with heathen deities, and crude folklore motifs that link the story with fomaldarsögur and romance. This version seems typical of the kind of saga written in the mid-14th century and later. The hero is a tragic figure, born into a hostile social environment, and doomed early in his life because of a cursed ring. He is led into misdeeds, outlawry, and eventual death by the folly and malice of friends and associates who are his moral inferiors; as well as being heroic and high-minded, Horðr is unaffected by magically induced illusions. One of the more memorable episodes is the heroic escape of his wife, Helga, daughter of an earl in Gautland, from the islet after her husband's death, by swimming across the fjord with their two young sons.

Harðar saga is one of three Icelandic outlaw sagas, but unlike Grettir and Gtúsi, the heroes of the other two, Horðr is not forced to endure loneliness and solitude in his outlawry. He lives with his wife, and together with his foster-brother Geirr, becomes leader of a band of outlaws (up to 180 people) who defy authority and set up an alternative society with its own rules and discipline, which lasts for three years.

Harðar saga is one of the few Islendingasögur located (except for the Viking adventures abroad) in southwestern Iceland. The outline of the story is probably historical, though many of the adventures are obviously not. Horðr's death must have taken place about 989, so that the story takes place entirely in heathen times. Reference is made to an otherwise-unknown *Álfgeirs páttr* as a source.

The language confirms that the version of the saga in AM 556a 4to was not written before the 14th century, and the verses (some of which, in eddic meter, are attributed to supernatural characters) are clearly no older than the prose. But since the saga is mentioned in Sturla's version of Landnámabók (ca. 1280), a version of it may have existed in the 13th century. The judgment on Horðr by Styrmir Kársén (d. 1245) quoted at the end of the saga in AM 556a 4to has led some scholars to assume that the earlier version, the characteristics of which are impossible to reconstruct, was composed by Styrmir, though such references to statements by the learned men of the 12th and 13th centuries are not necessarily reliable attributions of authorship. The fragment in AM 564a 4to, which shows clear signs of having been shortened, does not include the verses in the corresponding part of AM 556a 4to; but it is uncertain whether the fragment, too, is based on the 14th-century version of the saga, or whether it is closer to the lost earlier version.


Anthony Faulkes

[See also: Fornaldarsögur, Islendingabók, Islendingasögur, Landnámabók, Lausavísur, Outlaw Sagas, Outlawry, Ritmr]

Harmsöl see Gamli kanóki

Harpestræng, Henrik. A large body of medical work has been preserved from the Danish doctor Master Henrik Harpestræng, who died April 2, 1244, as a canon in Roskilde and physician-in-ordinary of King Erik Ploverpenning ("plow-penny"). Two Latin works by a certain Henricus Dacus, presumably the same man, are known: a book about laxatives, De simplicibus medicinis laxativis, and a book about herbs, Liber herbarum, extant in several MSS from the 15th century.

His other works are written in older Middle Danish, according to the late MS Thott 710 4to (A, 1450), by the author's own efforts: "Here a medical book in Danish is begun, the one that Master Henrik Harpestræng composed from his great mastery. This is the prologue to Harpestræng's best-known work, Urtebogen ("The Book of Herbs"), which is known from late MSS and two MSS from around 1300. In one of these MSS (NkS 66 8vo by Brother Knud Juul, attorney of the monastery of Sore), two books about herbs are followed by a Stenbog ("Book of Stones") about the curative properties of gemstones, and by a Kogebog ("Cookbook"), the oldest one with "French cuisine." The Urtebog is translated from a Latin poem in hexameters written under the French pseudonym Macer, De viribus herbarum (ca. 1090), and from Constantinus Africanus's De gradibus liber, a major work from the Salerno school (1050).

An astrological-prognostic work, which also contains the doctor's instructions for the bloodletting of King Erik Ploverpenning,
Harpestreng's works reveal him as a pupil of the international medical school in Salerno, Italy, which pursued Greek traditions (e.g., Galen, 2nd century A.D.) and Arabic ones (e.g., Avicenna's Canon, 1030). This antique system was based on a theory that the body was influenced by four cardinal liquids or humors, corresponding to the four elements and temperaments: air corresponding to blood (sanguis); fire to red or yellow gall (cholea rubra); soil to black gall (melancholia); and water to phlegm (flegma). Illnesses were caused by a lack of balance among these liquids, and medicine prescribed natural plants and minerals to restore the balance by a contrasting principle. Phlegm has, for example, the attributes of cold and moistness, and one gets pains if there is too much of it in the stomach. Harpestreng therefore suggests peas are suitable for stomach pains, because the attributes of peas are dryness and warmth like the yellow gall: "Pea is dry and warm; boiled and eaten it causes a good digestion and warms the stomach, but be careful not to eat it if you have an ulcer or abscess, because it increases the pain, and do not eat it during bloodletting nor when you suffer from pains in your eyes, because it brings about and increases warmth and infection and causes bad stools and does not allow the unclean liquid to flow from one's eyes" (from Liber herbarum).


Sigurd Kverndrup

Háttalykill ("Clavis metrica," or "Key to Meters") usually refers to the first Old Norse metrical treatise in verse. According to Orkneyinga saga (ch. 81), the poem was written around 1142 by Earl Rognvaldr Kali Kolsson of the Orkneys in collaboration with his retainer, the Icelandic skald Hallr Þórarinnesson breslæmi ("broad-belly"). Háttalykill is found in two 17th-century paper MSS, Stock. Papp. 8vo no. 25 and Upp. R 683, both written by Jón Runugam. Whereas R 683 appears to be a later clean copy, Papp. 8vo no. 25 was apparently copied directly from an older, lost original.

Háttalykill consists of forty-one double stanzas. Each pair of stanzas exemplifies a certain meter or formal peculiarity, such as the number of syllables in the line, the placement and quality of internal rhymes and end-rhymes, clause arrangement within a stanza, and variation in poetic language. The original version of Háttalykill allegedly used five stanzas to illustrate each hátt ("meter"), but the poem was considered too long and was reduced to its present form (Orkneyinga saga, ch. 81). Both the metrical variations and the names for the different meters in Háttalykill correspond to a great extent to those given by Snorri Sturluson in his Háttatal, composed around 1220, and Snorri was undoubtedly familiar with Rognvaldr's work. The exemplifying stanzas in Háttalykill are not as systematically arranged as those in Háttatal, and, unlike Snorri, Rognvaldr does not provide an explanatory prose commentary.

In the opening stanzas of Háttalykill, the poet states his intention to tell "the tales of ancient heroes." The first thirty double stanzas describe the lives of champions from heroic lays and sagas. The rest of the poem is devoted to the military exploits of the kings of Denmark and Norway (from Haraldr hafsfagr ["fair-hair"] Hålfdanarson to Magnus berfoettr ["bare-leg"] Olafsson).

Háttalykill was written within the continental tradition of Latin claves metricae. During the 15th and 16th centuries, such verse keys became increasingly popular in Iceland, and from that period we find such poems as Háttalykill by Loptr riki ("the rich"), Martyrallis by Jón Pálsson Martuskald ("Maria-skald"), Háttalykill by Hallur Magnússon, and Háttalykill by Póður Magnússon at Strúgjú.


Kari Ellen Gade

[See also: Bjarni Kolbeinsson; Orkneyinga saga; Snorra Edda]
Hauksbók ("Haukr's Book") designates a codex that Árni Magnússon possessed as a whole, which was later divided into three parts: AM 371 4to (now in the Árni Magnússon Institute in Iceland), and AM 544 4to and AM 675 4to (both in the Arnamagnæan Institute in Copenhagen). The book is named after Haukr Erlendsson, who identified himself on a leaf in AM 371 4to, which was lost in the 17th century. All three parts of the book are defective, but especially AM 371 4to; of the original Hauksbók, which probably consisted of at least 210 leaves, 141 leaves are preserved.

Haukr Erlendsson was an Icelander by origin, and he is first mentioned in 1294 as lawman in Iceland. A few years later, he moved to Norway, where he served as lawman, and where he lived until his death in 1334. Two charters in which Haukr is mentioned, written in 1302 and 1310, are in the same hand as a considerable portion of Hauksbók. This hand is undoubtedly his own, the oldest known hand of an identified Icelander.

AM 371 4to is written entirely in Haukr’s hand; in AM 544 4to, fols. 22–107, his hand alternates with the handwriting of Icelandic scribes, who must have been in his service. Judging from minor palaeographic variations between the above-mentioned charters, it appears likely that AM 371 4to, as well as AM 544 4to, fols. 22–59 and 69–107, were written in this period, possibly 1306–1308, when Haukr was on a mission to Iceland, and AM 544 4to, fols. 60–68, around or after 1310.

Those parts of the codex that Haukr either wrote himself or had written for him contain mainly three kinds of texts: first, historical or semihistorical works; second, mathematical treatises; third, philosophical or theological dialogues, translated from the Latin. Thus, AM 371 4to contains Haukr’s copy of two texts on the history of Iceland, Landnámabók and Kristiní saga. In AM 544 4to, Haukr copied, in the first place, translations of two semihistorical works, Tryjumanna saga (fols. 22–33; a compilation of translations of Dares Phrygius’s De exidio Troiae; Ilías latina, and other sources) and Breita sogur (fols. 36–53; a translation and adaptation of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia regum Britanniae) including also Merlinusapæa ("Prophecy of Merlin") in verse translation attributed to the Benedictine brother Gunnlaugr Leifsson of Pingeyrar (d. 1219).

Sources indicate that around the year 1600 the MS was in the possession of a prosperous farmer in the Western Fjords, and in the first half of the 17th century it is known to have been used by historians working in the spirit of Renaissance humanism on the history of Greenland and Iceland, notably the two autodidacts Jón Guðmundsson læðri ("the learned") and Björn Jónsson of Skárðs. In the 1650s, the MS collector and humanist Bishop Brynjulfur Sveinsson of Skálholt obtained AM 544 4to and had a copy of AM 371 4to made for himself, and Árni Magnússon obtained the second (and probably also the third) part of the MS in the 1690s from his heirs. The first part, or what remained of it, he obtained a little later, in the beginning of the 18th century.

In contrast to the practice most frequently encountered in medieval Icelandic MSS, in which works were collected in a book according to subject matter, Hauksbók from its inception was an entire private library, which Haukr, with assistance, wrote for himself. The Hauksbók version of Landnámabók is his own expanded version of this work, and research has shown that Haukr personally edited several of the other texts he wrote as well and that he usually condensed them. This procedure gives many of the texts in Hauksbók a special standing within the textual tradition.


Hávamál ("The Speech of Háv [Óinn]"), is an anonymous poem of information consisting principally of didactic and gnomic matter, largely of a secular character, although material relating to pagan belief, especially the cult of Óinn, appears in its latter part. It survives in the principal MS of the eddic poems, the Codex Regius (ca. 1270). The first strophe is also found near the beginning of Snorri’s Prose Edda (ca. 1220), and the second half of stanza 84 is quoted as a kvæðir ("ditty") in Fóstbræðra saga, in Hnings Jattr Ásklässonar; Landnavabök; Merlunsspat; Trjújumanna saga; Vinland Sagas; Vôluspá)

Hauðstlæng see bjöðöflr of Hvin

Hávamál comprises 164 strophes, mostly in ljóðaháttr meter, but málaháttr appears sporadically (e.g., 73, 85–87, 144). The end of stanza 145 is in fornyrðislag, and there are strophes not in any recognizable meter (80, 142–143). This disjointedness extends to the poem’s content; it is plainly not a unified composition, but the compilation of an "editor," perhaps no earlier than the 13th century, subsuming a number of distinct poems or strophe-sequences, some evidently disrupted in oral transmission. Six such sequences can be distinguished, although the boundaries are not always clear, and some strophes seem to fall outside the divisions altogether.

(a) The Gnomic Poem, as stanzas 1–77 (or 79) may be called, opens with advice to a traveler in a strange house, enjoining caution, alertness, and sobriety, and depreciating heedless loquacity, glibness, and unsociability, and so on. After stanza 35, it passes to more varied advice, counseling friendship and the exchange of gifts, culminating in the famous lines: "caste die, kin die, one dies oneself, renown alone is eternal." The tone is mundane and rationalistic, with no reference to cult or superstition. Fighting and weaponry are barely mentioned, feuds and the duty of vengeance also ignored.

(b) In stanzas 95–102, a first-person speaker, identified in 98 as Óinn, tells how he was deceived in love by Billings maer, the wife (or daughter) of Billings, a tale not otherwise known.

(c) Stanzas 104–10, to which 103 can be seen as an introduction, complement the preceding sequence and are probably by the same poet. Here, Óinn tells how he seduced and then abandoned a woman, Gunnlöð, to steal the sacred mead of poetry from her giant father, Suttungi (a tale already alluded to in stanzas 13–14, and told fully in Snorri’s Prose Edda).

(d) Loddfáfnismál. In stanza 111, the poet proclaims that he has heard runes and counsels, in the hall of Hávi, which he will now pass on. There follow twenty-six strophes (112–137), mostly comprising a four-line formula in which Loddfáfnir (unknown outside Hávamál) is enjoined to heed advice, followed by three or more lines in which the advice is stated. This advice is often in the imperative, not used in the Gnomic Poem, but has much the same general character, differing in that it includes references to sexual relations, magic, and superstition. In places (128, 130, 133), the advice seems less self-interested than in the Gnomic Poem, perhaps through Christian influence, though there is nothing unambiguously Christian in the poem.

(e) Rúnatal. Stanzas 138–145 deal obscurely and incompletely with runes, ritual, and myth. Only the first four strophes form a clear sequence: here, Óinn tells how, as he hung nine days on a "windy tree," pierced with a spear and sacrificed to himself, he "took up" runes, then grew and flourished. This account is not paralleled as such, but its various elements all have roots in Norse tradition. It is needless to invoke influence from the Crucifixion. The remaining four strophes are very miscellaneous, not least metrically, and are plainly a jumble of fragments.

(f) Ljóðatal. This numbered catalogue (146–163), the most clearly demarcated sequence in Hávamál, lists eighteen spells, of which the speaker claims sole knowledge (146) and describes what function each serves, but the spells themselves are not quoted. The speaker is not named, but Snorri was doubtless right, in using this sequence in Ynglinga saga (chs. 6 and 7), to identify him as Öinn.

The final strophe (164) may well have been composed by the compiler of the existing text of Hávamál. When he worked is uncertain; the structure of the unified text seems to be reflected in Óðarljóð, itself, however, of uncertain date, and in Snorri’s Gylfaginning (ca. 1220).


D. A. H. Evans
Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings ("The Saga of Hávarðr of Ísafjörður"), one of the shorter íslendingasögur, tells the story of Hávarðr halti ("the lame") of Ísafjörður and his vengeance on Porbjørn Pjöreksson, who killed Hávarðr’s son, Óláf, for no good reason. At the time of Óláfr’s death, Hávarðr is old and lame, and his two demands for compensation bring only insults from Porbjørn. His wife, Bjargsyn, then goes to her brothers and solicits aid from her nephews. At that point, Hávarðr, suddenly imbued with the vigor of a young man, sets off with his nephews to kill Porbjørn. Porbjørn is about to kill Hávarðr with a rock, when the latter remembers hearing about the new religion preached by Óláfr Tryggvason and vows to be baptized. Porbjørn then slips and falls, and Hávarðr kills him. To safeguard himself against reprisals, Hávarðr plans to kill Porbjørn’s brother, Ljótr, with the help of Steinþór of Eyrr and his brother-in-law, Atli. Once Ljótr and his followers are dead, Hávarðr and Bjargsyn sail to Norway and are baptized by Óláf Tryggvason.

The saga is preserved in paper MSS, the oldest and best of which (AM 160 fol. and AM 502 4to) date from the 17th century. These MSS are all believed to be copies of an earlier version, tentatively dated 1330. This version appears to be the reworking of an older lost saga, referred to in Landnámabók as the "saga þeira Þurbjarnar ok Hávarðar ins hálta" ("saga of Porbjorn and Hávarðr the lame," Þurlogbók, ch. 117, Hauksbók, ch. 89) and as the "saga Ísfirðinga" ("saga of the people of Ísafjörður," Þurlogbók, ch. 150, Hauksbók, ch. 121).

Stylistic features reminiscent of the fomaldarsögur add weight to the assumption that the extant Hávarðar saga is a late composition. Some of the characters are a little unconvincing. Hávarðr is suddenly transformed from a lame and helpless old man to a doughty warrior capable of great swimming feats. Atli changes from a miser to a brave and generous fighter. Óláf is completely blameless when he is killed, whereas Porbjørn appears to have no redeeming features. Óláf’s fight with the ghost is gratuitous adornment, and the author has sacrificed realism for humor when he sends the sorrowing Hávarðr to his bed for a year in three consecutive years. Christian influence can be seen in Hávarðr’s vow to accept the faith and in his defeat of Porbjørn, apparently by divine intervention.

The version of Hávarðar saga that has come down to us contains certain inaccuracies. The author has introduced anachronistic elements and confused Earl Hákó nephew Sigurdarson (d. 995) and Óláf Tryggvason (d. 1000) with Hákó Einiríssson (deposed 1014) and St. Óláf (d. 1030). Geographical errors suggest that the author was not familiar with the Western Fjords. Discrepancies between Hávarðar saga and Landnámabók suggest that the author was working from memory and had neither the earlier lost saga nor Landnámabók in front of him. One of the most notable discrepancies appears with regard to the character Ljótr. Landnámabók has one person of this name, Ljótr inn spak ("the wise") of Ingalassandi. Hávarðar saga divides this role between Gestr inn spak ("the wise"), Hólmgungo-Ljótr ("holm-going") of Raudásandr, and Ljótr Pjöreksson.

There are also problems with the verses. Several do not fit in with the surrounding text. In one case, a superflohy tale of a thrall and an untied shoe is dragged in to give a vís a raison d'être. Another vís was originally the work of a different poet, also nicknamed "the lame," and yet another is very similar to a stanza found in three other sagas.

The lateness and unreliability of Hávarðar saga may explain why critics have paid little attention to it.


Bernadine McCreesh

Héctors saga ok kappa hans see Eccors saga ok kappa hans

Hedeby. The Viking Age market, trading place, and proto-urban settlement of Hedeby, also called "Haithabu" after an Old Danish runic inscription, is situated at the inner part of the Schlei fjord, south and opposite the medieval town Schleswig in the northeastern part of Schleswig-Holstein, Germany, about 40 km. south of the present Danish–German border, and 40 km. southwest of the Baltic Sea (Fig. 38). Historical sources confirm the existence of the settlement between the year 808 (dislocation of Slavonic merchants from Reric to Hedeby under the rule of the Danish king Godfred) and 1066 (plundering of Hedeby by Slavonic people) as a trading and proto-urban center under the control of the Danish kingdom in the 9th, 10th, and 11th centuries, and of the German Empire in the 10th century. A successive series of dendrochronological dates covers the period between 811 and 1020; 783 is the oldest (isolated) dendrochronological date. The archaeological material can be fixed between the latter part of the 8th century and the 11th–12th centuries; the oldest coins belong to the late 8th–early 9th centuries (sceattas, coins of the older Carolingian type), the youngest to the years 1042–1066 (Edward the Confessor, minted at Lincoln).

A visible and outstanding monument of the former settlement (Fig. 39) is the semicircular wall (length 1,300 m., height 5.10 m.), which surrounded the main settlement area. The wall was connected with the defense work of Danevirke. In 1897 and 1900, Sophus Müller identified the walled settlement with the historically known Hedeby. From 1900 to 1980, excavations took place in several parts of the main settlement and outside the semicircular wall. The excavations from 1930 to 1939 under the direction of Herbert Jankuhn and from 1962 to 1968 and 1979 to 1980 under the direction of Kurt Schiebtzel, were especially successful; they were supplemented by field surveys. About 6 percent of the walled settlement area has been investigated by large-scale and test excavations.

The investigations yield a complex picture of the site. Settlement activity starts in the 8th century south of the semicircular wall (so-called "South-settlement" and "South-cemetery"). In the 9th century, probably three settlements with adjacent cemeteries existed in the south, the main area in the north. The main settlement area is well documented by timber structures and finds dating from the 9th century to the 11th-12th centuries. A harbor with several causeways and a semicircular palisade came to light, resembling the one known at Dorestad, the Netherlands. In the late 10th century, the main area was surrounded by a mighty wall. Unfortunately, we do not know the exact date of the walled area, to which several causeways and a semicircular palisade came to light, resembling the one known at Dorestad, the Netherlands. In the late 10th century, the main area was surrounded by a mighty wall. Unfortunately, we do not know the exact date of the walled area, to which belongs a cemetery on a hill ("Hochburg") north of the main settlement.

In moist layers of the main settlement, several parts of timber constructions were conserved, for example, buildings, wells, enclosures, gates, and facing of the riverside. The one-aisled houses of nonagrarian type (3x3 m. to 7x17.5 m.) built using several techniques (e.g., stave construction), are often divided into several rooms for dwelling, working, and sometimes for cattle. In the early "South-settlement," pithuts of South Scandinavian type were found. The structure of the main settlement is regular and obviously planned, probably by the royal administration. The six cemeteries (one in the south, three in the main settlement area, two in the north) reflect a stratified and polythetic society of Danish, Scandinavian, Saxon, Frisian, Frankish, and Slavonic origin, partly Christian, partly heathen. Cremation and inhumation burials are found, sometimes under low mounds and surrounded by ditches. Only a few burials are equipped with grave goods; a richer inventory of grave goods is found in several chamber graves and the so-called "boat-chamber-grave," which may be the burial of a Danish king from about 900. Some single Viking Age graves are situated outside the settlement proper and gravefield complex, but presumably belong to Hedeby, as do the runestones in the neighborhood of Hedeby.

The documentation of the excavations and finds (e.g., the shipwreck from the harbor) is exhibited in the Wikinger Museum Haithabu, opened in 1985 near the historical site.


Michael Müller-Wille

[See also: Birka; Danevirke; Germany; Norse in; Kaupang; Trade]

Heidarviga saga ("The Story of the Moor Killings"), named for a skirmish in 1014 between men from the Hónavatn and Borgarfjörður districts, is probably the oldest extant Íslendingasaga. Evidence for its age are its awkward style and composition and its influence on later saga literature. The first fifteen chapters, which were destroyed in the fire of 1728 in Copenhagen, were reconstructed from notes and memory by Jón Ólafsson. The saga contains seventeen skaldic stanzas.

Viga-Syrr ("killer Syrr") slays thirty-three men without reparation, including two berserks, whom he suffocates in a sauna (the episode occurs virtually unchanged in Eyrbyggja saga). Syrr is slain by Gesr, the young son of his last victim, whom he has offered a sick lamb in requital. Syrr's son tries three times to kill Gesr, but each time has his own life saved by the boy.

Following missions of revenge and counterrevenge, Hallr Guðmundarson is slain instead of an intended victim. Hallr's brother Barði three times seeks a peaceful settlement at the Alþingi. Rebuffed the third time with an insult, he prepares an excursion to Borgarfjörður according to detailed instructions from his fosterfather, who correctly predicts that these instructions will not be properly executed. Barði's mother, who has cruelly goaded her sons to vengeance, intends to accompany them, but they cut her saddle girth so that she tumbles into a creek. (A less farcical version of this incitement-to-revenge episode is used by the author of Laxdœla saga.)

Since Barði is so deliberate in carrying out his plans, his enemies in Borgarfjörður more and more frequently ask each other the caustic question: "Don't you think Barði will come?" At the same time, however, they experience dreams and other foreboding omens. Even as Barði and his men approach, Gisli, one of the three brothers mowing the hay, asks this question. Barði kills him.
and his brothers escape. As Gisli’s father, Porgaust, asks the scornful question, one of his sons casts Gisli’s body before his feet with the answer: “Your son Gisli found out that he has come.”

Bardó now wants to withdraw to the defensive position recommended by his foster-father, but his companions insist on eating a large leisurely breakfast. Consequently, they have to defend themselves from an inferior site. After beating off three attacks, they retreat before an overwhelming force. They have lost four men and their opponents nine. During the litigation, Eiðr Skeggjason, who has lost both his sons, urges the litigants to avoid abusive language. Eiðr is more concerned about restoring peace than about recompense for his loss. This scene is the model for the imperfect in Iceland. He is eventually killed after serving honorably in the emperor’s bodyguard in Constantinople.


Paul Schäch

[See also: Eyrbyggja saga, Íslendingasögur, Lausavísur, Laxdela saga; Njáls saga]

Heilagr manna sögur see Saints’ Lives

Heimskringla (“The Circle of the World”) comprises a Prologue and sixteen sagas of the kings of Norway. The first, Ynglinga saga, follows the rulers of Sweden and Norway from their divine origins to the half-light of 9th-century history, culminating in the reign of Hálfdan svarti (the black”) Guðrøarson. The remainder trace the struggles of subsequent kings to establish a unified Norwegian realm and to maintain it against rivals at home and abroad. The work divides naturally into three parts: the story of the kings preceding Óláf Haraldsson inn helgi (“the saint”), the saga of Óláf helgi, and the history of the succeeding kings down to Magnús Erlingsson in 1177.

The work owes its fame as a masterpiece of medieval historiography to its grand scale, and to the artistry with which individual episodes are related and the larger whole integrated by recurrent themes and patterns of causation. The individual sagas vary greatly in length, in density of detail, and in more literary features, such as structure and use of direct speech. The longest part is Ólafs saga helga, which is clearly an adaptation of the so-called “Separate Saga.” It is generally regarded as the greatest of all konungassögur for its dramatically realized episodes and its full and coherent treatment of character (especially Óláf’s), motivation, and theme.

Heimskringla, like the Separate Ólafs saga helga, is attributed with some certainty to Snorri Sturluson (d. 1241). Although no existing medieval MS names him as author, it is known, from Sturlunga saga, that Snorri compiled sogubókr, “saga books,” or possibly “story books” or “history books.” The Oddaverja annal, which is 16th-century, but based on earlier materials, also states, for the year 1241, that Snorri “compiled the Edda and many other learned books, Icelandic sagas” (samsetti Eddu ok margar aðrar friðlæðinnir, Íslenskar sögur). More specifically, several other works, including Orkneyinga saga and the sagas of Ólfr Tryggvason in Bergbók and Flateyjarbók, cite Snorri as an authority for details of early Norwegian history. Since the writers of these works clearly knew at least some of the Heimskringla sagas, it is reasonable to count these citations among the evidence for Snorri’s authorship. Further, two 16th-century translators of the work, Laurens Hansson and Peder Clausen Fris, attribute the work to Snorri, and it has been argued that they based their claim on at least one medieval reference, now lost. As for more circumstantial evidence, Snorri twice spent two years in Norway, where he had important dealings with the Norwegian monarchy, and in Västergötland, Sweden. He was otherwise very well placed, materially and intellectually, to undertake such a vast task as the writing of Heimskringla. There are also similarities of content, style, and approach between Heimskringla and Snorra Edda.

Snorri’s first stay in mainland Scandinavia was in 1218–1220; his second, 1237–1239, was too late to allow for the composing of Heimskringla on his return. The mention of saga books in Sturlunga saga refers to a period beginning in summer 1230, so that the time of composition is plausibly set in the 1220s or early 1230s. The Separate Ólafs saga helga was probably the first of Snorri’s konungassögur to be written.

Although the archetype and several medieval copies of Heimskringla are now lost, the work was evidently copied and circulated with more enthusiasm than any other konungassögur, with the exception of Snorri’s own Separate Ólafs saga helga. Only a single leaf survives from Kríngla, which is believed to be the oldest known MS (pre-1270) and the closest to Snorri’s original. But its text is preserved complete in good transcripts, especially AM 35, 36, and 63 fol., by Ægir Jónsson, and these transcripts are used as the main MS for most printed editions. From the opening words of Kríngla, “Kringla heimsins” (“the circle of the world”), the MS takes its name; Heimskringla itself was christened at least as early as the 17th century. Insofar as the medieval MSS suggest titles, they are less fixed and less flamboyant, in the style Konunga bók, Ævi, Sugur, or Bók Nóregskonunga.

All the other principal MSS of Heimskringla are more or less incomplete, and all date from the 14th century, usually early in the century. AM 39 fol. and AM 45 fol. (Codex Frisianus or Fråsboù) are vellums that, on the basis of their texts, are grouped with Kríngla. The other main branch of the MS tradition, perhaps stemming from an exemplar that found its way to Norway, is the Jófraskínna group. The main representatives of this branch are the vellum AM 47 fol. (Eirspennir) and AM 42 fol., a paper copy of the now-lost Gullaskína, both of which contain only the third part of Heimskringla, and Jófraskína itself, which is now chiefly represented by the paper copies AM 37 fol. and 38 fol. There are further vellum and paper MSS, still more fragmentary.

The text of Heimskringla is not especially problematic. Disagreements among the MSS are mainly of a predictable and minor kind, and where there is a striking difference in content, there is usually little difficulty in establishing the original text. Codex Frisianus and some members of the Jófraskína group, for in-
stance, contain some highly fabulous material that is not in character with the rest of Heimskringla, and that has apparently been interpolated from Mortkinnasna by later scribes. There is reasonable, though not complete, agreement among MSS about where individual sagas and chapters begin and end. The titles for these parts vary considerably among the MSS, but those of Krítnula (as preserved in the transcript Stock. Papp. fol. no. 18.) are often supported by other MSS and may be very old, even Snorri's own.

Snorri's first visit to mainland Scandinavia afforded him the chance to gather fresh oral materials for his work, and scholars have detected local traditions from Norway (especially the Trendelag, Hålogaland, and Tønsberg) and from Sweden in his writing. He must also have learned much from some of his Icelandic contemporaries, notably his foster-father, Jón Loftsson, who had witnessed the coronation of Magnús Erlingsson in 1163/4. His most important sources were, however, skaldic verse and prose works, mainly Icelandic rather than Norwegian, on historical subjects.

Snorri's respect for the skalds as authorities and his realization of their limitations are voiced explicitly in the Prologue to Heimskringla, and he particularly values the work of such poets as Sighvatri Póðarson and Pórarinn loftunga ('praise-tongue') who were present at some of the climactic events in Norwegian history. Accordingly, Snorri will often alter the details of events that he found in prose sources, bringing them into line with the skaldic evidence. He quotes around 600 verses from over seventy skalds, mainly in ones or twos, but sometimes in longer sequences, and elsewhere he uses more without directly quoting them. The verses are drawn mostly from formal panegyrics on rulers, both the dǫnþ type containing refrains and the somewhat less prestigious ðlokkr type. Snorri's particular choices are often resourceful, not always suggested by his sources. In some parts of Heimskringla, skaldic verse is Snorri's principal, perhaps even his only, source; elsewhere, the main effect of the verse is to add graphic detail and perhaps more subjective comment, especially laudatory flourishes, to the normally detached prose narrative.

The prose sources used by Snorri rarely or never survive in exactly the form known to him, and Snorri, with a lack of helpfulness he shares with many medieval authors, gives extremely scant information about them. He refers in the Prologue to konunga aevi ('lives of kings') by Ari Porgilsson, now lost. In Haraldsena saga (ch. 11), he refers to the *Hryggjarstykkj by Eiríkr Oddsson, which covered the period 1130–1139 or later, and is also now lost but can be partially reconstructed. He praises both works highly for being based on reliable, often firsthand accounts, but they are in fact used relatively little in Heimskringla. Snorri's other references to sources consist only of passing mentions of *Skjeldunga saga, *Jarlja saga / sogur (an early version of Orkneyinga saga), Saga Knits ins gamla (a saga of the Danish Knud [Cnut] the Great), and a work written at King Sverrir's behest, presumably Sverris saga itself. Despite its difficulties, however, the study of what remains of Snorri's sources has been a major preoccupation of Heimskringla scholars, invaluable in revealing both Snorri's tremendous indebtedness to written tradition and the distinctive qualities of his kings' sagas.

Most of the prose sources used by Snorri are later than Ari Porgilsson's and Eiríkr Oddson's writings, and were composed around the end of the 12th century and the beginning of the 13th. They divide broadly into two sorts: historical surveys spanning the reigns of several Norwegian kings or other Scandinavian rulers, and lives of individual kings. The most important surveys are Mortkinnasna in an older version, Fagrskinna, the Norwegian Ágrip af Íorðes konunga sogum, Orkneyinga saga, *Skjoldunga saga, and *Hlaðjarla saga, a now-lost saga of the early of Hlaðir (Lade, near Trondheim). Among the lives of individual kings, those of Óláf Tryggvason (r. 995–1000) by Oddr Snorsson and of St. Óláf Haraldsson (r. 1015–1030) by Snorri's friend Sýmirn Károson, as well as something approximating to the Legendary Saga of St. Óláf, have a special place. How many other early sagas of individual rulers existed before Snorri's time is unknown, but fragments survive from one saga about the 11th-century earl Hákon Ívarson. Other works known to Snorri were genealogical lists, miracle tales about St. Óláf, þættir, Faeryinga saga, and probably versions of Jømsvíkinga saga and Hallrólfr saga.

Although some sources, notably Fagrskinna and Ágrip, span most of the period covered by Heimskringla, the nature of the sources varies greatly from saga to saga. Ynglinga saga was probably composed from only exiguous preexisting materials, and much deduction and reconstruction was needed. In Óláf's saga Tryggvasonar, by contrast, Snorri's problem was to make sense of a wealth of traditions that were frequently fanciful or mutually discrepant. For the last few sagas of Heimskringla, he had the relatively full accounts of Mortkinnasna and *Hryggjarstykkj, and this fact may account for the impression of many readers that this part of the work is less clearly stamped as Snorri's own.

Snorri's method in adapting particular passages from his sources varies enormously. At times, he takes over a passage with little alteration, for example, the Snorri-k runar episode in Haralds saga háfragra (ch. 25), transcribed from Ágrip, or some of the miracle accounts in the third part of Heimskringla, whose content and persuasive "clerical" style closely echo the Old Norwegian Homily Book and the Legendary Saga of St. Óláf. Many of the vivid details and trenchant speeches in such scenes as the battles at Hjørungavág (Liavág) or Svolór (Svold; Óláf's saga Tryggvasonar, chs. 35–42 and 97–112), Stiklastadir (Stiklestad; Óláf's saga helga, chs. 205–235), or Stamford Bridge (Stanfóðabryggur; Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar, chs. 87–94) derive from earlier accounts, although Snorri's version often surpasses theirs in economy and vigor. At other times, he radically departs from his sources in terms of content or presentation. He may, for instance, suppress details or whole episodes that he thinks far-fetched, add explanatory matter or conflate disparate accounts of the same events, while the inherited presentation of events may be changed by streamlining, dramatization, or rationalization. Further, several of the most celebrated episodes and characters in Heimskringla are unique to the work, among them the expulsion of Harald Gormsson's shape-shifting envoy by the guardian creatures of Iceland (Óláf's saga helga, ch. 33), Þórarin Neðjólfsson and his ugly feet (Óláf's saga helga, ch. 85), or Einarr Eyjólfsson and his rousing speech against Norwegian encroachment on Iceland (Óláf's saga helga, ch. 125).

Because Heimskringla is concerned with major events of the past, it is fair to ask in what sense it may be regarded as history or historiography. Seen as a repository of historical tradition rather than historical fact, and as an unusually coherent 13th-century Icelandic view of the Norwegian past, it is probably the best of its kind. But judged by modern standards, it falls short. Its preoccupation with the deeds of great men, with political, rather than social and economic history, now appears old-fashioned, as do its use of dramatic reconstruction alongside sober narrative to present historical matters and its incorporation of anecdotes that may be
revealing of character and motive, but otherwise (to modern taste) trivial. Snorri's grasp of causation is fine, and his writing, for its day, marked by plausibility and rationality; yet the occasional appearance of berserks, sorcerers, and soothsayers, not to mention heathen gods, ghosts, and monsters, is disconcerting to the modern eye.

Moreover, despite the methodological good intentions declared in the Prologue, the factual core of Snorri's work can be no better than its sources, and these sources are far from ideal. *Heimskringla* rests not on the kind of raw and rigorously controlled data, documentary, archaeological, and onomastic, favored by modern historians, but mainly on evidence that, like *Heimskringla* itself, has already been highly processed into narrative, interpretative historiography. Where Snorri does make learned references to archaeological remains, especially burial sites, or to etymologies of place-names or personal names, they do not always stand up to scrutiny. His discriminating use of skaldic verse is reassuring, but the skalds, as well as being vague and hyperbolical, can sometimes make errors, as when Sighvatr Þorðarson claims that there was an eclipse at the time of Olaf Haraldsson's fall at Stiklaður.

Since the Icelandic traditions about Norwegian history preserved in *Heimskringla* and kindred works are often the fullest available, there is often no external means of checking their truth or of arbitrating between rival accounts when, for instance, *Heimskringla* disagrees with *Morækinskina* and/or *Fagskris*.

Where independent, foreign sources are available, they sometimes corroborate, sometimes undermine, the traditions preserved in *Heimskringla*. The late 11th-century Greek *Logos nuthetikos*, for example, substantiates the broad outlines of the adventures of Haraldr hardråde (*"hard-ruler"*) Þigurðarson in the service of the Byzantine emperor as told in Haraldr's saga Sigurðarsonar (chs. 3-16). But the claim, buttressed by skaldic verse, that Haraldr blinded the emperor in revenge for being imprisoned by him seems from the Greek sources to be attached to the wrong emperor. Again, the *Heimskringla* account of Haraldr's fatal English campaign is partially confirmed by the Anglo-Saxon *Chronicle* and numerous documents, especially where the battle of Stamford Bridge has been given motifs belonging properly to the battle of Hastings, or other famous battles.

*Heimskringla's* impact on later centuries has been considerable, and not confined to the world of scholarship. In the development of the konungasögur, it is something of an end point, for the only new sagas that postdate it are *Knúts saga*, *Höfnings saga*, and the now-extinguished *Magnúss saga lagabæsis*, about contemporary Norwegian kings, and *Knýtlinga saga*, about Danish royal history. As for lives of past Norwegian kings, instead of attempting new versions, makers of 14th- and 15th-century codices, such as Hulda-Hrokkinskinna and Flateyjarbók, copied parts of *Heimskringla*, expanding its text abundantly with material from other sources.

In the Nordic renaissance that began in the mid-16th century, *Heimskringla*, alongside other medieval Icelandic works, received its due share of attention. MSS were collected and copied, and the first printed texts published, in Peder Clausen Friis's translation, the first complete one, published in Copenhagen (1633), and in Perringsköld's edition, Stockholm (1697). In Norway, after mass printings at the turn of this century, it became known as a "second Bible," many Norwegians reputedly unaware that its author was actually an Icelander. Passages from *Heimskringla* provided a rallying call to those fighting for Icelandic and Norwegian national independence in the 19th and 20th centuries, and inspired creative artists both within Norway (Bjørnson, Ibsen, Vigeland, Grieg) and outside (Carlyle, Longfellow, Elgar).

Diana Edwards Whaley

[See also: Ágríp af Nöreges konunga sognum; Annals; Einþarnill; Fagrskírnisa; Flateyjarbók; Flísbók; Fiæreyinga saga; Hákonar saga Ívarssonar; Hákonar saga gamla Hákonarsonar; Hallfreðar saga; Homilies (West Norse); Hulda-Hroklitskinnar; Jómsvíkinga saga; Knýtlinga saga; Konungrasögur; Lausavísur; Magnús saga lagabættis; Merkkinskína; Óláfr Tryggvason; Ólafs saga helga; Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar; Orknýinga saga; Sighvat Póðarson; Skaldic Verse; Skjöldunga saga; Snorra Edda; Snorri Sturluson; Sturlunga saga; Sverris saga; Fríður; Þórarinn loftunga; Ynglinga saga]

**Heiti** (pl. heiti) is an uncommon Old Norse noun meaning “name, appellation,” used as a technical term by Snorri Sturluson in his *Prose Edda* to refer to a large number of poetic synonyms employed by skaldic poets. Toward the end of the third section, named “Poetic Diction,” Snorri lists many heiti for the main referents of skaldic verse, such as deities, natural phenomena, a variety of animals, the sea, fire, men, and women. Many of the terms used occur only in poetry, and some allude to myth or legend, as when Fafnir (the name of the man-turned-dragon killed by the hero Sigurrór) is given as a heiti for “serpent.” Snorri cites a range of permissible terms for each of these key concepts; for example, he says a raven may be called “crow, Huginn, Muninn [these two after Óðinn’s two ravens, *Grímnismál*, st. 20], secure-mood, early-flier, year-counter, flesh-marker” (trans. Faulkes 1987: 138).

Snorri differentiates three basic categories of skaldic diction, which he calls heiti, fornalm, and kenning, but immediately complicates this tripartite division by saying that certain kennings for Óðinn are called kennt heiti. Thus, the simplex heiti seems to be a cover term for at least two categories of poetic diction. Halldór Halldórsson (1975: 15–6) has suggested that Snorri probably had the medieval grammarians’ definition of a synonym in mind when he used the term (cf. Old Norse heita ‘to have a name, be called’). Snorri defines heiti as “to utter the name of each thing as it is called,” at nefna hvern tv, sem heitir (ed. Finnur Jónsson 1931: 86), and this definition is comparable to Priscian’s formulation that synonyms signify one and the same thing (Chunies Ross 1987: 48–9).

Snorri possibly preferred the term heiti over rafn ‘name’ because it was sometimes used in other Old Icelandic contexts for names whose forms betrayed the circumstances of their coinage (Chunies Ross 1987: 46–7). The difference between a simple (ókennt) heiti, such as “sparkler” for “fire,” and a kennt heiti or kennning like “Král’s seed” for “gold” seems to be, first, that the kenning is a periphrasis (although the raven examples given above show that Snorri did not by any means consistently maintain this distinction), and, second, that the kenning signaled by its very formulation something of the circumstances that gave rise to the periphrasis.

Some of the MSS in which Snorri’s *Edda* has been recorded also contain lists of versified poetic heiti, mostly in nonskaldic measures (e.g., *fornyrðislag*, *yðrhátta*) called *pulur*. Some of these lists are probably quite old, but others are likely to have been composed by people with antiquarian interests in the late 12th century or later (Halvorsen 1976, Amory 1984). Snorri quotes two sections from a *Porgitrannskjala* on horse- and ox-names respectively, and another on famous horses and their riders from a certain *Kálfsvís* (trans. Faulkes 1987: 136–7). It is generally reckoned that these *pulur* and some of the other list poems of the *Poetic Edda* (like *Alvíssmál*) may be reasonably old, and in some cases may display archaic principles of classification (Watkins 1970). Their purpose was probably to provide poets operating in an oral tradition with versified memory aids that functioned like rhyming dictionaries (Turville-Petre 1976: xii), so that they could keep the rich store of skaldic synonyms in mental play while composing.

Why did the poets need such an extensive repertoire of *heiti* and other kinds of poetic diction? It was argued in the last century, a thesis recently revived by Perkins (1984–85), that skaldic diction evolved from a kind of tabu-language associated with seafarers who dared not name the potentially destructive ocean or anything associated with it. Perkins further suggests that skaldic verse developed from rowing chants. Another argument is that the diversity of *heiti* and kennings evolved initially because there was a taboo on the outright naming of the gods; hence, a series of appellatives came into being that avoided naming them directly (Noreen 1921, Lie 1957: 42–59). Frank (1978: 40) has referred to *heiti* as “resonant archaisms” with a semimythological function.

Whatever the merit of these hypotheses, skaldic poetry first appears associated with the courts of late 9th-century Norwegian rulers. Its audience was a sophisticated and aristocratic one, and doubtless appreciated esoteric diction, metrics, and syntax partly for its own sake, partly because it confirmed their social and intellectual superiority to those who remained outside the court circle. The mental agility required to understand indirect references to myth and heroic legend, which *heiti* and kennings demand, was an appropriate quality to be displayed by an aristocratic elite, and this sociocultural phenomenon alone might be sufficient to explain the nature of skaldic diction (Lindow 1976).
A darkness descends. Twelve women ride up and set up camp. A ship comes to land one day, and Helgi goes alone into the forest. The leader, Ingi, the daughter of Guðmundr of Glæsisvellir, invites Helgi to eat with them and to sleep with her. After three days, she sends him away with gifts. He returns home, but the gifts of two horns for Óláfr. Óláfr has them filled, the drink blessed and taken to the two men, but they extinguish the lights and disappear with Helgi. He returns alone the following Christmas, released by the power of Óláfr’s prayers but blinded by Ingi, who tells him that the women of Norway will not enjoy him for long. He gives an ambiguous description of Guðmundr and his realm. He dies a year later.

The meeting of Helgi and Ingi, seems to be based on an episode in the Lai de Lanval of Marie de France, but Guðmundr and his realm are known from other Norse works, of which the closest is Pórissonar. The origins seem to be largely in Celtic tales of a delightful otherworld inhabited by beautiful women, a concept with which the author was clearly uneasy. He endeavors to make the visit to Guðmundr’s realm seem morally undesirable, and to show that Helgi is released because of the power of Óláfr’s prayers. As in Pórissonar, two horns from the otherworld come into Óláfr’s possession and vanish when he disappears from his ship in his final battle. The horns, like their bearers, are named Grímr. Grímr is the name used of another otherworld horn in Pórissonar. No literary relationship is discernible between the two jaettir.


Rosemary Power

See also: Flateyjarbók, þáttir, Pórissonar þáttir boejarmagns

Helgakviða Hjorvarðssonar see Helgi Poems

Helgakviða Hundingsbana I–II see Helgi Poems

Helgi Poems. The so-called "Helgi poems" comprise three lays in the Poetic Edda: Helgakviða Hjorvarðssonar ("The Lay of Helgi Hjorvarðsson") and Helgakviða Hundingsbana I and II ("The Lay of Helgi the Slayer of Hunding"). The lays are independent units, but are linked by striking similarity of locality, theme, and treatment. Although they form a group by themselves within the category of heroic poems, they are linked with the Völsunga and Niflungar by the poet’s making Helgi Hundingsbana a half-brother of Sigurðr Fáfnisbani. It is clear that Helgakviða Hjorvarðssonar is not of a piece. Lengthy prose passages unite the three sections of the lay into a loosely knit plot: (1) Hjorvarðr, who has three wives, woos Siglufr. Her son, dumb from birth, is given the name "Helgi" and a miraculous sword by his beloved-to-be, the valkyrie Sváva. Helgi, awakened to heroism, sets out to avenge his grandfather, and, under Sváva’s protection, to do heroic deeds. (2) (Hringgerðarmóð) The slaying of the giant Hati introduces a popular flying match with
Hati's daughter, Hrîmgerðr, who, thirsty for revenge, demands intercourse with Helgi in recompense. The senna is self-sufficient, even divorced from the plot itself, and is used as a ruse to delay Hrîmgerðr until she is petrified in the light of dawn. (3) A nocturnal threat, presented in Helgi's case by Hrîmgerðr, appears to his brother, Heõinn, in the form of a witchwoman. She offers him her comforts, but he refuses and thus provokes her revenge: Heõinn's fatal vow on the eve of Yuletide to obtain his brother's wife, Svāva. The curse of the witchwoman is thus fulfilled, but we are to understand that she was Helgi's fylgia, who has now left him because of his impending death. But the brothers do not come into conflict as threatened; Heõinn, struck with remorse, goes to Helgi and tells him what has happened. The doomed Helgi is soon mortally wounded in the battle. As he dies, he begs Svāva to marry the brother who will avenge him.

In the final form as preserved, Helgakvida Hjörvarðssonar is a complex of prose and verse in fornmaidarsaga and jöððâttr meter, without rigid structuring. In relying on prose inserts fleshed out with redundant fornmaidarsaga motifs, the work resembles a scaled-down fornmaidarsaga with verse inlays. The reconciliatory ending, with the remorseful hero, Heõinn, and the averted internecine conflict, shows a late conception of heroic poetry.

In Helgakvida Hundingsbana II, consisting of prose, stanza sequences, and verse fragments of various date, form, mood, and content, "revenge of kindred" is the leitmotif. (1) The opening part tells how Helgi killed Hundingr and so received his cognomen. (2) Sigrún is described as the valkyrie Svāva reborn. She comes to Helgi and confesses that she helped him in battle. (3) Sigrún is united with Helgi at Arasteinn ("Eagle Rock") after another ride "through air over sea." Meanwhile, he has killed four sons of Hundingr in extensive revenge of kin (prose). Sigrún, betrothed by her father to another, declares her love to Helgi. At Frekasteinn ("Wolf Rock"), he kills not only his rival, but also Sigrún's father, brother, and most of her kin. (4) Here, an abbreviated flying match follows (cf. Helgakvida Hundingsbana I). (5) Helgi, transfixed by the spear that Öõinn lent to Dagr, falls (prose), and Sigrún's brother Dagr's revenge on his brother-in-law repeats the leitmotif. Sigrún, cursing, again turns against her kin, yielding her brother in revenge for Helgi. The speech culminates in Sigrún's threnody. (6) Helgi returns from Valhöll, and the last passionate reunion of living and dead in the open mound introduces the grim climax of the poem. The preserved version is a problem-conscious, planned compilation. The leitmotif is revenge of kin. Kin-loyalty is opposed by individualistic love (wooing of wife and husband by Helgi and Sigrún, respectively), which itself is overtaken by Dagr's kin-revenge. The compiler is aware of similar problems in the "Helgi Saga," to which he alludes.

Unlike Helgakvida Hundingsbana I, Helgakvida Hundingsbana II is an artistically composed, compactly structured, and thematically coherent work. The basic tale is altered to fit the new message. Tragic elements, such as the death of the bride's hostile father (the story of Hildr, cf. Helgakvida Hundingsbana I) and the dark side of heroism (Helgi's death and return) are withheld. This lay is a skaldic hymn to a primeval hero, whose life is glorified from his birth to the triumphant climax. (1) After a brief introduction, Helgi kills Hundingr and his four sons. (2) At Arasteinn, Helgi meets Sigrún, who begs him for help against the hated suitor Höðbroðr, promised Sigrún by her father. (3) Helgi assembles his army and sets sail. (4) Upon his arrival in enemy territory, there is a flying match between Sinfjotli, Helgi's (and also Sigurðr's) half-brother, and Guðmundr, Höðbroðr's brother. (5) Höðbroðr assembles his army, and they join in battle. (6) Helgi meets Sigrún a second time at Frekasteinn, and the poem ends abruptly, leaving him at the zenith of power, having won Sigrún and Hundingr's land.

The order of the works, Helgakvida Hundingsbana I, Helgakvida Hjörvarðssonar, Helgakvida Hundingsbana II, is problematic. The compiler of the Edda interposes Helgakvida Hjörvarðssonar between doublets. Helgakvida Hjörvarðssonar and Helgakvida Hundingsbana II are united by thought of the hero's "rebirth" and the beloved valkyrie (prose only). They thus fulfill the genealogical and chronological organizational criteria of the heroic poems: one heroic family with one reborn Helgi Hundingbani, half-brother of Sigurðr, up to the characters of Hamðismål, Guðrún's last children. Helgakvida Hundingsbana I remains atypical, distinct from the other heroic poems of the compilation. Although the initial position of Helgakvida Hundingsbana I contradicts the compiler's principle of organization, Codex Regius, a copy of a lost exemplar, proves it to be intentional. It is possible that it forms a prologue to the heroic poems following the pattern of Vǫluspá, showing the symbolic beginning of the heroic era.


Heinz Klingenber

[See also: Alvismål, Codex Regius, Eddie Meters; Eddie Poetry; Fornmaidarsögur; Maiden Warriors; Senna; Manufafndur; Volsung-Niflung Cycle; Völuspá; Women in Eddic Poetry]

Helreið Brynhildar ("Brynhildr's Ride to Hel"). In the Codex Regius, the main MS preserving this anonymous eddic poem, the title reads Brynhildr reið helweg ("Brynhildr rode to the way to Hel"); the title Helreið Brynhildar is a later one. The text of the poem is uncertain: it is probable that some sections are lost, and the order of the stanzas, as they appear in the Codex Regius, is questionable. Apart from the Codex Regius, the poem and its prose introduction are also cited, with some variations, in Nornagesta þattr. Both versions probably go back to the same original text. Völuspá saga, which often makes use of eddic heroic poetry, does not use Helreið Brynhildar, but probably knew its introductory prose section.

The prose introduction to Helreið Brynhildar tells how Brynhildr and Sigurðr both were burned on funeral pyres, after which Brynhildr rode to the underworld on her way to Hel. A giantess prevents her from traveling through her region. The actual poem begins with the accusations of the giantess. She accuses Brynhildr of having brought Gjúki's sons bad luck. Brynhildr then begins her plea: she unintentionally offended Öõinn by helping a young hero, Agnarr, whom she loves, to win victory over an old suitor, Hjalm-Gunnarr. As punishment, Öõinn erected a wall of flame, behind which she was doomed to sleep until awakened by Sigurðr. Sigurðr spent eight nights sleeping next to Brynhildr with
a sword separating them. Only when Guðrún, Sigurðr’s wife, accuses Brynhildr of having slept in Sigurðr’s arms does she realize they had tricked her into marrying Gunnarr; Sigurðr and Gunnarr had exchanged their outward forms. The poem ends with Brynhildr’s hope that she now will be united with Sigurðr in death.

In Helreíd Brynhildar, the stories concerning the awakening of the valkyrie and the wooing of Brynhildr are welded together, leading to contradictions within the narrative. In strophe 11.2, for example, the meeting between Brynhildr and Sigurðr is set at the hall of Brynhildr’s foster-father, Heimir, which stands at odds with the statement in strophe 9 that Öðinn bound the valkyrie by a spell and raised up a wall of flames around her. Another peculiarity in the poem is that the wall of flame through which Sigurðr had to pass to awaken Brynhildr was originally presented as a test. In Helreíd Brynhildar, however, the flames are turned into Öðinn’s punishment for Brynhildr’s disobedience.

In one sense, the poem’s aim is to provide a justification for Brynhildr’s actions in seeking vengeance for her supposed betrayal by Sigurðr. The narrative frame of the meeting between Brynhildr and the giantess thus serves to set the stage for Brynhildr’s plea. The giantess appears as a representative of public opinion, and Brynhildr defends herself against the accusations. Brynhildr stands as the tragic heroine who turned against Öðinn and thereby unleashed his anger.

The story of Brynhildr’s youth (stas. 6 and 7) was composed from older sources; the story of Öðinn’s anger and of Brynhildr’s sleep are taken from Sigrdrífrumál. Helreíd Brynhildar is thus characterized in Sigrdrífrumál, in which the awakening of the valkyrie is treated, by the fact that Sigurðr does not awaken the sleeping valkyrie in order to have her himself, but to give her to his brother-in-law, Gunnarr, as his wife. Hlymdalr as the place of Hymir’s home is found only in prose sources and was presumably invented by the author.

Apart from Fálknismál (stas. 42–46), Helreíd Brynhildar is the only eddic poem that parallels Brynhildr with the valkyrie Sigrdrífa and connects the walls of shields with the flames. By equating Brynhildr with Sigrdrífa, it is possible to solve the mystery of Brynhildr’s youth. Like Sigurðr, Brynhildr also grew up with a foster-father and does not know her parents.

Helreíd Brynhildar is an elegiac, retrospective poem, characterized by sadness and pessimism. The account reaches its climax in Brynhildr’s hopes to be reunited with Sigurðr after death.


Gillian Fellows-Jensen

Hemings þáttur Æslánsóttar ("The Tale of Hemingr Æslánsóttar") tells the story of a legendary Norwegian athlete who earns the enmity of King Haraldr harðráði ("hard-ruler") Sigurðarson by proving himself superior to the king in contests in archery, swimming, and skiing. He is saved from certain death by the intervention of St. Óláfr, takes refuge in England, and is instrumental in bringing about the death of Haraldr harðráði at the battle of Stamford Bridge in 1066. After the defeat and apparent death of King Harold Godwinson at the battle of Hastings that same year, Hemingr retires with the secretly resuscitated king into a hermit’s cell.

The þáttur is not recorded in complete form in any early manuscript. The first part, which describes the athletic contests, is obviously dependent on the same folklore motifs as accounts of the exploits of other legendary heroes, such as Völundr’s brother Egill, Saxo’s Palmatokki, and the Swiss national hero, William Tell. This part is found in two related versions, one in a 15th-century hand in Flateyjarbók (GKS 1005 fol.) and the other in a 16th-century hand in Hrökkinskinna (GKS 1010 fol.). The second part of the þáttur, largely dependent on Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar but with much additional material, is found in Hauksbók (AM 544 4to) in Haukr Ólafssóttarson’s (d. 1334) hand.

Hemings, the undoubted hero of the first part of the þáttur, plays a comparatively insignificant role in the second, while Haraldr harðráði, who is depicted as a cruel and ridiculously proud tyrant in the first part, appears as a doomed but noble hero in the second.

It has therefore been suggested that the two parts did not originally belong together. There are, however, several textual links between them, and a transcript made in the winter of 1697–1698 of a now-lost leaf of Hauksbók contains text of the þáttur that overlaps with that surviving in Hrökkinskinna. The popularity of the þáttur in Iceland is shown by the survival of copies of more of less complete versions of it in over forty MSS, ranging in date from the 14th to the 18th century. It also formed the basis for two sets of rimur, one dating from the 16th century and the other composed by Benedikt Sigurðsson in 1729.


Gillian Fellows-Jensen
**HERVARAR SAGA OK HEIÐREKES KONUNGS**

(“The Saga of Hervor and King Heidrek”) is a fornaldarsaga composed around 1250. The saga is extant in three basic versions: R, U, and H. Version R, which is probably closest to the original, is best represented by Glk 2845 4to, a late 14th- or early 15th-century vellum MS, with one page missing, containing the dialogue between Hervor [1] and Angantyr [111 and the greater part of Hloðskviða. Version U is known from several late paper MSS, especially a paper copy in Uppsala (R:715), AM 203 fol., and a fragment made in the winter of 1596/7 by Arngrimur Jónsson (Jakob Benediktsson 1950:350-4). Although H is generally close to U, it also makes use of a version close to the R text. Its basic text is Hauksbók (ca. 1330s; AM 544 4to).

The author of the saga attempted, not always successfully, to combine a number of stories and poems into a single coherent narrative. The various components are related to each other by a fictional genealogy and by the motif of the sword Tyrfingr, which must take a man’s life whenever it is unsheathed. The main divisions of the saga are as follows:

1. The origin of Tyrfringr (two prose versions), shorter in R (ed. Tolkien 1960: 2) and longer (U, H; ed. Tolkien 1960: 66–8).
2. The battle of Sámsey (Samso), in which Tyrfringr’s owner, Angantyr, and his eleven brothers are defeated by Örvar-Öddr and the Swedish Hjálmarr. Hjálmarr is also slain, but lives long enough to send a message to his love in “Hjálmarr’s death song.” A longer version of this poem is contained in Örvar-Ödds saga.
3. Angantyr has a daughter, Hervor, who grows up with her grandfather, Earl Bjartmarr of Aldeigjuborg (Old Ladoga). Her father’s identity has been kept from her; when she learns it, she dons armor and leads a Viking ship to Sámsey. The poem “The Waking of Angantyr” describes her visit to the grave mound and the recovery of Tyrfringr.
4. Heidrek, son of Hervor and Guðmundr of Glaesisvelli, kills his brother with Tyrfringr. Exiled for this slaying, he receives from his father seven “wise counsels” (six in R and U), all of which he proceeds to break. Interwoven with the story of the broken counsels is that of the birth of his two sons, Angantyr (II), whose mother is a princess of Rìksgotland, and the illegitimate Hloðr, whose mother is a princess of Húnaðarki, in which the episode ends with a riddle contest between Heidrek and the disguised Óðinn that results in Heidrek’s death. While the frame story of this contest resembles those of other eddic wisdom poems, the riddles themselves (Heidrækas gátur) are among the few examples of the genre from medieval Scandinavia.
5. In the final episode, Heidrek’s two sons come to blows over the division of his kingdom. The narrative is adorned with the strophes of the poem called Hloðskviða or “The Battle of the Goths and Huns”; both describe the battle in which Angantyr slays his brother with Tyrfringr. While the story recounted has undoubtedly undergone many changes in the course of time, some of the place-names, especially those mentioned in the poem, indicate their possible origin in the 5th or 6th century.

The main MS of the U version, AM 203 fol., follows the saga by a genealogy that relates Angnantyr to King Ingi II Hallsteinsson of Sweden (d. 1130). This material may well be derived from the works of Icelandic historians of the early 12th century (Ellehøj 1965, Pritsk 1981).

The first edition of the *Hervarar saga* (version U) was made by Olaus Verelius: *Hervarar saga på Gammal Götiska* (Uppsala 1672). In 1873, Bugge edited the R-version (according to him, version II) with the combined H and U versions (his version I), but Heinsz (1887) proclaimed that Bugge’s versions I and II should be rather regarded as two independent stories. This view was challenged by Ivan SarovoFs’kyj (1906-07), who argued that both H and R go back to the one and the same lost version of the saga, while U represents the contaminated version.

In a series of articles (1913-27), Andrews resurrected version U, arguing that both U and R represent in their general makeup the original saga, while H was the product of the later scribe. Jón Helgason (1924) distinguished two versions of the saga. His *Heidrek’s saga* contains a diplomatic edition of R, with H printed under it (pp. 1-88) and U following (pp. 89-161). According to Tolkien (1960), R is the closest witness of the original called A (composed ca. 1250), while U and H descend from the next version of the saga (X, ca. 1300); H, however, is nothing but a careless abridgment of X.

**See also:** Folklore; Fornaldarsögun; Hauksbók; Hloðskviða; Riddles; Örvar-Odds saga
Hird is a common term for the retinue of warriors accompanying kings or great men in the Nordic countries. The word is derived from Anglo-Saxon *hīred* 'family, household'. Most of what is known of the institution concerns the king's hird. As it appears in Danish sources of the 11th and 12th centuries and Norwegian ones of the 12th and 13th, this group was a corporation with a special ceremony of reception for new members and regular meetings, which functioned as a court of law for its members and eventually came to serve as a council for the king. The Danish law of the hird (the Vederlov) claims to have been issued by Knud (Cnut) the Great, but this ascription is uncertain. The most detailed information comes from Norway (Hirdskra). The Norwegian hird of the 12th and 13th centuries was divided into three groups: the hirdmenn (*hīrd-men*); the gestir (*guests*), who did police work for the king; and kortsveinar, young men who served as pages. The first group was further divided into several different ranks, with the hird officials on top; then the lendir menn (*landed men*), after 1277 named barons; the skutilsveinar (men who carry dishes at the table), after 1277 named knights; and finally the ordinary hirdmenn. In Sweden, "men" in the service of the king, duke, or bishop are referred to in the laws, but we have no definite information on the hird as an organization. Even the Icelandic chief-tains had their retainers, but the term hird seems not to have been used of them until the mid-13th century, near the end of the Free State period. In addition, prominent Icelanders were often attached to the hird of the Norwegian king.

We can distinguish three stages in the evolution of the hird. During the first, in Denmark until the 12th century, in Norway until the first half of the 13th, the hird was primarily a warrior organization, attached to the king's person. Most of its members probably lived near the king. The relationship between the king and his men was based on some sort of contract, which could be terminated by both parties. During the Norwegian civil wars, a group's hird was usually dissolved at his death. The king's hird was not the only one that existed, though it had clearly surpassed those of other great men in importance from the end of the Viking Age.

In the second stage, with the growing centralization of the Nordic kingdoms, this body of retainers changed into an organization of the aristocracy of the realm. Both Danish and Norwegian sources distinguish quite early between resident and nonresident members of the hird. In the early Middle Ages, the former were the normal category, but most members became nonresident in Denmark from the 12th century and in Norway at least from the mid-13th, after the civil wars. On the other hand, the attachment to the king became permanent, and an ideology was developed that strongly emphasized the hirdmaðr's (*hīrd-man's*) submission to the king and the loyal service owed to him. In both countries, the hird served as an instrument in attaching the majority of the leading men to the king's direct service. The change in Denmark coincides with the change in military organization from the popular levy to an elite army of heavily armed men, who were rich enough to become professional warriors and in addition received tax compensation. These men became hirdmenn without ever residing at court.

Although there was also some military professionalization in Norway during the civil wars, no corresponding change took place there. The development of the royal administration, however, had partly the same effect as in Denmark. A large number of the hirdmenn became local administrators. In addition, the king sought to attach prominent men in the districts to his service by making them hirdmenn. Thus, the hird grew numerically, but only a relatively small percentage remained at court: on the one hand, the most prominent members of the royal household and the central administration; and on the other, younger members of the aristocracy who served at court for a shorter period.

This development then logically led into the third stage, the dissolution of the hird. The hird had served to create an aristocracy of the realm. The members of this aristocracy, however, were now distinguished from the rest of the population through arms and privileges rather than membership in an organization. There was also a growing tendency, above all in Denmark, for membership of the aristocracy in practice to become dependent on birth. Although its formal organization still existed in Denmark in the late 13th century, the hird had lost its importance long before that. The development went more slowly in Norway, but the unions with the other Nordic countries from 1319, and the fact that the king usually lived abroad, precipitated the decline of the hird, although the term hirdmaðr occurs in the sources as late as the 15th century.


**Sverre Bagge**

**Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagiensium** see Theodoricus

**Historia Norwagiæ.** Together with the *Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagiensium* of Theodoricus monachus, the *Historia Norwagiæ* can be considered among the most ancient documents concerning the history of Norway. The *Historia Norwagiæ* is a minor work found at fols. 1–12r of a paper MS containing other historical texts and documents concerning the Orkney Islands, Scotland, and Norway. The MS was discovered in the library of the baron of Panmure in Scotland and was published for the first time in Oslo in 1850. Storm considered the Dalshouse MS (the name of the owner) to have been composed between 1443 and 1460; however, recent examination by Chesnutt (1985) demonstrates that it cannot have been compiled before about 1500.

The text of the *Historia Norwagiæ* is much older than the age of the MS. A reference to a volcanic earthquake and eruption as contemporaneous suggests 1211 as a terminus a quo. We do not know the name or the nationality of the author; all facts that can be deduced depend upon internal evidence. Munch (1850) and Bugge (1873) contend that the detailed description of the Orkney Islands provides evidence for the author's birthplace. Storm (1873) argues to the contrary, that such a description is no more accurate than for other areas, and that the strong nationalistic stamp of the author denotes Norwegian origin.

The work consists of a prologue addressed to a certain Agnellus, who has not been identified with certainty, followed by a geographical description of Norway, the Faroe Islands, the Orkney
Islands, and Iceland, with a digression on the custom and dress of the Lapps. This geographical section is followed by a summary of a history of Norway beginning with the royal house of the Ynglingar and ending with the return from England in 1015 of St. Óláfr. Because of the fragmentary state of the MS, it cannot be said how far the story continued in its original form. However, it seems from the prologue that a third section followed that was dedicated to the struggle between paganism and Christianity. The chronicle was probably composed in Norway.

The problem of the sources is very complex. Among the Latin sources can be mentioned Adam of Bremen's Gesta Hammaburgenensis ecclesiae pontificum and works by Honorius Augustodunensis and Solinus. When the author traces the pedigree of the kings of England, he clearly follows an English chronicle known from the great compilation of Roger of Hoveden. In the chapter on the Lapps, there is a description of the beaver, hunted by the Lapps, closely resembling that given by Giraldus Cambrensis in the Itinerary Through Wales, and which suggests that the two descriptions probably descend from a common source. It is generally believed that the Historia Norwegiae is based largely on an older Latin work, which was also one of the sources of the Ágríp af Nòregs konunga saga. Úlset (1983: 150), however, recently proposed a stemma showing that the Historia Norwegiae and Theodoricus's work were among the sources used by the author of Ágríp, thus confirming an earlier proposal by Storm.

The style is characterized by florid rhetoric, which attests to the wide range of the author's reading.

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**Hjálmpé's saga** ("The Saga of Hjálmpær") probably dates from the 15th century. Its primary MS, AM 109a III 8vo, a paper book, was produced in the 17th century by Ólafur Jónsson, probably in Eyjafjarðará in the north of Iceland. Some of its verses predate the surrounding prose. Comparisons by Kölbing and Björn K. Pórólfssoon of the late 14th-century Hjálmpé's rimur with the extant text of Hjálmpé's saga suggest the existence of an earlier, more original version of the story, probably composed around 1300.

Best classified as a lygisinga, Hjálmpé's saga was, ironically, published for its supposed historical value by Peringskiöld at Uppsala in 1720 because of what he regarded as its evidence of Sweden's noble past. This publication fell among a spate of editions of later, fantastic sagas produced at the Antikvitetsarkiv during the late 17th and early 18th centuries in that fervor of Rudbeckian scholarship supporting Sweden's Stormaktstid ("time of great power"). Editions from the early 19th century on, however, have regarded the saga's historicity in a less enthusiastic light. Aside from the hero's homeland, Mannheim, equated by Rudbeck with Atlantis and thus with Sweden, the place-names of Hjálmpé's saga, including such items as Syria, Arabia, Serkland, and Bláland, are entirely foreign to Scandinavia. Personal names are also largely of foreign origin: Marsibil, Lúða, and Núdus.

The saga's importance lies in its folk motifs, which have analogues in continental Scandinavian tradition but more interestingly in Celtic folklore. The narrative presents the adventures of Hjálmpér, son of King Ingi of Mannheim, and his friend Ólvir. The hero is in conflict with Lúða, a wicked and amorous stepmother who places upon him a spell called an alog (related to the Celtic geis) that forces him to seek out a princess, Hervor Hunding's daughter. Once Hjálmpér locates her, Hunding assigns him a dangerous task called a forsendaing ("dangerous mission"), in this instance, initially to obtain the horns of a dangerous ox, although the requirements eventually become threefold. The narrative abounds in folk motifs, the wicked stepmother, the alog, and the forsendaing having been examined most closely for Celtic analogues. In particular, "Kuíhwich and Olwen," in the Mabinogion, and "The Adventures of Art son of Conn, and the Courtship of Delbchaen" have been viewed as close to some parts of Hjálmpé's saga. Two passages have been shown to be later interpolations, in particular a crudely inserted Viking episode, in chs. 4 and 5, from ch. 20 of Porsteins saga Vikingssonar. Both style and content suggest a diversity of sources, with part of the work sounding like later Icelandic sagas generally, but the amorous stepmother Lúða sounding in her more intense moments as if she came from a Greek romance.

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**See also:** Adam of Bremen; Ágríp af Nòregs konunga saga; Konungasögur, Theodoricus: Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagiensis

Richard Harris

Hlöðskviða ("The Lay of Hlöðr"), or "The Battle of the Goths and the Huns," although not included in the Codex Regius, is regarded as one of the anonymous heroic lays of the Poetic Edda. It is preserved in MSS of the Hervararsaga ok Heidreks konungs, and traces of the poetic language are still perceptible in the accompanying prose.

Only the first ten strophes are preserved in the oldest and best version of the poem, R, from the 14th century; the remainder has been transmitted in a 17th-century MS of the U version, which is corrupt in many places.

There is no general agreement where the poem begins. Some scholars argue for the strophe where Angantyr avenges his father's slayers (ed. Tolkien 1960, no. 74), some for the jula enumerating the names of those "who ruled over the lands in these days" (no. 75), and others for the strophe where the Hunnish kingdom, the birthplace of Hlöðr, is mentioned (no. 76). Hence, the number of strophes (or fragments of strophes) varies from thirty-one to thirty-four, depending on the perception of the given scholar.

As in much heroic poetry, the poem presents a war between two peoples as a family conflict, in this case a war between half-brothers, also a common heroic motif. In Hlöðskviða, Angantyr (representing the Goths) and Hlöðr (representing the Huns) fight over the division of their inheritance, which includes "Tyrfingr," the name Angantyr kills Hlöðr. "Tyrfingr" is derived from, and must originally have referred to, the Visigothic tribe of the Tervingi.

Hlöðskviða presents its main characters as if they were historical figures, but there are various schools of thought about their identity. The first is the "plained historical" school, best represented by Nerman (1928), who believed that he had successfully established the heroes of the saga as the ruling dynasty of Reiðogaland. That Germanic state encompassed, he believed, northeastern Germany, northern Poland, and eastern Prussia. Taking as the basis for chronology the hypothetical date of Ívarr víðfæðmi ("wide-fathoming") Hálfdanarson's death (ca. 675) and thirty years for a generation, Nerman arrived at a "historical" genealogy, according to which Angantyr, Hlöðr, and Hervor lived in the first half of the 6th century.

The second, the "epic-historical" school, tried to identify the heroes of the saga and of Hlöðskviða with important personalities of the age of migrations, i.e., the Germanic epic age, thereby blending several personalities into one, or splitting one personality into several, depending on their roles. Heiznel (1887) initiated this approach, following an idea first expressed by Möller (1858) that the "Battle of the Goths and the Huns" was the great historical battle of the year 451 on the Mauriac/Calataunian Plains, in which Attila the Hun (Humlí of the saga and kviða), together with the Gepids under Ardarc, the Ostrogoths, and other Hunnic subjects, were decisively defeated by the Roman patrician Aetius, assisted by the Visigoths. From this starting point, Heiznel created an extremely complex and ingenious system of fusions, for example, the name Angantyr derived from Aetius (Agetius), and Hlöðr from the Frankish Chlodio. Hlöðr as a character, however, he identified with the Roman general Litorius, a rival of Aetius. Gizurr, Angantyr's adviser, is a composite figure in that he represents three historical personages: the Vandal king Geiseric (d. 477), who instigated Attila's attack on the Visigoths (Gizurr owes his name to him); the bishop of Orleans, St. Anianus, the organizer of the city's defense against the Huns; and a certain anchorite who predicted to Attila his defeat on the eve of the battle of 451.

According to Much (1889), Angantyr and his valkyric sister, Hervor, are to be identified with the Langobardic dynasty, specifically, with King Agelmundus (ca. 360-400), mentioned in the Old English poem Widsith, and his daughter, who, as Paul the Deacon relates, fought against the Vulgars (representing the Huns) in a battle in which the king was killed and the daughter carried off as a prisoner. The battle that inspired the saga was, however, the victory of Lamissio, Agelmundus' successor, over the said Vulgars.

Schück (1918) found a historical prototype for the battle in the struggle between Vinitharius, the king of the Goths and successor of Ermanaric (last quarter of the 4th century), and Balambar, the king of the Huns, who helped the Goths Gesimund. Schütte (1905), who in principle defended the Catalaunian theory, nevertheless proposed his own correction to Heiznel's system. His Heidrek was the king of the Gepids (Hl)ardarc (Schütte 1933), and the name Hervor (Herv-vor) was originally that of the Hunnish hero Wymr-here, with the two elements transposed, named in Widsith (119a), in other words, the female Hervor is in fact the female hero Ormarr (Wymr-here; Schütte 1935).

Malone (1932; cf. 1923) identified the Angantyr of the saga and the kviða with the Beowulfian character Ongengœv of Sweden, and Hlöðr (Widsith Hlip) with the Beowulfian character Hædel. Hlödr, not Heidrek (Widsith Heaporki < *Hlip), of the saga corresponds to the Geatish leader Hædcyn of Beowulf. Malone then assumes a fusion of Hæde and Hædcyn under the name Hlöðr, since the Beowulfian character Angantyr (Ongengœv) killed Hædcyn in battle (Malone 1925, 1939).

No less complex is the hypothesis of Lukan (1946), who decided to pass over Jordanes (who wrote in 551) in favor of the original sources of the 4th century, including Ammianus Marcellinus (ca. 330-391). Heidrek is Athanaric (Hathanarich; r. ca. 369-381), the ruler of the Visigoths; the battle refers to the events of the year 386, when the Ostrogoths under Odotheus appeared on the Danube, and were defeated by a stratagem. The Hlödr of the saga is Odotheus.

Rosenfeld (1955) expressed the idea that the only period when the inheritance claims based on a Gothic-Hunnic mixed marriage would be contested was the time of the Gothic-Hunnic struggles after Attila's death. Without dealing with the names of the Hlöðskviða, he suggests that its historic background was the war of 456 conducted by Valamer (Theodoric's uncle) with the Huns coming from the east, over the newly colonized Pannonia.

Tolkien has argued correctly that "to pick about in old histories, looking for names that begin with the same letter or contain one or two of the same consonants as those in one's text, will attain nothing" (1953-57: 155). From this principle, it is clear that the long scholarly battle over the historicity of the Hlöðskviða, the exact date, and the location of the battle of the Goths and the Huns has so far managed only to create a galaxy of diverse, uncompromising opinions and no objective criteria that could be used to settle the dispute. The reason behind this confusion is the dogmatic refusal to part with the idea that the "battle" must reflect an important historical event.
It would seem, however, that Hlóðskvíska is simply an epic lay governed by its own laws and rules, which are different from the ones that govern historical writing. Like every true epic, Hlóðskvíska has telescoped several centuries of history, and transformed its main characters into archetypes. The poet did not use the proper names of historical peoples, but topical appellations symbolizing the role of the characters in the epic’s plot, for example, Heidrek = Old Norse heir-leikr ‘the king of the [Dán ‘Don]’s glory’; Anganyr = Old Norse angan tryj ‘joy, happiness Tryj’; Hervor = Old Norse her-for ‘protector of the host’ (= the Goths); and Hlóðr = Old Norse hlódr ‘destroyer, vanquisher.’

The only “historical” aspect of Hlóðskvíska is its set of topo­
graphic names. These, in fact, do reflect the geography of the
Gotish Ukraine during the period of the great migrations, for example, Danaparstadir (‘Gotish) homestead on the left bank of the lower Dnieper’ (its ruins, from the 4th–5th century a.c., comprise the Kamjans’ke Horodyšče on the left bank of the lower Dnieper); Dúnhéildr ‘the Don[ac]’s glory’; Jassarfjoll ‘the Jas/Alanian mountains’ to the south of the Donec and north of the Súxý/Toryc River (Pritsak 1981: 206–14, Beck 1986). But the “Reið-Gothic” layer of the ethnic and geographic names (Reið-Gotoland, identified with Jutland, and Garðariki) must be from about 750–850, and was probably collected later in West Gotland.


Omeljan Pritsak

**HOARDS**

**Hoards.** Deliberate deposits of precious metal in the form of treasure hoards are an important source of evidence for the study of the overseas contacts and the domestic economy of medieval Scandinavia, most notably during the Viking Age; gold and silver, however, were not the only metals hoarded. The medieval hoards may be divided into (1) those that were concealed by the owners with intent to recover them later; and (2) those that were deposited permanently for ritual purposes, as religious offerings. The great majority of hoards dating to the medieval period fall into category (1); in that period it is probable that much treasure was normally kept hidden, unlike the situation in the Bronze and Iron Ages, when there are many impressive metal deposits of a ritual nature known from Scandinavia, particularly in wetey places.

Some examples of category (2), ritual hoards, will be considered first. The votive-deposit type of hoard may result from a single act or be the product of accumulation from continuous offerings. Ritual hoards of iron weapons, as found in southern Scandinavia during the Migration Period, are virtually unknown during the Viking Age outside of Gotland; but in 1964, a large find of nearly 300 objects, mostly arrowheads, dating from the 7th to the 10th centuries, was made in Estuna churchyard in Uppland, Sweden. Deposits of gullgubbar, small gold foils impressed with a design of a man and a woman embracing, are thought to be pagan fertility offerings, such as those found beneath the church at Mære in Trøndelag, Norway. This practice also represents a native religious continuity from the pre-Viking Period into the 9th and 10th centuries.

In Lapland, Saami sacrificial sites have accumulated deposits of metal objects (ornaments and arrowheads) from the 11th to the 14th century.

The phenomenon of votive hoards did not end with the conversion of Scandinavia to Christianity, for there are various indications of continuity of belief. An early example is the offering of 110 coins placed beneath the foundations of the first stone church at Sankt Jørgensbjer in Roskilde, Denmark (ca. 1040), while accumulations of coins are regularly revealed by archaeologists excavating beneath wooden floors in medieval Scandinavian churches.

All silver in the Viking Age was imported into Scandinavia either as Viking plunder and tribute or as a result of trade. Viking treasure hoards may be broadly grouped into those that represent an individual’s personal ornaments as opposed to commercial wealth, the accumulated capital of a merchant, chieftain, or family. In certain instances, other explanations may have to be sought, such as a metalworker’s or trader’s stock. For instance, hoards of iron blanks, with axe- or spade-shaped blades, were used from the Merovingian period onward as raw material for trade in a form that also came to serve for taxation purposes.

The Viking Age silver-hoard material can be divided into four categories of objects: (1) coins, (2) ingots, (3) ornaments (chiefly rings and brooches), and (4) hack-silver (deliberately cut-up fragments of ingots and ornaments used as “small change”). The characteristic Viking-type hoard, which continued to be deposited in some areas in Scandinavia into the 12th century, is a mixture of most of these elements, although it changed over time, due to the developing sophistication of the Scandinavian economy. Early hoards tend to have a higher proportion of complete orma-

[See also: Eddie Metters, Eddie Poetry, Hervarar saga ok Heidreks konungs]
coins and highly fragmented hack-silver, often heavily pecked and nicked as the silver quality was checked during transactions. This development reflects the fact that much of the silver reaching Scandinavia as a result of early Viking activity was converted into ornaments that denoted the status of the wearers, even if the ornaments were later cut up for use in economic transactions. Increasing economic activity required more silver in circulation, and increasing familiarity with the use of coin led to the establishment of Scandinavian coinages. However, it was only during the 11th century that Scandinavian rulers began to mint their own coins in any quantity, and it was not until the second half of the century that the Danish and Norwegian kings seem to have been able to exclude foreign coin and hack-silver in the transition to a coined-money economy. In Sweden, the process took even longer, and the Viking-type hoard deposited at Burge, Lummelunda, on Gotland (ca. 1140), weighing 10.36 kg. is one of the latest. This hoard is only about a quarter the weight of the greatest Viking treasure known, which was deposited around 905 at Cuerdale in northwestern England, derived from the wealth of the Viking kingdoms of York and Dublin. Silver hoards continued to be deposited in Scandinavia in the high Middle Ages, but their contents, aside from coins, are rather different, comprising new forms of European ornaments and tableware (e.g., spoons) and Scandinavian folk-costume jewelry. There are, however, four 14th-century hoards known from Gotland, probably hidden during the raids of the Danish invaders in 1361 (battle of Visby), which contain objects dating back to the 12th century, representing family wealth accumulated over several generations.

In the 9th and 10th centuries, very large numbers of Islamic dirhams reached Scandinavia from the East, by way of the Russian river routes to the Baltic, spilling over into the Scandinavian settlements in Britain and Ireland, where twenty hoards have been found containing these Kufic coins. It has been estimated that of the approximately 250,000 foreign Viking Age coins found in Sweden, as many as 100,000 are Islamic, with those of the Samänid dynasty in the majority: the mints of Tashkent, Samarkand, and Bukhara are particularly well represented. Toward the end of the 10th century, this flow of eastern silver was replaced by one of similar size from England and Germany, so that over 60,000 Anglo-Saxon coins are known from some 1,000 northern European finds.

Coins are the commonest artifacts surviving from the Viking Age, and rank as one of its most important sources of historical and economic data, apart from their significance to medieval numismatic studies. For the medieval archaeologist and art historian, the wealth of mixed hoards of coin and bullion allows a chronological framework to be established for the deposition of different types of object and for the changing fashions in decorative art. There are inevitably numerous difficulties in determining the exact date of a hoard's deposition from its coin contents, but even the presence of a single identifiable coin in a hoard gives a date at or after which it must have been buried or lost.

It is important to remember that most accumulated or savings hoards have failed to come down to us because they were recovered by the rightful owners or their heirs. It is another matter with emergency hoards, those buried during a disturbance or in wartime by owners who were then prevented by death from regaining their property. The extent to which variations in hoard deposition and nonrecovery fluctuate according to times of unrest has been much debated. Certain documented periods of stress, such as the movement of the "Great Army" of Danes through England during the decade of around 865-875, the events leading up to the Irish defeat of the Vikings at the battle of Tara in 980, and the 1361 battle of Visby, are clearly marked in the archaeological record by the discovery of greater numbers of hoards than during other periods of the Middle Ages. On the other hand, the Kirial hoard, Denmark's largest, consisting of 81,422 coins weighing 33.5 kg., in two domestic iron cauldrons, was concealed within a year or two of 1365, when Denmark was not at war. There is, therefore, no simple equation to be made between widespread disturbance and hoard loss, when so many accidental and unknowable factors need also to be taken into account.

However, the very existence of hoards, whether deliberately hidden, ritually deposited, or accidentally lost, will always reveal something of the changing wealth and fortunes of an area, for where there is no wealth, there can be no hoards, even if increased wealth is not necessarily reflected in an increase in known hoards. All things considered, the medieval hoards of Scandinavia, including those from the Scandinavian Viking Age settlements in the East and West, reveal most strikingly the Vikings' great appetite for silver and their success in satisfying it.


James Graham-Campbell

[See also: Coins and Mints]

Hoaxes see Viking Hoaxes

Hölmganga ("island-going") was a duel or single combat governed by rules, in contrast to einungi, single combat not governed by rules. Despite this distinction, the two words are often used interchangeably. The rules governing hölmganga varied and were probably set by the combatants in many cases. Most of our information about hölmganga comes from Íslandingsásgarður, although we do not know how much of this source material is based on actual custom and how much is purely fiction. Occasions for hölmganga include the breakdown of court proceedings or a court judgment unacceptable to one party (Njáls saga, ch. 8; Egils saga Skálholt-Grimssonar, ch. 56; Ljósvetninga saga, ch. 30); quarrels over women (Kormáks saga, chs. 9-10; Gunnlaugs saga, ch. 11) or, according to the Swedish 13th-century Hednalagen ("Pagan Law"), insults to one's honor or mankind. In practice, hölmganga could constitute a form of legalized brigandage. Some men, including "berserks," traveled about challenging men to duels for their property and women (Egils saga Skálholt-Grimssonar, ch. 64; Grettis saga, ch. 19; Gísla saga, ch. 1). Landnámböck reports that several early settlers of Iceland won land in this way (S70; S86; H74; S389, H343). Duels are reported during the Conversion period at the end of the 10th century to test the relative merits of the pagan and Christian religions. A pagan poetess told the redoubtable Christian missionary Pangbrandr that the god Þórr challenged Christ to a duel, and Christ refused to fight (Njáls saga, ch. 102). Pangbrandr himself duelied with pagan (Njáls saga, ch. 101).

As the name implies, hölmganga was normally held on an island. In Iceland, it frequently took place at local þing-meetings and during the yearly álþingi, where a certain island in the middle of the Óxarár ("Axe River") was used for duels. The participants' cloaks or another piece of cloth might demarcate the fighting zone (Svarfícela saga, ch. 9). Kormáks saga (ch. 10) gives an elaborate description of the preparation of the site in the hólmunguholg ("law of the hölmganga," although it is unclear how widely it applied). A cloth five ells square was spread out and staked at the corners with pegs called þjóznar. Three-foot-wide furrows were dug around the cloak and bounded on the far side by cords. If a combatant set one foot outside the cords, he was said to be yielding; if he put both feet outside, he was fleeing (Kormáks saga). In Egils saga Skálholt-Grimssonar (ch. 64), the hölmganga takes place on an island inside a circle of stones. Hednalagen specifies that the combat should be held where three roads meet.

Weapons varied. According to Kormáks saga (ch. 14), the sword allowed in hölmganga could not exceed a certain length. Egill went to a hölmganga with an extra sword at hand, in case the first one broke (Egils saga Skálholt-Grimssonar, ch. 64). A contestant was allowed three shields (Kormáks saga, ch. 10). Combatants might have other men to hold their shields for them (Kormáks saga, chs. 10 and 14; Gunnaugs saga, ch. 11).

If a man failed to appear for the duel, he was publicly disgraced; he was called nötingi; a term implying the worst possible scorn and insult (Kormáks saga, ch. 21; Vatnsdeila saga, chs. 33-34; Hednalagen). According to Hednalagen, he lost the right to swear oaths or to bear witness. In Gísla saga (ch. 2), when the challenger was slow to appear, the challenger planned to make a wooden statue of him in a posture implying sodomy.

According to Egils saga Skálholt-Grimssonar (ch. 64), if the challenger won the victory, he received as his prize that for which he had issued the challenge. If he lost the fight, he might ransom himself at an agreed-upon price. If he was killed, all his possessions were inherited by his slayer. In Hednalagen, if the man who had first insulted his opponent felled him in the duel, he only had to pay half the normal compensation for manslaughter. If the other man succeeded in killing his insulter, he owed no compensation. Sometimes a duel concluded when the first wound was received, according to Kormáks saga (ch. 10), when the first blood fell on the cloak spread as an arena. The loser might buy himself off from the hölmganga by paying three marks of silver (Kormáks saga, ch. 10; Gunnaugs saga, ch. 11; Svarfícela saga, ch. 9) or a ring (Kormáks saga, ch. 23).

In Scandinavia, the duel was apparently not regarded as a
HÓLMGANGA

trial by ordeal or judgment of God, as it was in many parts of Europe. There are, however, possible traces of pagan rites in connection with hólmganga. According to Kormáks saga (ch. 10), the man who drove the tjiðsnur or pegs to hold down the cloth for an arena must look between his legs and hold his earlobes while speaking the spell that was later called the tjiðsnublót ("tjisnursacrifice"). There are reports of sacrificing an ox after a duel (Kormáks saga, ch. 22; Eglís saga, ch. 65). Einvígi also appears to have had pagan connections. According to Snorri Sturluson's Gylfaginning, the god Úllr was the patron god of einvígi.

Hólmganga was abolished in Iceland in the first or second decade of the 11th century, and in Norway in 1014.


Jesse L. Byock

Homilies (West Norse). The two principal collections of Old West Norse sermons, Stock. Perg. 4to no. 15 (the "Stockholm" or "Old Icelandic Homily Book") and AM 619 4to (the "Old Norwegian Homily Book"), both dated to around 1200, are among the oldest monuments of Old West Norse prose. They have eleven items in common, all based on earlier exemplars. Two of the sermons included in these collections, one for the feast of the dedication of a church (the so-called "Stave-church Homily"), and another for St. Michael's Day based on Gregory the Great's thirty-fourth gospel homily on the nine orders of angels, are also preserved in what is perhaps the oldest Icelandic MS fragment, AM 237a fol., written around 1150, and itself probably a remnant of a homily of considerable size. These sermons, at least, can be dated to the early part of the 12th century.

The ultimate provenance of both collections is obscure. Linguistic evidence suggests that AM 619 4to was composed in the vicinity of Bergen, Norway, perhaps at either of the Benedictine monasteries of Munkaflói or Sancti Albani on Selja, or at the Augustinian house of Jónskirka. Stock. Perg. 4to no. 15 appears to have been owned by a descendant of the scholarly cleric Gottskálk Jónsson of Glumhær (ca. 1524–1590) before it was purchased by the MS collector Jón Eggertsson for the Swedish College of Antiquities in 1682.

While the core of AM 619 4to is a cycle of homilies organized per circulum anni, the less orderly arrangement of Stock. Perg. 4to no. 15 reflects copying from several different collections. Both anthologies are homiletic handbooks rather than homilies in the strict sense of the word: In addition to expositions of the pericopes for particular feast days, they include admonitory and catechetical sermons to be read quando volueris, as well as commentaries on the Lord's Prayer and the service of the mass. Stock. Perg. 4to no. 15 also contains an allegorical interpretation of the eight church modes, a translation of part of pseudo-Ambrose's Acta Sancti Sebastiani, two versions of the Apostles' Creed, an Easter gospel harmony, excerpts from a Stephanus saga, and prayers to Christ and Mary. AM 619 4to preserves a complete translation of Alcuin's De virtutibus et vitís, "A Debate Between the Body and the Soul" probably based on the Old French poem Un samedi par nuit, a homily on St. Ólaf derived from a vita older than Eysteinn Erlandsson's Passio Olavi, and a vernacular version of the extended series of twenty Miracula Beatæ Olæ, which dates from the 1160s.

Whole and partial sources for many of the texts in AM 619 4to and Stock. Perg. 4to no. 15 have been identified among the works of Augustine, Maximus of Turin, Fulgentius of Ruspe, Caesarius of Arles, Gregory the Great, Bede, Ambrosius Auretus, Paschasius Radbert, Haymo of Auxerre, and Honorius Augustodunensis, but the Latin background of many sermons still awaits investigation. Much of the source material exploited by the Scandinavian homiliasts was available in standard homiliaries, such as those compiled by Alan of Farfa (before 770) and Paul the Deacon (ca. 790), but the homiliasts doubtless made use of other sorts of collections as well. Stock. Perg. 4to no. 15, for instance, contains a close translation of a penitential sermon that circulated in the "Pembroke-type" homily, a Carolingian preacher's anthology most fully represented by the 11th-century Anglo-Saxon MS Cambridge, Pembroke College 25. The Scandinavian translator may have had access to a version of this collection or to a florilegium containing material from it. Many of the sermons for which proximate sources have not yet been identified are very likely original though eclectic compositions based on reading and reminiscence. The dedication homily mentioned above, for instance, is built around a set of conventional allegorical interpretations of the parts of a church building, parallels for all of which can be found in various Latin sources, but which the Norse homilist adapts to a local setting, and applies to the wooden interior of a Scandinavian turf- or stave-church.

In order to make Christian teaching as accessible to their congregations as possible, the homiliasts adopted a simple, idiomatic prose style, occasionally adorned with native proverbs and similitudes from everyday life. Particularly in paraphrases of gospel passages, sudden changes of tense and shifts from indirect to direct speech are reminiscent of the terse, homespun narrative of the Íslendingasögur. The latinate diction and syntax characteristic of much later Old West Norse religious prose are, on the whole, not found in the early homilies, though in some passages (particularly in perorations) rhetorical devices, such as isocolon, antithesis, chiasmus, anaphora, alliteration, and word pairs, are exploited to achieve a high style. A few alliterative rhythmical sequences, such as the following catalogue of vices from Stock. Perg. 4to no. 15, can be scanned as verse: lygi oc lausung / oc Lester marger / sopon oc scialsemi / oc sketun optLEGa / gilding oc gæleysi / giâlp oc gáleysi / glepi ófallin / and many vices, / railing and gossiping / and frequently scorn (?), / boasting and heedlessness, / unbecoming merriment, / bragging and capriciousness, / that is the soul's harm").

Vernacular sermons and sermon fragments are also preserved in many other early Icelandic MSS. AM 677 4to (ca. 1200) contains ten homilies from what was probably a complete translation of Gregory the Great's forty Homiliae in evangelia. The miscellany of learned and theological writings in the AM 544 4to section of Hauksbók includes a sermon based on the Old English homily De falsis dis by Ælfric of Eynsham, a tract on the evils of sorcery
partially related to the same author’s *De auguris*, and a homily on the Ember Days also found in Stock. Perg. 4to no. 15 and AM 114 4to (mid-14th century). A spiritual interpretation of the rainbow version of the commonplace allegory of a ship and its parts in sermon form. A parallel catalogue of other Arnamagnæan MSS containing texts that have been tentatively identified as “homilies” is found in Knudsen 1961, col. 659.

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Houses.

1. RURAL. Our knowledge of rural medieval houses in Scandinavia is based mainly on archaeological data, but buildings from the high Middle Ages are still standing in some districts and can be studied in situ. Traditionally, the houses of farms and villages have been most intensively studied, and large-scale excavations carried out during the last decades have presented new information. But the research activity has been concentrated in certain regions, leaving other regions more or less blank. The rural architecture of the high and late Middle Ages, especially, is little studied from an archaeological point of view.

Recent research has shown that the development of the rural house was not a unilinear evolution from a simple to a more complex type of building. Scandinavia is divided into different ecological and economic zones with different resources, and societies with different economic and social structures can be found. The study of houses has undergone a change from an evolutionistic and diffusionistic view to a more fundamental one, taking into account local ecological and economic contexts. In recent years, much attention has also been paid to the social and symbolic value of a house and its effect on the construction, shape, and form of buildings (Stoklund 1980).

In parts of Sweden and Norway, permanent farms, often divided into several holdings, existed in the Roman and Migration periods, while in Denmark, large villages with more than twenty holdings have been found. A similar village-like settlement has recently been excavated in southwest Norway (Løken 1987). The individual farm or holding was, however, surprisingly similar in most of Scandinavia about A.D. 500. Normally, each farm had one main rectangular longhouse divided by partition walls into several rooms that had different functions. In most regions, the byre with cowsheds was placed at one end of the house, with the living rooms, and sometimes rooms for cooking and storage at the other end. The buildings were usually 5–7 m. broad, while the length may vary between 15 m. and 75 m., according to the farmer's social position. Many farms also had smaller houses with special functions, such as cooking rooms, smithy, byre, barn or storehouses, grouped around the main building (Carlsson 1979, Beskow-Sjöberg 1977, Hvass 1978, 1983, Løken 1987, Myhre 1982, Ramquist 1983).

The houses were always three-aisled, with two inner rows of wooden posts carrying beams that ran both transversally and longitudinally and that were fastened into a construction called grind in Norway and hafrem in Denmark. This construction was strong enough to support the roof, leaving the outer walls without a supporting function. The walls were built in different techniques. Hewn planks or logs standing side by side in wall ditches, called "stave-work," were common, as well as wattle-work or bulwark constructions. In some regions, outer walls of stone or turf were added for isolation purposes and to protect the woodwork. For outhouses or smaller farmhouses, walls made only of stone or turf have been found.

The grind- or hafrem-construction was in use in some parts of Scandinavia throughout the Middle Ages, and may even be found today (Gjørder 1982, Vensild 1982). Longhouses with a byre and different living rooms under the same roof were common in some districts until modern times. But new building techniques and a new layout of houses and rooms were introduced on other farms during the Viking and high Middle Ages. The late-medieval rural houses became more differentiated in Scandinavia, depending on geographical and social factors.

During the Migration Period, some longhouses had curved side walls, and this shape became a model during the Viking Age. On the larger farms or estates in Denmark, huge buildings or halls, more than 40 m. long and 10 m. broad, have recently been excavated. This type of house is well known from the Danish royal forts like Trelleborg and Fyrkat. Smaller buildings with curved walls were common also on ordinary farms in Norway, South Sweden, and Denmark, and the house type was introduced by Norse settlers on the North Atlantic islands: Shetland, the Faroes, Iceland, and Greenland. But these houses were used alongside the traditional rectangular longhouse, and the curve-sided house went out of use in the high Middle Ages (Hvass 1979, Johansen 1982, Albrethsen 1982, Myhr 1982, Næssmann 1984, Olsen and Schmidt 1977, Nielsen 1979).

Two other new trends in house construction should be pointed...
out: (1) On many farms, the byre was separated from the main building and was built as one of several freestanding houses. (2) Gradually, the grind-construction was replaced in the living rooms by reducing the number of posts, letting stronger wall constructions support the weight of the roof. One solution to this problem was to set up oblique supporting posts on the outside of the walls, as can be found on many Danish house sites from the Viking Age (Olsen and Schmidt 1977, Schietzel 1981), but which seldom occur on houses of the high Middle Ages. In Denmark, South Sweden, and West Norway, houses usually had walls built in bulwark or stave-work, while timber houses with cross-jointing were introduced in Sweden and East Norway in the late Viking Age and became common during the high Middle Ages (Hauglid 1980, Rosander 1986).

In Jutland, the longhouse with høyrem-construction still existed in the late Middle Ages, and this tradition from prehistoric times can be found up to the 20th century (Vensild 1982). Also, in South and West Norway, the longhouse with several living rooms and sometimes also a byre was common during the 18th and 19th centuries; this type of building has a continuous tradition extending back to the high Middle Ages and even to the Iron Age (Myhre 1982, Brekke 1982).

The old truisms that the introduction of proper timber buildings at the end of the Viking Age brought an end to the longhouse tradition still seems to be correct, however, for most parts of Sweden and Norway. Many of the medieval timber buildings are still standing, making it possible to admire their high-quality workmanship. They were specialized buildings, built, for instance, for living purposes only (stove/stuga), for storage (loft or bur), for cooking (eldhus), or for other purposes (Hauglid 1980, Rosander 1980). But in the western parts of Scandinavia and in the mountain valleys where timber was scarce, timber buildings were rarer, and cross-jointing was used for special rooms in longhouses only, on upper-class farms, and in the towns. Where longhouses were used, the different rooms had the same specialized functions as each separate timber building, and were called by the same names, for example, stove, eldhus, and bu (Brekke 1982).

At the end of the medieval period, two main building traditions may be found in Scandinavia: the western parts followed a general trend of the North Sea countries, where longhouses built in stave-work or bulwark were usual. The eastern parts, however, received their main influence from the eastern parts of Europe, and proper timber buildings were most common.


*Byørn Myhre*

2. URBAN. Houses in Scandinavian cities were of varied size and construction depending on their functions. Wood was mostly used, with an increasing use of stone and brick, especially in the later-medieval period, and in South Scandinavia. Monumental buildings, such as churches, monasteries, and kings’ and bishops’ palaces, were built mostly in stone, but such buildings will be excluded here, as the main subject of this study is the ordinary house for the city dweller.

From written sources in Norway, we have information about such houses as the living house (stue), kitchen house (eldhus), storehouse (bod), byre (fjøs), stable (fårhus), hayloft/barn (stall), and hayloft/barn (stall), together with rooms or buildings for commercial purposes, various crafts, general storage, and social meetings. These buildings were organized in a special layout forming a unit, with boundaries of fences or eaves drip-gaps between the buildings (Schia 1987a: 86). This unit, in Norway called bu (Brekke 1982), perhaps best translated into English as "townyard," consisted of a parcel of land, or plot, with several buildings of various functions and a courtyard; it was a densely built-up area of relatively limited dimensions when compared with the typical farm. These townyards could belong to a single owner, or be divided among two or more owners or into subordinate divisions as tenements, properties, or holdings.

There are no wooden houses of medieval age standing in Norwegian cities today. In Bergen, however, there are buildings from the 18th century that show the medieval layout of the townyards in the area of the Hanseatic wharf: (1) two rows of houses on either side of a courtyard or passage (Fig. 41) (Herteig 1985: 11), the "double-yard" (dobbeltgård), or (2) one row of houses and a passage/courtyard (Fig. 40, left), the "single-yard" (enkelgård). Archaeological excavations in the wharf area since 1955 have shown that this layout has a medieval origin (Herteig
40. 18th-century houses from the wharf area in Bergen. The two white buildings to the right form a "double-yard" with a gate in the middle. To the left is the fronthouse of a "single-yard." Photo: E. Schia.

41. The interior of a "double-yard" seen from the gate. Photo: E. Schia.
Archaeological remains and reconstruction of the so-called "door-house" in Bergen; second half of the 13th century. Reconstruction: H. Christie, A. Herteig, O. A. Svendsen.
43. The "open corner house" from Bergen; 12th century. Reconstruction: E. Reimers.

44. Reconstruction of excavated townyards in Oslo from the end of the 13th century. Reconstruction: Ø. Hansen, E. Schia.
45a–b. Typical single-storied living or kitchen house. Excavated remains and reconstruction from Oslo. Photo: D. Skre; reconstruction: Ø. Hansen, E. Schia.


47. Single-storied one-room house from Oslo; early 12th century. To the right, remains of house with central hearth. Photo: E. Schia.

49. Small building (?) with internal pit. In the back, a sill beam with remains of wattlework. Photo: C.D. Long.


51. Plan of wattle house from Lund divided into two rooms with oven in the corner; from ca. 1020.
52. Medieval stone building from Visby. Photo: Hans Hemlin.

53. Plan of two small sunken huts from Århus (11th century), one with a fireplace in the corner, roof-carrying posts, and vertical planks in the wall (bottom). The wall of the other was made of wattle, with a fireplace in the middle of the wall. After H. Helmuth Andersen.
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1959, Harris 1973). From the second half of the 13th century are the unique remains of a house with two doors at the ground level and two external galleries or pentices (sva/) on the upper floor (Figs. 42a-c). The reconstruction is based on a bracket and a corner post from the gallery, as well as on the remains of two doors and walls at ground level (Herteg 1959: 180, 1969: 40). Parallels to this construction are found both in Bergen in the 18th century and in medieval rural houses still standing (loft). The "door-house" shows a strong continuity in the Norwegian tradition of house building. From the mid-12th century is a house consisting of a wooden sill beam, vertical wall planks, and roof-bearing posts dug into the ground (Fig. 43). Strangely enough, the corners, which consisted of a pair of posts set apart, were left open. The construction is not primitive, and must be related to some special function (Reimers 1976: 104).

In medieval Oslo, excavations have been carried out 150-200 m. from the waterfront (Fig. 44), in an area dominated by activities different from the wharf (Liden 1977, Schia 1987). Typical here are single-story houses with two rooms (Figs. 45a-b), a good example of which was found in 1987, from the early 13th century. This building has a narrow room, an antechamber, with a wooden floor and entrance on the right side (Fig. 45a). From the narrow room, there was a door to the main room, with a threshold and mortises for the door posts (beitsk/). At either side of the door opening, as seen in the middle of the internal wall. In the right corner of the main room, there was a fireplace (oven?) of stone and clay with a corner post (ovnskall), which supported a short plank wall holding the stones of the fireplace/oven in position. The main room had a wooden floor, and against the wall (left side in Fig. 45b) were the remains of an earth-filled bench (moldenbank), with a vertical plank in the front. It was originally covered with planks. Such benches were made for sitting, and were sometimes used for sleeping, depending on the width of the bench. They also prevented drafts from the wall. Houses like this probably functioned as either a living house or a kitchen house. A few examples (11th century) of houses with a central hearth and an earth floor have also been found (Fig. 47, right). The general rule is, however, a fireplace in the corner, combined with a wooden floor. Excavations in Oslo have also revealed buildings with three rooms and probably two stories (Fig. 46), in addition to smaller single-story houses of one room only (Fig. 47). The latter were probably storehouses. A similar building has also been found in Tønsberg with an external gallery (Fig. 48).

Another type of building (ca. 2-3 x 3-4 m.) consisted of four roof-bearing corner posts dug into the ground, post-and-wattle walls, and a pit of varying depth inside (Fig. 49). They are found alone, and sometimes built up against buildings as shown in Figs. 45a-b (Schia 1987b: 110, 142). Such buildings (11th-13th centuries) have been found in Tønsberg, Trondheim (Long 1975: 206), and Oslo. Very often, the pits were filled with moss and human excrement, and have been interpreted as latrines. Normally, wooden houses were made of horizontal logs, notched at the corners (laft). In early-medieval times, however, houses were also post-built, with a stave-constructed wall. Wattle houses are rare in Norwegian cities, and occur only in early-medieval layers. From Trondheim, there is an example of a sill beam with small holes for the posts in the wattle construction, preserved together with the remains of wattle-work (Fig. 49, in the background).

In Sweden, various excavations have shown that wattle houses from the early-medieval period were quite common. In Lund, houses of different function and size have been found, including a longhouse (21 x 5.5 m.) of the same type as the Danish Viking Age fortresses (Fig. 50). Smaller houses, however, were more common, and the house shown in Fig. 51, probably used by a metalworker, was divided into two rooms, with an oven in the corner and benches filled with limestone along two of the walls in the living room. The other room probably functioned as an antechamber or storage room (Nilsson 1976: 55-7). The excavations in Lund also show a building technique developing throughout the Middle Ages: wattle houses were replaced by more solid post-built constructions, walls of standing timber, which in the early 13th century were replaced by timber-framed buildings and wall fillings of clay or brick. As in Norway, there are also examples of medieval log buildings with notched corners, as shown from excavations, for instance, in Uppland (Ehnh and Gustafsson 1984), Soderkoping (Tesch 1987), and Lodose (Ekre 1968). In the high Middle Ages, buildings begin to appear in stone, several examples of which are still standing in Stockholm and Visby. The Hanseatic wharf area in Visby was developed in the 13th century with stone buildings up to eight stories (Fig. 32), thus making Visby a kind of medieval "Nordic Manhattan."

From Denmark, our knowledge of urban houses is based mostly on surviving late-medieval brick houses, of various size and function, since there has been less archaeological excavation. In Århus, however, at a site close to the southern city wall, several small sunken huts from the 10th century have been recovered, each with different specialized functions: kitchen house and living house with fireplaces, and huts for various handicrafts, among which weaving is documented by concentrations of loom weights. These sunken-feature buildings, about 70 cm. below the contemporary surface, undoubtedly provided good protection against the cold winter temperature. In the 13th century, houses in Århus were still made of post and wattle, and from the 14th century, post-built constructions with vertical planks in the walls have been documented (Andersen 1971). From other Danish excavations, there are examples of sill stones on which timber-framed buildings have been constructed.

HRAFNKELS SAGA FREYSGODA 301


_Erik Schia_

[See also: Architecture]

_Hrafnkels saga Freysgoda_ ("The Saga of Hrafnkell, Freyr's God") was probably written in the late 13th century, toward the end of the most fruitful period in the history of the sagas. It is, however, extant only in late paper MSS, except for one leaf of a parchment MS that dates from the early 15th century.

The saga is novella-length (about 9,200 words), and its locale is the northeastern corner of Iceland. Hrafnkell is a powerful and ruthless chieftain (god) and large landowner who is a worshiper of the god Freyr. He kills a young shepherd, Einarr, for riding a horse, Freyfaxi, that Hrafnkell has forbidden anyone to ride because he has dedicated it to Freyr.

The boy's father, Porbjorn, demands satisfaction. Hrafnkell, who in the past has never paid compensation for his killings, makes him a very generous offer, but Porbjorn refuses, demanding sjáldómi, or the right to set his own terms. Everyone thinks he should accept Hrafnkell's terms, but he finally talks his nephew, Sámr, into taking his case to the Alþingi, the annual assembly in southwestern Iceland where lawsuits were settled, generally in favor of the side with the greater number of powerful adherents. Sámr and Porbjorn soon find that no one wishes to tangle with Hrafnkell, and their case seems hopeless until they gain the support of Porkell and Porgeirr, two brothers who are powerful chieftains from the northwest. With their aid, they are able to have Hrafnkell outlawed. After the Alþingi is over, they hold a "court of execution" at Hrafnkell’s dwelling, and give him a choice of death, or life stripped of his land and most of his possessions. Hrafnkell chooses life because, he says, he does not wish to desert his family.

Sámr takes over Hrafnkell's property, and Hrafnkell moves away to settle in a district to the east. By hard labor and good luck, he builds himself up again and becomes a chieftain even more powerful than he had been before. He gives up his worship of Freyr and becomes more amiable in his dealings. All is quiet for six years, when a relative of Sámr's, Eyvindr, returns from a successful merchant trip abroad and docks in the nearby fjord. Egged on by a servant woman to gain revenge, Hrafnkell wayslays Eyvindr and kills him after a hard battle. Sámr tries to prevent the killing, but gets there too late. The next morning, Hrafnkell captures Sámr and forces him to give up the farm and other property he took from him. Sámr, however, is allowed to return to his first residence. He hurries off to the west and asks Porkell and Porgeirr for their assistance in getting his property back, but they refuse, as they had warned him that not to kill Hrafnkell would have dire consequences. Sámr leaves in high dudgeon, returns to his farm, and never contests Hrafnkell's power.

Because of its length and a certain amount of verifiable historical fact and accurate geographical detail, _Hrafnkels saga_ had long been used as an example of a saga that could well have been orally transmitted. When it was discovered that some of the history and geography was incorrect, it became the center of the long-lasting controversy over the manner of composition and transmission of the sagas of Icelanders in general. Sigurður Ndal maintained that it was historical fiction of the 13th century. Hermann Pálsson argued that it was a kind of roman à clef, and that it was meant to exemplify Christian virtues. Neither of these positions can be maintained, as Öskar Halldórsson and Kratz have argued. It now seems evident that there must have been an oral component in the transmission. Kratz maintains that the large amount of alliteration in many sections of the work indicates that it was based on a lost narrative poem of the eddic type.

With its tight narrative structure and its deft characterization, the work stands among the best of the genre. If it has a message, it seems to be that only some are called to be leaders, while those who are must always exercise restraint.


[See also: Godi, Íslandssögur]
Hrafns saga Sveinbjarnarsonar see Sturlunga saga

Hrafns þáttir Guðrúnarsonar ("The Tale of Hrafns Guðrúnarson"), a short Old Icelandic tale, is a part of Magnúss saga góða. However, the tale appears in only one version, in the compilation Hulda-Hrokkinskinna from the 15th century, where it stands among five stories appended to Magnúss saga.

The first part takes place in Iceland. While Hrafns is still a child, his father is murdered by a neighbor. Guðrún, Hrafns mother, conceals the killing from her son. The truth is revealed to Hrafns when he grows up, and he kills the murderer's son. Hrafns is outlawed and barely gets away on a trading ship. When he arrives in Norway, he is permitted residence by the king's steward, Ketill, but is soon disgraced when he gets on too friendly terms with Ketill's wife and daughter. In the end, Hrafns is forced to kill Ketill, and King Magnús Óláfsson becomes the prosecutor of the case. Hrafns thereafter seeks reconciliation with all his might, and is brought back into favor by his achievement in a sea battle against the Danes. Advice given to Magnús in a dream by St. Óláfr also influences him. The main actors perform side by side with famous characters like King Magnus, and there are some striking resemblances to the Danish and Icelandic literature, around the beginning of the 13th century. All agree, however, that it is told with great zest and skill.


Tommy Danielsson

[See also: Heimskringla; Hrúð, Hulda-Hrokkinskinna; Outlawry, Sighvatr Póðarson, Þáttr]

Hrafnsmál see Sturla Póðarson

Hreiðars þáttir heimska ("The Tale of Hreiðar the Foolish") is found in Morkinskinna and Hulda-Hrokkinskinna, with stylistic variations but essentially the same plot. It tells of the deceptively simple Icelandic Hreiðar, who badgers his merchant brother into taking him to the court of Magnús inn gøði ("the good") Óláfsson in Norway. There he behaves strangely but manages to join the court. He is innocent of anger until a visit to Haraldr hardráði ("hard-ruler") Sigurðarson, whose retainers bully Hreiðar until he kills one. When Haraldr later confronts him, Hreiðar seems about to win over the king by making a metal pig for him, but he turns the gift into an insult by referring to Haraldr's father as Sigurð sýr ("sow"). Hreiðar escapes back to Magnús, composes and recites a poem for the king, receives awards, returns to Iceland, and becomes a great man.

Typologically, Hreiðar þáttir is a so-called utanleðar þáttir, because it describes an Icelandic's journey to Norway, encounter with a king (doubled in this instance), subsequent reward, and return to Iceland. The protagonist's improvement in social status typifies such þáttir. Hreiðar þáttir takes a special place, however, because of the implausibility of much of the narrative (Hreiðar is, for example, supernaturally swift of foot) and because of Hreiðar's verbal cleverness. About half of the text is dialogue, and Hreiðar wins every verbal encounter.

Many of the þáttir exhibit characteristics of folktales, and Hreiðar þáttir is no exception. Besides his speed of foot, Hreiðar possesses unusual strength, and his journey from buffoonery to social respectability after being tested by kings parallels that of many unpromising folktales heroes. The tale of "The Youth Who Wanted to Learn What Fear Is" (tale type 326 in Aarne and Thompson; no. 4 in Grimm) seems particularly close. In any case, it appears unlikely that the story could have any historical basis.

Occasional allusions in the language of Hreiðar þáttir have tempted some scholars to assign the story to the oldest layer of Old Icelandic literature, around the beginning of the 13th century. All agree, however, that it is told with great zest and skill.


John Lindow

[See also: Hulda-Hrokkinskinna; Morkinskinna; Þáttr]

Hrings saga ok Tryggva ("The Saga of Hringer and Tryggvi") is an Icelandic saga generally considered a riddarasaga. Only two 15th-century vellum fragments survive, AM 489 4to and AM 586 4to. The original probably dates from the 14th century. Hrings þitmar ok Tryggva were composed after the saga in the 16th century and probably tell the same story, although they put the stress on the skapram, or trial of the hero's temper. These þitmar could...
have existed by 1400. They, too, are fragmentary, at least in their earliest version. The *rímur* were in turn the basis of a prose saga and Tryggvi, but it soon ends, and Hringr marries Tryggvi's sister, Brynveig. But Tryggvi is treacherously murdered because of a false friend, and Brynveig dies of sorrow. Thus, since there is no longer any obstacle to the love between Hringr and Brynvei, they marry.

Supposing the *rímur* faithfully reproduce the plot of the saga, the text could be a useful tool to help solve the difficult and complex problem of defining the nature of the categories of sagas known as *riddarasögur*, *fornaldarsögur*, and *lygisögur*. *Hrings saga ok Tryggva* is not a real *riddarasaga*, despite the fact that the heroes are princely persons and that they express feelings that supposedly belong to the courtly sphere. There is no "knight," properly speaking, nor conventionally chivalric themes in this text. On the other hand, the plot is too simple and the adventures not sufficiently fantastic to allow us to speak of a *fornaldarsaga* in the best meaning of the term. Consequently, we here have a good instance of what King Sverrir is supposed to have called *lygisögur*, an intermediary between *riddarasögur* and *fornaldarsögur*.


[See also: *Fornaldarsögur*, *Lygisaga*, *Riddarasögur*, *Rímur*]

**HRÓLFS SAGA GAUTREKSSONAR** ("The Saga of Hrólfr Gautreksson") is a *fornaldarsaga* dating from the 13th century. It is preserved in numerous MSS, which form two main groups: a longer recension represented by AM 152 fol. and AM 390 b–c 4to, and a shorter and more original recension represented by SKB 7 4to. Although the first leaf containing the opening of the saga is missing, this early 14th-century MS offers the most reliable text. The *Hrólfs rímun Gautrekssonar* are composed on the basis of the last part of the saga.

The saga is structured around a fourfold bridal quest involving Hrólfr's father, Gautrek, Hrólfr himself, his brother, Ketill, and his blood-brother, Åsmundr. The saga begins with the courtship by King Gautrek of Gautaland of a Norwegian princess and the subsequent birth of their sons, Hrólfr and Ketill. The opening section, which presents a genealogical connection between the father of Hrólfr and *Gautreks saga*, is followed by three additional wooing expeditions that are decisive for the pattern of the text. The first courtship journey leads Hrólfr to Sweden, where he woos Princess Bornbjorg. However, she reveals herself as a Valkyrie-like heroine, whom he wins sexually after a hard battle. When Hrólfr accompanies Ketill to Russia on the second courtship journey, they meet a cannibal-giant who eats their followers and also threatens the brothers with death. They manage to blind the sleeping cyclops with an iron fork, and they escape with the magic sword Risanautr ("giant's companion"), which Hrólfr later uses considerably. He undertakes the third and most dangerous bridal quest to Ireland together with his blood-brother, Åsmundr. Before Åsmundr can win the daughter of the king of Ireland, they must undergo further adventurous trials, such as a fight with a lion, which, as in the previous bridal quests, reveals Hrólfr as a helpful, clever, and cautious hero. In general, the anonymous author emphasizes the characterization of the protagonist but without reaching the level of the art of the *Islandingsögur*. At the end of the saga, the author comments on the possibilities of the oral transmission of the saga material, and he addresses his audience directly with the following noteworthy reflection: "Whether this is true or not, let those who can, enjoy the story; but those who cannot, had better find some other amusement."

Although the saga attempts to capture the Viking atmosphere of the Scandinavian form old through names and scenes, it is difficult to classify the saga. Both the plot and the motifs give it the imprint of a fairy tale. In the threefold wooing expedition, one also finds the typical bridal-quest saga, which is interspersed with clear chivalric or romantic elements, such as courtly speech, the maiden-king, duels, and tournaments. The reworking of the Polyphemus material probably comes from a nonliterary version of the medieval European folk tradition that differs somewhat from Homer. The many similarities in motifs found within Norse literature, especially in *Orvar-Odds saga* and *HjRolifjôld*, have not yet been fully investigated by scholars.


**Hrólfs saga kraka** ("The Saga of Hrölf the Pole-ladder"), next to Völsunga saga probably the best known of the Fomaldarsögur, concerns King Hrölf and his twelve champions at the early Danish stronghold Hleifarňargårð (associated with modern Lejre), on Zealand in Denmark. Hrölf's importance in the legend and the saga, and the saga, The Old English poem *Chronicon Lethrense*, the early Danish stronghold Hleiõargarõr (associated with modern fomaldarsögur, concerns King Hrölf and his twelve champions at

Hrólfs saga kraka has been edited six times; of these editions, four are based upon AM 9 fol. The *editio princeps* (1737) used only the MSS then available in Sweden, which included Stock. Papp. 4to no. 17. The most recent diplomatic edition (1960) reproces AM 285 4to, which has been described by its editor as "a careful, sensible copy of the saga" and which "serves as well as any as a basis for reconstructing the common original."

Although the saga centers upon the Danish court, much of the action takes place elsewhere in the legendary landscape of northern Europe. *Hrólfs saga kraka* opens upon a dynastic struggle between Fröði and his brother Hálfdan, king of Denmark. Hálfdan is killed and his throne usurped. Although his sons Helgi and Hróar manage to escape, later to reclaim the throne, Helgi is the victim of an evil fate. His first sexual partner is Ólóf, a bellicose and unsubmissive queen who returns home to Germany immediately after her forced stay with Helgi. Her daughter, Yrsa, becomes Helgi's wife, and their offspring is Hrölf, the saga's hero. Helgi's third partner is an elf-woman, with whom he conceives Skuld, a sorceress later instrumental in the downfall of her half-brother, Hrölf, and his splendid court.

When her incestuous marriage with Helgi is revealed, Yrsa leaves Denmark to join her mother in Germany, where she is taken against her will to Uppsala as the wife of the Swedish king Aõil. Once his court is assembled, Hrölf and his men take revenge upon Aõil and reclaim the Danish patrimony lost at Helgi's death. Hrölf's court attains the height of splendor, but it is destroyed and Hrölf is killed when his sorceress half-sister, Skuld, wages war against him with the aid of supernatural creatures. Bôðvarr's brothers soon exact revenge upon Skuld and return the throne to Hrölf's descendants. Hrölf receives his nickname *kraki* ("pole, pole-ladder") from his servant Voggr, who is struck by the king's slender appearance.

Hrölf's saga kraka has attracted the attention of scholars interested in the legendary history of the North and in the "Bear's Son" folk motif. The section about Bôðvarr is taken as a significant example of the motif and an analogue of *Beowulf*. Bôðvarr's parents' names, Bjorn and Bera, mean "bear" and "she-bear," respectively, and his nickname "bjarki" means "little bear." His fight with the troll parallels Beowulf's victory against Grendel, and the addition of wings to the description of the monster appears to represent late contamination with the dragonslayer episode, of which there are numerous medieval Scandinavian examples.

Hrölf's saga kraka abounds in folktales and romance elements, including named swords and heirlooms; supernatural creatures, including elves, norns, berserks, sorcerers, and trolls; magical weapons; and enchantments. Its climax includes tragic-heroic speeches nearly as striking as those found in the Old English poem *The Battle of Maldon*. The list of Hrölf's twelve champions suggests awareness of Arthurian material, and the narrator's ascription of Hrölf's final defeat to his failure to worship the true Creator resembles similar passages elsewhere in medieval literature. *Hrölf's saga kraka* 's alleged authority for this inference is "master Galerus," or Galerus de Castellione, whose history of Alexander the Great was translated into Icelandic as *Alexanders saga* in the mid-13th century.


Jonathan D. M. Evans

[See also: Folklore; Fornaldarsögur; Old English Literature, Norse Influence on; Old Norse-Icelandic Literature, Foreign Influence on; Saxo Grammaticus; Skjaldunge saga; Snorra Edda; Ynglinga saga]

Hrómundar saga Gripssonar ("The Saga of Hrómundr Gripsson") dates from the 17th century and is almost certainly based on Griplur, late-medieval rimur on the same subject. The Griplur were probably based on a now-lost saga of Hrómundr Gripsson. This lost saga has been the focus of much scholarly debate. Interest centers on the description in Porgils saga ok Hallílda (ch. 10) of the entertainment at the wedding feast in 1119, where "Hrólf of Skálharnes told a saga about Hrongvíðr the Viking, and about Óláfr king of warriors, and the breaking of the mound of ráinn the berserk, and Hrómundr Gripsson, with many verses in it." The text further notes that "Hrólf composed this saga himself." Porgils saga cannot be dated more precisely than to the first half of the 13th century, but it was clearly composed long after the events described. If it does contain a genuine tradition about the Reykjahólar wedding, its account provides evidence for an oral stage in the development of fomaldarsögur well before such sagas were generally written down, and suggests that early fomaldarsögur were composed in a mixture of prose and verse. Even if the account in Porgils saga is based on a written saga circulating at the time rather than on older traditions, the lost Hrómundar saga remains one of the oldest written fomaldarsögur.

The summary of Hrómundar saga given in Porgils saga corresponds closely to the first half of Griplur. We can thus be reasonably sure that the lost saga contained the following: (1) introduction of King Óláfr and his men, including Hrómundr; (2) a battle at Elfsäsk between the king and Hrongvíðr, in which the latter is killed by Hrómundr; (3) while on a Viking raid with Óláfr, Hrómundr breaks into the grave mound of a certain Pálinn, kills him, and acquires treasure and a sword. Other episodes recounted in the Griplur that we cannot be sure were in the lost saga include: (4) Hrómundr is accused of seducing the king's sister, Svanhvit; (5) the king and his followers fight a battle against Hrongvíðr's brother, Helgi, and two kings; Hrómundr is wounded, but the battle is won; (6) Hrómundr marries the princess. The narrative is thus in the mainstream of the fomaldarsögur tradition.


Judith Jesch

[See also: Fornaldarsögur, Rimur, Sturlunga saga]

Hrómundar þátr halta ("The Tale of Hrómundr with the Limp") is a short, anonymous þátr incorporated into Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar in Flateyjarbók; it appears also in a condensed form in the Sturlubók version of Landnámabók composed by Sturla Þórdarson (d. 1284). An extract from the original text is transmitted also in Hauksbók. The date for the composition of the þátr can thus be established on the basis of the date of Sturlubók. According to Einar Ól. Sveinsson (1939), the language and style of the tale suggest an early date. Although the texts in Flateyjarbók and Sturlubók go back to a common original, there are divergences that can be attributed either to Sturla's editing or to his source. Only in Flateyjarbók is the narrative called a þátr.

The þátr tells the story of twelve Norwegian Vikings who steal horses from Icelandic farmers, including the farmer Hrómundr. Hrómundr decides to pursue the crime, but wants to come to a solution in a friendly way. The horse thieves pay little attention to Hrómundr's accusations and attack the Icelander at his farm. Hrómundr reveals himself as an undaunted hero in his fight against the Norwegians, in which he is finally killed. Hallstein, Hrómundr's son, then goes to Norway to King Óláfr's court, becomes one of his men, and falls by his side in the battle of Svöldr (Svold).

Within the context in which it appears in Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar in Flateyjarbók, Hrómundar þátr halta displays a moral meaning set against a political background. The political dimension of the þátr is reflected in Hallstein's relationship with King Óláfr, his baptism, and his death in the battle of Svöldr.

Elements of the þátr are mentioned also in Vatnsdeila saga (ch. 29) and Grettis saga (ch. 30). In all of the MSS of Landnámabók, Hrómundr's son is called Hásteinn. In the battle of Hvalsey, Hásteinn is the narrative called a þátr. Elements of the þátr are mentioned also in Vatnsdeila saga (ch. 29) and Grettis saga (ch. 30). In all of the MSS of Landnámabók, Hrómundr's son is called Hásteinn. In the battle of Hvalsey, Hásteinn is the narrative called a þátr. Elements of the þátr are mentioned also in Vatnsdeila saga (ch. 29) and Grettis saga (ch. 30). In all of the MSS of Landnámabók, Hrómundr's son is called Hásteinn. In the battle of Hvalsey, Hásteinn is the narrative called a þátr.


Stefanie Würth

[See also: Flateyjarbók, Grettis saga; Haukbók; Landnámabók; Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar, Pátrr, Vatnsdeila saga]

Hryggjastykki see Konungsögur

Hrynhenda see Arnór Pórörson jarlaskáld

Hugsvennsmál ("The Speech of the Wise-Minded One") is an anonymous loose rendering in some 148 strophes of the Disticha (or Dicta) Catonis, a collection of didactic Latin couplets in which a father gives advice to his son, dating from the second or third century AD. The Disticha were widely celebrated throughout Europe in the Middle Ages and later, and translated into many vernacular tongues. In Iceland, they were known at least by the 12th century; one of the couplets is quoted with a prose translation in the First Grammatical Treatise. The use of Hugsvinnr in the Icelandic title is probably a rendering of the Latin adjective catus 'shrewd,' which the translator apparently associated with the name Cato. The popularity of Hugsvinnsmál in Iceland is evidenced by the large number of surviving MSS, of which forty-two are known, although most are paper MSS from the 17th century onward, and some other MSS; the order of the strophes also varies somewhat in the MSS and hence in modern editions. The poem's style is plain to the point of flatness, and its vocabulary has been described by Gering as meager. The text presents no serious problems of interpretation. The meter, as usual in Old Norse didactic verse, is íjóðaháttr. The translation is very free, and, although the Latin original is pagan, as the translator observes in his introductory passages. Two of the other sources for three complete Hulda-Hrokkinskinna are not found elsewhere, while Morkinskina and Gallinskina, the latter two are known to us in 16th- and 17th-century transcripts, while only stray fragments are left of the originals. In 1599, the sagas of the kings of Norway were translated into Danish by the Norwegian cleric Peder Clausson Friis; the last third of Heimskringla was certainly translated either from the very MS that was used by the compiler of Hulda-Hrokkinskinna or from a descendant of it.

The name Morkinskina designates the MS GkS 1009 fol., and, by extension, the version of the sagas of the kings of Norway preserved almost completely in this MS, and partly or fragmentarily in two other MSS, notably the more recent part of Flateyjarbók (15th century). Genetically, the Morkinskina text used by the compiler of Hulda-Hrokkinskinna was more closely related to the more recent part of Flateyjarbók than to GkS 1009 fol. Stylistically, the Morkinskina text in Hulda-Hrokkinskinna differs considerably from that of both the other MSS of Morkinskina, as a result of a revision that seems to have been undertaken around 1300 and that affected the vocabulary as well as the narrative technique. This revision aimed at achieving a slightly "florid" style and a stricter chronological order of presentation.

While the main constituents of the compilation are Morkinskina and Heimskringla, Hulda-Hrokkinskinna draws on other sources for three complete þættir and a number of shorter passages. Two of the þættir, Porgrimr Játtr Hallasonar and Hrafn Játtr Gudrúnarsonar, are not found elsewhere, while Gísli Játtr Illugasonar has parallel texts in the three versions of þöns saga helga.

Hulda-Hrokkinskinna is the name usually applied to the version of the sagas of the kings of Norway between approximately 1035 and 1177 contained in the medieval Icelandic MSS Hulda ("the secret [vellum]"; AM 66 fol., 14th century) and Hrokkinskinna ("the wrinkled velvet"; GkS 1010 fol., 15th century). This version is a compilation based on Morkinskina and the relevant part of Heimskringla, with a number of additions from other works. The compilation was made after 1268, perhaps after 1280, but hardly much later than 1300, from MSS no longer extant. Hulda and Hrokkinskinna are sister MSS, derived directly or indirectly from the lost original compilation.

The MSS of Heimskringla fall into two main classes, the "Kringla" class and the "Jofraskinna" class. The MS that was available to the compiler of Hulda-Hrokkinskinna belonged to the latter class, together with such MSS as Eirspennill, Jofraskinna, and Gullinskina; the latter two are known to us in 16th- and 17th-century transcripts, while only stray fragments are left of the originals. In 1599, the sagas of the kings of Norway were translated into Danish by the Norwegian cleric Peder Clausson Friis; the last third of Heimskringla was certainly translated either from the very MS that was used by the compiler of Hulda-Hrokkinskinna or from a descendant of it.

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HUNGRVKÁ: ("Hungar-waker"), named by its anonymous author in its preface, survives in six 17th-century transcripts and later copies of these. The primary MSS represent three versions: (1) AM 380 4to, AM 379 4to (B); (2) AM 205 fol., AM 375 4to, AM 378 4to (C); (3) AM 110 8vo (D). Probably none of these versions preserves the medieval original. The text is short, about 7,800 words, and gives an account of the first five bishops of Iceland in the southern diocese of Skálholt: ísleifr Gizurarson (bishop 1055-1118), Magnús Einarsson (bishop 1134-1148), Porlákr Rúnólfsson (bishop 1118-1133), Magnús Einarsson (bishop 1134-1148), and Klaðr Þorsteinsnson (bishop 1152-1176). Its final paragraph seems intended to link it to a following life of St. Þorlákr Pórársson. Because of references to the sanctity of St. Þorlákr (acknowledged 1198) and of St. Jón Ógmundarson (acknowledged 1200), and references to Gizurr Hallsson (d. 1206) as immediate informant, the text was probably written in the first or second decade of the 13th century, but perhaps after 1206. It was probably written at or near Skálholt, since it may use documents likely to have been preserved in the cathedral archive, particularly a copy of a papal letter. It used Isleningabók as a primary source concerning Bishop Ísleifr and Gizurr, although the author probably also had access to other material, since it gives supplementary material that sometimes conflicts with Isleningabók. It also used material derived, probably indirectly, from Adam of Bremen's Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum. It is the most important primary historical source for the other three bishops with whom it deals, although there is no certain evidence that other medieval texts used it as such. However, Audunar þatter vestriðraka, preserved in Morkinskinna, may employ motifs and wording taken from it.

The text has a fairly consistent method of presentation. It gives the origin and person of each bishop, a detailed and dated account of his consecration, a general account of his personal qualities and any specific ways he enriched or enlarged the establishment at Skálholt, a detailed account of his death, and a list of historical memoranda of events, mostly deaths, abroad and in Iceland during the bishop's episcopacy. These memoranda are normally undated but given in chronological order.

The style of the text is distinctive. Sometimes rather ornate, it makes use of sententious moral comments and proverbs. Its descriptions tend to be formulaic, and are often composed of alliterating pairs of adjectives. Because of close similarities of structure and style, and shared peculiarities of chronology, it is normally considered that the author of Hungrvaka also composed Páls saga biskups. He may also have composed a number of passages preserved in þorláks saga helga.
later Middle Ages occasionally of iron. Traps for squirrel and other fur animals fell over the animal. Traps with automatically launched arrows or spears were also used. Likewise, trees bowed to the ground with a rope around the top functioned as snares.

The right to hunt generally belonged to the owner of the land. In Norway and Sweden, the best hunting grounds were in the commons (almenningar). They included the mountain plateaus of southern Norway and most inland areas of northern Norway and northern Sweden, where great flocks of reindeer lived. The commons also included large forests for fur and elk hunting. Here, hunting was free for all, but huts, walls, or trenches for hunting purposes belonged to the persons who had built them. If they were unused for ten years, anyone could repair them and start using them without compensation.

In many European countries, princes and nobles reserved hunting for themselves. In Scandinavia, this restriction was a late development. In the 13th century, the Danish king reserved certain geographic areas for his own hunting. Both the Danish and Swedish kings issued several regulations to reserve deer hunting for kings and nobles. It is not clear how far this policy really succeeded in limiting the hunting rights of peasants before 1500. In Norway, there were no such limitations to the peasants' hunting rights; there were fewer nobles and more game.

In Sweden, the peasants were legally bound to participate in the hunt for wolves, bears, and foxes at certain times of the year. The peasants of a certain district spread over a large area and chased the wolves into a net or a trap. These publicly organized chases are not known in Norway and Denmark before 1500.

The majority of the hunters were farmers who received most of their income from agriculture. Hunting gave them an extra supply of cash or meat. In Denmark and southern Sweden, professional hunters are found only at the courts of the great landowners. In northern Norway and Sweden, however, the Lapps drew most of their income from agriculture. Hunting gave them an extra 1300), and (ca. 1130) for their furs in the eastern Baltic, particularly Novgorod. Norwegian merchants produced in Scandinavia. Gotland merchants bought their furs from the Lapps then started to keep large herds of domesticated reindeer. To a text with the same order of the poems as in the Codex Regius (Klingenberg 1983). Then, it would be necessary to assume that AM 748 4to, which contains both stanzas, goes back to a text with the same order of the poems as in the Codex Regius of the Poetic Edda, which is improbable. Pörr's fishing expedition forms the middle of the poem, even though it is just a myth among others, around which the other episodes and the frame plot are concentrically arranged (Glendinning 1980).

**Húsdrápa** see Úlf Uggason

**Hymiskviða** ("The Lay of Hymir") is one of the mythological eddic poems, which is also extant in AM 748 4to (ca. 1300), and which in a frame plot pieces together a number of myths concerning Pörr. In order that Ægir can brew beer for the gods, Pörr and Tyr go to the giant Hymir, who alone has command over the great beer cauldron. In the evening, Pörr eats two of the giant's oxen, so that food must be brought in for the next day. With an ox-head as bait, which Pörr has torn off one of the giant's animals, Pörr and Hymir go fishing. Hymir catches two whales at the same time, but Pörr lures the Midgardsormr ("World Serpent"), which snatches at the ox-head; Pörr raises it with force to the surface and hits it on its head with his hammer, but then the "fish" sinks back into the ocean. Contrary to the Snorra Edda, the poem says nothing about the fact that Hymir, out of fear, cuts Pörr's fishing line before he could give the serpent its final blow. After further displays of strength, Pörr carries away the cauldron. On the way, he kills giants, who pursue him. Now Ægir's drinking bout can begin.

Bragi and other skalds gave accounts of Pörr's fishing expedition; Snorra Edda gives a detailed description. In addition, there are pictorial representations of the story on stones: Ardre VIII (Gotland), Altuna (Sweden), Herdum (Denmark), and the stone of Gosforth (Cumberland). The First Grammatical Treatise alludes to the stealing of the cauldron. The attempt to prove an old connection between Pörr's fishing expedition and the stealing of the cauldron with the help of the Indra myth (stealing and drinking of the Soma and the following fight against the Chaos monster) remains problematic. The cup test (Pörr smashes a cup on Hymir's head) has a striking parallel in the Swedish tale about Knöts. In this fusion of myths about Pörr, Hymiskviða would appear to be relatively young. The fact that Snorri does not mention Hymiskviða is no argument for the theory that the poem was composed later than Snorri's Edda (Reichardt 1933: between 1225 and 1250). It may have come into existence in the first half of the 12th century (Del Zotto 1979).

The account of Pörr's encounter with the Midgardsormr reveals borrowings from skaldic poems, and takes on cosmic dimensions reminiscent of the cosmic processes in the gods' final battle in Völuspá (esp. st. 52, perhaps also st. 57). Pörr's greed (st. 15) has a parallel in Prymskviða (st. 15). Apart from the traditional eddic stylistic features, Hymiskviða distinguishes itself by a wealth of kennings, variations, and hapax legomena, some of which are very archaic; and also by a strikingly small proportion of direct speech. Many words never or rarely appear in poetry, but in prose or modern Icelandic. Metrical and syntactical peculiarities suggest skaldic influences (Del Zotto 1979). The poet was concerned with welding together individual episodes, although he did not succeed very well; the vague mention of the lameness of one of Pörr's goats (st. 37f.) seems quite unmotivated. Perhaps both stanzas are an interpolation, and were added by the redactor of the collection of poems in order to create a transition to the following poem, Lokasenna (Klingenberg 1983). Then, it would be necessary to assume that AM 748 4to, which contains both stanzas, goes back to a text with the same order of the poems as in the Codex Regius of the Poetic Edda, which is improbable. Pörr's fishing expedition forms the middle of the poem, even though it is just a myth among others, around which the other episodes and the frame plot are concentrically arranged (Glendinning 1980).

**Araved Nedkvítna**


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Hyndluljóð is a narrative about a lawsuit between Óttarr and a certain Angantyr. The main part of Hyndluljóð is a lay composed. However, the pedigree is rather complicated and contradictory. At the end of the lay, Freyja demands that Hyndla give Óttarr the ale of memory, but the giantess mixes it with poison. Freyja is not, however, frightened by this deed, because she asks the gods to help Óttarr.

Stanzas 29–44 of Hyndluljóð are known as Völuspa in skamma ("The Short Prophecy of the Sybil"), an imitation of the Völuspá; and stanza 33 is cited in Snorra Edda.

The majority of scholars date Hyndluljóð to the 12th century. Some of them see in it the influence of Christianity. The living man who visits the otherworld is a character from medieval Christian visions; Hyndla seems more like a witch than a giantess.

It is possible to conjecture that certain judicial representations of the Northmen could be discerned under the sacral mythopoetical visions in Hyndluljóð. We need to distinguish between the two layers in the genealogical enumeration recited by the ecstatic Hyndla, Óttarr's pedigree, which includes five generations of his forefathers, and subsequent extensive genealogies of the noble kin, which include the tales and legends of heroes and heathen gods. Thus, the authentic pedigree passes into myth and prophecy about the coming Ragnarok, the destruction of the gods. Óttarr had to know his genealogy to defend his inheritance rights to his paternal estate just as Northmen did when they litigated in the law court on the matter of the dæli right. It seems permissible to interpret the inclusion of Óttarr's pedigree in the legend that unites illustrious clans of Skjöldungar, Skillingar, Óðingar, Þongljar, hiersar, and hildar into one consanguineous circle of "the best men in Míøgarðr" (Middle Earth, the world of humans) as a tendency inherent in ancient mentality to mythologize and poeticize property relations. Óttarr asserts his rights to his paternal estate with the help of Freyja, whose protection he enjoys, whereas the giantess does not regard him with favor, but is compelled to disclose his descent to him. It is possible to surmise that the giantess does not want Óttarr's victory in the lawsuit, because by seeking his inheritance right he defends eo ipso the cause of the whole Míøgarðr, for the best people in Míøgarðr are his kinsmen. Thus, Míøgarðr, the world of humans, friends of Æsir, versus Útgarðr, the world of giants and monsters, represents the disposition of enemy forces forming the basis of Hyndluljóð. Óttarr's defense of his property rights is treated as if raised to the level of the world conflict depicted in Völuspá. Asserting his dæli right, Óttarr (if such a man really existed and fought a lawsuit about landed estate) had to be conscious of the fact that he defended the legacy of all his forefathers, beginning with the old heroes and his patron Æsir. Poetization and mythologization of the property relations shed new light on their essence.
rians, in part because Ari Porgilsson, in his *Islendingabók*, chose to give a synopsis of the same dispute that provides the plot of the saga. Ari's account differs in some details of genealogy and other matters, but the broad account is the same. For Ari, the significance of the story is that the difficulties of prosecuting a killing case provided the catalytic incident for a constitutional reform that led to the division of the country into quarters; for the saga author, the constitutional reform is, according to one MS tradition, of no concern at all. Another stemma of MSS incorporates Ari's account of the reform verbatim, but even in this version national political issues are subordinated to local politics and disputes, and to the moral and practical problems of transferring fodder in time of need. The saga account exhibits the effects of an authorial reworking of historical events. Commentators believe the saga account to be intimately connected to the furor caused by a provision in the *Jótsbók* law code that mandated forced sales of hay in hard times from those who had surpluses to those in need. The earlier laws of the Icelandic commonwealth had no such provision. If the commentators are correct, the saga must have been written sometime after the introduction of *Jótsbók* in 1281. Such an inscription assumes that the norms governing the distribution of food and fodder during famine times were unproblematic prior to 1281 and thus incapable of giving rise to sagaworthy disputes. There is, however, no reason to believe that the relations between haves and have-nots in times of hardship were any less tense when the haves possessed the formal legal entitlement to the surpluses. The saga's *terminus post quem* simply cannot be dated very confidently.

The plot of the saga follows the vagaries and transformations of a dispute originated in a failed attempt to purchase hay during a hard winter. Blund-"sleep")-Ketill Geirsson, a wealthy and popular farmer, attempts to purchase hay on behalf of his impoverished tenants. Ari Porgilsson, who is blessed with substantial supplies, Pôrir counters generous offers for his surpluses with surly refusals, leading Blund-Ketill to force a sale simply by expropriating the surplus and leaving behind a fair price. After being rebuffed by two chieftains, Arngrimr and Tungu-Oddr ("Oddr from Tunga"), Pôrir succeeds in buying the support of Oddr's son, Porvaldr, to help prosecute his claim against Blund-Ketill. The summoning leads to disaster. Amgrimr's son, Helgi, is killed by a Norwegian merchant lodging with Blund-Ketill, and Pôrir manipulates this misfortune by using it to provoke the summoning party into burning Blund-Ketill in his home. The saga concludes with an account of how Tungu-Oddr's son woos and marries Gunnarr's second daughter contrary to the wishes of both his and her father.

The saga has long been noted for its exemplum-like qualities. Blund-Ketill's virtue and Pôrir's meanness approach the allegorical. The saga author also derives humorous effects and plot imper- tus from the commonplace of asking visitors for the latest news. But allegory never deflects the saga from the social and cultural constraints imposed by the disputing process. Like so many of the Islendingasögur, *Hönsa-Pórís saga* deals with the competition for power among chieftains and *hófstr* ("householders") and how this competition is mediated by feud and legal action.

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**W. I. Miller**

[See also: *Islendingabók*, *Islendingasögur*]

**Hofðulausn** see Egill Skallagrímsson

**Hofðulausn** see Óttarr svarti
Iceland was the last country in Europe to be settled. Major sources like Ari fróði’s ("the learned") Islendingabók, from about 1130, and Landnámabók, from about the same time but preserved in much later versions, provide only one possible interpretation of the oldest history. Settlement is said to have begun about 870, and these oldest sources were not written down until 250 years later. No traces of human habitation have been found that can with certainty be dated before the middle of the 9th century.

The Norse colonization of Iceland, invariably referred to in early sources as landnám, "landtaking" or "land claim," can be regarded as an extension of the Viking settlements in the Scottish islands and elsewhere in the British and northern isles.

Before the Norse settlement, some Irish hermits, papar, had lived there for a while. Dicuil, a 9th-century Irish scholar, states in his geographical treatise De mensura orbis terrae (ca. 825) that such hermits had sailed north to the island shortly before the end of the 8th century. Depending on ancient Greek and Roman works of geography, Dicuil identified the island as Thule, a term used by classical geographers to designate a country in the extreme north. The papar are mentioned also in Islendingabók and Landnámabók. According to Ari, they left Iceland when the Norse settlers arrived. They did not want to live among heathens.

Most of the settlers (landnámssmen) came directly from western Norway, although some evidently sailed from the Norse settlements in the British and northern isles, where they had mingled with the indigenous Celtic and Pictish population. Some of the settlers brought Celtic slaves with them. The question of the Celtic element in the Icelandic population has been a matter of controversy. However, anthropological research has shown that Icelandic blood types suggest a much closer affinity with the Celts than with the Norwegians. Consequently, it seems safe to assume that people of Celtic stock must have represented a considerable part of the original population.

The Norse expansion west over sea in the Viking period has been linked with an increase in the population of Norway from the 8th century onward. Love of adventure and lust for plunder must have been contributory factors, as well as trade, which became increasingly important. Iceland was, however, situated far away from the goals of the Viking raids, and the colonization was, as the word landnám indicates, a search for land. The medieval Icelandic literary tradition gave as one of the reasons for the settlement of Iceland the oppression, oftríki, of Haraldr hárfagri ("fair-hair") Hálfdanarson in his attempts to unify Norway politically. Immigration probably increased after Haraldr’s victory in the battle on Hafsfjörðr toward the end of the 9th century and his alleged raid on the Viking settlements in the west shortly afterward. But King Haraldr cannot be responsible for the entire immigration to Iceland. Correspondence in time may have created an impression of a causal relationship. The migration from the western and northern isles has been explained as the consequence of the dense population, if not overpopulation, in the islands, at the end of the 9th century. Certain defeats suffered by the Vikings (e.g., at Dublin in 902) may serve to explain why some of the Norsemen there chose to immigrate to Iceland.

Population and settlement figures. According to Islendingabók, Iceland was fully settled, albyggt, within sixty winters, "so that there was no further settlement made afterward." These sixty years (870–930) are called landnámssól, the time of settlement. It was probably Ari’s opinion that all the land had by then been claimed, and that the settlement had the same extent as at the time he wrote Islendingabók. The leading settlers acquired vast areas and established big farms where they engaged in extensive farming, particularly animal husbandry. The density of settlement increased after 930, and it should be noted that some of the largest estates in the country were not founded until the 10th, or even the 11th, century. By the beginning of the 12th century, the settlement pattern that has survived to our times had become firmly established. As in Norway, the salient feature is the wide scattering of individual farms, each being located some distance away from its neighbors. There were never any villages in medieval Iceland. The farms were concentrated near the coast, in the interior lowlands, and in the river valleys. The interior plateau has always been uninhabitable. Few farms are situated higher than 200 m. above sea level; most of them are below the 100-m. contour. In the earliest period, farms were established up to about 450 m. above sea level, especially in the northeast, where the climate is relatively dry. Climatic conditions at that time were generally more favorable than in later centuries. Between two-fifths and three-quarters of the land may have been covered with grass, as compared with a little more than one fifth now. According to Ari, Iceland was covered with wood from the mountains to the coast at the time of the settlement. Scientific investigations seem to confirm that large parts
of the country were covered with trees and scrub birch, which the settlers used for the grazing of animals and for firewood, or burned off to clear pastures. Continuous grazing on loose, sandy ground in a climatically marginal area soon resulted in the reduction of grassland. After 1100, erosion increased noticeably. Conditions were made worse by the gradually deteriorating climate from the last decades of the 12th century onward.

Landnámabók mentions about 400 settlers and about 600 farms. A number of these, to be sure, were abandoned almost immediately. On the other hand, Landnámabók provides information about only a fraction of all the settlers and farms, and there is no solid basis for estimating the size of the Icelandic population at any time in the Middle Ages. The census of 1703 gives the first reliable information about the total population. At that time, the country had about 50,000 inhabitants, divided into about 8,100 households. There were about 4,000 registered farms, lögbyli, which made up the core of the medieval settlement. The lögbyli of 1703 were divided into about 5,900 farmer holdings, bændabyli, units of production run by individual families. In addition, there were about 1,500 households of smallholders and fishermen, and about 750 households were lodgers. The average family size on a farmer holding was six in 1703; the households of smallholders and fishermen were much smaller.

The figures of 1703 may be compared with two pieces of information on taxpayers in the Middle Ages. Íslendingabók states that around 1100 the bishop of Skálholt had a count made of the farmers who were to pay pingfararkaup to the godar, a tax intended to finance the trip to the Alþingi. The total number came to about 4,560. In 1311, there were 3,812 taxable farmers. These are minimum figures to which may be added at least 15 percent nontaxable farmers. The number of farmers on ordinary holdings cannot, in any case, have exceeded 6,000. The few contemporary hints do not indicate that the size of medieval households differed from those of 1703. Even if we increase the average number of persons in single holdings to seven to eight and in double or multiple holdings to six to seven, the medieval population would not exceed 40,000. It is unlikely that it ever exceeded 50,000, and it was possibly much lower. There are several indications that the maximum was reached in the late 14th century or around 1400. Viewed against this background, a recent estimate of about 80,000 inhabitants around 1200 appears rather unrealistic, and even higher earlier estimates can safely be dismissed.

In the high Middle Ages, there is no indication of overpopulation or pressure on the natural resources, as has been assumed in contemporary Norway and other parts of Scandinavia. The individual farm, usually a one-family holding, was predominant. Double holdings, tvibýli, existed during the time of the Free State and later, but we do not know how common they were. On such holdings, the outlying meadows as well as the home field and the buildings were shared by the two families. Multiple holdings may also have existed, although there is no contemporary mention of them.

Iceland was spared when the Black Death reached the other Scandinavian countries in the years 1349–1350. But "The Great Plague," plágan mikla, ravaged the country from 1402 to 1404. It is not known how large a part of the population died. Estimates range from one-third to two-thirds. About the middle of the 15th century, the population had probably reached its former level, since the country avoided further outbreaks of the plague until the years 1494–1495, when "The Last Plague," plágan stôari, ravaged the land. The mortality rate during this plague is also unknown. Since the plague did not become endemic, there was neither permanent desertion of farms nor an agricultural crisis, as in large parts of Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. Abandonment appears to have been temporary and confined to farms in the interior and marginal settlements. Farms could also be deserted because people were attracted to the fishing areas.

Economy. The settlers brought with them domestic animals, particularly sheep, cattle, goats, and horses, and from the beginning animal husbandry was the principal occupation. What the farms yielded, however, failed to provide all the food that was needed, so the limited natural resources available had to be exploited to the full, including fishing and fowling. To compensate for the lack of suitable wood for building purposes, driftwood was gathered assiduously. The major part of the production was consumed domestically, and the goal was as much self-sufficiency as possible. Up to about 1300, the main emphasis was on animal husbandry and some agriculture, with fishing as an additional food supply in the coastal areas, all of which influenced the pattern of settlement. Most of the major farms, including the episcopal sees of Skálholt and Hólar, were situated a good distance from the coast. It is usually claimed that cattle breeding was more extensive during the high Middle Ages than in later centuries. Increased sheep raising is said to have followed the deterioration of the climate from the last decades of the 12th century, which made it more difficult to maintain large herds of cattle. The depopulation after the plagues probably had the same effect. Sheep raising required less labor, although it was not until about 1500 that it became the principal occupation of Icelandic farmers. The production of homespun, vadmál, remained important in the high Middle Ages, not only for domestic use, but also for export abroad, as was the case with furs and hides. At least from the 12th century onward, homespun, together with kúgildi, the value of a cow, became a legal unit of value, six ells of vadmál being the equivalent of an ounce of silver.

Climatically, Iceland is marginal for the purpose of raising crops. But the original settlers were used to that kind of agriculture, and the favorable climate during the first part of the high Middle Ages (before ca. 1150–1200) made it possible to grow barley, and to a lesser extent oats. The deterioration of the climate made growing crops impossible in the north, but it was more reliable in the south and west, and increased temporarily at the end of the 14th century. However, cereals were always scarce and had to be imported.

The decline of agriculture was presumably caused by factors other than the deterioration of the climate. In the early 14th century, Icelandic dried fish entered the European market, and the country received grain and grain products in exchange. Fish became a lucrative export. With the growth of urban life and trade in Europe, together with stricter observation of religious fasting, the demand for dried fish increased steadily. As a result, coastal farms in Iceland, particularly those with natural harbors, were much sought after by religious houses and wealthy landowners alike. As early as the first half of the 12th century, the bishop of Skálholt had bought up the Westman islands, probably the largest fishing settlement in Iceland. At the end of the 13th century, the monastery of Helgafell gained control of the best coastal fishing farms at the extreme end of Snæfellnes. The success of fishing influenced the pattern of settlement around Faxaflói and Breiðafjörður, and especially in the
Vestfirðir, which until then had been a poor, sparsely populated, isolated area. In the course of a few decades, the settlements there grew in importance economically and, before long, politically. This growth is clearly indicated by the fact that the number of tax-paying householders in Vestfirðingafjörður ("quarter") in 1311 shows a considerable increase in the figure from about 1100, although their number in the other quarters had either declined or remained unchanged. Strategically located major farms in Vestfirðir and around Breiðafjörður attracted much greater wealth than ever before. Still, there is no reason to believe that fishing was more important than agriculture. But the fishing stations and other coastal settlements attracted labor, and the degree of self-sufficiency decreased. The Danish-Norwegian monarchy also gradually acquired an important source of the growing prosperity of the coastal regions of the west and northwest in that period. The Danish-Norwegian king tried in vain to keep the Icelanders from trading with the English, and occasionally there was open conflict. From about 1440, the king capitated and allowed the English to engage in trade in return for a tax, which was not always paid. The English were in charge of most of the Icelandic trade until about 1540, when the Hanseatics, who, since the end of the 15th century, had competed with the English for the Icelandic trade, gradually took over. The 15th century is called the English Age, enska öldin.

The Icelandic Free State. The settlement was brought about by chieftains and rich farmers from western Norway and to a lesser extent from the Norse Viking settlements in the west. Some of them, as leaders of one or two ships' crews, claimed possession of vast areas, which they distributed among relatives and dependents or gave to people who came later. Our knowledge of the earliest social and political relationships is fragmentary, but it appears that society was, from the beginning, run by chieftains who saw themselves as first among equals.

We do not know how the independent groups of settlers got on with each other or how they created a society, but as more and more of the habitable land was settled, some form of social and political organization was needed. According to tradition, assemblies or þing-meetings were held after about 900. Around 930, a nationwide assembly, the Alþingi, was established, in which the main characteristics of the social and political structure were given legal expression. Apparently, this founding was the result of peaceful negotiations and was an expression of the will to balance the power of the rulers and of the various parts of the country, reflecting the division of power among many chieftains in the Age of Settlement. As no individual person or family had sufficient resources to control the whole country, a balance of power between a few oligarchs with good connections to other parts of the land. The period from about 930 to 1262/4 is commonly called the "Age of the Free State" in foreign historical research. Icelandic historians usually call the Free State fjöðvelyki, which has given rise to the term "Old Icelandic Commonwealth." None of these terms is adequate.

From about 930, social and political power was divided among thirty-six chieftaincies, called geirð, each of which was headed by one or more chieftains, goðar. The number of goðar must have roughly corresponded to the number of influential families. The goðar were equals. The man in charge of the geirð belonging to the family of Íngólf Arnason, Iceland's first settler, was called ælsherjargóði, "the godi of all the people," and had the sacred task of calling the Alþingi at its opening session every summer. About 965, the country was divided into quarters, or fjörðungar. Quarter courts, fjörðungsdómur, were established, and the number of goðar was increased to thirty-nine. Nordþingafjörður then was allowed twelve goðar; Austþingafjörður, Sunnþingafjörður, and Vestþingafjörður each had nine. The purpose was probably to strengthen the balance of power among
the parts of the country. In order to create a balance at the functions of the Alþingi, each group of godar of the three quarters other than Norðbellingafjörðungur elected three additional men, soon called “new godar.” But in the local districts, there were thirty-nine godord. The sphere of interest of the individual godi was restricted through a decision that he could not have thingmen, þímgønn, outside his quarter.

The original figure of thirty-six godar, three groups of twelve, may express their judicial and administrative functions at the thingsmeetings; groups of twelve were common in Scandinavia when courts of law were established. Sentencing occurred at the Alþingi and at the regional springtime assemblies, the várping. The judicial system consisted of the regional várping-courts, the quarter courts, and, shortly after 1000, the Fifth Court, líðimunardómur, the latter two, at the Alþingi. The godord were the basic units and the godar the leading authorities. Each várping was the joint responsibility of three godar, each of whom nominated twelve assessors to the várping-court, which thus consisted of thirty-six men. The quarter courts functioned as courts of appeal from the várping-courts.

Thirty-six men sat here and in the Fifth Court. The godar also named people to the courts at the Alþingi, but they had no formal judicial authority or responsibility for the legal proceedings or the execution of sentences. If one of the men of a godi was found guilty, the latter had no legal obligation to see that the man was punished or paid a fine. But the mutual personal relationship implied that in practice the godi would help his thingman, þímgøn, to obtain his rights. If the godi neglected to do so, the thingman could turn to another godi and become his thingman.

All forty-eight godar, each of them with two thingmen, took part in the activities of the legislative logrêta, or Law Council, at the Alþingi. They made up 144 of the members, which also included the lawspeaker, logsgøn, and later the two bishops. The lawspeaker was the chairman of the Alþingi, and this institution was established together with the Alþingi and existed until 1271. The lawspeaker was the only secular official for the whole people. Every year, he had to declare the rules of procedure for the thing-meeting. He also had to recite the rest of the laws in the course of three summers, his term of office. His was an office of great responsibility, especially before the laws were written down in 1117–1118. The person elected had to be a highly qualified man who had great prestige and a solid family background. The laws of the Free State are extant in two law books, both written in the years 1250–1270, Konungsblók and Stæðshólsbók. They vary in content, organization, and expression. The combined laws of the Free State are called Grágás.

In the logrêta, only the forty-eight godar had the right to vote. Its most important tasks were to pass new laws, nýætt, to interpret the laws, and to make amendments to and exemptions from the law. The godar were helped by their thingmen in the execution of their functions at the thing. Every ninth thingman followed his godi to the Alþingi. The others paid him þingafararkaup. The respect for a godi increased with the size of his following when riding to the thing or traveling around the country. Outside the thing-sessions, his authority was restricted to his thingmen, mannaforráð. Only during the thing-sessions did he possess territorial power and influence, regionally at the várping, nationally at the Alþingi. At the autumn assembly, the leði, he had to provide information about new legislation and pass on other important announcements and news from the recent Alþingi.

The authority exercised by the godar could, as time went on, provide the basis for a certain local power outside the thing-sessions. The godord were originally nongeographical units. The thingmen of one godi might live scattered among the thingmen of other godar within the quarter. In practice, however, the godord gradually became restricted more or less to clearly defined core areas. The population was organized in godord, based on voluntary mutual trust, not on obedience between lord and subject. Every farmer had the duty as the head of his household to be a thingman for a godi. The godi had to be able to wield his power in such a way that it was in the interest of the thingmen to belong to his godord. These conditions put the godi under certain obligations. They also created the basis for manipulation that eventually led to the destruction of the original balance of power.

Church and religion. The fact that the chieftains were called godar has led to the assumption that their office originated from their function as religious leaders, “sacificial priests,” in the pre-Christian era. Sources giving the godi a leading position in religious practices are problematic. Even if several place-names indicate cult functions, they are too numerous to imply a connection between them and the godar and godord. Nor were the things held close to the supposed heathen temples. It is unclear why it was only in Iceland that the terms godi/godord were linked to the institution of the chieftain. Even scholars inclined to believe in the theory that godar were religious leaders admit that it is difficult to see any connection between their supposed religious functions and their purely secular judicial, administrative, and legislative tasks, which we know from the laws and other contemporary sources concerning events and relations in the 12th and 13th centuries. It seems unreasonable that the chieftains who established the constitution would base their rule and political authority on heathen concepts and functions. They came from the areas of Norway most infiltrated by Christianity and from the Norse Viking settlements in the west, where Christianity had gained a firm foothold. Many had been Vikings, who, after contact with Christianity, had become “mixed in their faith.” Some had also been marked with the sign of the cross before baptism, prima signatio, which made it possible for them to have free contact with Christians. During heathen times, the godar may have hallowed the things, as the alþþjarargodi did at the Alþingi during Christian times. They may also have held sacrificial feasts for their households and thingmen. But these are only assumptions. The theory of the pre-Christian religious leadership of the godar is based on sources as uncertain as those that form the basis of the theory of a Germanic Eigentempelwesen, a system of proprietary temples considered the forerunner of the later Eigenkirchenwesen, a proprietary church system. This theory has generally been rejected by recent research.

Christianity was introduced in the years 999–1000 through an agreement at the Alþingi following tough negotiations and pressure from the Norwegian king. In contrast to what happened in parts of the king’s own country, this acceptance occurred without armed conflict or bloodshed. Such a political adoption of the new faith followed by mass baptism was, however, not as unique and spectacular as many scholars have assumed. In connection with the adoption of Christianity, we have a glimpse, for the first time, of the power constellation that characterized the later history of the Free State. The leader of the Haukadalur, Gizurr inn hvti (“the white”), together with his son-in-law Hjalti Sveggiason and Hallr Porsteinsson of Síða in the eastern part of the country, the leader of the so-called Stéðumenn, spearheaded the adoption of the new faith. Using the theories of the origin and religious character of the
The godar, the very persons who first adopted the Christian faith, removed the foundation for the power of the Church. How domination over the Church had strengthened the power of the godar, in fact, increased their power and influence with the help of the Church. The leading godar were probably well informed about how domination over the Church had strengthened the power of secular chieftains and princes in western Europe.

Initially, the introduction of Christianity did not imply a close relationship with Rome. The Church of Iceland evolved as a national church in which secular magnates had extensive power and influence. At first, it was placed under the archbishop of Hamburg/Bremen. In 1104, Iceland and Scandinavia came under the archbishop of Lund, and after 1152/3, Iceland, along with other Norse settlements in the west, became part of the Norwegian ecclesiastical province. Not until then did the pope and archbishop start to interfere with ecclesiastical affairs in Iceland.

Iselfr, the son of Gizurr inn hviti, became the first native bishop, in 1056, with a seat in the family farm of Skálholt in the heart of Arnesfjöll, the sphere of authority of the Haukdœlir. At the end of the 11th century, his son and successor, Gizurr, donated Skálholt as the permanent bishopric. Gizurr not only performed a pious act, he also secured the Haukdœlir's control over the bishopric as long as they preserved their power in Arnesfjöll. They largely monopolized the office of bishop in Skálholt throughout the period of the Free State in the second half of the 12th century, together with their neighbors and allies the Oddaverjar. For a long time, bishops were elected on their terms. At the peak of their power, they had Pörflákr Pólfráholsson (1178–1193) elected bishop of Skálholt. After him came the Oddaverjar Pall Jónsson (1195–1211). Both elections apparently occurred with the consent of the Haukdœlir. When a bishopric for the north of Iceland was established at Hólar at the beginning of the 12th century, they had major influence there too; Jón Ogmundsson was succeeded by Ketill Porrsteinnsson (1122–1145), who was married to the daughter of Bishop Gizurr. From 1163 to 1201, the Oddaverjar Brandr Sæmundarson was bishop. After his death, the most powerful family in northern Iceland, the Asbimmingar, had Guðmundr Arason elected bishop (1203–1237). His election broke the hegemony of the Haukdœlir and the Oddaverjar, and allowed the Asbimmingar to attain a dominant position in northern Iceland.

Until 1104, Iceland and the rest of Scandinavia belonged to the archdiocese of Hamburg/Bremen, and from 1104 to 1152/3, to that of Lund. After 1152/3 and up to the Reformation, Iceland belonged to the archdiocese of Niðaróss. In 1237, the archbishop rejected the candidates chosen by the Icelanders, and the chapter at Niðaróss instead chose two Norwegians. This action was part of the archbishop's and the chapter's efforts to secure for themselves the right to fill the episcopal seats on the Norse islands in the west. After Iceland came under the king of Norway in the years 1262–1264, both bishoprics were again occupied by Icelanders. The bishop of Skálholt, Arni Pórálksson, worked to abolish secular influences within the Church and to reestablish the authority of the bishop granted by canon law. He instituted a new ecclesiastical law, which was adopted by the Skálholt bishopric in 1275 and in 1354 made valid for the Hólar bishopric.

In 1380, after Iceland followed Norway into the Dano-Norwegian monarchy and in 1397 into the Kalmar Union, Danish clergy became eligible for Icelandic bishoprics. It was important to Queen Margrethe and her government to appoint bishops to Iceland without involving the Norwegian authorities, since the bishops occupied seats on the Norwegian State Council and since she needed their support. The first Danish clergyman was appointed to Skálholt in 1382 by a papal commission, a practice that was continued in the consecration of bishops at Skálholt until 1466 and at Hólar until 1442. Later, the bishoprics were given to Englishmen, Dutchmen, and Germans, many of whom never occupied their posts. From 1420 to 1460, bishops resided at Skálholt for a total of only fourteen years. At Hólar, where church authority was stricter, the bishops served for somewhat longer periods. The power of the bishopric at Hólar increased when in 1442 the Norwegian Gottskalk Kænekksson was consecrated by Archbishop Aslak Bolt. He was succeeded by his nephew Ólafur Rögnvaldsson (1460–1495). In 1524, Jón Arason became the last Catholic bishop at Hólar. He was beheaded in 1550. In 1541, Ógmundr Pálsson was forced to relinquish his office and was replaced by a Lutheran. The Reformation in Iceland became a fact.

In its early development, the Church expanded locally as chieftains or wealthy farmers built churches on their farms. They then controlled them. This proprietary-church system was at the outset universal in Iceland at a time when it was about to break down in the rest of Europe. The church-farmer had to maintain the church building and procure a priest. At first, when priests were not expected to be well educated, he himself or someone in his household commonly functioned as a priest. Tithe was introduced in 1096/7, earlier than in the other Scandinavian countries. This income provided the economic foundation for the activities of the Church. As a result of the proprietary-church system, the church-farmers administered the property and income of the local church. They received half the tithes themselves, that is, the church-and-priest-tithes. The other half went to the bishop and the poor. The tithe for the poor was administered by the leaders of local groups known as hreppar. The church-farmer also administered the part of his farm that he had given to the church as its endowment, herjafylgja, dos, and any other farms that had been acquired by the church, most often as alms. All this property was exempt from tithe. It often happened that eventually the church-farmer gave his church the whole farm where it was built. This joint ecclesiastical institution then became a private foundation and an independent economic unit. It was called a stadar, locus religiosus, or sacer, and was in many cases very lucrative. Usually, a condition for establishing a stadar was that the donor and his successors had the right to continue to administer it and benefit from its economic resources. If they did not, the heirs could reclaim the gift. Sometimes, however, the church-farmer gave control of the stadar to the bishop, who then assigned its administration to one of the local chieftains. On a large farm, it could happen that the stadar could include only the half of the farm where the church was built, if this half was large enough to be considered a meaningful economic unit.

Secular political developments. The spokesmen for Christianity, led by the Haukdœlir, dominated Icelandic politics in the 11th century, the period in which power began to be concentrated in fewer hands, as well as the first stage in the formation of territorial lordships, rtki. Riki meant, first, domination over a district, then the district itself with fairly fixed boundaries. It included at least three godord and one vatpping-parish. There is much to indicate that the territorialization of the godord began with a godi controlling two godord in his vatping district, thereby gaining authority over
two core areas. It then became difficult for the thingmen of the third goda to gain the necessary support. In modern studies, a goda who ruled a ríki is often called stórgodi, big chieftain. At this time in some parts of the country, the manusforrð had become territorially demarcated, turning into more stable units of power.

We can now speak of local government, héraðssjöður. In the 11th century, the Haukðœlir in Ærnesþing, the Ásbirningar in Hegransþing (Skagafjörður), the Svinfellingar, and the Austfjörðrar of Austfjörður managed to establish ríki. We know only the result of this first phase of the concentration of power, but the scarce information we do have indicates that it was a slow and peaceful process, achieved partly by gifts and marriages. In the 11th and early 12th centuries, the Haukðœlir were the most powerful family. They dominated Ærnesþing, a compact area of settlement strategically located for the concentration of power. Pongvellir, where the Alþingi was held, was close to their district. It was easy for them to mobilize their thingmen to ride to the Alþingi with them. Eyrar, one of the two most important commercial centers in Iceland during the time of the Free State, was within their sphere of power.

The transfer of wealth from the lesser farmers to the bigger ones, and probably contributed, more than anything else, to deepening the social gap between the aristocracy of the godar and the lesser landowners and the increasing number of those who leased land. It is reasonable to connect the second phase of the concentration of power and the formation of ríki, which began around 1100 or at the beginning of the 12th century, with the tithe income. Two of the leaders responsible for the introduction of tithes were Bishop Gizurr and the priest Saemundr fróði Sigfússon in Oddi. The origin of the Oddaverjar's ríki in Rangárþing, the neighboring district of Ærnesþing, at the beginning of the 12th century, is obviously connected with the transfer of income consequent upon tithing. The power of the Oddaverjar in the middle of the 12th century was clearly manifested when the Oddaverji Brandr Sæmundarson became bishop of Hólar, 1163–1201, and shortly afterward when their protégé, Pórakr Pórhallsson, became bishop of Skálholt, 1178–1193. He was succeeded by the Oddaverji Pállo Jónsson, 1195–1211. These elections coincided with the culmination of their power in Rangárþing in the second half of the 12th century. The two episcopal elections also reflect the intimate cooperation of the Haukðœlir and Oddaverjar that began in the time of Sæmundr fróði and Bishop Gizurr at the end of the 11th century and persisted until about 1220. This alliance dominated secular and ecclesiastical politics in Iceland, as well as the economy and trade, during this period. The Haukðœlir retained their influence over the bishopric at Skálholt: while an Oddaverji held the office of bishop, a Haukðœllir was steward, ríksstórmfr, of the bishopric, i.e., the administrator of its property and income. At the same time as the ríki of the Oddaverjar arose, the Ásbirningar in Skagafjörður gained control over their fourth godað, in Húnavatnþing. The rich and powerful Hafliõi Másson owned the other two godaðar there. He may have tried to establish a ríki in the district, but did not succeed. The confrontations between the godar in Húnavatnþing and elsewhere where ríki had not been established, Vestfjörðungjarður, Eyjafjörður, and Pingeyjarþing, in the 12th century and the beginning of the 13th, were a consequence of their attempts to acquire more godað in order to form their own ríki.

The third phase in the concentration of power and the formation of ríki came in the last quarter of the 12th century and the first quarter of the 13th. A new family, the Sturlungar, now came to the fore. They were the sons of the goda Hvann-Sturla in Dalir, who was active and acquisitive in the second half of the 12th century. The development of ríki in Eyjafjörður and Pingeþýjarþing, which began at the end of the 1180s, was completed in 1215 when Sighvatr Sturluson had gained control of the six godaðar in the district. At the beginning of the 13th century, his brother, Snorri Sturluson, established a ríki in Borgarþjörður on both sides of the boundary between the quarters Sunnþlandajárð surged and Vestfjörðungjarðungur. The rule that a goda could have thingmen only within his quarter had not been respected for a long time. During this period, the Svinfellingar also gained control of all the godaðar in Austfjörðungjarðungur.

Around 1220, most of the ríki had taken shape. Only in the divided, and in many ways backward, Vestfjörður had the development come no farther than to show a tendency toward the formation of a ríki. It was not until late in the 1240s that Hrafn Oddsson, who had a family background in the district, managed to establish firm control over Vestfjörður. In Ærnesþing, Rangárþing, Hegransþing (Skagafjörður), and Austfjörðungjarðungur, the concentration of power had, as far as we know, been a long, steady process. In other districts, such as Eyjafjörður, along with Pingeyjarþing and Borgarþjörður, the development started later and was faster, partly because of pressure and coercion.

The development of ríki led to the use of new methods of government by the stórgodar. They usually sought the model in Norway. Trusted men functioned as their advisers and probably also represented them in the local government, while their followers were bodyguards and police who formed a coercive force if necessary. Both functioned as the extended arm of the stórgodar. The power base of the stórgodar also changed when the ríki evolved. Earlier, the farmers had been able to choose a goda relatively freely. Now, all the farmers within a ríki were, in reality, subjected to one stórgodi as his thingmen. What had formerly been essentially a leadership based upon family and friendship now became a territorial, political authority. At the same time, the stórgodar gained control over the judicial activities in the district and decided all cases between their thingmen at the farm where they resided. The local and regional things declined. The stórgodar aimed at ever-increasing power and influence. Their success in utilizing the economic resources and manpower in the ríki was, in the end, the factor that determined whether they would survive in the power struggle that became increasingly bitter and destructive in the final phase of the Free State.

The chieftains had a strong economic power base in their authority over local ecclesiastical institutions, the stadir, and the rich farmers' churches, that were, at least later, called brøndalakirkjur. Snorri Sturluson is a good example of a chieftain who managed to acquire several godaðar and vast economic resources, mainly through the stadir and the rich farmers' churches; and by these means, he established his ríki in Borgarþjörður. Riches begat riches. The goda could buy more farms, expand their economic activities, and thereby strengthen their position as stórgodar. The concentration of power was parallel to the concentration of economic resources. The sons of Hvamm-Sturla, Pórðr, Sighvatr, and Snorri owned at least ten times as much property as their fathers, and their power corresponded to their wealth. Bishop Pórakr Pórhallsson had, in his time, tried to establish a rule that the bishop should have authority, forseti, over the local churches, while the laymen could continue to have the administration, vardenísla, of them and their
had to give in to the Oddaverji Jón Loptsson, the most powerful man in Iceland at the time. Prior to this confrontation with Jón, Porlákr had for the most part implemented his policy in Austfjörður, and the great number of staðir there, about two-thirds of the local churches compared with about one third elsewhere in the country, probably dates back to Porlákr’s efforts.

The fourth and final phase in the concentration of power came after the year 1220, in the Age of the Sturlungar. Five families, the Ásbímingar, Sturlungar, Oddaverjar, Haukdoelir, and Svinfellingar, controlled almost all the thirty-nine godord. Most of the ríki had taken shape. The conflict concerned ríki, not godord as before. The battle of Örlygsstaðir in 1238 was fought between the firmly established ríki of the Haukdoelir in Æmesping and the Ásbímingar in Hégranesping/Húnavatnsþing, on the one side, and the new, as yet incomplete ríki of the Sturlungar in Eyjafjörður, along with Pingeyjarþing, Dalir, Borgarfjörður, Húnavatnsþing, and Vestfjarðar, on the other side. In spite of the much greater population of their area, the Sturlungar managed to mobilize no more than approximately half as many troops as the Haukdoelir and Ásbímingar. The Sturlungar were defeated. The Ásbímingar gained control over the last two godord in Húnavatnsþing, the whole ríki of Sighvatr Sturluson, Eyjafjörður, and Pingeyjarþing; their ríki now included the entire Norðvestlandshérað. At the same time, the Haukdoelir Gizurr Porvaldsson gained a dominating position in southern and western Iceland. But the victory of the Haukdoelir and Ásbímingar was not final. A few years after the battle of Örlygsstaðir, the Sturlungi Pórðr Kakali, son of Sighvatr Sturluson, was in the process of reconstituting the power of the Sturlungar, with support from the Norwegian king.

In the 13th century, the Norwegian monarchy played an increasing role in political developments in Iceland. After 1220, when Snorri Sturluson became King Hákon’s and Duke Skóli’s lendir maðr (“landed man,” later called “baron”), the king attached one Icelandic chieftain after another to his court. After Snorri had been assassinated in 1241 for committing treason against the king of Norway, the king claimed his property and his godord as forfeit to the Crown. This act served as his springboard for interfering in the politics of the Free State. From 1238 until after the end of the Free State, the two bishops of Iceland were Norwegians, and served as active supporters of the king’s policies. The words of Cardinal William of Sabina in 1247, when he was in Norway to crown King Hákon, probably reflect the attitude toward Iceland in the king’s circle. The cardinal said that “it was unreasonable that that country did not serve under a king like all other countries in the world” (Sturla Pórðarson’s Hákonar saga [gamlar] Hákonarsonar). The Icelandic constitution, with godar and godord, was, despite the evolution of the ríki as a stage on the way toward organized statehood, considered an anomaly. The destructive civil wars justified the king’s plan to subject the country to his secular power, a parallel to the subjection to the ecclesiastical power of the archbishop of Niðarós after 1152/3. The Icelandic chieftains, on their side, considered it advantageous to be the king’s men in their political efforts. They were stronger with his support. At the same time, the Norwegians had monopolized trade and shipping to and from Iceland, so that the Icelanders were becoming more and more dependent upon Norway, economically and politically. The chieftains probably had to pay for the king’s support by gradually handing over their godord to him. About 1250, he had obtained nearly all the godord and could decide who was to control them. In reality, he could be considered as the farmers’ superior in the godord.

It was only a question of time before Iceland became part of the Norwegian kingdom. In 1258, the Haukdoelí Gizurr Porvaldsson was appointed earl, with the duty of completing the subjection of Iceland to Norway. As he was not active enough, in 1261, the king sent a Norwegian courtier, Hallvarðr Gullskór, to Iceland to speed the mission. Hallvarðr played the chieftain of Vestfjarðar, Hrafn Oddsson, who now gained control of Snorri Sturluson’s Borgarfjörður-rtki, against Earl Gizurr, forcing him to act on the king’s behalf.

Iceland as a Norwegian tributary country. In the years 1262–1264, the Icelanders swore to give the Norwegian king their land, their taxes, and their obedience. Iceland became a part of the Norwegian kingdom. The monarchy had conquered Iceland by making most of the chieftains the king’s liege men, while at the same time exploiting internal divisions and power struggles, the desire for peace, and the economic dependence on Norway. This development influenced the conditions the Icelanders wrote into the agreement (Gamli sáttmál) when they accepted Hákon Hákonarson as their king: the king had to let them enjoy peace and Icelandic law, and to maintain sufficient shipping between the two countries.

Iceland was of primary importance to King Magnús lagabætur (“law-mender”) Hákonarson and his two sons. The law book of the Free State, Grágás, was replaced by new law books: Járnsköta, 1271–1273, and fonsbók, 1281, corresponding to the two stages of Magnús lagabætur’s contemporary revision of Norwegian law. The first book, in particular, was strongly influenced by Norwegian law, but no common legal system was established between the two countries. Fonsbók and successive law amendments became Icelandic law for the rest of the Middle Ages.

The constitution had to be adapted to the monarchy, and the authority of the king had to be more precisely defined. The institution of the godord was abolished. Iceland got an administration run by officials appointed by the king. They took over the former functions of the godar, represented the state, and administered the king’s monopoly of coercion. The earldom ceased to exist after Gizurr’s death in 1268, and one or two superior commissioners, valdsmenn, governed the country. At least from 1320, they were called hirdstjórar. They were supported by sheriffs, syslumenn; according to fonsbók, there had to be one for every quarter. This system used the old institution of the things as its basis. The tax roll of 1311 distinguishes nine tax-collection districts, which possibly made up the sheriffs’ districts, syslur, at the time, and which seem to conform to the borders of the ríki toward the end of the period of the Free State. The lawspeaker was replaced by a lawman, logmaðr, appointed by the king; from 1283, there were two of them. The Alþingi was reorganized. The logrétta became a court of law with thirty-six members, following the Norwegian model, and the old quarter courts and the Fifth Court disappeared. When the courts pronounced sentences, they consisted of six, twelve, or twenty-four assessors, depending on the importance of the cases. The old assembly of the Alþingi was replaced by a Norwegian system of designated men, nefndarmenn.

The chieftains became the king’s men, executed his orders, and received their power and authority from him. New men and new families came to the fore, while those who had dominated during the Age of the Sturlungar receded into the background.
There were no more armed conflicts. The Icelanders were loyal to the monarchy. At the same time, they carefully guarded their rights. In the beginning of the 14th century, they reacted against the king's practice of sending only Norwegians to act as syslumen and hirdstjórar. As a result, the hirdstjórar thereafter were either Norwegians or Icelanders, while the sheriffs and the lawmen were usually Icelanders. In 1375, the Icelanders acted to protect their traditional political and economic rights, and made them the condition for swearing the king allegiance in 1377.

The royal revenue from Iceland, which included judicial penalties as well as taxes, was managed by the royal treasury in Bergen. Iceland was governed from Bergen, the capital of the Norwegian kingdom and the staple port of the trade with the Norwegian "tributary lands." There was a clear link between trade and economics on one side, and politics on the other.

Conflict over local churches. The decades following the submission of the Icelanders to the Norwegian king were dominated by a sharp controversy, the stádamál, concerning the control of the local churches and church property, in particular the richest stadir. Prompted by the Norwegian archbishop, the bishop of Skálholt, Árni Pórhallsson (1269–1298), reintroduced the demands of his predecessor, Pórlák Pórhallsson, in a more aggressive form. In a judgment declared in Bergen in 1273, the archbishop gave Árni full support. The controversy was renewed after the death of Magnús lagabættir in 1280, when a council of barons functioned as the regency for the young King Eiríkr, and the archbishop had been forced to leave the country. It was finally settled by a compromise in 1297, the concordat of Óqvaldsnes, which stated that stadir on farms that were church properties in their entirety were to be subjected to the bishop's authority. They became beneficial churches, lenskirkjur, administered by the bishop and assigned to priests or, less often, lay favorites for a certain number of years. But churches on farms, half or more of which were owned by laymen, i.e., all the farmers' churches and a few stadir, were to remain in the hands of the laymen, provided they abided by the obligations laid down by the donors; the bishop could make no further claims in such cases. Although Bishop Árni did not achieve all his aims, it was still a significant victory for the Church. The provisions of the concordat were gradually put into effect, and the power, influence, and wealth of the Church grew throughout the late Middle Ages. The bishops gradually gained the authority they were entitled to according to canon law.

Late Middle Ages. One result of the joint monarchy of Norway and Sweden after 1319 was that Iceland became increasingly peripheral to the royal government. During the regency in the 1320s, Bergen maintained its position as the political center of the kingdom; but after Magnús Eiríksson had come of age, its status as a royal residence was greatly reduced, and in 1340 the king ordered that the royal sources of income "from the north and from the west," i.e., from Iceland and other tributary lands and regions, were to go directly to him, not to the royal treasury in Bergen. When in 1350 Magnús shared his kingdoms between Eiríkr, who received Sweden, and Hákon, who received Norway, he reserved Iceland, the Faroes, Shetland, and Hålogaland for himself, certainly for purely financial reasons.

Magnús continued to administer Iceland, not only after Hákon came of age in 1355, but also after Hákon had himself taken charge of the government in 1358. Magnús's motives continued to be purely financial. Even though shipping to Iceland had collapsed after the ravages of the plague in the years 1349–1350, it was probably hoped throughout the 1350s that it would improve again. The rich fisheries led the king to try to increase the number of taxpayers in Iceland, and he levied a tax on the cargos of ships coming to Bergen from Iceland. The arrangement with the leigahirdstjórar from 1354 was also economically motivated. In return for a fixed annual sum, they administered the king's entire income from Iceland for a certain number of years. The result was a stricter political and economic regime; but when the Norwegian hirdstjórar was killed in 1361, this arrangement was abolished. Instead, the hirdstjórar received a fixed share of the royal income, which was, after 1350, again administered by the royal treasury in Bergen, but as separate royal income. The Icelanders continued to communicate with the king's government and with foreign countries through Bergen because of its stable functions and monopoly. Long after the Norwegian Age had ended, and the Bergen monopoly had irrevocably ceased to exist, Icelandic secular and ecclesiastical magnates continued to communicate with counselors of the realm in Bergen and Niðarós.

When Norway and Denmark became joint kingdoms in 1380, Iceland and the other Norwegian tributary lands followed suit. This development was not accompanied by any changes in the constitution or status of the countries involved.

The 15th and early 16th centuries were characterized by conflicts between the Danish-Norwegian king and the English concerning the right to sail to Iceland in order to fish and trade. The Icelanders began by demanding free trade and an end to the Bergen monopoly. During the period from about 1425 to about 1470, the English acted, more or less, as they wished around and in Iceland. The monarchy had to acknowledge that Iceland could no longer be governed from Bergen. The English also established bases in the land, and around 1460 the English king referred to the country as terra nostra Islandia, "our country of Iceland." The main English bases were the Westman Islands, Grindavik, and Hafnarfjörður on Reykjanes, and Rif on Snæfellsnes. They had, however, no bases in Vestfirðir, where contending chieftains were in control. On Snæfellsnes, the point of intersection between the spheres of interest, confrontations with the English occurred.

Shortly before 1480, the Alþingi adopted the regulation that only foreigners born in the kingdoms of the Norwegian king had the right to winter in Iceland. In 1490, the Alþingi by the so-called "þtings-verdict" once more prohibited foreigners from spending the winter in Iceland. Foreign merchants were not allowed to fish or to hire Icelanders. The background for these measures was that foreign activity had increased more than was in the interests of the chieftains. In the early 15th century, they were happy to trade with the English, and had become rich in the process. Now they feared an increase in wages as a result of the competition for labor; they feared undue winter sales and a rise in the price of imports. The Danish-Norwegian king supported the chieftains. During the first decades of the 15th century, when Iceland was only loosely affiliated with the joint kingdom, royal government was disordered and to some extent illusory. Toward the end of the 15th century, the government regained strength, and for the first time the king was able to send ships to Iceland to control what went on there, particularly seeing that foreigners did not gain a foothold. The hirdstjórar had contact on a regular basis with both the king in Denmark and the Council of the Realm in Norway. Most of the hirdstjórar were Icelanders, and they used the royal service to strengthen their own economic and political status.
The Church was also faithful to the king. John Craxton, an English cleric, who in 1425 was appointed bishop of Hólar by the pope and was allowed to take over the bishopric of Skálholt a few years later, was expelled from the country in 1435 after he had tried to make the Church of Iceland more independent of the archiepiscopal see of Niðaróss. When the Norwegian cleric Gottskalk Kænkejsson became bishop of Hólar in 1442, the contact with Niðaróss, the Council of the Realm in Norway, and the Danish-Norwegian court was reestablished. Gottskalk was succeeded by his nephew, Óláfr Rögnvaldsson (1460-1495). After Gottskalk Kaeneksson became bishop of Hólar in 1442, the con­

basis.

In 1550, Jón Arason was beheaded along with two of his sons. If one single year marks the end of the Middle Ages in Iceland, it must be 1550, the year that paved the way for the Lutheran mon­

archy with its state church and its strong economic and political

and Punishment; Demography; Family Structure; Fishing, Whaling, and Seal Hunting; Goda; Geisal; Tókg
Hákon Hákonarson; Hanseatic League; Haraldr hörfigr ("hair") Hálfdamarson; Iðla fráðr biskup, Íslandabók, Landnámabók; Laws; Leifr; Óláfr, St.; Óláfr Tryggvason; Plague; Settlement, Age of; Snorri Sturluson; Social Structure; Sturlunga Age; Temples, Heathen; Trade

**Iconography.** The surviving pagan monuments are few and scattered, with concentrations of memorial stones with pictorial programs on the island of Gotland from the late 8th and early 9th centuries, Cumbria from the first half of the 10th, the Isle of Man in the 10th and early 11th, and Gotland again in the second half of the 11th. In addition, there are some fragments of pictorial representations in textile and wood carving from Norway (9th and early 10th centuries), and a couple of memorial stones from mainland Sweden of the 9th century. Three skaldic poems of the 9th and 10th centuries, moreover, describe pictures, and some further poetic fragments may also come from ekphrases.

The 8th–9th-century memorial stones on Gotland constitute the only homogeneous group of monuments. A manned ship under sail and a horse and rider are the dominating pictures both numerically and in size; together, the representations may depict the journey of the deceased to Valholl. Most stones have surrounding, much smaller scenes with motifs based on myths and sagas. Using the contemporary poem by Bragi Boddason, Ragnarssdráp, scholars have identified one of these scenes as the battle of the Haddings, while others have with less certainty been taken to represent Þór's fishing expedition and the slaying of Jormunrekkur. Further pictures of this period are the memorial stone at Sparlösa, Västergötland, Sweden (rider with sword and animals, ship, birds, buiding: a mythical hunt? journey to Valholl?); the textile fragments from Tune (ship and figures) and Oseberg, Norway (laden horses, riders, carriages, walking men and women: procession? migration myth?); the Oseberg carriage (end: man attacked by snakes and lizard-like beast, identical iconography on Hunninge stone 1, Gotland; side: rider and man on foot confronting each other in battle, woman intervening or egging on: connected with the battle of the Haddings?).

There is a hiatus of pictures from Scandinavia between the mid-9th and the mid-10th centuries. This can to some extent be bridged by using the skaldic poems describing pictures painted on shields and walls: Bragi Boddason's Ragnarssdráp (first half of the 9th century), Björdörf of Hvin's Haustjóna (10th century), and Úlfur Uggason's Hvíthjón (980s). Þór's fishing expedition is described by both Bragi and Úlfur, and the Fishing Stone at Gosforth, Cumbria, probably reflects a Scandinavian iconography, but it is only with the stones at Hardum, Denmark, and Altuna in Uppland, Sweden, that an iconography corresponding to the poem's descriptions of the scene survive from Scandinavia proper. The Altuna memorial stone of the second half of the 11th century is one of the few outspokenly pagan pictures among the Upplandic memorials (which are predominantly Christian: around 65 percent have a cross and 25 percent a Christian invocation). The saga of Sigurfr on two memorials of the mid-11th century may reflect an honorific subject matter taken up in the period of conversion. No certain Ragnarssdráp scene survives from Scandinavia, and the combination of this theme with a Crucifixion on the cross at Gosforth, Cumbria, may reflect the iconography of a mixed Scandinavian-insular culture.

The earliest Christian representation in Scandinavia is the filigree cross of the first half of the 10th century from grave 660 at Birka, Uppland, Sweden. The figure of Christ on this and later pectoral crosses is stylized, but easily recognizable and uncontaminated by pagan pictures. The vine-entwined Crucifixion is used on the royal memorial stone at Jelling, Denmark (third quarter of the 10th century), illustrating the part of the inscription where Harald Gormsson commemorates the conversion of the Danes. The vine-entwined Crucifixion is West European iconography that underwent modifications of style only when it was transplanted to Scandinavia. The fragmentary panels from Flätatunga, Iceland, of the mid-11th century, show a row of standing saints below a frieze of plant ornament, and are probably the oldest surviving church decorations in Scandinavia. Christian narrative representations are few in the surviving material, the most important being the Adoration of the Magi on the stone from Dynna, Norway (first half of the 11th century), which probably depends ultimately on continental prototypes but with stylistic transformations that have influenced the iconography.

**Ecclesiastical art.** Architecture carries pictures mainly in Denmark and Sweden. The most frequently occurring representations are the Crucifixion, the Deposition, and the Majestas Domini, normally in tympana, but occasionally as separate reliefs in the walls of the 12th-century churches. Other frequent representations are Samson and the lion, the Expulsion, Herod, and various saints. Narrative representations with themes drawn from the Old and New Testaments occur especially in the school of Horder in northern Jutland, in the diocese of Skara, Västerbotten, in Scania emanating from the works in Lund, and on Gotland, which probably also had the cathedral workshop in Lund as a starting point. Both the quality of the carvings and the relative purity of their iconography vary, but no more than normal in European Romanesque stone carving.

Elaborate programs of a very high artistic quality survive above all on the metal altar fronts from Denmark and Sweden, and the cross of walrus ivory carved by Laugr for Gunhild in Denmark (ca. 1100) demonstrates one of the ways in which fairly complicated allegorical concepts were introduced into Scandinavia through artists working for, among others, royal patrons and using costly materials. The iconography of the Gunhild cross consists of the Crucifixion flanked by allegories of Life and Death, the Church, and the Synagogue, on one face; and on the other face, Christ in Judgment surrounded by angels, Abraham with the souls of the blessed, the elect, and the damned, and the torments of hell. Similarly, high-quality and very close European iconographic ties are demonstrated by the Danish wall-painting of the 12th century. Mostly, the iconographic programs follow continental models, but some types, notably the Majestas in Sønder Jernløse and the Hodegeitia in Maalø, both in Zealand, are of indisputably Byzantine origin, whether transmitted directly or by way of Germany cannot be ascertained. Contemporaneous Gotlandic murals, notably in Garde, are both stylistically and iconographically closely related to Russo-Byzantine painting. There is no doubt that the Danish schools of painting employed indigenous artists, but both their style and their iconographic programs show that they kept closely in touch with Germany and England throughout the 12th century. The most frequently recurring pictorial theme is Christ in Majesty (in apse or on chancel arch). Where the program has been fairly well preserved, the early decorations have scenes mainly
from the New Testament (e.g., Raasted), while stories from the lives of saints and unidentified battles seem to be introduced from the late 12th century onward (e.g., Hojen). Again, this pattern forms part of the normal European development.

Scandinavian altar fronts survive from the mid-12th century, beginning with the Danish metal fronts in the Carolingian and Ottonian tradition. The thirty-one painted fronts from Norway date from the mid-13th century to the early 15th, by which time they seem to have been made redundant by the reredos. The development of their iconographical programs reflects the general European tendency to let stories from legends and saints' vitae play an increasingly important role. The earliest Norwegian front, from Ulvik, has Christ in Majesty surrounded by apostles in a normal, Romanesque tradition. Similarly, Crucifixion representations of the later 13th century are of straightforward types, the most interesting of them being the front from Kinsarvik, where the Crucifixion is flanked by St. Paul and the vanquished Synagogue on the left, St. Peter and Ecclesia on the right, the whole framed by a Latin inscription quoting Baudri of Bourgueil on iconolatry. With the 14th century, far more emphasis is given to narrative scenes, such as the Passion of Christ on the front from Eid, apocryphal and legendary Marian cycles on the fronts from Odda and Nes, Emperor Heraclius recovering the True Cross on the front from Nedstryn, and St. Óláfr flanked by scenes from his passion on a front now in Trondheim cathedral. These fronts were evidently produced by urban workshops with good access to current, European iconographical prototypes and instructed by a clergy educated in the use of pictures.

Wooden crucifixes survive mainly from Sweden and Norway, and the iconography follows the main continental types. The suffering Christ of the Gero tradition is rare; the magnificent crucifix from Danderyd, Uppland, is probably an import, but there are local copies preserved from Laby and Husby-Långlund, Uppland. Another late Ottonian tradition survives in the splendid crucifixes from Forsby (probably ca. 1135), and Svenneby, both Västergötland, where Christ wears a colobium and, in Forsby, apparently also originally a crown, being identified as rex et sacerdos. A much later version of Christ wearing a colobium, from Grong, Norway, seems, on the other hand, to reflect the Volto Santo type, as does the crucifix from Väversunda, Sweden (ca. 1200). The Rex Triumphans type was current in the second half of the 12th century, with Christ standing upright and wearing a royal crown. The extremely fine crucifix from Tryde, Scania (ca. 1160), is the most famous example, while that from Horg, Norway ("Horg crucifix II"), represents the most primitive versions. The closely connected Christus Patiens type, with S-shaped body, royal crown, loincloth, and eyes either open or closed, survives in greater numbers and was used certainly until the mid-13th century, possibly even later; the crucifixes in Hemse, Gotland, and Urnes, Norway, exemplify the type. Peculiar to a small group of this type of Scandinavian crucifixes is the association of painted shoes with the earliest examples is the crucifix from Hablingbo, Gotland, based on Saxon models. Distinctive of the Gotlandic crucifixes of the late 13th century is the Iabellum type with narrative and allegorical representations within the ring, of which the Oja version is the most splendid. The development of the suffering Christ in the Scandinavian crucifixes follows that of western Europe, with the 14th-century cross from Fana, Norway, as a particularly expressive example. Calvary groups survive sporadically; the stylistically earliest version of the mourning Virgin and St. John are from Kjerstad, Västergötland; while the group from Bro, Gotland, and the Norwegian groups from Giske and Balke represent different stylistic and emotional interpretations without having iconographical distinctions.

Representations of the Virgin, like the Crucifixion, followed European types. The earliest surviving type is the Sedes Sapientiae, which predominates in 12th- and early 13th-century sculpture and is used also on the oldest altar front, from Lisbjerg, Denmark, of the mid-12th century. The great number of stylistic varieties testifies to the popularity of the type, iconographic differences being confined to hair, headdress, and the shape of the throne. The Virgin from Urnes, Norway, sits on a folding chair, while the Viklau and related representations have a chair comparable to that used in Saxon and Westphalian Sedes Sapientiae representations. The Child sitting sideways on the Virgin's lap was also introduced early. The Virgin from Varnum, Sweden, was probably imported from England shortly after 1150, and the same date is given to the indigenous version from Vreta, Östergötland. But the Gothic versions result from new West European models, stylistically attributable as German, English, and French. The maternal and playful postures of Virgin and Child increase from the late 13th century onward, but are rarely accentuated in either sculpture or painting. The Maria Lactans is very rare, though the type occurs on the 14th-century altar front from Vanylven, Norway. In sculpture, the sitting Virgin with standing Child and the standing Virgin are confined mainly to Swedish art; both types seem to have been introduced to Gotland through German prototypes in the 14th century, although there are stylistic indications also of English models for the standing type of the Virgin.

Seated saints appear to have been introduced in the late 12th century. The oldest examples are a group of unidentified bishops in Sweden: Sts. Nicholas, Thomas a Becket, and Sigfrid of Växjö have all been suggested. There are minor variations of age and type of pallium, otherwise they form a homogenous group and are seated on a chair identical to that used for the most common type of Sedes Sapientiae. Statues of St. Óláfr survive from the first half of the 13th century onward. The earliest type shows him seated, bearded, crowned, wearing tunic and mantle, and carrying the orb in his left hand and a scepter or an axe in his right, for example, the St. Óláfr from Tydal, Norway (now National Museum, Copenhagen; the axe is a modern reconstruction). An early Swedish example from Dadesjö depicts a young warrior under the saint's feet, and this figure became a normal attribute for the Óláfr iconography. Several explanations have been attempted, more or less fanciful or based on late-medieval legends: the saint's pagan youth, his half-brother Harald hardråde ("hard-ruler") Sigurðarson, a troll. Probably, the young warrior is an allegory of vanquished paganism in the same tradition as the Romanesque iconography of Constantine the Great. Approximately twenty statues of St. Óláfr of later types have the warrior exchanged for a dragon with crowned head, possibly a conflation with the attribute of St. George, although the same type of dragon occurs with the Virgin and a number of different saints, and can probably be taken as a general symbol of hell vanquished. High Gothic versions of St. Óláfr frequently show his left hand holding the strap of his mantle instead of an orb, a curiously gesture unlikely to have conveyed specific meaning, and the orb continued as an attribute to the end of the
Middle Ages. Unless they have definite attributes, like the axe or the proskenyean man, standing royal saints are not necessarily identifiable as St. Ólöfr, Sts. Erik or Knud, or a European kingly saint, are possible alternatives. But the certain examples demonstrate that the standing representations of St. Ólöfr had been introduced by the mid-13th century, and they came to predominate in the late Middle Ages. The dress of both the sitting and the standing types was changed into armor and mantle in most of the 15th-century versions. Contemporaneously, the king's age is frequently marked as advanced. Both iconographic changes seem to reflect the contemporary ideal of royalty in German art rather than reinterpretations of the saint's role. Approximately 250 statues of St. Ólöfr survive from all Nordic countries, more than half of them from Sweden, testifying to the general popularity of the saint. The late Romanesque and Gothic types were presumably Scandinavian inventions based on contemporary European representations of kings in church sculpture, royal seals, and so on. It is noteworthy that dress, posture, and features were subject to the changing fashions of courtly ideal. The late-medieval versions are certainly made in North German workshops, but the high number of these sculptures surviving in Scandinavia testifies to the popularity of these modernized iconographical types.

The other Scandinavian saint of international importance was St. Birgitta of Sweden (1302 [1303?]–1373). Italian sources document that portraits of her existed there in the 1370s and that they had a certain likeness. The earliest Swedish statues of the saint, in Skederid and Vadstena, are normally assumed to have been based on such Italian portraits. The Vadstena statue depicts her as an authoress inspired, with her book of revelations held open by one hand and presumably a pen in her raised right hand (damaged); her dress is contemporary, and the remains of polychromy correspond with the colors she is recorded to have worn. Most of the later statues preserve the pose of writing, but the emotional impact is changed by giving the features a more youthful, blissfully meditating, and idealized rendering. As is the case with most saints, late-medieval versions show her standing, but retaining her book.

Import of sculpture from North Germany and the Netherlands may have started in the second half of the 14th century, but from the early 15th century onward it dominates completely over indigenous production. The patrons' role in influencing the iconographical programs may to some extent be inferred from the presence of indigenous saints like Ólöfr, Birgitta, Knud, Erik, and Sunniva, and one of Bernt Notke's masterpieces, St. George in Stockholm, was commissioned to commemorate Sten Sture's victory at Brunkeberg in 1471. Nevertheless, iconographic types and details seem to owe little to Scandinavian traditions. Although the absence of peculiarly Scandinavian iconographic types is characteristic of most medieval art from the region, it becomes even more striking when coupled with the absence of indigenous styles and local iconographic preferences.


Siggia Horn Fuglesang

Illuga saga Gríøarfóstra ("The Saga of Illugi, Foster-son of Gríør"). The oldest MS of this saga (AM 123 8vo) dates from about 1600, and there is some doubt as to whether it is a genuine medieval fornaldarsaga. It relates the adventures of Illugi, a Norwegian farmer's son and friend of the king's son Sigurðr. The central episode concerns Illugi's encounter in the far north of Norway with the troll-wife Gríør and her daughter, who turn out to be real trolls in the process, and he and Sigurðr marry them.

The saga is shorter than most fornaldarsógrar, and simpler in both structure and style, consisting largely of the one episode, with attendant preliminaries and the happy ending. The hero's rescue of a princess from a troll is a common folktale motif, but the saga version is most closely paralleled in Danish, Faroese, and Icelandic sagas.

[See also: Birka; Bragi Boddason; Carving: Bone, Horn, and Walrus Tusk; Ironwork; Jelling; Oseberg; Painting: Saints' Lives; Pjóõólfr of Hvin; Úlfr Uggason; Viking Art; Wood Carving]
derive from the same pool of material reworked in a number of different genres at different times throughout Scandinavia.


Judith Jesch

Ireland, Norse in. Viking attacks on Ireland were first noted in 795, and became annual occurrences from 822. In the 830s and 840s, Ireland was widely raided by several fleets that came inland via the many navigable rivers. These fleets were under the command of Norwegian earls. From 841, they operated from winter camps. The annals mention a longphort, or ship camp, in Dublin by the River Liffey, in Waterford by the Barrow, in Limerick by the Shannon, and in Anagassan by the Boyne. Later camps included Wexford and Cork.

The Viking hold on the waterways was, however, endangered by heavy defeats by the Irish and the advent of a rival Danish fleet. In 853, Óláfr, son of the king of "Lochlann" (possibly Rogaland in southwestern Norway), asserted Norwegian power over the remnants of the camps. He abandoned the practice of Viking hit-and-run operations, and placed his fleets in the service of the highest bidder.

From 853, Norse activity must be analyzed within the wider framework of the complex diplomatic schemes of the internal Irish power struggle. Until the Norman Conquest in 1170, Ireland was divided among three or four rival over-kings, and mercenary troops were in high demand. The Norsemen were out of a job only during momentary truces, and only then resorted to more or less random Viking attacks. A momentary Irish truce seems indeed to be the explanation of the expulsion of the Norsemen from Ireland in 902. They dispersed to England and France to take part in the conquest of new territories.

By 914, a new generation of warriors sought land for themselves in Ireland, and took up the old campsites by the rivers. They were under the leadership of the grandsons of Ívarr the Boneless. Ívarr was a coregent of Dublin with Óláfr from 857 to 873, and his descendants had established themselves as kings of York. In the 920s, the grandsons of Ívarr controlled the entire Irish Sea area from their strongholds in York and Dublin. For a brief moment, the Viking kingship was a major political force in the history of both England and Ireland. In 927, Godfred was ousted from York by Æthelstan, king of the Anglo-Saxons, but the Dublin king re-captured York in 939 and held it almost continually to 952. The Dublin-York kingship was, however, repeatedly attacked, because it never managed to obtain a truce with any of its neighbors. For all practical intents, it was a kingship of the sea and the rivers, based on camps, and it did not secure a firm territorial grip. In the Irish context, Dublin and its allied camps ceased to have an independent political status after heavy defeats in the 940s. Norse warriors were once again reduced to mercenaries in the Irish power struggle.

The last outbursts of Norse political aspirations came under the rule of Sigtrygger síkskégg ("silk-beard"); r. 989–993, 995–1042). From 980, Dublin had to recognize the over-kingship of the Irish king of Meath, and Sigtrygger repeatedly allied with the king of Leinster to establish his sovereignty. However, he was forced to pay tribute to Meath in 995, 998, and 1000. Even though he probably was the engineer of the great alliance in 1014 of Leinster and the Orkney earl, he wisely kept out of the battle of Clontarf, thus saving Dublin from total defeat. By his death in 1042, Dublin was a minor political power, but a growing merchant town.

The luxuries of the Dublin market and the profits to be gained by controlling it attracted the interest of Irish kings for direct control. In 1052, Dublin was forced to acknowledge a son of the king of Leinster as regent. Except from 1078 to 1094, when Dublin was controlled by the Norse king of Man and the Isles (the Hebrides), the city was held by Irish kings.

The other Norse camps also came under Irish control, Limerick by 968 and Waterford in 1035. The history of the camps at Wexford and Cork is not known, whereas camps at Strangford and Carlingford Loughs, including Anagassan, were evacuated during the contraction of Dublin power in the 940s.

Even though Dublin ceased to be a political unit, the city continued to have a mercenary fleet. It was used by Irish and sometimes Scottish, Welsh, and even Norman warlords, and was only dissolved by the Norman Conquest.

Prey and tribute. The objective of a Viking hit-and-run attack was the taking of valuable goods. The Irish used the monasteries as sanctuaries for persons, wealth, and livestock during their own internal wars, and even in peacetime monasteries would be storerooms of ecclesiastical as well as secular wealth. The Vikings therefore concentrated attacks on religious sites as a practical matter of course. The first settlements to feel the threat were isolated coastal settlements, such as Iona, which had to be temporarily abandoned in the 830s and 840s, and small settlements, such as Skellig Michael. Larger establishments were better able to defend themselves and would indeed be protected by their secular over­king. Nevertheless, a large seat like Kildare, which was even at times regarded as the capital of Leinster, was plundered no less than fifteen times by the Norse between 836 and 1000. A series of eleven attacks on Armagh, the prime ecclesiastical center of the North, must also be noted. Settlements near the Viking camps probably paid tribute as protection money. Long lists in the 11th-century Book of Rights seem to reflect a complicated pattern of tributes paid in allegiance between Irish and Norse lords. In fact, Viking warfare was but one additional feature in the complex matrix of Irish power struggles. Overlords and rival contenders were locked in conflicts that failed to produce one victor who would have shaped an Irish state. Thus, breaches of sanctuary and payment of tribute were not new phenomena to the Irish. The Viking contribution was, however, an escalation of the means of warfare. They introduced the longship, which the Irish kings used from the 10th century to control the large navigable rivers. The Vikings also introduced superior weaponry, such as hand-axes and long swords.

Slaving and trading. The activities of the Viking Age proper, the 9th century, may be said to concentrate on the extraction of portable wealth, accumulated in the monasteries, and the payment of tributes and mercenary money. The Viking camps were semi­permanent structures, easily abandoned. The 10th-century creation of the York-Dublin axis coincided with an upward trend in international trade. The Dublin Vikings engaged in this trade in luxuries and handicrafts, as is well attested by the excavations of Dublin, which will, when eventually published, add considerably to our knowledge. Irish kings and churches were ready buyers of...
wine and wheat, metalwork and craftsmanship, made available to them via the Norse ports and trading ships. Ireland had no mineral wealth, and was forced to pay in hides and slaves. Very little is known about the actual trade mechanisms and balances, but one indicator is the growing number of instances recorded in the annals of the taking of slaves by the Irish. Rival lords seem to have waged war in part with the object of taking slaves to be sold at the Dublin slave market in return for foreign commodities. In the 11th century, Dublin was probably the prime slave market of western Europe, furnishing customers in the British Isles, Anglo-Saxon as well as Norse, and the Scandinavian countries and Iceland. The trade (and Irish slave raids) seems to have petered out in the early 12th century, when the Normans banned slave trade. Indeed, the Irish synod of 1170 welcomed the Norman Conquest as just punishment for the abuses of the slave trade. By then, however, trade had shifted to the export of hides to be used as parchment, and Dublin control of the Irish Sea area had already succumbed to the growing power of Bristol.

Norse traditions. Conversion to Christianity was already in evidence by the late 9th century, and the York-Dublin king was forced to become baptized in 926. Heathen cults were still in evidence around 1000. The reign of Sigtrygg skalkegg, however, signaled a steady growth of Anglo-Saxon cultural influence in Dublin. The Dublin mint was opened in 997 to English standards, and when Cnut (Knud) the Great took the English throne, Sigtrygg seems to have followed his example. He undertook a pilgrimage to Rome in 1028 and founded Christchurch cathedral within the bounds of the city, probably quite near the royal hall. Archaeological evidence underlines the growing Anglo-Saxon influence on the material culture of the Norse and through them on the Irish. Nevertheless, the court of Sigtrygg was in close contact with the earl of Orkney and the Norwegian king, and many settlers in Iceland probably had family relations in Ireland.

Dublin must have had, then, a thriving skaldic tradition that was conveyed to Iceland and thus preserved. Pride of place must go to the "saga of Brian Bórama," which tells the story of the battle of Clontarf in 1014. In fact, Dublin wisely kept out of this struggle between the Leinster and Munster kings, but the earl of Orkney and many other Norse noblemen fell as mercenaries. They were remembered in stories that are now incorporated into Njáls saga. Dublin's role in skaldic and saga traditions is, however, still largely unresearched.

In the 12th century, Dublin was losing contact with the Norse world, and was increasingly seen as the capital of the king of Leinster. Nevertheless, the city retained a large Norse population that was even able to preserve the identity of settlers who chose to move to the growing economic area around the Bristol channel and brought their Norse language to such places as Swansea and Bardsey. The Norse merchants and handicraftsmen in Dublin were increasingly absorbed into Irish society, and even obtained landholds. The Norman Conquest, however, brought disaster to this easily recognizable segment of the population. The Norse of Dublin were ousted to Ostmantown and were deprived of their privileges. By the middle of the 13th century, the Norse were wholly assimilated in Irish society, but the Viking experience was never forgotten, as evidenced in a number of Irish tales.


Ironwork. Modern Swedish researchers (Ambrosiani 1983, Hyenstrand 1979) have stressed the vital importance of the economic development of, for example, Uppland in the Vendel and Viking ages (ca. A.D. 600-1050). Rich finds have been made of furnaces and iron blanks, whereas there remain very few finished forged products from those early days, apart from weapons. In the well-known Oseberg grave in South Norway, from the 9th century, iron bands have never been the object of aesthetic consideration.

The earliest preserved Scandinavian ironwork images or ornaments date no farther back than the Missionary period, i.e., the decades around the year 1100, and are found on church doors. The corresponding secular smithing is considerably younger, and are found on church doors. The influx of foreign forms and motifs increased when Lund, at the beginning of the 12th century, became the archiepiscopal see of all Scandinavia. No ironwork has been preserved in Lund cathedral, but in South Swedish parish churches, there are doors that imply a well-known finished prototype. The only possible place for such a prototype is Lund itself. In those days, Scania was part of Denmark, and several Danish places have such "Lundenskr imitations." The impulses spread farther to Småland via Väskö church, which started building after the middle of the 12th century. A characteristic specimen of the latter group comes from Vetlanda (Fig. 60). Its lower portions are covered with a regular lattice, over which rises a strictly conventionalized arcade. The latter, as well as the openings of the lattice, contains vegetative forms intended to represent Trees of Life. The church door was meant to mirror the gate of paradise, and these ornamental forms present a picture of the eschatological paradise, the prospect of an eternal life held out by the Church.

Paradisical allusions of a different kind appear on the door at Väversunda. In its top panel, side by side, stand the two poles in the Christian doctrine of salvation, the Fall and the Crucifixion (Fig. 61). The first event drove the two sinners out of paradise and caused its gate to be shut. Christ's sacrificial death on the Cross opened it anew. The churchgoer is again reminded that the church door is the gate of paradise, the road to salvation. As at Väversunda, Christ is often pictured on the church door or very near it. Sometimes, there is a direct reference to John 10:9, where Jesus says, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved."

The Väversunda door (Fig. 61) consists of additive representations in horizontal panels, one on top of the other. The protagonists of the picture scenes are shaped as thin sheet-iron silhouettes. Michael and the dragon on the door at Borglösö (Fig. 56) have been made in the same technique, which is characteristic of Swedish ironwork and which remained vigorous until the 15th century. A grill at Strängnäs consists of similar thin silhouettes, whose surfaces, like the above-mentioned ones, have been enlivened by dots and lines, made with punch and chisel (Fig. 62). Many Swedish doors and chests are covered with hunting scenes in this technique, which was also known in Finland (Fig. 63).

Only in exceptional cases have Scandinavian smiths given a marked in-the-round character to their figure representations. We have already seen a Michael with his head en ronde bosse (Fig. 57), and on some doors there are crucifixes with a certain plasticity (Fig. 64).

The medieval ringhandles are also plastic. Some Norwegian

55. Sala, Sweden. Dragon guarding the keyhole of a church door; 15th century.

56. Rogslösa, Sweden. St. Michael and the dragon on a church door. The door contains several similar picture scenes; ca. 1200.


60. Vetlanda, Sweden. Door with paradise motif; early 13th century.

61. Väversunda, Sweden. Door with pictures of the Fall and the Crucifixion; ca. 1200.

63. Hollola, Finland. Man with hunting horn and prey placed high up on a church door; 15th century.

64. Romfartuna, Sweden. Crucifix on entirely ironclad door; ca. 1500.

65. Noderhof, Norway. Ringhandle consisting of two winged dragons with intertwined tails; ca. 1200.
66. Delsbo, Sweden. Ringhandle with three upsets, two animal heads, and a runic inscription; ca. 1200.

67. Björksta, Sweden. Animal’s head on a ringhandle. The handle is of a Romanesque type, but sits on a 15th-century door.

68. Källunge, Sweden. Church door dominated by a typically Gotlandic motif; end of the 13th century.

69. Martebo, Sweden. C-shape terminating a typically Gotlandic motif; shortly before middle of the 14th century.
70. Iron straps and C-shapes in combinations that occur on Gotlandic doors.

71 a-b. Prototype and successor. (a) Pontigny, France; 12th century. (b) Fole, Sweden; late 12th century.

72. Søndersø, Denmark. Door with Latin inscription, 1483.
variants are shaped like two winged dragons that twine around each other (Fig. 65), whereas the Swedish handles have only dragons’ heads (Fig. 66), some of them well elaborated (Fig. 67). Both in Norway and Sweden, ringhandles are often furnished with runic inscriptions. One from Delbo reads: “You may look at me. You shall not get me. Gunnar made me. The church owns me. Holy Mary” (Fig. 66).

Very early, Gotland developed a motif that did not exist in other parts of Scandinavia. In Gotlandic forging, however, it was predominant for over a hundred years from the middle of the 13th century. In the course of that period, doors were made larger and larger, often some 5 m. high and divided into two leaves. Each door leaf was furnished, all the way up, with horizontal iron straps, at both ends terminating in C-shapes with split curls. The middle section of each strap has two additional C-shapes (Fig. 68). Straps and C-shapes are enlivened by three deep, chiseled grooves (Fig. 69).

In theory, preliminary stages of this motif can be said to exist on Gotland as early as the 12th century. By combining straight horizontal hinge straps (Fig. 70a) and C-shaped ones (Fig. 70b), one arrives at a number of variations (Figs. 70c–g) which could be regarded as precursors of the fully developed Gotlandic motif (Fig. 70h). But everything points to the latter having another origin.

In 1164, a Cistercian abbey was founded in the middle of Gotland by monks from Nydala in Smãland, whose mother abbey, located near known ore deposits, and Nydala’s unlimited supply of lake ore, charcoal, and water power decided Clairvaux’s choice of that place for its first Swedish daughter monastery.

In other words, the Clairvaux monks were mining experts and skilled smiths, and everything indicates that they brought this typically French-Cistercian motif to Scandinavia. No Romanesque ironwork remains at Clairvaux, but at Pontigny, a sister establishment in the neighborhood, the prototype of the Gotlandic motif (Fig. 71a) can still be studied.

The Black Death and Valdemar Atterdag’s (“ever-day”) forays before the Reformation, there was again an increase, at least in quality. The quality, however, remained uneven; apart from a small number of exceptionally well-wrought letters was created in the decades around the year 1500 (Fig. 72). The door reproduced here bears a Latin inscription that can be translated: “Our lady Cecilia in the year of the Lord 1483. As soon as you enter the temple, consider why you pronounce prayers. This is the door of the Lord. The just shall enter into this church of the holy apostles Peter and Paul.”


Lennart Karlsson

[See also: Iconography; Oseberg]

Isle of Man see Man, Isle of

Ísleif's þáttir biskups ("The Tale of Bishop Ísleifr") concerns Ísleifr Gizurason, first bishop of the Icelanders (1056–1080). Ísleifr was a son of Gizurr inn Hvitri ("the white") Teitsson and his third wife, Íórdís Þórdísardóttir. His son, Gizurr, succeeded him as bishop (1082–1118).

The þáttir is preserved in two vellum MSS: Flateyjarbók (GKS 1005 fol., ca. 1400) and AM 75e fol. no. 3. In Flateyjarbók, the þáttir is interpolated in Óláfs saga helga. AM 75e fol. no. 3 is a 15th-century vellum, of which fifteen leaves or parts of leaves have survived. Ísleifs þáttir appears on folos. 9v–10. It is also found in the 17th-century paper MS AM 554h at 4to, thought to have been copied from AM 75e fol. no. 5 while it was still complete.

The þáttir relates two episodes from Ísleif’s life. The first tells of his meeting with St. Ólafr in Norway. At that time, Ísleifr was a priest and short of money. His meeting with the king brought about by the charitable act of another Icelandic, Brandr Vermundarson, who makes the priest a gift of a cloak the king had previously given to him. Ólafr’s curiosity is aroused upon hearing of this act, and he determines to see Ísleifr himself. When priest and king meet, Ólafr himself gives the cloak to Ísleifr.

The second episode is set in Iceland, and concerns Ísleifr’s marriage to Dalla Forvaldsdóttir. Ísleifr requested Dalla’s hand in marriage from her father, Forvaldr, but was unwilling to agree to the condition stipulated by Forvaldr that he should leave Skálholt and move to the north of Iceland. Dalla, foreseeing that Ísleifr will make her the best husband in Iceland, persuades Forvaldr to drop the condition, and she and Ísleifr are married. Their three sons
Jóns saga helga
ísleifr whenever he heard good men mentioned. Similar accounts (Gizurr, Teitr, and fcorvaldr) are named.

(bishop of Hólar 1106–1121), who thought of his foster-father bishops Porlákr and Ketill and Ssemundr Sigfusson “the learned” priest Ari Porgilsson (1068–1148) during the years 1122–1132. It about 1200 (AM 113a and b fol.). According to the preface, Ari works. The extent and character of the omitted sections and their was used by Snorri Sturluson and probably in other historical

“The Book of Icelanders” is a concise history of Iceland. The most detailed account concerns the introduction of Christianity and the history of the Icelandic Church. Here, the foreign missionary bishops and the first Icelandic bishops are listed, with the main emphasis on the description of Giszur in Iceland (bishop of Skálholt 1082–1118) and his efforts in the organization of the Icelandic Church, for instance, by introducing tithes (1097) and establishing the other episcopal see in Hólar (1106), along with the writing down of the first law book (1117–1118).

The chronological backbone of the work is the list of Icelandic lawspeakers, whose names and terms of office are recorded from the establishment of the Alpingi (930) until the 1120s. This chronology is connected with the general time reckoning from the birth of Christ by the mention of three specific years: the death of St. Edmund in 870, the fall of Óláfr Tryggvason in 1000, and the beginning of a new moon cycle in 1120. The Icelandic dates were fixed in relation to these years. In so doing, Ari had established the chronology for Iceland's oldest history, upon which later historians built.

Ari refers to a number of native informants for his narrative, and emphasizes their knowledge and trustworthiness. The oldest was born in 995, and several others remembered events from most of the 11th century and had known persons born in the latter half of the 10th century. Ari undoubtedly knew some Latin historical literature; he did not use it as a source for the history of Iceland, but to a certain extent as a model. He quotes directly only one "saga" about St. Edmund in connection with the year of the saint's death. Scholars have disagreed on Ari's use of foreign literature; several have assumed, for instance, a direct or indirect acquaintance with the Anglo-Saxon Bede, while others have asserted that the arguments for this influence are untenable.

For the Icelandic recording of history, however, it was of decisive importance that Ari did not follow his supposed models by writing in Latin, but chose instead to write his book in Icelandic.

Isleifs Pátr Biskups

(Giszur, Teitr, and Porvaldr) are named.

The Pátr concludes with a reference to St. Jón Ogmundsson (bishop of Hólar 1106–1121), who thought of his foster-father Isleif whenever he heard good men mentioned. Similar accounts appear in both versions of his saga: the older Jóns saga helga and Jóns saga helga by Gunnlaugr Leifsson.
Valdisarson is an Icelandic poem belonging to a group of skaldic preserved only in the MS AM 74814to from the early 14th century. 

Icelanders, all but two known from íslendingasõgur, and that íslendingasõgur art distinctive for a specific type of saga. Most scholars agree that the majority date from the 13th century. In some cases, it is deduced from connections with other texts as preserved sagas. There is no reason to believe that if he had recourse to saga MSS, he would have worked like a historian. His poem is more like a poetic adaptation of saga material, and the few deviations might be both intended and unintended. On the other hand, linguistic arguments are not conclusive, owing to the difficulty in establishing the linguistic norms of the 12th and 13th centuries. It is clear that Haukur imitates the poetry preserved in the sagas, including archaic word forms and old-fashioned kennings, but a poetic spark is lacking.


Bjarni Einarsson

Íslendingadrápa ("The drápa of Icelanders") by Haukur Valdísarson is an Icelandic poem belonging to a group of skaldic verse celebrating kings and heroes, who are as a rule, well known from preserved Icelandic sagas (e.g., Jónsvitki dýrðrapa and Krákumál). The poet is otherwise unknown, and the poem is preserved only in the MS AM 74814to from the early 14th century. This MS has mixed contents; the first gathering contains six eddic lays, and is thus the most important collection of eddic verse after the Codex Regius. Next comes various learned material, and then Íslendingadrápa is written on the last leaf, but it ends abruptly with the first couplet of the twenty-seventh stanza.

In its present state, the poem names twenty-seven illustrious Icelanders, all but two known from Íslendingasögur and konungasögur. Ten men, Icelanders foreign, appear in connection with the feats of the heroes. In general, each hero is given a stanza, and, with one remarkable exception, they are praised for their courage and fighting valor. The exception is Stóu-Hallr, who in stanza 22 is described as a lawmaker who upheld his right against any man. But his chief merit was as the father of "worthy sons to whom the glorious Lord of Heaven granted true honor." Stóu-Hallr is known from Íslendingabók as the leader of the Christian party at the Alþingi in the year 1000 when Christianity was adopted, and from Njóls saga as the great peacemaker. His son Porstein, known from a separate saga and a fátr, is spoken of in the next stanza. But the extraordinary content of stanza 22, together with the solemn and pious words about the true honor granted by the Lord to Hallr's sons, the hófuðsmenn (persons of high rank), may suggest that the poet is alluding to Hallr as the great-grandfather of St. Jón Ogmundarson, bishop of Hólar, who was made an Icelandic saint in 1200. Hallr was also the ancestor of two other centuries, i.e., probably earlier than the Íslendingasögur, and that Haukur accordingly had recourse only to oral sources. As a matter of fact, very little can be known about oral sources in this case. Much of what Haukur says about the feats and the fate of his heroes is in general terms, but the facts are with rare exceptions in agreement with preserved sagas. There is no reason to believe that


Jakob Benedikttssøn

Íslendinga saga see Sturlunga saga

Íslendingasögur see Sturlunga saga

Íslendingasögur is the modern term for a group of sagas about Icelandic farmer-chiefains from the period of Settlement (870–930) to the mid-11th century. The main setting for the action is, with one exception (Egils saga), Iceland, but many of these sagas begin in Norway before the Settlement, and many of them also describe journeys abroad and contacts with kings and noblemen in Scandinavia and the British Isles.

In medieval literature, the Íslendingasögur are distinctive for telling tales in a heroic spirit about nonaristocrats. Contemporary sagas from the 13th century tell tales about the same class of people. But while the pursuit of honor lies at the heart of the sagas from the 13th century tell tales about the same class of people. But while the pursuit of honor lies at the heart of the saga, Iceland, but many of these sagas begin in Norway before the Settlement, and many of them also describe journeys abroad and contacts with kings and noblemen in Scandinavia and the British Isles.

In medieval literature, the Íslendingasögur are distinctive for telling tales in a heroic spirit about nonaristocrats. Contemporary sagas from the 13th century tell tales about the same class of people. But while the pursuit of honor lies at the heart of the Íslendingasögur, the actors in the contemporary sagas seem more concerned with power.

The Íslendingasögur, between thirty-five and forty in number, are anonymous, and no saga is preserved in an author's original MS. A few fragments date from the 13th century, but the oldest MSS containing complete or nearly complete saga date from about 1300 onward, and a number of sagas are preserved in 14th- and 15th-century MSS. Some sagas exist only in paper MSS from the 16th or 17th centuries. Consequently, the quality of the texts and their proximity to their originals vary greatly.

Dating of the Íslendingasögur is controversial. Most scholars agree that the majority date from the 13th century. In some cases, this assumption can be deduced from the age of the oldest MSS. In other cases, it is deduced from connections with other texts as well as knowledge of the laws and customs of the old pre-State society that was dissolving in the mid-13th century, and was gradually replaced by a new state from the 1260s onward. If the
theory is accepted that *Egils saga* was written by Snorri Sturluson (1179–1241), facts of his biography place the saga in the period 1220–1240. There are good grounds to believe that *Njáls saga* was written 1275–1290. Other datings are much more uncertain. It has been common practice to classify a group of sagas thought to be older than *Egils saga* as preclassical, but scholars disagree about which sagas should be placed in this group. A considerable number of the classical sagas have influenced the version of *Landnámabók* written by Sturla Pórðarson no later than 1280. Another group of sagas is considered postclassical and dated in the 14th century or even later. As a rule, these sagas are more fantastic than the classical sagas and draw a more diffuse image of the old society. Some of these late sagas are thought to be revisions of classical versions now lost. The best known of the postclassical sagas is *Grettis saga*; among the others are *Kjalnesinga saga*, *Harðar saga*, *Hávarðar saga*, *Pórdar saga hreða*, *Finnboga saga ramma*, *Svarfdœla saga*, *Fljótsdœla saga*, *Flóamanna saga*, *Bárðar saga*, *Krôka-Refs saga*, and *Viglунdar saga*.

*Background in history and oral tradition.* The sagas present themselves as history, and many of the characters are not doubt historical. In most sagas, there are frequent references to characters known from other texts, and often characters are connected with later generations through genealogies. Moreover, in most sagas, the chronology has several ties to historical events, and as a rule the inner chronology is consistent. There is also a high degree of consistency in the information about persons and events in the sagas as a whole. All these characteristics suggest that the sagas were created as historical rather than fictional works. It does not necessarily follow, however, that they are historical documents of the same kind as modern history. The question of historicity has been much debated. From the time the *Íslendingasögur* became objects of study and continuing into this century, scholars (with some notable exceptions) had great faith in their value as sources for history. But the strict demands of source criticism in this century led to sagas being rejected altogether by historians, first because they were considered unreliable and even pure fiction, and second because they dealt with private matters in which the historians were not particularly interested. Many historians now think that the sagas can be used with caution as sources about social mechanisms and mental attitudes operative between the time of writing and the time in which events are supposed to have occurred.

The question of historicity is closely related to the question of orality. The sagas exist only as written literature, but are they primarily oral tales recorded more or less exactly as they were told, or are they works of authors who created them out of diverse materials, such as older written texts, oral tales, and their own fantasy? The question is still controversial, although no scholar would deny that the writer had some influence on the final form of the work. The majority of scholars would probably agree with this statement: the consistency of the saga canon as a whole, with regard to the world described and its inhabitants, is best explained by the existence of a continuous oral tradition about persons and events in the first centuries after the Settlement. Moreover, the uniformity of themes and their treatment, as well as the style, indicate that the narrative form of this tradition was already highly developed when it was adapted by the writers of sagas. However, the macrostructure of *Íslendingasaga* must have been inspired by older literary genres, such as saints' lives and konungasögur. There is no evidence or likelihood that an oral saga ever existed coming anywhere near the scope of the average *Íslendingasaga*, let alone the longest ones. We must assume that the medium of the written word enabled the authors to refine their style and narrative technique, compose sagas of greater complexity and length than the oral tales, and give individual events and the saga as a whole a meaning or a thematic structure not present in the oral tales.

If such a description is accepted, it is still important not to confuse saga writers with modern writers of fiction. The author of a saga could not treat his material with the freedom of a writer of contemporary fiction. The saga writer was bound by tradition and most likely had no wish to be free from it.

At first reading, the sagas resemble each other closely, and they do indeed have a great many characteristics in common, testifying to the strength of the tradition. However, the sagas also differ from one another in many respects. A part of the explanation may lie in the tradition itself. The events narrated in the sagas are supposed to have taken place about 200–400 years before the time of writing. A difference in the degree of stylization and heroic idealization in the sagas could partly reflect their place in a process whereby oral tradition gradually has transformed into heroic tales the chaotic narratives of recent events, such as those on which *Sturlunga saga* is based. On the other hand, if the *Íslendingasögur* are compared with the heroic lays of the *Poetic Edda*, which are undoubtedly among the influences forming the *Íslendingasögur*, they appear realistic and full of extraneous material. However, individual sagas most likely differ not only because the authors had different traditions to work with, but also because they had different backgrounds and education, different values and interests, and different ability and desire to develop something out of their material. Sagas like *Reykjadeala saga* or *Viga-Glúms saga* are crude and often clumsily told, and seem likely to be formed more by the traditions at hand than by the craft of the writer, while works like *Njáls saga* or *Laxdœla saga* transcend the limits set by tradition through conscious artistry and thematic interpretation of the subject matter.

*Social and ethical norms.* Whatever degree of sophistication we can detect in an *Íslendingasaga*, the action dominates, developed and formed through conflicts. The nature of these conflicts is conditioned by the social and ethical norms in the society depicted, as idealized by tradition. The Icelanders of the 13th century must have looked to the past, seeing there a society where living and dying with honor was a possibility, although never cheaply or easily realized. Most of them probably felt that chances of living with honor in their own tumultuous times were small.

For a saga hero, seeking and preserving his own and the family's honor is a categoric imperative more important than the preservation of property or life itself. As with most other social matters, honor is the responsibility of the adult males of a family, although women frequently spell out the demands of the code of honor at crucial moments. The sagas depict a society with considerable differences in social status, wealth, and power, but in this society every free man has a choice to live, or at least to die, honorably. It goes without saying that not every man in the sagas lives up to this ideal.

In the preservation of honor, a man may be forced to use violence, even to kill. But it is not considered honorable to initiate a conflict by abusing other people or treating them unjustly. Persons who so behave are called *ófanadarmenn* and thought worthy of contempt. An honorable man is not easily upset and usually delays his revenge until the community begins to wonder at his equanimity; then he strikes relentlessly, but is always open to the
The conflicts in the sagas are usually started by men who are either overbearing and greedy, or rash and inconsiderate. The initial causes are various: disagreement about property, disgrace to a female member of a family, unprovoked attack, verbal insult. However, it is important to realize that such behavior is almost immediately interpreted in terms of honor. In real life, a farmer who suffered losses from aggressive neighbors may have had quite material reasons to be angered, but in a saga he is so much more likely to be interested in getting revenge than "his money back" that he promises to give the property at stake to a chieftain willing to help him retrieve it from the aggressor.

It must be emphasized that while the code of honor lies at the core of saga ethics, individual sagas reveal a varying degree of influence from Christian values, and some of them show a conflict between the Christian idea of forgiveness and the old duty of revenge.

Types of conflict. In most sagas, we find instances of what can be called a "typical feud": a conflict between two individuals or kin groups with alternating clashes and attempts at resolution, usually climaxing with manslaughter followed by revenge, and, in the end, settled through the help of mediators or courts. A settlement during the course of a feud is often considered unsatisfactory by one of the parties involved, and this dissatisfaction then leads to a new phase. At the end of a saga, however, all feuds have been reconciled. As a rule, brokers and mediators play an important role in the typical feud.

In some sagas, conflict arises among close relatives or in-laws, creating what could be called a "tragic feud." Such sagas are closely related to eddic heroic poetry and are probably influenced by it. Here, people face a tragic situation: both or all alternatives open to them are disastrous. In Laxdæla saga, Kjartan provokes his cousin and foster-brother, Bolli, until Bolli's wife and brothers-in-law force him to kill Kjartan. In revenge, he is attacked by his cousins and killed. In Gísla saga, Gíslí kills his brother-in-law in revenge for another brother-in-law and a foster-brother; in revenge, Gíslí is killed, having been persecuted by men hired by his third brother-in-law. In Njal's saga, a similar sense of tragedy is created when conflict arises between thirst for revenge and ties created through friendship and fosterage.

Sagas about skalds often describe conflicts more individually oriented than a "typical" feud. A skald is often rash and inconsiderate of other people's honor, for example, the honor of the family of the woman he falls in love with. This behavior initiates conflict, where the skald is only reluctantly supported by his kin and usually goes his own way. The sagas of Kormákr and Hallfreðr show heroes governed by their impulses rather than a developed sense of honor. The same applies to Gunnilaug's saga and Fóstbroðra saga, and partly to Bjarnar saga Hítokelakappa.

Feud is conflict within the framework of society. When a person has been outlawed as a result of feud, he is no longer a part of society, and cannot be legally assisted or avenged. Therefore, the sagas of outlaws, Gísla saga and Grettis saga, describe heroes praiseworthy for their ability to escape revenge, sometimes through rather unheroic behavior. Typically, the outlaw tends to get assistance from women and men of low status. The outlaw is treated sympathetically in his own saga, but people standing or placing themselves outside society because of contemptible behavior are treated as outcasts. In many sagas, there are incidents where individuals or families, usually of low birth, do harm by stealing and witchcraft. Such persons are without honor, "outsiders" who are killed or driven away by good people, but often only when they have caused considerable harm. "Land-cleansing" episodes are found in many sagas, among them Laxdæla saga, Eybyggja saga, and Grettis saga; and in one saga, Vatnsdæla saga, this type of conflict is the dominant one.

In order to conduct a feud, an alliance with a godi or an influential chieftain is necessary, and usually feuds end up involving such persons, although the conflict may have begun at a lower stage in society. A conflict between people who are not equal always ends either in reconciliation before an important person is killed, or by the defeat of the lower person. In the Jöttrir about the dealings of Icelanders with a king, the end is almost always a reconciliation in which the Icelander pledges his loyalty to the king, and the king rewards him. Such conflicts, or pseudo-conflicts, also appear in the travel episodes of sagas and in Jöttrir set in Iceland, like Forsteins jöttr stangarhogg. In Egils saga, such a conflict is described between the family of Kveld-Ulfr and his descendants and the kings of Norway, but it is atypical because the kings suffer heavy losses through the actions of this chieftain family without really receiving compensation. However, a reconciliation of sorts is brought about in York when Egill ransoms his head from Eiríkr blóðer ("blood-axe") with a poem. Kveld-Ulfr and his descendants do not recognize the new kind of king who is more than a primus inter pares, as the old kings were, and they get away with it because they have sanctuary in Iceland and because they have influential helpers at the court.

Structure and composition. Each Islendingasaga describes several conflicts more or less closely tied to each other. In a number of sagas, the conflicts are subordinated to an overall scheme of composition moving from introduction of the characters and the situation, often including some anticipatory conflicts, through the development of the main conflict to a climax, followed by revenge and eventually final reconciliation, and ending with an aftermath accounting for the fate of some characters and their descendants. This model applies best to the structure of a saga when the climax and revenge can be defined easily. Within each of these segments of the narrative, excluding the aftermath, conflicts can arise, and one can even see this same structure repeated many times as a microstructure. The small units of conflict can also be made the points of departure for analysis of saga plot. It then appears that feud can be analyzed into recurrent constituents: conflict, advocacy, and resolution. With its stress on advocacy (the implications of a third party in a conflict, either on one of the sides or as mediator), this model reveals the social nature of feud, but it cannot account for the structure of the saga as a whole. These structural models can be supplemented with an analysis of the interweaving strands of narrative. The matter of one saga is often complex, and the general method of composition then is to interweave the stories by jumping from one to the other and back, rather than finishing one story and then starting a new one.

Style and narrative technique. In their style and narrative technique, the Islendingasögur have much in common with konungságur and other sagas based on native tradition. The writer or sagaman never speaks in the first person, nor is a reader or listener ever addressed. This technique has given the sagas a reputation for "objectivity" or impassibilité. Their objectivity should not be understood too literally, however. More often than not, sympathies and antipathies are quite clear, although they are conveyed to the reader by discreet means. Presentation of character appears
as an objective fact, although it often includes judgment and evaluation, and biases the reader. Individual acts are often commented upon indirectly by reference to common opinion. However, many sagas present important characters and their actions with such detachment that it is hard to see any sort of bias. *Egils saga* is a good example: no attempt is made to hide faults in the protagonist's appearance or character. As in many other sagas, the characterization is humorous rather than moral or psychological.

The saga style is dominated by parataxis, and the reporting of fact is usually brisk and lucid. As a rule, narrative pace slows down considerably when peaks of the action are being prepared and can become quite slow with changes of scene and detailed description of movement when violent confrontation is being prepared. There is not much pure description. Nature or other material surroundings are described only to the extent necessary for the understanding of the action, but in some cases individuals are described in considerable detail.

Dialogue is extremely important in the *Íslendingasögur*, and it is more varied in form than the narration. Dialogues are usually brief and interspersed with action, but many sagas also have speeches of some length. The function of the dialogue is varied. At the peaks of action, it enlivens the characters' confrontation with each other and expresses reasons for antagonism or alliance. Comments made by characters are, as a rule, no less cool and detached than the voice of the sagaman, but at the same time they are personal. One of the most important functions of the dialogue is to give an act a historical dimension by connecting it with past events or pointing to the future through warning and prediction. Important characters in the saga are individualized to some extent through their speech, although more in the direction of general characteristics than any kind of idiosyncrasy.

**Historical context.** The classical *Íslendingasögur* were written in an age when Icelandic society had been through a profound crisis and was changing radically. The social mechanisms established soon after the initial settlement, which seem to have functioned quite well for about three centuries, were disturbed, and Iceland was taking steps toward a mainstream European form of government by subjecting itself to the king of Norway. The *Íslendingasögur* as a whole embody a myth of Iceland as a bastion of the free and often heroic farmer in no need of king or state. The roots of this myth are difficult to trace, but it is only natural that it was strengthened when people felt that an era was coming to an end. However, the interests and anxieties that can be seen as the roots of this myth are not only natural but also typical of many societies. It is therefore not surprising that the *Íslendingasögur* are so different from traditional literature that reflects a fixed and static society. Conflict and contradiction is the vital nerve that connects them with the present age.

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**Vésteinn Olason**

[See also: Bandamanna saga; Bárðar saga Snæfellsøsson; Bjarnar saga Hitcælakappa; Bookprose/Freeprose Theory; Droplaugarsona saga; Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar; Eyrrbyggja saga; Finnboga saga ramma; Fljótstøls saga; Flóamanna saga; Fóstbrœðra saga; Gísla saga Súrssonar; Gull-Póris saga; Gunnars saga Keldugúsflís; Gunnars saga Pórandabara; Gunnlaugs saga omsætin; Hallfreðr saga; Hardar saga; Hávadar saga Ísfinnungs; Hekúavár saga; Hávadar saga; Hrannakels saga Freygoða; Hörsna-Póris saga; Iceland; Kjalningar saga; Kormaks saga; Króka-Refs saga; Laxdæla saga; Ljósvetninga saga; Njáls saga; Outlaw Sagas; Reykøldella saga (ok Viga-Skáru); Saga, Skálaksörg; Svarfðiðeða saga; Saftr; Póðar saga hreðu; Porsteins saga hvtta; Porsteins saga Sólu-Hallasonar; Valla-Ljóts saga; Vápnfröðinga saga; Vatnsdæla saga; Viga-Glúms saga; Viglundar saga; Vinland Sagas; Women in Sagas]**
íþróttir. Old Norse íþrótt (pl. íþróttir) is probably derived from id 'deed, feat' and próttis 'strength' (for detailed discussion, see Crozier 1986). Unlike modern Icelandic íþrótt, which means "sport, athletics," the Old Norse term had the more general significance of its proposed etymology: "feat-strength, ability in a respected skill." Athletic achievements certainly qualified as íþróttir in medieval Scandinavia, but the term could also denote mastery of crafts, fine arts, games of skill, traditional lore, law, and book learning. íþróttir are so diverse that it may seem difficult to formulate a principle of exclusion. Skills particularly associated with mercantile or agrarian activity seem to have been excluded quite systematically, however (Russo 1978: 13). Games particularly associated with children were probably excluded as well. Skill in the use of the top (skakt-kringla, hreyti-speðad) or in the throwing of the snowball (snæ-kókkir) would probably not be regarded as an íþrótt (Tilhagen 1956, Alver 1962). On the other hand, almost any talent qualified as an íþrótt if it was somehow associated with the aristocratic milieu of the chieftain's household and the þing, or public assembly.

Texts discussing íþróttir make the connection with aristocratic life quite clear. In Snorri Sturluson's well-known story of Þór and Ugarða-Loki (Gylfaginning, ch. 48), the giant chieftain says that no one can join his household unless he knows some kind of íþrótt. The visiting Æsir then attempt to show their prowess in a wrestling match, a foot race, an eating contest, and a drinking contest. The latter two activities may seem ignoble today, but they had important associations with heroic society, in which the chieftain was supposed to be generous with food and drink, while the retainers showed their appreciation by consuming what was offered.

Rognvaldr Kali, earl of the Orkneys, and Harald Sigurðarson, king of Norway, composed skaldic verses listing their íþróttir (Orkneyinga saga, ch. 58; Finnur Jónsson 1912-15, vol. 1A, p. 357; vol. 1B, p. 329). Subjects mentioned include horsemanship, swimming, versecraft, tall, runes, book learning, crafts (smíður), skiing, rowing, and harping. The term smíður encompasses a wide variety of crafts, including carpentry and jewellsmithing, as well as weapons manufacture. There were at least two varieties of tall: skák-tall, probably a type of "war game" analogous to modern chess (Du Chalullu 1890: 353), and hnela-tall, probably a type of "hunting game" in which one or more pieces attempted to escape from a larger number of "hunters" (Tolkien 1960: 88). Runic knowledge involved not only skill in carving and interpreting runic characters, but also use of these characters in magic charms of the sort described in the eddic poems Rígsþula (st. 43) and Sigdrifaþvalr (sts. 5–19).

The Old Norse mannjafnaðr "man-comparison" involved frequent references to íþróttir. In a verbal duel between Eysteinn and Sigurðr, joint kings of Norway, each antagonist argues that his gifts make him most fit to rule (Heimskringla: Magníssona saga, ch. 21). Sigurðr boasts of his physical strength, as displayed in hand-to-hand encounters and in use of weapons, especially the bow. Eysteinn claims to be the more accurate archer, and prides himself on his ability in public speaking, law, skiing, and use of bone skates. Three types of swimming skill are distinguished. Eysteinn is best at diving and long-distance swimming, while Sigurðr excels at the type of contest in which two swimmers try to duck (kefja) each other. Saga writers often include brief portraits of chieftains listing íþróttir along with other noble gifts. In Heimskringla, for example, we learn that King Óláfr Tryggvason excelled in mountain climbing and in juggling with knives (handsaxaleiki). Óláfr was also famous for his ability to dance along the oars outside the railing of his longship while his men were rowing (Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar, ch. 85). A similar passage in Njáls saga (ch. 19) informs us that the Icelandic champion Gunnarr was unbeatable in sports of all kinds. Gunnarr was ambidextrous in his use of weapons, swam like a seal, and could jump amazing distances forward, backward, and vertically.

Although games restricted to childhood did not qualify as íþróttir, children often participated in adult sports or imitated other types of significant adult activities. In Njáls saga (ch. 8), for example, two boys and a girl carry out a mock legal procedure of divorce. Both children and adults participated in the Icelandic knattleikir, which was played with a bat (knatt-drepa, knatt-tré) and ball (knottir) on a smooth field of ice. The connection of this game with social status is particularly emphasized in Gísla saga Súrssonar (ch. 18), where the evaluative role of male and female spectators is represented. The players' concern for reputation often produced brawls and even killings, as in Egils saga Skálhildar (ch. 40), where the seven-year-old Egill kills his opponent Grimir with an axe. A similar intensity of competition is evident in descriptions of the horse fight (hesta-vig), as for example in ch. 29 of Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar, although in this type of contest the íþrótt might more properly be credited to the animals than to the men who goaded them. Ch. 72 presupposes that competitive sports were frequently practiced at public assemblies, and gives a detailed account of wrestling matches.

There was apparently no hard-and-fast rule forbidding women to participate in íþróttir. Both sexes played tall (Gunnlaugs saga ormnstungu, ch. 4). The skaldic poets known to history include women like Steinnun and Steingerðr (Frank 1978: 24, 97, 168). Use of weapons by dedicated warrior women like Brynhildr is a well-known feature of ancient Germanic legend (see, e.g., the eddic poem Helreid Brynhildar). The description of Guðrún's deadly swordplay in the eddic Arnalám (sts. 49–51) suggests that aristocratic women with no special dedication to warfare might also have some training in martial arts.


[See also: Senna—Mannjafnaðr]

Ívan Lejonriddaren see Eufemiavisorna

Ívens saga ("Íven's Saga") is an Old Norse prose version of Chrétien de Troyes's chivalric romance Yvain, or Le chevalier au lion. The oldest MS of Ívens saga, Stock. Per. 4to no. 6 (early 15th century), attributes the commissioning of the translation from the
French to Hákon konung gamli ("King Hákon the Old"), presumably Hákon Hákonarson (r. 1217–1263). The work is probably contemporary with the other Old Norse versions of Chrétien’s narratives, Erex saga and Parcevals saga. Ívens saga is also found, incomplete, in AM 489 4to (ca. 1450) and, in somewhat abbreviated form, in Stock. Papp. fol. no. 46 (1690).

While remaining faithful to the substance of its source, Ívens saga conforms to the pattern found in other translated riddarasögur of omitting authorial intrusion and internal monologue, and reducing description. The sole intrusion by the saga writer involves some antifeminist remarks in ch. 7 about female fickleness. Stylistically, its most distinctive feature is alliteration, a characteristic of riddarasögur “court style,” which, in this case, serves to highlight crucial scenes as well as to link synonymous or collocating doublets. Present particles also occur in emotionally charged passages or at significant turns of the narrative, although not with the frequency of the similarly structured Erex saga. (See also: Erex saga, Eufemiasvorsa; Old Norse–Icelandic Literature, Foreign Influence on; Riddarasögur)

Ívens saga and Erex saga are sources of the Swedish verse romance Ivan Lejonriddaren (alternatively Herr Ivan), composed for Eufemia, queen of Hákon V of Norway, in 1303. The appearance of the lion-knight motif in some independent Icelandic riddarasögur, like Sigurdar saga Jögla and Vilhjálmssaga sjóðs, may also have been directly inspired by Ívens saga.


Geraldine Barnes
**Jarlmanns saga ok Hermanns** ("The Saga of Jarlmann and Hermann") is an indigenous Icelandic *riddarasaga* presumably composed in the 14th century. *Jarlmanns saga* is transmitted in approximately sixty MSS, the oldest from the 15th century, the youngest from the beginning of the 20th century. The large number of extant MSS suggests the extraordinary popularity of the saga. *Jarlmanns saga* follows the bridal-quest pattern in which there is a proxy wooer, and is structured around multiple wooings, rival wooers, and abduction of the bride.

Hermann inherits the throne of France. Jarlmann, the son of the wealthy Earl Roðgeirr, who had fostered Hermann, assists his foster-brother in the affairs of the kingdom. The plot unfolds when Jarlmann observes that Hermann is the perfect ruler in every respect but one: he has no wife. Jarlmann suggests that Ríkilát, daughter of King Katalatus of Mikligarðr (Constantinople), who is more beautiful and intelligent than other women, and noted for leechcraft, is Hermann's equal in every way.

The saga is bipartite, and focuses on Jarlmann's two journeys to obtain Ríkilát for Hermann. His first quest is as proxy wooer, and he returns to France with the bride. Jarlmann's second quest is also for Ríkilát, but this time because she had been mysteriously abducted during preparation for the wedding festivities. Although the bridal quest is the focus of *Jarlmanns saga*, its peculiar character derives from the relationship of the foster-brothers. Whereas the proximate cause of the second quest is the abduction of the bride, the ultimate cause is Jarlmann's estrangement from his foster-brother, leading to his subsequent departure from court, because Hermann had suspected his wife of loving Jarlmann, and Jarlmann of wanting to seduce her.

*Jarlmanns saga* is dominated by the double quest for Ríkilát, but this quest is punctuated by the quests of rival wooers. Jarlmann's proxy wooing is impeded by the appearance of an antagonistic wooer, a heathen, who returns to war, but is defeated by Jarlmann. The unwelcome suitor for Ríkilát is paralleled by an unwelcome heathen suitor for Herborg, Hermann's sister. He is rejected and also resorts to war, but is defeated by Hermann. The quest for Ríkilát in the second part of the saga has a false conclusion, a double wedding, that of the heathen king Rúdent of Serkland with Ríkilát, and of Austvestan, alias Jarlmann, with Rúdent's mother's sister Porbjorg, a giantess. The two antagonists, Rúdent and Porbjorg, are killed in their bridal beds, the former by Norðunnum, alias Hermann, who as Austvestan's brother attended the royal couple, the latter by the "husband" Austvestan. The saga culminates in the marriage of Hermann to Ríkilát, and Jarlmann to Herborg. In a conclusion, we learn that Jarlmann and his wife withdrew from the world and entered monasteries. Hermann and Ríkilát had two sons, one of whom, Ríkarðr, was said to have been the father of the eponymous hero of *Konráds saga keisarsaona*.

The author of *Jarlmanns saga ok Hermanns* was acquainted not only with indigenous Icelandic romances, such as *Konráds saga*, but also with the Old Norse translation *Tristrams saga ok Ísóndar*, from which the proxy wooing, the bride as leech, and the problem of the proxy wooer as lover presumably derive. The hall-of-statues episode in *Tristrams saga* seems to have been the inspiration for the scene in which Jarlmann draws a picture of Hermann for Ríkilát to obtain her consent to the marriage.
Játtvarðar saga ("Játtvarð's Saga"), the saga of St. Edward the Confessor (1003-1066), is chiefly preserved in the vellum MSS Stock. Perg. fol. no. 5 (1350-1360) and Flateyjarbók an account of Magnus ögg's ("the good") claim to the throne of England, and Edward's reply. Of importance also is the 17th-century genealogy of Edward and comments on the purity of his life. Found in AM 238 XVI fol. This fragment includes the beginning of a Danish king who was planning to attack England; the story of Edward's miracles. Hastings.

Section 2 contains Edward's vision of the death by drowning of a Danish king who was planning to attack England; the story of Edward, his coronation ring, and St. John the Evangelist; Edward's vision of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus; and brief mention of some of Edward's miracles.

Section 3 concerns the question of succession after Edward's death. It includes an account of Earl Godwine's death, and mentions the battles of Stamford Bridge and Hastings. It also refers to the tradition that King Harold Godwinson survived the battle of Hastings.

Section 4 deals with the emigration to Byzantium of some English noblemen and their men, said to have been led by Sigurðr, earl of Gloucester. After the death of King Harold, they were unwilling to remain in England under William's rule.

Játtvarðar saga was probably compiled in the 14th century from a number of different sources. The compiler alludes to English works and a history of the kings of Norway, and makes reference to Gizzurr Hallsson in his text. Among its sources were the Latin lives of St. Edward; Osbert of Clare's Vita beati Eadwardi regis Anglorum, written 1138; Ailred of Rievaulx's Vita sancti Edwardi regis et confessoris, written between 1161 and 1163; and William of Malmsbury's Gesta regum Anglorum, written in about 1125. The compiler of Játtvarðar saga probably knew these sources only in some abbreviated form. The excerpts from Ailred and Osbert stem from a service book containing lessons for St. Edward's feast day; St. Edward's vision of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus derives from William of Malmsbury via Vincent of Beauvais's Speculum historiale. The compiler used Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar and the Chronicon Lactuconeum, a world chronicle up to the year 1219, written by an English monk at Laon. Among the material with its source in the latter is the story of Edward and St. John the Evangelist, the account of Earl Godwine's death, and the account of the emigration to Byzantium.


Helen Carron

[See also: England, Norse in; Flateyjarbók; Legenda; Saints' Lives; Stamford Bridge, Battle of]

Jelling is the location of royal pagan and Christian dynastic monuments of the mid- and late 10th century in Jutland, Denmark. The monuments known today comprise two rune stones, a stone-setting, two mounds, burials, and a church (Fig. 73). There have been many excavations, most recently in the 1970s and in 1981.

The smaller rune stone must belong among the oldest elements, but its original place and context are unknown. The runes on the stone translate: "King Gorm made this monument in memory of Gorm, his father, and in memory of Thorvi [Thyre] his mother—that Harald who won the whole of Denmark for himself, and Norway, and made the Danes Christian. " Between this rune stone and the northern stone translate: "King Gorm made this monument in memory of Thorvi [Thyre], his wife, Denmark's adornment. Only parts of the large stone-setting are preserved, under the southern mound (Fig. 73). It is composed of two converging rows of standing stones, probably a ship-setting, and seems to relate to the northern mound. This largest burial mound in Denmark held the remains of a rich pagan burial in a wooden chamber. The date of the burial was probably 958/9 (by dendrochronology), and the grave had clearly been broken into at a later stage. The evidence suggests that this was the grave of the pagan King Gorm, father of King Harald Gormsson (Bluetooth).

Written sources imply that King Harald and the Danes were converted between 958 and 965. The southern mound, which is larger than the northern mound, was probably started and certainly finished after the conversion, although mounds were basically pagan. No grave was found here, in spite of extensive excavations. The large stone setting is clearly Christian. It was placed exactly between the centers of the two mounds: a large three-sided boulder with most of the script on one side, a lion entwined with a snake on the other, and Christ on the third (Fig. 74). The inscription reads: "King Harald commanded this monument to be made in memory of Gorm, his father, and in memory of Thorvi [Thyre] his mother—that Harald who won the whole of Denmark for himself, and Norway, and made the Danes Christian. " Between this rune stone and the northern mound, a large wooden church was built, planned with a wooden burial chamber. This building was found during excavations of the floor of the present stone church of around 1100. The grave contained the skeletal remains of a middle-aged man, who had first been buried
JEWELRY 341

73. Schematic drawing of the Jelling monuments. (A–B) Remains of stone setting. (C) Southern mound. (D) King Gorm's rune stone. (E) King Harald's rune stone. (F) Present stone church, which had three wooden predecessors. (G) Grave in the first church. (H) Northern mound. (J) Older mound. (K) Viking burial chamber dug into the older mound. Drawing: Knud J. Krogh.

74. The royal rune stones in Jelling, raised by King Gorm (left) and King Harald (right). Photo: The National Museum of Denmark.

Jewelry. Our knowledge about jewelry in the early Middle Ages derives from treasure trove and items found scattered in the earth. In recent years, metal detectors have brought to light a considerable amount of jewelry, especially amulets with animal figures.

Only a small amount of jewelry has been found in graves, because the conversion to Christianity in the period around the year 1000 eliminated burial deposits, apart from pectoral crosses and, if the person was a bishop, a finger ring. Heavy jewelry, such as neck rings and bracelets, went out of use during the 12th century. Medieval jewelry is characterized by economy of precious metal.

The use of finger rings became common in the early Middle Ages. They were worn on all fingers, by both men and women. Some finger rings adopted the shape of the plain or twisted Viking bracelets; others had precious stones inserted, especially stones or gems accorded symbolic significance or magical power, such as the sapphire, ruby, or amethyst. Many bishops' rings had sapphires, for example, the one found in the grave of the Danish archbishop Absalon (d. 1201), perhaps the one by which he had been consecrated. The oldest dated signet ring belonged to the Swedish king Knut Eriksson (r. 1167–1196). From the late 13th century onward, many rings with engraved or openwork pictures of Christ and saints and with religious inscriptions have survived, and, from the 15th century, signet rings with coats of arms or housemarks.

Among the finds from the early Middle Ages are openwork amulets of silver and bronze with animal figures in the late Viking Urnes style, and with Agnus Dei. Round amulets with pictures of Christ and the saints were either engraved or made of coins. Amulets could also hold relics, such as a round capsule with the Virgin depicted, in a hoard, dated before 1066, from Valbo, Gästrikland (SHM = Statens Historiska Museum, Stockholm); in the same treasure were other specimens of jewelry with granulation and filigree. Some crosses are encolpiums with cavities for relics. Most

Else Roesdahl


[See also: Burial Mounds and Burial Practices; Conversion; Gorm; Harald Gormsson (Bluetooth); Iconography; Runes and Runic Inscriptions]
of them were bronze, and were brought from Byzantium and the near Orient. Three excellent 11th- to 12th-century encopliums belong to the National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen (= DNM): the Queen Dagmar Cross of gold with enamel in bright colors, found in Ringsted church and imported from Byzantium; the Roskilde Cross of gold with precious stones and granulation, from Byzantium or northern Italy; and the Ore Cross, a Byzantine or Near Eastern reliquary cross with Nordic engravings (perhaps all through a Nordic replica). A silver reliquary cross of the Ore-type was found at Gullunge, Uppland, and another with rounded cross ends was found at Gotebo, Oland. The latter was modeled on a Byzantine cross, but the nielloed figure of Christ is reminiscent of the art of the runic stones (SHM). Small pendant crosses of gold, silver, or bronze were either made of plain sheet metal, with engravings, like some crosses from Hagerup, about 1050 (DNM), or were cast with a crucifix in relief like a group represented by crosses from Valbo in Gästrikland, Sandgårda in Gotland, Ryd in Oland, Johannishus in Blekinge, Haukøy near Troms, and several others, among them Store Tårnby, Zealand, all dated to about 1050-1150. Pendant crosses may also have ornaments consisting of three flat buckles at the cross ends; this type is especially found in Sweden and other countries in the Baltic. In Trondheim, two silver crucifixes with filigree were found with coins from about 1040. Of nearly the same date is a cross in openwork Ringerike style, found at Bonderup, Zealand (DNM).

The early-medieval amulets and pendant crosses hung on chains consisting of 8-shaped, bent rings of gold or silver, or made of thin "knitted" (Östersich) silver thread, techniques already used in the Viking Age and known from the Birka graves. Some of the chains are connected to the pendants by cast animal heads.

Round brooches (fibulae) with filigree of a workmanship close to Viking Age specimens and influenced by Carolingian and Ottonian goldsmiths' art were found at Kolund near Flensburg Fjord, at Frederikshborg, Zealand, (DNM), and Johannishus, Blekinge (SHM), all dated to about 1050-1075. Round brooches of different sizes were used throughout the Middle Ages, the early ones to fasten the mantle on the shoulders. The later ones in openwork were placed on the breast, as shown in Queen Eufemia's early-medieval jewelry were spherical buttons and buckles, which could be divided into two parts to be hooked together, often in cast openwork with flowers, leaves, and, as central figures, the Virgin, St. George with the dragon, or other saints. Such dress accessories were represented in the rich hoards, deposited about 1361, at Dune and Amunde on Gotland. A beautiful buckle from Dune, with reliefs in gilded silver representing a young knight and his lady (13th century), belongs to the best goldsmiths' work of the period (SHM).

The Nordic kings and queens may have worn crowns even before the first coronation took place, in Norway 1163, in Denmark 1170, and in Sweden 1210. Over the centuries, royal crowns were presented to churches as ornaments for Madonna statues, Queen Margrethe's to Børglum in 1407 and Queen Philippa's to Vadsten in the 1430s. None of these crowns is extant. Noblemen and noblewomen could wear head jewelry, either of gold and silver with fleurs-de-lis and other ornaments, or ribbons with silver roses. A silver chaplet of a noblewoman, worked in repoussé, was included in a hoard from Badeboda in Småland (14th century; SMH). A crown with fleurs-de-lis in openwork gilded silver sheet was found together with a magnificent pectoral cross in the town of Middelfart on Funen, from about 1500 (DNM). The items may have belonged to a Madonna statue, but were possibly used as a bridal crown and a bridegroom's cross.

Beads of filigree work for rosaries have been found in several places, as in the Slagelse hoard and in Nyborg church; a complete rosary of gold and silver belonged to an abbess, Anna Reinholdsdrater Leihusen in Stockholm, who died in 1550 (SHM).

The same abbess was the owner of a beautiful belt consisting of a chain in filigree gold (SHM). In the later Middle Ages, belts were often made of cloth or leather, with buckles and furnishings of silver. In the Dune hoard were found 14th-century belt fittings of gilded silver (SHM). The so-called "Belt of Erik of Pomerania" of woven silk has a silver buckle from about 1450 and furnishings 150 years older (DNM).

Matrixes and patrixes of bronze for round brooches and other jewelry from the transitional period between the Viking Age and the Middle Ages have been found at Tønsberg, Norway, and at various places in Sweden.
Jómsvíkinga saga ("The Saga of the Jómsvikingar") was written in Iceland around or possibly before 1200. For the most part, the scene of the action is late 9th- and 10th-century Denmark. Structurally, the saga falls into two parts, the first of which deals with the Danish kings, in particular King Harald Gormsson and his parents, Gorm the Old and Thyra. This part is to some extent based on two now-lost written sources, *Óláf saga Tryggvasonar* by Gunnlaugr Leifsson and *Skjoldunga saga*. Dreams and omens play a major role in this section, predicting, among other things, the conversion of Denmark, described at the end of the section, and the conflict between Harald and his son Sven Haraldsson, which is the subject of the latter part of the saga. The principal characters in the latter part of the saga are the leaders of a band of Vikings called "the Jómsvikingars," and its main theme is their strained relations with the Danish royal house. Páhnatóki from Funen is said to have founded the stronghold at Jómsborg on the Baltic coast of Wendland and to have been the first leader of the Viking community there. He was succeeded by Sigvaldi Strútr-Haraldsson from Scania. The Jómsvikings are praised for their boldness and fortitude, but their activities are not described in any detail until they invade Norway and fight the famous sea battle in Hjorungavagr (Llvág?) against Earl Hákon Sigurðarson and his sons. They are defeated at last, after Earl Hákon has invoked his protector, the goddess þorgeirð Hordaþr ("bride of the Hordaland"). Those who did not fall or flee are captured, and many of them are beheaded; but a few are pardoned by Earl Eiríkr Hákonarson, among others, Vagn Ákason, Páhnatóki's grandson, the bravest of them all.

The problems surrounding the preservation of Jómsvíkinga saga are among the most complex in the history of Icelandic literature. If we assume there was originally one written saga, based on oral traditions and to a lesser extent on older written sources, this saga would seem to have split into two redactions quite soon after its composition. The alternative is to allow for two sagas composed separately, but both based on oral traditions. In any case, two substantially different redactions are discernible in some MSS and in the parts of the saga incorporated into other works. These two redactions may be designated A and B. The A-version is preserved uncontaminated in one Icelandic MS only, AM 291 folio, the oldest and undoubtedly best MS preserving the saga, written in the latter half of the 13th century. The saga is not complete, however, because the last and third-to-last leaves of this MS are lost, and the first page is illegible and the last page nearly so. The same version, with a number of omissions, was incorporated into the saga of Óláfr Tryggvason in *Flateyjarbók*, but with some alteration of style and minor interpolations from other sources. The third MS is Stock. Perg. 4to no. 7, written in the early 14th century. In this MS, the text of the A-version has been in part shortened and includes interpolations from other sources. A different redaction of the saga is found in AM 510 folio, written about the middle of the 16th century. Here, the first section of the saga is omitted, and the text is a combination of the A- and B-versions. Still another redaction is the Latin translation of Amgrímr Jónsson, made in 1592–1593 after a now-lost MS, the text of which seems to have been a combination of the A- and B-versions. In the MS AM 310 folio, there are two sections of Jómsvíkinga saga incorporated into *Óláf saga Tryggvasonar*, taken from a MS closely related to AM 291 folio. Fagrskinna and Heimskringla both use the B-version of Jómsvíkinga saga, and the same version was probably also used by Bjarni Kolbeinsson, the author of the poem *Jómsvíkingadröpa*. The most characteristic feature of the redaction of AM 291 folio is its contempt for the Danish kings, especially Harald Gormsson. In the other redactions, this maliciousness is either somewhat softened or completely effaced, but there are also several other textual discrepancies among the MSS.

The saga itself is in no way outstanding for its characterization, but the story is vivid and well told. Throughout, the saga is interspersed with grotesque humor, even in the most grisly scenes, as, for example, the description of the beheading of the Jómsvikings...
after the battle in Hjorungavåg. Some of the events described in the saga are historical facts, although they did not happen in the same way as recorded, and most of the characters are attested in historical sources. But as a whole, the saga is far from being a historical work. It must be classified as an entertaining fiction, and as such, it is one of the highlights of medieval Icelandic saga literature.


[See also: Bjarni Kolbeinsson; Fagstjónn; Heimsóknir; Konungsþögur; Ölafs saga Trygggevasonar; Skjoldunga saga]

Jomsvikingadrápa see Bjarni Kolbeinsson

Jon Preest ("Priest John") is the Danish rendering of Latin "Predicte Johannes," the name of a legendary Christian priest-king of the Indies, called "Prester John" in English; his Swedish name is Joen præst af Indialand ("Priest John of India"). Wishful rumors of his victory over the Saracens, a misinterpretation of Yeh-hō Ta-shih's victory over the Seljuk Sultan in 1141, were supported by a personal letter that the Byzantine emperor Emanuel Komnenos received from him, probably in 1165. The letter, a literary fiction written in Latin by a westerner, describes the marvels of the priest-king's lands, and boasts of his fabulous wealth and power.

The Latin text of this letter survives in nearly 100 MSS, a dozen of which date from the 13th century. In his standard edition, Zarncke distinguished an original from five later interpolated versions (A-E) created within a century. The letter was translated into several vernaculars, among them possibly Old Norse (Holm-Olsen 1945: 13-4, 132-3). One Old Swedish and two Old Danish translations are extant.

The Swedish translation is preserved in two MSS, Ups. C 213 from about 1450 and the almost identical Stock. D 27 from 1550-1600. It belongs to the same tradition as the Danish translation printed by Gotfried of Ghenzen in 1510, namely the Latin C-version. The second Danish translation, in a Royal Library MS, Thott 585 8vo from about 1500, represents the Latin B-version, the main difference being the placing of an interpolated description of Jon Preest's second palace, either finally (B) or somewhat earlier in the text (C). Although they are both heavily abbreviated (in some places even obscure), the Uppsala/Ghenzen and the Thott versions differ greatly in their omissions. The Uppsala and Ghenzen texts also have a number of transpositions and additions in common, whereas the Thott text stays close to its Latin original. One corruption in the Ghenzen text (stegheton; cf. in the Uppsala text vesthan offkndene, "from the nearby regions," but in the Uppsala text westhan offlande, "west of the country"). The Thott version has also have a number of transpositions and additions in common, whereas the Thott text stays close to its Latin original. One corruption in the Ghenzen text (stegheton; cf. in the Uppsala text vesthan offkndene, "from the nearby regions," but in the Uppsala text westhan offlande, "west of the country"). The Thott version has several rare or unique words. Probably, the Scandinavian translations (in both versions) were first made at the beginning of the 15th century.


Jóns saga ens helga contains the *vita et acta* of the priest St. Jón Ogmundarson (1052–1121), consecrated in 1106 as first bishop of the diocese of Hólar, coterminal with Iceland's Northern Quarter. In 1198, his bones were disinterred and washed; in 1200, they were enshrined at Hólar, and the *Alþing* officially endorsed his cult (*dies natalis* April 23). The translation ceremony seems to have been closely modeled on the procedure followed at Skálholt when St. Þorlákr Pórhalsson was enshrined in 1198; and the oldest *Jóns saga*, now lost, was also influenced by the first *Þorláks saga*.

The oldest *Jóns saga* was a vernacular work produced at the same time as a Latin life and in some association with it. The Latin life was written by Gunnlaugr Leifsson (d. 1109/1120), a Benedictine of Pingeyrar. Koppenberg has argued that the Latin life never existed, but not persuasively; he overlooks the entry in the *Munkaþvera* inventory of 1429, "jons sagha holabiscups j latino," 221 fol., a reference to the oldest *Jóns saga*.*

The author of the oldest *Jóns saga* had little information about Bishop Jón's career, and he attractively supplemented it with matter drawn from hagiographie commonplaces as well as learned and popular storytelling to illustrate Jón's personal piety, pastoral care, and moral teaching. The picture he draws of school life at Hólar in Jón's time, with two foreign clerics as the chief masters, may be idealized but must contain a core of truth. The description gives some idea of how Christian and classical learning flowed into early Iceland. The whole work is enlivened by anecdotes, and these and the *post mortem* miracle reports often bring us in close touch with everyday life in 12th-century Iceland.


Peter Foote

[See also: *Biskupa sögur*, Miracles, Collections of; Saints' Lives]
above the gate behind which the dragon lives. Finally, a number of parallels exist between Jóns saga leiksveins and certain fornaldarsögur, above all, Hroðs saga kraka.

The style of the saga is simple and the story well structured. It moves swiftly from event to event, with little description, and mystery and suspense heighten the interest.


[See also: Riddarasögur, Rímur]

Jóns saga Svíðagössnar ok Eireks forvitna see Pjölar-Jóns saga

Jóns þáttur biskups Halldórssonar ("The Tale of Bishop Jón Halldórsson"), extant in AM 657 4to, from the 14th century, and AM 624 4to, from the 15th century, is a short biography of the Norwegian Jón Halldórsson, bishop of Skálholt from 1322 to 1339. He was raised in the Dominican monastery in Bergen, and went to Paris and Bologna to study at an early age. He is further said to have come "from school so mature, that he was the wisest clerk to have come to Norway," which explains his subsequent election as bishop. Also included in the þáttur are an account of his strange vision on the eve of his departure from Iceland to Bergen and a detailed report of his illness and last days in Bergen, where he died.

The þáttur tells that Jón would orally recount ævintýrî (shorter, moralizing narratives with motifs drawn from legend, fiction, or fairy tales) that he had "learned abroad both from letters and from his own experience." In retelling them, he would adapt them to suit the taste of his audience so as to please as many listeners as possible. Furthermore, we are told that some men in Iceland collected "his narratives for their own and other people’s delight"; three of the tales from his collection are provided as specimens of his repertoire. Such tales were frequently used as exempla in sermons, and in fact the third tale was inserted into a sermon delivered at Staðarholl. The three tales take up well over one half of the þáttur, evidently, this aspect of the bishop’s activities was of great concern to the biographer. In Islandzkævntír, Gering published around 100 ævintýrî. Besides the three tales mentioned above, at least four others may confidently be traced to Jón.

Jón also translated Klári saga from Latin into Old Norse. Oddly, the biographer makes no specific reference to it. A likely explanation is that apart from its length, Klári saga does not deviate from ævintýrî in theme and subject matter. Moreover, Jón may well have condensed it for use as an exemplum in his sermons.

The author of Jóns þáttur was probably a cleric and a personal acquaintance of the bishop. Hallberg (1968) suggests on the basis of linguistic and stylistic evidence that the author may be the abbot Bergr Sokkason, an interesting but unprovable hypothesis.


[See also: Exemla, Klári (Cláiri) saga, þáttur]

Jónsbók ("Jón’s Book") is named after the lawspeaker Jón Einarsson (d. 1306), one of its main authors, who brought the law code from Norway to Iceland in 1280, to have it accepted by the General Assembly (Alþingi). Although the original MS is lost, some 260 copies are preserved. These copies fall into two classes, one being closer to the original than the other, which has numerous interpolations from later times. Equally old MSS from both classes have come down to us, the earliest from the first half of the 13th century.

After the Icelanders submitted to the Norwegian King Håkon Håkonarson and his son Magnús in 1262–1264, the law of the Icelandic Commonwealth, Grágás, was abolished. Jónsbók, however, was prepared to supersede the interim (1271–1281) Járnstaða, a law code disliked by the Icelanders, as it incorporated mainly Norwegian law and did not pay enough attention to Icelandic conditions. About 1275, King Magnús lagabætur ("lawmender") had completed his second revision of the national law code for Norway (landslov), in which Icelanders must have taken part, since the landslov shows influence from Grágás and Járnstaða. Magnús’s national code of law became a more acceptable model for a new code of law, Jónsbók. Yet the national law was not followed in every detail; the paragraphs on eschatology are quite different in both codes, and the section on nautical law in Jónsbók is modeled on Magnús’s town law (byjarlslov). Jónsbók’s ability to combine various sources and expand important sections is note-
worthy. Although it is only half the size of Grágás, the section on inheritance rights is much more detailed.

The controversial debate about accepting Jónsbók is related in some detail in Ama saga biskups (chs. 28–31). The main points of disagreement concerned confiscation of property in cases that cannot be atoned for by money; unsuitability of the law to Icelandic conditions; and incompatibility to church law. The new law was accepted eventually, yet not unanimously. Points of dissent were reconciled by three amendments to the law (réttarbœtr) during the following thirty years. Finally, in 1314, Jónsbók took the form that remained valid for 400 years. The ten sections of Jónsbók deal with assembly attendance, Church and king, allegiance to the king, sanctuary and peace, marriage and inheritance, land claims, land rents, contracts, nautical law, and theft.

Jónsbók was among the first books printed in Iceland (Hólar 1578). Even today, some parts of this medieval law code remain in full force, primarily agriculture rights and the rights over the foreshore. There are also some thirty translations into Danish from the 17th–18th centuries in MS, and one in print (Copenhagen, 1763).

Jónsbók is thought to have had much influence on the preservation of the Icelandic language; it was among the essential reading materials for the young. However, the influence of medieval (Latin) rhetoric on the style of Jónsbók is obvious. It extends far beyond the opening invocational letter by King Magnús and is considerably stronger than in Grágás.


Hans Fix

[See also: Alpingi; Ama saga biskups; Grágás; Laws]


Järsta Stone, by the Upplandic rune master Asmund Karasun, is a commemorative monument containing one of the most puzzling 11th-century memorial inscriptions. The monument, classified as GS11 in Jansson’s Gästriklands runinskript, was raised on a grave site in Valbo parish, Gästrikland, Sweden, and is still standing.

Analysis of the Järsta stone within the context of the runic tradition in Denmark and Sweden reveals that the inscription on this stone accords grammatically and orthographically with Asmund's other inscriptions and follows the patterns of formulation in structure and content traditional to runic carving. The Järsta stone, along with the other stones signed by Asmund, is characterized by an inscription carefully placed in a text band integrated with the ornamentation and the contours of the stone.

A reading that smoothly follows the text band around the two zoomorphic figures on this carving provides the key to the meaning:

Pjúðgæir ok Guðlæfr ok Karl, þeir bróðr allis, letu
For a long time, Jökull and his men are adrift at sea. The ship is wrecked in a storm off the coast of Greenland, and the men survive only because Jökull carries them ashore. One night, he discovers the witches Geit and Gnipa on the beach. He decapitates Geit and defeats Gnipa at wrestling, winning her as a friend and helper. Later on, Jökull and his comrade Úlfr kill Gnipa’s parents and brothers in a fierce fight at the trolls’ cave. As penance, Jökull helps Gnipa get the troll-king’s son as a husband. By means of a ring, Jökull becomes invisible and starts a riot in the king’s mountain; the bewildered trolls soon kill each other. After being wrestled down, the son is forced to agree to marry Gnipa. Jökull also liberates a prince and a princess of Serkland, imprisoned by the trolls in a mountain cave. He then accompanies them home, marries the princess, and soon becomes king of Serkland.

Jökuls þáttur was probably written by someone who had read Kjalnesinga saga, and who thought that Jökull should have a saga of his own. Possibly, the story came into being in the 15th century. It is strongly influenced by the fómladarsögur for the adventures in Greenland, and by the riddarasögur for the stay in Serkland. The parallels to Hálfdanar saga Brœnufóstra are especially obvious; the lines of action are as a whole the same. Moreover, the princess is named Marsibilla in Jökuls þáttur and Marsibil in Hálfdanar saga. The king of Serkland also appears in some riddarasögur, among them Bevers saga. Jökuls saga is an adventure tale, totally devoid of the realistic background of many Ísleifingar saga. Still, the story is quite entertaining, not least because of its burlesque style and dialogue.

Anne Trygstad

[See also: Runes and Runic Inscriptions]

Jokuls þáttur Búasonar ("The Tale of Jokull Büason"). According to Kjalnesinga saga, Jokull Büason was fostered in Norway by his mother, the giantess Friðr. Jokull then traveled to Iceland, where he killed his father in a combat caused by Büi’s refusal to acknowledge Jokull as his son. In the groups of the Kjalnesinga saga MSS called A and B, it is plainly stated that nothing certain is known about Jokull’s later destiny. MS group C, on the other hand, append a story, Jokuls þáttur Búasonar, a tale of Jokull’s subsequent adventures.

Anne Trygstad
**Karlamagnús saga** ("The Saga of Charlemagne") is a collection of Old Norse prose translations of texts about Charlemagne, most of them Old French *chansons de geste*.

The beginning (branch I in Unger's edition) and the original ending seem to be parts of a translation of the same text, a lost *Life of Charlemagne* in Old French, which consisted mainly of summaries of different *chansons de geste*, including a *Chanson de Basin*. This *Life* can scarcely have been written before the second third of the 13th century, and is thus later than the other texts translated in *Karlamagnús saga*, which all date from the 12th century. It is important to distinguish between the *chansons de geste* used by the French author of the *Life* and those used directly by the Norwegian or Icelandic translators.

Between the two parts of this translated *Life of Charlemagne*, a compiler placed translations of the following texts (branch numbers follow Unger's edition): III: *Enfances d'Ogier le Danois*; IV: *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* (the only translation made from Latin in the older version of *Karlamagnús saga*) and Aspremont (the beginning of the latter is lost and has been replaced by the former); V: Saxons, a version lost in French, but perhaps identical to the source of Jean Bodel's *Chanson des Saisnes*; VI: Otinel; VII: *Pèlerinage/Voyage de Charlemagne*; VIII: Roland.

The end of the branch of Roland seems to stem from the *Life of Charlemagne*, and so does what follows: the retelling of the *Monia.ge de Guillaume* (branch IX) and an account of Charlemagne's death. This account is now extant only in the Danish translation (see below).

The texts no doubt came from Britain, and they were translated in the 13th century; the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* may have been translated before 1200. We do not know under what circumstances they arrived or were translated, nor under what circumstances the translations were assembled. We do not even know whether the translators and the compiler were Norwegians or Icelanders.

All of the extant copies were written by Icelanders, including a fragment of branch VIII written in the second half of the 13th century; we do not know whether this fragment was already a part of the collection. The first version of this text, α, is extant in a fragment from the 14th century and in two copies from about 1400 or a little later; the end is missing in both.

The α-text was revised in Iceland. The revised version, β, was used for Icelandic *rimur* and Faroese *kvæði*, and was the basis of further revisions extant in Icelandic copies from the 14th century and later. The most important innovations are the addition of the translation of an English version of *Doon de la Roche* (branch II, *Olif ok Landres*), a rewriting of branch IV, and a new text of Charlemagne's death (stemming indirectly from the *Speculum historiale* of Vincent of Beauvais).

A Swedish translation of the α-version of VII and VIII, *Karl Magnus*, was made about 1400. There is no evidence that other branches were translated as well.

An abridged Danish translation of the entire α-version, *Karl Magnuss’ Krønike*, was made in the 15th century. It is extant in a MS from 1480, a printed edition from 1509, and a revised edition from 1534, which was often reprinted during the following centuries.

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Kaupang (Skiringssalr) was a marketplace, dated to the period around 750–920, by the Viksfjord, Tjalling, Vestfold, Norway.

In his report to King Alfred the Great (Orosius 11), the North Norwegian merchant Óthirre (Óttarr) mentions a port in southern Norway by the name of "Sciringesheal" (Old Norse Skiringssalr). The information given about this port is sparse, apart from some Norwegian merchant Óthirre (Óttarr) mentions a port in southern Norway by the name of "Sciringesheal" (Old Norse Skiringssalr). The information given about this port is sparse, apart from some

In 1947, a series of new inhumation graves was found on the Kaupang land. An excavation campaign begun in 1950 first concentrated on this cemetery, which comprised mainly boat graves for men, women, and children. The grave goods contained a higher percentage of imported artifacts: weapons, jewelry, shards of glass and pottery, and amber and jet beads. Altogether, some sixty persons have been unearthed in this cemetery. Two or three persons had often been interred in the same boat. Some graves were indeed richly furnished, but none of the Kaupang graves was of the highest percentage of imported artifacts: weapons, jewelry, shards of glass and pottery, and amber and jet beads. Altogether, some sixty persons have been unearthed in this cemetery. Two or three persons had often been interred in the same boat. Some graves were indeed richly furnished, but none of the Kaupang graves was of the highest

The dating of the graves corresponds well enough to the Viking Age. The material was not sufficient to demonstrate that the graves had to belong to the population of a kaupang, or marketplace.

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Kennings were already a matter for discussion in Old Norse culture, either by puzzled auditors of skaldic poetry, or by literary experts, such as Snorri Sturluson and Óláfr Póðarson. Even the culture, either by puzzled auditors of skaldic poetry, or by literary unriddled has suggested that the kenning had the same intellectual function in Old Norse culture as the riddle, of which the Norsemen were equally fond. Kenning and riddle indulged a love of wordplay and of contests of wit in the culture.

A kenning (pl. -ar) is a feminine noun derived regularly from the weak verb kenna, which in the verb phrase kenna X vid Y means "to call X by Y's name," or designate X by Y. In its simplest form, a kenning consists of two noun members compounded together in a base word, or head noun, and a determinant, with or without genitive linkage between them, for example, benregn or benja rega ("wound-rain" or "rain of wounds" = "blood"). In this form, the kenning is distinguished from the uncompounded heiti (pl. heit), a poetic appellative (like English "blade" for "sword") that was said to be ókennt, i.e., "undesignated." There are, however, borderline kennings, the vidkenningsar and sannkenningsar ("by-kennings" and "true kennings"), which merely denote persons by their qualities of character, relations to others, and possessions, just as they are, and so refer to them more or less directly in the manner of the ókennt heiti. Where formal distinctions fail, the real difference between kennings and ókennt heiti lies in their modes of reference.

Since the generic term for any epithet in skaldic poetry was heiti ("appellation," from heita 'to call by name'), kennings were set off from all other epithets as kennt heiti, because of their peculiar designations of their referents.

In Snorri's Skáldskaparmál (7), three grades of skaldic diction are given: (1) "To name everything the way it is called." The ordinary heiti does so with poetic words for man, fire, sea, sword, and so on.

(2) "The second branch is what is termed substitution for names [= fornamn]." Here, Snorri seems to translate by fornamn the Latin rhetorical term pronominatio for a classical figure that will match either the "by-" or the "true kenning." By pronominatio, the Roman Gracchi were known rhetorically as "the grandsons of Scipio Africanus"; cf. the vidkennings for Pórr, Jarðar burr ("son of Earth"). Hence, this division includes the borderline vidkenningsar and sannkenningsar.

(3) "The third branch of diction is what is termed kenning, and the branch is so set up that if we denominate Öðinn or Pórr or Þýr or some one of the gods or the elves, and to each of them that I give a name, I then transfer with an appellative the property of another god or mention some of his deeds, therewith the first becomes the possessor of the name and not the one who was named for him; thus, when we allude to Victory-Þýr or Þýr of the Hanged or Þýr of Ships' Cargoes, those are Öðinn's names." The crucial point in this definition of kenning is the transfer of names that the kenning effects, so that Þýr, the sharer in Öðinn's sovereign power, can stand for Öðinn, while Öðinn "possesses" his name. This kind of transference, or translatio, may have prompted Óláfr Póðarson to claim in the Third Grammatical Treatise (3:16) that every kenning was constructed with a metaphor.

To summarize, we may say that the heightened language of the ordinary heiti (grade 1) requires no special mode of reference, whereas the "pronominal" periphrases and metaphors of the kennings (grades 2 and 3) must designate their referents within one remove or at one remove and more from them. As between the low and high grades of kenning, the metonymic principle of syntagmatic proximity predominates in the formation of "by-kennings" and "true kennings," and the metaphorical principle of paradigmatic similarity in that of bona fide kennings. But the latter kennings will also often combine a metaphorical head noun with a metonymic determinant, as in the Þýr-kennings for Öðinn above: "victory," "hanged men," and "ships' cargoes" are metonyms describing circumjacent areas of Öðinn's presence in battle, beside the gallows, and aboard ship; "Þýr," of course, is Öðinn's metaphorical name.

Great but not unlimited variability is to be expected in the more complex morphology of kennings. Some kennings, notably for women, dispense with their determinants to form half-kennings, for example, óskmær ("chosen maid" = valkyrie), which lacks the determinant, Öðinn, chief of the valkyries. But the main stylistic tendency of kennings is to elaborate on themselves and concatenate kenning with kenning in multiple noun compounds, not unlike the "grizzled beasts" motifs of Viking art. Doubled kennings were said to be twice-designated (tvíkennt), and further expansions were covered by a jeweler's term, "enchased" (rekít).

Snorri and his critical successors agreed that the kenning within a kenning should not exceed the number of five, and yet six-unit kennings were not out of reach of the skalds. Pórr Særeksson's man-kenning, nausta blákkar hlitamana gífru drífu gímslanvígir ("the sword-swinger in driven snow [= battle], with the sword [= axe] of the shield, like a protective moon on the side of the steed of the boathouse [= ship]") may be the longest kenning on record (as in Pórrís drápa Skólmssonar 1).

One last refinement, on top of these, was mysteriously termed oljóst ("over-light"); it added a pun on the name of whoever might be the referent of a personal kenning. Thus, since Grettir happens to be the name of a snake as well as of a human being, the name can be rendered with various snake-kennings. And if Icelanders were to be named, they could be represented in an anagrammatic kenning as álthing míndering, of which álthingi means "sky of the eel" or river ice, so that ís ("ice") plus míndering equals "ice-landers" (Íslingendar).

In the larger context of the dróttkvætt stanza of court poetry, the skalds freely mixed metaphors in their kennings, though Snorri, who considered that practice a "monstrosity" (nykrát), would have preferred to see in the stanzaic framework more unified kenning images, "new creations" (nýgervingar), as he called them in his Háttatal commentary (at ch. 6). But, again, skaldic practice did not conform to critical precept.

Kennings were not all form and verbal tricks; content also had significance, especially in connection with Old Norse mythology. The so-called "mythological kennings" were in point of content narrative precipitates from the stories told immemorially of the gods and their doings. Even the faded metaphor of "tree" for a man or a woman, which enters into countless nonmythological
Kennings, has a creation myth behind it (as in Snorri’s Gylfaginning, ch. 9), relating how men and women were fashioned from trees. Consequently, when Snorri Sturluson in an antiquarian and critical spirit undertook to expound the kennning system to the Norse Christian skalds of the 13th century, he not only delved into the traditional forms of skaldic diction, but also retold some of the ancient myths that were encapsulated in the content of the pagan kennings. Thereby, he could show that the mythological kennings were not altogether arbitrary but were well motivated in the system. If we must find a remote source of origin for the majority of kennings, it probably lies in the mythologizing of the Norsemen; but that still would not account for purely poetic kennings, such as Pórõr Særkkson’s kenning above.


**Lex.:** Finnur Jónsson, ed. Lexicon poeticum antiquae linguae septentrionalis: Ord­bog over det norsk­-iskelske skaldsk sag. Svar­nings, 1972 [Danish translation of the first edition].


†Erik Wahlgren

**[See also:]** America, Norse in; Viking Hoaxes

**Ketils saga hœngs** ("The Saga of Ketill Salmon") is a minor fornaldarsaga. Ketill, a typical hero, was endowed with superhuman strength, fearlessness, and an enterprising spirit. He acquired his byname hœngs "salmon," after he had slain a dragon. When asked by his father what he had been up to, he replied in self­­deprecation that he had killed a salmon. The nickname alludes to his giant ancestry and to his role as a giant/berserker killer and as an ally of giants.

Ketill’s father, Hallbjorn, was a demi­­giant, and many of Ketill’s adventures took place in Hallbjorn’s territory. Ketill thus lived in a pagan environment and ambiance. Still, in the description of Ketill’s love affair with the giantess Hrafnhildr, the mother of his son, Grímur loðunjinni ("shaggy­­chin"), the saga exhibits a curiously antipagan bias.

Typically, these giantesses were protectresses of their lovers, or so­­called foster­­mothers. The motif is rooted in the pagan belief that giants and giantesses were minor deities and eponymous ancestors. But there is no reminiscence of this belief in *Ketils saga*.
Kings' Sagas see Konungasögur

Kingship in medieval Scandinavia poses the question of whether its Christian manifestations maintain continuity from pre-Christian times in respect of sacral kingship, a concept broadly defined in terms of "an aura of specialness" that is believed to surround a king (McTurk 1975-76: 156). Whereas Christian sacral kingship, which becomes well attested in Scandinavia from the earliest reports of the cult of St. Óláfr onward (Hoffmann 1975: 58-89), implies kings ruling by divine grace and representing God on earth, pre-Christian sacral kingship in Scandinavia, if it existed at all, may have involved one or more of the following: (1) the belief that kings were descended from gods (attested, according to Turville-Petre 1978-79 and others, by Þjóðolf of Hvin's Ynglingatal, cf., however, Baetke 1964: 69-170 and Faulkes 1978-79); (2) the dedication of princes for purposes of vengeance to gods or semideified kings (attested, according to Höfler 1952, by the runic inscription on the Rök stone; see, however, Kuhn 1954-55 and Kratz 1978-79); (3) the ritual education of kings in numinous knowledge (attested, according to Fleck 1970 and Mazo 1985, in Rígsþula, Hyndluljóð, Grímsnýtil, and Vafþrudnsýtil); (4) the ritual marriage of a king to a bride who personifies the well-being of his realm (attested, according to Svava Jakobsdóttir 1988, in the Gunnlöð-episode of Hávamál, sts. 104-10); (5) the priestly function of kings, attested in Eyvindr skáldaspillir's ("the plagi­rist") Hákonarmál and Einarr skálaglamm's ("scale-tinkle") Vellekla (though this was the exclusive prerogative of kings, or enough to grant them the necessary "aura of specialness? Baetke 1964: 54-68, McTurk 1975-76); (6) the attribution to kings of a mana-like quality of luck, supposedly reflected in the words gipta, gefa, hamingja (Strörm 1967, Hallberg 1973), and also of supernatural powers, as suggested by legends of St. Óláfr and Saxo's account of Valdemar I (Gunnês 1974; however, cf. B. Sawyer 1985); (7) and the sacrificial slayings of kings in order to bring fertility, supposedly attested in Ynglingatal's account of the slaying of King Dómaldi (Strörm 1967, Lönroth 1986).

While the uncertainty of the evidence would lead some scholars to dispense with the term "sacral" in connection with pre-Christian Scandinavian kingship (Martin 1990; cf. Lönroth 1986), others continue to use it in that context in making comparisons with Irish kingship (Wormald 1982; cf. Ström 1981, Sayers 1985, Svava Jakobsdóttir 1988); or in using Rígsþula to argue for a pre-Christian Scandinavian counterpart to the idea of the king's "two bodies" (Dronke 1989); or in claiming that the ears of Hlaðr were the true inheritors of pagan sacral kingship in Norway, while Haraldr hárfagr ("fair-hair") Hálfdanarson, with his decidedly nonreligious kingship, eased the transition from paganism to Christianity as the basis for royal power (Fidjestøl 1987).

Many of these alleged aspects of pre-Christian Scandinavian kingship served Dumézil as evidence for his division of Indo-European ideology into the three functions of sovereignty, force, and fecundity, represented respectively by Oðinn, Ægir, and Freyr, as well as by priests, warriors, and farmers (e.g., Dumézil 1958: 54-8), a scheme that, however, Haugen (1967) and Page (1978-79) have criticized, particularly with regard to Dumézil's subdivision (1948; cf. Polomé 1984) of the first function into the roles of magician and jurist, represented respectively by Óðinn and Tyr (though see Strutynski 1974). Maillefer (1981), on the other hand, following Dumézil's view (1971; cf. 1958: 33) that the Indo-European king combines all three functions, finds that pre-Christian Swedish kingship, at least, exemplifies the third function more than the other two.

Pre-Viking Scandinavian kingship has been compared with pre-Migration Germanic kingship with regard not only to sacrality, but also to the king's dependence on an assembly, a feature reflected in the sociopolitical status of the Icelandic godi (which Sawyer 1982 compares with Irish kingship). Just as kingship among the Germans became increasingly competitive and military with the diplomatic, commercial, and predatory activity brought about by economic growth and contact with Rome, so did Scandinavia's 8th-century economic expansion and subsequent contact with the Franks in particular lead to a development among its peoples from tribal kingship (Volkskönigtum) to military kingship (Heerkönigtum), a development described as "both cause and effect of Viking activity" (Wormald 1982: 147).
The adoption by royal families of saint-kings as their chief ancestors provides a framework for studying the subsequent development of medieval Scandinavian kingship, and need not derive from any pre-Christian belief in the descent of kings from, or their dedication to, gods (despite recent claims, see Hoffmann 1975; cf. von See 1978). The “warrior-martyr” and “innocent murder victim” types of royal saint, knowledge of which appears to have reached Scandinavia from Merovingian Francia by way of Anglo-Saxon England, combined in the posthumously developed cult figure of St. Óláfr, whose adoption by the descendants of his half-brother, Haraldr hárfagri (“hard-ruler”) Sigurðarson, as their chief ancestor (in place of Haraldr hárfagri Hálfdanarson), helped to secure their tenure of the Norwegian throne until, with Magnus Erlingsson’s election in about 1165, legitimacy came to the fore as a criterion for the succession (Hoffmann 1975: 58–9, Jochens 1987).

The pattern established in Norway recurs in Denmark with Sven Estridsen’s (d. 1074) attempt to give prominence among his ancestors to the convert Harald Gormsson (Bluetooth) in place of the latter’s pagan father, Gorm the Old; with the fostering of two of Sven’s sons, Erik Ejegod (“ever-good”; 1095–1103) and Niels (1104–1134), of the cult of their brother, St. Knud (Cnut; d. 1086), to secure their own and their descendants’ royal claims; with the combined adoption by Valdemar I (d. 1182) of his son Knud VI (d. 1259) as conoler and his father, Knud Lavard (son of Erik Ejegod), as chief ancestor (the latter development reflecting a new preference for the “victim” to the “warrior” type of royal saint); and with the comparable attempts of Christoffer I (1252–1259; son and grandson respectively of Valdemars II and I) to secure his line’s succession by appointing his son, Erik Klipping, as conoler and promoting the cult of his brother, Erik Plovenen (“plover-penny”; d. 1250), with the result that Erik Klipping (1259–1286) and the latter’s son, Erik Menved (1286–1319), ruled after him (Hoffmann 1975: 89–96).

In Sweden, the same pattern is seen in the use of St. Erik Edvardsson’s (d. ca. 1160) cult by his descendants, down to and including Magnus Ladulás Birgersson (1275–1290), his great-granddaughter’s second son by Earl Birger, to ward off rival claimants to the throne (Hoffmann 1975: 197–204).

Kirialax saga ("The Saga of Kirialax"). Like some of the classical Islendingasögur, this romantic saga deals with three generations of a family, although the bulk of the story is devoted to the eponymous hero. Kirialax saga first tells how Kirialax's father, Lacius, king of Thessaly, wins the daughter of King Dagnus of Syria by assembling a large force of men, conquering some Syrian towns, and defeating the princess's brother, Egius, who then becomes his friend and helps to secure the marriage. The offspring of this union is Kirialax, who is trained in both the liberal and martial arts, and then begins a life of adventure and travel. His first deed, which constitutes the longest episode in the saga, is to aid Emperor Zeno by driving off a marauder from the North named Visimar. Refused at first, he brings an army and overcomes the invader. Kirialax next aids King Lodovicus of Sicily and the emperor Zeno at Constantinople. A massive use of such details makes Kirialax saga unique among Icelandic riddarasögur, a saga in which the plot merely serves as an excuse for a display of learning.


Rory McTurk

[See also: Einarr Helgason skálaglamm; Eyvindr Finsson skáldaspillir; Grímnismál, Hávamál, Hyndluljóð, Óláf, St.; Rigspula; Rök Stone; Pjóðóldr of Hvin; Vafpriðónsmál]

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Kirialax saga exists in three fragmentary MSS from the 15th century and some fourteen later copies. The date of composition was probably in the 14th century. The plot of the saga is repetitious and without interest or suspense. It is further marred by a tedious abundance of alliterating word chains. The redeeming feature of the saga is the amount of learned lore, ultimately of foreign origin but borrowed by the saga from Norse texts, such as the story of the elephants and the mice, of ancient origin but here derived from Sjómr. Other examples include the story of the labyrinth or "Domus Dedali" (house of Dedalus), which the author reminds us is called Volundur háus ("house of Volundr") in the North; the story of the slaying of Hector by Achilles; an account of marvelous birds in India; and the description of the fabulous palace of the emperor in Constantinople. A massive use of such details makes Kirialax saga unique among Icelandic riddarasögur, a saga in which the plot merely serves as an excuse for a display of learning.


Kjalnesinga saga ("The Saga of the Men of Kjalnaré") is preserved in four groups of MSS (A–D). Only AM 471 4to, representing A, is on parchment; it dates from the latter half of the 15th century. The rest are late paper MSS. The B-group is supposedly closely related to the lost version in Vatsnshyrra. The C-group contains a number of additions to the original text.

The introduction to Kjalnesinga saga is proportionally long, telling of landnám ("land taking") and family relationships on Kjalnaré, below Mount Esja north of Reykjavik. The main actor of the saga is Búi Andriðsson. Búi is persecuted by the chief Porgímr because of his reluctance to sacrifice. Eventually, he is provoked into killing Porgímr's son and burning down his temple. This act leads Porgímr to attack and kill Búi's innocent father. A conflict begins among Búi, the Norwegian Orn, and Kolfrór over the beautiful Ölaf. Orn waylays Kolfrór, but is himself killed in the ensuing fight. Búi defeats Kolfrór in a duel. He prepares to leave for Norway, but is attacked on his way to the ship by some relatives of Porgímr. Outsiders intervene, and Búi departs for the islands of Orkney and later visits King Haraldr háfrægri ("fair-hair") Hálfdanarson. Here, in order to make amends for the temple fire, he is assigned the task of collecting a backgammon board from Haraldr's foster-father, the mountain-giant Dofri. Búi gets help from Dofri's daughter, Fríðr, with whom he soon has an affair. At the end of the winter, when he wants to return, it appears that Fríðr is pregnant. At the parting, she promises to send the child, if a boy, to Búi. Dofri gives him the board as a gift. However, upon Búi's return, Haraldr demands one more achievement; he is to fight a bláttadr (literally "blue man"). Búi emerges victorious from the fierce combat and is reconciled to Haraldr. Back in Iceland, after some further entanglements, he is also reconciled to Porgímr.

[See also: Leiðarvísir; Riddarasögur; Sjómr; Style]
Some years later, Jokull, Fred's son, arrives, but Búi refuses to acknowledge him and proposes a wrestling match as a test. In spite of Jokull's attempts at a peaceful agreement, the fight goes on until Búi is fatally wounded. Jokull leaves Iceland, ill at ease.

*Kjalnesinga saga* takes place early, around 900, when Haraldr was king of Norway. But the saga was written down late. A few references in the text point to an origin at the beginning of the 14th century. As the author knew Kjarlars very well, he may have resided there or at the monastery of Viby. The cultural situation resembles that in *Hauksbók*, initiated by the lawman Haukr Erlendsson. Moreover, there are some connections between *Kjalnesinga saga* and *Finnboga saga ramma*, which may have been written down by Haukr's relative Gisurrr Bjarnarson.

*Kjalnesinga saga* seems an eclectic work of art. There are a number of borrowings from other written sources, a large quantity of revised motifs from other *Íslendingasögur*, and quite a lot of romantic material of a kind often to be found in *Fornaldar saga* and *Riddarasögur*.

The description of the pagan temple at Hof resembles accounts in, among other works, *Eyrbyggja saga*, the *Hákonar saga gíða* of Heimskringla, and *Alexanders saga*. The section may have come from learned or oral sources. The account of Órlýgr leaving Ireland and taking land in Iceland is found in *Landnámabók* and *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* as well. The existing divergences can be explained in different ways; either *Kjalnesinga saga* treated its written sources freely, or it presents an independent story, based on oral tales. The life-and-death struggle between father and son has many non-Icelandic parallels, for instance in *Hildebrandslied*. Possibly, Irish traditions have had a more general influence on *Kjalnesinga saga*. However, it is hard to determine whether these influences reach as far back as to the age of *landnám*; they may have arrived later with, for example, merchants, or they may be just an expression of an individual author's special interest in Ireland.


*Tommy Danielsson*

[See also: *Alexanders saga*, *Eyrbyggja saga*, *Finnboga saga ramma*, *Hauksbók*, *Heimskringla*, *Íslendingasögur*, *Jokuls þitr Bússonar*, *Landnámabók*, *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar*, *Vatnslyrama*]

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**Klári (Clári) saga** ("The Saga of Klárus"). According to an introductory passage in one group of MSS, this story was "found" in France, written in Latin meter, by Jón Halldórsson; Jón then "told" the story that is now written down. This passage tells us at once too much and not enough. It gives us an approximate date (ca. 1300, when Jón, a Norwegian who later served as bishop in Skálholt from 1322 to 1339, was a student in Paris) and informs us that the Norse text was based on a Latin poem (now lost). But it does not tell us when or even whether Jón made the written translation that is called *Klári saga*. Jón is known to have brought back exempla from France, which he told orally and which were later written down (Gering 1882–83). The most likely interpretation of the introductory passage is that Jón made a written translation from a Latin MS while he was a student in Paris.

The editions of Cederschiöld (1879, 1907) and the study by Jakobsen (1964) mention ten MSS divided into two groups, one group descending from AM 657b 4to (late 14th century) and the other descending from Stock. Perg. 4to no. 6 (ca. 1400). These two main MSS derive independently from a common original (see Jakobsen 1964: 13–14). The bibliography by Kalinke and Mitchell, however, lists twenty-four MSS, mostly late; we need to study these MSS to see whether or not they fit into the present two-group stemma.

The saga belongs to the category of "maiden-king romances" (Walhgren 1938) and indeed seems to have given rise to that genre in Old Icelandic, which also includes *Dínis saga drámbúla*, *Nítida saga*, *Sigrgrár saga íreikna*, *Sigrúðar saga þóglu*, and *Víktors saga ok Blávurs*.

The story concerns Klárus (or Clárus), prince of Saxland, and his efforts at winning the haughty Serena, princess of France. On Klárus’s first visit to her, he is entertained courteously in her tower, until she suddenly causes him to spill an egg on his tunic and then expels him from her presence with colorful language (e.g., vandr þorpuri, roughly "dumb hick"). With the help of his wise teacher from Arabia, Master Perus, Klárus visits Serena in disguise, eventually gets the better of her, and marries her (although on his first two attempts she tricks him into drinking a sleeping potion and then has him whipped). On the morning after the marriage, Serena awakes to find herself destitute and in the company of an ugly vagabond. For the next year, she accompanies this vagabond, in reality Perus, on his wanderings, steadfastly enduring much humiliation and hardship, and is eventually rewarded by being reunited with Klárus.

It has long been recognized that this “taming of the shrew” tale belongs to the type exemplified by the Brothers Grimm story of “King Thrushbeard” and the Norwegian tale “Håkon Borkenskjegg” collected by Asbjörnsen and Moe. *Klári saga* shares with the latter the use of precious treasures (three tents drawn by animal figures in the saga, a golden spinning wheel and its accessories in the tale) to appeal to the princess’s avarice on three successive visits.

The saga is written in the learned style, with a number of absolute constructions and latitude, some of which may derive from the Latin original.

Poems written in knittel characteristically employed stereotyped phrases, often owing to the need for a rhyming word, for example, badheto minna ok swa mera (“both smaller and bigger [tokens]”), hva thet wil forstanda (“whoever will understand it”) vtan alt meen (“without every deficiency, excellently”). For the same reason, the poems employ variation by means of synonyms or negated antonyms: badhe medh smile ok swa medh skel (“both with prudence and also with judgment”), han war feet ok ække maghe (“he was fat and not lean”; see also 1.1 quoted above).

As the name indicates, knittel was brought to Scandinavia from Germany, where it was already in use by the 12th century. In accordance with its origin, the Scandinavian knittel shows a rather strong German influence on its style and vocabulary (e.g., such words as stolt ‘splendid,’ edel ‘noble,’ æuvintr ‘story’). Another stylistic influence came from the ballads.

Knittel was composed in all of the Scandinavian countries except Iceland, least often in Norway, most often in Sweden. Two kinds of knittel poems were especially popular in Sweden, romantic epic poetry based on foreign patterns (e.g., Eulemiavissomaria and Karl Magnus) and rhymed chronicles (e.g., Eriksskrønikan). A third genre involved turning prose novels into poetry (e.g., Konung Alexander). The Eulemiavissomaria were translated into Danish, Herr Ivan into Norwegian.

In addition to the Eulemiavissomaria, there exist three Old Danish knittel poems, Dyrgekonkern Lavrin (“Lavrin, the King of the Dwarf’s”), Den kyske dronning (“The Chaste Queen”), written by Jep[pe] Jensen, presumably a monk, in 1483, and Persenober og Konstantianobis (written in 1483, perhaps by Jep[pe] Jensen). No immediate foreign originals of these poems are known; but they employ widespread motifs. Perhaps they were transmitted orally to their authors. Persenober og Konstantianobis goes back to a well-known French romance. In addition, a fragment of a poetic rendering of Evangelium Niconedi in knittel survives from about 1325 (SKA B 115).

The genre Rimkrøniker (“rhymed chronicles”) is represented in Denmark by a single work, Den danske Rimkrønik, the greatest part of which, however, is not in knittel.


Gøsta Holm

Knud (CNUT) the Great was king of England (1016/7–1035), Denmark, Norway, and perhaps parts of Sweden, a son of Sven Haroldsson (Forkbeard) and grandson of Harold Gormsson (Bluethooth). His mother was a sister of King Boleslav Chrobry of Poland (only saga name her as Sigríð). Knud was born in the 990s and followed his father on his last conquering expedition to England in 1013, when Sven became king. Sven died on February 3, 1014, and when the English counselors (witan) recalled King Æthelred, Knud’s forces were expelled, with no help given to either side by the mercenary fleet of Danes under Earl Porkell. Knud’s brother, Harald, had been left with the Danish throne and fortresses, and refused to share his power with Knud. Earl Porkell was reconciled with Knud, whose fleet, strengthened by the Norwegian Earl Eyrik of Hlaðir (Lade), numbered about 160 ships. It arrived

Robert Cook

[See also: Exempla; Jorän pátn biskups Halárdssonar; Old Norse–Icelandic Literature, Foreign Influence on; Riddarsörgur; Style]
in the summer or autumn of 1015 on the southern coast of England, where it had several encounters with the English levies. The earldorman Eadric of Mercia rebelled and joined Knud with forty ships. In the spring, a rapid move on horseback secured Northumbria for Knud, and by the beginning of April the ships approached London. King Æthelred died in London on April 23 before the arrival of the fleet, while his son, Edmund Ironside, collected armies against Knud, partly in rebellion against his father. Æthelred's queen, Emma of Normandy, negotiated some sort of armistice with Knud for London. In the final battle of Assandun, Knud had the victory, and the peace treaty of Alney in October or November 1016 provided Knud with Mercia and huge tax revenues from all of England. Edmund was to reign over Wessex, but he died on November 30, 1016, and the English witan were left with no alternative but to elect Knud as king of England.

The subsequent division of England into four great earldoms suggested itself: Eirikr already possessed Northumbria, and Æadric held Mercia; then Porkell got East Anglia, and Knud retained Wessex. But soon there were many smaller earldoms, and King Knud and Earl Porkell appear as two almost equally strong competitors for power, while Æadric was killed. In 1017, Knud married Emma, thus removing the Norman support for the refugee princes, Alfred and Eadward. In 1018, Danes and English made an agreement in Oxford, including a renewal of legislation in close cooperation with Archbishop Wulfstan, the famous homilist, a legislation to be elaborated upon before the mid-1020s (Liebermann, I-II Cn). Large gifts to churches and monasteries and the solemn transfer to Canterbury in 1023 of the remains of St. Ælfgah, slain by the Danes in London 1012, again reveal Knud's early alliance with the Church.

In 1019, Knud returned to Denmark for the winter and probably was elected king; nothing more is heard of his brother, Harald. In Norway, King Óláf (later St. Óláf) had assumed power, but was expelled by Knud in an expedition in 1025. Óláf was killed on his return in 1030 (or 1028?) in the battle of Stiklestad (Stiklarstaðir) near Nidaros (Trondheim). King Óláf also appeared as the ally of the Götan-Swedish king Önundr (Anund) Jakob, and even if the Anglo-Danish forces had no success against the Swedes in the battle of the Helgê (Holy River) in Skåne (Scania), some agreement seems to have secured the reign over parts of Sweden for Knud (also suggested by the coin of Sigunna in Uppland-Sweden); he may also have had some influence in Götaland. Now Knud could appear as the equal of the German emperor Conrad and the pope, both of whom he met in Rome in Easter of 1027, securing toll reductions for English and Danish clerics traveling to Rome. Perhaps also the marriage between Knud's daughter, Gunhild/Kunigunde, and the emperor's son, Henry, was agreed upon, possibly combined with the recognition of Danish possession of the later duchy of Sønderjylland (Schleswig).

Not much is recorded about the later years of Knud's reign. Some skirmishes with Scots and Welsh are recorded. With the tax paid in 1017, Knud was a wealthy man from the outset, able to bestow rich gifts and obtain loyal retainers. Taxation was perhaps continued, but on a much lower level. The large payments to Scandinavians and the new coinage struck by English minters in Denmark and Norway established the beginnings of monetary economy, but the political structure was fragile. Earl Porkell was exiled from England in 1021, but he and Knud were reconciled again in 1023, now with the exchange of their sons as a pledge. Knud's son Hardacnut reigned in Denmark with his mother Queen Emma, even striking coins in his own name before Knud's death.

Knud died in Shaftesbury on November 12, 1035, and was buried in Winchester; his body was later moved to the present cathedral. Knud's empire then disintegrated. Knud's two sons by his mistress Ælfgifu of Northamptonshire, Sven and Harald, reigned in Norway and England, respectively, for a short while, and Hardacnut reigned over England for two years.

After the Norman Conquest in 1066, monastic historians of the 12th century came to assess Knud's reign along several lines. He was viewed as the last good Anglo-Saxon king, his codes were studied carefully, and his long, peaceful reign and pious acts were praised. Alternatively, the old narratives were given a further bias, with the Danes cast as an image of the oppressive Normans. In more recent times, historians have reproached Knud for the loss of an empire, but credit him with founding the Royal Navy. The use of Knud as a symbol has thus given the legends about him a more lasting life than the few known facts.

St. Knud had furnished the church in Odense with relics of St. Alban and St. Oswald (brought home in 1075) and inaugurated the construction of the Romanesque cathedral that was later dedicated to him and served from around 1095 by Benedictines from Evesham. As a saint, Knud was the uniting force behind the diocese of Odense, comprising all islands between Jutland, Scania, and the German coast except Zealand, Møn, and Rügen.

Knud's biography was written around 1122 by Ælnoth, one of the English monks in Odense; his liturgical office must have been created by the English monks, taking its inspiration from the cult of English royal saints (Hoffmann 1975). In the 13th century, the cult was limited to Odense diocese and Lund, while St. Knud Lavard (d. 1131), the father of King Valdemar I (1157–1182), became the patron saint of Zealand. From around 1400, by analogy to Norway's and Sweden's royal saints, St. Knud of Odense took precedence under the influence of the Scandinavian Union of Kalmar (1397–1520). His relics were walled in during the centuries of Lutheran orthodoxy and restored together with the crypt in the 19th century.

**Søren Balle**

**Knud (Cnut), St.**, was a Danish king, son of King Sven Estridsen (1047–1075) and an unknown mother, killed in Odense at an insurrection on July 10, 1086. His remains were first elevated from the tomb in April 1095. His cult was approved by Pope Paschal II in 1099 and solemnly inaugurated on April 19, 1100, in Odense. The examination of his relics in Odense cathedral crypt has not led to any conclusion about his age, and, since genealogical evidence is insufficient, estimates vary between about 1036 and 1054 as possible years of birth.

Knud participated in sea-raids in the Baltic (according to Saxo) and against England in 1069 (Anglo-Saxon Chronicle), although not as commander-in-chief. At the death of King Sven on April 28, 1074/5, Knud became a candidate for the succession, although he was not the eldest son. But his brother Harald took power, and not until Harald's death in 1080 was Knud taken for king. Leading a Viking fleet against England in 1075, he decided not to attack but turned to Flanders, where he entered into a political alliance with Count Robert I (d. 1093) and ultimately (ca. 1087) married his daughter Adela. The common enemy in the alliance was William the Conqueror, who after 1066 made it in securing better economic conditions for the clergy by means of tax rather than war booty is to be understood from this perspective.

Another main concern was Knud's effort to secure Denmark's southern border against King Henry IV, who during Knud's reign had broken with Pope Gregory VII and established his own papacy, thereby enabling his own coronation as an emperor in Rome in 1084. By remaining on the southern border, Knud was unable to join the fleet allegedly preparing for an attack against England in northern Jutland in 1085, which in turn led to the insurrection against him and to his violent death in Odense. The rebels were aristocrats and farmers furnishing the Viking fleet (leidanger).

In church matters, Knud had to balance between the schismatic pope of Henry IV and the defeated Gregory VII (d. May 1085). He openly followed the directives formulated by Gregory VII in letters to his brother King Harald in 1077–1080 (DD 1,2 Nr. 17–20) in securing better economic conditions for the clergy by means of taxation and donations, such as the one to the cathedral in Lund, May 21, 1085 (DD 1,2 Nr. 21). He also introduced social improvements for the poor, liberated slaves, women, and foreigners (Breengard 1982). The inevitable trend toward royal autocratic government and at the same time the insufficiency of its administrative personnel gave birth to the decisive dissatisfaction among the landowning groups of society.

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Tore Nyberg

**Knudsdrápa** see Óttarr svarti; Sighvatr Póðarson

**Knútýlinga saga** ("The Saga of the Knútýlingar") is an Icelandic compilation about the Danish kings from the 10th century to 1187. The name KNUTSALINGA saga is found in Árnir Magnússon's copy from around 1700 of a parchment codex from around 1300, but is probably not a medieval title. The text is transmitted in two recensions; A is complete, B truncated, beginning with the reign of Óláfr, St.; Sven Estridsen. To the A-group belong the lost parchment from around 1300 (and numerous paper copies, all
deriving from Árni Magnússon's copy) plus fragments of another parchment MS. The B-group encompasses a parchment codex from the 15th century, sixteen paper copies, and three fragments of another parchment MS.

*Knytlinga saga* provides important historical information about the expansion of the Danish empire to include parts of England and Wendland (eastern Germany), while Danish-Norwegian hostilities receive less attention. Of the fifty-nine skaldic stanzas in this saga, fifty are transmitted nowhere else; the saga thus stands as an important repository for Old Norse poetry. *Knytlinga saga* is to a large extent based on lost works, many of which were employed as sources elsewhere. Like *Heimskringla*, *Knytlinga saga* used the "Konunga ævi" ("life history of kings") by Ari Porgilsson, *Jönsvíkinga saga*, and an Óláfss saga helga, which is thought to be by Styrmir Kárason. Through this last work, or directly, *Knytlinga saga* quotes a detailed saga with many skaldic stanzas about Knud (Cnut) the Great's conquest of England. Moreover, *Knytlinga saga* mentions sagas about the Norwegian kings Magnús góði ("the good") Olafsson (d. 1047) and Hákonarson ("White-skald"; d. 1259), Snorri Sturluson's nephew and brother of Sturla Pórõarson, although this view has been contested.

By Styrmir Kárason. Through this last work, or directly, *Knytlinga saga* makes independent use of *Heimskringla*'s older sources, the question of whether it also used *Heimskringla* itself remains open. The account of Erik Ejegod ("ever-good"; r. 1095-1103) is based on Markús Siggjósson's poem *Eiríksdrápa*. For the period 1134-1187, a translation of a 12th-century chronicle is quoted; known also by *Heimskringla*, *Knytlingesagas forhold til det tolvte ârhundredes danske og sveitsiske historiografi* ("Knytlingasaga, dens Kilder oghistoriske Vaerd.").

In the period after 1257, when Snorri Sturluson's *Egilss saga* is compiled on the basis of older works, a younger, well-composed saga of the king St. Knud (Cnut) the Great (r. 1080-1086) constitutes the central part of the work. With the *Kongar saga* and *Knud (Cnut) the Great; Knud (Cnut), St.; Konunngesögur, Laxdœla saga; Ólâfs saga helga; Ottarr svarti; Saxo Grammaticus*
that combines elements from native tradition with newer and more fashionable ones from the Continent. Presumably composed by an Icelandic cleric in the early 14th century, sometime after Ivens saga had been adapted from the French, the saga exists in two main redactions, an older one represented by Stock. Perg. 4to no. 7 (ca. 1350) and Stock. Perg. fol. no. 7 (ca. 1460), and a somewhat reduced later version, from which description and dialogue have been pared away, represented by Stock. Perg. 4to no. 6 (ca. 1400), the only vellum MS providing a full text of the saga. In all, forty-eight MSS of the saga are extant as well as eight sets of rítmur, or rhyming ballads (ranging from the 16th to the 19th centuries), and a 15th-century Faroese poem, Koralds kvæði, that are based on its story line.

Konráðr is sent by his father, the emperor of Saxland, to the learned Earl Róðgeirr for instruction. Konráð excels in deeds requiring agility and strength, surpassing in these even the earl's own son, his foster-brother Róðbert, who, seeing himself outdone, devotes himself instead to the study of foreign languages, at which he becomes quite adept. When Konráðr returns home, his father advises him not to depend on the knowledge of others but to rely on himself. The advice, as matters turn out, goes unheeded. After Konráðr's sister is made pregnant by Róðbert, Konráðr, having won clemency from his enraged father for Róðbert, sails with the latter to Constantinople. On their arrival, Konráðr, ignorant as he is of Greek, blindly enters into a name and role exchange with Róðbert ostensibly to open communication with the Greek emperor. Róðbert, however, utilizes his command of Greek and the false identity to further his own sinister ends and bring about Konráðr's downfall. He tells the jealous monarch that Konráðr is a potential seducer of his daughter Mathilda, and as such should be disposed of. A series of perilous trials, each more severe than the preceding, is imposed upon Konráðr. However, Mathilda recognizes Róðbert for what he really is, and provides Konráðr with warming counsel. When Konráðr visits her, the two are able to converse in a third language found in a compendium, and Konráðr is able to reestablish his princely identity, proclaim it subsequently at a public assembly, and prove it beyond all doubt by successfully accomplishing an impossible task, the bringing back from a serpent-infested land of a particular green gem. His prize is none other than Mathilda, whom he foolishly had allowed his proxy Róðbert to woo.

The entertaining quality of the saga derives largely from the succession of ever more frightening situations that Konráðr faces. The dominant thematic note struck in the saga is not that ignorance of foreign languages is the basic fault, but that naiveté and blindness toward life, as exemplified in Konráðr's actions, inevitably lead, unless corrected, to great peril. While the hero can speak to his father at length of the purposefulness of life as part of a grand celestial design, his own activity as demonstrated by his various "circus acts" is purposeless and for a considerable length of time given over to sporting and self-gratification. The relinquishing of personal identity to Róðbert marks the culmination of Konráðr's self-contained unawareness of life. It is not until he visits Mathilda on his own initiative and listens to her sage counsel that he embarks on meaningful activity from which, at the end, he can emerge triumphantly.


Konung Alexander ("King Alexander") is an Old Swedish epic poem about the life and deeds of King Alexander the Great of Macedonia (d. 323 B.C.). The text is preserved in a single MS, Cod. Stock. D 4, a product of the famous monastery at Vadstena, written certainly a learned man and a skillful Latinist. Probably, he belonged to copying errors or simply to conscious alternations of copyists. Some of the incongruent rhymes in the MS may be due to splitting of various "circus acts" is purposeless and for a considerable length of time given over to sporting and self-gratification. The relinquishing of personal identity to Róðbert marks the culmination of Konráðr's self-contained unawareness of life. It is not until he visits Mathilda on his own initiative and listens to her sage counsel that he embarks on meaningful activity from which, at the end, he can emerge triumphantly.


Konung Alexander was no. 14169 in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. The Latin original was one of the recensions of Historia de preliis, a group of various interpolated and modified versions of archipresbyter Leo's Nativitas et victoria Alexandri Magni. Closely related to the lost MS used for Konung Alexander is no. 14169 in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. The translator-author of Konung Alexander is unknown; he was certainly a learned man and a skillful latinist. Probably, he belonged to the retinue of Bo Jonsson Grip.

The Alexander novel was popular throughout Europe, perhaps because it overflows with tales of heroic deeds, battles, buried treasures, and exotic creatures.

The meter of Konung Alexander is the common medieval epic knutil. The knittel of Konung Alexander is influenced by Eulemiavisorna (and Erikskrónikan) both as far as rhyming, metrical padding, repetitions, and hyperboles are concerned. The rhymes of Konung Alexander, however, are more often incongruent than those of the forerunners (e.g., thröst 'thirst' rhyming with fisk 'fish'; vægh 'way' with gladh 'merry';Hugh 'mind' with op 'up'). Some of the incongruent rhymes in the MS may be due to copying errors or simply to conscious alternations of copyists speaking a different dialect or using younger forms.

The author of Konung Alexander has been called "one of the few real author personalities of medieval Sweden." His style is praised as strong and visual, personal and often acrid, spiced with proverbs and concrete metaphors. The vocabulary contains many unique words, such as embændin 'stubborn,' haligrat 'somewhat
unfriendly,’ 'swaddling clothes.' Many of the uncommon words are borrowed from Low German. By comparing the language of Konung Alexander, especially the vocabulary, with modern dialect conditions, one can maintain with some certainty that the translator-author had grown up in some part of eastern Götaland.


Kongungastyrelsen. En medelskrift från konungs ok höflighiga, or Konungastyrelsen ("The Royal Rule"), as the work is commonly known, is Sweden's contribution to the Speculum regale literature, which was so widespread and popular in the Middle Ages. It contains no explicit information as to when, by whom, or for whom it was written. The unknown author's main source and model was Aegidius Romanus's politico-pedagogical treatise De regimine principum (ca. 1280); a number of other writers, named and unnamed, also left their mark in his work. Konungastyrelsen is a compilation and can in a sense be considered part of the literature of translation. The Swedish compiler, however, shows what for medieval times is a remarkable independence in relation to his sources, and his prose style is of the very highest order.

Konungastyrelsen comprises four chapters. The first discusses rule by one versus rule by many, and hereditary versus elective monarchy. Arguments on both sides are set forth in the familiar manner of scholasticism. The author plainly endorses royal rule by one; to him, rule by many is the same thing as rule by the nobility. He also argues for hereditary monarchy, which is remarkable in view of the fact that the kings of medieval Sweden were elected. The remaining chapters give instructions on how a king should live and act in accordance with wisdom and moral principles; how he should organize his immediate surroundings, his court, and his servants; and how he should govern his country and his people. The overriding principle is that royal government should be to the credit of the king and to the benefit of the people.

The style of Konungastyrelsen, in its basic structure, is one of fullness and breadth, with a predominance of parallel expressions (pairs of synonyms or near-synonyms) and other redundant features. Ultimately, this style goes back to classical rhetoric. At the same time, it is simple and clear. The author has almost entirely managed to avoid the distracting latinisms, intricate periods, and constructions alien to Swedish generally, which are so common in Old Swedish translated prose. The text is larded with numerous proverbs and other sententious sayings.

Konungastyrelsen, in its entirety, is known only through a printed edition from 1634, based on a MS that shortly afterward disappeared without a trace. The MS was probably transcribed in the mid-15th century. All that is left of Konungastyrelsen in medieval MSS is a short fragment that can be dated to approximately 1440; it had not been part of the lost MS used for the printed edition of 1634. The original was at least a century older. With the help of its language and certain statements in the work, it can be deduced that Konungastyrelsen was composed at roughly the same time as the national law code, i.e., in the 1340s. The work may have been intended for Magnus Eriksson's sons, Erik and Håkon. In 1344, the former, then five years old, was appointed successor to the Swedish throne. A possible candidate for authorship is perhaps St. Birgitta's confessor, Magister Mathias, the foremost Swedish theologian of the Middle Ages. However, we are here on very precarious ground.


Lennart Moberg

Konungasögur ("kings' sagas") is the term used for a category of Old Norse sagas distinguished specifically by subject matter, namely the life stories of Scandinavian royalty. Konungasögur concern especially the Viking Age and medieval kings of Norway from the 9th to the 13th centuries, and also the kings of Denmark from roughly the same period, and, by extension, the earls of Orkney. The kings of Sweden appear incidentally in these works, but no tales were written about them in particular, save Ynglinga saga, which derives the Norwegian ruling line from prehistoric
Swedish kings. The literary form is almost exclusively Icelandic, and royal biography was seminal in the development of the entire saga genre. The texts represent basically the codification in 12th- and 13th-century Iceland of historical traditions concerning non-Icelandic happenings, with Icelandic events appearing chiefly as digressions. A few works were composed in Latin and then translated into Old Norse, but most were vernacular compositions. The texts range from accounts of individual regents to collections of life stories covering several generations of rulers, from speculations concerning the mythical beginnings of prehistoric Scandinavian royal lines to presentations of contemporary sovereigns based in part on documentary material, and from works preserved in many MSS to fragments, lost texts, and hypothetical constructions. In contrast to many other types of sagas, especially the so-called konungasögur, the authors are often named.

Although konungasögur can be defined literally and delimited narrowly, the definition is often broadened to include some other closely related writings. The term encompasses, in addition, saga accounts of the Norse colonies in the North Atlantic, specifically the Orkneys and the Faroes, tales of the half-legendary Baltic warrior community of the Jómsvikingar, and chronicles in the medieval Latin historical tradition. One could also include the non-saga presentations of early Icelandic history and genealogies, and perhaps even the stories about the discovery and settlement of Greenland and Vinland, although the latter are probably better classified as islendingasögur.

Research into this material centers mainly on philological questions concerning genesis and development, and on the complex textual relationships among various works. This is true especially when the same story is told several times, such as in the various recountings of the reign of a particular sovereign. In spite of reservations as to their reliability, these sagas still provide the basis of any historical speculation about the period.

Beginnings of historical writing (1120–1190). Historical writing in Iceland, which was among the first types of literature practiced there, began in the early 1100s. Around 1130, Ari Porgilsson (1067/8-1148) composed a short epitome of Icelandic history called islendingabók, which deals with events from the beginning of the Scandinavian settlement around 870 down to the time of Ari's own day, with an emphasis on ecclesiastical concerns. According to the prologue, the preserved work is a second edition and apparently omits the genealogy (átætratala) and kings' lives (*konunga ævi) of the previous version. The lost genealogies may be the earliest form of landnámabók, a topographical account of the colonization that includes the ancestral lines of the first settlers. The lost kings' lives probably dealt with the rulers of Norway from the time of Harald hárfagr ("hair-hair"), contemporary with the settlement of Iceland, down to Sigurðr Jórsalafari ("crusader"; d. 1130). According to the poem Nòregs konungatal, Ari's somewhat older contemporary Sæmundr Sigfússon (1056–1133) also wrote a now-lost history of the Norwegian kings from Harald hárfagr to Magnús góði ("the good"; d. 1047). Since Snorri Sturluson in his prologues to the Separate Ólafs saga helga and to Heimskringla states that Ari was the first to write history in the vernacular, it is assumed that Sæmundr wrote in Latin. Later references indicate the authority these two pioneers represented for subsequent medieval historical authors, but it has proven difficult to evaluate the extent and nature of their lost works. A main achievement was the establishment of a chronological framework for early history. In addition, they collected historical lore and placed it within this framework, at the same time setting examples for the critical evaluation of material. Both Sæmundr and Ari earned the byname fróði ("learned," especially in historical lore), and this stage of writing has been termed the period of the "learned men."

The recording of political history in Norway began about half a century later and represented more directly the tradition of medieval European Latin chronicles. The Norwegian historical works from around 1170–1190, which are sometimes referred to as the "Norwegian synoptics," include the anonymous Historia Norwegiae, the Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagiensium by the unidentified monk Theodoricus, and the so-called Ágrip af Nòregs konunga sogum. Ágrip ("summary"), a 19th-century misnomer based on the idea that the work was a compendium of individual sagas about each of the kings, is defective initially and toward the end, and exists only in an Icelandic copy of a Norwegian original. Like Theodoricus's work, it probably began with Harald hárfagr, but whereas Theodoricus stopped in 1130, as did Ari, Ágrip apparently continued until the arrival of Sverrir Sigurðarson in Norway in 1177. The Historia Norwegiae, which also reviews the legendary kings of Scandinavian prehistory, breaks off defective with Ólaf Haraldsson's arrival in Norway in 1015. Ágrip is partially a translation or paraphrase of Theodoricus's text and of the Historia Norwegiae (or of a Latin source common to the two of them), but is more saga-like in tone. Among its vernacular innovations is the inclusion of skaldic verse. The interrelationships of the "Norwegian synoptics," and their possible dependence on the lost works by Ari and Sæmundr, are debated. The significance of the later question is whether the Norwegian historical tradition is independent of the Icelandic or simply derivative. Theodoricus acknowledges Icelandic historical traditions, but also refers to a lost, probably Norwegian *Catalogus regum Norwagiensium.

While authors in Norway were mainly adapting the genre of European chronicle to native material, the saga genre itself developed in Iceland. The first saga may well have been Eiríkr Oddsson's *Hryggjarstykki (literally "back-piece," maybe [single] piece of calf skin"), composed sometime around the mid-12th century. The work is lost, but was used as a source in 13th-century compendia of Norwegian history (Heimskringla, Morkinskína, and Fagrskína). References indicate that the work covered at any rate the initial period of the Norwegian civil wars encompassing the strife in 1130–1139 among the sons and grandsons of Sigurðr Jórsalafari, and it may have continued until 1161. Recent scholarship (Bjarni Guðnason 1978), however, views the work as a life history of Sigurðr slæmbir ("sham deacon"), especially from 1136 when he killed King Haraldr gilt ("Gilchrist") until he was killed himself by Haraldr's sons in 1139. The work apparently combined secular and hagiographic elements, and presented Sigurðr slæmbir's death as a martyrdom.

Latin hagiographic writing had been practiced since the 11th century in both Norway and Iceland, and foremost among the native saints whose history had been put on parchment was St. Ólaf. An early vita is lost, but one from the mid-12th century is preserved in vernacular translation, followed by a collection of miracles, in the Old Norwegian Book of Homilies, and also as a source for a shorter and a longer Latin account by Archbishop Eystein Erlendsson (d. 1188) of the saint's life, death, and miracles. A Latin life story of St. Magnús of the Orkneys (d. 1115), *Vita sancti Magni, which was written in conjunction with his canonization around 1135 by a Master Robert, may have served both as a source and a model for Eiríkr Oddsson's *Hryggjarstykki, especially in the
presentation of the martyrdom. Pieces of the vita are preserved in vernacular translation in particular in the longer version from about 1300 of Magnús saga eyjafjarls.

In the mid-1180s, a priest turned king in Norway, Sverrir Sigurðarson (r. 1177/84–1202), took a sometime Icelandic abbot of the monastery at Pingeyrar who was visiting Norway, Karl Jónsson, into his service as the author of the tale of his early years as a pretender to the throne. The king directed the composition himself. The resultant text, Gylf ("bug-bear"), no longer exists as a separate work, but comprises the first part of the entire saga of the king, Sverris saga. Among other things, it includes dreams, premonitions, and dramatic scenes with direct discourse. From the early 1190s comes the Historia de protectione Danorum in Hierosolymam, a Latin recounting of contemporary preparations for a crusade undertaken mainly by Danes who traveled via Norway and had an audience with King Sverrir. This work was probably written by a Norwegian monk living in Denmark at the time.

**Formative period (1190–1220).** The three main roots of konungs saga composition were compact Latin chronicles covering long periods of time, brief Latin legends of individual saints, and vernacular and Latin accounts of relatively contemporary history covering short periods of time. The confluence of secular royal biography, religious saints' lives, and recounts of contemporary events are obvious in, for example, *Hryggjarstykkj*. The sources from which Old Norse historians had to draw their material were many and varied. Ari had trustworthy informants, some of whose firsthand knowledge went back to the period of the Conversion around 1000, and in the prelogue to Sverris saga and also in Snorri's preludes to the Separate Ólafs saga helga and to Heimskringla, the value of eyewitness accounts is stressed. Snorri emphasizes the traditions from Ari, and also the value of skaldic poetry. These poems, whose stylistic and metrical intricacies facilitated their preservation during the period of oral transmission, were often cited as confirmation of events. Skaldic strophes were perhaps transmitted with accompanying prose describing in more detail the happenings referred to, and this prose could lie behind the relation of events recorded in the poems. Oral tradition is otherwise not often mentioned, but must have been important. In addition, motifs and descriptions were borrowed from other literature, both native and foreign.

Part of the formative period of konungs saga composition is connected with the Benedictine monastery at Pingeyrar in northern Iceland. Abbot Karl Jónsson (d. 1212/13), who wrote about the first years of Sverrir's reign, may have collected additional material about the king and may have been the author of the entire Sverris saga. During the last decade or so of the 12th century, two monks at the monastery composed Latin biographies of Ólaf Tryggvason (r. 995–1000), the king of Norway whom the Icelanders viewed as being responsible for the conversion of Iceland and therefore held in esteem in much the same way the Norwegians revered St. Olaf. The texts were translated into Old Norse, and three different MSS exist of Oddr Snorrason's Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar. Gunnlaug Leifsson's work, probably a revision and expansion of Oddr's text, is preserved only as incorporated in a 14th-century compilation about the king.

Various saga accounts of St. Olaf (r. 1015–1028) survive from this formative period. The earliest known one, preserved in only six MS fragments, was dubbed the Olafs saga helga and may well date to around 1200. A later revised and augmented version of this text is found in the so-called Legendary Ólafs saga helga, preserved in a MS from central Norway (Tønsdal) dated to about 1250. Among other things, a legendary section with miracles has been added, hence the modern name. Styrmir Kára son (d. 1245), prior of the Augustinian house of Viðey, composed a ìlssaga ("biography") of St. Olaf certainly before 1230 and based on the Oldest Ólafs saga helga. Pieces of his work survive only as excerpts quoted in an appendix to Ólafs saga helga in Flateyjarbók, but it is also believed to have been Snorri Sturluson's chief source for his saga of the saint. Styrmir's work was apparently somewhat hagiographic in tone, presenting Olaf as a holy man who already worked miracles in his youth.

Icelanders composed not only royal biographies, but also provincial or regional histories during the first two decades of the 13th century. These include: (1) the compilation Orkneyinga saga, a record of the earls of Orkney from the time of Haraldr hárfagri down to around 1170 (accounts of individual events were likely written down as early as the late 12th century); (2) Færeyinga saga, about happenings in the Faroe Islands, especially a powerful and wily local chieftain's political dealings there in the years shortly before and after 1000 (the work is in many ways more like Islandingasaga than a konungs saga); (3) Jömsvölkingsa saga, the tale of the semi-legendary adventures of heroes from a warrior community in the Baltic with connections to the Danish rulers, who exploits culminate in their dashing defeat at the battle of Hjørungavág (ca. 980) against Earl Hákon riki ("the mighty") of Norway and thus impinge on Norwegian history (this work has much in common with fornaldarsögur); (4) the lost *Skjoldunga saga, known mainly from a 17th-century Latin retelling, which presented a history of the prehistoric kings of Denmark through some twenty generations down to the mid-10th century (in content more akin to fornaldarsögur than to konungs saga); (5) the history of the earls of Hlæðir (Lade, near Trondheim), the chief rivals of the kings of Norway in the 10th and 11th centuries, which has been dubbed *Hlæðjarla saga by scholars who claim its existence, although it is known only as it was absorbed in 13th-century compendia (Fagrskinna and Heims­kringla); and (6) Håkonar saga larssonar, the only saga about a Norwegian who was neither of royal status nor a pretender to the throne, although in this version he is presented as a scion of the earls of Hlæðir.

Sverris saga was probably completed soon after the monarch's death in 1202, most likely by around 1210. This masterpiece marks a literary high point in konungs saga composition, and had a substantial influence on later works, among other things in the employment of public oratory. Another saga about more or less contemporary events belonging to this period is Boglunga sögur, the story of the period of strife following Sverrir's death, existing in two related but politically varying redactions. A shorter and probably more original version covers the period 1202–1209, and a longer, probably revised and extended version continues until 1217.

**Classical period (1220–1280).** During the formative period of konungs saga composition, a great diversity of texts and types was represented. The classical period encompasses especially the years 1220–1240, and is characterized particularly by the composition of large, more compendious histories of long periods of time. The existence of Sverris saga was a prerequisite for the composition of these compendia, since they all end or probably ended in 1177, the year when Sverrir arrived in Norway and advanced his claims to the throne. The so-called *Oldest Morkinskinna, a comprehensive version of Norwegian history from Magnús góði (r. 1035–1047) until probably 1177, set the stage for the works of this period. Written by an Icelander in the early
1220s, its account is best reflected, although somewhat shortened, in the latter part of Fagrskinna. Fagrskinna is a rather sober and sometimes skeletal presentation of Norwegian royal history from Hálfdan svarti ("the black," Haraldr hárfagri's father) to 1177. The realistic account is based mainly on written materials, perhaps also a now-lost independent *Haralds saga hárfgra*, and contains much skaldic poetry. It is thought that the work was composed in Norway by an Icelander, perhaps for King Hákon Hákonarson.

The Icelander Snorri Sturluson (1178–1241) is identified by two 16th-century Danish translations as the author of Heimskringla, and his writing of "saga-books" in 1230–1231 is mentioned in Sturlunga saga. Snorri apparently first wrote a saga about St. Óláfr, now termed the Separate Ólafs saga helga, in the 1220s. This work was prefaced by a prologue and a summary presentation of the preceding kings in the royal line, and followed by a recounting of miracles that the saint worked after his death. Then, about 1230, Snorri composed a continuous presentation of the individual histories of the kings of Norway to the year 1177, using a slightly revised version of the Separate Ólafs saga helga as the central text and middle third of the work. The modern title for this compendium, Heimskringla (literally "Circle of the World"), is derived from the first two words in an initial geographical presentation in the earliest extant MS of the work, which lacks Snorri's prologue. The account begins with Ynglinga saga, which, based on the genealogical poem Ynglingatal by Þjóðólfr of Hvin, recounts the fates of some twenty-six generations of ancestors of the Norwegian royal line, starting with the gods in prehistoric times and continuing down to Hálfdan svarti in the 9th century. Heimskringla is the crowning work of konungasaga composition. Snorri's critical historical judgment of cause and effect and his literary skills at structuring a story and modeling dramatic dialogue are everywhere evident.

The composition of an Icelandic compendium about the kings of Denmark from the 10th century until 1187, Knýtlinga saga, belongs to the time after 1257. Danish histories in Latin and skaldic poetry were among the sources used, in addition to sagas of the kings of Norway. Embedded in this anonymous compilation is a well-composed and extensive saga of St. Knud (Cnut; r. 1080–1086), Knúts saga helga, for which Heimskringla's Ólafs saga helga functioned as both source and model, the protagonists in both instances being at once kings and martyred saints.

The time frame for the classical period of konungasaga composition may be extended until the latter part of the 13th century and encompasses then the composition of sagas about contemporary regents. Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar, the story of Hákon Hákornson (r. 1217–1263), was commissioned by Hákon's son and successor, Magnus, and was completed by Snorri's nephew, Sturla árðarson, within two years of Hákon's death. The somber account, which lacks the narrative power of earlier konungasagas, is based on a wealth of written historical sources and documentary material, and includes as embellishment many skaldic verses, most of which were composed by the saga author himself. Soon after the death of Magnus lagabætti ("law-mender") in 1280, Sturla (d. 1284) wrote his biography, Magnús saga lagabætis, which is only fragmentarily preserved and was apparently quite dry.

Postclassical period (1280–1390). After about 1280, konungasaga composition as such ceased, but texts of existing works continued to be copied by scribes, often in large MSS containing several konungasagas. During the postclassical period, more original editorial activities concentrated on the encyclopedic collection and expansion of material and its stylistic embellishment. The text of the preserved Morkinskiina heralds the advent of these procedures. In this MS, the presentation of the *Oldest Morkinskiina* was somewhat redone stylistically, and more skaldic strophes were added, but the main distinction is the inclusion of þættir (sing. þáttir), short stories about Icelanders and their relationships with the Norwegian kings. These tales are usually only loosely connected with the main story, and are often woven piece-meal into the narrative. Snorri's Separate Ólafs saga helga is also interpolated with þættir in various MSS from the 1300s.

Beyond the inclusion of short stories, redactors attempted to combine extensive histories of individual epochs or sovereigns, and one such product is the text of Hulda-Hrokkinskinna, a conglomeration mainly of the last third of Heimskringla with Morkinskiina text. The most striking such compilation, however, is the so-called Longest Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar. To make this work, every known version of the story of Óláfr Tryggvason was employed, including the vernacular translation of the otherwise lost Latin version from around 1200 by Gunnlaugr Leifsson. The stylistic embellishments of the "florid style" (i.e., alliteration, synonymous variation, rhythmic word placement, and syntactic parallelism), which became popular in the 1300s, characterize especially the sections from Gunnlaugr's text. The encyclopedic conflation and compilation of konungasögur in the 1300s culminates in Flateyjarbók (ca. 1390). This MS, the largest of all Icelandic parchments, includes, among other works, the Longest Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar, the Separate Ólafs saga helga, Sverris saga, and Hákonar saga Hákornsonar, in addition to a 15th-century addition consisting of Morkinskiina text. Other individual sagas and þættir in independent versions have been interlarded, especially in the Longest Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar.

Konungs skuggsjá ("King's Mirror"), or Speculum regale (both titles are found in the prologue) is a didactic work composed in Norway during the reign of King Hákon Hákonarson (1217–1263), probably in the 1250s. As with many medieval textbooks, Konungs skuggsjá is a dialogue, not between teacher and pupil as usual in such works, but between father and son. The work was probably written for the sons of King Hákon. One of them, Magnus, followed his father as king (1263–1280); he received the nickname lagabœttir ("law-mender") owing to the important revision of the laws that he authored, and which were influenced by Konungs skuggsjá.

Konungs skuggsjá is preserved in many MSS, most of them Icelandic. One of the oldest and best is AM 243B fol., written in Norway, probably in Bergen around 1275.

The author is anonymous, and many unsuccessful attempts have been made to attribute the work to persons more or less well known from historical sources. The work itself, however, gives a picture of an author working in close connection with the royal court. He was probably a man in holy orders, and by Norwegian standards he had a substantial theological background. Whether he had achieved this learning in Norway or had studied abroad is uncertain.

The first part of Konungs skuggsjá deals with subjects of importance to traders who sail with their merchandise to foreign countries. Different scientific matters are treated, and there are chapters on Iceland, Ireland, and Greenland, where there was a thriving Norse population in the Middle Ages. In the second part, the author gives firsthand and detailed information about the king’s retainers, their daily life, and their duties. He then concentrates on the king, his dignity, and his duties, especially as the highest judge. To instruct him in this capacity, the author gives a series of examples from the Old Testament of judgments pronounced by God, and chapters dealing with these matters. It is a much discussed problem whether the work was left unfinished or whether the final part is lost. As a third solution, it has been suggested that the prologue in his words in a somewhat misleading way. There is reason to be­

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Konungs skuggsjá has its place in a series of works from different countries written to be of use to kings or sons of kings. Some are called specula, but, as far as is known, none is the direct model for Konungs skuggsjá. Among the author’s sources was doubtless the Vulgate, and he must have known some of the many commentaries on the books of the Bible. He mentions Isidore and the Dialogues of Pope Gregory, and he certainly knew other learned works, but to point out exactly what he may have read has proved difficult.

Konungs skuggsjá is the most important work composed in
medieval Norway. It gives unique insight into the cultural life of the country in the middle of the 13th century, and offers discussion of a king's position and duties, seen from a Norwegian point of view, against the background of European rex justus ideology. In Konungs skuggsjá, the Old Norse language is treated with great stylistic skill as a flexible instrument for the author's thoughts. A theory that two separate works by two different authors are brought together in Konungs skuggsjá is based on very weak arguments.


Ludvig Holm-Olsen

Kormákr Ögmundarson was an Icelandic poet (ca. 930–970), the chief character of Kormáks saga. The name (Irish Cormac) suggests Celtic family connections. According to Haukr Valdarsson's Islendingadrápa, Kormákr was of high birth (kynstórr). The saga belongs to the category of skaldasögur, and is particularly remarkable for the large number of verses (lausavísir) it contains scattered throughout. Sixty-four of the eighty-five verses are spoken by the hero. Of the remaining ones, fifteen are attributed to his chief rival, Bersi. A few verses are falsified, corrupt, or of doubtful origin (in particular 6, 24, 61, 73, and 79). The prose story of the saga, the biography of the poet, is unusually short and constitutes little more than a connecting framework around the many verses. There are linguistic indications that it was composed at the beginning of the 13th century, the earliest period of saga writing.

Its all-dominating theme is the hero's unhappy love story, a love that is never consummated. Right from the start, it contains bizarre elements. A glimpse of a young girl's beautiful ankles is enough to make the poet fall in love and causes a flow of poetic inspiration. He realizes that love for the young Steingríðr is to be his fate for the rest of his life. But although his feelings are reciprocated, and, after incidents in which blood is shed, her father's resistance is overcome, the planned marriage falls through. Paradoxically enough, the direct cause of the failure is Kormákr himself: when the time comes, he does not turn up at the wedding that has already been prepared. According to the saga, the real reason is the harmful spell put upon him by a woman whose sons the poet had killed. Against her will, Steingríðr is married to the scarred warrior Bersi. With the arrogance that always characterizes him, Kormákr insists on his first right to the girl and challenges Bersi to single combat, but after a slight wound has to admit defeat. Scornful verses, challenges, and single combats follow. Steingríðr leaves Bersi and later marries again, this time a peaceful man whom Kormákr deeply despairs and mocks.

Off on his Viking journeys, the poet dreams of his beloved and sings the praises of her beauty. What seems to be a promising meeting between the two occurs when Kormákr visits his country, but a night spent with Steingríðr ends in a frustrating anticlimax: the physical role of a lover seems to have been something denied to Kormákr.

One thing is certain: no Icelandic skald can compete with Kormákr as the master of love poetry, which is not, however, his only genre. Skuldatal informs us that Kormákr had sung the praises of both Earl Sigurðr in Hláðir and Haraldr gráafelds ("grey-cloak") Eiríkrsson. Only a part of the former's poem has survived; there are seven half-strophes from Sigurðardrápa, cited in Skaldskaparmál in Snorri's Edda, and one complete strophe in Heimsæktingla. An original artistic device of the poet is his way of replacing the dirpa's refrain (setr) by varying mythological allusions that do not seem to have any connection with the content of the rest of the poem. In Snorri's Hátatal, this variety of drottkvætt is called hjásteikt.

A much-discussed theory would have us believe that Kormáks saga is an entirely literary product, with prose and poetry as equally authentic literary components. The author, it is suggested, was a 13th-century writer who had been influenced by continental European troubadour poetry and the medieval love poetry of which Tristan is the hero (Bjarni Einarsson 1976). This theory has been contested on both linguistic and literary-historical grounds (Einar Öl. Sveinsson 1966–69, Anderson 1969, Hallberg 1975).

Kormáks saga ("The Saga of Kormákr"). The life and work of the 10th-century Icelandic poet Kormákr Qgmundarson are noted briefly both in the Skaldatal and in Snorri Sturluson's Prose Edda. Kormáks saga, probably written in the early 13th century, is a dramatic prose account of his life. The work is preserved in toto in the mid-14th-century MS Módruvallabók and in fragments in AM 162 fol. (ca. 1400). Like Bjarnar saga Hittakerokappa, Gunnlaugs saga, Hallfreðar saga, and Fóstbrœðra saga (all Islendingasögur constructed as skaldic biographies), Kormáks saga intersperses poetic samples in its prose account, including no fewer than sixty-four stanzas of dróttkvætt attributed to Kormákr himself. Most of these verses are presented as lausavísur improvised on specific, informal occasions; the saga neither cites nor quotes Kormákr's "official" production for his patrons, Sigurðr Háskarljar ("Earl of Hlaðir") Håkonarson or King Haraldr gráfeldr ("grey-cloak") Eiríksson (ca. 960–970). Indeed, the saga is in general little concerned with Kormákr's professional or political career or indeed his travels and adventures. Rather, its interest lies in his secular life, above all, his unhappy love for Steingrímr.

The saga proper begins when Kormákr falls in love with Steingrímr at his first glimpse of her feet, which show under a partition separating the two at their first meeting. She returns the feeling, but their marriage is thwarted when Kormákr, thanks to a curse laid on him by a woman whose sons he had slain, fails to appear at the wedding. Steingrímr then marries and eventually divorces Bersi, and soon after marries Porvaldr. Kormákr persists in his attentions, exchanging hostilities with her husbands, and visiting on Steingrímr both love poems and welcome and unwelcome displays of affection. The saga ends with fantastic adventures in which Kormákr saves Steingrímr from Vikings by jumping overboard with her and swimming to land. He dies at the hands of a Scottish giant, with Steingrímr's name on his lips.

Although the skáldasögur as a group show some interest in romantic matters, Kormáks saga alone is structured from first to last around its hero's obsessive quest for a woman. No matter where he is or where he goes, fighting the king's battles in Ireland, escaping a shipwreck, or grappling with a giant, Kormákr has only Steingrímr on his mind. "There is no danger so great for you," says his brother Porgils, "that you aren't always thinking of Steingrímr." The image of the "lovesick skáld" is so extraordinary in the context of saga literature that some scholars have doubted the authenticity of the poems, the saga, or both, suspecting instead medieval workmanship under the direct influence of southern models, specifically the Tristan legend (translated into Norse around 1226) and troubadour poetry. The suggestion requires us to imagine a forger accomplished in the composition of archaic poetic language, however, and the factual inconsistencies between the verse and prose further require us to suppose that the saga forger and the stanza forger were different people. Such difficulties as these, together with the existence of legal injunctions against the composition of love poetry (albeit less passionate in tone) in the North, lead other scholars to reject the "southern" hypothesis in favor of a more or less authentic native product.


Carol J. Clover

Krákumál means "lay of Krúka ('crow')," a nickname of Ragnarr lodbrókr's ('chairy-breeces') second wife, Æslaug. This anonymous heroic skaldic poem was composed in the 12th century as part of an antiquarian revival. It was frequently called "Deathsong of Ragnarr lodbrókr" and belongs to the genre of ævindiða ("poem of life"), represented by about five poems, all of them transmitted in connection with fornaldarsögur, in this case with Ragnars saga lodbrokar. The dying hero, Ragnarr, overwhelmed by his enemy, the English king Ælla, and thrown into a snake pit, reports that he fought fifty-one battles and now is waiting for the valkyries to take him to Óðinn's hall. He hopes that his sons will avenge him.

The poem consists of twenty-nine stanzas in the meter of dróttkvætt ("court poetry"), mostly in its less strict form of háttatúa, which means that the internal rhymes are neglected. Each stanza, excepting 23 and 29, has ten lines as against eight in the usual dróttkvætt stanza. The first line of each stanza is a stef, or refrain: Hjöggum ver með bjørvi ("We struck with a sword!"). After the description of battles in the first twenty-one stanzas, the latter part contains educational and mythological reflections. There are reasons to believe that the poem was composed in the Orkney Islands (de Vries 1967, Frank 1978).

Scholars disagree on the value of the poem. But even if it is not among the foremost examples of skaldic poetry, it definitely needs a new evaluation (Heinrichs 1978). The fact that it was highly admired during the 18th century and that it took some time before the worst errors of interpretation were rectified probably led to its neglect in later times.

In the course of the Scandinavian Renaissance, Ole Worm published the poem for the first time in 1636 (second edition, 1651), in an appendix to his Literatura Runicca, transcribed in runes of the younger futhark (runic alphabet) and accompanied by a Latin translation. In the 18th century, it was translated into several European languages: Dutch (Lambert ten Kate, 1723), Swedish
Kristni saga see Conversion

Króka-Refs saga ("The Saga of Refr the Wily") is a postclassical Islendingasaga written in the 14th century by an anonymous author who probably lived in western Iceland. The saga is found in its entirety in one 15th-century vellum MSS (AM 471 4to) and many paper MSS. Fragments of the saga are also found in two 15th-century vellum MSS, Stock. Perg. 4to no. 8, and AM 586 4to. Differences among the MSS are small, and the vellum MSS best preserve the original text. The oldest known MS of the saga, a section of the late 14th-century vellum MS Vatnshyrna, is no longer extant.

Refr Steinson, a kolbitr ("coal biter," i.e., layabout) in his youth, is an Icelander with the unfortunate habit of being slow to anger, but excessive in his vengeance. Although a remarkable craftsman, he spends most of his life fleeing one country after another in order to avoid counter-retribution for his justifiable acts of revenge. First, Refr flees Breiðafjörður because he slew his widowed mother’s importunate neighbor. Later, he has to leave the uncle who sheltered him because he kills an overbearing neighbor. Refr settles in Greenland, takes a wife, and raises a family. Eventually, he and his household flee to the wilderness to escape the counter-revenge for slaying a neighboring family that had slandered him. A Norwegian trader visiting Greenland is drawn into the case, and despite useful advice from King Haraldr Sigurdarson, Refr is only flushed from his fortress (possibly the first in medieval literature to be equipped with a sprinkler system), while the Norwegian is killed. Making their escape from the fortress to the sea by means of a boat with wheels, Refr and his household flee to Norway, visiting Trondheim in disguise, perhaps to plead their case before the king. However, he kills one of Haraldr's retainers who tries to seduce his wife. Refr goes to the king, announces in puns and riddling speech what has happened, and takes his family to Denmark. Haraldr unravels the puns and concludes that this must be the same Icelander who had caused so much trouble in Greenland. He outlaws Refr and sets the dead retainer’s brother after him. Refr gains the favor of the Danish king, Sweinn (Sven), by means of a gift of polar bears and gyrfalcons, and is able to trick his Norwegian pursuer into swearing to leave him in peace. Sweinn encourages him to keep the name that he adopted as his latest disguise, “Sigtryggr.” He eventually goes on a pilgrimage to Rome, falls sick, and is buried at a French monastery. One of his sons, who stays in Denmark, is the ancestor of Bishop Absalon.

As is common with postclassical Islendingasögur, Króka-Refs saga has very little connection with historical traditions. Some characters are mentioned in other sources, such as Landnámabók, Gísla saga, and Hávamál saga, but most are not. The saga’s chronology also seems to be taken from earlier Islendingasögur rather than from history. For example, although Hákon Ásleifssonstöri ("Ethelstan’s foster-son") and Haraldr Sigurðarson ruled ninety years apart, the occurrence of both names in Gísla saga may have given the author of Króka-Refs saga the impression that they ruled sequentially. However, archaeological excavations in Greenland have provided the saga with some historical corroboration: waterworks similar to those described in the saga have been unearthed in Narsaaq.

Króka-Refs saga has its place in the group of stories that describe a clever or lucky man, usually an Icelander, who benefits from the king of Denmark at the expense of the king of Norway by means of a well-placed gift of a valuable animal. This group of narratives includes Audunar jättr vestfyrkan and the so-called Gísla-Refs játtr of Gautreks saga. The presence of another Refr may indicate a more direct literary relationship between the two sagas, or it might simply be that Refr (i.e., “fox”) was considered an appropriate name for a cunning man. Despite his pilgrimage to Rome, Refr’s cleverness has neither the spiritual overtones of Audun’s “luck” and generosity, nor the folktales effect of Gísla-
Refr's. Yet Refr also stands in contrast to saga heroes like Grettir and Gisli, who are similarly known for their skill in word- and smithcraft. Although the injustice of Refr's situation could easily be turned into tragedy, he in fact overcomes his bad luck by means of his wits. In contrast to 13th-century depictions of fate as always ineluctable and usually tragic, the 14th-century Króka-Refs saga seems to imply that a man's fate is in his own hands, and that when those hands are as skilled as Refr Steinsson's, his story is sure to have a happy ending.


Elizabeth Ashman Rowe

[See also: Auðurarpatr vestfyrzka; Gautreks saga; Gísla saga Súrssonar; Hávarður saga Ísfróðings; Íslendingasögur; Landnámabók; Vatnshyma]
Land Registers. Medieval land registers (Danish jordebøger), i.e., accounts of the incomes enjoyed by individuals or institutions from landed property, are found from Norway, Denmark, and Sweden, but not from Iceland or Finland. In some cases, the original documents survive to the present day, while other registers survive only in postmedieval transcripts. The existence of additional land registers can be deduced from references to them in medieval or later sources, but nothing is known about the contents of these lost records.

In the medieval period, a great deal of landed property was held by ecclesiastical institutions, so that some of the most significant of the land registers contain information about the dues and services owed to churches and religious houses.

Among the most famous of the church registers from Norway are Bergens kalvskinn from about 1350, which describes the revenues of the diocese of Bergen, Aslak Bolts jordebok from the 1430s for the archdiocese of Nidaros (Trondheim), and Biskop Eysteins jordebok or The Red Book from about 1400, which records the revenues of the diocese of Oslo.

Similar land registers from Denmark are Roskildebispens jordebøg from the 1370s, Århusbøgen from 1313, Ribe Oldemor from the 13th and 14th centuries, and Slesvigbispens jordebøger from the 14th and 15th centuries. These registers contain descriptions of the revenues of the dioceses of Roskilde in Zealand and Århus, Ribe, and Schleswig in Jutland. Most of the landed property of the archdiocese of Lund in Scania is registered in Palteboken dating from the beginning of the 16th century.

Even more sparse than the Danish registers are the surviving medieval registers of the Swedish Church. Examples are Registrum ecclesie Lincopensis from the 14th and 15th centuries, and Registrum preditorum from 1376, covering the building fund of the diocese of Uppsala.

The second great ecclesiastical property-owning institution in the medieval period was religious houses, from whose archives several important medieval registers derive. A number of registers from the 15th century survive from Munkeliv cloister near Bergen in Norway. From North Zealand in Denmark, we have Estrum klostres jordebog (1497), while from Swedish houses are found registers from Vårfruberga from the middle of the 13th century, Sko cloister from the 14th and 15th, and Vadstena from the 15th.

The most important register of secular property in medieval Scandinavia is the 13th-century Danish Kong Valdemars jordebog, which survives in a transcript from about 1300. This work contains a number of lists, the most significant one dating from 1231, which record the revenues from crown lands (kongelev) and from the king’s private property (patrimonium). Registers of the property of noblemen, mostly dating from the late-medieval period, include from Norway Hartvig Krummediges jordebok (1456), and from Sweden Arvid Trolle’s and Karl Knutsson’s registers from the end of the 15th century and Sten Stures jordebok from 1515.

Since the practical reason for the keeping of land registers was to obtain a record of land property on which dues and services were owed, they naturally form an important source of information for the social historian. They provide a picture of the economic structure of an area and consequently of the allocation of power and influence there. The information they yield as to what was paid, by whom, and how much, as well as how the dues were paid and how the various properties were otherwise organized, turns them indirectly into very significant sources of information about cultural history. They contribute to architectural history by their descriptions of the buildings on estates (farms, houses, mills, churches); to agricultural and industrial history by their accounts of the exploitation of fields and meadows, the construction of bridges, landing places, saltworks, and fish weirs; to administrative history by their information about how the cultivation of the land was organized, how the dues were paid (to stewards or bailiffs), and how the services were distributed among the able-bodied members of the population; and to metrology (the science of weights and measures) and to numismatics (the study of coinage) by the registration of assessments. Land registers are important sources of information for name research because of the huge number of place-names and personal names they record.
Land Tenure and Inheritance. In the main part of Scandinavia (excluding some regions of southern Sweden and Denmark), natural conditions worked against the development of agriculture. Even now, the percentage of area under tillage is very modest in Scandinavia.

The productivity of soil was secured not so much by the regular rotation of crops, as by intensive manuring. The scanty possibilities for agriculture offer one explanation why the large-scale landownership that triumphed in medieval Europe was much more modest in Scandinavia.

Nowhere else in early-medieval Europe can we observe the archaic social structures of man's relation to the land in such high relief as in the Scandinavian countries. It is impossible to understand this relation if one applies to it the notion of "private property" (in "patrimonium" sense). The land tiller felt himself an integral part of nature, as well as of a human collective. The scanty possibilities for agriculture offer one explanation why the large-scale landownership that triumphed in medieval Europe was much more modest in Scandinavia.

The oldal right was one of the main qualities of a freeman. The social category of holdar, the peasants who enjoyed full rights, was that of oðalmenn, those who hereditarily possessed oldal land. The story told by some Icelandics sagas about "the confiscation of all Norwegian oldal" that King Haraldr hárfagr ("fair-haired") Hálfdanarson was supposed to have undertaken when he united Norway (Oldís saga helga, ch. 1; Heimskringla: Haralds saga hárfragr, ch. 6; Hákonar saga góða, ch. 1; Egils saga Skallav-Grimssonar, ch. 4) provoked a prolonged discussion among historians. It seems possible to interpret it as reminiscences about the king's encroachment upon old liberties and personal freedom of the population. This encroachment was thought of, in the period of composition of the sagas at the beginning of the 13th century, as the king's attempt to take away the oldal, though there was not, and could not be, any general confiscation of land possessions, and Haraldr took away estates only from some of his noble enemies.

Oldal and personal freedom were understood by saga tellers as equivalent.

The oldal belonged to the family was thought of as age-old, and in the Norwegian law of the 13th century we find the expression haugódal, the land that was possessed by the family from the times when there were burial mounds, i.e., from the heathen times. The proof of the oldal right consisted in the testimony that the land was possessed by family continuously during several generations (four or even six, according to Norwegian law). A noble was called oldalbordin maðr ("a man who was born with the oldal right").

The oldal was a very archaic institution common not only to Scandinavian peoples but also to the Germanic peoples in general (compare Gothic haim-oldal, Old English òðel, Old Frisian òðel, Old Saxon òðil, and Old High German òðol).

To acquire a new plot of land, it was necessary to sanctify it by means of special magic rituals. A torch was carried around its boundaries, or bonfires were built at certain points on them. The Icelandic term helga sér (landit) ("to acquire the land, to consecrate") retains the memory of this magic procedure. The ancient Scandinavians' ability to poeticize and mythologize property relations found its expression in the eddic lay Hjalduljóð.

Old Scandinavian law codes, especially detailed in Norway and Sweden (the so-called provincial laws), characterize oldal as an object of family possession. This group was not wholly isolated from the more extensive kindred circle. A hypothesis about the existence, in ancient Scandinavia, of a large family that included several generations of relatives who led joint husbandry seems to find some confirmation in the historical sources. The oldal right belonged mainly to the male kinsmen, although in certain cases (especially in the absence of the masculine offspring), the land could be inherited by females. The earlier forms of landownership are not fixed in the written records, but some traces of them are found by archaeologists. The remains of "ancient fields" (fornskrar, oldtidssagre) from the last centuries B.C. and the first centuries A.D. have been discovered in Jutland, Gotland, and in some regions of Sweden and Norway. There were allotments of family lands, separated by turf and stone boundaries. These landholdings belonged to the population of separate farmsteads and small villages.
that developed from them. Ancient Germans and Scandinavians seem to have lacked the communal property of arable land. Community, a collective regulating the village agriculture, developed during the Middle Ages (a rural form of settlement was spread mainly in Denmark). Meanwhile, pastures and forests were subjected to community rules, and separate farmers did not have exclusive rights on their plots of wood or meadow. The neighbors' collectives ruled the common meadows and forests (almenningar), as well as mountain pastures (sefr).

The specific forms of landed property corresponded to certain peculiarities of the development of large landownershio. One of its characteristics was the origin of the kings' and nobles' estates as a result of the transformation of the system of gifts and feasts. It was an ancient custom that the peasant population had to afford entertainment, to his retainer, and grant his right to receive veizla, entertainment, to his retainer, and 92 92 92 the chieftain and his bodyguard when they visited the countryside, and to arrange a feast for them. The king could end his days in the possession of his farms, which harmed the state.

The term veizla was applied not only to the feast, but to territory, or more exactly, to the complex of the peasants' farms from which provision was gathered by the veizlumadr or lendr madr, and which because of the king's be­stowal came under the control of this veizlumadr. The veizla was one of the sources of the development of noble landownship. Certain parallels to this phenomenon can be found elsewhere in Europe of the early Middle Ages, from Anglo-Saxon "bookland" to Old Russian kornalnie. Veizla was not equivalent to the western European fief, being rather its embryo.

Another feature of the large land-property development in Scandinavian countries was inner colonization, the clearing of new lands, on which petty holders were settled. They did not own their plots on the odal right and were only lease holders, leiglendingar in Norway, landbor in Sweden and Denmark. Leiglendingar differed radically from the land tenants in other countries of feudal Europe. They did not enjoy a competency, but, nevertheless, retained certain elements of personal freedom and were not attached to their lord or to his estate. Their landholding was leased only on a very limited term, from one to six or eight years, according to the country and the period under consideration. The landlord had a right to expel the tenant and to give his plot of land to another man. In fact, the landbor tilted his land over a long period of time, even hereditarily, on condition that he paid all his rents, mostly in kind. But the short term of lease made the leiglendingar's condition very precarious and unstable from a legal point of view, and the landlord had the option of raising the rent. The status of landholder had drawn nearer to the status of the personally dependent peasant only in Denmark, and the system of vormodsbak during the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries deprived Danish peasants of any civil rights. Attempts by the nobility to introduce the continental forms of landownership and exploitation in Norway and Sweden met with the peasants' stubborn resistance and were unsuccessful. The separate small husbandry remained dominant, and it was not accidental that in Norway it was not destroyed, but, on the contrary, strengthened. During the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries, the main part of Norwegian church lands, as well as lands of nobility, passed into the hands of wealthy peasants.


Aaron J. Gurevich

[See also: Agriculture; Cosmography; Family Structure; Hyndiusjóð; Land Registers; Landownship; Laws]

Landnámabók ("The Book of Settlements") is an account of the discovery and settlement of Iceland. It deals in continuous topographical order with roughly 430 settlers, their families, and their successors around the country. Landnámabók is preserved in five redactions, three medieval and two from the 17th century. (1) Sturlúsóki was composed by Sturla Pór Óláfsson (d. 1286), preserved in AM 107 fol., a copy from the 17th century of a later lostvellum MS. (2) Hauksbók is preserved, although only fourteen leaves, in a codex by the same name (AM 371 4to), written by Haukr Erlendsson (d. 1334) during the years 1306–1308. A copy from the 17th century (AM 105 fol.) was made while the MS lacked only two leaves. (3) Melabók was written in the beginning
of the 14th century. Only two leaves are preserved in a MS from around 1400 (AM 445b 4to); this MS was in a more complete condition used in Pórøarbók. (4) Skarðarárbók is a compilation of Sturlubók and Hauksbók, made from thevellums in the1630s by Björn Jónsson in Skarðá (d. 1655). The chief MS is AM 104 fol. (5) Pórøarbók is a compilation of a MS of Skarðarárbók and Melabók, made by the priest Pórøur Jónsson (d. 1670), preserved in AM 106 and 112 fol.

The relationship among the redactions was debated for a long time, and most thoroughly examined by Jón Jóhannesson (1941). According to an epilogue to Hauksbók, this redaction is compiled from Sturlubók and another redaction written by Strymir Kárason (d. 1245). According to Jón Jóhannesson (1941), this redaction, Strymisbók, which is now lost, was also the basis for Sturlubók and Melabók. This theory was disputed by Sveinbjörn Rafnsson (1974), but hardly refuted. It is certain that Melabók represents the oldest preserved redaction, unfortunately only in fragments. In Melabók, the list of settlement begins with the eastern boundary of the Southern Quarter and continues clockwise around the country, while Sturlubók and Hauksbók begin with the discovery of Iceland and the first settlement in the southwestern part and continue around the country so that the Southern Quarter becomes divided into two parts. This obviously first took place in Sturlubók. The oldest redaction of Landnámabók must go back to the beginning of the 12th century. The epilogue to Hauksbók says that Ari Porgilsson and Kolskegginnvitri ("the wise one") were the first to write about the settlement; and the text of Landnámabók states that Kolskegg has sagt fyrir ("dictated" or "written about") the settlement in the southern section of the Eastern part. According to genealogies, Kolskegg was an older contemporary of Ari. The original redaction was probably based on the information from several people acquainted with local conditions.

The preserved Landnámabók redactions are expanded in relation to the original; Melabók, however, least so. Sturlubók and Hauksbók adopted material from sagas, genealogies, and so on. It has been asserted that Landnámabók was originally written to ensure the proprietary right of certain chieftains to landownership (Sveinbjörn Rafnsson 1974), which would reduce the trustworthiness of Landnámabók's accounts. This view may be partly correct, but it does not exclude the possibility that certain traditions concerning the settlement existed, and that, by force of analogy, the accounts of the settlements should cover the whole country, especially in instances where the economic interests of certain families cannot be demonstrated.

In Landnámabók, over 3,500 personal names and almost 1,500 farm names are mentioned, which is an important source for onomastics. Moreover, Landnámabók contains many brief accounts, often extremely well told, most of which probably go back to the 13th century. Many sagas relied on Landnámabók as a source for genealogical and other biographical information.

Sturla Pétursson presumably imagined Sturlubók as an introduction to an account of the history of Iceland, continued with Kristni saga, Porgils saga ok Hafliða, Sturts saga, and his own Íslendinga saga.


Jakob Benediktsson

[See also: Conversion, Hauksbók; Iceland; Íslendingabók; Landownership; Sturlunga saga]

Landownership. Little is known about landownership, or about Scandinavian society as a whole, during the Viking Age. It is likely that the family group was the most important institution. Most families probably cultivated their own land, but certainly some families possessed much land, which must have been cultivated by thralls. Kings, "chieftains," and other men of wealth probably had many persons dependent upon them. If so, it would account for the great number of peasants later to be found as tenants, and would help to explain the enormous regional differences in the distribution of landed wealth in later centuries.

In the early Middle Ages, 11th-13th centuries, Scandinavia developed along European lines into a feudal society insofar as authority, royal and clerical, and differentiation between privileged and unprivileged estates were concerned. Landownership, however, did not become feudal in the strictest sense of the word, but was basically allodial. Much land in Denmark was made church property before 1200, no doubt nearly all of it as endowments from kings and lords. Their generosity reflects their great wealth. We have concrete evidence, however, only of a few royal estates and of the renowned Hvide family, especially Sune Ebbesen, whose wealth, as far as we know, was unsurpassed until the end of the Middle Ages.
The Church’s demand for land was a major factor in determining the rules of inheritance in the provincial laws (ca. 1200). Every son inherited from his father and from his mother one portion, every daughter half a portion, while the Church under a will could inherit up to half a portion. Marriage, death, and childbirth could change the size of a family’s property radically. At the same time, selling and pawning of land became common.

The time of the Valdemars (1157–1241) saw the formation of a class of men serving the king or the bishops. The military service of the peasants became obsolete and was converted into taxes. The new nobility was recruited from the old aristocracy as well as from ordinary freemen and thus became a very heterogeneous class. It was, however, united through its service and privileges, which by about 1300 exempted all its servants, whether demesne farmers and cottars, or freeholders, from royal taxation.

The growing demands of the Crown tempted the free peasants to seek protection under the privileged classes, although this protection meant that they lost their property and became tenants. We do not know how much land passed in this way into the hands of the privileged, especially the nobility, because we have no way of determining the importance of the landowning peasantry in the early Middle Ages. But we do know that after 1350 only around 15 percent of the peasant holdings were owned by peasants, i.e., the same percentage as in 1536.

Norway and Sweden developed similarly to Denmark, acquiring the same medieval institutions. As in Denmark, daughters inherited half in proportion to sons. It is, however, characteristic that this rule was introduced later than in Denmark. Sweden especially lagged behind, and slavery still existed around 1300. But thereafter development was rapid. In approximately 1350, the king made serious attempts to prevent the nobility from acquiring control of peasant property. The Norwegian Church became a rich institution, helped to a considerable degree by gifts or purchases from peasants, often in the form of partial holdings. The Crown succeeded in retaining the taxes from the nobility’s tenants; in a country with such small resources, it would otherwise have been impossible to maintain a medieval royal power.

The decline in population after 1349 hit landowners hard. It caused a drop in feudal rents due to desertion (especially in Norway) and peasants forcing down the rents. In Norway, many noblemen lost their status, and the royal power was consequently weakened, with the result that the Danish kings assumed power. In Denmark, the estates of the nobility were concentrated in fewer hands. At the same time, the practice of acquiring land from the free peasants was stopped by Valdemar IV and Margrethe, who took the free peasants under royal protection. Furthermore, they confiscated or bought noble estates, thus doubling crown land, which, since the 12th century, had been small. The king was now able to live off his own properties (which included the “Crown’s free peasants”), and was usually able to refrain from extraordinary taxation. As sovereign of Sweden, Margrethe pursued the same policy as in Denmark, securing the crown estates and forcing the nobility to return acquisitions of free peasant land.

Three features of Danish landownership in the late Middle Ages warrant attention. First, many noblemen did not derive their income solely from their own land. Petty noblemen served as bailiffs for the Church, the Crown, or better-off peers, and the stewards of the castles were often men of the highest aristocracy. If they were at the same time pledges (i.e., if the king had pawned the castle to them), they received the royal income in full. Second, the peasants’ dues to their lord consisted of two types, the land rent and a variety of small dues received by the lord in his capacity as lord protector. This difference is apparent with regard to village churches, where the church would often only get the land rent and a nobleman or bishop the lordly income. Third, the allodial peasantry, now “the Crown’s free peasants,” was a very restricted class. They could not alter the size of their holdings, and compulsory inheritance could force the heir to cultivate the land or find someone who would do so.

Scandinavian land distribution is well documented at the end of the Middle Ages. For Sweden, the figures are derived from the complete tax assessments of 1544. The Danish figures are estimated from information from institutional, personal, and regional sources:

Landowners ca. 1530 (percentage of peasant holdings in Sweden and Denmark, and of rent in Norway):

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Norway</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crown</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allodial peasants</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>35-40</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nobility</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>35-40</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The proportion between the owner categories, at least in Denmark, was nearly stable from 1412 until the Reformation, the slight instability being due to the Church’s continued acquisition of land. Note the small figures for free peasants in Denmark and nobility in Norway. The number of peasants’ holdings is a good yardstick in determining individual wealth, as the holdings after the population crisis tended to uniformity in size.

Within the owner categories, the differences were enormous. The bishop of Roskilde possessed 2,500–3,000 holdings, his cathedral more than 1,000, but the Odense bishop and cathedral held only 700. Sna monastery in Zealand had 600, Grinderslev in northern Jutland, 35. Many rural vicars possessed only the “glebe” land (i.e., the vicarage farm). Some noblemen possessed hardly any land, while others had 500–800 holdings. Mogens Gøye and his first wife had in 1532 as many as 1,600, 2 percent of the country. Geographically, Zealand was dominated by the Church, most of Jutland by the nobility, Djursland by the major nobility, and Salling by the minor nobility. In remote parts of the country, such as Bornholm and Blekinge, there were many free peasants. Undoubtedly, regional land distribution often had ancient roots.


Erik Ulsig

[See also: Land Tenure and Inheritance]
Language. At the beginning of the Viking Age, Scandinavian was spoken over an area roughly comprising present-day Denmark and southern and central Norway and Sweden (including Bornholm, Gotland, and Åland). During the Viking Age and the early Middle Ages, Scandinavian-speaking communities established themselves in Normandy, the British Isles, the Faroes, Iceland, Greenland, the Finnish and Estonian coastal regions, and parts of Russia. In some of these places, Scandinavian became the dominant language: Orkney and Shetland, the Faroes, Iceland, and, in the areas of Scandinavian settlement, Greenland. Except where it gained total dominance, it was only in Finland and Estonia that Scandinavian survived beyond the Middle Ages, and even in Orkney and Shetland and Greenland it succumbed, in competition with Lowland Scots in the first two (ca. 1650–1750), and as a result of the extinction of the Norse colony in the third (early 16th century).

Sources. No Viking Age or medieval Scandinavian texts have been preserved from Normandy, Finland, or Estonia, and the British Isles (Man, Orkney, and Shetland excepted) and Russia have little to show other than a few brief runic inscriptions. Evidence for Scandinavian-speaking communities in these areas therefore comes mainly from place-names, remnants of Scandinavian influence on the vernacular, archaeological discoveries, and historical documents. From Man, we have over thirty runic inscriptions, most of them dated to the Viking Age, a few to the 12th century. Orkney and Shetland provide us with about thirty-five runic inscriptions from the period 1000–1200, and thirteen documents from the period 1299–1509. Verse composed in Orkney, mostly in the 12th and early 13th centuries, has been preserved in later Icelandic MSS. Three runic inscriptions have been found in the Faroes, the earliest said to be from the 10th, the latest from the 13th century; from the 14th and 15th centuries, a small number of documents survive, some of which may and some of which do exhibit Faroese linguistic features. From Greenland, over seventy-five runic inscriptions are known, the bulk from around 1300 or a little later, but a few possibly from as early as 1000; the eddic poem Atlaamal is called "the Greenlandic" in the Icelandic MS in which it is preserved.

From Iceland and mainland Scandinavia, there is a wealth of sources. For the period before the earliest preserved vernacular MSS (Iceland and Norway ca. 1150, Denmark and Sweden ca. 1250–1275), we have to rely principally on runic inscriptions (altogether some 5,000 are known from the period 700–1500, about half of which predate 1150). Eddic and skaldic verse, personal and place-names in foreign sources or in Latin documents written in Scandinavia, and Scandinavian loanwords in foreign languages offer additional evidence.

All these sources have drawbacks. Only runic inscriptions and eddic and skaldic verse provide us with complete sentences and are free from the interference of other languages. The verse, although some of it is undoubtedly much older than 1150, is preserved in MSS of the 13th century or (much) later, the skaldic poetry in particular often in garbled form. There are also problems about the dating of many eddic poems (most of them, though, were composed not later than the 12th century), and doubts about the authenticity of some skaldic verse. The runic inscriptions of the Viking Age suffer from having been written in the sixteen-character younger fjaðrark; this system provides only the crudest guide to phonemic contrasts, and interpretation is often difficult. Iceland has no inscriptions demonstrably older than the oldest MSS.

It is not certain when the Latin alphabet was first used for writing Scandinavian, but there is some evidence that in Iceland and Norway this development must have taken place at least in the second half of the 11th century. A few extant MSS (containing texts of religious, historical, legal, or scientific character) are generally reckoned to be from the period 1150–1200; two of the longest and most important are the Icelandic and Norwegian homily books. Much information about 12th-century Icelandic phonology and orthography is to be found in the so-called First Grammatical Treatise, probably written about 1130–1140, but preserved in a MS of Snorri's Edda from around 1360. The oldest Swedish MSS are from the period 1250–1300 and consist entirely of provincial law texts; most Swedish MSS from the next half-century are also legal in character. The earliest Danish MSS follow a similar pattern: those from the period 1250–1300 contain texts of the provincial law of Scania; those from around 1300 and the following decades are predominantly law MSS, although leech books and religious and historical works also appear. Original diplomas are important linguistic sources since they normally give their date and place of issue, but only Norway shows any significant number before well into the 14th century. After 1200 (Iceland and Norway) and 1350 (Denmark and Sweden), we find great numbers of MSS containing texts on a wide variety of subjects, although from Norway there is little besides diplomas and copies of older MSS after around 1350. By the time of the Reformation, Norwegian had been almost completely ousted as a written language by Danish.

Status ca. 700. As far as we can tell, the basic structure of Scandinavian around the year 700 did not differ greatly from that of other contemporary Germanic languages. Stressed syllables could be short (VC), long (VC or VC), or overlong (VC), while unstressed syllables were almost universally short; Scandinavian had also developed the front rounded vowels [y] and [o] and the low front vowel [a] through a process of mutation. In morphology, it retained a four-case system in nouns (with the usual differences between stem classes), adjectives (both strong and weak declensions), and pronouns, and a full range of indicative and subjunctive personal endings in the verb. Syntactically, Scandinavian had almost certainly become an SVO (Subject-Verb-Object) language, but null-subjects occurred widely; the order “head + modifier” had begun to give way to the reverse, but this was just the beginning of a slow process, which in the Faroes, Iceland, and Norway is not even complete today (cf. Norwegian huset dennes ‘their house,’ Icelandic lægð husa þar ‘the beauty of nature’). Many characteristically Scandinavian features had developed by 700, although generally they can be observed only in much later sources. U-mutation, especially of [a] > [u], seems to have taken place over virtually the whole Scandinavian-speaking area, and, like the other mutations, to have been phonemicized by 700. But the runic and other sources bear few traces of this innovation, and by the time of the first MSS, it appears to have been largely reversed in Denmark and Sweden (Old Icelandic áll, Old Swedish all ‘all’ n. pl.). The -sk (-s) form of the verb and the suffixed definite article are thought to have developed during the syncope period (ca. A.D. 500–700), but the first examples do not appear before the 11th century.

Development. It is generally assumed that Scandinavian around 700–1050 was a relatively uniform and static language. The linguistic period is often referred to as “Common Scandinavian.” However, the appearance of uniformity may be illusory and depend on scarcity of data; the preserved material can hardly represent more than a tiny proportion of the total features, and as
soon as material becomes abundant in the 12th century and later, numerous linguistic differences appear among the various parts of Scandinavia. Nor was this a period without linguistic change: monophthongization of the falling diphthongs /ei/ /au/ /oy/ spread through Denmark and into many parts of Sweden, the clusters /hi/ /hu/ /hi/ were simplified to /i/ /u/ /u/ in the whole of mainland Scandinavia, the -sk form of the verb was simplified to -s in Denmark and Sweden, to mention just two phonological and one morphological change that we can follow in the sources. These changes themselves created dialectal variation since they did not spread over the whole Scandinavian area, but there must have also been numerous other isoglosses.

Scandinavian in the period around 1050–1300 is commonly divided into East Norse (EN) and West Norse (WN). EN is broadly the language of Denmark, Sweden, the colonies across the Baltic, and the Danelaw; WN is the language of Norway, Iceland, and the other Atlantic colonies. The division is based almost entirely on certain phonological and morphological criteria as they appear in MSS and to a lesser extent in runic and other sources. Monophthongization of /ei/ /au/ /oy/, lack of u-mutation, and the simplification of the verbal ending -sk > -s have been mentioned above. Other criteria are: EN /u/ vs. WN /u/ (bulp: bod 'message, command'); EN lack of front mutation in specific cases (present tense of strong verbs, EN kom(b)er: WN kemr 'comes,' past subjunctive of strong verbs, EN vâre: WN vær/ would be,' before the combinations /gu/ /ku/, EN takan: WN tekun 'taken,' where conditioned by original /u/, EN glar: WN gler 'glass'); additional occurrences of breaking in EN (EN jak: WN ek 'I'); additional types of breaking in EN (EN siuaga: WN synagua 'to sing'); EN nasal + /p/ /t/ /k/: WN /p/ /t/ /k/: (EN krumpin: WN kroppin 'crooked, bent,' EN branter: WN brutter 'steep,' EN ænka: WN ekki 'widow').

How far the EN versus WN division represents the real state of affairs at any period has increasingly been questioned. While Icelandic and most forms of Norwegian apparently remain very similar until the 13th century, many differences must have developed between Swedish and Danish by the same period. The earliest Danish MSS show that Jutlandic apocope and Zealandic reduction of unstressed vowels to /a/ had taken place, and that, doubtless in part as a consequence of this phonetic reduction, the inflectional system in these areas had been drastically simplified (resulting in a system not unlike that in modern Danish). It is also widely argued that stød, the glottal catch characteristic of most forms of modern Danish, had developed by the 12th century. The reduction of unstressed vowels and inflectional simplification are not features of the earliest Swedish MSS, and most scholars agree that the pitch-accent contrast (tones 1 and 2) characteristic of modern Norwegian and Swedish existed in those types of Scandinavian long before the Middle Ages.

Each isogloss naturally has its own extension, which can constantly change. Therefore, we find that broad dialectal divisions like EN and WN, irrespective of their overall aptness, tend to be misleading (see, for example, the "Checklist of Dialectal Criteria in Old Sc[andinavian] Manuscripts (1150–1350)" in Haugen 1976: 210–3, which shows some EN features in the WN area and vice versa), and that in time they shade into other distinctions. By the 13th century, it is probably more accurate to see Scandinavian in terms of central (most Swedish and many Norwegian) and peripheral (other) dialects; by the time of the Reformation, however, a division into mainland and insular Scandinavian seems more appropriate. During the Middle Ages, many forms of Swedish and Norwegian came to share such features as the vowel shift (which gives modern standard Norwegian and Swedish "a," "e," "u," "y" their characteristic pronunciations), vowel balance ("fa"/"fa": /f/ /h/), the development of reflexive consonants, affrication and spirantization of velar stops, and the loss of /-v/ in inflectional endings. Eventually, however, the spread of inflectional simplification northward from Denmark into most areas of Norway and Sweden, and the profound lexical, morphological, and even syntactic influence on the mainland Scandinavian dialects by Middle Low German meant that at the end of the Middle Ages the biggest gulf was between (most forms of) Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish on the one hand, and Faroese and Icelandic on the other (insofar as we know what late 15th-century Faroese was like). This difference arose not merely because Faroese and Icelandic retained the four-case system, personal inflection in verbs, null-subjects (disappearing or shortly to disappear from Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish), and so on, and were less affected by the flood of Middle Low German loanwords, but also because the Faroese and Icelandic phonological systems had developed in separate ways, the vowels in particular undergoing numerous changes of quality and much diphthongization.

A number of changes affected all or virtually all forms of Scandinavian. One of the most important was the lengthening of short stressed syllables, which seems to have begun in Denmark in the 12th century or earlier and to have reached Iceland by the time of the Reformation. As a result, all stressed syllables in modern Faroese and Icelandic, modern standard Norwegian and Swedish, and in the great majority of dialects are long (VC or VC; overlong syllables were shortened); in modern standard Danish, stressed monosyllables may still be short, cf. Danish /gær/, Norwegian, Swedish /fær/, Faroese /fæ:/ 'does.'

Attempts to reconstruct the history and form of the spoken dialects of Scandinavia in the period 700–1500 are based on written texts, and these sources give a very imperfect picture of the linguistic situation at any given time or place. Most MSS are copies (often copies of copies of copies), and the language in them is usually a mixture of the language of the original(s), the practices of the scriptorium in which the scribe had learned to write or in which he worked, or both, and the scribe's own dialect. In addition, as time went on, standards or norms developed in connection with secular or ecclesiastical centers. As the court and chancellery in Norway moved from Trondheim to Bergen and finally around 1300 to Oslo, we find a form of written language developing that ultimately contained elements from all three areas. In 15th-century Sweden, the Brigittine monastery of Vadstena developed distinctive habits of writing, often referred to as "Vadstena language." The syntax of much medieval literature is also patently dependent on Latin models. The distinction made between "learned" and "popular" style seems often far from clear, but it is unlikely that the most marked characteristics associated with the learned were ever a significant part of the spoken language anywhere in Scandinavia.

Outside Denmark, the Faroes, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden, we know little of linguistic developments in the Middle Ages. Gotlandic has runic texts going back to the 10th century and MS records as old as around 1350; from these sources we can see that Gotlandic was as different as Danish and Norwegian from other forms of Swedish, and was characterized both by archaic features (e.g., the retention of the falling diphthongs /au/ /au/ /oy/) and innovations (e.g., diphthongization /u/ > /au/; a general tendency to raise vowels, the verb forms /al, ulu for scal, scalu/ 'shall'). Orkney
and Shetland Norn seem to have shared a number of phonological developments with Faroese and Icelandic, especially the former (e.g., /r/and /l/ -> /ø/and /u/ -> /☆/and /ø/; the intercalation of /g/ (Faroese /gv/) after the reflexes of Old Norse /o:/ and /u:/, /0/ > /h/ sporadically in initial position). Greenlandic runic inscriptions exhibit a mixture of Icelandic and Norwegian features, which may have characterized an emergent Greenlandic form of Scandinavian (Ø/ > /a/ initially in some pronouns seems the only recorded Greenlandic innovation). The modern Swedish of Finland and Estonia shows some influence from Finnish and Estonian, especially on the phonological level, but it is uncertain how old this influence is. These dialects also possess a number of archaic features (e.g., retention of the old falling diphthongs, of the consonant clusters /ndm/mb/ld/, and, in some areas, of short stressed syllables). Scandinavian spoken on Man and in the Hebrides was possibly influenced by Gaelic before its demise sometime in the Middle Ages.

Lit:
The principal work is Einar Haugen, The Scandinavian Languages: An Introduction to Their History (London: Faber and Faber, 1976); it deals with the history of all the Scandinavian languages from their origins to the present day and includes a 28-page bibliography that goes up to about 1970. Included below are (a) bibliographical works, (b) the principal histories of individual Scandinavian languages (in some respects now out-of-date), and (c) a few important contributions in English that have appeared since 1970.


Michael P. Barnes

L’Anse aux Meadows, now a small fishing village on the northern tip of the Great Northern Peninsula in Newfoundland, was the site of the first Norse settlement in North America. The settlement was located on a shallow bay, now known as Espe Bay. It faces west across the Strait of Belle Isle to the Labrador coast, which is clearly visible in fair weather.

The Norse settlement was discovered in 1960 by the Norwegian explorer and writer Helge Ingstad, and excavated by his archaeologist wife, Anne Stine Ingstad, 1960–1968. Additional excavations were conducted 1973–1976 by the Canadian Parks Service. The site is now a national historic park. It was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1978, the first site to obtain this distinction.

The Norse settlement, which took place around the year 1000, comprised three building complexes located close together by a brook on a narrow terrace encircling a sedge peat bog 100 m. inland from the shore. Each complex consisted of a large hall flanked by a small hut. The southernmost complex also contained a small house. Each complex had been the site of a specialized activity: one hall contained a smithy for the forging of boat nails; another hall had a carpentry shop, where replacements were made for damaged wooden boat parts; and in the third complex, boats were repaired with the new parts produced in the other two compounds. Away from the dwellings and closer to the shore was an open-ended hut with a bloomery furnace of stone and clay for the smelting of iron. A kiln for the making of charcoal to fuel the furnace lay nearby. This is the first evidence of iron manufacture in North America. The iron was made from local bog iron ore. The production was small, sufficient only for making about 100 boat nails.

The large halls were built in a specifically Icelandic architectural style characteristic of the Commonwealth Period, the same style as introduced into Greenland by the first Icelandic settlers there. The chief construction material was sod over a massive frame of wood. Each hall contained living quarters for about thirty people, as well as large storage rooms. The small huts were "pit buildings" partially set into the ground. They were used as workshops and possibly living quarters for slaves.

The settlement was not a normal colonizing venture but a base for exploration and exploitation of Vinland's resources farther south. As all exploration was coastal, the coast of the Gulf of St. Lawrence would probably have been the chief goal. From northern Newfoundland, one can circumnavigate this large inland sea, beginning and ending at L'Anse aux Meadows. The importance of the passage through the Strait of Belle Isle to the Norse settlement is made evident by the very location of the settlement on the outer coast facing the strait, rather than on one of the sheltered harbors nearby. That the Norse occupants of L'Anse aux Meadows did in fact venture farther south is demonstrated by the presence in the
Norse deposits of butternuts, *Juglans cinerea*, a North American walnut found in the St. Lawrence valley and along the Miramichi River in New Brunswick. The distribution of this nut coincides with that of wild grapes. The two fruits ripen at the same time, so that the Norse who picked the butternuts are likely to have observed and perhaps harvested wild grapes as well.

Although not Vinland *per se*, L’Anse aux Meadows would have a place in Vinland, guarding the northern entrance to this vast and rich region where hardwoods may have been the major attraction. The rigid organization of the site implies that it was a carefully planned and strictly controlled venture, authorized and executed by the leader of the Greenland colony, Leif Eiriksson and his family. Whoever controlled and owned L’Anse aux Meadows controlled the resources of Vinland.

The L’Anse aux Meadows settlement lasted only a few years. Its great distance from Greenland was probably the chief factor in its abandonment. This distance was almost as great as that to Europe, and Europe had so much more to offer in the way of metals, luxury goods, family, and friends, as well as the necessary ties with the Church.


**Birgitta Linderoth Wallace**

[See also: America, Norse in; Greenland, Norse in; Vinland Map; Vinland Sagas]

**Lapland.** The geographical term "Lapland" has been used in two senses, a broader one, denoting the area of northern Scandinavia with adjacent territories of Finland plus the Kola Peninsula (sometimes called Russian Lapland), and a more restricted one, meaning the Swedish-Finnish Province of Lapland. In its broader sense, Lapland corresponds fairly well to the Old Norse term "Finmark," the name that appears in western Scandinavian sources.

The name "Lapland," prevailing in eastern Scandinavian sources, has a relatively recent origin. It occurred for the first time in Saxo Grammaticus's *Gesta Danorum* (ca. 1200) in the form of *utraque Lappia*, i.e., western and eastern Lapland (*Lappia* is the Latin equivalent of *Lapland*). The origin of the word *Lapp* is uncertain. According to one etymology it is of Finnish, according to another of Swedish origin. The word was probably taken into use to avoid confusion between the two earlier meanings of Finn: (1) a Saami (*Lapp*) and (2) a Suomalainen (an inhabitant of Finland). In Swedish, *finne* was used in the latter sense. In Old Norse, and still in Norwegian, there is confusion as to the meaning of the word *finn* (*i.e.*, a Saami, a Finn, or an inhabitant of Finland).

In the Middle Ages, the district of Lapland was sparsely populated. The inhabitants were Saamis who lived by hunting, fishing, and reindeer breeding. Before the Peace of Nöteborg between Sweden-Finland and Novgorod (1323), there was a rivalry among three powers over the sovereignty of these vast districts of the North, *i.e.*, between Norway, Sweden-Finland, and Karelia (northwestern Russia and adjoining border country of Finland). The interests of the Karelians were taken over by Novgorod, which in the war preceding the Peace of Nöteborg more or less fully subdued their Karelian allies. It is very difficult to state the precise border established in the Peace of Nöteborg. The extant copies of the documents of the treaty are rather late, and have, in all probability, been falsified in details. There has not been full agreement among historians whether the border went from the Gulf of Finland to the Arctic Ocean or to the Gulf of Bothnia. It is, however, a fairly common opinion nowadays that the border went from the Gulf of Finland via the Karelian Isthmus to the Gulf of Bothnia, and terminated somewhere to the south of Oulu (Uleåborg). As the circumstances were not clear, the Swedish Crown tried to push its domains northward into the Karelian zone of interest. In the long run, the Novgorod-Karelians could not maintain their claims in the neighborhood of the Gulf of Bothnia. In the eastern parts of Finnish Lapland, representatives of both the Swedish Crown and the Karelians levied taxes. In other parts, both the Danish-Norwegian and Swedish-Finnish Crown forced the Saamis to pay taxes. In some districts in eastern Finland, the Saamis paid taxes to three nations: Denmark-Norway, Sweden-Finland, and Novgorod (Moscow).

The taxation of the Saamis of Sweden-Finland was given to a certain group of people called *birkarlar*, who collected the taxes for the Swedish king, not without some profit to themselves. According to an old but unsure tradition, this privilege was given to the *birkarlar* by the Swedish king Magnus Birgersson (r. 1275–1290).

For the purpose of taxation, Swedish-Finnish Lapland was divided into minor districts called *Lapmarks*. These districts were named after the great rivers of Lapland: Ume, Lule, Torne, and Kemi Lapmark. The taxation of Ume Lapmark, the southernmost of them all, did not belong to the *birkarlar*, but stood directly under the Crown. Therefore, the Saamis of this Lapmark were called "the King’s Lapps."

The coastal areas around the Gulf of Bothnia are not looked upon as belonging to the historical province of Lapland. Here, we find in olden times another historical province called Bothnia, divided into two parts, West Bothnia (Västerbotten), and East Bothnia (Österbotten). These historical provinces (landskap) had a rather unofficial character. They are not now and were not then administrative provinces or counties (län). (Västerbottens län is something different from the historical province mentioned here, *i.e.*, *landskapet Västerbotten*.)

From prehistoric times, there was a border, archaeologically substantiated, between the historical province of Jämtland to the south and Lapland to the north through the valley of Ströms Vattudal (roughly in latitude 64° north). The present-day border is a little farther to the north.

The more precise borders of the historical province of Swedish-Finnish Lapland are of late origin. The border with Norway was defined only in 1751, and the demarcation between the historical provinces of Lapland and Västerbotten was established in the same
year. The latter border is called lappmarksgrensan (the Lapmark boundary), and runs parallel to the coastline, roughly 100 km inland. It was intended as a demarcation line between the coastland farmers and the Saamis, and followed an old traditional boundary.

The ultimate division into Swedish and Finnish Lapland dates from 1809, and the present border between Finnish and Russian Lapland dates from after World War II.


Trygge Sköld

[See also: Finland]

Latin Language and Literature. The Latin language came to Scandinavia with the Christian missionaries (9th and following centuries), and the Church and its institutions remained the center of Latin culture until the Reformation. Latin also played an important role in secular administration and as the language of learning, but here regional differences were important. In Iceland and Norway, the position of the vernacular was much stronger than in other countries.

The Latin written and spoken in Scandinavia shares all the characteristics of medieval Latin in general with regard to pronunciation, spelling, morphology, syntax, vocabulary, and stylistic differentiation. Legal Latin, however, developed some neologisms particular to Scandinavia and its various regional laws.

The style of medieval Latin texts varies with their purpose or genre and with the contemporary or classical models chosen by the author. The language of most charters, annals, and scholastic texts is straightforward and its vocabulary formulaic, while some 12th-century historical works are stylistically ambitious, such as Sven Aggesen's Brevis historia, Saxo Grammaticus's Gesta Danorum, and the anonymous Historia Norwegiae et De professione Danorum. The use of prose rhythm (cursus) and of rhymed prose was introduced in the second half of the 12th century, but we do not yet know precisely how widespread they were.

Latin verse was written regularly from the beginning of the 12th century. A wealth of rhetorical and rhymed meters were used along with quantitative meters, with or without rhyme. Ecclesiastical poetry is mainly rhymed and rhymed. The poems of Saxo's Gesta Danorum are a virtuoso display of twenty-four different unrhymed classical quantitative meters, while the 14th-century poet Jacobus Nicholai de Dacia varied the rhymed dactylic hexameters and distichs in almost as many ways in his Liber de distincione metrorum; 14th-century Icelandic poets experimented with Latin verse written according to Old Norse metrics (Finnur Jónsson 1884-91, Kálund 1917-18). There are a number of texts in prosimetrum (a mixture of verse and prose), for example, Ælnoth, Saxo, and Pauper Olavus (Shetland, 15th century).

The ecclesiastical texts were of mixed origin. Besides imported liturgical texts, a whole literature soon grew up around local saints, to be used in the liturgy and for edification. Lives and passions of the saints Knud (Cnut) the king (Denmark, the first written ca. 1100), Olaf (Norway, 12th century), Porlakr (Iceland, early 13th), Botvid and Erik (Sweden, 12th and 13th), and Henrik (Finland, late 13th) were among the first texts written in Latin in each country. A number of complete saints' offices with prose readings and hymns have been transmitted, such as those for St. Knud (Cnut) Lavard (Denmark, 1170) and St. Birgitta (Önnerfors 1966). The first original Scandinavian contribution to ecclesiastical literature is St. Birgitta's Reuelaciones. Jacobus Nicholai de Dacia's rhythmic Mary poem (ca. 1350; ed. Lehmann, pp. 394-412) is unusually long.

In Denmark and Sweden, charters and official documents were originally written in Latin, in the other countries normally in the vernacular, except for international correspondence. The first transmitted Swedish charters written in the vernacular date from the 1280s, the first Danish one from 1371. A number of private Latin letter collections are extant, such as those by Abbot Wilhelm of Æbelholt (d. 1203, Denmark) and the Swede Petrus de Dacia (d. 1289).

Historical texts in Denmark were often written in Latin, in the other countries less frequently so. The lives of the king-saints form a transition to secular Latin historiography, which flourished in the 12th century in Denmark and Norway. A shortened and "medievalized" version of Saxo was composed in the early 14th century, and this Compendium Saxonis soon became more popular than the rather difficult original. The first Icelandic historical, Ósmund fröði ("the learned"; d. 1133), wrote a now-lost Latin history of the Norwegian kings. The main work in Latin by a Swedish historian is Ericus Olai's Chronicron regni Gothorum (ca. 1470).

Law texts were sometimes translated into Latin, and although having no legal status, the translations served to clarify the vernacular text: Anders Sunesen wrote a paraphrase of the Scanian Lex, a 14th-century Latin translation of the Jutish Law was commented upon in Latin by Bishop Knud Mikkelsen of Viborg around 1465, and King Magnus Eriksson's Swedish Law was translated around 1500 by Archdeacon Ragnvald Ingemundsson of Uppsala.

Scandinavians made a significant contribution to 13th- and 14th-century scholastic literature, which had Paris as its most important center. Anders Sunesen's didactic poem Hexaemeron (ca. 1200) is an early example of theological scholasticism, and Magister Mathias (14th century, St. Birgitta's confessor) wrote a rhetorical handbook and a Poetria using Aristotle's works in Latin translations. But the larger part of this literature is about speculative grammar, mathematics, and astronomy.

Secular Latin poetry has not been transmitted in large quantities. Saxo's paraphrases of vernacular poetry in the Gesta Danorum (ca. 1200), inspired by Vergil, Horace, and other classical authors, are an early, sophisticated example, and Jacobus Nicholai de Dacia's poems in the Liber de distincione metrorum,
LAURENTIUS SAGA BISKUPS

written around 1360 and thematically inspired by the initial onslaught of the Black Death (1349–1350), is the only known collection of poems. Many verse epistles and other inscriptions are preserved, written on stone or transmitted in MSS, as well as a small number of secular songs occasioned by various political disasters (Denmark and Sweden, 13th–16th centuries). The proverbs of Peder Løle exist in a double version, of which the Latin version has a metrical form.


Laurentius saga biskups ("The Saga of Bishop Laurentius") is the youngest of the original Icelandic Biskupa sögur written in the Middle Ages. It records the life of Laurentius Kálfsson, born in 1267 and bishop of Hólar from 1324 until his death in 1331. The saga tells of his youth and education in both Hólar and Niðaróss (Trondheim), and of the quarrels he had with his superiors after he became a priest in Iceland and in Norway. He seems to have been more honest than the bishop of Hólar and the canons of Niðaróss considered desirable. As bishop, he proved to be very strict, making no distinctions because of an individual's status. He did seem to have a sense of humor, however, because his lively stories about comical characters, along with practical jokes and plays on words, are found woven into the saga.

The author of the saga is almost certainly Einarr Halfészon (1307–1393), who was Laurentius's student and later assistant after Laurentius became a bishop. Einarr became a priest in 1332 and was often administrator of the Hólar episcopal seat. He went to the pope's court in Avignon in 1345–1346, traveled in France, and stayed for a while in Paris. He is thought to have translated the legend Alþurðr & Finnrnokk ("An Event in Finnmark") from Latin in 1381. Einarr wrote the so-called Logmanumadl up until 1362, the MS of which is preserved in his own hand. A number of phrases in Laurentius saga and the annal are almost identical. The saga seems to have been written after 1346, to judge by its reports of Árni, archbishop of Niðaróss from 1346 to 1349. Generally, the saga seems historically authentic, but is, of course, somewhat biased in favor of the main character.

The saga is preserved almost complete in two vellum MSS, AM 406a 1 4to (A) from the first half of the 16th century and AM 180b fol. (B) from around 1500. They are both connected with Skagafjörður in the northern part of Iceland, but are independent of each other. In the first quarter of the saga, their texts are very similar, but after that, B is considerably more sparing of words. In both of these MSS, there are some small lacunae, one of which is common to both. This missing chapter can be supplied from the paper MS AM 404 4to (P), which was copied for Bishop Porlákr Skolason of Hólar around 1640 from MS B, while the now-missing leaves were still in the MS. The copyist of P drew upon A to fill lacunae in B. The end of the saga is missing in all the MSS, but cannot have amounted to more than a few lines, since the main character at this point is on his deathbed.

In addition to the three main MSS, two vellum leaves survive from the 16th century, which seem to be copied from B, and nineteen paper MSS from the 17th and 18th centuries, derived from A, B, or P, and thus of no independent value.
Lausavísur ("loose verses"), i.e., single-stanza poems, occur intermittently in many medieval Norwegian and Icelandic prose works. The single-stanza norm is not absolute; still shorter units, termed kvöldingar, occur. In addition, one character may speak a ("loose verses"), i.e., single-stanza poems, occurring within the limits of the saga's prose.

The treatment of lausavísur in the Islendingasögur and konungasögur seems unhistorical in some respects. Some purported lausavísur are actually excerpts from extended poems. Sometimes, lausavísur are paraphrased inaccurately in the prose or linked with more than one context or author. Such features as metaphors, kennings, the present tense, apostrophes, and repetitions may be interpreted in an overfamiliar fashion. But in criticizing the saga testimony, we have to reckon with the relative unconcern for organic unity in the medieval aesthetic and with the uncertainties of oral and scribal tradition, which may have distorted the prose author's intention. Linguistic and metrical criteria may point to a different dating from that implied in the saga, but are of limited value because deliberate archaizing or partial modernization may have occurred. A work like Egils saga seems to contain different strata of lausavísur, ranging in age from the hero's own time to the writing down of the saga in the 13th century. Possible strata include: (1) by the person and in the situation identified in the saga, (2) retrospectively on the part of the saga character, remembering the situation, (3) on the part of a near-contemporary of the saga character, composing either lausavísur or an extended poem that was subsequently broken up to provide lausavísur, (4) on the part of a 12th-century skald, composing in order to embellish an early (perhaps oral) version of the saga, (5) on the part of the author of a version of the saga prose (either oral or written), or (6) on the part of a later redactor or interpolator, reworking a written version of the saga (as in Ínafs saga).


Arni Björnsson

[See also: Biskupa sögur]

Lausavísur ("loose verses"), i.e., single-stanza poems, occur intermittently in many medieval Norwegian and Icelandic prose works. The single-stanza norm is not absolute; still shorter units, termed kvöldingar, occur. In addition, one character may speak a series of lausavísur, different characters may exchange them, in a type of repartee, or the saga may present them as "work in progress" (to be subsequently gathered into an extended poem). Lausavísur are presented as if spoken in an immediate reaction to the speaker's situation, even one so extreme as impending death. Some of the situations described are highly specific, for instance, a pilgrimage situation, even one so extreme as impending death. Some of the lausavísur (to be subsequently gathered into an extended poem).

Sometimes, the verse form or arrangement of clauses has a simplicity that suggests extemporaneous composition, but simple verses have not been plentifully preserved, perhaps because they were not highly valued. By far the commonest verse form in lausavísur is the very complex dróttkvætt. Indeed, many of the extant lausavísur are in every way highly finished miniature poems, vivid in their kennings and metaphors and encompassing the same range of topics as the extended poem: love, revenge, battle, elegy, praise, ritual insult, travel, dreams, religious beliefs, and prophecy; Egils saga exemplifies most genres.

Virtually all lausavísur, of which hundreds survive, are preserved in connection with saga texts, in a type of prosimmetron whose origin is uncertain. Some are incidental to the saga plot, but others have a material effect on it. In a few cases, such as Kormáks saga, they form the backbone of the saga. Some verses corroborate historical statements in the prose. They often complement the largely external viewpoint of the prose narrative by suggesting emotion and psychological depth; notable here are the elegies and laments about old age or sickness attributed to Egill, the love verses attributed to Kormákr, the dream verses attributed to Gissli, and the inventive traded between rival factions during the Conversion period. Verses also complement the prose at a stylistic level, with their deviant lexis and syntax. Their presence often retards the pace of narration, creating suspense and marking climaxes. Their lexical richness adds a certain grandiloquence, evocative of the heroic age. Partial paraphrase in the prose probably helped to ensure intelligibility.

Although most lausavísur are attributed to professional skalds, ascriptions extend right through society, to include marginalized groups and even the dead. Extempore verse making is well attested in postmedieval Iceland, but how far it was a genuine part of Viking and medieval Icelandic culture is a largely insoluble problem. References to lausavísur outside the sagas (Grágás and Snorra Edda) are scanty, although supplemented by fuller and more convincing testimony in the samtíðarsögur ("contemporary sagas").

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(c) Discussions of the prosimetrum form


Russell Poole

[See also: Heit, Anna, Kvenning, Skald, Skaldic Meters, Skaldic Verse]
ordeal by fire, which was prohibited by the Church in 1215, so
that it must have been abolished soon after that by royal edict,
which we know of in undated form. Archbishop Anders Sunesen's
Latin paraphrase, an explication and interpretation of the Law of
Scania, closely resembles the 241 chapters of the Law of Scania. It
must have been abolished soon after that by royal edict,
was possibly meant for the internal use of the Church: in several
ordeal by fire, which was prohibited by the Church in 1215, so
in several rules concerning ordeal by fire. By contrast, there is only
that it must have been abolished soon after that by royal edict,
that it must have been abolished soon after that by royal edict,
that it must have been abolished soon after that by royal edict,
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Quarter Courts, as related in *Islandendingabók* (ch. 5). A well-known piece of legislation is the acceptance of Christianity in the year 1000, when the law required that all men should become Christians and be baptized (cf. *Islandendingabók*, ch. 7). Ch. 8 relates that during Skapti Þoroddsson’s time as lawspeaker (1004–1030), dueling was abolished and the Fifth Court established. Legislation was a difficult process that required the agreement of chieftains, prominent members of the Law Council, and their followers who shared the Quarters’ seats.

The law was introduced in 1096 by Bishop Gizurr Isleifsson, who also had laws made to establish the sees at Skálholt in 1012 and at Hólar in 1016. A new law requiring that the laws be written down in a book was passed at the General Assembly of 1117. This task was to be carried out by Hallóðr Másson, the lawspeaker Bergþórr Hrafnsson, and other wise men. According to *Islandendingabók* (ch. 10), they were to introduce such new laws as seemed better to them than the old ones. They were to announce them during the next session and retain all those that were not opposed. The homicide section and much else were written and read to the Law Council, and everyone was pleased with it, and nobody spoke against it. Hallóðskr, however, as this code was called, is also lost, but we have reason to assume that much of it is preserved in *Grágás*, whose oldest fragment, AM 315d fol., is only about thirty years younger.

The preserved laws of the Icelandic Commonwealth are generally known as *Grágás* ("grey goose"). *Grágás* is not a unified corpus of law, but refers to some 130 codices, fragments, and copies incorporating the tithe law of 1096 and the old Christian law (*Kristinn réttir forn*), originally drawn up by Bishop Porlák Þorlaksson (1118–1133) under the guidance of Archbishop Asa of Lund, according to *Hringvaka* (ch. 11).

After the Icelanders’ submission to the Norwegian king in 1262–1264, *Grágás* was soon superseded by the unpopular *Járnsfóla* (1271–1281), which is preserved in a single 13th-century MS, AM 334 fol., and a few copies, and eventually replaced by the long-enduring *Jónsásk*, which received several amendments and has come down to us in more than 260 MSS. Both these law codes did not immediately replace the old Christian law section *Kristinn laga játtr* of *Grágás*. Bishop Órn Þorlaksson issued his new church law (*Kristinn réttir nyb*) in 1275 and had it accepted by the General Assembly for the diocese of Skálholt, whereas in the diocese of Hólar the old Christian law remained in force until 1354.

3. NORWAY. The oldest legislation known in Norway can be traced to the assemblies (*lagting*) of each law province. In the 11th century, Norway had four law provinces, known by their assembly names: "Gulafþing," established around 950, covering western Norway; "Frostujþing," established around 950, covering Trondelag; "Eidkjþing," established around 1020, covering the inland area of eastern Norway; and "Borgarþing," established somewhat later, covering the Oslofjord regions.

At the assemblies, the laws were probably recited by "law speakers" or "lawmen" (*lagmann*). The laws were at first transmitted orally but began to be recorded in the latter part of the 11th century. We now have only the Gulafþing and the Frostujþing laws in complete form. Only one complete medieval MS is preserved containing the Gulafþing laws, *Codex Rantzovianus* (E donatione variornum no. 137 4to), written 1250–1300 in a West Norwegian dialect. Additionally, twelve fragments dating from the 13th century are preserved. One contains a part of the laws for eastern Norway.

The provincial laws contain regulations based partly on custom, partly on decision, made at the provincial assemblies. The contents of these laws are mostly the same as in the *Landslog* (see below).

Tradition says that the old laws were revised by St. Ólavr (r. 1015–1028). In the preserved Gulafþing laws, scholars distinguish an "Ólafr-text" from a "Magnús-text" (Magnús Erlingsson, r. 1161–1184). In the Frostujþing laws, there is an older version called *Grágás* ("grey goose"). (The name "Grágás" appears in a medieval source and is used of a collection of Norwegian laws; it later came to be applied to Icelandic texts.)

The first section of each of the old provincial laws concerns matters of Christian observance. Such regulations were included among the laws in the course of the 11th century; there are some references in the Gulafþing laws to provisions agreed between St. Ólavr and his attendant bishop Grimkell. The earliest Christian laws bear some resemblance to Anglo-Saxon church legislation.

In the early trading centers, separate laws were developed. They go by the name of "Bjarkey laws" ("Bjarkeþingarreitir"). These laws became a municipal code, which was first recorded toward the end of the 12th century. Only two medieval fragments of the Niðaróss (Trondheim) version of these laws have survived, the oldest dating from around 1250.

A Norwegian metropolitan see was established at Niðaróss in 1152/3. At that time, ecclesiastical statutes with national validity were promulgated. The second archbishop of Niðaróss, Eysteinn Erlandsson (1161–1188), took the initiative in securing a revision of the Christian laws of the old law provinces; the outcome was a volume called *Gulfljóðr* ("gold-feather").

In King Magnús Erlingsson’s reign, an extensive revision of legislation was undertaken, and the influence of the provincial assemblies reduced. King Hákon Hákonarson (r. 1217–1263) began to revise the Frostujþing laws, but it fell to one of his sons, Magnús (r. 1263–1284), to complete his work.

The development of legislation on a national scale went hand in hand with the general political evolution in Norway. King Haraldr hárfagr ("fair-hair") conquered western Norway at the end of the 9th century. In the following century or so, coastal Norway remained a more or less united kingdom under Haraldr’s descendants, but definitive control over the rich inland regions of eastern Norway and Trondelag was not achieved until after the death of St. Ólavr at Stiklestad in 1030, when the monarchy was strengthened by the power of the Church. A period of comparatively peaceful development was then interrupted by intermittent wars of suc-
cessation, especially in the century from about 1130 onward. And when these wars finally came to an end in 1240, the national
monarchy, personified in Hákon Håkonarson, emerged as the
sovereign power. The unification of the realm was completed and
the ground prepared for the creation of a national legal code.

Initially, King Magnús got his counselors to revise the Gulaþing
laws (1267) and those of the East Norwegian provinces (1268).
Only the Christian law sections of these revisions survive. In June
1269, King Magnús and Archbishop Jón (1268–1282) met at the
Frostþing. The Icelandic annals report: "Then King Magnús got
the agreement of all the men of Frostþing that he should com­
pose the Frostþing book in everything pertaining to secular af­
fairs and the monarchy as he thought best" (Storm 1888: 138).
The king was thus not authorized to revise the Christian law section.

Soon afterward, work was begun on a code for the whole of
the country (Landsløg). Decisions promulgated by national as­
semblies held in 1271 and 1273 were included in the new code,
which was completed in time to be adopted by the Gulaþing in 1274
and by the Frostþing probably in the following year. It was ac­
cepted by the Eiðsløfæþing and the Borgarþing in 1276. Although
a common secular code had now been created, it actually existed
in four separate versions, one for each of the old law provinces.
But the differences between them were only minor and have to do
mainly with the name and organization of the assembly. In later
copies of the code, this ground was covered in general terms.

King Magnús’s Landsløg starts with a prologue and is then
divided into the following sections: þingfararþolk (on the orga­
nization of assemblies), kristinsðonsþolk (the Christian law
section), landvarþolk (on the defense of the realm), mannhel­
garþolk (on personal rights), erðatal (on inheritance), landabri­
gið (on tenancies), kaupabþolk (on contracts), þjólasþolk
(on theft), and a last section containing statutes. The contents of the
Landsløg go back mainly to the older laws of the Gaulþing and Frostþing. The East Norwegian laws are lost, but they probably supplied a certain amount of material to the
Landsløg, especially in the section on land tenancies. A couple
of instances in the sections on personal rights and inheritance
show traces of borrowing or influence from Icelandic laws. Influence
from canon law is discernible in the sections on personal rights
and theft. A principle of subjective guilt is sometimes applied, and
in general the attitude is more humane than in the older provincial
codes. In this attitude, the influence of Roman law is also detectable.
By reforming the law on rights of preemption and redemption of
family land, and by restricting freedom of donation, King Magnús
sought to limit a growing concentration of landownership in the
Church’s hands. Several matters not previously regarded as the
province of the Crown are brought under state control.

King Magnús’s zeal in his work on the Landsløg earned him
the nickname Law-mender (lagabætir). But he must have been
assisted by men learned in law. We learn from the prologue and
confirmation that the king compiled the Landsløg “with the advice
of the best men.” These “best men” must have belonged among the
king’s counselors. We have a few clues to their identity. It has been
suggested that Audunn Hugleiksson (baron from 1277, d. 1302)
and the chancellor Pórir Håkonarson were the chief men behind
the revision of the laws.

Thirty-nine fairly complete medieval MSS of the Landsløg
exist. Two date from the end of the 13th century and three from
after 1350; the others date from the first half of the 14th century.
Thirty-one fragments of Landsløg MSS are also preserved. Six of
them probably date from the end of the 13th century, one is from
the latter part of the 14th century, and the rest from around 1300–
1350. The majority of the more or less complete MSS appear to
have been written in Bergen, Oslo, and Tønsberg. We know very
little about the scribes except the names of two of them: Porgeir
Håkonarson and Eiríkr Þrónsdóttar, both working around 1300.
No original of the Landsløg survives, and we must assume that
many copies have disappeared. According to Storm (1879: 11), at
least eighty copies must have existed in the 16th century.

King Magnús’s legislative work was not confined to the
Landsløg. His name is also connected with the Hirdskski (“rein­
ue-book”) preserved in ten medieval MSS and four fragments, all
dating from the 14th century, and to a new municipal code,
preserved in twenty-five MSS and three fragments, the oldest from
the end of the 13th century.

King Magnús was authorized to revise only the secular part of
the laws. Archbishop Jón initiated work on an ecclesiastical code
(completed 1273), based on principles of canon law. Arch­
bishop Jón’s ecclesiastical code is preserved in seven MSS, five of
them dating from the 14th century. The result of the ensuing
discussions between king and Church was a concordat in Tønsberg
in 1277. The final stage in ecclesiastical legislation in medieval
Norway is represented by a code issued in the reign of King Håkon
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Magnús Rindal

4. SWEDEN. Sweden’s medieval laws constitute laws for the
various provinces, a state law, and a municipal law. The state law
is found in an older and a younger version.

Two provincial laws have royal assent, the Law of Uppland
(Upplandslagen) of 1296 and the Law of Södermanland
(Södermannalagen) of 1327; both applied to the areas north and
south of Stockholm. The Law of Västmanland (Västmannalagen)
governed the area west of Stockholm, and the Law of Hälsingland
(Hälsingelagen), northern Sweden. The Law of Dalecarlia
(Dalalagen) received its name in more recent times, and it is un­
certain if it governed the present province of Dalarna, although
this is the generally accepted opinion. A new theory says that it governed the provinces of Värmland and Daliland (Sjöholm 1988). In certain sources, a Law of Närke (Närkeslagen) is mentioned, but no MSS of it are extant. The above-mentioned laws go under the common designation of the "Svea Laws."

The Göta Laws governed South Sweden, and contain the Law of Östergötland (Östgötalagen) and two versions of the Law of Västergötland (Västgötalagen), normally called the "older" and "younger" Västgöta Law. Moreover, there is a canon law for the Växjö diocese as an addition to a MS of the state law. This canon law generally is referred to as the ecclesiastical section of the "Law of Småland" (Smålandslagen). However, no MSS of this law have been preserved. The Laws of Västergötland distinguish themselves from the other laws by the fact that the MSS in which they are found also contain other texts primarily concerned with Västergötland. The Law of Gotland (Gutalagen), which governed the island of Gotland outside the town of Visby, is also regarded as a Swedish law.

The older state law is normally called "Magnus Erikkson's state law" (Landslag) after the king at that time, but it lacks royal assent. It came into existence around 1350. A revised, codified version appeared in 1442 as Christoffer's state law. During Magnus Erikkson's reign, a municipal law also appeared. It has a predecessor in the "Bjärktö Law" (Bjärkarätten), which originally governed Stockholm, but in the form preserved in MSS it is adapted to the town Lödöse near present-day Gothenburg. Because of controversies with the Church, the state law lacks a canon law. The provincial laws were also used side by side with the state law throughout the Middle Ages.

There are no preserved original MSS of Swedish medieval laws, except the younger state law. The copies are not older than from around 1300, except for some fragments. Inner criteria confirming an older age are also lacking. The Östgötalagen was thoroughly revised when the older state law came into existence. Everything indicates that there were written collections of laws at an earlier date, but that they were modified in different ways. Even a codified law like the Upplandslagen received many later additions.

The Swedish medieval laws, like those of the other Scandinavian countries, show a general agreement with western European medieval law. The similarities are so detailed that there must have been a direct influence. Noteworthy agreements have been found, above all, with the Langobard Law, which was particularly popular with the Church. It was systematically revised during the late Middle Ages with the same apparatus as the Roman and canon law. All these legal systems have had a decisive importance for the Scandinavian medieval laws.

Current research presumes that the laws were transmitted orally for centuries before they were committed to writing. This view of the sources goes back to the German historical law school from the beginning of the 19th century. The influence of foreign law, according to this view, first came at a late stage in the development of law. There should, therefore, be traces of an old Scandinavian or "Germanic" law in the Scandinavian laws. The basis for all western medieval law is, however, the Bible, in particular the Mosaic Law (Sjöholm 1988). Here, there are general agreements both in the main principles and in details. As in the Mosaic Law, the suspect is guilty until he has proven his innocence. The law of evidence is the same as in medieval law, as are the categories of crime and the kinds of punishment. Vendetta is proscribed in the Mosaic Law, while it is, to a varying degree, permitted in the medieval law. Given the fact that oaths and sworn evidence were taken on the Bible or relics in the presence of a priest, the Church had control over the process. From the beginning, the Church played an integral role in the "secular" law establishment, i.e., laws that governed the layman. In the western European theocratic state, ecclesiastical and secular law establishment are two sides of the same coin.

Sweden's medieval laws form a part of this European legal tradition. Virtually all of their content is also found in the above-mentioned legal systems or in later continental law. Of the neighboring countries, the similarity is greatest to Danish law, especially the Scanian and Zealand law. The southern and western Swedish areas belonged to Denmark in the Middle Ages, and the Danish archbishop was for a long time the primate of Sweden. It is likely that the influence upon Swedish law took place in part via the episcopal see in Lund. The production and dissemination of MSS were greatly advanced by the growth of monasticism in the 12th century in Denmark and Sweden.

Laxdœla saga ("The Saga of the Laxdœlir") is one of the greatest Islendingasögur, probably composed about the middle of the 13th century. It has come down to us in six medieval MSS and 13 fragments. The oldest is the fragment AM 162 D2 fol., most likely written in the last quarter of the 13th century. Laxdœla saga is also preserved in a couple of paper MSS, some of which are thought to be copies of vellum MSS, now lost. The MSS of Laxdœla saga are divided into two groups, y and z; the main difference between the two groups is that the latter lacks the so-called Bolla jattir. Editions of Laxdœla saga are based on the y-group of MSS, especially Môdravallabók (mid-14th century), which preserves the saga in its fullest form.

The author of Laxdœla saga appears to have used written sources concerning the settlement of Iceland, and he also refers to two Icelandic sagas as well as Ari Vborgisson. Some influences from...
the romance literature of the time are also apparent, especially in descriptions of customs, costumes, and weapons.

The action takes place over about 200 years, in the general area of Breiðafjörður, especially in the district known as Dalir (the Dales). At the beginning, the saga tells us of Ketill Flatefrið ("flat-nose"), a Norwegian chieftain who was forced to flee from Norway when King Haraldr hárfagri ("fair-hair") Halfdanarson came to power (ca. 872). Ketill dies in Scotland, but his sons, Bjorn and Helgi, and daughter, Unnr, become settlers in Iceland. The feud of Bjorn’s and Unnr’s descendants form the main subject matter of the saga.

At the beginning of the saga, peace prevails in the Dales under the leadership of Unnr. With the fourth generation, however, the disagreement between friends and relatives starts and gradually grows into feudal war, ending with the slaying of Kjartan by Bolli, his foster-brother.

The treatment is very often similar to that of romances, especially in its moral undertones. Unlike other Icelandic sagas, the main theme is the life and loves of a woman, Guðrún Ósvifrdottir, and deals with her affairs with Ketill and Bolli in a way similar to that in which the triangular love affair among Brynhildr, Sigurðr, and Gunnarr is handled in eddic heroic poetry. At the end of the saga, Guðrún looks back and comments on her life: "Permin vek verst, er ek unna mest" ("To him I was worst whom I loved most"), a sentiment that has been interpreted in a variety of ways.

It has been suggested that Óláfr Pórðarson hvítaskald ("white-skald"; d. 1259) was the author of Laxdœla saga. Some scholars, however, have thought that it was probably composed by a woman.

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Legenda, the gerund form (treated as fem. sing.) of the Latin verb legere, means "what shall or must be read." In scientific technical usage, legenda designates inscriptions on a coin or medal, words on a map, and captions below a picture in a book. In the domain of religion, legenda has come to mean an entertaining or edifying narrative about a saint. The use of legends in the Christian Church led to this transmission in meaning: on his feast day, the passion (passio) of a martyr or eulogy of a confessor was read as part of the lectiones in the daily office. Originally, only the lectiones of the lives (vitae) of confessors, i.e., saints who were not martyrs, were called legenda, as opposed to the passions of martyrs (cf. the statement by the 12th-century liturgist John Beleth: "Legendarius vocatur liber ille ubi agitur de vita et obitu confessorum, qui legitur in eorum festis, martyrum autem in passionariis") [De divinis officiis 60, Patrologia Latina 202, p. 66]. A book that relates the life and death of confessors, to be read on their feasts, is called a legendary; in the case of martyrs, it is a passionary). This distinction between liber legendarius and liber passionarius gradually became blurred, however; the Legenda aurea confirms the wider meaning, which includes in legenda the acts of martyrs as well as the biographies of other saints. At the same time, the ecclesiastical use of legenda in public reading receded in favor of private edification. In the 15th century, legenda also came to be used about an improbable account, and in the 16th century with the connation of a fictitious tale. The Reformations led to the defamation and pseudo-etymological alteration of legenda as Lügend ("lie-gen"); the close semantic relationship between legenda and fictitious tale is also evident in French, in which only one word, légende, exists for both concepts: légende hagiographique and légende populaire (or folklorique). In modern times, the word legenda is generally used to designate a fictitious tale about a historical personage or event. It is, therefore, subjected to the same truth-criteria as fanciful tales and fictions in general. In literary scholarship, legenda means a religious narrative about the life and/or death of a Christian saint, with special emphasis on the elements that bear witness to holiness (Roseneid 1982).

An essential element of legenda is that it presupposes a basis in historical fact, linking imaginary events and stories to real persons and places. This historical basis is often embellished or distorted by popular imagination and by the various motives of the writers. The proportions of these two elements may be very unequal, and as fact or fiction preponderates, the narrative may
classified as history or legenda. Such subjective (and even unconscous) reworking of material obscures the historical evidence, often almost suppressing it completely.

Legenda is formed by two distinct influences. On the one side stands the individual anonymous creator or, more generally, the people or cultural milieu that generates the disordered, fragmented compositional elements. On the other side stands the hagiographer, as editor and compiler, who gives shape and definition to the narrative, basing it on written, oral, or pictorial tradition combined with historical and empirical evidence, such as documents, relics, or shrines. The hagiographer writes with clear purpose: to interest and, above all, to edify his audience. Thus, the narrative brings together biography and panegyric, and combines them with a moral lesson (Delehaye 1927).

Because of its origin within popular culture, a legenda generally lacks invention, variety, and originality. Complexity yields to simplicity, and the supernatural is made concrete. Yet the supernatural element appeals only when it is combined with the marvelous; consequently, popular legends abound with wonders (miraculae). The number of heroes and events is usually limited, and the scope of the hero's activities is exaggerated, often incorporating a wealth of items dislodged from their historical context, or he is credited with the achievements of his predecessors. An idealized figure thus takes the place of a sharply defined historical portrait; often, he becomes no more than the personification of an abstraction. It is therefore not surprising that there are striking similarities among many legendae (Delehaye 1927).

In Norse, no distinction was generally made among legendarium, passionarium (or passionate), vitae sanctorum, or between legenda and saint's life. The terms were used for the life (or lives) of a saint (or saints), often with appended miraculae.


Kirsten Wolf

[See also: Postola sógør, Saints' Lives]

Leiðangr (Old Norse, leithing (Old Danish), leithung (Old Swedish), expeditio (Latin) designates any military expedition, but is used more specifically for the official fleet levied by the three Scandinavian countries from the late Viking Age to the early high Middle Ages. Leiðangr appears in the skaldic court poetry of the 10th and 11th centuries, in the provincial laws of the 12th and 13th centuries, and in Latin chronicles from Encomium Emmae (ca. 1040-1041) to Saxo Grammaticus (ca. 1200), while the Norse sagas of the 13th century appear to describe later military conditions. Leiðangr was a public fleet levy of the free farmers of the countries under the leadership of the king or the earl of Hlaðir. Leiðangr was the main organizing bond between the king and the farmers, who in leiðangr fought as his personal "men."

Each country was divided into districts (Old Norse skipreîða, Old Danish skippen, Old Swedish skiplag, Latin navis, navigium); the district farmers were obliged to own the necessary arms and to build and equip a rowed sailing ship of forty or forty-two (later occasionally fifty) oars. In Norway, there were 279 such districts in 1277, in Denmark probably 600-800. Originally, these larger districts were divided into smaller areas (Old Norse manager, lidi, Old Danish hafnæ, Old Swedish hamna, ar) with the obligation to provide one man per oar. Legislation emphasized that the ships were to be built and equipped in the same way, so that they could function in unison as large, fast fleet formations. Only royal ships were built somewhat more magnificently and faster than the others, and with more oars; the longships Skuldelev 2 and Hedeby 1 belong to this category.

In the 11th century, leiðangr was a successful military institution. Sections of the Danish and Norwegian leiðangr conquered England under the leadership of Knud (Cnut) the Great. Their strength lay in their discipline and in the versatility of their ships. The ships were fast, propelled both by sail and oars. They were so light that they could be pulled overland from one river to another, and they could, in addition to the crew, carry provisions for more than a month. In Scandinavian waters, the fleets fought great naval battles, where the ships were tied together, and where the crews engaged in hand-to-hand combat. More frequently, however, they served as an organization for amphibious warfare: the ships sailed in a fast, broad formation and moored simultaneously at a shore, or sailed up a river to a suitable camping site. The surrounding area was then plundered, and the opposing force attacked by an established phalanx of infantry equipped with bows and arrows, spears, swords, or battle-axes, and large, round shields. Before offensive campaigns were begun, the king summoned the crew to give its opinion and to select a part of the leiðangr that was to stay behind and defend the home country. The leiðangr was called to arms to fend off all threats from invading forces; and detachments of leiðangr from smaller areas fought against each other in civil wars. In the 11th century, earls are mentioned as lesser chieftains of leiðangr; in the 12th century, the bishops are the fleet levy's local leaders. Breach of duty to participate in leiðangr was punished by fines due to the king, forty marks for the shipmaster, three for farmers.

After 1066, and especially during the 12th century, leiðangr and its armed farmers met with increasing resistance from the new professional military systems. From 1134, German cavalry appeared in Denmark, and before 1169 it had become compulsory for each Danish shipmaster to bring a horse and a crossbow on the leiðangr ship. In 1169, the Danish farmers' leiðangr dissolved and was replaced by a smaller, professional army of the so-called heræmman. This new military organization and its levy were also called leithing or expeditio, but it probably did not contain any farmers after 1169. In Sweden, a similar professional system was introduced before 1281. In Norway toward the end of the 12th century, a new strategy for warfare was introduced that centered on a few heavy "grand ships," and, in contrast to Denmark, the farmers could still be called upon for active service, although in smaller numbers than earlier (for example, six men out of a forty-man ship in 1273). In all three Scandinavian countries, leiðangr then became the name of a certain tax, in Norway paid by all farmers until the 19th century, in Denmark and Sweden paid by independent farmers until early modern times.

LEIDANGR 389
Leidarvisan ("Way-Pointing" or "Guidance") is an anonymous Icelandic praise poem of forty-five stanzas in drottkvætt meter, a dřípa. It is transmitted in extenso in AM 757 4to (14th century); the first thirty-five stanzas also survive in AM 624 4to (15th century).

An introduction and final section each comprise twelve stanzas. The middle section of twenty-one stanzas contains two four-lined staves, making up the latter half of stanzas 13, 17, 21, and 25, 29, 33, respectively. The poem is composed around the number three, in honor of the Holy Trinity. It is crammed with kennings, only a few of which are pre-Christian, and it contains as many as forty-one hapax legomena.

Leidarvisan has its origin in the latter half of the 12th century, the occasion possibly being a local church feast. The poet himself names his poem (st. 44). He most likely had his background in the same monastic circles as the abbot Nikulás Bergsson. Some minor metrical lapses and the mention of a clerical adviser named Rúnolf r (st. 43), obviously the priest Rúnolf Dállskóss, have led to the supposition that the author was a young person, perhaps a clerical student. He is very familiar with contemporary and earlier vernacular poetry and homilies, and reveals a thorough knowledge of the Bible.

Leidarvisan provides its audience with ethical guidance. The poem exhorts its audience to show penitence, to avoid vices, and especially to observe the Lord's day, the sanctity of which has been verified by the many salvatory events occurring on just that day of the week. In the final section, the poet paints a vivid picture of the Last Judgment (Matthew 25). He refers to a version of the "Heavenly Letter," or the "Sunday Letter" (purported to be a letter by Christ Himself, and written in His own blood), which falls to the "Variant Description" was later used, often verbally, for the unhistorical description of Kirialax's visit to the Holy Land in Kirialax saga.


Rikke Malmros

[See also: Christian Poetry; Kennings; Skaldic Meters; Skaldic Verse]
**Lilja**

"Lilja" is an Old Norse–Icelandic poem composed in the middle of the 14th century and traditionally ascribed to an otherwise unknown poet, Eystein Æsgrimsson. The title *Lilja* is one of the traditional appellations of the Virgin Mary, and the poem is written specifically in her honor. Although the poet focuses on the Virgin Mary and addresses her specifically and at length, the poem is a summary of all Christian history from Creation until the end of history. The poet begins and ends with an invocation of the triune God, stanzas 2–4 appeal for inspiration, and then the poet narrates the events of creation history up to the Annunciation in stanza 25. Stanzas 25–50 are concerned with the events of Christ's life and preaching up to the Passion; stanzas 50–75 concern the defeat of Satan in the Passion, the Harrowing of Hell, the Ascension and the Last Judgment. The final twenty-five stanzas are prayers for forgiveness on the part of the poet, and praise of Mary and God as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The ordering of the narrative is reflected in a formal metrical pattern in that the poem consists of 100 hrynhent stanzas in symmetrical ddrpa form. The first twenty-five stanzas form a prologue (the upphar or inngangr), the next fifty stanzas a refrain section (the stejfablakei) divided into two refrains recurring five times each, and the last twenty-five stanzas form the conclusion (the slæm).

*Lilja* is a metrical and rhetorical *tour de force*, in which Eystein Æsgrimsson shows extraordinary technical facility (e.g., st. 55 in which the consonant cluster -dd- is repeated sixteen times), but the language of the poem as a whole is clear and transparent. The tone varies from the serenity of the invocation of the triune God in stanzas 1 and 100 to the poet's abject and emotional confession in stanzas 75–80, or the dramatic representation of the Crucifixion as a combat in which the World Serpent was caught on the hook of the Cross (sts. 60–66).
The poem is, however, more than an extraordinary monument of skaldic craftsmanship. It also reflects a very subtle and sophisticated understanding of Christian theology and poetry. For example, stanza 33 narrates the birth of Christ, stanza 66 the completion of the atonement, and stanza 99, which addresses Mary, completes the poem, since stanza 100 repeats the first stanza. Thus, the poem reflects a triadic, triangular pattern based on the correspondences between 33/66/99 as well as the larger pattern based on the number 100 reflected in the formal pattern of the refrains. There are thus two numerical patterns, one triadic and one circular, and these numerical patterns suggest the iconographic figure of the “triangular circle,” a famous emblem of the Incarnation, the joining of God and man made possible by the mediation of the Virgin Mary, the "Lilja" to whom the poem is addressed.

The popularity of the poem in Icelandic tradition inspired the proverb öll skáld vilda Lilja kvedði hafa ("every poet wishes he had composed Lilja"), and the more carefully one reads and studies the poem the more fully one can appreciate the force of this maxim.


[See also: Christian Poetry, Nicodemus, Gospel of; Skaldic Meters; Skaldic Verse]

Liturgy and Liturgical Texts. Up to the year 1104, the Scandinavian countries came under the archbishop of Bremen. In 1104, a Nordic ecclesiastical province with its archbishopric in Lund was founded. A Norwegian ecclesiastical province was begun in 1153 with its archbishopric in Niðarós (Trondheim), and in 1164 a Swedish province was founded with its archbishopric in Uppsala.

Every diocese had its own rites and its own liturgy. The difference could be considerable, especially with regard to the venation of saints. Liturgical uniformity in one and the same diocese was not reached until the end of the Middle Ages, when the liturgical books were printed.

Within the Swedish ecclesiastical province, four missals, or massbooks, were printed: for the dioceses of Uppsala in 1484 and in 1513, Strängnäs in 1487, and Åbo diocese in 1488. The rest of the dioceses in the ecclesiastical province (Linköping, Skara, Västerås, Växjö) never received their own printed missal book.

A number of missal MSS survive in Swedish archives and libraries, among them the oldest missal fragments of the country from the early 12th century (in the Skara diocese and the national library). Within the Danish ecclesiastical province, three massbooks were printed: for Copenhagen in around 1484, for Schleswig in 1486, and for Lund in 1514. The rest of the dioceses (Roskilde, Odense, Ribe, Viborg, Århus, and Børglum) never received printed missals. From the Norwegian ecclesiastical province, only one printed missal exists, for the Niðarós archdiocese, printed in 1519. Several fragments are kept in the national archive in Oslo.

The Nordic missals are all rather similar. All contain a calendar, ordinary masses, propers of the time, of the saints, and of the common of saints. Older missal MSS sometimes contain further rituals that later were excluded or were moved to other liturgical books.

In addition to missals, several breviaries or handbooks for the Hours were printed in the Nordic countries. In Sweden, such books were printed for Uppsala in 1496, for Skara in 1498, for Strängnäs in 1495, for Linköping in 1493, and for Västerås in 1513. The Skara breviary is especially interesting since, apart from the ritual for the Hours, it also contains rituals for baptism, weddings, funerals, and several masses. The Skara breviary was, in other words, used at the same time as a missal and a manual, unique within the Nordic history of liturgy.

In Denmark, there are kept five printed breviaries: for Lund in 1517, for Roskilde in 1517, for Odense in around 1482, 1497, 1510, for Århus in 1519, and for Schleswig in 1512. In Norway, a breviary for Niðarós was printed in 1519, and was used throughout the ecclesiastical province. A breviary for Holar in Iceland was printed in 1534. Except for the Skara breviary, the Nordic breviaries share the general arrangement prevalent during the Middle Ages, but with different propers of saints.

The manual (today the ritual) contained formulas for baptism, weddings, visits to the sick with communion, extreme unction, funerals, and some benedictions. The term liber agendarum was also used. In Sweden, three manuals were printed: for Uppsala in 1487, for Åbo in 1522, and for Linköping in 1525. The Skara breviary, printed in 1498, was also used as a manual. Some manuals in MSS are preserved in Swedish libraries, among them the oldest (about 1400) from the church of Hemso in the diocese of Skara. In Denmark, two printed manuals were edited: for Schleswig in 1512, and for Roskilde in 1513. From the diocese of Odense, there is a manual in MS from about 1400. In Norway, three manual MSS from the 13th to the 14th century are preserved.

Two of the sacraments of the Church, confirmation and ordination, were reserved for the bishop. The ritual was contained in the pontifical. From the Nordic medieval period, only two such handbooks are preserved, both in MSS. One of them, housed in the University of Uppsala library, from the latter part of the 15th century, belonged to the archdiocese of Lund; the other, in the library of the University of Lund, dates from the beginning of the 16th century, and was used in the diocese of Roskilde. A copy of a pontifical printed in Rome in 1497 has numerous notes in the margin showing that it had been used in Lund. For the rest, only fragments are preserved from the Nordic pontifical tradition.

A gradual containing the songs of the mass was printed in 1493 for the diocese of Västerås. Several fragmentary gradual MSS are preserved from various Nordic dioceses. The book of antiphons contained the music for the Hours. From the Nordic medieval period, a number of antiphonal books have been preserved, several of them in fragments.

The ordinarium offered a means of assistance in the use of the liturgical books, above all in the regulation of the complicated medieval ecclesiastical year. A Niðarós ordinarium in MS from the 13th century is preserved, along with two ordinaries from Linköping (15th century).

The missionary activity in the Nordic countries emanated from England in the west and from Germany and France in the
south. In all of Nordic liturgy, there are easily observed influences from these two directions, somewhat varying in some dioceses, depending on situation and development. At the end of the medieval period, these foreign influences had been united within the Swedish liturgy. All this can be observed in the veneration of the saints.

One more characteristic element was the regular liturgy for religious orders. Cistercians, Dominicans, and Franciscans were numerous in all Nordic countries. As an example of such influence, the Åbo missal from the year 1488 may be mentioned, in which Dominican elements dominate.

The liturgical handbooks were completed by synodal statutes. The bishop, however, had the right to promulgate statutes within the frame of the canon law and within his diocese. These statutes regulated new circumstances or strengthened the observance of earlier prescriptions. Such statutes have been preserved in all Nordic countries. Many statutes are still unedited, or their editions are antiquated. These statutes are important sources for the pious life in medieval Scandinavia.

The veneration of saints constituted an important part of the medieval liturgy, having been established when Christianity reached the Nordic countries in the 11th century. Later on, new continental and English saints gained a foothold in the North. Such saints followed new currents of culture, such as the establishment of monastic orders. Nordic saints played an important part in the liturgy. Several of them belong to the missionary period or the monastic orders. Nordic saints were especially venerated in different dioceses in different times.

In the 11th century, the English missionaries Sigfrid (February 15) and Eskil (October 8) were active in Sweden, Sigfrid in the south of Sweden and Eskil in Södermanland. About the same time, David (June 25) and Botvid (July 28) worked in the middle part of Sweden. In the 12th century, we meet St. Erik (May 18) and Henrik (January 19); Helena of Skövde (July 30 in Skara, in other dioceses July 31) also belongs to this epoch.

Best known of Swedish saints is Birgitta of Vadstena, who died in 1373 and was canonized in 1391. She founded the Brigittine Order, and her worship spread throughout the North and beyond.

The complex medieval ecclesiastical year with its movable and fixed parts was necessarily regulated in the liturgical handbooks. At synods and convocations of clergy, special statutes for different dioceses were promulgated, many of them of French origin.

LJÓSVETNINGA SAGA

The Saga of the Ljósavatn Family is a medium-length Islendingasaga. The main theme of the saga is the rivalry and battles between two chieftain families in northern Iceland, the Móðruvellir family in Eyjafjörður and the Ljósavatn family in the district just to the east. The saga is divided into two main parts. The first part starts with the great friendship between the two famous chiefs, Guðmundr riki ("the mighty") of Móðruvellir and Porgeirr of Ljósavatn (the latter especially well known from his important role as lawspeaker when Christianity was introduced into Iceland). There is constant conflict between Guðmundr and the sons of Porgeirr, the most prominent of them being attacked in his home and slain by Guðmundr. In the second part of the saga, the conflict continues between the descendants of Guðmundr and Porgeirr. The climax of this part is the battle of Kakalahól, where the noblest and most beloved of Guðmundr's sons is killed. Most of the events of the saga took place from about 990 to 1066, that is, over two to three generations. Ljósavetninga saga is thus a true "Family Saga." At least some of the main characters must represent genuine historical personages, but many of the events are fictional and sometimes reflect literary borrowings and traditional motifs. The author's sympathies obviously lie with the Ljósavetninga family. The most dominating personality in the saga, Guðmundr inn riki (d. ca. 1025), is known as a great chieftain in a number of other sagas, but is described here in Ljósavetninga saga with malicious irony.

It is generally assumed that Ljósavetninga saga was written around 1260. But the saga has suffered greatly during transmission. It now exists in two versions. The A-version is represented by only one MS, AM 561 4to (vellum, ca. 1400), covering most of the first part of the saga. A fuller, but not complete, version is C, which existed in a vellum codex written in the 15th century. Of the Ljósavetninga saga text of this codex, only three folios (six pages)
remains (in AM 162c fol.), but the complete Ljósvetninga saga text of this codex is transmitted in more than thirty paper MSS. In the C-version, the saga is extended to include a number of separate small tales (þættir), which are regarded as later additions.

For a time, Ljósvetninga saga played an important role in the great controversy between the supporters of "Free verse" as against "Bookverse," since it was maintained that the two versions of this saga represent exceptionally reliable examples of separate records of oral tradition. But this viewpoint has now been largely discredited.


Hallvard Magerøy

[See also: Bookverse / Freeverse Theory, Islandingsásgögur]

Lokasenna ("Loki's Quarrel") is one of the masterpiece of the eddic tradition. Also called Ægisdræka ("Ægir's Banquet"), and found in the Poetic Edda, it was composed by an unknown author who drew on a much older oral tradition.

The poem is set at the time just before Ragnarök, after Loki's misdeeds have tainted all the gods and caused the death of Baldr. The prose prologue, which, like the epilogue, was probably added when the originally oral poem was written down, reports that Loki has just been thrown out of the gods' banquet in Ægir's hall for killing a servant. With scorn for the hypocrisy that he says characterizes the gods, Loki marches arrogantly back into the hall. Bragi rebukes him, but Loki invokes his blood-brotherhood with Óðinn. When Bragi attempts to apologize, Loki accuses him of cowardice. Bragi's wife, Íðunn, steps in to calm her husband, only to have Loki maliciously point out that she has committed adultery with Loki himself. This abuse continues around the banquet table as Loki accuses Gjefon, Frigg, Freyja, Skadi, and Íðunn of adultery and other misdeeds, and Óðinn, Ýmir, Tyr, Freyr, Byggvir, and Heimdall of cowardice, referring in each case to a well-known story about that particular god or goddess. In most cases, it was Loki himself who instigated the incidents.

Pórr's wife, Sif, then offers Loki a cup of mead as a bribe to leave her out of the diatribe, but to no avail. Loki points out that even she is as guilty of infidelity as the rest. Suddenly, Pórr appears. Faced with the angry thunder-god, Loki flees the hall with a final curse, anticipating his ultimate defeat at the end of the world.

The poem consists of sixty-five stanzas, written mostly in ljóðaháttr ("chant meter"), a six-line verse form common to eddic poems. There is a variation of this stanza called, significantly, galdralag ("incantation meter"). Here, a seventh line takes the listener by surprise. This stanza assumes a power that the standard ljóðaháttr stanzas lack. Four galdralag verses are spoken by Loki, and reflect his attempts to use magic to increase his power. Óðinn tries to outdo him with an eight-line verse, but Loki is able to turn it against him. Only when Loki uses Pórr's name in a galdralag verse does his magic prove to be too strong even for him, for he conjures Pórr into his presence, and this act leads to his banishment.

The poet's probable purpose was to recite a catalogue of the important stories of the gods, and, in particular, the legends of Loki. The catalogue form, perhaps intended for other poets to help them remember the old myths and kennings, also appears in Volsásp, Vafþrúðnismál, Grímnismál, and Hábardráðslóð. But Lokasenna stands apart for its dramatic quality, for its more skillful weaving of the catalogue concept with the story, and for its succinct and effective portraits of the individual gods.


†Philip N. Anderson

[See also: Codex Regius; Eddic Meters; Eddic Poetry; Loki]

Loki is one of the most vivid and frequently discussed gods in the old Scandinavian mythology. The various sources present incidents that seem to relate to more than one personality. On the one
hand, Loki is said to be the murderer by advice (nódbangi) of Baldr, whose killing is said to be the worst incident among gods and men (Gylfaginning, ch. 33). Both Loki and his children play a central part in Ragnarök on the side of the enemies of the gods, and many other calamities that strike the enemies are caused by Loki, too. On the other hand, he is the blood relation of Óðinn and a figure who, by his own will or not, brings the gods some of their most precious objects, without which they could not fulfill their function as defenders of the cosmos.

The sources tell us that Loki is intelligent and cunning, and that he is deceitful (Gylfaginning, ch. 19; Skáldskaparmál, ch. 24; Lokasenna, st. 54; Hymiskviða, st. 37; Völuspá, st. 35; Haustlǫng, sts. 5–9; Póðrdrápa, st. 1; Háskviða, st. 2). As to his appearance, he is said to be beautiful (Gylfaginning, ch. 19). He is able to transform himself into all kinds of animals, both male and female, and into a woman as well (Gylfaginning, chs. 25, 33, 35, 36; Skáldskaparmál, chs. 3, 16, 44; Lokasenna, stts. 23, 33, and end prose; Prymskviða, sts. 3, 20; Hyndluljóð, st. 40; Haustlóng, st. 12).

His father and mother are said to be the giant Fárbauti and Laufey or Nal, and his brothers are Byleistr and Helblindi. His wife is Sigyn, and their sons are Nari (or Narfi) and Váli. With a giantess, he has the children Fenrir, the World Serpent, and Hel. In the end prose (árdaga; Lokasenna), he is said to be beautiful (Gylfaginning, ch. 19). He is able to transform himself into all kinds of animals, both male and female, and into a woman as well (Gylfaginning, chs. 25, 33, 35, 36; Skáldskaparmál, chs. 3, 16, 44; Lokasenna, stts. 23, 33, and end prose; Prymskviða, sts. 3, 20; Hyndluljóð, st. 40; Haustlóng, st. 12).

Loki plays an important role in many myths, often as the companion of Þór and Óðinn. Often, his role is first to create a dangerous situation, but in the end to resolve it. Significant myths include his mingling blood with Óðinn in the beginning of time (árdoiga; Lokasenna), the killing of Baldr (Gylfaginning, ch. 33), and his punishment. In the mythic present, he is chained to a rock, on which a snake drops poison in his eyes. Sigyn catches the poison in a bowl, but when it is full she has to empty it, and Loki trembles with pain, thereby causing earthquakes (Gylfaginning, ch. 36; Lokasenna end prose). Finally, his part in Ragnarök is significant, since he and his children are the main opponents of the gods (Gylfaginning, chs. 37–38; Völuspá, stts. 53–56).

Some scholars believe that Loki is identical with the god Lóðurr, whom we know from the anthropogenic myth of Völuspá, stanza 18, and in a kenning for Óðinn (Lóðurr víar ["Lóður’s friend"] in Háleygjatal and Islendingadrápa). But although etymological arguments have been put forward, neither these nor the role played by Lóðurr in the anthropogony are sufficient proof for an identity.

"Loki" is very problematic etymologically, and this difficulty is also true for his surname "Loptur" (Gylfaginning, ch. 19; cf. Jan de Vries, Altnordisches etymologisches Wörterbuch [Leiden: Brill, 1962]). There is nothing to suggest that Loki was ever worshiped, since there is no trace of a Loki cult and his name cannot be found in place-names. So the only way to understand his meaning and function in Nordic mythology is through his role in the myths and mythical references.

What were the meaning and function of this god in the pantheon of the old Scandinavians? During the 19th and early 20th centuries, many scholars linked Loki and most other gods with some natural phenomenon. He was seen as a fire-demon by some or a water-demon by others. Others looked upon him as a newcomer in the pantheon and inspired by the Christian Devil. None of these proposals is supported by modern scholars, although certain traits of the Loki figure may be explained in these ways; but almost everybody agrees that they do not explain the essential significance of this god.

In 1933, de Vries put forward a theory of Loki as a trickster. By denying any authenticity to those traits that also can be found outside the North, the Swedish scholar Rooth (1961) finds that the most constitutive trait is the making of the net as he was caught after the killing of Baldr (Gylfaginning, ch. 36). Combining this with later folkloristic material, she maintains that Loki was in fact a defiled spider. In 1956, Folke Ström suggested that Loki originally was a hypostasis of Óðinn and thus was a representative of Óðinn’s "evil" aspect. In 1975, another Swede, A. V. Ström, saw Loki as the dark side of Óðinn; he compares this god with the Innić god Vayu, who also has both a good and evil aspect. Most of the scholars here mentioned have not been able to make the whole material fit into their theories, and they have therefore dismissed much of it as "nonauthentic." Dumézil’s book on Loki (1948), however, uses all the material at hand. By comparing it with Ossetic and other Indo-European material, he succeeds in proving, for instance, that the role of Loki in the myth of Baldr is very old and dates back to Indo-European times. Dumézil’s analysis leads him to see Loki as "the impulsive intelligence," a psychological interpretation not very typical of Dumézil. Elsewhere, Dumézil proposed in an analysis of the myths of Baldr and Ragnarök that Loki is an archdemon, parallel to other Indo-European figures. With this theory as a point of departure, Schjødt (1981) has attempted to see Loki as the demon of our cosmic age. He shows how Loki becomes more and more evil concurrently with the deterioration of the world, culminating with the murder of Baldr and his role in Ragnarök. This position is due to his mediating role where male and female, culture and nature, good and evil, and many other oppositional pairs are intermingled.

Whether or not this theory can be accepted, it seems necessary to agree that Loki is a god who has changed his role radically. The problem is whether it is the conception of him that has changed or whether this change is constitutive for his mythic function.


Jens Peter Schjødt

[See also: Eddic Poetry; Eyvindr Finnsson skaldaspiller; Hymiskviða; Hyndluljóð, Islendingadrápa, Lokasenna; Mythology, Snorra Edda; Sóra Íjður; hjóðólfr of Hvíð; Prymskviða; Úlfur Óggaðson; Völuspá]
Love Poetry

1. EAST NORSE. A portion of East Norse love poetry is found in Old Swedish runic inscriptions. These poems are not creations of erotic passion, but evidence of tender feelings and genuine love between husband and wife. The poems of this kind are very short, one stanza and a half, or a pair of lines, as on a rune stone erected by the yeoman farmer Holmgautr, owner of the estate of Hasvimyra, Fläckebo parish, Västmanland, to the memory of his deceased wife. The inscription ends in a stanza, the first half of which runs:

Kumba húfryy
til Hasvimyra
ægi bèni
þan byi raðr.

[Never will come / to Hasvimyra / a better mistress / to manage the house.]  

On the old jing-place at Bällsta in Vallentuna, Uppland, stand two stones erected to the memory of Ulf, with fourteen lines of poetry. The last four lines run:

Auð Gryðr
gats æt veri
þy man i grati
geiti lata.

[Likewise Gryth / loved her husband. / So in an elegy / she aims to have it mentioned.]

Love poetry is found primarily in the ballads, the majority of which have a love story as the principal theme. The story or mood of these ballads is often condensed or mirrored in the burdens (refrains), some of which have the character of subjective love lyrics (e.g., DgF 431 A, SMB 22 D). In the main, the lyric love poetry proper shares the same fate as the ballad: poems of medieval origin are, with a few exceptions, found only in sources from the 16th century onward, and the Danish printed in Danske Viser (1912–31), the Swedish in 1500- och 1600-talens visböcker (1884–1919). Like the ballads, the lyrical poetry draws heavily upon a stock of set expressions and formulas, although the building elements in the lyrics are smaller and even more interchangeable than in the epic songs. It is, accordingly, often somewhat inadequate to talk about definite or fixed “types” in the lyrics as in narrative poetry. However, the general style as well as specific stylistic features and stanzaic forms (not to mention many single lines, rhymes, and groups of lines, appearing in a considerable number of medieval texts) may with a high degree of probability be regarded as medieval, more exactly belonging to the Middle Ages. The oldest example, from about 1250 (Dombibliothek, Cologne) is Danish rather than Swedish:

iac wet en frugha i wæroldet ware
hæmmila ofa thil iac æra.

[I know of a lady in this world / I wish to honor her life.]

It has indeed been suggested that this is not a secular love poem, but a religious one, the frugh meaning “Our Lady.” This view can hardly be upheld in this specific case, even if the two genres admitted have very much in common, an erotic vocabulary with roots in the Song of Songs. This ambiguity is evident in some of the poems found in a MS from about 1480 and attributed to the Danish friar Peder Ræff:

iek wil tegh præse fraa top til toe
och ther i mellom, om iek kan foo,
thu speyell och ædelæ quinnæ.

[It will praise you, from top to toe / and in between, if I can get you, mirror and honorable woman.]  

These and similar lines are directed to the Holy Virgin. It is significant that the sensuality in Peder’s poems to the Virgin Mary is lacking in the only undoubtedly secular love poem attributed to him, the most famous one, “Reth elscuns dydh mz sahgh oc drydh” (Frandsen, Mariaviserne, no. 21). This is the only Danish love poem preserved in a source from before the Reformation, while we have at least four such Swedish items. In a MS from about 1450, there is one, “Gläðhe oc frögdr oc hírtans hug” (ed. Klemming 1881–82). In another MS of the same age, there are two: “Jak wil qwedha ena wiso” and “Kristh for syn dðdi” (ed. Jonsson 1976), in the latter, we see the intonation from Peder Ræff. From about 1500, there is one text, “J mith hiarta der yppers anhe sorg” (ed. Klemming 1881–82), which seems to consist of two, probably three, different poems.

External evidence as well as internal, for example, the use of the term vesi for the poem, makes it clear that, at least as a rule, the love lyrics were sung and might thus rightly be called “love songs.” Several stanzaic forms are represented in the material, among them the sequence (as in “Jak wil qwedha ena wiso,” the first example of acoustic in Swedish verse) and structures from the German Minnesang and Meistersang (as in “Gläðhe oc frögdr oc hírtans hug,” with two Stoliken and an Abgesang). German patterns lie more or less behind the entire genre.

The East Nordic love poetry had probably left traces in the Swedish Eufemavisor from the early 14th century, although one cannot exclude the possibility that the lyrical phrases in question are taken directly from German poetry.
imitation of foreign models, i.e., classical authors like Ovid or the troubadours and their imitators. The distinction is by no means clear.

The native-foreign question is particularly vexed in the case of skaldic verse. There are altogether about fifty stanzas dealing with the subject of love (Finnur Jónsson 1912–15, “Erotiske digte og vers”). A clear case of troubadour influence are the verses composed by Rognvaldr Kali, earl of Orkney, and two of his companions (both Icelanders) while visiting Narbonne in the Languedoc on their way to the Holy Land in 1151 and cited in Orkneyinga saga. These verses are something of an anomaly in the skaldic canon, but show at least how contact could have taken place. Of the remainder, over half are by the poet Kormákr Ögmundarson, and a further six by Hallfreðr vandræðaskald (“troublesome skald”), both heroes of sagas bearing their names, two of the so-called skaldasögur, or skaldic biographies. Dronke (1968) uses a number of their verses to argue the universality of what is commonly called amour courtois, the skalds in question ostensibly antedating the troubadours of Provence by some hundred years. Bjarni Einarsson (1961), on the other hand, argues that the same verses cannot be much older than the sagas in which they are preserved, i.e., from the 13th century, going so far as to suggest that they were probably composed by the saga authors themselves. He cites linguistic evidence (refuted by Einar Ol. Sveinsson 1966), and also musers what may be called literary-critical evidence, i.e., aspects of the skaldic verses that may be traced more readily to troubadour than to native practice, but also looks at the complex question of the relationship between prose and verse in the sagas. Andersson (1969), however, argues that the similarities are not close enough to indicate dependence and that most of the verses in question represent native Norse tradition in that they are inspired by a particular situation, as is normally the case with skaldic poetry, as opposed to being of a general nature, “not bound by any particular moment,” a characteristic of troubadour poetry. Bjarni Einarsson (1971) has countered Andersson’s arguments, and the question remains open.

The subject of origins has unfortunately obscured the real achievement of poets like Kormákr, whose verses, genuine or spurious, based solely on native tradition or inspired by continental models, represent a high point in skaldic poetry. The theme of love is treated in a number of poems in the Edda, but differently handled in the heroic poems and in the mythological poems. In the heroic poems, the woman expresses her love, more specifically her sorrow at lost love (e.g., Helgakvida Hundingsbana In). In the mythological poems, there are a number of examples of male characters suffering from the pangs of love. Freyr in Skírnismál, for example, on seeing Gerðr for the first time, experiences måttregi mikill ("great longing"). Öðinn himself becomes consumed with passion for “Billings maer,” the daughter (or possibly wife) of Billings (cf. Hávamál 96–102).

The term mansongvar (from mansongr, originally a servant of either sex but subsequently used only of young maidens) appears in a number of early sources in reference to amorous or erotic verses. Grágás states that the penalty for composing such verses (mansongr) to a woman was outlawry, the heaviest penalty, but that the woman herself was guilty if twenty or older. This law may be quite old, but need not be much older than Grágás itself (13th century). Numerous references to mansongvar in the sagas and other sources indicate the existence of love lyrics in Iceland at least as early as the 12th century. None of these poems survives, but then conditions for the survival of poetry of this type are seldom good: it was “popular,” and thus rarely committed to parchment, and was viewed by ecclesiastical authorities as immoral. As elsewhere in Europe, much of the evidence we have concerning medieval love poetry is the direct result of the Church’s attempts to stamp it out. Among other improvements attributed to Bishop Jón Ógmundarson, elected 1106, was a ban on the then-popular game (leikr) in which a man and a woman recited or sang to each other “disgraceful and licentious verses, unworthy of hearing.” The bishop is also said to have banned the composition of love songs (mansongsvísur), but was not entirely successful in his attempt. The source of this information, Jóns saga helga, testifies at least to the existence of these practices at the time of its composition (early 13th century). But to what extent these verses represent an indigenous tradition is difficult to determine.

Young clerics in the Commonwealth period would have been familiar with Latin poets, as a reference to Jóns saga helga shows. There, the young Klegn Porsteinsson, subsequently bishop at Skalholt, is rebuked for reading Ovid’s Ars amatoria. Some indication of what these early lyrics were like is provided by a single line preserved in Sturlunga saga: Minnur eru soru frungur sem bý (“Mine are sorrows heavy as lead”), referred to as a “dance” (dans) in the saga, but in view of its subjective, personal nature, certainly from some kind of love lyric, perhaps a carol (vikivakavéði; the term is postmedieval), or, less likely, a ballad, but in any case, one decidedly “southern.”

The term mansonggr came eventually to be used exclusively of the subjective, nonnarrative introductions to the ritur, in which the poet addresses the audience directly. The mansonggar deal most often with the subject of love, women’s inconstancy being an especially favorite theme. Other common topoi were reflections on old age and its effect vis à vis love, or references to classical lovers or Ovid. Although the presence of mansonggar did not become fixed until after the Reformation, they appear sporadically in even the earliest ritur (14th century). The use of kennings and heiði in the mansongvar, as in the ritur in general, descends directly from skaldic practice; but in style and theme, they derive from the medieval European love lyric, and show a particular affinity with the German Minnesang. However, the ritur poets use only the themes of love in the mansongvar, but eschew the other great themes of troubadour poetry, for instance, nature and the coming of spring, perhaps for simple climatic reasons.

From this same period, i.e., the late Middle Ages down to the early 17th century, we have indications of the existence of what must have been a large body of love lyrics. These were the allemorskvéði (from amour), the usual name for lyrics dealing with love after the term mansongr became associated with the ritur. They were also known as brunakváedi (literally “burning poems”), a term favored by ecclesiastics, whose vehemence in condemning them attests their popularity. Only a handful of poems and fragments have survived, often as marginalia in saga and other MSS, but what does remain gives us some idea of what these poems were like: the poet, separated from his loved one, describes his longing for her. A few lyrics present the woman’s side, and may with some certainty be ascribed to women. In form, the allemorskvéði show unusual variety, for the most part derived from continental models.

Most of the ballads (fornkvéði or sagnadansar) and many carols (vikivakavéði) also deal in one way or another with the theme of love. Although probably of medieval provenance, they are preserved only in full versions dating from after the Reformation. The ballads fall squarely within the larger context of northern
European balladry, while the relationship between the vikivakavæði and other European dance lyrics has yet to be fully investigated, although their kinship with the English carol seems clear. Like their European counterparts, the Icelandic ballads are essentially narrative in nature, impersonal and objective, composed of short stanzas. The vikivakavæði, on the other hand, are lyrical, personal, and subjective, and characterized by the presence of a burden (refrain).

Although perhaps not great literature, many of the carols, ballads, mansögvar, and afmornskvæði have a simple beauty, and are deserving of more sympathetic treatment than that given them in most literary histories.

Magic seems to be volitive symbolic behavior to effect or to prevent changes in the environment by means of extraordinary communicative acts with paranormal factors. Magic is a way for certain human beings to make things happen that ordinarily could not be made to happen. Generally, it is distinguished from religion by the fact that the will of the magician is paramount. The magician makes the environment do his bidding, whereas in religion the human community generally attempts to harmonize its behavior with a universal paradigm.

In Viking Age accounts, there is a self-conscious division between two types of magic: Old Norse *galdr* and *seid(r)*. *Galdr* is derived from the verb *gala* 'to make the sound of a crow or raven,' while the etymology of *seid(r)* remains somewhat obscure (de Vries 1962). It may have something to do with vocal performance, such as singing or chanting. By the Viking Age, however, *seid(r)* had developed a reputation for being somehow "shameful." *Ynglinga saga* (ch. 7) relates how the Vanir goddess Freyja taught the god Oðinn the art of *seidr*. It may be that *seidr* was thought to be "shameful" or unmanly because it sometimes involved sexual activity, or perhaps more plausibly because it involved the loss of consciousness and induction of trance states. *Galdr*, on the other hand, appears to be a more straightforward use of symbolic vocal utterances, perhaps accompanied by visible signs, to impress the will of the magician directly onto the environment. The saga literature is rich with accounts of magic; extensive studies have been made by Dillmann (1986), Eggers (1932), Ellis Davidson (1973), Jaide (1937), and Strömberg (1935).

The most discussed aspect of medieval Scandinavian magic is certainly "rune magic," i.e., the notion that the runes, the early Germanic writing system, were essentially a magico-religious tool. Early literature on this subject suffered from a theoretically imprecise basis (Olsen 1916, Linderholm 1918, Lindquist 1923, Agrell 1927). In 1952, Baecksted raised the first serious objections to the simple equation that runes are magic. More recently, Schneider (1956) and Klingenberg (1973) have continued speculation in the field of rune magic, while other runologists, such as Page (1964) and Antonsen (1980), have remained more skeptical. The problems are summarized by Flowers (1986: 48-61).

Whether or not runes are in and of themselves magical, they were used almost exclusively for magical ends in the older runic period (1st–8th centuries A.D.). A review of the inscriptions of this period shows that there is not a single one of them that could be interpreted in a purely secular, nonmagical sense (Krause 1966). In the later period (9th–12th centuries), such profane communications become more common, while in the following medieval period they become more common still.

As far as the theory and practice of magic with runes are concerned, it is clear that this writing system was used as an aid in objectifying the will of the magician in graphic form. Formulas that until the introduction of the runes were perhaps performed only vocally were now made symbolically more objective, and hence more magically, by means of writing. The fact that the word used to class these signs, Proto-Germanic *rano*, Old Norse *rún*, seems to have basically meant "secret" or "mystery," adds to the credibility of those who see in the runes something intrinsically magical. In the history of magic in Scandinavia, there seems to have been no set of symbolic behaviors more important than a vocal performance followed by an execution of a graphic sign or set of signs to reinforce the will of the magician. In this process, the runes became a primary tool of the magician in pre-Christian times.

After the introduction of Christianity into Scandinavia, indigenous cultural features, such as the runes, began to erode slowly. In the field of magic, there arose a new tradition, certainly inspired by continental models, of recording magic "recipes" in *grimoires*, or *galdrabókur*, books of magic, as they were commonly called in Icelandic. The kind of magic practiced from these books is recorded in two significant ways. First, there is the tradition of the Icelandic folktales having their origins in this period (12th–17th centuries), in which the exploits of famous magicians who are said to have used such manuals are recounted. Second, there are the few remains of these books themselves. The most complete of these is the so-called *Galdrabók* (ed. Lindquist 1921).

The theoretical basis for the practice of magic in these sources is essentially unchanged from the heathen period. The magician is usually supposed to speak a vocal formula and then draw or carve a special abstract sign, called *galdnastafir* or *galdnarmyndir* in Old Icelandic. This procedure varies greatly from the standard forms of magic being commonly practiced at the same time on the Continent, in which supernatural entities are invoked and coerced into doing the bidding of the magician.

The practice of magic in the Scandinavian Middle Ages was
symbolic action bound up with the use of runes for magical purposes. The basis of this practice is the belief that certain persons have the power to effect their will directly on the environment with the aid of the traditional lore, such as mythic references, poetic formulas, runes, or abstract graphic signs.


Stephen E. Flowers

Magnús Hákonarson, son of Hakon Hakonarson, ruled Norway 1263–1280; he became king in 1257, and ruled together with his father until Hakon died in 1263. Magnús Hákonarson and his closest advisers, the “good men,” concentrated on the domestic conditions of Norway. Legislative and organizational work characterized Magnús Hákonarson’s reign, and secured him the name lagabettir (“law-mender”). During his reign, the State Council was more firmly structured than before. Furthermore, he saw to it that a staff of civil servants was educated at the royal chapel, the Apostolic Church in Bergen. We are able to distinguish a group of diplomats employed in his service during his reign.

The object of his legislation was a comprehensive revision of the old law books. The legal revision was a continuation of the State Laws dating from the time of Magnus Erlingsson (1161–1184) and Hakon Hakonarson (1217–1263). The latter had initiated the revision of the Frostupsing Law. The revision of the law went through two stages. The first one included a revision of the law books for Gulathing in 1267, and Eidaþifa- and Borgarþing in 1268. The latter consisted of the working out of the National Law in 1274 (which also came to apply to the Faroe Islands), a Town Law in 1276, and two law codes for Iceland, Jarnsida in 1271 and Jornsbo in 1281. An older court law was expanded and revised, and became the Hirdskra (1273–1277).

The object of this legislative work was to create uniform laws for the entire country. The legislation increased the authority of the king with the regard to administration and execution of the laws, as well as the public regulation of society. At the same time, it entailed important reforms, regulation of the tax system and of the institutions for the poor. There is no actual Christian Law in the National Law. The reason for this exclusion was a major conflict between the monarchy and the Church concerning Christian legislation, dating from the end of the 1260s. Magnús Hákonarson claimed that the king and the Church should administer the Christian legislation in unison. On the basis of this claim, Christian legislative decisions were publicized in a statute dating from the middle of the 1260s. The revision of the Gulathing Law and the Eidaþifa- and Borgarþing Law in 1267 and 1268 included the Christian Law. During the revision of the Frostupsing Law, the king was strongly opposed by the new archbishop, Jón rauði ("the red"), who independently started to make a Trondic Christian Law in accordance with purely ecclesiastical principles. The conflict between the king and the archbishop was difficult, but an agreement was reached in Tunsberg in 1277.

Magnús Hákonarson’s first task as absolute monarch was to conclude a peace treaty with Scotland. Thus, he abandoned his father’s expansive foreign policy. The negotiations with the Scottish king began in 1264, and an agreement was reached two years later, the Treaty of Perth. Magnús Hákonarson gave up his claim to the contested islands, the Hebrides and the Isle of Man, in return for a one-time compensation of 4,000 pounds sterling and 100 pounds sterling annually in perpetuity; at the same time, Norwegian control over the Orkney Islands and the Shetland Islands was secured. Magnús Hákonarson preserved the contact his father had established with neighboring countries and with Europe. His relations with Sweden and Denmark were peaceful, even though he became involved in the dispute over the throne in Sweden in the 1270s and in inheritance claims in Denmark. He also extended legal rights of all German-speaking merchants in Norway, surpassing the rights of native and other foreign merchants. This was the first step in the development of special privileges for the Germans in Norway, based upon their special role in the economy of the country.
Magnúss saga helga eyjajarls

see Arnórr í Hérdarson jarlaskáld

These are, first, the one incorporated into Heimskringla, and surviving as interpolations into the sagas of the Norwegian kings in the 13th century to accommodate it to the sagas of the kings of Norway and Scotland: 1150–1470." Diss. St. Andrews University, 1971; Helle, Knut. "Konge og gode menn i norsk riksstyrening ca. 1150–1319. Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1972; Crawford, Barbara E. "The Earls of Orkney-Caithness and Their Relations with the Kings of Norway and Scotland: 1150–1470." Mediaeval Scandinavia 1 (1968), 101–14; Gunnes, Erik. "Kirkelig juridisjon i Norge: 1153–1277." Historisk tidsskrift (Norway) 49 (1970), 121–60; Crawford, Barbara E. "Weland of Sidlaw: A Scottish Royal Servant at the Norwegian Court."

But the Longer Saga of St. Magnus is very closely related to the Miracle Book of Werárklaustr. It seems to be based upon a text of The Longer Saga of St. Magnus is also textually related to the Breviarium Aberdeenonis, which could also be derived from Master Robert’s text.

All the Norse texts give an account of Magnús’s ancestry, and describe an incident in his youth, when he was conscripted by King Magnús berføtt ("bare-leg") Óláfsson of Norway on an expedition into the Irish Sea (1098). He refused to fight, reading his psalter instead, and then absconded. Nothing else of his life is narrated other than his martyrdom at the hands of his cousin Earl Hákon Pálsson, which is described in detail. There follows a miracle book of the healings performed at his shrine. The Legenda makes only indirect reference to the story of the Irish Sea expedition, and omits the miracle book. The Longer Saga (ch. 27) and the Legenda preserve the detail of Magnús’s double wounding at martyrdom, although only the Longer Saga describes the double blow as struck from in front into the same wound on the head. Magnús saga helga (ch. 40) and specifically the Shorter Saga (ch. 13) mention only a single blow. The double blow from in front into a single wound has been strikingly confirmed from the skull of St. Magnus, discovered at the cathedral in Kirkwall in 1919. Underlying all the texts, therefore, is a Passio, to which a miracle book is normally appended. This text may well be that of Master Robert. The account in Orkneyinga saga is probably based directly or indirectly upon this text, as may be the much-abridged texts of the Legenda and the Breviarium. The Shorter Saga represents a separate redaction of the account in Orkneyinga saga, but the Longer Saga of St. Magnus seems to be a reworking of that account by reference back to Master Robert’s text.

The Shorter Saga may preserve fuller wording than that of the surviving version of Okneyinga saga. The Longer Saga was probably composed in its present form about or soon after the beginning of the 14th century, in the cultural context of the Benedictine monasteries of northern Iceland, and possibly by Abbot Berg Berkisson of Pertainment. It seems to be based upon a text of Orkneyinga saga close to Flateyjarbók, but it further cites as its source a Latin Life of St. Magnús, composed by a "Master Robert" twenty-eight years after Magnús’s martyrdom. The Longer Saga is also textually related to the Breviarium Aberdeenonis, which could also be derived from Master Robert’s text.

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The saga is a contemporary account of Magnús lagabøtir's reign over a realm that spread widely across the North Atlantic. It is structured in the same way as Sturla's saga on King Hákon (Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar), Magnús's father, using the regnal years to establish a chronological framework. The chronology of these two sagas runs much along the lines of West European chronicles, especially the English kings' chronicles of the 12th and 13th centuries. But the Icelandic tradition prevails in Magnús's saga with its strong realism; apart from statements of fact, the narrative is parsimonious. The saga was written under the guidance of King Magnús, who decided what it should contain.

Magnús saga lagabøtis is preserved in two fragments in a vellum from around 1400 (AM 325 X 4to), which were accidentally found by Árni Magnússon around 1700. Only a century earlier, the saga as such was still available in Iceland, judging by the works of Arngrímur Jónsson. In the Middle Ages, Magnús's saga must have been well known, as the various annalists of the 14th century have made abundant entries from it, some of which apparently represent long passages from lost parts of the saga. The two original fragments deal with the years 1263-1264 and 1271 and verify that the image as a prince of peace, which King Magnús attempts to give his father, is very much the same as the one he favors for himself. Foreign policy is the dominating theme in the saga, as it is in the latter part of the saga of his father, likewise written under Magnús's guidance.

His great achievements in law and administration seem to play only a minor role in the presentation of Magnús as an arbitrator in Scandinavian politics. The main sources for this work were the king's and Sturla's memoranda (the reader senses the author's closeness to the events), as well as interviews, letters, itineraries, and the royal archives in general; poems are absent from the saga.


[See also: Annals; Hákon Hákonarson; Hákonar saga gamla Hákonarsonar; Konungsögrur; Magnús Hákonarson; Sturla Þórðarson; Sturlunga saga]

Mágus saga jarls ("The Saga of Earl Máguš") is preserved in approximately seventy-five vellum and paper MSS. This comprehensive transmission, without parallel among the riddarasögur, comprises a shorter and a longer version from around 1300 and 1350, respectively. The former can be assigned together with Konráðs saga keisarsonar, Mirmanns saga, and Bærings saga to the oldest period of the nontranslated Icelandic riddarasögur. But the more detailed later version enjoyed the greater popularity in Iceland down to the early 20th century. The anonymous Mágus saga jarls may be one of the riddarasögur that had its origin in Reykhólar in western Iceland.

Parts of the material of the saga are also found in Mágus rítur and Geirards rítur, in the Faroese ballad Karlamagnús kvæði (Karlamagnus og Jóvagn konung, CCMF 106), and in Norwegian ballads (Dei tri vildri, The Types of the Scandinavian Medieval Ballad, TSB D 404).

The arrogant Emperor Játumn of Saxland is killed in the course of a dispute by the vehement Vigvarðr, son of Earl Ámundi. For three years, he hides in a forest together with his brothers, Rognvaldr, Markvarðr, and Ædalvarðr. By a trick, his brother-in-law Máguš manages to release the brothers from captivity and from the persecution of Játumn's son, Emperor Karl. In the end, Máguš reconciles the two parties. Because of his skills, Máguš is also called Bragða-Máguš ("the trickster") and the saga Bragða-Máguš saga.

Even though Mágus saga jarls, like Karlamagnús saga, Flóvents saga, Elis saga ok Rósamundu, and Bærings saga, belongs among the group of Old Norse riddarasögur that can be classified as the matière de France group, it hardly presents, at least in its present form, a close translation of a lost chanton de geste. Nonetheless, a part of it shows a very close thematic relation to Pélerinage de Charlemagne (ch. 1: "Travel to Constantinople"), to the fairy-tale type AaTh 1552 (ch. 2: "The Wise Carving of the Owl"), to Decameron 3-9 (the test of the unloved woman, chs. 2-4; cf. Shakespeare's All's Well That Ends Well), and in the main part (chs. 5-22) to Renaud de Montauban (also known as Magus d'Agremont or Fils d'Haymon). In the Geirards Jattir of the younger version, a story from Gesta Romanorum is also used. Among the Old Norse texts used by the author of Mágus saga jarls are Pårëks saga, Karlamagnús saga, Halfs saga ok Hálfsrekka, and Snorra Edda. The younger version shows in the added jættir many similarities in content to the fornaldarsögur. The origin of the older Mágus saga may be oral tradition, or it may be, as in the case of Tristrams saga, that a translation made in Norway was revised in Iceland and gave rise to a new version. In any case, the two different versions present an interesting example of how a source that was considered stylistically unsatisfactory (i.e., the older version) was adapted to changed poetic and stylistic models (the younger version). Similar characteristics can be found with regard to Óivar-Odds saga, to which Mágus saga appears to have a connection. The narrative style of the older and shorter Mágus saga has been compared with the classical Íslendingasögur. The younger version is characterized by an active, obtrusive narrator, seen also in a large number of the riddarasögur and fornaldarsögur of the 14th and 15th centuries.
Maiden Warriors. Old Norse literature has a common conception of women who, fully armed, participate in battle like men. These women thus encroach upon a preserve that, both earlier and later, has been considered a male one in European conceptual history. They show themselves in a sphere where strength and initiative are demanded and where they can gain honor immortality, at least in the world of words; great deeds in battle are commemorated in skaldic verse or in the later Islendingasögur.

In the younger sources (fornaldarsögur and riddarsögur), these women are met with reprisals. Often they are forced out of the male sphere because their suitors defeat and sometimes rape them (cf. the fairy-tale motif König Drosselbart). In the younger sources, the women are described as being provocatively sexually hostile. They prefer to fight rather than to love, and are exceedingly proud, independent, and unsympathetic. In the older sources, the Poetic Edda and the Islendingasögur, the strong, proud woman is capable of both fighting or loving, of showing both strength and tenderness (cf. Sigrún in Helgakvida Hundingsbana I). The primary positive or negative attitude toward the fighting women is thus decided by the date of the sources. The appearance of such women is determined by whether the material is treated realistically or not, or whether the plot takes place in distant lands or in local surroundings. The type therefore appears in the Poetic Edda and in the fornaldir saga with the common-Germanic or common-Nordic mythic material and in the exotic riddarsögur. The type does not exist in the local Islendingasögur, where armed women would have been a breach of style. Guðrún in Laxdœla saga, however, may be a successor to the type.

Whether the Norse maiden warriors are related to the Greek Amazons is not known. Nor is it known if maiden warriors in Scandinavia had a historical basis. No woman’s grave containing weapons has yet been discovered.

In Old Norse literature, an armed maiden warrior is called valkyrja, skjaldmær, or meyköngr.

The term valkyrja has the etymology kjósar val, and refers to the fact that she chooses the warriors who are to fall in battle. The valkyrja is a supernatural being in the shape of an armor-clad earthy woman, or she may be an earthly woman in the service of Öðinn, god of war and death. The valkyrja has two functions: she is present on the battlefield where the “choice” is to be made, and she is in Valhöll, where the fallen warriors gather. The valkyrja was able to fly through the air. The word valkyrja is used both in Snorra Edda and in the Poetic Edda, which also uses it about female figures independent of Öðinn, like Sigrún in Helgakvida Hundingsbana and Brynhildr in the poetic cycle about Sigurðr Fafnirsöni. It is possible that Volundr’s vanished wife, Svanhvitr, is related to the type. In her capacity as swan maiden, she can at least fly. And an obscure line, ærlög drygría (“in wars to try them”), can perhaps be translated as if she and her vanished sisters have been associated with warfare.

Skjaldmær is used especially in fornaldir saga, and the maiden warriors are here totally Nordic, but can, like all of the characters of this saga type, be involved in supernatural events. The same Brynhildr, who in the Poetic Edda is called a valkyrja, is called skjaldmær in the Volsunga saga, a fornaldarsaga that treats the same material. This identification shows that the designations valkyrja and skjaldmær at least sometimes could apply exactly to the same female character.

Meyköngr is used only in riddarsögur. This variant of the type “maidan warrior” is always a ruling queen and unwilling to share her power with a man. Most commonly, she appears totally

[See also: Fornaldarsögur; Halls saga ok Hallsrekkja; Karlamagnissaga; Old Norse–Icelandic Literature, Foreign Influence on, Riddarsögur, Snorra Edda, Pídreks saga af Bern, Örvar-Odds saga]

Mahlóningavísur see þórarinn svarti
sexually hostile and wants to fight against her suitors. She is then with force and/or cunning made to change her mind.


Lise Praegaard Andersen

Maine *Coin* is a weathered, barely decipherable coin, originally considered English, but now firmly identified as having been found in Maine. The spot is now referred to as the "Goddard site." Measuring 16.4 mm. in diameter and apparently at one time pierced so that it could be worn as a pendant, it has been analyzed by the numismatic scholar Kolbjorn Skaare at Oslo University. Tested at the Atomic Institute at Kjeller, the coin has a composition of 22 percent silver. Initially, the find was regarded as evidence of Norse exploration in Maine, possibly by the Icelandic bishop Eiríkr Gíslason, who, according to Icelandic chronicles, set sail "in search of Vinland" about 1121. But the coin is now believed to have come south by stages through trade among Indian tribes.


†Erik Wahlgren

[See also: America, Norse in; Vinland Sagas]

Malsháttakvæði see Bjarni Kolbeinsson

Mandevilles *Rejse* ("Mandeville’s Travels"). The fictitious Sir John Mandeville’s travels from St. Albans in England to the Holy Land and beyond appealed to the North as to most of Europe for its dynamic synthesis, within a historical narrative, of a traveler’s report from the Holy Land, an itinerary for a pilgrimage in the spirit, an affirmation of Scripture’s historicity, a world perspective on Christendom, crusade polemic, and an account of marvels of the East, authorized by such writers as Orosius, Solinus, and Pliny. The North also claimed its proprietary stake in the Dane Otnes (Holger Danske), conqueror for Christendom of lands between Jerusalem and the Earthly Paradise. The Latin work was known to Claudius Clavis, a Danish cartographer, in 1427. A translation into Danish, probably done about 1440, perhaps by Peder Hare, cleric in Roskilde diocese, was copied by Olaius Jacobi for the Franciscan community at Næstved, Zealand, in 1459 (SKB 307). Two further copies and an uncompleted summary of this translation are extant: Odense, Landsarkivet for Fyn, Karen Brahes Bibliothek E III 6 (mid-16th century); SKB M 306 (1584); and GKS 3559 (late 16th century). The text is thus a monument of Danish literary prose. No vernacular versions are known for other Scandinavian countries, though the influence of Mandeville is seen in the Icelandic lýgisögur. Its diverse appeal is suggested by its varied contexts: in the monastic milieu of Latin and vernacular religious literature; alongside the lists of relics, many implicitly authenticated by Mandeville, held in religious houses; in the scripitorium that also produced Dyrrerim ("Rhyming Bestiary") and the *Kranike* ("Leg­endary Chronicle"); later, paired with the *Udvandre* (a catalogue of ancient Scandinavian emigrants who achieved worldly rule); in the tradition of such itineraries as Abbot Nikulás Bergsson’s (d. 1159 or 1160) of Munkalver and the anonymous *De protectione Danorum in terram sanctam* (from Burgum monastery, Jutland, 1190); and against the background of actual pilgrimage from Scandinavia to the Holy Land.


S. A. J. Bradley

[See also: Chronicles; Dyrrerim, De gamle danske, Lygisaga; Protectio Danorum in Hierosolymam]

Man, Isle of. Set in the middle of the Irish Sea, easily visible on a clear day from all the surrounding countries, Man offered great potential to the politically ambitious of the region. Few historical sources survive from the Viking Age itself, but the period after the late 11th century until Man passed out of control of the Scandinavian kings in 1265 is rather better documented in *Chronica regum Manniae et insularum* (first compiled in the 13th century). By using standing monuments and archaeological investigation alongside historical sources, we can produce a reasonable narrative of the Scandinavian epoch.

The polity of Man before the Scandinavians came cannot be reconstructed coherently. By the 9th century, Norse settlement is evidenced by the presence of a number of furnished graves of pagan character. The graves are of two types: major accompanied burials in isolated mounds, and ordinary accompanied flat graves
in preexisting Christian cemeteries (e.g., at Peel Castle). The graves contain material with a Scottish or Norwegian taint. At some stage in the 10th century, the Scandinavians became Christian, and some seventy carved memorial stones, some of which are inscribed with runes, witness both to the Scandinavian character of the culture and to the fact that the original Manx population still played a role in the structure of society, particularly in that the inscriptions bear both Scandinavian and Manx names.

Excavated settlement sites of the Viking Age in Man tell us little. The major excavations on St. Patrick's Isle, Peel, have revealed a major 12th-century building. Earlier houses can be seen at the Braaid, which shows continuity from the pre-Norse period. This continuity is also evidenced at some of the promontory forts set along the coastline, some of which continued in use during the Middle Ages.

The prosperity of the island in the Viking Age is demonstrated by the presence of nineteen silver hoards, which date mostly from between 960 and 1070. These hoards may reflect the proximity of Dublin, the major economic center of the Scandinavians in the West. But when Dublin's trade shifted toward the southeast, and after Godred Crovan had established the Kingdom of Man and the Isles around 1079 with its northern bias, Man's prosperity declined.

The Church's presence in the Viking Age is attested by the sculptured crosses, by the Christian burials, and by the supposition that an ecclesiastical organization existed, a thesis based on the survival of ecclesiastical buildings where the crosses are found. There was a bishop in Man before 1079, but the parochial organization clearly belongs to a later period, and the bishopric of Sodor and Man was established in the mid-12th century.

From 1079 until 1265, a Norse dynasty reigned in Man, becoming more closely bound to Norway as time went on, particularly as the Western Isles (part of the kingdom of Man and the Isles) were gradually conquered by the Scots. The Norwegian interest in the Western Isles and in Man was purchased by the Scottish Crown after the battle of Largs, and, although Alexander III allowed Magnus to continue as king, a rebellion led by Godred Magnusson brought about the defeat and death of Godred, the last Norse king, at the battle of Ronaldsway in 1275.

The secular administration of the kingdom was carried out from Castle Rushen from the late 12th century onward, and this strong and impressive castle remained the administrative center of the island until the 19th century. The Norse administration is traced also in Tynwald, the present governing body of Man. This assembly, which still meets in a form that reflects its Scandinavian origins in the open air on St. John's Day, has its roots in the all-island (and originally all-kingdom) fæng of the Norse period, of which there are good secondary records.

The chief language of the island in the Norse period was apparently Scandinavian, but a stream of Brythonic Manx seems to have survived throughout the period as the language of the peasantry. Place-names do not seem to be pre-Norse, although claims are made for one or two early Celtic examples. Norse elements are strong in the surviving place-names, particularly in settlement names.


David M. Wilson

**Mannjafnadr** See Senna—Mannjafnadr

**Manx Crosses.** The Viking Age crosses decorated with pictures of human figures and animals reflect the mixture of Norse and Celtic traditions so characteristic of this period of the Isle of Man's history. The crosses also show strong links with northwestern England. Some scenes represent pagan and heroic themes popular in the Vikings' homelands, while others show Christian subjects.

The crosses are made of local slate, which fractures easily. Many survive only as fragments, making identifications difficult. In addition, the craftsmen used a cryptic style where several scenes might be shown on the same part of the cross, rather than divided into separate episodes. For these reasons, the pictures, particularly those on the fragmentary crosses, must be looked at very carefully to determine which scenes belong together and which attributes are distinctive of a particular figure or episode.
The crosses with pictures date to the second half of the 10th century, most from soon after about 950. Literary sources must be used with caution when making identifications, since most are considerably later than the carvings. As only a tiny proportion of 10th-century literature survives, it is not possible to link every picture with a known story.

Some figures have been identified as pagan gods of Norse mythology: among others, Heimdallr, the watchman of the gods, Gerðr, who was wooed by Freyr, the god of fertility, and Pórr. However, only Öðinn can be identified with any certainty: he is shown on a cross fragment from Kirk Andreas (128), following the reference numbers in use at the Manx Museum) with a raven on one shoulder and a spear alongside (both attributes of Öðinn), and his foot in the jaws of the wolf Fenrir, his foe at Ragnarók. On the reverse is a figure with a cross, a book, and a fish, trampling on a serpent, a figure of undoubted Christian meaning.

The great cross at Bride (124) is one of the few complete pictorial crosses, yet it remains an iconographic puzzle. There is no reason to identify the god Pórr among the host of motifs, as has been done in the past. One of the supposed Pórr figures has in fact an incised satchel on his chest. There is probably a Christian source for this figure, as similar ones appear on Irish and North English crosses. Both Norse and Celtic traditions play their part in the complicated decoration on the Bride cross, but the identification of many motifs remains elusive.

The most important group iconographically are four crosses decorated with scenes from the Sigurðr legend: Jurby (119), Malew (120), Kirk Andreas (121), and Maughold (122, from Ramsey). The cross at Kirk Andreas is the best preserved and the clearest to “read”: it shows Sigurðr at the base of the cross on the left killing the dragon Fáfnir, depicted as a serpent. Sigurðr is shown crouching in the curve of the serpent’s body, thus effectively beneath it, as told in literature. This composition illustrates well the skill of the craftsmen in using the limited space on each side of the cross shaft. The pictures of heroic legend were obviously thought appropriate for Christian memorial stones. What, then, do they mean?

The pictures have been interpreted in various ways, as a survival of paganism in a Christian framework, as an elaborate allegory of the triumph of Christianity over paganism, or as equivalents in two different traditions. This latter interpretation would explain the Kirk Andreas cross, where Öðinn seems to counterbalance a Christian figure.

This interpretation can be taken farther. The rows of animals and hunting scenes, as on Sandulf’s cross at Kirk Andreas and Joalf’s cross at Kirk Michael, may have been meant to recall the wealth and status of the man or woman in whose memory the cross was erected. Perhaps, the heroic deeds of Sigurðr and stories of the gods were intended likewise to enhance the memory of the dead.


Sue Margeson

Margrethe I (1353–October 27, 1412), queen of Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, was the daughter of King Valdemar IV Atterdag (“ever-day”) of Denmark and Queen Helvig. At the age of six, she was betrothed, and at the age of ten married, to King Håkon of Norway, son of King Magnus of Sweden of the Folkungs dynasty. Rebellion in Sweden brought Albrecht of Mecklenburg to the throne, but Håkon kept a firm grip on the western parts of the country. Thus, by marriage, Margrethe acquired the additional titles of queen of Norway and Sweden. The upbringing of the young queen was overseen by the Swedish noblewoman Merethe Ulfsdotter, together with that of Merethe’s own daughter, and “both often tasted the same birch.” Merethe herself was of notable birth; her father was a Swedish nobleman, and her mother St. Birgitta of Vadstena. The young Queen Margrethe was from the very beginning made familiar with current political themes, and was raised in an environment that doubtless shaped her opinion of the possibilities for women in society.

In 1370, around Christmas, she gave birth to her only child, Olaf (Olaf II), the legitimate heir to the crown of Norway and, more or less, Sweden. In Denmark, the problem of succession was deliberately kept undecided. Margrethe’s rebellious brother, Christoffer, had died, and King Valdemar had made vague promises to the son of Margrethe’s sister Ingeborg, Albrecht of Mecklenburg (not to be confused with King Albrecht of Sweden, his father’s brother). When King Valdemar died on October 24, 1375, the Danish Council was faced with a difficult choice, since the Mecklenburg candidate was heavily supported by the German emperor, Charles IV. Margrethe acted swiftly, as if she were the recognized ruler of the realm. After many negotiations, the Danes elected Olaf king in May 1376. But
under the military threat by Albrecht, an agreement was reached in September that opened the way for recognition of Albrecht's rights, without detracting from Olaf's, by submitting the issue to arbitration by a number of German princes. Margrethe thwarted this accord by claiming that all arbitration had to follow Danish rules of succession, of which there were none, since Danish kings were elected freely. The death of Emperor Charles in November 1378 and of Duke Albrecht in February 1379 left Margrethe to skirmish only with Albrecht of Sweden. King Hakon died in the late summer of 1380, only forty years old. The next summer, Olaf was acclaimed with all rights as hereditary king of Norway.

In 1386, diplomacy separated the Holsteinians from the Mecklenburg party, albeit at the cost of concessions regarding the status of the duchy of Schleswig under the Crown, but, as usual, with an enfeoffment of doubtful character, supplemented with clauses that cried out for interpretation. In Sweden, Albrecht gradually lost control over the main fiefs to the councilors. Details of their contacts with Margrethe are not known. But Olaf's sudden death on August 3, 1387, for the moment upset all possible plans. Then, on August 10, Margrethe established herself as “authorized lady and husband and guardian of all of the realm of Denmark,” until a new king could be elected according to her proposal. The following year, she performed a similar “coup d'état” in Norway, and managed to secure similar recognition from a number of Swedish magnates. The resulting war with King Albrecht was decided on February 24, 1389, by her victory at Axeval and Asle, where Albrecht was captured while the German faction still kept Stockholm. The same year, Margrethe adopted her sister's maternal grandson, Bugislav of Pomerania, now renamed Erik, who would become king of all three kingdoms. Everything seemed settled, when a war of revenge with Mecklenburg broke out. The peace in 1395 secured the release of Albrecht, who put up Stockholm as a pledge for the release sum. As this sum was not paid, Stockholm finally fell into the hands of Margrethe by 1398. Margrethe had already instituted her famous Union of Kalmar the year before. The resulting document, when compared with the coronation document for Erik, suggests that the outcome was not fully in accord with her ideas of monarchical reign. This may explain why the document was written only as a semivalid paper draft, kept secret in Denmark. The stipulated parchment copies to be sent to all three countries were never made, but the document was later used to curb the government of Erik of Pomerania. The lack of a son and the varying rules of succession in the three kingdoms would eventually prove to be the ultimate obstacle for Erik and thus for the life work of Margrethe. Nevertheless, the union between Denmark and Norway lasted until 1814, and with Sweden until the 1520s, indirectly giving fuel to the wars of the 17th and 18th centuries, and playing a major role in the politics of Scandinavia from the 19th century to the present day.


Søren Balle

Mariu saga ("The Saga of Mary") tells the life story of Mary, the mother of Jesus. The biography focuses on the time up to the return of the holy family from Egypt: the story of Mary's parents, Joachim and Anne; Mary's conception and release from original sin in the womb; her birth; the first years of life and the stay at the temple in Jerusalem; her betrothal to Joseph; the Annunciation and Immaculate Conception; the visit to Elizabeth; the birth of Jesus; the Adoration of the Magi; and the flight into Egypt. The saga merely touches on later events in her life, and then goes into detail about the circumstances of her death and the Assumption. The biographical data about Mary are accompanied by a detailed description of Herod's reign. This vita contains numerous theological opinions and commentaries, which give the saga its distinctive stamp. Among other points, the saga treats the following: Mary's original sin, the name "Mary," the significance of the fifteen steps of the temple in Jerusalem and the psalms associated with them, the mystery of Jesus's human and divine nature, Mary's freedom from sin, the painless virgin birth, the gifts of the three Magi, the Slaughter of the Innocents in Bethlehem, the resurrection of the body at the Last Judgment, and man as the likeness of God.

Unger's edition (1871) reproduces the text of two related versions (pp. 1–62: Stock. Per. 4to no. 1, with variant readings from AM 232 fol., AM 633 4to, AM 634 4to, and Stock. Per. 4to no. 1; pp. 339–401: AM 234 fol., with variant readings from AM 240 I, II, XI, XIV fol.). Apart from the saga, the edition prints a number of miracles attributed to Mary (jarteiknir) that were often transmitted together with the saga in varying forms and numbers. Since the edition has the same title as the saga, one must distinguish among edition, saga, and miracles. In contrast to the saga, Mary's miracles belong to a number of chronologically and stylistically distinct groups. New collections of miracles were added in the course of transmission until, as in Stock. Per. 4to no.1 and AM 635 4to, they achieved a form that has no parallel. Unger's edition brings together miracles from these different collections, often juxtaposing three stylistically divergent versions of the same story.

If one considers the MS tradition of the saga and the miracles, the following picture emerges: the miracles can be found in thirteen MSS, while there are nineteen MSS of the saga; fourteen MSS of the saga also contain miracles; the remaining five MSS are fragments. The same holds true for the twenty-five MSS that contain only miracles. Thus, it cannot be determined from the MS tradition whether the saga and miracles were transmitted separately. The oldest evidence for the saga dates from the second half of the 13th century, and can be found in the MSS NRA 78 (1r, ca. 1250–1300) and AM 240 XI fol. (1r–v; ca. 1275–1300). The complete saga is contained in AM 232 fol. (55ra-66va; ca. 1350), AM 234 fol. (28vb-39vb; ca. 1340), AM 633 4to (1r-59v; ca. 1700–1725), AM 634 4to (1r-19r, 49r-57v; ca. 1700–1725), Stock. Per. 4to no. 1 (1ra-16vb; ca. 1450–1500), and Stock. Per. 4to no.11 (1va-26vb; ca. 1325–1375). The MS tradition of the miracles of Mary goes back as far as the beginning of the 13th century with AM 655
II 4to (1r-4v; ca. 1200–1225). The following MSS also date from the 13th century: AM 655 XIX 4to (1r-2v; ca. 1225–1250), AM 656 II 4to (1r-v; ca. 1250–1300), and AM 240 II fol. (2n-3v; ca. 1300).

Icelandic tradition considers the distinguished cleric Kygri-Bjorn Hjaltaesen the author of Maríu saga (Biskupa sögur, vol. 1, p. 186). Having been chosen bishop of Hólar in 1236, he died in 1237 or 1238 on his return from a journey abroad (Sturlunga saga, vol. 1, pp. 486 ff.; Islandske Annaler, p. 130), during which he had possibly visited Rome to receive the confirmation of his investiture. The statement in Guðmundar saga does not necessarily mean that Kygri-Bjorn was the author of the surviving Maríu saga. It is possible that different versions of the Life of Mary were in circulation in Iceland and Norway. There is, however, no indication of this in the MS tradition. Only in Reykjahlóabók in the 16th century do we find an extensive Life of Mary (Emmerenciana Anna og Maria), which is based on Low German models (Reykahlóabók, vol. 2, pp. 305–468). Consequently, if no more convincing arguments should be found, there is no reason to doubt Kygri-Bjorn’s authorship. Furthermore, according to Guðmundar saga, he was in Rome at the time of the Lateran Council (1215) (Biskupa sögur, vol. 2, p. 92). The date of the council provides a terminus post quem, since Maríu saga (ch. 23) offers a detailed report on this council. The probable time of composition thus lies between 1216 and 1236, perhaps even between 1224 and 1236 (Turville-Petre 1972: 107).

It is not the literary quality of Maríu saga that accords it a special place within the genre of Marian vitae, but the unusual, or even eccentric, way of interweaving vita and theological commentary. The arrangement of the biography is based on a whole series of sources of which the chief ones are the apocryphal gospels Liber de ortu beatae Mariae et infantia salvatoris (Pseudo-Matthew) and De nativitate Mariæ, which depends on the former (both works were attributed to Jerome, who is probably for this reason named in the prologue to the saga, pp. 1 and 339). Minor sources for the description of Jesus’s childhood are the canonical gospels of Matthew and Luke. The Triumblium Anuæ (the legend, known from at least the 9th century, about Anne’s three marriages, with Joachim, Salome, and Cleophas), often referred to in secondary literature, is found only in Stock. Perg. 4to no. 11 (p. 17); all other MSS mention only Cleophas as Anne’s second husband.

The historico-cultural background in the vita is based for the most part on Flavius Josephus’s Antiquitates Judaicae, Books 16 and 17. The sources are often mentioned by name. Biblical authorities from the Old Testament are Moses, Isaiah, Solomon, and David; from the New Testament, Matthew, Luke, John, and Paul. Additional sources are the Church Fathers Jerome, Gregory the Great, Augustine, and John Chrysostom. The numerous theological commentaries, the sources of which are often mostly unknown, remain an unsolved problem. It is here that the author reveals himself to be astonishingly well read and knowledgeable, capable of independent reflection. Only a comprehensive investigation of all the commentaries would lead to detailed conclusions about a man who, with Maríu saga, created a work that is unique within the continental medieval tradition on Mary’s life.


Wilhelm Heizmann

[See also: Christian Poetry; Christian Prose; Miracles, Collections of; Reykahlóabók; Saints’ Lives; Visionary Literature]

Marriage and Divorce. Sharing a common pagan heritage, the Scandinavians, like other Germanic peoples, were confronted with a new set of values concerning marriage and divorce with the appearance of the Church. As Christianity gained recognition and churchmen increased their authority, these new ideas were reluctantly accepted by the native populations.

Modern German scholars have argued at length that marriage by capture (Old Norse hréðlang) was the original pagan form of marital union in the North. Some Scandinavian men did acquire women through warfare, since the practice was prohibited by the Church as late as 1176. It rarely seems to have taken place on native soil, however, but mainly in foreign wars. Most often taken as concubines, such women were frequently of aristocratic background and joined native females in providing Viking men with casual sexual unions, extending over periods of varying lengths. These features of polygyny were more pronounced at the higher levels of society, particularly among kings, where they seem to have lasted longer because of greater resistance to Christian morality. Another Germanic concept, the frikdælehe, which was a union less binding than formal marriage between a man and a free concubine, finds little support in the Nordic sources, although it is still touted by some historians.

Marriage, however, provided the most lasting sexual union for pagan Scandinavians. With a native word only for the ceremony (Old Norse brúðlaup or brúðaupa), but lacking a term for the institution, pagan marriage is best known from the Scandinavian law codes and from the Íslandesgátor. The arrangement consisted of two distinct steps: the betrothal and the wedding. The initiative was taken by the man directly or by his father, while the woman’s father was unable to start proceedings for his daughter, but had to wait for a suitor to appear. The betrothal was essentially a contract between the two men, in which the groom promised to pay a minimum sum, known as “the bride price,” in order to
obtain the woman. In return, her father or guardian declared his right to give her away, and promised to hand over at the wedding a dowry, the sum of the woman's inheritance. The two men shook hands on the bargain, and the date of the marriage was fixed most often within the next year. Celebrated at either the bride's or the groom's house, the wedding consisted of an elaborate festivity lasting several days. It was considered binding in law when at least six witnesses saw the couple openly go to bed.

The most important of these rules was the stipulation of the bride price (Old Norse mund) paid by the groom, which became the shorthand for legal marriage. The commercial character of the transaction is underlined by the use of the same formula (the agreeing on a price, the witnesses, the handshake) that was used in negotiations for other important acquisitions, such as land or ships.

Little if any room existed for the woman's own opinion in the pagan settlement. Providing the most detailed rules, the legal sources imply that male decision (or even coercion) was normal. Men often used marriage alliances to cement agreements between formerly feuding parties. Exchanged like pawns, wives started new lives among people whom they hitherto had considered their enemies. The marriages of orphans were arranged by other male relatives, but only widows enjoyed somewhat more freedom, since they required only their father's approval.

Once married, the couple stayed together, working on their farm and creating their new family. If the marriage did not work out, a divorce could be obtained, a right that extended to both men and women. In the earliest times, it may have been sufficient for the party desiring a divorce to summon witnesses and to declare himself or herself divorced from the spouse, but divorce does not seem to have been common. Both divorced and bereaved people usually remarried quickly, because farm life demanded the work of a couple.

In the pagan context, therefore, unions between men and women were characterized by male control or coercion and accompanied by casualness throughout the duration of the union. Marriage, the most fundamental arrangement, remained basically a commercial transaction between two families.

On this issue, the most telling difference between paganism and Christianity was that, for the latter, marriage was not a commercial contract but a sacrament, the feature that gave Christian marriage its unique character. It was a monogamous union that could not be dissolved, because the couple promised faithfulness to each other for life. The notion of equality of spouses already implicit in the obligation of mutual fidelity became even clearer in the concept of consent.

Consent was developed by continental canon lawyers in the middle of the 12th century. Derived from Roman law and writings of the Church Fathers, consent had originally involved the father, but eventually Roman and Christian writers began to show concern that the bride should also agree with her father's plans. This change was adopted by canon lawyers, and consent in the Christian context eventually came to mean that of the young couple, not of the father. In the Germanic world, boys were liberated from parental control at puberty, but girls escaped their father's protection only to be placed under their husband's control. Therefore, forced agreements weighed more heavily on women than on men. In accord with the freedom given to Germanic young men, churchmen extended it to women as well. Icelandic and Norwegian documents repeatedly stressed that true marriage exists as soon as a man has asked a woman to become his wife, and witnesses have heard her say yes. In some of the Íslendingasögur, female consent is accorded to pagan women, undoubtedly an attempt by the clerical authors to educate their audience to this novel idea. In other ways, however, the Church shaped its marriage regulations to accommodate former native patterns. The pagan twofold division between the betrothal and the wedding was retained in the Christian program by the exchange of promises (the engagement) and the wedding ceremony, which now was moved from the private house, first to the door of the church and later inside. Performed by churchmen, the wedding ceremony was preceded by the reading of banns, which were established to prevent people from unwittingly overstepping the new incest rules, now extended by churchmen beyond the former native limits. Churchmen also participated in the ritual of leading the couple to bed, emphasizing the procreative function in marriage. In Sweden, this custom came to rival the marriage ceremony itself. In place of the pagan model characterized by male coercion and fluidity, the Christian marriage model promised female consent and stability.

It is impossible to determine how far these rules were implemented. Among the lower classes, men and women undoubtedly cohabited informally, disregarding both pagan and Christian ceremonies. Although churchmen labored hard to induce the upper classes to accept the new rules, as late as the 13th century a Danish man was still reminded in law that if he lived with a woman openly for three years she was considered his wife. As illustrated in Sturlunga saga, Icelandic men were notorious for the frequency of their extramarital unions, and many high-born women in Norway continued to be married by their male relatives without their own approval. By the time of the Reformation, however, the rules of monogamy, consent, and indissolubility finally gained general acceptance.


Jenny Jochens

Martinus de Dacia, born Morten Mogensen, was a Dane who studied and taught in Paris in the 1270s–1280s, obtaining the degree of master of theology. In 1288, he appears as chancellor to King Erik VI Menved, probably appointed on the king's succession in 1287. In the king's struggle with Archbishop Jens Grand, he may have gone to Paris instead; he died there in 1304 and was buried in Notre Dame, of which he was a canon. In Denmark, he held canonrics in Lund (now in Sweden), Roskilde, and Schleswig.

Martinus's writings, all in Latin, date from the time he taught at Paris (1270s). They comprise some questions on the Old Logic, i.e., Porphyry's Isagoge, Aristotle's Categories and Perihermeneias, the anonymous Liber sex principiorum, and Boethius's De differentiis topicis, and Modi significandi, a work that provides an admirably clear exposition of the linguistic theory of modi significandi ("ways of signifying") and enjoyed popularity for more than a century. Several later grammarians wrote commentaries on it, among them Albertus Schwebelinus, Gentilis de Cingulo, and one Simon (ca. 1285–1300).


Sten Ebbesen

Martyrologies are lists of saints, arranged according to the calendar, with extracts from the legends of the various saints named (the martyr's passio and the confessors' vita), and with space reserved for the entry of obituaries. The Scandinavian martyrologies are based on the texts of Ado, bishop of Vienne, France (850–860), and of the monk Usuardus, from St. Germain-des-Prés in Paris (ca. 875).

Several fragments of martyrologies, but only five complete ones, are preserved from the Scandinavian region. Three of the complete ones were used in Sweden: two in the cathedrals of Lund and Strängnäs, and a third in the Brigittine monastery of Vadstena. Two were used in Denmark: one in the cathedral of Ribe, and one in the Franciscan convent of Nysted, on the isle of Lolland.

The Lund cathedral martyrology, Liber daticus vetustior, was established in 1146, and is the oldest in Scandinavia. It follows Ado's list of saints in abbreviated form, but from the beginning also included certain Nordic saints' names, such as St. Olaf of Norway; St. Angar, Denmark's apostle; and St. Lucius, pope and patron of the Roskilde diocese of Zealand, Denmark. At some time before 1200, the consecration dates of the Lund cathedral's altars were added to the calendar, i.e., the altars of St. John the Baptist, Our Lady, St. Lawrence, and St. Mary Magdalen. During the first decades of the 13th century, the names of a few Danish saints were incorporated, among them St. Knud (Cnut) Lavard and St. Wilhelm, as well as St. Dominic, St. Francis, St. Thomas of Canterbury, and later St. Catherine.

The Ribe martyrology was established at the end of the 13th century; like the rest of Scandinavian martyrologies, it is based on the texts of Usuardus. Its lists of saints, however, reveals that it is directly dependent on an English version from the New Minister of Winchester. From the beginning, the martyrology included a significant number of Danish saints: St. Knud the Holy, St. Knud Lavard, St. Thoger, St. Kjeld, St. Wilhelm, and St. Angar. During the 14th and 15th centuries, a number of universal saints were added, among them St. Francis, St. Clara, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, and St. Anna. However, only one Nordic saint, St. Birgitta, was added.

The Scandinavian martyrologies clearly reflect the differences among Nordic church provinces. The Strängnäs and Vadstena martyrologies thus include a list of local Swedish saints who do not occur in the Danish versions, for example, St. Sigfrid, St. Eskil, St. Botvid, St. Erik, and St. Helena. And while the Strängnäs martyrology was originally built around a Dominican version from the middle of the 14th century, the Nysted MS, from the beginning of the 14th century, is distinguished by its inclusion of the Franciscan saints' days: St. Bernard, St. Bonaventure, and the date of the consecration of the church in Portiuncula.

By means of paleographic analysis and through the study of MS additions, it can be shown how individual saints, national as well as international, gained popularity within the Scandinavian Church during the Middle Ages, not least under the influence of the new religious orders (the Friars). From the 13th century onward. In those cases where the feast category of a saint's day is indicated, a change of category may reflect the growing or declining importance of the saint. In the Strängnäs martyrology, for instance, the feast categories of St. Dominick and of St. Peter the Martyr were lowered, perhaps because the originally Dominican martyrology was later used in a secular clerical context.

The martyrologies are an important source for the study of the medieval calendar, and the name lists of the obituaries can provide valuable information concerning the general history of the period.

Many of these men subsequently acquired reputations as medical men. The Icelandic Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson (d. 1213) was regarded as a famous surgeon, and it seems probable that he had a certain command of the principles of contemporary Salernitan medicine. Women practicing war surgery are mentioned several times, for example, at the battle of Stiklestad (1030).

Osteoarchaeological findings from medieval burial sites also confirm that fairly advanced surgery was performed from time to time. Several surgical instruments from the Middle Ages are preserved, such as blood-letting equipment, needles, forceps, and catheters. In addition to wound and fracture treatment, operations for gallstones and cleft palates, for example, are mentioned, together with trepanations. The resistance of the Christian Church toward the practice of surgery hampered its development in Scandinavia as elsewhere.

In ordinary situations, however, most of the population had to rely on themselves or on local persons with special abilities in curing casualties or diseases. After the introduction of Christianity, a certain degree of medical service was provided by men of the Church, since many of them had medical knowledge and were able to practice according to the principles of the monastery medicine of southern Europe. In Scandinavia, medical doctors were not educated until the establishment of the first universities offering such training (Uppsala 1477, Copenhagen 1479).

Among the medical remedies used in the Middle Ages, several herbs or drugs from classical Greek and Roman medicine were known in the North in the Viking Age. This knowledge was intermingled with the local tradition and the use of local herbs. The same plants and vegetables could be used for nutrition, for their pleasant taste, and for the prevention and cure of diseases, an example being the highly valued hvorn (Angelica officinalis).

Herbal and medical books from ancient Scandinavia as a rule are collections of material somewhat revised and supplemented from MSS from central Europe. A much-cited author in Scandinavia is Henrik Harpestreng (d. 1244) from Roskilde in Denmark. After the introduction of the printed book, compilations of foreign herbs were published, such as the books of Christiern Pedersen (1533 and 1534) and Henrik Smid (from 1537).

Due to the geography and social structure of the Nordic countries, hospitals of significant size were not established until the 18th century. However, hospitals were erected in connection with churches and monasteries. In Denmark, they are reported from the 11th century. In Norway, the first hospital seems to have been founded in Trondheim around 1170–1180. The history of the early hospitals is often unclear, as sources and definitions are vague in many cases. The medieval monasteries in Scandinavia had a special function in taking care of leprous patients. Leprosy was common, and hospitals that treated the disease were founded all over Scandinavia in the Middle Ages. Excavations performed by Vilhelm Møller-Christensen (1903–1988) of the cemeteries of such hospitals have enriched our knowledge of Nordic medieval medicine in general.


[See also: Harpestreng, Henrik; Plague]
Melkólfs saga ok Salomons konungs ("The Saga of Melkólfr and King Solomon") is preserved fragmentarily in only one MS, AM 696 III 4to from around 1390, consisting of two leaves. The first leaf contains the beginning of Melkólfs saga, the second a fragment of Plácitus saga.

The saga tells how God revealed to King Solomon that He would grant him any boon. Solomon asked for wisdom, and was made the wisest man in the world. However, in Jerusalem, there was a youth, Melkólfr (or Malcolms), who was very clever. Fearing Melkólfr and King Solomon") is preserved fragmentarily in only

The narrative now shifts back to the king's castle and relates an episode, in which Melkólfr does not figure, about two of the king's men who bore grudges against each other. The one was rich and wise, but cunning and false; the other was poorer, but kinder and had the greater honor from the king. Accordingly, his colleague was jealous of him and wished to destroy him. He suggested that they should try to improve their relationship. The poorer man agreed, and said that as a token of their reconciliation, he would buy some meat from him and pay him later: "I will take a side from you, and you shall have a side from me later." Because of the lacuna, the saga ends in medias res at the point when the creditor asks for repayment, but the words of the rich man clearly suggest that he will demand the flesh of the debtor as payment. The scene would seem to record an early version of the "pound of flesh" motif in Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice. In the now-lost continuation of the saga, Melkólfr perhaps fulfilled a role analogous to that played by Portia.

The immediate source of the saga has not been established, and no parallels for the saga have been found among the numerous well-known folk motifs; thus, the riddle to test cleverness appears reminiscent to that played by Portia. In the now-lost version of the "Libellus," however, Leach 1921). The saga is closely related to the humorous and well-known Dialogus Salomonis et Marcolli, which is found in Danish and Swedish chabooks and in Icelandic in some twenty MSS from the mid-15th century to the 19th century, including two rimur cycles (all unedited). This Dialogus consists of two different parts. The first, the dialogue proper, parodies the disputatio, with the wise and learned Solomon being aped by, and finally yielding to, the clever and insolent Marcolli. The second comprises a series of anecdotes in most of which Marcolli provides proofs for his riddling pronouncements. There is a striking similarity between the saga and the first tale in the appended anecdotes, for which no source has been demonstrated. It is tempting to see Melkólfs saga ok Salomons konungs as our only extant evidence in any language of the anecdote in its early stage before it became associated with, adapted, and appended to the dialogue proper.

[See also: Riddles]

Merlinussýp ("Prophecy of Merlin") is a versified translation of the Prophecie Merlinli, consisting of two poems written about 1200 by the monk Gunnlaugr Leifsson, who lived in Píngeyrar monastery and died in 1218/9.

The prophecies of Merlin are contained in Book 7 of Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia regum Britanniae (chs. 3–4). According to Geoffrey, he had translated these prophecies from the British original into Latin in 1135 before writing the Libellus Merlini. This "Libellus," however, has been preserved only as part of the Historia, which has led to doubts whether an independent version of Merlin's prophecies ever existed (Tatlock 1950; cf., however, Leach 1921). The prophecies refer to the wars between the Anglo-Saxons and the Britons under their king Vortigern. They are pronounced by a young man named Merlin, who is said to be the son of a British princess and a demon (Merlinus is the Latin form of the Welsh name Myrdhín). The story of Merlin combines the youth of a certain Ambrosius (taken from Nennius) with the figure of a famous 6th-century Welsh poet and prophet.

Gunnlaugr's translation follows Geoffrey's text closely, except for some added stanzas and half-stanzas, which contain descriptions of battles in the stereotyped skaldic style, showing the translator's liking for scenes and kennings for warfare and battle. Gunnlaugr adds also an introduction to the first part, mentioning his reasons for translating the text, a prayer concluding the first part, and an introduction to the second part, giving the context of Merlin's prophecies, namely the explanation of the mysterious disappearance of the foundations of a tower the king wants to build. This story is told by Geoffrey earlier in Book 6, leading to the conclusion that Gunnlaugr knew not only the independent version of the "Libellus," but the complete text of the Historia. This theory seems to be supported also by the interpretative additions and translations (J.S. Eysteinsson 1953–57; cf., however, Leach 1921, who supposed that Gunnlaugr used only the "Libellus").

Gunnlaugr's two poems were later inserted into the Icelandic prose translation of the Historia regum Britanniae, the Breiðsögur, in the same place where the prophecies appear in Geoffrey's text.
But the sequence of the poem is inverted, for which a reason has not yet been found. It is contested whether there is a connection between the _Merlinsspað_ and the translation of the _Historia_, and if so, what. The _Breta sogur_ have been handed down to us in _Hauksbók_. In the second version (AM 573 4to), the scribe omits the poems, saying that many people know them by heart anyway.

The Latin versions of the prophecies are written in prose, but Gunnlaug used verse for his translation. He chose the fornirðbagai- stanza of ten to twelve lines, presumably because the meter was used in Icelandic poems of prophecy. His model was Völsaspó, shown by several borrowings from this poem.

The author was a skillful versifier who had a good command of the eddic and skaldic techniques and traditions. But his poetry lacks inspiration; it is the poetry of “a book-man who had not a spark of poetic talent in him” (Finnur Jónsson).

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_MIRACLES, COLLECTIONS OF_ 413


_Edith Marold_

[See also: _Breta sogur_; Eddic Meters; _Hauksbók_; Skaldic Poetry; _Völsaspó_]

_Meykongr_ see Maiden Warriors

_Miracles, Collections of_. The Old Norse _jarteikn_ (pl. -it) originally denoted an object that a messenger kept as proof of his identity. Later, it was used to name a miraculous event attributed to the intercession of a saint. Thus, it acquired the meaning “miracle” or “wonder” (Latin _signum, miraculum_). _Jarteiknir_ are usually short stories about a person who is ill or in danger, and subsequently healed or rescued. _Jarteiknaboekr_ are collections of such stories, usually about the same saint. Local _jarteiknaboekr_ were frequently used as the basis for a request for canonization. Medieval Latin literature includes large collections of miracles attributed to the Virgin Mary and the various saints. These have been wholly or partly translated into vernacular languages. Often, _jarteiknir_ were used in homiletic literature as exempla.

In Scandinavia, collections of miracles were translated from the Latin, and original miracle stories were written in both Latin and the vernacular. In content, the miracle stories composed in Scandinavia do not differ essentially from those composed in other countries, so we can hardly speak of national characteristics.

The richest miracle literature has been handed down in West Norse, including collections of miracles attributed to the intercession of “international” saints (_Posola sogur_) and the Virgin Mary (_Martu saga_). Other collections of miracles are about local saints. Miracles about St. Ólafr were first told in skaldic poetry (_Glaðlogsksviða, Erfdrápa_), and in _Geisli_ fourteen miracles are mentioned. It is generally assumed that a collection of Ólaf’s miracles was already in existence, and that in the 1160s, Archbishop Eystein Erlendsson of Nidaros (Trondheim) collected and translated into Latin a great number of Ólaf’s miracles; this collection is now extant in a shorter and longer version. Shortly after the death of Þorlákr Þorhallsson, bishop of Skálholt, his miracles were written at the initiative of his successor, Bishop Páll Jónsson, and read at the _Alpingi_ in 1199. They were translated into Latin by Gunnlaug Leifsson, monk of Pingeýrar, but most of them are preserved only in Icelandic. Miracles of Earl Magnús Erlendsdóttir are found in _Orkneyinga saga_, translated largely from the _Vita sancti Magni_.

In addition, there are accounts of miracles attributed to the bishops Jón Ógmundarson and Guðmundur göði (“the good”) Anason; these accounts are appended to the sagas of the two bishops. The oldest Danish collections of miracles date from the 13th century and are written in Latin (ed. Gertz), including collections of miracles attributed to the intercession of St. Vilhelm, St. Knud (Knut), Knud (Cnut) Lavard, King Erik Flóvensting, St. Þæger, St. Kjeld, and St. Niels. Only three miracles from a collection of miracles about the Virgin Mary are preserved; these miracles date from about 1300. Remnants from the same collection are found in the legendary _Helige Kvinder_.

The oldest Swedish miracle collection is about St. Erik, written in Latin toward the end of the 13th century. From the 1370s onward, miracles about the native saints Birgitta, Brynolf, Nikolaus, and Katarina were collected. In a codex from 1385, a miracle collection is found containing nearly 200 miracles attributed to the various international saints. In _Cod. Upps. C 9_ (ca. 1450) and _SkB A 3_ (1502), a legend of St. Anna including a number of miracles is found. From the mid-15th century, we have the _Svensk játteckens Postilla_. A number of miracles attributed to the Virgin Mary are found in younger MSS.

Mirmanns saga ("The Saga of Mirmann"; also Mirmann's saga) was composed in Iceland, probably in the 14th century, and is unique among the riddarasögur in that the hero's conversion to Christianity plays an important role in the development of the plot. Mirmanns saga is preserved in some thirty-two MSS and fragments. Both the earlyvellums are defective, Cod. Stock. Perg. 4to no. 6 (ca. 1400), preserving the first half, and AM 59a 4to (15th century), the last two-thirds of the saga. Two small vellum fragments from around 1500 (now Lbs. 1230 8vo), containing parts of the end of the saga, were recently discovered in the binding of a 17th-century book now in the National Library in Iceland. The remainder are paper MSS, the majority of which date from the 18th and 19th centuries.

The saga takes place in the time of Nero, when Clemens was pope in Rome. Mirmann, son of the heathen Earl Hermann of Germany, is brought up at the court of King Hlòðr (Clovis) of France. Following the death of his first wife, Hlòðr marries the young princess Katrin of England, who becomes enamored of the young hero. Along with the rest of France, Mirmann is converted to Christianity (Hlòðr is said to be Jewish!). He returns, but his attempt to convert his father ends in Mirmann killing Hermann. Mirmann's mother avenges her husband by infecting Mirmann with leprosy. He returns briefly to France, but leaves in search of a cure, disguised as Jòtvinn. He is advised to seek out the Sicilian princess Cecilia, whose powers as a healer are said to be unsurpassed. Mirmann makes the journey to Sicily, and in a bizarre scene Cecilia coaxes the evil from his body and cures him. Mirmann remains with Cecilia. He distinguishes himself as a knight and is offered her hand in marriage. He returns to France, and following the death of Hlòðr, is seduced by the widow Katrin, who through false letters and slander has convinced Mirmann that Cecilia has been unfaithful to him in his absence. They marry. Learning of this, Cecilia disguises herself as the earl Hiringer and journeys to France with an army. In single combat, she defeats Mirmann and leads him away captive. The wicked queen's tongue is cut out. They return to Sicily, and following a long and happy reign, both retire from the world and end their lives in a cloister.

Early scholars assumed the saga to be a translation rather than a native Icelandic composition. Köbing (1872) found in the saga echt deutsche Sagenstoff ("genuine German saga-material"), but postulated a (lost) Latin original, also citing parallels in the Italian chapbook Real de Francia. Mogk (1909) suggested a French original, and Leach (1921) classed the saga as a 14th-century importation, part of his so-called "merovingian cycle." In fact, there is no evidence that the saga is not an Icelandic composition. Like other native riddarasögur, it borrows and adapts themes and motifs from continental sources, but, unlike many, this first-rate story successfully shapes the borrowed material into a finely wrought whole with a strong narrative thread.

Perhaps the most unusual aspect of Mirmanns saga is the active role played by the three female characters and the correspondingly passive role of Mirmann himself. Mirmanns saga is written in a fine, terse prose style for the most part devoid of rhetorical elaboration.


Gryt Anne Piebenga

[See also: Birgitta, St.; Biskupa sögur; Christian Poetry; Christian Prose; Erik, St.; Gudmundar sögur biskups; Homilies (West Norse); Jòns saga ens helga; Knud (Cnut), St.; Legenda; Magnús saga helga eyjaðars; Marta saga; Oláf, St.; Óláfs saga helga; Orkneyinga saga; Postola sögur; Saints' lives; Porlaks saga helga]

M. J. Driscoll

[See also: Riddarasögur]

Monasticism. Christianity came to Scandinavia from monastic circles when Ansgar (d. 865), a Benedictine monk of Corvey (Westphalia), preached among Danes and Swedes around 830–850. No monasteries grew up on the basis of this early mission, the results of which were annihilated by the period of the Viking raids around 850–950. After Christianity had been adopted in Denmark by Harald Gormsson (Bluetooth) and had started to infiltrate Norway and West Sweden from the west and the Lake Mälaren area by Harald Gormsson (Bluetooth) and had started to infiltrate Norway and West Sweden from the west and the Lake Mälaren area by Harald Gormsson (Bluetooth) and had started to infiltrate Norway and West Sweden from the west and the Lake Mälaren area by Harald Gormsson (Bluetooth) and had started to infiltrate Norway and West Sweden from the west and the Lake Mälaren area by Harald Gormsson (Bluetooth) and had started to infiltrate Norway and West Sweden from the west and the Lake Mälaren area by Harald Gormsson (Bluetooth) and had started to infiltrate Norway and West Sweden from the west and the Lake Mälaren area by Harald Gormsson (Bluetooth) and had started to infiltrate Norway and West Sweden from the west and the Lake Mälaren area by Harald Gormsson (Bluetooth) and had started to infiltrate Norway and West Sweden from the west and the Lake Mälaren area by Harald Gormsson (Bluetooth) and had started to infiltrate Norway and West Sweden from the west and the Lake Mälaren area by Harald Gormsson (Bluetooth) and had started to infiltrate Norway and West Sweden from the west and the Lake Mälaren area by Harald Gormsson (Bluetooth) and had started to infiltrate Norway and West Sweden from the west and the Lake Mälaren area by Harald Gormsson (Bluetooth) and had started to infiltrate Norway and West Sweden from the west and the Lake Mälaren area by Harald Gormsson (Bluetooth) and had started to infiltrate Norway and West Sweden from the west and the Lake Mälaren area by Harald Gormsson (Bluetooth) and had started to infiltrate Norway and West Sweden from the west and the Lake Mälaren area by Harald Gormsson (Bluetooth) and had started to infiltrate Norway and West Sweden from the west and the Lake Mälaren area by Harald Gormsson (Bluetooth) and had started to infiltrate Norway and West Sweden from the west and the Lake Mälaren area by Harald Gormsson (Bluetooth) and had started to infiltrate Norway and West Sweden from the west and the Lake Mälaren area by Harald Gormsson (Bluetooth) and had started to infiltrate Norway and West Sweden from the west and the Lake Mälaren area by Harald Gormsson (Bluetooth) and had started to infiltrate Norway and West Sweden from the west and the Lake Mälaren area by Harald Gormsson (Bluetooth) and had started to infiltrate Norway and West Sweden from the west and the Lake Mälaren area by Harald Gormsson (Bluetooth) and had started to infiltrate Norway and West Sweden from the west and the Lake Mälaren area by Harald Gormsson (Bluetooth) and had started to infiltrate Norway and West Sweden from the west and the Lake Mälaren area by Harald Gormsson (Bluetooth) and had started to infr...
nuns; Tautra close to Trondheim). Thanks to foundation narratives and charters, this chapter of monastic expansion in Denmark and Norway is better known than the Benedictine one. In the 13th century, it gave rise to conflicts with the episcopal power in Jutland (Øm, bishops of Århus). Norbertines were called in to establish a cathedral chapter in North Jutland (Bærglund, or possibly Vreljiv in an early stage after ca. 1139/43, as recent excavations indicate; from ca. 1200, we find canonicesses of St. Norbert in Vreliv), in Scania (Lund, with the excavated St. Drotten's church from the 12th century with its wooden predecessors; Tommarp; Vä, moved to Bäckaskog; Öved, probably as a successor of Lund) and in Norway (Tønsberg, Dragsmark/Bohuslän, today in Sweden). The two reform orders soon engaged in colonizing activities on the southern shore of the Baltic: Cistercians in Kolbacz, Dargun, Eldena (West Pomerania), Oliva (East Pomerania), and Norbertines in Belbuk (and even in Kolbacz?).

In Norway, the position of the black Benedictines was challenged by the Austin Canons' strong position there: Jonskloster in Bergen (ca. 1150); Kastellekloster near Konghelle/Kungshalla in Bohuslän, founded shortly before 1181; Elgeseter in Trondheim, founded not later than 1183. They existed also in Iceland (Pylkkvö), and Greenland. Students from Paris brought the Austin Canons of St. Victor to Norway: Olavskloster in Stavanger (ca. 1150), which moved to Utstein not later than around 1280, and was closely connected with the episcopal see of Stavanger, and Halsøy (ca. 1164), closely connected with the bishops of Bergen.

In the spirit of the reform movement, two cathedral chapters in Jutland adopted the rule of St. Augustine: Ribe under the Flemish-born bishop Elias (d. 1162) and Viborg. But only Viborg remained a regular cathedral chapter throughout the Middle Ages (secularized 1437). The important reformer of the Austin Canons in Denmark was William, canon of St. Geneviève in Paris, active in Denmark for several decades, a reformer of Eskise priory in the Roskilde bay, which he moved to Æbelholt on Zealand, where he became abbot, renowned for his collection of exemplary letters. He died in 1202, and was canonized in 1224. This center of pilgrimage became especially renowned for the medical skill of its canons. Other Austin priories were Grinderslev and Tvílum in Jutland. Some of the nuns' convents in Jutland may have followed the same rule, although this is certain only for Asmild opposite Viborg.

There are some indications that the cathedral chapter of Skara, Sweden, also tried to introduce the rule of St. Augustine (Schück 1983-84). The spirit of the reform movement also influenced Archbishop Andreas Suneson (Anders Sunesen) of Lund to call for the establishment of Benedictine General Chapters for Denmark (1206). Several documents concerning Benedictine students of Odense going abroad in the middle of the 14th century may have received their impulse from the reform bull of Pope Benedict XII 1334 for the promotion of studies in the Benedictine abbeys.

Monasticism in Sweden. In Sweden, the Cistercians of the Clairvaux line were alone to set the complete monastic landscape by their foundations Alvastra (Östergötland, 1143); Varnhem (Västergötland); Víby (Uppland), moved to Julita (Södermanland); Nydala (Småland, 1144); Roma (Gotland); with a number of nuns' convents partly attached to the monks, partly under episcopal jurisdiction: Vreta, Gudhem, Skå, Vårfruberga, Askeby, Riseberga, and Solberga. The Bernhardine Cistercians profited from the spirit of expansion of the Baltic crusading period and were active in the Danish and Swedish missionary efforts in the Baltic area: Padís in Estonia and St. Michael's nunnery in Tallinn may have been initiated by Danish sovereigns and Cistercian monks, perhaps from the Roma kloster, Gotland.

In this connection, the arrival of the Hospitallers of St. John is significant. The Danish Antvorskov, Zealand, was their main house, founded before 1170; Eskilstuna in Sweden followed before 1185, and Varna/Vårne in Norway, probably before 1177, not later than 1194 (Nyberg 1985). The Danish flag, said to have descended from heaven on the battle for Estonia in 1219, is basically identical with the war flag of the Hospitallers of St. John.

It is difficult to characterize the social basis of this first wave of monastic culture in Scandinavia. Kings and the high nobility took the initiative for foundations and donated property; but we may assume that at least the recruitment of lay personnel (conversi and conuressae) also touched the lower layers of society. There are no traces of popular movements of religious enthusiasm ultimately finding its form in monasticism, as, for example, that attached to Robert of Arbrissel, with the possible exception of the preaching of the Hospitallers of St. John before the arrival of the mendicants.

Mendicants. Due to the still-undeveloped state of city life in Scandinavia, the mendicants had to settle at the episcopal sees (Dominicans) and in coastal and inland trading centers (Franciscans). We might assume that they in turn contributed to the development of an urban lifestyle based on the continental European models. St. Dominic showed an explicit interest in Denmark, and sent the Danish-born brother Salomon to Copenhagen in 1221 so that convents could be established in Lund (1221), Ribe (1228), and Visby, Gotland (1228). Now the Dominicans created a province for all Scandinavia named "Dacia," possibly after the model of the Hospitallers of St. John, whose tendency toward popular preaching they adopted, enriching it by theological learning in assistance to bishops and cathedral clergy. Foundations in the highly developed towns of Roskilde, Trondheim, Siguna, and Halsnøy soon followed. The complete list of Dominican (Blackfriars, sortebrüde/svartbröder) convents founded until 1253 numbers no less than twenty-two, of which fourteen were situated in episcopal towns, including Reval in Danish Estonia. Denmark, including Estonia, had eleven; Sweden, including Gotland and Finland, eight; and Norway, three convents. This pattern must have meant a change in old cathedral cities with monastic life, like Lund, Odense, Bergen, and Trondheim; in cathedral towns hitherto without monasticism, like Ribe and Århus in Denmark, Skara and Västerås in Sweden, and Oslo in Norway; and in merchant settlements, like the Danish Åhus (Scania) and Haderslev (South Jutland). Certainly, they stimulated the urban spirit and the introduction of an independent town administration, which had been kept back due to the dominating power of the king's sheriff in city life.

Correspondingly, the Franciscan friars (Greyfriars, gråbröder/gråbrödre) evoked and channeled strong tendencies toward an intensified popular piety in new settlements, gradually generating an urban lifestyle. Only eight of their convents out of a total of twenty-four for the first thirty-five years (1232-1267) were situated in episcopal towns, although the two important Swedish episcopal towns of Linköping and Uppsala were among them, both lacking a Dominican convent. In 1267, Denmark had seventeen Franciscan convents (Odense followed in 1279), Sweden had five already by 1250, with Stockholm in 1270 as the next one, and Norway had two or three at the close of the reign of King Hakon Hakonarson (d. 1263).

The distribution of the two mendicant orders that found their way to Scandinavia in the 13th century shows that in some important cities there was room for both of them: Schleswig, Ribe, Lund, Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim, Skara, and Stockholm, and in a second wave also Visby, Halmstad, Odense, Viborg in Denmark,
and Viborg in Finland. These were exceptions, however, since a number of developing settlements had only one (Franciscan) convent and stayed that way until the end of the Middle Ages; for example, in Denmark: Ålborg, Randers, Horsens, Kolding, Tønder, Flensburg, Svendborg, Kalundborg, Ystad, Trelleborg; in Sweden: Södertörn, Enköping. Later foundations were Helsingør (Elsinore), Malmö, and Nyköping on Falster, Denmark; Nyköping, Jönköping, and Arboga in Sweden, and Kökar on the Åland islands, also belonging to Sweden; Kongsbole/Kungshälla and Marstrand in Bohuslän, which was at that time in Norway. Sites around an abbey of one of the old orders with a Franciscan convent were Nästved and Tåsinge. Franciscans formed their Scandinavian province Dacia like the Dominicans, but not until 1432/8 did they try to make Lund their common study house, while the Dominicans very early had made Sigtuna one of their main centers for theological studies.

Since, from the monastic point of view, North Sweden and Finland were "empty" missionary areas, the Dominicans to a large extent became a substitute for original monasticism, especially in Finland with its important convent in Åbo/Turku. From here as well as from other centers, the Dominicans strongly influenced the liturgical practice of the secular clergy through the cathedral liturgy (Parvio 1980). In all Scandinavia, eighteen Dominicans were promoted to bishop until 1378.

Important centers of female monasticism were the convent of the Dominican nuns in Skåne, where St. Ingrid was a remarkable personality toward the end of the 13th century. A daughter foundation came later in Kalmar. The St. Clare convent just north of old Stockholm played an important role for this developing capital of Sweden. Most remarkable was the concentration of three nunneries in Roskilde: Cistercian nuns in Vor Frue (Our Lady's), Dominican nuns in St. Agnete, and the St. Clare nuns. Cistercian nuns were also found in Sangerup and in Bergen on the island of Rügen, then part of the diocese of Roskilde.

While Cistercian Soro was a center of literary activity (i.e., it owned an early MS of Adam of Bremen's Gesta Hammaburgensis and produced the 13th-century Rhymed Chronicle), the Dominicans took interest in annal writing, where Lund gave impulses to other houses, such as Sigtuna and Skåne. They cultivated philosophical, theological, and scientific as well as devotional and spiritual literature. The Franciscans in Visby kept a valuable chronicle covering the period 813-1412, and the Younger Zealad Chronicle (mid-14th century) may have a Franciscan as its author (Oksbjerg 1987). The dissolution of mendicant convents began in Denmark under Frederik 1 (1523-1533) and was confirmed by law in 1537. In Sweden, it was quickly accomplished after the Diet of Västerås 1527 by King Gustav Vasa, in Norway after 1536. In Denmark and Norway, life in the proper monastic settlements, especially in the countryside (abbey, herreklaster) was allowed to continue until the last inhabitant died, although the use of Latin and old ceremonies was restricted, and new members were not accepted. In Sweden, monks were treated harshly, and all monasteries except Vadstena and some nuns' convents were dissolved by 1550 (Ivarsson 1970).

In Denmark, in a few cases, female monasticism continued for another century in Lutheran forms for unmarried daughters of the nobility, as in the old Brigittine convent of Maribo (det adelige jomfrukloster, cf. Johansen 1985). Remarkable representatives

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Tore Nyberg

Morkinskinna ("the rotten vellum") is the not particularly appropriate name given by Thormodus Torfaeus to the MS later to be designated GKS 1009 fol. in the Royal Library in Copenhagen. The MS was brought to Copenhagen by Torfiæus in 1662 as a gift to the Danish king from Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson at Skálholt. The name Morkinskinna is also applied to the sagas of the kings of Norway contained in this MS that cover the period between about 1035 and the second half of the 12th century.

The MS was written around 1275 by two Icelandic scribes, probably in the scriptorium of some clerical institution. It has several lacunae and lacks a conclusion. In its present condition, it consists of thirty-seven leaves, but probably about one third of the book is missing.

Parts of the Morkinskinna text are also preserved in the more recent part of Flateyjarbók (15th century) and in AM 325 IV B and XI 3 4to (two 14th-century fragments, in all likelihood remnants of the very MS from which the more recent part of Flateyjarbók was transcribed). The more recent part of Flateyjarbók is intact, but contains only the sagas of kings Magnús góði ("the good") and Haraldr hárfager ("hard-ruler"), i.e., approximately the first half of Morkinskinna. The extensive lacuna following the first leaf of the Morkinskinna MS can thus be filled in from the more recent part of Flateyjarbók and AM 325 4to, but there is no parallel text to fill in the lacuna at the end. It is assumed, however, that Morkinskinna, like Fagrskinna and Heimskringla, ended with the battle of Ræ at 1177, just before the advent of King Sverrir.

The preserved Morkinskinna text is a reworking of a lost older work, known in the literature as the "Oldest Morkinskinna," which differed from the surviving version in not containing a number of shorter interpolations from Agríp af Nösga konunga ogmót and most of all of the Ættrir about Icelanders, which are a distinctive feature of Morkinskinna as we have it. The "Oldest Morkinskinna" was used by the author of Fagrskinna as the main source of the latter part of his work and was also an important source of the last third of Heimskringla.

The "Oldest Morkinskinna" has been dated to the early 13th century; Storm (1873), on external criteria, dates it as narrowly as 1217–1222. It is probable that it was written to fill a gap between two earlier works, the saga of St. Olaf (d. 1030) and the saga of King Sverrir. Certain archaic features of its style and language testify to its early origin, and an uneven presentation marked by repetition, contradiction, and infelicities in chronology add to the impression of a preclassical work. The hypothesis that Morkinskinna was based on a group of otherwise unattested sepa-
rate sagas of Norwegian kings can hardly be defended; apart from the section based on Eiríkr Oddsson's lost *Hryggjastykki*, dealing with the years 1136–1139 (perhaps 1136–1161?), the sources were probably oral rather than written. The references to "Knúts saga" (Knúts saga helga) and "Jarla sogur" (Orkneyinga saga) are likely to be unoriginal.

Text from *Morkinskinna* (with interpolations) forms part of various compilations from the 13th and 14th centuries. A number of *fætir* and shorter anecdotes have been interpolated from a *Morkinskinna* redaction into the archetype of one of the two main classes of MSS of *Heimskringla* (the "Jofraskinna" class), and a similar but independent augmentation is evident in *Codex Frisianus*, which belongs to the "Krínla" class. The late 13th-century compilation *Hulda-Hrokkinskinna* is based on texts of *Morkinskinna* and *Heimskringla* (among others) in a ratio of approximately two to one. The style of this text of *Morkinskinna* has been revised, either prior to or contemporary with its incorporation in *Hulda-Hrokkinskinna*. Two MSS of the *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, AM 62 fol. (14th century) and AM 54 fol. (an addition made in the 16th century), contain a short interpolation from an apparently expanded *Morkinskinna* redaction.


Jonna Louis-Jensen

[See also: Ágrip af Nørges konunga sogum, Fagrskinna, Flateyjarbók, Frísibók, Heimskringla, Hulda-Hrokkinskinna, Konungságrur, Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar, Pátr]

**Music and Musical Instruments.** Information about musical life in medieval Scandinavia is not plentiful, but the literary sources (the *Eddas*, the sagas, and the chronicles) make clear at least that even in Viking times music was recognized as an art, a civilized and civilizing accomplishment that belonged to the ideal education of a cultured man. Thus, in *Orkneyinga saga* we read that Earl Rognvaldr Kali Kolsson (d. 1158) counted harp playing among his "nine accomplishments" (cf. the eight accomplishments that purport to be claimed, some in identical terms, by King Haraldr hrðráðr ['hard-ruler'] Sigurðarson in *Morkinskinna*). Furthermore, it was understood that music affected the inner man, his mind and soul, to such a degree that, in especially skilled hands, it was believed to be capable of exerting a magical power, even over small animals and inanimate objects. Such a view, of course, received encouragement and respectability from the biblical account of David playing his harp to calm Saul. In *Volsunga saga* (drawing upon *Atlakvida* and *Atlamål*), we are told of Gunnarr, son of Gjuki, who, when inspired, could play the harp so that women would weep; and of how Gunnarr, cast into a snake pit with hands bound, played his harp with his toes so wonderfully that the snakes were lulled to sleep. So popular were Gunnarr's musical exploits that they gave their names to several tunes an itinerant musician played before King Ólafr Tryggvason in Trondheim, as recounted in *Nornagesis Pátr*. In *Bósá saga*, the adventurer Bósi (in the guise of King Goðmundr's harp player Sigurþr) played tunes at the wedding party held at King Goðmundr's court, which caused not only the guests who were present but also "the knives and dishes and everything that wasn't held down" to begin to move about and dance. These tunes also have particular names, the last being "Rammaslag." This name is printed in the margin beside Arild Huitfeldt's retelling, in *Danmarkris Rigs Kronike IV* (1603), of Saxo's account of King Erik Ejegod ("ever-good") being driven berserk by the playing of a visiting harper and then killing four men (*Gesta Danorum*, Book 12). Referring to *Bósá saga*, Sven Lagerbring reported (Svea Rikes Historia) that in 1769 the belief was still current in some peasant areas that a particular dance or piece of music had such powers. Others (see Levy 1974), calling attention to the fact that for "Rammaslag" Bósi referred to the use of a special string "that lay across the other strings," would relate it to the group of dance melodies called "Ramme slâtter" or "Gorrlause [i.e., loose-string] slattle," so-called because to play them the musician must tune down (loosen) the lowest string of the fiddle from G to F. These melodies have survived in Setesdal in Norway to the present day.

At the beginning of his Book 3, Saxo describes Hotherus, the foster-son of King Geverus, who "through the ear captured people's hearts and filled them with joy or horror," as a master of all sorts of stringed instruments, naming as examples "harp and lyre, lute and fiddle." The names of a variety of other string, wind, and percussion instruments are mentioned elsewhere in the literary sources as well (e.g., "pipar, bumbur, gígjur eðr salterium eðr harpur" in *Kírúflax saga*), but it is usually difficult to determine with certainty how such designations are to be interpreted and to what extent they are to be taken as representing actual use or seen as literary conventions, often anachronistic. Similarly, the numerous pictorial representations of musical instruments, especially in church wall-paintings, cannot be taken as evidence that all the instruments so depicted were familiar from local usage. One of the latest and most comprehensive examples is the unusually large instrumentarium in the mid-16th-century wall-paintings of an angelic orchestra playing no fewer than thirty-one different instruments, uncovered during the restoration of Rynkeby church on the island of Fanen in Denmark in 1965. Allowance must be made...
English missionaries played an important role in the christianization of Scandinavia, and their influence is to be observed in the earliest liturgical traditions, for example, at Nidaros (Trondheim) in Norway and Odense in Denmark, and in the earliest additions to the liturgy, required for the celebration of new local and national saints, such as the royal martyrs St. Óláfr (d. 1030), St. Knud rex (d. 1086), and St. Knud dux (d. 1131). Because of the Reformation, only comparatively few, and late, medieval liturgical books have survived entire in Scandinavia; however, many thousands of fragments from them have survived in the national archives of all the Scandinavian countries, the parchment folios having been used, among other things, as binding material and as wrappers for public records. Despite Haapanen's pioneering work in Helsingfors and the brave efforts of palaeographers in the other capitals, these fragments are still far from being thoroughly catalogued. Yet, we must look to them for knowledge of medieval Scandinavian church music. From such sources, Reiss (1912) was able largely to reconstruct the Offices and Mass of St. Óláfr, the services for Knud rex are known from late printed sources, but without music; quite exceptionally, the Offices and Masses of St. Knud (Lavard) dux perhaps prepared for his translation and canonization in 1170, survive intact in a late 13th-century copy (now Kiel, Univ. Bibl. MS S.H. 8 A 8vo). A certain influence from Germany was inevitable, in view of the fact that Scandinavia first belonged to the church province of Hamburg-Bremen, but this influence became less direct with the establishment by Pope Paschal II of a separate archbishopric with its seat in Lund in 1103, and of a second province of Niðaröss by Pope Anastasius IV in 1154. In the 12th century, important connections were established with Paris, first with the collegiate churches of St. Geneviève and St. Victor, later with the newly established university. The special cultivation of sequence composition at St. Victor is perhaps reflected in the three sequences added around 1170 to the Liber daticus Lundensis (Lund, Univ. Bibl.), the earliest complete pieces of music surviving in a Danish source, and certainly in the great sequence for St. Óláfr, Lux iluxit letabunda (ca. 1200), which quotes several melodic phrases from sequences associated with Adam of St. Victor. Additional influence from Paris came with the activities of Dominicans and Franciscans in Scandinavia in the 13th century, clearly to be seen in the use of Dominican models for the texts and music of various liturgical pieces, for St. Erik of Sweden and St. Henrik of Finland, for example, and in particular for virtually the entire liturgy for the feast of St. Porlák of Skalholt in Iceland.

In his endowment (ca. 1080) of St. Lawrence church in Lund (the later cathedral), King Knud made provision for a chanter. After the dedication of the cathedral in 1145, Archbishop Eskil Sunesen issued choral statutes, the first in Scandinavia, for the archdiocese of Lund. If the assistance of foreign musicians was needed to establish a proper musical practice, their names are not now known, with the exception of one Rikini, a French clerk engaged by Bishop Jon of Holar in Iceland to teach church music in the school founded by him in 1107. In view of the close contacts of churchmen from Scandinavia with Paris in the 12th and 13th centuries, it would be reasonable to expect church music in Scandinavia to include the new polyphony cultivated there; evidence of this development is almost totally lacking, however. The choral statutes of Uppsala cathedral from 1298 are of particular interest in this regard, inasmuch as they stipulate that on the occasions when "that kind of
polyphonic song which is called *organum* is performed, the singers are to receive an extra fee. The term *organum* is ambiguous: it can refer to the use of an organ, and it is known that various churches had organs, for example, Ribe cathedral in Denmark by around 1290, Lund and Niðarós before 1330. Amgrimr Brandsson brought an organ to Iceland in 1329 that he had himself built in Trondheim (*Biskupa sögur*). *Organum* can also refer to the style of singing in which a second part is added to an existing tune in accordance with certain rules that can be learned so that it can be done extempore. The term can also mean the compositions in what came to be called the *ars antiqua* style, although it was modern in the early 13th century. Moberg (1947) argued persuasively that the reference to *organum* in the Uppsala statutes must be to the latter kind of music in order to justify special remuneration for the skill involved, and he supported his argument with three early 14th-century music theoretical treatises (in Uppsala Univ. Bibl. C 55 and C 543) which could have been used to teach such skills. However, no example of such music, or of music written in mensural notation, has been found in a Scandinavian MS written before the 16th century, and we have no knowledge of the music in the lost book *continentem discantus et triplétet* given to the school in Lund in 1358.

*Biskupa sögur* record that Laurentius Kálisson, bishop of Hólar (1322–1331), forbade singing in two and three parts in church; since he referred to such singing as *leikaraskapr*, it may be to the practice of the earlier, improvised kind of polyphony that he took exception. In any case, the few examples of polyphonic music that have survived in Scandinavian sources are all of a kind that could have been improvised. These include: (1) the proper hymn, *Gaudet mater ecclesia*, in the Office of St. Knud Lavard (Kiel, Univ. Bibl. MS. S. H. 8 A 8vo), which has two melodies, both of which, although written as single melodies, can be sung in two parts as *rondellus*; (2) the well-known "hymn" to St. Magnus of the Orkneys, *Nobilis humilis*, remarkable for its use of parallel thirds (nos. [1] and [2] are probably 12th-century pieces, although found in late 13th-century MSS); (3) and (4) the beginnings of two antiphons to which parts in *organum* have been added, apparently in the 15th century, in fragments of two liturgical MSS, Swedish and Finnish respectively (Uppsala, Univ. Bibl. C 23 and Stockholm, Kammararkivet, Baltiska fogdskenskaps F. 365); (5) part of a troped *Agnus Dei* and a *Credo* on a fragment of a noted missal copied for a Benedictine monastery in Iceland in 1473 (AM 80 8vo); (6) three Latin songs in two parts, one in three parts, a *Sanctus* and a *Credo* in two parts from a MS from Iceland dated to around 1500 (AM 687b 4to); (7) five Latin songs and one mixed Latin and Danish in two parts in a MS from about 1425–1475 (AM 76 8vo). To this list may be added the several polyphonic pieces, of a character similar to the above, contained in Piae cantiones (Greifswald, 1582).


**Mythical-Heroic Sagas** see Fornaldarsögur

**Mythology.** Scandinavia was unusual among medieval cultures in that it recorded a body of texts about the pagan gods who had been displaced by the conversion to Christianity, which brought writing and made possible the recording of such texts. Most of these texts were first recorded in vernacular MSS from the 13th century in Iceland, more than two centuries after Iceland’s conversion to Christianity; but in many cases, an oral tradition running back to pagan times may be surmised. The *Gesta Danorum* of the Danish cleric Saxo Grammaticus comprises another important textual source. Besides these textual sources, scholars use the evidence of such disciplines as onomastics and archaeology to reconstruct Scandinavian mythology and early religion.

The system was apparently polytheistic, with an emphasis on male gods with probable Indo-European and definite Germanic cognates. It comprises a myth of origin, numerous myths detailing the acts of the gods, primarily against the related race of the *jotnar* (usually rendered "giants," but see below), a myth of the destruction of the current race of gods, and the beginning of a new cycle of gods. This recorded mythology bears many similarities with Christianity.

Sources. The body of texts is small. Some of the earliest skaldic poetry is mythological in nature and may therefore reflect genuine paganism, since it is believed that skaldic verses underwent very little alteration in oral transmission. Bragi Boddason, according to scholarly tradition the oldest known of the skalds (9th century?), described scenes inscribed on a shield in his *Ragnarssödra*, one of them the encounter between Pórr and the Midgardormr ("Midgard serpent"). Another very early shield poem, the *Haustung* of Höðör of Hvin, has two mythological scenes: the rape of Iðunn, and Pórr’s encounter with Hrungrin. Ulfur Uggason’s *Huisdrapa*, which probably dates from the decades before the conversion to Christianity, describes the decorative scenes carved inside an Icelandic farmhouse, among which were Pórr’s encounter with the *Midgarðsormr*, Loki’s with Heimdallr, and Baldr’s funeral. Several other skaldic poems and fragments exist with mythological subjects, of which the most important may be Eilfr Goðrúnarson’s *Páskesrappa*, a poem about Pórr’s visit with Geirrød. Of particular interest are single stanzas by the Icelandic poets Vetrílodi Sumarlíðsson and Porbjorn disarskáld, which address Pórr in the second person and thus give the only indication in textual format of the possible nature of ritual or prayer.

Pórr is the most represented god in this brief survey of the skaldic evidence. Óðinn and the other gods play a major role, however, in verse composed in nonskaldic forms. The anonymous *Eiríksmál* describes the arrival of Eiríkr blóðox (*"blood-axe") in Valholl, and was presumably therefore composed shortly after his death in 954. Eyvindr Finnsson’s *Hákonarmál* describes a similar arrival for Hákon the Good, who died around 960; the depiction of the warrior culture in Valholl points toward Óðinn. Of particular interest are single stanzas by the Icelandic poets Vetrílodi Sumarlíðsson and Porbjorn disarskáld, which address Pórr in the second person and thus give the only indication in textual format of the possible nature of ritual or prayer.

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However, the strictly eddic poems have the most to report with respect to Scandinavian mythology. Each of these poems has its own textual history, and the dating of them is uncertain. Some observers have felt confident in dating all of them to paganism, while others are equally convinced that at least some are products of the high Middle Ages. The problem is complex, for the material is clearly old, and, just as clearly, it had to have existed for two centuries in Christian oral tradition in Iceland before being re-
corded, and, most importantly, had to make sense to contemporary audiences in order to remain in oral tradition. Most of the important mythological eddic poems were collected into the main MS of the Poetic Edda by an unknown redactor, who followed a conscious plan. The book opens with the synoptic Völuspá, which gives the entire sweep of mythic history, from the creation, through the war between the two groups of gods, Æsir and Vanir, and the death of Baldfr (omitted from a version of the poem recorded in a different MS), through the fall of the gods (Ragnarök) and rebirth of the universe. A group of poems about Óðinn then follows: Hávamál (gnomic wisdom; amorous adventures; acquisition of the mead of poetry; self-sacrifice and acquisition of wisdom), Vafþrúðnismál (contest of wisdom with a giant), and Grímnismál (ecstatic wisdom performance in the hall of a human king). The next poem, For Skírnis, or Skírnismál, tells of the wooing of the giantess Gerðr for Freyr by his servant Skírnir. Thereafter, the redactor placed a series of poems about Pórr: Háðarðsljóð (dual of wits with Óðinn), Hymiskvida (encounter with the Mjógarþormr and acquisition of kettle for brewing mead), Lokasenna (Loki's insults to the gods; a Pórr poem because Pórr is the only one who can quiet Loki), and Prymskvíða (removal of his hammer from a giant). Pórr is also the divine act in Alvíssmál (dwarf sues for hand of Pórr's daughter), which the redactor apparently classified as a poem about beings of the lower mythology, because Vólundarkvíða, with elfin characteristics, intervenes between Prymskvíða and it. Since the remaining poems in the MS are heroic, one may infer an intended historical progression from the sacred prehistory of the gods to the human prehistory of the heroic poetry. A historical or at least linear progression is suggested even among the mythological poems, since the order of gods celebrated in them follows the order in which, according to the mythology, they perished at Ragnarök: Óðinn, Freyr, and Pórr. However, the Poetic Edda makes a clear break between mythological and heroic poems.

Many of these poems are also gathered in a second MS, which lacks the careful plan of the Poetic Edda, and a few other mythological eddic poems were retained in other MSS. These include Baldrs draumar (Óðinn seeks information from a seeress regarding Baldur's fate) and Rígaspula (origin of the social classes). Of the various sources, the Edda of Snorri Sturluson (1179–1241) is by far the most important. It is, in fact, the only text called "Edda" during the Middle Ages; application of the term to the work of Snorri has precipitated a vigorous debate on their trustworthiness and meaning.

The prologue offers a version of learned prehistory, in which the human king Óðinn emigrates from Troy to the North, establishes his sons as monarchs over various kingdoms there, and himself settles in Sigtna in Sweden. The prologue is radically different from what follows, and earlier observers doubted whether Snorri could have written it. But it is not difficult to imagine it having been written after the rest of the work was composed, as a defense against those who would criticize the retelling of pagan myths in Gylfaginning and the opening pages of Skáldskaparmál. Gylfaginning contains a frame in which the Swedish king Gylfi journeys to visit the Æsir. Precisely what the term means in this context has been a hotly debated issue, but Gylfi's interlocutors are called "High," "Just-as-High," and "Third," names that point clearly to Óðinn. Gylfi asks them questions, and the answers are most of the major myths. Gylfi begins with creation and then moves to cosmology before beginning to ask about individual gods. Óðinn receives the greatest amount of attention, but a dozen or so gods and an equal number of goddesses are surveyed, some of them very briefly. Ragnarök and its aftermath are the last topics treated. Gylfaginning may be read in a variety of ways, depending on one's view of Snorri's aims, and the range has been enormous, from authentic Germanic paganism to 13th-century fiction. All contemporary readings, however, begin from Snorri's use of euhemerism, the view that the pagan gods were once human.

The prologue and particularly Gylfaginning are the most famous parts of Snorri's Edda, but they represent no more than a third of the entire work. Skáldskaparmál, by far the longest section, adds a few more myths, of which the most important is that of the origin of the mead of poetry, and it also recounts some heroic legend. But nearly all of Skáldskaparmál is a discussion of the poetic figures used in the older poetry; Háttatal is a clavis rhytmica, with commentary, enumerating 100 primarily metrical possibilities.

Snorri's Edda is thus in its entirety properly viewed as a handbook of poems, since the myths in Gylfaginning and Skáldskaparmál are keys to understanding the kennings of the older skalds. Indeed, these kennings themselves represent a secondary source of our knowledge of Scandinavian mythology, since they often build on myth: for example, the earth may be called "flesh of Ymir" after the creation myth, or gold may be called "headpiece of Sif" after her golden hair. Skáldskaparmál, in fact, includes lists of kennings for many of the gods.

Snorri Sturluson also apparently composed the other major mythological source in Iceland: Ynglinga saga, the first in his cycle of sagas, Heimskringla, about Norwegian kings. Ynglinga saga chronicles briefly the reigns of the early Swedish kings known as Ynglingar, and in doing so generally follows the poem Ynglingatáli by Øystöfn of Hvin. However, Snorri traces the line all the way back to mythic prehistory and has it begin with the emigration of Óðinn from Asia. The presentation of the learned prehistory here bears similarities with the prologue to Snorri's Edda, but there is a good deal of additional valuable mythological information, especially concerning Óðinn and the war between the Æsir and the Vanir.

Other Old Norse–Icelandic prose sources are more recondite. Indeed, if one adopts a strict definition of myth as stories about gods, virtually no text will qualify. The closest is perhaps the Spreta þáttr of the late 14th-century compilation Flateyarbók; the opening pages of Spreta þáttr report that Freyja slept with some dwarfs to obtain the Brisinga men necklace. Many texts refer to alleged pagan ritual, and these references have precipitated a vigorous debate on their trustworthiness and meaning.

An important Latin source is the Gesta Danorum of Saxo Grammaticus, who was associated with the Danish bishopric at Lund. Gesta Danorum is a verse history of Denmark up to 1202. The first nine of its sixteen books treat prehistory and contain a certain amount of euhemerized mythology. Although Gesta Danorum was composed within Danish circles, Saxo relied heavily on Icelandic sources, and it is seldom easy to distinguish Icelandic from Danish.

To these textual sources may be added the evidence of onomastics, archaeology, and the history of religions. Theophrastic place-names abound in Scandinavia, and they reveal much about the chronology and distribution of the cults of the various gods. Archaeological evidence includes objects and images that have been identified as portraitals or sacred to various of the gods.
The history of religions provides a comparative perspective for interpretation of all these kinds of evidence. The mythology. Although each text must be approached and evaluated individually, the systematizing efforts of Snorri and the redactor of the Poetic Edda invite discussion of the mythology as a system. Broadly speaking, Scandinavian mythology is about the ongoing struggle between two groups of beings, the Æsir and the jötun, traditionally taken for gods and giants, and symbolically to be understood as forces of order and of chaos. Both terms seem to refer to something like what we would call tribes; other terms existed to indicate divine beings or beings with unusually large stature. In any case, the two groups are inextricably linked from the start, because the Æsir create the cosmos out of the body of Ymir, the hermaphroditic progenitor of the jötun.

The Æsir were not permanently opposed to all other groups, since early in mythic time they struck a peace with the group known as the Vanir, from whom came to them a number of the more important gods, especially those associated with fertility: Njørðr, Freyr, and Freyja. Some scholars have regarded the war between the Æsir and the Vanir and the incorporation of Vanir among Æsir in connection with the truce as a reflection of an actual religious war or of the replacement of one cult with another, such a surmise cannot be proven. Others hold that the war and ensuing peace symbolically explain the existence of different aspects of divinity.

In the “mythic present,” then, Æsir contend with jötun. This combat is generally envisioned as struggles between single gods and giants, although sometimes others are peripherally involved. A brief survey of the individual struggles serves to indicate the nature of the various gods. Óðinn generally uses his wisdom as his weapon. Thus, he wins a contest of wisdom with the giant Valførðr, at the end of which, recognizing his adversary, the giant forfeits his head. In the hall of the human king Geirrødur, Óðinn gives an ecstatic wisdom performance when he is tortured between two fires; at the end, he reveals his godhead, and Geirrødur falls on his sword. Since the subject of both of these myths is mythic history and cosmology, we may infer that wisdom and power are associated. Óðinn’s control of wisdom had in part to do with this mastery of poetry, an accomplishment associated with his theft of the mead of poetry from the giants. The mead is a powerful symbol concerning the interaction of various groups of beings, since it was fermented from the spittle of Æsir and Vanir at their truce, with the intervention of the chthonic dwarfs, but ended up among the giants. Óðinn’s retrieval of it exists in variant forms, but the salient point seems to be invasion of the giant world, seduction of a giant maiden, and a return to the world of the gods in bird form.

Where Óðinn uses wisdom and sometimes guile against the forces of chaos, Pórr generally uses his hammer; in other words, Óðinn uses strategy, and Pórr, force. The two little poetic fragments addressed to Pórr catalogue some of the giants and giantesses he killed, and nearly all of the myths in which he figures end with his killing one or many of them.

Two of Pórr’s struggles stand out as particularly significant. The first is against the Miðgarðsormr, a snake lying coiled about the earth deep in the ocean. Pórr fished up this serpent and threw his hammer at it, killing it, according to some sources, but failing to do so, according to Snorri. The outcome seems perhaps to have been less important than the struggle, which was popular in poetry and also apparently in rock carving. The poetic sources connect Pórr’s struggle against the Miðgarðsormr with a journey to acquire a large kettle to brew beer. Here again, one may note a contact with Óðinn; Óðinn acquires the mead of poetry, whose value is symbolic, and Pórr acquires a kettle for brewing, whose role is more concrete.

Pórr’s second important opponent was Hrungnir, strongest of the giants. According to Snorri, Hrungnir and Pórr fought a formal duel, and both sides realized the importance of it, for Hrungnir was the strongest of the giants and was equipped with a heart of stone. Pórr triumphed when his shieldbearer Jólfli tricked the giant into standing on his shield, enabling Pórr to cast his hammer at the giant without impediment. However, the closeness of the duel is indicated by the fact that Pórr got a fragment of the giant’s stone heart in his head and was unable without help to remove the dead giant’s leg, which had fallen over him.

That Pórr relies on his shieldbearer is not unusual, for he generally operates with some kind of assistant. Especially in the Hrungnir story, it is tempting to regard this assistant as the mythic representation of a youth being initiated into warrior society.

Pórr also kills many giantesses. The most important of the myths involves his visit to the home of the giant Geirrøðr, not identical to the human king visited by Óðinn. Along the way, he is nearly swept away in a river of urine or menstrual fluids being created by one of the giant’s daughters, and later she and a sister attempt to rise up under Pórr and crush him against the ceiling. He resists and breaks their backs. Pórr’s emnity with giantesses remains obscure; he killed many more, but most of the myths are now lost. Pórr himself dressed as the goddess Freyja when he went off to the world of the giants to regain his hammer, which had, according to the late and parodic eddic poem Prýmskviða, been stolen by the giant Prymr.

Freyr has only one major moment in the mythology, his long for and apparently winning the giantess Gerðr. However the myth is to be interpreted, it connects him with fertility and, because he gives up his sword, removes him from the sphere of war and battle.

The female Æsir play small roles. The two most significant, Frigg and Freyja, seem to represent the Æsir and Vanir, respectively. From statements by Snorri and by inference, it is possible to discern connections with magic, wisdom, and the dead, which other sources confirm for human seeresses. With the mythology, however, the goddesses often function as no more than objects desired by the jötun.

The most enigmatic figure in the mythology is Loki, who is of giant extraction but functions uneasily among the gods. Comparative analysis makes clear that he plays the common mythological role of the trickster figure, that is, one whose violation of boundaries and lack of forethought are dangerous, but also may confer benefits on society. In the systematized mythology of the recorded texts, however, it is plain that he sides ultimately with the enemies of the gods, perhaps through association with Satan. Loki arranged the slaying of Baldr by his half-brother Höðr, a slaying that apparently first brought death among the Æsir and that could not be avenged, given the close family relationship of slayer and slain. Loki leads the forces of chaos against the Æsir at Ragnarök. Although Ragnarök is conceived as a massive battle, in fact it involves individual combats in which the various gods are defeated by their major adversaries, followed by the destruction of the cosmos. Thereafter, however, the next generation of Æsir will rule. Baldr and Höðr will be reconciled, and there is no mention of the presence of jötun.
Many of the greatest scholars of myth, religion, and folklore have written on Scandinavian mythology, including Jakob Grimm, Sir James Frazer, Axel Olrik, Kaarle Krohn, and a great many others. The earliest serious scholarship, that of the 19th century, understood the myths as representations of seasonal change and the gods as such natural phenomena as storms, thunder, fire, and the like, sometimes in connection with hypothetical ritual activity. Ritual activity was the focus of some later interpretations, such as those of Otto Höfler, who argued the existence of a cult group of warriors linked with Óðinn, while other scholarship involved not so much interpretation as a search after borrowings from other traditions. In general, however, the major trends of the middle decades of this century might be described as "historicalist" and "comparative," the former referring to work that focuses on philological and archaeological detail in the context of Germanic religion (Karl Helm is a major name here), and the latter referring to work undertaken by Georges Dumézil and his followers attempting to show a tripartite structure allegedly characteristic of Indo-European mythologies. A more recent trend has involved the search for the learned, medieval context of the mythology, often in Christian theology. Such a focus both clarifies the material and renders less significant the gulf between pagan Scandinavia and the recording of the mythology centuries later during Christianity.


Almost the whole original part of *Møðruvallabók* is written by a single scribe, whose meticulous handwriting is known from several other, mainly fragmentary, MSS. For some reason, this scribe has left an open space for sixteen stanzas (and two lines in a 17th) in (2), but fourteen of these stanzas (and the two lines) have been written by another contemporary scribe, whose hand is also known from other MSS.

The scribes have not been identified, but several things point to the north of Iceland as *Møðruvallabók*’s place of origin. The MS’s name is derived from the farm name Moðruvellir in Eyjafjörður, where its owner at that time, the lawman Magnús Björnsson, wrote the name in it in 1628. In the late 17th century, the MS was brought to Copenhagen and came into the possession of Professor Ærn Magnússon. It belongs to the Amamagnæan Collection, which Ærn bequeathed to the University of Copenhagen and which is currently being transferred in part to the University of Iceland; since 1974, *Møðruvallabók* has been back in Iceland.

*Møðruvallabók* is by far the most comprehensive collection of *Islandingsgæt* in, and in many cases it contains sagas or parts of sagas that are not found elsewhere, except in copies that are derived from *Møðruvallabók*. Our knowledge of this important branch of Old Icelandic literature is thus based to a large degree on this MS.

**Móðruvallabók** ("The Book of Móðruvellir"), AM 132 fol., is an Icelandic MS that consists of 200 parchment leaves, bound in wooden plates; 189 leaves were written in the middle of the 14th century.

*See also:* Alfissmál; Baldr; Baldersdráumar; Bragi Boddason; Eddic Poetry; Eilifr Goddrúnarson; Eirkismál; Eyvindr Finsson skaldasagil. Freyr and Freyja; Grímnismál; Hárbarðshjóð; Hávamál; Hymiskviða; Kenning; Lokasenna; Lóki; Maiden Warriors; Óðinn; Religion; Pagan Scandinavian; Rígsþula; Saxo Grammaticus; Skaldic Verse; Skímismál; Snorra Edda; Supernatural Beings; Spála Þjóðr; Þjóðólfr of Hvin; Þórr; Prymskviða; Úlfur Uggason; Valtóðnismál; Völundarkviða; Volsásp; Ynglings saga
MOTTULS SAGA


**Stefán Karlsson**

[See also: *Bandamanna saga; Droplaugarsona saga; Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar; Finnboga saga ramma; Fóstbróðra saga; Hallfreðar saga; Íslandingsögr; Kormáks saga; Landnámabók; Laxdœla saga; Njáls saga; Víga-Glásins saga; Olkofra þáttir*]

**Möttuls saga,** or *Skikkju saga* (both mean "Saga About the Cloak"), is an Old Norse prose translation of the Old French *fabliau* *Le Lai du cort mantel.* This rather frivolous piece by Old Norse standards tells the story of a magic cloak brought to King Arthur's court, by means of which the chastity of the women at his court can be tested. Of course, all of them fail in one way or another, until Karradin's shy lady is brought forward and passes the test.

This saga belongs to the group of Arthurian romances translated into Old Norse at the Norwegian court of Hákon Håkonarson around the middle of the 13th century, but surely does not aspire to the educative purpose ascribed to the other works of this genre. It is also the only known translation into Old Norse prose of an Old French *fabliau.* The subject matter of the chastity-testing cloak was extremely popular both on the Continent, where translations were made into all major vernacular languages, and in Iceland, where the 14th- or 15th-century *Samsons saga fagra* was composed to reveal, among other things, the history of the cloak before it reached King Arthur's court, and which actually refers to the MS using the title *Skikkju saga.* The popularity of the saga in Iceland is also shown by the fourteen MSS still extant, dating from the time around 1300 to the 19th century, and by a *rimur* version of the saga called *Skikkju rimur* composed in the 15th century.


**Rudolf Simek**

[See also: Old Norse–Icelandic Literature, Foreign Influence on; *Riddarasögur*]
Namnlöse och Valentin see Swedish Literature, Miscellaneous

Navigation. There is no evidence whatsoever that any sort of instrument was used in Viking navigation. The "sun-board" to determine latitude from sun altitude, the sun-compass set by the shadow cast by a central pin, and the sun-stone to find the sun's position from polarization even when it was hidden by cloud are all imaginary modern creations. The wood fragment with unequally spaced roughly radial lines from a Benedictine monastery in Greenland (Vebæk 1956) is far too small to be used as a sun-compass. The solarstein or sun-stone, if it were a piece of Iceland feldspar with polarizing properties as some assume, would work only when the observer's zenith was unclouded and would not help the orientation of the equally hypothetical sun-compass in any case. To establish direction from the sun, one would need an independent source of time.

The sun was evidently used in navigation, but not in this quasi-modern way. Storm-Oddi ("Star-Oddi") Helgason's Oddatala shows that in Iceland in the early 12th century the sun's noon altitude and bearing at sunrise and sunset had been established for every day of the year. The information in the Vinland sagas that even on the shortest day the sun was above the horizon at dagmal ("mid-morning") and eykt ("mid-afternoon") certainly looks like an attempt to define the latitude of a place on the American coast well south of Iceland, where this would not be the case, but cannot be used to calculate an exact latitude, as some enthusiasts have attempted (Næss 1954). But the Króksfjarðarheiðr observation in Greenland suggests that sun altitudes in one place were on occasion compared with those in another to establish the difference in latitude between them, though the crudeness of this method (the shadow of the boat's gunwale on a man lying across the bottom boards) sufficiently demonstrates the absence of any instruments for determining it (Næss 1954).

The Canterbury portable sundial (ca. A.D. 1000) gives 9:00 A.M., noon, and 3:00 P.M. from the sun's altitude, and has been interpreted as showing that the necessary correction for sun declination North or South in different months had been reduced to a simple, easily remembered formula in successive months. This works only in the latitude between 50 and 60° North, but men who knew it could form a good idea of time or latitude from differences in the length of a shadow, and of direction at sunrise and sunset. In between, they probably relied on keeping a steady course by reference to wind and sea, and making allowance for the sun's progress across the sky. As recent orientation experiments have shown that the directional sense of humans and birds is interfered with by magnets, it is likely that they also relied on some sense of the earth's magnetic field long before the introduction of the magnetic compass, and backed it up with the interpretation of wave patterns and bird flight, such as is recorded from later whalers and contemporary primitive navigators in the Pacific (Binns 1971).

Most Viking navigation was not over long ocean voyages but along a coast at a safe distance offshore ("so that the sea came halfway up the mountains," as Hauksbók says, ch. 2) from one known point to another, and keeping a careful dead reckoning of distance run in terms of degr siglingar, or day's sailings. A normal value for this measure of 24 vikur ("shifts") of 6 nautical miles gives good agreement between the Old Norse texts and a modern chart, although under favorable conditions a Gokstad ship could cover half as much again. Sailing all night along coasts was avoided when possible. When it had to be done, the navigator attempted to sense from the bow the reflection of the seas off the land.

There is no evidence of any charts for sea use before the 15th century, but texts show the navigators had a clear mental picture of the layout of their world. Iceland is "opposite" one point on the Norwegian coast, Shetland opposite another, Scotland opposite a third; and if one sailed from these traditional departure points, one could assume that "at the expected time on the second day" (Beowulf, v. 219) the destination, identifiable by its characteristics (wooded, rocky, sandy, etc.) would be in sight. Wulfstan on his voyage to the east along the south coast of the Baltic evidently thought of himself as sailing across a grid whose North-South lines were identified by the islands on them, for he records progress by saying that he had on his port side Öland or Bornholm, although they were far out of sight, 50 or 100 miles north of his track. As he sailed at night, it seems possible, as Crumlin-Pedersen suggests (1984), that he followed the 10-fathom line, which in turn suggests that his navigational method was more English (where sounding is well recorded at this period) than Scandinavian (where on steep coasts it seems naturally to have been little used). This distinc-
The range of Viking voyages.


Alan Binns

**Nesjavísur** see Sighvat ríðarson

**Nicodemus, Gospel of.** Translations of the apocryphal gospel *Evangelium Nicodemi* are found in Old Norse, Old Swedish, and Old Danish. This gospel originates in two independent Greek traditions. One, named in Latin *Gesta Pilati,* relates to Pilate's trial of Christ and the subsequent Crucifixion. The other, commonly known as *Descensus Christi ad inferos,* relates Christ's harrowing of hell. Probably in the 5th century, both traditions were joined in an apocryphal gospel that relates the betrayal of Christ by the Jews and the glorious victory of Christ. Here, Satan is outwitted and driven from hell, while Christ raises Adam and all the righteous souls to eternal bliss in paradise. The gospel, originally entitled *Gesta salvatoris or Passio domini,* was later renamed *Evangelium Nicodemi* after its alleged author, the Pharisee Nicodemus, who assisted during Christ's burial (John 19:39).

In Old Norse, the second half of the Latin gospel, *Descensus
Christi ad inferos, was translated from Latin under the title Nidristigningar saga. Although the saga translates only this part, the opening and concluding lines show that the translator probably had access to the whole text of the Gospel. The translation is based on Tischendorf’s A-group of texts. The Old Norse text has survived in four medieval MSS, of which three probably have a common ancestor: AM 645 4to (complete text), AM 623 4to (beginning missing), and AM 233a fol. (fragmentary). The fourth and youngest MS, AM 238 V fol. (also fragmentary), is a revision of the older recension based on the Latin text. As Magnús Már Lárusson (1955) has shown, an additional source text is the copy of a medieval MS made by Ólafur Jónsson in Arney in 1780 (JS 405 8vo).

Seip believed that the original translation was Norwegian, but the linguistic evidence for this view does not seem conclusive. Although the question of national origin may not be definitely solved, the four medieval MSS are all Icelandic. There is also an independent Icelandic translation of the Gospel, probably postmedieval, extant in seventeen MSS from the 18th and 19th centuries (in chronological order: Lbs 1258 8vo, JS 280 4to, JS 219 8vo, JS 36 4to, Lbs 786 8vo, Lbs 526 8vo, JS 456 8vo, IB 98 8vo, Nks 68 4to, Lbs 2636 8vo, Lbs 2144 8vo, IB 393 8vo, Lbs 509 4to, IB 212 8vo, Lbs 1036 8vo, Lbs 1160 8vo, Lbs 1333 8vo).

The story of Christ’s harrowing of hell, spectacular as it is in the Latin text, is further dramatized by the Old Norse translator. The Vulgate-like style of the Latin text is rendered in a free translation, which on the linguistic level is paratactic, sometimes clumsy, and almost naïve. On the narrative level, however, the translator amplifies the text and adapts it to a northern setting. In the three oldest MSS, the tridium of Christ, Satan, and Inferus (reflecting the shadow-like character of Hades) is transformed into an opposition between Christ and Satan, while Inferus appears as a host of ungodly officials, giants, devils, and trolls. A unique feature of the Old Norse text is two interpolations relating how Christ outwits Satan and turns the inhabitants of hell against him. Triumphantly entering on a white horse and dressed like a king (cf. Revelations 19:11–14), Christ tricks Satan into believing that he is no more than a human being, fearful of death, and thus an easy prey. Satan, who changes into the shape of the Midgardörmr (“World Serpent”), rises to the bait and tries to swallow Christ, but is immediately defeated by his divine opponent sem òiskrí á oglíða eða máis undir trykettir (“like a fish on a hook or a mouse in a trap”). Christ’s stratagem reflects the medieval motif of pious fraud (pia fraus), according to which Christ was allowed to use human cunning to defeat his enemy. This motif is also known from the 14th-century Old Icelandic poem Lilja (st. 42).

There are references to Christ’s descent in several Old Norse sources, primarily in the religious poetry. Geisli (composed by the Icelandic skald Einarr Skúlason ca. 1153) states that a multitude of dead rose with Christ (st. 4); in Leidurvisan (second half of the 12th century), it is told that Christ himself bound the ingenious Devil (st. 31); Liknumbraut (late 13th or perhaps 14th century) recounts that Christ descended into hell to visit the devils with Satan (st. 22); and, finally, Lilja paints a dramatic picture of Christ in combat with Satan (sts. 60–64). The late Icelandic poem Nidrstaingningsvisur by Jón Arason (1484–1550) gives a free rendering of Christ’s harrowing of hell (sts. 24–36), and makes explicit reference to Gesta salvatoris (st. 11). A reference to the descent is also found in the apostolic creed contained in the Christian law section of King Magnus’s landsdög, where the relevant passage reads för niðr til helvitis at leysa þaðan alla sínan menn (“descended into hell, thence to release all his men”). Iconographically, the descent into hell is reflected in the religious art of Norwegian stave churches, for example, the ceiling decorations in Vang and Ál, and altar frontalts from Volbu, Eid, and Árdal.

A fragment of an Old Danish poetic rendering of the Evangelium Nicodemi survives in SKB A 115 from around 1325, consisting of two leaves. The linguistic form of the poem is Scanian. The home of the anonymous author and the provenance of the MS are thought to be in Lund or its close vicinity. From a number of scribal errors, it is clear that SKB A 115 is a copy of an older MS. Whether this MS was the original or also a copy cannot be ascertained, but it is reasonable to assume that it was written in the same Scanian linguistic form as SKB A 115. The metrical form of the poem is kvitth. It contains altogether 103 lines of verse, and covers the conclusion of the Gesta Pilati and the very beginning of Descensus Christi ad inferos. The poem appears to be based on Tischendorf’s D-group of texts. Brøndum-Nielsen (1955: 11) suggests that the poem may also to some extent rely on a now-lost German poetic adaptation of the Evangelium Nicodemi.

An Old Swedish prose translation of the entire Evangelium Nicodemi survives in three MSS: Codex Skokloster 3 4to (now in SRA), SKB A 110 (Codex Oxenstiernianus), and SKB A 3. Codex Skokloster 3 4to (also called “Passionarius”) contains the Old Swedish Legendary. The MS dates from 1450–1470 and is presumed to be from Vadstena. The translation of the Evangelium Nicodemi most probably did not originally belong to the Old Swedish Legendary, since it is not found in the two older MSS of the legendary, SKB A 34 and Úpps. C 528. SKB A 110 is from Vadstena; it is not a single book as such, but a collection of six MSS or parts of MSS. The translation of the Evangelium Nicodemi is found in the last part in a hand no younger than the beginning of the 15th century. SKB A 3 is a Vadstena MS written in 1502. It originally consisted of three volumes containing a legendary arranged according to the church year; only the first volume has survived.

NICODEMUS, GOSPEL OF


Odd Einar Haugen

[See also: Bible; Christian Poetry; Christian Prose; Einarr Skúlason; Knittel (vers); Leidarvisan; Lilja; Old Swedish Legendary]

Níóstingsingar saga see Nicodemus, Gospel of

Nitida saga ("The Saga of Nitida") is a native Icelandic riddarasaga composed probably in the 14th century. It is preserved in some sixty-five MSS and fragments, making it one of the most popular sagas. Apart from one leaf (Cod. Perg. 8vo no. 10 VII) from the late 15th century, the earliest vellum, AM 529 4to, dates from the 16th century. The vast majority of the MSS, however, are paper, dating from the 18th and 19th centuries.

The saga opens with a description of Nitida of France, the most famous maiden-king in the northern hemisphere, whose beauty and intelligence are without peer. Together with Hlösksjöld, son of her foster-mother, Eggida, queen of Apulia, Nitida journeys to Visio, an island near the edge of the world ruled over by a wise earl named Virgillus. They succeed in stealing a stone vessel, a number of magic stones, apples, and curative herbs before returning to France.

Nitida's hand in marriage is sought, in turn, by Ingi, son of King Hugon of Miklagårdr, Heiðarlogi and Velogi, both sons of King Soldán of Serkland, and Liforinus, whose sister, Sjálfinn, becomes a close friend of Nitida. While Hugon and Liforinus each succeed in abducting Nitida, she is able to escape with the aid of a magic stone. Heiðarlogi and Velogi mount an attack after being rejected by Nitida, and are subsequently outwitted and killed. Seeking to avenge his sons, Soldán attacks Nitida's army, but Liforinus comes to their aid, killing Soldán and taking the wounded Hlösksjöld with him to India, where he nurses him back to health. Liforinus returns to France, and Nitida agrees to marry him. Ingi then makes another attempt to win Nitida, but is wounded by Liforinus and nursed back to health by Sjálfinn, whom Ingi now wishes to marry. Liforinus agrees on the condition that Ingi's sister Listalin marry Hlösksjöld. The saga ends with a description of the triple marriage celebrations, the magnificence of which the narrator says, "it is not easy for a simple tongue on the fringes of the world to describe."

The saga falls squarely within the tradition of maiden-king romances described by Wahlgren (1938), sharing their overall motif structure. One important difference, however, is the character of Nitida herself. Nitida saga is the only one of the pre-Reformation maiden-king sagas to bear the name of a female protagonist. Nitida is portrayed throughout as a good and popular ruler; we are told time and time again how the people rejoice when she returns from captivity. She is, more importantly, no virago. Although adverse to the idea of marriage, she in no way humiliates her suitors. When her suitors resort to violence, she is obliged to outwit them. Nor is she herself humiliated. In the end, she agrees to marry Liforinus, because he has succeeded in winning her respect, not because she has broken her heart.

The narrative is in good prose style with only the occasional flourish; the plot is straightforward and uncluttered by superfluous characters and motifs.


M. J. Driscoll

[See also: Old Norse-Icelandic Literature, Foreign Influence on; Riddarsagar]

Njáls saga ("The Saga of Njáll") is the longest and most widely acclaimed of the Islandingasagur. It is a tale of the two friends, Gunnarr and Njáll, and their families in the south of Iceland, but a great number of other people are involved, directly or indirectly, and the action is set in various parts of Iceland, Scandinavia, and the British Isles.

After a gloomy introductory section (chs. 1-18) describing...
widowed Hallgerðr, and she gets into conflict with Njáll's wife, slaves and free men, until Njáll's sons, led by the grim-faced and peace-loving; both are rich and generous. Their friendship is put to a test when Gunnarr has married the twice-widowed Hallgerðr, and she gets into conflict with Njáll's wife, Bergþóra. This conflict escalates from insults to mutual killings of slaves and free men, until Njáll's sons, led by the grim-faced and quick-tempered Skarphéðinn and egged on by their mother, kill one of Gunnarr's close relatives. After each clash, Gunnarr and Njáll settle the case between themselves. Hallgerðr resents this peacemaking, but can do nothing while Gunnarr lives. Chs. 46–80 describe how Gunnarr's prosperity causes envy among neighboring chieftains, and how he is, against his will, drawn into feuds where he kills a great many adversaries in self-defense. Each time, Njáll succeeds in negotiating compensations until Gunnarr is finally outlawed for three years. He defies the sentence and stays at home, against Njáll's advice, and is killed after a glorious defense. Skarphéðinn and Gunnarr's eldest son, Hogni, kill several of his enemies in revenge.

The second part of the saga centers on Njáll's family. In an intermediary sequence, set abroad, the sons of Njáll and Gunnarr's relatives, led by Práinn, Hallgerðr's son-in-law and ally, reopen their feud, and back in Iceland it escalates until Skarphéðinn kills Práinn. Njáll succeeds in settling the case, and to ensure peace he fosters Práinn's son, Hóskuldur, raising him in his own spirit and making him a chieftain superior to others in the two families. In these years, Iceland has been Christianized, but envy and hatred have not been uprooted, and Möðr, a sly and smooth-tongued chieftain, who previously turned people against Gunnarr, now succeeds in making Njáll's sons mistrust their foster-brother Hóskuldur, and they slay him cruelly. This is a heavy blow to Njáll. He attempts to reconcile his sons with Hóskuldur's relatives but fails. Realizing at last that his struggle against evil is in vain, he goes with open eyes to his death, when he and his wife, his sons, and a grandson are burned and killed in their home. This event, seen as tragic even by the leader of the attackers, is a magnificent climax of the whole saga. The repercussions are great and seem to have national significance when a great battle breaks out at the Alþingi. However, good men succeed in making the relatives accept compensation, all but the son-in-law Kári, who had managed to escape from the burning farmhouse. Alone, he traces the burners and kills them one after the other inside and outside Iceland. In the end, he is reconciled with the leader of the burners, Flosi.

The numerous threads of this complex narrative are skillfully woven into a picture that gives the impression of an integrated whole, although many details stand out and demand attention in their own right. The scope of the saga is exceptional, with the long introduction, two great feud stories, each ending in an impressive climax with the killing of the protagonist, and then a long final movement of revenge incorporating a great battle in Ireland (Clontarf, A.D. 1014). To link the strands together, the author uses several kinds of foreshadowing along with other narrative devices to create the impression of a coherent and fatal chain of events.

Njáls saga surpasses other sagas in the number and variety of clearly, and often humorously, delineated characters. Even Gunnarr, who comes close to being a "cliché," the blond hero, is individualized by his emotionally charged and vivid utterances about his aversion to killing and about his reasons for staying at home when he has been outlawed. The unheroic but wise and sometimes cunning Njáll forms a contrast to him, as does Skarphéðinn, who, through his giant stature, ugly grin, and witty and sarcastic comments, is one of the most memorable figures in the saga, keeping his secrets to his death in the fire. The mistresses of these houses, Hallgerðr and Bergþóra, are no less memorable. Neither of them is faultless, and Hallgerðr is indeed one of the villains, but they are proud and active women, not afraid to play their own game. Sexuality, seen as a dangerous and even destructive force, is here more openly dealt with than in most or all sagas.

The style of Njáls saga is simple at first sight, but has in fact great variation. As a rule, summary of events is paratactic with a relatively high frequency of formulaic expressions, especially at the beginning and ending of the chapters and at other important junctures. Authorial bias is manifest in the presentation of characters, and it is often expressed through ironic comments, for example, "Gunnarr's sons, Hogni and Grani, were fully grown by this time. They were men of very different natures; Grani took after his mother, but Hogni was a fine man" (ch. 75). The stylistic versatility of the saga appears most vividly in the dialogue, which ranges from brief comments of epigrammatic wit and compression to personal statements illuminating the whole drama, like Njáll's seemingly contradictory statements in the fire. He consoles his people by saying: "Be of good heart and speak no words of fear, for this is just a passing storm, and it will be long before another like it comes. Put your faith in the mercy of God, for He will not let us burn both in this world and in the next." But his final statement belongs to the world he cannot renounce, although he has understood its limitations. Invited by Flosi to leave his sons and save himself, he answers: "I have no wish to go outside . . . for I am an old man and ill equipped to avenge my sons; and I do not want to live in shame" (ch. 129).

The presence of an author is more strongly felt in Njáls saga than in most other sagas, and his engagement in the fate of the characters and, above all, in Njáll's struggle for peace is unmistakable. It can be deduced from Njáll's final statements, quoted above, that the values inspiring the author form no harmonious hierarchy. The author is strongly tied to the basic values of the old and vanishing society, as he sees it, with its ideas of family honor and solidarity. He desperately wants peace and harmony, but accepts that in extreme cases honor can be preserved only by blood revenge. In the new faith, Njáll and the author see hope for the individual, and this hope is symbolized by the contrasting images we get of the two friends after their death: the heathen Gunnarr sits in his mound reciting poetry, stubbornly confirming the pride that led to his fall, a sad and gloomy picture. Njáll's death is even more tragic, but one of the chieftains most active in getting Iceland Christianized says about his corpse: "Njáll's countenance and body appear to have a radiance that I have never seen on a dead man before" (ch. 132).

Whoever wrote Njáls saga must have been thoroughly versed in the narrative traditions of his age, both oral and literary. It seems overwhelmingly likely that tales were told about Gunnarr and Njáll, about whose existence there is no doubt, before the saga was written, and the author may well have been one of the storytellers. But it is also obvious that the saga is the work of an author who, with much deliberation and artistic skill, created a great literary work from material now for the most part unavailable.

References to law and legal practice in the saga show influence from laws introduced in Iceland in 1271. The oldest MS and fragments of MSS are dated to around 1300. These and other
arguments have been used to date the saga to the years 1275–
1290. There are almost twenty MSS from the Middle Ages, and a
great many paper MSS from the post-Reformation era. This
confirms the fact that Njál's saga has always been one of the most popular of
the Íslendingasögur. It was first published in Copenhagen in
1772, and in the 19th century it was translated into Latin and several European languages.

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Véstein Olason

[See also: Duráðarljóð; Íslendingasögur; Women in Sagas]

Nóregs konunga tal see Fragrskinna

Norman Literature, Scandinavian Influence on. Scandinavian influence can be found in several works written by authors in Norway in the 11th century. It can be traced in stories about the Viking past of Normandy, in accounts of contemporary events concerning Scandinavians or persons coming from northern Europe, and in legends originating from Scandinavian or Anglo-Scandinavian sources. In about the year 1000, the poet Garnier de Rouen wrote a Latin satire against the Irish poet Morith. The Irishman and his wife had been captured by the Vikings and taken away separately. After many adventures, the poet finally was reunited with his wife in Normandy after the intercession of the Duchess Gunnor, herself of Danish origin. According to Garnier, the Irish poet consulted the pagan gods three times during his long search for his wife: he consulted the intestines of a woodpecker, sacrificed a young girl, and invoked the help of the gods for a third time. These pagan rituals are strongly reminiscent of Viking ceremonial practices. The poem itself may well be related to the Æflyning, a form of dialogue in Norse and Irish vernacular literature.

Dudo of St.-Quentin (d. after 1015) wrote the first history of the Viking settlement and early dukes of Normandy, in Latin, De moribus et actis primorum normanum ducum. Dudo included passages on pagan sacrificial rituals similar to the ones Garnier described. He wrote about Vikings sacrificing human blood to their war-god Æðr, and about their priests consulting the intestines of an ox to know beforehand the outcome of the next Viking raid. He also depicts other Scandinavian customs. Rollo, the first Viking leader of Normandy, divided land among his followers by way of the fæturk (a rope). He mentions Rollo’s trick of scaring off an attack of Franks near Chartres by using animal carcasses. He also describes how Rollo’s son, William Longsword, and thirty of his followers acted like berserks while taking an oath with a great deal of noise and performing the Scandinavian vâpnatak (“weapon taking”). He may have used an eyewitness account for his story of the attack on Lisbon in 966 by pagan Vikings expelled from Normandy.

During the third quarter of the 11th century, the Norman historians writing about the Norman Conquest of England in 1066 included Scandinavian material. Bishop Guy of Amiens, the author of the Carmen de Hastingae proelio, describes the burial of King Harold Godwinsson of England by Duke William of Normandy as a purely Viking funeral. The duke ordered that Harold’s body be buried under a heap of stones on top of a cliff as custos littoris et pelagi (“guardian of the shore and the sea”). It has been suggested that the burial mound (the heap of stones) symbolizes the king’s mound, because according to the Carmen the Norman duke becomes king at the same spot and at the same moment when his predecessor was buried. William of Poitiers, the biographer of William the Conqueror, who wrote around the years 1073–1077, refers to the same story: “It is said by way of mockery that the duke would rather install him [Harald] as guardian of the shore and sea” than hand him over for burial by his mother.

The author most influenced by Scandinavian tradition is William of Jumièges, who wrote a continuation of Dudo of St.-Quentin’s history of the dukes of Normandy around 1060–1070. In the first book of Gesta Normannorum ducum, concerning the Viking invasions of Normandy, William gives prominence to the Anglo-Scandinavian Bjorn Ironside, son of King Lothbroc. The king forced his son Bjorn into exile together with his tutor, Hastings, and a multitude of young men. Bjorn acquired his nickname “Ironside” because of his invulnerability, which the historian William explains as follows: “And therefore he was called Ironside, because when his shield did not protect him and when
he stood unarmed in the battlefield, he was invulnerable, despoised whatever force of arms, for his mother had him infected with very strong magic poison." According to William, Bjorn and Hastingus ravaged France for thirty years and then conquered the Italian city of Luni near Pisa, thinking it was Rome. Bjorn returned to the North, suffered shipwreck near England, then went to Frisia, where he died. Hastingus returned independently to Chartres.

Bjorn Ironside’s name is first mentioned by William of Jumièges, and thereafter (ca. 1145) in the skaldic poem Hátatalykil. Bjorn’s Mediterranean trip shows striking resemblances to the Fragmentary Annals (Ireland, mid-11th century). Bjorn’s magic invulnerability is a Scandinavian saga motif, and Frisia in connection with Lothbroc’s sons was known in Jumièges as well as in Northumbria from the 10th century onward.

William of Jumièges is the first authority to mention Lothbroc, who may be the legendary Ragnarr loðbrók, and therefore his story is an important stage in the development of the famous Scandinavian saga. Other written sources mentioning the name Lothbroc are Adam of Bremen’s Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum (Hamburg, ca. 1075), the Annals of St. Neots (East Anglia, early 12th century), and Ari PORGILDSSON’S Islendingabók (ca. 1122-1133), the first to combine the names Ragnarr and Lothbroc. This evidence, combined with other elements, suggests that William of Jumièges had access to an (Anglo-)Scandinavian source.

More passages in the Gesta Normannorum ducum show Scandinavian influence. The mysterious Haigröldus rex Daciae, mentioned by Dudo, is said to have come from Denmark to Normandy to assist Richard I in his struggle against the French king. He is identified by William of Jumièges as King Harald (Bluetooth) of Denmark (941-988) in Book 4. Both Dudo and William of Jumièges mistook the temporary Viking leader of Bayeux in about 845 for his royal contemporary namesake Harald Bluetooth. William adds that King Harald had been expelled from Denmark by his son Sven. Two other sources mention this story: the Encomium Emmae (ca. 1040-1041) and Adam of Bremen’s Gesta Hammaburgensis. Considering the fact that only a mainly English source like the Encomium and a German source like Adam, who got his information directly from King Sven’s grandson, knew about the dissension between Harald and Sven, William of Jumièges must have taken his information from an (Anglo-)Scandinavian source.

William is the only non-Scandinavian source to pay attention to the early career of Óláfr the Viking, the later king and martyr of Norway (d. 1030). The account in Gesta Normannorum ducum shows a striking resemblance to the poetry of Óláfr’s skald Sighvatr, not only as far as the attack on Dol in Brittany is concerned, but that William and Sighvatr agree that Óláfr had assisted Knud (Cnut) the Great in his struggle to obtain the throne of Denmark after his father died in 1014. Sighvatr visited Normandy in 1017 (Book 1). William is the only non-Scandinavian source to have taken his information from an (Anglo-)Scandinavian source.

Nornagest þáttir ("The Tale of Nornagestr") is an anonymous fornaldarsaga written probably in the early 14th century, and incorporated into one of the earliest versions of the Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar. The two chief MSS containing the þáttir are Flateyjarbók, AM 62 fol., and GKS 2845 4to. The þáttir contains two prose sections from the prose Edda, and the poems Reginsnál and Helreið Boyhnarker, along with their prose introductions. The þáttir also includes reference to a now-lost "Sigurðr saga. Verbal agreements between the þáttir and the Poetic Edda confirm that that author relied on a MS closely related to the Codex Regius. The tale is structured as a frame story. A very old man, Gestir, appears at the royal Norwegian court of Óláfr Tryggvason and asks for shelter for the night. This Gestir ("guest") entertains the court with stories from the Scandinavian past. When the king asks him about his faith, he answers that he was marked with the sign of the cross in Denmark, but that he has not yet been baptized. Óláfr encourages him to relate his 300-year life story. Nornagestr tells about all the known rulers in the Scandinavian past whom he visited. Gestir’s old age is attributed to the three norns, who prophesied his future at his birth (cf. his name, Norm). The youngest
nom felt herself slighted, and predicted that he should live no longer than the candle burned that was lit beside the cradle. But, in fact, this fate resulted in a long life, for another older sibyl immediately put out the candle and preserved it unburned. Gestr now tells Öláfr that he came to the Norwegian court because he had heard many favorable things about Öláfr. At the king's instigation, Gestr is baptized and lights his candle. As the candle goes out, the old man dies.

The focus of the játtr is the praise of Christianity, which is personified through Öláfr Tryggvason. Nornagesst þátttr can thus be placed alongside the other þátttr within Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar that present the king as advocate and teacher of the new faith, and that place his political function in the background.


Stefanie Würth

[See also: Codex Regius; Flateyjarbók; Formáldarsógur; Helreið Brynhildar; Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar; Reginsmál og Fáðhismál, Snorra Edda; þátttr]

Norns see Supernatural Beings

Norway. The first clear mention of Norway and its inhabitants occurs around 890 in the geographical survey prefacing King Alfred's Old English translation of Paulus Orosius's Historiarum adversum paganos, which includes a carefully recorded account of the voyages of the Norwegian Olhhere (Ótarr). He told the king "that he lived northemost of all Northmen." From his home, he sailed southward along "the land of the Northmen," which he also called Nordøgø, the "northern" way. The name is commonly thought to allude to the long and mostly protected sailing route that united Norwegian territory at a time when land, with its mountains and forests, tended to divide.

Ótarr describes Norway as a long and narrow stretch of territory extending from the land of the "Finns" or Lapps in the north (present-day Finnmark) to Denmark (Denmark) in the south. East of Norway, Ótarr knew of the land of the Swedes, Sweeland, and farther north Cwéna land, the land of the West Finnish Cwé纳斯 (Old Norse kvæningar). Norway thus enters history in a clear Scandinavian context. It appears that the country comprised most of its present territory, and that Ótarr regarded its inhabitants as a separate ethnic group, the Norsemen or Norwegians. At that time, the political unification of the country under a single monarch had as yet barely started, so that the idea of a Norway settled by Norwegians must have been rooted in more general geographic and sociocultural features.

Extensive forests separated southeastern Norway from Swedish settlements to the east. Farther north, the long mountain range called "the Keel" (Old Norse kjølen, Norwegian kjølen) took over as a natural border. There was closer contact with Danish-settled areas to the south, across the water and along the coast of present West Sweden, which to Ótarr formed part of Denmark. In the Viking Age and the early Christian period, the Danes often claimed, and sometimes had political supremacy over the Vikin or Oslofjord area. Still, in Ótarr's account most of this area was apparently thought to be Norwegian territory, including the port of Skiringsalr or Kaupang west of the mouth of the Oslofjord.

Inside Norway, communications at sea brought people from various parts of the country together. From the fjords cutting inland, traffic and settlement would follow river valleys and lakes toward higher ground, and people would traverse high plateaus and mountain passes between the main regions. This network of communications favored barter between areas of different natural and economic conditions, and helped to forge social links between regions. The Norsemen of Ótarr's days were also bound together by the cult of the same Nordic deities and by the common Old Norse language, which was characterized by traits of its own as compared with Danish and Swedish dialects.

More distinct Norwegian boundaries were a consequence of the long medieval process of political unification coming to an end in the 13th century. The Old Norse kingdom then included present Norway and the later Swedish provinces of Jämmland and Härjedalen to the east and Bohuslân to the south. South of Bohuslân, the three kingdoms of Scandinavia converged at the mouth of the Göta River. In the early 1260s, the Norse-speaking inhabitants of Iceland and Greenland placed themselves under the Norwegian Crown. Farther south, the Western Isles from the Faroes to the Hebrides and Isle of Man had, like Iceland, been settled from Norway in the Viking Age and had later been made tributary territories of the Norwegian kingdom. The Hebrides and Isle of Man were ceded to Scotland in 1266, while farther north Norwegian dominion continued. This was the total extension of the Norwegian realm until the Orkneys and Shetland were pledged to the Scottish king in 1468–1469. Formally, the rest of the "tributary lands" west over sea belonged to Norway past the end of the Middle Ages.

Settlement and population. Medieval Norway was a pre-dominantly agrarian society in which towns were few and scattered, and in which the agricultural population was settled on individual farms. Over the years, these farms were divided into varying numbers of holdings, that is to say, units of production run by individual households, usually families. In the coastal districts from South to North Norway, the houses of the various holdings of a divided farm would often stay clustered together in a hamlet-like complex. But regular villages in the common European sense did not exist in medieval Norway. No more fundamental socioeco-
nomic dividing line can be drawn through medieval Scandinavia than the one between the areas of individual farms, mainly to the north and west, in Norway, Iceland, and peripheral parts of Sweden, and the best agricultural regions with their village settlement to the south and east, in Central and South Sweden and most of Denmark. In the areas first mentioned, large, compact estates were never feasible, and society in general was less aristocratic than in the village regions.

The fact that the rural population of Norway was attached to single farms, whose names and property boundaries have to a large degree been preserved up to the present day, makes it possible to measure the volume of settlement in the form of a number of farms with their own names at given times, as they are indicated by datable place-names and other information in both contemporary and later sources.

From the Viking Age to the first half of the 14th century, there was a considerable extension of agrarian settlement. In the oldest and best agricultural areas, settlement became denser through the increasing division of farms and the exploitation of less accessible resources. At the same time, new farms and whole farm districts were cleared in less favorable or central areas; there was a general expansion of settlement toward the interior, onto higher ground, and farther north. This process can only be explained as connected with a steady increase in population. The evidence suggests that the increase was greater in East Norway, where the reserves of agricultural land were most extensive. In the southern districts were tenants or part-tenants of clerical or lay landowners. Consequently, many peasants would work their holdings partly as freeholders and partly as tenants. Quite a few would, in addition, be the owners of inherited or otherwise acquired parts of land rented by other peasants.

There is no solid evidence for when and how this pattern of landownership came about. Over the last fifty years, an influential school of materialist historians has postulated a society of free, equal farmers as the point of departure for Norwegian social history. In the course of the high Middle Ages, the Crown and the Church weakened the peasantry and accelerated the transition from a freeholding to a tenancy system. The politico-ideological superstructure of society in its turn influenced the relations of production. By increasing the public burdens on the people, the Crown and the Church weakened the peasantry and accelerated the transition from a freeholding to a tenancy system.

The materialist view took issue with an older approach that had argued that the tenancy system had developed quite far as early as the prehistoric period, or at the latest in the early Christian period, before the middle of the 12th century. A core of the tenancy system appears to have existed in the Viking Age or the early Christian period. Nor is there any empirical basis for the belief that the great mass of Norwegian peasants were freeholders and that society was generally less aristocratic in an earlier period. In the Viking Age and early Christian period, local aristocratic families commanded the support of peasants not only by means of tradi-
tional and personal loyalties and ability to protect and reward followers, but probably also in part by means of the control landowners could exercise over tenants.

There is no doubt that the tenancy system became increasingly important in the following period, not least through the growth of part-ownership of farms and holdings. Consequently, the proportion of freeholders was reduced. But it must be stressed that the striking growth of church land from nil at the start of the missionary period to about 40 percent in the first half of the 14th century was due largely to royal and aristocratic donations of land that was probably worked in advance by tenants. In other words, a great deal of what has been regarded as growth of the tenancy system as such may actually have been the transfer and reorganization of tenant holdings.

In the high Middle Ages, the centralization of Church and monarchy produced a development away from an old clan aristocracy, whose power base was overwhelmingly local, toward a service aristocracy that based its social position mainly in the government of state and Church. Still, high-medieval Norway was not a particularly aristocratic society compared with the neighboring Scandinavian kingdoms and most of the rest of Europe. Since the agricultural resources of the country were scarce and scattered, there were few really great landholders. The clergy and royal service aristocracy were certainly placed well above ordinary people in wealth and status, but the boundary between these two groups and peasant society was a fluid one, and both groups were recruited from the peasantry. In general, the clerical and lay aristocracy lacked the private economic power base that would have made it strong enough in number and influence to strive for independent control of society.

On the other hand, the situation of the Norwegian tenant of the Middle Ages was, in European terms, quite favorable. Not only would tenants of Crown, Church, and aristocracy farm the best land of the country, so that they would not rarely be better off than many freeholders, the tenant was also, in legal terms, a free man who worked the soil he leased on a contract basis. The landowner exercised no private jurisdiction over him, he was not obliged to perform labor services, and he was not tied to the soil. In other words, there was no serfdom or villeinage in Norway. Regular slavery had largely ebbed away by the late 12th century, probably not least for economic reasons. The growth of population led to short leases (one to three years), but they also open the way for longer contracts. Most of the written contracts that have survived in this type appear to represent the normal practice of central church institutions, and they were used by other landholders as well. To the degree that shorter leases were applied, they would normally be prolonged as long as the tenant and his heirs fulfilled their basic economic obligations.

As a consequence of the catastrophic decline of population in the late Middle Ages, land became plentiful. Land rents may on average have dropped to one fourth or one fifth of what they had been before the Black Death. At this low rent, there was more and better land for each tenant. Thus, the standard of living of the average peasant must have been considerably higher than it had been before the middle of the 14th century. In economic terms, the crisis of the late Middle Ages was a crisis for the recipients of land rents, taxes, and other dues from the agrarian population, that is, the Crown, the Church, and private landlords. The high aristocracy was strongly reduced in number and became more clearly separated from the rest of the population as a birth aristocracy. This decline had partly to do with the fact that royal service could no longer sustain an important low aristocracy. Thus, society below a few great families became more egalitarian than before.

**Political unification.** In Ottarr's days, there was as yet no political organization for more than parts of Norway. Territorial unification under one monarchy started seriously with King Haraldr hárfagr (“fair-hair”) Hálfdanarson in the decades around 900. It was achieved by two main stages of military struggle with a more peaceful period in between.

The first stage came to an end shortly after the middle of the 11th century. Throughout most of this phase, a monarchy with its chief power base in the coastal region of West Norway tried to gain a more permanent foothold in other parts of the country as well. A king like Óláf Haraldisson (r. 1015/6-1028), the later St. Ólav, managed to make his power felt over most of Norwegian territory. Still, his reign was only an episode in a period when Danish power was paramount in southeastern Norway. Not until the disintegration of the Danish North Sea empire after the death of Knud (Cnut) the Great in 1035 did it become possible for Norwegian monarchs to control the whole of Norway more permanently. Under Magnus I Óláfsson (r. 1035-1047) and Haraldr III hardráði (“hard-ruler”) Sigurðarson (r. 1046-1066), Norwegian territory was secured southward through Bohuslän to the mouth of the Gota River. And the inland agricultural regions of East Norway, called Uppland (Uplands), and Trøndelag were brought under more effective royal rule.

A period of comparative stability and peace followed. But frequent reigns of two or three joint rulers, commanding support from different regions and interest groups, indicate that political unity was far from achieved.

In the 1230s began a century of wars of succession, termed "the civil wars" by posterity. This was the second stage of the unification struggle, ending in victory for the kings of the line of Sverrir Sigurðarson (r. 1177-1202). The civil wars ebbed in the 1220s under Sverrir's grandson, Håkon IV Håkonarson (r. 1217-1263). The territorial divisions and social and political tensions that had for so long provided support for rival pretenders and their parties were now finally overcome by a national system of government.

One cornerstone of this system was the incorporation of the magnates and leading freemen of the country in the royal hird or retinue as members of a royal service aristocracy. As a consequence of this process, hird membership became the criterion of lay aristocratic status. During the civil wars, the hird aristocracy was divided between rival kings and pretenders. The wars ended when the aristocracy had been united under one king.

Another cornerstone of the national system of government was the collaboration of the Church and the clergy with the monarchy. The oldest Norwegian Church was a national church, led by the king and incorporated into peasant society by his help. By
the establishment of a separate Norwegian church province in
1152 or 1153, governed from the metropolitan see of Niðaróss
(Trondheim), and covering also the six dioceses of the Western
Isles from Greenland to the Hebrides and Isle of Man, the Norwegian
Church broke away from its heavy dependence on monarchy and
peasant society and became more firmly incorporated in the
universal Church under papal leadership. By means of its national
hierarchical organization, the Church developed into an almost
state-like public authority at the side of the monarchy, contributing
greatly to the unification of Norwegian society, not least in the
wider, cultural sense.

The more independent Church continued to collaborate with
the monarchy, although there were also passing clashes between
the two parties, developing into bitter conflicts in the days of King
Sverrir and again in the early 1280s. The consolidated monarchy
of the 13th century would not accept a politically autonomous
Church. But the monarchy was, by and large, prepared to grant
the Church internal autonomy, judicial powers in spiritual matters,
and financial privileges.

The clergy continuously furnished the king with able, literate
helpers in the government. After the civil wars, the bishops gen-
erally acted as counselors and political guarantors for the monarchy.
Clerics of lower rank served the king in embassies and adminis-
trative tasks, particularly members of the mendicant orders and
cathedral chapters. Still, the Church used most of its personnel
and considerable revenue for its own purposes. This pattern helps
to explain why Hakon Hakonarson and his successors worked
more systematically to create a clergy of their own within the
framework of the royal chapel, which was again part of the hird.

The clerical helpers of the king must have contributed essen-
tially to the formulation of royal political ideology as expressed in
Oratio contra clerum Norvegiae and Konungs skuggsjá. The latter
work emphasizes the king's likeness to God and his function as
God's chosen representative on earth. The position of the king is
presented as so elevated and superior in relation to other temporal
authorities that the work must be said to defend a near-absolutist
ideology. A related ideology pervades the extensive royal legisla-
tion of the following period, culminating in the great law codes of
Magnús Lagabøtir ("law-mender") Hakonarson (r. 1263–
1280). Both in this legislation and in the official saga biographies
of King Sverrir and his successors, the position of the king as the
heir of St. Olaf, the national patron, is stressed.

Even if the hird aristocracy and the clergy played key roles in
the state-building process of the high Middle Ages, they were in
themselves too slender a basis on which to build national royal
power. Norwegian society was predominantly a peasant society,
and no public authority of importance could be established and
maintained without the acceptance of the agrarian population.
Fundamental for the political unification of the country and the
development of a nationwide political system was the peasant
society's need for at least a minimum of peace and order. From this
need stemmed the two main functions of medieval monarchy in
society: enforcer of justice and military leader.

Centrally placed in the relations between king and peasants
were the popular assemblies, or things. They functioned locally in
judicial and partly also political matters throughout the Middle
Ages. Politically, some of them acquired special importance by the
"taking" or acclamation of a new king. From the days of Haraldr
harfagri, the monarchy was active in promoting the so-called
lognings as representative assemblies of larger regions and su-
preme forum of legislation and judicial decisions. The provincial
law codes sanctioned by the lognings regulated the king's role in
the enforcement of justice, with the right to legal fines and confis-
cation, and his role as military leader, commanding the important
naval levy of the leiðanger, which was supplied by the peasantry.

The national monarchy of the high Middle Ages reduced the
judicial and political influence of peasant society through the things.
In the law codes of Magnús Lagabøtir, the king assumes the role
as the highest judge and legislator in the land. The participation of
the lognings in legislation had by now been reduced to more formal
assent to royal enactments that would have been sanctioned in
advance by central royal assemblies or parliaments. Although
freemen representing local districts were sometimes summoned to
such assemblies at the side of prelates and magnates, their par-
ticipation was hardly decisive for the outcome of discussions and
negotiations; it was intended more to bind peasant society.

Still, the monarchy attached importance to the preservation
of the legal basis and support it had acquired from the agrarian
population at an early stage of the unification process. The rela-
tionship between monarchy and peasantry was never free from
tension, because of the economic and military burdens placed on
the people and infringements by local royal representatives. But
royal taxation in the form of a partial conversion of the leiðanger
was lighter in Norway than in the neighboring kingdoms, at
the same time as the peasantry kept its military function. Royal leg-
islation also reveals that the monarchy tried to protect its subjects
from abuses on the part of royal officials and private landowners.
It is debatable how far this policy was carried out in practice. But
it is hard to see how the monarchy, on a comparatively weak
financial basis, could have been built up to its strength and influence
at the end of the high Middle Ages without some form of positive
functional relationship with the great majority of the population.
This relationship would include the participation, under the control
of royal officials, of the best men of rural districts and towns in
local public affairs.

The establishment of a national system of government required
more solid points of support than the royal estates visited by an
itinerant king and his hird at the first stage of the unification
process. The role of the kings as promoters of towns must be
viewed in this light. In the rise and development of Norwegian
towns from the 11th century onward, attention should be drawn
to the towns' function as administrative and fiscal centers of
monarchy and Church in which were gathered, increasingly,
revenues in kind from the agrarian countryside. In the 13th cen-
tury, the international commercial center of Bergen, by far the
largest and most important of medieval Norwegian towns, became
the first town to deserve the name of a national capital. From the
beginning of the 14th century, it was rivaled by Oslo as a coordinate
political and administrative center for the increasingly important
eastern part of Norway.

Toward the end of the high Middle Ages, the Crown exerted
a greater political influence than its power apparatus and revenues
by themselves would suggest. The cause of this increased power
may well have been that there was a certain balance between the
main sociopolitical groups of the country in the sense that none of
them was strong enough to dominate the others and to act against
the interests of the kingdom as a whole; they were all to a certain
extent dependent on the Crown. But this equilibrium proved frag-
ile. When the consolidated monarchy of the 13th century directed
its new-found strength into an active and at times aggressive for-
eign policy, it was shown after some time to have insufficient re-

sources in open confrontations with the far more populous and
economically stronger neighboring kingdoms and with the North
German seaports that were later united in the Hanseatic League. In
the end, Norway was reduced to a mere pawn in the ambitious

game into which it had entered as an active player, and became for
600 years the weaker partner in a series of Scandinavian unions
starting in 1319.

Late Middle Ages. When Håkon V Magnusson died in 1319,
Magnus VII Eriksson (r. 1319–1355), the son of his daughter in
her marriage with a brother of the Swedish king, inherited the
Norwegian crown. In the same year, his election to the throne of
Sweden as Magnus II led Norway into a little more than personal
union with that kingdom. The union lasted until the second son of
Magnus, Håkon VI (r. 1355–1380), became Norwegian king. In
this period, Norway suffered most acutely from the population
and production crises of the late Middle Ages. The already weak
financial basis of the Crown was now so reduced that the question
has been raised whether the preconditions of a fairly effective and

independent Norwegian state authority any longer existed.

Håkon VI married Margrethe, the daughter of the Danish
king, Valdemar IV, and was drawn into Valdemar's ill-fated struggle
with the Hanseatic League. His son with Margrethe, Olaf IV (r.
1380–1387), was accepted as Danish king before he inherited his
father's throne. This was the origin of the Danish-Norwegian union
that was to last for more than four centuries; for some periods of
the late Middle Ages, it also included Sweden.

Norway entered the union with Denmark as a kingdom of
her own, represented by her "council of the realm," an aristocratic
representative and sanctioning body that derived from the
consultative and executive royal council of the high Middle Ages.
However, the weak Norwegian aristocracy was not capable in the
long run of defending its own and other Norwegian interests in
relation to the Danish-Norwegian monarchs, governing from
Denmark, and the strong conciliar aristocracy of that kingdom.

On the other hand, the disintegration of a central Norwegian
political power and the more private exercise of local administration
by the holders of royal len, or fiefs, led to greater autonomy for
local rural districts and towns.

In 1536, on the eve of the Lutheran Reformation and after an
unsuccessful revolt by the last Catholic archbishop of Norway,
Olaf Engelbrektsson, the much-reduced council that he led ceased
to function. Norway was formally, albeit never fully in practice,
incorporated into the Danish realm, ruled by the king and his
Danish council.

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Knut Helle

Numeral System. Roman numerals were introduced into Scandinavia
together with Latin script. They were often distinguished from
letters by a point before and after the numeral in question, for
example, xv = 15. Arabic numerals were known from at least the
second half of the 13th century, but Roman numerals prevailed
throughout the Middle Ages, even in accounts.

The words denoting the numerals from 1 to 100 in the Indo-
European languages have a common origin, the constitutive unit
being 10. While 1 to 10 are denoted by simplex words, all other
numerals are expressed by compounds containing derivatives of
the word for 10. This pattern includes the word for 100 (Latin
centum, Gothic hund, Old Norse hunndar, etc.), the etymological
interpretation of which is "ten decades," and the Scandinavian
word for 1,000 (Old Norse þau according to Proto-Germanic "þau-
dagl, etymologically "a great hundred" (Proto-Germanic "þau-
dagl.

The decimal system is perceptible in the medieval Scandinavian
languages, for example, Old Norse þrettan '13' (etymologically
"three-ten"), þrir titir or þraitjag '30' (etymologically "three
decades"), etc. Less evident is Old Swedish and Old Danish tiughu
'20' where the original first component is lost; cf. tuav tikas 'two
decades' in the runic inscription on the Rök stone in Östergötland,
Sweden, from about 800.

However, the decimal system is intermingled with a duodeci-
mal counting system based on the number 12, and a vigesimal
system based on the number 20. Thus, in Old Norse, the word
hundrad normally represents the numerical value "120" and þausund "1,200." The numerical value 100 may be expressed by tíu tígr 'ten decades' or hundrad tígrætt 'a hundred according to the decimal counting,' sometimes expressly opposed to hundrad tólfætt (120, or a hundred according to the duodecimal system). For instance, in Konungs skuggsjá, a leap year is said to consist of íf daga tólfætt og vi dagur. . . . Einn at bokmáli þá verða oll hundrud tígrætt kollud. og verdur þat þá at riettu rali íf tígrætt og lx dagar og vi dagar (*300 days according to the duodecimal counting and 6 days. . . . But in the literary language, all hundreds belong to the decimal system, and then the correct expression will be 300 days according to the decimal counting and 50 days and 6 days"; Konungs skuggsjá, p. 10); the "literary language" is Latin.

Quoting a Norwegian speaker in his Gesta Danorum (ca. 1200), Saxo Grammaticus noted this peculiarity: Volebat autem millenarium mille ac ducentorum capacem intellegi ("he wanted a thousand to be understood as twelve hundred"; Book 5, ch. 7:4).

In Old Danish, the component - tígh(a) in numerals is ambiguous, meaning a set of either ten (a decade) or twenty (a score). For instance, a Zealand MS from about 1300 has stúuygh 'seven decades', i.e., 70, while a contemporary Jutland MS has fyrst ítíghæ 'four times twenty', i.e., 80. The latter usage became dominant in the 14th century, resulting in, for example, halftígrættstwo 'three and a half times twenty' for 70, sometimes even femynítýghæ 'five times twenty' for 100, ìrðentn oc tywæ 'fourteen and twenty' for 34, and the like. In Modern Danish, the words for 20, 30, and 40 preserve etymological decades: tyve, tredive, fyrre(tyve), whereas the words for 50–90 are etymologically multiples of 20, for instance, firsindstýve (normally abbreviated firs) "80." Whether the Danish vigesimal counting is a premedieval relic or a medieval innovation can hardly be established. Vigesimal counting of unknown age occurs in several European languages, such as Irish, Basque, and Albanian. In French, the vigesimal element (e.g., soixante-dix '70, quatre-vingts '80) is an 11th-century innovation spreading from Normandy, but there is no evidence that it originated with the Viking settlers. Nor is the role of the number 12 confined to Scandinavian; the common denominator of Roman fractions was 12.


Allan Karker
Oddrúnargrátr ("Oddrún's Lament") is another in the Sigurð-Gudrún cycle of poems contained in the Codex Regius of the Poetic Edda (13th century). Oddrún, here the (half)-sister of Atli and Brynhildr, appears nowhere else in the texts, and is probably an invention of the late 12th-century poet. Oddrún, skilled in magic and witchcraft, hears of the difficult labor of Borgny, King Heiðrek's daughter. She rushes to her aid because she has pledged to help all in distress. When Borgny thanks her for safely delivering twins, Oddrún replies bitterly that it was not love for Borgny that brought her there. In fact, she has never forgiven Borgny for having accused her publicly at a banquet of having an illicit love affair. And now Borgny herself has just borne twins to her own illicit lover.

Oddrún then proceeds to tell her tale. After Sigurð's and Brynhildr's deaths, Gunnarr asks Atli for Oddrún's hand in marriage. But Atli is furious about Brynhildr's fate, and forbids the marriage. Love proves to be too strong, however, and Oddrún and Gunnarr become secret lovers. They are betrayed to Atli, who has Gunnarr and Hogni imprisoned. Oddrún escapes into exile.

From the snake pit where he has been thrown, Gunnarr plays his magic harp. The sound carries to Oddrún, who races to her lover's aid. But she arrives too late. As she rushes into the room, she watches in horror as Adi's mother transforms herself into a serpent and kills Gunnarr with a bite to the heart. The poem concludes with a reminder that love dictates destiny.

The juxtaposition of the two women, Borgny and Oddrún, forms the focus of the poem: Borgny at Oddrún's mercy, guilty of the same sin of which she had accused Oddrún, and Oddrún bitter and, like Borgny, rejected by her family because of love.
sions. Like Oddr, Pátrust always stays one step ahead of his adversary. *Njáls saga* may have borrowed the motif from *Odds páttr*.

According to many scholars, *Odds páttr*, which is told in a prominent saga style, was probably written down independently before being incorporated into the *konungasögur*.


**Tommy Danielsson**

[See also: Bandamanna saga, Flateyarbók, Hemings páttr Áslákssonar; Hulda-Hroknisskinna; Morkinskinna; Njáls saga; Sneglu-Halla páttr]

**Óðinn** (Proto-Germanic-*Wōmanaz*) appears in medieval Scandinavian sources as the chief figure of pagan Nordic mythology. He is also mentioned in Anglo-Saxon and German sources, where variations of his name include "Woden" and "Wotan." Óðinn's name is almost certainly to be traced to the same form (*wa tôs*) from which the Old Norse adjective *óðr* (mad, frantic, vehement; cf. German *wu*) is derived. In the 11th century, for example, Adam of Bremen remarks "Wodan, id est furor" ("Wodan, that is fury"); this association with "fury." In the narrative sources of information about Óõinn are generally late matches this association with "fury." In the archaeological record (the Gutnish Lârbro stone) and early Germania, (Gautreks saga, ch. 39), as well as late (Gautreks saga, ch. 7) literary testimony, imply that Óðinn's cult may have involved human sacrifice.

The interplay between knowledge and poetry ran deep in early Scandinavian history, because history was recorded and transmitted largely in the form of skaldic verse (cf. the prologue to *Heimskringla*). In addition to Óðinn's obtaining the poetic mead, which he apportions to gods and men, Óðinn speaks in verse (*Ynglinga saga*, ch. 6). He and his priests are called "song-smiths" (*ljóðasmirð*; *Ynglinga saga*, ch. 6). This association between Óðinn and poetry, and particularly the special relationship poets had with Óðinn, has important ramifications for our understanding of the deity, since much of the textual record concerning him survives in works of poetry or in writings dealing with poetic art (i.e., *eddic* and skaldic poetry, *Snorra Edda*). This fact may explain why the image of Óðinn that emerges from the written testimony does not always seem in accord with other sources of information.

Óðinn's ecstatic experiences, his quest for wisdom, and his self-sacrifice on the World Tree, along which he could then travel to the other worlds, have suggested to some that Scandinavian paganism was influenced by the shamanistic practices of the neighboring Lapps or of Siberian tribes. It is doubtful that anything like the shamanism of northern Asia was practiced by the Scandinavians; there is, for example, no evidence of such typical shamanistic activities as dancing, the use of drums, or healing. But it is difficult to deny traces of what appear to be shamanistic elements in the figure of Óðinn. In addition to his association with ecstasy-producing elements, such as intoxicants, self-sacrifice, and torture, Óðinn has two ravens that he sends out to collect information (*Gyldafinning*, ch. 25), and he frequently appears as a shape changer (*Ynglinga saga*, ch. 7; *Skaldskaparmál*, ch. 6).

Óðinn was also a god of battle, and in that context was affiliated with the valkyries and the berserks. The valkyries of Old Norse poetry and saga are armed attendants who ride into battle, where they give victory according to Óðinn's will. They place invisible fetters on the warrior, often a hero whom Óðinn had earlier championed, thus giving rise to Óðinn's reputation as a fickle patron. The berserks appear to have a long history in Scandinavia. By the time of the sagas, however, whatever cultural reality they may once have had as members of elite military bands had given way to literary use as stock figures, usually comic or villainous, sometimes both.
Among Óðinn's notable possessions are his spear (Gungnir), his eight-legged horse (Sleipnir), his ravens (Huginn, Muninn), his wonderfully reproductive ring (Draupnir), and the high-seat from which he sees into all the worlds (Hlidskjálf). He is the father of several of the most important deities, such as Þór and Baldr, and is married to Frigg, with whom he periodically carries on rivalry (e.g., the prose introduction to Grímnsœl). Óðinn is also the blood-brother of the complex and troublesome Loki (Lokasenna, st. 9).

Óðinn's status in the Nordic pantheon has been the matter of much debate. Certain aspects of our information about him, such as the paucity of Odinic place-names in the West Norse area, have led some scholars to conclude that he is a relative newcomer (presumably from the south), whose worship to some extent replaced the indigenous Þýr (*Þwaz). Pioneered by Dumézil, however, recent comparative research has indicated how Óðinn would fit into an inherited Indo-European mythological scheme.


Stephen A. Mitchell

[See also: Adam of Bremen; Berserkr; Eddic Poetry; Gautreks saga; Grimnismál; Hávamál; Lokasenna; Maiden Warriors; Mythology; Óðvalds saga Tryggvasonar; Runes and Runic Inscriptions; Saxo Grammaticus; Snorra Edda; Vafirðingismál; Volsunga saga; Volsunga, Ynglinga saga]

Óláfr, St. The sources of our knowledge of the saint are contemporary or younger skaldic poetry, secular sagas of the king (especially those from the hand of Snorri Sturluson), liturgical texts, church legends, and miracles.

Óláfr Haraldsson, Norwegian king and martyr, was born about 995. He seems to have been eager and vindictive, severe and proud, in many respects far from the medieval Christian ideal of humility. But in most sources, he is more or less portrayed after a model common to saints and martyrs, with some features patterned after Christ.

Óláfr descended from Haraldr háfrætfagrí ("fair-hair") Halfdarnarson and was the son of Haraldr inn grenski ("the Greenlandish"), a local king in southeast Norway. At the age of twelve, he sailed out for his first Viking expedition. During a winter stay at Rouen in France some years later, he was baptized. Shortly after that, he went home claiming Norway as his patrimony (1015), and within a year, he had defeated the Danish and Swedish rulers.

King Óláfr wanted to find his rule on Christian legislation, with the Church as his ally and Charlemagne as his ideal. To this end, he brought English clerics with him. He built churches and divided Norway into church regions, but because of his violent behavior he grew unpopular among the powerful local chieftains. They joined forces with the Christian King Knud (Cnut) the Great of Denmark and his Norwegian vassal, the earl Hákon Eiríksson, and expelled Óláfr from his domain (1028).

The king fled to Grand Duke Jaroslav of Garðariki (Novgorod). Encouraged by the message that Hákon Eiríksson had been drowned, Óláfr left his asylum two years later, raised a small army in Sweden, and crossed over to Norway. There, he encountered a large peasant army, and fell in battle at Stiklestad (Stiklestad) on July 29, 1030. His body was secretly carried to Niðaróss (Trondheim) by loyal peasants and buried in a sandbank by the River Nið.

Immediately after the king's fall, healing miracles were said to be performed where his body rested: light shined over its location, and the coffin moved upward in the sand. Grimkell, missionary bishop and counselor of Óláfr, was sent for. He came and opened
the coffin, and the king's body was buried close by St. Clement's church in Nidaros.

One year later, Grimkell opened the coffin anew. Witnesses reported that the king's face still had a fresh color, and that hair and nails had grown after his death. The bishop now proclaimed Óláfr a saint, and his mortal remains were enshrined and placed near the high altar of the church. The king was, however, never officially canonized. In the high Middle Ages, a cathedral was built in Nidaros to shelter the shrine of the saint.

The violent death of King Óláfr led to a sudden change in popular opinion of him. Many people grew discontented with the exploiting Danish rulers, and years of crop failure were regarded as a divine response to the evil deed of killing their king. Submission to the dead king became an act of repentance and penitence.

The cult of the new saint made rapid progress and spread widely also outside Norway. Many churches were dedicated to St. Óláfr. Crowds of supplicants came to see his shrine and to profit from his healing powers.

Like his pre-Christian ancestors, Óláfr was thought to possess supernatural influence on harvest and fortune. He was ascribed features from Freyr, the god of vegetation, and from the thunder-god Þorr. Springs with healing water were said to have welled forth where the king or his body had been. Folk traditions about the king's successful fight against trolls and giants proliferated. For centuries, the saint played a dominant role as protector against evil forces.

In the 1160s, King Magnus Eiriksson declared himself to be the saint's vassal and substitute. Óláfr had become an embodiment of the biblical idea of a just king, and was referred to as "Norway's king of all eternity." Church and kingdom shared a common interest in the saint as founder and unifier of a Christian national state.


[See also: Iconography; Liturgy and Liturgical Texts; Miracles, Collections of; Norway; Olafs saga helga; Saints' Lives]

Óláfr Tryggvason was king of Norway 995–999/1000. He was the son of Tryggvi Óláfsson, grandson of Haraldr hárfagri ("fair-hair") Hallíhandson, a petty king of Viken or the Upplands.

Before Óláfr Tryggvason became king, he led great Viking raids to England, Scotland, and Ireland. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for the years 991 and 994 states that Óláfr led a large Viking fleet to attack the eastern and southern coast of England. In both cases, the English king paid large amounts of silver, "Danegeld," to buy off the Vikings.

Just before Óláfr Tryggvason went to Norway, controversy arose in Trondelag between Earl Hákon, who was the actual ruler of the country, and the Tronds. According to Heimskringla, the earl constantly abused their wives and daughters, and the farmers began to grumble just as the Tronds are wont to do over anything which goes against them" (Heimskringla 1.343). One of the rich peasants who had refused to give up his wife to the earl gathered the farmers and set out against Hákon. The earl fled and was killed by his own slave, Karkr, while escaping. Óláfr Tryggvason, who was on his way to Nidaros (Trondheim), inadvertently encountered one of the earl's sons and killed him in battle; the two other sons fled. Óláfr was chosen king by the people of Trondelag at the Eyraing. After that, he traveled throughout the country and was made king of all Norway. In 996, Óláfr was in Viken (Viken), and from there he carried out his plans to introduce Christianity in Norway and to secure complete control over the country.

With the help of his paternal relatives, he succeeded in making the farmers of Viken accept the new faith in 996/7. Those who refused or disagreed with him, "he dealt with hard; some he slew, some he maimed, and some he drove away from the land" (Heimskringla 1.362). Gradually, his actions led to a conflict between the king and the farmers. In the summer of 997, he went to the southwestern part of the country, made the Rogalanders embrace the new faith, and secured their support by marrying his sister to one of the chieftains there, Erlingr Skjálgsson, at Sóli (Sole). In the west, he introduced Christianity through the support of his maternal relatives while securing control over this province. The introduction of Christianity in these provinces, the west, and Viken, was facilitated by long-lasting contact with Christian western Europe, especially the British Isles.

In the fall of 997, Óláfr Tryggvason went to Trondelag. There and in the north, paganism was stronger than in the other provinces. Óláfr Tryggvason met with strong opposition from the farmers and was forced to acquiesce. He returned one year later, killed the leader of the farmers, Jarn-Skeggi, and made the Tronds embrace the new faith. Some of the rich farmers refused to accept the new order. They fled and went to Sweden, joining Eiríkr, son of Earl Hákon. Óláfr Tryggvason tried to secure control over Trondelag and the good-will of the Tronds by marrying Guðrún, Jarn-Skeggi's daughter. He did not succeed; Guðrún attempted to murder him on their wedding night. In 999, he made the people of Hålogaland (Hålogaland) accept Christianity. Thus, he had christianized the entire coastal area of Norway. Óláfr Haraldsson later christianized the interior.

But it was not only in Norway that Óláfr Tryggvason tried to spread Christianity. His pressure on the Icelandic chieftains was undoubtedly one of the main reasons why the Icelanders accepted the new faith at the Alþingi in 999/1000. He also made the Greenlanders accept Christianity.

Óláfr Tryggvason's strengthening of the power of the king involved not only an expansion of the king's territorial control over the country, but also an attempt to develop the internal organization of the kingdom. It was most likely Óláfr Tryggvason who introduced the office of district governor, a service rendered by a chiefman who received royal land in return. He was also the first Norwegian king to mint coins.

Óláfr Tryggvason died in the battle of Svolðr (Svold) in 999/1000, where he fought the Danish king Sven Haraldsson (Forkbeard), who had been forced to give up Viken, the Swedish king who wanted control of Gautaland, and Eiríkr, son of Earl Hákon.
Ólafs saga helga

“The Saga of St. Óláfr”. Óláfr Haraldsson, king of Norway 1015–1028, died fighting at Stiklastaðir (Stiklestad) on July 29, 1030. His death was quickly interpreted as a martyrdom on July 29, 1030. His death was quickly interpreted as a martyrdom and an official translation of the vita was begun in the mid-12th century. The text is preserved in only six fragments, NRA 52 (Oslo), dating from about 1225; the seventh and eighth fragments, AM 325 Iv–IVa 4to, are from a different MS, and Louis-Jensen (1970) has demonstrated that they do not belong to the Oldest Saga. The language of the Oldest Saga is Icelandic. The six fragments comprise only events from the king’s reign until his departure from the country for his exile in Russia; but the saga must also have included his early years, the battle of Stiklastaðir, and an acknowledgment of his sanctity. Flaws in composition include curious repetitions, contradictions in details, and a clumsy order of events; the work is composed of anecdotes, þærir, skaldic strophes (six stanzas and two additional lines), and reports of historical facts. Closely related to the Oldest Saga is a Norwegian revision known as the Legendary Saga of St. Óláfr, which contains a great deal of clerical or legendary matter, hence its name. The Legendary Saga presents a history of the saint’s life from birth to death: his childhood and youth, his Viking years in England, his return to Norway and overthrow of the earls from Lade, his reign and the christianization of Norway, his exile in Russia, his return and death at Stiklastaðir, and the miracles attributed to him. This saga is preserved in only one MS, De la Gardie 8 (Uppsala), from central Norway (Trondelag) in the mid-13th century. The Legendary Saga has shortened the text considerably and improved upon the composition, although many incongruities are still left, probably due to the great variety of oral and written sources that were incorporated. The author often combined two variants of the same episode or reported them in different places. Two major sections were added: (1) the so-called Kriststald, inserted in two parts at different places, and containing stories of the king’s missionary activities, especially his christianization of the inhabitants of Guðbrandsdal, and (2) the Legendarium, i.e., the miracles of the
The Legendary Saga was not the immediate source for later histories of St. Ólaf. Other sagas about St. Ólaf's life must have existed. The presentation of St. Ólaf's life in Farglítuna is dependent on one of these lost sagas; no special prominence is given to his story in this collection of kings' lives. Fragments of the priest Styrmir Káraason's Ílisssa ("biography") of St. Ólaf, dated to about 1220, are preserved in Flateyjarbók as a list of twenty-eight "articles" in an appendix to the version of Oláfs saga helga presented there (the Separate Saga). The fragments reveal that it had a more amplified and rhetorical style than the Legendary Saga or the Oldest Saga. The versions of Oláfs saga helga culminate in Snorri Sturluson's Separate Saga of St. Ólaf, which was later incorporated in a slightly revised version as the central part of his collection of histories of the Norwegian kings, Heimskringla. His version was probably based on Styrmir Káraason's text, but Snorri also drew material from a number of other sources, among them Orkneyinga saga and Færøyingsa saga. Interestingly, the Kristni þáttir that was interpolated into the Legendary Saga is also quoted by Snorri, and there is a greater degree of word-for-word correspondence. Snorri did not use þjóðtrú that he deemed too fanciful, for instance, Oláfs þáttir Geirstadálls. The interpolated 14th-century MSS of the Separate Saga constitute the final stage in the development of the sagas about St. Ólaf. In these later redactions, Snorri's version was used as the basic text, but it was expanded through the introduction of much of the material that Snorri discarded from his sources.


[See also: Ágrip af Nóregs konunga sögum; Christian Poetry; Christian Prose; Conversion; Einart Skulason; Flateyjarbók; Heimskringla, Historia Norwegiae; Homilies (West Norse); Konungságur; Miracles, Collections of; Oláf, St.; Political Literature; Saints' Lives; Sighvatr Þorðarson; Theodoricus: Historia de antiquitate regum Norwegiensium; Pórarinn loftunga; William of Jumièges: Gesta Normannorum ducum] Œfills saga Tryggvasonar
Norwagiensium by Theodoricus Monachus. The saga, which describes his life and deeds in detail, has many different realizations. The oldest Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar was composed in Latin about 1190 by the monk Oddr Snorrason at the monastery of Pingeýrar (northern Iceland), but is preserved only as three different redactions of an Icelandic translation, each represented by a single MS: AM 310 4to, written in 1250–1275 (incomplete); Stock. Perg. 4to no. 18, written about 1300 (incomplete); and a fragment consisting of two folios, De la Gardie 4–7, written about 1270. The version in AM 310 4to is expanded with interpolations from Ari Porgilsson's Íslandningabók and from Jómsvíkinga saga; as a rule, the text is wordier in this redaction than in the others. Which of these three redactions represents the original translation best has, however, not been determined with full certainty.

Oddr collected his material from both oral and written sources, among others the now-lost works of Sæmundr Sigfússson and Ari Porgilsson. Correspondences between Oddr's and Theodoricus's texts indicate that Oddr must have used Theodoricus's work or a common source. In the written sources, Oddr found the main historical and pseudo-historical knowledge about Óláfr Tryggvason's life, as follows. After his father was treacherously killed by his kinsmen, Óláfr's mother bore him in exile and sent him on a perilous journey to Novgorod, where he was fostered. At twelve years old, he was made the leader of warriors, and later became the chief of Vikings who harassed the coasts of the Baltic Sea, the Netherlands, and the British Isles. He was baptized in England and shortly thereafter went to Norway, where he ruled as a king for five years, during which time he christianized five countries. He was killed in a battle at sea in the year 1000.

Oddr's chief concern was to glorify Óláfr Tryggvason as the first missionary king of Norway and the person who christianized Iceland; as John the Baptist was the forerunner of Christ, Óláfr Tryggvason was the forerunner of St. Óláfr Tryggvason as the forerunner of St. Óláfr. Although Oddr based his saga on written and oral sources, he found himself free to expand the story with anecdotes modeled on the Bible and hagiographic literature.

Oddr's Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar is, together with skaldic poetry, the main source of Fagrskinna's passage about Óláfr Tryggvason, in which the description of his last battle constitutes the bulk of the account. This version excludes all the legendary and hagiographic material. Likewise, Snorri Sturluson's Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar in Heimskringla has as its main sources Oddr's Olafs saga Tryggvasonar and skaldic poetry; but, in addition, Snorri used Jómsvíkinga saga and probably a now-lost saga about the earls of Hlaðir (*Hlaðjartaðr saga). Snorri also pruned the diction of all hagiographic characteristics.

Gunnlaug Leifsson, a monk at Pingeýrar (d. 1218 or 1219), also used Oddr in his Olafs saga Tryggvasonar and most likely expanded it with separate þætrir and other material concerning the king's missionary activity. His Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar, written in Latin, is lost, except for some passages in Olafs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta (the Longest Saga), which was probably composed in the early 14th century and was modeled on Snorri Sturluson's Separate Saga of St. Óláfr. The main source of the Longest Saga was Heimskringla in a MS closely related to Fagrskinna, but material from various sagas and þætrir with reference to the introduction of Christianity was inserted, including Færeyinga saga, Hallfreðar saga, Landnámabók, a lost saga of the Danish kings, Gunnlaug's Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar, and so on. The original version of the saga is preserved in AM 61 fol., AM 53 fol., and AM 54 fol., all written in the late 14th century. In Bergsbók (Stock. Perg. fol. no. 1, early 15th century, descending from AM 54 fol.), the saga is attributed to Bergg Sokkason, abbot of the monastery at Munkalverá (northern Iceland) during the second quarter of the 14th century. The Longest Saga was later altered considerably, with changes in the sequence of episodes; two independent þætrir (Nornagests þátti and Helga þátti Pórissonar) were interpolated. This later version is preserved (incomplete) in AM 62 fol. and partly in Flateyjarbók, where a new revision has been undertaken, in particular by the addition of fresh material, such as Greenlendinga saga. Instead of the abridged saga texts of the original Longest Saga, large parts of the sagas in question have been copied from independent MSS, among others Færeyinga saga and Jómsvíkinga saga.


Ólafur Hallíldørsøn

[See also: Ágrip af Norgés konunga sogum; Christian Poetry; Fagrskinna, Flateyjarbók, Hallfreðar saga, Heimskringla, Helga þátti Pórissonar; Historia Norwegiae, Íslandningabók; Konungsøgur, Landnámabók, Nornagests þátti; Ólaf Tryggvason; Theodoricus: Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagiensium; þáttir, Vinland Sagas]

Ólafsdraþa see Hallfréd Ottarsson

Ólafsdraþa scenska see Ottarr svarti
Old English Literature, Norse Influence on. It is not surprising that the vernacular literature of Anglo-Saxon England would to some extent come under Scandinavian influence, considering the tremendous impact of the Scandinavians upon English history, from the first raids of the Vikings upon Lindisfarne in 793, to the treaty between Alfred and Guthrum in 886 establishing the "Danelaw," to the succession of Knud (Cnut) to the throne of England in 1016, which he held until his death in 1035, and of the successive reigns of his two sons, ending in 1042.

Such historical events provided the impetus and subject matter for a number of Old English poems, such as The Battle of Maldon and two poems contained in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: The Battle of Brunanburh and The Capture of the Five Boroughs. The Battle of Maldon describes a battle fought in 991 between an English levy led by Byrhtnoth and a Viking fleet that made its way down from Ipswich to the estuary of the Blackwater and the small island of Northey on the east coast of England. The Parker Chronicle describes the event thus: "In this year Anlaf [Olaf Tryggvason] came with ninety-three ships to Folkestone, and harried outside, and sailed to Sandwich, and thence to Ipswich, overrunning all the countryside and so to Maldon. Ealdorman Byrhtnoth came to meet them with his levies and fought them, but they slew the ealdorman and there had possession of the place of slaughter." Despite suggestive evidence in Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar (Gordon 1987: 13–5) and a treaty among King Æthelred and Anlaf, Justin (Jósteinr), and Guðmundr in 991 or 994, it is uncertain that Óláf was actually at Maldon, even though he was engaged in military campaigns in England around that time. Scholars now generally hold that the poem was composed some years after the event (ca. 1020–1042) (McKinnell 1975, Blake 1978, Anderson 1986), with some possibility of influence from Bjarkamin (Phillpotts 1929), the Vita Osvaldi (composed ca. 995–1005; McKinnell 1975), and possibly the Encomium Emmae (Anderson 1986). The work must be counted as an imaginative poetic creation based on accounts of the battle, and not as a firsthand report. Notable is the poet's portrait of Byrhtnoth and his troop as they defend their position in the best of heroic traditions, as well as its swift pace, individual speeches, and battle clades.

The two Chronicle poems commemorate victories over invading forces. The Capture of the Five Boroughs is recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for the year 942, and tells in its ten lines of Edmund's freeing of the Five Boroughs of Leicester, Lincoln, Nottingham, Derby, and Stamford from the Norsemen at York. More noteworthy is The Battle of Brunanburh (in the Chronicle for 937), which relates the victory of the English forces under the command of Æthelstan and Edmund over the combined forces of Scots, commanded by Constantine, and Norsemen, commanded by Anlaf, son of the Viking king of Dublin Guthfrith. After the initial clash, the invading forces flee; five kings and seven earls of the Norse forces are killed, although Anlaf and Constantine escape. Scholars have identified the battle on Vinbyehsi described in Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar (chs. 50–55) as another account of the battle at Brunanburh, although some of the details are incorrect (e.g., Anlaf [Olaf] and Constantine are made into one person: "Ólafr raudr ["the red"] was the name of the king of Scotland").

Other works within the corpus of Old English may have come under direct Scandinavian influence, or drawn upon a larger Scandinavian or Germanic tradition of catalogues or encyclopedic writing. The Rune Poem contains a number of parallels with the Icelandic and Norwegian rune poems. For example, where the Old English poem reads (heregl) byð hwitus corna ("hail is the whitest of grains"), the Icelandic poem has (hagl) er kalastra korna ("hail is the coldest of grains"), and the Norwegian (hagl) er kaldakorn ("hail is cold grain"); where the Old English reads (man) byð on myrge his magan leof ("man rejoicing in life is cherished by his kinsmen"), the Icelandic has (maðr) er manns gaman ("man is the joy of man"). Yet, as the poem's most recent editor remarks, the poems reveal "disparities in content, style, and purpose" (Halsall 1981: 38); more likely, the poems simply draw from a larger tradition of rune lore and shared vocabulary. The Scandinavian relations of another poem, The Rhyming Poem, have also been the subject of recent discussion, with Earl (1987) suggesting that the poet was familiar with verse techniques of skaldic poetry. The claim was rejected in a response by Amory (1987), who asserted "that the Anglo-Saxon rhymer knew neither the Old Norse language nor its literature." Still another work, the poetic Solomon and Saturn, a dialogue on miscellaneous topics, has been said to exhibit stylistic affinities with Vafðrúðnismál (Dobbie 1942: 6:161). The poem Widsith, a catalogue poem in which a fictitious scop recounts his experiences among various tribes, suggests parallels with Saxo's Gesta Danorum and with verified name lists contained in Hervarar saga and Orvar-Odds saga (Malone 1962). Finally, early scholarship on Wulf and Eadwacer suggests a Norse model for the poem, citing the use of yðúðshát meter (v. 3) and similarities in Old English and Old Norse diction (e.g., Old English on þreat cyrnæ, Old Norse at þrotnb korn) (Lawrence 1902, Schoefield 1902). The use of the word hwæpl hwælp in a sense corresponding to Old Norse vargütnop 'wolf's cub' may also point to Norse influence (Pulsiano and Wolf 1991).

Among the prose works, the question of the relationship of The Froze Phoenix to the Old Norse version contained in Am 764 4to (14th century) and Am 194 8vo (15th century) has recently been reopened. Larsen (1942) maintained that the Old Norse version derived from the Old English version or from a common source, which Förster (1920) took to be a Latin sermon or homily (cf. Blake 1964: 96). Yerkes (1984), however, suggests that on the evidence of shared errors and the appearance of hapax legomena in the Old English version (e.g., Old English karlfugol 'male bird' where Old Norse reads karlfrugl), the Old Norse version possibly came first. With regard to the prose Solomon and Saturn and its companion, Adrían and Ritheus, Cross and Hill (1982) have argued that although one of the questions is found elsewhere only in Allræð Ælensk; it is more likely that both the Old English works and the Old Norse work had contact with a Latin list or text of the Joca monachorum type.

Two additional works merit mention here, Deor and Waldere, both of which draw upon legends widely circulated in the Middle Ages. The matter concerning Weland and Beadohild in Deoris also related in Völundarkviða, although it is clear from the Weland story carved on the Franks Casket (8th century) that the legend was inherited in Old English from a native tradition (Malone 1933). The Walter legend that forms the core of Waldere is known, among other works (e.g., Wahtarius, Nibelungenlied), from Pidreks saga (chs. 241–44).

The most important work exhibiting Scandinavian parallels is the epic poem Beowulf. Scandinavian history is central to the narrative, and the work displays a wide range of parallels to and influences from Scandinavian history, literature, myth, and folklore.

The nearest parallel to Beowulf's fight with Grendel in the
hall Heorot and his fight with Grendel's mother in the mere (ll. 662–709, 1492–1590) is found in chs. 64–66 of Grettis saga. A parallel to the descent into the mere and the subsequent battle is found in Samsons saga fagræ for analogues to fights with creatures in a hall or cave, we can look to Orms þátr Stórolssönar (chs. 6–9), Porsteins þátr uxfólfs (chs. 10–11), Gull-bõrs saga, and Porsteins saga Võingssonar (ch. 13). For the dragon fight that concludes Beowulf, scholars have suggested a possible Danish origin, particularly as reflected in Frotho's fight with a dragon in 

For the character of Beowulf himself, scholars have noted affinities with Boðvarr in Hrolfs saga kraka; so close are the parallels that scholars have seen in the combination of these characters a confirmation of the original identity of the two heroes" (Klaeb 1950: xix ff.). Hroðgar's character in the Old English poem is similar to that of Hrólfr's in Hrolfs saga kraka. Other parallels with episodes and references to characters appearing in Beowulf have been seen in such works as Skjoldunga saga, Heimskringla, Sven Aggesen's Brevis historia, and Volunga saga, to name but a few (see also Jorgensen 1978, 1986)

Old Norse-Icelandic Literature, Foreign Influence on, includes translations, adaptations, and recreations of English, French, German, and Latin literature; the incorporation of motifs, episodes, and themes; and the adaptation of narrative structures from non-Scandinavian works. The impact of foreign literature can be perceived in genres that were cultivated primarily in France, England, and Germany, such as the lai, romance, and chanson de geste. Old Norse-Icelandic translations of which are known as riddarasögur, and also in the indigenous eddic poetry, primarily the heroic lays, in the Islendingasögur, konungasögur, and formaldarsögur.

The dissemination of foreign matter in Old Norse-Icelandic literature was both literary and oral, embracing (1) the fairly accurate translation of known masterpieces of continental literature, such as the lais of Marie de France or Thomas of Britain's Tristan; (2) translations and adaptations of foreign literature for which the translator's/adaptor's source is not known, for example, Mágus saga jarls, which is related to the French poem Quatre fils Aymon; or Íþræks saga, the source of which was a collection of German epics belonging to the Dietrich von Bern cycle; or the "Landræs þátr" of Karlamagnús saga, which derives from an English romance that is no longer extant; (3) the inclusion in Old Icelandic literature of foreign motifs and episodes, known either through oral or written transmission, such as the faithful-lion motif introduced into Scandinavia through the Old Norse translation of Chrétien de Troyes's Yvain; (4) the retelling or generic recasting of translated literature, such as Tóðels saga, the Icelandic redaction of the Old Norse Biscleartz ljõð, itself a translation of the lai Biscleart; or Tristrams kvaði, a ballad belonging to the Tristan matter; or the many rítmur that derive ultimately from continental literature via Old Norse or Old Icelandic prose translations, such as the Skökkju rítmur, the metrical version of Mottuls saga; (5) the adaptation of foreign structures, forms, and themes, such as the structure and theme of maiden-king sagas or the multi-tier structure of bridalquest narratives.

The least problematic evidence for foreign influence in Old Norse-Icelandic literature is provided by the translations: in the sacred realm, prayers, homilies, saints' lives, and biblical literature, such as Stjórn; in the secular realm, certain learned and historiographical works, such as the Elucidarius or Gýlinga saga, collections of exempla, such as those ascribed to Jón Hallldórsson

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Phillip Pulsiano
sequent influence of the translated riddarasögur. The subsequent influence of the translated riddarasögur is limited for the most part to the transmission of non-Scandinavian names, motifs, themes, and episodes primarily in indigenous Icelandic romances, but also in the narratives traditionally known as fomaldrasögur, and sporadically in the Íslendingasögur. The Tristan matter was well known in the North, not only through the Old Norse translation Tristrams saga ok Ísoddur by Brother Robert, but also through a 14th-century Icelandic adaptation entitled Saga af Tristram ok Ísodd. Nonetheless, neither the Tristan legend nor the translated Arthurian matter engendered romances of the tragic Tristan type that focus on an adulterous relationship, or on the marital-romance type favored in the Arthurian tradition.

Many motifs essential to the Tristan legend, however, were incorporated into Icelandic literature. Although most of the Tristan motifs presumably became known through Brother Robert's translation of Thomas's Tristan, some Icelandic authors, as Bjarri Einarsson (1961, 1967) has pointed out, also seemed to have been acquainted with the Béroul/Eilhart-branch of the legend. Schach (1962, 1964, 1968) has amply documented the impact of Tristrams saga on the romances as well as the Íslendingasögur. An analogue to the ambiguous-oath episode occurs in the “Speasar þattur” of Grettis saga. Isolde’s abduction by a harp-playing Irishman, her rescue by Tristan, and return to her husband inspired a similar episode in Kormáks saga. Princesses skilled in leechcraft, like Isolde, appear in Jarlmanns saga ok Hermanns, Rémundar saga keisarsønur, and Sturluðs saga starfsmanna. Rémundar saga also borrowed from the hall-of-statues episode in Tristrams saga the motif of fashioning a likeness of the beloved. The author of GONGU-HROÝLS saga knew the Tristan legend, and incorporated into his bridal-quest romance both the sword-between-the-lovers motif, a variant of which also appears in Kormáks saga and Sturluðs saga starfsmanna, and the golden hair dropped by a swallow, the latter motif known from the Béroul-branch, but not the Thomas-branch, of the legend. The unusual figure of a giant wearing a mantle of the slain opponent, who confronts King Arthur in Tristrams saga, surfaces in the person of Ogmunr Eyjófsbani in one redaction of Orvar-Ódds saga, which is also indebted to the Tristan legend for the love-death of Ínhjórg. These Tristan loans suffice to show the considerable popularity of the romance and its impact on Icelandic authors.

The Tristan legend also appears to have influenced a certain type of Icelandic composition. Although no group of narratives emerged in Iceland that focuses on the adulterous love triangle, as happened in France and Germany, a group of sagas, such as Kormáks saga, which present the dilemma of a woman desired by two men, may have been inspired by acquaintance with Tristrams saga or other versions of the legend. Such romances as Jarlmanns saga ok Hermanns and Hávalds saga Hongshana may reflect criticism of the adulterous relationship glorified in the Tristan legend; indeed, Schlauch considered the latter “a deliberate reply to the French romance.” In any case, in both sagas, the surrogate wooer refuses to take the bride for himself in order not to betray his lord. The rather enigmatic hero of Fróðýjós saga Írveknna, which has defied satisfactory interpretation to date, is a protagonist who loves a married woman but refuses to commit adultery. His virtuous behavior may have been intended by the author as a corrective to Tristan, and may be interpreted as an indirect criticism of the amorality espoused by Tristrams saga.

In addition to the appearance of essential motifs associated with the Tristan legend and the adaptation of the narrative situation of the love triangle, but realized in a manner quite different from that in the Tristan tale, two anonymous Tristan texts were produced in the 14th century: the Saga af Tristram ok Ísodd and the ballad Tristrams kvæði. The two works are worlds apart, not only in form, the one a prose account, the other a metrical narrative, but especially in character. The saga has been criticized as a bungled narrative effort, the result of an imperfect recollection of the Tristan legend, but recent scholarship prefers to see it as a deliberate parody of the romance. Tristrams kvæði, however, which focuses on the death of the lovers, faithfully transmits the original’s tragic tone.

Of the fiction translated in Norway and Iceland, no other work had the impact of Tristrams saga. The translations of Chrétien de Troyes’s Arthurian romances neither generated a spate of imitations, as they did in Germany, nor did they prove as productive a source of motifs as Tristrams saga. Nonetheless, Ívens saga and Mottuls saga enriched the repertoire of motifs in Old Icelandic literature. The faithful-lion episode from Ívens saga is incorporated into Ectors saga, Grega saga, Kára saga Káraason, Konráðs saga keisarsønur, Vilhálm saga sjóðs, Sigurðar saga þógla, and even a post-Reformation folktale, Vigkáns saga káarihóls. The dragon in Ívens saga was also borrowed in other works, and took on features from a similar dragon appearing in Pôreks saga. Quite a different faithful lion appears in Hrôllís saga Gautrekkason, a lion that one can bully into submission by making pig-like noises. An analogous fearful elephant appears in Konráðs saga keisarsønur. The lore that elephants fear the grunting of pigs was transmitted by ancient and medieval writers (Pliny, Thomas of Cantimpre). It is also found in the Icelandic version of Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem (Sendibrief Alexanderis), which may have been the source for the romances.

Other motifs underwent modification at the hands of Icelandic authors. The mantle of Mottuls saga, which can expose unfaithful women, reappears in Samsons saga fagra, with the additional virtue of being able to detect thieves. Like Tristrams saga, Mottuls saga generated a metrical version, the Skikkyþu rîtur. Mottuls saga contributed the body of the narrative, but the author also borrowed matter from Íreks saga and apparently was also familiar with oral Arthurian traditions, for he depicts the Round Table, which is not mentioned in any of the translated Arthurian romances. Other translated works, such as Karlamagnús saga and Amicus saga ok Amlius, also generated rîtur, but the primary sources of inspiration for the rîtur were the indigenous romances, such as Íumbnsta saga and Víktors saga ok Blávans, which themselves had been inspired by continental romance.

Both translation and oral transmission played a role in incorporating foreign matter into Icelandic literature. On the one hand, the Old Norse translation Jánuals ljóð of the French Lai Lanval presumably was the source of the opening episode in Helga þáttur Pórisson. On the other hand, the lai Eliduc, which was not translated, surfaces in an episode in Þolsunga saga, itself indebted, like Pôreks saga and portions of the Poetic Edda (e.g., the dream sequence in Atlamál, which derives from the Somniale Daniæli), not only to South German heroic matter but also to non-Germanic sources.

The authors of indigenous Icelandic romances borrowed material from various genres and literary traditions. The “Herrgottsschintzer” (“carver of crucifixes”) motif in Sigurðar saga tumara, for example, is not original; it appears in earlier French
and German fabliaux, notably in *Le prestre crucifié*. The authors of *Gibbons saga* and *Viktors saga ok Blávus* presumably were acquainted with a tale belonging to the “Tristan-in-disguise” group of narratives, notably the German *Tristan als Mönch*. In *Dýmsutaka saga*, an analogue appears to be found in a German romance *Amadas et Ydoline*, while the authors of *Gongu-Hrólf's saga* and *Konráð's saga* seem to have known a narrative about an exchange of identities, which is otherwise transmitted only in Elisabeth von Nassau-Saarbrücken's 15th-century German translation of a French *chanson de geste*, *Loher und Mailer*.

The influence of foreign literature in Iceland, in written or oral form, can be seen not only in an originally foreign genre, the *rídarasögur*, but also in the indigenous Icelandic genres. The *Raudhóls þátr* of *Ólafs saga helga*, for example, transmits a version of Charlemagne's oriental travels that is independent of that preserved in *Karlamagnæs saga*. Judging from an analogue to the Harpins de la Montaigne episode in *Egils saga*, the author presumably was acquainted with Chrétien de Troyes's *Yvain* before the romance could have reached Iceland in translated form. The influence of *Beowulf* on *Grettis saga* has sometimes been argued, and Gregory's *Dialogues* may have contributed matter to *Njáls saga*, *Egils saga*, and the *sagas* of St. Oláf and Oláf Tryggvason, among others.

There is overwhelming evidence that Icelanders were acquainted with the anecdotal repertoire of Europe. An incident recounted in both *Haralds saga hardráða* and *Sigrurðs saga fósralafara* (in the compilation *Morkinskinna*), for which lack of firewood the respective king uses walnuts as kindling matter, has literary antecedents, including Wace's *Roman de Rou*.

Icelanders also adopted foreign structures, forms, and themes. They resisted using the Arthurian paradigm as a model for their romances, and instead imitated the structure of *Klári saga*, a narrative attributed to Jón Hallföðrsson, who is said to have become acquainted with the tale in a Latin metrical version, no longer extant. Unlike the Arthurian marital romances, *Klári saga* is a bridal-quest romance that focuses on a misogynous woman. The wiles and machinations employed by the prospective bride to obstruct her marriage are used by the wooer to promote it. The structure and essential narrative elements of *Klári saga* recur in a group of Icelandic romances called *mykýningar-sögur*, since their female protagonist is a maiden-king. *Sigrurðs saga foðgla*, *Níttida saga*, *Viktors saga ok Blávus*, *Sigrgard's saga frækuna*, and *Díðars saga drámþátta*. The author of the *HelgÍÓlóf* portion of *Hrólf's saga kraka* employs the maiden-king pattern in a tragic mode in keeping with his heroic sources. *Ála Íteklas saga*, *Gibbons saga*, *Mágus saga jarls*, and *Hrólf's saga Gautrekssonar* contain important maiden-king episodes. Although the structure and the narrative details of the maiden-king romances are chiefly indebted to *Klári saga*, the maiden-king type appears in *Hrólf's saga Gautrekssonar*, a work that presumably antedates *Klári saga*. There is evidence to suggest that the Latin source of *Klári saga* was in turn indebted to oriental literature. Indeed, the combination shield-maiden-maiden-king encountered in *Hrólf's saga Gautrekssonar*, which strikes us as “Nordic,” appears in the much older tale of ed-Datma in *The Thousand and One Nights*. This oriental tale includes the important motif of the avgening wooer in disguise and as trickster that is essential to *Klári saga*. Polygenesis is one explanation for the appearance of identical female types, plots, and narrative structures in both Icelandic and oriental literature. Nonetheless, given the considerable impact of Muslim culture on medieval Europe, notably through seven centuries of Spanish occupation and its prominent role at the Sicilian court of Emperor Frederick II (1194–1250), where translations were made from Arabic and Greek, a more plausible explanation is that Icelanders became acquainted with certain oriental narratives, in oral or written form, and presumably in translation, during their sojourns and travels on the Continent.

Not only the narratively conservative and hence predictable maiden-king romances appear to be indebted to foreign sources, both written and oral, for their structure, but also other bridal-quest narratives. Anderson (1985) has convincingly argued that the multigenerational bridal-quest tales found in eddic poetry (*Helgskvítla Hjörvarðssonar*) and in some *jornaldarsögur* (*Yolsunga saga*, *Hrólf's saga Gautrekssonar*, *Porsteins saga Vikingssonar*) were inspired by a combination of written sources (*Tristrams saga* ok *Ísundar* and *Þórks saga*) and oral infiltration of bridal-quest patterns and motifs from German *Spielmannsdichtung* (minstrel epic). Bridal-quest narrative was the most popular form of romance in Iceland, but in the adoption of this genre, just as in the adoption of narrative matter, Icelandic authors imbed their compositions with a peculiarly Icelandic sensibility. Unlike continental romance, for example of the Arthurian type, which is fairly predictable, many Icelandic romances, like the *sagas* of Icelanders, strike us as quite modern because the hero's behavior is not based on exigencies of plot, but rather derives from his character, his positive as well as negative qualities.

In addition to matter and structure, some formal aspects of Icelandic literature may well be indebted to the Continent. The similarity between plot interlace in the French prose compilations of romance and the *Íslandingsögar* is striking, although the influence of the former on the latter cannot be demonstrated. Certain stylistic traits in Icelandic prose, such as cursus, owe their origin to foreign sources. The *rímur*, many of which are based on foreign matter or Icelandic narratives imitative of foreign literature, are full of figures of speech that approximate kenning and that seem to be an indigenous development. Nonetheless, it is more likely that the genitive periphrasis, which is a distinctive trait of the *rímur*, is an expression of a common European tendency toward a florid poetic diction in the later Middle Ages. Furthermore, an indispensable component of the *rímur*, the *mænsöngr*, a love lyric, which functions as prologue to each *ríta*, presumably arose under the influence of German love poetry. Thus, these Icelandic lyric poems probably attest Icelandic familiarity with the continental love-lyrics of the high Middle Ages.

Old Swedish Legendary (Fornsvenska legendariet) is a chronologically arranged collection of legends from the earliest Christian time to the middle of the 13th century. It begins with the Virgin Mary, John the Baptist, and Jesus, and ends with Peter Martyr (d. 1252). We also learn something, though mostly in summary form, about emperors and popes from the same period. The Nordic countries play a very small part in the legendary. There are a number of legends about Nordic saints (Sigfrid, Olaf, Earl Magnús of the Orkneys, Erik), but these are certainly later additions.

The material of the legends was for the most part taken from the Legenda aurea of Jacobus de Voragine. For the material about emperors and popes, the author used Martinus Oppaviensis's Cronicon pontificum et imperatorum in a version from 1276. Another important source was the Sächsische Weltchronik. No close study has been made of the author's treatment of his sources, but it seems to have been rather free.

The legendary cannot be dated earlier than 1276, the date of Martinus's Chronicon. Nor can it be dated later than 1312, because it mentions Frederick II among the Roman emperors, but does not mention his successor Henry VII, who was crowned in 1312. Thus, the legendary would seem to date from around 1300, which makes it seem to have been rather free.

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There are other collections of legends in Swedish, for instance, the one known as the "Linköping legendary" (ca. 1500), most of which was edited by Dahlgren and appeared in Ett forn-svenska legendarium, vol. 3 (1865-74). Despite the title, however, these legends are not in the strict sense a part of the Old Swedish Legendary.


Oratio contra clericum Norvegiae ("A Speech Against the Norwegian Clergy"), also known as En tale mot biskopene ("A Speech Against the Bishops"), is an anonymous anticlerical pamphlet, written during the conflict between King Sverrir and the Church around 1200. Oratio is preserved in only one MS, AM 114 a 4to, from the early 14th century. As a piece of propaganda, Oratio compares favorably with most European works of the period. It is written in a vivid style and has a clear and logical composition, which is well suited to bringing home its central message. It opens with the allegory of the body politic, quite popular in contemporary Europe, according to which the various ranks and functions in society correspond to the limbs and organs of the human body. The author identifies the king with the heart and the whole body with the Church, thus placing himself within the Carolingian tradition of an extensive secular-religious community governed by the king. Next, he describes the illness that has affected the body, because its members, in practice those representing the clergy, have failed to perform their function; he sets out to correct this evil by presenting the right doctrine on the government of the Church. As the king is God's representative on earth, all men, including the clergy, owe him obedience. In support of this doctrine, the author refers to the duty of all men to pay taxes to the emperor and to the law of adworson (the right of presentation of a priest to a church), which allows even ordinary laymen to govern churches. In addition, he defends the contemporary Norwegian king against some of the charges brought against him by the clergy. The excommunication passed against King Sverrir in 1194 is invalid, because the king is in the right. The king did not resign his government of the Church when the archdiocese was established (in 1152/3), and even if he had done so, such a resignation would have been against the "sacred laws" and thus null and void. Finally, the author points out that heresy has normally originated in the clergy, while the kings have supported the right doctrine, and he cites examples to this effect.

Oratio contains a doctrine of royal superiority over the Church that was decidedly old-fashioned by the late 12th century, when most royalist propagandists based their claims on the doctrine of the two swords and tried to defend the independent authority of the king in purely secular matters. The author of Oratio supports his arguments by extensive quotations, both in the original and translation, "from the sacred writings," i.e., sources contained in the Decretum Gratiani. He exploits this source very skilfully, despite the fact that its general attitude to the king's position within the Church is the very opposite of his own.

Although it is preserved in only one MS, Oratio seems to have exerted some influence. The author of Konungs skuggsjá clearly drew upon Oratio, although he is less extreme in his doctrine of royal superiority over the Church. Together, the two works suggest a quite original tradition of political thought in the Norwegian court milieu, which was used actively by the monarchy, not only to defend its rights against the Church but also to make the people at large accept a stronger royal government.

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the contrary throughout those areas that were subjected to the misery of the Viking attacks. It is difficult to believe that the ferocity of the Viking assaults on the Scottish mainland and on the Hebrides was not paralleled by an earlier experience in Orkney.

Historical sources and onomastic evidence agree that Celtic monks (papaē) had established a presence in Orkney, and that, as elsewhere, the monastic communities and hermitages seem largely to have survived the initial onslaught, doubtless through the payment of tribute. The saga tradition relates that Orkney was converted to Christianity by King Óláfr Tryggvason, but clearly the process was both earlier and more gradual. Viking pragmatism probably dictated some accommodation with the papaē, nominal acceptance of Christianity may have been acquired along with other cultural baggage adopted, and adapted, by the invaders.

There is no evidence to suggest that Orkney was occupied much before the late 8th century. But it became an important base for attacks on the British mainland, and it remained a highly important link on the golden road between Norway, Ireland, and the Mediterranean.

It is doubtful whether Haraldr harfagri's much-cited expedition "west-over-sea" ever took place. He allegedly sought to displace Orkney-based Vikings who were using the islands as a refuge from which to attack Norway, and, consequently, he granted an earldom to the family of Rognvaldr, Earl of More. The earldom, which probably replaced a Pictish kingdom, testifies to Orkney's central importance in the Scandinavian world as a link between Norway, the Celtic West, and the Scandinavonian kingdom of York. The earls' de facto possession of Caithness brought the Norsemen into conflict with the Celtic tribes of northern Scotland, but also resulted in the creation of some Celtic-Norse kindreds.

The earldom achieved its zenith under Porfinnr Sigurdsson (d. ca. 1065), who feuded with the Scottish king MacBeth. After a pilgrimage to Rome, Porfinnr established an important cathedral or minster on the tidal island of Birsay alongside his Bu, or palace. Archaeology is beginning to reveal much about the parish of Birsay, the place-names of which have been extensively surveyed. Remarkable complexes have been excavated on the east coast between Skall and the Brough of Deerness as well as at Westness in Rousay. All three sites suggest that the Vikings occupied areas and apparently sometimes holdings that had already been settled. Some of the structures that postdate the Viking Age proper, including such fortified sites as Cubbie Roos's castle on Wyre, are being reassessed. Archaeology is also contributing to the history of the development of the Church from the 11th century, since the physical evidence, such as the numerous chapel sites, can be matched with that of place-names and medieval estate rentals.

If the Viking Age in Orkney is usually taken to have ended with Earl Porfinnr, the late Norse, or Scandinavian, era lasted much longer. The men who built the exquisite Kirkwall cathedral (founded 1137) were accustomed to reliving the exploits of their Viking ancestors through the medium of poetry and saga. Posternity should perhaps not presume the temporal division of a world that represented a unity to the people who lived in it.

Modern archaeologists rightly consider the Viking period to be the final phase of Orkney's prehistory, since it is otherwise comparatively poorly documented. The gradual recovery of information may further illuminate the position of splendor and centrality that Orkney enjoyed in the Viking Age.


Edward J. Cowan

[See also: Birsay, Caithness, Historia Norwegiae, Magniuss saga helga eyjarar, Orkneyinga saga]

Orkneyinga saga ("The Saga of the Orkney Islanders") is otherwise known as Jarla sogn ("The Sagas of the [Orkney] Earls"), which is a more precise and probably the historically more correct title. It was compiled by an Icelandic author at the end of the 12th or the beginning of the 13th century. This original redaction, no longer extant, was one of the sources exploited by Snorri Sturluson in his first, independently composed biography of St. Óláfr. About 1230, a new redaction of Orkneyinga saga was produced, apparently under the influence of Snorri's Heimskringla; here, the original text was supplemented by a mythical-genealogical introduction, a sequence of miracles of St. Magnús the Orcadian martyr, and two continuations dealing with the history of the Norse community in Caithness on the Scottish mainland. The most recent editor of Orkneyinga saga argues, not wholly convincingly, that the introduction to the new redaction was written by Snorri Sturluson. The other additions would seem to stem from literary and oral channels from the local tradition of Orkney and Caithness, respectively.

The text of the saga is badly preserved. There are three fragmentary witnesses from around 1300, and a fairly full text interpolated into the sagas of Óláfr Tryggvason and St. Óláfr as these appear in the great codex Flateyjarbók from the end of the 14th century. Fragments of a vellum MS of early date, the remnants of which were destroyed in the Copenhagen fire of 1728, were transcribed around 1700 by the amanuensis of the famous historian Torfaeus. A century earlier, this vellum MS, when still complete, was translated into Danish, and this textually important translation survives in a good copy.

Orkneyinga saga is an early example of the type of historical writing generally classified under the heading konungságar, and several attempts have been made to put a name to its anonymous author. It seems likely that the saga was written in the intellectual environment of Oddi in the south of Iceland, the seat of a great family that had extensive relations with Orkney. Of the various conjectures regarding the identity of the author, Hermann Pálsson's (1965) advocacy of Snorri Grimsson (d. 1208) is circumstantially the most persuasive. Other candidates who have been proposed by earlier scholars are Bjarni Kolbeinsson, bishop of Orkney;
Sighvatr, the brother of Snorri Sturluson; and the priest Ingimundr Jorgeinsson from Eyjafjarðar in the north of Iceland.

Whoever the author may have been, he did not succeed in creating a harmonious whole out of the sources at his disposal. These sources evidently ranged from sketchy recollections of the early period of the islands' history to detailed secondhand or even firsthand accounts of events in the 12th century. This passive reliance upon a multiplicity of sources explains why the life story of the Viking chieftain Steven Asleifarson, whose death in 1170/1 brought the original saga to an end, is told at much greater length than the histories of the early earls. The sections dealing with the life of St. Magnus and with the pilgrimage to the Holy Land of Earl Rognvaldr Kali Kolsson are reworked in whole or in part from preexisting written materials, thus further contributing to the lack of stylistic homogeneity in the saga.

Though not a monument of literary genius, Orkneyinga saga constitutes a most valuable repository of historical tradition. Its author worked in the spirit of enlightened antiquarianism promoted by Ari Porgilsson, and plainly followed the example of Ari in drawing upon the testimony of reputable informants. His knowledge of skaldic poetry extended to verses by and about some of the Orkney earls; the most notable skalds quoted in the saga are Arnór Óðarson jarlaskald ("earls' skald," 11th century) and Rognvaldr Kali (d. 1158).


Michael Chesnutt

See also: Arnór Óðarson jarlaskald; Caithness;

Flateyjarbók; Konungasögur; Magnús saga helga eyjalarls; Ólafía saga helga, Ólafía saga Tryggvasonar; Orkney, Norse in

Oseberg is a Viking Age ship burial on a farm of the same name in Slagen, Vestfold, Norway. G. Gustafson excavated the site in 1904, after a farmer had found carved wood when digging for treasure in the mound. The burial is usually dated to around A.D. 850. The date of the ship, wagon, and some of the other grave goods is generally placed at 800. Because of the blue clay subsoil and the tightly stacked turves of the mound, the burial has had nearly hermetic conditions, and the preservation of both metals and organic materials is remarkable. Oseberg is by far the richest burial from the Scandinavian Viking Age, and offers much information on material culture and art. The burial was placed in a 23-m. ship, pulled ashore, and lowered down into a shallow trench in the clay. During the burial ceremony, a central cairn of large stones was thrown into the ship. The combined weight of the stones and the mound pressing down into the soft subsoil caused much mechanical damage to the grave goods. Most objects are broken, and some are incomplete. The grave was robbed at some time, and the robbers' trench damaged the ship's prow and the burial chamber. Originally, the bodies of two women were placed in the burial chamber. The remains indicate that they were fully dressed, placed in beds, and the chamber hung with textiles. The skeletons are incomplete; most of the bones were found in the robbers' trench. One is of a woman fifty to sixty years old, the other between twenty and thirty years. The grave goods contain ship's equipment, objects from the "royal manor" that symbolize most of the activities of a large Viking Age farm, and a number of finely carved wooden objects, some of which may have had cultic use.

The largest and most impressive single object is the ship. Together with Gokstad, it is our main source for knowledge about early Viking Age shipbuilding. It is also of great importance in the study of Viking art. Sethelig (1971), who studied the Oseberg carvings, attributed the ship and wagon to the same master, and identified several other craftsmen on the basis of stylistic and technical details.

Before the Oseberg excavation, Viking art was known mainly from small metalwork. Oseberg gave the first information on art of monumental character. Precise dating, stylistic affinities, and development of Viking art are still under debate; nevertheless, all scholars include Oseberg in any discussion of these issues.

The find supplies information on nearly all aspects of Viking Age material culture. Most Viking graves lack organic material, either because the body was cremated with the grave goods included on the funeral fire, or because of decay. Oseberg has an abundance of wooden artifacts. Besides the ship and wagon, four sledges were found, three of them carved and with sledgepoles that are among the finest pieces of art in the find. Five animal-head posts are also richly decorated, although their exact use is unknown. Buckets, troughs, and ladles come from kitchen and table; chests and boxes were used for storage. A plain work sledge, hoe, plough fork, and wooden shovels represent the farmwork. Many of the wooden artifacts are paralleled by objects in use until only a couple of generations ago, and Norwegian ethnology draws heavily on Oseberg for the oldest dated example when various groups of artifacts are analyzed. In addition to the woodwork, Oseberg contains textiles, both imported and local. Of special value are fragments of tapestries, extremely fine woolen twills, and Byzant-
78. The ship during excavation. All equipment has been lifted, and the ship is ready to be recorded and lifted. Photo: Væring. By permission of Universitetets Oldsaksamling.

79. The wagon is the only wheeled vehicle of Viking Age date from Norway. It was probably for ceremonial rather than practical use. Photo: L. Smestad. By permission of Universitetets Oldsaksamling.

80. The "Carolingian" head-post is a good example of the intricate carving on many of the wooden objects found with the Oseberg ship. Photo: Holst. By permission of Universitetets Oldsaksamling.

81. A "collage" of kitchen and table equipment from Oseberg. The two brass-bound buckets are surely imports, while the rest is locally made. Photo: A. Liestøl. By permission of Universitetets Oldsaksamling.
tine silks. The textiles were placed mostly in the burial chamber, and were badly damaged when the grave was robbed. Tools for textile work include a frame for *sprang* (a braiding or plaiting technique used in textile work), spindles, sheep shears, wooden tablets for tablet weaving, and small wooden beaters that may have been used for processing flax. Of the personal equipment, two pairs of leather shoes are remarkably intact, while basketry made from birch roots and a box of thin bent wood survived only as small fragments.

Metalwork of high quality was also found, of both iron and copper alloys. The three pew buckets are believed to be of Irish or English manufacture; their mountings are iron and brass for the largest, brass or bronze for the two others. Two of the oak chests had iron mounts. There were two axes, and a knife, all with wooden handles intact, strap mounts, horse trappings, and dog chains, in addition to the 2,000–3,000 iron rivets of the ship and its anchor.

The remarkable conditions in the mound have led to the conservation of plant remains. Some are part of the grave goods, others are preserved in and on the turves used to build the mound. The latter indicate that the mound was built and the burial took place in late summer or early autumn. This notion is also supported by the find of wild apples (*Pirus malus*) in a bucket in the burial chamber. They are ripe, and must be part of the food included in the grave goods. Wheat (*Triticum sativum*), oats (*Avena sativa*), flax (*Linum usitatissimum*), and hemp (*Cannabis sativa*) were represented by a few seeds each, found in various parts of the burial. All were cultivated during the Viking Age. Hazelnuts (*Corylus avellana*) were probably picked from wild bushes, while the half of a walnut shell (*Juglands regia*) must be an import, probably from France or Britain.

In a small box in one of the chests lay fruits of woad (*Isatis tinctoria*), widely grown for its blue dye prior to the introduction of indigo. Another small box was full of press seeds (*Lepidium sativum*), probably cultivated as a kitchen herb.

The name "Oseberg" has been tentatively and hypothetically linked with Queen *Ása*, mentioned in Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla*. We can be fairly certain that a burial as rich as this must have been for a member of the ruling dynasty, which in Norway into one kingdom. Ingstad (1982) has suggested that the grave is that of *Álfhildr* Ælfræðidóttir, first wife of *Guðrøðr* veiðilkonungur ("the hunter") Hálfdanarson.

The Oseberg ship has often been interpreted as a luxury yacht, intended for inshore use only, as opposed to the seaworthy Gokstad ship. An exact replica of Oseberg was launched in 1987, and sailing trials in the summer of 1987 showed that the replica, with a reconstructed rig, is fast, but very difficult to handle and not safe under certain conditions. Continued trials will add to our knowledge of Viking Age ships and seamanship.

The ship and equipment can be seen at Vikingskipshuset, Bygdøy, Oslo, a department of Universitetets Oldsaksamling.


Arne Emil Christensen

[See also: Burial Mounds and Burial Practices; Iconography; Ships and Shipbuilding; Viking Art]

**Óttarr svarti** ("the black"). Our information on Óttarr's career comes from *Skáldatal*, supplemented by stray and not always reliable references in *Heimskringla*, the *Legendary Saga of St. Óláfr*, and other konungsöggur. An Icelandic, Óttarr was the nephew of Sighvatr and so, like some other skalds, had a famous skald in his lineage. His other family affiliations are unknown. A typical itinerant poet, he composed praises of various rulers. *Skáldatal* shows his career beginning with Sven Haroldsson (Fordarkonungur; d. 1014), but according to the *Legendary Saga*, his first patron was Ólafr sœnsku ("Swedish"). Óttarr's *Oláfskrá sœnsku* (from ca. 1018) is now represented only by six half-stanzas in *Snorra Edda*. They are unique in the corpus of extant skaldic praise poetry in being composed in the rare *halflhepp* form. An Irish origin for *halflhepp*, with its final monosyllable in each line and free arrangement of the other accented syllables, has been claimed: Óttarr's words seem to draw attention to the form as an innovation. An otherwise unknown poem about Ólaf's son, Ónundr Jakob, is mentioned by the Uppsala version of *Skáldatal*.

The story of Óttarr's move to Norway after the Swedish king's death in 1022 is a highly romantic one. A too-amorous poem about Ástríõr, the daughter of Ólaf sœnsku and (from 1019) wife of Ólaf helgi ("the holy") Haroldsson, is said to have offended the Norwegian king; Sighvatr rescued his nephew by encouraging him to present Ólaf with an encomium and a toned-down version of the *Ástríõr* poem. This anecdote seems to build upon a stereotypical characterization (skald as lover) and upon such stories as Egill's risky encounter with Einfrír blöðox ("blood-axe") Haroldsson at York, but cannot altogether be discounted, since it appears in the *Oldest Saga of St. Ólaf*. The opening two stanzas of the resulting *Oláfskrá*, or *Hópsalæusing* ("head-ransom"), are probably a semi-independent prelude to the main *drípa*; they echo lines composed by Sighvatr some seven years earlier, asking for acceptance as a court poet. For the documentary content, Óttarr is evidently indebted to Sighvatr's *Vikingaögg* and to the anonymous *Líðsmannaflókkur*. The surviving stanzas contain valuable historical data on Ólaf's campaigns in England and rise to power in Norway. No traces of the Ástríõr poem or of a poem about Dala-Guðbrandr (mentioned in *Skáldatal*) remain.

We soon afterward hear of Óttarr at the court of Ólaf's arch-enemy, Knud (Cnut) the Great, who legendarily rewarded him with *Knútsdrípa* with a helmet full of silver pennies. The extant stanzas (known chiefly from *Knýtlinga saga*, which here supplements *Heimskringla*) deal with Knud's campaigns in England in 1015–1016 and with the battle of Helgeå (datable between 1025 and 1027). Although apparently later than and indebted to Pórõr Kolbeinsson's *Eiríksdrípa*, *Knútsdrípa*, with its liberal mentions of place-names, helps to fill out the other historical sources concerning the period 1015–1016 in England. The relative simplicity of the style may indicate a special effort toward intelligibility in a mixed English-Scandinavian milieu.

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Russell Poole

[See also: Heimskringla; Knýtlinga saga; Ljðmennalokkr; Ólafs saga helga; Ólafur Pórðarson; Skald; Skaldic Meters; Skaldic Verse; Snorra Edda; Þórð Kolbeinsson]

Outlaw Sagas. Many sagas contain accounts of men living in outlawry, since full outlawry (permanent) or lesser outlawry (three years) were the only legal sanctions for antisocial behavior in medieval Iceland apart from the system of fines. In Gísla saga, Grettis saga, and Harðar saga, the principal character lives as an outlaw for a considerable part of the narrative. Full outlawry involved the loss of legal status, and the outlaw would generally live abroad. Some outlaws, however, like the heroes of the three outlaw sagas, remained in Iceland and managed to survive, in some cases for many years, either hiding with friends or in uninhabited parts of the country. Generally, this option meant a solitary existence, though Grettir had dealings both with other outlaws and with nonhuman beings. But in Harðar saga, Þorð took up with a group and lived as leader of an organized outlaw band.


Anthony Faulkes

[See also: Gísla saga Súrssonar; Grettis saga; Harðar saga; Íslendingasögur; Outlawry]

Outlawry (in Free State Iceland). The Norsemen conceived of society as synonymous with law; the Icelanders referred to their society as vár lög (“our law”), and the same concept is evident in the name given to the Danish settlements in England, “the Daneslaw.” An outlaw was outside the bounds of society, a nonperson. Some terms for outlaw denote nonhuman status by equating the individual with a wild animal. The word vargr means both wolf and outlaw. Skogarmaðr (“forest man”) and urðarmaðr (“man of the wilds”) are words for outlaws that refer to their hideouts in the wilderness, far from human habitations, but also point up their likeness to wild beasts. Outlaws, for example, Grettir (Grettis saga, ch. 38), might also be equated with supernatural creatures of the wild, such as trolls.

In Iceland, outlawry was the harshest punishment during the Free State (ca. 930–1024). The Free State laws made no provisions for the imposition of corporal punishment, execution, or incarceration, a situation linked to the nature of Icelandic government, which functioned without executive powers and maintained no policing body. Individuals who won a legal judgment against others in the courts were responsible for enforcing the penalty, whether fine or outlawry. The latter could amount to a death sentence, since a full outlaw might be slain with impunity.

There were two basic types of outlawry in Iceland, usually referred to as “lesser outlawry” and “full outlawry.” In addition, the sagas frequently refer to a third type, which exiled an individual from specific regions of the island. Called heradsskei (“district outlawry”) or fjarðungsstélagd (“quarter outlawry”), this third type of outlawry is not mentioned in the laws.

The property of an outlaw, whether a lesser or a full outlaw, was subject to confiscation at a færingsdómr, a court of confiscation, that took place at the farmstead of the convicted person fourteen days after the end of the assembly where he was outlawed. There, claims were made on his property to cover his debts, and compensation was awarded to the victims of his offenses. The chieftain who conducted the court received a cow or an ox, and the rest of the property was divided between the man who brought charges against the outlaw and the men of the quarter, or of the assembly district; this last was to be used by them to support the outlaw’s dependents or to provide relief to the poor (Grágás la, pp. 83–8, 108, 112 ff., 118, 120).

Lesser outlawry was a sentence of a three-year exile from Iceland. This punishment of temporary banishment was known as fjørbauggrrdr, a word composed of fjørbaugr ‘life-ring’ and garðr ‘fence, enclosure.’ The lesser outlaw was called a fjørbaugsmárdr. He had to pay a ransom for his life to the chieftain who presided over the confiscation of his property at the færingsdómr; originally, this payment was a silver ring, but later it was set at one mjölk (Grágás la, p. 88). The law entitled the lesser outlaw to stay at three different farmsteads, no more than a day’s journey apart, not venturing beyond bowshot from them. As often as once a month, he was allowed to travel the public road connecting the three dwellings; if men approached him, he could venture off the road beyond the range of a spear (Grágás la, pp. 88–9).

Each summer for three successive years, the outlaw was required to make three attempts to secure passage on outgoing ships. The law protected him as he traveled to the harbor. A ship’s captain who refused him was liable to a fine. If after three summers the fjørbauggsmárd had not succeeded in leaving the country, he became a full outlaw. The fjørbaugsmárd had to remain abroad for three years, after which he could return to Iceland and resume his position as a full member of society (Grágás la, pp. 89–92). While abroad, a lesser outlaw had legal immunity from attack (Grágás la, p. 96).
Full outlawry was known as skóggangr ("going into the forest"), and the outlaw was called a skógarmádr. Since there were no forests to speak of in Iceland, the term probably originated in continental Scandinavia. A full outlaw was also called ohelagr, meaning "unholy" or "unprotected." The phrase vargr í véum ("wolf in consecrated places"), which applied to outlaws, conveys a similar idea.

The skógarmádr lost all of his rights. No one was allowed to sustain or help him in any way or to give him passage (Grágás la, pp. 12, 94–5, 121; II, pp. 13, 198, 359; III, p. 11). If the outlaw succeeded in leaving Iceland, he could never return. Anyone could slay him with impunity, either in Iceland or abroad (Grágás la, p. 96; II, p. 397). A full outlaw was denied burial in a churchyard (Grágás la, p. 12; II, p. 13; III, p. 11), and children born to an outlaw, whether man or woman, had no inheritance rights (Grágás la, p. 224).

The lógrétta or legislative council at the Alpingi could mitigate a sentence of full outlawry to permanent exile. In such an instance, the outlaw was given the same protection and advantages in seeking passage abroad as a lesser outlaw (Grágás la, pp. 95–6). Also, full outlaws could win reduction of their sentences or reprieve by killing other outlaws, and other individuals could win mitigation on their behalf by killing outlaws in their name (Grágás la, pp. 187–8). Such rules probably fostered distrust among outlaws, dissuading them from banding together and becoming dangerous to settled society.


Jesse L. Byock

[See also: Cosmography; Crime and Punishment; Grágás; Grettis saga; Iceland; Laws; Outlaw Sagas]
Pagan Scandinavian Religion see Religion, Pagan Scandinavian

Painting To a greater degree than elsewhere in Europe, Nordic medieval art has escaped the destruction of later times. The sculptured images of the saints were frequently banished to church attics, or even less appropriate surroundings, after the Reformation. Some sculptures remained in the body of the church. In certain instances, wall-paintings were covered with new images that better reflected the Lutheran faith, but more often they seem to have remained on display until, shabby or discolored, they were whitewashed over. They thereby avoided the fate of paintings in more strictly reformed countries, such as Holland, where they were destroyed altogether. In many Nordic churches, medieval paintings have been uncovered, and though often pale and fragmented, they can be studied and sometimes even aesthetically enjoyed. Presumably for reasons of economy, the vault-paintings frequently escaped overpainting, and are therefore better preserved than the wall-paintings, which are often spoiled through incautious uncovering or restoration. Those paintings exposed in the later decades of the 19th century and the first years of the 20th are sometimes completely repainted. In many cases, however, the overpainting was removed in later years.

The painting preserved in the North is mainly sacred. The profane painting of the Middle Ages has largely been lost, probably because the dwelling houses of the time, to a considerable extent, were wooden, and seldom survived down to our time. Furthermore, secular buildings were generally more exposed to deterioration and rebuilding than churches. Thus, the extent of the profane painting during the Middle Ages cannot be appreciated. Among the few surviving remains are some figures in Bollerup's stronghouse in Scania (Fig. 82). As on the Continent, even in dwellings, people liked to depict saints and other sacred themes on their walls, and profane images have documentary witness, for example, the now-vanished 15th-century paintings in Alholm castle in Denmark. However, one can also find pictures with profane content inside the church, such as depictions of various occupations—masons or carpenters at work, the painter in his studio, the nobleman riding to the hunt with a falcon on his wrist, the farmer shooting a bird with an arrow, horse trading, plowing, and the like (Figs. 83-84). The painter could also depict jests and fancies.

The painting discussed below belongs to the churches where one finds both wall-paintings and painted altars. Medieval stained glass is preserved only to a limited extent, and no book illumination of significance was created in the Nordic lands. Painting with oil as a fixing agent can be seen as early as the 12th century, for example, on the crucifixes in Hemse and Als kog on the island of Gotland. The Norwegian antemensis (altar frontals) of the High Gothic period were once believed to be the oldest examples of oil painting in Europe. Mural painting was carried out largely on a dry ground with lime as a fixative.

Danish and Swedish medieval painting derived most of its artistic impulses from the German-speaking lands south of the Baltic, while the Norwegians, especially during the High Gothic period, received inspiration from Britain. However, with the increasing importance of the Hanseatics in Norway's trade, a German influence began to appear here also, especially obvious in altar art. Swedish influence was strong in Finland, which belonged to Sweden for the whole of the Middle Ages. Influences came from other directions as well, though these sources have not been completely explored. Finland had direct contacts with other Baltic countries than Sweden.

The different style periods are unequally represented. Denmark and the southern Swedish province of Scania, which was Danish during the Middle Ages, reveal the richest stock of Romanesque painting, admittedly often in fragmentary condition, but frequently of high quality. In Sweden, few examples of Romanesque painting survive, mainly in the southern and central areas along with the islands of Gotland and Åland, which together form the eastern outposts of Romanesque painting in the Nordic region. There are no Romanesque paintings on the Finnish mainland, and, strangely enough, none in Norway, if one does not count the paintings of Hacka's church in Jamtland, which belonged to Norway during the Middle Ages. However, they probably existed, at least in Norway, in now-vanished or time-ravaged Romanesque churches. Even in Denmark and Sweden, we do not find the full scope of Romanesque painting. Much may be concealed under layers of whitewash.
Among the oldest and most outstanding paintings in Scandinavia from the Romanesque period are those in Vä, Scania, where parts of a series have been preserved in the choir and the westernmost part of the church (Figs. 85, 86). Above all, the apse’s Majestas Domini, with surrounding evangelist symbols, draws the viewer’s attention. Now dated to the 1120s, the paintings in Vä have been connected with the Italo-Byzantine style, which spread over Europe via North Italy. As the paintings stand rather isolated in Danish art, they were possibly executed by a foreign master summoned for the occasion. A Byzantine influence is noticeable in other 12th-century painting in Denmark (e.g., the older series of paintings in Kirke-Hyllinge, Søby, and Sønder Jærmlæs in Zealand, together with Finja in Scania), but it is not clear by which routes it reached the country. The majority of older 12th-century paintings in Denmark survive in Zealand, the now-Swedish Scania, and eastern Jutland. After 1175, the distribution became more even over the whole country. Even when Byzantine influence is apparent, other influences may appear, as, for example, in Farslev, Zealand, and the heavily restored Bjræsøj series in Scania (Figs. 87, 88). These paintings are dated to before 1225, and have been compared with contemporaneous painting in France and Germany. However, even in Bjræsøj, the Byzantine influence is obvious (Fig. 89).

Associated with the Byzantine-influenced paintings in Sweden are those in Garda and Källunge on Gotland (Fig. 90) and in Torpa, Södermanland. The Gotland examples originated under influences from Novgorod, and were perhaps painted by Russian artists who sojourned on the island. This idea has been contested by Swedish byzantinists, who maintain a direct influence from Constantinople as more plausible. The Torpa paintings may have received their Byzantine influence by way of southern Italy or Sicily, possibly intermediated by the Knights of St. John in the adjacent Eskilstuna. The restoration-disfigured paintings in Masterby, Gotland, the few but high-quality fragments in Kaga, Östergötland (Fig. 91), the remains of paintings in Asby in the same province, and several other examples belong to a more western-oriented tradition, and originated around 1200 and later. The paintings in Hejdeby, Gotland, from 1270-1280 blend Romanesque and Gothic characteristics (Fig. 92), as do a number of contemporaneous fragments in Norwegian churches, for example, Nes in Telemark.

High Gothic painting, like the Romanesque, is sparsely represented, but may be richest in Norway. Besides a preserved wall-painting from the Alstave church, now in the Oldsaksamlingen in Oslo, together with a famous altar canopy in Torpo (Fig. 93), several antemansals of wood from the 13th and 14th centuries are preserved (Fig. 94). Among the oldest is the antemansal from Kinnsarvik in Hordaland (1260–1290), which depicts the Crucifixion. The scene is reminiscent of English book illumination during the 13th century. The same applies to much art produced in Norway from 1250 to 1350. Tall, slender figures, often with smiling faces, are outlined in graceful S-curves on the later antemansals. The earlier material is characterized by a stricter language of form, with a higher degree of stylization in the depiction of garments and persons, less movement in the composition, and sometimes lingering traces of the Romanesque. The antemansals often have the Crucifixion as the main motif (Figs. 94, 95). However, this motif gradually met competition from, for example, the Virgin and Child, although a number of similar Mary antemansals may have belonged to the Mary altar. Other motifs may occur on the main altars antemansal, such as the Majestas Domini in Ulvik (ca. 1250–1280). Among the Danish examples, an antemansal from Legumkloster, now in the National Museum of Copenhagen, dated to around 1325, shows Christ as judge as its central scene and, in addition, the Nativity and childhood of Jesus. The picture is assumed to have been painted in the abbey’s own workshop. The style is reminiscent of French miniature painting. No equivalent survives in Sweden, which, however, has paintings on wood. Among the finest examples is the painted ceiling in the abandoned church of Dadesjö, Småland, from around 1275 (Fig. 96). The childhood of Jesus is depicted in a series of medallions. Apocryphal material has been added to the Gospel accounts here. Stylistically, the paintings stand on the border between Romanesque and Gothic art. The choir-painting from 1323 in Södra Råda, Värmland (Fig. 97), should also be mentioned, together with the roughly contemporary work in the now-demolished church at Björåser in Östergötland, parts of which have been preserved in the Museum of National Antiquities in Stockholm. The series has been compared stylistically with French book illumination, while the Björåser paintings have been considered closer to the English ideal. Both cases show painting of a high standard, especially in Södra Råda.

High Gothic mural painting does not exist in Norway, and only to a modest extent in Denmark and the Swedish mainland (Fig. 98). On Gotland, however, it is abundant. Here, the vaults were already built by the time the paintings of the High Gothic period were made, while the construction of vaults on the mainland occurred largely during the 15th century, and the need for repainting arose. The figure painting often consists of single, large-scale saints or the apostles, sparsely distributed about the body of the church. Sometimes, large-scale figure scenes occur, for example, the Archangel Michael weighing souls or fighting the dragon (Fig. 99), or friezes with scenes from the Bible, framed by arcades (Fig. 100). An architecturally toned ornamental painting already existed during the Romanesque period, often imitating masonry, as in Ribe cathedral, Denmark, from about 1200 (Fig. 101). Ormamental painting also appears during the High Gothic period, and is abundantly represented on Gotland at Vallstena, Lummelunda, Stenkryka, and other locations. In the crown of the vaults, one often finds an ornamental foliate decor, sometimes combined with figures (Fig. 102).

The High Gothic period was also the high point for stained glass. Little of this material has been preserved, and most of it is in museums. On Gotland, however, one can still find stained glass in its original place (Fig. 103). Both figures and patterns appear in intense colors, as well as in grisaille.

There is little painting preserved in Scandinavia from the later half of the 14th century and the period around 1400. Some was without doubt overpainted, but the difficult times during the 14th century may also have had an inhibiting effect on the production of art. The reduction could also result from the fact that most churches were now provided with adornment, which did not yet need to be renewed. Among the paintings that survive from around 1400 are the Bohemian-influenced examples in Bunge, Gotland (Fig. 104), undoubtedly executed by a foreign artist. The Passion series in Bunge has close parallels in the churches of Silesia, now in Poland. The apostles in Othem, Gotland (Fig. 105), and the elegant ones in Fogdö, Södermanland (Fig. 106), both influenced by the so-called "beautiful style," can also be mentioned. There is more from this period preserved in Denmark than in Sweden; examples are the paintings in Vester Broby (1380–1400).
and Undlase (1400–1425; Fig. 107), which belong to the better-known Danish series. A connection between Undlase and the Swedish Fogdö paintings has been noted. It has also been claimed that the Bergen Maria church in Norway received its paintings during the early 15th century.

The period from 1425 to the end of the Middle Ages is rich in preserved murals in Denmark, Sweden, and Finland. To a certain degree, this survival is due to the fact that few churches received later painting, but were simply whitewashed when medieval paintings deteriorated. There are almost 100 churches with late-medieval paintings in the Swedish province of Uppland alone, some only fragmentarily preserved, but also many in more complete form. Native altar art survives from this time, especially in Sweden, although imported work dominates (Fig. 108). The importation from northern Germany and the Netherlands was especially great, but South German altarpieces also appear. Flemish and North German altarpieces can thus be studied to advantage in the Nordic countries (Fig. 109), especially Sweden, where a large proportion of this art is preserved.

The most outstanding paintings in early 15th-century art were uncovered in 1980–1981 in the church of Brønnestad in Scania. The series has been dated to about 1425–1440/50. In large-scale scenes, the childhood and Passion of Jesus are depicted in the vaults of the church. Their rare beauty of line is combined with an unusual interest in a realistic depiction of the milieu. An example is the archaic scene in Romanesque manner with Mary in her bed (Fig. 110), which shows how she, like real women in confinement, is given a substantial meal after the rigors of giving birth. Another picture shows how Jesus learns to walk with the aid of a chair on wheels, while the aged Joseph gently prevents the chair from running away. Usually, the quality of Nordic mural painting, although not low, is not as fine as at Brønnestad. There are examples of painting without artistic merit, in some cases quite primitive, and these have direct reference to the everyday peasant life (Fig. 111), the calendar, and the seasons of the year. Much of this painting has been preserved in Finland. A unique representation of a virgin in a labyrinth in the church of Sibbo, Nyland, may be mentioned here, a work undoubtedly associated with folk customs or rites.

Until around 1450, Nordic art bears traces of the “beautiful style,” which to varying degrees manifests itself in the various schools of painting (Figs. 112, 113). In Sweden, it is still visible in Ärentuna (ca. 1435) or Tensta (1437), both in Uppland. After the middle of the 15th century, its soft drapery is replaced by a more angular type of folding, analogous to those applied by Martin Schongauer or Meister E.S. in the continental material that found its way to the North through copperplate and woodcut prints. In Denmark, the broken-fold style was practiced by the painter in the Chapel of the Three Kings in Roskilde cathedral, from about 1464 (Fig. 114), in Sweden by Johannes Ivan, 1451 (Fig. 115), and by Albert the Painter (Albertus pictor) from the 1460s and later (Fig. 116). The figure drawing becomes more realistic with the passage of the century. The slender, graceful S-curved figures of the “beautiful style” have already disappeared in the earlier part of the century.

A new tendency toward the greater use of accessible areas for figure painting appears early in the 15th century, and becomes, especially in Sweden, more obvious in the course of the century. In the case of such artists as Albert the Painter, even the smallest corner is generally used for figure painting, if one excludes the ribs of the vaults and comparable places, where vine ornamentation or other decor is more suitable. The impression is often that of a many-colored, picture-rich fabric stretched over the interior of the church (Fig. 117). There are, however, series of paintings less rich in pictures even toward the end of the Middle Ages. In Roskilde (1464), one experiences, for example, a pleasing balance between figures and foliate ornamentation (Fig. 118), even if all the surfaces bear painting of some kind, such as stenciled medallions reminiscent of wallpaper patterns. The same balance may be found in the Tierp Master’s series in Uppland, Sweden, from the period around 1470, and in Lars the Carpenter’s paintings in Rimito (Rymättylä) near Åbo (Turku) in Finland, from around 1514 (Fig. 119).

Renaissance characteristics appear during the last quarter of the 15th century, for example, attempts at perspectivist structuring of space or heightened realism in the depiction of the milieu (Fig. 120). However, no Renaissance analogue to the Italian occurs: Gothic survives well into the 16th century. Ribe cathedral in Denmark, with paintings from around 1530, is probably one of the first monuments in the Nordic countries that received a picture series of Renaissance character (Fig. 121). The changes of style in native altarpiece painting in the Nordic countries proceed mainly parallel with those in mural painting. Both arts lag behind the tone-setting artistic centers.

Iconography. Nordic iconography generally conforms to international models until sometime in the 15th century. The choice of saints naturally varies, and we have early pictures of Óláfr (Figs. 122, 123), Erik, and Knud, the national saints (Figs. 124, 125), but the oldest images of them are sculpted. One of the early painted pictures of St. Knud is found in Dádesjö (ca. 1275; Fig. 124). However, paintings most often concern the international saints and their legends. Among the most popular are Nicholas of Myra, whose legend is developed in a painted series in Lemland on Åland (ca. 1275–1300), and Margaret of Antioch, represented in the 13th-century paintings in the church of Hackd, Jämtland (Fig. 126), a Norwegian province in the Middle Ages, and in the above-mentioned canopy in the Torpo stave church, Norway, painted around 1250 (Fig. 93). The stained glass in Dalhems church on Gotland has a picture of Margaret from about 1230.

The band of saints grows as the Middle Ages draw to a close. Many more local saints appear, not least in Sweden, where virtually every province in the 15th century has some saint or martyr of its own (Fig. 127). Among the most popular is Birgitta (Fig. 128), the Swedish patron saint along with Erik and a cult figure in western Christianity. In the Malar provinces alone, pictures of her are preserved in at least thirty churches. The cult of St. Anne leaves conspicuous traces in art toward the end of the Middle Ages (Fig. 129).

In the late Middle Ages, Old Testament motifs (aside from the Prophets) occur infrequently in Denmark and Finland. From Romanesque times onward, the stories of Moses, David, and Samson are found alongside those of Noah. These figures should be interpreted as prototypes of Christ. Old Testament motifs had an upsurge in popularity in the Malar provinces from the 1470s, when Albert the Painter emerged as an independent master (Figs. 130, 131). Albert gained inspiration for these compositions from the so-called Biblia pauperum and edifying works of a similar typological construction. Perhaps inspired by Albert’s work, other masters applied similar principles of composition. (Albert’s contemporaries in the so-called Tierp School avoided Old Testa-
82. Bollerup stronghouse, Scania, St. Andrew; ca. 1475–1500. Photo: Jan Johansson.

84. Vendel, Uppland. The master builder fortifies himself from a tankard while working on the small roof steeple. Painted by Johannes Ivan, 1451-1452. Photo: Anna Nilsen.

85. Va, Scania. Enthroned on a rainbow in the sky, the mighty Christ-figure raises his hand in a gesture of benediction. A flap of clothing flares out from his waist, reinforcing the impression of power. The figure is displayed frontally in the usual way and is surrounded by a mandorla. His white tunic and golden-brown mantle are outlined against an ultramarine background. The downward-tapering face with the long, strongly accentuated nose and the large, dark eyes, the stylized folds of the tunic, and the drape of the mantle all point toward a Byzantine influence; ca. 1121-1130. Photo: Lennart Karlsson.

87. Farslev, Zealand. The figure in the circle has its roots in Roman portraiture; ca. 1150-1200. Photo: Danmarks kirker.


93. Torpo, Buskerud. Altar canopy with, among other things, the Apostles and the legend of St. Margaret; ca. 1260–1290. Photo: Anna Nilsén.
94. Kinsarvik, Hordaland. Antemensal with Crucifixion, framed by the Apostles Peter and Paul, flanked by Ecclesia and Synagoga. The Crucifixion picture shows simultaneously how Jesus is nailed to the Cross, how Stephaton extends the vinegar-filled sponge to him, and how Longinus pierces his side. On each side of the Cross stand Mary and John, mourning the already dead Savior. The scene is surrounded by angels who swing censers in allusion to the Eucharist; ca. 1260–1290. Photo: Historical Museum, University of Bergen.

95. Årdal, Sogn og Fjordane. Antemensal with Crucifixion from ca. 1320–1350. While the Kinsarvik antemensal, with its elegant, almost floating Christ-figure, characteristic of the 13th-century Gothic style, hardly expresses great suffering, here we find him hanging heavily from the Cross, bleeding profusely from his wounds. The didactic, demonstrative features of the Kinsarvik picture are gone. Mary, with a sword in her breast, and John, with a gesture of pain, stand sorrowing alone at the Cross, a picture that appeals to the compassion of the viewer. Photo: Historical Museum, University of Bergen.


100. Othem, Gotland. Virgin and Child; beginning of 14th century. Photo: Anna Nilsén.


104. Bunge, Gotland. Descent from the Cross; second half of the 14th century. Photo: Anna Nilsén.


108. Lena, Uppland. Triptych with Joachim and Anne's meeting in the Golden Gate. Lars Germundsson, an Uppland master; 1491. Photo: Anna Nilsén.

109. Värmdö, Uppland. Triptych, probably from Lübeck; 1475–1500. Detail from the Dormition of the Virgin. The triptych was long thought to be made in Sweden by an artist from Lübeck. Since immigrant artists were responsible for some of the altar art in Sweden and other pieces were imported from their places of origin, it is difficult to ascertain the extent of the domestic production. Photo: Anna Nilsén.


112. Årentuna, Uppland. Creation of Eve; ca. 1435. Photo: Anna Nilsén.


117. Dannemora, Uppland. Legend of St. John the Baptist; ca. 1520. Photo: Anna Nilsén.


119. Rimito, near Åbo (Turku). Church interior, painted by Lars the Carpenter, who also made an Olof triptych in Värmdö, Uppland; ca. 1514. See pl. 122. Photo: Anna Nilsén.


123. Trondheim Cathedral. Antemensal with St. Óláfr from Haldalen church; 1320–1340. Photo: Oldsaksamlingen, University of Oslo.

125. Tortuna, Västmanland. St. Apollonia with tongs and St. Sunniva of Norway, here with three stones instead of the usual piece of rock. The series of paintings in Tortuna is one of the richest in saints in Scandinavia, showing many of the native Scandinavian saints, and also international saints, a number of them relatively unusual, as, for example, Brendan and Ottilia (Odil); ca. 1500. Photo: Anna Nilsén.


130. Härkeberga, Uppland. Noah sleeps off his drunkenness. The sons see their father exposed, and Ham makes a fool of him. Prototype for the Mocking of Christ; ca. 1485. Photo: Anna Nilsén.

131. Almunge, Uppland. Left, the Ascension of Christ, and right, its prototype in the Old Testament: Enoch being taken up to heaven together with Elijah on the way to heaven in the chariot of fire. Below him, Elisha receiving his mantle. On the far right, a picture of Moses receiving the tablets of the law, which is not connected with the Ascension but is probably painted as a formal appendage to Enoch for purposes of symmetry. The heavenly sphere is symbolized by the four angels. Workshop of Albert; ca. 1490. Photo: Anna Nilsén.


133. Södra Råda, Värmland. The Holy Trinity, or Seat of Grace; 1323. Photo: Anna Nilsén.

135. Hattula, Tavastland (Häme). The pelican alludes in this context to Christ's sacrifice, as does Abel's offering, which is depicted above; 1510s. Photo: Anna Nilsén.

136. Härnevi, Uppland. The worship of the pious and the worldly. The lines show how the pious and poor man directs his thoughts to the five wounds of Christ and the crown of thorns, while the worldly and rich man, with his banderole bearing signs devoid of meaning, lets his thoughts go to the glories of the world, symbolized by the treasures in the house behind him. Albert the Painter; 1485–1490. Photo: Anna Nilsén.

137. Morkov, Zealand. The horrors of hell are depicted here, not without relish, by the Danish Isefjords workshop; ca. 1460–1480. Photo: Danmarks kirker.


140. Gerlev, Zealand. Martin the Painter has placed his signature over the picture of the Last Supper, in the crown of the easternmost vault of the nave; ca. 1425. Photo: Danmarks kirker.

142. Sketch of the Judas kiss from the high Gothic period. This formula continues throughout the Middle Ages. From the Icelandic MS AM 673a 4to. After Harry Fett.

143. Hattula, Tavastland (Häme). The Miracle of the Painter. Mary saves the painter from the Devil's wrath by stretching out her hand; 1510s. Photo: P.O. Welin, Museiverket, Helsingfors (Helsinki).

144. Lojo (Lohja), near Helsingfors (Helsinki). The Miracle of the Painter. The painter saves himself from the wrath of the Devil by seizing a corner of Mary's robe; 1510s. Photo: Anna Nilsén.

146. MS AM 673a 4to in the University Library of Copenhagen. This leaf shows two different sketches of St. Christopher. After Harry Fett.
ment scenes.) No absolute equivalent to the Middle Swedish typological painting series exists in the other Nordic lands or on the Continent. Nevertheless, traces may be discerned in Denmark, Finland, and south of the Baltic, where, for example, the cathedral in Kolberg had a typological painting series (destroyed by bombing during the Second World War). However, there is no comparison with the world of Old Testament motifs of the rich and diversified kind left by Albert and his successors. A total of 130 different motifs from the Old Testament have been registered among the late-medieval paintings in the three Mälar provinces.

The wall- and vault-paintings of the churches were meant to beautify the house of God, while the donor sought to secure God's grace in the life to come. Several series of paintings arose in relation to the donors' weddings, presumably in hope of blessing. The program, whether wall-paintings or altarpieces, was usually composed by people with theological training. Sometimes, the priest of the church documented his collaboration with an inscription or his portrait (Fig. 132). A gift to God should be beautiful, and an expression of the highest knowledge. A perfectly beautiful sermon may have been the model closest to the mind of the designer of the program.

Right up to the middle of the 15th century, or directly after, the painting series generally have an epic character. The story of salvation is told from the Creation and Fall through to the Last Judgment. Variations in fullness of detail, choice of subject, and number of pictures naturally occur. The Romanesque program represents Christ as king and victor (Fig. 85), and emphasizes His power. In the Gothic period, the majestas representation disappears, to be replaced by the Trinity, with God the Father holding out the sacrificed Son, and the dove of the Holy Ghost in between (Fig. 133). The focus is on the Passion. There is a shift from didactic clarity to mysticism. Devotional images depicting the suffering Christ appear, intended for contemplation. Initiatio and compassio become living concepts (Fig. 134), encouraged by the preachers, especially the mendicant friars. The later programs also resemble sermons of the mendicants in construction. The method of composition described above, in which Old Testament scenes illuminate a New Testament picture, have their equivalents in sermons, which use examples drawn not just from the Bible (Fig. 135), but also from fables, legends, folktales, heroic sagas, and the like. By depicting Abraham preparing to sacrifice his son alongside the picture of Christ, the painter emphasizes the idea of sacrifice, while a corresponding depiction of Samson or David emphasizes that of triumph. The heroes of the folk saga may have the same function.

Moralizing pictures are abundant, especially in the late-medieval material (Fig. 136). The didactic clarity and the visible placement of these pictures make it probable that their function was to remind the viewer of the guiding light of the Church's teaching. The devotional pictures, which are also most frequently placed so that they may be seen, may have been intended as recipients of prayer to the depicted saint. Other pictures are aimed at inspiring reflection, for example, the Last Judgment, which generally receives a central position in the program of pictures (Fig. 137). Sometimes it is placed directly in front of the entrance, sometimes on the triumphal arch toward the aisle, sometimes on the western or eastern wall. The format is usually large.

The interior of the church must have had an uplifting and inspiring effect on those entering. In the Nordic churches, with their few and small windows, sometimes with stained glass, it would hardly have been possible to see all the paintings even by straining one's eyes. The totality of the program is often indicated, however, by the choice of pictures for the best-illuminated places (Fig. 138). The well-conceived unity of all its components was, as revealed by many inscriptions, directed to God, a fact that explains why many pictures were painted in places where it was difficult for the congregation to see them.

*Donors and painters.* It was an expensive undertaking to provide the churches with altar art and wall-paintings. A poor parish was dependent on donors. That such donors existed among the nobility and the richer burghers is often indicated by painted coats of arms, and sometimes by inscriptions or donors' portraits (Fig. 139). One may thus imagine the undertaking of a commission as a cooperation among donors, program designers, and artists.

Several painters have left their names to posterity in the form of signatures. Probably all, or the majority, signed their work, but were not always placed in the most prominent places. The claim that medieval painters wished to remain anonymous is contradicted by the large number of signatures that have been preserved, sometimes prominently placed, and sometimes followed by comments that bear witness to self-esteem. In Denmark, the painter Martin, who has left his signature in several churches (Fig. 140), often placed his signature in pride of place, for example, in Gerlev, where one can read in a most prominent place: *Martinus malera bene lecti* ("Martin the painter did this well"). Örjan the Painter's self-portrait (Fig. 141), with a hell composed of seven mouths and a heavenly citadel with the nine choirs of angels, each on its own story, may be the painter's own invention, possibly deriving from a text. In this context, it should also be stressed that certain picture formulas were established at an early point, and vary little over time (Fig. 142). One should note, however, that the artists' ability to innovate. Witness several of the miracles of Mary, depicted in the Finnish churches of Hattula and Lojo (Lohja), where the same workshop of painters has represented the same miracle in different ways in both churches (Figs. 143, 144). In such cases, the starting point had been written or orally transmitted material. Sometimes, in one work picture, for example, the depiction of clothing, the painter gained inspiration from contemporary reality. A good number of the draperies that occur on the remaining surfaces are thought to be free compositions (Fig. 145). The painters' workshop with its sketchbooks and graphic prints has been preserved. One is almost totally reliant on comparative studies to find the sources of inspiration. In Iceland, however, a sketchbook, the so-called *Teiknibók* in AM 673a 4to, unique in the Nordic context, was preserved. Obviously used over a long period, it contains pictures with both High Gothic and Late Gothic style characteristics (Fig. 146).

The origins of the painters can seldom be determined. As the older material often has an international character in respect to both style and content, it is thought to have often involved masters and workshops summoned for the purpose. The nearer the end of
the Middle Ages, the greater the number of local variations that can be discerned, and the more often the painters have indigenous names. The borrowing of skillful artists from foreign parts and the importation of altar art, however, by no means ceased at the end of the Middle Ages.


Anna Nilsson
Palaeography is the scientific study of old writing, of the history and evolution of its techniques and forms. It is especially concerned with the forms of script used in medieval MSS and their reading and interpretation. The word "palaeography" was coined from the Greek *palaios* 'old' and *graphia* 'writing, script' by the Benedictine monk Bernard de Montfaucon, who in 1708 published a book on Greek scripts entitled *Palaeographia Graeca sive De Ortu et Progressu Literarum*. In practice, however, palaeographic studies had already been begun by his confere Jean Mabillon, whose pioneering work *De re diplomatica libri VI* appeared in 1681. Whereas epigraphy deals mainly with texts written on lasting material like stone, palaeography is concerned with texts on paper, parchment, papyrus, linen, and wax. These can be written with a reed or straw pen (Latin *lurundo* or *calamus*), a brush, quill (Latin *penne* 'feather'), or stylus (Latin *stilus* or *graphium*) of metal or bone. They can be written either in formal book script for the purpose of saving work and parchment, or in cursive everyday script for official or private purposes.

Palaeography is an important auxiliary science for philology and history. The palaeographer's main tasks are interpreting texts, determining the date of MSS, and identifying and differentiating scripts. Palaeographic analysis of a script examines the appearance of the letters, abbreviations, the slant of writing, the movement of the pen, the size of the letters, the penstrokes, the nature of the writing material, and the nature of the text. Medieval palaeography overlaps or has points of contact with other disciplines; besides epigraphy, these include diplomatics (from which it developed), sphragistics (seals), papyrology, and numismatics.

In the Middle Ages, the most important writing material was parchment, the dressed skin of calves (vellum), goats, or sheep. Writing was done with quill pens, normally made from goose or swan feathers. There were also many different kinds of ink; the normal color was black.

The most usual form of parchment book is the codex, a book comprising one or more folded sheets. In the 14th century, it became customary to label or foliate the pages of books with letters and Roman numerals, for example Ai, Aii, up to Axxvi, followed by Bi, Bii, and so on. Continuous pagination did not become standard practice until early modern times. In the right bottom corner, each page normally had a custos, or catchword, the first letter or syllable of the word beginning the next page; this sign made it easier to check that the pages were bound in the correct order. Book formats were classified as folio, quarto (4to), octavo (8vo), duodecimo (12mo), sextodecimo (16mo), according to whether the sheet was folded to make two, four, eight, twelve, or sixteen leaves. The codex was usually bound in wooden boards covered with leather and often fitted with a clasp. Titles and headings were written, often by special rubricators, in red ink after the MS was finished.

MSS, especially liturgical ones, could also be embellished with miniatures in gold, silver, and other colors. Illuminations included the adornment of initials, which were sometimes used to frame little pictures, and the creation of larger illustrations. An early example of Nordic book-painting is the illuminated gospel known as Dalbyboken (DKB, GKS 1325-4to) from around 1050. Icelandic book-painting, which flourished in the 13th and 14th centuries, is conservative in character but also shows originality. There are also exquisite illustrations from the 15th and 16th centuries. Primarily law codices and religious books were illustrated. From Norway and Sweden, there are examples of illuminated law codices from the 14th century; the mid-15th-century *Magnus Erikssons landslag* (SKB B 172) has great artistic and cultural interest.

Paper, a Chinese invention that came to the West via the Arabs and Spain, gradually replaced parchment as a writing material. Paper came into use in Spain and Italy in the 12th and 13th centuries, reaching Scandinavia in the 14th. A feature of European paper is the watermark, a design or pattern visible when held up to the light. Watermarks are important dating aids.

In order to save work and parchment, Roman script used abbreviations and ligatures. The following abbreviation methods came into general use throughout western Europe: (1) suspension, *i.e.*, omission of one or more letters at the end of a word, the abbreviation being marked by a point or colon or by a stroke over or under the word; (2) contraction, *i.e.*, omission of one or more letters in the middle of a word, the abbreviation being marked by a stroke over the word as in de *for* *deus*; (3) superscript or interlinear letters (a kind of contraction), the omitted letter(s) being written above the word or between the lines; (4) special abbreviation signs, known as Tironian notes, a system devised by Cicero's freedman Tiro, in which, for example, "depressed" was for *er*-'and', *for* *con*-'with'; a curved or zigzag line represented *er* or *re*, and a bar over a letter indicated the omission of a following nasal.

Vernacular medieval texts from Denmark and Sweden show a limited use of abbreviations. Those most commonly found are the nasal bar for *m* and *n*, the curved sign for *er* and *re*, "depressed" for *ok*-'and', *for* *et*-'then', *for* *con*-'with'; a curved or zigzag line represented *er* or *re*, and a bar over a letter indicated the omission of a following nasal.

Medieval West Norse writing employs considerably more abbreviations in vernacular texts than does contemporary Old Norse script. Latin abbreviations are used even for native words with the same meaning, for instance "depressed" for *ok*-'and', *for* *et*-'then', *for* *con*-'with'. As in Old Norse script, the nasal bar and interlinear letters occur. The abbreviation for *er* has many other meanings. Suspension was common. Scribes often wrote just the initial letter followed by a point or some other sign; the letter could also be written between two points, as in .b. for *biskup* 'bishop', .e. for *elda* 'or'. Abbreviations became less common in Iceland and Norway in the 16th century.

Ligatures of two (or three) letters sharing a common feature, such as the central upright in *NB (= Notalt Blene)*, are much more frequent in West Norse than in Old Norse texts. A ligature can stand for a single sound, such as *ar*, but the letters can also retain their individual values, as in *k* (s + k). Carolingian script, in contrast to Merovingian, restricted the use of ligatures, retaining virtually none except those for *st*, *ct*, and *dr* (et). These ligatures were adopted into Nordic writing at an early date.

All western European script goes back to Roman writing. The development of Roman script can be sketched as follows. An original archaic script of a majuscular type gradually evolved into a book script known as *scriptura capitalis*, usually divided into classical *capitales rustica* (a form with tall, narrow letters; Fig. 147) and *capitales quadra* or *elegans* (with almost square letters, which survived until the 6th century a.d.; Fig. 147) at an early stage, almost certainly before the 3rd century a.d., a cursive script evolved, and in the first half of the 3rd century a.d., this cursive formed the
basis for the first book script of minuscule type, known as the
original or primitive minuscule. The typical book script of the
early Middle Ages was uncial, with its rounded stems and lines.
The letters A, E, D, H, M, Q, and V are particularly characteristic
of uncial script (Fig. 147). Magnificent uncial MSS survive from
the 4th to the 9th century. Around the year 400, scribes developed
the contemporary everyday writing into yet another book script,
half-uncial. A variety of national scripts (Beneventian in Italy,
Merovingian in France, Visigothic in Spain, Insular in the British
Isles; Fig. 147) gradually developed out of half-uncial and cursive
script. From the time of Charlemagne until the end of the 12th
century, the West (with the exception of the British Isles) was
dominated by Caroline minuscule (Fig. 147), a development of
the book script of late antiquity. This script, the prototype of our
lower-case alphabet, is clear and legible, with each letter written
separately. The short letters, as well as the ascenders and descend­
ers, were all the same height, and abbreviations and ligatures were
used sparingly. At the end of the 12th century, Caroline minus­
cule was reformed to a laterally compressed script with tall, nar­
row, angular, "broken" shapes; bowed letters like d and p were
joined to the following round letter like o. From this Gothic book
script was gradually developed Fraktur, the German blackletter
type. German handwriting is a direct continuation of cursive Gothic
script. Toward the end of the Middle Ages, there was a return to
the clear Carolingian script. Humanistic book script (antiqua)
became the model for our Roman type, while humanistic cursive
evolved into our italic type.

Latin script came to Scandinavia along with Christianity.
Denmark, like Sweden, mostly learned the art of writing from
Germany. The following periods can be distinguished:

Caroline minuscule (ca. 1050-1250). The sources, in Latin,
comprise MSS, books, and diplomas. Significant books include
Denmark's oldest liturgical MS, the Dalbyboken mentioned above,
and the 12th-century Necrologium Lundense (LUB, medeltidshs.
no. 6 4to), with about eighty different hands, showing the develop­
ment of writing over nearly a century; the numerous names
have great interest to philologists and historians. Documentary
script is more conservative than book script, having preserved
older features going back to Merovingian script. It is not a true
cursive. It is characterized by its long ascenders and descenders
and the looping decoration of the minims and abbreviation signs.
The oldest surviving diploma is from 1135.

Early Gothic (ca. 1250-1350). Latin sources include diplo­
as, chronicles, annals, necroleogies, and town charters. The com­
pilation Kong Valdemars jordebog has some brief passages in
Danish; of particular value is the abundant place-name material.
Abbreviations are frequent in these MSS. Danish sources include
law texts, medical books, and religious literature. The oldest ex­
tant MS in Danish is Skånske lov (SKB B 74) from around 1250.
These texts, like contemporary Swedish MSS, have few abbrevia­
tions. Documentary script differs from book script by becoming
cursive: more letters are written continuously without lifting the
pen.

Later Gothic (ca. 1350-1525). There are many Danish
sources of various kinds: legal texts, diplomas, chronicles, medical
works, and religious literature. True book script (Fig. 148) is found
particularly in liturgical MSS. Up until 1450, the predominant
script in books and diplomas is a semicursive form known as
Gothic hybrid (lettre bâtarde) in which the different letters are
written with broad penstrokes and only partly joined, and have
elegant, rounded, sweeping lines (Fig. 148). True cursive script
occurs both in books and in documents after 1450 (Fig. 148).
During this period, Danish takes over from Latin and Low German
as the language of diplomas. The oldest surviving vernacular diplo­
mas from Denmark are from the 1370s. After the Reformation,
Denmark was dominated by the neo-Gothic script developed in
Germany, found in textual and cursive forms. This functioned as
a national script, alongside Latin or humanistic script, mainly in
names and for texts in Latin and Romance languages. Neo-Gothic
script was used in Denmark and Norway until 1875.

The development of writing in Sweden is similar to that in
Denmark. The oldest extant original Swedish diploma dates from
1165. A fragment of the older Västgotalagen (SKB B 193) from
1225-1250 shows the influence of Insular and West Norse writing.
The oldest surviving book in Sweden, a complete text of the older
Västgotalagen (SKB B 59), from around 1285, is written in Gothic
minuscule. The later Middle Ages (ca. 1370-1526) are dominated
by a Gothic hybrid script (Fig. 148). As in Denmark, neo-Gothic
script achieved currency at the time of the Reformation and re­
mained the national script until the early 19th century. The German
letters ß and ð were introduced with the Reformation, and ð was
adopted in 1526; these innovations distinguished Swedish from
Danish, which retained its medieval letter forms.

Iceland's writing has a twin origin: Caroline minuscule from the
Continent and Insular from England (partly introduced via
Norway). The oldest surviving texts in Icelandic, from the latter
half of the 12th century, are written in Caroline minuscule adapted
for Icelandic (Fig. 148); the script lacks Insular letters, with the
exception of þ (thorn). However, judging by the First Grammatical
Treatise (written in the 1310s) and Ari froðis ('the learned')
Islandingabók (1120s), both of which are preserved only in later
transcripts, Insular script appears to have been known in Iceland
before 1150. From the Carolingian period (around 1120-1225),
there are about twenty-five MSS in Icelandic. Only one MS is
certainly older than this period: an Easter table (AM 732a VII 4to),
written between 1121 and 1139. The table contains an almost
complete alphabet (minuscules and capitals). From the Carolingian-
Insular period (ca. 1225-1300), there are several MSS of various
kinds in Icelandic, including one of the oldest known MSS, a
fragment of Egils saga (AM 162 A ð fol.; Fig. 148). The Second
Grammatical Treatise (written ca. 1200, preserved in later MSS)
enumerates almost the entire Latin alphabet as well as ð, ð, þ, and þ. During this period, there is a strong East Norse influence
on Icelandic script. During the Gothic period (ca. 1300-1550),
the Icelandic sources consist of a large number of MS books (in­
cluding the Codex Regius of Snorri's Prose Edda) and numerous
diplomas, the oldest of which dates from 1315. Diplomas in
Iceland were written mostly in the native language, but in the 15th
century there is sometimes a mixture of Icelandic, Danish, and
Norwegian. Cursive script does not become common in diplomas
until 1400; before this, the script used in diplomas and books was
essentially the same. The Gothic hybrid never achieved any cur­
rency in Iceland. As in the rest of Scandinavia, neo-Gothic script
was adopted at the Reformation for native Icelandic texts. Latin
and French words, however, are written in Latin cursive script.
In the mid-19th century, German script is wholly given up in favor
of Latin. Distinctive features of medieval Icelandic scripts are the
frequent use of abbreviations and ligatures, and the many func­
tions of capital letters and accents. Capital letters are used for
the following purposes: to emphasize words and names, such as sa-
DESPECTVS•TIBI•SVM•NEC•
DEVCALIONVACVVM
REMISIT EUM/ AD HERODEM
a b c d e e e e e e f f f g h
a b c d e e f g h i l l m n o p q r s t
Hadriano summo papae patrique beato.
Rex carolus salve mando ualeque pater.

cred names sometimes written with more than just the initial letter in capitals (e.g., MaRia); to indicate the start of a new sentence or section; for calligraphic reasons, especially R, N, S (e.g., utaN); to indicate geminate consonants (janN); for clarity; and as initials. Accents, usually acute, are used as a diaritic mark over i (not systematically); as a diaeresis over one or both vowels in hiatus; over little words (e.g., etr); over vowels in stressed syllables; as rhythmic markers; to mark vowel quality; as a correction sign; over y instead of a dot; to mark long vowels; as a transposition mark; and as a hyphen at the end of a line. A specifically Icelandic feature is the writing of a dot over a consonant to mark length, a usage that survives, side by side with gemination, throughout the Middle Ages. Furthermore, it should be noted that medieval Latin in Iceland never achieved the dominant position that it enjoyed in so much of the rest of Europe. Most of the country’s medieval literature is written in Icelandic.

In Norway, too, literature written in Latin has a subordinate position in the Middle Ages. From around 1200, Latin is used mainly, and to a decreasing extent, in diplomas and ecclesiastical documents. Other literature was written in the vernacular. The oldest surviving books, written in Carolingian-Insular script, date from the mid-12th century (Fig. 148). The oldest extant original diploma in Norwegian (with formulas adopted from English documentary language) dates from around 1210. Norwegian was long the documentary language, developed in Bergen and Niðrrós (Trondheim), after 1314 in Oslo. Swedish or Swedish-influenced language is encountered in Norwegian diplomas during the period when the two kingdoms were united (1319–1355). In the first half of the 15th century, a mixture of Swedish and Norwegian was written in the Brigittine monasteries. Pure Danish became customary in royal rescripts after 1450, and in episcopal letters from Niðrrós and Oslo after 1500. After the Reformation, Danish also became the language of literature and of the Church in Norway. Medieval Norwegian script is, like Icelandic, rich in abbreviations and ligatures. Capital letters and accents are also used in a similar way. In Norway, as in the rest of Scandinavia, neo-Gothic script came into use at the time of the Reformation. The change to Latin script occurred at the same time in Norway as in Denmark, in 1875.

The anonymous translator adhered closely to his original. No attempt is made, however, to imitate the metrical form of the Latin. Alliteration appears now and then, but otherwise examples of stylistic embellishments to match the Latin are few. The frequent errors in the Norse texts are presumably due to the copying, not to the translator himself. De Morawski (1917: 50, n. 1) suggests that the close translation was made by a student as an exercise.


Kirsten Wolf

Parcevals saga ("Parceval's Saga") is an Old Norse prose version of Chrétien de Troyes's chivalric romance Parceval, or Le Conte du Graal. The saga was probably composed, along with the other Arthurian riddarasogur, at the court of Hákon Hákonarson of Norway (r. 1217-1263). Parcevals saga is preserved in one vellum MS, Stock. Perg. 4to no. 6 (ca. 1400), which also contains Ívans saga, a fragment (ca. 1350), and a number of postmedieval paper transcripts. A lacuna in the vellum and also in the paper transcripts covers some 180 lines of Chrétien's poem.

The story concerns the chivalric education and adventures of a rustic but promising youth. Unschooled but enthusiastic, the
knights aspirant leaves home, enjoys the hospitality of the ailing Fisher King, proves himself worthy as a Round Table knight, delivers the lady Blanchefleur (Norse Blankiflur) from her enemies, and undertakes the quest for the Grail and the Bleeding Lance, mystery objects that he has glimpsed but reprehensibly failed to ask about at the Fisher King's castle. The significance of the Grail is eventually explained to him one Easter by a hermit, who identifies himself as Perceval's uncle.

**Perceval**

In its introductory family history of the hero, which makes his mother an abducted princess and his deceased father's rural exile voluntary, the saga deviates from Chrétien's grim account of killing, maiming, and dispossession as the background to their forest existence. The saga also appeals to a brief conclusion to that section of *Perceval* where Chrétien interrupts, and never resumes, his tale of the Fisher King's adventures. Perceval, as promised, returns to and marrying Blankiflur, becoming lord of her land and an invincible knight. Gauvain's adventures, which take up the rest of Chrétien's unfinished narrative, become the separate *Valvers þáttir*.

Unlike its source, the saga is indifferent to the complicated network of relationships that influence Perceval's predicted "destiny." The Norse version eliminates the blood tie between his family and the Grail King's, and, although providing a conclusion to the knight's adventures, Perceval, as promised, returns to and marries Blankiflur, becoming lord of her land and an invincible knight. Gauvain's adventures, which take up the rest of Chrétien's unfinished narrative, become the separate *Valvers þáttir*.

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German, Low German, and Dutch belong to the y-group, in which the story begins in France, the hero's native country. The Old Norse version, the Danish poem (see below), a Spanish prose version, a Catalanian translation of it, and an English version belong to the z-group, in which the story begins in Greece, the heroine's native country (Bakhtier 1912). The main difference between the two groups, i.e., the country where the story begins, may be due to a deliberate change from ordo artificialis to ordo naturalis, which theoretically may have been made independently of each other within the z-group. Verbal agreements within the z-group also support the theory about a close relationship between these versions, however.

Parthenopeus de Blois is a roman courtois sharing characteristics with stories of the type romans d'antiquité as well as romans bretons. The name of the protagonist is drawn from Roman of Thebes, and the main motif has its origin in Apuleius's story about Amor and Psyche.

The story evolves from the motif "the breach of the order," which relates how a mortal falls in love with a supernatural being (in the Partalopa saga the heroine, Marmoria, is not supernatural, but she is skilled in astronomy and magic, and, as the ruling empress of Constantinople, she is very mighty). The lovers are together only in the shelter of the dark of the night. In the daytime, the supernatural being disappears, and his full identity remains hidden to his partner. The mortal is persuaded by jealous or worried relatives to breach the promise to the lover not to try to meet again. The supernatural being disappears in anger, and the mortal must endure many trials before they can be united.

What is special about Parthenopeus de Blois and Partalopa saga, however, is that the man and the woman have exchanged roles. The woman is not the one who takes the erotic initiative, while the man is the one who humbly worships her, who is cast off, and who is finally restored to her favor. This shift is probably due to influence from Breton stories and Marie de France's lays. The Old Norse version has also added a motif not found in any other: the proud princess who humiliates and rejects all lovers until she is finally overcome by one of them (cf. the fairy-tale motif, König Drosselbart).

In the French text, the heroine promises the hero marriage after two and a half years. In the saga, she does not want to marry Partalopi or any other man; she only wants to have a secret lover, because she does not want to lose her position as maiden-king, meykingr. She finally realizes, however, that she misses Partalopi and that she must engage in a general, public marriage.

The saga is written in normal Norse prose, or what Halvorsen (1962) calls "translator's prose" without the embellishing effects found in other prose treating courtly topics, such as Ellis saga, Tristrans saga, and Stregfelkar.

The Danish poem Persénøber og Konstanziobis is found in the MS SKB 47 (younger than 1484), also containing the Danish versions of Chrétien de Troyes's Yvain and the Floire et Blancheflor. The plot is more or less the same as in the Old Norse version, but is somewhat simplified, and the names differ considerably. The French prince is called Persénoner and the Greek princess Konstanziobis, and in this version her empire is Konstantia. There is no direct connection between the Danish and Old Norse versions, but it has been suggested that they ultimately go back to the same Norse version. A printed edition from 1572 appears to be based on a now-lost edition from 1560.
and Sweden, while the Scandinavian names survived better in the rural districts of Norway, in the Faroes, and in Iceland.

It is usual to distinguish between compound (dithematic) forenames and simplex (monothematic) ones. The compound names are made up of two words from such categories of meaning as heathen mythology (Gudmund / Guðmundr, Thorstein / Þóristeinn, Aslaðr / Æslárgið), warfare (Gunnarr / Guðarr, Bothild / Ragnhildr, Sigrid / Sigríðr), or the animal world (Óðbjørn / Ætnbjørn, Armgrim / Ærmgrím). Unlike other compound words, compound names are not supposed to have a meaning. The combination of the two elements in a forename is generally the result of a naming practice according to which the name of the child had to contain at least one of the elements in the names of its parents, the principle of variation.

The simplex names consist of one linguistic element. This element can be an original by-name, which assumed the function of a forename at an early date (Sten / Stein, Gunn / Guðn, Geri / Gerđ). This type of forename is assumed to be typologically the most archaic. Such simplex names can, however, be hypocoristic short forms of compound names (Thorstein / Þóristeinn, Steinkil / Steinkell, Gunnarr / Guðarr, Thorgn / Þorgnarr, Ásgerdr / Æsgerd). To these simplex names is sometimes added a derivative ending. The most common of these are -(i) (mas.) and -á (fem.) (Thor, Guðan, Tumi, Þóra). Such formations are also assumed to have originated as hypocorisms, or pet names. The same stylistic effect could be achieved by the use of various consonant developments, particularly geminations (Tokke < Porkell, Ebbe < Esbjorn, Tubbi < Tobbjorn, Tobba < Tobbjorg, Sigga < Sigrid, Sigfridr). The hypocoristic nature of these names became obscured at an early date, however, and they end by being stylistically neutral.

The first names of foreign origin to be adopted into the nomenclature in the medieval period reflect the conversion of the Scandinavians to Christianity in the 11th century. At this time, the population of Scandinavia was introduced not only to the Bible but also to the great band of saints to whom the churches of the new faith were mainly dedicated and whose feast days were recorded in the calendar. Many of the names of personages in the New Testament and the legends of the saints were taken into use particularly frequently in the towns, where the trades and crafts were separated out into specialized occupations, for example, Hans Væver ("weaver"), Ole Smed ("smith"), Jens Møller ("miller").

By-names form the basis for family names, which are by-names that have been inherited and therefore no longer necessarily characterize their bearers. The establishment of a proper system of family names in Scandinavia did not take place until well after the end of the medieval period; and in Iceland, where patronymics predominate, such a system has never taken root. Medieval family names in Scandinavia were to be found almost only among the nobility, and even among the members of this class they were not universal. By-names that have already developed into family names among the nobility in the medieval period include physionyms: Hvide ("white"), Krummen ("crouched"), Brok ("badger"); psychonyms: Glob ("fool"), Hvas ("sharp"); relationship to person: Sensor (from Eighth), relation to place: Ume, Friis, occupational: Munk ("monk").


**John Kousgård Sørensen**

[See also: Place-names]

**Petrus de Dacia** (ca. 1230–1289) is called Sweden's first author. While studying at the studium generale of the Dominicans in Cologne (1267–1269), Petrus visited the nearby village of Stommeln, where he met the German beguine Christina of Stommeln in 1267. As Christina's confessor, he often witnessed her remarkable and even terrifying experiences: ecstasies, stigmatisations, and visions that convinced him that Christina was a saint capable of showing him the right way to God. In 1269–1270, when studying in Paris, Petrus began the correspondence with Christina that continued until his death. In 1270, he returned to Sweden, revisiting Stommeln on his way home, and in 1271 he was appointed lector of the Dominican convent of Skänninge. Not staying a month in Cologne, he again paid several visits to Christina at the convent of Visby in his native island of Gotland. In 1279, while staying a month in Cologne, he again paid several visits to Christina. Having become prior in Visby, he was also appointed socius of the provincial for the General Chapter at Bordeaux in summer 1287. On his way home from Bordeaux, Petrus met Christina at Stommeln for the last time. In a letter of September 9, 1289, Christina was informed that Petrus had died during the Lent of that year.

Two literary works in Latin by Petrus are known, both in the Codex Iuliacensis from about 1300, now in the Bischöfliches Diözesanarchiv in Aachen. In the Vita Christinae Stumbelensis ("Life of Christina of Stommeln"), Petrus describes his visits to Stommeln and his strong emotional reactions to Christina's mystical experiences. The book also contains their correspondence and a biography of Christina written by the parish priest of Stommeln, who used to read and translate Petrus's letters to Christina and write down her letters. Although Petrus was deeply attached to Christina, he repeatedly emphasizes that their love is a spiritual one, having Christ for its true object.

Petrus's other known work is De graia naturam distante sive De virtutibus Christinae Stumbelensis ("On Grace Enriching Nature, or On the Virtues of Christina of Stommeln"). It consists of a poem of forty-three hexameters praising Christina's virtues and a long theological treatise commenting on each word of the poem. The greater part of this work is lost. Petrus exploits his philosophical and theological learning to find theoretical explanations of Christina's behavior. The work presents few original thoughts, being mainly a compilation of the ideas of Petrus's masters in Cologne and Paris, Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas.

**Physiologus** (or Bestiarius) is a natural history written originally in Greek probably in the 4th century. The work became very popular, with early Latin renderings serving as the originals for a number of later translations into several European languages. The Physiologus contains descriptions of natural and supernatural beings and objects, with religious and moral lessons drawn from their appearance and behavior.

In Scandinavia, the work is known only in an Old Icelandic rendering, but the influence of the Physiologus manifests itself in several works, such as the Danish Lucidarius, the Swedish Sistilring, Konungs skuggsjá, and Anders Sunesen's poem Hezemeron. The Old Icelandic translation is not preserved in its entirety; only two small fragments are extant: AM 673a 1 and 114to. Both fragments date from about 1200, and both appear to be copies; judging from the orthography of these fragments, the originals probably dated from the 12th century. The fragments represent the first illustrated books made in Iceland still extant. The illustrators based their pictures upon foreign models, possibly of English origin.

Fragment I (two leaves) contains allegorical interpretations of five animals: phoenix, hoopoe, siren, horsefly, and onocentaur. The author does not describe the physical attributes of the animals, but dwells only upon the moral symbolism to be drawn from them. The second leaf has only pictures that appear to have no connection to the Physiologus text.

Fragment II consists of eight adjoining leaves plus one separate leaf. Only leaves 1–6 contain the Physiologus text (descriptions of fifteen animals and their allegorical significance: i.e., the Physiologus proper): hydris (wattensnake, but here a kind of bird), goat, wild ass, monkey, falcon, coot, panther, aspedo (turtle, but here a kind of whale), partridge, onocentaur, weasel, adder, turtle-dove, deer, and lizard. Fragment II also treats four animals in the
Bible: *milvus* (kite), *porcus silvae* (wild boar), *nycticorax* (nightraven), and *elephas* (elephant). These four creatures derive from commentaries on the Bible rather than from *Physiologus*.

Leaves 8–9 contain allegorical explanations, first of the ship and its individual parts, and next of the rainbow and its colors.


**Kirsten Wolf**

[See also:] Christian Poetry; *Elucidarius*, Homilies (West Norse); *Konungs skuggsjá*, Sunesen, Anders

**Place-names.** In the Middle Ages, Scandinavian place-names were found in the two countries of the Scandinavian peninsula, Norway and Sweden, together with Denmark and Schleswig, and also in the colonies established by Norwegians and Danes in Iceland, the Faroes, the British Isles, and Normandy, and by Swedes in the Åland islands and the western and southern parts of the Finnish mainland, around Uleåborg, Vasa, Åbo, and Helsinki.

**Settlement history.** There is no stratum of place-names in central and southern Scandinavia that can be proved to have been coined by people speaking a non-Germanic language. So a place-name chronology for the region is dependent partly on such internal evidence as their lexical content and linguistic expression, partly on a study of the names found in the colonies, and partly on comparison with the nomenclature of the rest of northwestern Europe, where names containing elements cognate with those found in Scandinavian place-names can be stratified between names of, for example, Celtic, Romance, or Slavic origin. We can assume that place-name elements found in all the countries in which Germanic tribes settled were current in the Migration Period, while elements found only in Scandinavia may be archaic elements that dropped out of use very early, or elements that did not come into use until the migrations were completed, or elements that were applicable only to the topography or settlement situation in Scandinavia. Elements shared by Scandinavia and one or more of the other Germanic countries may reflect a colonizing movement or the influence of trading contacts.

The problems associated with establishing a chronology of settlement in Scandinavia on the basis of the place-name evidence are thus very complicated, but it is nevertheless possible to draw some tentative conclusions. The oldest surviving place-names, dating from before the Migration Period, would seem to be those borne by a number of islands, lakes, and rivers. These names are either old appellatives (words for water, land-elevations, etc.) functioning as names, or names formed by the addition of a derivative suffix to a root form, which can seldom be identified with certainty, for example, the Danish island names *Als* and *Mors*, formed with an *s*-suffix, and the Swedish lake name *Åsnen* and the Norwegian river name *Mesna*, formed with an *n*-suffix.

The Germanic tribes who settled in northwestern Europe in the Migration Period brought with them not only methods of name forming but also an appropriate place-name vocabulary. At first, they evidently gave names not to individual farms or nucleated settlements but to areas of dispersed settlement. These names were often formed by adding an *ing*-suffix to a theme, and many of them apparently originated as tribal names before being transferred to the tribal territory. In Denmark and in southern and eastern Sweden, place-names derived from tribal names in *-ing* with appellative themes, for example, Swedish *Måringe* (< *mar*’lake*), occur frequently, but place-names derived from tribal names based on personal names, which are fairly common in England and Germany, such as *Hastings* (< *Hæsta*), *Sigmaringen* (< *Sigimar*), do not occur. Singular *ing*-names formed on appellativ or verbal themes, for example, *Steving* (< *stafn* ‘promontory’) and *Pebtring* (< *pipr* ‘trickle’), have a more general distribution over Scandinavia, being also found in Norway. Many of these names were originally appellatives in *-ing*, and such place-names are not necessarily old.

*Heimr* is a generic element used to coin district names in the Migration Period. This element occurs particularly frequently in the names in Norway, for example, *Trondheim* (< tribal name *Prænd*), but there are also many instances in southern and central Sweden and Jutland, where *heimr* usually has the meaning “village,” while in the Danish islands, names in *-heimr* occur comparatively rarely.

Although names in *-ing*, *-ing*, and *-heimr* occur frequently in the Scandinavian homelands, there is little evidence for their use to coin names in the Viking colonies. There are some few names in *-heimr* in Iceland and Shetland, but these instances are mostly stereotype names, such as *Sol-heimr* and *Vind-heimr*. The few apparent instances of Scandinavian names in *-ing* or *-heim* recorded in sources from the Danelaw can be more satisfactorily explained as the result of adaptation by Scandinavian-speaking settlers of earlier English names in *-ing* and *-ham*.

*Levlov* is a generic that evidently had its period of currency early in the Migration Period. This element originally seems to have denoted “something left behind.” It is used of nucleated settlements and seems to point to private ownership of land. Names containing this element are found only in Denmark and southern Sweden, while names containing the related German element *leben* also have a restricted distribution, being found mainly within the old territory of Thüringen. The names in Scandinavia may reflect a movement from Thüringen. If so, the route followed must have been over Brandenburg, Mecklenburg, Lolland, and Falster, for there is a broad belt without *lev*-names in Schleswig-Holstein.

Two other old generics with restricted distributions within Scandinavia, *lase* and *vin*, would both seem originally to have denoted “pasture-land,” although they survive in names of settlements, many of high status. Their distribution patterns are more or less complementary, with the *lase*-names being very common in the Danish islands and spreading from there to southern Sweden, while the *vin*-names are most numerous in Norway and fairly common in western Sweden.
Of the three old generics with restricted distributions in the homelands, the two elements characteristic of Denmark and southern Sweden, lev and lose, have left no trace on the nomenclature of the colonies in the west, while the typically Norwegian and West Swedish vin was evidently taken in fossilized form to Orkney and Shetland in the compound appellative leik-vin 'playing-field,' which appears as a place-name in these islands, but not in the Faroes or Iceland.

Names in -stadir (Danish sted, Norwegian stad, Swedish sta) are found over most of Scandinavia, although they are particularly common in the parts of Norway in which names in -heimr and -vin are rare. The cognate elements stede and stedt are fairly common in England and Germany. There are no Scandinavian names in -sted in the Danelaw, but there are a fair number of names in -stadir in the Northern and Western Isles and Man. Such names are extremely common in Iceland, although the generic does not occur in settlement names in the Faroes. In the colonies, -stadir was evidently used to coin names for small secondary settlements detached from an older estate center. The absence of -stadir from the areas of Scandinavian settlement in England probably results from its role there being played by another Scandinavian generic, by, while in the Faroes the lack of space for expansion of settlement onto outfields meant that the element was inappropriate for the Faroese nomenclature.

The generic bolstad 'site of farm or vill' frequently occurs in names along the west coast of Norway, and Norwegian settlers took the element with them to the Northern and Western Isles and Caithness, where it is the most frequently occurring Scandinavian generic. It is not found in names in Denmark, but there are a number of instances in Sweden, where bolstad would seem to have developed a secondary significance: "site of deserted settlement." It has been suggested that the names in -bolstad in Aland were given by Swedes in the 9th century to settlements established on sites that had been deserted by the earlier inhabitants of the islands. This secondary significance of the generic might lie behind its frequent occurrence in the Northern and Western Isles and Caithness, where the Viking settlers displaced the earlier Celtic inhabitants. The generic toft, tomt, however, which was certainly used with the denotation "site of a deserted settlement," not only has a much wider distribution than bolstad in the Scandinavian homelands but also occurs in all the colonized areas, although it is much less common than bolstad in the areas where the latter element occurs.

Names in -jorp, a generic that denoted a "dependent secondary settlement," are extremely common in both Denmark and Sweden, but rarely occur in Norway outside of Østfold. The numerous Scandinavian compounds in -jorp in eastern England were most probably coined by the Danish settlers there. In the other areas of Viking colonization, names in -jorp occur comparatively rarely. Some of the place-names in -jorp in the Scandinavian homelands seem to date from after the Viking Age, since they often have personal names of biblical origin as their specifics.

The Scandinavian generic occurring most frequently in place-names in the Danelaw is by. This is also one of the most common habitative generics in Aland. Both in the Danelaw and in Aland, the generic by is often compounded with a personal name, presumably because an influx of settlers to these areas had led to a sudden need to coin a large number of new names for small independent agricultural units. In Caithness, the Northern and Western Isles, Man, and Iceland, areas where small detached settlement units otherwise tended to be given names in -stadir or -bolstad, scattered instances of names consisting of a personal name plus -by may reflect contact between the Norwegian colonies and the Danelaw in the Viking period. In the Scandinavian homelands, place-names in -by with personal names as specifics have a fairly restricted distribution; and many of them would seem to have been coined after the Viking period. It has been suggested that they reflect trading contacts with the Danelaw.

A recurrent compound in -by, Hus(e)by (< *hús-a-by), which would seem to have been used to coin names in replacement of older names for administrative centers, has a characteristic distribution in Scandinavia. There are nine instances in Denmark, forty-six in Norway, and about seventy in Sweden. With the exception of four instances in Orkney, the name Hus(e)by does not occur in the Scandinavian colonies. It seems likely that this name, both in the Scandinavian homelands and in Orkney, replaced older names. Its absence from the Danelaw and Aland can be explained by the fact that the *hús-a-by institution did not develop until about the year 1000.

Tun is another generic that would sometimes seem to have been used to coin names in replacement of older names for administrative centers. Names in -tun are quite common in Sweden but rare in Norway and very rare in Denmark. The related Old English generic tun is by far the commonest habitative generic in place-names in England, and there is early evidence in this country for its use to denote a "royal vill." It is possible that the tun-names in Scandinavia were associated with an administrative reorganization in the 10th or 11th centuries.
Agricultural history. Many names point to the exploitation of mountain pastures in the summer months. Place-names provide information as to which crops were cultivated and which animals bred in the various regions. Names reveal, for example, that in the Faroes, pigs were kept not only on the infields close to the houses but also on the outfields, often at a great distance from the settlement. Place-names also show that in the mountainous areas of Norway kilns were used to dry the corn. Names can also provide information about changes in the flora not instigated by humans. A study of names in central and eastern Norway containing the specific gran 'spruce,' for example, indicates that this tree spread into Norway from Sweden earlier than the date in the 13th or 14th century suggested by pollen studies.

Paganism. Names are one of the best sources of information about the worship of the heathen gods in Scandinavia. The existence of cults of Oðinn, Þórr, Ægir, Freyr, and Freyja over the whole of Scandinavia is shown by such names as Odense and Torslund in Denmark, Njørheim and Frøsate in Norway, and Onsjö and Frøbøke in Sweden. The gods Úllr and Frigg, on the other hand, while appearing in several names in Norway and Sweden, such as Ullevål and Friggaker, have left no trace in the place-names of Denmark. The god Tyr, who is commemorated in many names in Denmark, such as Tisdal and perhaps Thisted, occurs only in a single one in Norway, Tysnes, and does not appear at all in names in Sweden.

Linguistic history. Place-names supply some of our best evidence for linguistic developments in Scandinavia in early times because they can be located exactly. The changes revealed can be dramatic, as when an examination of field names from two Danish-named parishes south of the present Danish-German frontier, Søvsted and Mildsted, shows that the inhabitants must still have been Danish-speaking in the Middle Ages, but that Danish was replaced by German as the local language in the 13th century in Søvsted and in the 14th century in Mildsted. Even when there has not been a change of language, place-names are an important source of information about the relative conservatism of the various Scandinavian languages and dialects. The contribution made by place-names to the history of the vocabulary can have broader cultural implications, as when a study of Saamish-Finnish place-names in northern Sweden reveals how a Slav cultural influence must have been transmitted by the Finns, probably in connection with the trade in furs in the Viking period.

Plácítus saga (“The Saga of Plácítus”) and Plácítus drápa (“The Poem of Plácítus”) both tell the story of St. Eustace, a Roman warrior named Placidus before his conversion by a crucifix-bearing stag. Agreeing to be tested, he is stripped of everything, including his wife, who is taken from him by a sailor, and his sons, who are seized by animals as he is transporting them across a flooding river. Years of exile follow. Then Eustace returns to power, and the family is reunited, only to be martyred together in an ox-shaped oven of brass. Ancient sources and analogues have been proposed for all parts of the story, which is also strongly influenced by the Bible. It exists in several Greek and two Latin prose versions, the longer of which (Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina, 2760) seems to be the immediate or ultimate source of all the Old Norse-Icelandic versions.

Plácítus saga exists in four versions: (1) a translation preserved fragmentarily in AM 655 IX 4to, written about 1150 in Trondheim (the only non-Icelandic MS among those mentioned here); (2) a different translation preserved fragmentarily in AM 655 X 4to, from about 1260, and completely or partly in six paper
MSS written between 1651 and 1878, the most important of which is the earliest, Stock. Papp. 8vo no. 8; (3) a version that freely reworks the Latin and is independent of version 2 (though they may descend from the same translation) found in two paper MSS from the 19th century; and (4) an abbreviated version preserved incompletely in AM 696 III 4to, from about 1390, whose source has not been determined. The early translation of the legend points to the narrative appetite of the period, and the richness of the material on which it fed. The numerous paper MSS, in which it is treated as an exemplum, attest to a popularity that endured the Reformation.

Plácítus drápa is found in AM 673b 4to, from about 1200. Owing to the loss apparently of a first and last leaf, only fifty-nine stanzas survive of what must have been a seventy-eight-stanza drápa. The thirty-six-stanza stefjábaldr (central section) opens with a refrain, then is divided into two groups of seven stanzas by means of two refrains which combine to form stanza 32. If we assume construction in multiples of seven, ten stanzas remain of an original twenty-one-stanza upphaf (introduction) and thirteen of an equally long slœmr (conclusion). The poetic merit of the poem has been considered slight, but the difficulties of telling a story in drótkvætt may account for its mechanical kennings.

Interest in the poem has centered on its relation to other Christian skaldic poems and to the saga. Vocabulary shared with Harmsol, Geisli, and Leíðarvisan has been used to argue either for or against the priority of Plácítus drápa. It is equally difficult to determine how it relates to the prose versions. Although it scarcely overlaps with version 1, its wording and narrative agree by turns with both versions 2 and 3. Since the drápa may have influenced later copies of the saga version that was its source, and the poet might have used more than one prose version or the hypothetical common source of 2 and 3, locating the drápa within the prose stemma will remain problematical.


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[See also: Christian Poetry; Einarr Skúlason; Gamli kanókti; Leíðarvisan; Saints' Lives; Skaldic Meters]
plague," i.e., secondary to the primary bubonic plague infection. This development seems to take place in about 10–25 percent of bubonic cases (Hirst 1953: 222, Leads 1984: 1400, Welty 1956). Such patients often develop a cough and bloody expectoration containing plague bacteria, which occasionally may infect others by droplet infection (cf. influenza).

Persons contracting plague directly by droplet infection are said to suffer from primary pneumonic plague. Secondary and primary pneumonic plague, then, spread by cross-infection, the primary being markedly more contagious than the secondary. Primary pneumonic plague is one of the most virulent diseases known. It is doubtful if any person has survived this condition without administration of antibiotics. The average duration of the illness is about 1.8 days, the infective cough emerging after about twenty-four hours, little time, therefore being left for spread. Moreover, not a few cases die before developing the dangerous cough, especially toward the end of outbreaks. Pneumonic plague, therefore, is characterized by weak powers of spread and small and episodic outbreaks, usually at the familial or neighborhood levels, rarely comprising more than a few tens of victims (Wu 1913, 1926, and 1927–28, Klimenko 1910, Chun 1936). However, as cases of pneumonic plague arise from cases of bubonic plague, they normally constitute a few percent of the victims of epidemics of bubonic plague.

Studies of the wave of plague epidemics in Sweden in 1710–1713 suggest the possible occurrence of small local epidemics with a substantial proportion of such cases, or possibly even epidemics of primary pneumonic plague, within the usual pattern of predominant bubonic plague (Moseng 1990). This pattern may have been the case in parts of Scandinavia in the late-medieval centuries as well. The case for this model is strengthened by descriptions in Nordic sources of some important aspects of social life. We are told, for example, that it was the custom “among the populace in the countryside that the whole household slept together in the same chamber during nights”; they used to have “farm animals like calves and pigs” in the houses where they lived (Vejde 1938). The first custom should be expected to increase the incidence of transmission by droplet infection from cases of secondary pneumonic plague, and also to increase the powers of spread of primary pneumonic plague significantly. The second custom would tend to increase the number of rats and rat fleas living in the immediate proximity of a household, which should increase (1) infection doses and so lethality rates; (2) the occurrence of overwhelming infections and so the incidence of primary septicaemic plague (repeatedly observed by Block 1711); and (3) the proportion of household members affected as evidenced by a conspicuous frequency of extinction of households (Leijonhufvud 1921, Vejde 1938).

As rats are social animals defending territories, the dispersed pattern of farm settlement implies a pattern of at least one rat colony per household-farmhouse and a higher ratio of rats and their fleas relative to the numbers of human beings than in urban settlements, where more households would tend to live within the area of the same rat colony. This feature explains why morbidity and mortality rates in rural areas are far higher than in towns in preindustrial Europe (Benedictow 1987, 1992).

Clinical symptomatic references to sharp pangs of pain and bloody expectoration, as in the account in the Icelandic Lögmannsannáll of the Great Pestilence in Norway in 1349–1350 (Íslámské Annaler, p. 275), are not, as hitherto commonly supposed, unambiguous references to primary pneumonic plague (see, e.g., Jón Steffensen 1974). Bloody expectoration is definitional a clinical symptom of secondary pneumonic plague, which is developed from bubonic plague. Sharp pangs of pain are the usual description of the extreme tenderness of buboes (see, e.g., Block 1711: 21, Benedictow 1990: 28–30, 1992). Also, bubonic plague is a fast killer, causing a considerable frequency of hasty and sudden deaths. As a matter of fact, the Swedish word for sudden death, bråddöda, became a name for plague (Block 1711, Ottosson 1986 and 1989).

While plague is disseminated directly between rodents by the agency of fleas, this case is rare with human beings. Bacteremia in human beings occurs only in about half of the cases and is very much weaker than in rats, making people a poor source for infected blood conducing to growth of blocks in the ventricular system of fleas (Benedictow 1992). In plague epidemics, husfian beings become the fortuitous victims of an epizootic among commensal rats, the “black rat,” which prefers living close to human beings because of its strong predilection for grain.

It has recently been maintained that this type of rat cannot survive in substantial numbers in countries of temperate or cool climates, and so cannot have provided the rodent basis for epidemics of plague in the parts of Europe with these climatic types (Wallæe 1982, Davis 1986, Oeding 1988). However, until the 1790s, the black rat was the only rat in Sweden and Finland, the countries of Scandinavia with the coldest winters. At the beginning of this century, it was found in a number of urban and rural areas (Nybelin 1928, Bernström 1969, Vilknva 1969). Large numbers of skeletal remains of the black rat dating back to the 13th century and the late-medieval period have recently been found during excavations in Stockholm, illustrating the need for rat catchers mentioned by Olauus Magnus (Vretemark 1982). Other medieval findings have been reported going back to ca. A.D. 1000 (see, e.g., Bergquist 1957). "During the late-medieval period, rats and mice are mentioned as generally known vermin in and around human buildings" (Bernström and Vilknva 1969). Moreover, the brown or grey rat was not observed in Scandinavia before the 1750s, first in Norway. Many findings of skeletal remains of the black rat in North Germany and in England antedating the High Middle Ages, in England even going back to the Roman period (Armitage et al. 1984, Teichert 1985, Reichstein 1987), strengthen the case for assuming a long presence of this type of rat in Scandinavia. This fact supports the plague explanation put forward by Norwegian, Swedish, and Finnish archaeologists of indications of depopulation and mass occurrence of deserted farms in some areas in the 6th and 7th centuries (Benedictow 1992:22).

The steady flea parasite of the black rat, Xenopsylla cheopis, has, because of the predilection of this rat for grain, developed through evolutionary selection the ability to subsist on grain, dependent only on blood for laying eggs. Transport of grain is a usual mechanism of interregional and interlocal spread of plague in the preindustrial society. As rats rapidly die from plague, the pathogen is usually transported in the bodies of rat fleas that primarily seek rat hosts at the place of arrival. A plague epidemic, then, usually begins with a few sporadic cases (endemic phase), as some rat fleas, having left dead rats and not succeeding in finding a new rat host, are offered the opportunity of a human substitute. As rats die off in large numbers, making it increasingly difficult to find new rat hosts, fleas gather on the remaining rats, which soon become ill and unable to defend themselves by the usual self-cleansing activities, causing the usual flea count to grow from about seven to often between fifty and 100 on sick rats (Indian
Plague Research Commission, 1 [1906], 24 [1907], 29 [1908], Busvine 1976). The death of rats in this phase, therefore, turns loose hundreds of fleas in the close proximity of human beings. This ecological pattern explains the typical explosive development pattern of plague epidemics with suddenly skyrocketing mortality rates.

This ecological pattern also explains what might at first seem an epidemiological puzzle, the ability of plague to penetrate and permeate sparsely populated local societies, reaching the many small and peripheral agricultural farmsteads and villages where large parts of the population of medieval Europe lived, as certainly was the case in Scandinavia. Medieval Norway, for example, which at the time of maximum population density around 1300, contained roughly 350,000 inhabitants in an area about three times the size of England, living typically in small nuclear-family-based households on detached or semidetached holdings. Norway suffered disastrously from the onslaughts of plague. The decisive point is that people lived in closely knit local societies where experience and necessity had developed a strong spirit of interdependence and mutual assistance. Occurrence of disease and death was met with neighborly work assistance, nursing care, and visits of consolation (Hagberg 1937, Vejde 1938). People visited the ill and dying to assist them, and in the case of plague, often brought with them to their own farmsteads dangerous rat fleas in their clothing. A Norwegian priest testifies that he was present when Anund Helgason died in the Great Pestilence, and that his death occurred also "in the presence of Ragndid Simonadottir and Alvald Sveinkason and many other good persons" (DN 1, no. 355; translation supplied). This pattern of social behavior is also highlighted in Sweden in 1710–1713, when there was much social unrest and rioting in the countryside as a reaction to the efforts of the government to prohibit and prevent social interaction between healthy and diseased people (Leijonhufvud 1921, Vejde 1938, Ottosson 1986a).

The powers of spread of diseases disseminated by cross-infection are weakened by the death of those who contract them. Death actually strengthens the dynamics of spread of bubonic plague, because bubonic plague is not spread by cross-infection but by ecological mechanisms. First, when people die, relatives and neighbors congregate to mourn and commemorate the deceased. Second, the Norse word for funeral feast can be directly translated as "inheritance feast." When people die, others inherit, and the funeral feast was ordinarily the occasion when the inheriting relatives agreed upon their portions and often began to share out the valuables and possessions (Ba 1960: 450–2). The situation in the wake of a great plague epidemic is well illustrated by a passage in the account of the Fijianannall of the second plague epidemic in Iceland: "Much property then came in the hands of many; almost everybody received inheritance from relatives, third cousins, or closer relations" (Annales Islandici Posteriorum Seculorum 1927–32: 27–8). Preindustrial societies were characterized by widespread and pronounced poverty; clothing, bedding, and so forth were valuable and eagerly inherited (see, e.g., Leijonhufvud 1921, Vejde 1938). The inheritance mechanism in this way intensified the spread of dangerous infected and infective rat fleas between farmsteads and local societies. Within this epidemiological framework, the rapid course of the disease itself was a factor increasing the dynamics of spread.

These are probably the most important mechanisms of local spread of plague in the parts of the Nordic countries with dispersed farm settlement. In village settlements and urban localities, intralocal spread through contact between rat colonies probably has played an important role as well (Benedictow 1992).

The class system yields another important mechanism of local epidemic spread. During the period of rapid population growth in the high Middle Ages, a great number of inferior settlements of a clearly proletarian character, in English associated with the concepts of croft and cottage, was established on marginal lands, often in the periphery of the old settlements. The occupants had to earn most of their income working as hired labor on the old, substantial farms, and undoubtedly often received much of their income in the form of grain (Benedictow 1986, 1992).

Three epidemiological mechanisms were probably the most important for interlocal dissemination of plague in the Scandinavian countries and Iceland. First, people fleeing from areas ravaged by plague and unwittingly bringing infected and infective rat fleas with them in clothing or luggage. Second, transport of grain containing such fleas. Third, in quite a number of patients, bubonic plague is clinically characterized by a marked Wandertrieb ("urge to wander"). Persons who are away from home because of trade or work migration will often feel a compulsive urge to set out for home (Chun 1936). Resident servants and workers in aristocratic households and on substantial farms will in this way disseminate the epidemic, increasing particularly the capacity of plague to reach the peripheral and small settlements and the cottages and crofts of the poor on the outskirts of local society, which otherwise tend to be passed over by epidemic diseases. Where significant distance is involved, another danger emerges: muscular efforts promote the development of serious types of secondary pneumonic plague. Traveling or wandering plague-infected persons are often the origin of outbreaks of primary pneumonic plague (Wu 1926, Wald 1932).

Particularly during the latter part of the high Middle Ages, population pressure inspired the establishment of thousands of settlements founded on the specialized exploitation of extensive resources in marginal and peripheral areas, mostly animal farming in highland areas. This development presupposes the concomitant development of a network of trade in grain, allowing procurement of vital grain from fertile lowland districts in exchange for animal products, implying a considerable profit in terms of calories, the most vital category of nutrition (Martens 1989). It may have been closely connected with a similarly fine-meshed network of trade in salt, an indispensable product for conservation of animal produce. This pattern of exchange may explain the extraordinary powers of plague to reach the most peripheral and widely dispersed settlements and localities: the more peripheral and dispersed the localities, the more specialized their husbandry tended to be, and the more they would be integrated in commercial activities, and the more they would be integrated in commercial activities, and then first of all in the grain trade, a type of goods particularly suited to dissemination of plague (Benedictow 1992). In the late-medieval period, fishing communities in northern Norway established a firm connection with Hanseatic merchants in Bergen, trading fish and grain, making themselves vulnerable to import of plague from North German towns (Benedictow 1992).

Contemporary chroniclers and annalists agree that the late-medieval pandemic of plague arrived in Scandinavia by boat from England, where the disease began to spread in the summer of 1348. The disease was first introduced at the end of 1348 (Annales Danici Medii Aevi 1920: 174–5), it is said in an old folklore, by a Norwegian ship coming from England and running aground in Vendsyssel in Jutland, because the crew had died of plague.
(Christensen 1938: 39). Next autumn, according to the Icelandic annalists, the disease arrived in Bergen. One should, however, note that the Icelandic annalists writing about the arrival of plague in Norway received their information from Bergen and the western part of Norway, and generally seem to have been poorly informed about what occurred in other parts of Norway, particularly the southeast. An altar for the most prestigious of all plague saints, St. Sebastian, was mentioned as having been founded in the cathedral of Oslo at the end of February 1349, and the townsmen, perhaps somewhat later, are said to have donated money to it (DN2, no. 298; DN4, no. 348). Possibly, therefore, southeastern Norway may have been infected from Denmark at the end of 1348. The commercial exchange of Norwegian timber for Danish grain seems to have been imported directly from England. Norwegian ships brought the disease to Shetland, the Orkneys, and the Faroe Islands.

Recent research (Benedictow 1990, 1992) has established that there must have been (at least) two independent introductions of the Great Pestilence in Norway. There was one in the Oslofjord area, in all likelihood in Oslo. The spatiotemporal pattern of territorial spread conforms to the role of Oslo as the point of introduction and epicenter of the outbreak. The epidemic commenced its spread out from this feeder outbreak at the latest in the first half of July 1349, but probably in May–June. This is confirmed by a later source referring to the "Summer of the Great Mortality" (DN3, no. 298). It may also have been introduced from England or, possibly, from Denmark, with ship transport toward the end of 1348, and have been smouldering in the rat populations until warmer weather triggered the flea-based dynamics of dissemination of this disease. There was also one independent introduction of plague in Bergen, possibly around mid-August, but probably not much earlier.

The spread of the Great Pestilence in southern Norway followed the main roads, and branched off along secondary and eventually tertiary communication lines, eventually reaching the peripheral communities and settlements. In the Hamar area and, as it seems, also in Borgarsysla (Østfold), the plague raged in August. At the end of September, it broke out at Toten on the western side of Lake Mjøsa. Metastatic spread with ship transport seems to have occurred in a southwesterly direction along the coast, and reaching, evidently, the south country (Sørlandet) at a time when Stavanger, 150 km. to the south of Bergen, remained uncontaminated. Stavanger probably was contaminated from this southerly source. This underscores the fact that the outbreak of plague in the Oslofjord area was considerably earlier than the outbreak in Bergen. On the other hand, in all likelihood, the contagion was brought to Niðås (Trondheim) from Bergen, making itself felt toward the end of September or the beginning of October.

In southern Norway, the Great Pestilence petered out in the border area between Telemark and Buskerud in December. No evidence exists indicating that the plague epidemic continued into 1350 and raged during the winter months. The last known fatality of plague was the bishop of Stavanger, who died on January 7, 1350. This fact probably mirrors the relatively late introduction of the Great Pestilence in the west country (Vestlandet), and suggests that this most notorious of all epidemics died out around the turn of the year also in this region.

This seasonal pattern agrees closely with the general European pattern, where plague characteristically rages in summer and autumn, reflecting the crucial role of fleas in dissemination and transmission. This interpretation of type of plague on the basis of the seasonal pattern agrees closely with the clinical description of the plague symptoms provided by the Icelandic annalists, unambiguously indicating bubonic plague.

The determination of the epidemic as bubonic plague, which has a lethality rate of around 80 percent, furnishes the opportunity to suggest morbidity rates relative to given mortality rates. If one third of the population died, the morbidity rate was 40 percent.

The Great Pestilence reached Sweden from southwestern Denmark (Scania) in 1349, from Norway in the west, and by shipping contacts with North German commercial towns in 1350. Finland is the only country in Europe that seems to have escaped plague epidemics altogether, or to have been hit only rarely during the Middle Ages (Ilmoni 1846–49, Ormman 1981).

The demographic effects of the arrival of plague in Scandinavia can be assessed only in Norway, and then only approximately. On the most plausible assumptions, we have estimated the maximum population of medieval Norway around 1300 at roughly 350,000 inhabitants. The minimum population, probably in 1450–1500, is estimated at about 125,000 inhabitants, a contraction of 64 percent. This result is conspicuously similar to Hatcher’s (1977) conclusions with respect to England. Evidence indicating population contraction and widespread desertion of holdings and villages is also found in Denmark and Sweden (Christensen 1963–66, Norborg 1979, Sandnes 1981), without, however, allowing quantification at a national level.

A plague explanation of the process of depopulation presupposes recurrent epidemics satisfying the following model: the effects of a demographic crisis increasing normal mortality four times without significant differentiation with respect to age and sex cannot be compensated for by the age groups below the age of fifteen even if they exhausted their powers of reproduction, the reproductive potential of those older being so small as to allow their being disregarded (Del Panta and Livi Bacci 1977). This model means that, even according to theoretical considerations, a population will need at least fifteen years to recuperate from the losses of an epidemic crisis of this magnitude and pattern of impact. In reality, no population exhausts its reproductive potential, and many studies have shown that it will usually take twenty-five to thirty years for a population to recuperate from such a crisis on the basis of its own reproductive resources. If crises of this magnitude and structure recur within shorter intervals of time, the size of a population will diminish. Plague is a bacterial disease and characteristically provokes only transitory and weak immunity in survivors. This property ensures that the whole population is at risk at each recurrence, and prevents the development of pronounced age-specific patterns of the type caused by viral diseases inducing permanent or long-lasting immunity, as in the case of so-called "children's diseases" like measles or mumps. Many examples of reinfections by plague have been registered, even within the same epidemic (Sticker 1910, Benedictow 1992). A case of reinfection was also registered by Block (1711) in the epidemic in Norrköping 1710–1711. As with other acute epidemic diseases hitting populations without much difference with respect to age and sex, plague causes a significant supermortality from lack of nursing care, as parents cannot attend to their sick children or each other because of concomitant illness.

It seems clear that plague generally satisfies the conditions set by the model outlined above both with respect to powers of dissemination, severity, sociology of impact, and recurrence (Hatcher
1977, Benedictow 1987a and b, 1992). Recurrent epidemics in Norway were recorded by the Icelandic annals in 1360, 1370–1371, 1379, 1390, and 1392. Several are mentioned also in the 15th century, in spite of dependence on other types of source material poorly suited to registering such events (Benedictow, 2nd ed. 1987). In the 15th century, plague epidemics appear in Sweden at least in 1413, 1422, 1439, 1440, 1455, 1465, 1484, and 1495 (Norborg 1968).

Iceland was hit by plague epidemics only twice, in 1402 and 1495. Although both onslaughts were severe and undoubtedly caused considerable population reduction in the short term, there is no reason to assume more lasting demographic effects. The same is probably the case with Finland, which seems to have experienced a noticeable settlement expansion and corresponding population increase during the late-medieval period as a whole.

The main reason for the relatively mild fate of these two countries must be seen in their relatively isolated territorial position and relatively sparse contacts with other countries (Norborg 1938: 117, Jön Steffensen 1974).

The arrival of plague in Scandinavia, 1348–1350, was arguably the most important event in the late-medieval period, causing strong and protracted population reduction in most of the region. The reduction of population produced a high demand for labor and tenants, which in turn caused substantial reduction in land rent and increase in wages. Material living standards of ordinary people accordingly improved considerably, while the incomes of the social elites and governments were much reduced. In Norwegian historiography, the plague is usually considered the principal cause of the decline and fall of the sovereign Norwegian state (Benedictow 1977, 1987a).


**Political Literature** (West Norse). It is not always easy to make a clear distinction between political literature from Norse times and other Norse literature. All religious literature was written in the service of the Church and inevitably had the effect of consolidating its political power. A main category of skaldic poetry, poems in honor of princes, and a main category of saga literature, the *konungasögur*, expressed a positive attitude toward princes, the Norwegian kings in particular. Iceland's status as an independent nation and its principal political and religious institutions, the *Alþingi* and the bishoprics of Skálholt and Hólar, were supported by a well-developed sense of national self-respect, which both gave birth to and absorbed new impulses from the rich literature about the Icelanders' own past, such works as *Íslendingabók*, *Landnámaábók*, and the saga literature. In this connection, the term "political literature" refers to the literature characterized by a definite intention on the part of the author to influence the political powers' measures of government in specific historical situations, or the opinion of important groups of the community in relation to political conditions and controversial political issues.

Norse literature also contains examples of political poetry from prior times that was written down much later. Thus, the sagas tell us that princes were sometimes given important political advice from skalds in the form of poems. *Óláf's saga helga* tells how the belief that King Óláfr was a saint gained ground after his death (1030). At that time, the Icelandic poet Pórarinn loftunga (“praise-tongue”) composed *Glaeglogaskvida* (“calm-sea lay”), where he advises King Óláfr's successor, the Danish-English King Sven, to support the worship of the king as a saint. In the poem *Bergsgúflavísur* in the saga about King Óláfr's son Magnús inn góði (“the good”), the Icelandic skald Síghvart Pórðarson persuades King Magnús to stop persecuting those who had opposed his father.

In the saga literature dealing with historical events in the Nordic countries, a distinction is made between "sagas about the past" and "contemporary sagas." In principle, the sagas about the past could not be defined as political literature in our meaning of the term. But certain accounts in the sagas about the past have been interpreted as disguised contributions by the authors to the political debates of their own time. In *Óláf's saga helga*, Einar from Pvera at the *Alþingi* dissuaded the Icelanders from yielding to King Óláfr's demand for taxes, and from letting him establish a military base on the small island of Grimsey off the north coast of Iceland. This speech has been interpreted as an attempt by the author, Snorri Sturluson, to warn the Icelanders against subjecting themselves to the rule of King Hákon Håkonarson of Norway (r. 1217–1263).

However, political literature in the true meaning of the term comprises that part of the *konungasögur* that can be classified as contemporary sagas. The oldest of these is *Hryggjarstykki* by Eiríkr Oddsson (12th century). Only small fragments of this saga remain, incorporated into the accounts of Magnus blindi ("the blind"), Haraldr Gilli, and the sons of Haraldr Gilli in *Morkinskinna*, *Fagrskinna*, and *Heimskringla*. It is thought that this part was written in defense of the pretender to the throne Sigurðr slembjdjánk (“sham deacon”); killed 1139). The other sagas belonging to this category are *Sverris saga* (at least the first part written by the abbot Karl Jónsson, d. 1212/3), *Bogiunga sogur*, *Hákonar saga Hákonarson*, and *Magnús saga lagabótes* (only some fragments remain). The last two sagas were written by Sturla Pórðarson (d. 1284). The central figures in all these sagas are the *birkibein-kings*; *birkibeinar*
King Hákon Hákonarson's definite safeguarding of his royal succession their legitimacy. In the sagas covering 1202-1210. The longer version in two versions, a longer version covering the period 1202-1217 supports King Sverrir's case in his fight with the authorities of the Church by means of arguments from canon law. The comprehensive anonymous educational work Konungs skuggsjá (probably from the 1250s) is also to some extent political literature because, like the Orito contra clerus Norvegiae, it presents the view that the monarchy is superior to the ecclesiastical authorities, and that only one heir to the throne at a time shall be chosen king. The stylistic requirement for objectivity in the saga literature tended to limit the political propaganda in the sagas telling about events in Iceland in the 12th and 13th centuries. But such sagas as Hrafn's saga Sveinbjarnarsonar and Pórgils saga skárbla are so biased in support of their respective heroes as to merit being called political propaganda. The Sturlunga saga also contains verses that distinctly express dislike at the thought of the Icelanders becoming subject to the Norwegian kings.


Hallvard Magerøy

[See also: Boghunga saga; Fagskrinar; Hákonar saga gamla Hâkonarsonar; Heimskringla; Islendingabók; Islendingasögur; Konungasögur; Konungs skuggjá; Landnámabók; Magnúss saga lagabókis; Morkinskanna; Ólafs saga helga; Orito contra clerus Norvegiae; Sighvat Póðarson; Skald; Skaldic Verse; Sturlunga saga; Sverris saga; Swedish Literature, Miscellaneous; Póratinn loftungayø i Sverris saga)
John and James, for instance, is AM 239 fol., which is hardly more than a few years older than the codex. From the language of the lives found in this part of the codex, it seems probable that these versions cannot be much older than about 1300. The lives found on fols. 82–94 are based on older texts; the life of Matthias, for instance, could be from the beginning of the 13th century. From the orthography in this part, it seems clear that the originals were not younger than roughly 1300, probably somewhat older. The older texts are characterized by their close adherence to the Latin source and their artistic simplicity; the younger texts contain a considerable amount of extraneous doctrinal and hagiographic material, and are characterized by a certain elegance of expression. Other collections or fragments of collections of apostles' sagas include AM 645 4to from the beginning of the 13th century, AM 655 XII–XIII 4to from 1200–1250, and AM 652 4to from 1250–1300 (see also Widding et al. 1963).

Pseudo-Abdias has generally been considered the primary source for most of the Old Norse postola sögur, but information drawn from such works as Peter Comestor's Historia scholastica, Honorius Augustodunensis's Speculum ecclesiae, Vincent of Beauvais's Speculum historiale, and the Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle is also found in a number of the lives. The exact sources for a number of sections or passages in the apostles' sagas remain obscure, despite efforts to trace them by Widding et al. (1963) and later by Collings (1969) in her analysis of the Codex Scardensis. Many of the Norse lives are extant in several versions; Pétras saga postola, for example, is found in six versions, Andreas saga postola in live, and Pál saga postola in three. In some instances, the versions are mutually independent renderings of a common Latin source; in others, they are translations of different Latin sources. Matheus saga postola, for example, is found in two versions, which are separate translations of the same source, presumably the vita of Lambertus a Legio. Philippus saga postola is extant in three versions, the first of which is based on Pseudo-Abdias, the second on the Legenda aurea, and the third probably on a Low German source.

At the end of his edition, Unger printed the text of two versions of a life of John the Baptist, because this saga often accompanies the lives of the apostles in the old collections. The first life (pp. 842–9) is edited from the defective MS AM 623 4to from the early 14th century. The text is largely dependent on the Gospels, but no immediate source has been found. The second version (pp. 849–933) is based on the 14th-century MS AM 232 fol., which is complete apart from a prologue (letter), supplied from AM 23a fol. from the mid-14th century. According to this letter, the saga was written by the priest Grímr Holmsteinsson (d. 1298) at the request of Rúnólfr Sigmundsson (d. 1306), abbot of the Benedictine monastery of Pykkvabær. The work is a compilation of information about John, in which his life story according to the Gospels is filled out with material from, for example, Bede, Comestor, Vincent of Beauvais, and the Church Fathers Gregory, Augustine, Ambrose, and Jerome.

Finnr Jónsson (1920–24) has pointed out that Unger's division of the sagas into the genres heligrana manna sögur ("saints' lives") and postola sögur ("apostles' sagas") may be practical, but not original, and lacks a basis in medieval times. Finnr Jónsson refers to a statement in Tveggia postola saga Philippus ok Jacobs: "... en Philippus var sva flarlær þein monnum, er heligrana manna sögur hafa samsettur, ok er því frá honum fatt sagt" ("... but Philippus was so far away from the men who composed the lives of holy men, and therefore little is said about him").


Kirsten Wolf

[See also: Christian Poetry; Christian Prose; Legenda; Saints' Lives; Skárðsbók]
**Pottery.** Despite a long tradition of study of prehistoric pottery in Scandinavia, systematic research into medieval pottery has not been carried out until comparatively recently, and there are still considerable gaps in knowledge.

Special problems are connected with the establishment of narrow dating criteria. The medieval archaeologist makes greater use of sequences of relatively dated pottery. The problems are greater where fragments of medieval coin-dated pottery are known; the time at which they were deposited is established as after the date of the youngest coin found in the soil. However, this type of oven from this period has not yet been found in Scandinavia.

**In step with the professionalization of pot making from the beginning of the 13th century.** The pottery of the Viking Age and the Late Iron Age. Both in quality and design, the pottery of prehistoric times deteriorates, and Scandinavia must then have become open to influences from the outside world. The new influences first arrived in the Jutland peninsula from the south and west, in the form of the Kugeltopf, with its globe-shaped corpus, rounded base, and narrow, sometimes grooved, neck with outward-curving rim. The vessels differ in size, and functioned as both cooking and storage pots. The Kugeltopf, which also occurs in versions with three small legs, and with or without lugs, was produced throughout the Middle Ages. From the 13th century onward, the Kugeltopf was made on the potter's wheel, and the fabric was fired harder in actual pottery kilns, as has been illustrated in later years through the finds of kilns in Barmer and Hellem in northern Jutland. At the same time, the Kugeltopf became common all over southern Scandinavia.

In step with the professionalization of pot making from the beginning of the 13th century, i.e., the introduction of the potter's wheel and actual pottery kilns, which allowed firing temperatures up to 900°-1000° C, the Baltic pottery with its prehistoric features was ousted by the Kugeltopf. In eastern Denmark, the tradition of Baltic design could still be traced; hard-fired grey pots with flat bases turned on the potter's wheel were still produced well into the 13th century, using the wave and spiral lines as popular elements of decoration.

The major innovation of the 13th century, however, is the red-fired glazed pottery. The potter's kiln and new technical knowledge made firing with the help of oxygen possible. This technique gave a reddish color and made it possible to achieve the high temperatures necessary for glaze firing. So far, pottery kilns have been found and excavated only in Denmark, and Zealand probably took the lead in the production of the new types of pottery. Pottery kilns from the 13th and 14th centuries have been investigated in Farum Lilleløv and Faurholm, both in North Zealand. In both places, particularly in Farum Lilleløv, the finds give a clear impression of the potter's repertoire during the high Middle Ages. Red-fired glazed globular pots, with or without legs or lugs, formed the largest mass product, but the outstanding object in the finds is the big decorated jug. Although the glazed jug occurs commonly in western Danish finds, at least from the 14th century, unglazed grey-fired variations of the jug are commonly found on Funen and in Jutland.

The chronological distribution of the red-fired glazed jug is thought to be confined to the period 1250-1350, mainly on the basis of the series of coin-dated vessels, the pottery from Næsholm, and a group of other finds. Recent observations in Ribe (Denmark) ...
and Lund (Sweden) indicate, however, that the starting point should perhaps be moved closer to 1200. But apart from that, the red-fired glazed jug must still be regarded as a relatively sure archeological “dating standard.”

The domestic pottery of the 15th century is still little researched. From this century, there are a few examples of glazed jugs, but apart from these pieces there is one distinct type of vessel, the “tail pot,” a red-fired globular pot on three legs with a vertical pipe-shaped handle. The tail pot was produced without interruption for the next 300-400 years, but the early examples are characterized by the red-fired fabric covered by a clear or faintly greenish glaze on the inside and by the rim curved inward, so that the pots have a more distinctly globular shape than the later pots, which as a rule have a vertical rim, most often decorated with a roll stamp.

Imported pottery can probably be found among the early Kugeltopf and the Baltic ware, but they are with few exceptions difficult to identify without mineralogical analyses. The pottery from the Netherlands and the Rhine region, such as the hard-fired graphite-like Blau-graue Ware and the whitish Pingsdorf Ware with red painting, constitutes an extremely small part of the total Scandinavian pottery material from the Middle Ages. Imported pottery plays a decisive role in Norway, however, where no local pottery production seems to have existed. English and Danish products in particular are dominant.

From the middle or the end of the 13th century onward, the hard-fired pottery from the Rhine region occurs more often in Scandinavia. Mugs of greyish-brown fabric, and jugs and jars of yellowish or brownish fabric, covered by a shiny reddish-brown or purple slip, go under the name of Fast Steinzeug. It is not until the years around 1340 that the mass-produced greyish-white Fast Steinzeug. It is not until

Pieter Breughel the Younger's painting shows a similar scene.

**Prayer Books**

1. EAST NORSE. Prayer books are collections of prayers and similar texts for private devotion. It is a universal Christian genre, and the Swedish and Danish prayer books, all from the period around 1450-1550, can be regarded as local representatives of the genre in its last stage of development. The genre had its origin in the Psalter (the 150 Old Testament psalms), passages of which were recited at fixed hours of prayer in the monasteries, and whose use spread out from there to the private devotions of laypeople. In the first stage of the development (9th century), prayers from the breviary (the book containing the official prayers for the canonical hours) were incorporated into the Psalter. Later, other prayers were added, and, finally, the prayers were detached from the Psalter. Thus, in the 14th-16th centuries, independent prayer books came into existence, first in Latin, later also in the vernacular. They include (1) books of hours, in which the connection with the breviary and prayers at the canonical hours still survives, since a calendar (a record of the days of the year with notes about the festivals of the Church, the feast days of saints, etc.) and psalms and prayers for fixed hours of the day always form part of it, along with the litany and prayers for saints; (2) books of common prayer or prayer books proper, in which the selection of material is dependent on the writer’s or the owner’s personal interests, and whose arrangement of material is sometimes random, sometimes in accordance with the place of the addressee in the hierarchy of the litany (i.e., first prayers to the Trinity, then to the Virgin Mary, and then to groups of other saints, with local variations); and (3) hybrid forms of these two types.

From Sweden, around fifteen MSS with prayers as their main content are preserved. The majority (e.g., Berlin Theol. Lat. 71 8vo, Giessen 881, Stock. A 38 and A 43, Upps. C 12 and C 68) derive from Vadstena, being written by or for Vadstena nuns, and they belong to the hybrid type with hour-book material in Latin and individually composed prayers in Swedish, occasionally arranged according to the litany. A few, mostly in Latin, belong to the book-of-hour type (e.g., Upps. C 475), while a few are entirely in Swedish and composed freely (e.g., Stock. A 37). Among printed books, there are a few minor works for laypeople containing, among other things, prayers for indulgence, in addition to books of hours for official use.

From Denmark are preserved about twenty MSS with prayer material as their main content. These MSS also seem to have originated in a homogeneous circle, primarily nuns and other religious women from among the nobility or the wealthier townspeople, several with Brigettine affiliations. Only one MS, mostly in Latin, belongs more or less to the book-of-hours type (Kalmar 33). A small group includes the hybrid type (e.g., Stock. A 40 and A 42, Lund 35, Gks 1615 4to), but in contrast to the corresponding Swedish MSS the Danish ones normally have the book-of-hours material in the vernacular. The rest are the common prayer-book type, some without any clear arrangement (e.g., Gks 1614 4to), others partially arranged according to the litany (e.g., Thott 553 4to, the only MS in which the female saints come before the male ones). Two MSS containing the same text, Visdoms Spejl ("Mirror of Wisdom": AM 782 4to and AM 784 4to), follow the ecclesiastical year. Among printed books, there is first and foremost Vor Frue Tider ("Our Lady's Hours": Paris, 1514), a combined book of hours and prayers in Christen Pedersen’s thoroughly revised redaction.

Niels-Knud Liebgott
Although the sources have not all been identified, it is certain that much of the content of the prayer books is dependent on foreign sources, especially Latin and Low German sources, which have been translated, revised, or excerpted more or less freely. A great deal of material in the Danish prayer books came via Sweden, while a reverse movement has not been demonstrated. Where the authors are known, they are mostly the major names of the Church: Church Fathers, scholastics, mystics, and the founders of the Catholic orders (Birgitta of Vadstena is the only Scandinavian founder). The addressees for the prayers are the same as elsewhere (first and foremost the celestial hierarchy, with Jesus and the Virgin Mary as the most frequently invoked); the character of the addresses is the same also (praise, thanks, requests for intercession for the salvation of the soul, or for protection against earthly misfortunes); and the content can be, for example, of a mainly dogmatic or ethical character, as in the penitentials, with their instructions on how to search one’s conscience before confession. The prayer can be of an epic-contemplative character or lyrical-mystical-ecstatic; the form can be prose or verse. Following foreign models, the prayers may also be accompanied by rubrics containing statements about authors, promises of indulgence, instructions on the use of pictures at devotion, and other magic elements.

In contrast to the foreign models, the Danish and Swedish prayer books are modest in appearance. The ornament consists of illuminated initials, a few marginal drawings, and miniatures of a poor quality; the Danish MS AM 421 12mo distinguishes itself from its fellows by its forty-eight full-page miniatures in gold and colors depicting, for example, scenes from the life of Jesus.

East Norse prayer material is also found sporadically outside the prayer books, for instance, in MSS containing religious material of various kinds, as in the Swedish MS Upps. C 23 (ca. 1500) and the Danish MS AM 76 8vo (ca. 1450–1500).

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**Britta Olikt Frederiksen**

2. WEST NORSE. Few Icelandic prayer books survive from the Middle Ages. The oldest is Upps. R 719 from around 1525–1550. It contains no hours, but instead the following seven prayers in Icelandic: *O bone Jesu, Conditor celli*, a prayer about the Cross (of unknown origin); a continuation of no. 3; a prayer for the church officials, relatives, and benefactors (of unknown origin); an extract from the king's prayer in *Konungs skuggsjá* called *A Good Prayer*; and a *brynjubœn* (literally "bymie-prayer," i.e., prayer for protection) belonging to the prayers entitled *Lorica*. This MS includes an illumination of the martyr Erasmus. Add. 4895 12mo from the 15th century contains the Erasmus prayer and also another prayer in Icelandic, *De cruci*. It is uncertain if *De cruci* dates from before the 14th century, but the Erasmus prayer may have been translated from Scandinavian in the 14th century.

The prayer book Thott 181 8vo from the 16th century is one of the closest to Catholic prayer books of all the prayer books of the Reformation. It contains, among other items, a calendar, a prayer in Latin, the *Domine labia* in Icelandic, as well as a book of hours, *Anima Christi*, and the seven penitential psalms.

Similar in content are two prayer books from the latter half of the 16th century, Bodl. MS lcel. g. 1 and Register House 22 in Edinburgh. From the 16th century, there are fragmentary books with prayer material of various kinds, such as IB 363 8vo from about 1550 (four leaves of the same MS are in the National Archives, Pjms 619). Parallels to the prayers are found in *Svenska böner* and Danish medieval prayers, among others, Johanne Nielsdatter’s book of hours from around 1480.

Most of the prayer books appear to have been written for women. This applies to IB 1 8vo, IB 363 8vo / Pjms 619, the first half of Thott 181 8vo, Register House no. 22 (although with exceptions). Bodl. MS lcel. g. 1 is, however, written in large part for a man. It is probable that the prayer books were originally written for nuns (*Svenska böner* 30).

Marian hours did, of course, exist in the Middle Ages. Now they are extant only in poetry (cf. *Íslenzk midaldakvæði*).

The medieval Icelandic prayer material has been little investigated, and no comprehensive edition exists. The origin of the prayers is unknown, but it is probable that they stem from Latin, Low German, or Scandinavian, especially Swedish, sources.

The external appearance of the prayer books is not conspicuous; only Upps. R 719 is illuminated. Some MSS contain ornate initials.

As far as we know, there are no medieval Norwegian prayer books. However, it is likely that Swedish and Danish prayer books found their way to Norway and were copied. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that in 1520 there was a book with a Danish Marian prayer in Vijn Church in Telemark.

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**Lit.:**


**Bib.:**


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**Svavar Sigmundsson**
Pregnancy and Childbirth are the most gender-determined historical experiences. Most women have experienced them, willingly or unwillingly. In the Middle Ages, women could avoid pregnancy by choosing a religious life, if the family permitted, or if they were strong or wealthy enough to do as they wished. Men have a vested interest in controlling the sexual activities of women, not least their reproductive abilities. This interest has shaped the historical experience of women and men differently and determined the sources available to the historian. Literature, folklore, and religious texts provide evidence about women's experience; laws and scientific writings depict primarily the men's role and perceptions.

Old Norse terms for pregnancy include vera eigi ein saman ("not to be alone") and eigi hett ("not well"). Most words concern the physical aspect: digest i gerðunum ("to become big around the waist") or fara vera med harni ("to walk/be with child"), the latter common to the other Scandinavian languages. The sources reveal ambivalence by the women toward the condition, as one filled with danger but also offering some privileges. In sermons (mostly late-medieval), husbands were urged to show consideration, and pregnant women were exempt from fasting regulations. The laws show that the pregnant woman could be considered especially valuable. Early Icelandic and Swedish laws set a fine for woman- or manslaughter.

Success in pregnancy was considered a matter of speculation. Early medieval sources do not bear out this notion. Successful pregnancies depended on nutrition, age, number of previous pregnancies, skill of helpers, and sanitary conditions, all determined by the socio-economic conditions of the woman. The wealthier had a better chance for survival and recovery. Royal women, however, may have been at greater risk due to marriage at an early age. Scandinavian skeletal remains do not show a higher mortality for pregnant and parturient women than for nonpregnant cohorts.

A higher mortality for adult women (fifteen to twenty years) apparent in some skeletal material seems due to inferior living conditions (relative to men), i.e., less food, harder work.

Prevention is not mentioned in Scandinavian sources. A Swedish law and a Danish synodal statute refer to induced abortion, the former by some form of massage. Herbals mention plants that can cause cessation menstruation to resume. The degree of popular use and effectiveness of these herbs is a matter of speculation.

The birth took place in the bath chamber or other separate place, which would limit the risk of infection. In contrast to other European countries, birth chairs were not in use in Scandinavia. Instead, the parturient woman knelt or sat on the stronger of the women present, supported by the others. The birth was exclusively a female affair in the village and towns. The husband took part on more isolated farmsteads. Women also gave evidence in legal disputes involving pregnant women and infants, usually concerning inheritance, suspicious stillbirths, or deaths of infants.

Exposure of children was apparently practiced in heathen times. The sagas refer to it, and the oldest Norwegian laws make it permissible in case of severe deformity. The Church frowned on exposure, but infanticide did take place, with economic reasons apparently weighing more heavily than the sex of the child. In the Christian period, the mother was responsible for the well-being of the infant, once she had recovered from the birth, and was a prime suspect if the only child died. Giving birth in secret was prohibited in one early Norwegian law, but not elsewhere, and did not become a capital offense until the 17th century.

Divine and human helpers are mentioned in pre-Christian and Christian sources. In the heathen period, the divine helpers were always female (disir, norrøt). In the Christian period, the primary divine helpers were the Virgin Mary and the saints Margaret and Dorothea, but a few male saints were also called on for help. Small MSS containing the vita of St. Margaret were used in Iceland as birth amulets as late as the 17th century. Other Christian magic was used, such as rune sticks with a prayer to Mary and Elizabeth, a kirtle said to have belonged to Mary, and chants, formulas, and songs invoking Mary and the saints (used secretly after the Reformation). Some of these rituals probably go back to heathen chants and birth tunes, mentioned in the Oddrínaragrás and the Sigrdrívumál.

Human helpers were usually neighbors or relatives, although some of the Old Norse terms imply that they could be specially skilled women. The caesarian section performed on the dead queen Dagmar (d. 1215) in the famous ballad seems to have been carried out by one of the women present. Caesarians were performed, although the Church prohibited them. Midwives, as clearly defined professional birth helpers, appear in the sources during the 15th century. After the Reformation, they were enlisted by the reformers in the crusade against "popish" superstition and rites connected with childbirth, and used by the authorities to control and maintain social mores and order. Trained midwives may, however, have been available only for urban women.

The kvindegilde, the women's feast mentioned from the 13th century to the 19th century, was a celebration of a successful birth by the female helpers. The feast entailed drinking, dancing, and mocking of a male figure made of straw, and could develop into a raucous affair ending with aggressive behavior toward any man who encountered the women on their way home. Baptism feasts, on the other hand, included both men and women, and took place shortly after the birth. The recovery period ideally lasted six to eight weeks, although it is doubtful that many women could afford to rest so long; it ended with the kirkegang (church-going), a religious celebration of the recovery of the woman, at times developing into a demonstration of social status.


Grethe Jacobsen

Profectio Danorum in Hierosolymam is an exciting Historia about a group of Danish crusaders who reach Jerusalem in 1192 after dire hardships and loss of life. It has been transmitted in three MSS, all transcripts of a lost parchment MS in Lübeck. The work was written before 1202 by a "frater X canonicus" (Brother Christianus, canon), as the author calls himself in a pompous dedication to a "dominus K." Christianus displays an intimate knowledge of Norway; he quotes two Norwegian proverbs, and his nominal forms manifest Norwegian diphthongization. As a Norwegian canon, he could be from the Fremonstratensian monastery in Tønsberg, come to pay a longer visit to a Danish sister
monastery, such as the one at Børglum in Vendsyssel. The significance of the work consists not least in its ideal picture of the spiritual development of the new class of knights, in accordance with the crusade ideology of Pope Urban II.

Profectio Danorum begins with the author ascertaining that the world is now approaching destruction. The judgment of God is drawing near. Since all peace has disappeared, the desire to sin has increased tremendously, while all modesty is gone. The punishment is, then, that the “center of the world,” Jerusalem, has been conquered by the heathens in the year 1187. The pope invokes the Third Crusade, and in the same year his edict reaches lords and sons of chieftains who are gathered at the court of King Knud VI in Odense. Esmen Snare, the brother of Archbishop Absalon, challenges the court to follow the edict of the pope and participate in “the holy war” as the true defenders of “Christianity” against the infidels. His challenge takes the form of an appeal to national and historical consciousness by conjuring up the heroic past of the Danes: as defenders attached to the bodyguard of the Greek emperor, as Langobards, the conquerors of the Roman Empire, and as the conquerors of Normandy, England, Norway, and Vendland.

Fifteen housecarls follow his suggestion. Through Norway, where there is trouble in the large, drunken city of Bergen, and where several Norwegian crusaders join, the Danes venture out onto the ocean in their open boats and sail toward Jerusalem. The voyage follows a dramatic course, and many perish during a raging storm, here brilliantly, if bombastically, described by the author. The rest continue overland to Venice and from there by boat to the Holy Land. Here, however, an armistice has been agreed upon, so the crusaders must content themselves with being redirected to the holy places as mourning tourists. The climax of the journey becomes instead the reception at the court of the emperor in Constantinople, and especially the moving encounter with the gigantic portrait of “the Holy Mother of God,” which is carried through the city.

Profectio Danorum sometimes employs a twofold biblical interpretation and has an allegorical character. It can be interpreted allegorically as the history of the Danish warrior: from Viking, with material and honor-bound objectives, to his debacle as ruler of the oceans. After that, the men revive “that old seed from the times of the ancient Church, that all things should be common to them, all according to the need to each one.” They continue as Christian knights who have been saved from the raging elements by God, and as members of the European community in the struggle of Christianity against the infidels. Finally, in the presence of the Virgin Mary’s portrait, they attain spiritual insight as warriors.


*Sigurd Kvænndrup*

[See also: Geographical Literature; Konungasögur]

**Prose Edda** see **Snorra Edda**

**Punishment** see **Crime and Punishment**
Ragnarssona saga loðbrókar (“The Saga of Ragnarr Hairy-breaches”), an Old Icelandic fornaldarsaga, survives in two major redactions: X, dating from around 1250, and preserved fragmentarily in AM 147 4to (ca. 1490) with Krákmál incorporated in its text; and Y, dating from later in the 13th century, deriving largely from X, and preserved complete in NkS 1824b 4to (ca. 1400) with Krákmál as an appendix. The existence of a third redaction, here called the “oldest” and composed independently of Krákmál, may be deduced from the combined evidence of X and Ragnarssona þáttr, a mainly prose compilation preserved in Hauksbók. This oldest redaction was perhaps complete by 1230. Like X, Y appears to have been written as a sequel to Volsunga saga, but only Y is preserved as such.

The oldest redaction clearly depended heavily on the same verse and prose oral traditions as were drawn on independently by Krákmál, which dwells on Ragnarr’s battles, and by Saxo in his Gesta Danorum (Book 9), which concentrates on Ragnarr’s wives (other than Áslaug) and sons. The oldest redaction described his winning of Póra by slaying a serpent; his marriage after Póra’s death to Áslaug, daughter of Sigurðr and Brynhildr; the deaths in Sweden of his two sons by Póra (Eiríkr and Agnarr), and the resulting revenge mission led by Áslaug and her own sons by Ragnar (Ivarr, Bjorn, Hvitserkr, and Sigurðr); Ragnar’s death in King Ælla’s snake pit after his abortive invasion of England; and his sons’ revenge, involving the cutting of a blood-eagle on Ælla’s back. Items added in X include the herdswoman Kráka at Spangereid in Norway, in whose guise Áslaug first meets Ragnarr; another son by this marriage, Rognvaldr, and his heroic death; and the hostile cows slain by Ivarr. Y adds an introductory account of Áslaug-Kráka’s childhood and three chapters at the end describing, respectively, the deaths and descendants of Ragnar’s sons; an exchange of verses in which two warriors recognize each other as followers of Ragnar and Bjorn; and a trémadr (“wooden man”) on the island of Samso, who claims in verse to have been placed and worshiped there by sons of Loðbróka.

The Faroese ballad sequence Ragnar kvaéði (first recorded in the 18th century), dealing with Ragnar’s marriages to Tóra (sic) and Áslaug, derives partly from Y, but also from oral traditions descended from those underlying the oldest redaction. From these oral traditions also derive the Norwegian and Danish ballads edited as Landstad XI and DgF 24 about a serpent-slaying exploit, and DgF 22–23 about a princess brought up as a herdswoman before marrying a king.

Ivarr, Bjorn, and Sigurðr are arguably 9th-century historical figures and among the sons of a woman named Loðbróka. Since brok is a heiti for kona ‘woman,’ Loðbróka may be seen as a variant of *Loðkona, a goddess name deducible from the Swedish place-name Locknevi (<Loðkouvé). Through confusion of her name with the common noun loðbrók ‘hairy-breaches,’ applicable as a nickname to a man (cf. hábrók ‘high-and-mighty’) as well as a woman (cf. langbrók ‘long-legs’), and in particular to a typical warrior (witness the 7th-century bronze plates from Torslunda, Öland), Loðbróka came to be regarded as the father rather than the mother of her sons, and identified with her contemporary Reginherti, the leader of the Viking attack on Paris in 845, who, however, cannot certainly be regarded as their historical father. Legends developed about Ragnarr loðbrók, his serpent slaying, and his sons. The historical Loðbróka was soon largely forgotten, but is perhaps dimly remembered in the figure of Áslaug.

Though more anchored in history than many fornaldarsögur, Ragnarssona saga combines heroic and Viking legend with folklore in a manner characteristic of the genre.

Ragnarsdrápa see Bragi Bodason


Rory McTurk

[See also: Ballads; Fornaldarsögur; Hausbök; Hetti; Krákmál; Saxo Grammaticus; Volsunga-Niflung Cycle; Volsunga saga]

Ragnarsdrápa see Bragi Bodason

**Reginsmál** and **Fafnismál** (“The Speech of Reginn” and “The Speech of Fafnir”) are the titles given by editors to a section of text in the Codex Regius of the Poetic Edda that follows Grípisspá. The division of this material into two separate texts is entirely the work of editors and based solely on evidence from late paper MSS; the Codex Regius contains only a faded title, which the Neckel/Kuhn edition reads as Fáðr Sigurðr, introducing the entire section, and the designation Capitulum preceding the prose description of Sigurðr’s victory over the sons of Hundingr in Reginssú. Both texts are a mixture of prose and verse used to summarize the action, and verse used for the dialogues; most of the verse is in ljóðaháttr meter, although there are a few stanzas in fornyrðislag.

The story told by these texts covers Sigurðr’s youth. Reginsmál tells of the encounter of the gods Óðinn, Hoenir, and Lokir with Hreiðmarr and his sons. Seeing an otter eating on a riverbank, the gods kill and skin it, and show its pelt to their host Hreiðmarr, who reveals himself as the father of the otter and demands mon­etary compensation or else threatens death to the three gods. Loki travels back to the river and catches a dwarf, Andvari, living there in the shape of a fish. Andvari, in turn, is forced to redeem his life by surrendering his considerable gold treasure, including a potent ring, but not without pronouncing a curse of death to subsequent owners of the treasure. This curse is repeated by Loki, as the gods hand over the gold and ring to Hreiðmarr. Hreiðmarr’s son Fafnir kills him for the gold, and, refusing a share to his brother Reginn, transforms himself into a dragon and hoards the treasure. Reginn rears Sigurðr and incites him to kill Fafnir. After successfully avenging the death of his father, Sigmundr, Sigurðr slays the dragon with a sword forged from the remnants of his father’s weapon. Fafnismál contains a brief prose description of the dragonslaying and a long dialogue in verse between the dying Fafnir and his slayer, in which Fafnir repeats the curse on the treasure. Birds then advise Sigurðr to kill Reginn as well, take the treasure, and set off to seek both the shield-maiden on the mountain and the beautiful daughter of King Gjuki.

Although the legend of Sigurðr is known throughout the medieval Germanic literary world, this particular sequence of events is unique to the Norse tradition. The tale is summarized in Snorri’s Edda (Skáldskaparmál), which includes stanzas 32 and 33 of Fafnismál, expanded in the Volsunga saga, which includes stanzas 1, 2, 6, and 18 of Reginssú, and occurs in a cycle of Faroese ballads, the Sjúðarkvæði. The German tradition, represented by the Nibelungenlied and Fátekas saga, contains a dragon- or serpent-slaying episode, but no story of the gods’ ransom of their lives. In the Old English poem Beowulf, the dragonslaying is attributed to Sigmund/Sigurðr. If the legend of Sigurðr originated in Germany, as is generally agreed, then the Norse version of the origin of the treasure and the specific details of the dragon light can be considered innovations. The motif of a great hero slaying a dragon or other monster is common in Indo-European mythological tradition; the addition of the gods’ adventures to the story may be attributed to a technique much employed in the Edda of linking divine and heroic legend. Snorri told the tale to explain why gold is called “the otter’s ransom.”

Scholars can do no more than speculate on the date and form of the original texts. In their present form, the texts date from the second half of the 13th century, when the Codex Regius was written. However, Heusler (1819) suggested that Reginssú and Fafnismál developed out of two earlier hypothetical poems, one dealing with the hoard (Hortlied), the other telling how Sigurðr took revenge for his father’s death (Vaterrachelied). To explain variation in the meter, Anderson (1980) proposed that yet a third poem in fornyrðislag surveying the events of the story may have existed, and that an early reductor combined the two sources where he saw fit. Arguing the case for artistic unity, Kragendal (1981) considers the variation in meter as a stylistic technique and examines the catechism, gnomes, and prophecy contained in the dialogues against the background of other thematically similar eddic poems, such as Havanmál, Vafþrúðnismál, Grimmismál, and Baldr’s draumar.

Religion, Pagan Scandinavian. The pre-Christian religion or religions of Scandinavia and North Germany, especially Schleswig-Holstein, span the period from the Iron Age (ca. 500 B.C.) to medieval times. The Old Norse-Icelandic texts were written or recorded from the 12th to the 15th century. The sources on which most handbooks are based are medieval Icelandic MSS, containing prose narratives and verse of different kinds. This material, decisively influenced by its medieval writers or redactors, can nevertheless be used with caution and strict methodology to unravel some aspects of pagan Scandinavian religion and mythology. Some runic inscriptions from the 2nd century A.D. through the Middle Ages are also valuable as contemporary testimony of magic and religious practices, although their often fragmentary state makes interpretation difficult.

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Place-name study is valuable for mapping out a "religious geography" of pagan Scandinavia. Significant for our purposes are place-names whose second component designates a holy place or sanctuary of some kind, or a piece of land whose religious "use" or dedication is indicated by the first component being the name or designation of a god (theophorous place-names, cf. list in de Vries 1956-57: 2. 475-9). Examples of second components designating pieces of land (or administrative units in the case of -tøn) are Old Norse -vin, -heimr, -land, -alr, -vang, -ey, -lundr, -berg, and -sjör. The first three, together with -tøn, are the oldest in relative chronology, and may have originated in the Roman Iron Age. Second components denoting a sanctuary are, for example, Old Norse -v, Gothic altis ("temple"; Old Norse cognates possible, but uncertain), Old Norse -hof ("temple, building"; late?), -stailf ("sacrificial altar"), -hopgr (stone heap as altar and/or supporting an idol), -hjalir (a platform or scaffold), and -stafr ("staff"; idol). The distribution of such names in the Scandinavian countries and regions varies widely. Furthermore, the exact locations to which such names refer may be unknown or may have shifted in the course of prehistory. Cooperation with other disciplines is thus essential.

Archaeology is indispensable to any account of pagan Scandinavian religion. Apart from the general sociological significance of settlement excavations, cemeteries and other burials can sometimes provide examples of beliefs and customs; witness, for example, grave goods, the "Charon's coin" (placed in the dead person's mouth to pay for the journey to the beyond), burial sacrifices (horses, even humans "accompanying" the dead), and the position of the corpse in the grave (e.g., in relation to the location of the underworld). The beliefs connected with cremation or inhumation are not at all clear, nor are the reasons for the frequent shifts and transitions from one to the other.

Apart from pictorial monuments, the most important group of archaeological finds is connected with excavations of sanctuaries and places of public sacrifice of local and regional significance (Olsen 1966, Ström 1967, Glob 1969, Lidén 1969, Jankuhn 1977, Hauck 1987). Places that have yielded most in this respect are the bogs and fens in Denmark, southern Sweden, and northern Germany. This pattern may, however, be due only to the excellent conditions for preservation offered by bogs, so that our picture may well be deceptive. There are two clearly distinguished categories of finds: (1) men and women killed in various ways and then thrown or submerged in the lake or bog, sometimes with precautions to prevent them from "rising" (e.g., fixing the corpse to the ground by a kind of scaffold), and (2) the great bog sacrifices (Celtic and Roman Iron Ages) of partly agricultural, partly aristocratic-warlike character (Thorsberg in northern Schleswig-Holstein; Nydam, Viborg, Kragelund, Illerup, and Rappendam in Denmark; Skedemosse, Rõekilloma, and Gârdlõsa in Sweden, and Oberdorla in Thuringia, Germany). The excavations of sacrificial places like these have considerably advanced our knowledge of public cult and sacrifice in early Germanic times. Spectacular advances have been made since about 1970 in the field of pictorial monuments, such as the Migration Age gold bracteates, together with about 2,500 rectangular "guldgubber," and, to a lesser degree, the Gotland picture stones with their scenes from cult and heroic legend. There are also pictorial weavings (Oseberg, Overhogdal) and statues of gods, from large wooden idols to small metal "pocket gods." The wooden idols were occasionally found near or in a heap of stones reminiscent of the horg. Furthermore, there are the scenes on the sacrificial kettle from Gundestrup, thought to be of Celtic provenance, and on the now-lost golden horns from Gallehus, with a Germanic inscription, possibly influenced by Celtic conceptions. The Late Bronze Age rock carvings have recently been compared with Celtic material, such as horned gods and the cult of the head (see Görman 1987 and also Buchholz 1984 on other Celtic influences). Apart from the Gotland stones, only some of which have been convincingly "read," the most significant subgroup comprises the roughly 900 gold bracteates, made from almost 500 different
The complicated systems of religious beliefs and cults that must have been prevalent in Migration Age South Scandinavia are embodied in these amulets, which probably were made in some of the main sanctuaries (e.g., in Odense, Old Norse Óðinnvæ). These small works of art were deciphered only recently with the aid of advanced photographic and enlargement techniques (Hauck 1970). They show a remarkable continuity between medieval Old Norse word traditions and Migration Age beliefs, as well as significant traits not exhibited in the medieval texts, though this fact does not necessarily mean they were then unknown. One central religious complex is connected with the god Óðinn and his characteristics, and centers on shamanism as a widespread cluster of techniques establishing contact with the supernatural world, a contact indispensable to any archaic religion (Buchholz 1968, 1984, Hauck 1970, 1980). For cultic phenomena, the data at our disposal are incomplete and fragmentary.

Sacred localities. There are two etymologically distinct Germanic and Old Norse groups of terms denoting the concept of “holy.” One is Old Norse heilagr (adj.). This word clearly indicates a sanctity referring to the gods. Some early attestations of the word prove this denotation: heilagl tan (“the holy sacrifice,” i.e., the god Baldr; Úlfur Uggason, Húsdrápa, st. 9); heilagl full Hrafnnsar (“the holy cup of the Raven-God,” i.e., the mead of poetry; Hǫfgrs-Refr, st. 2); and heilagl land (“the holy land,” i.e., the realm of the gods; Grímnismál, st. 4). Helgi denotes (1) holiness, inviolability (hóskelgi “holiness of the temple,” pinghelgi “holiness of the assembly”), and (2) a personal name of kings and heroes, which must indicate some kind of “holiness,” for example, that due to holding an office ("sacral kingship") or having been dedicated to a god.

The second group of terms appears as the Old Norse noun vé and the verb vegg. Vé clearly has the meaning “sanctuary,” which is attested not only from early skaldic poetry onward, but also in place-names (mostly theophorous ones), where it denotes the sanctuary of a god (e.g., Óðinn’s sanctuary, Óðinn’s sanctuary, Odense on Funen, Denmark). The runic stone of Glavendrup, Funen (10th century), probably mentions a kupá uia (Old Norse goda vé), a “priest of the sanctuaries.” The verb vegg is used in the Christian sense of “to bless, consecrate.” The exact connotations of this word are not clear (was there Christian influence in the inscriptions?), nor is the “sanctifying” of dead men as a protection against them (Hervarar saga), but the transfer of some power may well be the intention. Such an interpretation suggests magical associations.

Sacred localities, which include sanctuaries and temples, are as a rule situated near some special feature of the landscape, as a mountain, grave mound (some prehistoric burials are of considerable size), stone, tree, spring, or lake. It is quite conceivable that contact with the unseen power was thought to be facilitated by elevation (mountains) or subterranean connections (wells, lakes, also trees and stones). The dead in their burial mounds also provided a separate “point of contact” with the beyond. Óðinn was apparently also worshiped on mountains. Wells and lakes are probably the most important group of sacred localities, evident mainly from excavations of South Scandinavian bog and lake sanctuaries (Jankuhn 1970), but also, for example, from Adam of Bremen’s Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum (4:26, 27, and schol. 138, 139, 141), which mentions human sacrifices in a well for oracular purposes (schol. 138). Near that well there stood a huge perennial green tree said to be of unknown origin (schol. 138). Forests could also be regarded as sacred (e.g., place-names in -land). Cultivated fields very probably were used for seasonal vegetation or fertility cults (cf., e.g., place-names in -akr and -vin) linked by the place-names to specific gods connected with fertility (Njörðr, Freyr, Freyja).

It makes sense to assume that a sanctuary was somehow demarcated in the landscape. This demarcation could be achieved by a fence or poles (Old Gutnish staflgarþr). The one category of “nature sanctuaries” best investigated by archaeologists comprises lake or bog sanctuaries (Jankuhn 1970). Such sanctuaries are known in South Scandinavia and North Germany from the Bronze Age until just after the Late Roman Iron Age. Apart from different kinds of sacrifices, many contain idols, some of which were still standing in or on stone heaps. Such a stone heap was probably called a hógr or hógr in Old Norse (occurring also in place-names). In a most important eddic text (Hyndluljóð, st. 10), the goddess Freyja says of a hero:

He a high altar made me of heaped stones—
all glory have grown
the gathered rocks
and reddened anew them
with neats’ fresh blood;
for ay believed Óttar
in the Æsir.


The hógr was thus intimately connected with bloody sacrifices and apparently also with fire (cf. “glary” rocks). We do know that sacrifices connected with fire were also performed in the sanctuaries of Gárdlós and Røkkilorna (Jankuhn 1970).

Structures of some kind, such as enclosures or a roof, could be erected so that the hógr was the center (cf. Grímnismál, st. 16, where the god Njörðr rules over a “high-timbered hógr”). Such structures could be small, or larger in the case of more important sanctuaries that could sometimes be forerunners of a Christian church (Lidén 1969, Olsen 1966); examples may be the temple of Uppsala as described by Adam of Bremen (Turville-Petre 1964: 244 ff., or the temple of Mere in Tranelag (Lidén 1969), where the post holes were apparently “consecrated” by burying amulets in them. An early Christian church was not always erected on exactly the same site as a pagan temple, and one must bear in mind that a temple building was just one of the many forms of sanctuarity.

Quite a number of pagan Scandinavian idols have been excavated (de Vries 1956–57, Jankuhn 1970, and particularly Hauck 1976), dating from the Bronze Age to early-medieval times. Most are archaic wooden sculptures, distinguished from a mere pole by faces and distinct sexual attributes. One (Rude Eskildstrup, 6th century a.d.) displays a triple neck ring, perhaps a ruler’s attribute. Medieval historical and literary sources also mention idols of gods with specific attributes. It is possible that some idols had clothes put on them for specific occasions. One saga describes the anointing of idols, and later folklore also preserves traces of sacrifices to wooden figures. Idols may have been carried around in processions.

Old Norse staflr or stallr was apparently a general term for the location where the sacrifice took place, a kind of pagan “altar” about which we do not know anything exact (cf., however, the hógr above, and the “altar” of Stora Hammars, pl. 5 in Buchholz 1972: 26). In Ynglingatal (st. 12), a king is called vordr væstalls (“the...
 guardian of the holy altar”). An important requisite was the ring, apparently both part of the priest’s attire and also kept on or near the altar. Oaths were sworn “on the ring” (perhaps touching it). Such rings could be dedicated to specific gods (Pórr, Ullr). Another important cult object was the kettle, evidently necessary for cooking sacrificial meal and for collecting the blood. Such kettles could also be called hlautbolli (“oracular bowl”), because the blood could be used for oracles.

**Sacrifice, animal and human**. The information provided by our sources is insufficient to establish a sacral or worship of animals. Some animals, such as the bear, were probably regarded with awe. Gods, especially Óðinn, could appear in animal shape (bear, horse, snake, boar, bird, etc.), as could warriors or magicians through special procedures. It was also thought possible to have sexual relations with such real or imaginary animals.

The sacrificial animal *par excellence* of the warrior and aristocratic class was the horse. Eating horse meat was part of the sacrificial meal, and was expressly allowed to continue after the conversion of Iceland. Aristocratic burials and the mass sacrifices in Danish bogs contain numerous horses. Horse racing connected with burial ceremonies and/or periodic public events could explain place-names like Skedevi and Skedemosse (Old Norse sked ‘race, race course’) and even some Bronze Age pictorial monuments (as in the Kivik grave).

In the “ordinary,” agricultural milieu, the main sacrificial animal was the sheep (Old Norse saðu). It was cooked (Old Norse sjóda ‘to cook’, saðu) and eaten as part of the sacrificial meal. A text from medieval Gotland informs us that smaller cult communities were called *ajñanaitar* ‘cooking companions’.

Images of such animals as snakes and ravens served as insignia in battle. It is quite likely that weapons were thought to have, or to be given (by naming or inscribing them), attributes of beasts or birds of prey as “attackers.” Weapons could also be given to kings and heroes by gods, especially Óðinn.

The purposes of a sacrifice were mainly to placate the gods (who were thought to be dependent on the sacrifices), to avert catastrophes, to secure success in war, and to procure “a good harvest and peace” (Old Norse ár ok fróð). This practice was often connected with the universal desire to know the future. Predictions could be based on the behavior of the victim or on properties of its blood or specific organs. The etymological connection between German *Los*, English *lot*, and Old Norse *hlaut* ‘sacrificial blood’ makes it reasonable to assume the casting of lots and performing of other rites to learn one’s future “lot” in connection with sacrifices to which the gods were thought to be attracted.

Apart from the sacrifice itself as the main ceremony, there were most probably hymns to the gods and also dances. We only have traces: some hymns to Pórr (de Vries 1956–57) and possibly invocations of other gods (e.g., *Sigrdrífüs*, st. 3–4, possibly from a hymn to all gods?). One can speculate that there were songs to induct new priests into their office (*Hávamál*, st. 143), or to test their runic knowledge (*Hávamál*, st. 146–63, *Sigrdrífüs*, st. 6–13, 15–17, etc.). There was certainly dancing, but the written sources are almost silent (cf., however, *Gesta Danorum*, Book 5:154, about the lascivious body movements connected with the cult at Uppsala). Gold bracteates shows that, as in shamanistic practice, dance was one of the techniques necessary to attain ecstasy (Hauck 1970, 1980, Buchholz 1968a). We can assume that the priests made use of such techniques.

Sacrifices could be inanimate (agricultural produce like butter or seed, parts of utensils like plows, horses’ trappings, weapons) or animate (sheep, horses, even, at important occasions, human beings). Animal sacrifices were connected with a sacrificial meal establishing a communion among the participants. The sacrifice itself could apparently be conducted with the blood flowing, or without, by choking, to judge from the sacrificial terminology (Jankuhn 1970). Some parts of the animal, such as heads and hooves, were reserved for the gods. The bones were sometimes split to get at the marrow, sometimes left intact (perhaps to “resuscitate” the animal in order to secure abundance of meat). Drinking was evidently connected with the sacrificial meal, the drinks could be dedicated to specific gods.

There is abundant archaeological evidence of human sacrifices in pagan Scandinavia in the bog and lake sanctuaries (Jankuhn 1970). Adam of Bremen, *Guða saga*, and the *Gutalag* are also considered reliable witnesses. People were killed by hanging, stabbing, drowning, or breaking of the backbone. The sacrifice was evidently not an everyday occurrence, but was linked to important occasions like ceremonies in major sanctuaries relating to “matters of state,” such as successes or failures of the king, a crisis (drought, famine, invasion), or perhaps in respect of the reenactment of some primordial event, such as Baldur’s death, or the creation of the world from the dismembered giant Ymir. We even have indications of ritual cannibalism (splitting of human bones in some early sanctuaries). Human sacrifice to Óðinn is depicted on the Gotland picture stone of Stora Hammars (Buchholz 1972b: 26), and several times described or alluded to in the literature (e.g., Gautreks saga, ch. 7).

Celebrations could be conducted every nine years, as at Uppsala and Lejre. In the course of one year, there were probably three main sacrifices with local and regional differences regarding the exact time: in autumn, in midwinter (Yule), and at the beginning of spring. In some cases, there was a fourth sacrifice in midsummer.

In the 1st century A.D., the Roman historian Tacitus (*Germania*, ch. 40) described the Danish cult of a goddess Nerthus, equated with Terra mater, “Mother Earth.” The idol is carried around the country in a wagon; finally everything is ritually washed, and the assisting slaves are drowned. The name “Nerthus” is connected with Old Norse *Njordr*, a male god also connected with fertility (BecK 281).

**The question of priesthood.** There has been some controversy over whether there were Germanic and pagan Scandinavian priests. Much of that controversy, however, revolves around questions of priesthood as a sacral “office” in the sense of the more fixed social and religious structures of India and pagan Gaul, with their rigidly separated castes and highly organized priestly class. There certainly were pagan Scandinavian priests in the sense of persons, male and female, with priestly functions. Such priests are mentioned by, among others, Tacitus (*Germania*, chs. 7, 10, 11, and 40), and quite frequently in Icelandic sagas. The term is Old Norse *goði*, unambiguously connected with *goð* ‘god.’ The dignity of *goði* could be inherited, and was perhaps originally connected with ownership of the place of sacrifice. Besides the *godar*, the sagas mention *gyðjur* ‘priestesses.’ The texts support the assumption that these people were particularly active in fertility cults. On the function of the 10th-century *goði*, see Jon H. Ádalsteinsson (1985).

Also significant are place-names, not only theophorous place-names connected with important administrative centers (Hellberg 1986; note the connection here between “secular” and sacral), but also names containing apparently priestly designations.

Furthermore, we have to consider some runic inscriptions, such as that at Glavendrup (10th century): *kutu uia* (Old Norse *kutu uia*).
goda vea), "the priest of the sanctuaries"; Rök (early 9th century): uisnarti, "the guardian of the sanctuaries"; Snoldelev (early 9th century): Julus a Salhaugum, "of the ‘speaker’ at S." (see below); and Nordhuglen (ca. A.D. 400): ek gudja unangandir, "I, the priest, immune against sorcery."

The priest in this inscription cannot be harmed by evil sorcery because he is the stronger magician. The Old Norse word julr ‘speaker’ points in the same direction: the speaker of magical and sacral formulas, often at assemblies. Hávamál (st. 111) expresses Hávamál sacral formulas, often at assemblies. 

The designation julr, the inscription of Nordhuglen, numerous aspects of the cult of Óðinn (Buchholz 1984), the "magic" described in Old Norse sources (Buchholz 1986a), and the scenes on gold bracelets (Hauck 1970, 1980) all point in the same direction: the fundamental significance of shamanism in Old Norse religion and cult. It was essential for the person initiated into the contact with the unseen to have a command of these techniques that helped him to reach the state of ecstasy that was desirable or even necessary to perform sacrificial or other tasks most efficiently. Ecstasy as a means of establishing contact with the beyond is much older than pagan Scandinavian religion. It remained that so much alive in pagan Scandinavian pictorial monuments and even in texts committed to parchment in the 13th century is proof of its fundamental significance in religious anthropology.

Reliquaries can be classified in four main types: shrines of sepulchra, portable reliquaries, and jewel reliquaries. Shrines of saints usually consist of body-sized caskets that contain the whole body or parts of a saint. From written sources, it is known that a large number of such shrines existed in Thoger in Vestervig, and St. Knud Lavard in Ringsted. In Norway, mentioned, for instance, the shrines of St. Kjeld in Viborg, St. Thjodhild in Bergen, and the University Collection of Antiquities in Oslo. The portable reliquaries served in churches to house the relics and to present them on special feast days, and were often lavishly ornamented and frequently made of costly materials. House-shaped wooden caskets from the 13th century, mounted with gilt-copper plates, seem to have been particularly well preserved in the West Nordic area, with the best examples in the Danish National Museum, the University Historical Museum in Bergen, and the University Collection of Antiquities in Oslo.

From the end of the 12th century onward, and particularly during the 13th century, a considerable number of chained enamel reliquaries manufactured in Limoges, France, found their way to Scandinavia. Several completely preserved examples and many fragments, of some high quality, are now in the Danish National Museum and in the State Historical Museum in Stockholm. A few of these reliquaries have been used as portable altars, such as the 12th-century chained enamel casket found in Freslev bog, South Jutland.

Among the portable reliquaries, a certain group can be described as "narrative." These are also often made of precious metal, with gems, jewels, and rock crystals. What makes them distinctive is that their shape reflects the part of the saint's body they contain. The head reliquaries widespread in western Europe also seem to have been common in Scandinavia, but it is most often the arm reliquary, shaped like a sleeve with upward-pointing hand, that is mentioned. Two silver arm reliquaries, from Linköping cathedral, with relics of St. Eskil and St. Birgitta, are now in the State Historical Museum in Stockholm. An enamelled arm reliquary containing relics of St. Olaf, now in the Danish National Museum, was manufactured in Cologne around 1200, and is closely related to a St. Gereon arm reliquary preserved there. The main Scandinavian museums possess a large number of portable reliquaries of different shapes and made of different materials. The cross reliquary is the most common, but there are also examples of carved-out rock crystals.

Jewel reliquaries have likewise been preserved in large numbers, in the shape of pendants made of silver and gold, often decorated with enamel. The pictorial crosses containing a splinter of the True Cross are the most frequently encountered. The most famous among them are the Dagmar Cross, a Byzantine cloisonné enamel from the 12th century, found in 1685 in Queen Dagmar's grave (d. 1212) in the Benedictine abbey of Ringsted, Denmark, and the Roskilde Cross, a 12th-century South Italian encopiosis with gold filigree and gems, still containing a fragment of the Cross. This reliquary was found in 1807 in a casket in the head of the Christ figure on the late Romanesque crucifix of Roskilde cathedral, Denmark.

Son of an Emperor”). Rémundr, the son of the Christian king of Saxland (Germany), is a young man well trained in both bookish and martial arts. After a feast, he dreams of a strange country with three fabulous buildings, the third of which is a castle with a revolving chamber on its top. In the dream, he sees himself executing rings in a wedding ceremony with a beautiful maiden, whose name is Elina (who sends Víõfprull to bring him), he is content to stay at home caressing the statue, and sets out only when wounded and in need of a cure. The motifs connected with the deviation from the French analogue (statue of the beloved, embedded sword fragment, voyage to a distant land to seek a cure for a poisoned wound) all come from the story of Tristan. But where Tristan sets out in a boat, Rémundr goes off in a cart, which suggests influence from a tale about Lancelot, the “knight of the cart.”

The style is closer to that of the *Istendingsægður* than to the “court” style of the *ríðдарасægður*, and the plot is well constructed, although with one weak point: until he is cured by Elina in India, Rémundr is hardly fit for the adventures he undergoes in Africa.

[See also: Birgita, St.; Erik, St.; Knúd (Cnut), St.; Oláf, St.; Saints’ Lives; Vadstena]

Rémundar saga keisarasonar ("The Saga of Rémundr, Son of an Emperor"). Rémundr, the son of the Christian king of Saxland (Germany), is a young man well trained in both bookish and martial arts. After a feast, he dreams of a strange country with three fabulous buildings, the third of which is a castle with a revolving chamber on its top. In the dream, he sees himself executing rings in a wedding ceremony with a beautiful maiden, and then he is put into a golden bed with her, inside the revolving chamber. Just as they are about to embrace, he wakes up. On his finger is the ring.

In grief because of his dream, Rémundr first consoles himself with a lifelike statue of the maiden. In a fight with a giant named Eskupart, who claimed that the statue represented his sweetheart, Rémundr is wounded by the point of the giant’s sword, which (according to Eskupart’s dying curse) will remain lodged in his head until the maiden of the dream removes it.

Carried in a gold and silver chariot and called “the afflicted man of the cart” (*ðiðan krænkar kárumrúð*), Rémundr sets out for Africa with two companions, one of whom, Víõfprull, was sent by the maiden of his dream to fetch him. In Africa, he spurns the advances of the king’s daughter, and as a consequence is attacked by the king’s men, whom he defeats with the aid of her brother. His sickness worsens until, in India, an archbishop sends the maiden of his dream to fetch him. In Africa, Rémundr is cured by Elina in India, whose name is Elina, to remove the iron piece from his head. With the aid of a stone that renders him invisible, he is able to pay nightly visits to Elina. When the prince of Sicily comes to demand her hand, Rémundr defeats him.

At the urging of the archbishop, Rémundr returns home to prepare for a proper wedding with Elina. Back in Saxland, his father has been killed and the kingdom has been overrun by pagans from Tartary and Russia, whom he defeats after lengthy fighting. With 20,000 knights, he returns to India by way of Jerusalem, marries Elina, and then returns to Saxland to be crowned.

This romantic saga dates from the middle of the 14th century, and two M5 fragments from that century are preserved, as well as about forty later copies. It is the longest (372 pages in Broberg’s edition) of the indigenous Icelandic *ríðдарасægður*, with much of its space devoted to stereotyped battle descriptions. Its plot is a bridal-quest romance, of which there are some twenty in Old Icelandic, and it shares features with *Gibbons saga*, *Viktors saga ok Blávus*, and *Kláeri saga*. Among Icelandic bridal-quests, it has the peculiar feature of being initiated by a dream that comes to both the hero and the heroine. In this respect, it resembles the Old French prose romance *Le petit Artus de Bretagne*, with which it probably shares a source. Rémundr’s quest is not generated by his passion, however, as is Arthur’s. A more passive person than Elina (who sends Víõfprull to bring him), he is content to stay at home caressing the statue, and sets out only when wounded and in need of a cure. The motifs connected with the deviation from the French analogue (statue of the beloved, embedded sword fragment, voyage to a distant land to seek a cure for a poisoned wound) all come from the story of Tristan. But where Tristan sets out in a boat, Rémundr goes off in a cart, which suggests influence from a tale about Lancelot, the “knight of the cart.”

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[See also: Gibbons saga; Kláeri (Clari) saga; Ríðdarasægður; Viktors saga ok Blávus]

Reykjaðla saga (ok Víga-Skúttu) ("The Saga of the People of Reykjadalr [and of Killer-Skúta]") is preserved only in one vellum MS (AM 561 4to) from about 1400, which is now defective in the beginning and has two lacunae. But about thirty paper MSS were copied from AM 561 4to during the 17th century, and these MSS can be used to fill in the missing parts. Like all *Istendingsægður*, Reykjaðla saga is anonymous and poses difficulties in dating. Two proposals for its date have been made: the middle of the 13th century (Jóns Kristjánsson 1988), and between 1210 and 1220 (Hofmann 1972). The difference turns on varying opinions concerning the author’s indebtedness to oral tradition.

Reykjaðla saga consists of two parts connected by characters from two succeeding generations. The first part, called *Reykjaðla saga* in ch. 19, is centered on Vémundr kógar ("coverlet"), a young man of good family who always looks for trouble and regularly receives assistance from his wise uncle Æskell goði ("chieftain" or "priest"). Æskell is finally killed in a skirmish. In the second part, Æskell’s death is avenged by his son, Skúta.
The composition of the saga is uneven, containing a string of episodes, sometimes only loosely connected, with many repetitions of motifs, mostly of a rural character. Stylistically, there are two distinctive features that do not occur in other sagas to the same degree. The first is an unusually large number of formulas, more than 100, of the type: "it is said that," "it is not told whether," and the like, which apparently point to oral tradition, but can also be considered as a written literary device (Andersson 1966). A special type of these formulas contains references to variants of tradition, for example: "Some people say what is told here: that it was an axe and was called Fluga, and some people say that it was a sword and was called Fluga. But whatever it was, Skúta carried that weapon always, and so it was now this time." The narrator knew two traditions, originally oral, reports both, and is uncertain about which to follow.

The second distinctive characteristic is the use of indirect speech; often 8.5 percent of the saga consists of direct speech, which is by far the lowest rate ever found in an Islandingsaga. Liestøl (1928) sees the author as a sort of district historian from the northeast of Iceland, whose geographical statements are very accurate, and who was really not an artist, but a conscientious reporter of past events, as he believed them to be true.

The most impressive character in the saga is Æskell gøi, who represents the type of the noble heathen seen from a Christian perspective. In a time of famine, people discuss whether conditions might be improved by exposing babies and killing old people. But Æskell knows a better solution: "He said that it was more advisable to honor the Creator by helping the old people through a gift of money and raising up the children" (ch. 7). His life is devoted to peacemaking, and his death is a self-sacrifice.

The problem of oral or literary origin hinges largely on the fact that ch. 26 in Reykdoela saga is nearly identical with ch. 16 in Viga-Glums saga. Most critics agree that the relationship must be treated with caution until the evidence is better fitted into the context than in the version in Viga-Glums saga. After a careful examination of all arguments, Hofmann (1972) pleads for Reykdoela saga as the source and gives further evidence to strengthen the case for its oral origin. If he is right, Reykdoela saga belongs to the earliest written sagas. Despite clumsiness of composition and style, the saga shows a skillful treatment of certain narrative techniques (Heinarichs 1974 and 1976).

[See also: Bookprose/Freeprose Theory; Islandingasögur; Páttir, Viga-Glums saga]
lection drew most of his material from one of the revised and expanded versions of Jacobus de Voragine's Legenda aurea into Low German, known as the Passional or Der heiligen Leben, which has survived in a number of printed editions. Widding and Bekker-Nielsen note that of editions older than Reykjahólábók, Stephen Arndt's edition of the Passionael (Lübeck 1488, 1492, 1499, 1507) comes nearest to the text of Reykjahólábók.


[See also: Legenda; Marti saga; Saints' Lives]

Rhymed Chronicles see Chronicles, Rhymed

Riddar Paris och Jungfru Vienna see Swedish Literature, Miscellaneous

Riddarasögur

1. INDIGENOUS. In the prologue to Flóres saga konungs ok sora hans, a 14th-century riddarasaga, or chivalric romance, the author establishes three categories of sagas: saints' lives, which most people do not find very entertaining; sagas that tell of mighty kings from which one can learn courtly manners and how one is to comport oneself in the service of chiefs; and sagas that tell of kings who won great renown through their deeds. The last category presumably subsumes two established types of Icelandic sagas, the fornaldrasögur and the riddarasögur.

The designation riddarasögur ("knight's sagas") is attested in the Middle Ages; the redactor of the younger Mágus saga jarls refers to such riddarasögur as Flóres saga and Flóventis saga. The name riddarasögur is not a generic term, however; it is descriptive and refers to the courtly milieu that the narratives describe. The riddarasögur embrace a heterogeneous literature. The designation applies, on the one hand, to translations of courtly romances, lais, and chansons de geste, and, on the other hand, to indigenous Icelandic narratives composed in the wake of and under the influence of the translations. The former group came into being in Norway and Iceland primarily in the 13th and early 14th centuries, the latter in Iceland in the late 13th but predominantly 14th centuries. The indigenous Icelandic riddarasögur have on occasion also been called lygisögur ("fictional sagas") and formsögur Suðurlanda ("ancient sagas of southern lands"). German scholars refer to them as Märchensagas ("fairy-tale sagas"). Since the Icelan-

dic riddarasögur are the equivalent of the continental and English courtly romances, we use the terms riddarasögur and "Icelandic romances" interchangeably. As is the case with the translated riddarasögur, the indigenous romances are in prose; at times, this prose is quite florid, characterized by extensive alliteration.

Despite recent interest in the Icelandic riddarasögur and fornaldrasögur, valid and convincing criteria for assigning some sagas to one group rather than to the other have not yet been advanced. Consensus as to what constitutes the canon of Icelandic riddarasögur is wanting, although most scholars let themselves be guided by the contents of Loth's five-volume edition, Late Medieval Icelandic Romances, and Bjarne Vilhjálmsson's six-volume Riddarasögur, the latter containing both translated and indigenous sagas. In their respective articles on the fornaldrasögur and the riddarasögur, Einar Ol. Sveinsson (1959) and Halvorson (1969) concur that certain sagas appear to be borderline cases that partake of characteristics of both groups. The sagas in question are Ála fleksa saga, Hrings saga ok Tryggva, Sigjarglás saga frakræna, Sigurðar saga fóts, and Vilmundar saga viðtun. It is uncertain what criteria were applied in this selection. To be sure, the presence of such elements as trolls and shapeshifters in Ála fleksa saga and Vilmundar saga viðtun does impart a strong folkloristic element that is generally foreign to the riddarasögur. But the bridal-quest structure and theme of Hrings saga ok Tryggva and of Sigurðar saga fóts are in the best tradition of the riddarasögur. In studying the Icelandic riddarasögur, which are acknowledged to be romances, it might serve us well to keep in mind what Hermann Palsson (1982–89) wrote about the fornaldrasögur: "In terms of general historical theory, the fornaldrasögur, particularly the 'adventure tales,' probably could best be regarded as secular romances."

Our discussion of the riddarasögur includes those sagas that represent the Icelandic equivalent of medieval romance, i.e., those sagas that were inspired mainly by the translated romances for their plot, structure, and style, at the same time that they incorporated certain traditionally Nordic motifs into their compositions. The translated riddarasögur derive from works belonging to different genres: chanson de geste, such as Karlamagnús saga and Elís saga ok Rosamundu, lai, such as Mottuls saga and Strengleikar; Arthurian and other romance, such as Tristrams saga ok Ispderabad, Ivens saga, and Flóres saga ok Blanklifur. Whereas the translated riddarasögur cannot be said to constitute one genre, the indigenous Icelandic riddarasögur are a fairly homogeneous group; their plot and structure are determined by the quest. Unlike the late-medieval romances on the Continent, the Icelandic riddarasögur did not continue the tradition of Arthurian romance, although it was well known, to judge by the number of Arthurian romances translated and Arthurian motifs incorporated in the indigenous Icelandic romances. Instead, Icelandic authors favored bridal-quest romance. Basic to the indigenous riddarasögur, even those that are not bridal-quest sagas, is a quadrupartite structure consisting of (1) the hero's youth; (2) motivation for the quest and the hero's departure; (3) adventure cycle with conflict; and (4) return of the hero and wedding. The structural pattern may be multiplied in one work, as, for example, in Jarlmanns saga ok Hermanns og Hrolóis saga Gautreksnor, which respectively double and quadruple the bridal quest, which is basic to the plot. If one includes the aforementioned hybrid sagas, then the corpus of medieval Icelandic romance consists of some thirty-five works.

The quest and the adventures encountered by the hero during the quest are the substance of Icelandic romance, which can be divided into two main groups: bridal-quest romances and sagas in
which the plot is generated by some injustice suffered by the hero or one of his relatives, and which consists of the hero's quest to right the wrong. Ten sagas belong to this latter category. In several sagas, the plot revolves around the search for and the reunion of lost relatives: in \textit{Valdimars saga} and in \textit{Blömstrvallasaga} a sister and a brother, respectively, are abducted by a flying dragon, and the hero sets out in search. Trolls abduct the hero's foster-mother in \textit{Vilhjálmssaga sjöðs}. \textit{Flöres saga konungs ok sons hans} deals with the abduction of a bride, her retrieval, and the eventual reunion of the protagonist and his three sons believed to be dead. The other two sagas deal with the usurpation of a throne and its repossessio. In \textit{Adonis saga}, the eponymous hero avenges the slaying of his father, the king of Spain, and in \textit{Bæringssaga} the protagonist flees from the murderer of his uncle and the rejected suitor of his widowed mother. Two other sagas, \textit{Jóns saga leiðsveins} and \textit{Mírmannssaga}, tell about evil mothers: the iniquitous stepmother of Jón, who changes the hero into a werewolf, and Mírmann's evil mother, who causes her son to be stricken with leprosy, and his equally evil foster-mother, who causes Mírmann to forget that he already has a wife and to marry the foster-mother.

\textit{Ectors saga} and \textit{Kíralax saga} differ from the other sagas in that they lack a unifying quest. In \textit{Ectors saga}, the eponymous protagonist and his knights set out separately to seek adventures and agree to meet again after a year. The saga best approximates the structure of Arthurian romance with its sequence of adventures. The plot of \textit{Kíralax saga} is rather amorphous; it consists of a sequence of incidents, including two bridal quests, but without a unifying goal. The learned author uses the romance as a vehicle for describing the wonders of the Near East.

Most of the Icelandic \textit{riddarasögur} are bridal-quest romances, however, works in which the quest for a bride is not merely one theme among many, but rather the motivating force of the entire plot. In his 1935 monograph, Geissler distinguished three types of bridal quest: the quest for a woman for a man with matrimony as the goal; the quest by a man for a woman with matrimony as a goal; and a man and woman woo each other but whose goal is not matrimony but sexual union. Only the first of these categories applies to the \textit{riddarasögur}. Occasionally, a woman does woo a man, as in \textit{Bæringssaga}, but this courtship occurs merely as an isolated motif rather than as the driving force of the narrative.

In the bridal-quest sagas, the conflict derives either from the hero himself or from others. If the hero himself is the source of the conflict, it arises because of his low social standing, his phlegmatic personality, or his unethical or otherwise unworthy behavior. If other persons are the source of the conflict, then the impediments are the bride herself, the relatives, most frequently the father, or one or more rivals for the bride.

The quintessential Icelandic bridal-quest romance is \textit{Hrólfssaga Gautrekssonar}, a so-called \textit{formaldarsaga}. The work is outstanding for its well-drawn characters, male as well as female, and its tight quadripartite structure, and is exemplary for the types of bridal quest, the possibilities of conflict, and the variety of protagonists and antagonists.

If the hero is his own worst enemy in the quest for a bride, the cause may be his psychic weakness. What characterizes the protagonists of a group of bridal-quest romances, among them \textit{Frikjöls saga ins frieken} and \textit{Gongu-Hrólfssaga} (two so-called \textit{formaldarsögur}), \textit{Dámusta saga}, and \textit{Gíbbonssaga}, is their extraordinary passivity. They reach their goal only because in the last analysis their life is determined and their happiness ensured by forces beyond them. Although Frikjölsf, Dámusti, Gibbon, and Gongu-Hrólf are distinct in their behavior and personalities, they resemble each other in that the successful conclusion of their respective bridal quests is the result primarily not of their own aggressive wooing, but rather the interference of another: the generosity of a rival in \textit{Frikjöls saga ins frieken}, the protection and guidance of the Virgin Mary in \textit{Dámusta saga}, the control exercised by a strong-willed woman in \textit{Gíbbonssaga}, and the interaction of the realm of the dead with that of the living in \textit{Gongu-Hrólfssaga}.

The conflict in several sagas stems from rivals, presumed or real, for the hand of the same princess. In most bridal-quest sagas, at least one rival appears on the scene, but he may not always be the determining factor in the development of the plot. Such is the case, for example, in the first section of \textit{Hrólfssaga Gautrekssonar}, where old King Gautrek has a rival in young King Óláfr, or in \textit{Konráðs saga keisarasonar}, where the traitor Roðbert takes advantage of the protagonist's ignorance of Greek to present the bridal suit for himself rather than his lord. \textit{Sigurðar saga lóts} has an unusual plot in that Asmundr, the rival for the hand of Signý, daughter of the king of Sjólpnd ("the Sealands"), abducts the bride on her wedding day. When the wronged bridegroom refuses to accept compensation, the rivals decide to settle the matter by single combat. The battle is inconclusive, and to the reader's surprise the abductor offers to relinquish the bride after all. The erstwhile rivals become sworn brothers, and the second part of the romance tells how Sigurðr aids his blood-brother in obtaining the daughter of the king of Ireland for his wife. Somewhat similar to \textit{Sigurðar saga lóts} is the plot of the fragmentary \textit{Þryggs saga ok Tryggvas}. The heroine is betrothed to Hringr, whom she loves, but then given in marriage to Tryggvi, who has rescued her and her father's kingdom from the unwanted attentions of a Viking. As in \textit{Sigurðar saga lóts}, the rivals engage in combat, are grievously wounded, and then reconciled. Unlike Sigurðr, however, Hringr is not given his beloved but rather the sister of his former rival in marriage. Tryggvi is killed in battle, his sister, Hringr's wife, dies of grief; and Hringr gets his beloved after all.

Also centered on the problem of rival suitors is \textit{Jarlmanns saga ok Hermanns}. Whereas the rivalry in the above-named sagas is real, it exists only in the mind of Hermann, who accuses his foster-brother Jarlmann of having an amatory interest in the bride he has wooed and brought back for him. Jarlmann is hurt and insulted, and leaves the court. The unjustified accusation is the indirect cause of the abduction of the bride by a rival suitor, for had Jarlmann not been absent, the abduction would have been foiled. \textit{Jarlmanns saga ok Hermanns} may be interpreted as a counterpart to \textit{Konráðs saga keisarasonar}. While the conflict in the latter is generated by the protagonist's unwarranted trust in his treacherous foster-brother, in \textit{Jarlmanns saga ok Hermanns} the opposite happens: an unwarranted mistrust of the foster-brother leads to the crisis.

The most unusual obstacle that confronts the suitors of the Icelandic bridal-quest romances is the desired woman herself. Only in the Icelandic \textit{riddarasögur} and in some of the so-called \textit{formaldarsögur}, which we include here if they are bridal-quest romances, do we find a motif, otherwise unknown in medieval literature, of the maiden-ruler who does not wish to marry, that is, the meykongr ("maiden-king") motif. No other medieval literature appears to have cultivated a subgenre of bridal-quest romance that focuses on the misogynamous woman and the hero's attempt to trick her into marriage. To be sure, there exist such isolated figures as Brünhild in the \textit{Nibelungenlied} or the anonymous ruler of
Edinburgh in the 

of Donn, who wish to marry only the man who can pass certain tests, but the woman who categorically refuses to marry because marriage undermines her position as sovereign is an Icelandic phenomenon. In all, there are six sagas that are maiden-king stories from the beginning to end. Klári saga keisarasonar, Sigurðr saga þoqla, Nitríða saga, Viktors saga ok Blávus, Dínu saga dramblíta, and Sýrgarðs saga frekna. In another group of sagas, a maiden-king episode forms a substantial part of the plot: Æla flekkis saga, Gibbons saga, Hrólfss saga Gautrekssonar, and Hrólfss saga kraka.

Klári saga keisarasonar belongs among the translated riddarasögur. The work is supposed to be based on a Latin metrical narrative brought to Iceland by Jón Halldórsson, bishop of Skálholt (1322–1339), when he returned from his studies in Paris and Bologna. No such Latin tale is extant. In any case, it was presumably an isolated maiden-king romance on the Continent, which may, however, ultimately derive from Arabian tales. A major figure in Klári saga keisarasonar is a Master Perus of Arabia, and the narrative type involving the haughty princess who does not want to get married and who mistreats her suitors has analogues in The Thousand and One Nights.

The bridal-quest narratives that center on the misogynamous woman have three distinguishing motifs: the arrogant female ruler who opposes marriage (solely in Klári saga keisarasonar does the female protagonist not rule a kingdom or part of a kingdom by herself); the rejection and cruel treatment of all suitors; and the humiliation and taming of the recalcitrant woman by the hero. The meykongr-sagas are distinct from other bridal-quest tales in that there is always a direct confrontation between the wooer and the wooed. Whereas the relatives of the desired bride or rivals are the impediments to the hero’s successful quest in other bridal-quest tales, in the meykongr-sagas the woman herself is the source of conflict. Her misogamy does not derive from hatred of men, however, but rather from the fear that her realm may fall into the hands of a man who is not equal to the task.

Some of the authors of the riddarasögur were probably acquainted with each other’s work. They made references in one saga to characters in another; they borrowed matter from other sagas; and they composed their sagas as continuations of or responses to each other’s work. The variation on the theme of trust in one’s foster-brother that is common to both Konráðs saga keisarasonar and Jarlmanns saga ok Hermanns has been noted. The affinity of these two sagas is documented at the conclusion of Jarlmanns saga ok Hermanns: Hermanns turns out to be the paternal grandfather of Konráð. A third saga in which the plot is in one’s foster-brother that is common to both Konráðs saga keisarasonar and Jarlmanns saga ok Hermanns is Konráðs saga keisarasonar. A third saga in which the plot is in one’s foster-brother that is common to both Konráðs saga keisarasonar and Jarlmanns saga ok Hermanns is Konráðs saga keisarasonar. None of these sagas in the codex is an original text, and we assume that the three romances were already popular enough to have led the person responsible for the contents of the codex to include them. If the MS was produced around the earlier possible date, i.e., around 1300, then it is not out of the question that some of the Icelandic romances were composed at the same time as Njáls saga and Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða.


Marianne E. Kalinke

2. TRANSLATED. Translated *riddarasögur* are prose translations and adaptations, the majority made in 13th-century Norway, of a diverse collection of Old French verse epic (*Elis saga ok Rósamundu*), from the chanson de geste *Elie de Saint Gille*, *Karlamagnús saga*, in ten "branches," deriving in the main from Carolingian *chansons de geste* and chivalric narrative, the latter including Old Norse versions of *Aimon* (or *saga* (a version of the *roman* not correspond to the extant *Chanson de Floovant.* The immediate sources of the *riddarasögur* included in discussions of *riddarasögur* is a matter of some debate. With the exception of the first fifty-nine chapters of *Strengleikar*, *Elis saga* (both pre­

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The translation of French "courtly" narrative (lais, romans *riddarasögur* with which there were long-established ecclesiastical and economic ties. The name of the cleric, Robert, to whom the composition of *Elis saga* and *Tristrams saga* is attributed, is Anglo-Norman. But the works give no indication that the mother tongue of Robert or any other *riddarasaga* writer was French, and the texts contain occasional apparent mistranslations or misunderstandings of the original language.

As translations and adaptations, the *riddarasögur* belong to a venerable tradition in Norwegian and Icelandic literature. Norse versions of Latin religious works date from the early 12th century, and the Anglo-Norman Body and Soul debate poem *Un samedi par nuit* was translated into Norwegian (and is contained in the Norwegian Homily Book) around 1200. A variety of historical and pseudo-historical material provides the sources for *Breta sogur*, *Trojumanna saga*, *Rómverja saga*, and *Veraldar saga*, all dating from the first half of the 13th century. In addition to *Elis saga* and *Strengleikar*, MS De la Gardie 4–7 contains an incomplete translation of the Latin poem *Pamphilius de amore*.

The translation of French "courtly" narrative (lais, romans *riddarasögur* seems to have been a phenomenon restricted to the reign of Hákon Hákonarson, but Norse versions of Latin romances and pseudo-histories, like *Alexanders saga* (from Galterus de Castellione's *Alexandres* and *Amicus saga ok Amilus* (from the account of the legend in the *Speculum historiale* by Vincent of Beauvais), continued through the reigns of Hákon's son, Magnús (r. 1263–1280), and grandson, Hákon Magnússon (r. 1299–1319). Extant texts lend no substance to the assertion in the late 14th-century Icelandic romance *Viktors saga ok Blávus* that Hákon Magnússon had a number of *riddarasögur* translated from Greek and French. The Icelandic *klári saga* (mid-14th century) purports to be a translation of an unnamed Latin source. Apart from Bjarni Erlingsson of Bjarkey, who is said to have found the now-lost Middle English story of Olive and Landres (branch 11 of *Karlamagnús saga*) on a trip to Scotland in 1286–1287, the only names associated with the translated *riddarasögur* and secular narratives that have or claim Latin sources are of kings and clerics: Hákon Hákonarson, two of his successors, the unidentified "Robert" (called "brother" in *Strengleikar* and "abbot" in *Elis saga*), and two Icelandic bishops, Brandr Jónsson of Hólar, author of *Alexanders saga*, and Jón Halldórsson of Skálholt, author of *klári saga*.

From a stylistic viewpoint, the *riddarasögur* present a curious blend of Norse form and French content. Prose was the preferred medium for long narratives in Old Norse, although it has been suggested that its employment for the *riddarasögur* is due to a contemporary lack of native meters equivalent to the verse forms of Old French epic and romance. It was not until the development of the *rítmur* that Iceland acquired a form of poetic narrative corresponding to the metrical romances of other European literatures, but a distinctive Old Norse prose style was well developed by the time *chansons de geste* and romans *courtois* reached Norway. On the Old Norse literary time scale, the *riddarasögur* are contemporary with the writing of the *Islandingsögar*. The style of the translations, which often resembles but is, in varying degrees, more rhetorical than that of the *Islandingsögar*, is often called the "court style," and is characterized by the use of antithesis, parallelism, and alliteration, especially in rhyming or assonanced word pairs, often occurring in chains (e.g., *brena ok baela, vatrelik ok fóðleik, skjómm ok skáda*). Participial constructions, a feature of the "learned style" of religious translations from Latin, also appear in the *riddarasögur* with a much higher frequency than in the *Islandingsögar*, especially at points of dramatic intensity. The rhetorical training of the translator-adaptors is evident in their independent prefaces to *Strengleikar* and *Mottuls saga,* which are
modeled on the traditional medieval exordium, or prologue, a convention otherwise foreign to Old Norse secular narrative.

Comparison of *ríddarasögur* with available MSS of their sources shows a relationship that ranges from word-for-word translation to free adaptation. By and large, the *ríddarasögur* are faithful to the content of their originals, although there are occasional major deviations, like the ending of Flóres saga ok Blanklúftr, the Icelandic chapters that continue the Norwegian Elis saga, and the incorporation of an additional chapter into Exequian saga. Extended descriptions of physiognomy, dress, and social ritual, characteristic of French romance but alien to Norse narrative tradition, are usually eliminated or abbreviated. Occasionally, there is amplification of source material, as in Eskia, the version of Marie de France's Lai la tresse in Strengleikar, and Mottuls saga. Authors sometimes make additions to the existing framework, like the prologues to Strengleikar and Mottuls saga and the epilogue to Exequian (from Marie's *lai* of the same name) and *ríddarasögur*.

While the *Exequian* epilogue, with its reference to Exequian's later career and that of his sons, is similar to many epilogues in *peturr* and *Islendingasögur*, the ending of the Norwegian Exequian is one of a number of overtly didactic passages in the *ríddarasögur*, which are either not found or are less prominent in their originals. The Exequian conclusion is a lengthy, exhortatory piece on the vices of greed and injustice, which gives the story of the ignoble King Equuitan the appearance of an exemplum. *Exequian* saga expands passages in Chretien's *Erec et Enide* that are concerned with the obligations of kings and noblemen; *Parceval* saga emphasizes the educational aspect of Chretien's romance; *Tristrams saga* has a moralizing quality not present in the extant fragments of Thomas's work; Flóres saga ok Blanklúftr has an evangelical fervor that exceeds the Christian-pagan conflict in Floire et Blanchellor and is more reminiscent of the crusading spirit of *Karlamagnús saga*.

*Elis saga* and *Karlamagnús saga* treat French epic with due gusto, but the Norse versions of romances, particularly of *romans courtois*, differ radically in tone from their sources. A shift from works that combine, in Chretien's case, comedy, eroticism, and implicit didacticism, not always in easily discernible parts, to Norse renditions that are essentially exemplary in mode is effected by various modifications to structure, theme, and character. In addition to the element of explicit moralizing in the *ríddarasögur*, their elimination of two narrative conventions that are fundamental to the *romans courtois* but alien to Old Norse sagas, the nonomniscient narrator and internal monologue, plays a significant part in this process. The transition from the liveliness of the octosyllabic couplet of the *lai* and *romans courtois* to a rhetorically embellished prose also gives the *ríddarasögur* a stylistic ponderousness at odds with the lightness of touch of their sources.

*Ríddarasögur* authors make occasional independent interventions in the course of the narrative to explain unfamiliar terms, for example, dates in the church calendar like Pentecost (Old French *pancoste*: "pikkadrag, which we call hvitasunna" in *Ivans saga*) and Palm Sunday (Old French *jouer de la Pasque flor*: "palmusunndrag...is called blómmapáskr abroad" in *Flóres saga ok Blanklúftr*). But the constant, intrusive presence of a narrator is absent (Elis saga is something of an exception), and a typically 13th-century outburst against women in *Ivans saga*, which adds a condemnationary note to some wry comments on Yvain, is unusual. The departure of the loquacious narrator, with his running commentary on the action, takes with it the means by which Chretien establishes a sense of audience complicity and underlines discrepancies between the theory and practice of Arthurian chivalry, thereby giving his romances an ironic dimension lacking in the *ríddarasögur*. Problems of conflicting loyalties, usually between love (often personified as Amors) on the one hand and the demands of chivalry on the other, are explored through the medium of internal monologue by Chretien and other writers of French romance. *Flóres saga ok Blanklúftr* is unique in its retention of such a passage of "psychological allegory" in which Love and Reason vie for the hero's allegiance; other *ríddarasögur* largely ignore the inner life of their characters and the problematic side of literary chivalry. Love has only minor interest in *Exequian* saga and *Ivans saga*, for example, whereas their sources concern the proper role of love and marriage in the chivalric life; large portions of the French text examining the private thoughts of hero and heroine are left out, but descriptions of combat are rendered in detail. Similarly, in *Flóres saga ok Blanklúftr*, Flóres wins Blanklúftr not, like French Floire, through the appealing strength of their mutual love, but by force of arms.

Unbecoming or undignified conduct on the part of Arthur and his knights tends to be omitted, glossed over, or otherwise excused in the *ríddarasögur*. Any satire in *Mottuls saga*, the tale of a chastity test, is aimed at the ladies rather than the knights of Arthur's court. Heroic preconceptions of Arthur and his knights deriving from *Breta sögur*, Norse conceptions of the hero as found in eddic poetry and *Islendingasögur*, a likely imperviousness to or a possible distaste for "courtly" irony, and idealized expectations of the heroes of French romance on the part of translators and audience may all have influenced the presentation of character in the *ríddarasögur*. Clerical authorship may be responsible for their overtly didactic element. Chivalry in the *ríddarasögur* is "feudal" rather than "courtly," with the emphasis on the virtues of courage, loyalty, piety, and modesty, along with a lack of interest in the ritual and emotion of love.

These modifications to their sources flatten *ríddarasögur* characters, turn heroes into types, and make the tales straightforward accounts of knightly virtue rewarded or, occasionally, as in the case of *Exequian*, sin punished. The tendency to improve and exemplify character and to simplify "courtly" and, in the case of *Parceval* saga, mystical enigma is one feature that the *ríddarasögur* share with some other adaptations of French romance: for example, the Middle English Ywain and Gawain (from Yvain), an ideological companion piece to *Ivans saga*, and Sir Percival of Gaules (indirectly from *Pereval*), and the 15th-century Burgundian prose *Erec*.

The extant MSS testify to the popularity of the translated *ríddarasögur* in Iceland, but the extent of any direct influence they may have exerted on the *Islendingasögur* is difficult to establish. The contribution of the *Islendingasögur* to the style, form, and ethic of the *ríddarasögur* may have been greater than any influence in the opposite direction. Some scholars see the effects of the *ríddarasögur* on the development of Icelandic saga narrative as superficial only, limited to the occasional undistinguishable "chivalric" description (for example, the initial portrait of Kari S ómundarson in *Njáls saga*) or motifs like the "ambiguous oath" in the Porstein and Eses story in Grettis saga, which parallels an episode in *Tristrams saga*. Other scholars have argued that French romance, and the Tristan story in particular, had a more profound impact on the *Islendingasögur*, particularly on "skald sagas" like Kormáks saga.

The independent Icelandic *ríddarasögur*, most of which date from the 14th century, take their inspiration in part from the
translated riddarasögur, but differ from them markedly in tenor. Whereas the latter are restrained in their treatment of love, the exotic, and the supernatural, hyperbole is the keynote of the Ice­
riddarasõgur, but differ from them markedly in tenor.

sons de geste and lais than to those of romans courtois. Certain characters and motifs from the translated riddarasögur reappear in the Icelandic romances, although some of these may have been familiar in Iceland from other sources. The Tristan legend, for example, is the subject of Tristrams saga ok Ísoddar, and the lion-knight story, which appears in Ívens saga, is found in a number of the independent riddarasögur. Sigurðar saga þóglu is typically eclectic in its use of motifs from the translated romances: set in the days of King Arthur, it contains an account of the tale of Ælres and Blankliffl, and has a hero who rescues a lion from a dragon.

Although many of the heroes of these independent romances are the subject of Icelandic rínum, only Karlamagnús saga, Míttuls saga, and Tristrams saga appear to have inspired medieval rínum and ballads. Ívens saga ok Blankliffl and Ívens saga are sources of the Swedish verse romances (known as Eufemivisvorna), Flores och Blanzefflor and Ivan Ljéonriddaren, composed for Eufemia, wife of Hákon Magnússon of Norway, in the early years of the 14th century.


Geraldine Barnes

[See also: Adonias saga; Ála flekklds saga; Alexanders saga; Amicus and Amileus; Bevis saga; Blómstrvallasaga; Berings saga; Dámusta saga; Dínum saga drambláta; Draumajosn saga; Ectors saga ok kappan hans; Elig saga ok Rosamundi; Þreks saga; Eufemivisvorna; Flores saga konungs ok sona hans; Ívens saga ok Bankiflúr; Flovent saga Frakkakonungs; Forndalarsögur; Fríðjófs saga ins frékkna; Gibbons saga; Gogna-Hrólfs saga; Hring Saga ok Tryggva; Hröls saga Gautrekssonar; Íslendingasögur; Ívens saga; Jarlmanns saga ok Hermanns; Jóns saga leiksvins; Karlamagnús saga; Kirialax saga; Klári (Cléri) saga; Konráðs saga keisararsonar; Kormáks saga; Lygisaga; Mágus saga jarlís; Maiden Warriors, Mírmanns saga; Míttuls saga; Nítida saga; Njál's saga; Old Norse–Icelandic Literature, Foreign Influence on; Pamphilus ok Galatheas; Parcvals saga; Paralopa saga; Rémundar saga keisararsonar; Ritmir; Rómverja saga; Sauus saga ok Nikanors; Samsons saga fragn; Siggrårds saga frekkna; Siggrårds saga ok Valbrands; Sigurðar saga fróts ok Ásmundar Húnakongs; Sigurðar saga turnara; Sigurðar saga þóglu; Skálásögur; Strengeliker; Style; Tiódels saga; Tristrams saga ok Ísoddar; Tristrams saga ok Ísoddar; Pátrr; Pfalar-Jóns saga; Valdimars saga; Veraldar saga; Viktors saga ok Blávus; Vilhjálm saga sjóðs; Vílmundar saga viðutana; Women in Sagas]

Riddles. A riddle is a question that involves a rewriting of a concrete, objective description in an exact but novel way. Each word is intended to be equally clear and adjusted as in a logical definition, but the rewriting is made to complicate and puzzle. It is, therefore, difficult to see immediately what is spoken of, and the solution is usually rather difficult. The more unclear a riddle is, the better it is; but it must still give a completely correct description of what it concerns.
Riddles are known in most countries and have a long history. Generally, a distinction is made between the riddles that survive among the people and concern everyday matters, and those that have their origin in mythological and literary allegories and kennings, and have been transmitted from generation to generation in literature.

One of the oldest riddles in Scandinavia is found in the runic inscription on the Eggja stone in Sogn in Norway from the middle of the 8th century. The runes have not been interpreted definitively, but a name may be hidden in a riddle in them.

In Old Norse works, riddles appear widely, especially in the eddic poems (Valfyrðisnát, Alvíssmál, Grímnismál, Fjölsvínsmál), in Saxo's Gesta Danorum, and in the fornaldarsögur. There are some differences among the riddles in these works. In the eddic poems, they tend to be questions about mythological matters rather than actual riddles, but nonetheless questions and answers are asked as in the riddle contests. In Saxo, the riddles are mainly in prose, but in the fornaldarsögur real riddles are found as they are known from elsewhere, both riddles of a literary origin and riddles that have their origin among the people.

The eddic poems that include riddles or tell of quizzes similar to the riddle contests are Vafprúdnismál and Alvíssmál. In Valfyrðisnát, Óðinn goes to match his own lore with that of the giant Valþrúðr. After an initial test, they continue the wager with the loser's head as the stake. Óðinn finally propounds the unanswerable question: "What did Óðinn whisper in the ear of his son, before Baldr was placed on the funeral pyre?"

Alvíssmál tells of a wisdom contest between Þorr and the dwarf Alvíss. The former promises his consent to the marriage between his daughter and Alvíss provided the dwarf can answer all his questions. Þorr says that he has never met a man so learned in ancient lore, but this wisdom does not help the dwarf, for when he answers the last question, daylight surprises him and transforms him into stone.

Saxo gives an account of the riddles that Eiríkr asked King Fróði. Eiríkr describes his journey in riddles and uses proper names with the intention of misleading the king. The solution to these riddles involves solving name-riddles and puns.

The most famous riddles in medieval Scandinavian works are those of Gestumblindi and Heiðrek, preserved in Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks. Six of the thirty-five riddles appear widely in later times, but the others are known only from this story of the contest between King Heiðrek and Gestumblindi. The riddles are incorporated into a "head-ransom" framework. Gestumblindi was King Heiðrek's enemy, but Óðinn exchanged clothes with him, went to the king, and competed with him in a riddle contest. The events are described in a vein similar to Óðinn's contest with Valþrúðr. One of Gestumblindi's riddles that is known from elsewhere is the way-riddle:

From home I went
and left my home
and saw the roads on the road;
a road was above,
a road was below;
solve my riddle
correctly, King Heiðrek.

Here, Gestumblindi stood on a bridge, a river was under him, and birds flew in all directions over him.

The leek-riddle is widely known. The riddle asks what it is that turns its feet
toward the sun
but its head toward Hel.

In the course of the contest, Gestumblindi comes up with a riddle that shows that he is perhaps not who he pretends to be:

What marvel was that
which I saw outside
Delling's doors?
It has ten tongues
and twenty eyes;
with forty legs
the creature moves forward.

Heiðrek solves the riddle as a sow in the yard, and he has it killed to know if the number of piglets is correct. Now he suspects whom he is competing with, and is certain when Gestumblindi asks:

What did Óðinn speak
in Baldr's ear
before he was placed on the pyre?

Many of the riddles in Hervarar saga are known from other languages and have parallels outside Scandinavia.

Riddles to test cleverness are also found in Melkóls saga ok Salmonskonungs. A remnant of a riddle appears in the Prose Edda. The story of Bil and Hjúkki in ch. 11 of Snorri's Gylfaginning may be based on a riddle asking who they are (Holtsmark 1945). Riddles have been studied from many points of view. Scholars, for example, have divided riddles into a number of categories according to their content. In the first category are puns; in the second, riddles that contain a direct question about a certain topic; in the third, riddles that involve a metaphor or a simile; in the fourth, riddles that tell of what the questioner has witnessed; and in the fifth, riddles about numbers. Scholars have also analyzed riddles according to their form, as well as to the roles that they played in the cultures where they once flourished.

Educational and instructive riddles deliberately effect a certain knowledge. Many of Gestumblindi's riddles belong to this category, and such riddles are generally thought to have come to Europe from Asia. A riddle about the year has been traced all the way back to the ancient religious text in Rigveda. The lore in Alvíssmál and Vafprúdnismál is of the same kind, and several other mythological poems of the Poetic Edda contain profound wisdom from far away. Learned or educational riddles are also found in an Icelandic MS from the 13th century (Álfræðið Eslenskí, vol. 3, pp. 36 f.); a list of questions contains the riddle, "Which four grains make the soil wet?" The answer is "Rain, hail, snow, and dew."

Riddles were well suited as entertainment in the homes of farmer societies, when the families gathered in the evenings or on holidays. The description in many popular riddles is taken directly from everyday life, and the meaning and interpretation of the riddle were thus easy for everyone. But this meant, on the other hand, that the riddles could not travel unchanged to another cultural setting where conditions were different. "Ambiguous" riddles fall within this category. These can be interpreted in two different ways; sometimes, they have a normal vocabulary but a meaning that can be vulgar and allude to sex.

"Head ransom" is one of the most common purposes of riddles in narratives and literature. The doomed man is given the choice between escaping his fate by solving the riddles presented, or by
posing riddles that cannot be solved. In the sagas, it is often said that the doomed have enjoyed the help of good spirits in solving these contests.

The solution of a riddle is a mental contest that tests a person's intelligence to the utmost. The solution of a riddle appears to be a philosophical problem. The riddle-contest is also an exercise in the use of language and is thus in many ways associated with the philosophy of language.


Jón Hnefill Ádalsteinsson

[See also: Alvíssmál, Folklore; Foraldrasögur, Grímnismál, Hervarar saga ok Heidreks konungs, Kennings, Melkols saga ok Salomons konungs, Saxo Grammaticus; Snorra Edda, Svipdagsmál, Vafprúdnismál]

**Rígsþula** (*The Lay of Rígr*) is an incomplete poem of approximately forty-eight stanzas traditionally considered to be "edicic," although it is preserved in a MS of the *Prose Edda* (*Codex Wormianus, AM 242 fol.*) in style, meter, narrative content, and language. *Rígsþula* is quite similar to the mythological poems preserved in the *Poetic Edda,* but questions about the origin and circulation of this poem before it was copied into the *Codex Wormianus* are even more problematic than, and quite distinct from, similar questions concerning the other mythological eddic poems.

The text is introduced by a prose preface that identifies the main protagonist, Rígr, with the god Heimdall, an identification sometimes supported by comparison with Yvulpus (st. 1), in which the term *heyrndir* ("the holy races") are identified as the "kin" of Heimdall. The parallel, however, is not exact, and we cannot accept the identification as anything other than an early learned gloss on the text as we have it.

The myth that the poem narrates concerns Rígr, a figure who is identified in the poem as an *aks kunngr* ("a wise god"). During his travels, Rígr came upon the house of Ái and Edda, "great-grandfather" and "great-grandmother." The house was simple and poor, but Rígr spent three nights there sharing the bed of the married couple. The woman then gives birth to *jœrl* ("slave"), who marries a woman of low status and begets the race of *jœlar,* or "slaves." The narrative sequence is repeated at the houses of Ái and Amma, "Grandfather" and "Grandmother," and Fafdi and Mótr, from whom the races of the *kartar* ("free men") and *jalr* ("aristocrats") originate. In the concluding stanzas of the poem, Rígr is apparently preparing Konr, the youngest son of Jarl, to become king. *Konr, ungr ("young")* will become the *kunungr.* The poem breaks off without any conclusion.

In discussing *Rígsþula,* it is appropriate to distinguish between the poem itself as the artistic realization of the narrative and the myth or myths that are narrated in the poem. And it is also useful to distinguish between these myths and ideas concerning the "right" ordering of society that they implicitly express. A medieval Icelandic or Norwegian Christian, for example, might have thought incredible and absurd the myth of the divine being Rígr who fathers the three orders of society, but he might nonetheless have readily agreed that society is or should be ordered according to this pattern. Given these distinctions, the poem itself is stylistically and linguistically comparable to the other eddic poems, and a simple although not, strictly speaking, necessary assumption is that the general framework of possibilities that scholars have discussed in dating the other eddic poems is relevant here as well. The poem might be much older than the MS in which it was preserved, and a product of a pre-Christian period, or it might be the work of 11th- or 12th-century Icelandic or Norwegian poets of a somewhat antiquarian disposition. The latest dating proposition is von See's (1957), who argues that the poem is a mid-13th-century work composed in Norway. Such a date seems quite late for a poem this archaic in content and in its social ideology. These myths reflect apparent archaic insular influences in certain significant respects.

The first and most striking is the name *Rígr,* which corresponds well to Old Irish *rígh,* the standard Old Irish term for "king.* A second feature of *Rígsþula* that seems to reflect Celtic influence is the implicit sanction the poem concedes to allowing distinguished visitors to have sexual relations with the wife of the host, a social custom that can be paralleled readily in early-medieval secular Irish literature, and that would seem to conflict with both Christian and pre-Christian normative values in Iceland and Norway. On the Celtic, specifically Irish, aspect of *Rígsþula,* see Young (1983).

The "tripartite" or implicitly "quattuor-partite" structure of society that *Rígsþula* sanctions ("slaves," "free men," "nobles," and then a "king") can be paralleled in Celtic social structures, but there are also Germanic parallels. Any structure or ordering of society of this sort is a fiction imposed on a complex and refractory reality, but if we could localize and date *Rígsþula* with more confidence, we could read the poem as a rich source of social ideology, of implicit attitudes toward such topics as class and work in the social circle in which it was produced and appreciated. As it is, we may see the poem as reflecting a specifically aristocratic and secular ideology, although we cannot be confident how widely the ideals implicit in the poem were ever shared in Scandinavian antiquity. On the later influence and the dissemination of the myth of the "three" classes, see Hill (1986).
Rímg are Icelandic narrative poems, usually long enough to be divided into cantos or fits, with each such division (ríma, fem. sing.) displaying different and usually complicated patterns of rhyme, alliteration, and strict counting of stressed and unstressed syllables. Probably arising in the first half of the 14th century, the rímg proved to be the most popular literary form in Iceland from the 15th century until well into the 1800s.

Plots for the rímg are derived from prose sources, usually sagas of various kinds. Although members of the genre are commonly called "metrical romances" in English, the thematic material can be quite varied. Of the roughly seventy-eight rímg composed before 1600, a commonly employed cutoff date for the premodern members of the genre, almost half are based on the riddarasögur of both foreign and domestic provenance, and a score of others deal with material from the fornaldarsögur. Íslendingasögur and konungsöggur provide material for only nine rímg, and the remainder are based on folktales, exempla, and tales from the Ëddas. Original thematic material is found only in two parodies of the heroic ideal, Skíða ríma and Fjósa ríma.

While the oldest of the rímg, Ólafs ríma Haraldssonar (composed ca. 1350), comprises just a single canto of sixty-five stanzas, the number of cantos among rímg prior to 1600 averages around eighty, with the largest number (thirty) in Pontus rímg. There is likewise considerable variation in the number of stanzas per canto. Skíða ríma contains by far the largest number with 202 stanzas, but being a parody of heroic adventure, its stanzaic abundance may also be satirizing what might have seemed to contemporaries an endless string of monotonous verses in the rímg. In a corpus of thirty other, old cycles comprising 181 rímg, the average number of stanzas was fifty-two, with a differing number from canto to canto being the rule rather than the exception. Landnæs rímg has a rather large spread, with several cantos containing stanzas in the low thirties and other cantos with just over 100, while a narrow range of stanzas per canto is represented by Prymlur (twenty-three to twenty-nine) and Ólafs rímg Tryggvasonar [B] (thirty-three to thirty-five).

Early in the development of the rímg, a series of nonnarrative stanzas called a mansongr (masc. sing.), "love-song," previously extant as occasional poetry, could be affixed to the beginning of each canto. In content, these verses echo continental European courtly poetry, singing the praises of women in general or of one woman in particular, or lamenting the adversity occasioned by love. In later rímg, nonamorous subjects could be broached. While some of the earliest rímg have no mansongr and others affix the mansongr only to the first canto, a vacillation between roughly two and twelve stanzas in each canto of a poem is not uncommon for the bulk of medieval rímg. By far the greatest fluctuation is demonstrated by Pontus rímg, in which the mansongvar can vary between zero and eighty-seven stanzas per canto.

All the stanzas in a single canto have the same meter, although in very late rímg the final stanzas could sometimes be made more difficult. Theoretically, the total number of prosodic combinations was very large, since the placement of alliterating staves and rhyme, and the number of syllables in a line or in a rhyme could all be varied. By the end of the 19th century, Helgi Sigurðsson counted more than 2,000 possibilities divided among twenty-three major types. The most common prosodic patterns, however, especially in the older rímg, are ferskeytt, stafhent, braghent, skählen, and samhent.

Ferskeytt is by far the most common meter. In its most basic form, its four-line stanza is characterized by uneven-numbered lines containing four stressed syllables, two alliterating staves on any combination of stressed syllables except the first and second, and monosyllabic end-rhyme. Even-numbered lines contain three stressed syllables, the first of which must begin with the same alliterating stave employed in the preceding line. Ideally, each line contains three unstressed syllables. Trochaic rhyme combines the final two syllables of the even lines, as in the following example:

- Synna baði og sina frá
- síkling til stín kallar
- bðr sér hýlda bráðr nú
- býtir frænings vallar.

(Jonas rímg 1:14)

Stafhent differs from ferskeytt in having four stressed syllables in each line, monosyllabic rhyme also in the even lines, and a rhyme scheme of aabb:

- Jonatas segir atuðar ná
- ekti er goti segir frá
- burt er hafni besta þin
- en breini í sundr kistan mín

(Jonas rímg 2:15)

Samhent resembles stafhent meter except that the rhyme is the same in all four lines (aaaa). Stafhent differs from ferskeytt in having the second and fourth stressed syllables rhyme in the first and third lines, while eliminating rhyme in the odd lines.

The only three-line stanza in the early rímg, first attested in the 15th century, is braghent, which contains three lines connected by trochaic rhyme. The final two lines each contain four stressed (and ideally four unstressed) syllables, with alliterating as in the preceding meters. The initial line contains six stressed syllables (with three of these alliterating with each other) and six unstressed syllables:

- Létti aldri leðum fyrra leðir branda
- heldr en karskur kjôfur randa
- kastala sár velli standa.

(Jonas rímg 3:24)
Characteristic of the language of the rímr is the heavy use of heiti and kennings (one- and multiple-part metaphors, respectively) as well as special poetic vocabulary. For example, a woman is often referred to as a “goddess of riches” (audar Na), gold can be called the “home-field of the snake” (frænings vppl), and a warrior or a man in general can be a “cleaver of shields” (kljúfr randa) or “destroyer of swords” (lestir branda). While the earliest use of these figures of speech corresponds closely to their codification in Snorri Sturluson’s Prose Edda, later usage showed some innovation.

Both skaldic and eddic poetry influenced the earliest rímr. The prosodic complexity and metaphoric diction show the influence of skaldic poetry, while the narrative, stanzaic eddic poetry, with its treatment of heroic and mythological themes, very likely encouraged the development of the rímr in Iceland. Poets often refer to their poetry as eddu list or eddu regla (eddic art or rules). In the verses cited above, for example, the resolution of two short syllables to represent a long, stressed syllable (syn-, ekk, brotn) and the alliterating of any vowel with any other vowel, including j(onatas, audar, ekk) are also eddic characteristics. Although it is possible to derive all the necessary elements of the rímr from native Icelandic literary material, the sudden appearance of the genre and lack of any evidence for a period of development leading to the basic features of diction and meter indicate that outside influence provided the models for the earliest rímr.

The name of the genre itself is a borrowing, cognate with French rime, a term that spread to all the Germanic languages, including Middle English, Middle Low German, and Middle Dutch, where the meaning was expanded to refer to an entire poem. The term was finally chosen over other loanwords, such as visa, dæus, or spil, which were sometimes also employed in the rímr themselves probably due to Middle English influence, where the sense of “story” is also present (cf. Old English ríman ‘to recount’). Because some of the meters found in medieval Latin, Irish, English, and German are similar to the simpler, earlier rímr meters, probably one or more of these languages supplied the impetus for the adoption of the genre in Iceland, but there is little doubt that skaldic and eddic poetry soon influenced the imported poetry.

In addition, the influence of the older, French-inspired dance (Icelandic dans, dansleik, hringleik) cannot be lightly discounted. Dances are mentioned in Iceland from the 12th century, and the fact that church leaders disapproved of them so vigorously indicates that dancing must have been enjoying great popularity at that time. Dances might have encouraged the use of straightforward word order and set the stage for the rapid acceptance of the introductory amorous verses in the rímr. Even the term mansqur is known from the dances.

Melodies, which also accompanied the dances, may have influenced the recitation of the rímr. Although the oldest musical notation for rímr is preserved in 17th-century MSS, melodies for the individual rímr are apparently much older. They extended over the entire stanza, being repeated for each successive stanza until the end of the canto. The reciter (kvæðamáður) chanted a capella, although he might be joined in harmony by a second reciter.

Before the Reformation, it was unusual for poets to identify themselves in their work, indicating that the newer poetry might at first have been considered inferior to skaldic verse. After 1600, the practice of having a poet name himself in his work becomes quite common, although identification is often made difficult because the names might be obscured by the use of synonyms for a name that had been broken down either into its compounding elements or into the runic equivalents of its letters.

After 1600, rímr continued to increase in popularity in Iceland, with over 1,000 such poems having been preserved. About half that number were composed in the 19th century, and although the popularity of rímr subsequently declined sharply, these poems continued to be composed and performed into the 20th century. After the Reformation, the saga-derived rímr became the source for rímr-derived sagas, but the exact number of these works is currently unknown.


Peter A. Jørgensen

[See also: Eddie Meters; Eddie Poetry; Heiti; Kennings; Love Poetry; Skaldic Meters; Skaldic Verse; Snorra Edda]

Romances see Riddarasögur

Rómverja saga ("The Saga of the Romans") is an Icelandic translation of Sallust's Bellum Iugurthinum and Coniuratio Catilinae, and Lucan's Pharsalia. The saga is preserved in two redactions: the older (A) in AM 595a-b 4to (second quarter of the 14th century), the younger (B) in AM 226 fol. (second half of the 14th century), of which AM 225 fol. is a copy, and in some younger fragments. The A-redaction is fragmentary, the beginning and ending, among other parts, are lost. B is complete, but revised and
abridged. Nonetheless, B preserves a few more original readings than A, which shows that it does not reproduce the common original without alterations. The translation of Sallust in the A-redaction is quite accurate, so that it has been possible to determine to which group of Sallust MSS the Latin original belonged. The transition between Sallust's two works is based on Lucan's second book and the Lucan scholia. The translation of Lucan is much freer than that of Sallust and greatly abbreviated. It opens with a section on the oldest history of Rome and history prior to Pharsalia. Only the beginning of this introduction is preserved in A, but a longer section is rendered in AM 764 4to (printed in the 1980 facsimile edition), which continues with a short extract from the Lucan text. In the B-version, this introduction is much abridged. Here, the narrative extends beyond Lucan's account and ends with Augustus's victory and the birth of Christ. The extracts in AM 764 4to show that this was also the case in the A-version. In AM 594 4to, on two originally blank pages preceding the Lucan material, there is inserted in a slightly younger hand another section on the oldest history of Rome ending with the account of Romulus ("Upphaf Rómverja," printed by Konráð Gíslason, 1860: 381–5). This section is based on the original introduction to Lucan and on Martin of Troppean's chronicle, and was obviously added to the saga later. Meissner (1903) incorrectly asserted that both introductions were later additions, and accordingly omitted the introduction to Lucan in his edition (1910).

Hofmann (1986) has convincingly argued that Veraldrasaga borrowed a number of direct quotations from Rómverja saga in the section on the history of Rome. Accordingly, the composition of Rómverja saga must be dated to the 1180s at the latest, and probably originated in the same milieu as Veraldrasaga, i.e., in the circle of the episcopate in Skálholt.

The style of Rómverja saga (in A) is classical. Rhetorical adornments and poetic embellishments are left out (especially in the Lucan text); Latin technical terms are often aptly translated, although misunderstandings do occur. The translator shows a certain independence in toning down Lucan's strong criticism of Caesar and in a more objective treatment of the civil war.


[See also: Veraldarsaga]

Royal Administration and Finances

1. DENMARK. During the Middle Ages, Denmark developed from a domain household into a tax-levying state. This process was not completed until the latter half of the 16th century, and although this development cannot be followed in all details, its importance can hardly be doubted. Major stages in this development are the breakdown after 1227 of the realm of King Valdemar Sejr ("the victorious"), complete upon his death in 1241. His death left his successors, his three sons with Berengaria, to compete among themselves for supremacy, aided by various German princes who, in return for military assistance, obtained royal estates in Denmark in fief. From 1332 until 1340, Denmark was totally given in pawn to the counts of Holstein, and it was not until the years after 1360 that King Valdemar Atterdag ("ever-day") succeeded in restoring an autonomous Danish state on a new basis.

After kingship had been established in the late Viking period, royal administration seems to have been based upon the large estates belonging to the king himself and those of his major chieftains. Military defense was the most important objective of all royal administrations, and the leding, or levy, developed into a strong and well-adjusted organization of maritime warfare. Its origins in ancient Scandinavian kinship society have long been debated, but no conclusions have been arrived at, except perhaps for a recent theory that the skipæn as a unit in the leding framework can be identified with the ancient estates of major Viking chieftains. The leding fleet, given each year to the king at his disposal, is one ship built and furnished for sixteen weeks by each skipæn, and manned by peasants divided into havner, one havne consisting of from three to eight men who were to alternate in rendering actual military service on board the ship. To govern this whole process, there were strict rules for the division of burdens among the peasants, and a strong role of leadership on the part of a royal styresmand, who supervised the delivery of foodstuffs and furnishings to the campaign, and who was also responsible for manning the ship. If there were insufficient men, he had the power to order people out, even if the peasant in question had the right to refuse if there was anyone in his havne who had not served on the ship since he himself had served last.

From 1157, when King Valdemar den Store ("the great") obtained the Crown, the dynasty of the Valdemar kings built strong castles throughout the realm and conscripted peasants to maintain them. In Old Danish, the word inne may have covered all forms of taxation, but it may also have meant specifically peasants' work on the king's fortifications in the realm. Åegt points linguistically to burdens of transportation of the king and his household in their endless traveling throughout the realm. Redskud is presumably delivery of foodstuffs on requisition of royal officials, while stud, to be yielded in the spring and during the winter, normally is paid in oats for the king's horses. A survey of royal income in the year 1231 has come down to us in a MS from about 1300 called Hoveddykket, i.e., the main part of "King Valdemar's Land Register," which has sometimes inappropriately been considered a Danish counterpart to the English Domesday Book. The MS is a copy of, among other things,
texts from the royal chancery; but why the copy was made at such a relatively late date and why in the monastery of Søra are questions that have never been answered. The *Hovedstykket* proves that estates at the disposal of the king were of three kinds; they were property of the Crown, or they were _kongeleve_ and belonged to whoever occupied the Danish throne at a given time, or they were the king's hereditary estates, _patrimonium_. The *Hovedstykket* illustrates how royal estates were administered from castles and other strongholds in the realm, and it is an important source of information about their relative size and value.

Several estates would furnish specific yearly deliveries to the king's household, and all of them were obliged to provide housing and maintenance for the king on his travels; _gæsteri_ ("maintenance") is normally measured in nights. Our insight into the functionings of royal administration in the time of the Valdemars, however, is dimmed by the fact that the _leding, gæsteri, ægt, stud, inne, and redskud _in the course of time all came to mean simply taxes.

From the outset, the _leding_ was probably intended to be replaced by mere taxation, as in years when the king had no enemy to move against, and when he profitably might use the peasants' pretensions for other purposes. He would then dispose of deliveries and services from all _leding_ districts corresponding to an actual sixteen-week campaign. Even in years when the _leding_ was actually ordered out, there were payments made by those who lived too far from the sea to give service in person; they were charged with a tax called _kværsæde_ (for sitting-behind). From the middle of the 1200s, when warfare changed to favor professional cavalry, the _leding_ may be supposed to have been absolved continuously.

Cities founded on ground belonging to the king or the Crown were often granted favorable conditions for a certain period of time, but were later taxed with a yearly contribution, _midsommergæld_ or _armegæld_, a tax on hearths to be paid on Midsummer's Day, resting on the theory or reality that the cities were royal property.

In the 1200s, when royal power in Denmark was the object of continuous strife among branches of the royal family after the death of King Valdemar Sejr, royal estates, with all their normal income, were often pawned to princes in the service of the king who then were obliged to serve the king in warfare on conditions corresponding to the value of their pawns. A series of misfortunes in royal Danish foreign policy in the years leading up to 1332 resulted in all royal estates and incomes being given in pawn to the counts of Holstein for a sum of 200,000 silver marks; Danish royal castles fell into the possession of Holstein noblemen, who themselves were the counts' creditors.

From 1340 onward, King Valdemar Atterdag, who had spent his youth abroad and now accepted the realm on conditions set up by the counts of Holstein and their allies, managed to restore the kingdom of Denmark financially in the course of little more than twenty years. He established a strong military organization on the basis of the royal estates, intended both for inner coercion and for international warfare, and he entered into close cooperation with the Church, which allowed him to dispose of ecclesiastical property nearly as if it had been royal in return for concessions in other ecclesiastical rights and duties. In this way, King Valdemar was able to draw revenue from taxation, in money or in kind from his other subjects. His success in creating a financial structure was favored by a shift in population from the countryside to the cities, which allowed him and other feudal lords to redistribute their holdings in a way favorable to their intentions, to collect large estates, and at the same time to normalize the minor dependent holdings in size and yield. Another important factor was growing dependence upon the Hanseatic cities, which became the gateway to world economy for Danish commercial and speculative enterprises. From the 1330s until the end of the century, no Danish coinage was issued, and foreign coin circulated freely in Denmark.

Under Valdemar and his daughter, Margrethe, who succeeded to the realm in 1375 on behalf of her minor son Olaf, the royal holdings grew in size and value because of vast acquisitions that, at least officially, were termed reductions of lost crown property to its former state. They laid the basis for a more consolidated royal economy in the 1400s, even if administration of royal estates and income henceforth, for internal political reasons, had to be given to magnates of the realm on more liberal terms and for longer periods of time than had hitherto been normally the case. Gradually, in the later Middle Ages, the corporation of the Council of the Realm (the _Rigsråd_) came to consider itself, in its capacity as representative of all servants of the Crown, as major guarantor of the Crown's integrity, to be observed especially when royal power was handed over from one monarch to another.

One constant and important source of royal income comprised dues and customs from the Scanian Fairs. They had existed apparently from time immemorial, based upon the abundant autumn herrings fisheries in the Sound, but they were reorganized along western European models in the middle of the 1200s. The king issued his coinage each year during the market period, and he enforced an exchange rate with foreign currency most favorable to Denmark. At the same time, he levied dues on all grants yielded to foreign visitors to the market, to be paid in Danish coinage, and an export customs payment, to be paid in Flemish coinage for the traffic to western Europe or in Hanseatic coinage, i.e., Lübeck coinage for the traffic across the Baltic. The Scanian customs system no doubt is a precursor of the Sound Toll dues, its importance being mainly that it was paid in foreign currency.

During the entire Middle Ages, the king levied a trading and consumption tax in all cities and marketplaces, and the chancery might levy dues on all judicial decisions, the issuing of charters, and the like. These taxes, however, could never have reached the levels of income derived from royal estates and foreign trade.


2. NORWAY. The early Norwegian monarchy developed no machinery of government by which various parts of the kingdom could be held together beyond the lifespan of each king. The monarchs were hardly capable of ruling directly more than a core
territory, through which they would progress with their hird, or retinue, to consume the proceeds in kind of royal estates and other sources of income. But there were limits to the size of territory that could be controlled by a single king in this way.

A king who wanted to unite the land under his rule could not do so without the help of local chieftains, who possessed an inherited power base that the king as yet lacked in many districts. At best, he could make the chieftains exercise public authority on his behalf and render military support in return for a share of royal income and power. Such a system of government would, however, cut both ways. The chieftains tended to cooperate with the king only as far as it served their own interests.

From the reign of King Ólafur II Haraldsson (1015/6-1028) can be traced the title of lendr madr (“lent man”), a person who in return for fealty and service was provided with the income of royal land in addition to his own. Both local chieftains and prominent freemen of the peasant society were made lendr menn and thus tied closer to the monarchy. In this fashion started the incorporation of the magnates of the country into the hird as royal liegemen and the leading rank of a service aristocracy. Over the years, the hird came to function as a corps of administrative personnel. Within its framework was built up a machinery of both local and central government, in the end covering the whole of Norway, together with the “tributary” islands west over the sea.

From Ólafur Haraldsson’s reign is also attested the local office of royal ármadr (“servant, messenger”). In the sagas, the ármadr appears as a manager of royal estates whose authority would also extend over public matters. In the 12th-century provincial codes, he represents the king locally in fiscal, judicial, and military matters. There were hardly enough ármenn to take care of local administrative tasks all over the country, since the law code of the Gulapingslog implies that there would not be such an official in every large county (lykt) of West Norway. This lack may help to explain why the provincial law codes cast the lendr madr in much the same role as the ármadr. He was probably to represent the king in districts without ármenn, and otherwise to support the ármadr in carrying out his duties as a more regular royal servant.

In the more important towns of the kingdom, a royal official called a gjalðkeri can be traced back to at least the first decade of the 12th century (in Trondheim). Like the ármadr, he represented the king in a general civil and military capacity. He was head of urban administration and organized the urban assembly, the ping or móð.

A regular system of local administration that covered the whole country was only gradually established from the latter half of the 12th and throughout the 13th centuries. The mainstay of the system was the office of systlumadr, comparable to that of the English sheriff. The systlumadr was charged with more extensive fiscal, legal-administrative, and military duties than the ármadr. He combined the regular administrative service of the ármadr with the social standing of the lendr madr, which is revealed by the fact that most lendr menn, or “barons,” as they were also called from the 1270s, served as systlumenn. In the course of the 13th century, the kingdom was fairly systematically subdivided into administrative districts called syslur (sing, sysl), each controlled by one or two systlumenn. Altogether there were more than fifty such officials, being paid mainly by a share of the legal fines they collected on behalf of the king. If the sysla contained a town, the systlumadr would take up residence there and head the town administration. In the more important towns, he would support and partly control the gjalðkeri in his function as a more direct urban official.

From the late 12th century, the local administration of justice was increasingly handled by the royal logmadr (“lawman”). His original task was to instruct the ping courts on points of law. But his instruction increasingly acquired the character of judgment, and was legally defined as such from 1260. The law codes of King Magnús lagabættir (“law-mender”) from the 1270s define in greater detail the role of the lawman as well as that of the systlumadr, with whom he was to act in concert in the enforcement of law. In the following period, ten lawmen, each within his own law province, delivered judgments and passed sentences, partly in sessions of their own courts, partly within the framework of local and regional ping. Like the systlumenn, the lawmen tended to take up residence in towns. The larger towns of Bergen and Trondheim were given special urban lawmen.

In 1308, a regional royal treasurer or fehirdhíðir resided in the royal castle or palace of each of the four most important towns of the kingdom: Bergen, Trondheim, Oslo, and Tønsberg. Into his treasury, the systlumenn and other officials of the pertaining region paid the royal incomes for which they were accountable, and from here payments were made on behalf of the king.

In the early kingdom, there was no other organ of central government than an itinerant king and his private hird. The development of a more elaborate system of central administration took place on well-known European lines. Within the hird, offices of the royal household, above all that of the stallari (“marshal”), were entrusted with public functions and gradually acquired the character of offices of state. In the latter half of the 13th century, the chancellor emerged as head of a royal writing office, which developed into what may be termed the first “department of state” in Norway. Writing had been put to use in royal administration at least from the mid-12th century. But it took more than a century before writing became a regular means of accounting, record keeping, and communication between the central government and local districts.

In the Middle Ages, the king never completely ceased to be itinerant. But from the late 12th century, he would rarely stay outside the leading towns of the kingdom for long periods. Bergen in the 13th century became what may be termed the first real political capital of Norway, in its capacity as the most important royal residential town, the chief meeting place of royal assemblies, and the rallying point of incipient agencies of central government.

In the reign of King Håkon V Magnusson (1299-1319), Oslo became the center of the royal chancery. In the late Middle Ages, when the monarchy moved abroad, the two towns functioned as more or less coordinate centers of administration, Bergen for North and West Norway with the tributary Atlantic islands, Oslo for East Norway. Sections of the permanent royal council, later the “Council of the Realm” (Old Norse ríkisins rád, Latin consilium regni), were resident in Bergen from the beginning of the 14th century, later also in Oslo.

The early monarchy probably to some extent based itself on riches acquired by the Viking methods of plunder and trade. Still, the permanent and stable element of its economy must have been the yield of royal estates, supplemented by contributions of food, lodging, and transport from the peasants during the progress of king and hird. The maintenance of peace and order by an itinerant king was probably an early additional source of income, in the form of legal fines and confiscations (sakarfelagir). The population also contributed economically to the defense system of the kjóðingr.

During the prolonged military struggle for territorial unification, the monarchy confiscated considerable quantities of land
from defeated opponents as it gained footholds in various parts of the country. In the 11th and 12th centuries, agricultural land was no doubt the main source of royal income. Over the years, however, it was given away at greater speed than it accrued, above all in the form of donations to ecclesiastical institutions. In the first half of the 14th century, the Crown, according to the latest estimate, hardly had at its disposal more than about 7 percent of the land of the country in terms of value. It may by this time have received more of its revenue from the sakeyr. Its third main source of income was the part of the leððang that, from the 12th century onward, had gradually been converted into an annual tax, the first state tax of Norway.

The economy of the Crown also rested on regal rights of uncertain fiscal importance. The king claimed ownership of what nobody else possessed: commons (in the sense that people who started new farms there became his tenants), property without heirs, treasure trove, illosam, and jetsam. His monopoly of mining could be turned to account. He claimed the right of preemption of all goods arriving at Norwegian ports. From 1294, he imposed a fixed duty on foreign ships calling there. Foreign traders had some time earlier been subjected to an export duty on herring from East Norway, and for a period in the first half of the 14th century had to pay both import and export duties on further goods.

The royal revenues from territories outside Norway proper are little known. After the annexation of Iceland in 1262-1264, the peasants there paid a tax of homespun (vaðmal) to the Norwegian Crown, but information is lacking about the taxes paid from the other tributary islands of the Atlantic. The king had the right to sakeyr from Iceland, Greenland, the Faroe Islands, Shetland, and Orkney, and had estates in some of the islands. The right to trade with and to exact tribute from the “Finns” or Lapps (Saami) in the north became a royal monopoly of some importance.

The royal revenues were paid mainly in a narrow selection of goods. Consequently, it was necessary for the king and his servants to trade in order to procure other commodities and cash.

The financial basis of the high-medieval Norwegian Crown was rather weak. The decline of population and production in the latter part of the 14th century must have altered the fiscal situation drastically for the worse. As a consequence of the financial crisis, the administrative machinery of Norwegian state government was strongly reduced. As the monarchy moved abroad, the central government of Norway came more and more to be directed from Denmark. The prelates and magnates of the Council of the Realm, who were to function as a consultative and sanctioning body at the king's side in the government of Norway, had no central administrative apparatus at their disposal. The Norwegian chancellor was largely reduced to an issuer of certain formalized judicial documents, and the surplus of royal revenues was sent to Denmark from the regional treasurers. During throne vacancies, royal minorities, and longer royal absences, there functioned up to 1387 a chairman of the council and leader of Norwegian state government in the person of the chancellor or the dróttseti (“steward”), corresponding to the Danish drost and the Swedish drost. A dróttseti was also appointed for further periods up to 1483. The archbishop of Trondheim occupied a strong position in the council, and acted as its de facto leader toward the end of the Middle Ages.

In local administration, the syslumen in the late Middle Ages were generally replaced by the private bailiffs (Norwegian foder, sing. flogd) of holders of larger royal lén or fiéls. These “vassals” were generally more autonomous royal representatives and held their lén on more favorable fiscal terms than the high-medieval syslumen. The captains of the royal castles of Bergen, Trondheim, Oslo, and Tønsberg came to combine the earlier functions of local syslumard and regional treasurer. They exercised direct authority over a castle lén that tended to expand toward the end of the Middle Ages, and indirectly controlled other lén by virtue of their superior fiscal authority and greater military resources. Thus, they functioned as especially trusted and often rather independent middlemen between a king who resided in Denmark and his Norwegian subjects. The captain of the strategically important Bohus castle at the Gota River also acquired a dominant position, while the castle of Tønsberg lost its importance toward the end of the Middle Ages.

The disintegration of a central Norwegian administration and the more private exercise of local administration by the lén holders led to a greater autonomy for local districts and towns. The leading members of local society came to play a more important part in public affairs, in the capacity of town councilors and men sworn to take part in the decisions of local and regional jongs (Norwegian lagrettemenn). In local rural districts, so-called lensmen, recruited from peasant society, increasingly functioned as helpers of the foder. And the royal gjaldkeri changed into the flogd of the town (Norwegian byfogd), functioning under the town council.


Knut Helle
play an important role in the local government throughout the Middle Ages.

With the introduction of a heavily armed and armored cavalry patterned after the international model, and with the construction of completely new castles, the Crown came to have different financial needs, since building and furnishing permanent houses and maintaining permanent garrisons were costly enterprises. The castles also served as residences for the ambulatory court. As a consequence, standing taxes and different fees replaced personal service, leading to new collection systems and administrative districts. Such military and administrative changes had great importance for the consolidation of royal power, which at the same time was strengthened through cooperation with the Church.

Administrative procedures and enlargement of the administration from the middle of the 13th century came as a direct consequence of the new military need. The construction of defensive works had to be maintained, and soldiers required weapons, clothing, food, and money, as well as feed for the horses. To fill these and other needs, the incomes in money and payment in kind, which until then had been collected in storage houses in the demesne of the Crown in the district, were sent to the castle of the province. The castle thus became the center of the territory, defended and administered by a commander responsible for that territory. If the castle lay directly under the king's control, it was administered by his bailiff. If it was granted by the king to a nobleman, the captain stood in the latter's service. The main duty of the captain was to act as commander and be responsible for the defense of the castle and the surrounding territory; he thus had certain financial and administrative duties.

The king directly disposed of income from a Crown-administered bailiwick. The bailiff was required to maintain accounts of incomes and expenses. How the bailiff was paid is not clear, but some part of the tax collection must have fallen to his share. Or he may have had a separate fief of estate and income inside or outside the bailiwick in addition to the income (immunity from taxation) he received for his ordinary service.

Male members of the royal family, especially the younger brothers of the reigning king, received duchies. Even younger members of the royal family received maintenance provinces (donatio propter nuptias), comprising a demesne of the Crown with income from the district. In the beginning of the 14th century, a castle was given along with a province, but this eventually came to pose a threat to the reigning king, and was later forbidden by law. Provinces with or without a castle to defend and maintain consisting of fiefs of estates and income were also given to individuals outside the royal family in recognition of service to the Crown or in pledge.

In the Middle Ages, the kings were always short of money, and to pay their debts bailiwicks as well as certain sources of income were pawned. Such territory was given with all the king's ordinary sources of income. The right to impose extra taxes and high fines, however, was reserved for the king. The possessor of the pledge was guaranteed a certain yearly minimum yield from the province in question. The pledge conditions could be set up either in such a way that the annual collection was deducted from the main debts, or else it was paid in one lump, at which time the pledge reverted to the king. In the first case, it was a question of amortizing the debt. Otherwise, the collection functioned as the holder's interest. Even if the heirs of the province holder were included in the pledge agreement, as was often the case, few examples from the period show that the fee passed to the heirs of the province holder. That a province was pledged again by the holder was common.

The pledged fief gave the province holder a free hand. The defense and administration of the territory passed completely to him. He manned and equipped the castle and had his own bailiffs and civil servants. The promise to keep the castle to assist the king or his heirs was the only connection between the Crown and the province holder.

The earliest castles were built seemingly as protection against external enemies in the east and west, and then at watercourses leading into key districts in the interior. Nature itself offered a good defense. The country was, on the whole, sparsely populated; mountains and forests made the terrain difficult to penetrate. Lakes and bogs formed a natural defense in the summertime; during the winter, sledges made passage on the frozen waterways relatively easy.

The first citadel-type fortresses were located at such key positions. In Stockholm, the castle was placed at the outflow of Lake Malaren into the Baltic. Nyköpinghus was located farther south, and Ståkeborg even farther down the coast, protecting the rich central districts of Östergötland. Kalmar appears in contemporary sources as the most important castle on the east coast. It was situated just north of the contemporary border with Denmark, and at the same time guarded the passageway through Kalmarund. Borgholm on the isle of Öland was similarly situated. The fortification found in Jönköping at the southern shore of Lake Vättern guarded the south of the realm, and farther south forests formed natural barriers. As a consequence of political conditions during this period, there was not a particularly large territory for the Swedish Crown to defend on the west coast. The old town Lõdõse at the Gota River had a castle, and somewhat later Axvall was built not far from the episcopal see of Skara. All these castles had large bailiwicks, because the income of the king and the Crown was quite limited. In other words, a large territory was required to support the castle. This does not mean, however, that all territories at this time were bailiwicks of the castle.

The struggles for the throne within the reigning dynasty during the first decades of the 14th century involved these castles; Nyköpinghus and Ståkeborg were destroyed. After Magnus Eriksson was elected king in 1319, a relatively peaceful period followed, with few castles being built. Finances in any case did not allow the construction of large buildings, especially not after the redemption of the former Danish provinces Scania and Blekinge in 1332. On the contrary, Kalmar castle was pawned, something that was possible because it was no longer a boundary castle. Lõdõsehus lost its importance and came to be replaced by fortresses at Lindholm and Álvsborg at the mouth of the Gota River.

The period is distinguished by extensive, consolidated territories, resulting in part from the disappearance of several castles. Thus, not only the old Nyköping bailiwick, but almost all of middle Sweden was under the castle in Stockholm. During the civil wars of 1350 and 1360, castles were again constructed. During the German regime from 1363, a number of small private castles were built that would later be transferred to the king's possession and become an integral part of the administration division. Nyköpinghus was rebuilt, and the castle became the center of a large pawn-province complex. To Nyköpinghus now belonged not only the bordering parts of Södermanland, but also the more
distant territories of Dalarna and Norrland in the north. For protection of the important iron and copper export from the mines in middle Sweden, castles were built in Örebro, Köping, and, later, Västerås.

Under King Albrecht of Mecklenburg, nephew of King Magnus Eriksson, the administration came under strong German influence. Nevertheless, the struggle with the deposed kings Magnus Eriksson and Hakon Magnusson, who held territory in the west, and their followers continued a long time. Toward the end of this period, after the Mecklenburgs had been driven out in 1388/9, and Queen Margrethe, and later Erik of Pomerania, had ascended the throne, the division of the country into several smaller administration units had progressed far. In Södermanland, for example, a new castle was built by Bo Jonsson (Grip), a wealthy magnate who had been the leader of the opposition to German dominion in the years 1370-1380. During this period, Norrland became more prominent. Some fortresses were built there, but the coastal territories farthest north were under the administration of Korsholm, a castle on the eastern shore of the Gulf of Bothnia, in the Finnish territory, which then belonged to Sweden.

The process of administrative division suddenly came to a halt during the 1434 revolt of the people under the leadership of Engelbrekt Engelbrektsson. The first assault was directed against Borgholm, the center of a hated bailiwick in Dalarna, not far from Kopparberg and the copper mine. Almost half of the castles of the realm were completely destroyed or seriously damaged. The result was a return to the maintenance of larger territories under the remaining citadels, which on the whole were the strongest and most important ones.

The Swedish Crown typically administered house and land through its own bailiffs, which at least in principle meant that the income went directly to the national treasury (fiscus). But in practice, the collection was often already mortgaged long before it was received by the bailiff and the officials in the districts. The Crown suffered from a constant lack of liquid assets and income from the relatively primitive agrarian society. The agrarian crisis of the 14th century worsened the situation. At the same time, the Scandinavians started to lose international merchant shipping to the Hanseatic ports. During the second half of the 14th century, the pledge fee became the predominant form of administration.

Queen Margrethe understood the need to assert royal power, however, and looked after the interests of the Crown by confiscating provinces and estates, and by levying harsh taxes. During her reign, when Sweden practically was ruled from Copenhagen, crown administration with strong centralization was firmly asserted. But at the death of the queen, when Erik of Pomerania, a young relative whom she had selected as her successor, came to the throne, the strength of the Crown diminished.

At the end of the Middle Ages, about half of the farms were owned by fee holders. The rest of the soil was farmed for landowners. Aristocratic and ecclesiastical land holders were exempt from crown tax, while at the same time they could collect taxes from their own lands. And although the Crown placed certain restrictions on tax exemption, the income from taxation was nonetheless comparatively insignificant. Given the often precarious financial situation of the Crown, however, the revenue duty was a standard theme in domestic politics. In view of its financial needs, the Crown imposed additional taxes, which tended to become permanent. Typically, the taxes overlapped, and were constantly changed in different ways. Thus, the new tax paid in kind, which was added to the old legal taxes in 1403, is considered to have been a severe additional tax, which nevertheless became part of the standing structure.

There were, as well, significant variations in the taxes imposed within local districts. Much rested on local agreement between the representatives of the Crown and the taxpayers. The organization in the administrative territories, and local regulations and statutes, settled what was to be considered the ordinary tax in a given region. Bailiffs and others were responsible for overseeing the details of the taxation system. Yet the Crown had only a general idea about its sources of income or revenues, and accounts were maintained showing only approximate sums expected from the bailiwicks.

While the preserved source material illuminating the tax system is fragmentary, we do know that, at times, the taxes were burdensome. Grievances over hard taxes and tax collection are common in contemporary sources, not least in connection with the Engelbrekt insurrection in 1434. But how these taxes affected the private individual is impossible to determine. The Crown also received income in money (as opposed to goods or service in kind) from customs, minting coins, and the taxation of certain towns.

During the 15th and early 16th century, Sweden joined the other Nordic countries in a union. The period was characterized by incessant fighting for control between the king of the Union and the Swedish aristocratic council members. Events came to a head with the election of a regent to lead the council and govern the country as a republic, thus bringing to a halt for a long time the king's demand for control of Sweden. The Swedish council in turn attempted to curtail the power of the king through constitutional means.

The period after Erik of Pomerania's fall is characterized by a decentralized province administration. Most of the castles and provinces were in the possession of members of the State Council as fees in exchange for service. This arrangement implied that the feudal lords received Crown income from their respective provinces for their part in the defense and administration of these provinces. As during the Mecklenburg regime in the 14th century, the territory of the province of the Crown was often limited. There was again a danger of the kingdom being dissolved. Attempts at the middle of the century to subjugate the provinces under the Crown and royal bailiwick administration were in vain.

The period after 1504, like that before 1434, has been the object of special studies of the administrative system. To coordinate and increase the financial resources of the central power, territories that lacked a castle to maintain were consolidated. Income from the territories in the central, northern, and eastern (Finnish) areas went to maintain the castles in Västerås, Åbo (now Turku in Finland), and especially Stockholm, which functioned as administrative center. This Crown-administered territory was composed in such a way that most of the collected income was received in cash, iron, and grain, although other goods, such as bulls from farms and provinces in Gotland, also formed an integral part of the tax collection.

The bailiffs of these castles stood in the service of the national manager (riksföreståndaren), from whom they took orders with regard to tax conveyance, sale of goods, and other aspects of tax collection. Thus, the bailiff at Västerås castle had to relinquish most of the iron revenue as well as a part of his other collected taxes to the central administration. From there, the goods were easily transported to Stockholm, either on the ice of the Mälaren
in winter or by boat in summer. Because of this arrangement, the Västerås bailiff was dependent upon Stockholm to replenish deficiencies in his stores.

The whole taxation structure, with its strong centralization, was intended to keep Stockholm as strong as possible. Furthermore, in order to ensure continued surplus, those provinces that were best connected with Stockholm, providing easy access to available revenue, were centrally administered. Other provinces were granted exemption from taxes in lieu of service, implying that the national manager could not make financial claims upon the feudal lords in the form of a province collection for the national treasury, but could only collect extra taxes.

The process of stabilizing the finances of the Crown that continued from the end of the 15th century came to be completed under King Gustav Vasa. Confiscation of church property and accumulated revenue after the Reformation in 1527 added considerably to the national treasury. With the sweeping reforms of about 1540, the medieval administrative pattern finally dissolved, and a more uniform tax system along with a central bookkeeping system was established, thus allowing the Crown, for the first time, to form a complete picture of its sources of income.


**Birgitta Fritz**

[See also] Chancery; Coins and Mints; Council of the Realm; Denmark; Feudal Influences and Tendencies; Hird; Iceland; Leidangr; Norway; Royal Assemblies (Parliaments, Estates); Sweden; Ping

**Royal Assemblies (Parliaments, Estates).** The royal assemblies in the three Scandinavian kingdoms cannot be grouped under one designation. They flourish in different epochs in different forms. On the whole, they correspond to the development that, in the rest of Europe, can be observed from the feudal curia in an expanded form to the organized assembly of the estates of the realm.

In Norway, the royal meeting (a contemporary term does not exist) received a firm form in connection with the establishment of the archiepiscopal see in Nidaros (Trondheim) in 1152/3 and the coronation of Magnus Erlingsson in 1163/4. The new law of succession demanded an assembly of bishops, abbots, and men who constituted the hird, plus twelve farmers from each of the five dioceses. This assembly was clearly meant to take over the role of the ping in the taking of a king, the acceptance of new laws, and agreements with the Church. The domestic disturbances during the following half-century allowed no opportunity for this royal assembly. It reached its climax during the reigns of Håkon Hakonarson and Magnus lagabætir ("law-mender"); fifteen known assemblies from 1218 to 1281 with up to eighty participants ("good men"). The number of farmers remains unknown. However, the law of succession was probably not followed strictly. The assemblies were dominated by the king and the archbishop; decisions were made in a smaller circle, but were sanctioned through the acceptance of the participants in the form of acclamation. Any real influence by the farmers, who were not always summoned, cannot be demonstrated. The royal assembly diminishes in importance because of the schism between the state and Church, and does not take place after 1302. It is replaced partly by the Council of the Realm (riksråd), partly by the synods of the Norwegian church province. However, certain swearings of allegiance to kings, e.g., in 1344 and 1442, took place through assemblies of a similar character.

In Denmark, the king's hird-assembly became a meeting (consilium) with the magnates of the nation around the middle of the 13th century. Erik Klipping committed himself in his charter of assurance of 1282 to hold an annual parlamentum quod dicitur hof at Mid-Lent; the domestic designation later became danehof. The most distinguished men of the Church and the secular society (meliores regni) were summoned. But representatives of towns and rural communities could also participate, although without any real influence on the decisions, which were mostly legislation and legal matters. Danehof was the supreme authority of the nation; it could judge between the king and his subjects. It normally met in Nyborg (Funen) in the early summer. Although the meeting appeared again in later coronation charters, it took place more and more irregularly and infrequently, the last time in 1413. The need of the monarch for advice was normally satisfied through the Council of the Realm, in special cases through herredager. In special cases, an appeal was made to the landsting.

So far, with a certain displacement in time, the development is parallel to that seen in Norway. But at the end of the Middle Ages, there was a new royal assembly. In 1468, Christian I summoned the Council of the Realm to Kalundborg (Zealand) along with the nobles, town men, and farmers to judge between him and a group of magnates. The meeting gave sanction to the king's expansion of rights in relation to the vassals. The sporadic royal assemblies, which were later held in Kalundborg from 1482, were formally assemblies of the estates of the realm gathered in order to support the royal power in extraordinary situations. The Council of the Realm and the nobility, bishops, abbots, and representatives of the chapters, plus leading men from the towns and rural com-
munities were summoned. The procedures appear simple; the meeting never obtained a strong position in the political life of the nation. The last assembly of the estates of the realm was held in Copenhagen in 1536, where the term rigsdag (parliament) was used, implying that the power of the Church was broken.

The development in Sweden varied considerably from those in Norway and Denmark. The existence of meetings among the king, the bishops, and the magnates is certainly known from the middle of the 12th century, now and then in the form of the ecclesiastical concilium, but there were no established forms. After a Council of the Realm came into existence in the 1280s, it is difficult to distinguish in the source material between the meetings (parlamentum, consilium) with this group and the meetings with a bigger circle. In the 16th century, the domestic term for the latter was still herredag, i.e., meeting of the lords. The meeting in 1319, where Magnus Eriksson was chosen as king, can be seen as the first real national assembly. In the national landlaw adopted around 1350, the king-nominating assembly was the only prescribed national assembly; decisions about legislation and taxation took place in the various “countries.” The representation was federal, with delegations from seven jurisdictions (“countries”), and from 1362 also from Finland. An assembly similar to the danehof is seen in Magnus Eriksson’s summons to a meeting in 1359; apart from the general participants in the herredag, representatives of the chapters, the towns, and the jurisdictions were also summoned. The task was to reestablish order in the nation, and the groups affected were to certify and strengthen the decisions. Further, two types of national assemblies, with a tendency to merge, can be seen: the king-nominating assembly, which until 1523 was summoned according to the law (in 1544, the hereditary realm was introduced); and assemblies summoned by the Council of the Realm during the periods in which this was governing (1435–1441, 1464–1467, 1470–1497, 1501–1512). In documents and chronicles, these later assemblies are often described as assemblies of the estates of the realm: “bishops, prelates, barons, and knights, town men and all commoners.” But here it is without doubt the old herredag, to which the Council of the Realm, or incidental rulers, summoned the nobility and, more or less explicitly stated, representatives of the towns, the Bergslag (the mining areas in Västmanland and Dalarna), and the rural communities. The actual participation of the various provinces and categories was extremely uneven. The Council needed the support from these groups but made the decisions that concerned politics and policy itself; the assembly as such had no sphere of authority.

A change took place in the 1510s, when the regent used the assembly to strengthen his position against the Council of the Realm. The meeting in Västerås in 1527, where the power of the Church was broken, became epoch making: it is the first meeting that was in reality a meeting of the estates of the realm, but totally directed by the king, Gustav Vasa. During the rest of the 16th century, the royal meetings play an increasingly important role in the nation’s political life. In 1544, the term ständer (“estates”) and in 1561 the term riksdag (“parliament”) were first used. The development is thus to a certain degree contrary to the development in Denmark and Norway.

[See also: Hird, Royal Administration and Finances]

Runes and Runic Inscriptions

1. INTRODUCTION. Runes are the individual letters of the runic alphabet, the oldest and only native system of writing used by the Germanic peoples. This alphabet, called the futhark after its first six letters ($th = ð$), is attested in an older version from about A.D. 150–750 and in later variants. Latin letters, which came in the wake of Christianity, competed with and gradually replaced runes, and only in Scandinavia, because of the late christianization (10th and 11th centuries), did runic writing continue into the Middle Ages. Inscriptions with runes, though often obscure or scanty, are valuable primary sources for the study of primitive Germanic and especially old Scandinavian culture and language. Of about 6,000 known inscriptions, over half are found in Sweden, 1,600 in Norway, and 800 in Denmark.

The older runes (ca. A.D. 150–750). The runic forms were possibly originally meant to be carved with a knife on wooden surfaces, since horizontal lines, which would not be clearly distinguishable from the grain of the wood, were apparently avoided as a rule. Runes have appropriate characteristics for incised letters, consisting basically of straight lines: vertical staves, slanting branches, pointed loops, and angular crooks. The older futhark encompassed twenty-four letters, with some variations in form. (See the standardized representation, with transliteration, in Fig. 151.)

The runic alphabet as such must predate the earliest inscriptions, and its invention has traditionally been fixed around the birth of Christ. Obviously related to the letters in Mediterranean alphabets, runes must owe their creation to the contact of Germanic tribes with literate cultures to the south, and various theories have been produced as to which alphabet was the model: Latin (especially Latin capitals, which is most likely), Greek, or Etruscan/North Italic alphabets (see Düwel 1967: 90–5, Moltke 1985: 38–73). Apparently, some older runic writers believed that the runes were “of divine origin,” as they are termed on the Noleby stone and the Sparlösa stone from Västergötland, Sweden; and in the eddic poem Hávamál, they are connected with Óðinn and seem to be considered his invention. Although the etymology of


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the word "rune" is disputed, its early uses in Germanic languages indicate a relationship with mystery and secrecy.

Each rune had a fixed place in the order of the alphabet and a name that was also a meaningful word. The early names must be reconstructed from later MS sources: *ælu 'cattle, wealth,' *bruz 'aurochs,' *jurisaz 'giant,' *sunsu 'god,' and so on. In spite of attempts to derive them from a Germanic cosmology, neither the special order nor the particular choice of name is understood. The initial sound of each rune name was in principle the sound the rune represented, and the names could thus help carvers to remember which sounds the runes symbols denoted. The runic alphabet has its own graphic and orthographic conventions, which were often typical of early stages of literacy. They include freedom of direction in writing runes (left to right, which predominates as time goes on, right to left, or alternating), the reversing or inverting of individual letters, and the possibility of combining two or more signs, usually with a common stave, into ligatures called "bind runes." Words and sentences are frequently run together, and the same character is as a rule not written twice in succession, even where one word ends and the next begins with identical sounds. The runic alphabet could be divided into three groups, in Old Norse called settir 'families' (or 'groups of eight?'), divisions that Viking Age and medieval scribes used.

The older futhark was well suited for rendering the distinctive sounds of the older Germanic languages. There are nearly 200 known inscriptions in this alphabet, not including bracteate legends (see below). Most are short, consisting of only one or a few words, and many defy interpretation. They reveal few dialectal features in spite of widespread geographic spread; the majority are, however, found in Scandinavia, and are usually considered to be in Proto-Scandinavian. They occur mainly on weapons, jewelry, tools, and stones, poor conditions for preservation probably responsible for the dearth of wooden objects. On precious, military, or everyday objects, one often finds names: of the owner, of the workman who crafted the object, or of the object itself. From the time about 450–550 and with Denmark as their center of distribution come numerous bracteates, thin medallions of gold stamped with a design and frequently an inscription, many of which are garbled or more rune-like than runic (ca. 150 different rune-bearing stamps are represented). Also from Denmark come the golden horns from Gallehus (Jutland), elaborate, presumably cult objects, with the simple legend on one: "I, Hlewagast from Holt (?; holt dweller?; son of Holta-?), made the horn." Several stone inscriptions commemorate deceased persons, while some simply declare who wrote the runes. A few have pictorial additions. The text on the Tune stone from eastern Norway begins, as it is usually read, "I, Wiwian, in memory of Wodurida, the bread-warden (=lord), wrought [the runes]" and continues with statements referring to the stone, three artificial mounds in the marshy coastal landscape. The Anglo-Saxon runic objects include mainly small artifacts, coins, and stones. Foremost among them is the Ruthwell Cross, a large 8th-century stone cross containing in its more than 320 runes portions of an Anglo-Saxon poem also preserved in the Vercelli Book and known as The Dream of the Rood. Also outstanding is the Auzon or Franks Casket, a box of whalebone on which various religious, historical, and legendary situations are presented in carved pictures and long, mainly runic inscriptions, but including some Latin with Roman letters. The Frisian inscriptions all come from artificial mounds in the marshy coastal landscape. The Anglo-Saxon and Frisian futhork (the fourth letter had undergone a sound change: a > o) are closely related, the alphabet being extended in both places to encompass signs for new sounds that had arisen due to phonological changes. Around 800, the Anglo-Saxon futhork reached a total of thirty-one distinct characters used in inscriptions.

The Viking Age (ca. 750–1050). Toward the end of the period of use of the older futhark, major linguistic changes occurred in Scandinavia. Certain vowels, and hence syllables, were lost in a process known as syncope; as a result, independent status was achieved by the new vowel sounds resulting in particular from mutation (umlaut); in addition, the distribution of various consonants was altered. These phonological changes left the older futhark less suited to render the current speech sounds, and the transitional period (ca. 600–750) is characterized by orthographic experimentation. Around 600, initial j disappeared, and the j-rune, in accordance with the phonological change in its name, became an a-rune. The original a-rune, also following the linguistic development of its name, later mainly signified a nasalized a-sound (œ).

Although the linguistic changes led to an increase in the inventory of distinctive sounds in the language, the Scandinavian response was an apparently deliberate reform of the runic alphabet with a reduction in the number of letters and a simplification of many of the forms. Sometime before the year 800, the younger futhark with only sixteen runes emerged. One symbol, therefore, had to represent many sounds: the k-rune, for example, was used for both k and g, and the u-rune stood for u, o, y, 0, or w: The paucity of signs and their ambiguity made the reader's task more difficult. The carver's task was made easier, however, as the apparent principle behind the graphical forms of the new letters, and perhaps the entire reform, was economy. In general, the characters took less room and were easier to write.

There were two closely related initial variants of the sixteen-runue alphabet: the "short-twig runes," which are of simpler form, and the "long-branch" or normal younger runes, which resemble more closely the older runes. See the standardized representation in Fig. 152, where the primary sound value of each sign is listed. Based on their general distribution, the short-twig runes are often called the "Norwegian-Swedish runes," whereas the long-branch runes are known as the "Danish runes." It has usually been assumed that the short-twig runes represented a simplification of
151. The older, 24-rune futhark.

![Image of the older futhark](image)

152. The younger, 16-rune (Viking Age) futharks: (a) the normal runes; (b) the short-twig runes.

a) ![Image of 'a' runes](image)

\[ \text{fubarkgwnijnip\v{e}Rstblemldo} \]

b) ![Image of 'b' runes](image)

\[ \text{fubarkhniasbmlR} \]

153. The Gripsholm stone.

![Image of the Gripsholm stone](image)

154. The medieval runes, the 16-rune alphabet, plus extensions.

![Image of the medieval runes](image)
156. Ownership tag reading "Gunnar owns."

the long-branch runes, but recently strong arguments have been advanced for the primacy of the short-twig runes (see Liestol 1981, Barnes 1987). The long-branch runes are then viewed as a contamination of the short-twig runes and what remained of the older futhark.

The two initial younger futharks appear to be functional variants: the short-twig forms were probably designed as a cursive script for the practical business of everyday communication, whereas the fuller forms of the long-branch runes were more decorative and thus better suited for epigraphic use on stone monuments. Further graphic simplification, far beyond that of the short-twig forms, led to the "staveless" runes, often called "Hälsinge" runes, a Swedish shorthand where the staves have basically been removed and only characteristic strokes of the branches and pockets appear. Regional variations of the sixteen-rune futhark soon developed from the mixing of the two initial variants. In Norway and Sweden, for instance, the long-branch forms of the h-, b-, m-, and r-runes became standard with time.

From Viking and medieval times, there are inscriptions that employ ciphers. Various systems are used, e.g., the replacement of a rune by the following sign, or the indication of a rune by its "family" and number within the family, e.g., \(32 = u\) (that is, the family of six runes beginning with \(f\), which is usually called the third family, and the second symbol in that family, which is \(u\)). Both these systems are found on the 9th-century Rôk stone from Östergötland in Sweden (Og136), an impressive monument commemorating a deadkinsman, with all five faces completely covered with runes; the text, which is partially in verse, contains allusions to Germanic heroic legends. (Concerning the citation of runic inscriptions, e.g., Og136, see "Ed." following the subarticles about medieval inscriptions below.)

Runestone are a hallmark of the Viking Age. As a rule, they are memorial, erected not necessarily on a grave, although many are near grave sites, but in public places or by roads or bridges, and thus visible for those who passed by. Runestones are usually raised stones, but inscriptions on glacial boulders or faces of bedrock also occur. The legends were probably often colored, as statements in various inscriptions imply and remains of pigment on some stones confirm. Runes on stones, especially in the early Viking Age, were cut in successive lines arranged as a rule in vertical rows and often between incised frames; they could be placed along narrow edges or off-center on broad faces. In the later Viking Age, especially in Sweden, they were placed in a band or bands, commonly in the form of a snake with head and tail, on a flat portion of the stone, often toward the edge, and sometimes with added ornamentation in the form of a cross or drawings. The most famous pictures are the illustrations from the legend of Sigurd the Dragonslayer found on the Ramsund rock in Södermanland, Sweden. Memorial inscriptions state who commissioned or sponsored the monument and who was honored by it; usually indicate the relationship between the two, and often contain a description of the dead person or other additions. In spite of their stereotyped nature, they are invaluable sources of knowledge about the Viking Age: development of the language and poetry, genealogy, inheritance, and habits of name giving; settlement, government, and communication; Viking raids and peaceful trading expeditions; and the spread of Christianity and pilgrimages.

The custom of raising rune stones in memory of dead kinsmen or comrades is found early in Denmark, where a total of around 200 are known. The most famous of all Danish rune stones is the 10th-century larger Jelling stone in Jutland (D42), raised by King Harald Gormsson (called "Bluetooth") to honor his parents, although equally an exaltation of the king himself and often called "Denmark's certificate of baptism." It has horizontal lines of runes on all three faces, with, however, pictures of Christ and a beast wrestling with a serpent dominating two of them. The text reads: "King Harald commanded this monument to be made in memory of Gorm, his father, and in memory of his mother, Porvi (Thyre)—that Harald who won the whole of Denmark for himself, and Norway, and made the Danes Christian."

Runestone predominates in the rich Swedish material. Those from the southern provinces of Västergötland, Östergötland, and Småland are more or less contemporary with the Danish ones, whereas those from farther north are generally somewhat younger. In the province of Uppland alone, where the fashion of raising rune stones reached its apex during the 11th century, some 1,300 such monuments are recorded. There were a number of professional rune carvers in Uppland who signed their inscriptions, some of whom are known by name. Among the most famous are Öpir, with over eighty stones to his credit: Near thirty stones are found in the Lake Malar area raised in memory of men who followed Yngvarr vîðforli ("the far-traveler") on an ill-fated exploit to the East during the 11th century. The noblest monument to this expedition, at Gripsholm in Södermanland, reads (S0179; see Fig. 153): "Tola had this stone set up in memory of her son Haraldr, Ingvarr's brother. [In verse:] They fared like men / far after gold / and in the East / gave the eagle food. / They died southward / in Serkland (the Arab caliphates)." Jarlabanki, an 11th-century landed aristocrat from Täby in Uppland, constructed a causeway and recorded his enterprise, as well as an advertisement for himself, on four rune stones. Originally, two stood at each end of the road, and all had more or less the same text (e.g., U164): "Jarlabanki had these stones set up in memory of himself in his own lifetime. And he made this causeway for his soul's sake. And he owned the whole of Täby by himself. May God help his soul." The fashion of erecting rune stones ended in Sweden around 1100, due not to Christianity perse (many of the later stones are definitely Christian), but perhaps due to the new custom of burying the dead in a Christian graveyard at a church and erecting memorials to them at the grave with a text suitting the occasion.

The Viking Age rune stones in Norway date mainly to the 10th and 11th centuries, and number only some sixty. The 3.5-m.-high stone at Oddernes on the southern tip of the country has two inscriptions (N209–10), the older one, from the 10th century, in memory of a deceased person. The younger one, on a narrow side, commemorates the construction of a church on ancestral property during the early 11th century by a man named Eyvindr, who appears to be called the godson of St. Óláfr. The stone from Dyna, just north of Oslo, is a magnificent red sandstone monument decorated with pictures of the Magi under the Christmas star riding to find the Christ child. According to the inscription along one narrow side (N68), it was erected by a woman in memory of her daughter, "the most skillful maiden in Hadeland (the particular region of eastern Norway in which the stone stood)." Norwegian Viking Age objects with runic inscriptions include a wooden pole and bucket from the Oseberg ship burial, a copper kettle from the Gokstad ship burial, and, from the 1060s, coins stamped with moneyers' names in runes.

The Scandinavians took their script with them as they plundered, traded with, and settled or visited other areas, from Russia...
in the East and Turkey and Greece in the South, to Greenland and Iceland in the North and West. Inscriptions are scattered throughout the British Isles and the Faroes, with the only concentration on the Isle of Man. The some thirty Manx inscriptions are mainly on stone crosses from the 10th and 11th centuries with the common memorial formula (which can be extended): "X put up the cross in memory of Y." The personal names on the crosses reveal a mixed society of Celts and Scandinavians who intermarried.

Medieval runes and runic inscriptions (ca. 1050–1500). Changes in both form and sound value for many runes mark the runological transition about 1020–1100 to the Middle Ages. The original a-rune, which in an altered form in the Viking Age usually denoted a nasalized a-sound, came to denote o, in accordance with a further sound change in its name. As an alphabet, the futhark, or more properly futhork after this sound change, still consisted of sixteen symbols, but more signs came into existence and could be used when writing texts. The medieval runes were based on the modified mixtures of short-twig and long-branch runes of the late Viking period, with differentiations and additions making possible the denotation of a greater number of distinctive speech sounds. New symbols were created partly through the practice of adding dots to existing rune forms, a system already in limited use in late Viking times: a dotted i-rune signified e, a dotted k-rune g, and so on. Other new forms came about by specialization of variants; e.g., when the short-twig a-rune was used for ar, the long-branch variant could denote æ. The basic inventory of standard medieval runes is presented in Fig. 154. The representation does not reflect all regional variations in form and sound value.

The introduction of Latin letters during the late 10th or 11th century constituted a cultural gain, but for some time this alphabet was used solely in connection with the Christian faith, and initially only for the writing of Latin. Throughout the Middle Ages, writing with the Latin alphabet was mastered only by a small elite, mainly clerics and nobility. In contrast, the ability to read and write runes must have been widespread. The variety of runic objects found during recent excavations in medieval towns demonstrates that runes were used for a great spectrum of activities. The relationship between Roman letters and runes must have been complementary, the choice of alphabet being partially dependent on the type of message: notes of temporary significance were inscribed with runes on pieces of wood, whereas texts of more permanent character (deeds, royal edicts, voluminous legal, historical, or literary texts) were written in Roman letters on parchment. Some 10 percent of all medieval runic inscriptions are in Latin, mainly those with religious content, such as invocations of saints and prayers.

Runic inscriptions from the Middle Ages are found mainly in the medieval towns and churches of Norway, Sweden, and Denmark (see the individual subarticles below). Runic writing in Scandinavia apparently thrived during the 12th and 13th centuries, continued into the 14th, and declined during the 15th. In the Swedish province of Dalarna, an offshoot of the medieval runic tradition persisted until the early 20th century. Elsewhere in Scandinavia, postformational runic practices are basically learned reconstructions rather than genuine traditions.

Runic inscriptions are found in the entire medieval Scandi­navian realm. Iceland has over seventy, but strangely enough none are preserved much before 1200, the time of the one on the church door from Valþýjskóli. Icelandic inscriptions are usually found on grave slabs or small artifacts, or as marginalia in MSS. Norwe­gian finds from Bergen and Trondhjem sometimes apparently attest to the use of runes by Icelanders who traded in Norway. From Greenland come some seventy-five runic inscriptions that seem to show special phonological and (ortho)graphic characteristics. Notable among the Greenlandic inscriptions are eight wooden runic crosses with Latin or Old Norse texts and the small stone from Kingittorsuaq, Baffin Bay, with a message complete with cryptic runes. From Orkney, there are over thirty inscriptions consisting mainly of 12th-century Norwegian (?) graffiti in the neolithic stone-built grave chamber at Maeshowe, some of which have erotic or humorous content. One carver at Maeshowe terms himself "the most rune-wise man west of the sea [North Sea]." None of the North American "runic" inscriptions, including the Kensington stone from Minnesota, has proven genuine.


James E. Knirk

2. DENMARK. The custom of erecting rune stones in memory of dead kinsmen or comrades seems to have died out in Denmark around 1025, with a few exceptions, mainly due to Swedish influence on the island of Bornholm. Around 1065-1075, runes were used on coins, in competition, however, with Latin letters. One of dead kinsmen or comrades seems to have died out in Denmark (chiefly Lund). On the early, flat Christian moneyers' names occur, many of them English) and the place Christian name) in Roman capitals on the obverse, and on the reverse, in runes, the mint master's name (ca. sixty different moneyers' names occur, many of them English) and the place where the coin was struck (chiefly Lund). On the early, flat Christian moneyers' names occur, many of them English) and the place Christian name) in Roman capitals on the obverse, and on the reverse, in runes, the mint master's name (ca. sixty different moneyers' names occur, many of them English) and the place where the coin was struck (chiefly Lund). On the early, flat Christian moneyers' names occur, many of them English) and the place Christian name) in Roman capitals on the obverse, and on the reverse, in runes, the mint master's name (ca. sixty different moneyers' names occur, many of them English) and the place where the coin was struck (chiefly Lund). On the early, flat Christian moneyers' names occur, many of them English) and the place Christian name) in Roman capitals on the obverse, and on the reverse, in runes, the mint master's name (ca. sixty different moneyers' names occur, many of them English) and the place where the coin was struck (chiefly Lund). On the early, flat Christian moneyers' names occur, many of them English) and the place Christian name) in Roman capitals on the obverse, and on the reverse, in runes, the mint master's name (ca. sixty different moneyers' names occur, many of them English) and the place where the coin was struck (chiefly Lund). On the early, flat Christian moneyers' names occur, many of them English) and the place Christian name) in Roman capitals on the obverse, and on the reverse, in runes, the mint master's name (ca. sixty different moneyers' names occur, many of them English) and the place where the coin was struck (chiefly Lund). On the early, flat Christian moneyers' names occur, many of them English) and the place Christian name) in Roman capitals on the obverse, and on the reverse, in runes, the mint master's name (ca. sixty different moneyers' names occur, many of them English) and the place where the coin was struck (chiefly Lund). On the early, flat Christian moneyers' names occur, many of them English) and the place Christian name) in Roman capitals on the obverse, and on the reverse, in runes, the mint master's name (ca. sixty different moneyers' names occur, many of them English) and the place where the coin was struck (chiefly Lund).

inscriptions, for instance, baptismal fonts, bells, and censers. There are twelve censers made by Master Jakob Red in Svendborg on Funen with different but similar inscriptions in Latin or in Old Danish, each consisting of a master formula along with a sacred name or devotional phrase, like the following in the vernacular on the censer from Hesselager church (D175): "Master Jakob Red of Svendborg made me. Jesus Christ."

Nonepigraphic inscriptions are found especially on objects excavated from medieval Danish towns, particularly Lund, Ribe, and Schleswig, as well as on a few items found elsewhere. These inscriptions are usually on wood, bone, antler, or lead, and consist of futharkers (twelve alone from Lund), owner's inscriptions (like "Bovi owns the graver" on the bronze stuftus from Dalby in Scania), identifications of the items (e.g., tinbl-bein 'twining bone' [for twisting yarn] or skelfnikr, Old Danish skætningar, a kind of polished needle, on bone tools from Lund and Alborg respectively), and finally magic charms, some of them just pretending to be inscriptions, others, mainly on lead, in Latin with roots in the rich liturgical stock of the Catholic Church. The Blesinge inscription, Denmark's longest with well over 400 runes (discovered in 1983), in Latin on a lead plate, begins with a conjuration of the seven sisters (of fever?) and goes on: "I conjure you and invoke you by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, that you harm not this servant of God, neither in eyes nor in limbs nor in marrow nor in any joint of limbs, [but rather] that the strength of the most high Christ may inhabit you. Behold the cross of the Lord! Flee, you hostile adversaries! The Lion of the tribe of Judaea, the Root of David, has conquered. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. Amen. Christ conquers, Christ reigns, Christ rules, Christ liberates, Christ blesses you, defends you from all evil. AGLA. Our Father." (AGLA is a religious charm word.) Frequently, the spells are in corrupt Latin; the lead plate from Odense (D204), for instance, contains a few of the same elements as the Blesinge inscription, but is generally rather confused. The most important charm in the vernacular is Denmark's third-longest runic inscription, on the Ribe rune stick, Jutland, dated to around 1300. It begins with an invocation in the eddic meter fornyrdislag: "Earth I pray guard / and the heaven above, / sun and St. Mary / and healing tongue / to cure the Trembler / when treatment is needed." There follows an exorcism to cast out the demon malaria (the Trembler), a brief narrative section, a threat, and the closing: "Amen, so be it!"

Around 1300, antiquarian interest led to some isolated instances of the writing of runes on parchment, notably in the so-called Codex Runicus of the Scanian Law, and in another MS for a translation of a religious text (Plancus Mariae).
3. NORWAY. Some 500 medieval runic inscriptions were known in Norway in the mid-1950s, for the most part having ecclesiastical associations, and encompassing largely markers in church graveyards, carvings on church walls, statements on church furnishings, and religious formulas on amulets. Over forty medieval gravestones with runic inscriptions are known. Some of the earlier ones have epitaphs reminiscent of hie iacet monuments, especially the earlier ones, the majority were hori­

The majority of inscriptions occurring in an ecclesiastical context are carved into the church buildings themselves. Of the roughly 300 such inscriptions, over two-thirds are in stave churches, the rest in stone churches. A small number commemorate the structure itself. On parts of the interior of the church in Torpo (N110) and Ál (N121), for instance, a 12th-century Pórólfr had written impressive runic legends naming himself as the mas­

More than 600 runic inscriptions, mostly dating to 1150­

The largest group of inscriptions from Bryggen deals with mercantile transactions. Some 110 ownership tags have been identified by text or shape; they are pieces of wood, usually with an inscription like "Einarr owns," "Lucia Grimsdóttir owns," or "Porstein owns me," or simply a personal name like "Eirikr," and whittled in such a way that they can be attached directly or tied to merchant's wares (see Fig. 157). Several other inscriptions from Bryggen indicate ownership but not commercial activities, since they are inscribed directly on the item itself, such as "Jóhann owns" (B4) on an ornamentally carved walrus skull.

More than fifteen business letters and notes were uncovered, including accounting records and packing slips. The letter dispatched by Pórir fagr ("the fair") around 1330 from the south­

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Several inscriptions consist of stereotyped carver's formulas or requests and prayers similar to ones cut into church walls, whereas others provide rare glimpses into private lives and human
relationships. On one surface of a rune stick is carved "Gyða says that you should go home" (B149), perhaps a message from a wife to a carousing husband, and on yet another, "Ingibjorg made love with me when I was in Stavanger" (B390). Folk poetry is also included among the inscriptions, such as the ditty (B493) bylli min unn mer an ek fer af astonu auk af allum huga ("My swain! Love me; I love you, with all my heart and [ciphered runes:] all my mind").

Over thirty pieces of poetry written in runes, many very fragmentary, were unearthed at Bryggen. They range from the simple ditty just quoted to examples of eddic meters and skaldic strophes. The greater part of these verses is erotic, and only one of the metrical texts is otherwise known, a quotation from a stanza by King Haraldr hardraði ("hard-ruler") Sigurðarson, B88. Although some skaldic poems could reflect the activity of Icelanders in Norway, it appears that this art form had not generally died out among Norwegians, as previously assumed. The eddic verses include the following, which is probably a quotation from an older poem, rather than a reflection of genuine pagan feelings (B380):

hæl sejuk ok thiuhum gojom / por pik gi gotepen: pikwethi ("Hail to you, and be of good cheer! May Óðinn receive you; may Óðinn own you").

The over sixty runic inscriptions in Latin include a taste of goliardic poetry, with one inscription (N603) consisting of fragments from two poems preserved in the Carmina Burana. A popular line from Vergil appears a few times, but only once complete (in conjunction with a skaldic love song, B145): Omnia vincit Amor, et nos cedamus Amori ("Love conquers all; let us too yield to Love"). Many of the Latin texts reflect the Christian liturgy, including the Lord's Prayer and the "Hail Mary," although these two usually appear very truncated. The Latin inscriptions also encompass incantations to stop bleeding, protect against blindness, or help during difficult childbirth. Latin-like gibberish appears on magical sticks or amulets, including one sequence of runes having close parallels among charms known from medieval English sources. Two recurring international formulae are the protective word "AGLA" and the palindrome sator arepo tenet operas rotas.


The over sixty runic inscriptions in Latin include a taste of goliardic poetry. The majority come from the provinces of Västergötland, Småland, and Gotland, while the area around Lake Mälaren (the Stockholm/Uppsala area), which has the highest concentration of Viking Age runic stones, has relatively few. On Gotland, legends on grave slabs and carvings or paintings on the plaster of medieval churches dominate, while inscriptions elsewhere show greater variation. The number of medieval inscriptions has increased substantially because of the recent systematic excavations of medieval town centers (especially Old Lødøse, Skara, Nyköping, Söderköping, and Uppsala), the restoration of churches, and scientific fieldwork in connection with the ongoing publication of the corpus. The runic finds encompass objects of wood, bone, and metal, plus brick and plaster. Old Lødøse, which is located some 40 km northeast of Gothenberg, has provided the greatest number of inscriptions from one locality, almost fifty, but the combined interpretable texts would fill fewer than ten lines.

The texts on the early-medieval grave slabs are closely related to those on late Viking Age raised rune stones. A grave slab from the old churchyard at Rådene provides an example of a burial legend in its shortest form (Vg93, 1100a): ṙani laer. gæra sten heena: / xæar a:jaur:sin: ("Rani had this stone made in memory of Peter, his father"). During the later Middle Ages, the basic text is often a Swedish translation of the Latin formula hic actat ("here lies"), for instance, at Västerhejde church (G210, 1300a): +hier liker lair urcibeth hok: hans hus: froya ("Here lies Gairvaldr from Berg [present-day Bjärin] and his wife").

Carvings in the plaster walls of churches are mostly short prayers or signatures. A few important signatures of church builders occur on Gotland and in Västergötland, and the almost illegible inscription from Torpa church (S0337), "Oðulf made the church," provides the name of a stonemason associated with five remarkable 12th-century churches. A tragic event in the history of Hejde church was mentioned on a floor stone that has disappeared (G171): "The church burnt during a procession(?) on (Easter) Saturday; at that time h was the Sunday (rune) and s the prime (rune) in the 13th row [of the Easter table, (i.e., 1492)]."

Church doors, baptismal fonts, and church bells are ecclesi-
astical fixtures that sometimes bear runic inscriptions, either signatures or more extensive and less stereotyped texts. On an iron door mounting from Hörnse church, one reads (G155, 1100s): “Gairvaldr attached the iron to the door.” On the Burseryd baptismal font is written (Sm50, 1200s): “Aribjorn made me, Viökunnar the priest wrote me, and here I shall stand for a while.” The runic bell from Saleby church, one of twelve from Västergötland, is Sweden’s oldest self-dated bell and the oldest with Swedish text (in addition to Latin; Vg210): "Arinbjom made me, Viõkunnr [the name that follows the beginning of the "Hail Mary""] When it was made, it was one thousand two hundred twenty years (± years; 1228) from God’s birth. AGLA. Hail Mary, full of grace. Dionysius be blessed. “AGLA” is a protective formula; Dionysius, the name that follows the beginning of the "Hail Mary" (Ave Maria, Jesus), while one has a poetic runic inscription in Latin (Vg248).

The use of runes for purposes of magic is attested by many small metal sheets, which are often found in connection with graves and Christian graveyards. Remarkable is the Högstena magic formula (Vg216, 1100s), a charm with a heathen air that, freely translated, reads: “I conjure against the spirit of the dead, the revenant, whether he comes riding or running, reveals himself sitting or sinking down (reclining?), comes traveling or flying; in every form the ghost shall deteriorate and die.” The antithesis to this incantation is a little, fragmentary lead cross from Lõðöse, a burial amulet whose runic inscription in Latin is a close quotation from the Catholic burial ritual (Vg264, 1200s; normalized and reconstructed as far as possible): Domine Jesu [Christe], libera de ignibus sicut liberasti (r)es [pueros] de camino ignis ([Lord Jesus Christ, save [the soul] from the flames, as you saved the three young men from the burning oven] (cf. Daniel 3).

The persons responsible for the inscriptions quoted above were obviously literate. In the prose texts preserved on a number of everyday items made of wood, bone, or metal, such as tools and utensils, the common people express themselves, often succinctly, with signatures, prayers, and futhark magic. (The following examples all come from Old Lõðöse.) Statements of ownership like “Helga owns me” (Vg239, 1200s) on a small wooden spade (butter knife?) are quite common; the expression “owns me” is gradually translated, reads: “I conjure against the spirit of the dead, the revenant, whether he comes riding or running, reveals himself sitting or sinking down (reclining?), comes traveling or flying; in every form the ghost shall deteriorate and die.”

Examples are a fairly unidentifiable wooden fragment bearing the inscription (Vg272, 1200s; the first letter a Latin capital) Prhl ‘swhingle, thrashing stick,’ and a small lead sheet with the runes (Vg234, 1200s) unmarka ‘one mark [a unit of weight].’ Occasionally, a longer prose text appears, for example on a weaver’s knife (Vg279, 1100s): “Think of me, 1 am thinking of you; love me, I love you,” a little love verse also found in the Norwegian knife (Vg279, 1100s): “I think of me, I am thinking of you; love me, I love you,” a little love verse also found in the Norwegian. A wooden calendar (Vg233, 1100s) uses runes as numbers. The runic calendar, an eternal calendar for popular reckoning of time employed from the Middle Ages until the 1800s, is largely a Swedish phenomenon; the first seven runes indicate weekdays and are repeated for the 365 days of the year, and the entire row of sixteen runes plus three new rune-like signs signify the nineteen years of the lunar counting cycle. Runes could also be used as numbers in late-medieval counting games.

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Ed.: Sveriges runinskrifter 1-. Ed. Kungl. vitterhets historie och antikvitets akademien. Stockholm: [various publishers, now.] Almqvist & Wiksell, 1900- [the ongoing corpus publication, by county, e., vol. 5 is Västergötlands runinskrifter, inscriptions are cited by an abbreviation for the province plus their registration or publication number, e.g., Vg93 (= Västergötland no. 93); similarly, G (= Gotland), Sm (= Småland), Sö (= Södermanland); ”Runifynd 19XX. ” Formvännen [lye early reports of new finds beginning with: Sveriges runinskrifter, Elisabeth. ”Runifynd 1966.” Formvännen 62 (1967), 261-5; Sverige, Elisabeth. Runifynden i Gamla Lõðöse. Lõðöse—västsvenska medelitidssat, 4. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1982. Lit.: Sveriges runinskrifter, Elisabeth. ”Svensk medeltidsrunologi.” Rig55 (1972), 77-97; Jansson, Sven B. F. Runes in Sweden. 2nd rev. ed. Trans. Peter Footo. [Sto: g:land:; Royal Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities; Central Board of National Antiquities, 1987, pp. 162-73.

Elisabeth Svärdström

Rural Houses see Houses, Rural

Rural Settlement see Settlement, Rural

Rus’. The term Rus’ first appears around 830-840 in both western and eastern sources as a designation for traders dealing in slaves, precious furs, and swords, who developed trade routes from the Baltic along the Volga to Baghdad. Their first trading centers were in Old Ladoga (Aldeigjuborg); a locality referred to in Arabic as Arthãni (near modern Jaroslavl’); Kiev (Kcenugarõr); and Novgorod, the ”New Town” (Old Norse Holmgårdr), founded by 900, followed by Polotsk (Palteskjuborg) and Smolensk (Smalenskaja). Political upheavals in the mid-10th century led to the replacement of the Volga route by one along the Dnieper, known in the sources as ”the route from the Varangians to the Greeks.”

The origin of the word Rus’, which does not occur in Old Norse sources, and the ethnic group(s) to which it referred have been the subject of much debate (Pritsak 1981, vol. 1). That there was a significant ”Scandinavian” component in Rus’ is indicated not only by written sources, but also by the bilingual names of the waterfalls on the river Dnieper (Benediktz 1978: 9-12; the following examples all come from Old Lõðöse.) Statements of ownership like ”Helga owns me” (Vg239, 1200s) on a small wooden spade (butter knife?) are quite common, the expression ”owns me” is gradually dropped in preference for just the name, as on the other side of the spade: ”Helga.” Sometimes, an object is labeled by a runic carver. Examples are a fairly unidentifiable wooden fragment bearing the inscription (Vg272, 1200s; the first letter a Latin capital) Prhl ‘swhingle, thrashing stick,’ and a small lead sheet with the runes (Vg234, 1200s) unmarka ‘one mark [a unit of weight].’ Occasionally, a longer prose text appears, for example on a weaver’s knife (Vg279, 1100s): “Think of me, I am thinking of you; love me, I love you,” a little love verse also found in the Norwegian. A wooden calendar (Vg233, 1100s) uses runes as numbers. The runic calendar, an eternal calendar for popular reckoning of time employed from the Middle Ages until the 1800s, is largely a Swedish phenomenon; the first seven runes indicate weekdays and are repeated for the 365 days of the year, and the entire row of sixteen runes plus three new rune-like signs signify the nineteen years of the lunar counting cycle. Runes could also be used as numbers in late-medieval counting games.
names that shifted with the interests of the Norsemen. Originally, they referred to the Franco-Frisian towns of Quentovic and Dorestad encompassed first Ladoga and Novgorod, and later Kiev. The earlier designation for this territory and the lands east of the Baltic in general was austrevar, the “eastern way.” This term included the territories Kurland, Eistand, Adalsysla, Eysysla, and later Bjarmaland and the northern Dvina (Vina). Expeditions to this area are prominent in Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar and Landnamabok.

The earliest rulers of the territory bore Scandinavian names, starting with Rurik (Rærekr, ca. 860) through Olga (Helga, regent 945–964). The next prince, Svyatolav (964–972), was the first to have a Slavic name. In the oldest chronicle of the Rus’, the Povest’vremennykh let, this situation is accounted for by a legendary account of how the war-torn Slavs and Finns invited Scandinavians from across the seas to come and rule them. This account, known as the “Calling of the Varangians,” has led to the spilling of much scholarly ink; its supporters are referred to as “Normanists,” its opponents, who claim that Rus’ is purely Slavic origin, as “anti-Normanists.” In its present form, the story of the “Calling of the Varangians” is reminiscent of other origin legends, for example, Vortigern’s request for aid from Hengist and Horsa in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia regum Britanniae. The precise events leading to the establishment of the khaganate and later of the kingdom are still subjects of scholarly discussion; it is, however, clear that Scandinavians, both merchants and warriors, must have played an important part in its foundation along with the Khazars and the Slavs.

Even after the capital moved south to Kiev, the ruling families of Scandinavia maintained ties with the rulers of Novgorod, who usually were the sons of the kings of Kiev. Óláfr Tryggvason was brought up at the court of Valdemar (Volodimir, 970–1015) in the 970s, and Óláfr Haraldsson (later known as St. Óláfr) sought refuge at the court of his successor, Jaroslav (1018–1054), during the winter of 1029–1030, leaving his son, Magnus, in his care. Óláfr’s half-brother, Haraldr hardráði (“hard-ruler”), spent some time in Jaroslav’s service on his way to and from Greece, and married one of his daughters, Elizabeth (Old Norse Ellisif). Jaroslav himself was married to a Swedish princess, Ingigerðr, at Hastings in 1066. Gyða was raised at the court of the Danish king Sven Estridsen (1047–1076). The daughters of their son, Mstislav (Harald, according to the sagas), also married Scandinavians: Malmýr was the wife first of King Sigurðr Jórsalafari (“crusader”) of Norway (d. 1130) and then of King Erik II of Denmark (d. 1137); Ingeborg married Knud Lavard, king of the Obotriti (d. 1131).

In the sagas, Garðariki served as the setting for numerous harrying expeditions, historical and otherwise. The locations most commonly named are Holmgårð and Aldeigjuborg, closest to Scandinavia and familiar from the konungssögur. Eymundur jatkar, which appears to reflect the fraticidal wars that followed Valdemar’s death (1015), leaves its hero in possession of the kingdom of Poleska. Another Icelandic tale of Garðariki is Bjorn Hittdalakappi. Merchants to and from this part of the world are described as “Holmgarsfarði” (“traveler to Holmgårð”) or “gerkr,” although the latter term was easily confused with the “gorikr” (“Greek”). “Rus’ian [coniic] hats” (sing. gerkr hatti) appear in a number of sagas.

As a country peopled by monsters and giants, perhaps because of its location within the classical “Scythia,” perhaps because of confusion over the fact that the Latin “Russia”/“Rucia,” which often appears in Icelandic as “Rucidland,” could easily be confused with “Rusland” (giantland), or a combination of the two, Garðariki is a place of sorcery and adventure in formaldarsögur and riddarasögur.


**Omeljan Pritsak**

**Russia, Norse in.** Did Scandinavians found, or dominate, or merely visit and serve, the early Russian state? After a quarter-millennium debate, there is still no consensus, partly due to the politically charged nature of the debate itself. The Slavs had been “living like savage beasts and birds” before the advent of the civilized Norsemen, according to the German-born Moscow academician Schlözer in 1802, a view adopted by several subsequent scholars and nonscholars alike, including Adolf Hitler, who saw in Russia “a wonderful instance of the state-organizing capability of the Germans among an inferior race.” Thoroughly provoked, many Russian and Soviet historians have countered by downplaying, questioning, or even denying any Scandinavian influence on the rise of early Russia. In short, noises emanating from more modern racist assumptions have often “jammed” signals from a distant past.

Written sources inspired the “Normanist” side. The Bertín Annals of the Frankish court state that envoys from the prince of Rhoz visiting Byzantium in 839 were Swedes. The treatise De administrando imperio by the Byzantine emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitos (ca. 950) distinguishes “Rhos” from “Slavs” and gives not only Slavonic names for the cataracts down the Dnieper, but also “Rhos” ones, which have proven to be Old Swedish. Likewise, Bishop Liutprand of Cremona in 968 identifies the Rhos with (Germanic) Northmen. Finally, the Russian Primary Chronicle,
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edited by the monk Nestor around 1112, asserts that two Slavonic tribes and two Finnish ones from the Ladoga-Novgorod–Upper Volga area, locked in internecine strife, around 860 invited in the very foreigners who had been dominating them earlier, “Varangians called Rus’ . . . from across the sea,” to restore order and rule them all.

Other philological arguments have also been marshaled to substantiate that Norsemen founded or were a dominant force in ancient Russia. Thus, the name “Russia” (Slavonic ‘Swede,’ or Latin Rhos, Greek ‘Rōs, Arabic Rūs) has been derived from Finnish ruotsi ‘Swede,’ or originally Swedish “rower,” as reflected in Rothslagen, “the Rovers’ Law-reach,” the area around what is now Stockholm. The names of Russia’s early rulers, as well as their envos, as enumerated in the Primary Chronicle, are overwhelmingly Norse. Place-names around Novgorod in particular reflect a one-time presence of the Varjagi ‘Varangarians,’ and so on.

The “Anti-Normanist” side has taken varying exception to all these arguments. Following the Russian revolution, there has been an increasing emphasis on archaeology. Basing themselves on the “solid (art)facts” unearthed, Soviet scholars demonstrated that the Slavs in the south, around the Don and Dnieper, were more advanced economically and culturally than the tribes in the forested north. In keeping with Marxist historical materialism, Soviet scholars generally concluded that the Russian state must have arisen from the inner societal needs of this more developed and sophisticated south, around Kiev.

This “Moscow school” view has lately been challenged by a “Leningrad school” of archaeologists (Dubov et al. 1978). The oldest excavated part of Old Ladoga comprises a Scandinavian smithy from 754. The Old Ladoga Plakun cemetery, likewise Nordic, dates from about 830–840. The entire town was razed in a fire around 860 (cf. the Primary Chronicle’s words on tribal and intercommunal warfare). A Nordic king held court there and moved south, to GorodiSce, which became Novgorod, where there were cultural layers from about 860–890, whereas Novgorod itself appears to date from about 900 (Nosov 1984). Scandinavians are well represented in the Upper Volga settlements from the same time (which tallies well with the Arab Ibn Fadlan’s description of a Scandinavian “Rūs” boat pyre by the Volga in 921), as well as in, e.g., the great Gnezdovo warriors’ cemetery right outside Smolensk, north of Kiev.

This argument is part of what we may see as a long-term tendency toward reappraising the whole Normanist controversy. In this reappraisal, there are three main constituents: the “Nordic-Fennic equation”; the question of what Nordic warriors did around 839–1030 in relation to the Slavs; and the question of lasting Nordic influence on the Slavs, and vice versa.

First, still unresolved is the question of what relationship(s) Norse immigrants had to the aboriginal Baltic Fennic (Finnish, Estonian, Vepse, etc.) and Volga Fennic (Merja) tribes, along the Baltic–Ladoga–Onega–Upper Volga waterway. Here, Scandinavians and Slavs alike were intruders, lured by the world market of Islam. In the caliphate, far-northern luxury articles, furs for clothing, walrus teeth for scabbards, and so on, were in high demand. Such articles prompted, on the one hand, Fennic, especially Vepse, expansion northward (the Wisu of Arab sources, the Bjarnar of Norse sagas), and on the other hand, both Scandinavian and Slav expansion in Fennic (Vepse) areas, beginning with Old Ladoga, and ending in the White Sea area (“Bjarmaland,” from Vepse Perämaa ‘hinterland;’ Perm’). The Wisu describe North Norwegian walrus hunters fighting each other around 926. Indeed, Norwegian expansion northward (“Nor-way”) to Kola may be explained by these market forces. As late as 1222, a Norwegian sailed through “Bjarmaland” and eastern Europe to Jerusalem and home.

Second, there are indications that the Rhos of the Bertinian Annals both came from and returned to Old Ladoga. And great numbers of Islamic coins, first in the Ladoga-Novgorod woodlands around 750–860, then in Sweden (Rothslagen and Gotland) 860–950, point to something drastic occurring around 860. Did Slav colonization and domination induce a joint Scandinavian-Vepse reaction? Vepse cemeteries near Ladoga show a Vepse-Scandinavian symbiosis around 860–950. Did the victors in an Old Ladoga “civil war” in 860 both call in mercenaries from Sweden (cf. the Islamic coinage from Russia going there) and proceed south, to Novgorod, Kiev, and Constantinople, which in 866 barely withstood the Rōs? The name Rōs may with some difficulties be derived from ruotsi, but points perhaps instead to Greek Rōs (from the 839 contact) as influenced by a Vepse milieu, cf. other Fennic tribal names in Russian, Etn’, Lib’, Sum’, Ves’, etc. Greek Rōs is in turn biblical, but its application to the 839 Slaves may also have been inspired by archival materials on the 3rd- to 6th-century blond (Trásio) Scandinavian proto-Vikings known as the Erules (“Ears”) or Rosomones.

Whether the ethnic origins of these original Rūs’ (and there were certainly many Slavs among them), it is important to distinguish the early Nordic arrivals and Old Ladoga, Upper Volga settlers from the later “Varangarians.” Mentioned in Arabic in about 1020 (Warān, in the Old Russian Law Code 1015 (Varjaji, alongside Kolbjagi), and in Byzantine Greek from 1030 (Varanggoi, alongside Koulpinggoi), they may have comprised both traders and warriors. Their name may bespeak their farthest northern trading haunts at Varangor, as indicated by al-Bîrûnï and al-Qazwînî. The enigmatic Kolbjagi (in al-Qazwînî al-Kilâbiyya, Old Norse kyllingar) may be their Fennic partners (cf. e.g., Vepse Ladogan artifacts in Arctic Scandinavia, including Varanger, and Norwegian state intervention against marauding kyllingar). The early rulers of Russia in Kiev used Scandinavian elite troops. Six thousand were removed from Kiev in 988 to Constantinople, where they formed the beginnings of the emperor’s Varangian guard. After the Norman invasion of England in 1066, fugitive Anglo-Saxons also served as Varangians.

Third, and most important, the old “Normanist” assumptions that Scandinavians introduced civilization among the subject Slavs, must be totally revised. The Norsemen were few in relation to Slav and non-Slav natives alike. Only in areas colonized by Novgorod, up toward the White Sea, is their racial type still dominant today, alongside the Vepse (Onega-Saima) type. Otherwise, Norsemen were drops in a Slavonic sea. They took up “Russian” (meaning Eastern Slavonic), had weapons made by Slav smiths, married locally. Tales and folklore motifs in Russia thought to have been Scandinavian have been shown instead to have originated in Byzantium and traveled northward. Less than ten Norse loanwords have been established in Russian (e.g., jadědnik ‘official;’ Suđ ‘the Golden Horn’ found at Constantinople; cf. Thomsen 1877), nearly the same number are found, less known, in Vepse (e.g., murgneîta ‘to breakfast;’ sur ‘big;’ kurt ‘shirt’). Some fifteen Russian words, however, penetrated Scandinavian (tolk ‘interpreter;’ cf. English talk; toks ‘marketplace;’ grøns ‘border;’ etc [cf. Mel’nikova 1984]; plus possibly moln ‘cloud’ and Mjølner ‘Pórr’s hammer’ from molnîja ‘lightning;’ hvørje ‘coat-of-mail’ from bronja;
Generally, the Norsemen absorbed culture in, and via, Russia, Novgorod, Kiev, and Constantinople and, seldom realized, down the Volga, traversing the Muslim Bulgar state and Jewish Khazaria to Zoroastrian-and-Shia-Muslim Iran and Shia-and-Sunni Iraq in the 9th–11th centuries. A few details of late Norse paganism may even have been inspired in the East (e.g., the deity Heimdallr, the Bifrost bridge, Þorr’s abode, Freyja’s name), although the connection remains to be proven. The Norse sources on Varangjar (Varangians) and travelers to and through Russia are few, yet the most notable are given by their completion of one hundred runes stones, thirty-two of which commemorate the ill-fated expedition of Yngvarið vîðfjörði (“the widely traveled”; cf. Yngvars saga vîðfjörða) in 1041, which may have made it all the way to Karusm, Muslim Khwârizm, in present-day Uzbekistan.


Haakon Stang

[See also: Rus’; Varangians; Yngvars saga vîðfjörða]

Rōk Stone Inscription. The runic inscription on the huge stone in the cemetery of Rōk parish in southeastern Sweden, containing some 750 characters, is the longest and most complicated of all ancient Scandinavian inscriptions. The stone is almost 4 m. high, 1 1/2 m. wide, and 1/2 m. thick, and is covered with runes on all four sides as well as the top. The inscription appears to date from the early 9th century, and is composed mainly in “short-twig runes” of the later futhark, which contained sixteen letters. However, it also contains a number of cipher runes of various types, including some that use runes of the older twenty-four-letter futhark. The inscription features the oldest fornyrdislag strophe in existence. The work of generations of scholars has deciphered most of the writing, although there is much uncertainty about detail, including the order in which the five surfaces should be read. There is wide disagreement about the meaning and intent of the inscription as a whole.

Ostensibly, it is a memorial stone raised in honor of Væmoð by his father, Varin. The inscription then makes a series of cryptic references to memorable matters of the past, including “two articles of booty that were taken twelve times in battle”; Theoderic on horseback on the shores of the “Hreið Sea”; twenty kings dead on a battlefield; (another?) twenty kings having only four names among them, each five of the same name being sons of one of four brothers; the sacrifice of a mother for one of the “Ingeldings”; a son born to Vilin, who could fell a giant; Þorr; Sibbi, ninety years old, who fostered Væmoð or engendered him.

One interpretation (von Friesen 1920) sees the stone as an announcement by Varin that in his old age he has engendered a son to avenge Væmoð, even as Sibbi, at the age of ninety, had done. The great deeds mentioned are to serve as inspirations for the avenger against the twenty sea-kings who caused Væmoð’s death. Höfler (1975) modified this theory, claiming that sibbi means “father,” and that Varin himself was ninety, and was dedicating the
avenging son to a quasi-divine Theodoric the Great. The kings were members of a "warrior guild," such as the one evidenced by the Trelleborg remains. Other scholars (Wessén 1964, Jacobsen 1961) consider all the material except the first two sentences to be unrelated episodes present merely for ornament and to demonstrate the rune master's knowledge and versatility. Nielsen (1969) contends that the inscription contains two religious segments, one an invocation to Óðinn, one to Þórr. Lönnroth (1977) claims to see a tripartite form, each section containing a riddle pertaining to a heroic legend and its answer. Kratz (1978–79) views it an initiation memorial, Vsemoõ being only ritually dead, and initiated into a brotherhood of warriors divided into groups where each one has the same ritual name and is subservient to a "father," in Vsemoõ's case, Vilin. The memorable matters pertain to the brotherhood, some of them so secret they cannot be mentioned (the inscription skips over from memorable matter three to memorable matter twelve). The brotherhood is dedicated to Þórr, and wise old Sibbi is Vsemoõ's mother.


Henry Kratz

[See also: Eddie Meters; Runes and Runic Inscriptions]
Saga is an Icelandic word borrowed into English to designate an Old Norse prose narrative. The oldest sagas are *postola sógur* ("apostles' sagas") and *heilagra manna sógur* ("saints' lives"), anonymous translations of Latin biographies of apostles and saints, the earliest from about 1150. Turville-Petre (1953) stressed the importance of these works, over 100 of which are extant, as models for later subgenres.

Although the forerunners of *konungasógr* ("kings' sagas") are also quite old, the major biographies and compendia were compiled around 1190-1230. Skaldic stanzas were important sources for these works, some of which include tales about Icelandic poets. The most important *konungasaga* is *Heimskringla* ("Orb of the World"), a history of Norway to 1177, by the Icelandic scholar Snorri Sturluson (1178/9-1241).

Best known are the *Islendingasógr* ("sagas about Icelanders"), of which forty have been preserved. The best of these anonymous works, such as *Njáls saga*, are among the finest literary creations of the Middle Ages. Most were composed during the 13th century. The oldest, biographies of poets, such as *Egils saga*, seem to be offshoots of the *konungasógr*. There has been much speculation about the nature of their oral sources. Structurally, the *Islendingasógr* resemble romances, characterized by plot interlace and sophisticated foreshadowing.

*Riddarasógr* ("sagas about knights") are prose adaptations of romances. *Tristrams saga ok Íslandar*, perhaps the oldest, is a translation of Thomas's *Tristan* made in 1226 at the behest of Hákon Håkonarson (r. 1217-1263). *Tristrams saga* exerted a strong influence on saga writing, and the subgenre inspired a spate of mediocre Icelandic imitations.

*Fomaldarsógr* ("sagas of ancient times") comprise two groups, heroic legends and adventure tales. The most important member of the first group is *Volsunga saga*. Characteristic of the second group is *Gongu-Hrólls saga*, whose hero bears the same name as the conqueror of Normandy. Most of the *fomaldarsógr* are products of the 14th century. Many *fomaldarsógr* are retold by Saxo Grammaticus in his 13th-century *Gesta Danorum*.


Paul Schach

*See also: Bookprose/Freeprose Theory; Egils saga Skallagrímsson; Fornaldarsógr; Gongu-Hrólls saga; Heimskringla; Islendingasógr; Konungasógr; Njáls saga; Postola sógur; Riddarasógr; Saints' Lives; Saxo Grammaticus; Tristrams saga ok Íslandar; Volsunga saga*
Saints' Lives

1. DENMARK. Along with chronicles, saints' lives constitute one of the most important literary genres in the early Middle Ages. Indeed, most of the early Danish works in Latin were legends, based on the lives of holy men and women and patterned on international models.

Saints' cults were used in missionary work and in the establishment of political institutions, e.g., to advance the feudal society, which became a political prerequisite of the Catholic Church after Pope Gregory VII. An important link in this process was that the monarchy was sanctified through the Church. In the centuries between the introduction of Christianity and the Reformation in 1536, the following people were canonized in Denmark: the king Knud, who was killed in Odense Cathedral (1086), the martyr Knud (Cnut) Lavard, the son of King Erik Ejegod (“ever-good”) and the father of King Valdemar den Store (“the great”; r. 1157-1182); the missionary Theodgar (Thager) from Thüringen, who was venerated especially in North Jutland; Margrethe, a martyr from Zealand, killed by her husband after an argument (she was related to Bishop Absalon, King Valdemar’s brother-in-arms); and Abbot Vilhelm, a French Augustinian abbot, summoned to the country by Bishop Absalon. The following were venerated as saints but without canonization: Niels of Århus, housecarl of King Valdemar the Great, son of King Knud Magnusson, his comrade-in-arms during the civil wars (he thus represents a collateral branch to the victorious royal family); King Erik Plovpenning (“plow-penny”), Valdemar den Store’s grandson, killed by his brother Abel in the Schlei; and the popular saint Anders from Zealand (d. 1205), priest in St. Peter’s church in Slagelse, who until recent times was still venerated as a saint in western Zealand, as was Niels in Århus.

The victorious feudal central power was able to raise many saints from the grave among its own people. As holy figures and concrete, worldly people, the saints, not least the national and local women: relics, pilgrimages, saints’ days, saints’ feasts with dances (French ballado), and so on. From the Middle Ages, eleven Danish legends and fragments are known, comprising fourteen passions, the anonymous Passio Sancti Canuti regis et martiris (ca. 1090), a fragment of the Englishman Robert of Ely’s legend about Knud Lavard (ca. 1135), from which material is used in the anonymous Passio de Sc. Canuto duce (ca. 1170). There survive, moreover, two short accounts of St. Margarethe’s death and enshrinement (ca. 1205). There are six vitae, including: “The Life of St. Kjeld” (ca. 1350), “The Life of St. Knud” (ca. 1220), “St. Anders’ Miraculous Ride” (ca. 1350), and “The Life of St. Thager” (ca. 1260). There is also a large collection of miracles linked to King Erik Plovpenning and the Anglo-Saxon Alfred the Great’s king’s-mirror legend and historical chronicle about King Sven Estridsen and his five sons, with special emphasis on St. Knud (ca. 1120).

Apart from the legends about King Knud, the most interesting of the original Danish legends in Latin is the long vita about a Victorine abbot, the Frenchman Vilhelm (Vita et miracula S. Guillermi). The vita demonstrates the great cultural differences between the center (France) and the periphery (Denmark) noticed by the Parisian monk, who comes upon an almost abandoned monastery that lacks almost everything (Eskildes), but who, with Bishop Absalon’s help, creates a flourishing cultural center (Æbelhol). An interesting collection of letters is preserved from the abbot.

The legend about Knud Lavard is both beautiful and well composed. Duke Knud is depicted as the seed that must die and be buried so that a new (religious) life can bloom. His life is a long preparation for his voluntary martyrdom, where he, in spite of many warnings, is treacherously murdered by his cousin, Prince Magnus Nielsen, whose motive is invidia. At the place of the murder, a well gushes out, and miracles are said to take place at the grave. Knud’s son, Valdemar den Store, has the body translated. After a victory in the civil war of 1134-1157 and his accession to the throne, Valdemar also manages to obtain the Pope’s canonization of Knud Lavard (1170).

On the borderline of the original Danish saints’ lives is Rimbet’s Vita Anskarii, an account of Ansgar, “the Apostle of the North,” who, with the support of the Frankish emperor Louis the Pious, undertook a comprehensive mission in Scandinavia from 832 onward.
often composed in Norway and show Norwegian traces in the language.

Over 100 different saints' lives are included in this corpus, drawn primarily, but not exclusively, from Latin sources. These sources include the apocryphal books of the New Testament, *legendaria* like Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda aurea*, Gregory's *Dialogues*, and the lives of many saints, from the early "desert saints" down through the centuries. Much of the material concerns the lives of the apostles, both from the canonical *Acta apostolorum* and from the New Testament apocrypha. The "Harrowing of Hell" from the *Evangelium Nicodemi* was popular, as were legends of the Virgin Mary. Lives of the martyred saints, such as Catherine, Sebastian, and Thomas à Becket, are found along with the lives of the confessors, such as Nicolas and Anthony, known for their exemplary lives and miracles rather than their martyrdoms.

Until recently, little has been done to organize this material or to explore the connections among the various texts, due in no small part to the large corpus of secular material in Old Norse, which has been so fascinating to scholars that they have unduly neglected religious writings. There is also little of value in the contents of most of these lives, as they are well known from other sources, except for ones where the Latin original is lost.

Whatever their intrinsic value might be, these works are extremely important for the history of the language and the development of Old Norse literature, although scholars have begun to see this potential only recently. In his seminal work, * Origins of Icelandic Literature*, Turville-Petre maintained that religious writings had taught Icelanders how to write secular sagas, but he had little to say directly about the language of the saints' lives. Unlike early translations—from Latin and Greek into other vernaculars, the earliest Old Norse saints' lives show little influence of Latin syntax and few loanwords from Latin. Unnatural constructions, such as appositional participial phrases, the ablative absolute, and the accusative with the infinitive, are replaced by native constructions. Even the Greek and Roman gods are replaced by pagan Norse gods, such as Óðinn for Mercury, Þorr for Jupiter, and Frigg for Venus. The style is lively and colloquial, and little different from that of the secular sagas in Iceland. In a second stage, from the mid-13th to the 15th century, many of the saints' lives were written in a more ornate style (the so-called "florid style"), deliberately imitating Latin, and often translating Latin constructions literally. While the florid style was adopted by Icelandic writers in the 13th century, as in the priest Grímr Hólmsteinsson's (d. 1298) *Jóns saga baptísta*, the style flourished in the 14th century, with Bergr Sökkan as its best-known exponent. The simple style, however, was not made obsolete, as demonstrated by, e.g., MS Stock. Perg. fol. no. 2 (late 14th century), which contains twenty-six legends, none written in the florid style.

The lives of the native Norwegian and Icelandic saints contain many elements of the earlier Latin lives. Generally, however, they tend to be more realistic. Some of the accounts stress worldly events more than religion, and go beyond the scope of hagiography. The exception is one of the recensions of the life of St. Olaf, the most popular of Norwegian saints.

Latin lives of the other Norwegian saints (Hallvarðr, Sunniva, and Magnus) are extant, but we have little in the vernacular about the last two. There is only one fragment (ca. 1300) of a life of Hallvarðr (d. 1043) in the vernacular, and a short account of the life of Sunniva is embedded within *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar* of Oddr Snorrason (*Seljumanna þáttr*). There are three different vernacular redactions of the life of St. Magnus of the Orkneys (d. 1115), one contained in *Orkneyinga saga*, all apparently descended ultimately from a lost Latin account ascribed to Rodbert of Cricklade, who lived in the 12th century.

Lives of the three Icelandic saints, all bishops, Jón Ógmundarson (d. 1121), Porlák Pórhallsson (d. 1193), and Guðmundr Arason (d. 1237), are extant in the vernacular. The saga of St. Porlák was composed in Icelandic, although fragments of a Latin life of the saint are also in evidence; the other two are translated from lost Latin originals. Jón's life was originally composed by Gunnlaugr Leifsson (d. 1218) and translated into Icelandic not much later. This translation and a later revised one have both survived. Guðmundr's saga was composed in Latin by Argrímur Brandsson (d. 1361), and probably translated soon after. The ending, however, is missing in the MS we have, and must be supplied from a collection of small pieces about Guðmundr found in a different MS.

The lives of these Icelandic saints mostly emphasize their exemplary lives and piety. They are supplemented by collections of miracles (*jarteikn*) that take place through their benign influence after they are dead.

3. SWEDEN. The earliest saints' lives, all written in Latin, are for the most part standardized legends of limited historical value, often written long after the death of the saint, in connection with the rise of the cult. The 11th-century missionaries include the English-born Sigfrid, who traveled to Västergötland to the court of Sweden's first Christian king, Olaf (Skotkonung) Eriksson, leaving three nephews behind in the district of Väret, where they were martyred. Sigfrid is regarded as the founder of the see of Växjö, which was the center of his cult. Another of the 11th-century English missionaries was Eskil, who preached in Södermanland during the reign of the Christian king Inge the Elder, but was stoned to death in Strängnäs during a heathen uprising under Blot-Sven ("Sacrificer-Sven"), and was buried in the trading center that later took the name Eskilstuna. Also in the 11th century, the English Cluniac monk David, who was inspired by the example of Sigfrid's nephews, but was probably himself never martyred, traveled to Sweden, where he worked as a missionary in Västmanland. His legend is late and based wholly on foreign models.

The Swedish saint Botvid, born in Södermanland, accepted Christianity while on a journey to England and, although never ordained, worked to convert his native province upon his return to Sweden. His legend contains two main stories, one concerning his catching large quantities of fish, and the other depicting his martyrdom around 1120 at the hand of a Wendish slave, whom he had freed from captivity and intended to send back to his own land to preach the gospel. The life of the saint-king Erik bears similarities to that of Knud of Denmark, and its historical reliability has been the subject of debate. He is portrayed as a supporter of the Church, a good ruler and judge, and an undertaker of the wrongfully murdered widow, Helena of Skövde. Ingrid of Birka, who died in 1373 and was canonized in 1391, accompanied Erik to Finland, remained behind as a missionary, and was eventually martyred there.

In the late 13th and 14th centuries, as individual saints' cults grew, early legends were reworked and additional ones written. Bynolf Algotssson, bishop of Skara 1278–1317, wrote legends that were incorporated into his offices in honor of St. Eskil and the wrongfully murdered widow, Helena of Skövde. Ingrid of Skåne's biography (d. 1282) was written at the beginning of the 15th century. Nikolaus Hermansson, bishop of Linköping 1375–1391, wrote the offices in honor of St. Erik and of St. Ansgar (d. 865), who led the first mission to Sweden around 1120 at the hand of a Wendish slave, whom he had freed from captivity and intended to send back to his own land to preach the gospel. The life of the saint-king Erik bears similarities to that of Knud of Denmark, and its historical reliability has been the subject of debate. He is portrayed as a supporter of the Church, a good ruler and judge, and an undertaker of the wrongfully murdered widow, Helena of Skövde. Ingrid of Birka, who died in 1373 and was canonized in 1391, accompanied Erik to Finland, remained behind as a missionary, and was eventually martyred there.

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Swedish saints' lives of the later Middle Ages are more fully authenticated vitae, usually incorporated into a formal application for canonization. They emenate chiefly from the circles of Birgitta Birgersdotter, who died in 1373 and was canonized in 1391. The earliest life of St. Birgitta was written by her two confessors, Petrus Olofsson of Alvastra and Petrus Olofsson of Skåne. Exactly what form their Vita originally took is uncertain. The extant text tells episodically of her pious childhood and married life, her vision...
calling her to become the "bride and mouthpiece" of Christ, her life of devotion during her widowhood in Sweden, and her death in Rome. Two further lives of Birgitta, written before her canonization, were incorporated into offices, one by Birger Gregersson, archbishop of Uppsala 1367–1383, which is known by its opening antiphon Birgite matris inclita, and the other by Nikolaus Hermansson, known as Rosa roana. Birger's legend contains mainly biographical details relating to her life in Sweden and Rome, and miracles after her death, whereas that of Nikolaus contains several excerpts from her revelations. In the 15th century, Margareta Clausdotter, abbess of the Brigettine foundation at Vadstena 1472–1480, wrote a colorful but historically dubious account in Swedish of Birgitta's family.

Many of the Brigettine circle were revered as local saints in Sweden. The vita of Nikolaus Hermansson containing seventy-seven miracles was presented as part of an application for canonization in 1414; he was beatified in 1515. St. Birgitta's daughter, Katarina Ulfsdotter, was beatified in 1489. Her life, written in the 15th century by the general confessor at Vadstena, Ulf Birgersson, emphasizes her chaste marriage and strict obedience to her mother's wishes. Ulf Birgersson also wrote a life of Petrus Olofsson of Skånninge. Brynolf of Skara's life does not survive, but only the miracles after her death, whereas that of Nikolaus contains several substantial collections in the vernacular. The Forssvenska legendariet ("Old Swedish Legendary"), which uses the Legenda aurea as its main source but arranges the saints in chronological order, exists in several MSS. Additional early Christian saints' and martyrs' lives occur in other collections, the most important of which are: 

Codex Oxenstierna (Cod. Holm. A 110, written at Vadstena ca. 1385), which, in addition to the above-mentioned life of St. Birgitta, contains a translation of the Vitae patrum; Nådendals klosterbok (Cod. Holm. A 49, ca. 1442); Cod. Holm. A 10 (written at Vadstena ca. 1500); and the Linköping Legendarium (Cod. Lic. B 70a, written at Vadstena ca. 1500), parts of which were translated by the general confessor Nikolaus Ragvaldi.


Bridget Morris

Samsons Fångsel see Drama

Samsons saga fagra ("The Saga of Fair Samson") is a riddarsaga probably composed late in the 14th or early 15th century. It has two clearly distinctive parts. The first is a romance in the Arthurian style, mingled with motifs from fairy tales, modeled mainly on some version of the romance of Lancelot, although no actual translation into Old Norse is known of any version of the romance of Lancelot. The second part (the so-called "Sigurðar þáttur") resembles other late and fantastic fornaldrarsögur, but shows knowledge not only of Snorri's Edda and older fornaldrasögur, but also of scholarly literature (with information taken from encyclopedic texts, such as those represented in the ethnographic texts of the Hauksbók) in its treatment of the far North and its inhabitants. The extraordinary popularity of this interesting saga in postmedieval Iceland is shown by the existence of about forty MSS.

The first part tells how Samson, supposedly the son of King Arthur, falls in love with the Irish princess Valentina, who, however, is soon abducted by the evil harper Kvintelin, but rescued shortly afterward by Samson's foster-mother, the sorceress Olimpia. While searching for his fiancée, Samson has to fight Kvintelin's mother under a waterfall, reminiscent of similar troll fights in Beowulf and Grettis saga. While Samson and Valentina think each other dead, she is abducted again by a dwarf, driving a cart, in the pay of Kvintelin, but is rescued after a chase. To make up for his evil actions, Kvintelin is sent out to search for the magic cloak.

The second part tells of Sigurd, the son of King Gøuðmundr of Glesisvellar and of a woman of the fabulous race of the Smáeyjar
Saulus saga ok Nikanors was composed in Iceland in the 14th century, and is preserved in twenty-six MSS and fragments, the most important of which are three vellum MSS, AM 343a 4to (15th century), where the saga is preserved in full, and the two fragments AM 162e fol. (15th century, four leaves) and AM 570a 4to (second half of the 14th century, two separate leaves). The remainder are paper MSS, the majority of which date from the 18th and 19th centuries.

King Helesius in Liberum Domum (Santiago de Compostela) was composing a full-length history of the Danish kings of the archipelago. The two meet at a splendid feast held by Timoteus, the king of Giantland and gains a treasure trove. Among his treasures is the chastity-testing cloak. When Sigurðr, aged 100, tries on the cloak, and brings it to Samson. The saga ends in stereotypical fashion with a number of marriages.

The saga is characterized by a fondness for blow-by-blow battle descriptions (over a third of the narrative is taken up with such scenes) and by an unusually large number of biblical and classical allusions. Thus, we are informed that Saulus is from Galicia, “where James the Apostle is buried,” and Nikanor from Bár, “burial place of St. Nicholas.” Abel, who is first said to be from Cappadocia, is later said to be from Mesopotamia, “which is where Jacob fled in order to escape his brother Esau.” Abel’s shield, which depicts scenes from the lives of several classical and biblical worthies, is described in detail (nearly 600 words).

Rosenbeck (1970: 120ff., 210-1) and, following him, Glauser (1983: 130ff.) have analyzed the way in which simultaneous action is handled in the saga by managing point of view. The older version of the saga, as edited by Loth, shows clearly how the narrative style of the original riddarasögur is midway between that of the thatof and the translated riddarasögur.
previous century. Four MS fragments of this work (one, from Angers, probably autograph), a compendium of around 1345, and an edition printed at Paris in 1514 from a lost MS provide the surviving evidence for Saxo's achievement. It was printed under the title of Danorum Regum Heroumque Historia ("The History of the Kings and Heroes of the Danes"), but is usually known by the earlier description Gesta Danorum (alias De Gesti Danorum).

Saksi was not an uncommon name in medieval Denmark, and the historian cannot be identified for sure with any who bore it. Grammaticus "the learned" and Longus "the tall" are posthumous by-names. From his own words, we learn that he came from a warrior family, and that he joined the household of King Valdemar I's foremost adviser, Absalon, bishop of Roskilde (1158-1192) and archbishop of Lund (1178-1201), who encouraged him to write history. His partiality for Zealand suggests that he came from that island. He may have been educated abroad, and his familiarity with church business argues that he became a clerk of some sort, but probably not a monk. He was also familiar with war and seamanship. In Absalon's will, "my cleric Saxo" was forgiven a small debt, and required to send two borrowed books to the Cistercians of Sora. Saxo completed his work under the patronage of Archbishop Anders (1201-1223), probably after 1216, and dedicated it to Anders and King Valdemar II.

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posternity, and after his son's death the Danes show their probity by accepting the Norwegian Magnus as king in observance of a sworn pact.

In these two books, written sources are distorted and augmented by Nordic legend: tales of Ragnarr, Ívarr, Gorm, the Jómsvíkingar, and Palnatoki. From 11 onward, more Latin sources are accepted as having been written in observance of a sworn pact. The sons (1047-1134) are presented with an eye to earlier accounts, modified or rejected at will. Each ruler serves as an example of the Slavs and the unruly nobility and people of Denmark. Kings purge their own guilt by spectacular penances, and the people incur death and destruction for the slaying of King Knud (Cnut) the Saint (1086) and Knud (Cnut) Lavard (1131). Book 14 (four times as long as any other) covers the period of civil wars, conspiracy, and dissension among king, bishops, and nobles from 1134 to 1178, when Valdemar I and Absalon succeeded in conquering the Rügen Slavs and restoring unity to the kingdom. Book 15 covers Absalon's first years as archbishop of Lund (1178-1182) and the rebellion of the Scanians against his authority. Book 16 relates how his political mission was fulfilled in the early years against Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, and by the subjugation of the Pomeranian Slavs.

In the last three books, a copious narrative is enlivened by reported speech and digressions on Norwegian, German, and Slavic affairs. The main source may have been Absalon's own words, but Saxo and the compiler of Knýtlinga saga (ca. 1260) perhaps used an earlier written source now lost. Books 9-16 are usually supposed to have been written first, before 1201, and the earlier books in the time of Valdemar I. Much of the text must relate to contemporary issues and personalities, but it is difficult to find Saxo advocating any official policy. His patrons were the most powerful men in the kingdom, but he was an idiosyncratic critic of the times, hoping to inspire his fellow countrymen to political unity and civic virtue by the example of former days, as well as to impress learned foreigners. Simplified and excised versions of his work were current in Denmark in the later Middle Ages, but it was only after 1514 and the appearance of Anders Sørensen Vedel's Danish translation in 1575 that his view of the Nordic past was widely received both at home and abroad.

unknown author, using as his main sources a version of Jacobus de Cessolis's advocacy of the hereditary kingdom to the Swedish practice, according to which the king was elected, but from within the ruling dynasty. He is also anxious to remind the king of his oath to the people to consult his council. The council in its turn has to guarantee the right to the people. Remarkably, the author pleads for education of young knights even in reading and writing. He also shows more understanding of the conditions of the peasants than his precursors do, even quoting the widespread "democratic" proverb *ho war tha en ådel man, tha adam groff ok eua span* (in Middle English, "Whan Adam delf, and Eve span, who was thanne a gentlelman?").

Compared with its model, *Schacktavelslek* shows considerable literary merits. The author displays a satirical talent lacking in his forerunners. He criticizes the poor education that spoils the young knights, he expresses his contempt for women, and he warns the reader of the tricks of love. Most remarkable is the fact that he adds a lyrical song, now called *Àktenskapsvisan* (possibly based on a Danish or German model), which in a very naturalistic way shows what dangerous adventures love and marriage are.

*Schacktavelslek* is preserved in two MSS (MS A, AM 191 fol., from 1492, MS B, Cod. Stock. D 3, from 1476), both copies of the lost Swedish original. Despite its modest length (1,504 lines), B has some better readings than A with its 3,322 lines.


**Sven-Bertil Jansson**

**Scotland, Norse in.** The history of Viking Scotland has yet to be written, but there is no doubt that the Norwegian and Danish attacks had a crucial impact upon the country's political and social development. For several centuries, the Scandinavian earldom of Orkney controlled the north, while a Celtic-Norse kingdom was established in the Western Isles. Viking activity in Ireland and England also had an impact upon Scotland, which experienced a Scandinavian presence until 1266, when King Magnus lagabætur ("law-mender") Hákonarson ceded Hebrides to the Scots in the treaty of Perth. Orkney and Shetland remained Norwegian possessions until the 15th century. Place-names, linguistic influence upon both the Scots and Gaelic languages, folktales, and archaeological evidence all reflect the heritage of Scotland's Viking Age.

The first recorded raids date to the 790s, when Lindisfarne,
and, therefore, Scotland's eastern seaboard, was attacked in 793, and Iona and Skye in the following year. Monastic sites, often conveniently situated on or near the coast, yielded much plunder. Despite the severe setback in 806, when sixty-eight members of the Iona community were slaughtered, and notwithstanding several other assaults, the monastery founded by St. Columba survived. The Life of Blathmac implies that the remaining monks, as elsewhere, bought off their attackers. Orkney and Isey served as bases for the early raids, and both places continued to serve as important centers of power.

Early-medieval Britain was composed of diverse peoples. In 839, the Danes won a battle in which "the flower of the Pictish nobility was destroyed." Kenneth mac Alpin, king of Scottish Dalriada, whose own western kingdom was hard pressed by Vikings, made himself first ruler of the united peoples of the Picts and the Scots. He transferred some of St. Columba's relics to Dunkeld, but the new ecclesiastical capital was also threatened by Danes raiding up the River Tay from the east and thus halfway across Scotland.

In subsequent years, Viking activity greatly intensified. Halfdan broke away from the Great Danish Army to push into eastern Scotland. With the consolidation of the Orkney earldom, Viking settlers approached the shores of the Moray Firth; in 900, they captured the mighty fortress of Dunottar, south of Aberdeen. In the west, a hybrid Celto-Norse population known as "Gall-Gael" was mounting assaults that were especially dreaded because the mixed-bloods were regarded by contemporary chroniclers as more base and bloodthirsty than the Vikings themselves. There is no evidence for their traditional association with Galloway. Southwestern Scotland was devastated by Olaf and Augisl from Ireland. In 870, they successfully besieged Dumbarton, carrying off prisoners and much booty. This important episode, noted in the Irish annals, may be interpreted as an attempt to establish an alternative commercial center to Dublin.

The infant kingdom of Scotland almost perished in the midst of such overwhelming hostile attention, but a savior appeared in King Constantine mac Aed (900-943), who battled both Vikings and Anglo-Scandinavians throughout his long reign. Several defeats at Scandinavian hands persuaded him to attempt pacification through marriage alliances, such a measure, at least, is suggested by the occurrence of Scandinavian personal names among some of his successors. He also worked hard to create a common identity for his ethnically diverse people. He and his successors took advantage of English weakness resulting from Scandinavian attacks to push his Scottish frontier farther to the south.

Viking activity was by no means over, but it was no longer the potent threat it had once represented. In the mid-10th century, a fleet of summer raiders was destroyed in the district of Buchan. Very soon, Somerled, or Sorley, came to be used as a personal name in King Constantine's court (900-943), who battled both Vikings and Anglo-Scandinavians throughout his long reign. Several defeats at Scandinavian hands persuaded him to attempt pacification through marriage alliances, such a measure, at least, is suggested by the occurrence of Scandinavian personal names among some of his successors. He also worked hard to create a common identity for his ethnically diverse people. He and his successors took advantage of English weakness resulting from Scandinavian attacks to push his Scottish frontier farther to the south.

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Place-name evidence indicates that Viking settlement of the Scottish mainland was most dense in Caithness. Although for a time a presence was established in Dingwall, Strathclyde was regarded as the southern frontier. Archaeological excavations at Freswick in Caithness testify to Norse hegemony to the 12th century. Much evidence is being recovered from the impressive site at the Udal in North Uist. Archaeology and place-names alike suggest a considerable presence in the Hebrides. Place-names and personal names also indicate Scandinavian penetration into the south of Scotland in population movements best regarded as secondary.

The Vikings introduced Scotland to a world of unprecedented wide horizons. Scots took part in the Vinland voyages, and Orcadians adventurers in the Holy Land. For some 400 years of its history, Scotland could no longer be considered to be on the road to nowhere. Indeed, had there been no Viking Age, it is conceivable that there might have been no Scotland.


Edward J. Cowan

[See also: Caithness; Daraðarljóð; Orkney, Norse in]

Seal Hunting see Fishing, Whaling, and Seal Hunting

Seals. The science dealing with seals is called sigillography (sigillum 'seal,' diminutive of signum) or sphragistics (Greek sphragis 'seal'). Since antiquity, imprints of a stamp in clay, wax, or sealing wax have been used as a personal or official mark. One can seal up, i.e., close a folded letter, a parcel, or a door, or seal, i.e., confirm the authenticity of, a document with a seal, placed on or hanging under the document. In the Middle Ages, a signature was replaced by seals, the use of which became common, especially in the 12th and 13th centuries.

In Scandinavia, a seal is first mentioned in 1072-1073, and Danish kings have used seals from the end of the 11th century, the Norwegian and Swedish kings probably somewhat later. For judgments issued in the king's name, court seals (sigillum ad causas) were used. Soon after, the Church (bishops, chapters, monasteries, etc.), towns, districts, guilds, and livery companies, individuals (first the nobility, later the clergy, commoners, and peasants) began to use seals as well. From around 1400, seals were combined with signatures, which, especially from around 1800, completely replaced the seal (except for very special purposes), just as the gummed envelope rendered it as superfluous as a letter closer.

In the Middle Ages, the stamp itself was a flat plate, the back of which was equipped with a raised crest with the lug or a handle. The plate could be circular, shield-shaped, multangular, or pointed
oval, the last-mentioned frequently used by women and the clergy. The stamps, which were usually made by goldsmiths, were often broken up or made useless in other ways after the owner's death. Many stamps are, however, preserved in museums. For imprints of smaller seals, a signet was used, but the transition between the two designations is vague. The signet could be set into a ring, and instead of an actual signet, gems could be used, i.e., carved stones. The word "signet" is also used for the seal imprinting itself. With a clip, double seals could be made with both an obverse and a reverse side, so-called "coin seals." The word "clip" may also refer to the seal itself, usually a king's large seal, called the "clip of the kingdom"; the term gradually came to be used about certain large, one-sided seals as well.

Institutional stamps and signets in particular could be in use for a very long time, which makes it difficult to date them if their existence is known only from seal imprints. One can distinguish between big seals (sigillum) used for important documents, and the usually smaller and more private types: privy seals and signets. Already in the Middle Ages, the distinctions became unclear, and often the small seals replaced the big ones. The royalty and the upper clergy could use a counterseal printed on the reverse side of the actual seal with a smaller stamp. Medieval seals were most often made of wax, occasionally colored, and frequently placed in a larger lump of wax or in a wooden cap. In the 15th century, the paper seal came into existence. A thin layer of wax or sealing wax was placed on the document; then it was covered with a piece of paper, and the stamp was pressed into it. Wax seals became common from the 16th century, and also metal seals are found. Best known are the papal bulls, most often made out of lead, which has given the name to the document itself.

The oldest seals hang under the letters in parchment straps or strings, which are stuck through holes in the letter. Often the bottom part of the letter is folded, a plica, in order to strengthen the suspension. Plicas can also be used to protect the seals, as it gradually became common to imprint them directly on the letters. The sealers of a letter were often listed in the text, but not necessarily under an image of a saint. Biblical motifs and symbols are found showing the royal coat of arms. Bishops could stand or sit enthroned, and other members of the clergy could kneel in a niche under an image of a saint. Biblical motifs and symbols are found in ecclesiastical seals, not infrequently accompanied by the owner's own coat of arms. Noble seals usually contained the owner's coat of arms, in some instances also with a helmet and a crest, which can also appear alone. Commoners' seals and peasants' seals could also be heraldic, but often they contain marks, letters, or symbols. Town and district seals are much varied; often pictures occur that allude to the name of the locality, its appearance, or topography. In guild seals, many kinds of tools are found. Seal pictures can thus elucidate changing styles, depict the development in clothes, tools, or ships, and contain topographic information. Personal seals are an important source of information for genealogies and social history until around 1700. In both personal and institutional seals, the picture could be replaced by letters (initials). More recent seals of office often contain simply the name of the institution.


Knud Prange

[See also: Chancery]
temporarily, geographically, and culturally distinct forms of verbal dueling in order to clarify their fundamental aspects (witness the sounding tradition in the Black English vernacular [Labov 1972], verbal dueling rhymes in the Near East [Dundes et al. 1972], or ritual challenges among chivalric knights in the West European Middle Ages [Bax 1981, 1983, 1984]). The alleged forms of Norse the sounding tradition in the Black English vernacular [Labov or ritual challenges among chivalric knights in the West European are scrutinized, one arrives at the conclusion that the terms of purpose of the interaction (or "outcome"), participants, setting, message form, and message content. Once these features are scrutinized, one arrives at the conclusion that the *senna* and the *mannjafnadr* as received in written documents do in fact constitute different types of verbal dueling. Old Norse literary texts seem to present us with information about the performance of these "rituals" in their contemporary context.

Examples of the *senna* tradition are numerous in the medieval literature of Scandinavia, and can be found in Saxo's *Gesta Danorum*, *Ketils saga haengs*, Hárbardsljóð, *Gríms saga loðingakina*, Hjàlmpés saga ok Olvíš, Lokasenna, and the Helgi poems of the *Poetic Edda*.

A *senna* can be practiced for several reasons, among them diversion, as in *Lokasenna*, where Geffjon advises the gods not to take Loki's insults seriously (st. 19). Second, a *senna* may help to define social status, as in the contest between Erius and Grep (in Saxo), which serves to reveal who has the greater verbal ability, hence social prestige. Third, a *senna* functions as a means to impress an opponent. In several texts, a *senna* precedes a physical fight, probably to intimidate the opponent and thus cause him to withdraw from the encounter. In this respect, the *senna* can be compared with the insulting sequences in a judicial context (e.g., *Njáls saga*, ch. 119).

A *senna* begins with a preliminary exchange: a "summons" by the first speaker, who uses a deprecatory term of address (thus challenging the other to a verbal contest), and an "answer," comparable in form or content, that counts as an acceptance of the challenge. The verbal interaction develops according to a small set of comparatively simple principles: each contender confronts the other with personal insults, and defends himself against the offenses that are addressed to him in reply. Such a defensive move can consist of a denial of the content of an insult, or may take the form of a counterattack in which the speaker "mirrors" or surpasses the foregoing outrage, thus sending it back to its originator (for particulars, see Bax and Padmos 1983: 154–6). Contrary to the *mannjafnadr* genre, the propositions put forth in a *senna* must always relate to the other speaker. Further, the insults that are uttered in this context are ritual in character, that is, they are not "heard" as truly meant offenses. Their impact draws upon their tactical merits within the ongoing duel rather than on their truth value (Bax and Padmos 1983: 154–5, 165–6).

Examples of *mannjafnadr* are found in Hárbardsljóð, *Óðvar-Odds saga*, Heimskringla, Háls saga, and Ólafs saga helga. They share with the *senna* the same purpose and ritual nature. There are, however, several features that suggest that the *mannjafnadr* stands apart as a speech genre. A *mannjafnadr* cannot be practiced, as a *senna* often is, among strangers. The contenders must know each other by name, as in the oldest version of *Óðvar-Odds saga* (p. 78); when Oddr's opponents propose to give him a name for the occasion, he reveals his own name. In Hárbardsljóð, Pórr and Hárbardr have identified themselves before engaging in the *mannjafnadr*. Another precondition is that the contenders must be equal in relevant aspects; this demand of equality is expressed by Eystræinn in *Heimskringla* (3, ch. 21: 259). Hárbardsljóð is a special case in that the *mannjafnadr* starts after a *senna* that has ended "undecided"; this outcome means that the opponents have proved to be equal in verbal skill (see Bax and Padmos 1983: 157).

Yet what makes a *mannjafnadr* truly distinct are its formal properties. Propositions necessarily refer to the actual speaker; moreover, they constitute a claim by the speaker about his own competence in a certain field, for instance, boasts pertaining to his warlike spirit, virility, physical or verbal abilities, or magic cunning. In the context of the duel, such a claim is heard as abuse, an implicit attempt to reduce the prestige of the hearer. The obligatory response to this action is either a mere rejection of the claim or a rejection accompanied by a counterclaim that "tops" the original claim. In Hárbardsljóð, we find this typical sequence: in stanza 15, Pórr boasts about his fight against the giant Hungrnir, and lays claim to the fact that he is a competent warrior. In its context, this claim entails the speaker's conviction that the hearer, Hárbardr, is not as competent in this respect (compare the conceived "Meanwhile, what were you doing?"). Hárbardr reacts by boasting about his own heroic exploits: "I was with Fjolvarr for five winters. . . . We fought battles, felled heroes, / And wood maidens: we had much to do." (st. 16). This boast mirrors Pórr's claim, which is thus rejected: Hárbardr argues against Pórr's supposition that Hárbardr is not an able warrior; but the latter also adds a new topic, women. This new element is challenging in character in that Hárbardr indicates that he, unlike Pórr, is not only competent in the field of armor, but also in the field of amour. In stanza 17, Pórr comes up with a defying question: "How were the women you won there?" showing that he, so far, is not impressed, thus rejecting the counterclaim. Hárbardr then gives a more detailed account of his affairs: "With seven sisters I dalled / And had my way with them all / Meanwhile, what were you doing?" And this formula indicates the next round in the verbal context (see Bax and Padmos 1983).

The *senna* and *mannjafnadr* also differ in their complexity. The *senna* employs a series of "two-turn" exchanges, but one "round" in a *mannjafnadr* can consist of as many as eight turns linked by observable sequencing rules (see Hárbardsljóð, sts. 29–36).

The Icelandic Age of Settlement spans in the space of sixty years Iceland was fully occupied, so that after land had been taken first settler, "took land" in the southwestern part of the island. According to Ari fróði ("the learned"); 1067–1148), who wrote the *Landnámabók*, it is clear from the *Landnámabók*, it is clear from *The Book of Settlements, Landnámabók*. While most of these historical fictions were not written down until the late 12th and 13th centuries, social and material conditions had not changed much since the Age of Settlement; and the authors, when they dealt with this period, were "conscious of the distance in time, and they had a considerable historical sense" (Sigurður Nordinal 1957: 29).


**Marcel M. H. Bax and Tineke Pachmos**

[See also: Hárðardóuð; íprótir]

**Settlement, Age of.** The Icelandic Age of Settlement spans the decades 870–930, with 874 traditionally accepted as the symbolic year of the founding of Iceland, when Íngólf Arnarson, the first settler, "took land" in the southwestern part of the island. Before the middle of the 10th century, all the pastureland in Iceland had been taken, According to Ari fróði ("the learned"); 1067–1148), who wrote the *Islendingabók*: "Wise men have said...that in the space of sixty years Iceland was fully occupied, so that after that there was no further taking of land." At this time, the population of the country was probably between 20,000 and 30,000.

It is clear from *Landnámabók*, first completed early in the 12th century, that most of the settlers were Norwegians, with a minority of Irish and Scots. Most of the Norwegian settlers did not migrate directly from Norway but came to Iceland indirectly after spending some years in Britain, Ireland, the Hebrides, and Orkney. Many brought Celtic wives and slaves. Of those who came directly from Norway, most came from the southwest, particularly from Sogn and Hordaland. Some also came from northern Norway, but few people came from the eastern part of the country. There were also a handful of Swedes and Danes, and a few from other places.

The settlement of Iceland was a part of the dispersion of the Nordic peoples, a movement that occupied the Scandinavians from the late 8th century into the 11th. Scholars propose different reasons for this outpouring from the North. Some stress the shortage of land and the pressure of a growing population; others emphasize the desire for adventure, plunder, and honor, values strong among the ancient Scandinavians. According to tradition, the migration out of Norway was prompted by the desire to escape the rule of Harald hárflagr ("fair-haired") Hálfdánarson, who had succeeded in unified Norway during the second half of the 9th century and who was trying to force all of the petty chieftains to submit to his rule, which many refused to do. The culture that took root in Iceland was Scandinavian. Irish influences are apparent in a few proper names, some place-names, and a few words in the language. However, some students of Icelandic literature claim that Irish culture had a larger impact on the culture and literature (Stefán Einarsson 1957: 5–6).

Our main source of information on pre-Christian Iceland, its legal system, material conditions of life, relations between the sexes, kinship names and naming patterns, and social structure in general are the *Islendingasögur*. While most of these historical fictions were not written down until the late 12th and 13th centuries, social and material conditions had not changed much since the Age of Settlement; and the authors, when they dealt with this period, were "conscious of the distance in time, and they had a considerable historical sense" (Sigurður Nordial 1957: 29).


**Richard F. Tomasson**

[See also: Iceland, *Islendingabók*, *Islendingasögur*, *Landnámabók*]

**Settlement, Rural.** During prehistoric times and the medieval period, the major feature of the Nordic region was a preponderance of forest, broken up by a large number of minor lakes and swamps. The establishment of settlements was dependent upon the natural resources available for arable farming and/or cattle raising.

Cattle raising was the predominant feature in the economy of settlements during the late Iron Age and the Viking Age. The large number of swamp areas made access to water relatively easy; there was land suitable for grazing and for the collection of winter fodder. The number and size of settlements increased during the later Viking Age and the early-medieval period as a result of the rising population. It is possible to estimate the age of a settlement from its name. Place-names ending in -thorp, -arp, -rup, and -ryd were most probably established during this period. Settlements in Denmark, and most probably the rest of the Nordic region, were not stable during the early Iron Age. As the land became exhausted, villagers moved on to fresh pastures. Beginning in the 1970s, principally in Denmark, archaeological excavations have examined a number of village sites dated from a.d. 1 to the late Iron Age. This work has established that during certain periods, villages ceased to exist, only to become reestablished within the same area at a later stage.
160. Distribution of types of villages and farms in Scandinavia.


163. Approximate spread of Swedish farm types. Nos. 5 and 6 are mixed villages of types 3 and 4. After Geografiska notiser (1949).

About A.D. 1000, this mobility ceased and villages became fixed. Two factors influenced this development: the changing face of agriculture and the organizational structure imposed by the monarchy, the Church, and a growing aristocracy.

Medieval sources describe three main types of farming undertaken during this period: one-field, two-field, and three-field systems. The types are differentiated in terms of their cropping systems and were dependent upon the nature of the land. Areas of fertile and easily cultivated soil, for example in Denmark and the Swedish plains, had most probably established as early as the Viking Age a system of rotation farming where the ratio of crops to fallow land was 2:1 (i.e., in the three-field system). The principal crops were barley and rye; wheat and oats became important during the later-medieval period. Evidence for this trend has been found in the analysis of fruits and seeds. A prerequisite for this type of farming is the ability of the farm workers to work cooperatively. Sandy soils were cultivated using an ard, which made shallow furrows. The development of the wheel-plow during the period 1000-1100 enabled larger areas of land to be plowed, and facilitated the cultivation of the previously forest-clad heavier clay soils.

It is difficult to give a definitive picture of rural settlements during the medieval period. The type of settlements already established during the Iron Age form part of the picture, of course, as do individual farms. These latter were often situated in areas of poorer soil, unsuitable for more extensive farming. Exceptions to this pattern can be seen on, for example, Bornholm, where factors concerning inheritance, landownership, and the organization of society produced a settlement picture consisting only of individual farms.

Medieval villagers were usually concentrated on plains with fertile soil where it was easy to use the wheel-plow. A village is defined as a settlement of at least three farms.

Probably the best picture of settlement patterns can be gained from certain 17th- and 18th-century maps, which show conditions prior to the agricultural reforms. It is possible to study the different methods of farming used and get an overview of the countryside. Certain of these conditions can be presumed valid for the Middle Ages. The Danish book Cadestre of King Waldemar (ca. 1230) records the king's estates and taxes in such detail that reconstructions of the settlement patterns can be made.

The laws current at that time have been preserved to a greater or lesser extent. These laws regulated the daily life, settling disputes among the villagers. Place-names also play a part in an overview of the development of village settlements over a large area, and the density of these settlements.

From the evidence above, together with other written material, it is possible to build an overview of the settlement of villages and individual farms. In Denmark, the villages were situated on the large plains with good soil, where solitary farms were found in marginal areas: northern and western Jutland, and the northern parts of Funen, Zealand, and Scania. As mentioned above, on the island of Bornholm the settlement consisted only of individual farms. In Sweden and Finland, the situation was similar, with villages on easily cultivated land, especially along the coasts and rivers. In southeastern Finland, influence from the east can be seen in the occurrence of large groups of houses functioning as individual farms. In Norway, the settlements often comprised a large number of buildings. They were, however, not villages, but farms with one or several buildings for each function. These buildings could be placed regularly or irregularly on the site. In Iceland, the settlements consisted only of individual farms.

An individual farm in the early Iron Age would consist of several buildings, each with a different function. Archaeological examinations have confirmed that there would be a long house with a central hearth, a dwelling house. There are also examples of long houses divided into a living area and a byre. The farms also featured one or more pit houses, together with several huts.
Archaeological investigations of medieval farms have been made in Denmark by one of the pioneers of rural archaeology, Axel Steensberg. His excavations during the middle of the 20th century were for a long time the only ones concerned with medi­eval farms. However, the 1980s saw the initiation of several projects in both Sweden and Denmark, studying rural settlements, with an emphasis on environmental analysis.

Archaeological investigations of medieval villages in both Scania and Denmark have shown that the same type of long houses and pit houses constructed in the late Viking Age also appear in the early-medieval period. Not until the second half of the 13th century were long houses replaced by houses constructed using foundations made of stones. Pit houses also ceased to be constructed during this period. At this time, too, there were changes in the proportion of livestock types.

One of the few farms from the period 1200–1400 examined by archaeologists is the village Lilla Tvâren (Fig. 165). The building that formed the dwelling place was constructed on a foundation of stones at the end of the 13th century. During the 14th century, the length of the building was extended.

The appearance and exact function of the different buildings of the medieval farms are not known in detail. The distribution map of farm types in Sweden (Fig. 163) is based primarily on material from the 17th and 18th centuries. It probably also indicates what the situation was like in the medieval period, because preserved older farmhouses fit well into the picture.

Until the 13th century, there is next to no documentary or literary evidence concerning Shetland’s polity and economy. Crawford (1987) has argued that until the 11th century, the kings of Norway may have granted Shetland to favored individuals, and that Earl Forfinnr II of Orkney may well have acquired Shetland for his earldom after defeating one individual so favored, Rognvaldr Brússon, in 1046. However, there is some evidence that Shetland was an important, albeit relatively poor, “third” (þríðjur) of the Orkney earldom, used by claimants like Rognvaldr Brússon and Rognvaldr Kali Kolsson as a stepping-stone to power (Smith 1988).

In the absence of documentary evidence, we have to look to archaeology and settlement toponymy for information about the first 400 years of Norse society in Shetland. Hamilton’s excavations at “Jarlshof” (the name was invented in the early 19th century by Sir Walter Scott), a medium-sized and probably typical township at the southwest tip of the Shetland mainland, uncovered seven phases of settlement from about 800 to the 13th century, revealing a peasant community par excellence, with much evidence of fishing activity (Hamilton 1956). Jakobsen’s work (1936) on Shetland farm names, and Nicolaisen’s (1969) on their chronology, give us a picture of a society overwhelmingly Norse; there is no evidence of any pre-Norse place-name anywhere in Shetland. Thanks to the amount of low-lying land in the islands, Shetland’s settlement toponymy is far more complex than that of the Faroes.

In 1195, King Sverrir Sigurðarson of Norway removed Shetland from the control of the Orkney earls, and he and his successors henceforth administered the islands directly from Norway (Crawford 1983). In the late 13th and early 14th centuries, Shetland adopted political and economic institutions characteristic of Norway at that period. We have records of the Shetland law­thing from 1299 and 1307, the latter showing that the law administered in the islands was Magnus lagabøtir ("law-mender") Hákonarson’s lawland (Robberstad 1983). Recent research has shown that a new system of land valuation, rent, and taxation was probably introduced in Shetland at the same time, based on the East Norwegian markebol unit (Smith forthcoming). There is evidence from the late 13th and early 15th centuries of close political and family links between Shetland and the Faroes, the latter group of islands administered from Norway in precisely the same way as Shetland.

Before the 15th century, Shetland fish, always the main ex­port commodity, was channeled through the Hanseatic kontor in Bergen. During that century, individual merchants from North Germany ignored Hansa rules and began to trade directly with the Shetlanders, thus breaking an important economic link between Shetland and Norway (Friedland 1983). In 1469, Christian 1 of Denmark and Norway mortgaged his royal rights in Shetland to the king of Scotland; and during the next 150 years, Norse and Scots administrators and forms of administration and law intermixed in the islands. Norwegian aristocrats, known as the “Lords of Norway” in Shetland, continued to own large estates in the islands, but were gradually ousted by Scots in the late 16th and early 17th centuries (Smith 1990). Shetlanders finally ceased to speak a Scandinavian language in the 18th century (Jakobsen 1928).

In the late 19th century, Shetland intellectuals formulated a romantic theory of Shetland’s Norse past, contrasting that era favorably with what they called the period of “semi-serfdom” endured by Shetlanders in the 18th and 19th centuries (Cohen 1983).


Ingmar Billberg

[See also: Agriculture; Houses; Rural; Houses, Urban]

Shetland, Norse in. Shetland is called “Hjaltland” in the sagas and medieval documents. This group of around thirty inhabitable islands and numerous grazing islets and rocks lies 360 km. west of Bergen and 338 km. north of Aberdeen in Scotland. From the period of the Viking migrations until the Reformation, Shetland’s relationship with Scandinavia was close and complex, but eventually waned in intensity.
The Skuldelev find gave a convincing demonstration on one site of the variety of Viking ship types. Skuldelev 1 (length 15.8 m., breadth 4.4 m., draught 1.3 m., sail area 91.5 sq. m.) was capable of crossing the North Atlantic to Iceland or Greenland with 13.6 metric tons of cargo, but was not very fast under sail nor easily rowed. The smaller Skuldelev 3 (length 13.4 m., breadth 3.5 m., draught 0.9 m., sail area 41.2 sq. m.) was equally seaworthy, with a crew of six to seven but room for twice as many, and is probably representative of the maid-of-all-work of many estates of the period. The Skuldelev war vessels 2 (length 28 m., breadth 4.4 m., draught 0.9 m.) and 5 (length 18.3 m., breadth 2.6 m., draught 0.6 m.) had much larger crews, of a minimum fifty and twenty-five respectively, with 100 or fifty needed for continuous operation, requiring larger supplies of food and water scarcely to be carried in these light-displacement hulls, making them less independent, with a smaller operational radius. They are developments of pre-Viking types of the 5th and 7th centuries, such as Nydam (Akerlund 1963) or Sutton Hoo (Bruce-Mitford 1975), which carried no sail but evidently made successful North Sea crossings under oars alone. The division in the Skuldelev craft between capable sailing vessels with auxiliary oars, and primarily oared war vessels with auxiliary sails displays the difficulty that the Gokstad ship is underpowered under sail and oars in most believable reconstructions, leading to a variation between them of 150 percent in sail area and displacement. The warships could easily raise or lower their mast and rig when rowing to windward; in the merchant ships, the mast was a fixture, which may suggest that it was higher, with a higher aspect ratio, more efficient rig, suiting a ship with a smaller crew and less oar power to call on. But since no rigs survive, there can be no proof.

The variety of craft at Skuldelev is important in other ways. Once the Gokstad ship ceases to be the sole model, the skepticism of some historians about the size of certain ships (e.g., King Óláfr's Long-Serpent) or certain fleets (e.g., the a.d. 851 fleet of 350 ships) seems less justified. If we enlarge it to a length of 51.8 m. with eighty rowers, or envisage 20,000 men in a fleet of such expensive masterpieces, we may well have doubts. But a longship like Skuldelev 2 would at such a length have only twice the tonnage of the Gokstad ship (Banbury 1975), with the same power per ton available from its oars, and a fleet made up of Skuldelev 3 need not have numbered more than 7,000 men, a good deal more credible than the 20,000 involved if they were all in Gokstad ships. The contemporary accounts are less open to the charge of possible exaggeration.

Existing ships make a bigger impression than deductions, however legitimate, from fragments. But the evidence from Staraja Ladoga and Hedeby of merchant ships of Scandinavian type of 24.4 m. long and one from Bergen 27.4 m. long shows that some were larger than later cogs, such as that from Bremen, which is 23.2 m. long (Crumlin-Pedersen 1983). There is thus no reason to use the nature of the vessels as evidence that Viking ships carried only small luxury cargoes, and the bulk shipment of grain and other low-value loads later produced a different ship type, the Hansa cog. The development of ships of this size in Scandinavia is evidence that bulk cargoes were carried on a scale that made such ships worthwhile before the Hanseatic period.

Whether the later, larger oared warships were a similar improvement on their predecessors is doubtful. Since the maximum speed for a given power depends on waterline length, and an
oarsman produces approximately 0.5 hp. and requires a yard of rail to row over (less in the later, more crowded ships), the motive for increasing length beyond the limit of structural strength of a shallow hull is clear. The hull had to be shallow for its length to enable the oars to be applied effectively without entering the water at too steep an angle. In the Gokstad ship, this ratio was combined with a seaworthy freeboard by adding two strakes of planking above the oarports, with covers to close the oarports when the ship was under sail; without this feature, the permissible heel would have been too small for sailing in a seaway.

Estimates of the ability under sail of the Gokstad ship have been naturally as various as estimates of its sail area and displacement where the variation between upper and lower estimates, appropriate to different roles, is 150 percent. Some scholars thought Gokstad always needed a following wind, while others thought it could sail 4° off the wind at 7 knots, far surpassing a modern ice-yacht! The latter is certainly a misunderstanding of Andersen's 4 points (45°), itself hard to believe even as a heading, to which must be added the optimal 10° leeway required to produce the turbulence of water flowing under the shallow keel toward the windward side, which adds a virtual keel of water, shown in tank tests and sailing with replicas. The side rudder, not very effective for large course alterations, but easily handled because it is balanced about its axis, functions as a trim tab to control this angle of attack. Two alternative tiller holes in some rudders suggest it was used in the "half-up" position to control the ship even at the last minute before beaching, which was the normal way of loading, unloading, or spending the night.

The speeds to be expected from the waterline length can be substantially exceeded. Odin's Raven, a two-thirds replica version of the Gokstad ship, very similar to Skuldelev 3, was timed at a speed of 12.5 knots, 2\text{\textit{V}}L, and under a conservative seagoing rig tacked through the wind reliably and repeatedly without using oars or making sternway. At such speeds, England was barely a night and a day from Denmark, but of course such speeds imply that the wave making as the ship races through the water is not that of a displacement hull. Whether we explain this by planing, semiplaning, the flexibility of the hull, or fine sections and ultralight weight (all have been suggested; Binns 1980), the puzzling fact is well established. Light is thrown on the necessary sail trimming by the practice in contemporary North Norwegian

166. The evolution of the seagoing oared warship in Scandinavia to A.D. 1000.


168. Sailing ships (bottom left) are wide in proportion to length, and are good load carriers, but not fast. Oared warships are narrow for their length and fast. Gokstad, incorporating both traditions, stands on the dotted "borderline" between war galleys and merchant sailing ships.
(five oars a side) of using a priare, or three-armed sheet in the middle of the foot, used to control the curve and therefore the power of the sail. The interlace at the foot of the sail being held by crewmen in depictions of Viking ships on Gotland stones, such as that from Hejnum, seems to show this as a Viking Age feature, which implies skilled fine tuning to get the best speed possible as close to the wind as possible.

**Shipbuilding.** Seasoned timber has proved difficult to work as required in modern replica construction, and it seems likely that the timber was cut in the fall and moved through the forest on the winter snow to some convenient place close to the beach, where in spring it was built into a ship that sailed that summer. No hull has shown any sign of the use of a saw, and planks were split from a trunk radially, giving perhaps six narrow oak planks, or across a diameter, giving two wide pine planks. This process is important for the interpretation of hull shape, as shrinkage along the radius of a trunk is only half that across it (McGrail 1974). When allowance for this distortion is made, early ships like Nydam can be restored to much more seaworthy forms than those presently exhibited. The relative stability of split planks was required by the constructional method of all Viking Age hulls, the lapstrake or clinker form in which the hull shell is first completed from overlapping planks, and afterward strengthened by inserting frames and crossbeams. The extra flexibility needed in the devotedly and expensively lightened warships, where the thickness of the frames is carefully varied to suit the load, was achieved by tying the planking to the frames; but in merchant ships, it was fastened rigidly with metal or wooden spikes.

Ease of beaching required a shallow keel and relatively wide midship section, and seaworthiness required a curving high prow which was built first, with a fairly flat bottom giving a much greater volume on a given length, altogether more suitable for carrying large cargoes in tidal waters where oared propulsion was less important.


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**Sighvatr Póðarson.** With more than 160 stanzas and half-stanzas, Sighvatr's oeuvre is the most fully attested of all the skalds. Even so, the original context of many stanzas is uncertain and only one poem, Bersøglavísur ("Plain-speaking Verses"), approaches complete preservation. Although no saga centering on Sighvatr exists, his distinguished career is documented by numerous episodes, some anecdotal and perhaps dubiously reliable, in the various versions of Olaf's Saga helga. An Iceland born near the turn of the 11th century, Sighvatr belonged to a skaldic kindred, being the son of Póðr Sigvaldaskald and the uncle of Óttarr svarti ("the black"). His childhood was spent independently of his father, who seems to have been attached to the Jomsvingar, and in a non-Norri anecdote his legendary fluency in poetic improvisation is attributed to his having caught and eaten a miraculous fish. Following a successful petition to St. Óláfr to accept him as a court poet, his adult career began with his Vikingsævisur ("Verses on the Viking Expedition"; the title is editorial). Here, Sighvatr used information from eyewitnesses (including his father?) to enumerate Óláfr's battles in the Baltic, England, France, and Spain. Nesjavísl ("Nesjar Verses"), by contrast, is based on Sighvatr's own participation in Óláfr's victorious sea-battle against Earl Ósvin Hákonarson (1016). Sighvatr also became personally involved in peace missions. His embassy (ca. 1017) to Earl Rognvaldr of Västergotland is described in Austrfavársvísur ("Verses on a Journey to the East"). This collection of verses gives vivid, humorous, almost nothical impressions of a difficult route, inhospitable people, and a favorable diplomatic outcome, although its exact documentary significance remains controversial. Subsequently, with the high rank of stallari ("marshal"), Sighvatr went to England to gather intelligence about Knud (Cnut) the Great's designs in Norway. He described this mission in a sparsely preserved sequence entitled Vestfrávarvísl ("Verses on a Journey to the West", 1025–1026). Sighvatr's close relationship with Óláfr, richly documented in the lausavísur and other compositions, brought him landed property and also benefited other Icelanders, including his nephew Óttarr. Tradition has it that he was instrumental in the naming of Óláfr's son Magnús, and in return the king sponsored Sighvatr's daughter at baptism. A pilgrimage to Rome (1029–1030) precluded his participation in the king's final battle at Stiklastadhir. His sorrow is expressed in some very eloquent and touching memorial lausavísur. His eríðatapa ("memorial lay"), perhaps composed some years later, appears to have focused on Óláfr's battles, sainthood, and miracles. Spurning an invitation from Svein, the temporary regent of Norway, Sighvatr attached himself to Óláfr's widow, Æstríð, in exile in Sweden, and composed verses eulogizing her political efforts on behalf of Magnús, her stepson. Returning to Norway with Magnús (1035), he foresawed civil war with the poem entitled Bersoglaíavísur, which, by mingling candid admonition with sweet persuasion, brought the new king to recognize the grievances of Svein's erstwhile supporters. He also mediated between Æstríð and Alfhildr, the mother of Magnús. Despite his declaration to Knud that he could serve only one lord at a time, Sighvatr was capable of political independence. Most notably, he composed a drapa and an affectionate memorial blikkr in honor of Erlingr Skjalagsson, Óláfr's brother-in-law and long-time foe (d. 1028). Some MSS connect his name with a poorly attested Tryggaflokkr for Tryggvi Olafsson (son of Óláfr Tryggvason, and an unsuccessful contender against Earl Svein)
poems praising Earl Ivar and the Swedish king Önundr Jakob are also reported. His *Knudsdrápa* (*Lay in Honor of Knud*) was composed after Knud’s death (1035), perhaps on the occasion of Magnús’s reconciliation with Hardacnut (1038). Its coverage included Knud’s English campaign, the battle of Helged, and the king’s pilgrimage to Rome. It is distinctive formally for its *klolastef* (“broken refrain”) and very restrictive *taglag* versification. Sigvárr’s death probably occurred around 1043. His verse distinguishes itself by sincerity, loyalty, humor, and general strength of personality. Such is the air of spontaneity that his poems appear to be retrospective assemblages of occasional or anecdotal verses. Colloquial and proverbial touches sit side by side with foreign words, which, combined with the breadth of geographical references, give itself by sincerity, loyalty, humor, and general strength of per-

cloquial and proverbial touches sit side by side with foreign words, retrospective assemblages of occasional or anecdotal verses. Colloquial and proverbial touches sit side by side with foreign words, which, combined with the breadth of geographical references, give itself by sincerity, loyalty, humor, and general strength of per-


Russell Poole

[Sigvárrfumál (“The Lay of Sigvárr”) is preserved in the *Codex Regius* of the *Poetic Edda* (Grk 2365 4to; written in Iceland ca. 1270; now in Reykjavik) and in much later paper MSS. It does not constitute a single poem, but is part of a mass of heterogeneous prose and verse concerning “young Sigurðr” that begins with *Reginsmál*, continues through *Fáfnismál*, and ends when *Sigvárrfumál* breaks off in the great lacuna after stanza 29.2. The title is found only in some of the paper MSS. The lacuna resulted from the removal of the fifth of the *Codex Regius’s* originally seven gatherings. Although no copy antedates the loss, the contents of the eight lost leaves can be determined from a 13th-century paraphrase (*Vósumsa saga*) in prose, with many verse quotations. This paraphrase confirms the paper MSS that continue the poem through stanza 37.

Introductory prose tells how Sigurðr, fresh from killing the dragon and removing its treasure, rode up to the mountain Hindarfjall, where he saw a great light like a fire. In it was an enclosure of shields, and within that lay a sleeping person in armor. Sigurðr removed the helmet, saw that it was a woman, and cut the chain mail from her body. In narrative verse (* fornýðralag*; st. 1), she asks who freed her from the dark fetters of sleep, and Sigurðr identifies himself with a reference to the slaying of Fáfnir. In chant meter (*ljóðaháttr*, st. 2), she says that her long sleep was due to Óðinn. prose: she gave him a drink of mead, the memory cup. *ljóðaháttr* (sts. 3-4): Her invocation of day and the gods, a blessing on the two of them. Prose with *forðráþlag* inlay: She was a valkyrie called Sigdrifa. (The word seems to be an appellative in *Fáfnismál*, st. 44: “the victory-showering one” may be a periphrasis for a valkyrie.) She defied the will of Óðinn, who stabbed her with a sleep-thorn and cursed her so that she would lose her valkyrie powers in marriage, but she swore to marry only a man without fear. *Fornýðralag* (st. 5): She says that she is presenting her interlocutor with beer filled with magical powers for good. *ljóðaháttr* (sts. 6-13): Sigdrifa teaches Sigurðr a series of runes, such as “victory runes” and “ale runes,” their use, and where they are to be cut. A mixture of charm meter (*galdradrag*, a by-form of *ljóðaháttr*) and *fornýðralag* (sts. 14-19): Cryptic references to the mythological history and use of runes. *ljóðaháttr* (sts. 20-21): Sigdrifa asks Sigurðr in a challenging way whether she should speak further; he answers that he has no fear of his fate and will value her “loving advice” as long as he lives. Stanzas 22-37 in *ljóðaháttr* give eleven

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numbered items of advice and five similar unnumbered expansions or additions; the rules for the conduct of life touch on loyalty, oaths, wisdom, honor, witches, women, drinking, and the dead, among other subjects.

Many conflicting analyses of this material have been argued, but a typical one might distinguish the following components: (1) The remainders of a fornyrðislag narrative poem specific to Sigurðr that told of the awakening of the valkyrie (st. 1, prose and verse after st. 4, and st. 5). (2) The ljóðakháttr poem on runes (sts. 6–13.6) may have been introduced by stanza 8, in which Sigdrífa offers beer; nothing ties it specifically with Sigurðr. (3) The ljóðakháttr poem of ethical advice might have included the beautiful and ancient invocations in stanzas 3–4, the valkyrie’s explanation of her sleep (st. 2), the exchange regarding knowledge and fate (sts. 20–21), and the advice stanzas (22–37, perhaps minus interpolations); it is difficult to imagine this poem as separate from the Sigurðr story. (4) Finally, an assortment of bits of wisdom tradition accounts for stanza 13.7–18.

The various elements reflect diverse cultural periods: the invocation stanzas (3–4) are at least modeled on very ancient ritual poetry; some advice may reflect Christian influence (33–34). Although firm datings are impossible, a consensus of contemporary scholarship might assign the rune poem and the advice poem substantially to the 11th century and the fornyrðislag narrative to the 12th. Sigdrífumál is an important witness to stages in the story of Sigurðr and Brynhildr. But such questions as the origin of the identification of Brynhildr with Sigdrífr or of Sigurðr’s “prior betrothal” to Brynhildr can only be answered after intricate and hypothetical reconstruction of lost written versions just preceding the preserved monuments. In general, it seems that both a pamphlet of Sigurðr poems and a separate prose saga of Sigurðr must be postulated for about 1200 (see Andersson 1980 for summaries and references).


Joseph Harris

[See also: Codex Regius; Eddic Meters; Eddic Poetry; Maiden Warriors; Reginsmál and Fáfnismál; Völsung-Niflung Cycle; Völsunga saga; Women in Eddic Poetry]

Sigdrífr saga frekna (“The Saga of Sigdrífr the Brave”) is an anonymous Icelandic riddarasaga composed probably in the third quarter of the 15th century, perhaps in Oddi in South Iceland. Sigdrífr saga frekna thus belongs to the youngest period of the genre, and with a total of more than fifty preserved MSS from the 15th to the beginning of the 20th century, is one of the most heavily transmitted riddarasógr. Two cycles of Rímur af Sigdrífr saga date from the 17th century.

Prince Sigdrífr from Garðar courts the arrogant maiden-queen Ingigerðr of Tarcia, who, along with her two sisters, has been bound in a spell cast by their wicked stepmother, Hlégerðr. Three times he is rejected by Ingigerðr, and returns home in low spirits. On his way home after a second visit, he kills the Viking Knútr, takes on the dead man’s shape, and lets the report spread of his own death. He spends the winter with Ingigerðr together with his two men. In the spring, he and his men are sent on a difficult errand. They prevail in fierce fights with animals, giants, and dragons, accomplish the task, and thus break the spell in which the three sisters are bound. Sigdrífr reassumes his own shape, subdues Ingigerðr, and takes her as his wife.

The thematic relationship between Sigdrífr saga frekna and the fomaldarsógr is so striking that the saga has often been placed in a group of sagas bordering the original riddarasógr and the fomaldarsógr. Especially characteristic is the stepmother motif with its detailed spell plot. The devices of the spell (álog) and the maiden-king (meykóngr) determine the narrative structure of the text. Direct loans from Bósa saga (two-brother motif) and especially Viktors saga ok Blávus are probable. From the latter, Sigdrífr saga frekna most likely appropriated the bridal-quest story, which makes it possible to date an Icelandic riddarasaga with some certainty. Sigdrífr saga frekna can probably be dated to the time between around 1440 (Viktors saga) and the last quarter of the 15th century (the oldest MS of Sigdrífr saga, AM 5666 4to). The saga also includes familiar motifs, such as magic weapons, flying carpets, a guest in the disguise of a merchant, a winter guest, and shape shifting. In one of the central incidents in the saga, the hero and the Viking taunt one another with niðr, or sexual insults.

Sigurðar saga fót ok Æsmundar húnakongs

The beautiful Princess Porfia of Ungaria (Hungary?), and takes her as his wife.

Although Sigurðar saga ok Valbrands contains ancient elements, it is not based on a foreign source, but undoubtedly belongs to the youngest group of the pre-Reformation sagas. In structure and content, there are clear parallels with Bærings saga and Adonias saga, and influence from Gibbons saga is also evident.

The saga represents an adaptation of a rich corpus of international narrative patterns. For the extensive first part and the short third part of the saga, the bridal-quest theme constitutes the plot. Several common motifs of the narrative literature of medieval Europe, such as the chase of the hind (Placidia), the meeting with the dwarf, the magic instrument, the test of the suitor, and the magic flute, determine the fairy-tale-like character of Sigurðar saga ok Valbrands. The emphasis placed upon the courtly aspect is striking. In addition, an unusually distinctive narrator comments upon the events, divides his sympathy among the characters, sides with the hero, and curses the wicked Valbrandr.

[Sigurðar saga fót ok Æsmundar húnakongs](#)

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**Sigurðar saga fót ok Valbrands** 

The Saga of Sigurdr and Valbrandr) is an anonymous Icelandic riddarasaga, composed probably in the 15th century, perhaps in Oddi in South Iceland. The transmission of the saga is extremely poor. Of the extant vellum MSS (Stock. Perg. 130 no. 2), only two small fragments are preserved; the remaining seventeen MSS are all late paper MSS. In the 17th century, a rímun cycle based on the material of the saga came into existence.

The eminent Prince Sigurdr of England chases a hind, and is led by it to the dwarf Gestr. Sigurdr receives a wonderful harp and gloves from him, and promises in return his firstborn son. Sigurdr later marries Princess Florida of Villisvinaland ("wild boar country"), having defeated the wicked Duke Valbrandr in a duel and beaten Florida in harp playing. However, during the wedding night, Sigurdr is stabbed and killed by Valbrandr. Later, Valbrandr abducts Sigurdr's two sons, killing one of them. Gestr removes the elder son and Florida to safety in England, and trains the boy, named Sigurdr like his father, to become a brave knight. At the age of fifteen, he takes revenge on Valbrandr, defeating him with Gestr's help in a furious battle. Valbrandr is tortured to death, and young Sigurdr becomes king. At Gestr's advice, hecourts...
Asmundr presents his suit to Signy, who, although favorably disposed toward Asmundr, is loath to accept in her father's absence. Not content with such an answer, Asmundr declares himself betrothed to Signy. Meanwhile, King Knútr has met the fleet-of-foot Sigurðr fótr, king of Valland, who has asked for and been granted his daughter's hand. At the wedding, Asmundr and one of his men abduct the bride, not entirely against her will. All attempts at a settlement fail, Sigurðr refusing to accept anything short of Signy. The kings meet in single combat. Although defeated, Sigurðr once more refuses a settlement, and Asmundr agrees to give up Signy. Signy and Sigurðr are married, and he and Asmundr become sworn brothers.

Ásmundr now turns his attention to Elena, daughter of King Hrólfr of Ireland. Hrólfr considers Asmundr unworthy of his daughter, and will not hear of the union. Ásmundr challenges the Irish to battle, but is badly defeated. In a dream, Signy sees what has befallen Ásmundr and urges Sigurðr to go to his aid. He and his men sail to Ireland and defeat Hrólfr. Unknown to them, Ásmundr has been released by Elena. King Hrólfr is spared at Elena's request, in return for which he agrees to the marriage.

Sigurðar saga fóts is generally classed as a riddarasaga, presumably on the grounds that the action takes place outside Scandinavia. It has, however, more in common with the fomaldarsögur: the names are all Nordic, and although the setting is not Scandinavia proper, it is limited to the Viking North Sea area. There is also a complete absence of the magic stones and other marvelous objects much favored by riddarasögurauthors; and although the two heroes meet in single combat, there is no tournament, otherwise de rigeure in the riddarsögur. There is, in any case, no clearcut distinction between the two, the present saga being one of the four or five often cited as borderline cases.

A few scholars have seen a correspondence between the saga and the Middle High German Rüdran, a view rejected by Liestel (1933), who argues that the saga is not a firsthand treatment of the Hilde-Gudrun theme, but rather draws heavily on a number of fomaldarsögur, in particular Hrólfs saga Gautrekksonar and Ásmundar saga kappabana.

For this type of saga, critical opinion has been unusually favorable, Liestel (1933) calling it one of the best and Jackson (1931) the most readable of its kind. This favor is no doubt due to its brevity and its similarity to the more "respectable" (because more "native") fomaldarsögur. The narrative is uncluttered by superfluous characters and motifs and written in a straightforward, if somewhat uninspired, style.


[See also: Ásmundar saga kappabana; Fornaldarsögur, Hrólfs saga Gautrekksonar; Riddarsögur]

Sigurðar saga turnara ("The Saga of Sigurðr the Jouster"), was composed in Iceland, probably in the 14th century, and survives in thirty MSS and fragments. The oldest of these is Stock Perg. fol. no. 7, dating from the second half of the 15th century, in which the saga is defective. Two early paper MSS, AM 589d 4to (1691) and AM 122 8vo (ca. 1700), preserve the saga in full. Sigurðr, son of Vilhjálmar, king of France, having by the age of twelve surpassed all others at book learning and knightly pursuits, travels abroad in search of adventure. In Greece, he disguises his identity and offers his services to King Valdimarr in return for winter lodging. Count Herrmör of Spain arrives and challenges the king and his men to a tournament. After initially professing his ignorance of the sport, Sigurðr goes on to distinguish himself, defeating Herrmör and routing his army. During the tournament, Sigurðr notices a beautiful veiled woman watching from a tower, whom he suspects is the king's daughter. Through his skill at climbing and picking locks, Sigurðr gains access to the tower, and there follows an extended liaison between the two, during which Sigurðr reveals his true identity to the princess.

Having overextended himself financially through his generosity, Sigurðr is obliged to seek a loan from Prándr, the king's adviser and a cunning and wicked man. He reveals the secret of his liaison with the princess to Prándr, who betrays him to the king. Sigurðr escapes capture in the princess's bedchamber on three consecutive nights, first by hiding in a hollow seat, next by hiding in a secret place under the bed, and finally by standing with arms outstretched in front of a life-sized crucifix over the bed. Sigurðr is then asked to relate his exploits to Prándr's "parents," realizing too late that the "father" is really the king himself. Sigurðr kills Prándr and forces the king to allow the marriage, which he does gladly once Sigurðr has revealed his true identity. The wedding takes place, and Sigurðr becomes king of both countries.

The plot of Sigurðar saga turnara, like those of most riddarasögur, is composed of conventional motifs and episodes borrowed from a wide variety of sources, native and foreign. Thus, although initially described in terms befitting a perfect knight, Sigurðr becomes in battle the archetypal Viking hero, while in his dealings with the king's daughter taking on characteristics commonly associated with the figure of the trickster in medieval legend. Schlauch (1934) recognized in the saga a general indebtedness to the fabliaux. Spaulding (1982) suggests that a 12th-century fabliau, Du prestre crucile, could have provided a source for the crucifix incident in Sigurðar saga. Similarly, Sigurðr's escapes from detection in the princess's bedchamber are reminiscent of, and may be based on, the sjávarloft episodes told by King Haraldr harðráði ("hard-ruler") Sigurðarson and Porstein Ásmundarson in Grettis saga.

Despite this eclecticism, Sigurðar saga turnara functions well as a literary work: it is a good story, well told. Both style and plot are straightforward and free of rhetorical elaboration.


M. J. Driscoll

[See also: Gretis saga; Riddarasögur]

Sigurðar saga þöglua ("The Saga of Sigurðr the Silent"), a riddarasaga composed in Iceland in the 14th century, relates the tale of Sætíánna, daughter of King Flores and Queen Blankiflur of France, who refuses all suitors and, having succeeded her father to the throne, insists on being called king. Her hand is sought by Hålfían, Sigurð’s brother, whom she humiliates. Sigurð has an unpromising youth; he is still unable to speak at age seven, hence his sobriquet "the Silent." But under the tutelage of his foster-father, Count Lafranz of Liexion, he becomes a paragon of medieval masculinity. Following a series of adventures, he succeeds, with help from the supernatural, in chastising Sætíánna and winning her for himself.

The saga is one of a number of native romances dealing with the theme of the "maiden-king," a popular subgenre of the bridal-quest narrative. Added to the basic plot are names, objects, topoi, and entire episodes freely borrowed from other sources. The acquisition of a grateful lion, for example, is a motif present in other riddarasöggur (and elsewhere), but which derives ultimately from Chrétien de Troyes. In addition, Sigurðar saga can be shown to have borrowed directly from, or been influenced by, the following sagas: Flores saga ok Blankiflur, Klári saga, Bevis saga, Viktors saga, Gíbgons saga, og Blávus saga. The list could be extended. The prologue, a kind of apologia for the romances, is also found in two MSS of Gíngu-Hrôlfs saga, but cannot be shown to be more original there. This extraneous material is for the most part carefully woven into the plot and is seldom perfunctory. Moreover, much of it is characterized by a humor not found in other sources.

The saga’s popularity is attested by sixty MSS and fragments, the majority paper from the 18th and 19th centuries. There are two early vellums, AM 152 fol., dating from the early 16th century, which preserves the saga in its entirety, and the fragmentary AM 596 4to, comprising two separate fragments, the first from the middle of the second half of the 14th century, the second somewhat later. AM 596 4to preserves a version of the saga substantially different from the other MSS, shorter by several episodes and differing in a number of incidental details, but differing also from AM 152 fol. and related MSS in style. All extant paper MSS stem from AM 152 fol., while AM 596 fol. (or a MS closely related to it) clearly formed the basis for the Sigurðar rímur þöglua, composed probably in the 14th century and preserved in four MSS. While Björn K. Pórlísson (1934) argued that the longer version must be the more original, the opposite conclusion was reached by Einar Òl. Sveinsson (1964). A comparison of the two texts indicates that neither, as preserved, can be the source of the other, for while AM 152 fol. and related MSS contain material not found in AM 596 fol., the wording of AM 596 fol. is consistently more elaborate. Rather, both appear to derive from a common source, AM 152 fol. showing evidence of material amplification, AM 596 fol. of rhetorical amplification.

The style of Sigurðar saga is not as far removed from that of the Islendingasögur as some critics have suggested. On the whole, the saga shows few characteristics of the "courtly style" commonly associated with the romances.


M. J. Driscoll

[See also: Bevis saga; Flores saga ok Blankiflur; Gíbgons saga; Gíngu-Hrôlfs saga; Klári (Clári) saga; Riddarasögur; Viktors saga ok Blávus]

Sigurðar þáttur Hranasonar see Pínga saga

Sigurðarðrápa see Einarr Skúlason

Sigurðarkviða in skammar ("The Short Lay of Sigurðr") is an anonymous poem in the Poetic Edda comprising seventy-one stanza in fornyrðislag meter. Despite its name, Sigurðarkviða in skammar is one of the longest eddic poems: the term "short" distinguishes it from a lost *Sigurðarkviða in meiri* ("The Long Lay of Sigurðr"), which occupied much of the lost fifth gathering of Codex Regius, the chief MS of the Edda. Since the third Sigurðr poem in the Edda (Brot af Sigurðarkviða) also fell partly into the lost gathering, the short lay is the only complete extant Norse poem on Sigurðr's death. Unfortunately for our knowledge of Germanic legend, it is also probably the latest, and abbreviates its narrative by skipping over the older central parts of the story.
The poem begins with a sketchy account of Sigurðr’s arrival at the court of Gjúki, his sworn brotherhood with Gjúki’s sons Gunnarr and Hogni, and his assisting Gunnarr in wooing Brynhildr. It continues with Brynhildr’s determination to see Sigurðr dead. In other sources, Brynhildr is jealous of Sigurðr’s wife, Guðrún, because Sigurðr helped Gunnarr win her hand, or intends on vengeance because Sigurðr promised to marry her but then jilted her. In the short lay, Brynhildr’s motive is unstated, but appears to be jealous and/or unrequited love. Brynhildr threatens to leave Gunnarr if he does not kill Sigurðr; Hogni resists the idea, then agrees and suggests they incite their youngest brother, Guttormr, to kill Sigurðr, since he has sworn no oaths of brotherhood with him. Gunnarr kills Sigurðr in his bed, the Scandinavian version of Sigurðr’s death; in German versions, he is killed in the forest. But Sigurðr is able to kill Guttormr and comfort Guðrún before he dies. When Brynhildr hears Guðrún weeping, she laughs feverishly and begins to remind Gunnarr how he, Hogni, and Sigurðr all desired her when she married Gunnarr. She prepares to commit suicide, invites her servants to share her funeral pyre, and prophesies the future troubles of Gunnarr, Guðrún, and Sigurðr’s daughter, Svanhildr. Gunnarr will fall in love with Brynhildr as Gunnarr’s proxy. He does so, but places a sword between Brynhildr and himself on the bridal bed.

Years later, in anger, Guðrún reveals the deception to Brynhildr. Brynhildr is desolate. She tells Gunnarr that Sigurðr betrayed him and consummated their marriage. Brynhildr refuses “to have two husbands in one hall”; she, Sigurðr, or Gunnarr must die. Gunnarr confers with his brother Hogni.

Here the fragment begins. Told that Sigurðr must die, Hogni surmises that Brynhildr has incited the murder out of jealousy of Guðrún. With wolf and snake meat, Gunnarr and Hogni embolden their brother, Gunnarr, who kills Sigurðr. When they return, Guðrún asks after Sigurðr. Hogni tells her they have cut him down and that his horse now moans over his head. Brynhildr celebrates the news joyously; Guðrún predicts vengeance for Sigurðr’s death. In a flashback, the poet announces that Sigurðr was killed “south of the Rhine” and that a raven cried out that Atli (Atila) would avenge the brothers’ broken oaths to Sigurðr. The forest murder follows the German form of the legend and suggests a German or Danish source.

That night, Gunnarr lies awake, tormented by the memory of the raven’s cry. Brynhildr awakens weeping just before dawn, telling a dream of Gunnarr riding fettered among his enemies. She then reveals the truth: Sigurðr did not consummate the marriage with her at all, so Gunnarr, not Sigurðr, has betrayed his oaths.

The poem breaks off abruptly here; it once probably continued with an account of Brynhildr’s death, omitted from Codex Regius because the following poems (notably Sigurðarkviða in skamma) told the story more fully.

Brot af Sigurðarkviðu combines the terse, dramatic narrative style of the oldest Germanic heroic lays with motifs reminiscent of ballads and late heroic poetry, such as the raven’s prophecy, the warning dreams, and the image of Grani mourning over Sigurðr’s body. Like Sigurðarkviða in skamma, it shows more interest in Brynhildr than in Sigurðr; this emphasis may reflect continental influence. Some lines show the metrical light filling of late heroic poetry. Datings range from the 10th to the 12th century; 1100 to 1150 seems plausible for the poem as we have it.
The tales are unified within a frame story. The son of the empress and the wise men try to persuade the emperor by telling him appropriate stories of the myth of the "mead of poetry." They counted one of the seven wise men as the main Old Norse word for a poet. Greppr 'man' also occurs, but only infrequently in verse in this specific sense. Skáld presumably referred, as it does in modern Icelandic, to any kind of poet. But since nothing is directly known about the authorship of eddic poems or the contexts in which they were composed, it is only possible to speak about the makers of skaldic verse, and this is the normal usage of the loanword "skáld/skald" in modern English, and of German Skald(e) and Scandinavian skald.

Insight into the role of the skald can be gained from various sources: the verses themselves, the prose narratives involving skalds, and the laws, which, however, are concerned only with poetry as a medium for libel or illicit protestations of love. The lausavík, or occasional verses, are obviously promising sources, since they are supposedly extemporized comments on battles, sea voyages, love affairs, or other situations in which the skald was personally involved, although the authenticity of some, especially those quoted in Íslandssögur, maybe questioned. But the more extended and "official" drapur and flokkar, which emulate the deeds of others, also contain hints about the skalds' art and status. It is indeed a proud and highly self-conscious art. The skalds attributed its genesis to the god Óðinn, producing fascinating elaborations of the myth of the "mead of poetry." They counted one of their predecessors, Bragi Bodason, among the gods; and they frequently punctuated their poems with exuberant references to the composition and performance of verse (for which Kreutzer 1977 is an invaluable source). The importance of verse making is also publicly affirmed by the considerable number of nicknames that refer to it, among them þórrarin loftunga ("praise-tongue") and Æðun íllskelda ("bad-poet, plagiarist"). In addition to producing verbal art, the skalds became the subject of it in brief anecdotes and fuller, detachable þættir, which it was in the rest of Europe, even something of a bestseller. The reason might be that some of the stories are a bit dramatic, while others have comic details, and one or two touch upon sexual matters.

The description of individuals is primitive, schematic, and unrealistic. The author's capability for variation is limited, and the reactions of his characters stereotyped.
are preserved in versions of the konungsödgar. These anecdotes and jættir are especially numerous in the sagas of Magnús góði ("the good") and Haraldr Sigurðarson in such MSS as Morkinskinna and Hylfdahropkinskinna. Moreover, there are six complete sagas of skalds (skaldasögur): Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar, Gunnlaugs saga ormstunga, Kormáks saga, Hallrétts saga, Fóstbrœðra saga (the skald is one of the two foster-brothers, Pormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld), and Bjarnar saga Htídalakappu (Björn's rival Póróðr Kolbeinsson).

Some of these sagas are counted among the earliest of the Íslendingasögur. A now-lost saga of Orm Krætepjarðarstórm seems to have existed in some form by 1119, for a reading of it is among the entertainments at the wedding of Reykjahólar recorded for that year in Pòrgils saga ok Hallrétts (ch. 10). There is also the Skálta saga, from the mid-13th century at the earliest, whose heroes are highly fictionalized versions of three skalds of Haraldr hárfagr ("fair-hair").

The dynamic of these prose narratives depends partly on the power of poetry itself. Egill Skalla-Grímsson in his saga assures the wrath of King Eiríkr blóðax ("blood-axe") by means of the panegyric Hólfjudlaus ("Head-ransom"); he pours out and purges his angry grief at the deaths of his sons in Sonatorræk ("Cruel Loss of Sons"). The nið, or verse slander, of Þormörk jarlarskáld ("earl's skald") is, according to the Íttrir about him, so potent that Hókon jarl Sigurðarson equips an assassin with magical powers and sends him to Iceland to do away with the poet. However, there is also an evident fascination with the figure of the poet himself, whose frequently awkward, even turbulent, temperament can produce interesting confrontations with royal patrons or neighbors at home in Iceland. Hallrétts is given his nickname vandræðaskáld ("troublesome-poet") by King Ólaf Tryggvason in memory of his anguished conversion from paganism to Christianity. The principal theme of the skaldasögur, however, is rivalry and unhappiness in love, a central theme in Kormáks saga, and dominant in all the rest except Egils saga.

Skaldic verse is resolutely and, for the medieval period, unusually, not anonymous, although some verses lack known authors, while some named skalds lack extant verses, including several of the 146 poets named in Skaldatal (ca. 1260), the "List of Poets," and categorized according to their royal patrons. Estimates vary as to the total number of names of skalds that are recorded, but Kühn (1993: 240) reckons on over 300 for the period to 1200. There is interesting diversity among the practitioners of the skaldic art. Haraldr Sigurðarson was the most prolific of a handful of verse-making Norwegian kings, and Rognvaldr Kali, earl of Orkney, shared his gift, as did the Orkneyish bishop Bjarni Kolbeinsson. Icelandic skalds included such lawspeakers as Markús Skeggjason and Snorri Sturluson, the outlaw Grenn and Óslí, and several women. Some attributions and verses, however, are suspect, the supernatural ones being the most obvious case. Haralda saga Sigurðarsonar in Heimskringla, for example, contains verses spoken in dreams by the ghost of Óláfr Haraldsson and by trollwomen.

Little is known about the training of skalds, and it is not until Snorri Sturluson's Edda (ca. 1220) that we see possible teaching materials on meter, diction, and mythological background. Some skalds are the sons of skalds, among them Sighvatr, son of Póðr Sigvaldskáld ("Sigvaldi's skald"), and Arnór jarlarskáld ("earl's skald"), son of Póðr Kolbeinsson, but there are not enough to suggest a definite pattern of heredity. There are also skaldic friendships on record, but only very imprecise references to tutoring. Einar Helgason skálaglamm ("scale-tinkle") visited Egill Skalla-Grímssson and discussed poetry with him (Egils saga, ch. 78); Gunnlaugr ormstunga ("serpent-tongue") was a friend of Hallrétts and rival of Hrafn Ònundarson, both in poetry and in love. Hofgarða-Refr's memorial poem for his foster-father, Giszurr gullbráskáld ("poet of goldbrow"), includes thanks for passing on to him the gift of poetry. Would-be skalds doubtless began memorizing and studying existing verses, and established skalds retained these verses in their repertoire. Pomóðr Kolbrúnarskáld ("Kolbrún's skald"), called upon to recite something to King Ólaf before the battle of Stiklastaðir in 1030, really declaims Bjarkamál (whose authenticity, however, has been questioned). Stílís jættir shows the skald entertaining Haraldr Sigurðarson with the verses of others before proceeding to his own.

Similarly, although references to making and uttering verses are numerous within the skaldic corpus, they yield only imprecise insights into the skald's craft. There is a distinction between composition (for which the verb yrka is especially favored) and performance (kveða, flýtja, feora framm), and skalds frequently arrive at court with their eulogies ready-made. For lausavísur, on the other hand, the claims of rapid extemporization may in many cases be true, for the verses often depend for their effect on their immediacy within a particular situation, whether it be a witty exchange of insults, or a sighting of Constantinople from an approaching ship. Some such claims, however, are dubious, as when Egill makes his first dróttkvattn utterances at the age of three (Egils saga, ch. 31). Skaldic verses were certainly delivered with panache (often skoruliga 'splendidly'), and although the manner of recitation probably differed from everyday speech, poems were not sung. There is no evidence of musical accompaniment.

Whether rightly or wrongly, the notion of skaldship is above all associated with the poets composing for Scandinavian, especially Norwegian, rulers from the 9th century (Bragi Boddason) to the 13th century (Sturla Póðarson and his brother Ólaf hvitaskáld ("white-skald")). The court poets are, to begin with, Norwegians, but in the mid-10th century Egill becomes the first known Icelander to compose at a foreign court, and Ólafur Geiðason the first to enjoy an established position, with King Haraldr gráfaðir ("greycloak"). By the end of the 10th century, the Norwegians had been displaced, for reasons not now understood.

The relationship of poet and royal patron is nowhere systematically defined. The skald's position at court was probably never full-time or lifelong, but the existence of the term hirðskáld ("court poet") might suggest at least a semiofficial role. Egils saga (ch. 8) claims that Haraldr hárfagr's poets were given seats of honor opposite the king; Arnór jarlarskáld enjoyed similar favor at the feasts of Porfinnr, earl of Orkney, and married a relative of his. Here, as often, the specific role of court poet fused with the general one of royal retainer. Sighvatr Póðarson's position of trust with Ólaf Haraldsson helgi ("the saint") was such that he went on diplomatic missions for him, commemorated in the Óstfarárvarð and Vestfarárvarð ("Verses on a Journey to the East/West"), and later gave outspoken advice to Ólaf's son (and Sighvatr's godson) Magnús in the Bessgölsvísur ("Plain-speaking Verses"). Sighvatr's position was exceptional, but many skalds fought and died alongside their patrons. At Stiklastaðir, Ólaf Haraldsson, according to his saga in Heimskringla (ch. 206), places his skalds Pomóðr Kolbrúnarskáld, Giszurr gullbrá ("gold-brow"), and Porfinnr munnr ("mouth") in the shield wall in front of him, so that they might compose about the battle afterward from firsthand knowledge. They pledge support for the king in dróttkvattn stanzas, which are immediately memorized by the men around them. All three skalds...
fall with their lord in the battle.

As well as providing commemoration, praise, and propaganda in their panegyrics and blame in their satires, skalds could supply less lofty forms of entertainment, and Máni skáld, at the end of the 12th century, feared displacement by jugglers and gandar in their panegyrics and blame in their satires, skalds could minstrels. Pjödólf Arnórsson, a leading skald at the poetically lively court of Harald Sigurdarson, was called upon by the king to extemporize a verse about a tanner and a smith, and took part in a three-way verse-making contest. Sneglu-Halli, a specialist in insulting verses, responded to a challenge to make a snapshot in verse when Harald Sigurdarson put his armor on a Frisian dwarf.

The rewards for poetry were hospitality (although Sneglu-Halli complains of Harald Sigurdarson’s meanness with food) and gifts of treasure or armor, to which the skalds frequently refer (e.g., Haraldskviða, sts. 18–19), as well as occasionally hinting at their impecunious state or uttering complaints about rulers who fail in generosity.


**Diana Edwards Whaley**

[See also: Arnór Póðarson jarlaskáld; Bjarkamál; Bjarni Kolbeinsson; Björn Arngeirsson Hítdekkakappi; Björn Breiðvikingakappi; Bragi Boddason; Christian Poetry; Commemorative Poetry; Egill Skalla-Grimsson; Eilífr Godþrúnarson; Einarr Helgason skálaglamm; Einarr Skúlason; Eyvindr Fínnysson skáldaspillir; Gamli kanóki; Gunnlaug ormsunga; Hallrœðr Óttarsson; Kormákr Ógmundarson; Lausavísur; Love Poetry; Óttarr sverri; Sighvatr Póðarson; Skáldasögur; Skaldic Meters; Skaldic Verse; Skáldkonur; Snorri Sturluson; Stáls þáttr; Sturla Póðarson; Þattr; Pjödólf of Hvin; Póðarin loftunga; Póðarin svarti; Póðbjörn hornklofi; Póður Kolbeinsson; Þorleifs þáttar jarlskálđs; Úlfur Uggason; Viga-Glúmr Eyrjófsson]

**Skald Sagas** see Skáldasögur

**Skáldasögur** ("Sagas of Skalds") is a modern name given to a group of *Islendingasogur* that have famous skalds as principal characters: Kormáks saga, Hallrœðr saga, Bjarnar saga Hítdekkakappu, Gunnlaugs saga ormsungu, Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar, and Fóstbrœðra saga. The first four are also sagas of lovesick tragedy. Kormáks saga is probably the oldest, and the outlines of its love story and several minor traits apparently influenced Hallrœðr saga. In the saga, Kormákr improves more than sixty stanzas, some indisputably the finest stanzas on love in skaldic poetry. Altogether, there are eighty-five stanzas, including half-stanzas and couplets, in Kormáks saga. Here and in the following four sagas, the stanzas form a part of the artistic fabric of the saga and are never quoted as evidence.

On the other hand, fifteen stanzas from Pormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld’s *erðirþrápa* ("elegy") about his foster-brother Forgeir are quoted as evidence or confirmation of the story in Fóstbrœðra saga, while about twenty, depending on the redaction, are quoted as entertainment only. In this saga, there is a special episode of love, where Pormóðr improves two stanzas.

In Bjarnar saga and Gunnlaugs saga, the outlines of the love story are the same, and in both sagas the principal character dies at the hands of the man, also a skald, who had married his betrothed. It should be noted that the plot of the love story in Laxdæla saga follows the same pattern.

Egils saga is a very different skald saga, although it contains an episode of passionate love, which later has great consequences for Egill. And Egill himself plays the lovesick skald in a short episode.

It has been suggested that the dominant theme of Kormáks saga, the skald’s lifelong love of a woman both before and after she has married another man, may have its roots in some version of the originally French romance of Tristan, and that the plot of Bjarnar saga and Gunnlaugs saga may originate in an episode in the same romance through the medium of a Þórrin Morkusókninna. The short but intricate love episode in Fóstbrœðra saga appears to have affinities with an episode in the Tristan romance. It can hardly be expected that stanzas that constitute an inherent part of these love stories are authentic 10th-century poetry.

SKALDASÖGUR


Bjarni Einarsson

[See also: Bjarnari saga Hitcdelakappa; Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar; Fóstbróðra saga; Gunlaugs saga ormsstungu; Hallfreda saga; Islendingasögur; Kormáks saga; Laxdœla saga; Morkinskinna; Skald; Skaldic Verse; Páttr]

Skaldic Meters. The skaldic verse of the 9th to the 14th century is mostly composed in meters that are strophic, stress counting, and syllable counting, with tightly regulated alliteration and internal rhyme.

Dróttkvætt. The highly elaborate dróttkvæðr hattir or dróttkvætt "court meter" is the meter of some five-sixths of the skaldic corpus and the basis of most other skaldic meters. Its kinship with the eddic fornyrdslag and Old English, Old High German, and Old Saxon alliterative verse is obvious and undisputed; whether its special characteristics show influence from Latin, Irish, or Welsh verse is less certain. The following half-strophe from the memorial poem for Haraldr Sigurðarson (d. 1066) by Ármórnjarlaskald ("earls' skald") illustrates the meter:

[Vín for völungs heiti,
vara margloft hard, sás skaut ór Niõ nyfla
nørdan herships bordi.

Wide went the prince's name; praised most highly was he who skillfully launched from the Niõ southward the warship's plank.

The following notation is customary in scanning lines:

/ full stress
/ half/secondary stress
x unstressed element
- long syllable
~ short syllable

In the quotation above, boldface indicates alliteration, and italics indicate internal rhyme.

The rules of the dróttkvætt are, in summary, as follows (the fullest, most recent account being Kuhn 1983):

(1) The strophe (visa) consists of eight lines (vísurð). However, the half-strophe (visuhelsing) forms a complete metrical unit, and is usually independent in syntax and often in meaning. Many skaldic half-strophes are preserved alone in MSS, as is the specimen verse above.

(2) Each of the two couplets (visufjördingar) in the half-strophe is united by alliteration, just as the strakes of a boat are joined by their nails, as Óláfr hvítaskald ("white-skald") said, (a) Alliteration is normally carried by strongly stressed syllables, e.g., the first syllables of nouns and adjectives. (b) In each odd line there are two alliterating sounds or stúdar ("props, supporters"). (c) In every even line, the first syllable carries the höfuðstaf ("main post"), a sound alliterating with the stúdar of the previous line. (d) Each consonant alliterates with itself, and the clusters sk, sp, and st count as units, alliterating only with themselves. Hl, ln, hr, and hv normally alliterate with themselves or with h. Any vowel alliterates with any other vowel, though preferably an unlike one, and j counts as a vowel.

(3) Individual lines carry internal rhyme or hendingar ("catches, links"). (a) Hendingar fall on stressed, or sometimes half-stressed, syllables, which may or may not be the same as those bearing alliteration. (b) The second member of the rhyming pair in each line, called vérhending ("after-rhyme"), must fall on the penultimate syllable. The first of the pair is called frumhending ("fore-rhyme"). If this falls on the first syllable, as it most commonly does, it is further called oddhending edge-point-rhyme; mid-line it is called bluthending?chance-rhyme. (c) There is commonly, but not invariably, a caesura at some point between the two rhyming syllables. (d) Two types of hending alternate, so that pairs of odd and even lines are demarcated, although not by means of common sounds as in the case of alliteration. Odd lines contain an adalhending, a "chief/full rhyme" of vowel or diphthong and following consonant(s). Even lines contain a skothending ("sho- rhyme"), a half-rhyme of postvocalic consonant(s) only. (e) In both types of hending, a consonant group or geminate consonant may rhyme in full or only on its first element; consonants belonging to inflectional or derivational syllables are very frequently left out of the rhyme. Certain clusters, however, can rhyme only with themselves, notably ng. (f) Older skalds couple a, e, i, and ð with their u-mutated counterparts o, æ, ð, and ð respectively in both skothendingar and adalhendingar, e.g., allr rhyming with fjollum. It was apparently only around 1200 that the mutated and nonmutated sounds became so distinct that they could not be coupled in adalhendingar.

(4) The number of syllables in an individual line is regulated. The norm is six, and exceptions usually fall into one of a few definite categories: (a) "Resolution," in which a pair of syllables, of which at least the first is short, "resolves," or counts as metrically equivalent to a long syllable, stressed or unstressed. A long syllable is defined as a long vowel or diphthong followed by one or more consonants, or a short vowel followed by two or more consonants. Thus, primavás þrýt skemmiri is equivalent to ve bao vísi knyja. Resolution most commonly occurs in the first foot of a line, never in the third. (b) Bragarnal ("fusion"), literally "poetic language," in which an enclitic becomes nonsyllabic by dropping its vowel. Thus, par es/ em ek, etc. become pars emk, etc. In the specimen verse above, sás is an editorial restoration from MS sa er (er being the younger form of es). (c) Elision is common when the second, word-initial vowel occurs in an unstressed syllable, e.g., hefraltreka ens ofra. (d) Some apparently overlong lines probably contain modernized forms in the MS texts, so that restoration of the appropriate older forms, e.g., prepositions fyr, ept, of, for MS fyrir, eptir, yfir, or verb hefr for hefir, yields the normal six syllables. (e) Snorri Sturluson allows the possibility of a five-syllable line where there are seinrar samstofur ("slow syllables"); (Commentary to Hattatal, st. 7). However, most such lines contain a monosyllable that at an earlier stage was disyllabic, e.g., blúm/blám from blúum in the line jafnpar f mínin braut.

(5) The stress patterns of the dróttkvætt line are more controversial than the other metrical features outlined above, although insofar as all metrical features are interdependent, virtually all can be disputed. The following description is based on the analysis of Sievers (1993), which, although by no means unchallenged, remains the best known and most widely used: (a) Each line has
three main stresses, i.e., there are three metrical feet. In certain
cases, secondary stress supplements the first two main stresses. (b)
Stress most frequently falls on a long syllable. Stress on a short
syllable is especially common in lines containing an additional
secondary stress. (c) The first syllable of an even line always carries
stress and alliteration. (d) All lines end with a trochee (\(x\), usually
provided by an independent disyllabic word. (e) Because the third
foot is predetermined, only the stress patterns of the first two feet
need further classification. Sievers’s system of classification into
Five Types, minimally summarized below, therefore applies both
to dróttkvætt and to Norse fornyrðislag and other early Germanic
poetry. Type A, scanning / x / x, e.g., harri lekk 1 hverti, is the
commonest, although whether the dróttkvætt line is predominantly
trochaic is disputed. Types B and C are relatively rare, and,
having unstressed openings, can occur only in odd lines. B scans
\(x/x/x\), e.g., at fram t gram m um; C is \(x/x/x\), e.g., at sleggjar
Yggjar. D and E both contain two full stresses and one secondary
stress. D scans / / x / x, e.g., hraustyr ýðkonungr austan; E scans /
\(x/x/x\), e.g., hjörpeýr á Skáneýju.

The lines of the specimen verse are A, D, B, and A with
additional secondary stress. The relative frequency with which the
various line types are used tends to be quite similar among different
skalds (for figures, see Hollander 1953, Kuhn 1983, sects. 58–65).
In the corpus as a whole, there is a marked difference between
metrical usage in odd and even lines. Certain verbal fillings are
characteristic of particular metrical types (see J. Turville-Petre 1969,
Kuhn 1983: ch. 3). For instance, E lines are commonly filled by a
trisyllabic nominal or adjectival compound ending with an inflec-
tional syllable, plus a monosyllabic finite verb, e.g., snarfangian
bar þengill. Some critics believe that the types can yield particular
aesthetic effects, the trochaic beat of the A lines, for instance, being
suitable for depicting quick, resolute action.

**Difficulties of skaldic scansion.** These difficulties are many,
both practical and theoretical. The written texts, mostly 13th
century or later, are often far removed in time from the skald’s
lifetime. The tight verse form reduces but does not remove the
possibility of scribal corruption, and older linguistic forms may
need restoring, although metrical and linguistic arguments can
become circular. There is no help from the medieval theoreticians
(the authors of Háttalykill, Háttatal, and the Third Grammatical
Treatise), who recognize variations in length of line and of syl-
lables, but are silent about the stress patterns of skaldic meter. We
also lack exact knowledge of the stress patterns of spoken Old
Norse.

There are therefore areas of doubt about the relative stress of
words in the metrical line. There are, e.g., lines in which the (pre-
sumed) normal clause stress would yield only two full stresses
rather than three, and in which there are two candidates, say
a second element of a compound and a finite verb, for raising to full
stress in order to conform to the metrical “rules.” Assigning such
problem lines to one of Sievers’s Five Types can become somewhat
arbitrary, especially when the choice is among certain subtypes of
A, D, and E lines. More generally, must we assume that the “natural”
stress ranking of words was modified to fit the rules, as the high-
lighting of syntactically unimportant words by alliteration and
rhyme would suggest, or that meter as practiced by the skalds was
not necessarily on the first syllable of even

**Variants of dróttkvætt.** The rules of dróttkvætt are reasonably
stable throughout its five or so centuries of use. However, some
points, such as the presence and placing of hendingar and allit-
eration, are not totally fixed until the 11th century, and some
flexibility remains even within the strict dróttkvætt, e.g., in the
incidence of casual additional assonances. Moreover, there are
“official” variants with separate names in which variation is for-
malized. The following (bragar)-hættir (“poetic meters”) and many
more, some of them stylistic rather than strictly metrical, are named
and exemplified in Háttalykill and Háttatal, although some of the
theoreticians’ meters may have been rarely or never used.

(1) Variation in line length. *Hryn.hendad*/hrymphnt/yrhynjandyt*/
cf. vb. hrynja ‘rush, flow, resound’ is the most important meter
dróttkvætt, and is the meter of the major 14th-century po-
ems. It has an extra trochee, and the line tends to settle into trochaic
tetrameter; influence from octosyllabic Latin hymns or metrical
prayers has been suggested. Another meter, draugent, has a
seven-syllable line, while the three *stalar* meters have one or more
five-syllable lines per half-strophe.

(2) Variation in quantity, quality, and placing of hendingar. *Albent*
have two pairs of ad lhendingar per line, while at the op-
posite extreme, *háttausaha (“meter-less”) has all its lines rhymeless,
and the *hóðastaf* is not necessarily on the first syllable of even
lines. *Manurworp* has rhymeless odd lines and skothiendur in
even lines. In *duanhent*, the last word of each odd line is echoed in
the first of each even line, so that the couplet is united by rhyme
as well as by alliteration. In *leifinshátar* (named in *Háttatal* only),
the rhyming syllables always fall on the first and second stresses.

(3) End-rhyme. The meter of the rare examples of end-rhym-
ing strophic verse is called *russent* irrespective of its other met-
crical properties.

(4) The eddic-skaldic boundary. The use of eddic meters in
noneddic poetry, such as *jóðahátar* in Hákonarmál by Eivindr
skaldaspillir (“plagiarist”, ca. 961), fornyrðislag in Gisl Ilugsson’s
memorial poem for Magnús berfœttr (“bare-leg”, ca. 1104), is one
factor that makes the definition of “skaldic” verse very difficult.
There are, moreover, meters with resemblances to both dróttkvætt
and eddic meters. For instance, *tølag* and the ancient *kvíðahátar*
have, in common with fornyrðislag, a two-foot alliterative line, but
are syllable counting (kvíðaháttr) having alternation of three- and
four-syllable lines. *Tølag* has some tightening of alliteration and
addition of hendingar.

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Maal og minne (1952), 1–92; rpi. in his Om sagaen og skaldskap:
Skaldic Verse. In Old Norse, the word skáld (or skald) means "poet," and the word skáldskapr, "poetry" or, in a narrower sense, "a libel in verse." This narrower meaning is possibly the original one, as the most widely accepted etymology associates the word with Old High German skaldan 'to scold.'

In modern use, skaldic poetry is defined primarily as Old Norse poetry distinct from eddic poetry. This distinction is not as clearly known in Old Norse, however, where the word skáld may be used indiscriminately of authors of both genres. Since eddic poetry is anonymous, there was little need for the word skáld in this context, and therefore it naturally would be used more commonly of authors of skaldic verse.

In view of the difficulty of constructing a neat definition of skaldic poetry that rules out overlap (cf. Frank 1985: 160), it is tempting to define as skaldic verse everything contained in Finnur Jónsson's authoritative edition (1912–15; cf. von See 1980: 19). A more serious definition covering this corpus will have to use partly conceptual and partly chronological criteria, applying the term primarily to that part of the Old Norse poetic tradition which is "timeless" (Turville-Petre 1976: xvi), skaldic poetry is in principle historical and situated within a definite historical context. In most cases, the name of the skald is known and very often the poem's original addressee or audience.

Secondary to this historical criterion aremetrical and stylistic criteria. Typical skaldic verse has a highly elaborate form, strictly regulated in rhyme, meter, and the number of syllables and lines. Nevertheless, some skaldic poems are also composed in an edda-like manner.

Nearly all skaldic verse is unambiguously strophic. Eddic poetry, which is more loosely strophic, is supposed to have been influenced by skaldic verse in this respect. Typically, a skaldic stanza consists of eight lines, which mainly by syntactic means are divided into two halves (helmingar). By means of different rhyming devices, the halves are divided into two "long lines," each consisting of two "short lines," and probably the "short lines" are divided into two still smaller rhythmical units ("cola") by means of a caesura (Kuhn 1983). In the short lines, stresses and syllables, or rather metrical positions, are counted. A stanza in drottkvætt meter thus will consist of (2x2x2x2=) 16 cola and of (8x6=) 48 syllables or metrical positions, 24 of which are stressed. Above the strophe level, there are no strict compositional rules, except for the drita form, which is characterized by a systematic use of recurring refrains, or stef.

In addition to strictly regulated alliteration, skaldic poetry makes lavish use of internal rhymes, called hendingar, and occasionally of end-rhyme in the meter runhent.

The principal skaldic meters are not numerous, but by regularity of stylistic phenomena, new varieties are easily created, as Snorri Sturluson demonstrated in his metric model poem, Háttatal. The number of possible meters is thus another difference between eddic and skaldic poetry.

Stylistically, skaldic verse is characterized by its tendency to vary its vocabulary, particularly its nouns, by using heiti instead of plain words, and especially by prolific use of the kenning, a device that often gives the genre a riddle-like character. There is also extraordinary liberty in word order and clause arrangement. The constituent parts of kennings may be split and separated, and several clauses are frequently interlaced and intercalated within the limits of the half-strophe.

The chronological limit of skaldic verse is arbitrarily set by Finnur Jónsson (1912–19) at 1400, while Jón Helgason suggests the date of the composition of Ljúfa about 1350 by Eysteinn Ásgrímsson as a more suitable limit, because of the polemics found in this poem against the traditional skaldic aesthetics. The author propounds his own Christian aesthetic of "clear words" in preference to the "darkness" of the fóm ("old, heathen") poetry (Jón Helgason 1953: 102). On the other hand, Christian skaldic poetry of the 14th century continued until the Reformation (ed. Jón Helgason 1936–38; cf. Jón Pórkelsson 1888). As these poems in many cases cannot be dated with certainty, it is probable that some of them may antedate 1400. Another solution to the delimitation problem would therefore be to consider Jón Arason (1494–1500), the last Catholic bishop of Iceland, as the last skald as well.

Normally, rimur are not regarded as part of the corpus of skaldic verse. Finnur Jónsson thus includes the skaldic poetry of Einarr Gizolf in his edition, but he excludes his Oláls rimu Haraldssónar preserved in Flateyjarbók. Icelandic ballads (fornkvað) are excluded as not alliterative.

Preservation. The greater part of skaldic poetry is preserved as quotations in prose works from the 12th to the 14th century. Poetry previous to these dates must have been transmitted orally, as stated by Snorri Sturluson in the introduction to Heimskringla. In written form, skaldic poetry is found mainly in five types of literature, namely konungasögur, Islendingasögur (including the Sturlunga collection), poetical treatises (including Snorri's Edda), fornaldarsögur, and religious sagas (including biskupa sögur and postola sögur). Religious poetry may also be found in separate MSS, like AM 713 4to. A few stanzas are preserved in runic form, the most important being a drottkvætt stanza on the Karleiv stone (10th or 11th century) and a group of verses carved on wood from Bryggen in Bergen (13th and 14th centuries).

Subgenres. Skaldic poetry may be divided into a number of subgenres according to its content and historical value. A survey of the subgenres will also involve some comments on the definition given above as well as on the history of skaldic verse.

As we have chosen the poems' historical character as our main defining criterion, the panegyric poems (mærd, loð),
composed by court poets in honor of kings and earls will have to be considered the main genre of skaldic verse. From the 9th to the 13th century, poems and fragments of poems are known on about forty princes (kings and earls) from the Scandinavian countries, England, and the Orkneys, in addition to a handful of Icelandic chiefs. A catalogue of court poetry from about 1260, Skáldatal, mentions the works of 146 skalds, bearing witness to a great quantity of praise poems now lost; but several of its entries are probably apocryphal. The typical content of a praise poem is an enumeration of battles and other feats of prowess, and the person in question is praised for his generosity and boldness, above all as a sea warrior. The praise may be expressed in plain words, or it may be alluded to in the kennings.

An important subgroup of praise poems are the erítrkvæði (funeral poems). It has been argued that skaldic verse in general had its origin in this group (Ohlmarks 1944), but this is uncertain (cf. Fidjestøl 1982: 198). There is no clearcut difference in style or content between erítrkvæði and other praise poems, except for occasional expressions of mourning or the like.

Another subgenre of praise poems is a small group of genealogical poems, recalling the ancestors of a king or prince, beginning in a mythical past and above all giving information on the death and burial place of each pedigree (cf. the Prologue of Heimskringla on Ynglingatal [and Hálaygatal]: “in this poem, his ancestors are mentioned, and it is told about their death and burial place”). The genealogical poems are composed in the meter kvøðhátætir.

Three praise poems from the 9th–10th centuries (Haraldrkveði, Eiríksmál, Hákonarmáli) are called eddic praise poems, on metric and stylistic grounds. They are skaldic, however, insofar as they are composed in praise of historical kings, and the authors of the poems (except Eiríksmál) are known. In the 12th century, praise poems are also composed in skaldic variants of eddic meters.

Poems describing pictures, mostly decorated shields, may be considered eulogies insofar as they implicitly praise the giver of the owner of the object. The shield poem Ragnarsdrápa by Bragi, which probably is the oldest preserved skaldic poem, contains some metrical irregularities not found in classical skaldic verse, suggesting that the stricter rules were laid down only somewhat later, possibly by Þorbjörn hornklið.

Mansþvangur are love poems, or praise poems on women. According to Icelandic law (in a passage supposed to belong to its younger layers), mansþvangur were forbidden under heavy penalty. Nidvísur, the opposite of praise poems, were likewise strictly forbidden, because níd was supposed to have a real injurious influence on the person against whom it was directed (cf. Almqvist 1965).

Another group of skaldic verse attested in the oldest period are poems narrating a story from the mythical or heroic past. To a certain extent, this group overlaps with the poems that describe mythological pictures. Outside this group, narration is seldom found in skaldic poetry, and in their legendary or mythological context, these poems are akin to eddic poetry and thus have no relevance for actual history. But normally the name of the skald is known, and they are distinct from eddic poems in meter and style. This group includes four major poems (Ragnarsdrápa, Haustlöng, Þórsdrápa, Húsadrápa) and a number of fragments. Stave strophes may have a heathen hymnic content, e.g., a lausavís by Vetriløi Sumarliljason praising the god Þór by means of an enumeration of his forceful deeds in slaying monsters (cf. Lindow 1988).

The third main group of skaldic verse known from the 9th century onward comprises the so-called lausavísar, occasional verses on any subject from everyday life, often preserved together with an anecdote in prose recounting the circumstances leading up to the composition of the stanza in question. Since a large number of occasional verses preserved in the Íslandingsaðsögur are under suspicion of being forgeries, Finnr Jónsson, in his edition of skaldic verse, makes a distinction between stanzas believed to be original poetry from the saga age (before ca. 1050) and spurious stanzas from the Íslandingsaðsögur, supposed to stem from the 12th to the 14th century (Finnur Jónsson 1A: 603–7, 2A: 198–208, 430–61). This distinction must remain hypothetical, however.

Although skaldic verse typically is concerned with contemporary history, except the mythological-heroic group mentioned above, in the 12th century a new genre appeared, the historical poem, or sognukvæði, dealing with persons and events from the past, like Ragnarr lothbrokk, the Jómsvíkingar, or heroes from the Íslandingsaðsögur (Krákumál, Jómsvíkingadrápa, Íslandingadrápa), or from the more recent past, like Ólafur Tryggvason (Rekstejava by Pseudo-Hallfreðr). Jómsvíkingadrápa was composed by Bjarni Kolbeinsson, bishop in the Orkneys 1188–1223, and there are reasons to believe that the genre may have originated in the Orkneys. Stanzas and poems quoted in fornaldarsögur (Finnur Jónsson 2A: 219–344) are frequently attributed to heroes from these sagas, and thus they can also be qualified as sognukvæði. However, to a great extent, the fornaldarsaga poetry is in eddic meter and style, and parts of it might more properly be counted among the eddic poetry ("eddica minora").

The historical poems bear witness to a revival of the interest in the national past in the Nordic countries in the 12th century, corresponding to the 12th-century renaissance in Europe. Another genre that likewise may qualify as a poetry of learning comprises the two claves metriceæ from the middle of the 12th and the first quarter of the 13th century, Háttalykill and Háttatal. These works reveal an attempt to keep alive the classical art of skaldic poetry. Snorri Sturluson's Háttatal is incorporated in his Edda, the cornerstone of the medieval art of commentary on skaldic verse, and remains the most influential introduction to skaldic studies.

After the introduction of Christianity in the beginning of the 11th century, Christian themes gradually replace the heathen themes of the earlier religious poetry. In particular, after the establishment of a Scandinavian church province (the archbishopric of Lund 1103, Niðaróss [Trondheim] 1152/3), skaldic verse tends to be dominated by Christian poetry. The meter hrynhent, which resembled contemporary European meters, gained ground at the expense of dróttkvætt. Eiríksmál, a hrynhent eulogy on the founder of the archbishopric of Lund, the Danish king Erik Ejegod ("evergood"), is an interesting blend of traditional panegyrics and a new, Christian feeling for the virtues of the soul. The dróttkvætt poem Geisli, dealing with the national saint of Norway, Ólaf Haraldsson, was composed by the court poet Einarr Skúlason on the occasion of the establishment of the archbishopric of Niðaróss, and is the first major representative of the legendary poem. From the second half of the 12th century onward, legendary poetry becomes the dominant genre, including poems to Christ and the Virgin Mary, the apostles and other universal as well as local saints, and poems on the holiness of Sunday, on the importance of repentance, and on other themes.
sifted to yield the following: (1) eight pre-Christian Norwegian and Icelandic skal̄dkonur, cited in the konungas̄ögur, Íslendingas̄ögur, and related þættir; (2) eight Icelandic skal̄dkonur of the Sturlunga Age (13th century); (3) eleven additional early skal̄dkonur from the Íslendingas̄ögur and þættir, but of more doubtful authenticity than those of the first group; and (4) a number of shield-maidens, witches, and troll-women cited as reciting verse in various legendary sagas. In connection with lists of this sort, however, we should bear in mind that all of the surviving skal̄d poetry, whether attributed to men or women, probably represents only a small, random portion of the total amount of skal̄d poetry composed during the Middle Ages.

The eight skal̄dkonur of the first group mentioned above were active in the 10th century and the first half of the 11th. The poetry of this period was dominated by the complex dróttkvætt ("court meter") style, and of all of the compositions of these eight skal̄dkonur, with the possible exception of two kviðlingar (epigrams, too short to classify), were composed in that meter. The earliest three of these skal̄dkonur, Jórunn skal̄dmær ("skald-maid"), Hildr Hrolfsdóttir, and Gunnhildr konungamóðr ("king's mother"), were Norwegians, tied to various kings by obligations of family, or perhaps fealty (in Jórunn's case). They were probably active in court circles, where dróttkvætt had become the fashionable mode of expression; accordingly, the subjects of their poetry reflected events of interest at court. The remaining five women poets in this first group were Icelanders. Their poetic commentaries on errant husbands or lovers (by Bróka-Audr, Pórhildr skal̄dkona, and Steingerðr Pörkesdóttir), satires on Christian missionaries (by Steinunn Ráfsdóttir), and exhortations addressed to lukewarm avengers (by Purðr Ólafsdóttir) may have been noncourtly in theme, but they were no less elegant as examples of the dróttkvætt style than the poetry of the first three.

The eight skal̄dkonur of the second group are all known from Sturlunga saga. One of them, Steinvor Sighvatsdóttir (á Keldum), is also listed elsewhere, in the Skaldatal, as being a professional skald in the pay of the Norwegian chieftain Gautr Jónsson (á Mel). However, the extant half-stanza (visshelming) by her is not a poem in praise of Gautr, but a poetic vision, as are all but one of the compositions in this group. The skal̄dona is portrayed as having a dream or a vision, or seeing an apparition, in connection with which she experiences the poetry, which she recites upon awakening or coming out of the trance. Many of these poetic fragments are tinged with the ghostliness characteristic of Icelandic folklore down to the present day. All but one of these poetic visions are doom prophecies presaging one of the great climaxes of Sturlunga saga, the fall of Sturla Sighvatsson at the battle of Orlygstaðir in 1238. Their style is chant-like and simple, using eddic meters, such as fomrit, galdralag, rather than dróttkvætt. The longest of them, eight stanzas of dream verse by the sixteen-year-old Jóreiðr Hermundardóttir (í Miðjum), constitutes the largest body of poetry by a single historically attestable woman that survives in Old Norse literature.

The skal̄dkonur of the final group, the women poets in the fomaldarsøyggur, are significant not so much for their own sake as for what they reveal about the attitudes toward women and poetry among the 13th-century redactors who compiled these sagas. As Guðrún Helgadóttir (1961) has noted, the saga compilers seem to have been far richer to ascribe lengthy poems to supernatural women than to the women's sorcery) and religion (specifically the cult of the Vanir), as well as matronymic naming customs and matrilineal property ownership. He contends that seidr, poetry, and cultic activities were commonly seen as female-dominated arts in early Nordic society. It is tempting to postulate a golden age for skal̄dkonur, from which we retain no poetry except for some fragments now largely embedded in the fomaldarsøyggur and in the eddic lays (Volsunga, for example). Sometime after this hypothetical golden age, and certainly sometime before the heyday of the dróttkvætt style, a transition seems to have occurred. Poetic composition had become disassociated from its original, female-dominated cultic or religious environment, in favor of a male-dominated court environment. Evidence for this cultural transition is admittedly sparse, but the memory of it may perhaps be preserved in the myth recounted by Snorri Sturluson in the Prose Edda, in which the usurper Óðinn guilefully wrests the mead of poetry from its former owners, who seem to represent earlier, female-dominated, chthonic deities (Vanir equivalents, in other words).


Sandra Ballif Straubhaar

Skarðsbók (“The Book of Skarð”) is the name given by Árni Magnússon to two different MSS after the farm Skarð in Skárðströnd, where they were housed during the 17th century. The first, AM 350 fol., is a codex containing mainly legal texts, e.g., Jónsbók, amendments, Hiriðkrá (King Magnús Håkonarson’s ecclesiastical law), Bishop Árni Porslksson’s ecclesiastical law, and various legal formulas, records, and ecclesiastical statutes and diplomas.

The codex comprises 157 folios, but has not been preserved entirely in its original form. Fol. 18–23 are younger and were obviously written to fill the gap left by folios of the original book that became damaged or lost. Fol. 152–157 are also younger, containing a list of the contents of the manuscript and a formula of absolution. The whole of AM 350 fol. was originally written by one person, presumably in 1363 (the date given on fol. 149).

The codex is especially known for its beautifully illuminated initials. Selma Jónsdóttir has pointed out that one of these (fol. 2r) has a picture of the MS’s donor; this detail suggests that a layman commissioned the MS and that he intended it as a gift for some ecclesiastical foundation, although it appears always to have been private property. According to Ólafur Halldórsson (1966), the codex belongs to a group of MSS (including Codex Scardensis) written in the Helgafell monastery, perhaps written for Lawman Ormr Snorros (ca. 1320–1401 or 1402).

The second codex, Codex Scardensis, is a 14th-century MS containing the most complete medieval Icelandic collection of the postola súgor, i.e., Petra saga, Páls saga, Andreas saga, Tveggia postola saga Jóns ok Jakobs, Thómas saga, Philippus saga, Jakobs saga (Jakobs Minor), Bartholomæus saga, Mathías saga, Tveggia postola saga Stínons ok Judas, and Mathías saga.

The codex originally consisted of ninety-five folios, but one leaf is now lost (after fol. 63). It was written by two scribes, and is beautifully illuminated. On pages originally left blank at the beginning and end of the MS, two church inventories and a title account have since been written.

According to Ólafur Halldórsson (1966), this codex also belongs to a group of MSS written in the Helgafell monastery. It is first mentioned as being at Skarð in the Vilchin inventory of 1397, and is assumed to have been written for Lawman Ormr Snorros, who, according to the inventory of Skarð church in the codex itself, gave it to the church. The codex presumably remained at Skarð until 1807. Around 1710, it was borrowed by Árni Magnússon and copied (AM 638 4to, AM 631 4to, and AM 636 4to). In 1807, it fell into obscurity until 1836, when it was offered for sale in London and purchased by Sir Thomas Phillips. In 1890, it was rediscovered by Eiríkr Magnússon and Jón Porskelsson, and was purchased in 1965 on behalf of the banks in Iceland and presented to the Árni Magnússon Institute in Iceland.


Kirsten Wolf

[Sæðo also: Diplomats; Jónsbók; Laws; Postola sógur]

Skitrnisal (“The Lay of Skirim”), or For Scirim (“Skirim’s Journey”), as it is called in Codex Regius of the Poetic Edda, survives in three texts: the poem contained in Codex Regius, a fragmentary text (sts. 1–27) in AM 748 4to, and a prose summary, together with stanza 42, in ch. 23 of Gyllgagon in Skörra Edda.

Skitrnisal is unique among the eddic materials as the only poem to deal exclusively with the gods known as the Vanir. The poem tells how Freyr sees the giantess Gerðr from Óein’s high seat, is smitten by her beauty, and sends his servant Skirnir to arrange an assignation with her. Before Skirim departs on his errand, Freyr and the other gods give him gifts. He accomplishes his mission, by not offering these objects as gifts, which she rejects, but rather by resorting to threats and a lengthy curse. The narrative portion of Skitrnisal is composed in the ljóðaháttr meter, but the curse is primarily in galdnagr meter.

Given the poem’s subject matter and characters, many scholars have detected an underlying fertility myth: Freyr (the sky) loves Gerðr (the fruitful earth), and tells her that they will meet in Barri, which Olsen (1909) interprets as a kind of grain. Sahlgren (1962) took exception to this interpretation, viewing Skitrnisal not as a fertility myth, but as a popular tale created from well-known motifs. Phillips (1920) builds on Olsen’s views, and sees in the poem a ritual that would have been performed. Her in-
pretation neatly accounts for the fact that nearly every verse of the poem can be understood as dialogue, and for the fact that Skímir, rather than the god himself, undertakes the mission. The relationship between Skímir and Freyr has been a point of discussion, however, in that Freyr is elsewhere referred to as *skitr* ("bright, shining, pure"); some scholars have concluded that Skímir is none other than Freyr himself. Like Olsen and Phillpotts, Dronke (1962) sees the poem as a *hieros gamos* (sacred marriage). In his structurally oriented study, Lönnroth (1977) examines the tale in terms of the marriage norms of Old Norse society, and concludes that the myth represents a legitimation and reaffirmation of the patriarchal structure of Old Norse society, and thus helps regulate human behavior. Motz (1981) sees the poem as a male-female struggle for power. Building on Lönnroth's view, Mitchell (1983) argues that the central point of the myth is to provide a matrix for resolving conflict between different families and groups through a system of exchange and intermarriage.

Skímir's curse has commanded attention from nearly all commentators. Reichardt (1939) regards the whole curse as a later interpolation based on an indigenous tradition of Germanic magical spells. By comparing the thistyle curse (st. 31.6–8) with an Old English magical charm, Harris (1975) demonstrates how the curse contrasts the brittle dryness of the weed with the fertile, phallic alternative Skímir offers Gerðr.


**Stephen A. Mitchell**

[See also: *Codex Regius,* Eddic Meters, Eddic Poetry, Mythology]

**Skjoldunga saga** ("The Saga of the Skjoldunga") is a history of the prehistoric kings of Denmark, tracing some twenty generations from Skjöldr, Óðinn's son, to Gorm the Old (d. ca. 940). The saga thus stands on the margin between *fornaldarsögur* (in content) and *konungasögur* (in intent). **Skjoldunga saga** is a pioneer work in Old Norse literature. It is the earliest saga of ancient times, *i.e.*, before the settlement of Iceland, and the first Icelandic history of the kings of Denmark. After **Skjoldunga saga**, the Icelanders began to write histories of kings other than Norwegian, and legendary history received its own genre in the *fornaldarsögur*, which in written form developed after the mid-13th century.

The original text of **Skjoldunga saga** no longer exists. But saga authors and historians from around 1200 until 1600 used the saga as a source for their works; on the basis of these versions, it is possible to reconstruct the saga. Our primary authority is the *Retum Danicareum fragmenta*, composed toward the end of the 16th century at the instigation of Niels Krag by Arntgrím Jónson lærði ("the learned"); 1568–1648, who relied heavily on the saga for the section from Óðinn to Hrólfkr kraki; the text known to Arntgrím contained a lacuna that extended from Hrólfkr kraki as far as Sigurðr hringer. Jakob Bendiksson claimed that Arntgrím abridged the original text, but his theory was refuted by Bjarni Guðnason (1663), who argued that Arntgrím followed his source fairly closely. In addition, the *Sogubrot af fornkonungum* (AM 1 e 1 fol.) is considered to be derived from the saga, although probably from a younger and expanded recension composed in the latter part of the 13th century. Snorri Sturluson relied on the saga for his *Edda* (the prologue and *Skáldskaparmál*), and in *Ynglinga saga* (ch. 29), he directly refers to it: "Frá þessi orrostu er langt sagt i Skjoldunga sogn . . ." ("A long account of this battle is given in Skjoldunga saga . . ."). From this reference, it is clear that the name of this saga is medieval, confirmed by two medieval MS catalogues, which mention MSS containing **Skjoldunga saga**. One MS of **Skjoldunga saga** was in the monastery of Móðruvellir in 1416. Glimpses of **Skjoldunga saga** are also seen in Arntgrím Jónson's *Ad catalogum regum Suecie annotanda,* Úpphaf alla frásgna (AM 764 4to), Bjarkarimur, Ragnarssonat þáttir (Hauksbók), Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta, Jónsvikingsa saga, and Hrolfs saga kraka.

Snorri's *Edda* (composed ca. 1220) forms a terminus ante quem for the dating of **Skjoldunga saga**. But on the basis of the text of the *Edda*, it cannot be ascertained whether **Skjoldunga saga** was at that time an older work, or whether it had been composed only a few years earlier. Bjarni Guðnason has attempted to demonstrate that the saga could be dated to around 1180, but the arguments are weak; stylistically, the saga is primitive, and lacks the narrative technique of the classical saga literature. And from a literary-historical point of view, **Skjoldunga saga** must be seen as a result of the so-called 12th-century renaissance, which passed through all the countries of western and northern Europe.

By reason of its age, **Skjoldunga saga** must have been based primarily on oral narratives, in which numerous tales about the Skjoldungar existed, as witnessed by Saxo's *Gesta Danorum*. The author also used a great number of poems, including *Grottasongr,* *Regissula,* and the Starkad poems. The backbone of the saga was, however, a written genealogy from Oddi, which may have been compiled by Sæmundr fróði ("the learned") Sigfusson (d. 1133). It is believed that the author was also acquainted with a number of foreign histories, including Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*, which may have inspired him, although whether he actually drew information from these works cannot be ascertained. For the account of Óðinn and his sons' migration from Asia to Scandinavia, it is possible that he relied on Frankish works.
Borrowings from Gregory the Great’s Dialogues are also possible. The work is anonymous, but Bishop Páll Jónsson (d. 1211) of the Oddaverjar, who claimed descent from the Skjoldungar, may have had a hand in the composition of Skjoldunga saga. The author was a learned and critical storyteller with a sense of reality, who was familiar with the etymological and historiographical methods of the Middle Ages. His goal was not to record events directly associated with the Danish kings and Denmark, but also to give an account of the origin and history of the Norse peoples and their place in world history. Because of the genealogy, which gives the saga a framework, it must be considered well structured. When at times the work appears unbalanced, this trait can most probably be traced to the uneven information available to the medieval author.


Kirsten Wolf

[See also: Fornaldarsöğur; Gregory, St.: Dialogues; Grottasongr; Konunagassögur; Rígsþula; Saxo Grammaticus; Snorra Edda; Sæmund Sigfúsison inn fröði; Ynglinga saga]

Slavery. The thrall (Old Norse þræll) who appears in the medieval law codes of Norway, Iceland, Denmark, and Sweden, and in the Icelandic sagas, is a slave by any currently accepted definition of the term. Slaves appear in Finnish literature as well, but the sources for their status are much scantier. According to Landnámabók and the Íslendingasögur, Vikings raiding in Ireland and Scotland brought slaves back with them to Iceland and Norway. Arabic accounts report that Swedes sold slaves to Islamic merchants in Russia, and they may have brought Slavic or Finnish slaves home. Since slavery was hereditary, the descendants of these captives remained slaves and may have been assimilated into an indigenous slave class. Native Scandinavians were captured in raids as well and enslaved for crime and debt. By the era of the law codes, debt servitude was temporary and distinguished from slavery, but this distinction may not always have been the case.

Under the law, slaves were property like livestock; they could be bought and sold, and tendered for payment of debts. The laws did not punish owners for harming their slaves, with a few exceptions based on Christian principles; in Iceland, for example, it was forbidden to kill one’s slave during Lent. Someone who injured or killed another’s slave had to pay compensation not to the slave or his kindred, as with free people, but to the owner. Except in the law of Uppland, a royal issuance that deliberately tried to ameliorate the lot of the slave, the compensation was not a wergild (the price set upon a person) and had nothing to do with honor or status; it was keyed to market value, the actual damage the owner had suffered by injury to his property. The laws set standard amounts for compensation, but the level could vary depending on the value of the particular slave. Under Icelandic law, an injured slave could keep a small part of the compensation. In certain special circumstances (e.g., if a slave were killed defending his master), the killer had to pay a higher price and could be outlawed.

The owner was also responsible for injuries a slave committed, unless he could prove the slave had run away. The owner might have the option of turning over the slave to the victim or his family as part of or in lieu of a compensation payment. For certain offenses, however, the law prescribed physical punishment for slaves, who owned little or no property and so could not be fined. Landnámabók and the sagas contain a few examples of minor slave rebellions, but flight is the only type of resistance most of the law codes consider. In parts of Denmark and Sweden, the law recognized slave marriage. Where slaves could engage only in informal relationships, not marriage, the law either implicitly or explicitly gave a child its mother’s status, a principle it may have adopted from Roman and canon law. Some of the Swedish codes provided that a child with one free parent was free, and a passage in the Uppland law implies that any child of a Christian marriage was free even if the parents were both slaves. Where the children did remain slaves, the parents had no rights over them; they belonged to the mother’s owner or were split between the parents’ owners. The Norwegian laws envision that slave children were a disadvantage to the owner; anyone who fathered a slave child had to pay for its upbringing. In Sweden, by contrast, ownership of children was considered an advantage. Many scholars infer that slave children were often killed by exposure in Norway and Iceland, although the evidence for this practice is scanty.

On the evidence of the sagas, slaves seem to have been members of the household labor force rather than organized in gangs on large estates. Slaves generally did the same work as free laborers or family members, though the more onerous tasks, like dunging fields, might have been reserved for them. In Denmark and Sweden,
estates were larger than in Norway and Iceland, and scholars have suggested that cottagers mentioned in later documents are the descendants of slaves who worked in a plantation-like system.

Slavery was not just a legal and economic status, but also a social classification. The sagas and poetry (particularly Rigsgulda) show contempt for slaves, depicted as cowardly, ugly, and stupid. Whether born into slavery or captured, a slave was seen as having an innately slavish character.

The laws provided mechanisms for masters to free their slaves, who then remained in a position of dependence, or for slaves or their kin to purchase their freedom. Wills from Sweden and Denmark indicate that owners freed slaves as a pious act. Although the Church may have encouraged manumission and better treatment of slaves, never in the Middle Ages did it condemn slavery itself.

In Norway by the end of that century at the latest. In Denmark, Skara Ordinance of 1335 prohibited holding Christians as slaves. As suggested as a reason for the ending of slavery in Iceland and Norway, but if slavery was economically advantageous, it could be continued on a hereditary basis there as it did in Sweden. As a pool of landless free laborers developed by the 11th century in Iceland (later, elsewhere), however, it may have been cheaper for landowners to hire them by the year or rent land to them than to keep slaves. In Sweden and Denmark, large estates were split up in the 13th and 14th centuries into tenant holdings, and many former slaves may have become tenants. By the later Middle Ages, the free population of Scandinavia was much more stratified socially than before, and not all free people had full political rights, but there was no longer a need for a formal category of slave.


The end of the Viking raids on western Europe has often been suggested as a reason for the ending of slavery in Iceland and Norway, but if slavery was economically advantageous, it could have continued on a hereditary basis there as it did in Sweden. As a pool of landless free laborers developed by the 11th century in Iceland (later, elsewhere), however, it may have been cheaper for landowners to hire them by the year or rent land to them than to keep slaves. In Sweden and Denmark, large estates were split up in the 13th and 14th centuries into tenant holdings, and many former slaves may have become tenants. By the later Middle Ages, the free population of Scandinavia was much more stratified socially than before, and not all free people had full political rights, but there was no longer a need for a formal category of slave.

[Sneglu-Halla páttir](#) ("The Tale of Shuttle-Halli"), a short Old Icelandic tale, forms part of the *konungasagabrot* about Haraldr harðræði ("hard-ruler"). In *Morkrinskána* and *Hulda-Hrókniskána*, it is found among some tales that end a section dealing with Norwegian domestic conflicts. The later part of *Flateyjarbók* places the *páttir* after the saga proper, as the third of seven additional *jættir*. This version (designated "11" below) is considerably longer than the other two (designated "1").

Version II begins and ends in Iceland, and is set probably during the 1050s. In I as well as in II, Halli is accepted as a follower of the king, and he performs poems on several occasions. However, he comes into conflict with Haraldr, and the relationship between Halli and the court poet Þjóðólfr grows increasingly tense. In the presence of the king, they scorn each other's earlier accomplishments in Iceland. Þjóðólfr becomes so enraged that he draws his sword, and the men are forced to intervene. On a later occasion, Halli succeeds in fooling Einarr fluga ("fly") into paying fines for the assassination of a nonexistent brother. At the end, Halli embarks on a journey abroad and attracts attention in Denmark and England. Version II relates some further events in Norway and Halli's death in Iceland.

Which version is older has not been definitely settled. There are signs of expansion in II, as well as of shortening in I. And why was the *páttir* omitted in the Haraldr saga proper in *Flateyjarbók*? Was it lacking in the original saga, or was it dismissed by the author because he knew a better version that was not available at the time? The story is very old and based on oral tradition and genuine skaldic poetry; it was probably written down around 1200. The Halli material evolved to some degree in the later tradition, and new episodes were added.

*Sneglu-Halla páttir* has a looser and more paratactical construction than most other *jættir*. It consists of a series of episodes that could have been arranged otherwise just as well. Perhaps the material was too abundant to be digested into a unified work of art. The tale is characterized by a coarse, sometimes obscene comedy, and it shows a fascination with verbal talents.

Halli is mentioned in *Skaldatal*, and a half stanza of his is cited in the *Third Grammatical Treatise*, which is included in some MSS of Snorri's *Edda*. He came from the same district in Iceland as Haraldr's court poet Þjóðólfr Arnórsson, whose preserved production is considerable. However, only in *Sneglu-Halla páttir* does Þjóðólfr's private life shine through. Einarr fluga appears in the younger *Odds páttir* of Ófeigssonar, acting in a way similar to that in this tale.
nature worship and a euhemeristic explanation of the origin of the Norse gods as great kings descended from King Priam of Troy, who migrated to Scandinavia and came to be worshiped there. This prologue forms an introduction to Snorri's Edda, which takes the form of a dialogue, a contest of wits between three of the newly arrived Æsir, disguised as a wanderer under the name of "Gangleri." Then begins the discussion of the language of poetry, interrupted by a brief statement of the purpose of the work, which is to instruct young poets, and an excursus claiming an origin for some Norse myths in allegories of events in the Troy story, sometimes referred to as the epírmál ("epilogue"). The main part of Skáldskaparmál has two principal sections, the first dealing with kennings, or periphrastic descriptions, e.g., "son of Óðinn" for Þórr, "tree of weapons" for warrior, "horse of the sea" for ship. The second section deals with þoði, or synonyms, such as steed for horse, prince for king, rhyme for poetry. The two categories are not rigorously distinguished, however, especially toward the end of this section, and various subcategories are mentioned that are not altogether clear. Both kennings and þoði are listed according to their meanings, beginning with those referring to heathen gods and to poetry, and including those for various natural phenomena, men and women, gold, battle, ships, and weapons, and some for Christ. The kennings and þoði are listed by frequent quotations from poems by numerous Norwegian and Icelandic poets of various periods, many of which are not preserved elsewhere. Some narratives are included to account for the origins of kennings, some mythological, some heroic. In connection with the myths, long passages of skaldic mythological poems are not found elsewhere, but they are used in the kennings and þoði. As an appendix to Skáldskaparmál, some MSS include a series of þulur, or versified lists of names and synonyms, for poets to use in constructing kennings.

The last part of the work is Háttatal ("list of verse forms"). This section consists of a poem, or rather a series of three poems, in 102 stanzas that illustrate a variety of verse forms (although some of the variants are rhetorical rather than metrical), composed by Snorri himself, together with a prose commentary, assumed also to be by Snorri, that explains the meters and devices used, such as rhyme and alliteration. The commentary begins in dialogue form, although the speakers are anonymous. The poem offers eulogy in the conventional style of court poetry of King Hákon Håkonarson of Norway and Earl Skuli, praising both for their success in battle and generosity to their followers.

All four sections of the work show the influence both of native traditions and of the thought of the Christian Latin Middle Ages. The prologue and Skáldskaparmál use learned Icelandic sagas about prehistory, such as Skjoldunga saga and an early version of Volsunga saga, as well as genealogies both in verse and prose, some of the latter derived from Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies. A version of Tríumunnan saga also seems to have been used in the prologue and "epilogue," and the author may also have known Breið saga. The euhemeristic treatment of heathen gods in the prologue has parallels not only in Snorri's own Ynglingsa saga and Saxo Grammaticus, but also in Latin writings dealing with classical deities. The influence of Christianity is apparent on the mythology of Gylfaginning, and, more specifically, patrician writings influenced the discussion of heathen religion in the prologue. Some of the native sources for myths recounted were eddic and skaldic poems now lost, but a precedent for Háttatal survives in the Háttadalir of Bjarki Kali and Hallr Þorarinsson, although no commentary on this work has survived. Háttatal was also probably influenced by Latin centisternae, and the use of dialogue in this part of the work is most reminiscent of Latin schoolbooks, the frame of Gylfaginning being more similar to that of Varðbóksmál. Snorri was probably influenced by writers on Latin grammar and rhetoric, but his classification system is not closely derivative from any that are known.
There are seven MSS or MS fragments that have independent textual value, though none of them seems to preserve the text in quite its original form. Their relationships are complex, and it is not possible to construct a traditional stemma. The oldest is probably De la Gardie 11 (early 14th century). Its text has been greatly shortened, and parts are lacking, notably the pulur and the latter half of Háttatal, as well as some passages in Gylfaginning and Skálkskaparmál. Some of the material appears in a different order from that of the other MSS. Some unconnected items are included: Skáldatal (a list of court poets), a genealogy of the Sturlung family, a list of Icelandic lawspeakers, and a version of the Second Grammatical Treatise. This MS is possibly derived from an authorial draft, since it seems to lack ordering.

Most editions are based on the Codex Regius (GrkS 2367 4to, first half of the 14th century), which is believed to have the least altered text and is virtually complete. Although the beginning of the prologue is lacking, the missing text can be reconstructed from 17th-century copies. The eddic-type poem Grottasongr is included as part of Skálkskaparmál, and two unrelated poems, Jómsvíkingadrâpa and Málshátatlakvæði, are added at the end. This is the only MS that includes the end of Háttatal. Closely related to it is University Library Utrecht MS no. 1374 (ca. 1595), which is evidently a fairly close copy of a lost 13th-century exemplar, but lacks the end of Háttatal and the beginning of the prologue.

In Codex Wormianus (AM 242 fol., mid-14th century), the second part of Skálkskaparmál (dealing with heiðr) had been extensively revised and expanded, but only fragments of this part now survive, and there are no pulur. Long additions containing biblical and classical material have been made to the prologue, and the MS also includes the eddic-type poem Rígsþula and four grammatical treatises. But some narrative passages in the first part of Skálkskaparmál are omitted, and the beginning and end of Háttatal are missing. In the 17th century, most of the missing material was added from other MSS onto paper leaves for its then-owner, Ole Worm.

Three fragmentary MSS contain parts of Skálkskaparmál and pulur only. AM 748 II 4to (ca. 1400) is close to the Codex Regius. The other two contain greatly rearranged and altered versions of the text, and both include parts of the Third Grammatical Treatise; AM 748 I 4to (early 14th century) also contains part of a collection of eddic poems, and AM 757a 4to (late 14th century) also contains various Christian poems. A fourth fragmentary MS (AM 756 4to, 15th century) contains parts of Gylfaginning and Skálkskaparmál derived from Codex Wormianus. A very large number (over 150) of other later MSS survive, most having heavily altered texts, the majority based on the version made by the priest Magnús Ólafsson of Laufás in 1609, which was also the basis of the first printed edition in 1665.

The attribution of the Prose Edda to Snorri Sturluson is based on a notice in De la Gardie 11, which also names him again as author of Háttatal. Some verses of Háttatal are quoted and ascribed to him in other medieval texts. He is further named in connection with references to Skálkskaparmál and the commentary to Háttatal in other MSS of the Prose Edda, and the work as a whole is attributed to him in the late 16th-century Oddaþvera annall. He most likely composed Háttatal shortly after his first visit to Norway in 1218–1220, and this part may have been the first written. The rest may have been compiled over a period of years, and some of the inconsistencies and illogicalities perhaps indicate that he was still revising it when he died. But the wide divergences between the contents and arrangement in the various MSS suggests that other revisers may have been at work, too. Various parts of the text have often been assumed to be additions or interpolations in Snorri's work, such as the pulur, the first and last chapters of Gylfaginning, some of the narrative parts of Skálkskaparmál, as well as the longer quotations from eddic and skaldic poems, the so-called epilogue, and even the prologue. On the other hand, many scholars have thought that the Edda is an earlier and less mature work than Snorri's Heimskringla. There are striking differences between the mythology of Gylfaginning and the treatment of heathen gods in Ynglings saga (the first saga in Heimskringla), where, besides variations of detail, the euhemeristic doctrine is applied more consistently.

There is no universally accepted explanation of the name Edda. There are linguistic problems with the derivation from dór 'poetry,' historical ones with connection with the place-name Oddi (where Snorri lived as a child, but not where he wrote his Edda), and semantic ones with identification with the word edda 'great-grandmother' (the sense development is unexplained). More recently, Magnús Ólafsson's suggestion has been revived, that the word was coined by Snorri as an ironical name for his book from the Latin word edo 'I compose' on the analogy of kreidda 'superstition, illogically held belief,' which is derived from Latin credo 'I believe; creed' (Faulkes 1977). In 14th-century poems, the word is used to mean "poetics."

Snorri himself indicates, near the beginning of Skálkskaparmál, that the purpose of the work was to instruct young poets in the traditional techniques of skaldic verse. He was probably aware that this kind of poetry was becoming less popular and was in danger of being replaced by newer styles based on foreign models, such as ballads and romances, to which, as an aristocratic Icelander who valued the early traditions of his country, he would have been less sympathetic. But he is nevertheless a learned writer, and although he does not imitate foreign models closely, he shows acquaintance with Latin grammatical, metrical, and rhetorical treatises. Like many Latin writers, he shows more interest in the language and rhetoric of poems than in their content or overall structure. His explanations of the names of gods and of the origins of kennings are often linguistic ones, based on learned folk-etylology or on wordplay, and often seem improbable to modern scholars. This interest in language, also evidenced in the prologue, conforms with the general medieval view of grammar as embracing what we would call stylistics and literary criticism. Several MSS of Snorra Edda include one or more of the "Grammatical Treatises" that deal with spelling and rhetoric.

The account of mythology in Gylfaginning was probably included because so many skaldic kennings require a knowledge of heathen mythology. Snorri's attitude to the heathen religion is that of a historian: he shows great detachment and writes of the gods with irony and humor, distancing himself from them by the use of fictional narrators. Unlike other medieval mythographers, he shows little interest in allegorical or symbolic explanations of myths. Where he offers any interpretation at all, he presents the stories as having an etiological purpose.

Snorri's Edda is the only work of its kind from the Middle Ages. Gylfaginning provides the fullest and most systematic account of Norse mythology, and Skálkskaparmál and Háttatal offer the only comprehensive analysis of the diction and meter of poetry in a Germanic language before modern times.
Snorri Sturluson (1178/9–1241) was outstanding as a man of letters, and as a man of the world. More is known about him than about most authors of his time. He figures prominently in the major events of his day as recorded by his nephew Sturla Póðarson in his Íslendinga saga, the chief item in the Sturlunga saga collection. We also gain glimpses of Snorri from other sagas of the Sturlunga collection, from Sturla Póðarson's Hákonar saga Hákonsarson, and from sagas of contemporary Icelandic bishops, especially Guðmundr Arason, as well as from annals, genealogies, letters, and verses by Snorri and his contemporaries.

Snorri's intelligence and driving ambition made him exceptional, but, at the same time, his life reflects his age and its contradictions, not least that between political turbulence and intellectual achievement.

Snorri is named in a near-contemporary source among the eight most powerful laymen in Iceland while still in his twenties. In 1215–1218 and 1222–1231/5, he held the almost presidential position of lawspeaker (lögssognamður) at the Alþingi, and he became the richest man in the land.

Snorri owed his worldly success to a combination of luck and shrewd management. He was born into the clan of the Sturlungs, who took their name from his father, the chieftain Sturla Póðarson of Hvammr (d. 1183), and gave their name to one of the most tempestuous ages in Iceland's history, the "Age of the Sturlungs." Snorri's relations with his brothers Pórõr and Sighvatr and nephew Sturla Sighvatsson varied throughout their lives, but at their worst were tragically destructive. In 1227–1228, for instance, Snorri and Pórõr ousted Sturla Sighvatsson from the family chieftainship (godord) in Dalir. In 1236, Sturla attacked Snorri's farm at Reykjahló and had his son Óraekja mutilated.

Although born into the Sturlungs, Snorri was brought up among the Oddaverjar, being fostered at Oddi, a prime center of learning, by the great chieftain Jón Loptsson (d. 1197). Partly through the agency of his foster-fkinsman Sæmundr Jónsson, Snorri married Herdis, daughter of Bersi inn auðgi ("the wealthy") in 1199. He inherited Bersi's estate at Borg two years later. In 1206, Snorri took over the godord (chiefship) there, later extending his influence (often by a shared or temporarily entrusted godord) still farther throughout the west of the country and into the northern and southern quarters. Herdis remained in Borg until her death in 1233, but before that, in 1224, Snorri had found another partner, Hallveig Ormsdóttir, a member of the Oddaverjar and the richest woman in Iceland.

Snorri also allied himself with other chieftainly families through his daughters' marriages: Hallbera's to Æði Magnússon óðreiða ("the unready") of the Æmundaejt and then to Kolbeinn ung{1} ("the young") of the Ásbingar; Ingibjörg's to Gizurr Porvaldsson of the Haukdoelir; and Pórdís's to Porvaldr Vatnsfiðingr. But Porvaldr was burned to death at the instigation of Sturla Sighvatsson in 1228, and the other three marriages turned sour, and with them the alliances, which proved to be the death of Snorri, because Gizurr and Kolbeinn were leaders of the expedition that killed him.

Snorri's dealings with his fellow Icelanders, as lawspeaker, chieftain, and neighbor, and the personality that emerges from them, are far too intricate even to outline here. In essence, Snorri shunned violence and cherished an ideal of peace, which, however, could not prevail against the violence of the times or his own greed for power and ostentatious wealth. He figures variously as a

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[See also: Bragi Boddason; Breta sogur; Codex Regius; Eddic Metrics; Eddic Poetry; Fornyrði; Grammatical Treatises; Grettis saga; Háttalykill; Heimskringla; Heiti; Kennings, Mythology, Saxo Grammaticus; Skaldic Metrics; Skaldic Verse; Skjöldunga saga; Snorri Sturluson, Trójumanna saga, Vafþraumismál, Völuspá, Ynglinga sagal]
reconciler, an equivocator, or a coward. His practical sense and legal expertise were often put to the service of his friends, but often used in deviously self-promoting ways; and where legal means failed, he did not flinch from inciting others to violence.

Snorri began early to court the favor of Scandinavian rulers by sending youthful praise poems to the Norwegian kings Sverrir Sigurðarson and Ingi Bárðarson, and the earl Hálkon gálinn ("the mad"). Hákon sent lavish gifts in return and an invitation to Nor­way, but died before Snorri was able to take up this offer. Snorri did, however, make the journey to see Hákon’s widow, Kristin, now remarried in Gautland, during his Scandinavian visit of 1218–1220. The main focus of the visit was the Norwegian court, and Snorri spent the two winters with Earl Skúli, regent to the young King Hákun Hónkarson, becoming a royal retainer and receiving titles from them culminating in lendr madr ("baron," literally "landed­man") as well as magnificent gifts. The glory and generous­ity of these rulers were celebrated in Snorri’s grand metrical sam­ple Hátatal, and Snorri is credited with two panegyrics for Skúli alone, from which only a refrain survives. Snorri also cut a politi­cal deal in Norway, making a promise (which he kept little or not at all) to persuade the Icelanders to accept Norwegian rule, while Skúli in return gave up his intention to punish a fracas between the Oddaverjar and Norwegian traders by invading Iceland.

Snorri again sailed to Norway in 1237, thus escaping from the tightening web of hostility between Icelandic clans and within his own, and there he learned of the deaths of Sighvatr Sturluson and Sturla Sighvatsson in the battle of Öryggjarstaðr (1238). Snorri stayed with Earl Skúli and his son Pétr, thus taking the wrong side in what became a fatal rift between Skúli and King Hákun. It was later rumored in Iceland that Skúli had secretly granted Snorri the title of “jarl,” but certainly Snorri gave Hákun grounds enough for anger and a charge of treason by leaving Norway in defiance of his ban. The king’s anger joined that of Gizurr Pórdýrson, Snorri’s alienated and ambitious son­in­law. Acting in delayed response to the letter from the king that had been brought to him by Árni óreiða, another former son­in­law, Gizurr, led the force of seventy men that attacked Reykjahlótt on September 22, 1241. Kolbeinn ungi and Sturla Pórõarson only rarely refers to this side of his life, calling him a good

To posterity, Snorri’s role as a man of letters, a preserver of poetic, mythological, and historical traditions, a composer of techni­cally ingenious verse, and a writer of at times superb prose far exceeds his importance as magnate and statesman. Yet Sturla Pórðarson only rarely refers to this side of his life, calling him a good skald, and reporting spurious comments about Snorri’s poetic attempts to ingratiate himself with the Norwegian monarchy and about his tendency to compose verses rather than act. He also tells how Snorri’s nephew Sturla Sighvatsson spent a winter at Reykjavholt in 1230­31, and had copies of Snorri’s söguböcker made. What saga books these were is not clear, but Snorri probably wrote his Prose Edda, his separate Ólafs saga helga, and most of Heimskringla in the relatively peaceful decade 1220­1230. That he also com­posed Egils saga has been argued often and persuasively, if not conclusively.


Diana Edwards Whaley

Social Structure

1. Denmark. In Denmark, the transition from antiquity to the Middle Ages is marked by the end of the Viking period and the breakthrough of Christianity. In spite of the great number of people who emigrated during the Viking Age, the population seems to have increased steadily, and the peoples who inhabited the Danish lands were the same as before: Jutes, Funians, Zealanders, Scilians, and so on. The rule of the chieftains in the Iron Age was in the Viking Age replaced by politically powerful kings who effectively governed the Danish realm and more; for example, Knud (Cnut) the Great ruled a North Sea empire consisting of Denmark, England, Norway, and perhaps parts of Sweden, at that time (1018­1035), the greatest empire in Europe. This empire was divided, but after King Sven Estridsen (1047­1074), Knud’s nephew, the Danish territories made up a cohesive empire, whose central ad­ministration was developed thanks to the aid of the Church and to the experience the Vikings had acquired in the countries they had raided.

The earliest account of the Scandinavian lands and peoples dates from approximately 1070, when Adam of Bremen, in his Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum, recorded what he knew about conditions in the outermost regions of missionary work, which he describes as the Nordic Isles. Besides a topo­graphical description of the lands of the Danes, Adam provides information about the population and its conditions. In Jutland, the very large towns south of the fjords are emphasized. The oldest bishops’ residences in Schleswig, Ribe, and Århus are mentioned, and in this connection the most important domestic and foreign navigational routes are cited, with the added comment that attacks from pirates constitute a danger. The king’s residence is situated at Roskilde on Zealand, centrally located in the realm that included lands east of the Sound: Scania, Halland, Bornholm, and perhaps Blekinge, even though this land was hardly christianized as yet. Adam praises Scania for its beauty and wealth, both with regard to its inhabitants, and merchandise and gold collected through piracy, i.e., Viking expeditions. But now it is full of churches, 300 in all; Zealand has half as many, and Funen one third. Adam also describes peoples on the coast of the Baltic Sea.

Besides providing a topographical account, Adam relates the history of the Danes, especially based on conversations with Sven Estridsen. The memory of the time before the unification of the realm, when many kings or despots ruled at once, is still pre­served.

As the text implies, the Danish realm was tied together by sea routes. During the Viking Age, the most significant technological
advance was represented by the Nordic ship, which carried the Vikings throughout the world. After the Viking Age, the ship was a prerequisite for the cohesion of the realm under the rule of the king. In the Middle Ages, the coastline was in many places different from today. Toward Sweden and Germany, large expanses of forest formed natural borders.

Within these borders lived the Danish peoples, for one cannot yet speak of a single people. The realm consisted of countries, and countrymen were people from the same country. Not just Jutland, Funen, Zealand, and Scania, but also smaller islands were countries with their own landsting (parliament) and their own legal system. It is still not possible to say which or how many tribes made up the population of the realm. Skeletal remains show a homogeneous human type. But we do not know much about the physical appearance of the people. The oldest fresco paintings and sculptures in the churches date from the 12th century. They show great variation in human type, but their purpose was not to reproduce the appearance of individuals exactly.

From the Viking Age, the heathen graves betray class and sex differences, judging from the grave goods. But the custom of including grave goods ends with the rise of Christianity. It is possible only in a few cases to determine the graves of kings and noblemen in the churches by means of tomb inscriptions and written sources, and to ascertain that, for example, members of the noble family "Hvide" were very tall and powerful individuals. But other skeletons found in churches, which can be determined to be medieval, reveal an average height corresponding to that of individuals today.

The population figures of the Middle Ages are also uncertain. Various estimates, based on the number of churches and their sizes, fix the figure at approximately one million, before the plague epidemics of the 14th century reduced this number considerably.

Linguistic differences among the Danish peoples were no different than differences in dialect today. This similarity is confirmed by the laws recorded in the 13th century. Since the written language did not yet have a fixed form, linguistic variations are revealed. But Scandinavians on the whole seem to have understood each other's language much more easily during the Viking Age than now.

Earlier scholars saw the construction of buildings on farms and in towns or villages as ethnically based. The archaeological finds of the last decades, however, have shown no sharp distinction. Without doubt, the natural conditions, greater or lesser fertility, are the decisive factors. Place-name evidence indicates a wide expansion of the cultivated area during the Viking Age. The buildings and the areas of cultivation created in this way were not exceeded in the following centuries. The method of cultivation and the agricultural conditions that caused and are produced by this development form the bases for regulations concerning agrarian rights in the laws.

Nothing is certain about the mobility of the population during the early Middle Ages, except for the fact that many people moved from villages into the provincial towns that grew in the early Middle Ages, except for the fact that many people moved from villages into the provincial towns that grew in the 12th and 13th centuries, not least in Denmark. In contrast to Norway and Sweden, where the towns had a common town law, each individual Danish town had its own legal system, expressed in town rights and privileges. This comprehensive mosaic of judicial rules is an important source for understanding the way of life among the urban population.

Although almost seventy Danish towns were legally organized as townships in the Middle Ages, the number of citizens constituted only a small percentage of the total population. The judicial conditions known from the agrarian laws were, to a great extent, based upon the kin as the primary social group. Inheritance rights, guardianship, and possession of land were dictated by kinship relations; and during court trials at the ting, the individual depended on the support of his relatives. The same was true when fines had to be paid, from ancient times, the responsibility was a collective one for the kin. By moving to the towns, the individual or family completely or partly lost the protection of relatives. Guilds were gradually established to remedy this situation.

King Valdemar's so-called Land Register, whose earliest sections date approximately to 1230, is found in a comprehensive, hybrid MS, because it contains some budgetary income lists to be used by the central administration of the realm. During the last century, these lists were the basis for all research on conditions and the social structure of the kingdom during the Danish Middle Ages. The detailed information contained in the Land Register is so contradictory, however, that an unequivocal picture cannot be formed, except for the fact that administration of the kingdom was made more efficient.

There is always a close relationship between socioeconomic development and social structure. In the later Danish Middle Ages, extensive bonded contracts were entered into, whereby the lands of the peasants were transferred to the Crown, the Church, or the nobles, who assumed the responsibility for protecting the peasants. Later, this process coincided with the widespread European phenomenon whereby great expanses of land that had been plowed earlier were left uncultivated in the Middle Ages. Since 1969 in Scandinavia, these conditions have been treated as a common subject of research, the "abandoned farm project," which has increased our knowledge about the socioeconomic problems of the medieval agrarian community in selected localities. It has been confirmed that the villages before the agrarian crisis contained farms of widely differing size, whereas it was earlier assumed, based on the rules of law, that the size and wealth of farms were more similar. Since farms were abandoned in Denmark before the plague epidemics in 1348–1350, other explanations have become necessary: demographic and climatic conditions, transition from agricultural farming to cattle raising, agrarian structural changes, or combinations of these causes that were accelerated by the plague.

A reconstruction seems to have occurred in the 1380s, but the consequences were apparently not overcome until about 1500. In terms of the population figure, only a status quo was reached. This idea has been confirmed by the number of churches. From the 1200s up to the 1800s, very few churches were built in Denmark.

Other extensive migrations are not known in the Danish Middle Ages, with one exception: after the 1200s, a German immigration took place, consisting mainly of nobles from Holstein, who came to the kingdom via South Jutland. After the 1300s, the Danish nobles, reacting to this competition, obliged the king to employ only Danish-speaking civil servants. The German immigration was more concentrated where the Hanseatic merchants settled, thus affecting the population pattern among the citizenry. Furthermore, surnames from certain Danish provinces occur in other localities, revealing that people had moved. It was practically or legally impossible for the bonded, adscripted peasants to move.

2. NORWAY. The name Norvegr means "the way toward the north," i.e., the navigational route along the coast. The coast more
than the inland forms the core of the country. The Norwegian population seems to have had the same basic features since the beginning of historical time. Over 2,000 skeletons dating from the advent of Christianity to the end of the Middle Ages have been found, and they indicate only small changes over the period. The population before the plague epidemic in the 14th century was possibly close to 300,000. The plague reduced it to half or less.

The common anthropological features did not, however, entail uniform cultural and occupational conditions. On the contrary, a sharp distinction between the east and west existed, determined by differences in the living conditions and way of life. In the Middle Ages, the population in the interior was a purely peasant population to a much greater extent than it is today. Even though everywhere hunting and fishing contributed significantly to the food supply, people in the northern and southern interior were actually peasants, in contrast to the coastal inhabitants, who engaged in farming and the raising of cattle, but under such poor conditions because of climate and lack of fertile land that fishing and hunting were vital occupations. The differences between the settlements in western and eastern Norway also seem to have increased because of the close contact of the people in the west across the sea with western Europe and the islands in the Atlantic.

The settlements united early around common jørg-steads, Eidsvåning at Eidsvold, Gulaing near Bergen, and Frostuping near Trondheim. The unification of the country completed by King Hallldan svarti ("the black") Guðrøðarson and King Haraldr hárfagri ("fair-hair") Halldarson was the conclusion of a development that had begun a long time before, a development that was, to a large extent, determined by improvements in the types of ships that not only served the "northern routes," but also facilitated Norwegian expansion to the islands in the Atlantic.

The natural conditions have always limited settlement in Norway to the coast and to the flat areas and valleys of the eastern region and Trøndelag. The high mountains were uninhabitable, but served as grazing and hunting lands. Deforestation was necessary for settlement, and the names of farms indicate the period in which this development took place. From the Viking Age onward, a farm usually housed an extended family, because not only married sons but also married daughters remained in the same household. However, this practice led later to the scattering, division, and creation of farms. But, because new land was not available, many people were forced to move out of the country or to the town settlements. In the early Viking Age, there were markets and commercial settlements in Norway, most of them of limited local importance, but some had connections across the sea to foreign countries and to the more remote parts of Norway, like Trondheim, Bergen, Tønsberg, and Skiringssal.

In the 11th and 12th centuries, the social structure of the Norwegian people was similar to that of the Viking Age. The earliest recorded laws, from about the year 1100, on the whole reflect those social and legal conditions transmitted from heathen times. Where the Danish laws do not contain different penalty rates, the Norwegian penalties for manslaughter depended upon the social status of the victim, so that those social differences demonstrated by the archaeologists in the Danish villages of the later Middle Ages were developed to a higher degree in the Norwegian laws. The location of the graves in the cemetery was also determined on the basis of social status. At the lowest level were the slaves, whose number and economic importance remain uncertain.

The social structure varied from east to west of the mountains. The possibility of combining several occupations on the coast provided the opportunity for social mobility, which, in the west, was hindered by the more fixed organization of noblemen's peasants, who lived on inherited land, and tenant farmers, who lived on the land of others.

In the later Middle Ages, Norway had a new social class in the urban population. Even at its peak around the year 1300, this urban population hardly numbered more than 20,000. The largest town was Bergen, with perhaps 7,000 inhabitants, then Trondheim with 3,000, Oslo with 2,000, and Tønsberg with 1,500. The other settlements were small towns with a few hundred inhabitants. The population of the towns was almost exclusively Norwegian. Their occupations were trade, shipping, and handicrafts. The citizens were early given a certain autonomy and their own civil rights, which King Magnus lagabætur ("law-mender") Hákonarson (1263-1280) put together into a common law book for the Norwegian towns.

In the 14th century, the North German Hanseatic merchants started to penetrate the Norwegian towns, gradually acquiring a monopoly on Norwegian foreign trade. In the same century, the number of tenant farmers increased; but the total population figure seems to have dropped from about the year 1320, when the phenomenon of the abandoned farm occurred, especially in the western and northern regions. As in Denmark, farms were abandoned before the plague spread in 1349, probably because of worsened climate and increased pressure on resources.

The second half of the 14th century is characterized by unstable conditions and by attempts at adjustments to the reduced population figure. Around the year 1450, the number of abandoned farms is estimated at more than 15,000, about 25 percent of the total. The population figure, which before the plague was possibly around 300,000, was hardly more than 180,000 as late as the Reformation. The income lists contained in the land registers often show a decline of 20 percent in the land tax before the plague. Entire settlements were depopulated, and half the cultivated land was abandoned, but not as a short-term consequence of the disasters; in large parts of the country, this condition persisted for 200 years or more, in contrast to the neighboring countries, where the consequences of the decrease in population seem to have been overcome within two or three generations. Norwegian agriculture, both grain cultivation and husbandry, was so labor-intensive that the supervisors could just barely feed themselves. In many places, the population figures continued to drop. The surplus of agricultural products carried the existing Norwegian social system and the entire political life because it supported the monarchy and the aristocracy. Now the foundation of both the central and local government disappeared. The local representatives of the monarchy were gone, and the aristocrats became peasants on a par with the other survivors. Most taxes were not paid, and if they were, they were paid in the less valuable coin minted by the king. These socioeconomic conditions form the background for the joint monarchy with the neighboring countries, which resulted from a meeting in Kalmar in 1397. The Norwegian king was now Erik of Pomerania. The joint monarchy with Denmark lasted until 1814. With the Reformation, Norway became a vassal state of Denmark.

3. SWEDEN. At the beginning of the Middle Ages, the borders between Sweden and the neighboring countries of Denmark and Norway became more fixed, while the borders with the Lapps in the north and the Finns in the east were not defined. Adam of
Bremen tells us that the Swedish population consisted of many tribes, but the skeletal remains indicate a fairly homogeneous population already in the Iron Age. Adam distinguishes between West Goths north of Scania and East Goths along the Baltic Sea, all the way up to Birka. Between Norway and Sweden lived the people of Värmland, the people of Finnveden, and others; "Now they are all Christians and belong to the church in Skara." In the north lived the Skridfinns, who surpassed the wild animals in speed. In the east, in the vast wastelands, Adam mentions the Amazons, the Dogheads, the Cyclops, who have only one eye in the middle of their foreheads, and the people who enjoy eating human flesh. The longest-lasting consequences of the original organization of the Swedish people in tribes belong to various forms of customary rights that remained valid until the last half of the 14th century.

From the late Middle Ages, the following social categories are found in Sweden: a class of nobles, peasants on inherited land (freeholder farmers), peasants on the land of others (tenant farmers) who were the descendants of relocated peasants and villagers, and casual laborers with no permanent residence. Slavery existed in Sweden, but to what extent is uncertain. Some wills have been found from the end of the 13th century containing decisions concerning the liberation of the testator's slaves. In 1296, the "law of Uppland" prohibited any purchase of Christian slaves. In 1335, slavery was abolished by law. This development has been regarded as the cause of a comprehensive effort at cultivation and the origin of a long list of villages in the 14th century, but such a connection is highly unlikely. New settlements arose, new land was plowed, and, in contrast to Norway and (in part) to Denmark, there was enough land in Sweden for anyone who took upon himself the clearing of forest and the breaking of land. Along the coast of Norland, settlement moved north toward the foreign peoples: Lapps (Samians) and West Finns, who began emigrating to Sweden early in the Middle Ages.

In certain parts of Sweden, mining had an important impact on the conditions for settlement in the Middle Ages. This development can be documented from the end of the 13th century, but may go back even farther. The population increased in the settlements where iron ore was found and processed. Many peasants became miners, and German names testify to the fact that foreign expertise was called in. A significant immigration also occurred in the growing Swedish towns.

It has been estimated that the size of the population immediately before the plague was around 650,000, and then it was greatly reduced. But at the beginning of the 16th century, the consequences of the plague had been overcome, and the earlier population figure had been reached.

The growth of the towns in the Middle Ages had an impact on the social structure, although only a small percentage of the population, living in approximately thirty-five larger or smaller townships, could be found in Sweden around the year 1500. Only two of the towns were relatively large according to the standard of the time, Visby and Stockholm, with 5,000–10,000 inhabitants. Medium-sized towns like Kalmar, Jönköping, Uppsala, and Västerås had 2,000–3,000 inhabitants at most. Except for Stockholm and Visby, the towns had an almost rural character; the chieftains were engaged in farming and kept domestic animals in addition to their urban occupations: trade or handicrafts. Despite their small size, the towns became important for the increased economic and cultural relations with foreign countries, especially Germany.

By the middle of the 12th century, German merchants appear to have settled in Visby on the island of Gotland, which quickly developed into a German township. The German element among the citizenry was so distinct at the beginning of the 13th century that immigrants from there populated the German colonial towns of Riga and Reval on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea. German settlement not only in Visby, but also on the Swedish mainland, became such a normal event that the settlers were forced to submit to Swedish law and to become Swedish citizens on an equal footing with the Swedes. This development happened especially in Stockholm, where a powerful German citizenry actually ruled the city because of their economic superiority. This condition continued in the time of the Union. The first Union monarchs, Margrethe (1389–1412) and Erik of Pomerania (1397–1439), did nothing to restrict the influence of the Germans in Stockholm.

Outside the towns, noble families dominated throughout the Middle Ages. The oldest laws presuppose landed gentry who rented out land to peasants. In the 13th century, the noble class became more exclusive; marriage and family relations were restricted to a narrow circle. This narrowing paved the way for a feudal system in which the feudal estates and the higher offices of the country were reserved for a hereditary aristocracy. This development entailed increased social differentiation in Swedish society. The position of the tax-liable peasants worsened to the point that great numbers of them relinquished their land to squires in order to avoid paying taxes to the Crown, which then was economically weakened in comparison with the nobility. King Magnus Eriksson (1319–1363) tried to turn this development around, and an open conflict between the king and the aristocracy ensued. Both parties sought help from Germany, and anarchy was the consequence during those years when Sweden was also struck by the plague. The unity of the country was endangered. After the Kalmar Union in 1397 among Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, the Swedish noble class was weakened economically and politically. Erik of Pomerania installed Danish and German stewards and bailiffs all over the country at the expense of the Swedish nobility. Peasants and miners rebelled, supported by the clergy and the nobility. The rebellion succeeded, and the nobility regained their former powerful positions, partly by cooperating with their Danish and Norwegian equals. But the union with Denmark and Norway lasted only until 1523, when Gustav I (1523–1560) assumed the Swedish throne as the first king of the House of Vasa.

4. ICELAND. Iceland was the only Scandinavian country settled in historical times. The process of immigration and settlement (landnám) is known from medieval written sources: Íslendingabók and Landnámabók. Both emphasize that the immigrants came from Norway, even though many had lived or stayed for a shorter or longer period of time in Scotland, Ireland, or neighboring islands. The Scottish, Irish, and Celtic elements may, therefore, have been more distinct than appears from the sources mentioned.

This notion is corroborated by skeletal finds from the Viking Age; the Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish Vikings are racially identical, while the skeletons of Vikings found in the British Isles and in Iceland deviate from the Scandinavian remains. In addition to these observations, the blood-type distribution in the contemporary Icelandic population is closer to the distribution in the Scots and the Irish than to the Scandinavian distribution. These biological differences between western and eastern Vikings must, however, be cross-checked with other cultural similarities; the Icelandic language of the earlier Middle Ages, including the place-name material, and the archaeological finds of, for example, grave
goods, reveal a considerable agreement with Norwegian conditions and finds.

The greatest number of immigrants presumably came to Iceland during the decades around the year 900. According to Landnámabók, the immigrants can be divided into three categories: the chieftains, who immigrated first and who came to possess large tracts of land; the later arrivals, who took land with the approval of the former; and those who acquired land transferred from an earlier owner, primarily as a gift or a purchase. Women also acquired land through landnám.

With regard to the population, the number of farms around the year 1100 is presumed to have been about 4,500. According to the estimate of archaeologists, based upon examination of farm ruins, the typical household numbered about fifteen persons, that is, about 70,000 people in all, a figure that about the year 1200 may have increased to close to 80,000, but that began to drop in the 14th century. From the beginning of the 15th century, the population was drastically reduced as a result of plagues. Around the year 1700, the population still numbered only about 50,000.

The medieval Icelandic laws and, to an even greater extent, the sagas emphasize the importance of the family and relatives for better or for worse. Relatives protected and avenged each other. In a country not threatened by external enemies, families made war on each other during destructive feuds, inhibited only with great difficulty by the Church, which was organized during the period 1030-1200. This conflict was caused by the absence of a national power executed by chieftains or kings, since the national assembly, the Alþingi, had no executive power.

Although there were differences within the individual family, which meant that closer relatives had precedence over more distant relatives and males over females, relatives were in fact friends; but there were great social differences among families. The Old Icelandic poem Rígsþula provides a poetic explanation of the origin of the various social classes. Rigr is identical to the god Helmdallr, who wanders throughout the world. He visits three families: slaves, peasants, and chieftains, who represent the three population groups made up by the Icelanders.

Farming and fishing constituted the major means of support in the Middle Ages as well as later. In a few places, barley was grown, but the damp island climate and low summer temperatures were obstacles to farming and forestry. The abundant grasslands that supplied both animal feed in the summer and hay for winter feed were decisive factors for animal husbandry. Fishing in fjords in the north and west was a necessary supplement to the sparse farming.

Iceland was politically independent from 930 to 1262. Once a year, the chieftains met at the Alþingi and handled laws and court cases, but there was no central government to speak of. In 1237, the Icelandic bishops' seats at Skálholt and Hólar were occupied by Norwegians, and after this date the influence of the Norwegian king increased. The Icelanders consequently submitted to the Norwegian king in 1262. In 1380, Iceland and Norway came under the rule of the Danish king, but this union did not change the living conditions of the people, which steadily deteriorated, reaching the lowest level in the 14th century as a result of major volcanic eruptions and earthquakes, and after that the plague of 1402-1404, when many families perished and many farms were abandoned. The consequences of this social and economic crisis lasted throughout the Middle Ages and far into more recent times.


Ole Fenger

[See also: Adam of Bremen; Agriculture; Alþingi; Crafts; Demography; Denmark; Family Structure; Feudal Influences and Tendencies; Fishing, Whaling, and Seal Hunting; Gotland; Guilds; Hanseatic League; Iceland; Íslandingsbók; Land Registers; Land Tenure and Inheritance; Landnámabók; Landownership; Laws; Norway; Plague; Rígsþula; Settlement, Age of; Settlement, Rural; Slavery; Sweden; Towns; Trade]

Sölarljóð ("The Lay/Poem of the Sun") has been transmitted to us from the later Middle Ages only in paper copies of a lost original. The copies were made in the 17th century; among them, AM 166b 8vo is palaeographically the best, and AM 738 4to one of the better copies. The poem is usually dated from the second half of the 13th century because of its close proximity in style and content to the verse translation of the Disticha Catonis, called Hugsvinnsmál, and because Snorri Sturluson (1178/9-1241) seems not to have been acquainted with the poem, which he does not mention in his skaldic poems. One verbal detail, the apocopated use of ga for ganga in stanza 25, might date Sölarljóð even later, to the mid-14th century, when this usage is attested elsewhere, in Möðruvallabók.

In form, the poem is composed in the traditional eddic meter (jóðaháttr) and diction of the Hávamál, its artistic model in the older pagan poetry of Iceland. Some of the quasi-allegorical proper names in the poem are untraditional, i.e., of the poet's invention,
and therefore faulty transmitted in the paper MSS, and almost impossible to reconstruct correctly. But like the Hávamál and the parallel Disticha Catonis, Sólarljóð belongs to the ancient genre of wisdom literature, and in its Christian way seeks not only to instruct its readers in the perils and temptations of this life, but also to prepare their souls for the rewards and punishments in the life beyond. In its transcendent visions of heaven and hell, it surpasses its pagan models, whose wisdom does not rise much above the concerns of this life. Presumably, the author of Sólarljóð was a cleric who was as sensitive to the poetry of Old Norse paganism as he was devout in the Christian faith.

As we learn toward the end of the poem, from stanza 78, and again from an interpolated stanza at the very end, Sólarljóð was conceived as a dream-vision in which a father appears after his death to his son, and having counseled him with five warning experiences, together with the closing prayers (sts. 53–82). The climactic central section, with the biblical image of Christ as "the sun of righteousness" (cf. Malachi 4:2), is one of the high points of expressiveness in the visionary and mystical literature of medieval Europe.

Research on the poem has so far uncovered general analogies rather than exact correspondences between Sólarljóð and European Latin vision literature of the Middle Ages. The image of the damned souls as cursed birds or clouds of midges in stanza 53, and the punishment of the avaricious who stagger under huge weights of lead in stanza 63 were almost certainly borrowed from continental hell visions. Despite the relative lateness of composition, the poem has no place for purgatory in its visions, and no fixed scheme of sins punishable in hell. In these respects, it fits the Latin visions, before the idea of purgatory can be said to have been fixed. The imagery of the angels of righteousness is one of the high points of Christian poetry (cf. Matthew 4:23; Malachi 4:2), is one of the high points of Christian poetry. The poem becomes a frame story that breaks down the means of his own death and his subsequent journeys through the realms of heaven and hell, concluding with a prayer to the Trinity and a plea for eternal peace to the dead and God's mercy on the living. The poem becomes a frame story that breaks down the means of his own death and his subsequent journeys through the realms of heaven and hell, concluding with a prayer to the Trinity and a plea for eternal peace.

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The immediate events that culminated in the conflict are complex. In 1055, Tostig became earl of Northumbria; but rebellion broke out in 1065 in response to his levying heavy taxes and the murder of a number of Yorkshire thanes, for which he was held responsible. Tostig and his family were outlawed by Edward the Confessor, then king of England. Morcar, brother of Edwin, earl of Mercia, took Tostig's place. With his wife and a small band of followers, Tostig left England. One year later, Edward the Confessor died, leaving no natural heir to the throne, and Harold, the king's chief counselor, was elected to the throne. The new king had to defend England against threats from three quarters: William ("the Conqueror"), duke of Normandy, to whom Edward supposedly promised the throne; Haraldr harðráði, who saw himself as the rightful heir to Knud's (Cnut's) kingdom; and Tostig. In early May, Tostig's forces appeared off the Isle of Wight, and occupied Sandwich, supposedly with the encouragement of William. Tostig's forces, however, were defeated, and Tostig made his way to Scotland. In the north, he joined with Haraldr harðráði, and together they swiftly battled their way to Rical, just outside York. At Fulford, two miles south of York, they defeated the English troops of Edwin and Morcar on September 20th. On September 25th, Harold Godwinson attacked at Stamford Bridge, surprising the Scandinavian army. The invading forces were routed, and both Tostig and Haraldr harðráði were killed. Harold Godwinson's victory, however, was short-lived; only two days later, William invaded 250 miles to the south. On October 14th, Harold was defeated by William at Hastings in the decisive battle that opened the gateway to Norman rule.


Phillip Pulsiano
Stave Church (stavkirke) is the term used for a type of wooden church built in Norway, and to some extent Sweden, from around 1150 onward. Technically, the stave-church walls are characterized by corner posts (and sometimes intermediate posts) resting on ground sills. The posts are joined at the top by the wall plates. Thus, the supporting elements of the walls form frames into which vertical planks are inserted. The planks are joined together by tongue and groove. The building is stabilized by a developed system of bracing, using quadrant brackets to lock the parts together. Quadrant brackets are also used for securing the structural elements of the roof, which is of a characteristically open, scissor-braced type with principal rafters, collar beams, and purlins, but without any tie beams at the wall-plate level.

While the majority of the medieval wooden churches in Sweden were timber churches built of horizontal logs notched into one another in the corners, practically all medieval churches in Norway were stave churches. Approximately 1,000 stave churches may have been in use at the same time in Norway during the Middle Ages, most of them in the period 1150–1350. Postmedieval stave churches are unknown.

Two types of stave churches occur. The more usual was a relatively small building with a separate chancel and no aisles. A larger type consists of a raised central part surrounded by lower aisles on all four sides. The latter buildings have an extra set of large-dimensional foundation beams forming a raft that carries both the sills of the walls and rows of freestanding, internal posts that support the raised central part. A chancel of similar construction is joined to the east aisle. Both types are often surrounded by pentices and may have small turrets riding over the roof ridges (cf. the Borgund stave church).

The origin and development of the stave church have been debated among Scandinavian scholars ever since serious study began in the latter part of the 19th century. Broadly speaking, two opinions have been set forth: (1) The basic structural features of the stave churches are inspired by earlier domestic building traditions. According to some scholars, some sacred pagan type of building (høvhol or horg/horg) may have played an important part as a model for the stave church (Boethius 1931). (2) The design of the stave church, especially the large church with the raised central part, is mainly the result of influence from European stone architecture, i.e., the Romanesque basilica (Dietrichson 1892, Bugge 1933, Hauglid 1976).

The discussion has been rather hypothetical in the absence of surviving buildings from the Viking period and the 11th century. But archaeological evidence has to some extent contributed to elucidating the problems. As early as in 1914, remnants of a large wooden church from the 11th century were excavated in Lund, Scania (Sweden). The importance of this find was not fully acknowledged until after World War II, when church excavations started up on a large scale all over northern Europe. In Lund, two wooden churches similar to the church found in 1914 have been excavated, while in Denmark a whole series of wooden churches was excavated, starting with the famous church at Jelling in 1941. In Norway, Urnes church was excavated in 1936. This excavation brought to light remnants of two older churches, the first of a series of ten early wooden churches found in Norway.

Practically all early wooden churches found so far have one thing in common: their supporting members were earth-fast. Two types occur: (1) Buildings where the walls themselves, or parts of them, supported the roof. Usually, this type of building seems to have had longitudinal walls with corresponding earth-fast posts, probably connected by transverse tie beams, thus forming a bay system. Between the wall posts, ground sills must have been inserted, carrying upright wall planks. (2) Buildings where the weight of the roof was carried by rows of internal posts, thus reducing the walls to a space-limiting element. These walls seem normally to have consisted of upright halved logs dug into the ground. There are, however, examples of churches where roof-supporting walls are combined with internal posts (e.g., Urnes and Lom, Norway).

Examples of the latter type are found in Lund and in Greensted, Essex, England, where the nave of a wooden church dating from Anglo-Saxon times is still standing, although in a very rebuilt state.

Comparisons with early churches and vernacular buildings, known through excavations in Germany (e.g., Tostedt, Breberen, Stellerburg, Hustenknap), show that the early Scandinavian churches belong within a general North European building tradition. Thus, the forerunners of the developed stave churches do not belong to a specifically Nordic type of building. As far as wall construction is concerned, a continuous development can be traced between a large group of early churches (to which all the Norwegian churches hitherto excavated belong) and the fully developed stave church. Some churches in Gotland, Sweden (Silte, Hemse), where the supporting elements are placed on ground sills of a special kind, seem to form the intermediate link between the early churches and the stave churches as we know them.

Convincing archaeological evidence of early wooden churches with a raised central part has not yet been found. Four large postholes found within the walls of Urnes church have been interpreted as holes for posts supporting some sort of raised structure (Christie 1959). Based on archaeological evidence, however, it is difficult to reconstruct the building with surrounding aisles on all four sides. One of the churches found in Lund has been reconstructed as an aisled building with a raised central nave (Hauglid 1976). This reconstruction is conjectural and has been debated. Thus, it is still an unsolved question from which sort of building the stave church with a raised central part actually developed. Some scholars still maintain that the stone basilica provided the model. Others disagree, claiming that the stave church, which is a central building with a chancel loosely joined to it, represents a type of building quite different from the axial stone basilica. The most probable answer to this question is that the stave church with the raised central part represents a sudden leap in a domestic evolution that took place in Norway around 1150–1200, when the first generation of churches gradually was replaced by new ones, either stone churches or stave churches on ground sills. The creation of the large stave church was probably due to a challenge from the Church to create, on a modest scale, a room that possessed some of the spatial qualities that could be experienced in the new cathedrals built in the leading centers of Europe. The solution, however, had to be found within the constraints imposed by a quite different building material and an established native building tradition. The result was neither a copy of the stone basilica nor a traditional building.

The most conspicuous difference between the early churches and the developed stave churches lies in the field of statics. Contrary to the early churches, where the supporting members (i.e.,
the wall posts forming the bay system) must have formed rows of transverse units, the longitudinal walls of the stave church carry the weight of the roof, which has an "open" construction without any transverse tie beams (see above). The lifting of the whole building above the ground and putting it on sills also represents the weight of the roof, which has an "open" construction without any transverse tie beams (see above). The lifting of the whole structure also presupposes a change in the building procedure. In contrast to the early churches, developed stave churches are prefabricated structures. Thus, the stave church represents a leap to a considerably higher level of technical skill. Somehow, this skill must have emerged in Scandinavia in the years between around 1050 and 1150.

About thirty stave churches, most of them of the large type, are still standing in Norway, while only one church (Hedared) has survived in Sweden. In some respects, the Norwegian stave churches differ from district to district, Sogn in West Norway being the "classical" district, where the famous churches of Urnes and Borgund are found, while more simplified types prevail in the east valleys, such as Valdres and Numedal. In Urnes, the internal rows of freestanding posts supporting the raised central part of the building are adorned with bases and capitals to make them look like stone columns. The posts are connected by arches visually comparable to the arcing in a stone basilica. In Borgund, two sets of arches with cross braces between them form a sort of "triforium." This type of embellishment is certainly taken from stone architecture, and explains why some scholars believe that the stone basilica provided the model for the large type of stave church.

In some Valdres churches, the internal posts are reduced to four corner posts, allowing the central room and the aisles to merge into one single room at floor level. Some Numedal churches (and some of the Hallingdal churches now vanished) have only one freestanding post placed in the center of the nave and extending right up to the roof ridge. Usually, this post also supports a bell turret. These churches come close in appearance to the churches of the simple nave-and-chancel type, but they have a more complicated structural system. Large churches with rows of internal, freestanding posts carrying a raised central room are, however, also known from the eastern part of Norway, as at Lom in Gudbrandsdalen, Goli and Torpo in Hallingdal, and Heddal in Telemark.

A special type of large, cruciform, aisled stave church is known from the northwestern part of southern Norway (More and Romsdal) and in Iceland, where the cathedral at Skálholt, which is known from archaeological excavations, measured 39 by 12 meters, the transverse arms measuring 5 by 12 meters. These churches, all of which seem to be late medieval, were built with rows of transverse, roof-bearing units, consisting of pairs of internal posts connected by tie beams and longitudinal wall plates, probably put together in a form of construction called "reversed assembly" (Smith 1974).

The dating of the stave churches is much debated, focusing on the decorated parts, especially the magnificently carved doorways. Typological series have been established and given a chronological bearing, and influence from various European stylistic centers has been demonstrated. The route by which this influence was transmitted, and how the transformation of foreign impulses took place, are questions on which recent research concentrates (Hohler 1975).

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Hans-Emil Liden

[See also: Architecture, Churches, Stone; Temples, Heathen;
Wood Carving]

Stiklestad, Battle of. Since the year 1025, Knud (Cnut) the
Great had demanded to be the king of Norway. Through gifts, he
eventually managed to win most of the powerful chieftains of the
country to his side. In 1028, he went to Norway and was made
king. Before Knud returned to England, he appointed his nephew
Earl Hákon governor of Norway. At the same time, he took hos-
tages from all the chieftains and rich peasants in the country. King
Olaf Haraldsson fled to Sweden, and the year after to Russia.
Earl Hákon died in the winter of 1029. Norway then had no
ruler, and Knud could find no one with the authority of the earl
to replace him. After Hákon's death, Bjorn digri ("the fat"), Olaf's
former retainer (stallari), went to Russia and told Olaf about the
latest developments in Norway. Olaf then decided to reclaim the
throne. He left Russia for Sweden with a small group of retainers
and received support from his brother-in-law, the Swedish king,
and 480 men. On the way from Sweden to Norway, he gathered
additional reinforcements; at the same time, some of his faithful
friends in Norway, among others Harald Sigurdson and King
Hringr from the east, joined him on his way to Stiklestad
(Stiklastadher) in Norway. Before the beginning of the battle, Olaf
had about 3,600 men.

When the Norwegian chieftains, primarily those from
Trøndelag, the west, and the north, learned of Olaf's return, they
gathered armies made up of peasants. When they heard that Olaf
was about to cross Kjølen into Verdal, they set out with the peasant army for Trondheim and Verdal. According to Heimskringla, they had the largest army as yet assembled in Norway, about 14,000 men.

The battle was fought at Stiklestad on July 29, 1030. Óláfr and a great number of his men fell in the battle. Snorri describes the death of Óláfr as follows: "Then Pórir hundr ["hound"] struck at him with his spear and the thrust went under the bymie up into his neck." (Heimskringla 2:385)

After the battle, Knud installed Sven Álifuðsson as ruler of Norway. He soon became unpopular because of the taxes he levied upon the peasants. Two of the chieftains who fought against Óláfr then brought his son, Magnús Olafsson, home from Russia; he was made king of Norway in the year 1035.

Óláfr then brought his son, Magnús Óláfsson, home from Russia; he was made king, but he was never canonized by the pope.


Jón Vidar Sigurðsson

[See also: Heimskringla, Norway, Óláfr, St.; Ölafs saga helga]

**Stjórn** is the title commonly given to a collection of material that represents the Old Testament historical literature from the Creation to the Exile. This material is found in full in one MS from the middle of the 14th century, AM 226 fol., and a number of later copies, and in part in other MSS from the same century onward, notably AM 227 fol. and 228 fol. It is not, however, a homogeneous work; rather, it comprises three different Norse versions of the historical literature that vary considerably in content and date.

In a prologue to this composite work, we are told that Hákon Magnússon, king of Norway 1299–1319, instigated the compilation of a work based on Holy Scripture that could be read aloud for the edification of those at his court who did not know Latin; and the compiler says that he used a number of other works in the compilation, notably Peter Comestor's *Historia scholastica* and the *Speculum historiale* of Vincent of Beauvais. But this statement can apply only to the first part of the work, from Genesis 1 to Exodus 18, in which the Bible story is augmented very considerably from both these works and others; indeed, the compiler does not hesitate to depart completely from the Bible on occasion. A lengthy geographical treatise from Vincent, accounts of the legendary love affairs of Joseph and of Moses, and a couple of lento homilies are the principal additions (Unger 1862: 3–299).

The remainder of the Pentateuch is found only in AM 226 fol. and as an addition to it; the MS gathering was cut to permit it to be inserted. A close and considerably shortened translation of the Vulgate text, it concentrates on the historical material, summarizing or omitting the legal prescriptions of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, and adds virtually nothing to the scriptural text. Although it is written in a hand from the 15th century or a little later, it is clearly a copy made from an earlier MS, presumably of the Pentateuch. Evidence based principally on error analysis suggests that the translation goes back at least to the early part of the 13th century (Unger 1862: 300–49).

The post-Pentateuchal historical material from Joshua to the Exile is found in almost complete form in the eldest of the principal MSS, AM 228 fol., which is dated to the early part of the 14th century; in AM 226 fol., the Book of Joshua follows a different translation, being based essentially not on the Vulgate but on the text of Joshua as found in Comestor's *Historia scholastica*. This version of the scriptures differs from both the others: it derives essentially from the Vulgate, but with some summarizing and omission, and some expansion and elaboration. The books of Chronicles are used to supplement the information contained in the books of Kings; Peter Comestor is used sporadically and without acknowledgment, while Honorius Augustodunensis's *Imago mundi* is among the works cited. Allegorical commentaries on Jewish heroes, representing them as types of Christ in some cases, are also included, apparently taken from Richard of St. Victor's *Liber exceptionum*. This version probably comprised a translation of the Pentateuch as well, for there is a MS fragment, AM 238 XIX fol., containing extracts from Genesis that do not correspond to the *Stjórn* text, but are very similar to this translation, notably in their use of *Imago mundi* (Unger 1862: 349–654).

Concerning authorship, nothing can be said for certain; but it is possible that the last-mentioned version was the work of Brandi Jónsson, bishop of Hólar (d. 1264), translator of the apocryphal historical material at the behest of Magnús Hákonarson, king of Norway (d. 1280). It is also possible that this version made use of an earlier, more straightforward translation, perhaps that which survives in the latter part of the Pentateuch. In turn, *Konungs skuggsjá* appears to make use of this version, for many biblical quotations in this latter work show almost exact correspondence with the Bible version.


**I. J. Kirby**

*Strengleikar* is a collection of Old Norse translations of French *lais* apparently undertaken in Norway during the reign of King Hákon Hákonarson (1217–1263). The plural of *strengleikar* means primarily "stringed instrument" and by extension "lai" or "sung lais." Parallelisms and alliteration seems consistent throughout the collection, and gives an impression of keen attention to detail. Yet scattered throughout the anthology, there are errors that distort the sense and confuse the narrative. As mentioned earlier, the Norse versions vary considerably in their faithfulness to the French originals, but it is noteworthy that despite these fluctuations authorial interventions in the first person singular and first person plural are almost always carried over from the French to the Norse, in contrast to other translations from French to Norse where this type of material is frequently omitted. The ostensible framework of a collection produced for King Håkon is only occasionally reinforced, and its didactic purpose is doubtful. Note the inconsistences between the two parts of the prologue, the disproportionate heaviness of the didactic addition in *Equitan*, the disconcerted outburst from the translator at the end of *Chetovel*: "I have read no more about this, and I do not wish to add to it or to tell you new lies," and the precarious inclusion of the unseemly *Leikara ljóð*.

A detailed stylistic study is needed to establish whether there are significant variations in language usage among the different *lais*; similarly, key phrases that occur in many of the French texts should be checked against their Norse counterparts to see whether a theory of more than one translator can be maintained.

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**See also:** Bible; Christian Prose; *Gyðinga saga*; *Konungs skuggsjá*

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**Strengleikar** exists primarily in one Norwegian MS from about 1270: *De la Gardie 4–7* now in Uppsala University Library in Sweden. Four leaves from the end of the MS were cut out and subsequently inserted in a bishop's meter used at the cathedral church of Skálholt in Iceland; the resulting fragments are now registered as AM 666b 4to in Copenhagen. The first editors of *Strengleikar* (Keyser and Unger 1850) believed that the surviving Norwegian MS was "the first fair copy of the translator's rough draft," and it was long customary to assume that the translator was a cleric, perhaps the brother or abbot Robert associated with *Tristrams saga* and *Ellis saga*.

Cook and Tveitane, who edited *Strengleikar* in 1979, were not convinced. The Norse versions of the *lais* vary considerably in the extent to which they are faithful to the extant French originals. Figures vary from an abridgment of about 15 percent (*Joni* and *Tveggja eklanda ljóð*) to about 50 percent (*Milun*), and this variation seems inconsistent with the concept of a single translator. Tveitane (1973) had furthermore made a linguistic study of the MS, and noted dialect elements from different parts of the country that made original composition at one place, either at the Norwegian court or on commission in a monastery, improbable. All in all, Cook and Tveitane were more inclined to imagine two to four separate translators making drafts of their work perhaps around 1250 (1979: xxvii).

Cook and Tveitane's views have been debated. Hådbø (1984, 1987) largely refuted Tveitane's findings concerning dialect features from different parts of Norway and asserted that the two scribes who copied *Strengleikar* in *De la Gardie 4–7* wrote a consistent and uninfiltred form of Old Norwegian compatible with the dialect of the Stavanger area of West Norway; this view reduces the potential geographical spread of a disparate collection of translations. Support came in the form of the discovery of an Icelandic version of *Guimar*, the Norse translation of *Guigemar*, that contained readings closer to the French original than those in *De la Gardie 4–7* (Kalinke 1979, 1980). By conclusively demonstrating that a now-lost, earlier and better version of the Norse translation once existed, this discovery supports the idea that the text of *De la Gardie 4–7* may be the result of an editorial venture to gather together in one book a number of translations of similar French material. Additional research that demonstrates knowledge of *Strengleikar* material in other Old Norse–Icelandic texts gives further indirect support (Kalinke 1981, Power 1985, Clover 1986).

Many problems remain, and some theory of a number of levels of textual development is needed to explain them. On the one hand, the deliberately rhetorical style with widespread use of parallelisms and alliteration seems consistent throughout the collection, and gives an impression of keen attention to detail. Yet scattered throughout the anthology, there are errors that distort the sense and confuse the narrative. As mentioned earlier, the Norse versions vary considerably in their faithfulness to the French originals, but it is noteworthy that despite these fluctuations authorial interventions in the first person singular and first person plural are almost always carried over from the French to the Norse, in contrast to other translations from French to Norse where this type of material is frequently omitted. The ostensible framework of a collection produced for King Hákon is only occasionally reinforced, and its didactic purpose is doubtful. Note the inconsistences between the two parts of the prologue, the disproportionate heaviness of the didactic addition in *Equitan*, the disconcerted outburst from the translator at the end of *Chetovel*: "I have read no more about this, and I do not wish to add to it or to tell you new lies," and the precarious inclusion of the unseemly *Leikara ljóð*.

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Christopher Sanders

Stúfs þáttr ("The Tale of Stúfr") is found in two versions, a shorter one in MSS of the konungsætting, including Markkinskina, Flateyjarbók, and Hulda-Hrokkinskinna, and a longer one in three 15th-century paper MSS in which the text is recorded independently. The versions differ in style and in some details (e.g., Sigurðarson arrives unexpectedly. The king takes a flokkar), and advance what they are. He requests the king's aid in obtaining some drápur (laudatory poems). He promises to recite them when they next meet. Later, Stúfr asks the king for three boons, to be granted without knowing in advance what they are. He requests the king's aid in obtaining some inherited property elsewhere in Norway, permission to compose a drúpa for the king, and admission to the king's hird (the order is drúpa, hird, and inheritance in the longer version). Haraldr immediately grants aid in the matter of the inheritance, and, after some discussion about Stúfr's skaldic ancestry, allows him to compose the drúpa. Later, after hearing the drúpa, the king admits Stúfr to his hird.

Generically, Stúfs þáttr falls into the utanerd type, in which an Icelandic journey to Norway is tested by a king, and receives rewards from him. The usual return to Iceland is omitted.

Stúfs þáttr affords insight into medieval oral tradition. Stúfr is a freðmáðr ("man of learning") because he knows many of the works of other poets; in the þáttr, he obtains permission to compose his own drúpa and thus to become a skald only after the king is satisfied that Stúfr comes from a skaldic family. The þáttr shows the context of a performance situation: late at night, a royal audience, and a distinction between flokkar and drúpur, suggesting that both would ordinarily be performed.

Most scholars date the þáttr to the first decades of the 13th century and regard the longer version as more original.


John Lindow

[See also: Flateyjarbók; Hird; Hulda-Hrokkkinskinna; Konungsætting; Markkinskina; Skáld, þáttr]

Sturla Pórdarson (July 29, 1214–July 30, 1284) attained eminence as a historian, poet, and legal expert. His literary fame is based on his histories: Íslendinga saga ("History of the Icelanders"), which covers in detail the period from 1183 to 1242, and Håkonar saga Håkonarsonar, a chronicle of the reign of the Norwegian king Håkon Håkonarson (1217–1263). He also composed a version of Landnámabók ("Book of Settlements") known as Sturlubók. Although much of his skaldic poetry has been lost, the surviving verses are generally considered conventional rather than exceptional in inspiration and in expression. In the last two decades of his life, he was an acknowledged authority on his native law. Following Iceland's integration into Norway (1264), the Norwegian king Magnus Håkonarson (1263–1280) appointed him a member of the commission charged with revising provincial law.

Sturla was born the illegitimate son of a major chieftain, Póðr Sturluson, in the northwest of Iceland. Although his illegitimacy was a distinct social disadvantage, his upbringing was privileged. In his infancy, he was raised by his grandmother Guðny, a woman of remarkable intellect and energy. His father trained him early in the duties of a chieftain, which included participation in legal affairs and in armed ventures. At age thirteen, he was delegated to empower his uncle Snorri to administer his father's chieftaincy at the Alþingi. In his late teens, he guarded Bishop Guðmundr and his retinue of paupers during his visitation of western Iceland. Subsequently, Sturla joined his brothers in protecting their father's territory from the depredations of Snorri's son Óræfajökull. These missions involved him in open or barely concealed enmities that would test his organizational skills and would develop his abilities as a chieftain.

In 1235, Sturla joined his uncle Snorri, the great writer and historian. A closeness developed between the two. Although Sturla would ascribe demeaning foibles to Snorri in Íslendinga saga, the fact remains that Snorri assigned to Sturla the administrative powers that made Sturla, at age twenty-six, one of the foremost chieftains of western Iceland (1240). Sturla acknowledged his debt by naming his oldest son after his uncle and by joining Óræfajökull in seeking blood revenge for the slaying of Snorri (1241).

In the intermecic struggles of the thirties and forties, the power of Sturla's clan, the Sturlungs, had been truncated. Increasingly, the Norwegian king manipulated the internal jockeying for power. Sturla was embroiled in these fights, both because two of the main contestants, Póðr Kakali and Porgils Skarði, were his cousin and nephew respectively, and because he felt compelled to protect his own territorial interests. His fortunes fluctuated as he participated, sometimes reluctantly, sometimes actively, in bitter feuds. Tragedy also touched his life. In 1253, Sturla had allied himself with Gíszur Porvaldsson, the chieftain who had ordered Snorri's death. To strengthen the alliance, Sturla had allied his daughter to Gíszur's son Hallr. At the end of the wedding celebrations, Gíszur's manor, Flugumyr, was put to the torch. The bride barely escaped in the attack that was futilely launched in revenge for the slaying of both Snorri and of Snorri's nephew, Sturla Sighvatsson. Moreover, Porgils Skarði, for a brief time the major chieftain in northern Iceland and Sturla's close associate, was slain in 1258.

A period of uncertainty, dashed hopes, ill-fated alliances, and ventures ended in Sturla's exile to Norway in 1263. His stay at the
court was prolonged. It was also an intellectually busy and fruitful time. Appointed court historian, he composed the official history of Magnus's father, King Hákon Hákonarson, a work based on eyewitness reports and on records in the royal chancery. Sturla was also busy with the revision of the provincial laws, including Icelandic law. He returned to Iceland with the first codification of the amended law, the so-called Járnsida ("iron side"), in 1272. He then assumed the highest judiciary post. In 1277, his jurisdiction as lawman was restricted to northern and western Ireland. Concomitantly, he was summoned to Norway on charges that he was less active in discharging his duties than the newly appointed lawman for eastern and southern Iceland. Still, he was honored by the king, who appointed him a member of the court with the rank of knight (skutsóspvein). Again he assumed the post of royal biographer by writing the history of Magnus's reign, of which only one page survives. He resigned his post as lawman when he felt unable to cope with the question of jurisdiction over church property that pitted landowners against the bishop. He died in 1284, respected by his contemporaries for his scholarliness and integrity.

His literary work was extensive. He probably wrote, as a prologue to Landnámabók, an account of Iceland's christianization, Kriststina saga, and also a lost version of Grettis saga. A 14th-century clerical author credits Sturla with a fantastic story about the trollwoman Selkolla. Less certain is the conjecture that he was responsible for the oldest versions of Icelandic annals and for a list of lawgivers that has survived only in a MS of the 17th century.


Marlene Ciklamini

See also: Conversion; Hákonar saga gamla Hákonarsonar; Landnámabók; Laws; Snorri Sturluson; Sturlunga Age; Sturlunga saga

Sturlunga saga starfsama ("The Saga of Sturlaugr the Industrious"), a fornaldarsaga composed around 1300, is preserved in two distinct versions. The older version (A) is best represented by the vellums AM 335 4to (ca. 1400), AM 589f 4to (late 15th century), and AM 567XXI 4to (fragment, late 16th century), while the later recasting (B) is found only in paper MSS, the earliest of which is AM 171a fol., from the latter part of the 17th century. A total of forty-four MSS of varying worth remains of this saga, one of which, JS 632 4to (18th century), selectively conflates the two versions.

As the saga opens, Sturlaugr, son of the chieflain Ingólfr of Naumudalr in Norway, is a kolbítir, or stay-at-home, who prefers games and household chores to manlier pursuits. Ingólfr suggests that he should marry Ása, daughter of Earl Ótingr, but when she rejects Sturlaugr for not having distinguished himself, he angrily goes harrying in the Baltic area. Meanwhile, old King Haraldr and the sinister Kolr successively seek Ása's hand. Ótingr gives pledges of betrothal to both of them. Since Haraldr is too old to battle Kolr, he calls upon Sturlaugr to take his place. Sturlaugr accepts on the condition that the king relinquish to him his betrothal claim. Reluctantly, Haraldr agrees, and Sturlaugr wed Ása. When told of the impending duel with Kolr, Ása advises Sturlaugr to see her foster-mother, the crone Vefreyja, who provides him with an extraordinary sword by means of which he slays Kolr. Subsequently, Kolr's brother, Framarr, bristling with vengefulness, challenges Sturlaugr to a duel. Although Framarr is wounded in the subsequent encounter with Sturlaugr and on the verge of death, he is healed by Vefreyja and becomes Sturlaugr's sworn brother. When Sturlaugr returns home, Haraldr gives him an arduous task to perform, recovering an aurochs horn. On the way, Sturlaugr and his men encounter three giantesses and men who yelp like dogs, with chins grown down to their chests. Eventually, they succeed in obtaining the aurochs horn and make their way back to Haraldr, into whose speechless face Sturlaugr thrusts the horn. He proceeds to his kinfold in Sweden, where he defends the kingdom ruled by Ónghreyri. In return, Sturlaugr is made king and given territory. The remainder of the saga is largely taken up with loosely connected episodes resulting from vows made at a yule feast. Of these, those involving Framarr, who had pledged to sleep with Ingibjorg, are the most entertaining. After a series of frustrated attempts on the part of Framarr to win Ingibjorg, Sturlaugr is obliged to intervene. After a long battle in which Dagr, Ingibjorg's father, is killed, Sturlaugr gives Ingibjorg to Framarr in marriage. Thereupon, he returns to Sweden, where he performs further feats. By Ása, Sturlaugr has two sons, Heimringr and Ingólfr, each of whom becomes king after their father dies of old age.

In version B, which shows accretion from the sequel, Gunguráhúfs saga, as well as from Forstéins saga Vikingslarar, the cast of characters is reduced, but more detailed description is offered of the main figures: Ása is described as being haughtier and mockingly eloquent; Kolr, less than human with cat-like golden eyes peering from under shaggy brows; and the giantess Hornnja, comically grotesque when she "comes on," carrying walrus on her back and a dead bear in front. The role of Vefreyja as a helper figure is curtailed. In general, version A operates with omens, triadic groupings, and the other stocks in trade of the fairy tale, while B is more tightly knit, providing motivation often lacking in A.

of a Fourteenth-Century Icelandic Mythical-Heroic Saga. Düsseldorf: Tritsch, 1969 [diplomatic text of A based on AM 335 4to; text of B based on Nks 1228 fol].

Otto J. Zitzelsberger

[See also: Formaldarsôgur, Gongu-Hrólfs saga, Porsteins saga Vikingssonar]

Sturlu þáttir see Sturlunga saga

Sturlung Age (Sturlungaold). The period 930-1262 is called the Commonwealth Age in Icelandic history; the end of this period is called the Sturlung Age. The name is old, but its origin is uncertain, and it is unclear what period of time it designates. However, it is connected with the dissolution that took place at the end of the Commonwealth Age, when five chieftain families were struggling for power, and the archbishop in Norway and the Norwegian king were directly involved in the power struggle.

During the last decades, scholars have placed the beginning of the Sturlung Age around 1200, 1220, or even 1235. Those who place it around 1200 emphasize, among other things, the separation of church and secular power. The Church, they point out, had come directly under foreign rule; the Icelanders no longer owned ocean-going ships and had become dependent on foreign merchants for all import and travel abroad. Furthermore, they claim that education had declined, and disputes and warfare increased around 1200.

Others place the dividing line around 1220, because then the Sturlungs had begun to assert themselves, and their power in Norway had become directly involved in Icelandic matters. The ancestor of the Sturlungs, Sturla Ólafs þornsson (d. 1183) was never very powerful, but his three sons collaborated well until around 1220, and the Sturlungs were at that time the most powerful family of the country. They enjoyed the friendship of the Birkibeinar in Norway, and Snorri, Sturla’s son, even tried to bring the country under Norwegian royal power in 1220, but it came to nothing.

In 1235, the son of Snorri’s brother, Snorri Sighvatsson, again tried to bring Iceland under the Norwegian king. There had been a considerable power struggle between Snorri and Sturla, and Sturla now expelled his father’s brother from the country. Then he turned against other chieftains and tried to chase them to the king, but fell himself in 1238. From 1235 onward, there was much unrest in the country, with many battles taking place. Some scholars claim that the Sturlung Age began at this point.

One of the two main characteristics of the Sturlung Age is the power struggle among the chieftains; the other is foreign intervention. The chieftains’ controversies can be explained by the fact that five families became wealthier and more powerful than others in the 12th century, probably especially because of the church income, and then usually from the largest churches, the so-called stadir (sing. stadir ‘church establishment’). They kept reasonable peace with each other until the sixth family, the Sturlungs, began to assert themselves around 1220. They had their origin in Dalvík, but forced their way to power wherever they could, and conquered all the western part of Iceland and a large area in the northern part, but the Sturlungs’ solidarity was eventually disrupted.

Most of the victorious chieftains of the Sturlung Age were the Norwegian king’s men (hirdmenn), and the support of the Norwegians became increasingly important to them as the disputes also increased, both of special messengers of the king and of merchants who represented the king, but also bishops, who were all Norwegians after 1237 until the end of the Commonwealth Age. Snorri supported Earl Skuli in his rebellion in Norway and had prospects of becoming Skuli’s earl in Iceland. But Skuli got the worst of it, and the king let his man, the Icelandic chieftain Gisúr Pó强调sson, kill Snorri in 1241. The king’s power was then obvious, and the chieftains who became most powerful after this time, Pórðr Kakali and Porgils Skardr, both Sturlungs, and Gisúr, were all the king’s men and dependent on him.

The primary source about the Sturlung Age is Sturlunga saga, a collection of sagas describing the period. Here, an account is given of the fights that took place after 1235, and the killings are described in detail. The chieftains’ recruiting was large, 1,200–1,400 men at the most in each troop, but the losses were small in comparison. Around 350 men may have fallen or been killed in the period 1208–1260, and the total number of Icelanders at the time was 50,000–60,000. Mutilations were common, especially the cutting off of hands and feet, and then plundering, especially of cattle.

Pórðr Kakali and Porgils Skardr died in 1256 and 1258, respectively. There was only one chieftain among the king’s men who was likely to subject the country to the king, Gisúr Porvaldsson. The king did not trust him for this task and tried to control him by making him his earl. Gisúr appears to have been reluctant to subjugate the country to the king, but finally was forced to do so when the king diminished his power and made it probable that he would reduce it even more. The Icelanders agreed to subjugate themselves to the king and pay taxes to him, but under certain conditions as set forth in the Gamli sáttmáli ("Old Covenant").

By about 1255, the farmers had tired of war, at least those in the northern part of Iceland. The king claimed that only he could secure peace, and the leaders of the Church supported him. The Gamli sáttmáli states that six ships should sail to Iceland over the next two years, and then according to an agreement. Many scholars interpret this statement as implying that all trade was in the hands of the Norwegians, and that the Icelanders had been forced to negotiate with the king in order to secure imports. This idea is nowhere stated explicitly, but it is possible that Norwegian merchants may have been interested in the trade. Many Icelanders may have found it unnatural not to be subject to a king; to have a Norwegian king may have seemed self-elected. But it is clear that the payment of taxes was a thorn in the Icelanders’ side.

It was not to be expected that the Icelanders could buck the Norwegian obstruction. With peace established in the first half of the 13th century, Norway’s time as a major power had begun. The king employed a policy of expansion, and the Icelanders were no match for the Norwegians.

Most scholars consider the Sturlung Age a period of political, financial, cultural, and moral decay. There is a tendency to look at the time through modern notions of self-determination, but such ideas may have been unknown around 1250. The supposed financial decline is uncertain, and it seems that Icelandic goods were no less in demand in the 13th than in the 12th century. The role of international trade should not be overestimated. Some scholars claim that culture and education decayed after 1200, and believe that the Islendingasögur and other literary genres, that came into
existence in the 13th century, are a kind of swan song of the culture that had flourished especially at the end of the 12th century before the controversies began. This view is doubtful, although it is clear that the literature declined around 1300 or in the 14th century.

Sturlunga saga ("The Saga of the Sturlungs") is a huge compilation, in all some 260,000 words, from around the year 1300. It comprises a series of texts by different authors, and forms a continuous chronicle of Icelandic history during the period 1117–1264, that is, to the breakdown of the insular Free State. There are two MS versions of Sturlunga saga: Króksfjardarbók [K] (AM 122a fol.; written 1360–1370) and Reykjafjarðarbók [R] (AM 122b fol.; written somewhat later). Neither of these two MSS has preserved the text in its original form. Much has been lost, especially in R. K seems to be more faithful to the substance of the original, whereas R has incorporated some texts not found there (see below).

The designation Sturlunga saga does not appear until the 17th century. But the work is aptly named, because the family of the Sturlungs, with its many prominent chieftains, dominated the Icelandic scene during much of the period in question, currently referred to as the Sturlungaald ("Sturlung Age").

Sturlunga saga belongs to the branch of Icelandic saga literature called samfélagságrar ("contemporary sagas"). This designation distinguishes it from the Íslandságrar, such as Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar or Njáls saga. Most of the Íslandságrar were written in the 13th century, but deal with Icelanders from the settlement (ländmán), beginning in the late 9th century, up to approximately 1030, when the new community had been Christian for a generation. Sturlunga saga is also "contemporary" in the sense that its authors had witnessed many of the events that they describe.

Sturlunga saga includes the following parts:

Geirmundar þátrar heljarskinna takes place in the immigration period, and ends with a chapter on Geirmundr's descendants. This short story is a kind of historical prelude, perhaps written by the compiler himself.

Porgis saga ok Hallóðr deals with the antagonism between the two chieftains named in the title in the early 12th century. There is a famous account of a wedding at Reykjahlóir in 1119, where the telling of fornaldrasögur is of great interest for the discussion of that genre.

Attaðartúr ("Genealogies") is a compressed review of the foremost families in contemporary Iceland: Oddavarjar, Sturlunar, Æbisningar, Svinfellingar, and so on.

Haukðela þátr presents the main features of the famous family of Haukadalr from the immigration period up to about 1200. As a source for his narrative, the author sometimes refers to the renowned Ari Porgilsson "inn fróði" ("the learned"; 1067–1148), who, with his Íslandságróbók, became the pioneer in writing history in a Nordic language. From the age of seven to twenty-one, Ari spent his life at Haukadalr.

Sturla saga is the story of Sturla Pórðarson from the farm Hvammr in western Iceland ("Hvamm-Sturla"), father of Snorri Sturluson, and his conflicts with other chieftains in the years from 1148 until his death in 1183. It gives a vivid and entertaining portrait of the man who was the founder of the Sturlung clan. Like certain other chieftains of his day, Hvamm-Sturla was an upstart. But he more than made up for his lack of pedigree through ambition, cunning, and ruthlessness. Gradually, he became the most powerful man in the western districts. In this saga, we also find the story of how his son Snorri at the age of two was adopted as foster-son by the prominent chieftain Jón Loptsson from the estate Oddi in southern Iceland. Snorri spent his youth at Oddi, a cultural center, and an important school for the future historian, mythologist, and expert in Icelandic poetry.

Formali ("Preface") is supposed to be written by the compiler, but on the basis of an older preface by Sturla Pórðarson to his own Íslandságr (see below). The short piece is an important document on saga writing, but difficult to interpret.

Prestsaga Guðmundar Arnasonar is a biography of the priest Guðmundr Arnason until he became bishop in the year 1203, and afterward was heavily involved in the conflicts among the chieftains. The compiler has divided the saga into four parts and integrated them with other texts. He has shortened it considerably, and excluded passages dealing with miraculous events. It seems fairly certain that Prestsaga was composed by the abbot Lambknar Porgilsson (d. 1249), who was Guðmundr's disciple and friend.

Guðmundar saga dýra is a chronicle of feuds among chieftains in the district around Eyjafjörður in northern Iceland, especially Guðmundr Þorvaldsson (d. 1212) and Onundr Borkelsson, who fell victim to arson in 1197 ("Onundarbrenna"). The compiler has divided the saga and reproduced it in two different places.

Hrafnar saga Swinbjarnarsonar is the story of a noble chieftain and renowned physician, who in 1213 was killed by his adversary Þorvald Snorran. The saga was composed by a contemporary admirer of Hrafn, apparently shortly after Þorvald's death. The compiler has used only the latter part of the saga, which is elsewhere preserved entire.

Íslandságr is by far the weightiest single contribution to Sturlunga saga, both by virtue of its size (more than 100,000 words)
and its central position. It was written by Sturla Þorðarson (1214–1284), a nephew of Snorri Sturluson, and is the only text in the whole compilation that can with absolute confidence be ascribed to an author. The saga begins at the death of Sturla's paternal grandfather and namesake, Hvamm-Sturla, in 1183, and follows the history of Iceland and its chieftains in the 13th century, until the Free State was forced to submit to the Norwegian king in 1262–1264. Like many of his relatives, Sturla was deeply involved in the course of events, and often refers to himself, but, with typical restraint and objectivity, always in the third person. His portraits of Snorri Sturluson and other members of his family are drawn with a steady hand by a man who knew them better than anyone else.

Pórðar saga kakala has its name from the Sturlung chieftain Pórðr Sighvatsson Kakali (1210–1256), Snorri Sturluson's nephew and cousin of the author of Íslendinga saga. A central episode is the naval battle between Pórðr and his competitor Kolbeinn Arnórsson (1208–1245) on the gulf Húnaflói in northern Iceland in the year 1244. The saga does not exist outside Sturlunga saga, where it has been merged with Sturla's Íslendinga saga.

Sturlunga saga tells of strife and deceit among chieftains in southern Iceland in the years 1248–1252: the brothers Sæmundr and Guðmundr Órnsson and Ógmundr Helgason.

Porgils saga skárða is the story of the Sturlung Porgil Björvarsson (1226–1258), next to Íslendinga saga the most voluminous single text (45,000 words) of the compilation. It did not belong to the original composition, but was introduced in MS R, where it has been entirely integrated with Íslendinga saga.

Sturlu þáttr, preserved only in R and its line in the MS tradition, is a charming portrait of the main contributor to Sturlunga saga, Sturla Þorðarson, and of his meeting with King Magnús Hákonarson in Norway. The king at first treated Sturla with suspicion, but ended by honoring the Icelanders with the task of writing his father's biography, Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar (ca. 1265).

Finally, one could add Arons saga, which is not to be found in the Sturlunga saga compilation itself, but which has much in common with its contents, and is thus sometimes included in modern editions of Sturlunga saga. Arons saga, supposedly composed around 1340, is the story of Aron Hjóleifsson (d. 1255), who is also known from Sturla's Íslendinga saga. Aron was a faithful supporter of Bishop Guðmundr Anason in his bitter quarrels with the Sturlung chieftain Snorra Sighvatsson, and was one of the most famous warriors of his time, very much in the old heroic vein. He made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, not unusual for Icelanders in the Sturlung Age, and died in Norway as an honored member of King Hákon's hird.

The political and social development in Iceland during the Sturlung Age involved a disturbance of the balance among the original thirty-six, and later forty-eight, local chieftains, the godar (sg. god). Each of them administrated his district, his godard, and together they constituted the legislative body (lagretta) of the General Assembly (Alþingi), meeting every summer at Pingvellir. In the 10th and 11th centuries, the power among the godar had been fairly equally distributed. The godàr was hereditary, but it could also be sold, temporarily transferred, or divided and held in partnership.

After the middle of the 12th century, however, individual chieftains gained control of more than one godðard. Finally, the old social structure was completely disrupted. In place of many godðar with approximately equal power, there were a few ambitious and influential individuals and families who subjected large parts of the country to their control. Among these chieftains almost uninterrupted conflicts raged, which culminated in the 13th century, and eventually led to the submission of Iceland to the Norwegian kingdom.

The greatest interest among the feuding families centers upon the Sturlungs. Their period of power began with Hvamm-Sturla's sons, Pórðr, Sighvatr, and Snorri. Snorri gained fame not only as a learned man and historian, but also in more mundane matters, and achieved great prestige and wealth. He visited King Hákon Hákonarson (1217–1263) and Earl Skáll in Norway, and seems to have promised to work on behalf of the king and Norwegian interests among his countrymen. In the decades to come, the king increasingly interfered in Icelandic politics, playing off the contending chieftains against one another. In 1222, Snorri was elected lawyer-speaker for the second time, the highest office of the Icelandic Free State, and during the following years he reached the peak of his power, partly at the expense of his own kinships. He was rather unscrupulous in his treatment of his brother Sighvatr and his brother's son Sturla.

Sturla Sighvatsson (1199–1238) brought the political influence of the Sturlungs to its first culmination. On a voyage abroad, he paid a visit to the Norwegian court. King Hákon, disappointed with Snorri's achievements, expressed the opinion that the best way to put an end to the strife in Iceland would be to introduce absolute monarchy there. Sturla undertook to work for the king's cause in return for suitable honors. When he came home again, he first turned against his uncle, Snorri Sturluson, and the latter's unruly son Órákja. In accordance with the king's instructions, Snorri was driven from his stronghold in southwestern Iceland, and finally forced into exile. But the ambitious and ruthless Sturla met his doom at the hands of two young chieftains, Gizurr Porvaldsson (1208–1268) and Kolbeinn Arnórsson the Young (1208–1245). They joined forces, and with 1,700 men defeated Sturla and his father Sighvat at Orlygstaðir in the summer of 1238, the largest battle ever fought in Iceland. Both father and son were slain after a brave defense.

However, peace and quiet in Iceland were still unobtainable. After the battle at Orlygstaðir, Snorri Sturluson returned from his exile and attempted to restore his former position. But in this situation, Gizurr and Kolbeinn had a strong trump card to play, for King Hákon had written to Gizurr and ordered him either to get Snorri out of the country or have him killed. On the authority of the king's letter, Gizurr and Kolbeinn had Snorri murdered on September 22, 1241, at his estate, Reykjavik. It is quite consonant with the prevailing conditions of that time in Iceland that both Gizurr and Kolbeinn had formerly been married to daughters of Snorri.

In the last two decades of the Free State, other prominent men beside Gizurr and Kolbeinn played important roles. One may mention Pórðr Sighvatsson Kakali and Porgil Björvarsson Skárði, both of them members of the Sturlung clan, and both with their own separate sagas (see above). Pórðr was a brother of Sturla Sighvatsson but had escaped his brother's and father's fate at Orlygstaðir, being in Norway at the time.

King Hákon's hold on Iceland became stronger and stronger. After the death of Snorri Sturluson, the king had his property and chieftaincy confiscated. Icelandic chieftains voluntarily relinquished their godðar authorities to the king. In their internal disputes, they sought the support of the king and appealed to him to decide their
issues. The Icelanders at last were forced into swearing loyalty and homage to the king of Norway and became tributary to the Norwegian Crown.

Sturlunga saga gives us a detailed, varied, and apparently reliable picture of the course of events, and also of the attitudes and values of the time. The Sturlung Age has a reputation for moral turbulence, because of the devastating feuds, deceit, and savagery. There are instances of chieftains who have their adversaries or their followers maimed: a hand or foot is cut off, or they were cast astray. The practice of keeping a concubine was widespread, even among the clergy.

On the other hand, it has been asserted that the Sturlung Age was scarcely any worse morally than any other epoch, but has merely paid the penalty by having received such a relentless and detailed chronicle in Sturlunga saga. In other countries, with more complex and large-scale political conditions, the rulers, and consequently the historians, could mask their acts of violence and cruelty as a political necessity, depicting them as a more or less legal punishment. "But here in Iceland, one scarcely perceives the concept of the state among mere individuals. It is they who must shoulder the full responsibility for their deeds" (Einar Öl. Sveinsson 1953).

The tendency toward dissolution and the lack of moral focus during the Sturlung Age have been interpreted in part as a result of the tension between paganism and Christianity. Of course, paganism as a cult had been abolished long before. But the tension is revealed in the people's view of life. After men had, sometimes half-heartedly, given up the ancient values without having completely acquired the new, they could easily slide into a state of disorientation and uncertainty in the evaluation of human actions. In any case, despite its reputation, the Sturlung Age, as documented in Sturlunga saga, does not lack instances of heroism, of men fighting to the bitter end against odds, faithful to their fellows, and even compassionate.

Sturlunga saga is written in typical saga style, much like the Íslendingasögur. But there is a difference. In the Íslendingasögur, whatever their basis in history or tradition, the topic is remote and has been thoroughly structured according to artistic principles. In the contemporary chronicle, we still have the raw material of life in all its overwhelming fullness. It is so close to the author that it may be hard for him to see the forest for the trees; the many authentic details threaten to blur the main outlines. Sturlunga saga offers the reader the thrill of a more direct confrontation with historical events. This is not to say that Sturlunga saga is formless, neglecting narrative art and aesthetic principles. Sometimes, it reaches the heights of the best Íslendingasögur in dramatic composition, trenchant dialogue, and clearcut characterization.

The compiler of Sturlunga saga rounds off his foreword with some appreciative words about Sturla Þórðarson: "I trust completely his sound reason and honesty as a chronicler, for I knew him as the wisest and most moderate of men." Considering that Sturla was himself involved in the violent strife of his time, the balanced and objective attitude of his account is admirable. But in that respect, he was not alone among his colleagues. To be sure, we sometimes listen to clear echoes of sympathies and antipathies. But usually we meet the same discipline and calm in the rendering of facts, even when most repulsive. Nowhere else in the northern countries, and probably nowhere in all Europe, has medieval history been documented by contemporary authors with such an unbiased outlook toward men and events.

Sturlunga saga is a unique and valuable work in its own right. However, especially in later decades, it has been increasingly explored also in the study of the Íslendingasögur. The authors who wrote of their ancestors in the sagaold ("saga age") were themselves men of the Sturlung Age. They were necessarily influenced by the time in which they lived, not just by events, but also by values and atmosphere on the whole. Obvious reflections of the Sturlung Age have been traced in the Íslendingasögur. For instance, an attempt has been made to interpret Njal's saga as a kind of roman à clef from the 13th century, and to identify one of the contemporary chieftains, a prominent character in Sturlunga saga, as its author. Whether or not this claim is valid, Sturlunga saga has turned out to be of great value as a background for our understanding of the Íslendingasögur.


Peter Hallberg

[See also: Arons saga Hjörleifssonar; Biskupa sógur; Guðmundar sógur biskups; Iceland; Snorri Sturluson; Sturla Þórðarson; Sturlunga Age]

Style

1. EAST NORSE. Medieval literature in the Swedish and Danish vernaculars varies in style as a result of three contributing influences: native oral tradition, latinized classical rhetoric, and continental romance. These three influences affect different genres, sometimes counteracting, sometimes strengthening one another. In all genres, one also finds a less easily definable, more general level of style. According to the established view, native tradition predominates in the laws, prose chronicles, prose epics (e.g., Guta saga), and proverbs. The Latin influence is regarded as greatest in documents and in learned or rhetorical prose, as generally in the translated, primarily religious literature. The ideals of chivalric romance characterize the style of the rhymed chronicles, ballads,
and verse romances. The more general level of style is typical of the sparse attempts at a scientific, ordinary prose (e.g., Henrik Harpestreng, Peder Månsson).

The laws show a very peculiar form of language. Traditionally, scholars have claimed to trace the particular law style back to a preliterary origin of the laws, as recited at the "thing" and handed down orally from father to son among the holders of the "lawspeaker" office. This background favored a linguistic form facilitating the memorization of large sequences of text, and enhancing the clarity of expression and vigor of delivery. This linguistic form has, according to the same traditional view, left very significant marks in the oldest written versions, particularly of the Swedish provincial laws. The result is an artificial spoken language, not unlike that characterizing other orally delivered literary genres. Sound effects, like alliteration, rhythm, and rhyme, are prominent features, often in combination with antimetric arrangements and pithy wordings, sometimes varied in more or less synonymous word pairs. A well-known peculiarity is the frequent habit of introducing the treatment of a case with the adverb Nu ("Now," as in Nu takår máifar þiu sin, "Now takes man theft his," in the Ældre Västgötalagen ["Older Västergötland Law"]). The law style is formulaic: the rules are stated in a small number of fixed syntactic types. The syntax is simple and mainly paratactic: short sentences, few and little varied subordinate clauses. The vocabulary is, with certain exceptions for the later-added ecclesiastical sections, altogether native Norse.

Typical of the diction and the general spirit of the medieval law is the famous passage introducing the Bygningabalakan ("Building Section" or, more properly, the "Vîjarabo balkár" ["Neighborhood Section"]) of the Swedish Upplandslagen ("Uppland Law"): Land skulu máp laghum byggis, ok á máp walsvwrikum. By at þa standa land wâl, laghum þýlys ("Lands shall with law be built, and not with violent acts. Because then stand lands well [when] law is obeyed"). The Danish Jyske lov ("Jutland Law") varies the familiar quotation: Með logh skal land byggies ("With law shall land be built").

Recent research has questioned the immediate dependence of law style upon native oral tradition, and ascribed this conception to lingering ideas born in Scandinavian 19th-century nationalist romanticism. Instead, attention has been drawn to striking similarities with continental legal writings, Roman jurisprudence as well as canon law (Foose 1977).

Originally, the language of the diplomas (charters, deeds, etc.) was Latin, but from the middle of the 14th century in Sweden and from the early 15th in Denmark, the vernaculars prevail. The style of Swedish and Danish diplomas is highly influenced by international Latin "officialese"; it is abstract and lengthy, with a heavy, rhetorically colored syntax, often developed in long, complicated periods. In vocabulary, Low German loans are common.

Rhetorical elements are predominant also in the religious translated literature, which was attached chiefly to the monasteries, particularly to Vadstena. In this kind of literature, rhetoric is sometimes combined with, and strengthened by, scholastic erudition and a tendency toward systematization, as in the works of mystics like Suso, in prayers, hymns, and poems to St. Mary. The result is an elaborated, sometimes overloaded, rhetorical artificial language, often with a refined, intricate syntax.

More frequently, however, the translators' rhetorical training is employed for the purpose of preaching, or even sheer entertainment. The language becomes plainer, the style more straightforward and fluent, as in sermons and edificatory writings, exegesis, and saints' legends. In certain genres, elements of realism and metaphorical language tend to bring the style closer to popular modes of expression. This style is particularly apparent in the biblical paraphrases and saints' lives, and more so in Sweden, where this kind of literature was given a more popular and less latinate shape (e.g., the Pentateuch Paraphrase, the Old Swedish Legendary) than in Denmark (Legenda aurea, biblical translation).

All these stylistic features, rhetorical as well as "popular," occur, concentrated and in ample variation, in the sole great original religious work of medieval Scandinavia: St. Birgitta's Revelations.

Secular education and entertainment addressed a different public than did monastic literature, and was based on a different outlook. The ideology of chivalry was transmitted to the upper classes by chivalric verse. In the knittelvers of the 14th and 15th centuries (Eufemiasiorna, the Swedish Erik's Chronicle [Erikskronikan], Swedish and Danish Rhymed Chronicles), this poetry reflects French and German originals, sometimes through West Norse intermediaries. The poets are either translators, normally very independent ones, or free imitators. In this epic poetry, one finds an East Norse language richly colored, sometimes extravagant and vivid, sometimes cultured and elegant, always fluent, adapted from spoken language, and apparently modern: inflection and syntax point toward later periods. The vocabulary is interspersed with continental, particularly German, loanwords, principally connected with the material and spiritual aspects of chivalry.

A place apart is occupied by the Swedish Konungastyrelsen ("The regime princeps"), the East Norse counterpart to the Konungs skuggsjá. The work has a peculiar style: in rhythm not unlike the austere prose of the laws, but also with a dash of chivalric refinement.


Lars Wollin

2. WEST NORSE. Old Norse medieval literature was written or translated by well-educated persons, mostly clerics, familiar with medieval Latin style patterns and rhetoric. But these native
authors, translators, and compilers were also rooted in a tradition of vernacular language usage. Out of their handling of the mother tongue emerged different types of vernacular style. These styles existed side by side, often mixed or alternating within the same text. On the basis of salient text features and their frequency, it is convenient to distinguish among the following styles: (1) Saga Style, or Popular Style; (2) Learned Style; (3) Court Style; and (4) Florid Style, Adorned Style, or Ornate Style.

The Saga Style was developed in the first half of the 13th century. To what degree it was influenced by the spoken popular language or is to be regarded as a successful adaptation of oral narrative style is under debate. It may be considered an original Icelandic contribution to the style types of the vernaculars in the Middle Ages. Vernacular and foreign elements combine to form a distinct language tool, suited for popular narratives of native themes. The Saga Style has a cumulative, nonperiodic sentence structure. The syntactical units are brief, and subordinate clauses are few. We frequently find asyndetic collocations of sentences. A literal connective is often missing at the beginning of a sentence. The word order, however, makes up for this lack in many cases. The clauses are short, precise, and often monumental in their expressiveness. These features give the composition a bold staccato character. Subjective and modal auxiliaries are frequently employed. Vacillation between the preterite tense and the historical present, and changes from indirect to direct speech contribute to an impression of vividness and actuality. The use of brief particles, pronouns, and adverbs of place and time have a similar effect. Understatement and litotes, reiteration of words, and deliberate use of related words and plays on words are also used effectively. Pithy discourses are used with skillful refinement. The saga writers present necessary facts, but do not anticipate. As to portrayal of persons and description of events or human reactions, the style is most often characterized by restrained, dispassionate discretion and apparent objectivity. The Saga Style predominates in the *Islandingsögur* and the *konungasögur*, although the sagas differ somewhat from each other in the use and frequency of stylistic elements.

The Learned Style grew to serve the purpose of translating religious Latin texts into the vernacular. In the late decades of the 12th century, we encounter it at an early stage in simple word-for-word translation. At the beginning of the 13th century, it develops into an artistic prose medium. It is characterized by a greater ver¬bosity than the Saga Style. Alliterative word pairs are frequently used to render a single Latin word; parallelisms and antithetic expressions abound. Characterizing adjectives are numerous, as are superlatives and hyperbolic expressions, loanwords, and new coinages. Use of the participles and of the absolute dative is common, in contrast to the Saga Style.

In the Court Style, we have a further development of the Learned Style. This style evolved in Norway from the efforts of Håkon Håkonarson (r. 1217–1263) to raise his court to a higher level of culture and manners. He and his successors had a select library of European court literature translated, mostly from Old French (e.g., *Strengleikar*). A wider range of rhetorical elements is here accepted, and well-known conventions are used more frequently and in a more sophisticated manner than in the Learned Style. The diction of the originals probably influenced the renderings into Old Norse to assume an undulating prose rhythm. Synonyms, alliterations, and assonances are common. The use of participles and antitheses is, however, more restrained than in the Learned Style. The Court Style was obviously assessed by the contemporary public as a refined narrative art.

In the last decades of the 13th century, it became fashionable among translators into Old Norse to imitate the contemporary way of writing Latin. From their efforts in this area grew the Florid Style. The many new literary adjectives, adjective abstracts, derivatives, and compounds are striking features of this style. New words are frequently formed in accordance with common Scandinavian patterns, even if they diverge from Latin. Prolix sentences and heavy genitive constructions are common. Word pairs, often synonyms, are deliberately used to obtain a higher degree of accuracy. An abundance of metaphors serves as pedagogic tools, as do digressions. The style admits of declamatory effects, and often rises to grandiloquent paths. It was regarded as an advanced manner of writing, and Icelanders, such as the Benedictine abbot Bergríðar sokkason, used the Florid Style for independent compositions from about 1300.


**Reidar Astaks**

[See also: Christian Prose; Chronicles; Chronicles,
Succession. The succession pattern of Scandinavian kings reflects two opposing concepts traceable to the remotest times of the Germanic world. By their incompatibility, these two principles were destined to create havoc in society throughout the medieval period. The first, royal descent, required that a Germanic king be related by blood to a previous king, a concept that was eventually extended to automatic hereditary succession and primogeniture. The other, election by chieftains, provided a mechanism for choosing a suitable candidate, but also introduced discord and civil war.

Blending with mythology, Germanic kingship was often anchored in descent from the pagan gods. This divine descent of kings, known also as “sacral kingship,” is noticeable particularly in Sweden. The connection between religion and kingship continued into the Christian era in all Scandinavian countries when after their deaths kings were occasionally designated as saints to secure stability for the current ruler and his lineage.

Royal descent and election coexisted with a modicum of harmony in the early stages of Scandinavian monarchy, when leading chieftains chose the most capable candidate from a pool of contenders claiming descent from previous kings. Warfare, Viking expeditions, division, and joint rule decimated and advanced a large number of candidates. In the 9th century, however, when single rule appeared in Norway and Denmark, other means of selection were demanded. The many civil wars in all Scandinavian countries throughout the period testify that solutions were not easy. Contenders were numerous because of the kings’ sexual exploits with many women, and their number increased with the cessation of the Viking excursions. During the late 11th and early 12th century, Denmark used a horizontal system of succession that allowed five sons of Sven Estridsen to follow their father in vertical lineage within a single dynasty. The goal was succession of royal minority and childlessness again revived the control of the leaders.

Throughout the development of primogeniture, the idea of election remained. A royal candidate through hereditary right had to present himself at a local assembly, and if accepted by the chieftains, he was certified as king, the so-called konungstekja. Only then could he hope to receive the military support that would enable him to fight against other contenders, but the elective system continued even when single rule was established. When the hereditary succession was accepted, the magnates still formally elected the next king, often at a tender age while his father was still alive. This elective feature, testimony to the power of the nobility, resulted in the establishment of the hândfsestning, or coronation charter, in 14th-century Denmark, a charter to be signed by each king before being accepted. Norway became an elective monarchy in the mid-15th century, and Swedish laws stress the election of Swedish kings in the same period. The elective principle also marks the ill-fated Scandinavian Union from this period. Nevertheless, although elected, the preferred candidate was the previous ruler’s oldest son, or in the absence of this normal heir, his closest biological kin.


Jenny Jochens

Sunesen, Anders (ca. 1160–1228) was archbishop of Lund from 1201/2 to 1223/4. His father, Sune Ebbesen, was a cousin of Archbishop Absalon and one of the wealthiest men in Denmark. In the 1180s, Anders studied abroad. He probably received his main training in Paris (arts and theology), but also visited Italy (for law studies in Bologna?), and England (for an unknown purpose). After becoming a master of arts perhaps by 1186, and of theology some years later, he spent some time teaching, probably theology in Paris, before becoming chancellor to King Valdemar I (r. 1182-1202). His first-known job as chancellor was on an embassy in 1195 that tried to reconcile Philippe Auguste of France with his Danish queen, Ingeborg. In 1201/2, Anders succeeded Absalon as archbishop of Lund and left the chancellorcy to his brother Peter, bishop of Roskilde, Denmark. In 1204, Anders was named papal legate to Denmark and Sweden. During the years 1206–1222, he cooperated with King Valdemar II (r. 1202–1241) in the subjugation and christianization of pagan populations in the Baltic area, in particular Estonia. Though initially reluctant, he seems in the end to have obeyed a papal summons to attend the Fourth Lateran Council in Rome in 1215. In 1222, he petitioned the pope to be
relieved of his duties as archbishop due to “an incurable bodily infirmity.” His successor, Peder Saksesen, was consecrated in 1224. Anders died in 1228, leaving various possessions to Lund chapter, including a collection of books.

As archbishop, Anders was an able administrator and politician on good terms with both pope and king. A later legend, modeled on the story of Moses in Exodus 17, credits him with prayer that secured Danish victory in the decisive battle against the Estonians at Lyndanis on June 15, 1219. This legend is often combined with another, according to which the Danish flag, Dannebrog, was sent from heaven during the battle.

Anders produced no literary works in Danish, as far as is known. Apart from administrative documents, the following Latin works have been attributed to Anders: (1) Hexaemeron, a theological poem in 8,040 hexameters, extant. (2) De vitæ ecclesiae sacramentis, also in hexameters, now lost. (3) Two sequences, “Missus Gabriel de celis” and “Stella soler premor morn”; “Missus,” however, seems to predate Anders, and his authorship of “Stella” is also doubtful. (4) A Latin version of the Law of Scania, extant; the attribution rests on slender evidence, but is generally accepted.

The Hexaemeron is preserved in one medieval MS (Copenhagen, Royal Library, E don. var. 155 4to) from the second half of the 13th century, originally in the cathedral library at Roskilde. Anders probably composed the work in Paris in the early 1190s. It consists of twelve books and combines a commentary on Genesis 1–3 (Books 1–4) with an exposition of the main points of systematic theology, excluding the sacraments (5–12 plus a digression on divine names in 2–3). Main sources include, for the commentary on Genesis, Peter Comestor’s Historia scholastica and Richard of St. Victor’s Allegorie, and for the remaining part of the work, Stephen Langton’s Summa and Questiones. As a whole, the Hexaemeron takes the reader from the Creation (1) to the Day of Judgment (12). A second proemium in Book 10 marks off two main parts: creation and fall (1–9), recreation in Christ (10–12). Anders shows great skill as a poet of hexameters. In his handling of the Latin language and of verse technique, he dissociates himself from the classicizing school represented by Saxo. The poem seems to have had a very limited diffusion, probably because so much learning is packed into it that it makes for very difficult reading.


[See also: Latin Language and Literature]

**Supernatural Beings**

1. ELVES, DWARFS, AND GIANTS. The families of elves, dwarfs, and giants belong to Germanic folklore, myth, and literature. Of these beings, the giants (jötunn, pursar, troll, rísar) are the most important. The giant Ymir of Norse mythology represents the first form of life on earth (e.g., Volúsápa, st. 3, Gylfaginning, ch. 4), and from his body the landscape was fashioned by the gods (Vafþrúðnismál, st. 21, Grímnismál, st. 40). The world will perish in the final battle through flames kindled by the giant Surtr (Volúsápa, sts. 52–57). Giants and gods engage in relentless warfare, Þór being the defender of the gods. If all of them had escaped the force of his hammer Mjöllin, there would be no life left in this world, and Ásgróðr would be populated by giants (HárðarÞjóð, st. 23, Prymskviða, st. 18). Heimdallr appears in a number of sources as the guardian of the gods against the giants (Lokasenna, st. 48). Yet the gods themselves descended from the giantess Bestla (Gylfaginning, ch. 5), and a giant’s daughter may be sought in marriage by a god (Freyr and Gerðr; skr. Skrínismál, st. 41). The gods also owe important cultural possessions to the giants, such as the mead of poetry (Skaldskaparmál, chs. 4–6).

In sagas, especially fomalhótsögur, the giants dwell in caves and are invariably allied with the local landscape. A meeting with a giant and a love relation with a giant’s daughter are standard adventures in the life of a young hero (Hállósdar saga Bronfúðara). Giants are also depicted as hostile, man-eating monsters, who must be destroyed by the young warrior. Frequently, a giant’s dwelling lies in the midst of snow and ice. Some scholars have identified the giants with the forces of chaos and destruction, with the deadly powers of wintertime, and with the primeval elements of nature. Others see them as literary creations. Recently, attention has been drawn to cultic worship offered to the race (Steinsland 1986), and there seem to be many indications that the giants were the gods of a pre-Germanic population (Motz 1984).

The family of elves (álfar) comprises a variety of spirits. Snorri (Gylfaginning, ch. 9) distinguishes between two kinds of elves: the light elves (fóssílar) and dark elves (dypkkálfar). The dark elves were black and lived underground; Snorri’s dark elves are skilled in smithcraft like the dwarfs, and present the gods with precious gifts (Skaldskaparmál, ch. 1). While the closeness of the light elves to the gods is accentuated by the recurrent phrase “ESir and elves,” their form, function, or activities are never described.

In the prose narratives, elves live in mounds as spirits of great potency (Kormáks saga). That the elves received cultic worship is suggested by the word álflát (“sacrifice to elves”; Austurlavarsvát), most probably a sacrifice for fertility, but they are also grouped in a curse with evil spirits (Bôsa saga ok Herrauda). Sacrifice to a heathen king Oláf, a petty king of southeastern Norway for a fruitful harvest, brought him his nickname Geirstadálfr (“elf of
The Danish word ælf ("elves’ dance") and the Norwegian word alf ("elves’ wind") indicate that belief in elves persisted in folk tradition. The elves have survived into modern times as hidden beings, and are hardly to be distinguished from the huldufólk ("hidden people").

Scholars consider the alf either as forces of fruitlessness or of death. The family, however, shows such divergent, contradictory qualities that it is not possible to obtain a clear image of its nature. Obviously, elves are potent forces of enduring significance.

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The name alf was extended in meaning to include spirits from alfar, the old Norse word for earth-dwelling smiths of Mediterranean tradition, such as Ptah of Egypt. The name alf was also extended to include spirits from alfar, the old Norse word for earth-dwelling smiths of Mediterranean tradition, such as Ptah of Egypt. The name alf was also extended to include spirits from alfar, the old Norse word for earth-dwelling smiths of Mediterranean tradition, such as Ptah of Egypt.

Dwarfs are all male, and they arose asexually, molded from the earth or generated in giants' blood (dvergar). The dwarfs of the Norse texts are craftsmen; they brewed the mead of poetry (Skáldsparnál, ch. 1) and were renowned as forgers of precious possessions, such as Óðinn's spear Gungnir, Sif's golden hair, Pórr's hammer Mjöllnir, and Freyr's ship Skíõblaõnir (Skáldskaparmál, ch. 33). The dwarfs were also said to be very wise (Alvíssmál), and had command of esoteric knowledge, runes, and magic chants (Hávamál, st. 143, 160). They lived invariably in stones and mountains.

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Dwarfs in folktales show strong resemblances to their counterparts in myth and literature. This inclusiveness may account for the variety and forms within the group.

In both myth and literature, dwarfs serve beings of higher status than themselves to whom they offer their products willingly or under coercion. Frequently insulted and mistreated, they sometimes exact revenge (Sigrður saga þøglja, ch. 16). In spite of their generosity and skills, they are often held in low esteem. Depicted mainly in the exercise of their craft, dwarfs are the mythical representatives of a profession, counterparts of the mysterious craftsman-priests of early civilizations. They show affinity with the earth-dwelling smiths of Mediterranean tradition, such as Pith of Egypt, Hephaistos of Lemnos, or the Dakiyls of Crete.

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a variety of striking episodes, such as the hauntings at Fróða ("Frodarundur") in Eyrbyggja saga (chs. 53–55), in which a group of drowned people appear, and Póðilr bægiltórs ("twist foot‘s"") mischief (chs. 33–34, 61); the appearance of Pórkell's ghost to Guðrún, which announces his drowning (Laxdœla saga, ch. 76); and, above all, Grettir's struggle with the monster Glámt (Grettis saga, chs. 32–35). Later texts, like Dámusta saga, also show familiarity with the motif of the struggle of the hero with a deceased person (Alheimr). But in these late-medieval legendary and romantic sagas, the prevailing motif is that of the deceased in a grave mound that has been opened by the hero; after a bitter wrestling match, the hero defeats the revenant and takes his treasures and weapons. Egils saga einhenda (ch. 7; cf. Saxo Grammaticus, Gesta Danorum, Book 5), Hrómundar saga Gripssonar (ch. 4), and Hervararsaga ok Heidreks offer examples of such episodes, often folktales, where the deceased are seen as living on and intervening in the actions of the living. Designations like "battle-disir" (Sigrdrífumál, st. 28). 3. DISIR (sing, dis) is a collective word comprising female divine beings without individual names. Like the noms, they assist in childbirth (Sigrdrífumál, st. 9). As tutelary goddesses attached to an individual or a family, they offer protection against enemies (Volusunga saga, ch. 35). Designations like "battle-disir" (Haustlong, st. 17) and Hejans disir (Gudmørarkvota, st. 1.19), kenning for valkyries, emphasize their military aspect. As "Ǫðinn's disir," they bring home men slain in battle (Hamðismaður, st. 28). Ǫðinn announces the impending death of King Geirrœðr by reference to the anger of the disir (Götamørð, st. 28). Piœrandanjótr in Flatyjarbók relates that a young Icelandar, Piœrandi, was attacked and killed by disir at the "winter-nights," a time when a feast was held with customary sacrifice to the disir.

In Norway and Iceland, there is evidence of a disir cult, which was celebrated with a sacrifice to the disir (disablóð) in the fall. It is probable that the disir cult was primarily a private one closely associated with fertility cults: in Gylfaginning (ch. 35), Freyja is called Vanadis ("dis of the Vanir"). The name of the old market Distig near Uppsala implies that in Sweden the cult of the disir was more public than in the western regions. According to Snorri, there was a great cult festival in February, during which sacrifice was made for "peace and the victory of the king." The disir cult was associated with the Ynglingar clan; according to Ynglinga saga (chs. 19, 29), King Åôðil of Uppsala was present at a sacrifice to the disir, and, as he rode his horse around the hall of the disir (disálsarl), it stumbled, and the king fell forward, striking his head on a stone, and died.

The function of the disir is unclear. They appear close to norns, valkyries, and fylgjur, but in contrast to these supernatural beings, the disir were objects of a cult, as testified by a number of Swedish-Norwegian place-names (Disåsen, Disåberg, Disåvid).

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Hans-Peter Naumann

4. FYLGJA ("fetch, guardian spirit"; pl. fyldjur). The beings called fylgjur in Old Norse sources are of two kinds: one type has the shape of an animal, the other the shape of a woman. These two types have little in common but the name.

The fylgja in the shape of an animal is an alter ego, and reflects a person's character. A strong and powerful man may have a bear or a bull as a fylgja (Nyáls saga, ch. 23, Ljósvetninga saga, chs. 11 and 16, Vápnföðinga saga, ch. 13); a sly person may have a fox (Ponstein's saga Vikingssonar, ch. 12). The foster-father of the sons of Nyáll (Nyáls saga, ch. 41), who was a peaceful person, had a he-goat as a fylgja.
A fylgja may also indicate the social status of a person. In the nonrealistic fornaldarsögur, kings may have fylgiur in the shape of a lion (Hrolfs saga Gautrekssonar, chs. 7 and 12) or a leopard (Sogubrot, ch. 2).

A person has only one fylgja of the alter-ego type, which always appears in the same shape; deviations from this rule must be regarded as free use of a literary motif in conflict with the underlying folk belief. The fylgja follows a person throughout life, and dies with him. It is normally invisible, but may show itself to other people than its owner. When the fylgja shows itself to its owner, it augurs the person’s death. The fylgja as an alter ego is also called mannsfylgja (“man-fylgja”), and when it augurs death, dauðarfylgja (“death-fylgja”).

The conception of a man’s fylgja in the shape of an animal has much in common with a man’s hugr (“mind”), a personification of a man’s evil thought that always appears in the shape of a wolf. This wolf may “attack” enemies by making them sleepy or unwell, and probably such a mixture in the literary motif may indicate confusion in the underlying belief.

Fylgjur, spoken of as unfriendly, harmful beings, could also result from the two conceptions having been mixed, but most likely such ófridarfylgjur (“enemies”) and ófriõarfylgjur (“enemies”) belong to the other type, the fylgja in the shape of a woman. This type of fylgja acts on its own behalf, as opposed to the alter-ego type, whose actions are solely reflections of the person’s actions.

The fylgja in the shape of a woman is a guardian spirit, often of a whole family; but she follows the head of the family in particular, and when the old head of the family dies, she turns to the next (Viga-Glúms saga, ch. 9, Hallfreðar saga, ch. 11). A man or a family may have one fylgja of the guardian-spirit type, but in some sources, there may be a few more, or even a large collective of women. Normally, they are invisible, but they may also be visible to the person they follow and, less often, to others. The fylgja as a guardian spirit may attack a person’s enemy, or help in battle or in other critical situations. As long as she follows a person, she guarantees luck; when she leaves a person, it means that luck has gone, and the person will soon die. At the end of life, the fylgja riding on the grey horse of death may call for her person and bring him home to the place of the dead ancestors. The belief in the fylgja as a guardian spirit is most likely connected with the worship of dead ancestresses, and in some literary sources she is in fact a link between the living and the dead members of a family. In some sources (Viga-Glúms saga, ch. 9, Laxdœla saga, ch. 67), the fylgja is described as a woman of an unusually large size, which may indicate that she was looked upon as a semidivine character.

The fylgja as a guardian spirit is called by many names that focus on different aspects of her character. Besides fylgja, she is also spoken of as kona (“woman”), fylgiukona (“woman-fylgja”), and dis; dis is often used in poetry and in the nonrealistic literature. These words tell us that the guardian spirit is a woman. The names ætterrýggja and kynfylgja (“family-fylgja”) focus on her close relationship to the whole family. The name draumkona (“dream-woman”) tells that she often appears in a dream, and the name spáðis (“prophecy-dís”) that she knows the future. The names ófriõarfylgja and ófridarfylgja indicate that fylgiur belonging to an enemy were dangerous creatures. The name hamingja, which generally is a word for “luck,” underlines her good and protecting nature.


5. NORNS (Old Norse nom fem., pl. nornir; etymology disputed). The norns in Old Norse mythology are female beings whose purpose is to determine the fate of every human being, of the gods, and probably of the whole world. The norns thus represent the highest power in the universe. Their fate-making activity is a magic act, referred to either as the spinning of a thread (Reginsmál, st. 13, Helgakvida Hundingsbana i) or as making a mark in wood (Voluspá, st. 20).

According to Snorri’s Gylfaginning, three norns, Urðr, Verðandi, and Skuld, come from a hall by the well Urðarbrunnr, beneath the world Tree, Yggdrasil. Yggdrasil and the well below are situated in the center of Ásgarðr, the home of the gods. The Hauksbok version of Voluspá agrees that the norns come from a hall by the well, but the Codex Regius version of Voluspá says they come from the well itself, as does the name Urðr in Kormákr’s Sigurðardrápa (late 10th century). Codex Regius’ and Kormákr’s understanding seems to be the more genuine, since it is related to the widespread conception of female divine beings living in sacred wells.

In some sources, the norns are individualized and referred to with special names. The name Urðr (fem.) has the oldest and strongest tradition (Urðarbrunnr), derived from the verb verða ‘to be, to become.’ The masculine form, urðr, also has the meaning “death,” and is cognate with the Old English word wyrf ‘fate.’ The nom name Verðandi (pres. part. of verða) is not mentioned in poems other than Voluspá. The name Skuld (the same root as in the auxiliary verb skulu ‘shall!’) is mentioned in Voluspá and in the poem Grøgaldr. But Skuld is usually the name of a valkyrja, a female character who chooses who is going to die. These three individualized norns are mentioned together only in Voluspá and, with reference to Voluspá, in Snorri’s Gylfaginning, where the names probably are meant to be associated with the three aspects of time: past, present, and future. In Saxo’s sixth book, in the story about Frithius, and in Nornagests þáttir, there are also three norns, but they are not named. Saxo refers to them with the Latin words parca and nympha. In Nornagests þáttir, the three female characters are partly referred to as norns and partly as volur, the sibyls in Old Norse mythology.
Most often when the norns are mentioned, they are spoken of as a collective force. In Gylfaginning, Snorri says with reference to Fáfnismál that there are different norns (other than Urðr, Verðandi, and Skuld) who come to every newborn child to determine the child’s life. Some of these norns are related to the gods, some to the elves, and some to the dwarfs.

In most cases, the central conception is that the norns’ decision, the final outcome of which is death, can never be changed. The natural inclination to look for reasons when things go wrong burdened the norns especially with the responsibility for cruel fates. Snorri says with reference to Nornagasta páttr, an angry nom decides to give a porridge, which in Iceland finally acquired the meaning “witch.” In Norway, the attitude toward the norns was found in a stanza by Torf-Einarr Rognvaldsen, earl of the Orkneys (Finnur Jónsson 1912–15: vol. 1A, p. 32, st. 2). He gives the norns credit when he has succeeded in his revenge on the killer of his father. But even a good fate, from the skald’s point of view, is here linked to death, the death of an enemy.

In some late sources, we find an explanation of why happiness and length of life are so unevenly divided. In Snorri’s Gylfaginning, good fate is given by good norns, and evil fate by evil norns. In Nornagasta páttr, an angry nom decides to give a child a short life, and in Saxo’s story about Fridlevus, an evil nom decides to give a child avarice as part of his character. These motifs are probably influenced by fairy-tale motifs of a late date, and the division between good and evil norns may be influenced by Christianity.

Fate-making is the norns’ specialty. But they share some aspects with other groups of mythological female characters. The name Skuld, which is a name used both for a valkyrja and a nom, indicates that the two groups have been mixed, or that they have never been sharply distinguished, which is understandable since they are both associated with death. The (con)fusion of norns and völur in Nornagasta páttr is probably of a late date, but the point of contact between the two groups is fate, which is created by the norns, but about which the völur could obtain knowledge.

The norns were heathen figures, and therefore belief in them was complicated by the conversion to Christianity. The Icelandic skald Hallfreðr Óttarsson vandraeðaskald (“troublesome-poet”) states in his lausavís, st. 10 (from the late 10th century, if the stanza is genuine), that a Christian should reject the norns’ decisions (Finnur Jónsson 1912–15: vol. 1A, p. 169). The norns’ association with heathendom and malicious forces may be seen in the semantic changing of the word norn, which in Iceland finally acquired the meaning “witch.” In Norway, the attitude toward the norns may have been more neutral. In a Norwegian church (Borgund in Sogn) from about 1200, a runic inscription says: “the norns did both good and evil; for me they decided a cruel fate.” And up to modern times, the porridge that the neighboring women brought to a woman who had given birth was called normagrautr (“the norns’ porridge”) in the Norwegian valley of Setesdal. This custom seems to be connected with the idea that norns come to every newborn child.


[See also: Mythology; Snorra Edda]

Susanna see Drama

Svarfédla saga (“The Saga of the People of Svarfaðardalr”) belongs to the genre of the Íslendingasögur. This text has a very complicated history. It is now extant in two versions: one, on paper, AM 161 fol., dating from about 1650, with one large and several small lacunae, and one parchment leaf (AM 445c 4to) from the 15th century. It has, however, proved possible to reconstruct the history of the whole text. The oldest version of Landnámabók contains a short tale about the settler Porsteinr sýrufurr (“sweeper?”) and about the first generations of inhabitants of Svarfaðardalr, in the north of Iceland. A version of Svarfédla saga had existed at that time (ca. 1250) that incorporated earlier literary models, local traditions, and folktales. This version is lost, but part of it has been preserved in the present text and in Forðís páttrjarlisskálds. It narrated the Viking expeditions of one Porstein, who married the daughter of a Swedish king. Sturla Pórðarson (d. 1284), author of the Sturlubók version of Landnámabók, knew this version (cf. Sturlubók, ch. 219). Then, in the 15th century, the story was recast following the taste of the time, seen in the exaggerations typical of the postclassical sagas. After the large lacuna, the saga continues in quite a different style, becoming heavy and awkward, and clearly reminiscent of local traditions. This part of the saga tells the story of settlement in Svarfaðardalr by one Porstein, who may be the same as the previous character of that name. The facts, a long bloody quarrel among the inhabitants of Svarfaðardalr, are loosely connected, and the whole is very insecure. The characters are on the whole poorly depicted, with the exception of Klaufi, who marries by cunning Yngvildr fagkrinn (“fair-cheek”), he is a berserk when living and, after his death, a draugr who fights with his own head as a weapon. Toward the end, the saga adopts a new tone to narrate the cruel revenge that Karl, Porstein’s grandson, takes on Yngvildr, who has caused the death of his father: he kills her three sons and takes her into slavery abroad, until she consents, at last, to humiliate herself.

Svarfédla saga is a baroque Íslendingasaga. It lacks unity in both style and narrative technique, and the characters are fairly inconsistent. It shows obvious influences from the fornaldarsögur, especially Orvar-Odds saga. It incorporates popular motifs, such as the episode involving Karl, which reminds us of the history of Shakespeare’s Hamlet (told also by Saxo Grammaticus in Books 3 and 4 of his Gesta Danorum), or the episode involving Yngvildr fagkrinn, which resembles Shakespeare’s The Taming of the Shrew.

but its motives were more likely political; there is no other indication. Harald Gormsson (Bluetooth), who fled to the Wends and died of his illness, was king of Denmark 987–1014. One of the more famous kings of the Viking Age, he also: Adam of Bremen; Encomium Emmae reginae; Landnamabók; Porteils þättjaralshalds; Ólav-Olds saga]

Sven Haraldsson (Forkbeard) was king of Denmark 987–1014. Sven seized power through a revolt against his father, Harald Gormsson (Bluetooth), who fled to the Wends and died of his wounds on November 1, 987. That Sven was captured and ransomed from the Wends following this revolt is highly dubious. According to Adam of Bremen, Sven's revolt was a pagan reaction, but its motives were more likely political; there is no other indication that Sven was a pagan. In Sven's time, Viking raids against England were resumed, and in 994 he led a raid together with Óláfr Tryggvason. He probably also took part in the raid in 991 and the battle of Maldon, but apparently not in the great raids of 990–991. Sven also reasserted his father's claim to Norway, which had been seized, possibly with the help of Óláfr Tryggvason around 995. Sven supported the sons of Earl Hákon, and, having married the widow of the Swedish king Erik Bjarnarson, he achieved the conquest of England, when Óláfr gave up resistance and left the country at Christmas, his subjects having acknowledged Sven as king. Sven's English reign was brief; however, he died on February 3, 1014, in Gainsborough and was buried in Lund, which developed into a town early in Sven's reign.

Régis Boyer

[See also: Berserkr, Islendingasögur, Landnamabók; Porteils þättjaralshalds; Ólav-Olds saga]

Sverrir Sigurðarson, king of Norway 1177–1202, was a native of the Faroe Islands, where his paternal uncle held the bishopric of Kirkebø (Kirkubøer). Here, Sverrir grew up and received his education. At the age of twenty-four, he was consecrated a priest, and his Norwegian mother revealed to him that his true father was the then long-dead King Sigurðr munr (“mouth”) Haraldsson. This revelation caused Sverrir to go to Norway in 1176, quit the clergy, and fight his way to the throne in fierce opposition to the powerful Archbishop Eyastein, who had supported Magnus Erlingsson and crowned him king in 1164. Sverrir was proclaimed king in 1177 in Trondheim, and a few years later he had succeeded in gaining control of the larger part of the country. After the battle at Fimreiti in 1184, where King Magnus fell together with the majority of the Norwegian aristocracy, Sverrir became the sole ruler of Norway, although having constantly to fight an array of pretenders to the kingdom.

Our knowledge about Sverrir comes primarily from his saga, Sverrir saga, which presents us with a fascinating personality, seemingly embodying great contrasts. He describes himself as being fierce as the lion and mild as the lamb, both symbols found on his royal seal. His biography does indeed exhibit his wit and down-to-earth philosophy, but also the new Christian ethics of mildness and forgiveness toward one's enemies. Sverrir's complex back-
ground and subtle mind are reflected in his irony and humor, displaying great self-confidence. Sverrir was a brilliant military leader on sea as well as on land. His ingenious tactics in warfare were so untraditional that he has been called a coward despite being victorious, his guerilla attacks were often of a kind that most Norse noblemen avoided. Sverrir had a profound knowledge of the Bible. His national-church policy brought him into lasting conflict with the Norwegian bishops; eventually, the archbishop left the country. Sverrir was excommunicated by him and later by the pope.

Sverrir's struggle with the Church is set forth in a document he himself commissioned. From his Oratio contra clerum Norvegiae ("Speech Against the Norwegian Clergy"), as well as the contemporary Sverris saga, we learn about his political ideology, drawn partly from Old Testament values. At the same time that he carried out his controversies with the international Church, Sverrir introduced those theocratic traits into his dynastic policy that are so extraordinary for the 13th-century Norwegian monarch. During his reign, Sverrir strengthened the centralization of the king's administration, and the finances of the Crown were improved by a new system of taxation.

After the Reformation, Sverrir was celebrated as the king who had the courage to speak against the authority of Rome. In the 19th-century Norwegian struggle for national independence, Sverrir became a symbolic figure for the national identity. Present-day scholars have investigated his controversies with the international Church, Sverrir introduced those theocratic traits into his dynastic policy that are so extraordinary for the 13th-century Norwegian monarch. During his reign, Sverrir strengthened the centralization of the king's administration, and the finances of the Crown were improved by a new system of taxation.

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The prologue to Sverris saga states that the first part was written by Karl Jónsson (abbot of the Icelandic monastery of Pingeyrar, who was in Norway 1185–1188), while the king sat by and told him what to write. For the rest of the saga, the sources were people who remembered the events, some of whom had taken part in Sverrir's battles. Where the first part ends is not obvious; it may have extended to Erlingr's death in June 1179, but more probably it only covers Sverrir's career to the end of 1178. This problem has been much discussed, as has the question of the authorship of the continuation. The saga was most likely completed before 1210, and the fact that it has been impossible to find important stylistic differences between parts of the saga suggests that Karl Jónsson (d. 1212 or 1213) is the author of the whole work.

The first part of the saga is not primarily a historical account, but is intended chiefly to show that God had chosen Sverrir and helped him in many difficulties. Since the saga was composed while many people still remembered the events, the details are probably reliable. But the sympathy for Sverrir that characterizes the whole work makes it necessary to read it with a certain amount of skepticism. Certain facts that were embarrassing for Sverrir are omitted, especially in the account of his controversies with the Church. Here, the saga can be supplemented and modified by papal letters and other sources.

The saga includes numerous speeches, most of them given by Sverrir himself with his strange blend of gravity and humor. They contribute strongly to the vivid picture Sverris saga gives of one of the most outstanding medieval kings of Norway.


Olafia Einarsdottir

[See also: Norway; Oratio contra clerum Norvegiae; Sverris saga]

Sverris saga, the saga of the Norwegian king Sverrir Sigurdarson (r. 1177–1202), survives in four vellum MSS, the best of which is AM 327 4to, written around 1300 probably by an Icelander in Norway. The other major vellums are Flateyjarbók, Eirspennill, Skálholtsbók yngsta; some fragments of other medieval MSS also exist.

A Norwegian woman, Gunnhildr, married to a comb maker, gives birth to a son, Sverrir, who is sent as a child to the Faroe Islands, where he is fostered by the bishop and ordained priest. When he is twenty-four years old, his mother comes to the Faroes and tells him that she had been to Rome and confesses that his father is King Sigurðr Haraldsson (r. 1134–1155). Sverrir decides to go to Norway to fight for his right to the throne against the rulers there, King Magnús, who had been crowned in 1164, and his father, the mighty Earl Erlingr.

In Norway, he becomes leader of the defeated army of the Birkikeinir ("birch-legs"), whose pretender had been killed in a battle against King Magnús Erlingsson. They confer on Sverrir the title of king, and in the following years he fights his way to power. Erlingr is killed in battle in 1179, and Magnús in 1184. The saga thereafter deals with Sverrir's struggle to defend his kingdom against new contenders to the throne, especially pretenders from the Baglar (Crozier) faction, his conflicts with the Church, and his death in 1202.

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Sweden. At the end of the Middle Ages, the Swedish realm had an almost square shape. It stretched from the Baltic city of Kalmar in the south to the large Laplandish forests in the north, and from Lådöse at the mouth of the Gota River in the west to the fortress city of Viborg at the Russian border in the east. The Swedish Crown thus reigned over a territory that in north-south direction was about 1,400 km. long and in west-east direction about 1,100 km. wide. In the west and in the south, apart from a corridor at the mouth of the Gota River, Sweden was isolated from the North Sea and the Kattegat by Norwegian and Danish coast provinces; in the east, however, the northern part of the Baltic Sea had become a Swedish inland sea. The square shape of the realm and the prevailing dominance of waterway communications gave the east-west axis the same political and economic importance as the north-south axis. At the end of the Middle Ages, Stockholm was the largest and most important city, situated in the center of the realm, not, as it has been since the loss of Finland in 1809, at its eastern edge.

The late-medieval Swedish realm comprised about twenty provinces that in most cases formed geographically and economically independent districts. The provinces were separated from each other by large forests or lakes, and their central parts in most cases consisted of plains that, with their fertile clay soils, were fairly well suited to agriculture. The most important agricultural districts were then as now in southern and central Sweden. The northern and eastern (i.e., Finnish) provinces were, on the other hand, dominated by forests. There, only the river valleys along the northern part of the gulf of Bothnia and the shores of the Finnish bay offered good conditions for farming and consequently for denser population.

The natural conditions for settlement and cultivation did not undergo any major changes during the Middle Ages, except the constant progression of the shoreline along the coast of the Baltic Sea. The progression was, and still is, a consequence of the rising of the earth’s crust since the end of the latest ice age as well as of long-term changes in the water level of the world’s oceans, resulting over centuries in both impairments and improvements for the coastal population. On one hand, it has made old sea routes un-
usable and placed earlier ports and fishing settlements far away from the coast; on the other hand, it has given the coastal villages new, productive land, which first provided fine pasture and which later, when it had dried, could be used as arable land.

The Swedish realm had developed during the end of the Viking Age and the first centuries of the Middle Ages. Exactly how it took shape and became "unified" is difficult to ascertain with precision, since the source material documenting this development is weak. At the beginning of the Swedish Middle Ages, around 1050, the provinces in middle and southern Sweden had a common king, although he apparently had difficulty in asserting royal power simultaneously in the old Svithiod (i.e., the provinces around Lake Mälaren), and in the territory of the Göta around Lake Vänern and Lake Vättern (i.e., Västergötland with Dalsland and Värmland and Östergötland with Småland). Sweden's first Christian king, Olav Skåtkonung, had presumably been banished from the pagan Lake Mälaren region and taken refuge in Västergötland, where during his reign the first permanent Swedish bishopric was established in Skara.

The unity of the three main parts of the realm was not fully established during the early Middle Ages. Västergötland, for example, seems to have been separated from the rest of Sweden at certain periods during the 11th and 12th centuries. When the old royal family died out in the 1120s, a period of struggle for power followed lasting more than a century. The pretenders were usually drawn from two rival families, descendants of King Sverker the Elder and King Erik the Holy, respectively.

The explanation for the political instability of Sweden during the early Middle Ages lies in the varied geographical character of the realm and in the general social structure. The provinces were closed settlements, divided from each other by large forests and open lakes. They were thus not initially linked by common economic interests, and it was difficult to amass the military resources needed to bring the country under a single ruler. Regional chieftains governed the individual territories, and royal power and authority were limited to the right to lead men in combat and, when necessary, to function as the highest judicial authority.

In the 12th century, developments took place that in time would make it possible for the king to procure a stronger hold over the entire realm. The most important factor was probably that Christianity gained a strong foothold, and that, as a consequence, the country was organized into parishes and dioceses. The oldest list of Swedish episcopal towns dates from the year 1120; these can be identified as Skara, Sigtuna, Linköping, (Eskils-)Tuna, and Västerås. The list implies that the basic structure of the medieval ecclesiastical organization in Sweden already existed. The establishment of a separate archdiocese in 1164 in Uppsala, to which the see had been translated from Sigtuna, presumably indicates that the Swedish state by then had a measure of political stability that could be compared with that of other Northern European states. The ecclesiastical organization must have given the royal power impulses to, and, by providing able officials, resources for, developing a central but in the beginning small civil administration.

The kings of the 12th century often resided in Götaland, at the centrally situated island Visingsö in Lake Vättern. The long distances and the loose organization of the realm made it necessary for the king to have a deputy, an earl, to govern that part of the realm where he did not reside. Gradually, the earl came to have certain responsibilities for commanding the leding, the naval military organization with roots in the Viking Age that guaranteed the king access to a certain number of warships and control over the waters along the Baltic coast. The royal power gradually became stronger, and its resources were formally organized during the late 12th and 13th centuries. A definite shift came around 1250, when the Crown, after years of internal struggles, was given to the son of Earl Birger, who in reality was a kind of Swedish maior domus, married to the former king's sister.

The ecclesiastical organization received its final form around 1250. Regular cathedral chapters were established; the parish subdivision received the form that, on the whole, it would retain throughout the Middle Ages; the ordinances of the Swedish Church were adjusted in all essentials to the continental model; and the Church was granted exemption from taxes for its property and the right to collect tithes from parishioners.

The administration of justice came increasingly under royal influence. At the end of the 11th century, the royal inquisition was introduced, which meant that the king or his deputy would appear every third year at the sessions of the district courts and there administer justice in cases submitted to him. Royal influence over legislation was not long in coming. To what extent the royal power, the Church, and the magnates participated in the process that led to codification of the provincial laws during the 13th century has been debated, but it is obvious that, by the middle of that century, the Crown, represented by Earl Birger, had such influence over the legislation that it could issue special laws valid for the whole realm and not just one province. Peace laws banning the use of violence in another's home, against women, in law courts, and in churches were instituted by an oath taken by the king and his men to punish infractions. Toward the end of the 13th century, the development had progressed so far that it was expressly the king who approved even new law books for the provinces, e.g., the Uppland Law, which was ratified by the king in 1296.

Parallel with consolidation in the area of judicial matters came a change in taxation and administration. At the end of the 13th century, the military leding was converted into a fiscal leding, that is, a yearly tax in money and in kind imposed on all self-owning farmers instead of the duty to serve on the king's ships. This conversion of the form of the farmers' obligation to the Crown is apparently connected with changes in the art of war in Sweden as in other European countries. There are strong reasons to see the castle building that took place in Sweden in the latter half of the 13th century in connection with the introduction of permanent taxes. The new large castles, such as those in Stockholm, Nyköping, Örebro, Kalmar, Åbo, and Tavastehus (the latter two in Finland), with their bailiffs and permanent garrisons, demanded constant maintenance from the surrounding countryside, including the provisions that farmers earlier brought with them on the leding ships and that they now had to pay as taxes in kind. With the allocation of special maintenance districts to the castles, the realm was divided into new, extensive administrative units. The castles were certainly erected in the first place for defense against foreign enemies, but they also gave the king, at least as long as the commanders in them were loyal to him, better possibilities than before to control the different parts of the country and their often stubborn magnates.

The remodeling of the military system and the consequent need for armored horsemen instead of mobilized, sea-borne farmers and district chiefs also seem to have been the main reasons for the creation of a Swedish nobility. This development was formally
regulated through a statute issued at a meeting at Alsnö in Lake Mälaren, probably in September 1280. All who served the king on horse were thereby granted exemption from royal taxes and fines, which consequently gave them the right to collect these dues from their own tenants. The new nobility came to comprise the old class of locally rooted chieftains as well as peasants who chose to continue to serve the king as warriors, but now on horseback instead of on the leding ship, in exchange for exemption from the new permanent taxes. It was important that all of them, aristocrats as well as the lesser nobility, became the king's men and were personally tied to him in a uniform way throughout the entire realm.

At the same time, during the last decades of the 13th century, a more permanent circle of royal counselors appeared. The royal council consisted of the bishops of the realm and a group of secular magnates, among them the three foremost public officials: the lord chief justice, who came to represent the king as supreme judge; the lord high constable, who, in the place of the king, was in command during war; and the chancellor, most often a bishop, who was in charge of the king's chancery. From the beginning, the council was probably intended to function, when necessary, as a caretaker government, but after a couple of decades it came to be considered a permanent institution, known as the Council of the Realm, charged with the task of acting as permanent counselors of the king. In addition to the council, the king could draw support from specially formed assemblies of magnates, which, even if they usually were composed ad hoc of locally accessible magnates, were considered to represent the whole realm.

A distinct terminal point to the development in the 11th and 12th centuries toward a stable, economically strong, and unified kingdom came in 1319 with the "Freedom Letter," sometimes called "Sweden's Magna Carta." It was issued, together with a statute dictating how a king's election should take place in Sweden, when the three-year-old Magnus Eriksson was elected to the throne after protracted internal struggles. The Freedom Letter created guarantees against arbitrary taxation and forbade alienation of the fixed income of the Crown. In addition, the king, according to the election statute, was to take an oath that no one could be imprisoned unless he had been found guilty according to the law, and that the king would not place foreigners on the council or as bailiffs in the royal castles.

Around 1300, the Swedish realm was europeanized to a much higher degree than at the beginning of the Middle Ages. It had a nationwide royal power, whose strength was based on legal claims of continental character, on taxes, and on a military organization with castles and armored horsemen of European type. The Church was fully organized and, as a member of the international Church, was an important intermediary of continental European religious, intellectual, and cultural currents. The leading class of secular magnates had achieved positions and privileges that resembled those of the continental nobility, even if the process of feudalization, in legal terms, never developed as far in Swedish society as it did, for instance, in England, France, and Germany.

Around 1300, Swedish society was europeanized also in another respect. The number of towns had then increased significantly from only one around the year 1100 (Sigtuna) to about twenty-five by 1300. The growth was especially marked at the middle of the 13th century, concentrated in central Sweden (the Mälar valley region), and connected with an increased European demand for iron and copper from the mines in that area. Sweden became closely tied to international commerce, and the resources created through this commerce must have furthered the formation of a strong Swedish kingdom. The founding of Stockholm, the future capital of Sweden, around the year 1250 must certainly be seen in this context.

The 11th and 12th centuries were also the period when Sweden's borders were established. The stabilizing process that the royal power underwent bound together the various parts of the realm. The border with Norway was regulated through several agreements made during the period 1140-1273, while the border with Denmark was determined in detail sometime during the 13th century. At the middle of the same century, Sweden was given rights to a small corridor along the Gota River into the North Sea, Sweden's only breathing space toward the west. Gotland was finally placed under the Swedish Crown around 1280. In the latter part of the 11th and the beginning of the 12th century began a mainly peaceful immigration of Swedish farmers to parts of the coast districts along the northern part of the Gulf of Bothnia and the Finnish Gulf (Osterbotten, Åboland's skerries, Nyland). The immigration was followed by regular war expeditions with the joint purpose of capturing and christianizing the territory. The first "crusade" probably occurred around the middle of the 12th century and was repeated during the 13th century. At the beginning of the 14th century, an attempt was made to reach all the way to the River Neva (at the site of present-day St. Petersburg) to control the commerce heading for Novgorod. This effort was unsuccessful, and in 1323 the border between the Swedish realm and Novgorod was regulated through the peace concluded at Nöteborg. The southern part of the border established there remained in effect throughout the Middle Ages. The northern part marked spheres of interest in a no-man's land; the territories along the northeastern shore of the Gulf of Bothnia were in due time incorporated into the Swedish realm.

During the 14th and 15th centuries, Swedish society did not undergo any profound structural changes. The pattern that had developed during the early Middle Ages lasted until the introduction of the Lutheran reformation in Sweden and the reorganization of the central administration during the first decades of Gustav Vasa's rule.

In the area of foreign policy, the 14th and 15th centuries were dominated by repeated attempts to unite the Nordic realms under a single dynasty. At about the same time as he was elected king of Sweden (1319), the underage Magnus Eriksson became king of Norway through inheritance from his maternal grandfather, Hákon Magnússon. During a few decades (1332-1360), he was also lord of that part of Denmark east of the Sound (Scania, Halland, and Blekinge). Even if he never strove to create an integrated Nordic realm, his Swedish-Norwegian personal union had prepared the ground for the Nordic union created a generation later. Already in 1355, Magnus transferred the Norwegian Crown to one of his sons, Hakon, and five years later the Danish provinces were taken back by the Danish King Valdemar Atterdag ("ever-day"). In 1361, King Valdemar also incorporated Gotland into his kingdom. Magnus himself was defeated by his nephew, the German prince Albrecht of Mecklenburg, who had been summoned by the opposition Swedish magnates.

After a short while, Albrecht found himself in the same situation as King Magnus; because of poor finances, even he faced difficulties in upholding his kingdom against the Swedish magnates, who demanded greater influence over the administration of the realm. Finally, in 1388, they once more summoned a foreign
monarch, Valdemar Atterdag's daughter, Margrethe, widow of Håkon Magnusson and heir of their recently deceased son, Olaf (d. 1387). Although a woman, she was recognized as regent in all three Nordic countries. In contrast to Magnus, she deliberately strove for an unlimited royal power that could unite the three realms. By playing the leading circles of the realms against each other, and by not giving her assurances legal form, she succeeded in 1397 (in Kalmar in southern Sweden) in getting her niece's son Erik, duke of Pomerania, crowned and acknowledged as king in all her Nordic realms without binding constitutional guarantees.

Even if the Union could not be maintained de facto during the entire 15th century, the thought of union was kept alive during more than 100 years by changing groups of magnates in the Nordic realms, who in different ways believed that they could benefit by a continued union. The Union meant certain advantages. It guaranteed peace in Scandinavia and a collective force against non-Nordic countries, especially the German powers at the Baltic Sea. Furthermore, it gave both peasants and landowners an invaluable opportunity to carry on commerce freely among themselves across the borders and with the merchants in the towns of the other realms. From the Swedish perspective, however, there remained the constant, but perhaps exaggerated, fear that the richer and more powerful Denmark would gain a dominant influence in Sweden, and in various ways exploit its resources. Finally, many of the leading Swedish aristocrats feared that they would lose, among other things, the politically important and economically profitable commissions as bailiff administrators of the Crown's estates.

Toward the end of the 15th century, after an unsuccessful attempt by King Christian I to subdue the Swedes with force of arms (the battle of Brunkeberg outside Stockholm in 1471), the union increasingly became a political forum without real substance. Sweden was governed by a regent, who gradually became independent in relation to the Council of the Realm, whereas the Union king, although formally acknowledged, lacked influence in Sweden. The violent attempts made by the Union king to recapture power (1497–1501, 1518–1523) finally made the Union a political impossibility.

An essential aspect of the political history of Sweden during the late Middle Ages is the question of the relationship between the Council of the Realm and royal power, whether national or union. The king tried to strengthen his grip on the administration and the finances by reducing the influence of the magnates. At the same time, the leading men of the realm strove to preserve Sweden as a real elective kingdom (which implied that they themselves chose the king within certain limits), to protect the privileges and the immunity from taxation they had obtained from the Crown, to procure guarantees that they should have the right to administer at least some of the royal castles, and to be able to induce the king to consult them in ruling the realm. During periods in which royal power was weak, such as under the latter decades of Magnus Erikssson and under the reign of King Albrecht, the influence of the Council of the Realm increased. Under stronger monarchs, such as Margrethe and King Erik in the first decades of his own reign (after 1412), royal power was strengthened.

With the uprising against King Erik, which started in 1434, the Council of the Realm took on greater importance. As the king, although formally in power, was suspended, the council developed into an independent state government with full responsibility for the administration of the realm. An expression of this independent position was the decision of the Council of the Realm to let a special seal of the realm, with a picture of the Swedish king St. Erik and the three crown coats of arms, replace the king's seal under important decisions.

The rebellion also led to important steps toward forming a popular Swedish representation. A formal parliament with chosen representatives for the four estates of the realm (nobility, clergy, burghers, and peasants) was certainly not established before the reign of Gustav Vasa; but it is obvious that representatives, even of the peasants, the mine owners, and the citizenry of the towns, especially around 1430, participated in meetings at which important decisions were taken on whether the union monarch was to remain in power. Earlier, peasants had been granted certain privileges in joint decision making at royal elections and in the question of taxation.

An area in which participation of the peasantry was never questioned was the administration of justice. At the local level, the district court or the thing, the jury consisted of twelve representatives for the farmers; these members of the jury could be free-holders as well as tenants of the nobility, the clerical institutions, or the Crown. According to the law, the district court at the vacancy of the district court judge had to recommend three candidates to the king, from which he should choose one as the new judge. During the reign of Magnus Eriksson, a further step was taken to unify the Swedish society by the introduction of two law books valid for the entire realm. One, the common law, which was compiled around 1350, was valid for the rural court district, that is, for the greater part of the population of the realm (ca. 90 percent) that lived in the countryside. The other one, the town law, which came a couple of years later, was applied to the towns of the realm and apparently based on conditions in Stockholm. A century later, a modernized version of the common law was ratified (King Christoffer's Law, 1442), but during the Middle Ages, the new version was never in general use. The common law was supplemented throughout the Middle Ages by ordinances promulgated by the reigning king and regulating particular issues.

In the ecclesiastical area, no great changes took place during the last two centuries of the Middle Ages. The subdivision into dioceses and parishes generally remained stable from the end of the 13th century, although very small parishes, particularly in southwestern Sweden, were sometimes amalgamated with a neighboring parish, and the largest parishes in Norrland and Finland were divided into two or more parishes. The monastic orders in Sweden were the same as in the rest of Europe. In the countryside, there were monasteries of the contemplative kind, in most cases belonging to the Cistercian order and founded during the 12th century. In towns, however, mendicant orders could be found, both Dominicans and Franciscans, in most cases established during the second half of the 13th century. At the end of the 14th century, religious life in Sweden was renewed through the creation of the specifically Swedish Order of Our Savior, founded by Birgitta Birgersdotter (St. Birgitta), daughter of a Swedish magnate. The preaching of Birgitta and the founding of the monastery became very important, both spiritually and culturally. The mother monastery in Vadstena became a national concern, although during certain periods it became closely associated with the union kings and especially their consorts.

Through the bishops who were ex officio members of the Council of the Realm, the Church came to play a central role in the political history of the 14th and 15th centuries. As a rule, they made common cause with the leading magnates in their struggle to reduce the power of the king, since it was essential to protect
the privileges of the Church (e.g., its exemption from taxes) and to defend its right to the free election of bishops. The last issue became especially important for political developments during the reign of Erik of Pomerania, since his repeated attempts to fill the Swedish sees with men, often Danes, loyal to the king led to the Church's siding with the insurgents in 1434. The struggle over the archiepiscopal see in Uppsala in 1432 and in subsequent years was an important factor in this development.

For the same reason, the Church took a cautious position when, at the end of the 15th century and the beginning of the 16th, Sten Sture and his successors as governers of the realm gained increasingly independent power and, among other things, secured pontifical permission in 1491 to fill certain bishoprics. This situation led to the archbishops coming to play an active role against the governors when the union kings tried to take back power at the end of the Middle Ages.

A powerful contributing factor in Magnus Eriksson's and Albrecht of Mecklenburg's failure to assert their power against the magnates was endemically poor finances. The revenue of the monarchs from this vast but sparsely populated country was insufficient to support a military apparatus, where strong castles and hired horsemen were the most important ingredients. The result was that the king had to transfer a considerable number of the royal castles and their maintenance districts to individual magnates, often as pawns for loans received. This situation led in time to a weakening of the king's power.

The financial situation of the Crown declined even more as a result of the Black Death and the effects of the agrarian crisis on the economy of the realm. Even if, because of the inadequacy of the Swedish source material, we cannot follow the development very closely, it is obvious that settlement and agrarian production during the latter half of the 14th century and the beginning of the 15th decreased to such an extent that it must have had a powerful negative effect on the tax income of the Crown. Certainly, the decrease in agricultural production must have had an effect even on the secular and ecclesiastical magnates who were dependent on the income from their estates and tenants. But these magnates probably had better possibilities for compensation than the Crown, which was compelled to resort to unpopular and politically risky tax increases. An important reason for the rebellion against Erik of Pomerania in the 1430s was evidently a widespread dissatisfaction with the harsh tax increases that Margrethe and Erik put into effect a few decades earlier.

There are many indications that, after 1450, both demographic and economic development improved. The population seems to have begun slowly rising, which can be seen through the increased emigration to Norrland and the inner parts of Finland. Foreign commerce flourished, based foremost on metal products from central Sweden but also on fish and other animal products from the provinces around the Gulf of Botnia. The modernizing of the churches, especially in central Sweden, Norrland, and Finland between 1450 and 1520, indicates that even the countryside received its share of the positive economic development.

The terminal point for the Middle Ages in Sweden is traditionally placed at 1521, with the rebellion against King Christian II, or at 1523, when the leader of the rebellion, Gustav Vasa, was elected king, or, less commonly, at 1527, when the reformation of the Swedish Church was initiated. The cited years all indicate political or ecclesiastical administrative changes, but they are not as natural if the social structure of Sweden is considered. In many respects, the new regent, Gustav Vasa (1523–1560), came to follow medieval lines of development. But through his conscious organizing of resources and conditions, he laid the foundation of a modern society, structured in a new way under forceful royal leadership.


Göran Dahlbäck

Swedish Literature, Miscellaneous. Västgötakronika is three short chronicles concerning the lives and achievements of the Swedish kings and the lawmen and bishops of Västergötland during the period from about 1000 to about 1250. They were composed about 1250. Besides Guta saga, these humble records are the only specimens of original Swedish historical prose, so they are also interesting from a linguistic point of view. Their historical value varies. Holm (1972, 1975) maintained that the kings' chronicle shows signs of having existed in a runic version. The lawmen's chronicle especially is rich in alliterations (e.g., ær hans e giætt at godło, "he had always been well spoken of"; eno siinne ok aldriht mer, "once and never more"; sent łôdës annar sliker maðer, "soon will be born a man like him"). The chronicles were written down around 1325 by the priest Laurentius Dyakn in an appendix to the Äldre Västgötalagen in Cod. Holm B 59.

Prose fiction. Namnlöös och Valentin ("Nameless and Valentin") is a tale of chivalry, in which noble and courageous knights and fair virgins act against a background of evil and treachery.
principal persons belong to the royal families of France and Hungary. Familiar motifs include the hatred of the newborn Valentine's step-grandmother, who tries to kill him, but fails because a servant girl puts him in a box that she places in a river, where the boy is found and saved by his cousin Clarina. The end is happy: loving couples marry, and Valentine, Nameless, and their friend Blandamär ascend the thrones of France, Hungary, and Spain, respectively.

Apart from the stereotypes of the genre, the style has some freshness. Sometimes, it comes near to the spoken language, with doubled parts of sentences, as in Falantin han redh elfter dwirit ("Falentine, he rode after the animal").

The immediate model for this romance is a Low German knitted poem; the ultimate original was an Old French poem, now lost. The romance was probably written within the middle of the 15th century. It is preserved in three MSS, Cod. Holm D 4a (from 1457 at the latest; complete), Cod. Holm D 3 (from 1476; incomplete; perhaps a copy of D 4a), and Cod. Holm K 45 (from the beginning of the 16th century; incomplete; perhaps a copy of D 3).

Satiren om abbotan ("The Satire upon Abbots"); Old Swedish title: Hov siga all abotum altum skæmptan mykla, literally: "Here is told about all abbots great fun!", is a funny but cruel satire on the gluttony of abbots. Allusions to the Bible are skillfully used, e.g.: "Then two big pots are carried in to Mr. Abbot. Mr. Abbot takes one of them in his left hand and the other in his right. He takes them both and drinks a little to find out how he likes them. Then Mr. Abbot says to the pot in his left hand, because there is bad ale in it: 'Depart from me, you cursed. . . .'"). (cf. Matthew 25:32, 33, 41). The piece belongs to the literature of the goliards (medieval wandering students), but no real foreign model has been found, and the Satiren om abbotarna far surpasses its closest analogues. The satire was probably written in the first half of the 15th century, and is preserved in two MSS, Cod. Holm D 4a ("Vereliumus") from 1457 and Cod. Holm D 3 ("Lady Eln's book") from 1476.

Secular narrative poetry. Beside the great knitted poems Euemavisorna, the Erikskronikan, and other rimknökon, there survive a limited number of minor poems. To the romance genre belongs Riddar Paris och Jungfru Vienna ("Knight Paris and Virgin Vienna"), a very free translation-adaptation of a prose romance known in many European countries and probably written in Provence. The poem is romantic indeed; the knights are brave and gallant, the ladies beautiful and virtuous. The meter is unusual for the time: stanzas with four lines rhyming abab, masculine and female rhymes alternating. Unfortunately, only a fragment of the poem survives. It was probably written in the beginning of the 16th century. The MS, in Cod. Holm D 2 ("Spegelbergs bok"), was written down in 1523.

A historical event provides the theme for the knitted poem Om ett gyllene år ("About a Golden Year"), that is, the disastrous defeat that the farmers of Dithmarschen on the North Sea coast north of the River Elbe administered to the Danish (and Scandinavian Union) King Hans and his army of knights, mercenaries, and levy in the year 1500. The Swedish poem (completed in 1503) is a very free translation, made by a certain Sven Månsson, of a Low German original, Van dem gadenricken Gulden Jahr ("the golden year") was an ecclesiastical jubilee year, sanctus annus or annus jubilaeus. The reason why Sven Månsson wrote his poem is obvious; he rejoices in the defeat of the Danes, the unbeloved partner of the Scandinavian Union (see Political Verse below). The poem is preserved in Cod. Holm D 8 (or "Aurivillianus") from the beginning of the 17th century.

Political verse. Sweden, Norway, and Denmark were joined in the Kalmar Union during the period 1397–1523, with many interruptions and civil wars. Denmark usually played the leading part. In Sweden, people often grumbled at the burden of taxes. It was maintained that money was brought out of the country to Denmark and that foreign bailiffs and lords of castles were tyrannical. Some poems from that time are manifestations of the discontent and of patriotic and nationalistic feelings, propaganda pamphlets from the offices of insurgents, and so on. The Gotlandsvisan describes how the island of Gotland was conquered in the year 1449 by the Danes, according to the author, by means of guile: danska manna ordh / är verre än mord ("Danish man's words / are worse than murder"). In 1456, the Swedish general Thord Bonde was murdered by a Dane, an event that was commemorated in a ballad now called Thord Bondes mord. In the Brunkebergsvisan about the battle against the Danes at Brunkeberg outside Stockholm in 1471, the author celebrates Swedish bravery and triumphantly announces the Danes' embarking on their ships. Both the Gotlandsvisan and the Brunkebergsvisan are composed in a fashionable meter of that time, the German Minnesang meter. Aesthetically unrivaled among the political poems is Frihetsvisan ("The Lay of Liberty"), written in 1439 against the union king Erik of Pomerania and in favor of the Lord High Constable Karl Knutsson Bonde. The author, Bishop Thomas of Strängnäs, chose the ecclesiastical sequence meter for his poem. He is all aflame for freedom and national steadfastness, and is able to formulate his pathos in a way that makes it still deeply affecting. The poem has been set to music, and some of the stanzas are still often sung in a slightly modernized form at national festivals. One of them runs as follows in the original version:

Friiheeth ãr thet bettza thing,  
thet sökius kan all wårdin um kring  
then friiheet kan wel båra.  

With thw wara tik stieffler hull,  
tw alska friiheei meer an gull  
thy friiheet fõlgher ãra.  

(Freedom is the best thing / that may be found anywhere / for him who can her bear. / Will you be good to yourself, / then love freedom more than gold, / for honor follows freedom.)

The political poems are found in the following MSS: the Gotlandsvisan, Thord Bondes mord, and the Brunkebergsvisan in Een vijse book ("17th century"), Royal Library, Stockholm; the Frihetsvisan in Cod. Holm B 42, ca. 1510, containing King Christoffer's landslag.

Practical (professional and technical) literature. On behalf of the monastery at Vadstena, the monk Peder Månsson resided in Rome during the years 1508–1524 as a director of St. Birgitta's house, the property of his convent. In Italy, he studied and translated into Swedish a great many books in Latin and Italian concerning various practical subjects. In some of his works, he also draws from his own experience. Especially interesting is his Bondakons ("Manual on Agriculture"), for the main part modeled on De re rustica by Lucius J. M. Columella (written about a.d. 64 and printed in 1472), partly also on works by Petrus de Crescентiis (Ruralia commoda, printed several times in 1471 and later), on the "Dancus Rex" (MS), and on the "Agogo Mago" (printed 1502).

The translations of Peder Månsson treat the originals freely,
and his language and style are remarkably idiomatic. A great many Old Swedish words are found only in his works. He wrote charming versified prologues to the Bondakonst and to books about the arts of warfare (Strids konsth, gem carving (Konst grafiwa stena), mining (Berzgbrukningh), and educating children (now called Barnabok; built on Erasmus's Institutio principis christianis). In the Bondakonst prologue, he recommends bringing Finns to deserted regions of Sweden, since they are hardworking and fertile. Peder Månsson calls them "the people who say tärtwa holflwe meis," modern Finnish tervä, hyvä mies, roughly, "good morning, old chap," one of the earliest phrases ever recorded in Finnish.

Exceptionally in Old Swedish literature, nearly all of Månsson's texts are preserved in the author's autographs; they are kept in the Royal Library, Stockholm ("Liber B"), in the Diocese Library, Linköping ("Liber C"), and in the University Library, Uppsala (two nonautographs).

Låke- och Örteböcker are books about medical treatment and medicinal herbs. Advice concerning the art of healing has been written down in Europe since classical times, and exists in a great many MSS in Latin by such authors as Hippocrates, Galen, Pliny, and Albertus Magnus. Texts and extracts from them were adapted and translated into many vernacular languages, including Old Swedish, partly supplemented by the works of the Dane Henrik Harpstrøm. The Old Swedish Låkeböcker are especially interesting because they contain words not found elsewhere. A few prescriptions seem practicable. The majority, though, are useless (for they contain words not found elsewhere). A few

Nonofficial letters. During the final decades of the Old Swedish period, a number of private persons wrote letters, which add much to our knowledge of the language of late-medieval Sweden. The letters of the prelate, diplomat, and soldier Hemming Gad (d. 1520) are highly individual. Many of Gad's letters were sent to his chief, Svante Sture, when Gad was commanding the troops at Kalmar against the Danes. He conquered the town after three assaults, and in civil actions. The stock of oaths and abusive etc) etc)

Månsson comments: Penitencia tht är tryggaste wåghen thär wil jak dö wppa ("Penance is the most infallible way [to salvation]; that I will believe unto my death"). The letters of Peder Månsson are housed in the Swedish State Archives, Stockholm, and in the University Library, Uppsala.

Tänkeböcker, minute books of magistrates' courts, are preserved in the cities of Arboga, Jönköping, Kalmar, and Stockholm. Most register real-estate purchases, and also give accounts of inquiries, examinations, and sentences in criminal cases (larcenies, assaults, etc) and in civil actions. The stock of oaths and abusive words seems to have been very large in the late Middle Ages. Our knowledge of the store of personal names in medieval Swedish cities is to a great extent based on the information given by the Tänkeböcker. The Tänkebock of Kalmar begins in the 14th century with a few annotations in Low German; the others begin in the 15th century: Arboga in 1451, Jönköping in 1456, and Stockholm in 1474. They are kept in the University Library in Uppsala (MS E 211), the Magistrate Court's Archives in Arboga and Stockholm, respectively, and in the Landsarkiv (the Provincial Archives) in Vadstena.

Saemund Sigfusson inn fróði ("the learned"); 1056–1133.

To his contemporaries, Saemund was known as a preeminent churchman and a man of great learning. To modern scholarship, he is known primarily as a founding father of historical writing in Iceland, and of the great dynasty of the Oddavæjar ("men of Oddi"). At various points in the intervening centuries, folklore accused churchman and a man of great learning. To modern scholarship, annals, genealogies, Eddas, and in other historical writings. But there is no coherent medieval account of his life, and virtually nothing by him survives in writing, so that much remains unknown.

Saemund, the son of a priest, was born into a distinguished family that had lived at Oddi, South Iceland, since about 900. He studied for some years in "Fakkland." The Oddavæjar annall for 1077 specifies Paris, but this may be no more than a surmise, as is the suggestion by modern scholars that Saemund attended the cathedral school of Notre Dame in Paris. An entertaining account of his return to Iceland in Gunnlaugr Leifsson's Jóns saga helga (early 13th century) tells how Jón and Saemund outwitted the master astrologer who held Saemund in his power. This legend seems to contain the germ of later folktales in which Saemund, learned in the black art, uses his cleverness to foil the Devil.

After his return to Iceland in or after 1076, Saemund was ordained priest and became a "pillar of the church," building a new church at Oddi dedicated to St. Nicholas, increasing its endowments and clergy, and preaching and dispensing wise counsel in the neighborhood. He probably also had a school there, for he is said in Sturla saga (ch. 1) to have fostered Oddi Pogillsson, who, like Saemund himself, became fróði, "learned (especially in native lore)." Of still greater national importance was Saemund's part, with the bishops, in establishing tithe laws (1096) and other ecclesiastical laws.

Little else is known of Saemund's life or activities as priest and secular chieftain, because the records are slight and the times relatively uneventful. However, it is known that he and his two brothers married the three daughters of Kolbeinn Flosason. With his wife, Guðrún, he had three sons and a daughter, and their descendants, who came to be known as the Oddavæjar, in many senses built on the foundations laid by Saemund at Oddi. Their power and wealth, augmented especially by the tithe and other revenues paid to family-owned churches, overtook those of other chieftainly families during the time of Saemund's distinguished grandson Jón Loprtsson (1124–1197), and were maintained throughout the following decades without the viciousness found elsewhere. The intellectual tradition of Oddi also flourished.

Saemund's son, the priest Óyjólfr, had a school there attended by the future St. Óláfur; Jón Loprtsson fostered and educated Snorri Sturluson there. Jón's son, the bishop Pall, compiled a miracle book of St. Óláfur, and is himself the subject of one of the biskupa sögur. The poem Nóregns konunga tal was composed around 1190 to celebrate Jón Loprtsson's descent through his mother from the Norwegian kings; other works, notably Orkneyinga saga and Skjoldunga saga, may have links with Oddi.

Saemund is frequently named as an authority by medieval Icelandic historians, and these references provide the main clues about his learning and its transmission. That he composed a work, now lost, on the rulers of Norway from Haraldr háarfagri ("fair-haired") in the late 9th century down to Magnus góði ("the good," d. 1046/7) is suggested by Nóregns konunga tal (st. 40), which acknowledges Saemund inn fróði as its model for the lives (ævi) of these eleven rulers. The scraps of information attributed to Saemund elsewhere, however, especially concern the late 10th century: the length of Hákon jarl's reign (in Oddr Snorsson's Oldís saga Tryggvasonar); the number of ships in the Jomsvikung fleet at Hjörungavág (Liavág) (in AM 510 fo; a late MS of Jomsvikingsaga); details of Óláfur Tryggvason's christianization of Norway (in a fifty-word quotation from Saemund in Oddr Snorsson's saga); and the date of his death (in Ari Porgilsson's Islendingabók). Saemund is also named in certain versions of the Icelandic annals as authority for the ice-bound Scandinavian winter of 1047. It seems from all this evidence, and from the example of the near-contemporary Islendingabók, that Saemund's legacy to later historiography must have been a chronological scheme, with brief narratives on each ruler, in a sober style but with Christian bias.

Saemund's presumed history was probably written rather than oral, especially since the long quotation from Saemund in Oddr Snorsson's saga (which survives only in Icelandic versions...
of a Latin original) is followed by “Svá hefir Sæmundr rituð um Óláf konung lýsinn bok” (“Thus has Sæmundr written about King Óláfr in his book”). Storm (1873: 15) and Meissner (1902: 35ff.) nevertheless disputed that there was a written work by Sæmundr. The language seems to have been Latin, for Snorri Sturluson, in his prologue to Ólafs saga helga and Heimskringla, refers to Ari Porgísson as the first writer of history in Norse, although Sæmundr, an older contemporary whom Ari consulted over the writing of Islendingabók, probably completed his history first. The nature of Sæmundr’s writing and its influence on other histories of Norway, such as Fagrskinna, Ágrip, Historia Norwegiae, and even on Knýtlinga saga, have been much discussed by scholars such as Bjarni Æslbjarnarson, Siegfried Bovschlag, Svend Ellebæj, and Bjarni Guðnason (see the summary in Anderson 1985).

Sæmundr is also acknowledged as an authority for certain facts about Iceland, including its discovery by the Viking Naddoddur (Landnámabók, Sturlubók text), but whether such matters were included in the history of Norwegian kings, whether there was a separate work on Iceland, and whether some of Sæmundr’s more fragmentary pieces of learning were at first only transmitted orally cannot now be established. The “oral” theory is supported by the report in Kristni saga, that “in that year [1118–1119], there was such great loss of life, that the priest Sæmundr the learned said [sagði] at the jöng that no fewer must have died of sickness than had come to the ping.” It is also possible that Sæmundr simply became a model of learning, to whom miscellaneous facts could be attached. This tendency could apply to such patronally clerical facts as the details about the creation of the sun and the moon (in AM 624 4to) or the body of Adam (in AM 764 4to).

The title Sæmundar Edda appeared on editions of the Codex Regius poems of the Poetic Edda until well into this century, and this attribution goes back to 16th- and 17th-century theories that credited Sæmundr first with the Prose Edda (now attributed to Snorri) and then with the Codex Regius poems. The connection may not be completely unfounded, for it is possible, as Hallóðr Hermannsson (1932) argued, that Snorri found the poetic materials for his Edda at Oddi, and that Sæmundr had a hand in collecting them.


Diana Edwards Whaley

[Sorla saga sterka] (The Saga of Sorli the Strong) relates the adventures of Sorli, the younger son of the Norwegian king Erlingr in Scandinavia and Africa. Central to his exploits are his killing of King Hálfðan Hringsson and the capture of his magnificent dragon-ship “Skrauti,” provoking Hálfðan’s sons Sigmundr and Hogni and their retainer Þórir to seek revenge against the saga’s hero. Five main sections comprise most of the action: Sorli’s adventures in Bláland, the battle in which Sorli captures Skrauti, the ensuing maneuvers of his opponents, Sorli’s siege of their Swedish stronghold, and a final battle reconciling the warring parties. Like many fornaldarsögur, this saga ends with a wedding.

Sorli, whom King Erlingr prefers over his eldest son, Sigvaldi, decides to go abroad, taking his foster-father, Karmon, with him. Arriving by ship in Bláland, Sorli’s shore party is destroyed, but he survives to do battle with a giant named Skrimimir, slaying him and taking his treasure after making peace with Skrimimir’s giantess-wife, Mâna. Back in Norway, Sorli is called to help King Haraldr Valdimarsson against Garðarr and his brother Þórir, from Morland; Garðarr wishes to marry Haraldr’s daughter Steinþóra, but Haraldr has refused. A pitched battle ensues in which Þórir turns into a dragon. Sorli slays the dragon and beheads Garðarr, ending the conflict. Sorli declines Haraldr’s offer of Steinþóra in marriage and goes off shortly thereafter to harry in Africa.

Returning north, Sorli puts in at Eyjarsund (modern Danish Øresund), where he sees Hálfðan’s warship, Skrauti. Sorli and Hálfðan fight a long battle aboard ship. The king refuses Sorli’s three offers of peace, whereupon Sorli kills him and takes the vessel; but Þórir escapes to arouse Hogni and Sigmundr to revenge.

Enraged, Hogni sails to Norway, only to find that Sorli, leaving Skrauti behind, has gone to Sweden to negotiate a settlement with him and his brother. Hogni kills the ship’s overseer, takes Skrauti, and raises war against King Erlingr. Hogni kills Erlingr, his son Sigvaldi, and his ally King Haraldr; after this battle, Hogni seeks Inghjörn in Erlingr’s castle, but cannot find her and sails home.

Sorli, meanwhile, has besieged Sigmundr’s and Hogni’s walled stronghold at Lititorum. In a four-day battle, Sigmundr receives a mortal stomach wound; fresh troops from England revive the besieged Swedes, and Hogni arrives with Skrauti under his command. Sorli is challenged by Hogni to single combat, in which Sorli gains the upper hand; Hogni, having dropped his sword, entreats Sorli to let him go get it. Sorli does so, and Hogni, impressed by his opponent’s honor and remembering Sorli’s threefold offer of peace to his father, bids him make peace as friend and foster-brother. Sorli accepts this offer, ending the siege and the war. All parties enter the castle at Lititorum for a great feast. Hogni and Sorli marry each other’s sisters, Marsibil and Inghjörn, and Þórir marries Steinþóra.

This saga is related to several fornaldarsögur (Hálfdanar saga Brunnfóstra, Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar, and Ósvár-Odds saga) concerning either marginally or centrally with Hálfðan’s great ship; it is only tangentially related to Sorla játtr eda Héðins saga ok Hogns, where Sorli appears only in the introduction. Lukeman (1977) suggested that this saga was based upon Irish annals concerning Dano-Norwegian activity in Ireland in 851–873; personal and place-name correlations between the apparent annalistic sources and elements in Sorla saga suggest creative recasting of the Irish materials.

Sorla saga sterka survives only in paper MSS, none earlier than the middle of the 17th century. Four of them (AM 168 fol.,
AM 171a fol., AM 560d 4to, Rask 32) are in the Arnamagnæan collection, with one (NKS 1806 4to) in the Royal Library in Copenhagen and three more in Stockholm. HB 82b 4to in the University Library in Iceland served as the basis for Björner's edition princeps (1737); Rahn's 1829-30 edition follows suit, supplying variants from the AM MSS.


Jonathan D. M. Evans

[See also: *Fornaldarsögur; Hálfdanar saga Brynufóstra; Hálfdanar saga Eysteinsssonar; Sórla þáttr*]

**Sórla þáttr** ("The Tale of Sórla"), not to be confused with *Sórla þáttr Brodd-Helgasonar*, is preserved only in the late 14th-centuryvellum *Flateyjarbók* (GlK 1005 fol., Árni Magnússon Institute in Iceland), as one of the thirty-three *þáttr* inserted into *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*. Although the *þáttr* bears his name, Sórla is far from the main character, appearing in the second of the two preludes to the story of the *Hjaðningavíg* ("the battle of Hjöðinn and his men"), which serves as the main narrative. His life, however, is the subject of one of the *fornaldarsögur*, *Sórla saga sterka*. The *þáttr* combines myth, history, and legend, and is structured into two introductions, a main story, and an epilogue. The first introduction (chs. 1 and 2) tells how Freyja first obtained, lost, and regained her necklace, and sets the outline of the main story: an everlasting battle brought about by the theft of a precious treasure. The second introduction (chs. 3 and 4) functions as a transition, joining the mythological and legendary portions of the *þáttr*. It relates the adventures of Sórla sterki ("the strong") Erlingsson, who rose to fame as a Viking sea-king in the Baltic. It develops the theme of the "desire and theft of a precious object" and introduces both the theme of the *fóstbroðrarlag* ("blood-brotherhood") and the character of Hogni. Part 3 offers a romanticized and lightly comic version of the *Hjaðningavíg*, a well-known Germanic legend recorded in the extant documents of Old English and Middle High German, in Saxon and Snorri, and in a number of Old Icelandic texts from the 10th to the 15th century. The epilogue (ch. 9) christianizes the pagan tale and appropriately recalls the close of the first introduction, by having Ívarr ljómi ("the gleam") end the cursed battle and win victory over Óðinn for Óláfr Tryggvason. There is a recent argument for an Irish source for the entire *þáttr*.

Like the other *þáttr* inserted into *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, *Sórla þáttr* includes secular, Christian, and pagan fantastical matter. Its tone is light, and its purpose, beyond offering still another example of Óláfr's (or his surrogate's) victories over paganism, is to entertain. There is humor, both in the conjugal disenchantment of Öðinn and Freyja and in the legendary figures. Hildr, for example, who in other versions is presented as a type of demigoddess turned sorceress, the cause and perpetrator of the strife, is presented here as a reasoning and prudent young woman, a compassionate lover, and a dutiful daughter. Her charismatic qualities have been fragmented and given over to the demonic Gondul and the doomed queen Hervor. Her sole contribution to the drama of the everlasting battle is to sit in the wings and watch. Hjöðinn also loses his heroic veneer, and is portrayed as a kind of repentant muscleman who wishes only to slink off and hide lest men cast his "wicked deeds in his teeth."

*Sórla þáttr* has unity. Its structural simplicity is made complex by thematic repetition and balance. It begins and ends with a mythological motif. The conflict/redress configuration in each part is similar: each struggle is touched off by the obsession with a precious object belonging to another (necklace, boat, fame/love), and the redress is either a pact (Freyja's promise, the *fóstbroðrarlag*) or, as in the case in the *Hjaðningavíg*, both a *fóstbroðrarlag* and blood revenge. In characterization, unity is achieved by means of antithetical balancing of character, as, for example, in the figures of Öðinn and Óláfr, and of Loki (the master thief and catalyst of the everlasting battle) and Ívarr ljómi (the Christian guard who brings closure to the nightly "thefts" of watchmen and to the everlasting battle).


Helen Damico

[See also: *Flateyjarbók; Freyr and Freyja; Mythology; Öðinn; Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar; Sórla saga sterka; þáttr*]
Tale mot biskopene see Oratio contra clerum Norvegiae

Temples, Heathen. The Old Norse terms for heathen places of worship are hof and høgr. The word hof has no sacred significance in the South Germanic areas, where it is used solely to describe secular buildings or enclosures. In Old Norse, the word indicates a building where the ritual sacrifice (the blót) took place. No special building seems to have been needed. The hof was probably identical with the largest hall or longhouse on the farm where the blót was held (the veizluskál). In Norway, the names of twenty-two farms begin with a name of a god, followed by the word hof, and eighty-five farms are simply called “Hof (Hoff, Hov). This evidence seems to indicate that hof could also mean a farm where cult meetings were regularly held, probably for more people than those living on the farm.

Hof is mentioned in Snorri’s Heimskringla and some of the Islendingasögur. Fyrbyggja saga has a detailed description of a hof, comprising a banqueting hall where the ritual meals were eaten, and an aðhús where the cult images were placed. Modern historical criticism, however, regards the descriptions in the sagas as learned reconstructions. Some brief notes on the erection of hof in Landnámabók may go back to the 12th century, and are perhaps more reliable. The so-called Ulfjötssöld, which occur in some versions of Landnámabók, reckon a number of hofs in each þing district, an organization very similar to the parish system of the Christian Church, but this again must be regarded as a learned reconstruction from around 1200.

The Old Norse word høgr is used to describe both a natural and an artificially contrived pile of stones, usually out in the open. In the Edda, however, the word is used to describe the dwelling of the gods, and the Gulathingssöld penalizes anyone “making a house and calling it høgr.” Thus, the word høgr could perhaps mean both an open place of worship and a place sheltered by some sort of roof construction. Adam of Bremen, writing around 1070, describes the heathen temple at Uppsala in Sweden, at that time still a center of pagan worship. His description is based on eyewitness accounts. According to Adam, the temple building contained the statues of Þórr, Óðinn, and Freyr (“Thor, Wodan et Frisco”). We do not know what the Swedes called their temple, but it was probably of the høgr type, situated in the vicinity of the holy grove and spring where the votive ceremonies Adam describes took place.

Archaeological evidence. The only hof site that can be established with some degree of certainty was excavated at Hofstaðir in Mývatnsveit, Iceland, in 1908. On the site was a large, turf-built longhouse with a stone-built extension, interpreted as an aðhús, added to the north gable. To the south of the building, an oval pit placed axially, filled with ashes, charcoal, pot stones, and fragments of animal bones, suggests a ritual baking pit.

In 1926, Gamla Uppsala church was excavated. Traces of earlier settlement were found in at least three different strata. Based on a number of postholes both inside and outside the oldest part of the church, Sune Lindqvist reconstructed what he believed to be the heathen temple mentioned by Adam, as an almost square building with a raised central part, not unlike the nave of a stave church. In 1967, Lindqvist reconsidered his reconstruction. On the basis of revalued documentary evidence, he maintained that the heathen temple must have been situated to the west of the church building, serving, after being “purged by fire,” as a church before the present church was erected.

At Mære in North Trøndelag in Norway, mentioned in the sagas as one of the most important heathen cult centers in Trøndelag, excavation was carried out beneath the present 12th-century stone church in 1967–1968. A wooden church was found, probably dating from the second half of the 11th century, and beneath this church traces of at least two different building stages were found, the older reaching well into the Viking Age. The limited area, unaffected by Christian burials, gave no information about the form and size of the pre-Christian buildings, but around a series of postholes nineteen gold plaquettes were found with stamped pictures of a man and a woman believed to be Freyr and Gerðr. Similar finds of gold plaquettes are known from different sites in Scandinavia, e.g., Hauge, Jæren, and Borg in Lofoten, Norway; Eskilstuna, Eketorp, Öland, and Helgö in Mälaren, Sweden; and Bornholm in Denmark. The plaquettes found at Helgö form an interesting parallel to the Mære finds in that they were found around a large posthole. The excavator, Wilhelm Holmqvist, interpreted the circumstances under which the plaquettes were found as an indication of a fertility cult, which, according to him, could also explain the name of the island, Helgö (Holy Island).
Textiles, Furnishing. Textile art was one of the leading arts in the Middle Ages, and beautiful textiles were as prestigious as gold and jewels. Costly silk fabrics and embroideries imported to Scandinavia have survived in surprisingly large quantities. Most of them are found in Sweden and date from the late Middle Ages. Cheaper decorative textiles in wool and linen were also imported, until the 16th century, but we know the names of some professional male embroiderers from the 15th and 16th centuries. One competent embroidery workshop in Stockholm from the 1470s was run by Birgitta. The textile discussed here, however, are believed to be of Scandinavian origin.

Most medieval Scandinavian textiles were made as handi­crafts at various levels. Male professional weavers are, with one exception (Roskilde in Denmark, 1483), unknown in Scandinavia until the 16th century, but we know the names of some professional male embroiderers from the 15th and 16th centuries. One of them is Albertus Pictor, a mural painter who headed a highly competent embroidery workshop in Stockholm from the 1470s onward. Workshops for embroidery and probably decorative weaving are also known from Scandinavian convents like Vårdalen in Sweden, founded by St. Birgitta in the 14th century, and the Brigittine convent of Nåndel in Finland. Other centers of artistic skill may have been established in mansion houses and in royal courts.

Surviving embroideries from the workshops of Albertus Pictor and the convents of Vårdalen and Nåndel were intended for ecclesiastical use. In fact, most of the medieval decorative textiles in Scandinavia come from churches. This origin does not necessarily mean that they were intended for a church from the start. Many of them are quite secular in character, a fact that can be explained by the custom whereby wealthy people donated valuable textiles to churches after they had been used for secular purposes.

There were differences between the amount and kinds of textiles used for furnishing by common people and those of upper social classes. Historical records of many kinds give us information on medieval furnishing textiles, and the terminological studies of the Norwegian philologist Hjalmar Falk are important in this connection. Still, there are also gaps in our knowledge.

It was customary in medieval Scandinavia on festive occasions to decorate the interior of secular houses as well as churches with long textiles hanging around the walls. The wall runners were of different types, the most important called tjeld (tjeld) and refil (refil). Tjeld was a plain textile covering most of the wall. It was usually made of simple material like coarse woolen cloth. A narrow refil, with embroidered or woven decoration, was frequently hung on top of the tjeld. A large part of the extant medieval decorative textiles of Scandinavian origin is supposed to have been used as wall hangings.

Among the woven wall hangings, several techniques are represented. The narrow hangings from Skog and Överhogdal in Sweden are executed in a kind of soumak weave resembling the figured weaves from the Oseberg ship burial of about 850. They probably date from the 13th century, and the designs consist of hosts of people, animals, and houses. The narrative scenes in many-colored woolen yarn on a white linen ground have been the subject of various interpretations.

The hanging from the church of Baldishol in Norway is the only one in tapestry weave. It depicts two men under a low arcade, one of them riding a horse. The men represent the months April and May, and may have been part of a tapestry cycle showing the twelve months of the year. It is now generally believed that the tapestry was woven in Norway in the beginning of the 13th century.

Several hangings in pick-up doublecloth have survived; from late-medieval inventories, we know that textiles of this type were very popular. Pick-up doublecloth is not known from other parts of western Europe in the Middle Ages, and it has been suggested that the weave reached Scandinavia from the East. Four narrow refils from Marby, Revsund, and Överhogdal in Sweden and Rennebu in Norway are of a 13th-century type, where the pattern is formed by the interchanging of one layer in white linen and one in colored wool. The patterns include knots and interlaced motifs, and geometric human beings and animals. A later group of all­woolen doublecloths are predominantly decorated with animals. The blue and white hanging from Grödinge in Sweden, dated to the 15th century, is a splendid example with different types of beasts on a checkerboard ground as a main motif.

Three hangings from the first half of the 16th century woven in tabby brocaded on the counted thread are known from the Finnish Brigittine convent at Nåndel. One hanging, nearly 5 m. long, has ornamental borders in many-colored wool on a white linen ground. On the others, the colored woollen patterns with octagons are seen against a ground weave of red wool. Inside the octagons and surrounding them are such motifs as lions, deer, birds, human figures, and trees.

Another refil from Nåndel, worked in long-armed cross stitch, has a rather similar pattern with octagons. Long-armed cross stitch or simple cross stitch have also been used on Swedish refils like the one from the church of Fogdó from the end of the 15th century. It was probably made in the convent of Vårfruberga and depicts religious scenes under an arcade. The original length was more than 8 m. Medieval embroidered hangings, like those just mentioned, are partly worked in counted-thread embroidery, partly in free embroidery.

The unique hanging from the church of Høylandet in Norway depicting the story of the three Magi is believed to date from the first half of the 13th century. The embroidery is worked on a red woolen fabric with outlines elegantly executed in white linen yarn in stem stitch, and the figures filled in with pattern darning in colored woolen yarn and in white linen. It is skilled work, probably carried out in a workshop, and the designer might have had access to English patterns.

It is impossible to tell whether Norwegian embroidered fragments in laid and couched work, like the one from the church of...

170. Hanging from Hoylandet Church, Norway. Detail; probably first half of 13th century. Wool and linen embroidery on wool. Height: 43 cm. Owner and photo: Universitetet i Trondheim, Vitenskapsmuseet.


172. Hanging from Grödinge Church, Sweden. Detail; probably 13th century. Woven in pick-up doublecloth. Each square measures about 23.5–24.5 cm. x 22 cm. Owner: Statens Historiska Museum, Stockholm. Photo: Gabriel Hildebrand, Antikvarisk-topografiska arkivet.
This ecclesiastical textile probably once belonged to the Brigettine convent of Vadstena. Similar embroideries were used for furnishing textiles like arkivet. Museum, Stockholm. Photo: Gabriel Hildebrand, Antikvarisk-topografiska arkivet.

Run worked in colored woolen yarn and white linen contours on a linen ground, were part of wall hangings. Seven fallen men and a horse are seen on the fragment, which dates from the 13th century and is related to the 11th-century Bayeux Tapestry in style and technique. Textiles in laid and couched work were popular in Iceland during the Middle Ages, and several interesting examples have survived. One of them, fragmentarily preserved, is an all-woollen horizontal wall hanging from Hvammur church from the 14th century or later, with a design of interlaced circles framing animals.

Not only the walls but also the ceiling could be decorated with hangings. They were partly used to protect against soot, partly as decoration. In the Museum of National Antiquities in Stockholm, there is one such example dated to about 1527, with alternating lengths of embroidered linen and lengths of knotted silk net with loops of varying sizes.

Cushions for benches and chairs are known to have had textile covers, and bench runners of considerable length could be used for festive occasions. Swedish medieval cushions are in pattern darning, cross stitch, and gilt-membrane embroidery.

The history of table covers and tablecloths in medieval Scandinavia is unknown. However, three long linen textiles from Norway with embroidered ornamental borders in pattern darning are believed to be late-medieval examples of tablecloths. On one of the textiles, the borders are worked in blue linen thread; on the others, they are worked in many-colored woolen yarn.

Little has survived of medieval bedclothes, but some Swedish and Finnish textiles in wool inlaid embroidery with gilded leather strips are of a type known to have been used as coverlets. They are made of cloth squares with fantastic animals joined together in a chessboard manner. The animals were probably cut at the same time from two superimposed panels in contrasting colors. After the cutting, the motives were interchanged and the edges sewn together and decorated with gilt leather strips. The inlaid embroideries date approximately between 1300 and 1500.

Written sources do not reveal in detail how beds were made up, even if they mention different articles of bedclothing. People from the upper classes might have used a sheet of leather, eventually a fell, on top of the straw, or a bolster filled with feathers and down. Linen sheets are known from 14th- and 15th-century inventories. Ordinary people had one or more woolen cloths or blankets in 2/2 twill on top of the straw. Pillows of several types were used, and some of them had patterned covers. The body was covered with an upper sheet of wool or linen (known from the 14th century in the inventories of well-to-do people) with a coverlet on top. The coverlets varied from plain woolen blankets, fells, and pile rugs of the "rya" type (mentioned in sources from the 15th century onward) to decorated coverlets like the ones in intarsia embroidery. It is uncertain whether eiderdowns were used in the Middle Ages. Some beds had bed curtains and valances. Twenty-one such valances, or parts of valances, primarily worked in straight darning stitch, are preserved in Iceland. They date from the 17th and 18th centuries, but definitely show a medieval tradition.

Footcloths are frequently referred to in medieval Scandinavian sources. Most of them were fells used for protection against the cold, but Norwegian inventories show that some of them were costly woven textiles used by the upper classes for special occasions.

Theodoricus: Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagiensium. The "History of the Ancient Kings of Norway," which summarizes Norwegian history from the time of Haraldr hárfagri ("fair-hair") Hálfdanarson to the death of Sigurðr Óláfsson in 1130, was composed by the monk Theodoricus (Theodoricus monachus). The Historia is dedicated to Archbishop Eysteinn Erlendsson of Niõaróss (Trondheim), for the completion of the work. Mention of a battle that took place in 1177 provides a terminus post quem ( "end time" ) for the composition of the work.

Nothing is known about Theodoricus beyond his authorship of the Historia. References to Hugh of St. Victor in the work have led scholars to believe that Theodoricus studied at the Parisian monastery of St. Victor, and a comparison of the writings he cites with those of classical and medieval authors. While some of the works cited have been quoted from memory or from a collection of excerpts, others seem to have been cited from memory or from a collection of excerpts. Theoridicus has been identified with Archbishop Pórir of Hamarr (1189/90-1196), each of whom spent some time at St. Victor's, but the evidence is inconclusive.

Whether he studied at St. Victor's or elsewhere, Theodoricus received a good education; the Historia abounds with references to classical and medieval authors. While some of the works cited were undoubtedly available to him in Norway, others seem to have been quoted from memory or from a collection of excerpts. He is not averse to using foreign sources to correct Norwegian ones, his most notable contribution being the discovery in the Historia Normannorum (presumably the work of that title by William of Jumièges) that St. Óláfr was baptized not in England or Norway, as had previously been thought, but in Rouen.

Theodoridicus's sources for the Historia included a vita of St. Óláfr and a "Catalogus regum Norwagiensium," presumably a regnal list giving the lengths of reign of successive Norwegian kings, a topic on which Theodoridicus's information differs from Icelandic tradition. He says that Icelanders were important informants in the introduction to his work, where he refers to traditions preserved in their "ancient songs"; this statement, as well as a number of passages in which he notes the lack of written Norwegian history, has led scholars to believe that the information obtained from Icelanders was purely oral. The question of whether Theodoridicus also had access to written Icelandic historical works, such as the writings of Sæmundr Sigfússon or Ari Porgilsson, has been the subject of much debate. The relationships among his Historia, the Historia Norwegiæ, and Ágrip af Nóregs konunga sogum are key questions for the study of early Icelandic-Norwegian historiography and konungsasögur. Recent articles by Bjarni Guðnason (1977) and Theodore Andersson (1979; 1985) make strong arguments that Theodoridicus did, in fact, use Icelandic writings.

Thómas saga erkibiskups ("The Saga of Archbishop Thomas"). The life of Thomas à Becket, archbishop of Canterbury, martyred in 1170 in his struggle against the English king and canonized in 1173, became the subject of a number of contemporary biographies in Latin and also of a body of Old Norse sagas. His career furnished the ecclesiastical leadership with a forceful argument in their struggle for supremacy against the monarchy. This struggle continued throughout the Middle Ages, and no doubt was the main reason for the popularity of this saint.

Thómas saga 1 is based on the so-called Quadrilogus prior. Probably originating in the second half of the 13th century, the saga is preserved in MS Stock. Perg. 4to no. 17, dating from around 1300. The copy in Stock. Perg. 4to no. 17 was presumably made by a Norwegian, but certain Icelandicisms suggest Icelandic influence. Icelandic marginalia from the 14th century indicate that the MS was already in Iceland at this time. It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that the Norwegian scribe made the copy during a stay in Iceland.

The erudite translator has rendered his Latin exemplar in a free and independent manner. He adopts an ornate and flowery
language, including, among other things, a number of alliterations that have no basis in the original. The style is characterized by pathos and great declamatory force.

It has customarily been taken for granted that the translator of *Thómas saga* was of Norwegian ancestry as well. Recently, however, some scholars have challenged this assumption. Nevertheless, investigation of the numerous alliterations in this saga shows that their linguistic basis is primarily Norwegian.

According to Icelandic tradition, two native priests composed *Thómas sagas*: Bergr Gunnsteinsson (d. 1211) and Jón Holt (d. 1312). Stefán Karlsson (1973) argued in favor of the latter's responsibility for *Thómas saga* 1. His name suggests Norwegian origin, as the use of place-names as surnames was no doubt a more common practice in Norway than in Iceland.

All the other Old Norse accounts of Thomas are Icelandic. The most complete of these (*Thómas saga* 2), dating from the first half of the 14th century, has been transcribed in *Tómasskír* (GKS 1008 fol., ca. 1400) and in a few medieval fragments. The sources of this highly competent work of compilation include, among others, *Thómas saga* 1, the *Speculum historiale* by Vincent of Beauvais, and an older Icelandic translation of a now-lost life of Thomas by Robert of Cricklade from about 1173.

A third saga (*Thómas saga* 3), surviving only in fragments from the early 14th century, represents an intermediate stage between the original translation of the life by Robert of Cricklade and *Thómas saga* 2, whereas the fragmentary saga in the 14th-century Stock. Perg. fol. no. 2 (*Thómas saga* 4) seems to approximate the original translation even more closely.

There is relatively general agreement that Bergr Gunnsteinsson is responsible for the translation of the life by Robert of Cricklade, which *Thómas saga* 2, 3, and 4 have drawn on directly or indirectly. On the basis of lexical-statistical investigations, Peter Hallberg (1968) has argued that the abbot Bergr Sokkason composed *Thómas saga* 2.

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**Thord Bondes mord** see Swedish Literature, Miscellaneous

**Tiódel's saga** (*"The Saga of Tiódel"*) is a riddarasaga closely related to the Old French *Lai de Bisclavret* by Marie de France and its Old Norwegian prose translation, *Bisclaretz fjóð*, the fifth story in the *Strenglækar* collection. *Bisclaretz fjóð* is a careful translation, true to its French original, but it has a few deviations. As these are also found in *Tiódel's saga*, it is no doubt based on the Norwegian prose translation.

The story takes place in Syria. Tiódel is a knight endowed by God with chivalric virtues. He has the fortitude of Samson, the beauty of Absalom, the prudence of Solomon, and the kindness of Aristotle. He is respected by the king, and is the leader of 12,000 knights. The only peculiar thing about him is that he disappears a couple of days every week. His unnamed wife, who has only bad qualities and who has betrayed her husband for ten years, gets him to tell his secret: he periodically changes into a bear or other animal. As soon as she has the opportunity, the evil wife removes Tiódel's clothes, which forces him to remain an animal. After feigning sadness, the wife marries her lover.

While the king is out hunting, he comes upon a large polar bear that acts like a human being. The animal seems to be deeply attached to the king. The king brings the bear back to his castle, and the bear follows him everywhere. At a party given by the king, the bear recognizes his rival, the present husband of his wife, and attacks him violently.

One day, the king loses his way while out hunting, and comes to the house of Tiódel's wife. She celebrates the king's arrival with a splendid party, during which she too is attacked by the furious bear, which bites off her nose.

The king intends to kill the bear, but is prevented by a poor educated knight who is the only one capable of seeing the connection between Tiódel's disappearance and the bear's behavior. He advises the king to force the woman to tell where she has hidden the clothes. The clothes are brought to the bear, but it refuses to look at them. The king becomes angry, and condemns the knight to death for lying. The judgment is accepted by the knight, but he asks for permission to make another proposal: to allow the bear and the clothes to be left alone behind locked doors, since Tiódel may feel ashamed to show his nakedness. This notion turns out to be correct, and Tiódel changes into a man again.

The king wants Tiódel to take back his wife, but, since Tiódel refuses, she and her lover are driven away from the country. As a sign that God is angry with her, all her children are born without noses. Tiódel and his rescuer, however, end their lives in happiness and prosperity.

The name "Tiódel" is probably a Norwegian development of Old Norse *Þjóðalr*, compounded of *Þjóð* 'people' and *Alfr* 'wolf,' which would be a convenient name for a werewolf, which Tiódel may have been in the original version. Perhaps the story was adapted by a Norwegian clergyman, who wanted an example to demonstrate the reward of virtue and the punishment of evil.


*Alfred Jakobsen*

[See also: Christian Prose; Legenda; Saints' Lives]
about 1600 (AM 123 8vo, vellum) to the turn of the 20th century.
The text is badly transmitted; there are garbled passages, and the
relationship among the main MSS is not evident. An edition of the
saga and of the rímir (three cycles) is under preparation by Ohlsson
in the Editiones Amamagnaeanae series.

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Tove Hovn Ohlsson

[See also: Riddarasögur; Rímir; Strengleikar]

Tobiae Comedia see Drama

Tools. At the beginning of the Viking period, the city with its
differentiated craftmanship was an almost unknown phenom-
enon in Scandinavia. The production of crafts took place in the
countryside, in the village, or on individual farms. Noblemen might
employ goldsmiths and other specialized craftsmen at their farms.
But most craftsmen had to master several professions. This fact is
reflected in, for example, the chest of tools from Mastermyr, which
contains tools for both forging and woodworking, as well as scales
and other equipment used in trading. The difficult land transpor-
tation routes meant that many local variations originated with
regard to manufacturing. Some of these local variations remain
until today, while other rural crafts were modified under the influ-
ence of city craftmanship.

Since the individual farm or village was self-sufficient in its
daily necessities, those traces of craftmanship found in the oldest
cities are, therefore, related to whatever could not be produced
locally, such as combs and other craft items in bone, amber, horn,
and antler, as well as jewelry and beads made of, among other
substances, glass, precious metals, and bronze. For example, in
Hedeby in what was then southern Denmark, a significant amount
of trade was based on imported Norwegian grindstones and soap-
stone jars, and the making of combs depended upon raw materials
from northern Scandinavia. After the initial settlement phase, new
craftsmen arrived: bakers, dyers, shoemakers, and craftsmen work-
ning with various metals. Interest turned away from remote trading,
and the industrial structure was adjusted to supplying the sur-
rrounding area with a varied supply of products.

The rise of the city changed the conditions for the practice of
crafts. Craftsmen joined together in organizations based on com-
mon interests. They specialized and tried to keep competitors away
by requiring an education. This requirement included the rule
that the apprentice who finished his apprenticeship was required
to travel using his crafts for a certain period of time in order to
learn his profession thoroughly before he could settle down as a
master. Through these wandering journeyman, the Scandinavian
craftsmen came into contact with traditional city cultures in cen-
tral and southern Europe. The Scandinavian city craftsman be-
came part of a common European culture, and his tools became
those used in the rest of Europe.

With Christianity, new crafts came to Scandinavia: masonry,
stonecutting, lead roofing, bell molding, new techniques in wood
 carving, and painting, as well as the manufacture of stained-glass
windows, gold altars, illuminations and frescoes, church textiles,
and so on. The baking of bricks and the manufacture of lead-
glazed pottery also belong to this period. Naturally, the secular
noblemen understood how to take advantage of these imported
craftsmen; soon the lead-glazed pitcher, the bell molder's
aquamanile, and bronze cooking vessels adorned the nobleman's
home, which was now constructed of brick instead of wood.

By fortifying the cities and by damming to create moats, a
"mill privilege" was introduced: the small hand grinders and spot
mills of the individual households were replaced by the crafts-
manship of the professional miller, and the weaver, the baker, and
the beer brewer took over those functions that had been handled
by the individual household until then.

Wood crafts. In woodworking, the change from the Viking
period to the Middle Ages can be described as a transition from a
"green" wood technology, where newly felled wood is processed,
to a "dry" wood technology, where stored wood is used in manu-
facturing. The green-wood technology involved splitting the wood
into boards with wedges, and squaring the timber with narrow,
chisel-like side axes or adzes. Even though actual planes were
known in Scandinavia from the Roman Iron Age, most of the rest
of the manufacturing process was done with tools that are pulled,
most often with drawing knives in various shapes and mountings,
rather than with planes, which are pushed. Decorative carving
was done with a knife.

In dry-wood technology, the wood is cut by sawing with a pit
saw, a technique that can be observed in several Romanesque
roofs. The cutting of edges is done with a felling axe, and final
planing with a two-handed side axe, also called the planing axe, a
special development of the medieval bearded axe. In wheel mak-
ing, the T-shaped long axe was used.

All wood crafts used augers, most often spoon bits, that could
be mounted as breast augers in order to transfer more power.
Drills were used for making hubs and for hollowing out (where
drill holes are made in both ends and the remaining wood in the
middle is then removed, either with a block axe—a small, chisel-
shaped side axe—or with a special hollowing adze). The medieval
cooper initially used axes and drawing knives, refining the work
with an adze. The process resembled those primitive rural crafts
preserved in modern times, where the manufacturing of wooden
shoes, the hollowing out of mugs, and the production of agricul-
tural tools were done using traditional carpenter's techniques with
the block axes or adzes, and refinements with drawing knives. At
the end of the Middle Ages, the cabinet maker's profession gained
ground, and the use of planes spread to related woodworking
professions like the carpenter's, the cooper's, and the coach
builder's. Other tools introduced in the late Middle Ages were the dished wheel, the breast auger of the coach maker, and the carpenter's trowbill for cutting peg holes. The small felling axe was replaced by the carvel-built ship, but both types of construction continued to be used by boat builders and shipwrights respectively. For the Viking ships, narrow, chisel-shaped side axes were used for preparation, and drawing knives for planing. But through mutual adjustment, both crafts started using shipwright's adzes, and planes were also introduced into the process.

In northern Germany and in the Baltic region, sawmills are known to have existed since the 1300s, but these mills and the framed pit saws connected with them seem to have been unknown in Scandinavia during the Middle Ages.

Ceramic, stone, glass, and leather crafts. The ceramic tradition of prehistoric times continued throughout the Middle Ages, and into modern times as a cottage industry. Black, unglazed earthware was manufactured on a board that one turned on one's lap. At the end of the Middle Ages, the practice of decorating the pieces with a smoothing pattern made by a stone seems to have begun. For the initial processing, most likely those tools were used that were known from more recent times: variously shaped stones for initial processing and smoothing, plus knives, pieces of iron, and wood shavings for scraping of the charred ceramics. But in connection with the introduction of tile and brick as building material during the years after the 1150s, a new type of lead-glazed ceramics is introduced, manufactured on rotating potter's wheels. The kilns, the technology, and the tools resembled those of the rest of Europe. Painting with horn and slip-covering in special vessels is unknown before the Renaissance, which also introduced the first production of tin-glazed faience tile in the 1580s. Stoneware was not produced in Scandinavia, but was imported.

During the Viking period and early Middle Ages, soapstone vessels and grindstones were important Norwegian exports. Like the earliest building materials of stone that came to the forefront as church building expanded, these soft stones could be processed with tools resembling those used for the processing of wood.

During the 1200s, the use of square-cut granite stones increased. For the processing of these hard stones, a hoe-shaped point hammer was used, a scabbling hammer that could also be used for the making of ornamental details; possibly the runic inscriptions were cut with a similar instrument, although this cutting was most likely done with a hammer and point chisel. Various types of chisels were used for the processing of stone.

Glass production did not exist in Scandinavia before the Renaissance, but one finds glass jewelry in the style of Roman gems from the early Viking period, most likely imported from Carolingian areas, but possibly also manufactured locally; later, one finds glass beads manufactured locally, as well as imported ones. Window framing and local production of stained glass had taken place since the Romanesque period.

The tanning and shoemaking crafts followed the common European techniques from an early period. Characteristic tools are the tanner's scraping knife and the shoemaker's crescent knife, which had one handle shaped like an awl in the Middle Ages. The kinds of awl-like tools with open handle sockets already widely in use during the Roman Iron Age were probably bark spades for debarking and for the production of tanning bark.

Metal crafts. During the Viking Age and the Middle Ages, the technique of forging was no different from that known in more recent times. A small bellows was shielded against the heat of the furnace by soapstone or, later, iron. The red-hot object was grasped by a pair of blacksmith's tongs and worked on an anvil, which could be either a block anvil or an anvil with horns. In certain cases, a stone could serve as an anvil. Objects could be swage-forged as the swage was placed in a hole in the anvil. Plates could be cut with a pair of plate scissors. Metal could be filed, and iron and steel could be welded in the furnace (blacksmith welding). For molten metal, crucibles were used.

Larger bronze objects were cast using a cire perdue ("lost wax") process, smaller objects in molds made of sandstone or soapstone. With the building of churches, the technique of bell molding was developed, and items like censers and bronze vessels were manufactured.

During the Viking period, gold and silver could be drawn into threads with drawing irons and tongs. Tools for the manufacture of gold and silver plate are known from the same period. It could be shaped into jewelry using a bronze matrix or a wooden mold. From the early Middle Ages, we know of soldering lamps, oblong bowls used to produce the heat necessary for soldering. The various punches, chisels, engraving cutters, and other tools of the goldsmith existed in Scandinavia prior to the Viking Age.

Boiler makers (copper smiths) are mentioned in Bergen in the year 1282. The technique of drawing copper plate is also connected with religious articles, for example, the gilded Romanesque altars in Denmark and Sweden. Pewtering, lead roofing, and lamp making (tinsmithing) are techniques imported into Scandinavia during the late Middle Ages.

Textile crafts. During the Viking period and early Middle Ages, yarn was spun on a small distaff with a weight made of stone, mortar, or clay, and later on larger distaffs made entirely of wood. The spinning wheel with a spindle was not used before the Renaissance. Yarn was manufactured using ancient techniques like plaiting, knitting (from the 1400s), tying, and piece weaving. Large pieces of cloth were woven on a standing loom with loom weights. In southern Scandinavia in the 1400s (in Hedehby perhaps much earlier by Frisian weavers), this type was replaced by the horizontal loom, which gave rise to a weaving profession that was to replace production at home.


Mikael Andersen
The formative development of medieval Scandinavian towns may roughly be divided into three evolutionary stages, all influenced from abroad: early economic centers, royal and ecclesiastical centers, and more fully developed medieval towns. These stages do not always coincide in the various regions of Scandinavia, and they overlap to a large extent.

The first tendencies toward urbanization, that is, nucleation of settlement with a general central function, appear along the main trading routes of the Merovingian and Viking ages. From continental Europe, such lines of communication led along rivers and overland toward the Baltic and Jutland. Jutland was also reached along the northwest continental coast. From Jutland, seaways branched out along the southern shore of the Baltic, toward the island of Gotland and the Lake Målaren area of Sweden, and toward the Oslofjord region of Norway.

From the Merovingian Age and even earlier, if one takes into consideration the excavated craft and trading center at Helgö in Målaren, the transshipment, exchange, and redistribution of commodities were centralized in places along the lines of communication mentioned. At the same time, the production of professional craftsmen tended to attach itself to the early trading centers. In this fashion, several localities acquired economically central functions. Best known is Hedeby/Schleswig at the foot of Jutland.

In the Viking Age, economic centers of this type gained in number and importance. It is difficult to assess to what extent the exchange of goods and production of craftsmen in such places were seasonal and to what extent they brought about permanent occupation. In most cases, such activities probably had a largely seasonal character. But permanent settlement has been proven archaeologically in some of the early centers. In a few exceptional cases, it is even justifiable to speak of towns. Judged by the size of the built-up areas within their semicircular earth banks, their supposed numbers of inhabitants, and their general centrality, both Hedeby and Birka in the Målaren area may be termed "urban centers" in the 10th century.

The continued development of trade and related production led to the emergence of new, both seasonal and permanently settled, economic centers in the centuries following the Viking Age. In the 11th and 12th centuries, the initial development of quite a few towns in central parts of Scandinavia may be described in this way. At the same time, such trading centers spread to more remote areas. In Iceland, they did not develop in the Middle Ages beyond the stages of seasonal marketplaces and fishing harbors.

Early centers did not, however, base their existence on economic activities alone. Royal protection and support were probably important for the emergence of Hedeby and Birka, and of other Viking Age centers as well, such as that of Skiringssalr or Kaupang at the mouth of Oslofjord. The early missionary church established itself in Hedeby and two other Jutish trading places, Ribe and Århus, adding a new dimension to their central function. Thus, already in the Viking Age, there are foreshadowings of the main forces at work in the next stage of urbanization.

From the 11th century, a broader wave of urbanization was set in motion, probably because of a special organizing effort made by a royal power aspiring to unite larger parts of the later Scandinavian kingdoms in close cooperation with the Christian Church. Monarchy and Church were capable of effecting something that had not been possible in the preceding period, when political power was mostly local and legal-administrative and cultic functions as yet mainly of a periodic character. Governed by political, administrative, and military considerations, the two powers started to develop more densely populated and built-up settlements, some of them earlier trading places. These settlements came to function not least as fiscal centers in which were increasingly gathered royal, ecclesiastical, and aristocratic revenues in kind. In their turn, such centers came to act as magnets on trade and specialized crafts, attracting such activities from a wider network of older, largely seasonal and less-established centers.

In Denmark, royal minting places and administrative centers were obviously important as points of departure for the development of some of the towns (civitates) mentioned by Adam of Bremen in the 1070s: Viborg, Odense, Roskilde, and Lund. Adam's other towns were also minting places: Ålborg, Hedeby, Ribe, and Århus. The combination of royal centers and episcopal sees was effective in creating urban settlements, as attested by the cases of Lund and Roskilde. Urbanization picked up speed from the end of the 10th century, when royal power had been established over the whole of Denmark.

In the Valdemarian era from the latter half of the 12th century, Danish towns started to spread from protected situations inland or at narrow inlets to the open coasts. This pattern partly had to do with the sheltering functions of royal and other strongholds. The Valdemarian kings included such strongholds together with older urban centers in their administrative system.

In Norway, there is probably a solid historical foundation for the persistent view of later saga writers that the kings from the 11th century acted as promoters of towns. An important part of their urbanizing record is the establishment of the first episcopal sees. In its efforts toward political unification, Norwegian royal power had indeed very good strategic reasons for promoting towns, such as Trondheim, Bergen, Oslo, Borg (present Sarpsborg), and Kongehelle (at the Gota River), all of them, together with Tønsberg, mentioned by Odoricus Vitalis as coastal civitates in 1135.

In Sweden, political unification and the building of a state-like political organization came later than in Denmark and Norway, and it took longer for Christianity to become firmly established. This combination may help to explain the relatively late urbanization of Sweden. As a combined royal and ecclesiastical urban center, only Sigtuna in the Målaren area goes back to the 11th century. In West Sweden, Skara may have been in the process of becoming a town-like ecclesiastical center in the same century, to be supplemented by the stronghold of Lõdôse at the Gota River as a royal center in the late 12th century. In this century, the other episcopal sees of medieval Sweden also started to develop into central places of urban character.

In the 13th century, the rapid urbanization of East Sweden probably owed much to the fact that it was now also the power base of a more state-like Swedish kingdom. Royal strongholds, such as Kalmar and Stockholm, became focal points of urbaniza-
tion, possibly planted as parts of a more elaborate and centralized administrative system (Andersson 1985).

In the 13th century, the last and most expansive of the three formative stages of medieval Scandinavian urbanization was well on its way. The term “fully developed medieval town” implies a system of self-government based on explicit privileges and urban codes, with the town council as the leading authority from the middle of the 13th century. The monarchy could create formal towns, legally separated from the surrounding countryside, and this creation had obviously happened to a certain extent before the 13th century. From now on, towns generally functioned as legal and administrative enclaves. Throughout the rest of the Middle Ages, there was a clear tendency in royal legislation to give such enclaves a monopoly on more professional trade. In Denmark, regal rights over towns were also delegated, although in relatively few cases, to bishops and princely magnates.

There is little doubt that because of the “commercial revolution” of the High Middle Ages, economic activity from the 12th and 13th centuries became a particularly important urbanizing factor in Scandinavia. In North European commerce, the east-west axis between the Baltic and the North Sea grew into the most important one, involving Denmark and branching out toward Norway, Sweden, and Finland. The North German Hanseatic traders became the completely dominant group of merchants exploiting the new commercial possibilities. They opened up new European markets for the exports of Scandinavia, notably Swedish copper and iron, Scanian herring, and Norwegian stockfish.

Bergen, originally the royal and ecclesiastical center of West Norway, developed in the 12th century into the first international commercial town of Scandinavia. In the following century, it obtained a virtual monopoly as a staple port for foreign trade with North and West Norway and the tributary Atlantic islands. The town became the center of a satellite system of smaller towns and marketplaces farther north, including the seasonal trading places of Iceland. In the 13th century, it may also be called the first political capital of Norway.

From about 1200, the herring fisheries and connected international fairs of Scania started to expand rapidly, making a heavy impact on urban development in Scania and the neighboring areas of Blekinge and Halland, at that time a part of the Danish kingdom. In Denmark, the fairs of Scania apparently became the most important channel of importation for most towns. Only Ribe and possibly Schleswig kept up a more independent foreign trade. Local trade was probably more decisive than long-distance trade for the emergence of most of the numerous small towns of high-medieval Denmark.

In Sweden, the commercial expansion of the 13th century led to a pronounced growth of towns, particularly in the Mälaren area and other eastern regions connected with the Baltic. The economic base of the rapid urbanization was made up of agricultural produce and, increasingly, of iron and copper mining. From the middle of the century, Stockholm rapidly achieved a dominant position as the staple port for the Mälaren area and the coastal districts of the northern Baltic. In this respect, it acquired a function comparable to that of Bergen in northwestern Scandinavia. Again like Bergen, it grew into the chief political and administrative center of its kingdom.

Few important towns expanded as purely commercial centers in high-medieval Scandinavia. Visby in Gotland is the most notable exception, because of its unique geographical position. Of the new and mainly economic centers of the 13th century, Malmö in Scania was probably the most important. In most other cases, towns that one-sidedly based their existence on trade and specialized production tended to be relatively small. Most of the more important towns taking advantage of the great commercial changes were royal and/or ecclesiastical centers as well, as in the cases of Bergen and Stockholm.

By the mid-14th century, the medieval urbanization of the central parts of Scandinavia had largely been completed. The general decline of population and agrarian production in the following half century must have affected urban development. Some smaller towns disappeared, and contraction of settlement occurred in others. Still, a few new towns emerged even in the second half of the 14th century, and more appeared throughout the rest of the Middle Ages, not least in peripheral areas, such as Sweden north of the Mälaren area and Finland. In more central districts, old towns soon started to grow again. The increased volume of commercial shipping through the Sound gave a new impetus to the urbanization of the coastal regions on both sides and east of the Kattegat. Here, the expansion of old towns and the foundation of new ones were particularly striking in the 15th century. In 1417, Copenhagen was annexed by the Crown from the bishop of Roskilde. It grew into the largest and most important town in Denmark and obtained the position as the political capital of Denmark-Norway.

Denmark, as the most populous and densely settled medieval kingdom in Scandinavia, including the southernmost regions of present Sweden (Scania, Halland, and Blekinge), was also the most urbanized one. At the end of the Middle Ages, formal Danish towns numbered about 100. The kingdom of Sweden, including Finland, came to comprise about forty towns; the kingdom of Norway, including the present Swedish county of Bohuslän, had only fifteen. In addition, there were quite a few town-like ports and trading places without formal town status. Within the borders of the present Nordic countries, there were about seventy towns in Denmark and Sweden respectively, twelve in Norway, and six in Finland.

It is impossible to calculate the number of inhabitants in any medieval Scandinavian town. But most urban settlements were obviously quite small, numbering their populations only in hundreds and, at the most, in low thousands. Only in a handful of cases is there reason to believe that urban settlements grew into middle-sized towns by contemporary European standards, in the range of 5,000–10,000 permanent inhabitants. The international trading center of Bergen was probably the first Nordic town to reach this size, around 1300. In the late Middle Ages, it may have been followed by Stockholm, Visby, and Copenhagen. Still, as centers of royal and ecclesiastical government, administration, and specialized economic activities, the Scandinavian towns were far more important for the surrounding territories than their number of inhabitants would seem to indicate.

By European standards, the medieval towns of Scandinavia were quite simply built. Timber was originally the dominant building material, and remained so to the end of the Middle Ages in the kingdoms of Norway and Sweden. In Denmark, half-timbering grew in importance from the 13th century and apparently came to dominate in the late Middle Ages. Building in natural stone was restricted mainly to churches, monasteries, castles, and palaces. It rarely occurred in ordinary urban tenements, and then mostly in the form of late-medieval stone cellars, used as cool and fireproof
The use of urban fortifications apparently became quite widespread in Denmark, but only in the form of earth walls with pallises and ditches. In Sweden, they were rarer, and in Norway, almost nonexistent. At a later stage, stone walls with towers surrounded only a few Swedish and Danish towns, such as Visby, Stockholm, Kalmar, Kalundborg, Vordingborg, Copenhagen, and in part a few other towns.

Even if the council towns of high- and late-medieval Scandinavia were allowed a measure of self-government, they were far from having the autonomy enjoyed by many European towns, notably in North Italy, in the northwest Continent, and partly in Germany. The Crown never ceased to control the towns through its urban bailiffs or other representatives. The position of royal officials may still have been somewhat stronger in Norway and Sweden than in Denmark. In this as in other respects, the Danish medieval towns were closer to European models than the towns of the neighboring Scandinavian kingdoms.


**Trade.** In the Viking Age, trade in the North Sea and Baltic area seems to have been primarily over long distances with luxury products for the upper classes. Practically nothing is known of local trade, which was probably insignificant; peasants produced most of what they needed on the farm.

Scandinavian merchants carried goods between the Scandinavian and Slavonic parts of northern Europe and the more developed regions of western Europe and the Byzantine and Arab empires.

The main goods from the North were furs and slaves. Some of the furs came from northern Sweden and Norway, but most were bought in what was formerly the Soviet Union. Norwegian merchants carried out these expeditions in ships sailed north to Finnmark and to the White Sea and obtained furs through trade, taxation, and plunder. The largest quantities were obtained by Swedes in the east Baltic.

Scandinavians captured or bought slaves mainly in the former Soviet Union, and sold them both in western Europe and in the East. Viking pirates also took prisoners in western Europe and sold them as slaves in Scandinavia and probably in the East. In Hedeby, Ansgar ca. 850) saw a group of slaves bound together by chains around the neck. Among them was a nun who had been taken prisoner somewhere in western Europe.

From western Europe, the Swedes bought woolen cloth, swords, pottery, and glass, from Byzantium cloth of wool and silk, and from the Arabs silver in the form of coins.

The main trade route of the Scandinavian merchants went from the river Rhine via Lake Ladoga to Constantinople. Few merchants covered all that distance; the goods could change hands several times.

In the Viking Age, the Rhine area was the most economically advanced part of northern Europe. The main city was Cologne; the main trading center toward the North Sea was Dorestad. From here, goods were brought to Hedeby near the present-day Schleswig. Eastward from Hedeby, the main route went along the Swedish coast to Birka in Lake Mälaren. This site was the central district of the Swedish kingdom, where the merchants found aris-
tocratic customers with tastes for their goods. Those who wanted to go farther east crossed the Baltic and entered Lake Ladoga.

From there, a northern route reached the upper Volga and Búlgar, the capital of the Volga-Búlgars. Here, Scandinavians traded with Arab merchants. A few Scandinavians continued down to the Caspian Sea and even reached Baghdad. The Arab author al-Mastidî (ca. 900–950) writes that Northmen had settled in the town of Atli, where the Volga flows into the Caspian. A southern route from Lake Ladoga followed the river Volkov to Novgorod, then to Smolensk and along the Dnieper via Kiev to the Black Sea. The ultimate goal was Constantinople.

Denmark and Norway were attached to this great west-east trade route at Hedeby. The chieftain Óttarr (Old English Ohthere; ca. 880) probably lived somewhere in Troms in northern Norway. It took him one month to sail down to the trading center of Skiringssalr in Vestfold, “if he set up camp at night and the winds were favorable.” From there, he sailed in five days to Hedeby.

It is often said that Óttarr traveled from Hedeby to King Alfred’s court by crossing the Jutland peninsula and then crossing the North Sea to England. However, Öttarr himself does not say that he visited Hedeby and England on the same journey (Orosius, Book 1). In Öttarr’s day, Norwegians regularly crossed the North Sea to England directly from western Norway. Danes also sailed directly to England from western Jutland, particularly the Littl Fjord area. Not all trade went via the great west-east route.

About 970, the journeys of the Swedes along the Russian rivers seem to have ended. The Scandinavians did not go further than Novgorod and the estuary points of the great Baltic rivers. Local merchants took over the inland trade. Several explanations have been given for this change. The silver production in the Arab territories south of the Caspian Sea decreased sharply, and so did the profits of the Scandinavian merchants who traded there. But the fundamental cause must have been that the Scandinavians who had settled there intermarried with Slavs and became part of a local merchant class.

The traditional view has been that Scandinavian seafarers in the Viking Age were mainly pirates. Nobody has disputed the fact that some Scandinavian merchants traded on the route from Dorestad to Constantinople. But traders from Dorestad via Hedeby to Birka in Sweden and Skiringssal in Norway were said to have been mainly Frisians who lived at the coast between the rivers Rhine and Weser. This view has been challenged by several historians, most prominent among them A. E. Christensen. The sources on this subject are scarce.

The first leg of the journey was from the Rhine to Hedeby. Rimbert (ca. 880) writes that many of the inhabitants of Hedeby were christened in Dorestad and Hamburg around 850. Since then, merchants from Dorestad and Sachsen had visited Hedeby, “which was earlier impossible.” The last sentence should not be taken literally, but it is evident that Scandinavians as well as Frisians and Germans traveled between Hedeby and the Rhine area. Traditionally, it has been assumed that the goods went by ship from Dorestad along the Frisian coast and across Jutland to Hedeby. However, Ansgar traveled in 826 overland from Dorestad to Hedeby. The better-known trade routes of the 12th century also went by land. The Scandinavian merchants were primarily seafarers; it is therefore reasonable to assume that the Scandinavians were a minority.

The traffic from Hedeby northward and eastward, however, went by sea. We have no evidence that Frisian ships or merchants ever sailed from Hedeby or in Baltic, Danish, and Norwegian waters. The strongest argument for Frisian presence in the Baltic has been two runic stones in Birka from around 1050–1100, which say that members of the “Frisian guild” erected the stones in memory of guild brothers. But it may just as well have been a guild of Birka merchants who traveled together to Dorestad. The evidence indicates that Scandinavians controlled the trade east and north of Hedeby.

Scandinavian trade inside Russia is equally controversial. There is general agreement that Scandinavians traveled far inside Russia to obtain furs. But traders along the Russian rivers are called “Rûs” in the sources, and there is some controversy about how many of them were of Scandinavian and how many of Slavic origin. The Rûs’ settled more or less permanently as chieftains and merchants along the main trade routes: from Lake Ladoga along the upper reaches of the Volga to Búlgar (near today’s Kazan), and on the route from Ladoga to the Black Sea near the later cities of Novgorod, Smolensk, and Kiev. The Byzantine author Constantine Porphyrogenitos (ca. 950) tells how the Rûs during the winter visited the local tribes whom they had subjugated and demanded taxes, which were paid mainly in furs. In spring, many of them assembled in Kiev and sailed to Constantinople. At least in the Ladoga area, the Rûs were Scandinavians; the same identification applies to many of those settled farther north and south.

Loyn (1977) has stressed that the Scandinavian Viking Age merchants helped to start English maritime trade and urban life after the “Dark Ages.” Öttarr is the only Viking Age Scandinavian merchant whose social background is known from contemporary sources. He was no professional merchant; his main income came from agriculture and taxation. Most Scandinavian merchants must have been peasant-merchants or chieftain-merchants. The peasant-merchants of Gotland were particularly active. Up to 1951, Arab Viking Age coins were found in these quantities: around 400 in Norway, 4,000 in Denmark, but 80,000 in Sweden; of the latter, around 70 percent were found in Gotland.

In the trading centers of Hedeby, Birka, and Skiringssalr, many of the houses were probably inhabited only during the market time. But Rimbert’s account and archaeological excavations show that at least some of the houses were inhabited by merchants and others who must have lived there all year. But the vast majority of Scandinavian Viking Age merchants combined commerce with other occupations.

The commercial revolution. About 1100, a commercialization of the European economies started that has continued up to the present. More people sold a larger part of what they produced, and bought more of the goods they consumed. The first stage of this development up to the Black Death (1349) has been called “the commercial revolution of the Middle Ages.” In Scandinavia, it changed trade in two important ways. Goods of mass consumption entered long-distance trade for the first time, and German urban merchants took over long-distance trade from Scandinavian peasant-merchants and chieftain-merchants.

The commercial revolution in this first stage concerned only those people who had access to goods that were in demand in distant markets. From Scandinavia, mainly fish, metals, and to some degree butter and meat entered long-distance trade. The great majority of peasants were not able to produce a marketable surplus of these goods, and were little affected. Fishing in Iceland, Norway, and Scania and iron mining in Sweden mainly provided subsidiary incomes for peasants who continued to cultivate their
farms. In the Swedish copper and silver mines from the 13th century and the 15th-century fishing villages of Finnmark and Iceland, however, some professional miners and fishermen were found.

The merchants first developed the resources that demanded the least capital and organization to exploit. Stockfish from the Lofoten Islands was the first Scandinavian-produced commodity sold in larger quantities on North European markets, from about 1100. The fishermen dried the fish themselves, and up to about 1350 mostly sold it to merchants at an annual market in Vågan in Lofoten. These "merchants" were partly rich peasants and landowners from the fishing districts, partly townspeople of Bergen and Trondheim. They transported the fish in small coastal cargo vessels down to Bergen, and, up to around 1310, also to Trondheim. There, they sold it to export merchants who sent the goods on larger vessels to England before 1460, and to the Rhine area and Lübeck after 1250.

Commercial stockfish production in Iceland started around 1320–1340. Up to 1412, it reached European markets via Bergen. From 1100 to 1412, the English imported all their stockfish from that town. In 1412, however, English merchants started to sail directly to Iceland and bought stockfish from Icelandic fishermen. The English built seasonal trading stations in the main fishing villages, some of which were manned also in winter. From about 1470, German merchants, mainly from Hamburg and Bremen, started to sail to Iceland in large numbers. They allied themselves with the Icelandic authorities, and in 1470–1540 chased the English from their trading stations.

Before 1200, the Scanian herring fisheries were drawn into international commerce. The fishermen were mainly Danish peasants. They sold the catch fresh to merchants when coming ashore from Lübeck and other Hansa towns along the southern shore of the Baltic, North Sea, and Zuiderzee. Most of the salting was done near the towns of Skanör and Falsterbo. Each of the larger German towns had a limited area on the shore where their merchants constructed huts, salted herring, and traded. Some towns even had their own bailliffs who passed judgments in conflicts among Hansa merchants. The Scania herring was exported to Hansa ports, such as Lübeck and Kampen, and transported to German inland cities. The fisheries declined after about 1400 because of competition from Dutch herring fisheries in the North Sea; possibly there were also fewer herring.

The start of Swedish commercial mining has been much discussed. Today, most historians assume that industrial mining for export belongs to the period after 1250. The mining districts were north and northwest of Stockholm. Miners and farmers brought the metals down to small Mälar towns like Vasterås, Örebro, Köping, Enköping, and Arboga in winter on sledges, and sold them to local merchants. In spring, metals were sent in small cargo vessels to Stockholm and sold to export merchants. These buyers were almost exclusively Hansa merchants; some settled in Stockholm, some in Lübeck. The markets for Swedish metals were in the Baltic and in Flanders.

Denmark in the Middle Ages included today's southern Sweden. Apart from Scania herring, the main exports from medieval Denmark were meat, butter, and some grain produced on the manors of nobles and on peasant farms. From 1200 to 1350, most of it was probably sold at the Scanian Fair. As this fair gradually lost its importance in the later Middle Ages, more of the export went by small cargo vessels directly from the production areas to Danish and the nearest North German towns. In 1399/1400, more than 500 small vessels sailed annually from Denmark with agricultural products to Lübeck. Most of these vessels belonged to Danish noblemen, peasants, and small traders. After 1400, citizens of towns in Schleswig-Holstein, Hamburg, Lübeck, and Lüneburg bought cattle in Jutland in the autumn, and drove them to their home towns.

Scandinavian imports were dominated by three products: cloth, salt, and grain. Members of the upper classes used foreign cloth in their everyday dress, and peasants used it on special occasions. The Italian merchant Pietro Querini suffered shipwreck and came ashore at the island of Rest in Lofoten in 1432. He was surprised to discover that the peasant-fishermen wore English cloth. Up to about 1440, most of the cloth imported to Sweden and Denmark was Flemish; during the rest of the Middle Ages, Holland dominated. English cloth became important at the end of the 15th century. Norway and Iceland followed the same pattern, except that English cloth already had an important share of the market in the 12th century.

Salt was used for preservation of food. In northern Scandinavia, the climate was so dry and cold that drying in the wind and/or smoking was sufficient to preserve both fish and meat. In Norway and Iceland, salt imports were insignificant in the Middle Ages; the limited production of sea salt sufficed. Sweden and Denmark, however, needed considerable quantities for their herring fisheries. Up to 1350, the salt mines of Lüneburg, owned by Lübeck merchants, were the main suppliers. In the following period, the sea salt of Brittany and later Spain and Portugal dominated.

The need for imported grain was largest in the North. It is too cold for growing corn in normal years north of Malangen in Norway. Farther south, the growing season is so short that the crop often fails to ripen in cold summers. The scarce Icelandic crops gave the Icelanders only a small fraction of what in southern Scandinavia was considered normal consumption. By bartering stockfish for grain, Scandinavian fishermen received two to seven times more calories than they gave away. The fishermen of northern Norway took advantage of these favorable prices, and from about 1250 onward they consumed considerable quantities of rye imported from the Baltic. Before 1320, they also got regular supplies of English wheat. The Icelanders' diet included comparatively little grain; they lived mainly on meat, milk, butter, and fish. Up to 1412, grain imports were minimal, but from 1412, the English merchants and from 1470 the Germans increased the supply. Denmark, Sweden, and eastern Norway produced enough grain to satisfy the needs of the inhabitants. In normal years, the surplus of the countryside was just sufficient to supply the towns.

The commercial revolution, with greater quantities of bulkier goods, led to changes in trade routes and merchant groups. Bulky goods like grain, salt, fish, and metals had to be transported by sea rather than by land. After 1150, German merchants took over an increasing part of Scandinavian long-distance trade, and they dominated completely after about 1310.

At the close of the Viking Age, trade between western and northeastern Europe was conducted on a main route from the Rhine area to Novgorod, with a side branch up to Norway and Iceland. This structure remained to the end of the Middle Ages. As mentioned above, German and Frisian merchants probably already controlled most of the trade from the Rhine area to Hedeby during the Viking Age. Hedeby was in the domain of the Danish king, and most of its inhabitants were probably Scandinavians. In
1158, Lübeck, the first German town on the Baltic, was founded. It became the point of departure for German expansion into the Baltic and Scandinavia. In the Baltic, the main traders at the end of the Viking Age were the peasant-commerce of Gotland. In 1161, the Germans traded in Visby on Gotland; in 1165, in Novgorod. Before 1300, German merchants controlled almost all long-distance trade in the Baltic. All through the Middle Ages, Lübeck was an important distribution center for western goods to Scandinavia.

However, from 1200, the main distribution centers for West European goods to eastern Scandinavia were the towns of Skanör and Falsterbo, where the herring fisheries generated the largest market in northeastern Europe, the Scanian Fair. Merchants from Lübeck with their western goods met with merchants, landowners, and peasants from Denmark, Sweden, eastern Norway, and the rest of the Baltic.

From 1250, ships started to arrive in Scania from Kampen and other towns around the North Sea. For the first time, a direct shipping route connected the North Sea and the Baltic. Over the following 250 years, direct shipping between towns in the Baltic and the North Sea increased, while the route via Lübeck and the Scanian Fair declined. The Dutch commercial expansion into the Baltic started after 1400, and they made Gdansk their main port.

Western Norway kept up its direct trade to other North Sea ports all through the Middle Ages. After 1310, German merchants almost monopolized the export. They sold fish from Bergen to Bruges, Amsterdam, Deventer, Bremen, and Lübeck, and Boston in England.

Hansa merchants. During the last 200 years of the Middle Ages, German merchants controlled almost all long-distance trade in Scandinavian waters. How did they organize their trade, and why were they so strong?

The Hansa existed from 1161 to 1169. It was originally an organization of merchants from North German towns, which historians called "the merchant Hansa." In 1356, it was transformed into an organization of the hometowns of these merchants, "the town Hansa." The purpose was to defend the interests of merchants in foreign countries.

The Hansa had two roots. When German merchants sailed in convoy, or traded in, a foreign market, they often elected an alderman and formed a temporary organization, often called a "Hansa." The German merchants sailing from Lübeck to Gotland formed such a Hansa called "Merchants of the Roman (i.e., German) Empire visiting Gotland." Because most German merchants in the Baltic started from Lübeck and sailed via Gotland, the Gotland Hansa grew into a permanent organization that also defended merchant interests outside Gotland. The Gotland Hansa is first mentioned in 1161, three years after the founding of Lübeck. This year is usually considered the starting year of the Hansa.

These merchant Hansas had no power to oblige merchants to follow a common policy. Only the councils of their hometowns could do that. After the breakdown of imperial power in 1254, several urban leagues were formed in Germany. It was common for representatives of town councils to meet and coordinate their actions. In 1356, the German merchants in Bruges had a conflict with local authorities. Lübeck then summoned councilors of the towns sending merchants to Bruges to discuss concerted action, the first meeting of the diet of the town Hansa.

The diet did not meet every year, but was summoned by the town council of Lübeck when there were problems to be discussed. The Hansa towns were never strong enough to make war on any of the Scandinavian nations on their own. But before the Reformation, they were strong enough to be a valuable ally when Scandinavian countries clashed. By skillfully shifting alliance partners, the Hansa towns obtained favorable trade privileges in all the Scandinavian countries. Their greatest triumph was the league of Cologne in 1367, when they allied themselves with Sweden, Holstein, and Mecklenburg against Denmark and Norway. At the peace conference in 1370, they obtained control of the fortification along Øresund and at the Scania market for fifteen years.

The real strength of the Hansa merchants did not lie in military power, but in economic organization. In the Viking Age, only a small minority of Scandinavian merchants were professional. After 1100, an increasing number of them settled in towns. But as late as 1300, many of the Norwegians sending ships and goods to England, Iceland, and Greenland were churchmen, landowners, and rich peasants who lived only part of the year in town. Most Scandinavian merchants in Gotland were peasants. The Scandinavians traveled from marketplace to marketplace with their goods.

The Hansa merchants, however, were professionals, which enabled them to organize their trade in a new and more effective manner from about 1250 onward. The merchant capitalist no longer traveled with his goods, but sat in his office in his hometown and wrote letters to agents in foreign trade markets. Inside Germany, these agents were usually local merchants; Hansa merchants bought and sold goods for each other. To Scandinavia they sent servants or junior partners, who lived there for longer periods. When there were many of them in a town, they elected aldermen and formed an organization. Such Hanseatic trading stations were found in almost all the larger Scandinavian towns in the period 1300–1500.

The Hanseatic trade organization was the most effective in northern Europe 1250–1450. The Hansa merchants had wider trade contacts than other merchants and could offer their customers more and cheaper goods than their Scandinavian colleagues.

Many Hansa merchants came to Scandinavia for some weeks or months every summer. The Scanian Fair is the best example of this practice. But many stayed for years or a lifetime as representatives of merchants in Hansa towns. The largest Hanseatic colonies were found in Stockholm and Bergen. These towns also represented two opposite ways of integrating the Germans socially and politically into urban society.

The Germans in Stockholm had no special guild or organization; there was no need for it. Hansa merchants in Stockholm retained citizenship in their German hometowns. But that affiliation did not prevent many of them from also being citizens of Stockholm; double citizenship was common. Hansa merchants who owned a house in the town were given the same political rights as Swedes, paid the same taxes, and had the same duties. They were eligible for election to the ruling body of the town, the council, and the office of mayor. These Germans came to Stockholm with their families. While buying and selling on behalf of merchants in their hometowns, mostly Lübeck, they also traded on their own. Their children often stayed in Sweden and founded native Swedish merchant families. The number of Germans in Stockholm was at its highest in the years 1350–1400. At the end of the 15th century, there was an upsurge of national feeling in Sweden, and after 1471 only citizens of Swedish towns could be elected to councils and mayorships.

In Bergen, on the other hand, the Hansa merchants had a strong organization, called "the Kontor." At its maximum in 1450–1550, it organized about 1,000 Germans who lived there all year,
and an additional 1,000 who came to trade there in summer. By comparison, Bergen had around 6,000 Norwegian townsmen. The resident Germans were bound by the statutes of the Kontor to remain unmarried while in Bergen, and they returned to their hometowns when they had earned enough money to establish a household of their own. They were all servants or junior partners of merchants in their hometowns. They owned houses in Bergen and were engaged in the stockfish trade. The resident Germans elected aldermen who represented them before local authorities. The aldermen were dependent on support from, and received orders from, the Hanseatic Diet and the council of Lübeck. Most of the Germans brought weapons to Bergen. During a conflict in 1455, they killed the royal bailiff, the bishop, and sixty other Norwegians. This conflict was an exception; they rarely used their actual military control of the town. Most of their houses were situated in a special quarter, Bryggen. Here, the aldermen exercised jurisdiction in cases between Germans. In practice, they did not respect Norwegian law regulating exchange of goods, duration of stay, and so on.

In other Scandinavian towns, we find elements of both patterns. Swedish towns followed Stockholm. In Oslo and Tønsberg, the Hansa merchants had their organization and sat in the council. In the Dalish towns, there were fewer resident Germans because so much of the trade was done at the fair in Scania, and because the distance to the Hansa towns was so short. They were eligible for the council, but they were rarely elected. In the towns along Øresund, they had their own organizations, but not in Jutland and on Funen.

About 1100, the medieval commercial revolution started a process of economic integration in northern Europe. In the first medieval phase, it concerned limited sections of the Scandinavia economies, mainly fish and metals and to some degree butter and meat. The Hansa merchants created these economic links between Scandinavia and Europe.

Transport. In the Viking Age, a marked improvement took place in Scandinavia's means of communication. This process began with the Arab expansion at the beginning of the 8th century. The European trade routes were thus shifted from the Mediterranean to the North Sea, leading to the growth in Scandinavian transit trade. The first towns were established as summer markets for the hinterland trade. Maritime conditions, such as accessibility from the sea and the possibility of further transport into the country by water, were decisive factors in this phase of establishment. When the summer markets became permanent settlements, they increasingly specialized in hinterland trade. Accordingly, a town sector came into existence, which took over part of the tool production of agriculture, and an agricultural sector, which made available possibilities for an increase in the actual agricultural production. This work division motivated improvements to the road systems.

The good roads were again a prerequisite for vehicles with larger capacities and better use of the tractive force of the animals. The resident merchants in the towns had storage facilities that favored ships with more cargo-carrying capacity, which demanded fixed quays. With the town as an intermediary, the development of the means of transportation on sea and land led to the development of superior transportation systems. At the end of the Viking Age, these connected systems of transportation were established especially in southern Scandinavia and in particular in Denmark. In northern Scandinavia, natural conditions favored maritime transportation.

Carriage by sea. In addition to Scandinavian ships, foreign ships were also important. The oldest remote trade was conducted by Frisians, who made regular visits to the various trading centers. Franks and especially Saxons took over the Frisians' trade and type of ship, which developed into the Hanseatic cog. English, Frisian, and Slavic types of ships also played a role in Scandinavia in the Viking Age and the Middle Ages.

Scandinavian shipbuilding and shipping traditions can be traced back to the 7th century. At the beginning of the Viking Age, two main types were in existence, one for use in warfare and one for trade. Common characteristics were a sharp stemson and curved sterns and bows, a peculiar rudder system, boards joined by clinker building, and a T-shaped keel.

Picture stones from Gotland show a variant of the Nordic ship with a kind of ramming stem, but otherwise it is more a troopship than a warship. They were very light and supple ships that could land on any flat beach and go deep into rivers. In the construction, great speed, maneuverability, and independence of wind power were emphasized. These requisites were managed by a relatively slim ship (the ones that have been found are between 4.5 and 7.2 times longer than broad), which was rowed by the troops themselves. Since the rowers had to sit on both sides of the vessel, with enough space to allow for rowing, the width of the frame was a decisive factor in the ship's construction. To get ashore without being seen, the mast could be laid down during the voyage through a flap in the mast partner, which was placed at deck level, and by lifting it up from the hole in the keelson in which it rested. Equipment and provisions could be stowed under the loose deck-planks.

The merchant ships were constructed to allow for maximum cargo-carrying capacity while maintaining as stable a construction as possible. This aim was managed by a broader ship with close-set ribs. The merchant ships are 2.3–4.9 times longer than broad. There was a half-deck at the stem and at the bow, and a big, open hole at midship. The cargo could be stowed under the half-decks.

were, of course, no oars in the hold, and since the smaller crew, intended for transfer to the hold of the ship, employing the same cult, the sail was the most important propelling force. The sources distinguish among kôpar, bâða, and byrdingr. Contrary to the other known Nordic ships, did not have enough built keel-boat with thwarts strengthened by crossbeams was still with a larger cargo-

Nordic type are known since the Viking Age. This slim, clinker-built keel-boat with thwarts strengthened by crossbeams was still in use in the 20th century for local transport and fishing in western Norway and the Faroe Islands. It could be rowed or propelled by a square sail, the only type of sail known in the Scandinavian Viking Age and the Middle Ages.

From the southern Scandinavian Nydam vessel, a warship was developed in England related to the Nordic ones. It was clinker-built and had a keel. The keel has given the ship its name (Old English ceol, Old Norse kjöll). This type received a small sail at the same time as sails are found on the Gotland picture stones (Ellmers 1972: 47ff.). The sail seems to have spread quickly to all the north-European areas in the 7th century. In the 10th century, the term kjöll was also applied to merchant ships, and this type was adopted by England's trading partners, e.g., in northwestern France. Depictions on seals and other descriptions show that in the 13th century this type received fore and aft castles.

The hulk was developed from English and Frisian local shipbuilding traditions. Instead of a keel and a bow, it had a broad floor-board, which curved both in the cross-section and in the fore-and-aft direction, giving the boat the shape of a banana. The individual planks were originally pushed together and against the floor-board, and were held together by outside cappings. The hulk was well suited for landing on a flat, sandy beach, and an example from Utrecht shows signs of wear from being pulled ashore. On this hulk, the cappings are developed into a half-round beam, which improved the stiffening of the hull and functioned as a kind of bilge keel. A mast, which for reasons of stabilization was placed rather far toward the bow, is known already in Roman times, where it was set in a hole in the frame. The hulk had only one or two pairs of oars. It used a sail, and in the 13th century received fore and aft castles as a consequence of new demands and possibilities of naval warfare. In the late Middle Ages, the hulk developed into a large ship, which ousted the cog in the Baltic. Originally, the cog was a small fishing and merchant vessel for use in shallow tidal waters. The type is of Frisian origin, but in Denmark (the Schlei and the Liim Fjord) it was a small domestic ship before the 11th century and was still in use in the 19th century. The Danish word kog thereafter came to be used as a designation for a flat-bottomed rowboat.

The early Frisian cog, such as the one found in Brøgge, had a flat, carvel-built bottom, which did not allow this type of ship to go ashore. This type had reverse clinkerwork in order to stand the pressure from the cargo when it rested on the sea floor at low tide. The mast was placed in an enlarged frame and was secured at the top with a crossbeam. Excavated remnants of quays in Viking Age towns (Hedeby and Kaupang) must most probably be seen in connection with the Frisian cog, which, outside the tidal areas, were dependent on quays, or anchoring and reloading into small boats. Since the 10th century, the cog had been used for levies, but from the 13th century onward, it was purely a sailing vessel that, like the other types of ships, received fore and aft castles, and shortly before 1250 a stern-rudder instead of a steering oar.

In the development of the seagoing cog, the T-shaped keel and the keelson construction, which was dependent on the T-shaped keel, and also the common clinkerwork were adopted from the Nordic ships. Theoretically, a new type of ship was created, which had only the name in common with the earlier cogs. By the creation of the seagoing cog, the technological prerequisite for a ship with a great cargo-carrying capacity and seaworthiness was realized, as the late-medieval cog from Bremen shows; and with the rise of the Hanseatic towns, the cog became the most important merchant ship in Scandinavia. It was, among other things, used regularly for sailing to Iceland. The great cargo-carrying capacity of the cog became such a decisive factor in the late Middle Ages that not only had new quays to be built for these ships, but also trading centers had to be moved (Ellmers 1972: 75, 164).

For a fuller survey of the various types of small boats, see the bibliography below. Here, only a few important types will be mentioned.

The dugout was common everywhere. In Scandinavia, it was still used in the 19th century or later for transportation, hunting, and fishing. Two dugouts tied together to form a barge were still used ca. 1900 for cattle transport in southern Denmark. The actual flat-bottomed barge was, among other things, used for fishing at Falsterbo (Ellmers 1972: 104).

Maritime transportation in the Viking Age is reflected in place-names. The name Skibby used for settlements along the rivers refers to places that could be reached by ship, and names like Draget and Skibsdret refer to places where one had to pull the ships on rollers over land. Pulling ships over land from the North Sea to Hedeby was not uncommon.

The rafting of timber is known from all wooded areas of Scandinavia, although in Denmark it only took place sporadically as a consequence of such obstacles as mills and eel weirs. As ferries, rafts were used together with dugouts, and are mentioned in Iceland in the first half of the 12th century and in a Norwegian law by King Magnús (r. 1263–1280). Such finds are known from Sweden from the 5th to the 7th centuries and the first half of the 12th century (Ellmers 1972: 115).

Towns and quays. The summer markets, with pit houses, tents, and ships pulled up on the beach, gradually became permanent settlements. They were fortified, and roads were constructed according to the system that can be seen in Åhus: one road along the inside of the fortification, and two crossroads that lead to the gates. The planked roads show traces of wear from carts, which must have placed a role in the hinterland trade. It is at this stage that the road systems to the towns are expanded and improved.

As a consequence of the growth of the towns and the expansion of the road system, a shift in trading centers took place. The open market by the beach was retained, but loses significance. Instead, large merchant's houses with storehouses, residential buildings, and possibly overnight accommodations for visiting crews...
were established along the rivers and fitted with landing platforms parallel to the river. The only road leads through the merchant's house to a broad public highway on the other side that paralleled the river and led to the hinterland. This system is known throughout the northern European area.

Most of the visiting merchants had an established connection with a resident merchant, at whose landing they put in. He bought their goods and provided return cargo. The local farmer drove to the merchant's house with his surplus production and local homemade articles. In return, he received not only goods for private consumption, but also for resale and further purchase of goods. The resident merchant thus also stimulated increased trade in the Nordic towns well into the 20th century. In the late Middle Ages, the plots of land near the water were provided with jetties. In Bergen and Uppsala, the individual landing piers were provided with a common quay, so that one could walk along the waterside.

Road systems. In the Middle Ages, the cities' planked roads were gradually replaced by stone pavement in southern Scandinavia. In northern Scandinavia, roads were constructed with planks over a box-construction that contained drains (e.g., in Trondheim). Outside the towns, the roads consisted of lanes formed by wheel tracks. In moist and wet areas, roads were strengthened with brushwood or planking, and were possibly supplied with curbstones. After the Viking Age, a predominance of paved roads is found, which were normally divided into two lanes with raised stone in between. One crossed boglands and natural fords by way of gravel causeways. Where there were no such causeways, they could be created by bringing in gravel and stones and strengthened with brushwood and planking.

Wooden bridges begin to appear in the 10th century (e.g., in Varpelev, Risby, and Ravning). These may be long and long, with rammed-down poles and braces to support individual spans. A number of bridges made from carved blocks of granite are preserved from the Romanesque period (e.g., in Viborg county). The need for solid stone roads in the Middle Ages is related to the increased load capacity of the carts and the military demands of the royal power. Jyske lov (the Jutish Law) and Sjællandsklof (the Zealand Law) attempted to secure the safety of the travelers. Concerning the maintenance of the roads, the Jutish Law says that to each town must belong four roads, those that from time immemorial have led to it. It is the duty of the plot owners to repair "the military road of the king." But if it is impassable, either because of bogland or large rivers, then all of the parish must help in the building of a bridge. In Norway, it was the duty of the local people to keep the general road in repair.

Transportation by vehicle. According to Berg (1934, 1935), carriages had been used only in Denmark, Sweden (as far as the Göteborg area and northern Uppland), Aland, Aboland, and southern Karelen, while carts were found far inland and could be used to transport people and heavy objects, such as timber and stones. The use of oxen for carriages continued throughout the Viking Age and Middle Ages until the 20th century.

Horses. Most of the horses in the Viking Age were of the size of an Icelandic horse. The biggest horses measured 150 cm. (16 hands). The rare finds of horse bones from the Middle Ages point to these small horses.

Breast harnesses are depicted on the Oseberg textiles. Such harnesses were linked by additional harnesses or chains that transferred the draw to the pulling disks at the shafts of the forecarriage. Chains and pulling disks of iron are mentioned in 1516 in Stockholm.

In the winter, sledges were used both for transportation of people and heavy objects, such as timber and stones. The use of oxen for carriages continued throughout the Viking Age and Middle Ages until the 20th century.
TRANSPORT

a cradle-saddle. During the ride, the legs were stretched forward. A special version for military use can be seen in a mural in Brejning church in Holbæk county, Denmark. As a pack saddle, this type lived a long life in northern Scandinavia, where it was in use until recent times under the name klanseal. In the 14th century, the cradle-saddle was replaced by the club-saddle, a heavier saddle with a high fork and a distinct horn. The exaggerated cantle is replaced by two side panels that are free of the saddle. A saddle pad was used, consisting of either a blanket or leather with linen sewn underneath.

A great variety of medieval stirrups show that they were made for a number of functions. The stirrup of the Viking Age often had a neck between the hole for the stirrup strap and the stirrup. The stirrup becomes shorter toward the end of the 10th century, and the neck disappears; the strap is placed around the top of the stirrup, thus making it stronger. This innovation is due to the club-saddle, which gave the horse more mobility and allowed the rider to shift his weight exclusively to the stirrups, thus requiring that the stirrups be more solid.

Among the various kinds of bits, the main types are the snaffle and the curb bit, as can be seen in depictions from throughout the Middle Ages. The snaffle is the more common type, but a few curbs have been found dating from the 13th century to the beginning of the 14th. From the Viking Age until the early Middle Ages, the snaffle with a loose guard was used. A snaffle welded together with cheek pieces appears at the latest in the middle of the 13th century, and was used throughout the Middle Ages. Simple, massive snaffles are found throughout the Middle Ages. Until the 13th century, some are consciously made sharp. Hollow, thicker, and milder bits are found at the latest around the second quarter of the 14th century, and are linked to the better control offered by the club-saddle.

From the 10th century and the beginning of the 11th, prick spurs generally follow a straight horizontal plane. In the second half of the 11th century until the mid-12th, the end of the spur tilted upward. The latest prick spur is Danish (Borroming), and has a fan-shaped rowel.

The oldest wheeled spurs are from Lund (ca. 1160 and 1175). The type does not become common until the end of the 13th century. The oldest have a short shank. In the beginning of the 14th century, some spurs had a long shank.

In the Viking Age, calls rather than horseshoes were probably used. The so-called "Celtic" horseshoe is known from the end of the 11th century, and came into use possibly before the middle of the century (Thuletomen, Lund). The shoe has a wavy outer rim as a result of pressing out from the depression around the nail holes. The shoe type has calls, and the nailheads have goads that jutted under the shoe. This feature is often seen in one-half or three-quarter shoes, and was created as a result of the interference cause by the jutting out of the rim. In the 13th century, the shoe type develops into the "triangle-shoe" with a less distinct wavy outer rim and a V-shaped inner rim. The type is known from Lund, and was probably in use until the first half of the 14th century. In France, horseshoes of the "Celtic" type were the normal ones until the last century, although fitted with common horseshoe nails.

Around 1300, we find the "Spanish" horseshoe with high calls and a raising of the hindmost part of the bars so that the calls and the front part of the bars are on the same line. Also, this type uses stud-nails. In the middle of the 14th century, the Spanish horseshoe gets a fullering: one of two small grooves on each bar. To this type belong the T-shaped nails placed alongside in the groove, but in winter the shoeing was done with the stud-nail being placed in a pair of special holes. The type of shoeing is still common.

The datable medieval oxshoes are all from the 13th century. They are made of thin iron, a couple of millimeters thick at the most, in the shape of a half-circle. Toe-clips provided added support. Like the horseshoes of the Celtic type, there was a depression around the nail holes, and the same kind of nails were used.

Other means of transportation. It was common to walk on foot with small wares and tools. Skates made from smoothed metatarsal bones of an ox were common. One pole with a piked stick, most examples of which date from the Viking Age and the early Middle Ages. Skis are mentioned in the sources, and one of the Nordic gods, Ul, was known as the ski-god. Finally, the use of woven or braided snowshoes for people and packhorses is also attested.

Perspective. The systems of transportation and trade that were established in the Middle Ages functioned unchallenged until the 20th century. Individual features could be subjected to technical innovation, but the physical frames of the town remained the same, and the trade pattern with small craft for voyages to the individual merchants and the farmers who sold their surplus production did not change.

It was the nation's military need that promoted innovation in overland and maritime transportation.

Gradually, the river harbors were abandoned, and the large docks were established along the coast. Road transport was supplied by canals. The system of transport was tied to maritime travel, but only until the railway lines were expanded, thus introducing a new epoch of town establishment, the railway towns. The physical frames of the old towns burst with the expansion of trade and increased industrialization coupled with the mass migration from the countryside. A system of transportation that had functioned for 600 years came to an end.

**Tristram's Saga ok Ísoddar**

(‘The Saga of Tristram and Ísodd’) was written in Iceland, presumably in the 14th century. It survives in a vellum MS of around 1450, AM 489 4to, and in paper MSS from the 18th and 19th centuries. The probable source of the saga is *Tristrams saga ok Ísoddar*, which was translated in Norway in 1226 for King Håkon Håkonarson by a certain Brother Robert from the Tristan of the 12th-century Anglo-Norman poet Thomas. However, the earliest extant MS of this translation dates from the late 13th century, postdating that of *Tristrams saga ok Ísoddar*. The relationship between the two sagas and the literary value of the Icelandic version has been a matter for debate. The names of the characters in *Tristrams saga ok Ísoddar* do not correspond exactly with those of Brother Robert's translation; there are significant changes in the story line and significant alterations to motivation. The Icelandic version is also considerably shorter, and the style is closer to that of the *Íslendingasögur* than the Norwegian translation. In sum, the shorter Icelandic saga could be regarded as a homely retelling of the Tristan story by someone who had only an imperfect memory of Robert's *roman courtios*. This view was held by Leach (1921), and for many years it was generally accepted. But in 1960, Schach pointed out that the Icelandic saga deviated from the Norwegian source in ways that amounted to a consistent reversal of it, not least in its attempt to ennoble the characters of Tristan and Isodd and to convince the reader of their good motives. Schach demonstrated further that the author, far from being an ignorant rustic, was well versed in the sagas, consciously limited their style, and drew extensively upon them for many of his episodes. Kalinke (1981) argues that the saga is not merely a reply to the Norwegian translation, but a humorous commentary on Arthurian romance in general, in which the author makes fun of the tenets of the genre, exaggerating some motifs, distorting others, and generally confusing the audience's expectations. Kalinke thus places *Tristrams saga ok Ísoddar* at the zenith of the evolutionary process from translated romance to Icelandic saga.

The Icelandic and Danish Tristan ballads and the Icelandic Tristan folklore ultimately derive from the Norwegian translation, but some of the names in them may have been taken from the shorter Icelandic saga, which may also be the source for some of the motifs in the folklore.

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**[See also: Navigation; Ships and Shipbuilding]**

**Trelleborg Fortresses** see Fortresses, Trelleborg

**Tristrams saga ok Ísoddar** (‘The Saga of Tristram and Ísodd’) was written in Iceland, presumably in the 14th century. It survives in a vellum MS of around 1450, AM 489 4to, and in paper MSS from the 18th and 19th centuries. The probable source of the saga is *Tristrams saga ok Ísoddar*, which was translated in Norway in 1226 for King Håkon Håkonarson by a certain Brother Robert from the Tristan of the 12th-century Anglo-Norman poet Thomas. However, the earliest extant MS of this translation dates from the late 13th century, postdating that of *Tristrams saga ok Ísoddar*. The relationship between the two sagas and the literary value of the Icelandic version has been a matter for debate. The names of the characters in *Tristrams saga ok Ísoddar* do not correspond exactly with those of Brother Robert's translation; there are significant changes in the story line and significant alterations to motivation. The Icelandic version is also considerably shorter, and the style is closer to that of the *Íslendingasögur* than the Norwegian translation. In sum, the shorter Icelandic saga could be regarded as a homely retelling of the Tristan story by someone who had only an imperfect memory of Robert's *roman courtios*. This view was held by Leach (1921), and for many years it was generally accepted. But in 1960, Schach pointed out that the Icelandic saga deviated from the Norwegian source in ways that amounted to a consistent reversal of it, not least in its attempt to ennoble the characters of Tristan and Isodd and to convince the reader of their good motives. Schach demonstrated further that the author, far from being an ignorant rustic, was well versed in the sagas, consciously limited their style, and drew extensively upon them for many of his episodes. Kalinke (1981) argues that the saga is not merely a reply to the Norwegian translation, but a humorous commentary on Arthurian romance in general, in which the author makes fun of the tenets of the genre, exaggerating some motifs, distorting others, and generally confusing the audience's expectations. Kalinke thus places *Tristrams saga ok Ísoddar* at the zenith of the evolutionary process from translated romance to Icelandic saga.

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**[See also: Old Norse—Icelandic Literature, Foreign Influence on; Riddarasögur; Tristrams saga ok Ísoddar]**

**Tristrams saga ok Ísoddar** (‘The Saga of Tristram and Ísodd’) is an Old Norse riddarasögur originally translated or adapted from Old French (Anglo-Norman) in 1226 by a certain Brother Robert under the auspices of the Norwegian king Håkonarson (r. 1217–1263). This piece of information is supplied by a passage preceding Tristrams saga in the paper MSS. *Tristrams saga* is preserved in its entirety in the Icelandic paper MSS AM 543 4to (17th century), with some lacunae in IB 51 fol. (17th century) and in JS 8 fol., a copy of IB 51 fol. (18th century), which contains material not found in IB 51 fol. Four leaves from now-lost codices also exist (from AM 567 XXII 4to and from Library of Congress, "Reeves Fragment," in William Dudley Foulke Papers, MS Division). They contain parts of *Tristrams saga* in somewhat fuller form than the later copies. Árni Magnússon had excerpts from *Tristrams saga* made in AM 576b 4to, which also contains his notes on the text. Another résumé is found in the MS NKS 1144 fol. (18th century) and a fragment in Lbs 4816 4to (ca. 1800).

Scholars do not agree whether *Tristrams saga* should be considered a faithfully translated representative of the Tristan poem by Thomas written about 1170 and grouped with the "courtly" branch of the Tristan material, or looked upon as a conflation of both the "vulgar" and "courtly" branches. What is clear, however, is that the translator or adapter has used some sources that scholars have attributed to the "vulgar" branch.

*Tristrams saga* is a stylistically uneven account of the famous triangular love affair among King Mark, Ísodd, and Tristram. Compared with the preserved fragments of Thomas's poem, it is obvious that the translator has omitted all the explanations supplied by the poet and shortened most of the interior monologues. He has, on the other hand, tried to embellish his story with rhetorical ornamentations. Whether this translation is to be traced back to the 13th century and is, as stated in the title of the saga, a work of Brother Robert, or whether it must be looked upon as a 14th-century Icelandic adaptation, has not been investigated.

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Trójumanna saga ("The Saga of the Troy-men") survives in three redactions known as Alpha, Beta, and Hauksbók. The broad similarities among the redactions, taken together with their differences in detail, indicate a common origin in a lost archetype that was probably composed in the early 13th century. The Alpha redaction, with its fidelity to Dares and the consistently latinate names of its characters, has no part in the controversy; but for each of the other two redactions, it is still an open question to what extent the non-Daretean material results from direct consultation of classical sources or simply from use of an Old Norse source that had already incorporated borrowings from classical authors.

For all their reliance on foreign sources, the three redactors also strive to assimilate the story of Troy to Old Norse literary tradition. The Hauksbók redaction includes episodes derived from "native" sagas, such as Vǫfnfjörðinga saga and Hrölfs saga kraka, which enhance the narrative considerably. Aside from these additions and the unique mythological preface, Hauksbók handles the story of Troy in a terser and more condensed style than the other two redactions. Both Alpha and Beta, but especially Alpha, impart a truly saga-like character to their foreign source material by developing dramatic scenes rich in vivid description and dialogue. The characters' speeches, full of ironic understatement and courageous resignation to fate, contribute to a distinctly Northern heroic ethos in these redactions of the saga.

Far more than a simple word-for-word translation of a classical account of the Trojan War, more even than an ingenious synthesis of various sources of the Troy legends, Trójumanna saga stands as a noteworthy achievement in Old Norse heroic narrative. It had considerable influence on subsequent literature, especially the late-medieval riddarsögur, which contain many names, narrative motifs, and stylistic features taken from Trójumanna saga.

Randi Eldevik

[See also: Breta sógur; Hauksbók; Hröls saga kraka; Riddarasögur, Snorra Edda, Vápnfirdinga saga]

**Tógdrápa** see **Þórarinn loftunga**
Páttir (pl. þaettir) in modern usage refers to short narratives in Old Norse–Icelandic. Scholars have yet to explain fully its etymology, but Germanic cognates mean “wick, loop, strand of rope,” and the latter is the primary meaning in Old Norse. Even some of the earliest attestations, however, are metaphorical, in that they use the term to refer to members of a family (e.g., Egill Skallagrímsson, Lausavís, st. 24, Sonatorrekk, st. 7; also the eddic Hamdısmål, st. 4). More broadly, þáttir meant simply “part of a whole,” a meaning attested in laws and through centuries of skaldic poetry and often used in literary contexts, meaning “part of a text.” Metonymy gradually extended the meaning to more or less independent parts of larger compilations, perhaps especially MSS.

Although the meaning “part, chapter” still remains, as a literary term þáttir now has the special technical sense of a short independent narrative. The number of such þaettir probably exceeds 100, but they vary greatly, and one cannot speak of a single genre. The best-known þaettir, and the ones that best cohere to form a corpus, are those embedded in the great synoptic konungasögur MSS, especially Morkinskínta and Faginskínta from the first part of the 13th century, and Hulda-Hroknskínta, whose original may date from around 1300. These þaettir characteristically turn on an encounter between the Norwegian king, perhaps most often Haraldr harðráði (“hard-ruler”) Sigurðarson, and an Icelander of relatively low social status. Through wit, luck, or pluck, the Icelander pleases the monarch after falling out with him, and receives a reward that greatly enhances his social status. A frame of the hero’s journey from Iceland to Norway at the beginning of the tale and journey back out to Iceland often surrounds the central encounter and reward, and for this reason such þaettir may be termed útanferdar þáttir, or “tales of a journey from Iceland to Norway.” The journeys in turn may be omitted, particularly the journey back to Iceland, and some introductory and concluding material, sometimes of a genealogical nature, may begin and end the narratives. Stylistically, these þaettir resemble the konungasögur in which they are embedded; that is, they employ the understated, paratactic language often called “saga style,” with its seemingly neutral point of view and emphasis on showing rather than telling. Perhaps, however, because they are shorter than other kinds of texts (some fill only a few pages in the modern editions) and therefore have less time to spend on background, they rely more heavily on dialogue and indirect address than do most Old Norse prose genres, and time is relatively more telescoped. Descriptions of persons and places tend to be abbreviated.

About thirty to forty þaettir share some of this structure, and they also exhibit thematic similarities. Friendship, hospitality, reconciliation, or religious themes operate in nearly all of them. Among the best known are Audunar þáttir vestfirska, Hreiðar þáttir heimska, Halldór's þáttir Snorranaril, Brands þáttir orva, Stóls þáttir, and Ógmundar þáttir dyts.

To date, most scholarship on þaettir has focused on narratives of this sort, and indeed they clearly respond to treatment as a separate genre. Considering the original low status of the protagonist and his subsequent leap in social status in a happy ending, the telescoping of time and space, and the possibility that an útanferðar þáttir could be told in a single sitting, some scholars have explored the relationship of the form to folktale.

Other texts traditionally called þaettir appear on closer examination to be nothing more than short versions of other genres. A number of þaettir display all the structural, thematic, and stylistic features of the family sagas, and in fact no line can be drawn between some of the longer texts now called þaettir, such as Porsteins þáttir stangarhoggis or Óláfra þáttir (in Möðruvallabók actually called Óláfra saga) and the short Íslendingasögur, such as Porsteins saga hvíta or Porsteins saga Sólu-Hallssonar. Similarly, a number of texts now called þaettir are short fornaldrarsögur in all but name. These texts exhibit the variety of fornaldrasögur: Normagestis þáttir, for example, contains snatches of eddic heroic poetry, as does Volsunga saga; Helga þáttir Pórisssonar and Porsteins þáttir bejarmagns offer a mixture of prehistoric fantasy and historical reality; and Hauks þáttir Hafrokar has fantastic elements.

Many þaettir defy the usual taxonomy, and although scholars have resorted to such terms as “þáttir-like” to discuss them, it may be best to regard them simply as anecdotes that made sense to medieval authors in the contexts in which we find them recorded.

"The Saga of Piõrekr of Bern" was compiled perhaps as late as 1250–1251, although possibly as early as the late 12th century. There are three main MSS: a Norwegianvellum (Stock. Perg. fol. no. 4) marred by several lacunae and dating from the late 13th century, and two complete Icelandic paper MSS (AM 177 fol. and AM 178 fol.), both dating from the 17th century. Other Icelandic paper MSS have no independent textual value. There is also a Swedish translation (Didriksskrönikan) made in about the mid-15th century.

Piõreks saga af Bern is usually classified with the forntaldarsõgur or with the riddarsõgur, although strictly speaking it has little in common with either genre with regard to motifs or structure, and is almost unique of its sort.

The saga tells of the lineage, exploits, and death of many heroes, the most famous names among them also occurring, with variant spellings, in medieval German literature, while some appear in Old English. These heroes are set in looser or closer relationship to the preeminent hero Piõrek af Bern (i.e., Verona). For instance, Attila (the Atli of other Old Norse works) asks Piõrek for help against his enemies, and later grants him asylum when he is ousted by Ermanaric (Jormunrekkr in older Norse tradition), who is Piõrek's uncle. Sigurðr the dragonslayer, of whose fortunes the saga gives a full version, is vanquished by Piõrek and becomes his liegeman, while Sigurðr's brothers-in-law, the Niflungs Gunnarr and Hogni, of whom there is also a full account in the section called "Niflunga saga," deal with Piõrek long before their fateful meeting at Attila's court. Vêlent the Smith (Volundr in older Norse tradition), grandson of the Swedish king Vilkinus and son of Vaõi, has a son, Viðga, who first becomes Piõrek's liegeman and then, through marrying into Ermanaric's family, his reluctant and doomed opponent.

Such links help to give coherence to the mass of material interwoven with Piõrek's youthful adventures, his expulsion from his city of Bern by Ermanaric, his eventual return, and his final mysterious disappearance on a black steed of satanic origin.

Piõrek is the legendary development of Theodoric, Ostrogothic ruler of Italy (493–526), while Ermanaric of the saga derives from the earlier Ostrogothic king Ermanaric (d. ca. 376), who in legend has taken the place of Odoacer (ca. 433–493), Theodoric's historical opponent; Odoacer, however, did not depose Theodoric but was deposed by him. Theodoric had no links with the historical Attila, who died a year or two before Theodoric was born.

The precise nature of the saga's immediate sources and its mode of composition are disputed. The prologue mentions the advantage of having lengthy (oral) stories in written form, and also mentions the saga's derivation from German sources, including lays. The saga writer, who was probably a Norwegian, although possibly an Icelander, may have collected and combined in written form various unlinked stories or poems transmitted orally. On the other hand, it is equally probable, and recent research makes it increasingly likely (Andersson 1974), that the saga writer did little more than translate an existing, written Low German version of the already integrated legends, probably compiled in Soest (Susa in the saga, Attila's capital city), although he may also have used additional orally transmitted material.


Alpingi was elected in 1989, as a representative to the Storting (sing. and pl.) has no certain etymology. A Nordic word is underway. The establishment of Finnish and Swedish Sameting pingmadr met at definite places at regular intervals, did not participate, women only occasionally (as widows) or as "ping-mznn". Tative meeting of a larger territory or region. But only Iceland had neither presupposes nor excludes egalitarian societies. The local communities in Denmark, western Norway, and Iceland were dominated by chieftains even in prehistoric times, less so in Trøndelag or in remote Swedish villages (byar).

We have little positive knowledge about the ping on the local level. Still, we may infer that the old Nordic rural societies must have had meetings to decide questions relating to fencing, construction of bridges, clearance, pasture rights, worship, and even defense. And they must have had ways to settle conflicts.

In Norway, settlement of conflicts seems to have been arranged in the first place by a dômr, i.e., six men, three nominated from either side. The dômr was expected to reach an agreement between the parties in matters of property as well as of, say, manslaughter. If an agreement was not reached or was considered broken, one of the parties would call a ping of the community. Breaking an agreement concluded by a dômr was considered a robbery (raun). Acting as a court, this ping would then pronounce a judgment, eventually execute the judgment by sheer force, and confiscate for their own benefit the property of the obstinate fellow fãgmâdr. It would appear that such pings were not lightly convoked, because of the potential threat of not obeying the agreement before the dômr and the nuisance caused to fellow fãgmâdr of the community.

Regional political units had been founded in Scandinavia well before historic times. They are the -land in Denmark and Sweden (Finland included), or the -lög, -lag, -lyke in Norway, founded within topographic settings by conquest and kept up by domination and force. The ping at such levels was composed of local chieftains and/or deputies picked by local or central chieftains. Tasks for such pings were defense, worship, and jurisdiction. Local chieftains engaged in a conflict would not easily submit to a local ping. They might receive more support at a regional ping with their peers. Or the local ping might not agree about a case brought before it. The outcome would then be referred to a regional ping. But there were no traditions of appeal in secular courts in Scandinavia in the Middle Ages.

The regional ping in their functions as courts may supply the background of the well-known Nordic regional codes (landskapsloven), all lavishly published since the 19th century and even translated into modern Nordic languages. Decisions taken on the regional level had sufficient authority behind them to crystallize into regional customs and customary laws, in Sweden set forth in topographic settings by conquest and kept up by domination and force. The ping at such levels was composed of local chieftains and/or deputies picked by local or central chieftains. Tasks for such pings were defense, worship, and jurisdiction. Local chieftains engaged in a conflict would not easily submit to a local ping. They might receive more support at a regional ping with their peers. Or the local ping might not agree about a case brought before it. The outcome would then be referred to a regional ping. But there were no traditions of appeal in secular courts in Scandinavia in the Middle Ages.

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dic, and Danish. Regional chieftains as well as the kings and the clerical authorities could use the ping for their own purposes.

On a local level, there were such matters to be decided as construction and equipping of the local warship (e.g., in the Norwegian skipreider along the coast); construction and maintenance of bridges, roads, and harbors; taxes; construction and equipping of parish churches; and the provisions for parsons. The king's local steward (Norwegian armadr) might use the local ping to communicate royal decrees as well as to prosecute violation of the king's peace, thus by and large introducing royal jurisdiction to replace local custom.

These subjects were also negotiated in a more general way on the regional level. Negotiations at the regional ping explain the character of the Nordic regional laws. They were not, like the English common law, an ever-growing body of decisions in casu. Each regional law was general for its region, even if there were considerable differences between the regional laws. They are the main result left to us from the regional ping.

Royal pretenders convoked regional ping in order to be recognized as kings (hyllingsping). The regional ping of Trondelag from the 8th century onward had its meeting place at Frosta, a peninsula in the Trondheimsfjord. At the end of the 10th century, a town (kaupang) was founded at the delta (eyr) of the river Nida, with a ping-place. From then on, the hyllingsping for royal pretenders in Trondelag were held at the Eyrafping in Nidaros. More elaborate was the Swedish Eriksça. A royal pretender first designated as king at the Mora ping at Uppsala was required to present himself on numerous hyllingspinga along a fixed itinerary through all Sweden.

The regional ping should not be seen as something like modern legislative assemblies. The Danish regional ping may have been overshadowed from 1250 by the high nobility, not very interested in nationwide codes, but more in exerting direct influence through their council of nobles. Norway received the first national code in 1273, with the establishment of the Swedish landslag. The code was prepared in the royal chancery in Bergen, then "given" to the regional Gula{)ingat midsummer 1274, the following year to the Frostu{)ing, and in 1276 to the two regional ping in eastern Norway. But in contrast with the former regional laws, these apparently regional codes are practically identical, a fact that demonstrates that the regional ping were not supposed to deliberate with any effect on a royal proposal. The Swedish codes (of the countryside and of the towns) from 1350 onward were uniform for the realm, prepared in common by the royal chancery and the high nobility.

The regional ping tended to disappear with the growth of royal power in the late Middle Ages and in the early-modern period. The local urban ping remained until the 18th century, the local rural ping well into the 19th. The local ping at that later stage were used for publication of contracts, for civil and criminal justice, for tax collection, and for publication of royal decrees.


Gudmund Sandvik

[See also: Alping; Royal Administration and Finances]

Pinga saga ("The Saga of the Assemblies"), or Sigurðar þáttir Hranasonar ("The Tale of Sigurðr Hranason"), tells the story of a prolonged legal conflict supposed to have taken place 1112–1114 or 1113–1115, which arose when King Sigurðr Jórsalfari ("crusader") Magnússon accused Sigurðr Hranason of keeping for himself a part of the Lapp-tax that he was responsible for collecting. Sigurðr Hranason, however, receives legal advice from King Eysteinn, and, after a series of lawsuits, King Sigurðr’s attempt to punish Sigurðr Hranason remains unsuccessful. This failure enrages King Sigurðr, who eventually threatens King Eysteinn, his brother and coregent, with civil war. To avoid such a calamity, Sigurðr Hranason places his fate in the hands of King Sigurðr, who fines him. When later it appears that Sigurðr Hranason is unable to pay the fine, King Sigurðr is convinced that Sigurðr Hranason has not been feathering his own nest as originally assumed, and they are reconciled.

Pinga saga is preserved in six MSS. There are two longer and not quite identical versions in Hulda (AM 66 fol.) and in Morkinskinn (GKS 1009 fol.), shorter versions are found in Eirspennill (AM 47 fol.), Jófraskinn, Gullinskinna, and Codex Frisianus (AM 45 fol.; Frisbók). Scholars agree that the different versions are all derived from an original *Pinga saga, now lost, probably composed around 1200 and incorporated into the Heimskringla MSS during the 13th century. Storm (1877) suggested that the surviving shorter version of Pinga saga (which he calls Pinga þáttir) is an extract from the longer one, which is closest to the original. Louis-Jensen (1977), however, proposes that both versions were altered from the original saga. In her view, Pinga saga was composed in Norway (whereas Storm favored Iceland) and was later changed by Icelandic editors into the versions known to us today. Bjarni Einarsson (1977) suggested Pinga saga as a source for Egils saga, a theory challenged by Berger (1979).


Jannie Roed

[See also: Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar; Eirspennill; Frisbók; Heimskringla; Hulda-Hrokkinskinna; Morkinskinn; Þáttir]

Pjalar-Jóns saga ("The Saga of File-Jón") is an anonymous Icelandic riddarasaga, often known under the title Jóns saga Svipdagssonar or Eireks forvitna ("The Saga of Jón Svipdagsson and Eirek the Curious"). The saga probably came into existence in the 14th century, perhaps in Reykholar in Breiðafjörður; its style
suggests the first half of the century. *Pjalar-Jóns saga* is extant in forty MSS, of which the oldest (fragmentary) parchment MS, Stock. perg. 4to no. 6, is dated about 1400. The *ritmar* based on the material of the saga were probably composed at the end of the 16th century.

Prince Eirekr of Valland is an excellent warrior. A stranger, Gestr, spends the winter at the royal court. With him, Eirekr finds a portrait of a beautiful virgin, whom he wishes to marry. Eirekr leaves together with Gestr and sails to Kastella in Holmgårðr (Novgorod), where Earl Röðbert rules. Gestr leads him in secret to two women, one of whom is his sister Marsilia, the woman Eirekr desires. It turns out that Gestr is in reality Jón, the son of King Svipdagr, whom Röðbert killed. After the murder, Röðbert had seized the throne while Jón was brought up by two dwarfs. Eirekr and Jón sail away with the two women. In Valland, Eirekr and Marsilia marry. The following year, they attack Röðbert with a large army and kill him after a great battle. Jón obtains the power of Holmgårðsríki, while Eirekr later becomes king of Valland.

*Pjalar-Jóns saga* belongs to a borderline group between *riddarasögur* and *fornaldarsögur*. On the basis of the bridal-quest plot, a popular structural device in both these genres, the text connects a large number of well-known themes and motifs to form a new and independent whole: the anonymous winter-guest, the magic gold-dripping ring (cf. Draupnir in the eddic mythology), the portrait of a remote beloved, the search for her as the central plot, the meeting with helpful dwarfs, the usurpation of a traitor, the murder of the hero's father, the exile of the hero in his youth, and the she-wolf who licks the honey-smelled boy and releases him. The structure of the plot in *Pjalar-Jóns saga* is noteworthy because it deals with the constellations of two heroes, as in, for example, *Viktors saga ok Blávus*: the bridal quest, the revenge, and the gaining of power are partly divided between two different plots, whereby the hero and the helper in the two parts change roles. Generally, these two texts have a number of details in common regarding motif and structure. Some MSS of *Pjalar-Jóns saga* show a late connection with *Konráds saga keisarasonar*. *Konráds saga* may thus serve as a terminus post quem for the composition of *Pjalar-Jóns saga*: in both texts, Röðbert is the main adversary and Konráð the king of Constantinople. While analogous connections between two later sagas (e.g., between *Bósa saga* and *Vilmundar saga víðutan* or between *Hálfdanar saga Brýnuoðra* and *Ala fletska saga*) can be demonstrated on the basis of the relationship between the main characters, *Pjalar-Jóns saga* represents instead a thematic continuation of another text (*Konráds saga*) and thus shows a tendency toward a cyclical expansion.


Jörg Glauser

**Pjóðlfr of Hvin** was a poet active in southern Norway in the last decades of the 9th century and the very beginning of the 10th. *Skáldatal* (*Edda Snorra Sturlusonar* 3: 253, 261, 273) associates him with both King Haraldr Hálfdanarson and his first cousin Rognvaldr heíðumhraði ("the highly honored") Oláfsson, king of Vestfold, an important kingdom on the western shore of the Oslo fjord. Another of his patrons is given as Earl Hákon Grjótvárdsson. Two major poems, *Ynglingsátal* and *Haustling*, are firmly ascribed to him in medieval texts, while some sources, including Snorri Sturluson in his *Edda*, attribute to Pjóðlfr hornkleif (*horn-cleaver*) at least some verses of the *Haraldskvæði* (or *Hrafnnsbát*), a poem in praise of Haraldr Hálfdanarson. Other MSS support Porphyr hornkleif's authorship of this work, however, and modern authorities agree with them. For a list of the MSS sources and attributions of verses of Haraldskvæði, see Jón Helgason 1968: 105-15.

*Ynglingsátal* ("List of the Ynglings") is a dynastic poem that Pjóðlfr composed in honor of Rognvaldr heíðumhraði. It traces his genealogy back to the legendary Ynglingar, the royal house of Uppsala, devoting one or sometimes two stanzas to each of twenty-seven ancestors. In cryptic, allusive fashion, the poet tells the manner of each king's death and records his burial place. Thus, it
functions as a kind of necrology as well as a tribute to Rognvaldr. Ynglingatal appears in the eddic measure but makes telling use of kennings. Ari Porgilsson's subject matter and ordering of material between composition, but has to contend with the marked similarity in 1230. An oppos­

tory of the kings of Norway, (Krag 1985) considers the poem a much more recent and the relevant parts of the 12th-century Latin Historia Norwegiae and Ari Porgilsson's Islendingabók.

Hauslóng ("Autumn Long," a title thought to refer to the length of time Pjóðólfr spent composing the poem) is a shield poem like Bragi Boddason's Ragnarsdrápa. It is in the skaldic measure dróttkvætt. In the first stanza, the poet claims, his drása is a re­
payment to a certain Portellf for his gift of a "well-decorated voice-

Hrungnir (sts. 14-20). Haustlóng is recorded in MSS of Snorri Sturluson's Edda, because Snorri or his copyists quote it in two large blocks, corresponding to the two poetic subjects, in chs. 26 (Pórr and Hrungnir, Finnur Jónsson 1931: 104–5, Faulkes 1987: 80–1) and 31 (Pjazi and Idunn; Finnur Jónsson 1931: 110–1, Faulkes 1987: 86–8) of his Skaldskaparmál. He himself gives a lengthy prose retelling of both the underlying myths of Haustlóng (Finnur Jónsson 1931: 78–81 and 100–5, Faulkes 1987: 59–61 and 77–81) and elsewhere in Skaldskaparmál uses half-stanzas from the poem to illustrate points of skaldic dictio­n (Finnur Jónsson 1931: 113–4 [st. 14b], 166 [st. 3a], 173 [st. 2a], Faulkes 1987: 89, 133, 139). Haustlóng is a poem that combines clear narrative di­
rection with complex and effective kennings.


Margaret Clunies Ross

[See also: Borre; Bragi Boddason; Eddie Meters; Historia Norwegia; Iconography; Islendingabók; Kennings; Mythology; Skald; Skaldic Meters; Skaldic Verse; Snorra Edda; Pjóðólfr hornklófi; Viking Art; Ynglinga saga]
Pórarinn loftunga ("praise-longue") is listed in Skáldatalas as poet both to King Knud (Cnut) Svensson (d. 1035) and to Knud's son Sven Álfsson, successor to Ólav Haraldsson (d. 1030) in Norway.

The first of these associations is confirmed in Fagrskinna, Knýtlinga saga, and a number of extant redactions of Ólafs saga helga. Of Pórarinn's Höfuðlausn ("Head-ransom"); only the Hofudlausn ("praise-tongue") is listed in to Hallvarð Háreksblesi (11th century), remains (in MSS of Snorri's Heimskringla and separate sagas of St. Óláfr). We apparently have Pórarinn's verification of the considerable sum (fifty marks) he received for this composition in stanza 1 of Toegdrápa (Pórarinn's eyewitness account of Knud's 1028 expedition to Norway), although this stanza is preserved in isolation, only in Knýtlinga saga (ca. 1260–1270). (Stanza numbers refer to Finnur Jónsson's numeration.) The six Toegdrápa stanzas cited by Snorri in his separate and Heimskringla sagas of St. Ólav (both early 13th century), and Knýtlinga saga's single stanza, are set within narrative frameworks that combine two recurrent saga motifs: the skald's poetic ransom for his life, and the skald's reward for a well-received composition. Four of the seven and a half stanzas of Toegdrápa are cited in Fagrskinna (1220–1240), and six in the Legendary saga of St. Ólav (early 13th century), in each case as a historical source. The four extant vísuorð of stanza 8 are cited only in Skálaksþaparmál (Snorra Edda; ca. 1220). Snorri describes the six full stanzas he records (in the sequence between stef). Whether or not the title Toegdrápa (attested in st. 8, perhaps meaning "Twenty [stanzas] drápə or "Journey-drápə") indicates the poem's original length, the extant portion seems incomplete, since the klofasl (divided stef), which apparently opens in stanza 2, is nowhere resolved.

The ten stanzas traditionally attributed to Pórarinn's Glelogskvida ("Sea-calm Lay") are preserved in Snorri's sagas of Ólav, with stanza 1 (ten vísuord or alliterative half-lines) also appearing in Fagrskinna. Stanzas 4 and (perhaps) 10 are defectionally preserved, and Snorri's attribution, dating (1033–1035), and account of the significance of some or all of the stanzas may be incorrect, for the extant stanzas are primarily concerned not with Sveinn (who, according to Snorri, is the addressee of all ten) but with St. Óláfr. After what is traditionally interpreted as a description of Sveinn's settlement in Nóiaróss (Trondheim), the poet describes posthumous revelations of Óláfr's sanctity. With unadorned conviction, in the kviðuhatt meter, Pórarinn extols Óláfr, the eternal king, mediator between man and God, to whom even his political opponent Sveinn is commended to pray.

We know little of Pórarinn other than that he was an Icelander who frequented the courts of noblemen. Although his extant corpus appears bland (Glelogskvida is stylistically simple, and Toegdrápa, in effect, an elaborated itinerary), it is without interest. Glelogskvida appears to introduce Christian skaldic poetry the cult figure of St. Ólav, and Toegdrápa seems to represent an early example of a technical innovation, the combination of fornýðslag lines and dróttkvætt rhyme and alliteration, which apparently gave rise to the tryggfed meter.


Mary Malcolm
These verses are scattered throughout the narrative after the slaying of Pórarinn, although they may originally have been composed as a single poem. In tone and content, they are consistent with the saga's portrayal of events and of Pórarinn himself. They refer to Pórarinn's reputation for effeminacy and to the loss of his pride in the poet's martial triumph and the vindication of his masculinity. The verses suggest both his fear of the legal consequences of the fight and his hope of assistance from his kinsmen.

Some of the vocabulary and kennings in these verses, particularly in stanzas 11-14, suggest a date rather later than the historical Pórarinn. It is difficult to ascertain whether this anachronism is due to later interpolation of the stanzas in question or reworking of the original poetry, or whether the whole of these verses was composed by a later poet and attributed to Pórarinn. However, it is generally agreed that the verses predate the saga in its extant written form.

Most of Pórarinn's kennings are composed of two or three elements, although stanza 9 in particular includes such lengthy circumlocutions as hjalmi hættar spásmeyjar ens jøngu jings vangis Prúðar hjaldra ("the helm-endangering sybils of the grave meeting of the field of Prúðr of the din") for "arrows." His kenning liknar leiki ("healing-play") for "peace," is unique, a reversal of the typical "battle-play" kennings, which is particularly appropriate to his peaceful nature. Stanza 4 includes some legalistic kennings and metaphors, such as daemmisald döma ("case-hall of judgments") for "mouth," suggesting the poet's preoccupation with the legal outcome of this confrontation. Pórarinn is also remarkable for his frequent references to women: his mother, his wife, Porbjpm's. This skald's surviving works were apparently composed before he was an old friend of the kings, who had been at the court constantly since his childhood; Fagrskinna, ch. 2). Why he was called "horn-cleaver," a word that is used in a julia as a heiti for "raven," is not known. Skáldasaga, preserved in Hauksbók, recounts an amorous adventure of Pórarinn hornklöf and two other skalds, quoting a stanza by each of them, but this saga has no historical value.

The quotation from Fagrskinna introduces fifteen stanzas from a dialogue poem by "Hornklöf skáld," which has been called Kveði um hildisdu, on the life at King Haraldr's court. The first part is in málháttr meter, the latter part in a mixture of málháttr and ljóðháttr. One of these stanzas is also quoted in Heimskringla (Haralds saga hárfagra, ch. 15), and another one in Haralds þáttir hárfragar in Plateyjarbók, where it is attributed to Auðun illskelda ("poetaster").

Five stanzas in málháttr about the battle in Hafrsfjord are quoted in the same saga. In Haralds þáttir and Fagrskinna (ch. 3), they are attributed to "Pjöðlfr skáld ór Hvíti," but in Heimskringla (Haralds saga ins hárfragri, ch. 18) they are assigned to Pórarinn hornklöf, as is the stanza from Kveði um hildisdu. Half of one of them, however, is also quoted in the Snorra Edda under Pjöðlfr's name, as well as an additional half-stanza describing the fallen warriors lying on the sand, preserved only there.

According to the common tradition in Fagrskinna and Haralds þáttir hárfragr, the stanzas belong to poems by two or three different skalds, whereas Snorri, when he wrote Heimskringla, seems to have taken them as a unit. Admittedly, it is not known whether he knew more than the seven stanzas quoted in Heimskringla and the Snorra Edda.

Uniting the stanzas into one poem avoids having to explain why there are several poems about one particular king, all in the same relatively rare meter. Further, the raven's introductory announcement that he will "tell about Haraldr's war-deeds" is fulfilled only by the inclusion of the Hafrsfjörd stanzas. Finally, the opening line of the first Hafrsfjörd stanza, "... Heyrdirr þú ... ," seems to presuppose the dialogue frame found in the Kveði um hildisdu.

Most modern scholars have therefore accepted the idea that the stanzas belong to one poem, which is commonly called Haralsksvæði or sometimes Hafrismál. Moreover, two additional stanzas on the king's wives, preserved in different konungasögur, are edited as stanzas 13-14 of the same poem. Four stanzas on King Haraldr in eddic meter preserved in Haralds þáttir hárfragr, and one fragment in Fagrskinna MS A are considered spurious, and are not included in editions of Haraldskvæði. Possibly, they represent an oral variant of the poem.

Although the evidence is not compelling, Pórarinn hornklöf's authorship of Haraldskvæði is also generally accepted. Von See (1961) argued, however, that the latter part of the poem (sts. 13-23) is a later addition from the 11th–12th centuries. Haraldskvæði, as a modern reconstruction of twenty-three stanzas of varying length, thus consists of an introductory part,
containing the skald’s bid for listeners and a presentation of the fictitious participants in the dialogue, a valkyrie and a raven, together with a description of the belligerent king, who prefers the Viking life at sea to sitting by the fire at home. The raven is described as a beautiful woman, strangely ignorant of the king’s deeds, and she lacks all nunnymous quality. The raven, on the other hand, has thorough knowledge of Harald’s affairs, because the raven, like the skald himself, has “followed the young king since he came out of the egg” (cf. the quotation from Fagrskinna about the poet). Despite the fact that both participants in the dialogue might be considered mythological figures, their role does not in any way seem religious, but just a matter of literary devices.

The second section, which in the reconstructed Haraldskvæði context is taken as the raven’s monologue, describes the battle in Hafrsfjörð. A chief called Haklangr fell after a fierce battle, and King Kjøtví and his men “fled by way of Jaðarár, on mead cups thinking.” The beaten enemies are ridiculed by the skald in a coarse description with sexually defamatory overtones: “Then hid under benches, and let their buttocks stick up, they who were wounded, but thrust their heads keelward.”

In the last section, after the stanzas on the king’s marriage, which possibly are out of place in this context, the raven answers a series of questions from the valkyrie concerning the warriors, skalds, and jugglers in the king’s service, and praises the generosity of the king. Whether this section is a genuine part of the original poem or not, it seems incomplete.

Haraldskvæði is the oldest of the three so-called eddic praise poems (Genzmer 1920), and it gives a historically important description of a crucial event in Norwegian history of the Viking Age, presumably from an eyewitness. Its vivid descriptions, grim irony, and terse composition make it a masterpiece of skaldic poetry.

Also preserved in Haraldskvætri, Fagrskinna, and Heimsþingla are seven whole and two half-stanzas of a dröttkvætt poem by Pórõr on King Harald’s battles, called Glymdrápa. The poem describes a battle “on the heath,” which took place before another battle at sea, where the king defeated two other kings. Other battles took place “south of the sea” and “on the sand,” where the king seems to be called “enemy of the Scots.” However, as the poem mentions no place-names, the identification of the battles is hypothetical, and there is no unanimity in the sagas quoting the stanzas on this question.

Glymdrápa is the oldest praise poem in fully developed dröttkvætt meter, and it contains a great number of complex kennings. The description of the Skóglar dyr at (“the din of Skogur” [one of the valkyries], i.e., battle) to a great extent concentrates on sound sensations, and the language is rich in (onomatopoeic?) assonances in addition to the hendingar required by the meter. The name Glymdrápa (the “clargor poet”), therefore, probably alludes to its “noisy” character. Some stanzas seem to be composed in intricate parallel patterns. In the poem’s state of preservation, no stei can be found. In the presumably final stanza, Haraldr is praised as the most glorious king “under the sun’s old, steep chair” (heaven), a frequently recurring panegyrical formula.


Bjarne Fjøðjæsal

**Pórdar saga hreóðu** see Sturlunga saga

**Pórdar saga hreóðu** ("The Saga of Quarrel-Pórdar") is one of the minor Islendingasögur. It completely lacks any historical basis, although the text claims that Pórdar hreóðu Pórdarson was a settler in Iceland, and follows him from Norway to Iceland ostensibly during the 11th century. Most of the characters and episodes are clearly borrowed from Landnámabók or from other Islendingasögur, many details being invented or taken from unknown sources. Consequently, this postclassical saga provides an excellent opportunity to investigate how a good saðnamæðr ("saga author") tells his story, draws his characters, and combines details. Oral traditions may have existed in the north of Iceland about Pórdar hreóðu, who built several skálar (sing. skáli, a house or small building on a farm), one of which, according to the text, still existed during the time of Bishop Egill (1332–1341). But most of the obligatory stereotypes are presented in a very conventional way, for example, in the description of fights. The saga focuses on a long family quarrel between Pórdar hreóðu and Mið fjárdar-Skeggj, whose son, Eiðr, has been the object of Pórdar’s jeers.

Two texts concerning Pórdar hreóðu survive. The first is fragmentary, lacking both beginning and end; it is preserved in the Vatnshyrna codex (late 14th century), containing several Islendingasögur. The author used themes and characters in the konungs-sögur, and he knew Laxdœla saga. The second version is complete: five paper MSS tell the whole story of Pórdar, including the quarrels that gave rise to his nickname. The author knew and appreciated Nyáls saga, since episodes are borrowed from it. Ármgrímur Jónsson knew this text, and provides an abstract in his Crymogaea (1609).

It is difficult to say whether these two versions were independent or internally related, because we lack a complete study of
the MS tradition. Nonetheless, the saga is interesting because of the character Pórõr himself, who occupies an intermediate position between the heroes of fornaldarsögur and those in Islendingasögur.


Régis Boyer

[See also: Fornaldarsögur; Islendingasögur; Landnámabók, Laxdæla saga; Njáls saga; Vatnshýrna]

Pórðr Kolbeinsson was an Icelandic skald born in Iceland around 974. The year of his death is not known, but he probably lived until the middle of the 11th century. Pórðr was a court poet and served as a retainer of the Norwegian Earl Eiríkr Hákonarson from 1007 to 1008. In Skaldatal, Pórðr Kolbeinsson is listed among the skalds of King Magnús Óláfsson of Norway (d. 1047). He is also said (doubtfully) to have composed a praise poem to the Danish Earl Sveinn Estridsen (d. 1076). Pórðr Kolbeinsson is best known as the antagonist of the skald Bjorn Arngeisson in Bjarnar saga Hítdeelakappa. The saga describes Pórðr’s marriage to Bjorn’s former fiancée Oddny eykynndill (“isle-candle”) and the ensuing enmity between the two skalds (expressed in a series of lausavísur, twelve of which are attributed to Pórðr). The story culminates in Pórðr’s killing of Bjorn in 1024. Pórðr lived at the farmstead Híttarmes in Iceland. He had eight children with his wife Oddny, and one of his sons was the court poet Arnór Pörðarsson jarlaskald (‘earls’ skald’).

Aside from the twelve lausavísur by Pórðr Kolbeinsson recorded in Bjarnar saga Hítdeelakappa, his only extant poems are seventeen dróttkvætt stanzas from the beginning of the 11th century: two and a half stanzas of Belgskaðræpa (ca. 1007), an encomiastic poem describing the death of Earl Hákon Sigurðarson and Eiríkr Hákonarson’s escape to Sweden; one stanza to a drúpa about the skald Gunnlaugr Illugsson (d. 1008); and thirteen and a half stanzas of Eiriksdraþa (ca. 1014), a panegyric to Earl Eiríkr Hákonarson. According to Bjarnar saga Hítdeelakappa, Pórðr allegedly composed a poem in honor of King Óláf Haraldsson (ca. 1016) and two satirical poems about Bjorn Arngeisson and Bjorn’s wife (Kollhvísur, Daggeislásvísur), but none of these poems has survived.

Pórðr Kolbeinsson is referred to as “a good skald” (Bjarnar saga Hítdeelakappa, chs. 3 and 6; Grettis saga, ch. 136). His lausavísur, clearly superior to those of his adversary Bjorn Arngeisson, show that he was indeed worthy of such distinction. His encomiastic poetry, however, shows little originality, and several of the lines merely echo the poetry of such skalds as Hallfreð Óttarsson (Erfrídrása) and Tindr Hallkelsson (Hákunarðrápa). In Pórðr’s Eiríksdrápa (sts. 11:5, 12:7, and 13:7), we find the first occurrences of dróttkvætt lines with the internal rhyme on the verb in the first position, followed by a trisyllabic compound or a similar syntactic unit whose first element carries alliteration (e.g., brestr erfiði Austra and híðð minum brag meðir). This structural innovation appears to be the result of Pórðr’s attempt to accommodate the place-name Hringmarahvöðr in dróttkvætt lines (cf. Erfrídrása, st. 12:7: naðr Hringmarahvöðr). Lines of this type enjoyed an increased popularity in the poetry of later skalds.


Kari Ellen Gade

[See also: Arnór Pórðarson jarlaskald; Bjarnar saga Hítdeelakappa, Hallfreðar Óttarsson; Lausavísur; Skáld, Skaldic Meters; Skaldic Verse]

Pörfinnsdrápa see Arnór Pórðarson jarlaskald

Porgils saga ok Halliða see Sturlunga saga

Porgils saga skarða see Sturlunga saga

Porgíms þáttar Hallasonar ("The Tale of Porgíms Hallason"), a short Old Icelandic tale, is part of the konungasögur about Magnús inn goði ("the good"), in the codex Hulda-
The story starts in Iceland, but the main events take place in Norway. In the absence of Magnús, Kálf runs the state government. Porgrimr, being advanced in years, is slandered by Kálf’s brother Póðr. Kolgrímur, a member of Porgrimr’s retinue, kills Póðr and is put in prison. It is now time for Magnús to return from his campaign against Denmark, as a *deus ex machina*. He liberates and rewards Kolgrímur and criticizes Kálf for his proceedings in the conflict.

Bjarni has been identified as the court poet Bjami gullbrárskáld ("the skald with gold brows") by Árni Magnússon, although the identification is disputable. Bjarni composed a poem entitled *Kálfsflokkr* mentioning events from as late as 1044. But, according to *Porgríms þáttr*, he had been long dead by that time. Furthermore, the main saga text does not mention any campaign against Denmark during the time Kálf was still living in Norway, that is, before he was pressed by Magnús to escape. These problems can be circumvented in two ways. The tale could have taken place at a later time, around 1050 in the reign of Haladrír ("hard-ruler") Sigurðarson, or it could be based on a corrupt or misunderstood tradition.

*Porgríms þáttr* was probably composed sometime during the 13th century, with the conflict between Kálf and Magnús as the point of departure. In spite of Porgrimr’s early death, the tale is far from tragic, as Kolgrímur immediately takes over the role as hero. He is small and subordinate, but he grows to be a leader. His friend Galti, who is big and strong, evolves in the opposite direction.

The saga is a life of St. Porlákr Pórhallsson, bishop of Skálholt, and his relics. It is also set in Iceland, and in the miracle books give correspondingly vivid glimpses of the daily life of ordinary Icelanders.


Paul Bibire
which conjures up a protective murk in the hall. The devastating...which was known to the author of the story in a lost early version. He was famous as a skald and satirist. The anecdote about Hallbjörn hal is derived from a similar "miracle" told of the Venerable Bede and extant in an Icelandic translation (see Jónas Kristjánsson, ed. 1956: c for references). The conception of poetry there may show the influence of the Prose Edda of Snorri Sturluson. However, the anecdote, like the florid clerical prose prefacing the story, may be a late addition. If the six bits of verse in the story, there is reason to believe five spurious; one fragment may well be from the famous "NÍd Against the Earl." A cryptic alternative title, "Konu(n)visur," perhaps because its "verses" will magically level Há-kon to a kona or woman, seems genuinely archaic. The story is generally dated to the late 13th or early 14th century.


Joseph Harris

[See also: Flateyjarbók; Skáld; Snorra Edda; Svarfdœla saga, þættir]

PÓRR is the god most often mentioned in Norse sources. Whereas many of the other gods are obscure as to their primary function and their position in the pantheon, most scholars agree that Pór is a god both of war, fighting the forces of chaos, and of fertility. The relation between these functions, however, has been subject to much debate, often depending on whether or not Pór is seen in an Indo-European framework.

Mythologically, the main stress is on Pór's martial function. Most myths relate his battles against giants and other beings representing chaos, such as the serpent Miõgarõsormr, which he fights on more than one occasion (Hymiskviða, Ragnarstrída, Húsdrápa, Gylfaginning, Voluspá, and other textual and pictorial evidence; cf. Meulengracht Sørensen 1986). His battles with giants begin with different incidents, but in most cases it is obvious that he is defending Ótgarõ, the dwelling of the gods, against the dangers of Útgarõr, since these forces are constantly trying to steal something or somebody that belongs to the gods, e.g., Óinn (Haustlçng, chs. 2-3), Freyja (Gylfaginning, ch. 25; Voluspá, ch. 25), or Pór's hammer (Prymskvida, chs. 1ff.).

In the myths, Pór is the son of Óinn and Jorð (Skáldskaparmál, ch. 12; Prymskviða, st. 1; Lokasenna, st. 58). His sons are called Móõi and Magni ("the angry one" and "the strong one") and his daughter Brúðr ("power"). Names that emphasize Pór's strength and role as the killer of giants. His wife is Sif. Of the many attributes that accentuate his martial function, the most important is the hammer Mjollnir, which plays an important role in many myths (e.g., Haustlçng).

Whereas Óinn mythologically is seen in general as the superior god, there is no doubt that Pór was worshiped the most widely, at least during the last phase of paganism. Adam of Bremen (Gesta Hamburgherensis ecclesiae pontificum 4:26) states explicitly that Pór is the mightiest of the three gods (Pór, Óinn, and Freyr). Whether or not this statement is correct, both personal names and place-names indicate that Pór held the main position among the gods. The runic inscriptions also mention Pór often, while Óinn is mentioned only once. In the Icelandic sagas, we find the same situation: whereas Óinn and the other gods are mentioned only occasionally, Pór plays a major role in religious life. This discrepancy is also attested in the mythology. In the poem Hárbardsþjóð, where Óinn and Pór are quarreling, Óinn maintains that he takes the ears when they die, whereas Pór will get the thralls. This distinction may indicate a solution to the problem of the two gods' relationship: Pór is associated with the farmers and other ordinary men, whereas Óinn is associated with the warriors, the kings, and the skalds. This notion may account for the wide distribution of his cult among the Icelanders and in other parts of the North.
It is thus natural that Þórr was the god who was seen as the most direct opponent to Christ during the period of christianization. This conflict can be seen in many sagas where Þórr is portrayed as a representative of the Devil, especially in some of the konungsögr.

As stated above, it is much debated whether Þórr was primarily a god of fertility or a god of war. Adam of Bremen relates that Þórr is concerned with the fertility of the soil and with thunder and lightning. The West Norse sources, on the other hand, accentuate his role as a killer of giants. In relation to human warfare, Oðinn seems to have been the more important of the two. Dumézil has nevertheless proposed that Þórr is a god of the second function, i.e., war, through comparisons with other Indo-European gods (Dumézil 1973: 66ff.). His arguments are sufficiently convincing, and most scholars today would agree that Þórr’s connection with fertility has secondary importance. However, problems remain in relation to the kind of connection Þórr has with war. He seems to be mainly a defender of the cosmos, rather than an aggressive god of the berserk type. In other words, his affinity with war is not the same as that of other Scandinavian gods.

There is no doubt that Þórr is a very old deity. Some scholars think that he is pictured on the petroglyphs of the Bronze Age. Parallels with other Indo-European gods, especially the Vedic Indra, suggest the existence of a god of this type in Indo-European times.


Jens Peter Schjødt

[See also:] Adam of Bremen; Bragi Bodsdottir; Cosmography; Hárbarðsljóð; Hymiskvida; Lokasenna; Mythology; Snorra Edda; Þjóðœlfr of Hvin; Prymskvida; Úlfur Uggason; Völuspá

Porsteins draumr Síðu-Hallsonar ("The Dream of Porsteinn Síðu-Hallson") is probably excerpted from an Íslendingasaga of unknown authorship from the 13th century. Porsteins draumr follows Porsteins saga Síðu-Hallsonar in the paper MSS JS 435 4to and AM 142 fol., and is separately preserved in two other paper MSS, AM 564c 4to and AM 165m fol., as well as in a vellum fragment, AM 594a 4to.

Porsteins draumr tells of the chieftain Porsteinn Síðu-Hallson, who, while visiting Svinafell, Iceland, dreams of three women who warn him against the treachery of one of his slaves, whom he had castrated. The first woman recites an ominous verse. When Porsteinn wakes up, the slave cannot be found. The next night, the women reappear with the same warning, and the second one recites a verse predicting his death. Despite another search, the slave is still missing. On the third night, the women, all weeping, appear again. The third one asks Porsteinn where they should go after his death. He replies, "To Magnús, my son." She says that they will not be there long, implying that Magnús will die an early death, and recites a third verse. The search for the slave continues on the third day, but without result. Then a storm comes up, and Porsteinn's host is reluctant to let the guests leave. On the fourth night, the slave sneaks in and kills Porsteinn, but is captured immediately afterward. Porsteinn's wife tortures him by putting a red-hot wash basin on his stomach, and stops only when he threatens to put a curse on her family. He dies from the burn, and his body is sunk in a fen.

The abrupt beginning of Porsteins draumr suggests that it is an excerpt from a longer saga, though not necessarily the extant Porsteins saga Síðu-Hallsonar, from which it differs considerably in style. As it stands, however, Porsteins draumr is a neatly structured, folktales-like episode that incorporates many motifs considered typical of the "classical" Íslendingasaga: the appearance of a man's hamingjur ("guardian spirits") before his death, ominous prophetic dreams, and a woman's vicious revenge. Porsteins draumr is "classical" in its simplicity of style and in the inevitability of the events it describes, but the skaldic verses recited by the dream-women contrast with this spareness. In drœttkvœtet and with the repeated last line characteristic of the utterings of supernatural creatures, the verses contain many kennings and obscure references, although their general import is clear enough.


Elizabeth Ashman Rowe

[See also:] Íslendingasogur; Kennings; Skaldic Meters; Skaldic Verse; Porsteins saga Síðu-Hallsonar

Porsteins saga hvíta ("The Saga of Porsteinn the White"), one of the shortest of the Íslendingasagur, takes as its starting point the familiar saga motif of an icelander whose detention abroad leads to his fiancée's marrying another man. The traveler-hero is not Porsteinn hvíti, however, but Porsteinn fagrí ("the handsome"), forced to stay an extra season in Norway because of illness. The marital poacher is his business partner and traveling companion Einarr, who not only offers the ailing Porsteinn no help, but also...
mocks and lampoons him in public, and, upon returning to Iceland, spreads rumors of his death and marries Helga. When Porsteinn fagri returns to Iceland and learns the truth, he (like Kjartan in Laxdœla saga) feigns indifference at first. Finally, he rides to Einarr and demands legal compensation and, when Einarr refuses, kills him. Einarr's father organizes a vengeance party; they kill Porsteinn's brothers and get Porsteinn himself outlawed. Porsteinn returns to Iceland five years later and puts himself in the hands of Porsteinn hviti. When his grandson, Brodd-Helgi Porgilsson, approaches maturity, Porsteinn hviti advises Porsteinn fagri to return to Norway.

At first glance, the saga seems incorrectly named, for Porsteinn hviti's role in the story proper is minimal and for the most part indirect: his son Porgils, married to Einarr's sister, joins the revenge action against Porsteinn fagri's brothers and is killed in that battle. It has been proposed that the final sentence, "and here ends the saga of Porsteinn hviti," from which the title is taken, is either an error or a later interpolation on the part of the scribe familiar with Väpnfröinga saga, in which Porsteinn hviti, as grandfather of Brodd-Helgi Porgilsson, plays a larger role. Whether the title is a mistake, or whether it merely acknowledges the relative importance of the two Porsteinns in early Icelandic history is unclear, but naming the saga after Porsteinn hviti does shift attention from Porsteinn fagri's plight to Porsteinn hviti's grand moral gesture in his treatment of his son-in-law. Pórhaddr resists, Porsteinn sets his house on fire. The removal is effected and ample restitution made to the son-in-law. Pórhaddr and his sons now begin a campaign of slander against Porsteinn, which Porsteinn steadfastly ignores. The provocation is less easily endured by Porsteinn's friends, brother, and wife, all of whom urge him to take revenge. Finally, Porsteinn's dead mother appears to him in a dream, asking when he will avenge his honor. By this time, Pórhaddr has had fourteen ominous dreams about his own fate. The next day, Porsteinn, accompanied by a group of men, slays the sons of Pórhaddr. Despite the lacuna in the text here, we may assume that Porsteinn goes on to slay Pórhaddr. The text resumes in the middle of Porsteinn's genealogy, which ends the saga.

Porsteins saga Sóðu-Hallssonar is a minor work of Old Icelandic literature. Its interest for us lies chiefly in its relationship to Njáls saga and in its stylistic anomalies, since the defective text makes a purely literary interpretation difficult. The ultimate source of Porsteins saga may be contained in stanza 23 of Haukr Valdsarton's Islendingadrápa, which mentions the conflict between Porsteinn and Pórhaddr, but this remains a conjecture. Another source of Porsteins saga, both closer and more problematical, is Njáls saga. On one hand, there are literary echoes of Njáls saga; burning, slandering, and prophetic dreams occupy a prominent place in each work. Njáls saga apparently provided Porsteins saga with still more material, and is mentioned by name at one point, although this reference could be a later interpolation. Moreover, a close relationship with Njáls saga could explain the curious arrangement of the saga (beginning with the protagonist, rather than with the preceding generations), since most of what would be related about Porsteinn's ancestors is already told there. On the other hand, Porsteins saga disagrees with Njáls saga on a number of genealogical points and in its description of the battle of Clontarf. Furthermore, the assumption that Porsteins saga was written after Njáls saga (after 1280 roughly) gives us a rather late date for a text that displays a few "early" characteristics. These include the use of the preposition of (which gave way to um by about 1250, except in the East Fjords), the location of Porsteinn's genealogy at the end of the narrative instead of at the beginning, and the less than impersonal, "nonclassical" descriptions of some of the characters. Quite possibly it is better to attribute these inconsistencies to the lack of sophistication of a late 13th-century writer from the East Fjords, and not to an early date of composition. Without the source of Porsteins saga's account of the battle of Clontarf or other evidence, we cannot say for certain.


Carol J. Clover

[See also: Islendingasogur; Väpnfröinga saga]

Porsteins saga Sóðu-Hallssonar ("The Saga of Porsteinn Sóðu-Hallsson") is an Islendingasaga of unknown authorship probably from the late 13th century. The text survives in two paper MSS, AM 142 fol. and JS 435 4to (previously AM 551 4to), neither of which is complete. AM 142 fol. is the longer of the two, but it is now missing.

The chieftain Porsteinn Sóðu-Hallsson hands his chieftaincy in the East Fjords over to Pórhaddr Háljfjósson, a man with whom he has had small conflict in the past, and leaves for the Orkneys. There, Porsteinn becomes a highly favored retainer of Earl Sigurðr, his distant cousin. Sigurðr is killed at the battle of Clontarf (1014), but Porsteinn survives, and becomes a retainer of King Magnus Ólálfsson in Norway before returning home to Iceland. During Porsteinn's absence, Pórhaddr quarrels with and abuses his own son-in-law, although he has been an able chieftain in all other respects. When Porsteinn returns to Iceland, Pórhaddr yields up the chieftaincy only under the threat of force, and an irritated Porsteinn rules that he should move off his farm. When Pórhaddr resists, Porsteinn sets his house on fire. The removal is effected and ample restitution made to the son-in-law. Pórhaddr and his sons now begin a campaign of slander against Porsteinn, which Porsteinn steadfastly ignores. The provocation is less easily endured by Porsteinn's friends, brother, and wife, all of whom urge him to take revenge. Finally, Porsteinn's dead mother appears to him in a dream, asking when he will avenge his honor. By this time, Pórhaddr has had fourteen ominous dreams about his own fate. The next day, Porsteinn, accompanied by a group of men, slays the sons of Pórhaddr. Despite the lacuna in the text here, we may assume that Porsteinn goes on to slay Pórhaddr. The text resumes in the middle of Porsteinn's genealogy, which ends the saga.

Porsteins saga Sóðu-Hallssonar is a minor work of Old Icelandic literature. Its interest for us lies chiefly in its relationship to Njáls saga and in its stylistic anomalies, since the defective text makes a purely literary interpretation difficult. The ultimate source of Porsteins saga may be contained in stanza 23 of Haukr Valdsarton's Islendingadräpa, which mentions the conflict between Porsteinn and Pórhaddr, but this remains a conjecture. Another source of Porsteins saga, both closer and more problematical, is Njáls saga. On one hand, there are literary echoes of Njáls saga; burning, slandering, and prophetic dreams occupy a prominent place in each work. Njáls saga apparently provided Porsteins saga with still more material, and is mentioned by name at one point, although this reference could be a later interpolation. Moreover, a close relationship with Njáls saga could explain the curious arrangement of the saga (beginning with the protagonist, rather than with the preceding generations), since most of what would be related about Porsteinn's ancestors is already told there. On the other hand, Porsteins saga disagrees with Njáls saga on a number of genealogical points and in its description of the battle of Clontarf. Furthermore, the assumption that Porsteins saga was written after Njáls saga (after 1280 roughly) gives us a rather late date for a text that displays a few "early" characteristics. These include the use of the preposition of (which gave way to um by about 1250, except in the East Fjords), the location of Porsteinn's genealogy at the end of the narrative instead of at the beginning, and the less than impersonal, "nonclassical" descriptions of some of the characters. Quite possibly it is better to attribute these inconsistencies to the lack of sophistication of a late 13th-century writer from the East Fjords, and not to an early date of composition. Without the source of Porsteins saga's account of the battle of Clontarf or other evidence, we cannot say for certain.


Elizabeth Ashman Rowe
Porsteins saga Vikingssonar ("The Saga of Porsteinn, the Son of Vikings"), one of the more fantastic of the fornaldaðarðögur, was probably written around 1300. The hero of this saga is the father of the protagonist in Fríðþjófs saga frekzkna, which was most certainly known to the author of Porsteins saga. The saga begins with a genealogical introduction that includes numerous legendary kings of Scandinavia. Despite its mythological content, this part of the saga (chs. 1–2) seems to be fairly young and was probably modeled on another pseudo-historical text, the Upplaph砝 Ótra frásgagna. The author then proceeds to tell of the adventures encountered by Porsteinn's father, Viking ("the Viking"), and his blood-brother, Njörfi. This section spans nearly a quarter of the whole saga (chs. 3–8) and is reminiscent of some riddarasðögur both in its motifs and exotic settings, including India and the otherwise unknown Masareland.

Viking and Njörfi have nine sons each, who, despite the friendship of their fathers, become involved in a long and bloody feud. Only Porsteinn and Njörfi's son Þórkill survive the ensuing battles, Porsteinn by being left for dead on the battlefield on repeated occasions. Only after the deaths of their fathers, who never gave up their friendship, do Porsteinn and Þórkill make a peace settlement.

The reference to Porsteinn's son (ch. 25) leads on to Fríðþjófs saga, to which the work may have been intended as an introduction. The structure of Porsteins saga, with its genealogical introduction and plot spanning more than one generation, resembles the Islendingasógur more than other fornaldaðarðögur. So does the main action of the saga, in which the heroes are driven by their desire for revenge rather than their desire and quest for a princess, which forms the plot of many other younger fornaldaðarðögur and riddarasðögur. Nevertheless, its familiarity with Fríðþjófs saga, and the numerous imaginative motifs included especially in the first part of the saga, betray the work as a late fornaldaðar saga that draws on ancient heroic matter. Among the fairy-tale motifs that Porsteins saga has in common with many late 14th-century Icelandic texts are magical weapons, the talking ship Ellíði, shapechangers, sorcerers, and a helpful dwarf.


Rudolf Simek

Porsteins þáttr Austfirðings ("The Tale of Porsteinn from the East Fjords") recounts the adventures of a young Icelandic from the poor northeastern district on his pilgrimage to Rome. As Porsteinn travels through a lonely place in Denmark, he intervenes in an unfair fight and saves a stranger, who gives his name as "Styrbjorn." Later, at the court of King Magnús, Porsteinn is mocked by the retainers but welcomed by the king, who reveals his previous identity as "Styrbjorn." On a later occasion, Porsteinn again excites the laughter of the regular retainers by uncourtly table manners, but the king defends Porsteinn in a verse. Finally, however, Porsteinn declines preference in Norway and returns to Iceland with rich gifts.

The historical Magnús inn góði ("the good") Ólafsson ruled Norway 1035–1047, and the story is set in the period of his Danish wars, 1042–1027. Any historical kernel is unlikely, since the þáttir is based on an international popular tale known as "The King in Disguise." The folktale was also used in a story attached to the Danish King Sven Estridsen and may have been transferred from the Danes to his Norwegian antagonist sometime during the 13th or 14th century. That the story was never integrated into the saga of Magnús suggests a very late date. The Icelandic þáttir is preserved in two paper MSS from the 17th and 18th centuries, which go back to the same vellum source.

Like a number of generically related stories, Porsteins þáttir traces the relationship of an Icelander to a Norwegian king; several features of the plot seem to derive from the imposition of this pattern on the folktale. King Magnús's impromptu poem (lausavísa) seems to be an extraneous element, only awkwardly integrated into the tale and probably not as old as Magnús's time. A final constituent may be influence from a written story, Auður þáttir vestfirðskva. The themes of Porsteins þáttir, respect for strangers and the power of luck, resemble the morals of similar Icelandic tales, but Porsteins þáttir is inferior to them stylistically.


Joseph Harris

Porsteins þáttir beðarmagns ("The Tale of Porsteinn Town-strength") is a fornaldaðar saga consisting of an introduction and four adventures. The saga dates from the late 13th century, although...
much of the material is considerably older. There is relatively superficial influence from romance literature.

Porsteinn, the son of a Norwegian farmer, is a youth of great size and difficult temperament who becomes a retainer of King Ólaf Tryggvason. He undertakes a number of enterprises for the king. In the first adventure, the hero journeys to the underworld in the company of an elf. In the second, he recovers a dwarf's abducted child and is rewarded with the gift of magic objects, which prove invaluable in the third and main tale. In this adventure, he travels north on a voyage, and one day goes alone into the forest. He meets the otherworld ruler Guðmundr of Glaesivellir, the reluctant vassal of King Geirroðr. Guðmundr is on his way to Geirroðargarðr to pay homage, but he fears that Geirroðr will have him slain. Porsteinn accompanies him, rendered invisible by the magic stone given to him by the dwarf. With the aid of other gifts from the dwarf, he thwarts the attempts by Geirroðr and his henchmen to slay Guðmundr and his followers, and finally kills Geirroðr and sets the hall on fire. Porsteinn escapes, parts good friends with Guðmundr, and on the way back to his ship meets the half-human daughter of Geirroðr's follower, Earl Agði. She accompanies him back to Ólaf, is baptized, and they marry. In the final episode, Agði retrieves two horns that Porsteinn has stolen from the otherworld and presented to Ólaf. Porsteinn returns to the otherworld, finds that Agði has retired to his grave mound, takes over his lands, steals the horns back from Agði's mound, and seals him in by putting a cross in the doorway. He gives the horns back to Ólaf, and then returns to his dwelling in the otherworld.

The first episode has analogues in Icelandic folktales and to some extent in the main story itself. The second is a stock episode in sagas of this kind. The final episode is based loosely on accounts of raising the mounds of avарicious and aggressive ghosts. The main tale has attracted the most attention. It seems to be based partly on the myth of the journey of Þórr to the giant Geirroðr and his slaying of him, and partly on Celtic tales, known through medieval Irish literature, of a delightful otherworld to which a human being journeys and settles a dispute between two otherworld rulers. After a brief sojourn in mortal lands, he may then return to the otherworld for good. Another version of the story is told by Saxo in Book 8 of his Gesta Danorum. In the Gesta Danorum, Porsteins þátt, and the closely related Helga þátt Pórissonar, the author, independently in each case, stresses the values of Christianity and the defense it provides against the perilous delights of the otherworld. Guðmundr and his realm again appear in the Hauksbók text of Hervarar saga, and in Bósa saga ok Herrauds, where the supernatural theme is used flippanly.


[See also: Bósa saga ok Herrauds, Fornaldarsögur; Helga þátt Pórissonar; Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks konungs, Saxo Grammaticus; Þáttir]

Porsteins þáttar stangarhoggss ("The Tale of Porstein Staff-Struck") tells of a young man, Porsteinn, who, during a horse fight, is stuck on the head with a horse prod by Pórhallr, a stable groom on the estate of a nearby chieftain, Bjarni. Porsteinn pays no attention to the blow, calling it an accident instead of a deliberate injury. Later, his father Póroðinn tells him that some members of the community, especially Bjarni’s housecarls Pórhallr and Póraldr, regard Porsteinn’s self-restraint as cowardice; he urges his son to seek vengeance. When Pórhallr refuses to apologize, Porsteinn kills him. Bjarni sends the two housecarls to kill Porsteinn, but he says they, too. Finally, Bjarni himself challenges Porsteinn to a duel, in which the injuries sustained by each are offset in a complicated series of blows and counterblows. The story ends with the reconciliation of the two men, an account of Bjarni’s pilgrimage to Rome, and a list of his descendants.

Porsteins þáttar stangarhoggss is preserved in eight MSS, a parchment from the 14th century, and seven paper MSS from the 17th century or later. The early parchment, AM 162c fol., contains only the last three-fifths of the story. Of the paper MSS, the two most important for the textual tradition are AM 156c fol. and AM 496 4to; the former dates from the late 17th century, and the latter is somewhat older. Both are copies of an earlier version, not, however, the one contained in the parchment fragment, which is somewhat condensed. The main editions of Porsteins þáttir, Jakobsen’s (1902-03) and Jón Johannesson’s (1950), are based on AM 156c fol.

Porsteins þáttar stangarhoggss has a historical basis. The account of Bjarni’s descendants mentions a number of Icelanders of the 13th century, from which we may conclude that the story was composed in the early 14th century. A number of passages suggest that the author was familiar with other sagas, especially Vápnfræðinga saga. Porsteins þáttar stangarhoggss is considered one of the best examples of the þáttir, the short prose narrative, in medieval Icelandic literature.

Porsteins þattir sogufróða ("The Tale of Porstein the Saganwise"), a short Old Icelandic tale, is part of the konungasögur about Haraldr harðráði ("hard-ruler") Sigurðarson. In Flateyjarbók, it appears just before the final confrontation with King Sven of Denmark. Hulda-Hrolkmínna locates it among a succession of short stories ending a section of domestic conflicts.

The independent version is older than the versions in Morkinskinna and Hulda-Hrolkmínna; Konungasögur, Morkinskinna; Pátr.

Porvalds þattir tasalda ("The Tale of Porvaldr the Tassel") is an anonymous, short þattir found in Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar in Flateyjarbók. It is probable that the þattir was originally independent and not incorporated into Óláfs saga until a later date. The þattir came into existence at the end of the 13th century, or, at the very latest, at the beginning of the 14th.

The Icelander Porvaldr goes to the Norwegian king Ólafr Tryggvason to be baptized. After a fight with one of the king's men, Porvaldr is sent to the Upplands to conduct missionary activities, where he meets the heathen Bárðr. They come to blows when Bárðr refuses to accompany Porvaldr to the king's court. In his distress, the Icelander appeals to God for help, but is overcome when Bárðr summons supernatural creatures to his aid. The Icelander is impressed with Porvaldr's strength, and after Porvaldr tells the king that his strength is attributed to the help of the Christian God, the heathen agrees to go with him to the Norwegian royal court. Porvaldr returns to Iceland with much honor.

The þattir can be grouped with other conversion narratives in Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar, in which the Norwegian king is shown in his function as the promulgator of Christianity, with Porvaldr as a type of exemplary Icelander at the Norwegian royal court. The central motif of the þattir reveals a close relationship with Eindriði ja ñtt librekis ("The Tale of Eindriði the Flat-footed"), also found in Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar, but it is difficult to determine which of the two narratives is older.

Porvarðar þáttar kráknuféns ("The Tale of Porvarð Crow-nose"), a short Old Icelandic tale, is part of the konungasaga about Haraldr harðráði ("hard-ruler") Sigurðarson. In the final battle against King Sven of Denmark. It occurs somewhat "The Tale of Porvarð Crow-worthless gift from an Icelander. Instead, Eysteinn orri ends a section of domestic conflicts. but Porvarð accepts only after a renewed invitation when they "heathcock") receives the sail. Eysteinn invites Porvarð to his farm, meet again at sea. A feast is held, and Eysteinn detains Porvarð for three nights to be able to give him treasures balancing the gift of the sail. Only then does Porvarð leave for Iceland. Soon, Haraldr notices that Eysteinn's ship sails better than his own. During three nights to be able to give him treasures balancing the gift of the sail. Only then does Porvarð leave for Iceland. Soon, Haraldr notices that Eysteinn's ship sails better than his own. However, the king turns it down rather curtly, because of a previous worthless gift from an Icelander. Instead, Eysteinn orri ("heathcock") receives the sail. Eysteinn invites Porvarð to his farm, but Porvarð accepts only after a renewed invitation when they meet again at sea. A feast is held, and Eysteinn detains Porvarð during three nights to be able to give him treasures balancing the gift of the sail. Only then does Porvarð leave for Iceland. Soon, Haraldr notices that Eysteinn's ship sails better than his own. Eysteinn offers his sail to the king. However, it does not function equally well on the king's vessel. The versions of Porvarðar þáttar are very much alike, even though Ægils saga Tryggvasonar, in the version is a giant demands Freyja as compensation


**Porvalds þáttar TASALDA**


**Stefanie Würth**

*See also: Flateyjarbók, Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar; Íslendinga sögur.*

**Prymskviða ("The Lay of Prymr").** Several eddic poems poke fun at the gods, Pór in particular. Prymskviða probably goes farthest in that direction. It tells of the giant Prymr, who has stolen Pór's hammer and will return it only if he is given Freyja as his bride. She refuses vehemently, and on Heimdallr's advice Pór is dressed in a wedding dress and sent to Jötunheimar ("the giants' land") with Loki posing as his maid. Pór does not play the role of a bride very convincingly, but Loki saves the situation by his clever explanations, until the hammer is carried in and placed in the lap of the "bride." Pór then kills Prymr and his family with the hammer

Prymskviða is told by a skilled narrator. The plot is clear, the players are distinctly characterized through their remarks, and the language is terse and simple with few kennings. The meter is fornyrðislag, and the form an epic-dramatic one. Prymskviða is extant only in the most parallels in phraseology and contents with other eddic and skaldic poems. Examples of such parallels are found in, e.g., Voluspá, Lokasenna, Brot af Sigurðarkviðu, and Ólafsson's Húsdrápa. Prymskviða stanza 14 is almost identical with Baldis draumar stanza 1, and between Prymskviða stanza 24:5–10 and Hymiskviða stanza 15:5–8, there is a close connection with regard to content. Older scholars considered Prymskviða very ancient and assumed, therefore, that it had played an important role as a lender of material to other eddic poems. Recent research has demonstrated, however, that the poem must be rather young, from the beginning of the 13th century. Prymskviða was more likely the borrower than the lending work in most instances. The poet may have had a special purpose in alluding to older poems, intending to create a mixed effect and ironic contrasts.

Stanza 22 in Prymskviða and stanza 1 in the skaldic poem Eiríksmal show several affinities. Jötunheimar is pitted against Valhall, giants against fallen warriors, and the giant king Prymr against the god Óðinn. The guest awaited by Óðinn is the fallen heroic king Eiríkr blóðax ("blood-axe") Haraldrsson; Prymr's visitor is bór disguised as a bride. The allusion to Eiríksmal strongly heightens the comic effect of the disguise motif in Prymskviða.

The myth in Prymskviða has certain basic features in common with that of Skírnismál. Apparently, the purpose of the Prymskviða-poet was to create a counterpart on a more primitive level to the love plot in Skírnismál. The intention was presumably to strengthen the comic and grotesque elements in Prymskviða.

It has proved difficult to locate any trace of the myth of the hammer fetching outside Prymskviða. No evidence of its presence is traceable in either skaldic or other eddic poetry, nor does Snorri's Edda make any reference to it. Hallberg (1954) hypothesizes boldly that the poem may in fact have been written by Snorri while at work on his Edda.

The main plot shows a certain resemblance in motif and structure to the tale of the building of Asgard in Snorri's Edda (ch. 42). As in Prymskviða, a giant demands Freyja as compensation

**Tommy Danielsson**

*See also: Flateyjarbók, Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar; Konungasögur, Morkinskinna; Íslendinga sögur.*
for his services. Loki's clever tricks save the day again, and the tale ends with Pórr slaying the giant with his hammer. Hence, the possibility cannot be excluded that the Prymskviða-poet to some extent drew on this tale in composing his poem.


Alfred Jakobsen

[See also: Baldrs draumar; Codex Regius; Eddic Meters; Eddic Poetry; Eiríksmál; Hymiskviða; Kennings; Lokasenna; Loki; Mythology; Sigurðarkviðu, Brot af, Skírnismál; Snorra Edda; Pórr; Úlfur Uggason; Ævapsþl]
Ülfr UggaSon was an Icelandic skald who flourished around the year 1000. He married Järngerõr, daughter of Pórarinn Bjprn buna Veõrar-Grímsson, one of the most prominent early settlers in Iceland. His wife's family were descendants of Hrappr, son of (Landnámabók Grímkelsson andjórunn Einarsdóttir from Stafaholt settlers in Iceland. His father's family is unknown.

Ulfr is represented in three sagas. Njáls saga portrays him as a cautious man. In ch. 60, he makes a brief appearance as the loser in an inheritance claim he contests with Ásgrímr Elliott-Grímsson. In ch. 102, he refuses to commit himself openly to physical violence in the cause of the antimissionary party in the events surrounding the conversion of Iceland to Christianity. Both here and in Kristni saga (ch. 9), a single verse of Úlfr's is preserved in which he responds to a poetic incitement to push the foreign evangelist Pangbrandr over a cliff. Likening himself to a wily fish, he asserts that it is not his style to swallow the fly (esat minligt . . . flugs at gina).

However, Úlfr is best known for his composition of a skaldic picture poem, Húsdrápa ("House-lay"), which commemorates a splendid new hall that Óláfr pái ("peacock") had built at Hjarðarholt. The drápa celebrates both the builder of the hall and the mythological stories depicted on its carved panels. Laxdœla saga (ch. 29) describes the hall and the occasion upon which Úlfr delivered his poem, the marriage feast of Óláfr's daughter Fárun. Excellent stories (ágsedigar sogur) were carved on the wainscoting and on the hall ceiling, and these splendid carvings surpassed the wall hangings. Laxdœla saga does not preserve the poem, but comments only that Húsdrápa was well crafted (ve/íslandske skjaldedigtning). Out of these verses, editors have conventionally reconstructed a drápa of twelve stanzas (ágsedigar sogur). Only one stanza (2) of this section survives, although from Snorri's summary it seems likely to have been longer in the complete drápa.

It may be surmised that Úlfr's pictorial praise poem in honor of Óláfr pái was, in a late 10th-century Icelandic context, something of a hearkening back to the courtly, aristocratic style of skalds like Bragi Boddason and Pjöður of Hvin, who lived about a century earlier than Úlfr. Judging by Laxdœla saga's account of Óláfr, his splendid style of living, and Irish royal connections, he would have been flattered by an implicit comparison with Norwegian princelings and their skaldic encomiasts.

There are three known mythological subjects Úlfr treated in Húsdrápa, and there may have been more. Snorri states that Úlfr composed a long passage in the poem on the story of Baldr, of which we now have five half-stanzas (7–11 in Finnur Jónsson 1912–15). They deal with the procession of supernatural beings and their mounts riding to Baldr's funeral. In Gyðaginning, chs. 33–35 (Finnur Jónsson 1931: 63–8, Faulkes 1987: 48–51), Snorri gives a prose account of the funeral and other events that led up to and followed Baldr's death, for which Húsdrápa was probably one of his main sources.

Two other known subjects of Húsdrápa were Pórr's fight with the World Serpent, Miõgarõsormr, a popular choice with Viking Age skalds and sculptors (sts. 3–6), and the otherwise unrepresented myth of how the gods Heimdallr and Loki, said by Snorri to have taken the form of seals, wrestled for a "beautiful sea-kidney" (probably the necklace Brisingamen) at a place called Singasteinn. Only one stanza (2) of this section survives, although from Snorri's summary it seems likely to have been longer in the complete drápa.


Margaret Clunies Ross

[See also: Bragi Boddason; Conversion; Laxdæla saga; Njáls saga; Skald; Skaldic Meters; Skaldic Verse; Þjóðólfr of Hvin]
Vadstena is the mother house of the Brigittine Order, situated on the shores of Lake Vättern, Östergötland, Sweden. Originally the site of a castle built for Birger Jarl’s son Valdemar in the mid-13th century, the land and adjoining estates were bequeathed to St. Birgitta by King Magnus Eriksson and his wife, Blanche of Namur, on May 1, 1346, for conversion to a monastery. The plans for the foundation, from the general organization down to details of the spices and herbs that were to be grown in the gardens, were conceived by Birgitta herself and recorded in her Revelations, in particular in the book containing the Regula sancti salvatoris. Construction began in 1369, and the main part of the monastery was probably ready by 1374, the year after Birgitta’s death, when her remains were translated with great ceremony back to Sweden from Rome, where she had lived the latter part of her life. From 1374, Vadstena became a place of pilgrimage. The monastery was consecrated as a double foundation on October 23-24, 1384, and the Rule allowed for a maximum of sixty nuns and twenty-five priests and lay brethren, with an abbess in overall authority. A fire in 1388 destroyed the wooden chapel, two stone buildings, and part of the nuns’ living quarters, but rebuilding work was quickly begun, following a large number of gifts and bequests. The great stone church was completed in 1430, to the north of which was the nuns’ convent, and to the south the monastery; these buildings were joined on the west side by a locutorium (“conversation room”) for communication between the monks and nuns. The monastery survived the first few decades of Lutheranism, but was finally dissolved in 1595. The building was used as a hospital and prison during the following centuries; in 1963, the Order was reestablished and thrives today on the original site.

The principal source of information about Vadstena is the Diarium Vadstenense, which survives in MS Cod. Ups. C 89. It contains entries for the years between 1344 and 1545, written in Latin by about twenty scribes, five of whom have been identified by name. Entries for the early decades of the monastery’s history are sparse; apart from mentioning especially significant events (such as Birgitta’s death, and that of her daughter, Katarina Ulfsdotter, the monastery’s first abbess, although never consecrated, in 1381), they consist mainly of death notices for its benefactors. From the 15th and 16th centuries, there is more detailed information relating to Swedish history as well as internal events of the monastery. The foundation became embroiled in national politics and in negotiations relating to the Scandinavian Union. From 1439, events recorded are highly political in nature, and the monastery became the temporary headquarters for King Karl Knutsson and his supporters. After 1470, the recording of political events ceased, and the diarists reverted exclusively to the monastery’s internal history. In the medieval period, 321 nuns and 173 monks are mentioned by name, many of them from leading Swedish noble families.

Vadstena was for a long time the most favored burial place in Sweden: Bo Jonsson Grip and Queen Philippa, wife of Erik of Pomerania and sister of Henry V of England, for instance, were buried there. The monastery became extremely prosperous through the conferment of privileges and the receipt of Våtfrupenningar, a tax of one penny from every adult, which was payable to the monastery. Surviving land records mention some 957 properties owned by the monastery. Relations with the twenty-seven daughter houses abroad were active throughout the medieval period, in particular Nåndel in Finland, which was an important center for devotion, and whose most famous monk, Jöns Budde, was a celebrated translator of religious texts.

Vadstena rapidly became a center for the spread of learning and the production of books. It had an important scriptorium and library, which at its height is estimated to have contained some 1,500 books. Many books were obtained abroad, or donated by daughter houses, but many were also produced and bound at the monastery. Both the monks and nuns were engaged in the production of books. Apart from copies of the Revelations and works relating to the Order, many devotional and liturgical texts were written, including large sermon collections, for which the Brigittine monks had a considerable reputation. There was also a significant collection of books in Swedish, which in all likelihood was kept apart from the main library and intended primarily for edificatory use by the nuns. Gradually, a distinct literary tradition evolved at the monastery and showed itself in the script and language. The script, known as vadstenakursiv, occurs in formal bookhands as a type of Gothic semicursive, and, for ordinary copying, as a cursive, often slightly angled hand of a more functional character. The language, known as vadstenaspråk, extends through several centuries and reflects many layers of linguistic change, but retains much of its distinctive character, and is acknowledged to be the foundation stone of later vernacular writing in Sweden.
Many of the distinctive features of Vadstena language are in the form of orthographic phenomena that very probably had no counterpart in pronunciation. Very noticeable, for instance, is the alternation between a vowel represented by two letters before a single consonant sound in a closed syllable, and a vowel represented by one letter before the same consonant sound in an open syllable (e.g., book—boken). When the single consonant sound is represented by two letters (f, dh), the vowel is more often represented by one letter than when the consonant sound is represented by one letter. This is especially noticeable in the case of a closed syllable: book but bodh (modern Swedish bod).

Linguistic features referred to here as characteristic of Vadstena MSS also appear in many other MSS. Peculiar to Vadstena, however, is the frequency with which such features appear, together with the fact that they appear at the same time. In sum, it can be said that Vadstena language has a generally conservative character, with written forms that would seem to reflect from reflecting a contemporary pronunciation.

Despite the many important features that together render it distinctive, Vadstena language is not completely uniform. It extends over a long period. Work was begun on the convent in 1369, and the first nuns and monks were received in 1384. The same convent then remained unchanged until shortly before the Reformation, when the monks were forced to leave. It was not completely dissolved until 1595. The earliest MSS date from just before and around 1400, and the latest from around or just after 1500. It is natural that the language should change during the more than 100 years of its existence, however strong the force of tradition, and indeed there are certain differences between the earlier and the later language. Thus, for instance, the dropping of the old palatal r is less marked in the later than in the earlier MSS.

However, the language is not uniform even among contemporaneous MSS; the variations are, in fact, quite considerable. It is not always possible to establish why this should be so. One possibility is that the original on which a MS is based was written in a language deviating from that of Vadstena. In other cases, it may be a question of the scribe’s own individual usage showing through. One well-known scribe and translator is Jöns Budde, who evidently was a Finn, but who resided and worked at the convent. His language has its own special characteristics. The same is true of another well-known Vadstena monk, Peder Månsson, who was active at the beginning of the 16th century. But one must not neglect the possibility that many styles of transcription could have been part of a written-language tradition practiced at the convent.

Complete knowledge of the oral background of Vadstena language is lacking. On the whole, however, it seems closest to dialects of the eastern part of Sweden. Most plausible, perhaps, is to see it in relation to the dialect of the county of Östergötland, and in particular the dialect of the Vadstena area, but this local connection has not been firmly established. Even if most of the nuns and monks came from the immediately surrounding area, or at least from Östergötland, it nevertheless seems that a considerable proportion came from other counties, chiefly from Västergötland and Småland, but also from Öland, Södermanland, and Västmanland. This pattern can be seen from the Diarium Vadstenense, a diary in Latin that covers the entire history of the convent. Among other things, it provides information concerning individual nuns and monks, their inauguration into the monastic calling, and, more regularly, their death and burial.

Vadstena language exhibits at the same time both uniformity and variation, implying both a firm tradition and different indi-
valde-mar

Vafprúdnismál ("The Lay of Vafprúðnir") is one of the anonymous mythological poems of the Poetic Edda. Consisting of fifty-five stanzas in ljóðaháttr meter, it is the third poem in the Codex Regius MS of the Edda (GrK 2365 4to) after Völuspá and Hávamál. Stanzas 20–55 are also preserved in the MS fragment A (AM 748 1 4to). Snorri Sturluson quotes ten stanzas in whole or in part in his Ægissís Edda, and provides prose summaries of six more.

Vafprúdnismál consists of a series of questions and answers on mythological topics. Despite the great bulk of mythological material that impedes the flow of the narrative, the poet sustains the drama through deft use of parallelism and incremental repetition. The first ten stanzas provide a frame story. Óðinn asks his consort, Frigg, for advice on his proposed journey to the hall of the giant Vafprúðnir to engage him in a contest of wit and lore. Despite Frigg's caution, Óðinn goes in disguise to the giant's court, calling himself Gagnráðr. Vafprúðnir challenges the god with four questions on mythological nomenclature; answering successfully, the disguised Óðinn takes his seat in the hall, and in turn challenges the giant with similar questions. Óðinn's last few questions concern the fate of the world and the gods. Having obtained the information he needs, he demonstrates his mastery in lore by asking a question to which only he could know the answer: "What did Óðinn whisper in the ears of his son, before Baldr was born to the pyre?" (st. 54). Vafprúðnir then realizes that he has been contending with Óðinn.

The frame story in Vafprúdnismál is one variant of a widespread Scandinavian mythic pattern centered on the motif of Óðinn in disguise. The core of the myth is Óðinn's mastery of sacred knowledge; this knowledge warrants his sovereignty over gods and men, and provides him with the means of protecting them from destructive and demonic forces represented by the giants. Other versions of this myth may be found in the eddic mythological wisdom poem Grímnmál, the "Riddles of Gestumblindi" episode in Hervarar saga, Nornagæt þáttur, and the story of Óðinn's appearance to the Norwegian King Ólafr Tryggvason in the various versions of Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar. In Hervarar saga, although King Heiðrek and the disguised Óðinn contend with secular and popular riddles rather than sacred lore, Óðinn reveals his identity and defeats the king using the same question about Baldr's death that he uses in Vafprúdnismál. The eddic poem Baldis draumar ("Baldir's Dreams"), which seems also to involve this catch-question motif, reflects another aspect of Vafprúdnismál: the need for Óðinn not only to demonstrate his superiority in lore over the giants, but also, paradoxically, to obtain from them necessary knowledge about the fate of the world and the gods.
kingship from its deepest crisis, and was succeeded by Queen Margrethe.

In Denmark, the early Valdemarian Age was described by the contemporary historians Saxo Grammaticus and Sven Aggesen. In Europe, the period is marked by notable developments: struggles between the imperial lines of Hohenstaufens and Welfs, German and Danish imperialism in the Baltic, crusades to the Holy Land, schismatic popes, the Magna Carta in England, and the strife surrounding Archbishop Thomas à Becket, who, incidentally, sought the advice of King Valdemar I. The intellectual renaissance of the 12th century marked the thinking of kings and archbishops alike, and the new standard of learning was attained by Danes like Archbishop Eskil, Abbot St. Vilhelm, and Archbishop Anders Sunesen. Agriculture and manufacture were characterized by technical innovation and economic growth. Trade and cities flourished to the Sound gained in importance. Around 1167, Bishop Absalon was able to found his castle at Havn (‘harbor’), later to become the city of Copenhagen (‘harbor of the merchants’).

Against this background, it becomes understandable how a strong kingship might emerge, most often in cooperation with the Church, once the threat of civil war had ended between the lines of the royal family. Before the sole reign of Valdemar I, at one time three kings shared the realm: Knud (son of King Niels’s son Magnus, who murdered St. Knud Lavard, Canutus Dux), Sven Grathe (son of King Erik II Emune, Knud’s brother), and Valdemar (son of Knud Lavard), with the country held in vassalage from the emperor. Sven attempted to murder both Knud and Valdemar at a feast, but Valdemar managed to flee and later killed Sven in a fierce battle. Many years of civil war and blood feud had exhausted the country and decisively reduced the number of candidates to the throne.

The military situation was also changing dramatically. All over the country, castles were built of the new “baked stone” (tile). Yeomen’s service was increasingly replaced by payments, and the king’s power to a greater extent rested on the knights or the king’s permanent guard. This development did not mean that strife with magnates or descendants of kings was totally avoided, only that for the time being the king had won.

Feudalism in Denmark did not yet reach the state of dissolution known from other countries. But the feudal mode of production was gradually replacing the more undefined types of bondage and slavery. Imperialism and military victories probably also helped the kings. Partly together with, partly against the North German princes (like Heinrich Lõwe, “the Lion”), Rügen and a number of princes (like Heinrich Lõwe, “the Lion”), Rügen and a number of other Slavonic and pagan places were won by “crusades,” giving fights with enemies, victory, marriage, and succession to the throne.

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Søren Balle

Valdimars saga ("The Saga of Valdimar") is an anonymous Icelandic riddarasögur, probably from the 15th century. The twenty-five preserved MSS (15th–19th century) can be divided into an older (AM 557 4to, AM 589c 4to, AM 585e 4to, AM 588q 4to) and a younger redaction (e.g., JS 411 8vo, JB 172 4to). Valdimars saga belongs to the group of indigenous, original riddarasögur composed in Iceland.

During a royal feast, Princess Marmoria of Saxony is abducted by a flying dragon. Her brother, Valdimar, sets out to search for her, and in a forest meets a dwarf, who leads him to some giants. They receive him with kindness and after two years equip him with magic charms. In Risaland ("Land of Giants"), Valdimar finds his sister and also the two royal children Blabus and Florida, whose wicked stepmother, Lupa, had kidnapped the princess. After a terrible battle between armies of monsters, in which Lupa, in the form of a dragon, is killed, Valdimar and Florida marry, as do Blabus and Marmoria.

In spite of its brevity, Valdimars saga presents in many respects a typical and ideal example of the youngest period of this late-medieval genre. A source for the whole saga will probably never be found, but the text makes considerable use of older sagas. Valdimars saga is probably directly influenced by Viktors saga ok Blávus og Órvar-Odds saga, and close parallels in content are also found in Egils saga einhenda and Ectors saga. Valdimars saga combines widespread narrative and thematic structures, for example, from fairy tales and romances, the well-known motifs of kidnapping of a princess, journey of the hero, meeting with helpers, fights with enemies, victory, marriage, and succession to the throne. Traditional narrative patterns (feasts, battles, etc.) and motifs like dragon transformation, magic glass, and wicked stepmother, indicate that the text is structured in conformity with its genre.

The transmission of the MSS suggests that Valdimars saga had its origin in western Iceland, where several Icelandic riddarasögur of the 14th and 15th centuries came into existence as the literature of the landowners and owners of fishing stations. In addition to the many late paper MSS of the saga, four cycles of Rimur af Valdimar frækna (16th–19th century) also show the continued popularity of the story.

Maiden Warriors

Valkyrie see Maiden Warriors

Valla-Ljóts saga ("The Saga of Ljótr from Vellir") is a brief Islendingasaga preserved only in postmedieval MSS, two of which have independent value as textual witnesses (AM 496 4to and AM 161 fol.). Despite the late date of these MSS, the saga is considered authentic, probably composed around 1220-1240. Indeed, in some ways Valla-Ljóts saga seems more classical than some of the longer, better-known Islendingasagas: Studies zur Prosaaliteratur im spätmittelalterlichen Island. Beiträge zur nordischen Philologie, 12. Basel and Frankfurt am Main: Helbing & Lichtenhahn, 1983; Kalinke, Marianne. "Norse Romance (Riddarasögur)." In Old Norse–Icelandic Literature: A Critical Guide. Ed. Carol J. Clover and John Lidow. Islandica, 45. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985, pp. 316-63.

Jürg Glauser

[See also: Ectors saga ok kappa hans; Egils saga einhenda ok Æmundar berserkjabana; Riddarasögur; Ritmur; Viktors saga ok Blávus; Qvar-Odds saga]

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the 13th century, perhaps by a descendant of Porrkell Geitisson, whose family is mentioned in the last chapter, where no mention is made of the prominent family of Bjarni Brodd-Helgason. The author used Stýrnir's version of Landnámabók and perhaps some other written sources, such as a version of Droplaugarsona saga. but his main source was oral tradition. The Islendingadráp of Haukur Valdsísarson, perhaps from around 1200, mentions the principal events of the saga, the slayings of Brodd-Helgi and Geitir and the failed attempts by Porrkell to take vengeance on Bjarni, but it describes Bjarni as a more combative sort than does the saga and was probably not a source.

Vápnfírdinga saga deals with the relationships between two families in Vopnafjörður, in the northeast of Iceland, over two generations at the end of the 10th century: the Krossvikinger, who lived on the farm Krossavik, and the Hofsverjar (from the farm Hof). The first thirteen chapters trace the decline of a friendship between Brodd-Helgi of Hof and Geitir of Krossavik, to the point where Geitir, normally a peaceful man, is provoked to attack and slay his former friend. Unfortunately, the lacuna prevents us from witnessing the fight. The friendship began to decline when each suspected the other of taking property from a Norwegian captain whose death they contrived. Things worsened when Brodd-Helgi dismissed his wife, who was Geitir's sister, and refused to return her property. Finally, when Brodd-Helgi unjustly killed oxen and cut down trees belonging to a follower of Geitir, Geitir decided to take action.

After the slaying, the second part of the saga (chs. 14–19) centers on the next generation, and contains two reversals. The first has to do with personalities: to avenge his father, Brodd-Helgi's son Bjarni kills his uncle Geitir, but he does so reluctantly and tries his best to avoid conflict for the rest of the saga, while Porrkell, son of the peaceful Geitir, aggressively seeks to lay his hands on Bjarni, but is repeatedly frustrated and out-tricked. Finally, they clash, but their fighting is ended by women who throw clothes over their weapons. The second reversal is one of plot: the saga ends with reconciliation, when Porrkell finally accepts Bjarni's offers of medical assistance and self-judgment, and in his old age he moves to Bjarni's farm at Hof. Thus, whereas the first part of the saga showed how to turn a friend into a mortal enemy, the second part shows how to make peace with an enemy.

Influences of the saga are difficult to trace. The moving scene in ch. 14, where Bjarni strikes Geitir and then in repentance sup­plies him with the dyring body, may have influenced the similar scene between Bolli and Kjarðan in Laxdœla saga (ch. 49).


Robert Cook

[See also: Droplaugarsona saga; Islendingadráp; Íslendingasögur; Landnámabók; Laxdœla saga; Porsteins saga hvita]

Varangians (Old Norse Væringar, Slavic varjan, Greek Βαράγγοι) has slightly different meanings depending on the language in which it appears. In Slavic and Greek, it apparently meant "Scandinavians and/or Franks"; in Icelandic, as in English, it denotes a Scandinavian mercenary in the service of the Byzantine emperors, more specifically a member of the famous "Varangian Guard.

Scandinavian traders had reached Constantinople as early as the late 9th century. Some came as traders or pirates, and others joined the Byzantine army. The practice of hiring foreign troops was a legacy of the Roman Empire; such forces were used not only in the field, but also as units in the imperial guard, the Hetairia. The presence of Scandinavians in these groups is attested as early as the reign of Michael III (842-867). An elite corps within the Hetairia, the Varangian Guard was established by Basil II around 988, and survived until the fall of Constantinople in 1204. It was referred to as the "Varangians of the City" to distinguish it from other groups of Varangians of lesser importance, the "Varangians outside the city." As the name indicates, the Guard was composed primarily of Scandinavians, but included Franks, Turks, and, after the Norman Conquest in 1066, Englishmen.

Many Swedish rune stones commemorate men who died in Greece (Pritsak 1981: 374-81); however, they did not usually specify whether the deceased was a soldier, merchant, or pilgrim. Ragnvaldr, a member of a prominent family in Uppland, Sweden, raised a stone recording his service as a commanding officer (lods forung) in the imperial army (Uppsalal 1128). One can assume that several Norsemen who died in Langbarðaland, the Byzantine catepanate of Italy, were members of the Varangian Guard; see especially the inscriptions Sö 65, Sö Lagnå, U141.

Undoubtedly, the most famous Scandinavian to enter the imperial service was the Norwegian Haraldr hardráði ("hard­ruler") Sigurðarson, half-brother of St. Óláfr, who spent the years 1034–1043 as an officer (spatharokandidatos) in the Byzantine army. His exploits are recounted at great length in his saga, preserved in Morkinskinna, Heimskringla, and Fagrskinna; he is also mentioned in a contemporary Byzantine source, the "Memoires" of Kekaumenos (trans. in Sigfus Blöndal 1978: 57–8), from which it can be seen that his position was somewhat more modest than the saga would have us believe.

Many Icelandic sagas enhance the reputations of their heroes by reporting that they served the emperor; while some of these claims may be based on fact, others are clearly fictitious (Sigfus Blöndal, ch. 9).
The following sagas contain such accounts: *Hrafnkels saga:* Póursel Bóðvarsson and Eyrvind Bjarnason, in the mid-10th century; *Hallríðr saga vandræðaskálds:* Griss Sæmundsson, ca. 970-980; *Finnboga saga ramma:* Bersi hvíti ("the white"), a Norwegian, ca. 970; *Njáls saga:* Kolbein Þórmælósson, ca. 989, probably one of the first members of the Varangian Guard; *Porvalds þáttir viðflóa:* Porvaldr Kóðarson and Stefnið Porgilsson, ca. 998; *Heiðarvíga saga:* Geirst Pórhallsson and Porsteinn Steyrtsson, ca. 1026-1036; *Heimskríningla:* Ellifr Porgilsson, paternal uncle of the Danish king Sven Estridsson, ca. 1026-1036; *Laxdœla saga:* Bolli Bollason, ca. 1026-1030; *Grettis saga:* Porbjörn Póðarson and Porsteinn Ásmundarson, ca. 1032-1033; *Heimskríningla* and *Hallrós þáttir:* Halldór Snorrason and Haraldr hárfagri, ca. 1034-1042; and *Ljósvetninga saga:* Pórmóðr Ásgeirsson, ca. 1064-1071.

The Varangian Guard has a special place as a kind of "hatchery" for Old Icelandic storytelling. Constantinople was the meeting place for peoples of different cultures, and the higher cultural milieu of the imperial capital stimulated the soldiers to tell stories about their adventures, in which truth and fantasy could easily be combined.


**Omeljan Pritsak**

*Vatnsdœla saga* ("The Saga of the People of Vatnsdale") is an *Islandingsasaga* about five generations of an Icelandic chieftain family in Vatnsdal in the north of Iceland. It begins in Norway in the 9th century, with Porsteinn Ketilsson's rise to fame and fortune. His son, Ingimundr, a great Viking, joins Harald hárfagri ("fair-hair") Hálfdanarson before the battle in Harðsfjörðr and gains his friendship. It is prophesied that he will emigrate to Iceland. He does so, and the main part of the saga recounts his fortunes and misfortunes and those of his descendants for more than a century.

The good fortune of this family is emphasized in *Vatnsdœla saga*, although not all its members are equally fortunate. In old age, Ingimundr is killed by a scoundrel he is trying to protect from his own sons' just retribution. Ingimundr himself behaves like a "noble heathen," and some of his descendants also embody the author's ideals of peacefulness and equanimity. The bravest and strongest among them, however, tend to be reckless and fall victims to misfortune. The last chieftain of the family described in the saga is said to be of the same kind as Ingimundr and his son Porsteinn, although he has the advantage over them that "he had the right faith and loved God and prepared himself for his death in a Christian manner." Thus, he is the ideal chieftain. The saga is permeated with a mixture of Christian attitudes and traditional notions of fortune.

*Vatnsdœla saga* has a looser composition than most *Islandingsasögur*. Its numerous episodes are mostly connected only through the actors, and there are no prolonged feuds to bind them together. The introduction about events in Norway is fabulous, modeled on earlier sagas and legends. The continuation seems to draw on oral tradition about local feuds and skirmishes, but they have not been integrated into a convincing whole. Although minor feuds are briefly recounted, the dominant type of conflict is the cleansing of land of alien and disruptive elements: robbers, thieves, sorcerers, witches. Repeatedly, such elements "invade" the territory controlled by the Vatnsdœlar family, who succeed in driving them away or eliminating them, but often after having suffered heavy losses. Two of the leaders of the family are killed by such persons.

The style of *Vatnsdœla saga* is verbose and verges on the sentimental at times. The characterization of the heroes often seems superficial; they lack the substance that could justify the lavish praise bestowed on them. The writer makes brave attempts to glorify them as traditional heroes, but does so halfheartedly, since his values are basically Christian. In spite of the artistic shortcomings of the saga, however, it is full of material interesting for the student of folklore and folk belief.

Only a fragment of *Vatnsdœla saga* has been preserved on vellum (ca. 1400), but there are good paper copies of a 14th-century text. The relationship with *Landnámabók* has led scholars to conclude that it cannot have been written later than 1280. Its general character and style indicate that it is not likely to be much older than that.


**Vésteinn Ólason**

*Vatnslyrna* ("The Book of Vatnshorn" or "Water-logged") was a major saga codex, probably copied, like part of *Flateyjarbók*, by Magnús Pórhallsson, most likely for Jón Håkonarson of Vöðidalstunga, Húnavatnssýsla, North Iceland, between 1391 and 1395; its texts of *Flóamanna saga* and *Póðar saga hredu* ended with genealogies down to Jón and his wife. Arngrímur Jónsson's *Crymogaea* (Hamburg, 1609) refers to its texts of *Kjalnesinga saga*, *Póðar saga hredu*, and *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*; Arngrímur presumably called it *Vatnslyrna* because it was then at Stóra Vatnshorn, Haukadalur, Dalasýsla, Northwest Iceland. A major part of it then became no. 5 in the MS collection of Peder Resen, and in 1675 passed to Copenhagen University Library. The codex then contained *Flóamanna saga*, *Laxdœla saga*, *Hœnsa-Poris saga*, *Vatnsdœla saga*, *Eyrbyggja saga*, *Kjalnesinga saga*, *Króka-Refs saga*, *Stóms-Odda draumar*, *Bergþráða þáttir*, *Kumilþi þáttir*, and *Porseins draumar* *Sródh-Hallssonar*. All these texts were destroyed in the great fire of Copenhagen in 1728, but reliable copies of all of them except *Króka-Refs saga*, made by Árni Magnússon and his scribe Ásgeir Jónsson, survive in the Arnamagnæan Collection.

It was formerly thought that fragments of the portion of
Vatnshyrna that did not reach Resen's collection (at least Pórðar saga hreðu and Bárðar saga Snæfellsåss) have survived in AM 564a 4to; but because these leaves include the short þættir that were also part of Resen's codex, this cannot be so. It now seems that there was another codex, Pseudo-Vatnshyrna, in part related to Vatnshyrna, of which fragments survive in AM 445b 4to, AM 445c 4to, and AM 564a 4to. This contained at least the Melabót text of Landnámabók, Vatnsdœla saga, Flóamanna saga, Eybyggja saga, Bárðar saga Snæfellsåss, Pórðar saga hreðu, Bergþúa játtr, Kuminþúa játtr, Porsteins draumar Stóu-Hallssonar, Gísla saga, Víga-Glúms saga, and Harðar saga, the last possibly added some time after the rest of the codex. Pseudo-Vatnshyrna was in several hands; a minor hand in Gísla saga has been identified as that of Pórðr Þorðarson, priest at Skagastöðr, Húnavatnsýsla, and dated around 1390. The heading to Harðar saga was probably written by Höskuldur Hákonarson of Miklabær, Skagafjarðarþýsla, North Iceland, perhaps in the first decade of the 15th century.

Although the two codices originate in the same area and period, it appears that they were closely related only in some of their shared material. It cannot be assumed that any text for which the other.


John McKinnell

[See also: Bárðar saga Snæfellsåss, Eybyggja saga, Flateyjarbók, Flóamanna saga, Gísla saga Súrssonar, Harðar saga, Horða-Póris saga, Kjalnesinga saga, Króka-Reis saga, Landnámabók, Laxdœla saga, Pórðar saga hreðu, Porsteins draumar Stóu-Hallssonar, Vatnsdœla saga, Víga-Glúms saga]

Vellekla see Einart Helgason skálaglamm

Veraldar saga ("The Saga of the World") is an Icelandic chronicle of world history from the Creation through the 12th century. It survives in two redactions: A (AM 625 4to, beginning of the 14th century) and B (in several fragments, the oldest from ca. 1200, complete only in copies from ca. 1600 and later). The name was first assigned to the saga by Konráð Gíslason (1860) in his edition.

Veraldar saga is divided according to the Six Ages. Apart from a number of verbal variants, the redactions differ from each other in that B has allegorical explanations accompanying each of the first five ages, a pattern most likely original but omitted in A.

The core of Veraldar saga is probably a reworking of an unknown Latin original. The oldest part derives ultimately from Bede's and Isidore's chronicles, but is expanded with material drawn from the Bible, Bible commentaries, and other sources. Hofmann (1986) has offered convincing evidence that the author of Veraldar saga relied on the Icelandic Rómverja saga for the section on the oldest history of Rome. The history of the period after Bede is presented more concisely; the material is known from German annals and chronicles, but no definite source has been established. Veraldar saga closes with a list of German emperors down to Frederick Barbarossa (d. 1190). Of the last two rulers, however, it is only stated that Konrad III (r. 1138–1152) was emperor when the Icelander Gizurr Hallsson (d. 1126) was on a journey south and that Frederick Barbarossa is now emperor (thus only B). The last historical note concerns Lothar II's Roman campaign in 1137; the year of his rule is inaccurately recorded in A, while B has a lacuna. The original, therefore, probably only went as far as Lothar II, while the rest is added in the Icelandic versions along with other expansions, e.g., from Rómverja saga and from Dares Phrygius or Trójumanna saga, Stefán Karlsson (1977) has pointed out on the basis of parallels in Icelandic hagiographic literature that there possibly existed a somewhat fuller redaction of Veraldar saga. The Icelandic reworking is obviously older than 1190; the reference to Gizurr Hallsson has led scholars to suggest that he was the author, but it is more likely that the saga was simply the product of his cultural setting in the area of the bishopric in Skálholt, Iceland. Seip's (1954) theory postulating a Norwegian original of Veraldar saga is untenable.

Redaction A has an addition concerning the four synods in Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon, along with a section on the patriarchs and the beginning of a list of popes. These additions are probably old; some of the them are interpolated in the B-text, and the section on the synods is found outside Veraldar saga, expanded with a passage on the Lateran Council of 1215. The version in A is thus older than 1215, and was probably in A's original, which can be dated to around 1200.


Jakob Benediktsson

[See also: Rómverja saga, Trójumanna saga]

Vestfararfürur see Sighvatr Þorðarson

Víga-Glúms Eyjólfsson, the central character in Víga-Glúms saga, was the grandson of Ingiáldr, who established the estate at Eyvra in Eyjafjörður (now Munkahverð), and the great-grandson
of Helgi inn magri ("the lean"). A number of references whose origins antedate the saga itself can help to distinguish the historical man from the literary character, but it is hard to know how far these depend on each other.

The early recensions of Landnámabók confirm the names of Glúmr's immediate ancestors, brothers, wife, and sons given in the saga, though there are minor differences in the names of his collateral relatives (Landnámabók: 253, 259, 269). They also mention his killing of Sigmundr, son of Porkell inn hávi ("the tall"); (Landnámabók, ch. 1: 237, 282, and cf. Viga-Glúms saga, ch. 8).

The Icelandic annals record the slaying of Sigmundr under the year 944, and the battle at Hrisateigr under 983. These exact dates may be a learned guess, but the gap between them is probably based on the statement in stanza 9 in the saga that Glúmr had enjoyed power at Pverá for forty years, and this looks like an accurate tradition (trans. McKinnell, p. 14).

The saga's thirteen verses are all probably ancient; stanzas 8 and 12 are also attributed to Glúmr in Snorri's Skáldskaparmál (ed. Finnur Jónsson, pp. 75, 115–6, 119, 132). These verses provide support for an unjust encroachment on Glúmr's family estate (st. 1; cf. content of ch. 7); a battle in a meadow (st. 6; cf. chs. 21–23); Glúmr's loss of his estate after forty years as a result of having killed a man (sts. 8–9; cf. ch. 26); an inconclusive battle at an assembly whose geographical details must refer to Vaðlajöng in Eyjafjörður (sts. 10–12; cf. ch. 27); and his inability to avenge Grímr eyrarleggr ("bank-leg") (st. 13; cf. ch. 27).

Further details, found in Pórdarbók, are probably derived from Melabók and the lost *Ethelings saga. These details include Glúmr's relationship to King Óláfr Tryggvason (cf. ch. 5); the killing of Bárõr by Glúmr's son Víglús (cf. ch. 19); more about the battle at Hrísateigr (cf. chs. 22–23); and a different and possibly more historical account of the circumstances leading up to the fight at Vaðlajöng (cf. ch. 27). The killing of Bárõr may also receive support from the discovery, at the place where he and Víglús are said to have fought, of the heathen burial of a young warrior of the late 10th century (trans. McKinnell, p. 15).

Glúmr was probably born around 928, killed Sigmundr about 944, and came to power in Eyjafjörður around 946. He was a powerful chiefman until about 986, but lost the estate at Pverá as an indirect result of the battle at Hrísateigr (ca. 983). He was later involved in a struggle at the local assembly in which his brother-in-law Grímr eyrarleggr was killed. His son Víglús killed Bárõr, perhaps around 976–977, and later became a retainer of Earl Hákon.

The saga attributes ten full verses and one half-verse to Glúmr; none seem to be the work of the saga writer, and only the half-verse (st. 3) need be regarded with suspicion, since it occurs in the interpolated ch. 16 and contradicts the geographical details of the episode there. Like many early skaldic poets, Glúmr (if the ten verses really are his) uses rhyme rather irregularly, except in the fourth and eighth line of each verse, although his verses are otherwise highly accomplished. He uses much mythological information, notably the names and attributes of Óðinn, disir, and valkyries, and the story of Nörr and Hrungrir (st. 5). But his most noticeable traits are a fondness for "land" images, particularly concerning his own estate, and a persistent tone of egotism (none of his surviving verses praises anyone but himself; see McKinnell, pp. 22–7). His prominent and habitual portrayal of himself as a warrior also seems oddy out of keeping with a long career, which, according to his saga, included only three killings (or four, if we include the interpolated Ingólfr story) and two significant battles.

Viga-Glúms saga ("The Saga of Killer-Glúmr") is preserved in full in the mid-14th-century codex Möðruvallabók (AM 132 fol.), and in fragments of a longer version in AM 445e 4to and AM 564a 4to, two of the surviving remnants of the codex known as Pseudo-Vatnsheyrna (ca. 1400). Comparison of the story of Viga-Skítta in both versions with the corresponding material in Reykadella saga shows that it has been independently interpolated into both sages from a common original, and that the Pseudo-Vatnsheyrna text of Viga-Glúms saga is closer to that original than that of Möðruvallabók, which seems throughout to contain a condensed version of a longer original text. However, the text in Pseudo-Vatnsheyrna already contained three major interpolations: the stories of Ingólfr (corresponding to chs. 13–15 in Möðruvallabók), Ógmundr (not in Möðruvallabók, but fully preserved in another version as ch. 174 of Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta), and Víga-Skítta (ch. 16 in Möðruvallabók).

The author probably lived at or near Munkakerla in Eyjafjörður, North Iceland, of which he shows a minutely accurate knowledge; he may have been associated with the Benedictine monastery there. The date is hard to establish, but if, as seems likely, the author was bearing in mind the design of Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar, Viga-Glúms saga must postdate that saga, which was probably written by Snorri Sturhson in the early 1220s (Sigurður Nðlð 1968: 122–5). The Ingólfr story may allude to contemporary events that culminated in 1232. Although this episode is an interpolation, it uses other parts of the saga as source material, so must be later than the rest of Viga-Glúms saga. Together, these indications might suggest a date about 1230, although Einar Ól. Sveinsson (1969) suggests parallels between Viga-Glúms saga and the account in Sturlunga saga of the death of Snorri's brother Sigvatr in 1238. Sigvatr lived within sight of Munkakerla at Grund, and the origins of the saga should probably be sought among his circle.

Much of the saga's source material was probably transmitted orally, including its thirteen verses, two of which are also attributed to Glúmr in Snorra Edda; there is probably also some quotation from memory from the legal code Grágás. But the genealogical details and the names of those involved in the battle at Hrísateigr in Eyjafjörður are in some ways fuller than the story requires, suggesting the use of written genealogies and annals. Jónas Kristjánsson (1956: xxvii–xxxvi) demonstrates the existence...
of a lost *Espælinga saga.* This saga included a rather different account of the confrontation described in ch. 27 of Víga-Glúms saga, which survives in Pórðarbók, a late version of Landnámabók. Jónas Kristjánsson (1956) thinks that *Espælinga saga* was another source of Víga-Glúms saga. Although the two sagas must have been related, it is hard to determine which one influenced the other. The story of Ingólfr, besides its possible allusion to contemporary events, uses an exemplary tale from the 12th-century *Disciplina clericalis* of Petrus Alphonsus, in which a young man tests his friends' loyalty by killing a calf and pretending it is a man; this episode seems to be the only use of a non-Icelandic source.

Víga-Glúms saga is essentially a biography of Víga-Glúmr Eyjólfsson, depicted as tough, self-assertive, and antiromantic. After a prologue that presents his father's youthful trip to Norway as lightly ironized folktale (chs. 1-4), Glúmr himself has adventures that function as a parody of his father's (chs. 5-6). Returning to Iceland, he is faced with oppression by Porkell and his son Sigmundr, but kills Sigmundr and defeats Porkell in the ensuing lawsuit, thus taking the estate at Ívern from Porkell, but ensuring the subsequent enmity of the family at nearby Eshphóll (chs. 7-10). His success leads to ambition and dishonesty among his supporters, and subsequently to killings on both sides, culminating in a battle against the Eshphóll men at Hrisateigr (chs. 23-24). There, Glúmr kills Porvaldr krókr ("crooked") Pórisson, but succeeds in getting the killing attributed to the twelve-year-old Guðbrandr, who is outlawed for it. However, a careless boast in one of Glumr's verses leads to the reopening of the case, and although he tries to evade the consequences by means of an equivocal oath, he is eventually deprived of his estate on terms similar to those on which he gained it (chs. 25-26). He remains undaunted in old age and adversity, but is ultimately unable either to regain his former position or to obtain revenge. The tone of the saga is antithetical and its style (in *Módrurvallabók*) terse and generally without overt value judgments, but the author's viewpoint seems to be that aggressive self-assertion is ultimately self-defeating.

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**Víglundar saga** ("The Saga of Víglundr") is an *Íslendingasaga* from the end of the 14th or the beginning of the 15th century, by an anonymous author who probably lived at Snæfellsnes. The saga survives in two vellum MSS and a number of paper ones. The oldest vellum, AM 551a 4to, dates from the 15th century, and, despite the absence of one leaf, contains the best extant version of the text. The other vellum, AM 510 4to, is commonly dated to the 15th century, but may be as late as the mid-16th. It is missing two leaves, but its lacuna does not overlap with that of AM 551a 4to. The oldest paper copy, AM 160 fol., was made in the 17th century by Jón Erlendsson, and has independent value.

Víglundar saga relates the parallel adventures of successive generations of a family. Pógrímur is a Norwegian earl's illegitimate son. He falls in love with Ólaf, the beautiful daughter of Earl Pórir. Since Pórir will not consent to their marriage, they elope to Iceland at the last moment before her marriage to Ketill of Raumariki. Pógrímur and Ólaf raise a family near Snæfellsnes and foster Ketilríðr, the daughter of their neighbors. Pógrímur's son Víglundr falls in love with Ketilríðr. While jealousy and hostility grow between Pógrímur's sons and Ketilríðr's brothers, Ketill sends first his daughter's suitor and then, after the suitor's death, his own sons, Sigurdr and Gunnlaugr, to kill Pógrímur. After their ship is wrecked, Ketill's sons effect a reconciliation with Pógrímur instead of revenge. Pógrímur and Ketilríðr's father then conspire to save Ketilríðr from an importunate suitor; they pretend to marry her to a settler from Norway who is actually Pógrímur's half-brother. Víglundr and the sons of Ketill return from raiding and find themselves at Ketilríðr's new home. Víglundr and Ketilríðr resist temptation, and her "husband" reveals his identity. Ketilríðr is married to Víglundr, Sigurdr marries Víglundr's sister, and Gunnlaugr marries the "husband's" daughter. The saga ends with a rhyning prayer.

**Víglundar saga** is usually dismissed as a late *Íslendingasaga* influenced by romance and * fornaldarsögur,* and unconnected to historical tradition. Some of the saga's characters may share names with figures known from earlier, more reputable sources, but little else. However, such a reading obscures **Víglundar saga**'s many positive characteristics. Its structure, for example, compares favorably with that of classical *Íslendingasögur,* and although the cast of characters is fairly large, all the narrative strands come together satisfyingly at the end of the story.

**Víglundar saga** attempts to portray Settlement Age Icelanders and Norwegians as the equals of the knights and ladies of romance in their courtesy and courtliness. The figure of Víglundr, a first-generation Icelander whose scrupulously moral pursuit of Ketilríðr does his parents' Norwegian elopement one better, is one of the late 14th-century Icelanders' conception of an *Íslendingasaga* hero. The presumably pagan Víglundr's behavior and ethics also differ

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conceived considerably from those of pagans described by 13th-century authors, since it is Christianity as a social, rather than political, force that informs the saga. Far more noticeable than battles and bloodshed are the many decisions not to gain one’s objectives by violence. In addition, friendship and kinship function as powerful social forces, while anger and malice prove correspondingly weak. As a love story, **Viglundar saga** also contrasts with the **skaldasögur** of the 13th century. Not only does Viglundr live happily ever after with Ketilríõr, but their marriage is only one third of the triple wedding that crowns the narrative.

**Viglundar saga** seems to have drawn heavily on **riddarasögur** and **foraldrarsögur** for motifs and episodes. **Porsteins saga Vikingssonar** provides the main conflict of hostility between sets of sons whose fathers are friends, and traces from **Fridpjófs saga**, **Hjálmpés saga ok Olvis**, **Flóvents saga**, and other sagas have been detected. An episode of a fishing trip interrupted by a magical storm also occurs in **Bárðar saga Snaefellsáss**, but the relationship between the two sagas is unclear. **Viglundar saga** shows romance influence in its style as well as in its characterization and plot. Burning love-flames and courtesy, groves and bowers, harp playing and chess playing ornament the narrative, but **Viglundar saga** avoids many of the empty exaggerations and stereotypes of romance.


**Elizabeth Ashman Rowe**

**Viking Age.** The word “Viking” has come to be used in a general sense to describe the Scandinavian world and peoples in the period 800–1100. Contemporaries, however, used it to describe raiders and their activity. It appears in both Old English and Old Norse. Some runic inscriptions describe persons as Vikings (U 617; cf. *Sveriges runinskrifter. Upplands runinskrifter*, DR 216 [cf. *Danmarks Runinskrifter*]); others record the death of young men “in Viking” (Vg 61 [cf. *Sveriges runinskrifter: Västergötlands runinskrifter*, DR 330, 334).

Several etymologies have been suggested; “Viking” has been derived from the region Viken in South Norway and taken to mean “people from Viken,” from the substantive *vik*, and interpreted as “people lurking in a cove or fjord,” from *vice* or *vicus*, giving “people attacking (or frequenting) ports of trade,” and so on. The matter is unresolved.

“The Age of the Vikings began when Scandinavians first attacked western Europe and it ended when those attacks ceased” (Sawyer 1982: 6). These attacks began around 800, when a series of monasteries along the British and Irish coasts were sacked, and when Charlemagne had to strengthen the coastal defenses in northern Francia. These early raids were probably often conducted by a few men and ships, like the episode that occurred “in the days of King Beorhtric” at Portland, in which three ships were involved. Later, they grew to considerable ventures involving hundreds of ships and thousands of men, and occasional raiding gave way to organized exploitation and even conquest. Parts of England were conquered, and Vikings settled there in the 9th century, and the whole of it was conquered once again in the 11th century, when first Sven Haraldsson (Forkbeard) and, afterward, Knud (Crnut) the Great became kings of England. Ireland, Francia, Russia, and even remotest parts like the Mediterranean and the Black and Caspian seas also suffered from Viking attacks. Many temporary lordships were created, but no permanent settlements resulted, apart from Normandy.

The Viking raids were conducted for the exaction of tribute. A whole province or even a kingdom might be held ransom and forced to buy its peace from the Vikings. A town might buy off a threatened sack with a tribute, but also individual buildings, like churches, or individuals, like bishops, abbots, or earldormen, and even objects, like precious books, might be ransomed. The capturing of slaves may be considered from the same angle: it made little difference to the Vikings whether their prisoners were redeemed by their own family or by perfect strangers.

Viking activity also took place inside Scandinavia, and, in fact, it differed little from what was going on all over Europe in the “Dark Ages.” The plundering of neighbors, the exaction of tribute from them, and their submission, to a large extent interchangeable notions, were familiar facts in western Europe as well as in Russia, but it was a new experience, and to many a shocking one when the Scandinavians began to extend their sphere of activity so far beyond their own borders. This ability depended on their superior ships.

The Vikings were organized in bands called *lið*, very much the kind of military household familiar in western Europe. A chieftain might go abroad with just his own men in a couple of ships, but more often he would join forces with greater chieftains. These were often members of royal or noble families, styling themselves kings or earls, and they often seem to have been exiles, for example, unsuccessful rivals for the throne, who were forced to seek their fortune abroad. Therefore, such men were often willing to stay abroad to serve Frankish or Byzantine rulers as mercenaries, to accept feasts from them, and to become their vassals. They thereby became a factor in European politics, and Vikings were frequently employed by one European prince against another or against other Vikings. The clearcut clash between Christian and pagan suggested by many sources is largely false. In fact, many Viking attacks, such as those on Dorestad in the 830s, were carried out by Christian Vikings on behalf of one Christian ruler against another, in this case, on behalf of Lothar against his father, Louis the Pious.

Animal motifs dominated Scandinavian ornament until the 12th century, when they gradually merged with the Romanesque. But starting with the Borre style of the late 9th century onward, ribbon and plant motifs based on European usage were incorporated in the Scandinavian repertoire. The earliest attempts at classification (e.g., Müller 1880) were based on the occurrence of specific motifs, but from the time of Shetelig (1920) stylistic criteria have gradually played a more important role. Viking style groups are termed toponymically and much less systematically than the classification for pre-Viking art established by Salin and later scholars. Important Viking grave finds have given names to the Oseberg, Borre, Jelling, and Mammen styles, while a geological sequence of the Viking style groups, and pointed out that Salin terms may be encountered in literature: “Gripping-beast style” for works of Salin style III:E, Oseberg, and Borre; “Great-beast style” for monuments of Mammen, Ringerike, and Urnes; and “Rune-stone style” especially in Sweden for ornament of Ringerike, Urnes, and Urnes-Romanesque. Shetelig (1920) established the relative sequence of the Viking style groups, and pointed out that Salin style III continued into the Viking period. Wilson laid the basis for a modern, systematic characterization and dating (Wilson and Klindt-Jensen 1966), and Fuglesang (1980, 1981a, 1982) worked out a more precise and nuanced morphology especially for late Viking ornament. In addition, a great amount of ornament that is resulting from mass production and the practice of copying jewelry by casting from earlier pieces.

Dating criteria. The types of evidence for artistic development and for dating changed around the middle of the 10th century. In the early and mid-Viking periods (ca. 775/800–950), the main corpus of surviving artistic production consists of personal ornaments and mounts found in graves. These pieces are normally of copper alloy, and were mass-produced by casting. Consequently, the dating criteria concern mostly the relative chronology: (1) the typology of objects based on find associations and (2) the typology of ornament. In addition comes the sparse evidence for absolute dating: (3) Viking ornaments found in stratified layers, mainly Ribe and York; (4) the fact that Scandinavian-type stone carving in England cannot antedate the settlements that began in the late 9th century; (5) from around 925 begin the coin-dated hoards containing ornaments, found mainly in Scandinavia and the British Isles. In the late Viking period (ca. 950–1100), the copper ornaments were largely reproductions of types that had been developed previously. The surviving monuments that demonstrate innovative development consist of decorated memorial stones, ornaments from hoards, and carvings in wood and bone. The dating of the late Viking style groups consequently rests mainly on evidence for absolute chronology: (1) coin-dated hoards; (2) decorated memorial stones that mention historically known persons or events; (3) archaeological dating of levels in medieval towns; (4) tree-ring dating of Danish graves; supplemented by (5) a few MSS from the British Isles that are paleographically datable and contain Scandinavian elements.

Neither the beginning nor the end of Viking art coincides with the historical brackets for the that period: AD 793, the raid on Lindisfarne, to 1066, the battles at Stamford Bridge and Hastings. Early stages of what was to become the Oseberg style occur in late 8th-century associations in the workshop remains in Ribe and on Gotlandic disc-on-bow brooches. Some Urnes-style elements continued in Romanesque ornament certainly to the mid-12th century and probably into the third quarter of that century.

Although both relative and absolute chronology begin to take firmer shape, one must allow for normal overlaps of period fashions. Chronological assessment is today normally given in conventional quarter- and half-centuries. For early and mid-Viking ornament, there may be additional time lags for individual objects resulting from mass production and the practice of copying jewelry by casting from earlier pieces.

Style groups: classification and dating. The continuous tradition makes animal motifs the most important source for morphological classification into style groups. In addition, ribbon interlace of the mid-Viking Borre and plant motifs of the late Viking Mammen and Ringerike styles have stylistic elements diagnostic of these groups (see below).

(1) Style III:E corresponds to the late phase of Salin style III. Typically, the animals are ribbon-shaped, with bodies that swell and taper, frequently slit with wide openings, and with a marked contraction separating the two ballooning hips. Very elongated limbs and lappets make up open loops intertwined with the bodies. Surface patterning and frond-like terminals contribute to the total restless effect. Contemporaneously, and in the same workshops that used style-E animals, were employed seminaturalistic animals and birds copied from West European, probably Frankish, models (Abraham 1937). In most cases, they were stylized with the same swelling lines, slit bodies, and intertwining elements as the ribbon-shaped animals. Another motif introduced at this stage is the gripping beast, always rendered as a solid entity, juxtaposed to the style-E manner of the other motifs. The gripping beast probably originated in the small squirrel-like animals inhabiting Anglo-Saxon scrolls (Haseloff 1951). The conglomeration of motifs and forms of this phase is sometimes referred to as "Broa style." This stage of eclecticism, variety, and innovation probably reflects an increase of western European trade connections in the second half of the 8th century, although dating evidence is tenuous. Major finds are the set of twenty-two gilt harness mounts from Broa on Gotland, Sweden, and the typologically earliest carvings from Oseberg, Norway (the "Academician" and the "Ship Master"). Important types of jewelry include disc-on-bow and oval brooches. The continuation of style E into the early 9th century is suggested by the Oseberg carvings, the occurrence of oval brooches with style E in Birka, Sweden, and the association of disc-on-bow brooches with metalwork looted from the British Isles in some Norwegian graves. The evidence of the Oseberg carvings also indicates the prominent role played by style E in shaping the subsequent Oseberg style.

(2) Style III:F is confined to Denmark, especially Jutland and Zealand. Distinctive is the almost abstract animal type with broad, irregular hips, short body, and mostly profile head (Ramskou 1963,
but they represent several types of metalwork, which suggests that
the style was more generally applied in Denmark. Style F is clearly
adapted from Anglo-Carolingian work of the "Tassilo-chalice style,"
and is contemporary with Style E, i.e., second half of the 8th
century.

The Oseberg style is named after the site of the famous
ship burial in southern Norway that contained a rich variety of
wood carving. While some of the carvings can be classified as style
E, the work of the "Baroque Master" exemplified the new style
(Shetelig 1920). The motifs are developed forms of the
seminaturalistic and gripping-animal types introduced in style E,
while ribbon-shaped animals play a subdued role. The innova­
tions are mainly those of form. The compositions have motifs of
equal size and equal compositional value, which are disposed in a
carpet-pattern manner. The open loops are suppressed. Squat
animal types are preferred, and the plasticity of a graded relief
relief makes for a totally new play of light and shade. There is consid­
erable variety within the Oseberg style, and it must have attained a
pan-Scandinavian use. Especially, some types of oval brooch and
the novel equal-armed brooch types reflect the personal manner of
their originators, although most of the surviving specimens are
attributed to copyists. For the Oseberg style proper, elements of
foreign influence cannot so far be identified, but for some of the
stylistically unclassifiable metalwork of the same chronological
phase there are indications of Anglo-Saxon influence. Indications
for the absolute dating of the Oseberg style are vague, but better
than for pre-Viking ornament; and it overlaps both the Borre and the Mammen styles. When Jelling-type animals are
associated with Borre ornaments, the latter are normally attribut­
able to an advanced stage of the Borre style, as in the hoard from
Väby in Södermanland, Sweden, deposited around 940. Other
dating indications are supplied by the Jelling grave that dendo­
chronology has recently indicated was constructed 958–959
(Christensen 1987), and a very fine stone cross in York from a
level that is archaeologically datable to the first half of the 10th
century. The Jelling style is undoubtedly of Scandinavian, possibly
Danish origin, but it may have been precipitated by the introduc­
tion of the sleek S-shaped animal motif that is normally used for
Jelling-style designs in England.

The Mammen style is an innovative phase of the same
magnitude as style E. New motifs are the seminaturalistic lion and
bird based on West European prototypes, and a revitalization of
the older Scandinavian snake, which was given a novel promi­
nence. The plant scroll was introduced from either Anglo-Saxon
or continental art, and was translated into a Scandinavian style, no
longer a mere copy as in the Borre phase. Characteristics of form
include the use of one or two large motifs that fill a panel by abrupt
twists and turns, the asymmetrical composition of scrolls, orna­
ment lines that widen abruptly into panel-like shapes, and wavy
and frequently dented outlines. The latest innovations of the mass­
produced bronze ornaments took place in the Jelling style, and
although such ornaments were presumably still made and worn
artistic innovation seems to have passed to new groups of monu­
ments, such as decorated memorial stones, bone carving, and
engraved and filigreed silver.

The large memorial stone at Jelling in Jutland, Denmark, is a
central monument. It was raised by King Harald Gormsson to
commemorate his parents and himself. Its inscription dates it firmly
to the period around 960–985, while plausible inference from the
German annals about the conversion of the Danes narrows the
dating of the monument to the 960s. The Jelling stone is unique
as a ruler's monument and seems to begin the fashion of decorat­
ing rune memorials in Denmark and subsequently on the Scandi­
navian peninsula. The confrontation of lion and snake in battle
may likewise be the earliest instance of this iconography in
Scandinavia. Certainly, it has no surviving antecedent, and it came
to exercise a wide influence on animal representations in the 11th
century. The Crucifixion entwined by a scroll is the only Viking
example of this iconography and must have had a West European

VIKING ART 695
Jutland, Denmark, which has given the name to the style and vine-entwined Crucifixion as its model (Fuglesang 1981c). Further monuments include the inlaid axehead from Mammen in Jutland, Denmark, which has given the name to the style and which comes from a grave that has recently been dendrochronologically dated to the winter of 970/1 (Iversen and Vellev 1986); the famous caskets from Cammin (lost during World War II) and Bamberg with carved bone plaques and engraved mounts; as well as bone carving and metalwork of good artistic quality from undatable contexts in Scandinavia. The Mammen style flourished in the second half of the 10th century, but its geographical extent, particularly in its plant motifs, remains conjectural.

(7) In the Ringerike style, the animal motifs of the Mammen style were continued, although with some alterations. The main innovations lie in the handling of the plant motifs and composition schemes that indicate influence from Anglo-Saxon and Ottonian ornament. The memorial stone at Vang, Norway, exemplifies the fully developed Ringerike style: a double scroll with stems in strict axiality, asymmetrically placed groups of short and intertwined tendrils, and a rosette-shaped cross composed by alternating broad lobe with thin tendril. Above the cross, a walking lion and a small spiral with short offshoots along the outline emphasize the additive character of the full composition. The use of both Anglo-Saxon and Ottonian composition schemes (alternating tendril and lobe, and groups of short intertwined tendrils, respectively) indicates that the Ringerike style was created in Danish centers under the auspices of the nascent church organization. Its subsequent distribution followed both the Church and the traditional lines of copying and trading. It is used, for example, for the vegetal frieze on the fragments of the oldest surviving church in Ireland, where the main Umes-style elements were incorporated in the decoration of the Swedish memorials: in the panels from Flatatunga, Iceland. It also occurs both with and without Christian connotations on memorial stones in Norway and Sweden, on metal vanes, and on plain wooden objects recovered from the lower 11th-century levels in the medieval towns of Lund in Scania (present Sweden), and Trondheim and Oslo, Norway. The Ringerike style has a pan-Scandinavian distribution, and was also used in southern England and in Dublin. Dating is fairly dependable; in addition to the finds of the first half of the 11th century in medieval towns, there are two coin-dated hoards deposited about 1025 and 1035, and two Anglo-Saxon psalters of the second quarter of the century that contain Ringerike-style elements. The latest datable specimens are from the third quarter of the 11th century and betray influence from the Umes style.

(8) The Umes style is the latest Viking style proper. In contrast to the Mammen and Ringerike styles, animals dominate the repertoire: extremely stylized mammals (some of them lions), ribbon-shaped animals, and snakes. The winged dragon makes its first Scandinavian appearance on some Upplandic memorial stones of the second quarter of the 11th century. The cross is frequently incorporated in the decoration of the Swedish memorials: in Uppland, around 65 percent have a cross, and 25 percent a Christian invocation (Thompson 1975). Some vegetal motifs were continued from the Ringerike style, particularly the single scroll and the union knot, but are transformed into the Umes-style idiom. Umes-style designs are determined by an underlying aim for unity; typically, a design has only two contrasting line widths, animal heads and feet are reduced to mere elongated terminals, figure-of-eight and multiloop compositions form an open and asymmetrical network of circular shapes, and larger animals frequently exhibit a gradual swelling and tapering of body. The most impressive monuments are the runic memorials in Sweden, with the more than 1,100 stones in Uppland forming the center of both quality and quantity. But the distribution of the style is pan-Scandinavian, and neither the area of origin nor the possible European influences have yet been determined. Some Umes-style metalwork was manufactured in England, but by far the greater impact was made in Ireland, where the main Umes-style elements were applied in the revivalization of Irish art in the late 11th and the 12th century. The earliest phase of the Umes style in Scandinavia is datable to the second quarter of the 11th century, mainly on the basis of runic memorials that mention the taking of "danelegd" in England under Knud (Cnut) the Great (latest levying in 1018) and one coin-dated hoard deposited around 1050. These datings have recently been confirmed by several Umes-style carvings from Oslo, Norway, in levels archaeologically datable to around 1050–1100. Like the Ringerike style, the Umes style is intimately connected with church buildings and Christian monuments. Among the most important fragments of church ornament are the 11th-century doorway, post, planks, and gables incorporated in the mid-12th-century church at Umes in Sogn, Norway, from which the name of the style has been taken. Among secular ornaments may be cited weapons, the novel type of animal-shaped brooches, and wood carving from medieval towns.

(9) The transitional Umes-Romanesque style retains some of the Umes-style motifs, notably the ribbon-shaped animal and the snake. But the main impact of the Umes-style tradition lies in the form: contrast of two line widths, multiloop compositions, and sinuous swelling and tapering of animals and scrolls. However, most of the motifs and stylistic elements in this phase of Scandinavian art were imported from western Europe. The Romanesque types of winged dragon were introduced and became a staple, together with the full set of Romanesque animal symbols, scrolls, and leaf work. The Umes-Romanesque phase is pan-Scandinavian, but is a much more heterogeneous style than the Umes, with more local schools and with purely Romanesque ornament produced contemporaneously. There is a parallel development in Ireland in the first half of the 12th century, which, to judge from the donor inscriptions, has no ethnic connections with the population of the Norse towns. Similar transitional monuments in England are few in number and have restricted motifs. Dating indications in Scandinavia are few, but include the levels of around 1100–1175 in Oslo, Norway, a dating that corresponds well with those Irish monuments datable from their donor inscriptions.

Pictorial art. Narrative art must have been far more important than is commonly supposed, but is haphazardly preserved. Decorated memorial stones form the best iconographical evidence, but the fashion for such monuments had narrow chronological and geographical limitations. The stones relevant to pre-Christian iconography were raised on Gotland in the late 8th and early 9th century, and in Cumbria and on the Isle of Man in the 10th century. The iconography on the Gotlandic stones is dominated by a ship and rider, normally taken to be chthonic symbols for the journey to Valhöll, but possibly also reflecting the social standing of the deceased. Fragments of two textiles from the early 9th century indicate that the popularity of the journey theme was not confined to memorial stones. The piece from Tune in Østfold, Norway, has a row of men and women next to a ship, while the fragments from Oseberg in Vestfold, Norway, show women, warriors, riders, and carts in what has been tentatively interpreted as a procession. The Gotlandic memorials of this period also have a high number of
narrative scenes from mythology and heroic tales, but few of these pictures can be verifiably interpreted and seem only occasionally related to the haphazardly transmitted literary sources. In the first half of the 9th century, Bragi Boddason described a painted shield in the oldest surviving skaldic poem from Scandinavia. The themes of the paintings were taken from four completely unrelated sources: Þórr and Halfiir killing Jómunrekkr, the battle of the Haddings, Gefjon ploughing Zealand from Scania, and Pór's fishing expedition. The juxtaposition of these disparate pictures corresponds to the contemporary narrative scenes on the Gotlandic stones, but only one of Bragi's scenes, the battle of the Haddings, has with a fair amount of probability been identified on a late 8th-century Gotlandic stone (Lindqvist 1941-42).

Pór's fishing expedition has with less credibility been identified as the boat with two men in the lower-left register on Andre VIII, although the main iconographic element of the Miðgarðsormr (World Serpent) is missing. The serpent is absent also from the Fishing Stone at Gosforth in Cumbria, of the 10th century. In fact, there survive only two renderings that are undeniably identifiable as Pór's fishing expedition, both of the 11th century: the roughly incised picture on a stone from Hardum in Thy, Denmark, and the well-carved memorial at Altuna in Uppland, Sweden. The fact that Pór's fishing expedition, which is among the most frequently recurring themes in skaldic poetry throughout the Viking period, survives in only two certain, and late, pictorial versions, should give food for thought. There has been, and still exists, a philological propensity to link haphazardly surviving pictures with equally fortuitously transmitted texts, disregarding elementary rules of methodological control.

Although further scenes on the Gotlandic memorials cannot be interpreted, they are nevertheless extremely important in demonstrating a narrative art that is clearly distinct from ornament. The motifs are rendered as easily readable "pictograms" that juxtapose the highlights of several apparently unrelated themes in a figure style uninfluenced by current ornament. These scenes, although now largely indecipherable, must have been easily understood by the educated contemporaneous Scandinavian. In addition to the narrative scenes on the Gotlandic stones and the Norwegian textiles, some similarly unidentifiable figure representations survive in wood carving on the Oseberg cart, and on the memorial stone at Sparlösa in Västergötland, mainland Sweden.

But from the mid-9th to the mid-10th century, there is a hiatus for figurative representations in Scandinavia. The hiatus can to some extent be bridged by the use of skaldic poems that describe pictures, but even this material has uneven iconographical value. Hallvard Lie attributed several fragments of skaldic poems to this group (1952, 1956). A modern philological reappraisal has not been undertaken, but a critical view suggests that only those poems that specify that pictures are indeed being described should be admitted as iconographical evidence. This stipulation would limit the group to three poems: Bragi's Ragnarśrápa mentioned above (first half of 9th century), Húsdrápa by Björdólf of Hvin (10th century), and Húsdrápa by Úlf Eggaason (ca. 980). Húsdrápa purports to describe shield paintings showing the abduction of Óðinn and Pór's fight with the giant Hrungnir, while Húsdrápa's description of the pictures in the hall of Óðinn on Iceland contains the swimming competition between Loki and Heimdallar, Pór's fishing expedition, and the cremation of Baldr. Úlf's description of the cremation suggests that this representation may have consisted of several units: he mentions Óðinn on Sleipnir, Heimdallr on his horse, Freyr on his boar, and the giantess who helped the gods to push the burial ship from the beach. Erik Molke has suggested that the giantess may be represented on one of the stones of the memorial monument from Hunnestad in Scania, although this picture coincides better with Snorri's description of her (ca. 1220) than with the contemporaneous description by Úlfr (Jacobsen and Molke 1940-41). Narrative scenes of the 10th century survive mainly in Cumbria and on the Isle of Man, and the extent of Anglo-Saxon influence on these pictures is difficult to determine. Some of the scenes on the great cross at Gosforth church, Cumbria, have been interpreted as Ragnarok, the Scandinavian pagan equivalent of Judgment Day (Berg 1958). Similar scenes do not survive from Scandinavia, and on the Gosforth Cross they are combined with a Crucifixion. The Manx narratives appear to be mainly scenes from hunting and from the legend of Sigurðr, rendered within ribbon and plant ornaments. The dating of these Manx crosses is uncertain, but they are normally placed in the late 10th century (Wilson 1983). In Scandinavia, the hunting theme survives on two stones, both of the 11th century, from Alstad, Norway, and at Balingsta in Uppland, Sweden. In addition, some Upplandic Úmes-style stones show a rider and a bird, which may represent an abbreviated hunt. The iconography of the chase cannot be attributed to any surviving literary source, and seems to reflect a pan-European iconography and social ideals (Fuglesang 1980, 1986). The Sigurðr legend in Scandinavian Viking art survives in full in the memorial carving on Ramsundsberget and its derivative on the Rök Stone, both in Södermanland, Sweden. Both are attributable to the Ringerike style. In contrast to early-and mid-Viking pictures, these representations show a sequence of events from one tale. This sequencing seems to be a novel principle in Viking art, just as the hunt and the Sigurðr legend represent novel iconographical themes. Another difference from early Viking pictures lies in the ornamentation of the rendering. The older tradition of showing only the climax of a story was continued, but in the late 11th century even such scenes were incorporated in an overall ornamental scheme, as evidenced by some Upplandic Úmes-style stones and the latest group of Gotlandic memorials. In this emphasis on the ornament in narrative art, Scandinavia follows a fashion common in much contemporary European illumination. Only one outspokenly pagan monument survives from 11th-century Scandinavia, the memorial stone at Altuna church in Uppland, Sweden. But even Christian iconographic themes are rare, the main examples being the Jelling Crucifixion. The Adoration of the Magi on the memorial stones in the late 10th and the 11th centuries shows great regional and chronological variations in Scandinavia, and the use of figure representations is even more idiosyncratic (Fuglesang 1968a). What survives indicates the existence of several potential iconographical models, ranging from late offshoots of pagan themes to novel secular and Christian ones, but with an emphasis on the latter two categories. This mixture may reflect an iconographically unsettled situation during the period of conversion. But it should also be noted that the hunt represents a generally honorific category of pictures, and the Sigurðr legend was certainly used textually in the same sense when Ílgi Bryndzelskáld compared the deeds of Harald hardráðr ("hard-ruler") Sigurðarson with those of Sigurðr in the couplets of his fragmentarily preserved poem in Harald's honor. In spite of many and deep-rooted differences, the many virtues and social standing of the deceased seem to link the pictorial programs of the pagan and the Christian memorial stones.

State of research. Several studies of the last decade develop
the potential of Viking art as a contemporaneous historical source.
A few examples must suffice. The excavation of stratified workshops in Ribe, Denmark, has given much new information on the manufacture of cast ornaments, and the numismatic evidence indicating a late 8th-century dating for these levels has reactivated the question of the origins of early Viking art (Bencard 1978, Bendixen 1981). Studies of mass-produced cast brooches of the early- and mid-Viking periods have given a better understanding of the economic side of the production, as well as a more reliable chronological framework (Jansson 1981, 1985, Carlsson 1983, Thunmark-Nylén 1983, Fuglesang 1987). Studies and technical analysis of filigreed ornaments have highlighted the process by which foreign techniques and models were copied and subsequently absorbed (or discarded) by the Scandinavian workshops (Duczko 1985).

Viking Hoaxes. The so-called Vinland sagas describe the settlement of Greenland and initial exploration of the eastern coast of North America by Icelanders of Norse ancestry around the year 1000. In the early 19th century, discussion of these narratives led to efforts by laymen and scholars to find evidence of Norse landings in New England. The search gave rise to numerous misidentifications and ultimately to deliberate "Viking" hoaxes. Among the misidentifications are Indian pictographs and various scratchings on rock, the latter produced by geological action. The Kensington inscription is bogus has inhibited neither popular acceptance, nor the invention of new authenticity schemes. The Kensington inscription has been the subject of numerous discussions of the Vinland sagas are the dates 1010 and 1011, the settlement of New England. The search gave rise to numerous misidentifications and ultimately to deliberate "Viking" hoaxes.

The most publicized Viking hoax in the 20th century is the Kensington rune stone from Douglas County, Minnesota, which may be seen as the meeting ground between ethnic patriotism in the United States and the still surviving habit in Scandinavia of carving runic inscriptions for amusement. The overwhelmingly unanimous view of authorities on Scandinavian epigraphy that the Kensington inscription is bogus has inhibited neither popular support for it nor imitations of it in other quarters.

Best known of these imitations are the Spirit Pond inscriptions, a group of four stones, the first three found in 1971 at Popham Beach, coastal Maine. The carvings include numerals, purporting to be runic, that are nevertheless anachronistically based on the Marinus system with place values. Borrowed from recent discussions of the Vinland sagas are the dates 1010 and 1011, the latter, as a triple tour de force, written as Roman/Arabic "M11." The runes employed have been borrowed from those of the ostensibly 350-years-younger Kensington stone. In this case, however, the language is not Swedish but a distorted pseudo-Icelandic through which shine modern thought patterns. Consistent inter-
pertation has been obfuscated through a deliberately false segmentation of words. The poorly composed message refers to (Karlsfni's) Hop, Vinland, skraelingar, a kayak, journeys, ice floe, the Canadian border, sailing ships, and a sea-serpent. There is a map of the immediate area as it appears in our day. Map and text are accompanied by drawings that illustrate the Vinland sagas: a cluster of grapes, a figure rowing a canoe, an animal pel, a sling-shot or ballista, a rattle, a human face and, as a droll substitute for the whale of Þórhallr veidimær ("huntsman"), a sea-serpent. Unlike the Kensington Stone, the Spirit Pond group includes personal names: "Haakon" and "Norse folk's Jæck," who may be the otherwise anonymous author. The entire concoction is a humorous satire on the Kensington stone, the Vinland sagas, the Vinland Map, the theory of runic cryptograms, and, perhaps, the Loch Ness monster. The fourth stone, not reported until 1975, is carved on the one side with a cross and on the other with what may be a "tree rune," and is pierced in its narrow end as if for a thong from which it might hang as an amulet.

Various "runic" carvings reported from Oklahoma, though not necessarily hoaxes, are manifestly of modern origin, as are "mooring holes," "battle-axes," and other asserted Norse antiquities discovered in the United States. The so-called Beardmore Finds in Ontario, Canada, are ancient, but were imported from Norway in 1923. The late 11th-century Norwegian coin from Naskeag Point in coastal Maine was probably transported from farther north by Indians. In recent years, there has been discussion of a rune-inscribed drinking horn found in 1952 at Waukegan, Illinois. Claimed as medieval, it is now known to have been inscribed in Iceland by the modern poet Hjalmar Lárusson, whose daughter has identified it. How it wound up in the United States is unknown.

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Viktor now returns to France with Blávus after an absence of twelve years. The remaining third of the saga describes Viktor's suit for Fulgida, the formidable "maiden-king" of India, who has already rejected many wooers. Viktor sails to India, where he is drugged from a trick goblet, tarred, shaven, flogged, and finally rescued by Kóðer. The next year, he returns, bringing Blávus's magic carpet. He entices Fulgida onto it, but once in France she shoves him off into a tree and flies back home. Then Blávus and Kóðer sail to India, disguised as monks. Blávus wins a great reputation as a healer and, when Fulgida falls gravely ill, is persuaded to spend seven nights with her in a hall, chanting his spells. As she recovers, he invokes the name of Dimus, who then emerges from a land-inscribed drinking horn found in 1952 at Waukegan, Illinois. Claimed as medieval, it is now known to have been inscribed in Iceland by the modern poet Hjalmar Lárusson, whose daughter has identified it. How it wound up in the United States is unknown.

Though much of its material and many of its personal names are ultimately of foreign inspiration, the saga has no known continental model and is presumably an original Icelandic composition. Its motifs are widely paralleled in other Icelandic romances, notably in Gibbons saga, Klári saga, and Sigurðar saga jóglask. The theme of the misogynamous maiden-king was highly developed in Icelandic romance; the part played by a magic carpet in the version here appears to derive from a tale in the popular medieval Latin collection Gesta Romanorum. At the beginning of the saga, the author speaks in the first person, but without providing any indication of who he was or where he lived, except that he implies that King Hakon Magnússon of Norway (almost certainly the Elder, d. 1319) is no longer alive but is well remembered. Most probably, the author worked in the second half of the 14th century.

The best MS of the saga is Stock. Perg. fol. no. 7, a vellum from about 1470, probably written in the monastery at Moordruel. Two other vellums survive, AM 471 4to and AM 593b 4to, both from the second half of the 15th century and evidently from northernmost Iceland. There are also numerous paper MSS, of no independent authority, from the 17th century onward. For all its lively and entertaining narrative style and its richness in romance motifs, the saga has been little known or discussed until recently, because no printed edition appeared until 1962. Three rémus cycles have been composed on the basis of its subject matter; the oldest, the
anonymous _Viktors rimur_.formu, linguistically dateable to around 1400, varies in some details of the narrative from the extant saga and perhaps reflects an earlier, now-lost, version. The highly compressed last chapter of the saga, where a more extensive account is plainly being summarized, points in the same direction.


**D. A. H. Evans**

[See also: Gibbons saga; Klári (Clári) saga. *Riddarasögur,* *Ritum,* Sigurðar saga *þögla*]

**Vilhjálms saga sýðs** (*"The Saga of Vilhjálmar of Sýðr"* [1]) was composed in Iceland in the late 14th or early 15th century. It is one of the most voluminous of the original _riddarasögur_ and is characterized primarily by a plethora of exotic motifs. The saga seems to have been extremely popular, and is preserved in fifty-seven MSS and fragments, the majority on paper dating from the 18th and 19th centuries. Primary MSS are AM 343a 4to (vellum, 15th century), AM 548 4to (vellum, 1543), AM 577 4to (vellum, late 15th century), AM 599 4to (vellum, ca. 1600), and AM 527 4to (paper, first half of the 17th century).

In a chess game with an African princess, King Ríkarðr of England wins a golden arm ring, which he gives to his son Vilhjálmar, later disappearing in a violent storm. A giant appears one day and challenges Vilhjálmar to a series of chess games with the ring as the stake. Vilhjálmar beats the giant in two successive games, winning the ring. His head, he is obliged after three years to meet the giant in his den, but neither can defeat the other, and a reconciliation is made.

Meanwhile, Astrinomia has been abducted by emissaries from England. Finally, Vilhjálmar is proclaimed king of Babyloun. The saga is a careless and sprawling work, without even a semblance of overall structure. The first part is given at least a kind of unity by the golden arm ring and the series of chess games played for it, but the second part degenerates into a repetitious series of battles with trolls and giants.

Critical commentary on the saga has been restricted for the most part to motif hunting, for which it provides ample opportunity. Schlauch (1934) lists a number of familiar motifs found in the saga, several of which, such as the unwelcome suitor, are nearly universal in the _riddarasögur_. Several motifs may be traced directly or indirectly to Chrétien de Troyes, including the dangerous bridge (_Lancelot_) and the grateful lion (_Yvain_). Einar Ól. Sveinsson (1929: 8) recognizes the motif of trolls dying when named as common to the folklore. The _Allra flagda pula_ has special interest, and has been edited separately on two occasions.


**M. J. Driscoll**

[See also: _Riddarasögur_]

**Vilmundar saga viðutana** (*"The Saga of Vilmundr from Outside"*) is an anonymous Icelandic _riddarasaga_, probably from the 14th century. The saga is preserved in almost fifty MSS; the oldest parchment MSS are AM 586 4to, AM 343a 4to, and AM 577 4to from the 15th century. Five different _ritum_ cycles came into existence in the middle of the 15th century, of which the one by Hallur Magnússon (d. 1601) formed the basis of a younger redaction of the saga (MSS Lbs. 1445 Bvo, JS 411 Bvo, and IB 49 4to from the 18th–19th centuries). The Faroese _Vilmund's kvæði_ (CCF 104) came into existence in the 19th century, based on a MS belonging to this younger redaction.

Prince Hjarandi of Garðaríki refuses to marry off his sister...
Viimundr then goes to the royal court, where he conquers and kills a berserk and a polar bear. He becomes Hjarandi’s sworn brother and offers his assistance in killing Kolr and in warding off Qskubuska. While in the forest one day, Viimundr finds a golden Gullbrá to any man. His other sister, Sóley, agrees to marry Kolr in a shoe. She will marry only the man who brings it back to her. Viimundr is Bogu-Bósi’s grandson. Apart from Bósa saga, parallels in narrative structure and theme are found in a number of late Islendingasǫgur, in Piðreks saga, but primarily in Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar and in Parcevals saga, and perhaps also in Erex saga. A number of folkloristic motifs characterize the story, such as the fight with the bear and the substitution of the bride; Viimundar saga has even been considered the oldest example of the Cinderella fairy tale (the shoe motif, the name Qskubuska). Scholars debate whether or not the saga illustrates the superiority of the hero coming from the farming milieu, and if this is perhaps supposed to express a certain national self-consciousness among the Icelandic audience; it is thought that the author of Viimundar saga vidutan was a farmer, not a clergyman. On the other hand, the saga shows how the hero discards all rustic characteristics and fully integrates into the courtly-aristocratic society, thus arguably demonstrating the superiority of that society.

Vinland Map is a crude map of the world, purportedly of medieval provenance, but unknown until discovered in the late 1950s in Europe by the American bookseller Lawrence Witten of New Haven. Labeled in Latin and inscribed on a worm and scraped piece of parchment, it was introduced to the world through publication by Yale University Press, with the collaboration of the British Museum, of a large volume, The Vinland Map and the Tartar Relation. If authentic, the Vinland portrayed on the map as a large island would be the earliest known representation of the New World. The Latin writing on the map declares among other things that “Byarmus” (Bjarni Herjólfsson) and “Leiphus” (Leifr Eiríksson) together discovered and explored “Vinland.” That statement appears to argue that there may once have existed a third Vinland saga, for which there is no other evidence. Also mentioned in the Latin captions is a voyage in search of Vinland by an early 12th-century “Henricus . . . episcopus” (Bishop Eiríkr Gýrason), who is briefly mentioned in later Icelandic reports.

The earlier history of the Vinland Map has never been ascertained, Witten considering himself bound by a pledge not to reveal certain details of the map’s previous ownership. This refusal and the vague circumstances surrounding its finding led to much scholarly skepticism. Cartographers have argued that the New World projections of the Vinland Map distort the representation of the world as a whole, as if added to a previous map that lacked them. There is some evidence of involvement by the late Yugoslavian cleric and historian Lukas Jelić, whose theories the map seems to confirm. In 1974, it was announced that Walter C. McCrone, a microscopist and chemist employed by Yale University’s Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, had found that the ink contains large amounts of titanium dioxide, a chemical not invented until 1917. Renewed testing by Thomas A. Cahill, director of the Crocker Nuclear Laboratories of the University of California at Davis, indicates that only trace elements of the chemical can be found. The dating of the Vinland Map must accordingly be decided on other grounds.


Jörg Glauuser

[See also: Berserkr; Bósa saga ok Herrauds; Erex saga, Formaldarögur, Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar, Parcevals saga, Riddarsögur, Rímrur, Piðreks saga af Bern]
Vinland Sagas describe, in varying terms, the early discovery, naming, and partial exploration of Greenland and coastal North America by Icelanders and Greenlanders of Norse extraction. The name is applied in particular to Grœnlendinga saga ("The Saga of the Greenlanders"), here cited as GS, ("The Saga of Eiríkr the Red"), here cited as ES. Confusingly, GS is called by some writers Grœnlendinga páttr ("The Tale of the Greenlanders"), a title sometimes applied as well to a short story shortly after 1264. Written in part to glorify King Óláfr Tryggvason (r. 995-1000), it has clearly been influenced by the monk Hauksbók and Skálholtsbók, transcribed in two closely related vellum MSS: Skálholtsbók (AM 557 4to) and Hauksbók (AM 544 4to).

Through a line-by-line examination, Jansson showed that the Hauksbók version, written down before 1334 by the Iceland-born Norwegian lawspeaker Haukur Erlensson (1265–1334), was a tightened and rationalized version of the more pristine and digressive Skålholtsbók MS. There is strong evidence (Jón Jóhannesson 1962, Wahlgren 1969) that ES as we now have it is in part a tendentious rewriting of the GS account, undertaken to magnify the exploits of Hauk’s own ancestor, Porrinfur karlsetni ("doughty man"), chief hero of ES. Óláfr Halldórsson (1978), tentatively supported by Jones (1986), attribute equal authority to GS and ES, whereas H. Ingstad, like Jón Jóhannesson and Wahlgren but with excellent additional arguments of his own, finds that ES is largely modeled on GS. Doubtful, however, is Ingstad’s conclusion that GS was actually written in Greenland. Various words and phrases of ES reveal the author’s skillful alteration to mask that saga’s dependence on the earlier GS. That dependence is far from uniform, for ES reveals purposes not evident in GS. Better written, it is in general a more sophisticated product, with hagiographic features that demonstrably transcend the facts of history. ES changes both the action and the cast of characters involved in what we may call “the Vinland story.”

If the GS were not available for comparison, we should have far fewer criteria for evaluating the general historicity of the Vinland voyages. In terms both of literature and of history, the entire picture has long been muddled through a general tendency to regard the details of the two Vinland sagas as more or less interchangeable. The two sagas may and should be compared, but it is important to regard them as discrete, if obviously related, works. Like the Íslendingasögur in general, they were not intended as general histories or travel guides. Some of their details, after generations of oral transmission, were doubtless imperfectly understood by the saga writers themselves. Their confusions, together with certain obvious fictions, have led such writers as Nansen to minimize or deny the historical content of the Vinland accounts. Modern archaeological discoveries in Greenland and Canada, however, and in particular the work of H. and A. S. Ingstad at L’Anse aux Meadows in northern Newfoundland, have now vindicated the basic indications of the sagas.

Although shorter than ES, the GS, or Flateyjarbók tradition, identifies six Vinland voyages versus three in ES. The first of the six narrates the accidental discovery of some part of North America by the merchant Bjarni Herjólfsson, presumably in the year 986. Sailing from Norway to Iceland with a shippload of wares and intending to winter with his family in western Iceland, Bjarni finds that, shortly before, his kinsmen had gone off to Greenland as part of Eiríkr’s project to colonize it. Rapidly changing plans, Bjarni sets sail toward Greenland. Lost for many days in the Atlantic fogs, he ultimately sights land to the west. Cautionily standing offshore, he sails northward until the sight of glaciers, presumably on Baffin Island, persuades him that he has come far enough north to make an easterly push with small risk of missing Greenland a second time. And indeed, he arrives safely at his father’s estate of Herjólfslæs on the southern tip of Greenland. On a subsequent trip to Norway, he is reported to have not having explored the lands he had sighted.

The second voyage, by Eiríkr’s son Leifr, was made sometime around the year 1000. Resolving to do what Bjarni had not done, he buys the latter’s ship and sails to investigate the new lands to the west. Coming first to the land that Bjarni had sighted last, he sails southward, naming the areas as he goes. Three of these names have survived: Helluland ("Slab-rock Land"), Markland ("Forest Land"), and Vinland (long o) or Vinland (short o), to be interpreted as "Vine Land" or "Meadow Land." Finding grapevines and fine forest trees, they build houses for the winter. In the spring or summer, with a load of lumber, they sail back to Leifr’s father’s home at Brattahlíð, having rescued some shipwrecked people on the way. Leifr’s voyage is followed by a third expedition undertaken by the wealthy trader Karlsetni, who with a crew of sixty, including five women, and several head of cattle, finds Leifr’s home at Brattahlíð, having rescued some shipwrecked people on the way. Leifr’s voyage is followed by a third expedition undertaken by his brother Porvaldr, who winters in Leifr’s houses and then searches for land for himself. Ultimately, Porvaldr is killed by an arrow shot by one of the skraelingar, or natives. His companions bury him and return to Greenland. A fourth voyage, undertaken by Leifr’s brother Porsteinn, is aborted. A fifth expedition is undertaken by the wealthy trader Karlsetni, who with a crew of sixty, including five women, and several head of cattle, finds Leifr’s houses, which he has agreed to lend them. They meet and trade with the skraelingar for furs, but the two races ultimately come to blows. The would-be colonists return to Greenland with produce of the land, including grapes, grapevines, and furs. There follows a sixth voyage, a joint-stock expedition undertaken by Leifr’s illegitimate half-sister, Freydis, together with two brothers named Helgi and Finnbogi, whom, in the end, Freydis murders with their entire crew, including even the women. For a number of reasons, the historicity of this voyage is doubtful.

ES (Skálholtsbók–Hauksbók tradition), placing its emphasis on Karlsetni, has fewer voyages. Dispensing with Bjarni Herjólfsson, it makes Leifr discover some unnamed new lands quie by accident while returning from an adventurous and probably...
unhistorical voyage to the Hebrides and Norway, where King Óláfr commissions him to preach Christianity in Greenland. Leifr's brother Porsteinn sets out on a fruitless voyage. Finally, a mighty commissions him to preach Christianity in Greenland. Leifr's expedition, comprising three ships and 160 men and women, sails forth under Karlsefni. They never find Vinland. Internal dissent splits the group, and strife with the heathen poet and curmudgeon Pórhallr veiõimaõr ("huntsman"), adroitly Karlsefni, with his wife, Guõríõr, and son, Snorri, the "first white whose verses lament the failure to find grapes. The edible whale of GS, located with certainty. If the grapevines were real, the St. Lawrence Valley or New England would seem reasonable locations. For want of archaeological finds, many investigators are willing to settle for northern Newfoundland as an authentic or surrogate site for Vinland, Land of Grapes. Meanwhile, objects of medieval Norse manufacture are turning up in impressive numbers in Arctic Canada.

Because of its economic value, Markland, source of timber for the Greenland colony, lives on for centuries in legend and in fact. Vinland/Vinland became a shadowy memory, never to be located with certainty. If the grapevines were real, the St. Lawrence Valley or New England would seem reasonable locations. For want of archaeological finds, many investigators are willing to settle for northern Newfoundland as an authentic or surrogate site for Vinland, Land of Grapes. Meanwhile, objects of medieval Norse manufacture are turning up in impressive numbers in Arctic Canada.

Visio Tnugdali ("The Vision of Tundale") is a mid-12th-century account of the vision of a wicked Irish nobleman, Tundale, in a swoon during which he remained almost lifeless. After three days, he awoke and led a pious life from then on; he distributed all his possessions to the Church and the poor, and made known what he had seen and experienced in his vision. The succeeding chapters describe how his soul departed from his body and was led by an angel through the purgatorial torments of hell to the bliss of paradise until its return to Tundale's body. Because of its vivid and imaginative description of the otherworld, the story became very popular in the Middle Ages: it was translated into a number of languages and was included by Vincent of Beauvais in his Speculum historiale (Book 27: 88–104).

The Old Norse translation of the work, Duggals leiðsla, has been dated to the mid-13th century. This dating is based on the prologue, which says the translation was undertaken at the request of King Hákon (Hákonarson; r. 1217–1263). Some features of the vocabulary and syntax of Duggals leiðsla show an affinity with a number of translated middatarasogur, i.e., the Tristram group, that can be assigned to several locations, including Vinland. The succeeding chapters describe how his soul departed from his body and was led by an angel through the purgatorial torments of hell to the bliss of paradise until its return to Tundale's body. Because of its vivid and imaginative description of the otherworld, the story became very popular in the Middle Ages: it was translated into a number of languages and was included by Vincent of Beauvais in his Speculum historiale (Book 27: 88–104).

Visio Tnugdali is found in the following paper MSS: SKB D 4 a (Codex Verelianus) from no later than 1457, SKB D 3 from 1476, Stb Saml. 1a in Linköping from the end of the 15th century or the beginning of the 16th, SKB K 45 4to from the beginning of the 16th century, and SKB D 80 (a copy of SKB D 3 by Wennaesius) from around 1670; an additional MS (SKB A 58) containing a translation of the Visio Tnugdali is now lost (cf. Stephens and Ahlstrand 1844: L1). According to Kornhall (1959: 57), SKB D 4 preserves the most original text. The A-reduction presents the shorter version. Whether it is derived from a different and shorter original than the B-reduction, or whether the translator simplified or omitted certain sections of his Latin original cannot be ascertained. The B-reduction (ed. Dahlgren 1875) survives in SKB A 58 (Jöns Buddes bok), written 1491. It is possible that the translation was made by Jöns Budd in Nåndal monastery and that SKB A 58 represents a copy of the original translation.

No translation of the Visio Tnugdali into Danish has survived, but that the work was known is evident from two Danish MSS containing the Latin text (cf. Ronge and Gad 1975: 55–6): (1) Halle Univ.-bibl. Y c 6 4to from the 13th century; it originally belonged to the Cistercian monastery in Legumkloster. (2) NKS 123 4to (fols. 27–36) from 1454–1462 by Peder Madsen, a priest in Ribe; the text is translated and excerpted from the Speculum historiale ("Istud bene est extractum compilatum et scriptum ex speculo hystoriali").


Kirsten Wolf

Visionary Literature. There may be traces of ecstatic experiences in eddic poetry, as in Völuspá, and there are many hints of shamanistic trance in diverse Scandinavian sources (Arbman 1963–70). But visionary literature as a genre of its own developed in the North only after the Conversion. The motifs employed in these texts rely heavily on Latin traditions of revelation, if they are not mere translations of earlier specimens of this genre. Generally speaking, there were two types of visions during the Middle Ages. The first, ecstatic journeys of the soul to the realms of the dead, concerned the punishments of the wicked and the rewards of the just. Early examples are found in the Dialogues of Pope Gregory 1 and the Historia Francorum of Gregory of Tours (both late 6th century). The genre culminates in the long Latin visions of the 12th century, but declines soon afterward. The second type comprises the mystic visions, describing mostly the soul's ecstatic union with its heavenly bridegroom, Christ, as well as scenes from his passion, or allegorical themes. This type of vision is recorded from the 12th century onward.

From the large corpus of Latin journeys to the otherworld, only a small part was translated into the Scandinavian languages. The vision of St. Paul of the pains of hell, although fictitious and rejected by the Church Fathers, served as a model for the whole genre. It was translated at the end of the 12th century into Old Norse (ed. Tveitane 1964). A Danish version forms part of the legendary "Hellige Kvinder" extant in SKB K 4 from 1400–1500. An Old Norse translation (12th century) of Gregory's Dialogues contains the vision of the souls' bridge to paradise (ed. Unger 1877: 179–255). Drythel's vision of the realm of eternal punishment first recorded by the Venerable Bede in 731 (Historia ecclesiastica 5:12), was repeated in Vincent of Beauvais's Speculum historiale, which was translated in the 14th century into Old Norse (ed. Gering 1882–84: 313). An early-medieval saint's life containing numerous dream-visions was that of Ansgar, written by Rimbert in the 9th century and translated into Old Swedish in the 14th or 15th century. The most widespread of the otherworld journeys was the Visio Tnugdali (mid-12th century): in his ecstasy, the Irish knight Tundale, guided by his angel, had to "taste" for himself most of the pains of the netherworld before crossing the nail-studded bridge to the regions of paradise. This fascinating if sadistic account found pious translators all over the European countries; an Old Norse translation was ordered by King Hakon Hakonarson (d. 1263) or Hakon Magnusson (ed. Cahill 1983). A Swedish version followed (ed. Stephens and Ahlstrand 1844, Dahlgren 1875). One famous record from the Irish sanctuary on an island in Lake Dergh (Ulster) treated the adventures of the knight Owein, who had to wander through the regions of purgatory and cross the slippery bridge to paradise in order to do penance for his sins. It was translated into Old Swedish (ed. Stephens and Ahlstrand 1844). Old Norse versions of Gundelin's vision (1167) were incorporated into Maritu saga (13th century; ed. Unger 1871: 534–41, 1162–8).
Of the mystical visions, only one translation seems to be known; it was taken from the numerous revelations of St. Elisabeth of Schönau (d. 1164), dealing with Mary’s assumption (ed. Maurer 1883; Widding and Bekker-Nielsen 1961).

The Nordic countries have not produced many visions of their own; at least, not many have been preserved. There are some examples in saints’ lives, especially those about King Óláfr Haraldsson, but the first and perhaps only originally independent text is Runnevarar leilda, incorporated into Prestssaga Gudmundar Arasonar. Runnevar, the concubine of several priests, was dragged through an Icelandic desert landscape and tormented by fiends, but was rescued by the Virgin and saints (ed. Stefán Karlsson 1983: 92–9). The dominating visionary of the later Middle Ages was St. Birgitta of Sweden, whose revelations, dictated in her native tongue, were immediately translated into Latin, but soon retranslated into Old Swedish (ed. Klemming 1857–84). Of her original wording, only scraps have been preserved (ed. Högman 1951, Gussgard 1961).

Sometimes, Solarljóð is counted as a vision, although it is in fact a moralistic-didactic poem, as are the dialogues between the body and soul sometimes classified as visions. Guidos Ånd and Arild og Åndern are Danish translations from the Latin and Low German respectively (cf. Gad 1961: 356ff.), and represent examples of the many late-medieval stories in circulation about ghosts.


Volsung-Niflung Cycle comprises a wealth of literary works, both poetry and prose, that extend geographically from the Scandinavian North to the Austro-Bavarian South, and chronologically from the early lays of the Poetic Edda, such as Brot af Sigurðarkviða, on to the early 13th-century German Nibelungenlied, and ending with the 16th-century Das Lied vom Härnn Seyffrid.

The Codex Regius of the Poetic Edda includes eighteen lays related to the Volsung-Niflung material, some marginally, some centrally. The central group deals with (Sequence A) Sigurðr’s marriage to Guðrún, daughter of King Gjúki, the resentment felt by Brynhildr, Gunnarr’s wife, toward her brother-in-law Sigurðr’s attitude and behavior, and Sigurðr’s murder at the hands of Guðrún’s brothers and their appropriation of his treasure, all this in association with (Sequence B) those lays that deal with the murder of Guðrún’s brothers (termed Gjúkings, Niflungs, or Burgundians) by Atli, ruler of the Huns (the historical Attila) and Guðrún’s second husband, greedy for the treasure that once was Sigurðr’s, with the vengeance taken against Atli by Guðrún for the murder of her brothers, and with her own death.

Sequences A and B are in their origins two separate legends that became loosely linked through the person of Guðrún: Sigurðr’s sorrowing widow is identified as Atli’s vengeful queen.

The Nibelungenlied also falls into two sections: Part 1 corresponds to Sequence A of the eddic lays, and Part II to Sequence B. The forms taken by the names of the various characters are, of course, different, e.g. Sigurðr is paralleled by Sifrit (i.e., Siegfried), Brynhildr by Brünhild, Gunnarr by Gunther, Hogni by Hagen, Gjúki by Gibeche, Niflungs by Nibelungs, Guðrún by Kriemhild (Grimhildr in Poetic Edda; the term Niblung, Nibelungs, or Burgundians by Atli, ruler of the Huns (the historical Attila) and Guðrún’s second husband, greedy for the treasure that once was Sigurðr’s, with the vengeance taken against Atli by Guðrún for the murder of her brothers, and with her own death.

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The older version is that of the Poetic Edda, because the pattern in the Nibelungenlied with its emphasis on the role played by the love of a wife for a beloved husband seems more modern than the theme of Atla-kviða, because the Nibelungenlied presents a more sophisticated structuring of the material, and because it allows a brief glimpse of the older version to appear. Kriemhild’s joy on observing her brothers arrive at Etzel’s court in full armor makes sense only if she favors their cause, as does the Norse Guðrún, and is not set on their downfall, which, in the Nibelungenlied, she undoubtedly is. Again, it is only if seen in the earlier context of anxiety felt for her brothers’ safety that the warning of trouble
ahead given to those brothers while on their way to Etzel's court by her own trusted liegeman, Eckewart, on the borders of Margrave Rüediger's domains (where, confusingly, Eckewart also functions as a sentinel for Rüediger) can be properly understood in a version in which Kriemhilt is her brothers' enemy. Kriemhilt's changed role is probably due to the need to exonerate Etzel from the murder of Hagen and Gunther in the light of a tradition developed among the Ostrogoths, and inherited by the Bavarians, that presented Attila in a favorable light.

Even in the Poetic Edda, there are hints of a motivation for the downfall of the Niflung brothers other than simple greed for gold. In the late Atlamal, belonging to Sequence B, occurs a veiled reference to their responsibility for the death by suicide of Brynhildr, Athi's sister (as she had become in the Norse tradition), while the eddic prose passage Drap Niflungs, where there is no mention any more than in Atlamal of the Niflung treasure, implies that their doom at Athi's hands is the result of that responsibility. A clear link between Sigurør's murder and their downfall is provided by a passage in Volsunga saga where Athi is not only motivated by his greed for their treasure, but also by his desire to avenge Sigurór; and in the eddic Brot af Sigurdarkvídú, references to the Niflungs' undoing because they broke their oaths to Sigurór may indicate a similar if tenuous link, conceivably a spontaneous development in the North, but possibly an echo (along with the passage in Volsunga saga) of the developed German pattern.

There are also differences between the pattern taken by the Norse legends of Brynhildr in the Poetic Edda and Volsunga saga on the one hand, and the Nibelungenlied's account of Brûnhilt on the other. In the northern tradition represented by Volsunga saga, Sigurór is betrothed to Brynhildr (the "prior betrothal" theme), loses all memory of her as a result of a potion administered by Grôtmhildr, whose daughter, Guðrún, he is persuaded to marry. Gunnar seeks Brynhildr's hand in marriage, but cannot pass through the flame barrier surrounding her hall. Sigurór, however, does so, thus fulfilling the condition laid on the man Brynhildr must wed, after first magically exchanging shapes with Gunnar, whom Brynhildr must accept as her husband, although it was Sigurór she had expected to dare the fire. During a quarrel with Guðrún over precedence, the deception comes to light and Sigurór is murdered at the instigation of Brynhildr, who chooses to die on his funeral pyre.

In the Nibelungenlied, Brûnhilt is the warrior-queen of Iseland (presumably Iceland, although this has been disputed), and she too is won for Gunther by Sifrit, invisible in his magic cloak and Brûnhilt's real opponent in three martial games, although Gunther appears to be the victor, thus fulfilling the condition for success imposed by Brûnhilt on her suitors. Brûnhilt will not allow consummation of her marriage to Gunther until he tells her why her sister, Kriemhilt, should enter into what seems to Brûnhilt a mésalliance with Sifrit, who in Iseland had pretended to be Gunther's liegeman and thus his feudal inferior. Sifrit, who had been given Kriemhilt's hand in marriage as a reward for his assistance in Iseland, again comes to Gunther's aid. On the second night after Gunther's wedding, he seduces—chastely—the immensely strong Brûnhilt, then leaves her to Gunther's embraces, her Amazon-like qualities being lost along with her virginity. Eventually, in the course of a quarrel over precedence, Kriemhilt, overstepping the case, publicly calls Brûnhilt Sifrit's "paramour" (in Hárek saga, Sigurór actually deflowers Brynhilde), and Sifrit's part in the final subjugation of Gunther's wife is revealed. At Hagen's instigation (Hagen, the Burgundians' right-hand man, is not brother to Gunther, as Hogni is to Gunnar, but a distant kinsman), Sifrit's murder is plotted, and Hagen himself slays Sifrit when they are out hunting in the forest. Kriemhilt is distraught, while Brûnhilt, who had also considered the need to take vengeance on Sifrit, is supremely and uncaringly arrogant.

The two fundamental differences between the two patterns are that in the Nibelungenlied, Brûnhilt, as distinct from Brynhildr of Volsunga saga, is not betrothed to Sifrit (Sigurór), nor does she commit suicide, but sits "enthroned in her pride." In the Nibelungenlied, Brûnhilt's anger and distress arise out of the deception practiced on her by Sifrit on the second night after her wedding, or for Sifrit's boasting about it to Kriemhilt, and because it has now become public knowledge.

The existence of the prior-betrothal theme in the North renders Brynhildr's feelings toward Sigurór more complex. In Volsunga saga, she refers to her deception by him at the same time that she shows her envy of Guðrún, who had the more eminent husband in Sigurór; she is also in love with Sigurór, and thus is jealous of Guðrún on that count, too. Moreover, in deceiving her, Sigurór had made her jilt herself, for although Sigurór braved the flames, she had to marry Gunnar. Yet she had sworn to wed none but the man who rode through the fire, and her oath is broken. A broken oath, in pagan belief, brought doom to the perjurer, and Brynhildr's suicide may be seen as a heroic anticipation of that doom, although her self-immolation is best understood in the context of her love for Sigurór: she is united in death to the man who in life was withheld from her, and whose downfall the code of vengeance, not invalidated by Sigurór's enforced forgetfulness of her, impelled her to contrive. Although Volsunga saga presents an integrated version of the eddic poems basic to the Sigurór material, including those of the lost gathering, the treatment accorded these latter by the saga writer helps to make the precise path taken by Brynhildr's complex psychological development largely a matter of informed conjecture.

The less complex pattern of the Nibelungenlied, with no prior betrothal, no jealous love on Brûnhilt's part, and no suicide, is very likely the narrative core of the Brynhildr/Brûnhilt legend that became elaborated in Scandinavia. This core contains a further element found both in the Nibelungenlied and in the North. In the Nibelungenlied, Hagen takes action not so much to avenge the deceived and insulted Brûnhilt as to get rid of Sifrit, regarded as a threat to the royal power, and to seize his immense wealth, including the Nibelung treasure. In the northern variants, it is mainly Brûnhilt, although to some extent Gunnar, who expresses this envy-fear theme, while Hogni is opposed to Sigurór's murder; it is his younger brother, Gutormr, who slays Sigurór (in the old Brot af Sigurdarkvídú, Hogni and Gunnar together slay Sigurór). The differences may largely be due to the changing emphasis given to Brynhildr/Brûnhilt's role in the different versions of the material. In Hárek saga, she is the main instigator of Sigurór's murder, Hogni simply carrying out the deed, and she voices her belief that Sigurór poses a threat to them all, the better to ensure that action is taken for the wrong done to her. In the Nibelungenlied, she plays a less prominent role in this respect, where Hagen is the main instigator, as well as Sigfrid's murderer, and the main propounder of the envy-fear theme. In the North, Brynhildr's role receives the fullest development, and her feelings regarding the threat posed by Sigurór receive their most vehement expression. The envy-fear theme is a basic ingredient in a probably historically derived nucleus worked upon over the centuries by the poetic imagination.
That the more complex Brynhildr/Brünhilt pattern was known solely in the North has been disputed. Just as there are hints in Part II of the Nibelungenlied of an older version, so, it is suggested, there are hints in Part I of the prior-betrothal theme, for there Sifrit clearly knows about Brünhilt and is able to guide Gunther's wooing expedition to Isult. Moreover, Sifrit is recognized on the approach of the expedition, and on his arrival is the first to be greeted by Brünhilt, and without introduction. These and other so-called "hints" need be nothing of the kind; they can be accounted for by the special knowledge often attributed to heroes, by the fact that Sifrit's fame went before him, that his preeminent heroic qualities made him instantly recognizable, and by reference to the social mores of the age. Pidreks saga does tell of a prior meeting, without a betrothal, between Sigurðr and Brynhildr before Sigurðr's marriage, but that meeting, along with a later retrospective reference to a betrothal, may well be due to the influence of the northern tradition on the German-based saga. It is safer to consider the prior betrothal and associated motifs as belonging together with other northern innovations in the cycle, such as the genealogical links connecting Sigurðr, his father Sigmundr, his grandfather Volsungr, and his whole line with the Norse god Oðinn, and those that make Brynhildr into Atli's sister; or the lays in the Poetic Edda that tell of the exploits of Sigurðr's half-brother, Helgi, or yet the new theme of Guðrún's unsuccessful attempt at suicide that replaces her death on the completion of her vengeance at Atli's court, a device that links the cycle to the legends of Jórmunrekkr, historically the 4th-century ruler of the Ostrogoths, Ermanaric. Then there is the sudden appearance of Áslaug, unaccountably Sigurðr's daughter by Brynhildr, who provides a link with Ragnars saga lodbrokar and the Norwegian royal line.

A further innovation is that Hogni's son, Niflungr (or Hniflungr), assists Guðrún in her vengeance. It probably reflects a late development whereby Hogni, after being mortally wounded, begets a son who becomes his father's avenger, and, according to Pidreks saga, starves Attila (in a different version Grimmhildr, in another both of them) to death in the Niflung's treasure chamber.

A possible innovative link is the identification in Volsunga saga of the sleeping valkyrie awakened by Sigurðr in the eddic Sigdrífrunnal as Brynhildr, for in Sigdrífrunnal her name is not Brynhildr but Sigdrífr, and there is no betrothal. She need not have been the maiden whom Sigurðr woosed on Gunnarr's behalf. The sleeping-valkyrie adventure may have been an exploit originally independent of the central core of the legends, as are the hero's other youthful exploits, his slaying of a dragon (thought by some to be his father Sigmundr's exploit later transferred to him), and his acquisition of great wealth, the precise details and the associated themes differing from one version to another, but all supplying the victim of the murder plot with suitable heroic antecedents.

The original themes have thus undergone constant remodeling and expansion so as to embrace originally unrelated heroic legends, not the least of these being those associated with Pidrekt of Bern (in German, Dietrich), the reflex in legend of Theodor, the 5th-century Ostrogothic ruler of Italy.

In addition to the Poetic Edda, Volsungasaga, Pidreks saga, and the Nibelungenlied, there is a brief version of the material in Snorri Sturluson's Prose Edda, and various aspects (not excluding further variations and accretions) are dealt with in the North by the 14th-century Normagesst þáttir, the late Icelandic metrical romances called Volsungasímur, various ballads in Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, and Faroese, and the Hven Chronicle, a Danish translation made in 1603 of a lost Latin original; while in Germany there are, in addition to certain of the Dietrich poems, Selfrid de Ardemont (where Siegfried becomes a knight of the Round Table), the Anhang zum Heldenschöpf, and the late Lied vom Härmen Seyfried. References to characters from the cycle are found in Eiríks saga, in Flateyjarbók, in the Old English poems Beowulf, the Fight at Finnsburh, Widsith, and Waldere, in the medieval Latin Waltharius, and occasionally in medieval historical chronicles, such as Simon Kezaí's Chronica Hungarorum. Such names as Hagnur, Kriemhilt, Nipulunc, Sigfrid, and Welsunc (Volsung) appear in German deeds and charters as early as the 8th century.

Although the Siegfried story is probably rooted in historical events overlaid with fairy tale and myth, both fairy tale and myth have been regarded as its primary source: Siegfried is either a heroicized fairy-tale character, or the counterpart of a mythic divine being, for instance, the redeeming god who slays in spring the dragon of winter, his death parallels that of the vegetation god, and he has been linked with the Norse god Baldr. Siegfried's historical prototype has admittedly never been positively identified, unlike those of Gunnarr/Gunther and his father, Gjökt/Gibeche, and brother Gutorm/Geslher, whose prototypes were members of the Burgundian royal house. But suggestions are not lacking: the Ostrogoth Araja, the German national hero Arminus, and Sigibert, Merovingian ruler of Austria, who was the husband of the Visigothic princess Brunichildis and was murdered in 575 at the behest of Fredegundis, wife of his brother, Chilperich, with whom Sigibert was at war. The doom of Gunther/Gunnarr and Hagen/Hogni is based on the historical destruction in 437 of the Burgundians by the Huns, not led on this occasion by Attila. Attila died from natural causes on his wedding night in 453 after marrying a Germanic maiden named Hildico. Legend rapidly made Hildico into Attila's murderer and associated his death, as an act of vengeance, with the downfall of the Burgundians, now effected by Attila himself.

The term "Niflung/Nibelung" may have a historical basis and perhaps derive from the city of Nivelles, an important Merovingian center, although its likely connection with Old High German nebal, Old Norse'Neill 'mist' suggests a link with supernatural "mist dwellers," a term appropriate for the dwarfs often associated with the Niflung/Nibelung treasure. Hogni himself is said in Pidreks saga to have been begotten by an ell (elf). Volsung may contain the name Volfi, a phallic fetish in Volsa þáttir, and thus may have associations with a fertility cult.

The transmission and diffusion of the early legends have been much debated. It is likely that heroic Germanic traditions were perpetuated orally not only in poetic form, but also outside it, that there existed different, parallel, versions of a given legend, and that these could influence each other. This relative lack of thematic stability does not necessarily imply the validity of the Parry-Lord Yugoslavian-based theories of improvised oral poetry for the Germanic area, and certainly not for the eddic lays.

The ancient tales are not recorded exclusively on parchment and paper, for scenes from them are found carved in wood and stone in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, England, and the Isle of Man, for example, Sigurðr slaying the dragon, Sigurðr and Gunnarr with Brynhildr, Hogni's heart being cut out, and Gunnarr in the snake pit. The Swedish Overhogdal tapestry also depicts Volsung motifs.

There is no doubt as to the influence exerted by the central
Der Humen Seyfrid, shown by Hans Sachs's 16th-century German Volksbuch vom gehõmten Sigfrid, by the 18th-century German Laxdãnga saga, several 19th-century reworkings of the material, such as Friedrich Ring des Nibelungen, or in our own century by Max Mell's Der Nibelunge Not.


See also: Atlakvida; Atlamál; Codex Regius; Eddie Poetry; Erfiðsmál; Flateyjarbók; Grettispá; Geoðrurnarkviða I–III; Guðrúnarhvöft; Hamðismál in form; Helreið Brynhildar; Laxdæla saga; Nornageists pátrar; Oddrúnargráðr; Ragnar saga lóðbrókar; Regínsmál and
The saga tells of Sigurðr's ancestors, descendants of Óðinn, including Volsungr, Sigurðr's grandfather, and especially of Sigurðr's father, Sigmundr. It then tells of Sigurðr himself, how he slew a dragon, Fáfhir, brother of Reginn, Sigurðr's foster-father, acquired its accursed gold, and became betrothed to the valkyrie daughter, Gu∂rún, sister to Gunnarr, Hogni, and Guttormr. Gunnarr now seeks Brynhildr's hand, but cannot ride through the flames surrounding her castle. Sigurðr and Gunnarr exchange oaths of blood-brotherhood; he slays Sigurðr, who avenges himself before dying. Brynhildr now declares Sigurðr's innocence, stabs herself, and dies on Sigurðr's funeral pyre. After the death of Sigurðr, Gu∂rún is married to Atlí, Brynhildr's brother. Greedy for Sigurðr's treasure, now owned by Gu∂rún's brothers, Atlí invites them to a feast and treacherously takes them prisoner. Gunnarr refuses to tell Atlí where the gold lies hidden while Hogni lives. On seeing Hogni's bloody heart, he exults that now he alone knows the secret and that Atlí never will. Gunnarr is put to death in a snake pit. Gu∂rún takes vengeance on Atlí by giving him his sons' hearts to eat and their blood to drink. Helped by Hogni's son, Niflung, she slays Atlí, then sets fire to his hall. Gu∂rún marries a third husband, Jónakr, and incites their sons, Þórir, Hamþór, and Erpr, to take vengeance on Jormunrekkr for the killing of Svanhildr, her daughter by Sigurðr. Jormunrekkr had sent his son, Randvǫr, to ask for her hand on his behalf. Svanhildr was given to him, but Bikki, Jormunrekkr's counselor, said she was a more fitting bride for Randvǫr. Jormunrekkr was furious, and had his son hanged and Svanhildr trampled to death by horses.

Volsunga saga forms a probably independent "prologue" to Ragnarssaga lóðbrókar and is linked to it by Áslaug, said to be daughter of Brynhildr and Sigurðr (of Óðinn's line), whom Ragnar marries, thus providing a divine progenitor for Hákon Hákonarson, king of Norway, a descendant of the historical Ragnar. Some assign the connecting Áslaug episode to Volsunga saga, others to Ragnarssaga.

Despite structural defects (e.g., Brynhildr and Sigurðr are twice betrothed, and Brynhildr's residence varies between a flame-encircled castle, a "shield castle," and a normal Norse hall), this saga is at least as compelling as most of its genre.

The prose of Volsunga saga has thirty inset stanzas; indeed, the main body of its narrative material is a retelling of certain heroic lays preserved in the Codex Regius MS of the Poetic Edda; the MS was probably not used by the saga writer. Moreover, it includes a version of the poems contained in a gathering now lost from that MS. Some argue for a prose provenance for chs. 24–28, and a postulated *Sigurðr saga could have supplied material not deriving from the Poetic Edda; Priðreks saga supplied at least ch. 23, probably as an addition by a later interpolator.

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R. G. Finch
a native figure of Scandinavian lore. The skiing and hunting mentioned in the poem suggest a possible Finnish origin for the legend, though it is impossible to ascertain how old the figure of the archetypal smith (e.g., Ilmarinen in the Kalevala) actually is. The name Vplundr, however, is unrecorded before this poem, and figures in no early Scandinavian place-names. It may reflect the Norse root vel ‘magic, cunning, artifice,’ a sense clearly played upon in the poem (st. 20): vel gerði hann heldr hvatt Niðuðr (‘marvels he wrought, fiercely for Niðuðr’). Another possible root is Gallo-Roman *valare ‘disposed to live well.’ Other names in the poem do not help, though some scholars have suspected Irish origin, since the poem’s introductory prose mentions a Gaulish king Kjárr, apparently cognate with Old Irish Ceaghall, although Latin Caesar is possible. Others have sought a Gothic origin for the legend, since the Old English Waldere mentions Vplundr’s son, Wida, who has been identified with the Vithgabius of Ammianus Marcellinus’s 4th-century Rerum gestarum and with the “rex fortissimum Víðgoíoa” in Jordane’s 6th-century Getica, although neither the name nor the exploits of Vplundr are alluded to in these documents. The later and longer account of Vplundr and his son are contained in the 13th-century Velents saga smíðs, which forms part of the compendious Pídeses saga al Bern. Here, Velent is said to be the “excellent smith whom the Varangians call Vplundr.” Vplundr’s brother in this account, Egill, appears early in Norse poetry, in a visa by Eyvindr Finnsson skaldaspíllir (“plagiarist”), and in the Skáldskaparmál of Snorri Sturluson, both times in a kenning for bow, Egils vápn (‘Egill’s weapon’). This scant evidence of an earlier archer legend suggests that the Vplundarkvida might well be an accretion of a native story with a continental myth.

Linguistic evidence would date the poem from the 9th century, according to both Bellows (1923) and Vigfusson and Powell (1905). The story was known to the English at this time, for the Old English poem Deor devotes a strophe each to the physical woes of Weland and the moral dilemma of Beaduhild, pregnant with the child of her brothers’ killer. That poem’s strophic form and alliterative refrain, however, have suggested to many critics a Norse origin. The 8th-century Frank Casket, now in the British Museum, depicts what appear to be scenes from the story of Vplundr, showing a smith at his anvil, over the bodies of two boys, receiving a cup from a woman (or giving one to her). The Old English poem Beowulf (l. 455) mentions Weland as the maker of the hero’s mailshirt.

The poem Vplundarkvida, consisting of forty-one stanzas of two to five alliterative fornyrðislag lines (159 lines in all), with prose introduction and two brief prose interludes, can be divided into four narrative units. The first five stanzas describe the capture, or embrace, of Vplundr and his two brothers by three swan-maidens; the prose introduction has it the other way round: the brothers capture the maidens. After a stay of eight years, the maidens depart. Vplundr sits fashioning jewelry, awaiting the return of Hervor, while his two brothers go searching for their mother. The next section of twelve stanzas describes the theft of one of Vplundr’s rings and his subsequent capture by King Niðuðr (“evil-destroyer,” or “condition-of-enmity?”). A prose interpolation notes that the ring is given to the king’s daughter, Bjóðvikdr (“war-battle, desire-of-battle”), while Niðuðr keeps Vplundr’s sword for himself. The queen orders Vplundr to be deprived of his sínar magnum (‘power of sinews’) by means of a ring. Another prose intervention localizes the maiming of the knees before Vplundr is set on an island to manufacture jewelry for the king. The third part of the poem, stanzas 18–29, comprises Vplundr’s double revenge. First, he kills the two sons of Niðuðr and makes jeweled cups of their skulls; then, he seduces the king’s daughter when she brings him her broken ring to repair. The last twelve stanzas of the poem recount Vplundr’s boastful revelation of his acts, his flight from the island despite the king’s archers by means of wings he has fashioned, and, finally, Niðuðr’s lament.

Of the poem’s narrative features, or motifs, the swan-maiden episode is unique to this version of the story. The capture and vengeance of Vplundr are alluded to in Deor, the Franks Casket, and Velents saga, while the archers are present in Velents saga, where it is Vplundr’s own brother, Egill, who is ordered to shoot him down. Vplundarkvida contains at least seven distinct conventional motifs: (1) swan-maiden, or Valkyries, (2) theft of a single fetish treasure, (3) a lame smith, (4) an archer (in the Velents saga version, Niðuðr has Egill prove his skill as an archer by shooting an apple off the head of his son, a folk tale motif that may must have had wide currency in Europe before being fixed popularly to the Swiss hero William Tell in the 14th century), (5) serving a child’s body to the father, (6) making wings for flight from imprisonment, and (7) performance of vengeance through a sexual act. The collocation of these elements in a single poem suggests that it embodies a regeneration myth, which can be summed up as follows: a male fertility force prospers until his mate deserts him. A destructive force renders the hero powerless until he regains his powers in an act of destruction followed by conception of life. The coupling with the daughter of his oppressor replaces, or reestablishes, a sexual act of which he is deprived when his own “wife” leaves him. Regaining his ring and his power combines fetish treasure with sexual conception. The fabrication of wings offers him an efficient means of pursuing his lost maiden. Such a mythic structure is not uncommon in the mythological poems of the Poetic Edda. A remarkably close analogy occurs in Prymskvida, which tells the story of Poór’s loss of his hammer and his recovery of it in a mock wedding ceremony that turns into a slaughter of his enemy and the saving of Freyja, goddess of fertility, for the gods. Prymskvida immediately precedes Vplundarkvida in the MS.

Volundr is a craftsman of supernatural stature and endowment who appears in various aspects of Germanic tradition. Named Weland in German, Wayland/Weland in English, Velent/Volundr in Icelandic, he partakes of folklore, myth, and literature.

His story is most fully recorded in Völundarkvida, one of the older eddic poems, and in the Icelandic Pòdreks saga af Bern, Prynmskvida, Volundr.

In the eddic lay, Volundr weds a swan-maiden who leaves him after several years of marriage. Waiting for her in sorrow, Volundr eddic lay, Volundr weds a swan-maiden who leaves him after several years of marriage. Waiting for her in sorrow, Volundr

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Völund is mentioned in the Old English poems Deor and Waldere, and Beowulf’s mailshirt is designated as “Weland’s creation.” Wayland’s Smithy is the name of a megalithic tomb in the Berkshire Downs of Wessex; here the craftsman is said to live, invisible to men, and to perform smith’s work if payment is left at his door. The 8th-century Franks Casket depicts scenes from the craftsman’s life. Place-names of Velent’s story, as recorded in Pòdreks saga, indicate that it was set in northwestern Germany. The craftsman is thus encountered in English, Scandinavian, and German tradition, and partakes of Norse myth and English folklore, as well as heroic literature.

Volundr shares aspects with the dwarf smiths of Germanic folklore and mythology. He belongs, moreover, to a wider context; many nations have the figure of a superhuman craftsman, such as Hephaistos of Greece or Ptah of Egypt. The act of craftsmanship in clay, stone, or metal was in archaic times apparently imbued with magical significance. We may assume that the legendary artisan originated at the time of craft specialization.

The swan-maiden episode, related in Völundarkvida, also has worldwide diffusion, and was generated, in all likelihood, in communities of fishermen and hunters.

That a work of heroic literature should portray the triumph of an artisan over a warrior is unusual, and Volundr’s story has inspired many interpretations. Taylor (1963) and Grimstad (1983) believe that the eddic lay encapsulates a ritual event, the ordeals and resurgence of initiation. Krappe (1930) and Ellis Davidson (1958) point to the folklore affinities. Dieterle (1987) detects themes relating to the importance of metalcraft. Burson (1983), employing a structural approach, reveals the presence of a folktales pattern; Motz (1986) indicates elements of northern hunting and fishing cultures.


Paul Beckman Taylor

[See also: Codex Regius; Eddie Meters; Eddie Poetry; Eyvindr Finnsson skaldaspillir; Snorra Edda; Pòdreks saga af Bern; Prynmskvida; Volundr]
1983); but 37, on the halls of giants, may be misplaced (Boer 1904, McKinnell 1987). The list of dwarf names is probably interpolated: Sigurðr N ordinal (ed. 1978) and Schach (1983) reject stanzas 9–16, Björn M. Ólsen (1914) 11–16, Boyer (1983) 13–16. Björn M. Ólsen is probably correct not to exclude the creation of dwarfs, which could explain how the name list came to be interpolated, and dwarfs appear again at stanza 48.

Most modern interpretations of the poem’s structure build on Sigurðr N ordinal (1970–71), although Dölvers (1969) proposes a “stream of consciousness” model with no planned structure. Three main parts, roughly corresponding to past, present, and future, are each marked by an irregularly recurring refrain, and the whole is articulated by a framework (sts. 1–2, 28–29, and probably 66). In the opening framework, the speaker demands a hearing, answers a request from Óðinn to relate the first things she remembers, and asserts her own antiquity, but without revealing the fictional situation.

She remembers the void (st. 3), before the gods made the earth and heavenly bodies, and regulated times and seasons (sts. 4–6), and created their own wealth, dwarfs, and men (sts. 7–10, 17–18). But their golden age is already troubled by three fearsome giant maidens (st. 8), and soon Yggdrasill and the norms have come into being (sts. 19–20), perhaps as patrons of change, introduced by the very act of creation. Anxiety and greed follow: the gods are visited by Gullveig (“intoxication of gold”), probably one of the Vanir and seemingly the poet’s own invention. They attack and burn her, only to see her reborn as the witch Höðr (“bright”), ststs. 21–22. War with the Vanir ensues, in which the Æsir lose their fortress walls (sts. 23–24), so that they must employ a giant builder and subsequently kill him because they cannot afford his price (sts. 25–26). Realizing that folly has made them oath breakers and murderers, Óðinn begins a quest for wisdom (st. 27), which motivates the framework by explaining his encounter with the prophetess who narrates the poem (sts. 28–29).

In the second section (sts. 30–44), the prophetess mocks Óðinn with the refrain: Væða er enn, eða hvar? (“Do you know enough yet, or what?”). Through his valkyries, Óðinn has become an agent of violent death (st. 30), and this comes to haunt the gods themselves, in the murder of Baldr and the vengeance taken for it (sts. 31–35). In an attempt to stem the rising moral chaos, the gods mete out harsh punishments to oath breakers, murderers, and seducers among men (sts. 36, 38–39), but this punishment only emphasizes their own corruption and encourages the preparations of the giants for bringing them down, until finally the bound wolf Fenrir breaks free (sts. 37, 40–44).

The third section (sts. 45–65) begins with the downfall of the gods (sts. 45–58). Moral and physical order will collapse amid universal fear (sts. 45–48); giants will converge from three directions (sts. 50–52). When battle begins, Óðinn will be killed by Fenrir but avenged by his son Viðarr (sts. 53–55); Þorr and the World Serpent will destroy each other (st. 56); the earth will sink into the sea and the heavens be consumed by fire (st. 57). But in stanzas 59–65, a new and purified earth rises, to be ruled over by the innocent gods, Baldr and Höðr, and inhabited in eternal happiness by trustworthy men; in stanza 65, they are joined by a supreme deity, possibly Christ. But stanza 66 reintroduces the corpse-bearing dragon Nidhogg; this could mean that evil, too, is reborn (Sigurðr N ordinal 1978–79, Turville-Petre 1964, Schach 1983), or even that time itself is seen as cyclic (Schipjedt 1981), but it more probably reflects a return to the “present” of the frame-work, with the prophetess emphasizing that Ragnarök is close at hand (Briem ed. 1968).

The extent of Christian influence on Voluspá has been debated. It seems unlikely to be directly indebted to the homilies of Wulfstan (so Butt 1969, but see Lindow 1987); but the moral framework, the idea of punishment or reward for human beings after death, the coming of inn ríki (“the mighty one”), and the obsession with the end of the world do suggest syncretic use of Christian material, notably the Book of Revelation. The poet, however, was probably not a Christian himself: the gods may be corrupt, but their fall is viewed with tragic sympathy, not with the hostility common among early Norse Christians.

Most opinion dates Voluspá to the late 10th or early 11th century. The valkyrie name Geisrskjegg (st. 30) may originate in a misunderstanding of Hákônarmál (st. 12), and Porfinnzdrapa (st. 24) seems to echo Voluspá (st. 57); although uncertain, these points suggest a date between 961 and around 1064. Sigurðr N ordinal and others date the poem to the last years of West Norse heathenism and see it as colored by the millenarian fear of the imminent end of the world that swept northern Europe just before the year 1000 and again toward 1030.

Voluspá has been located in Norway (e.g., by Finnur Jónsson) and in the Danelaw in England (Butt 1969), but is usually considered Icelandic (Sigurðr N ordinal 1970–71, 1978–79, Turville-Petre 1964, Martin 1972, Schach 1983), chiefly because of imagery apparently derived from volcanic phenomena (see sts. 35, 41, 47, and notes in Sigurðr N ordinal ed. 1978). There are also several skaldic kennings (see, e.g., sts. 52, 57, and Sigurðr N ordinal [1978–79] guesses that the author may be the little-known skaldic poet Volú-Steinn. Whoever composed it, Voluspá remains one of the most powerful and enigmatic of all Norse poems.


*John McKinnell*

[See also: *Codex Regius*; *Eddic Meters*; *Eddic Poetry*; *Hauksbók*; *Mythology*; *Snorra Edda*]
**Warfare.** The Scandinavian countries first came into the spotlight of European history in the medieval period, and therefore the preserved sources of information in Scandinavia are few for the early centuries. Nonetheless, through the Norse sagas, which were written down around the 13th century, we can gain an impression of the art of war during the early period of the Viking Age.

The primitive art of war was based on a *leidangr* ("levy") organization in all of the Scandinavian countries, and thus the topography of the countries has great importance. Thick and large forests filled the inner part of Scandinavia as well as the Danish island realm, and made these countries difficult to traverse on land. Furthermore, for southern Denmark, the large woodlands in Holstein by Jutland's base formed a natural border toward Europe. The forests south of the Swedish lakes in what is now central Sweden protected Denmark's border toward the east. Thus, the regions of Scania, Halland, and Blekinge were naturally attached. In addition, the kings' powers were based on the hird (hird), with retainers (hirdmen) and housecarls (húskarlar), who lived in the royal castle. Such a hird is known from Knud (Cnut) the Great's *Pinglidi*, which he established in England in 1018. To this, a special law, the hird law (*Vederlov*) was attached. In addition, there were in the island realm of Denmark a number of circular fortifications. Such fortifications are now known in West Zealand near the Great Belt (Trelleborg), in Odense on Funen (Nonnebakken), in East Jutland near Hobro (Fyrkat), and by the Lim Fjord in North Jutland (Aggersborg). Their precise circular measurements and their regularity reveal a thorough technical knowledge and an efficient military organization, which clearly point to a strong royal power.

The military organization was thus built up around a fleet of Viking ships. The ships were narrow, long, and light, and either used a single square sail or were rowed. In addition, the kings' powers were based on the hird (hird), with retainers (hirdmen) and housecarls (húskarlar), who lived in the royal castle. Such a hird is known from Knud (Cnut) the Great's *Pinglidi*, which he established in England in 1018. To this, a special law, the hird law (*Vederlov*) was attached. In addition, there were in the island realm of Denmark a number of circular fortifications. Such fortifications are now known in West Zealand near the Great Belt (Trelleborg), in Odense on Funen (Nonnebakken), in East Jutland near Hobro (Fyrkat), and by the Lim Fjord in North Jutland (Aggersborg). Their precise circular measurements and their regularity reveal a thorough technical knowledge and an efficient military organization, which clearly point to a strong royal power.

*Leidangr* from around 1000 existed as a social duty. The historian Saxo (ca. 1200) tells of a reform of the *leidangr* system around 1170, according to which only every fourth ship had to be armed and used as a watch force throughout the time of the year when navigation was possible. At the same time, the other countries, which did not provide ships, were to pay expenses and other kinds of duties. At this time, it is told that each member of the crew was to meet with a shield, sword, spear, and helmet, while the shipmaster also required a coat of mail and a crossbow. The development became more and more like the European pattern, where the shipmaster was called the "squire" and was obliged to provide a horse.

When battles in the Viking Age were fought on land, the war
forces were arranged for battle position in groups that jointly moved forward to fighting at close quarters after having first sent a volley of arrows against the enemy. The outcome of the battle was decided by man-to-man fighting. On sea, the outcome was similarly decided by an initial volley of arrows and then by an attempt to ram the enemy's ship, or an attempt to come alongside to initiate hand-to-hand combat on the enemy's deck. The best-known battles from this time took place near Svolder (Svold) in 1000, where all three Scandinavian kings participated, and in 1030 at Stiklaðar, Norway.

New strategies and tactics were gradually learned from Europe. In the beginning of the 12th century, the first horsemen appear in war in Denmark, and one of the first battles in which cavalry played an important role took place in 1134 at Fodevig in Scania, a struggle among claimants to the Danish throne.

During the 12th century, Denmark was attacked from the Baltic and the Slavonic Wends, while other Slavonic peoples directed attacks against Sweden. In the 1160s, Sweden turned attacks directly against the Slavonic countries. The island Rugen off the North German coast, a main stronghold for the Wends, was attacked and captured, and in the beginning of the 13th century the Danish king went as far as Estland on a kind of crusade against the Slavs. The Danish flag, Dannebrog, dates from one of these campaigns in 1219.

Subsequently, two circumstances altered military organization. First, the kings began to levy taxes in the provinces from which leidangr and war service were not demanded, and thus leidangr tax came into existence, which gradually spread throughout the country, when the king needed money for armament and hired soldiers. Second, the king, to a greater extent, needed well-equipped men with horses and armament. As a result, a gulf was created between the major farmers, who could provide themselves as horsemen, and the common farmers. These increasingly powerful farmers, or nobility, who, because of their military service, were exempted from taxes, also built strongholds, which changed the forms of war even more. The squire was thus the only person who was obliged to do military service.

The cavalry, along with the archers, became a common and decisive element in battles. The first firearms, which appear at the end of the 14th century, were not a decisive factor, as the archers could shoot much faster. When the two armies joined in battle, there was only a slim possibility for tactics or strategic use of terrain, so that battles were decided by man-to-man combat, fighting between the increasingly iron-clad horsemen. It was most often horsemanship, skill in the use of arms, and physical strength that decided a battle.

In these centuries, a shift occurs. At first, hired horsemen were used together with a national infantry. Gradually, that cavalry (i.e., the squires) became national, while the infantry became composed of mercenaries.

On the sea, the situation also changed. The slender and elegant Viking ships, of which the old leidangr fleet had consisted, came to be replaced by completely new types. The cog, a ship broader than the longships, and set with more square sails, became predominant between 1200 and 1400, thus changing the nature of warfare. Since the cogs also rode deeply, battles were to a considerable degree decided by navigational tactics, even though action at close range and boarding constantly took place. Moreover, the introduction of cannons on the ships around 1400 meant that the maneuvering of the ships could be decisive for the outcome of the battle. Similarly, the stronger-built carvels were used increasingly, and warfare at sea then developed as in the rest of Europe.


Weapons. Our knowledge of Scandinavian medieval weapons is based upon archaeological finds (e.g., grave, bow, and loose finds), illustrations, and historical sources. The majority of early-medieval weapons survive from pagan graves, but a substantial number come from graves in Denmark and South Sweden. The bow finds are interpreted as sacrifices to a war-god. The distribution of weapon graves is uneven, with few finds in Denmark and numerous finds in Sweden and especially in Norway. In Norway, the number of graves exceeds 4,000, yielding more than 2,000 swords, 1,500 spearheads, and 2,300 axes. The Swedish burial grounds at Vendel, Valsgärde, and especially Birka have yielded important material; however, the highest proportion of Swedish finds came from Gotland. When Christianity was introduced around 1000, weapons in graves became rare, and weapons from the high and late Middle Ages are usually loose finds, most often from Danish towns and fortifications.

The large majority of Migration Period (400-600) weapon graves have been found in the coastal districts of Norway. These graves contain one to four offensive weapons, such as a sword, axe, lance, and/or barbed spear, a single lance being the most common. From 600 to 1050, the Norwegian graves contain one to three offensive weapons, axes being most prevalent. In the Viking Age (800-1050), especially after 900, the weapon sets correspond to the folk weapons mentioned in the laws from the high Middle Ages, i.e., swords, spears, and axes. According to the Norwegian provincial laws, and especially the Landslag, a man's armament corresponded to his wealth and status, a poor farmer being equipped with only an axe and a shield, while a wealthy man would have a shield, helmet, coat of mail, and all the folk weapons.

Swords. Depending upon the length of the blades, swords with one edge have been classified as either "saxes" or single-edged swords. Saxes had neither hilts nor knobs, and the blades...
varied between 25 and 70 cm. in length. The single-edged swords usually had hilts and knobs, and the blades were more than 70 cm. long. Saxese developed on the Continent around 400, and the earliest specimens were hardly more than long-bladed knives. In Scandinavia, saxese were introduced around 550 and were most prevalent in the period 600-800. Their manufacture was markedly influenced by the continental Kultur-, Schmal-, Breit-, and Langsax (short-, narrow-, wide-, and long-bladed saxese). P. Olsen (1945) has studied the Swedish saxese, and Gudesen (1980) has divided the Norwegian specimens from East Norway into seven types according to the lengths and widths of the blades. In the Viking period, single-edged swords were particularly common in the coastal districts of Norway, but were gradually displaced by double-edged swords. The majority of the Scandinavian saxese and single-edged swords have been regarded as indigenously manufactured.

Double-edged swords with long blades reflecting Celtic traditions prevailed in the Migration and Viking periods, but were rare in the intervening centuries. In the high and late Middle Ages, when swords were used mainly by mounted knights, they changed from cutting to thrusting weapons with a long, narrow, and more rigid blade. Behmer (1939) divided the swords from 400-800 into nine types, and Petersen (1919) divided those from the Viking period into twenty-six general and twenty special types. These classifications were based mainly upon the form and decoration of the hilts and knobs. While three of Behmer's types had a characteristic Nordic distribution, one (type VI) has also been found in several other European countries. The latter type included several ring swords, i.e., swords characterized by two interlocked metal rings, frequently of gold, on the upper hilt. In Germanic societies, ring swords were restricted to the highest social group. Such swords are depicted on the Torslunda plaques and have been found at the burial grounds at Vendel and Valsgärde. The Viking Age swords are more numerous and distributed over a wider area than the Migration Period specimens. Sword manufacture was a task for highly skilled smiths. However, it has remained a matter of dispute whether individual swords represent indigenous manufacture or import from the Continent. While Arbman (1937) regarded several of Petersen's types as imported, Petersen himself assumed that the large majority of the Norwegian swords represented indigenous manufacture. Scholars agree that specimens with vegetal ornamentation and inscriptions in Latin letters are imports. The most frequent inscriptions include Christian names and terms, such as "Benedictus" and "DNS" (Dominus), and the personal names Ulfberth, Ingelrii, and Gicelin. Swords with Ulfberth inscriptions have been dated to the period 800-1100 and Ingelrii swords to the Viking period and up to 1150, while the Gicelin swords are somewhat younger. Because of a lack of systematic investigations, little is known about the proportions and production area of swords with inscriptions. However, it has been assumed that the Rhine region represents the most likely production area. During the 14th century, swords from Passau in France, with the municipal symbol of a wolf on their blades, became common. From 1500, sword-manufacturing centers developed in Solingen in western Germany, Brescia in northern Italy, and Toledo in Spain.

Swords were regarded as the most prestigious weapons, as attested by individual names given to them and recorded in the sagas. They also represented power and justice; kings were often depicted with swords symbolizing their rank and power. Knights pledged loyalty to their overlords by the sword, and swords were kept in city halls as symbols of justice.

Spears. Since wooden shafts are rarely preserved, early-medieval spears are represented mainly by their spearheads. Before 600, two categories of spears were used, the lance and the barbed spear, the lance being the most common. Around 600, however, the barbed spears were no longer used. Spearheads from the Merovingian or Vendel period (600-800) are characterized by wide and heavy blades. In the early Viking Age, spearheads with lugs on the socket and a high frequency of pattern-welded blades were used all over Scandinavia. Most likely, the pattern-welded specimens were imports from the Continent. In the 10th century, the spearheads had developed into slenderer weapons, with long blades and sockets with frequent silver incrustation. When cavalry was introduced in the high Middle Ages, lances with shorter blades and longer shafts were manufactured. Fett (1938) divided the Norwegian lances and barbed spears from the Migration Period into thirty-one and eight types, respectively. Gjesing (1934) and Petersen (1919) classified the Merovingian and Viking period lances into eight and eleven types.

From around 1200, pikes—i.e. long (5-6 m.) poles with metal spearheads—were used by foot soldiers against cavalry. The pikemen, wearing armor like knights, fought in tight formations. Pikes became the main weapon for the heavy infantry in the 16th century.

Axes. Axes were included among the weapons beginning around 500, most likely a result of Frankish influence, since special battle-axes (franksis) were used by the Franks from the latter half of the 5th century. On the Continent, battle-axes went out of use around 600. In Scandinavia, however, they were folk weapons throughout the medieval period. The earliest specimens were plain woodworker's axes, but gradually special battle-axes were manufactured. In the late Viking period, the battle-axes had thin, wide-edged blades (Danish axes). Petersen divided the Viking-period axes into twelve types, each type being less homogeneous than the sword and spearhead types. This pattern may be due to less specialized manufacture of the axes.

Pole-axes, or halberds, were combined cutting-and-thrusting weapons and represented a special development of the battle-axe. The handle was around 2.5 m. long, ending in a spear, pike, or hook, and the head had a pick or spike opposite the blade. Halberds originated in central Europe, and after being used successfully by the Swiss, they became the main infantry weapon in Europe in the 14th and 15th centuries.

Maces. Medieval maces included war clubs with metal heads; the morning-star represented a special variant: a metal ball set with spikes and chained to the handle. Maces have not been found in early-medieval graves, nor have they been recorded in the laws from the high and late Middle Ages. There are, however, indications in several of the sagas that they were used in warfare in the late Viking period and high Middle Ages. This evidence is confirmed by their depiction on the Bayeux Tapestry.

Bows. In the Stone Age, bows and arrows were used for hunting and warfare, and it may be difficult to decide which of these functions the many early-medieval iron arrowheads served. However, the numerous arrow finds in Danish bogs strongly indicate use for warfare. Until about 1100, the bow made of one piece of wood prevailed, the preferred material being European yew, ash, or elm. Later, this wooden bow was replaced by the crossbow, a powerful weapon made of laminated horn and whalebone fixed transversely on a grooved stock. Because of its superior power, the
crossbow was used for shooting not slender arrows, but sturdy bolts, or "quarrels." During the 15th century, steel bows were introduced, but the introduction of firearms ended the era of bows and arrows around 1600.

Firearms. Firearms seem to have become available shortly after 1350. The earliest guns were small cannons, much like barrels in shape, generally forged or cast. Early in the 15th century, guns began to increase rapidly in size. At the same time, small arms were developed. At first, these weapons were simple forms of cannons small enough for hand use. The first projectiles were stone, but bundles or bags of stones, small balls, bits of iron, and chain were also used. Some early devices were used for shooting arrows or fire arrows. Early in the 15th century, forged iron balls became common. These projectiles were effective against castles and fortifications. Cast-iron projectiles followed, replacing stones and wrought iron.


Whaling see Fishing, Whaling, and Seal Hunting

William of Jumièges: *Gesta Normannorum ducum.*

William, monk of the monastery of Jumièges on the Seine in Normandy, wrote his *Deeds of the Dukes of Normandy* around 1060–1070. Although famous as the earliest prose account of the Norman Conquest of England in 1066, it is equally important as a source for the history of the Viking invasions and Viking settlement of Normandy in the 9th and 10th centuries. The work consists of seven books, six of which are devoted to one duke each, from the Viking Rollo (Book 2) to William the Conqueror (Book 7). The form of a serial biography, or gesta, was copied from his main source, Dudo of St.-Quentin, who wrote his *De moribus et actis primorum normannicorum* around 994–1015. The first four books of the gesta are a rewritten abbreviation of Dudo's history. The *Gesta* exists in more than fifty MSS divided into seven redactions, A–F, C being the original version written by William. The literary framework of one reign per book made it easy for later historians to interpolate the existing books or to add a new book. The most important are Ordeic Vitalis (redaction E, ca. 1109–1133) and Robert of Torigni (redaction F, ca. 1139). In Book 2, on Rollo, William of Jumièges omitted many stories about the pagan Vikings, which interestingly were all inserted again by the last interpolator of the *Gesta*, Robert of Torigni. William of Jumièges supplements Dudo's account of the early history of Normandy with information from annals, saints' lives, and oral tradition collected in Jumièges. In Book 5, on Duke Richard II, William's sympathy lies with the Danish occupants of England rather than with the duke's brother-in-law, the exiled Anglo-Saxon king Æthelred. However, Books 6 and 7, on Robert the Magnificent and his son William the Conqueror, reflect the loosening of Normandy's ties with Scandinavia in favor of relations with England.

Women in Eddic Poetry. Women are the principal speakers in nine of the thirty-seven poems in the Neckel-Kuhn edition of the Poetic Edda, are central to the dramatic action in twenty-one, and appear as either minor characters or as significant referents in the remaining poems. Sexual imagery evoking the feminine is likewise pervasive. Snorri Sturluson in classifies female character types as (norns), and (valkyries), (disir), and (an untranslatable term that refers to Germanic minor female deities who appear either as friendly or hostile guardian spirits or as martial women with supernatural attributes). In addition, prominent figures include giantesses, (seeresses, sibyls), and, in the heroic lays, the warrior woman, a fusion of a human noblewoman and a Valkyrie, as a female relative of Neri (possibly a dwarf), and Skuld (associated with the modal skulr ‘shall’ and skuld, n. ‘debt’). Their names provide the sense that one’s fate is composed of the inevitability of future events, the eradicability of the past, and the necessity and appropriateness of the present. In Helgakviða Hundingsbana I (st. 4), one norn is described as a female relative of Nerth (possibly a dwarf), and, in Fafnsismál (st. 11–13), Fafnir informs Sigurd that the norns of childbirth are of various descent, some akin to the gods, some descendants of elves, and others daughters of Dvalinn (a dwarf). They appear in action only in Helgakviða Hundingsbana I (sts. 1–6), where, positioned with Borghildr at Helgi’s birth, they spin out the hero’s fate. Elsewhere, they are referred to as malevolent figures (Gudrunarhvet, st. 13, Helgakviða Hundingsbana II, sts. 26–28, Hamðismál, st. 30, Reginsmál, st. 2; see also Gylfaginning, chs. 5, 8, and passim). Symbolically, the norns embody the archetypal function of women as controllers of men’s destinies, an attribute that also underlies the character of heroines in the Helgi lays and of Brynhildr.

Völur (seeresses, sibyls) appear infrequently in the poems, restricted to the sibyl-speaker of Völuspa (who relates her cosmological vision), to Helgi, the evil sibyl (who is the “delight of evil women”) in the same poem (Völuspa, st. 22), and to the witch-like creature who prophesies Bald’s death in Baldr’s draumar. Whereas the norns shape men’s fates, these Teiresian figures, excluding Helgi, utter the doom of the gods. Under compulsion, usually exhibiting pain, they bring to light knowledge hidden even from Óðinn, and at his command they rise into being from the dead. The general attribute of visionary and prophetic utterance is not restricted to them, however, since it is a characteristic of the giantesses, goddesses, and the heroines of the heroic lays, although their knowledge is less than that of the Völur.

Giantesses appear as either physically beautiful and sexually desirable or as repellent. They have a number of epithets, e.g., pursa meyjar (“maids of the thurses”); Helgakviða Hundingsbana I, st. 40, Völuspa, st. 8); daughters and sisters of iotna (“giants”); Prymskvíða, st. 32, Grímnismál, st. 11); gygur (“witch, giantess”; Vafþrúðnismál, st. 32, Helreið Brynhildar, st. 13, Hymiskviða, st. 14); and fálu (“giantess”); Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar, st. 16). These epithets probably discriminate function and status, but will be treated here under the broad category. In the heroic poems, they are haggish, malevolent creatures who strive either with the heroine (Brynhildr in Helreið Brynhildar) or with her surrogate (Atli in Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar). They represent the obstacle the bright maidens Brynhildr and Svéa must overcome before being reunited with their lovers. Hrímgerðr (Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar) is the paradigm. A sexually corrupt figure, as evidenced by her half-bested, half-human form, she is a night raider and insatiable in her desire to avenge her father’s murder (cf. Skád). A corpse-hungry giantess with a powerful wrestling grip, she is depicted as attacking in the rush of a sea-battle. In the mythological poems, giantesses are both hostile and friendly. Giant maidens spin out the hero’s fate. Elsewhere, they are referred to in passing as attacking in the rush of a sea-battle. In the mythological poems, giantesses are both hostile and friendly. Giant maidens usually exhibiting pain, they bring to light knowledge hidden even from Óðinn, and at his command they rise into being from the dead. The general attribute of visionary and prophetic utterance is not restricted to them, however, since it is a characteristic of the giantesses, goddesses, and the heroines of the heroic lays, although their knowledge is less than that of the Völur.


Elisabeth M. C. van Houts

[See also: Dudo of St.-Quentin: De moribus et actis primorum normannie ducum; England, Norse in; France, Norse in]
Prose Edda
both of Freyja and of the warrior women in the heroic poetry are (Gylfaginning, chs. 24, 35, 42, Skáldskaparmál, chs. 17, 20, 37). Freyja is the mythological exemplar for the major female figure of the heroic lays, the warrior woman.

Two other character types that bear on the characterization both of Freyja and of the warrior women in the heroic poetry are the disir and the valkyries (choosers of the slain). Both terms are gender-specific, referring only to females. As noted above, the concept of the disir is complex. The term has broad martial value, associated with Old High German idis, the battle figures of the 10th-century Merseburg Charm. In eddic poetry, when used in the plural, disir refers to hostile spirits who were once friendly (Atlamál, st. 28, Grímnismál, st. 53, Hamðismál, st. 28). When used in the singular, the term is polysemous, referring to women in a martial environment, who function as guides and protectors of the hero, and who are also called “valkyries.” In the mythological lays, the valkyries are entirely supernatural with few individualizing attributes. Stripped of their religious potency, they have been reduced to serve as Öðinn’s functionaries (Grímnismál, st. 36). In the heroic poetry, they are distinctly different characters, characteristically appearing as brightly adorned noblewomen, metamorphosed into valkyries and disir (e.g., Sigrún in Helgakvíða Hundingsbana I and II, Brynhildr in Brot af Sigurdarkvíðu). These valkyrie brides, so-called because of their erotic attachment to the hero, are composite characters. Figures of the royal court, with ties and obligations to a worldly environment (Helgakvíða Hundingsbana II, sts. 30–38, Sigurdarkvíða in skamma, sts. 35–41), they possess at the same time supernatural powers: they are not limited by spatial and temporal considerations (e.g., Sigrún’s entrance through air, signaled by lightning in Helgakvíða Hundingsbana I, sts. 15–16, Sváva’s in Helgakvíða Hjörvarðssonar, prose before sts. 6 and 10). Their major traits are boldness, profundity and resoluteness of mind, extravagance of emotion, and rhetorical brilliance (e.g., Helgakvíða Hundingsbana II, sts. 11, 26, Helgakvíða Hundingsbana I, st. 54, Sigurdarkvíða in skamma, st. 34, Helreið Brynhildar, st. 3). They originate from the south (Helgakvíða Hundingsbana I, st. 16, and II, st. 45, Völsundarkvíða I–3). They prophesy (Helgakvíða Hundingsbana I and II, Helgakvíða Hjörvarðssonar,Sigurdfríðumál, Sigurdarkvíða in skamma), and they determine the outcome of central issues that concern Germanic warrior society: the battle and the warrior’s afterlife. Epithets for the valkyrie brides evoke women who are sublime, sexually active and desirable, and beneficent, offering the hero treasure, glory, and love. Radiant and nobly born, they ride into battle hårvar og hyldnim (“sublime under helmets”). Epithets, such as gullvarð (“gold-adorned”), margallín maðr (“richly decked with gold”), and baugvarð (“ring-adorned”), refer both to the brilliance of their warrior’s dress and metaphorically to the treasure awaiting the hero at the battle’s end. They are embodiments of heroic desire: gold, glory, and love. Yet, at the same time, in line with the ironic treatment of character in eddic poetry, they are objectified as the origin of the hero’s destruction. The Sigrún–Sváva character of the Helgi lays best exemplifies this ambivalent figure. Scholars have alluded the eddic warrior women with similar figures in Old English heroic poetry (Elene, Judith, Juliana).

Sigrún, Sváva, Brynhildr, and Guðrún, the major characters of eddic poetry, are complex figures, because their attributes associate them with both the temporal and the legendary. Of the four, Guðrún is the most “realistic,” while Sigrún and Sváva are the most elusive. In an attempt to give genealogical cohesion to the characters, the compiler of the Poetic Edda reports that Sigrún is Sváva reborn, and later, at the close of Helgakvíða Hundingsbana II, he relates that Sigrún will be reborn into Káta, also a valkyrie. These statements may reflect remnants of a belief in ancestor worship. The critical consensus is that we are dealing with the basic story of the Skjolungur king Helgi (his heroic actions, his love for the valkyrie Sigrún-Sváva), and that the three poems represent a diverse treatment of original legendary material. Unlike Brynhildr and Guðrún, Sigrún and Sváva do not have clear origins in legend. Further, the characters are beset by problems brought about by the poems’ being generically anomalous and fragmentary. Bugge (1899) and Höfler (1952) argue that Sigrún I represents Helgi’s victory genius more than she does an actual historical personage. Harris (1983) sees Sigrún I as moving from a “human” figure toward one that is “divine.” Bugge postulates Sigrún II as a merged figure, a blending of Sigrún I (5–13), Guðrún when she expresses sorrow, and Brynhildr in her single-minded drive to promote strife. Damico (1984) argues for a composite legendary and archetypal character with a counterpart in Beowulf.

Anderson’s (1980) comprehensive and closely analyzed study of Brynhildr and the evolution of her story in the principal documents (e.g., the Nibelungenlied, Perkóks saga, the eddic poems, and Volsungasaga) sees her as a fusion of a historical and legendary personage and of archetypal figures, in particular the shield-maiden and the reluctant bride. In eddic poetry, she is immediate in emotion and action, psychologically complex, erotic, and protective of her honor. As a court figure, she desires status and wealth, which leads her to succumb to Atli’s blackmail and marry Gunnarr (Sigurdarkvíða in skamma, st. 36). Her story is presented piece-meal in Gípsisspa (which, because of its position in the MS, serves as a prologue to the succeeding lays about Sigurðr, Sigdrífrumál, Brot af Sigurdarkvíðu, Sigurdarkvíða in skamma, Guðrúnarkvíða I, and Helreið Brynhildar (wherein Brynhildr justifies her action to have Sigurð killed). Briefly, Sigurðr meets and exchanges oaths with the valkyrie Brynhildr, who, as punishment from Öðinn, has been put to sleep in a hall encircled by flame, which Sigurðr has crossed. Their relationship is chaste. Subsequently, Sigurðr visits Gjúki’s court. Under the effects of a drug administered by Queen Grímhildr, Sigurðr forgets Brynhildr, and instead agrees to win her for Gjúki’s son Gunnarr, which he does later when disguised as Gunnarr. Sigurðr subsequently marries Gunnarr’s sister, Guðrún. When Brynhildr discovers the deceit, she demands that Gunnarr kill both Sigurðr and his son as compensation for her outraged honor. Brynhildr is the central character in three poems (Brot af Sigurdarkvíðu, Sigurdarkvíða in skamma, Helreið Brynhildar) and, if one accepts her identification as Sigdrífa, in a fourth, Sigdrífrumál. Her death speech in Sigurdarkvíða in skamma, wherein she counsels Gunnarr on his actions after her death, parallels Sigdrífa’s rune lesson to Sigurðr, an act that would support the hypothesis of a Sigdrífa-Brynhildr identification.

Guðrún, the Nordic equivalent of Kriemhild in the Nibelungenlied, is the central figure in six poems and the primary speaker in four (Guðrúnarkvíða I, II, III, Guðrúnardrápa), and appears as part of the dramatic action in all the poems concerning the Niflungs and Gjúkings. In line count and poetic emphasis, she overshadows her rival Brynhildr. Prior to Sigurðr’s death, Guðrún is young and peerless, secure in her husband’s love. After Sigurðr’s murder and Brynhildr’s suicide, Guðrún becomes almost demonic, unrestrained in mood and emotion, and extreme in action. Unafraid
of the fates, she shapes her destiny and disdains those who do not, in particular her sons. In essence, she appropriates and develops the extravagance of character associated with Brynhildr before her death. Gudrúnarkvida I focuses on the boundlessness of Guðrún's grief; Gudrúnarkvida II, on the extremity of her alienation and despair; Gudrúnarkvida III, on the rigidity of her chastity; Atlamál and Atlamál, on her single-minded drive for, and the bold monstrosity of, her revenge; and Gudrúnarkvöpt on her state of frenzied exaltation informing both her incitement to her sons, which leads to their certain death, and her command to be burned on the pyre. Like Brynhildr and Sigrún-Sváva, she is a warrior woman, appearing in a byrnie with sword in hand. She shapes the battle (Atlamál, sts. 44-48) and abandons herself to the fight (Atlamál, sts. 49-53, 98-99, Atlamál, sts. 35-43). Twice she is found in a Job-like situation, in inconsoled states of sadness (Gudrúnarkvida I) and alienation (Gudrúnarkvida II), surrounded by women who attempt unsuccessfully to give her comfort. In Atlamál, Guðrún becomes a grotesque Medea, because she has no love for the children she slays, responding to their frightened appeals with chilling satire: "Desire has long sprung up in me to cure you of old age" (Atlamál, st. 78).

There are numerous minor characters in the heroic poetry, and these form a unifying pattern, for they are connected to the major figures by motif. In Frá dauða Sinfjotla, for example, the motif of the scheming and deceitful queen-mother is embodied in Borghildr, Sigmundr's wife, who serves poisoned drink to her stepson, Sinfjotl. The motif is elaborated by Grímhildr, who offers her future son-in-law Sigrún-Sváva the drink of forgetfulness that causes him to neglect his vow to Brynhildr (Grípisspá) and to abandon himself to the fight (Atlamál).

The women in the heroic lays have epic proportions. Characters of volition depicted at climactic moments, they instigate and control narrative action. They have unconquerable spirits, and when, in line with Germanic heroic poetry, they are placed in a position where they must choose between the satisfaction of their honor or desire and the death or destruction of loved ones, they invariably choose the former. In the mythological poems, the women are less engaging. The gods dominate most of the authors' and readers' attention. Thus, in the presentation of women, one can mark a distinctive difference between the mythological and heroic poetry in the Poetic Edda. When the poetry becomes anthropo-centered, it turns its attention to the characterization of women.


*Helen Damico*


**Women in Sagas.** The picture of women, their importance, and their roles differs from genre to genre within the saga literature. The differences between the portrayal of women in the realistic and nonrealistic sagas are especially apparent. In the realistic saga genres, the picture of women must correspond to real life in a way that made the literary figures acceptable as "historical" persons, although this correspondence does not necessarily mean that the literature gives a true picture of women and their life, either within the frame of the narrative or at the time the sagas were written.

Women in *Íslendingasögur* are regarded as strong and independent characters; this type may partly be understood against the background of the women's position in Old Norse society, which, compared with their positions in other medieval societies,
was rather good. But the strong female characters in the *Íslandssögur* are also a result of an idealizing literature. The male heroes rise considerably above ordinary men in skill, strength, and vigor, and consequently the heroines rise above ordinary women. Still, a woman is never the main character in an *Íslandssaga*, although Guðrún in *Laxdela saga* comes very close. She is perhaps the most interesting character in the saga, but in this genre the viewpoint follows the action, and, according to the sex roles, men are the active sex, and accordingly the main characters. The important male characters in the *Íslandssögur* can be divided into groups of types like the light hero, the dark hero, the Christ/Baldr type, the wise man. But the characters are highly individualized within each group. The important female characters in the sagas are roughly divided into two groups only, the strong women and the weak women, most belonging to the first group. Here, we find different characters like Guðrún in *Laxdela saga*, Bergþóra and Hallgerðr in *Njáls saga*, and Ástríðr and Pórríðr in *Gísla saga*. The weak woman is a rather rare type. Actually, she is not a weak character, but her strength and her will to live are broken by the loss of her beloved one. Hrefn in *Laxdela saga*, Helga in *Gunnlaugs saga*, and Oddýn in *Bjarnar saga Hitvekslakappta* belong to this type, which is perhaps influenced by European romantic literature. Among the less central female figures, the woman skilled in magic is generally described as a wicked person, but not when she uses her skill in magic to help a hero. In some cases, a woman's skill in magic is used to explain her sex appeal, especially if the woman is elderly and the man young. Among the subordinate characters, we find female types, very little individualized, like the old foster-mother, the gossip, and the maidservant. Since the women generally play a minor part in the sagas compared with men, the picture of them is consequently less detailed, and the number of women mentioned in the sagas is considerably lower than the number of men.

The female characters act in their social roles as wives, daughters, mothers, and sisters; and their reputation depends on how well they play the roles seen from the man’s point of view. The woman who urges the men to take revenge is a character found in many of the *Íslandssögur*. She may be described as very hard, and even more eager than the men to protect the honor of the family. The women’s passive role, which did not allow her to act herself, could explain such uncompromisingly hard incitement. But, in terms of narrative function, the author needs the women to speed the action. The goading scene, which to a great extent has formed our view of the saga women, is part of the author’s literary technique, and must be judged in that light.

In the less idealizing contemporaneous sagas, the author seldom focuses on women. When he does, the picture of these women is much the same as in the *Íslandssögur*, with one interesting difference: we do not have as many women bent on inciting revenge. Instead, the women on many occasions try to protect their men and prevent killing.

In the *Konungasögur*, few women are mentioned, and they normally play a subordinate role. The exceptions are some queens and princesses, especially in the early period, like Queen Gunnhildr, wife of the Norwegian king Eiríkr Blöðnar ("blood-axe") Haraldsson; the Swedish princess Ingjótr, who plays an important part in the sagas of St. Óláfr; and the Swedish queen Sigþr, who had the father of St. Óláfr killed, and who later became the deadly enemy of King Óláfr Tryggvason after he refused to marry her. The basis of these women’s actions and influence resides in their high social rank.

The *Konungasögur* deal with politics, which is the domain of men; consequently, women play a significant role in the story only when they are political figures or used in the political game. The king’s private life and his relationship with women are normally not given much space in the *Konungasögur*. But to some extent, the sagas of King Óláfr Tryggvason form an exception. The reason may be that the oldest written sagas about this king seem to be derived from a tradition that was in part shaped by women. In his saga about Óláfr Tryggvason, the monk Oddr mentions six informants, three men and three women. Whether this list of informants is Oddr’s own, or was originally found in another saga about the same king (e.g., the saga by the monk Gunnlaugr), it may indicate that the women’s part in shaping the tradition behind the written sagas also had some influence on the portrayal of women and on the amount of space they were accorded in the narrative.

In the nonrealistic sagas, such as the *Fornaldarsögur* and the *Riddararsögur*, women often take a more active part in the narrative. In these sagas, a woman may break out of the ordinary female sex role and act in the role normally reserved for men as a warrior (skjaldmenn), commander of an army, executor of revenge, or reigning queen or princess. The importance of women and their number compared with the number of men differ considerably from saga to saga within the genres. Only one of the *Fornaldarsögur*, *Hervarar saga* (ok Heidreks konungs), is named after a female figure, Hervor, who approaches a formal main part in the saga as a person who carries out the action. Some of the Icelandic *Riddararsögur* and some of the translated sagas are named both after the hero and the heroine, a fact that also reflects the importance of the female figures. In some sagas, these strong female figures not only act like men, but they also dress like men, pretend they are men, and demand to be treated as men. A common motif is that they refuse to marry. When the heroine demands to act in a male role, it underscores the fact that the male role offers possibilities that the female role does not. When women in the nonrealistic sagas act like men, it could be interpreted as the women’s desire for greater freedom, although in these sagas they are not always allowed to take on a male role. The princess or queen who refuses to marry, a popular motif in the later Icelandic *Riddarar­sögur*, is in most cases forced into marriage by her suitor, conquered militarily, and often raped, after which she marries the suitor and assumes her ordinary female role. These sagas may thus reflect different attitudes toward women, and perhaps the discussion in the late Middle Ages about women’s nature and their place in society.

The female characters in all the saga genres are often praised for their beauty, but an even more constant factor is the heroine’s wisdom. In fact, those traits of character that are regarded as positive in men (sense of honor, self-assertion, a strong will, courage, generosity) are also regarded as positive characteristics in women, as long as they do not use them against the men they are supposed to support. The positive assessment of the wise and strong woman is perhaps connected with the view on inheritance in Old Norse society. This society was well aware of the fact that children inherited their mother’s qualities as well as their father’s. And this society seems to have regarded inheritance as a much more important factor in the forming of the children’s character than environmental influence. A wise with intelligence and a strong character was perhaps not easy to cope with. But these qualities are required in a desirable bride, and the explanation may be that such a bride was looked upon as an investment in the future of the unborn sons.
Skaldkonur
Women Skalds

Wood Carving


Else Mundal

[See also: Bjarnar saga Hitceldakappa; Fornalandsogur; Gissla saga Sorganar; Gunnlaugs saga orsumungu; Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks konungs; Islingsdansogur; Konungsogur; Laxdela saga; Maiden Warriors; Njals saga; Olafs saga Tryggvasonar; Riddarasogur; Women in Eddic Poetry]

Women Skalds see Skaldkonur

Wood Carving

incised, and openwork. The Oseberg carvings suggest that wood carving was a leading form of art compared with other forms of artistic expression in the Viking Age.

We also know a little about the wood carving in the period after the burial mound at Oseberg, thanks to two burial mounds from the second half of the 9th century or around 900. The mound at Nedre Gokstad in Vestfold has provided most of the wood carving in Borre style. It contained mostly incised carving and openwork, but there was also a head sculpted in the round. This style was widespread in Scandinavia, but was most common in Sweden and Norway.

Not much Norwegian wood carving has been preserved in the Jelling, Mammen, and Ringerike Viking styles from the 10th century and the first half of the 11th. They were particularly linear and plain styles. Animal ornamentation was still dominant, but plant motifs gradually appeared. Right up to the 1970s, we had no examples of Norwegian wood carving in these styles, but archaeological excavations at Trondheim have brought forth many small articles of everyday use that were made of wood with decoration in Mammen, Ringerike, and the later Urnes style.

The second half of the 11th century once again offers examples of monumental Norwegian wood carving in the last of the Viking styles, the Urnes style, which was widespread in Scandinavia and on the islands in the Atlantic, and in which animal ornamentation was again dominant. The major monument in this style comprises the older parts of the Urnes stave church in Sogn. Characteristic of its ornamentation is the interplay between thin bands (snakes) and wider animals in an open interface pattern, where all lines are curved and figure-of-eight traceries are common. Exceptionally high relief, up to about 7 cm., alternates with very low and flat carving.

At the time when the Romanesque and Gothic styles ruled in European architecture, art, and handicraft, a large number of wooden churches (stave churches) were built in Norway, especially from about 1150 to roughly 1200. These churches were decorated with carvings, and more wood carving from the high Middle Ages has been preserved in Norway than in any other Nordic country. The Church was the foremost employer of wood carvers.

Most of the carving was on the outside of the churches, especially around the doorways. Up to 1,000 stave churches may have been in use at the same time. Only about thirty are still standing, but Norwegian museums have many carved doorways and other items from stave churches that were pulled down. In particular, the main doorway in the westernmost part of the nave could be large and magnificently decorated.

Vestiges of the Urnes style lived on for a long time in stave-church ornamentation, but gradually the decoration became colored by Romanesque style. The doorway from Al church in Hallingdal is a good example of a large group of doorways with the same main scheme in their composition.

New decorative features were vine-like ornamentation and the winged dragon. The vine grows up from the jaws of an animal at the bottom of each plank and goes up the plank in waves to continue on the upper part of the doorway. Branches with leaves entwine to form spirals, but dragons with wings and long tails also crawl up the plank. The largest dragons are to be found at the top of the planks (the tips of their wings extend right up to the top corners) and on the upper part of the doorway. Such doorways have often been called "dragon portals."


179. Chair from Tyldal Church, Østerdalen, Norway; ca. 1150. University Museum of National Antiquities, Oslo.
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195. Söderköping, Östergötland, Sweden. Counterpoise of wooden balance with carved plait ornaments. This kind of ornamentation is found from the 10th century to the present and is impossible to date on stylistic grounds. S. Ragnhild's Guild, Söderköping.
197. Alnö, Medelpad, Sweden. Baptismal font. Receptacle and foot were made separately. The former has been put together in the manner of a cask with ten staves; ca. 1200.


198. Gothem, Gotland, Sweden. Top pieces of choir bench; 14th century.
No completely equivalent ornamentation is found outside Norway. The Urnes style may have influenced its composition. The half-columns with a suggestion of an archivolt have been taken over from the art of building in stone. The lions, in high relief or sculptured in the round on the capitals, have relatives in the art of the Continent. The plant ornamentation is also based on foreign models. The figures of dragons are known from European Romanesque art, and no doubt come from the Orient.

The planks of a doorway from Hylestad stave church in Setesdal, probably dating from 1200–1250, provide the best example of a portal decorated with narrative scenes. They show events from the eodic poems telling of the slaying of the dragon Fafnir by Sigurðr Fafnirsæi. Several other doorways have scenes from the same group of legends. Strangely enough, these church doorways contain motifs from heathen legends.

One group of stave-church doorways belongs to a completely different tradition and is related to stone sculpture in Niðarós (Trondheim), from the first half and middle of the 12th century. Irrespective of the motifs, the decoration on the portals is carved mainly in relief of varying height (seldom more than 5 cm. above the lower surface).

Only a few portals show influence from the Gothic style. The late portals still have vine-like ornamentation, but the dragons are found less frequently.

The surface treatment is an important aspect of the wood carving on all groups of stave-church portals. The carvers used notches and hollows, as well as incised lines. Special tools are needed for wood carving, including knives and wood-carving chisels of various forms. Originally, the carvers probably were specialists sent from cities like Bergen and Niðarós, but later they were local.

From the 14th century, the country suffered a general decline that was also noticeable in artistic activity, especially after the Black Death (1349–1350), which reduced the population of Norway by more than half. The planks from the doorway of Tuddal stave church in Telemark, dating from after 1369, show how the art of doorway carving had deteriorated at the time when skilled wood carvers must have been a rarity. This portal also affords an example of a portal decorated with ornamental wood carving in pure Gothic style. When purely Gothic ornamentation is found, it is usually of late date and is used sparingly. The dragon motif has disappeared, and the plant motifs have become naturalistic. Geometrical architectural motifs seem to have been popular, particularly in late Gothic tracery. Finally, such ornamentation was “translated” into chip-carving technique.

In the latter part of the Middle Ages, most of the works of art for churches were imported from abroad, mostly from Lübeck in Germany, but to some extent from the Netherlands. Gothic reës was very common. Nevertheless, carved furnishings of high quality were made in Norway. For example, numerous choir-stall side-members from Kirkjubø, the Faroe Islands, were probably made in Bergen in the 15th century.

Wood carving was also found on houses, furniture, and objects of everyday use, especially on large farms. On houses built of logs, the entrance in particular was emphasized by carved decoration.

The church doorways were to some extent models for the secular portals, but the latter were as a rule simpler. A good many have been preserved. Romanesque ornamentation was dominant. The secular portals, however, have more wood carving in Gothic style than the stave-church doorways.

Even fewer examples of medieval carved furniture have been preserved from the home than from the church. In addition to chests, tabletops and beds occasionally were carved, as well as smaller objects of everyday use, such as drinking vessels.

There was no Gothic flowering to compare with the rich Romanesque tradition that achieved its finest expression on the doorways of stave churches. The golden age of Norwegian wood carving was over before the Gothic succeeded in becoming common property.

From the earliest times, traces of color have been found, indicating that carvings could be painted in several colors.

The ancient, continuous tradition of color painting appears to have become practically extinct by the end of the Middle Ages, although this applies to the representative “elite” carving. The tradition continued in folk art, however, in which the Romanesque motifs were to live on for several hundred years.

Jelling and Ringerike styles. The four fragments of an upright panel carved wooden objects surviving from before the Reformation. There are very few poor for the preservation of wood carving. But these few pieces, mostly fragments of buildings, are of inestimable importance for our knowledge of wood carving in the Nordic countries.

Some of the Nordic domestic furniture in medieval times were chairs that had been sculpted and decorated with intricate carvings. Among the most famous of these is the so-called "Estonia Style Chair," which dates back to the 13th century. These chairs were often decorated with religious motifs, including scenes from the Last Judgment. In 1973, a fragment decorated in the Ringerike style came to light when an old house was torn down on the farm of Gaulverjá in southern Iceland. The fragment seems to be part of a chair or bench.

The remains, thirteen larger and smaller fragments, of a piece of horizontal paneling from the farm of Bjarnastaðshlóð in Skagafjörður show a later style. The decoration consists entirely of incised figures, but was probably painted originally. It has been shown that these fragments are parts of a characteristically Byzantine representation of the Last Judgment, which perhaps decorated the west wall of the nave of Hólar cathedral (Kristján Eldjarn 1960), built soon after 1106.

Six fragments of beams and of plank, carved in relief, from Hrafnaflói in Eyjafjörður may be of different ages. The oldest are probably parts of a stave-church portal from the latter half of the 12th century. They seem to have been decorated with vine-like plants and winged dragons.

An important monument is the church door from Valþjófsstaður in Fljótsdalur in eastern Iceland, probably from about 1200, with two large, circular medallions decorated in relief. The uppermost depicts a knight on horseback with helmet and shield, who saves a lion by piercing a dragon with his sword. Afterward, the lion follows him faithfully and finally dies on his grave. A runic inscription tells that the king who killed the dragon is buried there. The lower medallion contains four winged dragons intertwined in a fantastic decoration. The door was probably originally taller, with a third carved medallion. The carving has features in common with the wood carving on the portals of the Norwegian stave churches (e.g., Hylestad).

Wood carving of a more European-Romanesque type, apparently from about 1260, is found on two planks from Løfås at Eyjafjörður and two fragments of planks from Målifell in Skagafjörður, possibly parts of church portals. The motifs are big-leaved stalks of a soft, rounded character, partly intertwined with four-legged animals. The decoration is similar on two boards from Målifell with well-preserved wood carving.

On a doorway plank from Munkaþvera in Eyjafjörður, a long, double stalk twines up from a gaping animal mouth. The scant leaves are decorated with chip carving. Most of the circular areas between the stalks contain figures, human beings, and animals. The plank may date from after 1300.

Although the wood carving in "Icelandic style" on a fragment from Skjalfandi in northwestern Iceland appears to be totally Romanesque, with small-leaved spiral stalks interspersed with animals, it probably dates from the mid-15th century.

Church furnishings that have been preserved include a fragment of a chair back and two famous chairs from Grund in Eyjafjörður. A valuation document from 1551, listing the chairs as new, enables us to date these chairs roughly. They were given to the church in the chieftain's seat of Grund by the mistress of the farm, Pórunn, the daughter of Bishop Jón Arason. They represent richly carved, posted furniture with a "box" and lid. In contrast to Norwegian church furniture of a similar type, this furniture has carving only on the front of the chair back, not on the back. The carving is mainly Romanesque, with some Gothic features.

In Iceland, in spite of certain elements characteristic of later styles, the Romanesque style of wood carving lasted many centuries.
Vendei graves and one of the Jelling mounds, however, contain gloried in such eminent wood carvers as Norway's and, consequently, have nothing corresponding to the Oseberg find, the Umes buckles of modest dimensions. Many are cast bronze that has been regions may have possessed rich carved material from the Migration and Viking periods. Originally shaped in wood, i.e., in chip-carving technique. Houses, of wood and were certainly richly decorated. Hardly anything remains today, but, thanks to their popular roots, patterns and furniture, vehicles, tools, and weapons were to a large extent made and large, closed and open, narrow and broad, all consistently rhythmical interaction between different kinds of ribbons, small times symmetrical. The elongated, ribbon-shaped animal bodies, interlaced (Fig. 183a).

Some interesting intermediate forms. The animal representations Norway, however, retain more material than Sweden and show recognized in the surface-covering ornamentation of one of the early Nordic structure that is seen in Fig. 183a and that is easily recog­nized as pagan, and they resolutely worked to direct pictorial art into other paths. The artists were employed by the Church itself, and they fetched their motifs from the Christian countries from which the missions had set out. The Christian artists who shaped the early portal reliefs, fonts, roods, mural paintings, and communion silverware were all trained and highly specialized craftsmen. This is also true of the Norweg­ian wood carvers, but hardly of their colleagues from Denmark and Sweden. With few exceptions, the wood carvings from the latter countries are executed in a simple scratchwork technique. They are un­plastic and linear, more like drawings than sculpted reliefs. The East Scandinavian wood ornamentation has mostly been cut with a knife by local carpenters without any knowledge of the stylistic techniques in vogue. But the most ancient material is of a different character, and belongs to the stave-church era in the 11th century and beginning of the 12th. Stylistically, it is related to the Urnes portal and to the style named after it. At the National Museum in Copenhagen, there is a fragment of a wall plate with a ribbon-shaped animal whose body forms an eight. To the right, there is its head with an eye, pointed forward, elongated jaws, and two lappets extending from the back of its neck and its upper jaw, characteristics of the pure Urnes style (Fig. 184).

From another Danish stave church comes a board that once belonged to the top piece of a portal. It is fragmentary and damaged by rot and insects, but presents several typical features of the Urnes style (Fig. 185).

Less ancient and enriched with loans out of the international Romance style are the portal boards from the two Gotlandic stave churches at Guldrude and Hemse (Figs. 186, 187). The same foreign influences appear in the ornamentation of the Kungsåra bench (Fig. 188). Its basic form is traditionally Nordic, like its linear rhythm, but its three winged dragons do not belong in the domestic fauna. They have thus been borrowed, but are tolerably well integrated in the Nordic pictorial language.

In the sparsely populated regions in Norrland, the animal ornamentation from the Viking Age survived for all the Middle Ages and much longer. From Lillhärdal comes a round lid that several scholars suppose belonged to a wooden font. On its upper side, there are two ribbon-shaped animals (Fig. 189). The double contours, the long lappets, and the foot that terminates each body have many Swedish forerunners as early as the Vendel period. The representation on the lid is highly retarded; the head is disinte­grated and only marked by three lappets. Closely related characteristics are found on a chest from Bjurkber (Fig. 190). The animals' bodies retain their double contours and are interlaced in the traditional way, but heads and extremities have, during the making of long series of copies, lost all their strictness. This kind of ornamentation cannot be dated on
Stylistic grounds. It bears a Viking Age stamp that, in extreme cases, stayed alive into the 19th century.

Sometimes, an even older tradition can be vaguely discerned. In Dalarna, one of the provinces where surviving forms have been most thoroughly investigated, patterns from the Migration Period have been repeated for over a millennium. From Rättvik comes a wool hamper, one side of which has a remarkable motif. It consists of a wavy vine that has stylized animal heads instead of leaves, whose long tongues protrude and cut across the stem of the vine (Fig. 191). Its closest parallels are found in 7th-century metal mountings. The same old-fashioned tendencies appear at Orsa, where confronting animal heads have been put together to carry the receptacle of a baptismal font (Fig. 192).

The objects in Figs. 190–192 are late-medieval or possibly even younger. Purely Romanesque, on the other hand, are a great number of beams and boards that sat under the roof pitch of our earliest stone churches (Fig. 193). The wall plate has been directly transferred from the stave church, where it occupies a key position in the construction, whereas its function in the stone church is uncertain, and where it is also most often lacking. Fig. 193 shows how the eave board sits under the projecting part of the roof truss. Both these building units were furnished with carved ornaments. Because of their exposed position, they have often been damaged by wind and weather.

In Nordic animal ornamentation, there developed very early a group of zoomorphous lappets, which in the course of the late Viking Age received a characteristic shaping. The typical lappet is long, narrow, tensely curved, with a rolled terminal and, at its base, a smaller lobe. During the missionary era, vegetative motifs began to penetrate, and the lappet was made to serve as a leaf in pure plant ornaments. In its original form, it is found in the ornamentation from Guldrupe and Hablingbo (Figs. 194b and c), with slightly modified versions of it in several other places (Figs. 194d–l). Characteristic of early Nordic vine ornamentation are symbiotic vege-to-animal forms. Sometimes, the vine extends from a dragon's body (Figs 194i and j; also Fig. 188). In other cases, small animal heads burgeon from the branches (Fig. 194g).

Animal ornaments were predominant in the Scandinavian art of pre-Christian times, and a prominent feature was the use of elongated animal bodies interwoven to make intricate patterns. But besides such zoomorphous interlace, there was pure ribbon and plait ornamentation, which also survived into the popular art of more recent times. A good example of the latter type is given by a wooden balance from Söderköping (Fig. 195). Its counterpoise is covered by the kind of ring-chain pattern found on the stone crosses at Gosforth and on the Isle of Man.

East Scandinavian wood carving was thus dominated by local, stylistically retarded representations, but there were other manifestations as well. The two stave-church fragments (Figs. 184 and 185) do not belong in the predominant group, and from Norrland come two Romanesque baptismal fonts, well elaborated in the round. The one from Näs in Jämtland (Fig. 196) has been made out of one single piece probably by a skilled Norwegian sculptor; the inscribed palmettes on its foot have parallels in the Norwegian material. The font from Alnö in Medelpad (Fig. 197) is totally different and unique. The large monsters on its foot may have been borrowed from some stone font, but are very specially elaborated. The receptacle has irregular vines and abstruse figure representations, which lack parallels.

During the 14th and 15th centuries, the Danish cathedrals of Lund and Roskilde received magnificent, richly sculpted oaken choir stalls. They correspond to international models and were obviously executed by artists called in for the occasion. Also, the stalls and benches that remain in Gotlandic parish churches have been influenced by continental patterns. But they are simpler and in most cases carved by native masters. It is striking how often the Gotlandic benches are adorned with vegetative dragons (Fig. 198), i.e., the same motif that we have met before (cf. Figs. 188, 194i and 194m); the leaf shapes have been borrowed, but the basic motif has a native lineage.

To the painters, sculptors, and goldsmiths who worked for the Church, the Reformation meant a serious setback, but not to local wood carvers, who kept on tending their heritage from the Migration, oblivious of Renaissance, Baroque, and Rococo.


Lennart Karlsson

[See also: Carving: Bone, Horn, and Walrus Tusk; Iconography; Oseberg; Stave Church; Viking Art]
Ynglinga saga ("The Saga of the Ynglingar") is the first section of Snorri Sturluson's Heimskringla. It is a quasi-historical work, in which Snorri gives an account of the mythical and legendary ancestors of the Ynglingar, the kings of Sweden. These kings were thought to descend from the pagan Norse gods, and Snorri traces in detail their mythical ancestry, expressing the same euhemeristic thought to descend from the pagan Norse gods, and Snorri traces the ancestors of the Ynglingar, the kings of Sweden. These kings were called "Ynglingar." Covering a period from the end of the 3rd century to the mid-9th century, Snorri provides a systematic and concise account of events during the reigns of these kings.

Ynglingatal, or Ynglinga Saga, relates the Swedish warrior Yngvarr’s famous expedition and events and characters. Interspersed throughout the narrative are earlier than the 11th century, and treats to some extent historical events by the monk Oddr. Hofmann (1981) argues that the existing text represents an Icelandic translation from before 1200 of a now-lost Latin original composed by Oddr Snorrason at the end of the 12th century in the monastery of Pingeyrar (see, however, Thulin 1975, Mel’nikova 1976, and Pritsak 1981). The approximately thirty rune stones in Sweden erected in memory of the men who fell “in the East with Yngvarr” corroborate the evidence given by the annals. In addition, Shepard (1984–85) has drawn attention to an Old Russian inscribed cross commemorating a deceased Russian. The cross stood near a land and water route from the Caspian to the Sea of Azov. Its Cyrillic inscription appears once to have borne a date corresponding to 1041, but no longer does so. The second expedition, undertaken by Sveinn, has not been historically verified.

In the entries for 1041, Konungssoninn and Logmannsanndill state that “Yngvarr the Far-traveler dies” (Islandske Annaler 1888: 108, 250); it is, therefore, believed that in or around 1041 Yngvarr led an expedition from central Sweden, and that the expedition met with disaster somewhere southeast of Russia, in the region of the Caspian (see, however, Thulin 1975, Mel’nikova 1976, and Pritsak 1981). The approximately thirty rune stones in Sweden erected in memory of the men who fell “in the East with Yngvarr” corroborate the evidence given by the annals. In addition, Shepard (1984–85) has drawn attention to an Old Russian inscribed cross commemorating a deceased Russian. The cross stood near a land and water route from the Caspian to the Sea of Azov. Its Cyrillic inscription appears once to have borne a date corresponding to 1041, but no longer does so. The second expedition, undertaken by Sveinn, has not been historically verified.


Kirsten Wolf

It was one of just a handful of places in 7th- to 9th-century England that could be called a town, and was the first strategic center. They captured York in 866, held it in face of a Northumbrian counterattack, and established a line of kings, both Danes and Norwegians, who controlled the city and its kingdom, encompassing the county of Yorkshire and lands beyond, for most of the period until 954. In that year, the last Viking king, the exiled Norwegian prince Eiríkr blóõox (“blood-axe”) Haraldsson, was expelled, but Scandinavian settlers and their descendants remained an important element in the population until the Norman Conquest and after. Their influence is demonstrated in the city’s name “Yorks,” which derives from Jórvík, the Scandinavian version of the Old English name Eoforwic. Many of the street names end in the element -gate, also a Scandinavian derivation.

Viking Age texts, such as the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, imply that Jórvík was a defended site. It was described around 1000 as full of the treasures brought from many places by merchants, particularly Danes. In William the Conqueror’s Domesday Book, the city is shown in 1066 as divided into seven administrative areas called “shires.” There were about 2,000 tenements in the city, suggesting a population of around 10,000, and various churches are named as well as one street, the Shambles or Butcher’s street. This street and all of the churches still survive, in or just outside the area originally occupied by the Roman fortress and civilian town. The Anglo-Saxon commercial center focused 1 km. farther downstream, but it was abandoned at the start of the Scandinavian occupation, when the old Roman nucleus was reoccupied. Archaeological excavations at Coppergate have demonstrated clearly how an area that had been abandoned since the end of the Roman period around A.D. 400 was settled again in the mid-9th century, and divided up into tenement plots that left an enduring mark on the evolution of the neighborhood, still recognizable in the 20th century.

The Scandinavian kings revitalized the coinage of York, improving its weight and purity. Commerce was encouraged as a source of revenue, and Jórvík had links extending throughout England, to the Scandinavian colonies in Scotland and Ireland (Jórvík had close dynastic links with the rulers of Norse Dublin), to the Scandinavian homelands, to northwestern Europe, and beyond, via a series of middlemen, to the eastern Mediterranean and the Near and Middle East. Among the goods brought to the town were German wines and Byzantine silks.

Economically as important as overseas trade was Jórvík’s role as a manufacturing center, supplying a wide hinterland with a variety of goods and equipment. There is, for example, archaeological evidence for metalworking, including both the production of jewelry and the manufacture of such items as knives, locks, and keys; for the working of both jet and amber into jewelry; for a variety of leather working, including shoemaking and repairing; for textile production and dyeing; for the making of wooden cups and bowls; and for a wide range of bone and antler working, making combs and many other items. Sometimes, Norse taste and style can be detected, as in the evidence for making the trefoil brooches characteristic of Viking Age Scandinavia, or in the scenes from pagan Norse mythology, including the Sigurðr epic, carved on grave markers found near the Viking Age cathedral. Essentially, however, the culture of Jórvík was a hybrid, Anglo-Scandinavian one, and many of the finds would not be out of place anywhere in northwestern Europe.

With its Scandinavian links, the later 10th- and 11th-century kings were wary of the loyalty of Jórvík, and appointed earls and archbishops who were acceptable in York yet linked to the south of England, to rule it on their behalf. Just before the Norman Conquest, one of the last earls, Waltheof, built a church dedicated to St. Óláfr; a later rebuilding still stands today, and probably signals the location of the earl’s palace. Similarly, the name “King’s Square,” first recorded as Konungsgrutu, probably indicates where the Viking Age royal palace lay.

The last epic battle of the Viking period took place 11 km. east-northeast of York in 1066, when Haraldr harðráði (“hard-ruler”) Sigurðarson of Norway, having won an initial victory over the men of York at the battle of Fulford, was surprised, defeated, and killed by King Harold Godwinsson at Stamford Bridge. After Harold’s defeat at Hastings, the Normans eventually seized control of York and built new castles and churches, but despite their interventions and those of succeeding centuries, York retains to this day the topographic framework that largely crystallized under Norse rule when Jórvík was second only to London as the largest and richest city in England.


R. A. Hall

[See also: England, Norse in, Stamford Bridge, Battle of]
Qgmundar þáttir dyttos ok Gunnars helmings
("The Tale of Qgmundr Dint and Gunnarr Half") is an anonymous þáttir, written probably in the beginning of the 14th century. It is extant in its entirety only within Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta, although originally it was possibly an independent narrative. The Vatnshyrna version of Víga-Glúms saga tells only the first part of the story. The text is not designated as a þáttir in the MSS, but was classified as such by the editors of this group of texts.

On a journey from Iceland to Norway, Qgmund Hrafsson has an argument with one of Earl Hákon Sigurðarson's men. Qgmundr decides to take revenge, and arrives in Norway after two years. There he learns from Gunnarr that Óláfur Tryggvason is now the ruler and that his enemy, Hallvarðr, is at the court. Qgmundr and Gunnarr exchange cloaks, and the Icelander then goes to the king's court, kills Hallvarðr, and returns to Iceland. Because of the cloak, Gunnarr is thought to be Hallvarðr's murderer. He flees to Sweden, where he stays with a priestess of Freyr and adopts the role of the heathen deity. The inhabitants of the village do not discover the deceit, and are pleased when they discover that the priestess is expecting a child. When Óláfur Tryggvason hears of this development, he immediately suspects that Gunnarr is there, and sends his brother to take him back to Norway. Gunnarr leaves heathen Sweden, and he and his wife are baptised at the Norwegian court.

The þáttir can be divided into two parts, the first concerning Qgmundr dytt ("dint"), and the second, Gunnarrs helmings ("half"), with the exchange of cloaks functioning as a link between the parts. Whether the two parts were originally different narratives later joined by a redactor remains an open question. The second part, in which Gunnarr plays the role of the deity Freyr, has received attention from historians of religion, although its relatively late date limits the þáttir's usefulness as a source.


Ólfos þáttir ("The Tale of Ólafot") appears in Móðruvullabók, between Droplaugarsona saga and Hallfreðar saga vandræðaskálds. Following the MS title itself, as well as the content and structure of the text, Ólfos þáttir should properly be called Ólafs saga, because it is a truncated Íslandingasaga, revolving around a feud touched off by accident and culminating in a legal climax at the Alþingi.

Pórhall Ólafóti ("ale-hood"), so called because he brews and sells beer at assemblies, enjoys wealth but little social status. While making charcoal in a forest he owns, he accidentally burns down his own forest and a neighboring forest owned by six chieftains. They decide to regard the fire as intentional and sue Ólafóti for his property. At the Alþingi, Ólafóti is unable to gain support until Brodtri Bjarnarson convinces his brother-in-law Porstein Súður-Hallsson that they should help. Counseled by Brodtri, Ólafóti tricks the chieftains into accepting arbitration for the case and to allow him to choose the arbiters. However, Ólafóti chooses not the chieftains,
as they had expected, but Broddi and Porsteinn. When Porsteinn announces the judgment, which amounts to no more than a mild fine, the chieftains' complaints are silenced by Broddi in a flyting that is the central scene of the saga. He dispatches them one by one with accusations, apparently well founded, of less than manly behavior. Later, Broddi renews ties of kinship with one of the chieftains who accompanies him safely home from the Álfingi and later visits him, cementing their relationship and, one may infer, rendering unlikely further response by the other chieftains.

Although Ljósveitinga saga and Vápnfírðinga saga touch on elements of the story, Olkofra þáttir is best grouped with Lokasenna and Bandamanna saga because of the centrality of the flying. The ridiculed chieftains of Olkofra þáttir have the same high status as those of Bandamanna saga and the gods of Lokasenna, because they include the major figures Guðmundr inn ríki (“the mighty”) and Snorri góði (“chieftain”); and the somewhat silly Olkofri parallels the weak Oddr of Bandamanna saga. With the trickster figures of Lokasenna and Bandamanna saga, however, Broddi is less closely parallel; unlike Loki and the shabby old Ófeig, he has only his relative youth to make him singular.

Much of the speculation on Olkofra þáttir has centered on its date, conventionally set at around 1250, and its relationship to Bandamanna saga, which has been regarded as the borrower in more recent scholarship. Neither of these findings is secure. However, the high quality of the style and characterization of Olkofra þáttir is beyond debate.


John Lindow

[See also: Bandamanna saga; Íslendingasögur; Ljósveitinga saga; Lokasenna; Móðruvallabók; Þáttir; Vápnfírðinga saga]

Órvar-Odds saga ("The Saga of Arrow-Oddr") is a fornaldarsaga known in two versions. Its hero, Órvar-Oddr, is introduced as the son of Grimr loðinkinni ("britly-cheek") and the grandson of Ketill hœngi ("salmon"), also known from Gríms saga loðinkinnna and Ketils saga hœngs, respectively. These three sagas show a remarkable likeness to each other in some of their episodes in which the heroes deal with giants. There was also a historical Ketill hœngi among the earliest Icelandic settlers, so we can surmise that originally these stories were told among his descendants.

Oddr is said to have lived to the age of 300 years. At the beginning of the story, his future is told by a prophetess, whom he scorns. The fulfillment of this prophecy, which concerns the manner of his dying, serves as a frame to the story. Soon afterward, he starts his life as a Viking, and thus shows himself to have more mettle than his predecessors, who had always been farmers. Many of the following episodes contain nothing more than a set of stereotypical Viking adventures. His nickname arose from the fact that he inherited three magical arrows from his grandfather Ketill. The singular arrow of the epithet "Arrow-Oddr" shows that in the course of time the story must have altered somewhat.

The most famous of his Viking adventures is the fight on the isle of Sámsey (Samsø, in Denmark), together with his blood-brother Hjálmar, against a Viking band of twelve brothers. This episode is thought to be one of the oldest parts of the story. A variant appears in Hervarar saga and in Saxo, who also relates some other confused reminiscences of Oddr. These passages show that at one time Oddr must have been popular in the North, and that he did not originally belong to the family of Ketill hœngi, but because of his prestige was at some later point adopted into it.

The saga includes the glaring anachronism of Oddr's being a Christian during the heathen period in Scandinavia. His baptism is followed by two curious meetings with Óðinn, one of which occurs in all versions, the other only in the youngest. In both versions, Óðinn helps Oddr fight and overcome a supernatural opponent; Óðinn gives him some magical arrows, stronger than the arrows of the king of the Finns (older story), and makes him enter into bloodbrothership with the other Vikings (younger story). One might interpret these as initiation stories, showing Oddr entering into the service of Óðinn.

But what about Oddr's baptism? The author might wish to regard him as a Christian Viking, but this identification clashes with the appearance of Óðinn. In his fight against monstrous adversaries, Oddr calls himself the inveterate enemy of both Óðinn and Freyr. We are apparently meant to think that Oddr fights against Óðinn with the help of Óðinn.

The story must be relatively young, and is usually dated from the end of the 13th or even the beginning of the 14th century. A great number of vellum MSS and paper copies testify to the popularity of its hero. The oldest one, Stock. Perg. 4to no. 7 (S; beginning of the 14th century), lacks the episode on Sámsey. Next comes AM 344a 4to (M; second half of the 14th century), from which the paper copy AM 1793 4to derives. The 15th-century MSS AM 343 4to (A) and AM 471 4to (B) are closely related. In both of them, we find Órvar-Odds saga preceded by Ketils saga hœngs and Gríms saga loðinkinnna. The younger Óðinn story is preserved only in these two MSS. From A, six paper copies are derived, and from B, one paper copy with some of its poetry. M occupies an intermediary position between S and AB. The vellum fragment AM 567 4to (C) dates from the 15th century. A group of paper MSS, the best of which is AM 173 fol. (E), is assumed to have been copied from a lost MS related to AB.


Riti Kroesen

[See also: Fornaldarsögur; Gríms saga loðinkinnna; Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks konung; Ketils saga hœngs]
Entries are arranged alphabetically as follows: a, b, c, d, ṭ, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r, s, t, ṭ, u, ū, v, w, x, y, z, æ, ã, æ, õ, ð, ð, ð, ð, ð. Page numbers for principal entries are in boldface type.
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