

# The 15th International Saga Conference Sagas and the Use of the Past

5th – 11th August 2012, Aarhus University

**Preprint of Abstracts**

Edited by

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The cover image is the so-called “Aarhus Mask”, a depiction on a runestone found in the district of Hasle in Aarhus. It has been dated to the period 970-1020.

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# Preface

The theme of the 15th International Saga Conference, the 5th to the 11th of August, 2012, Aarhus University, is Sagas and the Use of the Past. Papers at the conference will be presented in one of the following categories: Memory and Fiction, Myth and Reality, Textuality and Manuscript Transmission, Genre and Concepts of History, Oral Tradition, The Christianisation of Denmark and Eastern Scandinavia, The Use of Sagas and Eddas in the 21st Century and Open Session

Apart from the keynote lectures, orally-presented papers are organized in up to 6 parallel sessions on each day of the conference, in addition to which there are poster presentations, which are presented on Thursday afternoon. The Preprint Publication is principally meant to be a tool to assist participants in deciding which papers/posters to attend.

Altogether the Preprint Publication includes abstracts of 4 keynote lectures, 3 individually themed sessions, 16 poster presentations and 201 papers. The word-limit on abstracts for papers is 800 words, and for poster abstracts it is 2000. In the process of editing, it has been the editors' express purpose to retain the original formatting and text of each contribution as it was intended by its author. The editors have only standardized titles, data on the contributors and the lay-out of the contributions, so that the paper abstracts of 800 words will fit on max. 2 pages and poster abstracts of 2000 words fit on max. 5 pages. The abstracts have not been proofread, nor has the language been checked. The responsibility for each abstract rests solely with its author.

Aarhus University, June 2012

The editors

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## Why Should We Care about *rímur*?

Matthew James Driscoll, University of Copenhagen, Denmark

*Rímur*, long narrative poems traditionally presented orally, were far and away the most important secular poetic genre in Iceland from the late middle ages to the beginning of the 20th century. Their popularity is attested both by the large number of *rímur* composed – well over a thousand – and by the many, many manuscripts and popular printed editions in which they are preserved.

The subject matter of the *rímur* – the stories they tell – were almost invariably borrowed from pre-existing narratives. Although almost any kind of narrative could be pressed into service, the romances were especially popular: nearly two-thirds of the seventy-eight *rímur* preserved from the period before 1600 derive from either *riddarasögur* or *fornaldarsögur*, and while the range of subjects broadened somewhat, romance of one kind or another formed the basis for the majority of the *rímur* composed after 1600. And many, if not most, received the *rímur* treatment more than once, perhaps as many as 7, 8 or 9 times – and often there is evidence for *rímur* which have not survived. So the chances that any given saga would at one point or another be turned into *rímur* were extremely good. In some cases the only evidence we have for a saga's existence are *rímur* that were based on it. These, but by no means only these, were not infrequently then turned back into prose – the book of the film of the book, as it were.

There exists a wide variety of *rímur* metres, over two thousand variations, about a quarter of which are modifications of *ferskeytla*, a four-lined stanza rhyming a b a b. In addition to the rhyme there was alliteration, the first line of each couplet containing two alliterating words and the second line one. Variations making use of internal rhyme, or assonance, both horizontal and vertical, are common, some of them very complex indeed.

*Rímur* are also characterised by their extensive use of kennings and *heiti*, derived from skaldic poetry, and, particularly in the later *rímur*, of ornate paraphrastic collocations derived from the German *Minnesang*. Despite the intricacies of the form, *rímur* could be of considerable length: sets comprising 15 to 20 fits, each of 80 or 90 verses, are not uncommon. The longest *rímur* extant, *Olgeirs rímur danska* by Guðmundur Bergþórsson (1657-1705), consist of 60 fits, 5243 verses in all.

With some notable exceptions – W. A. Craigie, Björn Karel Þórólfsson, Finnur Sigmundsson, Shaun Hughes, to name but four – scholarly interest in the *rímur* has been negligible, both in Iceland itself and among Old Norse-Icelandic scholars abroad: for most scholars it is as though *rímur* simply don't exist. This is unfortunate, to say the least, for a number of reasons, foremost among which the following may be mentioned:

1. Because they're there – and there's a lot of them. If you're interested in Icelandic literature it's rather strange, not to say perverse, to ignore what was arguably the single most popular literary genre in Iceland for 500 years.
2. Because they're an integral part of the literary landscape. It is perhaps a bit like film *vis-à-vis* the novel – a scholar of the 20th-century novel, for example, who had never seen, or seen the need to see, a film would be regarded with suspicion, and rightly so, for the two go hand in hand.
3. Because of their role in the history of transmission. As mentioned, there are very few sagas that were not turned into *rímur*, and these *rímur* were not infrequently turned back into prose; an examination of the textual history of any of the romances, certainly, will almost inevitably turn up one or more 'wild' versions, which, upon examination, will reveal themselves to be derived from *rímur*.
4. Because they preserve – and build upon – the skaldic tradition with their use of kennings and *heiti*. An appreciation of the one must involve an understanding of the other, not least as the two traditions, in terms of their transmission, were contemporaneous.
5. Because *rímur* metres are extremely interesting from the perspective of prosody, and have arguably influenced *all* other forms of Icelandic poetry, even the most serious ones. The melodies to which the *rímur* are sung or chanted are, many of them, of great antiquity and therefore also very interesting (and, some of them, quite beautiful).
6. Because they are very interesting linguistically – and are arguably the reason why the morphological system of Old Icelandic has been preserved largely intact.
7. Because, unlike skaldic poetry, *rímur* are narrative in nature, and therefore tell a story; they can also often be very funny, and occasionally quite lyrical – *rímur* are not, in other words, universally bad poetry, as some would have you believe.

And that's why we should care about *rímur*.

## Representing the Past in the Sagas: Relique or Blank Slate?

Stephen Mitchell, Harvard University, USA

Many possible ways exist to frame the contingent relationships between author, history, and text, and in particular, the ways in which events of the past, and even ideas of “pastness” itself, served medieval writers, shaped what those writers produced, and addressed the expectations of their audiences. One important aspect of this relationship of which we can be reasonably certain is this: from Ari ÞORGILSSON’S reported use of «lore, both old and new» (*fræði, bæði forna ok nýja*) to Saxo’s promise to provide “a faithful image of the past” (*fidelem uetustatis notitiam*) to the assurance by Theodoricus Monachus that he will record for posterity the “relics of our forefathers” (*majorum nostrorum memoriae*), medieval Scandinavian authorities placed a high value on the purported authenticity of their materials and, one assumes, the reception of their work as just such mirror-like reflections of what had once occurred. Even Snorri found it prudent to shade his comments on the truth value of *Heimskringla* by noting that he does not know if the accounts on which he has based his work are accurate but that seasoned scholars (*gamlir fræðimenn*) believe them to be.<sup>1</sup> The author of *Historia Norwegiæ* goes further than most when he remarks, “For I am neither eager for praise as a historian nor fearful of the sting of censure as a liar, since concerning the course of early times I have added nothing new or unknown but in all things followed the assertions of my seniors.”

Against these solemn protests and promises of verisimilitude by an elite group of authors generally regarded as formative figures in the growth of history writing in the North, it is—curiously, given the ridicule to which their genre is frequently subjected and the lack of verisimilitude usually attached to their stories—the late medieval authors of the *fornaldarsögur* who display some of the most savvy and intellectually critical views about such claims to authenticity. The most spectacular example of such rational critical distance, it seems to me, comes from the author of *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*, whose “Prologue” is witty, wise and on point. In laying out his perspective, he specifically refrains from pledges to historical fidelity and instead makes it clear that he regards such representations of authenticity as suspect. One cannot miss the tone—ironic, critical, insightful, and bemused—in his opening remark (in AM 589f, 4<sup>10</sup>) that, “Of the many stories written for people’s entertainment, a number come down to us from ancient manuscripts or from learned men. Some of these tales from old books must have been set down very briefly at first, and expanded afterwards, since most of what they contain took place later than is told.”<sup>23</sup> Some thirty thousand words later, the saga concludes around an even more prescient consideration of the saga writer’s art, in the midst of which the author notes, “But it’s best not to cast aspersions on this or call the stories of learned men lies, unless one can tell the stories more plausibly and in a more elegant way. Old stories and poems are offered more as entertainments of the moment than as eternal truths.”<sup>24</sup>



These antipodean views of the opportunities offered by the past and the narrative materials inherited from it—the “relics of our forefathers” versus the “entertainments of the moment”—capture a series of seemingly timeless dichotomies, whether cast as, for example, “historian” versus “liar” (to mirror the terms used by the author of *Historia Norwegiæ*), native versus anti-native, oral versus written, or even more to the point of my comments, *reliques* (with due respect to Bishop Percy) versus the *tabula rasa* (with similar respect to John Locke).

Exploring how Icelandic saga writers viewed “the past” and the concept of “pastness” within this debate, the rôles of continuity and perceptions of continuity, and the uses they made of these perspectives, forms the basis for my presentation.

#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> En þótt vér vitim eigi sannendi á því, þá vitum vér dæmi til, at gamlir fræðimenn hafi slíkt fyrir satt haft.

<sup>2</sup> Neque enim laudis avidus ut chronographus existo neque vituperii stimulos ut falsidicus exhorreo, cum nihil a me de vetustatis serie novum vel inauditum assumpserim, sed in omnibus seniorum assertiones secutus.

<sup>3</sup> Margar frásagnir hafa menn samansett til skemtanar mönnum, sumar eptir fornskræðum eðr fróðum mönnum, ok stundum eptir fornum bókum, er í fyrstu hafa settar verit með stuttu máli, en síðan orðum fylðar, því flest hefir seinna verit, enn sagt er...

<sup>4</sup> Stendr því bezt at lasta eigi eðr kalla lygð fróðra manna sagnir, nema hann kunni með meirum líkendum at segja eðr orðfæriligar fram at bera, hafa ok forn kvæði ok frásagnir meir verit framsett til stundligar gleði enn ævinligs átrúnaðar...

## The Margins of the Bayeux Tapestry as a Source of the Past

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This paper studies the textile narrative of the events leading up to the Norman Conquest of England in 1066, which is depicted on the Bayeux tapestry, embroidered about ten years later. My analysis is influenced by the art historian Michael Camille and his research on marginalia of medieval manuscripts, for example in *Image on the Edge. The Margins of Medieval Art* (1992). Camille has come to the conclusion that marginal pictures often correspond to motifs in the main scenes. Animals and grotesques frequent the margin, which Camille considers to be a significant communicative space. Above all, the margin provides a narrative dealing with comical elements or taboos.

This embroidered historiography from the Viking Ages has been used as a source for knowledge of ships, weapons, horses and other military attributes. It has also been studied for its political and ideological history. However, its margins are more rarely analyzed. My aim is to compare the margins of the Bayeux tapestry with medieval manuscript marginalia, linked to a change from oral culture to literacy, and consider in what way the margins of the Bayeux tapestry tell us about the past.

The tapestry is divided into three parts: the main frieze and an upper and a lower margin. In the margins, the most frequent motifs are animals and birds. A “birds-in battle” motif interpreted as birds waiting for fallen warriors, as, for example, more or less explicit at the Swedish Gripsholm’s runic stone (SÖ 81) or in Eddic and Skaldic poetry, is depicted in the upper margin. In the lower margin, real and fantastic animals are shown, many of them in scenes linked to the events of the main frieze. The artisan who designed this textile narrative was obviously influenced by written learned lore, as well as by agrarian and forestry everyday life and even some elements of the grotesque. Besides, attitudes towards nature, man and behavior seem to be reflected.

As in manuscript marginalia, there is a correspondence between the main and the marginal scenes. It seems that animals or birds in the margin express feelings similar to those depicted in the main scenes and thus strengthening them. For example, a dog is howling in the margin during a funeral in the main frieze, and close above the major battle scenes, the animals and birds show signs of anxiety and threat. Thus, animal symbolism along the lower margin – expressed in an increased activity in general, aggression and finally death – corresponds to the sequence of the narrative of the main scenes.

According to Michael Camille, there is some misogyny in the lower margin of the Bayeux tapestry. I would not agree, but there is a difference between the way women are depicted in the margin and in the main scenes. There are, in the main frieze as well as in the margins, a small number of women in comparison to men, indeed not surprising given the history, but while the women in the main frieze wear fine dresses and hide their hair under a veil, the marginal women are naked with flowing hair.

Camille argues that medieval marginal pictures are linked to a change from oral culture to literacy, and to an increasing use of written documents. The Bayeux tapestry may also be considered as a site for communication about the past, as well as with the contemporary, since William the Conqueror is portrayed as a rightful heir to the crown, and thus the tapestry has a legitimating role.

A main feature of the tapestry is the heroic ideal and the violation of oaths as a serious crime. Broken promises and oaths would in the first place be connected with the marginalia, and in this respect, the Bayeux tapestry could be a legal source. However, there are also other crimes or non-accepted behavior, for example of erotic nature, presented to the public above all in the lower margin. A comparative analysis between the content and form of the main frieze and the margins reveals a contrast between socially acceptable and its opposite, a contrast made visible through symbols and animal associations, but also concretely through a mostly solid line between the main frieze and the margins, depicting different spaces for communication.

The link between the main frieze and the margins may in a comparative perspective be similar to the role of the myth in Old Icelandic literature. For example, Margaret Clunies Ross argues in *Prolonged Echos. Old Norse Myths in Medieval Northern Society* (1994) that the myth contributes to the understanding of the entire text by forming a narrative allusion. A prerequisite for this kind of communication must have been the understanding or recognition of the myth by the audience. That the public of the Bayeux tapestry was acquainted with the historical background as well with the symbols in the margins, and besides, with some gossip, was certainly an assumption by the artisan.

## Myth, Memory and Rulership

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Within the last decades, archaeologists have discovered several traces of Scandinavian halls and manors, providing us with a more tangible basis to discuss the relation between power and ideology in the Nordic countries in Viking and Medieval Age. The power of the ruler and the ideology of rulership are central elements in the political, social, religious and cultural development in the North during the transition from the Viking to the Medieval Age.

When the Medieval European ideology of rulership has been widely discussed in scholarly circles, there is a need for a stronger attention on Norse pagan ideology of rulership and the transformations and functions of pagan traditions within historiography and sagas of the Middle Age.

The term ideology may refer to explanations and interpretations of the world shared by a whole culture, here however, it will more specifically refer to the intentional use of myths, rites or narratives by dynasties or individuals with the aim to legitimise certain types of rulership: chieftains, earls and kings.

Main sources giving access to the ideology of the past, are myths and mythic narratives, found in Norse poems and sagas. In addition to traces of dynastic myths in scaldic and eddaic poems such as *Ynglingatal*, *Háleygjatal*, *Skírnismál*, *Hyndluljóð*, it will be focused on *Heimskringla* for presentations of early kings, *Orkneyinga saga* on earls and *Færeyinga saga* on chieftainship.

In pre-modern societies power is generally manifested through memory of a distant past, through myths of origin, genealogies and narratives of foundation. Origin myths tend to proclaim the ruling dynasty as descendants of mythic powers. Myth is the primary tool of expressing collective memories of the distant past, as mythic actions take place on a timeless pre-historic level. Origin myths thus become models for the actual life and for the order of society. In Norse sources some basic mythic structures may be classified within the category of *cultural memory*, to use a term coined by Aleida and Jan Assman. The basic structure of Norse origin myths is discernable in the polarization between gods and giants as fundamental symbols of the powers of life. Out of this collective memory several variants of origin and foundation myths are created, especially through the transition from myth to history within the historiography of the Medieval Age. The great challenge is to uncover and interpret the ideological message of the mythical narratives connected to the field of rulership, corresponding to the political levels of chieftains, earls and kings.

A main question is how and why the learned Medieval Age continued to be occupied by pagan origin myths - a tendency that seems to be contrary and even in opposition to the impact of a Christian European rulership-ideology that reached the Nordic countries about 1150, the so called *rex iustus*-ideology.

In the wake of the conversion and the establishment of new kingdoms and nations, the Nordic countries faced the challenge to write themselves into a common European historiography. The interest of the learned milieu was extended from focus on the old, famous ruling dynasties, with new ideas about the origin of peoples or group of peoples, expressed in a new type of myths of *origo gentis*. The Prologue to *Snorri's Edda* presents a common Nordic origin narrative based on contemporary European theories of migration, of evhemerism and "natural religion". The author, however, continues to stick to the old pagan mythical structure as well. Historiography and sagas further exhibit a striking interest in the giants of the pagan origin mythology, associating giants with the native population, figured in Saamis and Finns, seen as representatives of the genuine Nordic landscape. The Saami element in the Nordic origin narratives requires further examination as well. The origin legend of *Orkneyinga saga* seems to be a conscious political re-formulation of older mythological material. The description of the initiation of the chieftain in *Færeyinga saga* relies on a whole spectrum of pagan myths. These tendencies should be taken as expressions of ideology.

Interdisciplinary co-work on the field Nordic rulership is demanded to bring results from analysis of textual and material sources together, not only in a Nordic, but in a north-European and comparative perspective as well. The renewed interest in rites and rituals coming up the last years, will obviously bring us new insight and knowledge of the field.

## Historical, Mythological, Pedagogical: MyNDIR and Illustrations of Norse Gods

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This poster presentation introduces a prototype named MyNDIR (My Norse Digital Image Repository) and demonstrates its potential for research and collaboration on the paratextual transmission of Norse mythology through illustrations in manuscripts and early print sources. MyNDIR provides a thumbnail strip of cropped images as Search results from a dropdown menu, a typed query, or clicking on a keyword.

Clicking on a thumbnail produces the full size image and its complete descriptive data, such as illustrator, date, keywords etc. MyNDIR also has two optional descriptive fields designated as “related items” and “research notes.” The “related items” field is for multiple renderings of a specific scene by an individual artist. The “research notes” field is for including information or links to other visual material relevant to a discussion of the scene and its illustrator.

The thumbnail strip also provides a view of the diversity of images related to a specific scene or figure and reveals anomalies such as M. Lamé Fleury’s illustration of Þórr riding a goat. The visual content of the poster presents evidence of set scenes that were revised and recycled through the ages for a variety of agendas ranging from historical, mythological, and pedagogical. The poster reveals that figures from original renderings were not only revised, but at times mixed and matched and incorporated in revised scenes or even completely new ones. My poster demonstrates that MyNDIR’s prototype represents an emerging research tool for examining the ongoing illustrative cycle of Norse mythology that complements the textual tradition.

## Making New Texts from Old: The Use of Sources in the Old Norse *Jóns saga postola*

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The *Jóns saga postola* has been transmitted to us in 4 main versions. The first three, preserved in manuscripts from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, are mostly based on the *Vulgata* and the *Vita* by Pseudo-Mellitus, with supplementary material from other sources, such as Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*. They are not very different in style and content, but vary mostly in their selection of the source material and in the structure.

The Pseudo-Mellitus' *Vita* also provides the core of narration for the fourth version of the saga (from now *Jón<sup>d</sup>*), which is only preserved in AM 649 a 4<sup>o</sup> (ca 1350-1400), a manuscript entirely devoted to St John the Evangelist. As stated in a note on the last page and confirmed by an Icelandic diplom (*DI V*, 589), the manuscript was owned by the church of John the Evangelist at Hof in Vatnsdalur. This version of the saga, attributed to Bergr Sökkason or his *scriptorium* (Hallberg 1968; Johansson 2007), is incomplete, since 4 leaves are missing in the first section of the manuscript. The *incipit* of the text reads as follows: *Her byriar litlu Jons sagu postola ok guðspiallamannz* (Unger 1874: 466). Despite the definition as *lítill saga*, the text is the longest of the four versions and contains a lot of additional material compared to the others, deriving from many different sources, often quoted in the text. For instance, the first chapter (which includes the lacuna) is based on the *Vulgata* with additions from Petrus Damianus and Pope Leo the Great, both mentioned by the compiler, and in ch. 2 the story of Marcellinus, based on a text like the *Legenda Aurea*, is supplied with commentary from the *Homiliae in Ezechielem* by Gregory the Great. Finally, part of the source material of the *Jóns saga postola* is also found in the *Tveggja postola saga Jóns ok Jakobs* (from now *JJ*) preserved in the *Codex Scardensis* (ca 1350-1375). In this highly compilatory work, also attributed to Bergr Sökkason, the lives of the two brothers are interweaved.

Starting from the internal references in the narrative, I will focus on some of the sources of the younger versions – in particular *Jón<sup>d</sup>* – and the parallels between different texts, in order to elucidate the authorial attitude to the sources and the editorial method.

One of the expansions in comparison with the Pseudo-Mellitus' *Vita* which is found in all 4 versions of *Jóns saga postola* and in *JJ*, is an independent anecdote about a young man who is converted by the apostle and entrusted to the care of a bishop. The episode, from Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* (III, 23, 8-20), is though placed differently in the narration. In the third version it is followed by another anecdote, about the apostle playing with a bird and his conversation with a hunter, from Cassianus' *Collationes* (XXIV, 21). This same anecdote is also found in the fourth version of the saga – though placed earlier in the narrative sequence, before the events in the temple of Diana – and in *JJ*.

Among the specifically named amplifications which are peculiar for the fourth version there is a comparison between John the Evangelist and John the Baptist. In ch. 21 of the saga the Lord appears to John to announce that his life will come to an end on the following Sunday. The compiler of the saga comments on this call with a reference to the *Rationale divinorum officiorum* by Guillaume Durand, which provides a theological explanation of the reason why the feast of John the Evangelist, who died on the feast day of John the Baptist (24<sup>th</sup> June), was moved to the 27<sup>th</sup> December:

Eru þessi græðarans orð með þeiri glósu, sem greinir su bok, er heitir Rationale Officiorum, at þessi upprisutið drottins var sa sunnudagr, er stendr octavo kalendas Julij. Þat bar saman i þessum argang, at a þann sunnudag stoð fæðingartið sæls Johannis baptiste, sem getið mun verða enn i oðrum stað. Merkilíkt er guðs sonar verk, at kalla þann tíð aurninn háfleygan upp i himin haleitrar dyrðar, sem kallaz aundvegi arsins ok solin gengr hæst i krafti sinum (Unger 1874: 492<sup>36</sup>-493<sup>3</sup>)

The explanation of this apparent contradiction is found in the Gospel: *Inter natos mulierum non surrexit maior Iohanne Baptista* (Matth. 11, 11). Although the material is quite elaborated and could be mediated through an intermediate text, it corresponds ultimately in content to what is found in the chapter of the *Rationale divinorum officiorum* about *De sanctis Stephano, Iohanne Evangelista et Innocentibus* (VII, 42, § 8 ff.).

The coincidence of the birthday of John the Baptist and the death day of John the Evangelist is interpreted within God's design for universal history, with a parallel between the symbolism of the eagle connected to John the Evangelist and the summer solstice, an image that can also be found in Durandus' description of the rites connected to the Feast of John the Baptist.

The internal reference *sem getið mun verða en i oðrum stað* refers to the reflections following the narration of the death of John the Evangelist (chs. 21-23), and is counterparted by the *incipit* of ch. 24:

Greint var fyrr, hvilikan andlatzdag hin hifneska forsia valdi virduligum Johanni postola upp a burdartið Johannis baptiste. Heðan leiðir þat maal, er stendr i nefndri bok Rationali Officiorum, at visdómismenn ok meistara gænguz á með greinum fylgis ok ritninga, hvárr þessarra tveggja guds ástvina væri meirr frumtignadr, eda hvárr vegia skilldi firir oðrum sakir hátiðarhalldz ok tíðagiorðar (Unger 1874: 495<sup>20-26</sup>)

This is one of many examples of cross-references, with which the text is interspersed, showing a full padronance of the subject matter and of the overwiewing structure on the part of the compiler. After the chapters about the death of the apostle, *Jón<sup>r</sup>* includes material from a series of sources which make the fourth version unique in the textual tradition of *Jóns saga postola*. Among others we find an apocryphal epistolary exchange between Ignatius of Anthioc and the Blessed Virgin Mary, concerning the apostle John. Ch. 38 of the saga contains additional material of Old Norse provenance, in the form of skaldic poetry on John by Nikulás, Gamli and Kolbeinn.



There are several parallels between *JJ* and *Jón<sup>4</sup>*, which support the common origin of the two texts. As an introductory passage to the section concerning John's death, in ch. 20 of *Jón<sup>4</sup>*, we find a quotation from Irenaeus, probably from a glossed version of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* (III, 18) (Collings 1969: 134). This passage, almost with the same wording, is also found in ch. 61 of *JJ*.

This is also the case in ch. 25, which quotes the testimony about John by Policrates, bishop in Efesus, from the *Historia Ecclesiastica* (V, 24, 1-3). The same passage with a similar wording – though including more details not directly concerning John – is found in ch. 82 of *JJ*.

Ch. 32 of *Jón<sup>4</sup>* contains an anecdote about St. Augustine and the composition of the *Tractatus in Johannis Evangelium*: while Augustine is walking on the seashore in meditation, he meets a boy who is trying to empty the sea pouring water with a spoon into a hole dug in the sand. When confronted with the impossibility of accomplishing the task, the boy explains that his task is not less impossible than the work Augustine intends to embark upon. Other versions of the same passage are found in *JJ* ch. 121 and the younger *Augustinus saga* in the *Reykjahólabók*, ch. 16, while the older *Augustinus saga* by abbot Runólfr doesn't include it. It is interesting to observe that in the *Reykjahólabók* the episode refers to Augustine's meditations about the Holy Trinity, which lead to the composition of the treaty *De trinitate*. This is actually in accordance with the traditional version of the anecdote, which is transmitted through medieval *exempla* and undoubtedly belongs to the traditional lore about Augustine, also found in the iconography devoted to the Saint. Compared to this tradition, the attribution to Augustinus' work about John in *Jón<sup>4</sup>* and *JJ* is peculiar. A closer look at the two versions of the passage in these two texts show that they constitute in both cases a separate chapter and have a very similar *incipit*, respectively: Heilagr Augustinus er hinn fiórði doctor heiminum; Augustinus byskup er hinn .iiii. doctor heilagrar kirkiu. In *Jón<sup>4</sup>* the story represents a shift in the narration, after a few chapters (26-31) devoted to events occurred under the emperor Theodosius that actually are concluded with *Amen*. In *JJ* the episode follows a connective paragraph where emphasis in the saga shifts from James to John, and is told *eptir goðra manna saugn* to elucidate the origin of Augustinus' work on the Gospel of John. Significantly, in both sagas the episode is followed by the story of the origin of the prayer *O intemerata*, devoted to the Virgin Mary and John the Evangelist, and also found in *Mariú saga* (Unger 1871: 1060). Towards the end of both texts (*Jón<sup>4</sup>* ch. 36 and *JJ* ch. 122) we find a miracle of John concerning King Edward the Confessor of England, which is borrowed from the *Játvarðar saga* in *Flateyjarbók* (Guðbrandur Vigfússon & Unger 1868: 464-465).

The concluding chapter of *Jón<sup>4</sup>* is typical for a commissioned work, aimed at meeting the needs of a specific Icelandic audience, which is referred to as *ver*, *er lifum nalegt undir norðanvert heimskautið*. Apart from this peculiar reference to the geographical distance from the places where the events narrated in the saga occurred, the relevant passages of this epilogue are also found in *JJ*, where the prayer for intercession is amplified to include James.

This brief survey lists only a few examples of the composite puzzle of sources which forms the different redactions of *Jóns saga postola*, each of which represents a new text subject to further revision. As we have seen, some passages and references that are included into the frame of narration of *Jón<sup>d</sup>* are also found in *JJ* or in other works, like fx *Mariu saga* or *Játvarðar saga*.

In my poster presentation I will focus on *Jón<sup>d</sup>* and try to map in a more systematic way the sources that are directly mentioned or otherwise can be identified in the narration, with reference to the other versions of *Jóns saga postola* and other texts where the same sources occur.

This will hopefully help to cast light on the process of transmission and development of the legend of St John in Old Norse, as a representative example of the process of creating new texts from pre-existing ones which is typical of medieval written culture.

In particular, the many source references in the highly compilatory *Jón<sup>d</sup>* and *JJ* bear witness of some of the literature which Bergr Sökkason and his *scriptorium* had at their disposal when embarking the task of producing an exhaustive work about the apostle John and about John and James respectively. Moreover, the different use of the same sources in each specific work shows a high competence in adapting the material to the task of the text to be produced.

In the light of the stylistic and palaeographic studies conducted by scholars like Hallberg, Stefán Karlsson and Johansson it is interesting to notice how the mutual relations in terms of parallel passages and use of common sources in *Jón<sup>d</sup>* and the related texts strengthen the idea of a group of texts associated with the productive literary milieu in northern Iceland in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

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## Memory at the Cemeteries of Przeworsk Culture

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The issue of memory and commemoration in Iron Age burial rites has recently found its complex definition in the works of Howard Williams (2003, 2006). My intention is to stress some of its most important aspects. I recognize those views as very important for further consideration included in this short text. The main axis of Williams' reasoning concerns burial rites understood as the means for commemorating the deceased and (re) creating memories about them. It is important to mention that the specific way of forgetting is also involved in this process. The whole burial rite involves a range of procedures in which the mourners decide what features of the dead should be remembered and which aspects of his personality, behavior or physical presence, should be forgotten, or just not included in the memory of a particular social group. There is also a significant aspect of material representation of all these features in burial rites and afterwards in the graves discovered, excavated and described by archeologists. Williams also discusses the important role of space and landscape in association with burial rites. Another important aspect connected with the problem of memory, also mentioned in works of Howard Williams, is the way of perceiving the past in prehistoric and early historic societies. This issue might be represented by the presence of Neolithic or Bronze Age graves discovered at cemeteries used by the societies of Pre-Roman and Roman times.

In this short paper I will try to discuss the possibility of applying the ideas of Howard Williams, in the studies on Iron Age cemeteries from the areas inhabited by members of the Przeworsk culture. My point is to show that some ideas, observed mainly on the basis of early medieval, Anglo-Saxon cemeteries may also be incorporated in the studies of Barbarian or Roman Europe.

The Przeworsk culture was first identified by archaeologists at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Along with the Wielbark culture, they create two main strands of cultural and geographical differentiation of Central Europe in the first centuries AD. According to most scholars, the beginnings of Przeworsk culture can be dated to the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC or the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. Its origin is strongly connected with the influences from the La Tène culture, coming from south-western Europe, and also with the areas of northern Germany and the southern part of Jutland, inhabited by the so-called Jastorf culture. The area settled by the members of the Przeworsk culture stretches between the river basins of Odra, Warta and Vistula and in the pre-Roman period it reached even as far as the river Bug. From the north it is separated from area of Pomerania by the line of rivers Noteć, Warta and Vistula, but it was crossed in both directions by the carriers of Przeworsk and also Wielbark culture. Some scholars are willing to connect the Przeworsk culture with the Celtic tribe called the Lugii in Pre-Roman period but in the Roman period its identified by some with the Germanic Vandals. It is important to mention at the present moment it seems impossible to attribute a

Slavic ethnicity to members of the Przeworsk culture. It is also important to stress that all attempts at attributing ethnic identities to archaeological cultures is a complicated matter and many scholars consider such approaches as ambiguous and controversial.

In discussing the sphere of burial rites of the Przeworsk culture, it is vital to note that cremation was the most common practice. Today, traces of cremation, may be observed in the majority of excavated graves. However, there is also some evidence of inhumations, albeit to a limited degree. In case of the cremation burials, the ashes of deceased were buried in ceramic urns or without them in ditches of various depth and width. Apart from ashes and pottery, we may recognize in the graves of Przeworsk culture a range of grave goods made of bronze, iron, glass, silver and bone. Those items are deposited in wide variety of configurations and every grave has a different set of features. Weaponry plays an important role in the burial rituals and spearheads, shield bosses or swords are common in the Przeworsk culture graves. It is characteristic, that these weapons are frequently intentionally destroyed (bent or broken). Sometimes swordscabbards and spurs are also excavated. Apart from weapons other grave goods comprise elements of costume, such as fibulas, strap ends, buckles or other accessories. Tools are also frequent, especially spindle whorls, needles or awls. Devices for personal hygiene like razors, combs and tweezers are also common in the Przeworsk culture graves. In a few cases the specific equipment of blacksmiths was also discovered. The quantity and quality of items found in the Przeworsk culture graves from the territory of Poland became the basis for interpretations about social differentiation in Pre-Roman and Roman Period.

Unfortunately we have rather limited evidence regarding the settlements of Przeworsk culture and the majority of information about these people comes from funerary contexts. In 2004 Andrzej Kokowski listed over 84 most important and well known cemeteries but we have to remember that the total number of cemeteries is a much larger. These cemeteries are varied with regards to the time during which they were used, the number of graves or the quality and quantity of grave goods. There are also different models for the development of space at these sites. Cemeteries of oval, round shape are known, but there are also two or three 'partial' cemeteries, where areas used for burials are separated by empty spaces with the absence of graves. Sometimes these sites are oriented along the north-south axis and sometimes along the east-west axis. Some selected features of those cemeteries are similar but in most there are all different and there is no general rule for their size, time of use or development, except the burial rite, which in general is mostly the same through the ages. Therefore, a question arises as to how the notion of memory and commemoration could be seen within the cemeteries of the Przeworsk culture? I will try to answer it by analyzing chosen sites where the details regarding the localization and the furnishing of graves is known. The first aspect that I have to mention is the notion of spatial development of subsequent parts of the cemeteries. It is difficult to understand why in the archaeological literature this issue has so far been perceived in a very straightforward way. The scholars often assume that the cemeteries were originally founded only in one, clustered part of a particular area and in the course of time, as the number of graves started to grow, they began to expand

in different directions. However, although some sites indeed developed in such a ‘linear’ way, there are also cemeteries where the oldest graves are discovered in different places within their area and where the oldest graves are in close proximity to graves from much younger times. In such instances, we find whole clusters of graves dated to different phases. The area of cemetery is determined by the oldest graves. Younger graves were located inside the area designated by the older burials (Ruszków, Rzęzawy in central Poland). Often the youngest graves from cemeteries are located not on the margins of the site but rather in its center.

This situation might be interpreted as a way of creating a link between the newly deceased and their (actual or assumed/imagined) relatives. If this was indeed the case, then perhaps this was the reason why some cemeteries developed in clustered areas and the graves were not spread towards the outside. Most importantly, in order to bury the dead in such close proximity to the older graves, the mourners had to know or remember who their ancestors were and where their graves were located. So in some cases memory about the deceased may have influenced the shape and way the cemeteries developed.

In some cemeteries (Ruszków, Rzęzawy) it is possible to find groups of graves localized close to each other where similar kinds of goods have been found. Often these are the graves including weaponry. This situation became a source for discussion about groups of warriors called *comitatus*, known from written sources. Although such an idea was criticized and rejected by some scholars, it is interesting the contexts of our discussion on the notion of ‘memory’. To create a group of graves with a similar equipment (assuming that it was intentional), which were not from the same time period, it is important to know, or in other words to remember, where within the cemetery graves with weapons were located, ergo who is buried there. In present times this may sound rather trivial, but probably it had a deeper meaning for societies with oral culture, where tradition and spiritual binding with ancestors played an important role.

Another aspect connected with the notion of ‘memory’ within the discussed cemeteries is their connection with earlier graves, sometimes even from the Neolithic period. In discussing this issue, the cemetery in Rzęzawy in Central Poland is a good example. It is important to mention that the western part of this site might have been destroyed by digging sand and building a windmill there. In the excavated part of cemetery there were 28 graves of Przeworsk culture. Their spatial location may be regarded as continuation of the cemetery of the Pomeranian culture (Early Iron Age, 7<sup>th</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC) located in western part of the site. Moreover in the central-northern part of excavated area a Neolithic grave is situated. Three Przeworsk culture graves were located in close proximity of it. In the central part of this cemetery there is an area where were no graves (this may also result from building works and sand digging). In the center of this area a grave with a range of weapons (e.g. two swords) was located.

This site in Rzęzawy is important also because it shows clear and explicit differences in the way of spatial development between Early Iron Age cemetery, where graves were separated from each other, and pre-Roman/Roman Period cemetery, where the

distances between graves was much shorter. It is also important to mention that graves with weapons were located in the southern part of the excavated area. Only one grave with military equipment was located in northern part of the site. Furthermore, it must be observed that this site is also good example of filling the space created by earlier graves by the new ones. All Roman Period graves at this site are located between two lines of Pre-Roman burials.

In this short article I tried to describe only a selected aspects visible at the cemeteries of Przeworsk culture which might be connected with the notion of ‘memory’. I discussed their non-linear and clustered chronological development and sought to find the explanation for such a practice. Moreover, I also examined some meanings that may have stood behind locating groups of graves with similar equipment within a clustered area. Some examples of connections with earlier cultures and societies have also been given. The works of Howard Williams were an inspiration for my considerations of these problems. However, it is necessary to highlight that I have used his approaches only to a limited degree. Williams’ approach is strongly connected with the analysis of the whole procedure and symbolism of the burial rites and in my paper I only focused on aspects of memory connected with space and the development and continuity of cemeteries. I am aware that this short paper may give rise to more questions. I believe that my complementary poster will be helpful in answering at least some of them.

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## Cross Monuments and the Christianization of Norway

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Norwegian cross-monuments dating to the late Viking Age and the Middle Ages vary greatly in size, type and shape. Equally diverse are the ways in which they are interpreted with regard to their chronology, function and relationship with cross-monuments elsewhere in Europe. It is, however, safe to assume that stone crosses and standing stones adorned with an ornamental cross are essentially Christian monuments and that they were commissioned by people or societal groups who identified themselves as Christians. Thus, it is likely these monuments only started to appear after Christianity was introduced in Norway. When and where this first happened are major questions that are not easily answered. Nevertheless, the assumption that many of the large stone crosses and cross-slabs found in the West Norwegian counties of Møre og Romsdal, Sogn og Fjordane, Hordaland and Rogaland are directly related to the religious transition and indicate where in Norway Christianity was first established has become a commonplace. In my poster presentation I would like to address whether cross-monuments are a suitable source to base theories regarding the Christianization of Norway on. Apart from focussing on how literary sources -in particular *Heimskringla*, Snorri Sturluson's compilation of the sagas of the kings of Norway composed shortly after 1230- have been used to interpret stone crosses, I will discuss the only texts that are directly related to the monuments: the runic inscriptions. In addition, folktales and legends may provide some insight in how stone monuments were perceived in the past. I would like to explore whether some of the stone crosses were associated with the Christianization, not because they were actually raised by missionaries or missionary kings, but rather because they memorialized events related to the Christian mission or the presence of the persons involved, in particular St Olav.

### Previous research

Published in 1973, *Norske steinkors i tidlig middelalder: et bidrag til belysning av overgangen fra norrøn religion til kristendom* by Fridtjov Birkeli, is still the most influential study on the stone crosses and upright cross-slabs of Western Norway. Birkeli developed an often-quoted model for the Christianization of Norway: several centuries of infiltration (up to c. 950) were followed by the missionary period (from c. 950 to 1030) and concluded by a period of continued missionary activity and the organization of the Church (c. 1030 to 1153).<sup>1</sup> Birkeli argues that the majority of the large crosses were raised during the missionary period, which largely coincides with the reigns of the Norwegian kings Håkon den gode (934-961), Olav Tryggvason (995-1000) and Olav Haraldsson (1015-1028). According to the medieval textual sources, Håkon den gode, who was brought up in England by King Athelstan, was Norway's first Christian ruler, although his attempts to Christianize the country are described as less successful than

those of his successors Olav Tryggvason and, in particular, Olav Haraldsson, who was to become Norway's most beloved saint. Even though Birkeli's study contains many valuable observations, his attempts to date certain crosses to the tenth century by connecting them to events described in the sagas of the kings are rather strained. For instance, the so-called 'Anglian' and 'Celtic' crosses in Eivindvik in Sogn og Fjordane are thought to testify to two different occasions when Håkon den gode and Olav Tryggvason made decisions regarding the conversion of Norway at the assembly place known as Gulating, which may have been located in Eivindvik.<sup>2</sup> However, none of the extant Norwegian crosses and cross-slabs can with certainty be dated before the year 1000 and the cross-shapes they display were used over such a long time-period and wide geographical region that it is difficult to determine their origin.

### Runic inscriptions on stone crosses and cross-slabs

Apart from giving us a direct explanation of the function of the monument, runic inscriptions often provide a more solid basis for dating than stylistic or morphological analysis, particularly when dealing with objects as plain as the majority of the Norwegian cross-monuments. Four upright slabs displaying both a runic inscription and an ornamental cross have been handed down to us.<sup>3</sup> Only two free-standing crosses with runic inscriptions have been completely preserved, whereas two lost runic crosses, one of which only fragments remain, are known from seventeenth-century documents.<sup>4</sup> From the inscriptions on these eight monuments, most of which are dated to the first half of the eleventh century, it can be gathered they were erected in memory of a deceased person. One of the cross-slabs, the famous Kuli stone from Møre og Romsdal, does not only commemorate a person, but also the arrival of Christianity in Norway, as its inscription states: "Þórir and Hallvarðr raised this stone in memory of Ulfrjótr ... Twelve winters had Christianity been in Norway ...". The Kuli stone is the only Norwegian cross-monument that unequivocally refers to the Christianization process, although there has been much debate as to what historical moment it memorializes. Based on dendrochronological analysis of the remains of a nearby bridge, which must have been constructed after 1034, it is believed to point to the assembly at Moster in Hordaland in c. 1024 when Olav Haraldsson proclaimed Christianity the official religion of Norway.<sup>5</sup> The inscription, however, does not mention any bridge, nor does it necessarily have to refer to an occurrence recorded in the sagas. A free-standing cross from Stavanger can with more certainty be tied to events described in the kings' sagas. Its runic inscription states: "<alf--ir> the priest raised this stone in memory of his lord Erlingr ... when he fought with Óleift." The persons named in the inscription can be identified as Erling Skjalgsson and Olav Haraldsson. Erling Skjalgsson was a powerful Christian chieftain from Sola in Rogaland, who was defeated by Olav's army in the year 1028. Based on the linguistic evidence, the cross could date from around 1030.<sup>6</sup> The Stavanger cross is the only cross-monument that makes reference to Olav, although hardly as a king or a saint, but rather as the one responsible for the death of the commemorated person.



## Commemorating St Olaf

After his death at the Battle of Stiklestad in 1030, Olav Haraldsson's body was transported to Nidaros, where his miraculous shrine soon attracted pilgrims, whose numbers increased during the twelfth century. Many Norwegian landmarks, such as crosses and springs, were associated with St Olav and his cult. Whether Olav Haraldsson erected any crosses himself during his lifetime, is doubtful, although Snorri Sturluson tells how the king arrived by ship at a sandbank named Sylte in the West Norwegian district of Sunnmøre. There Olav set up his land-tent and had a cross erected. The next day he continued his journey by foot. After a while Olav rested at a spot known as Krossbrekka. The place where he sat down was marked with two crosses.<sup>7</sup> A letter by Bishop Eystein of Oslo, dated 18 February 1394, indicates that as late as the fourteenth century crosses were raised as memorials to St Olav's presence at a certain site in the past.<sup>8</sup> Bishop Eystein writes how he during a visit to Vinger, a district in the present-day county of Hedmark, met four old men who remembered that in their youth a large cross had been standing by the church of Eidskog. The cross apparently marked the place where St Olav had rested, but had disappeared. Upon hearing this, Bishop Eystein promptly ordered the re-erection of the cross and additionally had a small prayer house built for pilgrims.<sup>9</sup> The relationship between St Olav, pilgrimage and crosses can also be observed in the travel notes of Bishop Jens Nilsson of Oslo and Hamar. On the 7<sup>th</sup> of September 1594 the Bishop encountered several crosses standing on a heap of stones by Kjølveien, the road leading from Gran to Teterud in the county of Oppland.<sup>10</sup> The highest point of this road is still known as Høikorset ('High cross'), which might indicate that this is the place where the crosses, now lost, had been standing. Kjølveien was part of the pilgrimage route to Nidaros and travellers may have rested and prayed by the crosses.

Crosses associated with missionary saints are also found in other parts of Europe. In Germany, for instance, many legends and folktales surrounding crosses allude to St Boniface, who was active in the Frankish Empire during the eight century. The functions attributed to these crosses are similar to the ones often assumed for the large Norwegian crosses: they were supposedly erected in places where missionaries preached, performed baptisms and celebrated mass before churches were built. Other options are mentioned as well: after his violent death in Dokkum in 754, Boniface's body was brought to the monastery of Fulda. Wherever the funeral procession rested overnight, a stone cross was raised.<sup>11</sup> None of the extant German stone crosses can convincingly be dated to the eight century, but they might have been erected at a later stage to commemorate St Boniface's mission or the transport of his body. Another possibility is that these stories became attached to existing crosses that were raised for other reasons. In Norway, a legend is recorded that mentions how the body of the aforementioned chieftain Erling Skjalgsson was transported over land to his farm estate in Sola. Nine still extant standing stones on six different estates were thought to mark the resting places during transport. However, archaeological research has demonstrated that at least several of these stones were originally part of funerary structures dating back to the Migration Period.<sup>12</sup> These legends explain the occurrence of monuments by connecting them to known historical persons

or events and can, of course, not be used to determine the age or primary function of the monuments in question. They do, however, offer us a glimpse of how monuments were perceived and used in the past.

Also in modern times the presence of St Olav and events related to the Christianization of Norway are commemorated by (re-)erecting crosses. For instance, in 1923 a roughly-cut cross from Voss in Hordaland, which was first documented in 1626 and may date back to the Middle Ages, was renovated and moved to its present location on an artificial mound in the centre of town. The occasion was the 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Olav's missionary visit to Voss, which was described by Snorri, although the Icelandic author does not mention any crosses were raised at the time.<sup>13</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Birkeli 1973, 14.

<sup>2</sup> Birkeli 1973, 178-190

<sup>3</sup> These are the rune-stones from Kuli, Edøy, Møre og Romsdal (N449); Vang, Valdres, Oppland (N84); Grindheim, Etne, Hordaland (N273) and Njærheim II, Nærbø, Rogaland (N224). Numbers refer to Olsen 1941-1960.

<sup>4</sup> Completely preserved are the crosses from Svanøy, Sogn og Fjordane (N449) and Stavanger III, Rogaland (N252). The lost crosses from Sele, Rogaland (N237) and Njærheim I, Nærbø, Rogaland (N223) are depicted in the manuscript A.M. 368 fol. dated to c. 1639 (published in Moltke 1956).

<sup>5</sup> Spurkland 2005, 108-111.

<sup>6</sup> Spurkland 2005, 114.

<sup>7</sup> Snorri Sturluson 2005, 376-377 (*Olav den helliges saga* 178-179).

<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the letter indicates that large crosses also existed in Eastern Norway during the Middle Ages, although no such monuments survive in this part of the country.

<sup>9</sup> *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* I, vol. 2, No. 545 (1849, 396).

<sup>10</sup> Nilsson 1885, 287 (and note by Nielsen in Nillsøn 1885, 287).

<sup>11</sup> Brockpähler 1963, 145-146.

<sup>12</sup> Myhre 2005, 3-5.

<sup>13</sup> Snorri Sturluson 2005, 307 (*Olav den helliges saga* 121).

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## Fixed Expressions, Variation and Change in Old Icelandic Diplomas

Ellert Þór Jóhannsson, Københavns Universitet, Denmark

This poster presentation will focus on issues relating to the structure of Old Icelandic diplomas and fixed and formulaic expressions often found in such documents.

After having outlined the basic structural components of diplomas (cf. Hamre 1972:29) we will proceed to look closer at specific parts that tend to be formulaic, such as the *Salutatio*, which refers to the greeting part of a document's introduction and the *Corroboratio*, which refers to the part of a document where the actor declares the intent of corroborating the text with insignia.

The starting point will be Icelandic original diplomas before 1450 as presented by Stefán Karlsson (1963). We will look at how the wording of structural components changes with time, what parts of the formulaic expressions are completely fixed and what variation is allowed. Attempts will be made to account for some of the variation as a conscious stylistic effect.

We will also look at linguistic change and how it is reflected in the text of the diplomas. There seem to be indications that formulaic parts of the documents are slower to reflect linguistic change than the parts that allow more freely composed text. This will be examined in some detail, especially with regard to choice of verb endings.

The Old Icelandic material will also be compared to Old Norwegian diplomatic material from around the same time as well as Old Swedish diplomas.

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## Power, Praise and Posterity – Oral Narratives of Naming in Viking Age Scandinavia

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Viking Age Scandinavian society was an oral one and most of its spoken history is therefore irretrievable. Since the use of language in a culture discloses essential information regarding that society's views and beliefs it is essential that we study the few existing literary products from Scandinavia that *do* indicate an origin in Viking Age orality, such as Eddic poetry, Skaldic verse and Runic Inscriptions, in order to salvage what cultural information we can from the remnants of actual communication practices.

The conference poster represents key elements in onomastic research on material from these three genres with the purpose of investigating the use of the personal name in oral texts specifically. It draws together the various threads of an investigation which focuses on the central position that the name occupies within the oral corpus and on what this centrality implies in terms of the social, political and cultural systems of Viking Age Scandinavia.

Discussions surrounding name-magic, flyting, bynames, propaganda and memory form some of the key elements of the research which posits that the personal name is one of the most versatile and significant word-types in the Old-Norse language and that its uses extend from its pragmatic ability to mark an object as one's own, to its perceived supernatural ability to empower spells.

## Editing *Þorsteins saga bæjarmagns*

Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir (University of Iceland, Iceland) and the Master Class of the Arnamagnean Summer School in Manuscript Studies 2008, Iceland

This poster presents the ongoing edition of *Þorsteins saga bæjarmagns*. An overview is given of the manuscript witnesses to the text and their relation and the editorial decisions made in the course of the editing process are presented and discussed. *Þorsteins saga bæjarmagns* is a short late-medieval text that describes the adventures and travels of Þorsteinn bæjarmagn. The saga is preserved in 54 manuscripts, the oldest of which date back to the fifteenth century. At present only two editions of the text exist, neither of which can be classified as a critical edition that can be used for scholarly purposes. The edition currently being prepared is a best-text edition with the text found in AM 589 4to as its base text. The AM 589 4to text of *Þorsteins saga bæjarmagns* has been selected because it has not previously been edited and the text is complete without lacunae. The base text will be printed in a strictly diplomatic transcription. The variation found in the manuscripts dated to the seventeenth century and earlier is not significant enough to classify the texts as separate redactions. The manuscript variation is thus well suited to being represented in a critical apparatus as opposed to a parallel edition. The critical apparatus will contain variants from the ca. 10 manuscripts that were copied until about 1700 and have been assigned to the upper levels of the stemma.

# Prose Contexts of Eddic Poetry: *Snorra Edda* and the *fornaldarsögur*

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## I. The Poster (*Grímnismál* and *Ketils saga hængs*) and Preprint (*Grímnismál*)

My poster will display two case studies from my work on the eddic prosimetra of *Gylfaginning* from *Snorra Edda* and on the *fornaldarsögur* that contain eddic verse. The first focuses on the quotation of the eddic poem *Grímnismál* in *Gylfaginning*, arguing that there is a deliberate pattern of when the quoted poem is named in the prose of *Gylfaginning*; this shows that the verses were felt to have a certain order and were to be recognised in that order. The second looks at the marking of verses in the manuscript layout of *Ketils saga hængs* as possible indicators of the process of the transition of these sagas into their written form. In the preprint, I focus on elaborating my case study of *Grímnismál*.

## II. Introduction

This preprint presents a brief intertextual study of the quotation of the eddic poem *Grímnismál* in *Gylfaginning*, the first part of *Snorra Edda*, a thirteenth century *Ars Poetica* that describes Old Norse mythology in a more or less homogenous prose account built around excerpted stanzas of eddic poetry. The majority of the eddic poems that *Gylfaginning* draws upon are also found in the *Poetic Edda*. Most commonly, an eddic stanza in *Gylfaginning* is quoted as evidence for something stated in the prose. Deviations from this pattern differ slightly between manuscripts, particularly in manuscript U, which is abbreviated in comparison to manuscripts RTW.

Reference is made here to five manuscripts. Four are the manuscripts of *Snorra Edda* held to have independent textual value:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| R | Codex Regius ( <i>Snorra Edda</i> ), GkS 2367 4to, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, Reykjavík |
| T | Codex Trajectinus, University Library Utrecht MS No. 1374                              |
| W | Codex Wormianus, AM 242 fol. Det Arnemagnæanske Institut, Copenhagen                   |
| U | Codex Upsaliensis, DG 11 Uppsala University Library                                    |

The fifth is the *Poetic Edda* manuscript, a collection of eddic poems: Codex Regius (*Poetic Edda*), GkS 2365 4to, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, Reykjavík. This manuscript contains a coherent version of *Grímnismál*. Stanza numbers of the *Poetic Edda* refer to the edition of Neckel & Kuhn 1962.

### III. Naming Quoted Poems in *Gylfaginning*

Manuscripts RTW have 71 stanzas embedded into their prose, two of which are skaldic (see Lindow 1977) and 69 in eddic metres. Manuscript U has substantially fewer, with 61 stanzas in total. Of the ten verses in RTW that do not appear in U, one is skaldic (a stanza from *Ragnarsdrápa*, the first stanza that RTW quote) but the rest eddic: two non-consecutive verses of *Vafþrúðnismál* (stanzas 30 and 18), *Skírnismál* stanza 42, and stanzas 50-53 and 55-56 of *Völuspá*. U does not have any additional stanzas in comparison to RTW, but there are variations, usually minor, between the verses as they appear in the four manuscripts.

Eight eddic poems that are known from sources other than *Snorra Edda* are quoted in *Gylfaginning*: *Hávamál* (1 stanza in RTWU), *Völuspá* (28 stanzas in RTW, 22 in U), *Völuspá hinn skamma* (so-called in *Snorra Edda*, where there is one stanza in RTWU, also known as *Hyndluljóð* elsewhere), *Vafþrúðnismál* (9 stanzas in RTW and 7 in U), *Grímnismál* (20 stanzas in RTWU), *Fáfnismál* (1 stanza in RTWU), *Lokasenna* (1 stanza in RTWU), and *Skírnismál* (1 stanza in RTW, not in U). There is also one eddic stanza of *Heimdallargaldr* (named thus in *Snorra Edda* but not known from elsewhere), and all four manuscripts quote five stanzas that are from unnamed and unidentifiable poems.

The majority of stanzas introduced into the prose have an introductory phrase, and sometimes this includes the name of the poem. This indicates firstly that the compilers of the manuscripts had relationships with the poem in which it was some kind of self-contained named entity, and secondly, that presumably the compiler intended or assumed that the name of the poem would mean something to whoever was reading *Gylfaginning*. Having said that, lack of a name does not necessarily imply the reverse of this or that the poem did not have a name. Indeed, not all stanzas quoted in *Gylfaginning* have such an introductory phrase, because a number of blocks of stanzas are also included. The way the poems are named in the prose of *Gylfaginning* is inconsistent: a stanza may be named as coming from a particular poem in one place, but other quotations from the same source may be anonymous.



#### IV. Naming *Grímnismál* in the Prose of *Gylfaginning*

Although *Völuspá* is named a comparatively high number of times in RTW, *Grímnismál* is rarely named, despite being drawn upon for a large number of evidence stanzas. In RTW, *Grímnismál* stanzas are introduced sixteen times but the poem named just once. U is very similar; *Grímnismál* is introduced fifteen times and only named twice.<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to say what this implies about the audience's anticipated knowledge of *Grímnismál*: as a long poem in its own right, or whether perhaps certain stanzas were less popular than others and thus less readily identified. The stanzas that are named (*Poetic Edda* stanzas 24, 36 and 23) are from different parts of the poem and there seems no reason why these stanzas should be any less well-known than those which are not named.

The named *Grímnismál* stanzas are fairly spread out through the prose, and this could be one explanatory factor for their being named: the unnamed *Grímnismál* stanzas either tend to form blocks or, when single stanzas are quoted, still run on from each other sequentially. For example, although *Grímnismál* stanzas 18, 19 and 20 are unnamed and not quoted as a block in the narrative, they do follow on from each other, although with prose pieces between. The stanza quoted after stanza 20 is *Grímnismál* 23, which is named. Perhaps it is the close proximity of stanzas that would help the intended audience to identify a poem. When the narrative stream is broken, by jumping from stanzas 20 to 23, an aid is given to identification by providing the poem's name. The same is true of the context of *Grímnismál* 24, which is a named, lone stanza after a block of *Grímnismál* stanzas 46, 47 and a conflation of 48, 49, 50 and 54. Close by are *Grímnismál* stanzas 12, 11, 14, 13 and 15; although they do not form a block, they are more or less consecutive with prose between them (two otherwise unknown stanzas used as dialogue separate stanza 12 from stanzas 11, 14 and 13, and the *Heimdallargaldr* quotation is between *Grímnismál* 13 and 15). After two more dialogue stanzas, *Grímnismál* 36 is then named. This stanza is likewise out on a limb, coming from a completely different part of the *Poetic Edda* poem than its neighbours *Grímnismál* 18, 19 and 20, from which it is separated by a stanza of *Skirnismál*. This consistent pattern of when a stanza of *Grímnismál* is named indicates that sections of a poem, typically three stanzas consecutively even if they have prose in between them, is enough to make the poem from which they come recognisable, and it is only single stanzas that may be unexpected – that come from a very different part of the poem – that need signposting. This also seems to indicate that the stanzas or units of stanzas from *Grímnismál*, in the version of the poem known to Snorri, formed some kind of fixed sequence that was not too far away from the order of stanzas in the *Poetic Edda Grímnismál*. This suggests that the poem was at a remove from the stage of oral transmission in which stanza order could vary,<sup>2</sup> as is usually thought to be the reason behind the variation in stanza order between the Hauksbók and *Poetic Edda* versions of *Völuspá* (see Mundal 2008).

## V. Blocks of Stanzas from *Grímnismál* in *Gylfaginning*

In the case of the poem *Grímnismál* above, whether the stanzas form blocks or the proximity of the quoted stanzas to each other can have an effect on whether the poem is named or not. The introduction of a number of blocks of verses into the *Gylfaginning* narrative allows a direct comparison of the order of verses to that found in the *Poetic Edda* and also to assess the role that blocks play in building the *Gylfaginning* narrative. A ‘block’ of verse is defined as several stanzas from the same poem (either identified as such by the *Gylfaginning* prose narrative through introductory phrases or as identified in the *Poetic Edda*), quoted consecutively in *Gylfaginning* and not substantially split by prose (more than one line, for example). There are nine blocks of eddic verse in *Gylfaginning*, five from *Völuspá*, three from *Grímnismál*, plus one from *Vafþrúðnismál* in RTW that does not form a block in U.

The first *Grímnismál* block is of two uninterrupted stanzas, *Poetic Edda* stanzas 40 and 41, which both function as standard evidence stanzas in the narrative. The second *Grímnismál* block is also of two stanzas separated by a short line of prose: “Svá er sagt” (RT); “Svá er enn sagt” (W), “Ok enn segir hér svá” (U). This introductory phrase for the second stanza is perhaps necessary because the *Poetic Edda Grímnismál* stanzas 34 and 35 are quoted in *Gylfaginning* in reverse order. The stanzas of *Grímnismál* are virtually identical to the *Poetic Edda* order in blocks, and even when separated by narrative prose they generally run in the same order as in the *Poetic Edda*. The second prose introductory phrase in *Gylfaginning* thus simply serves as recognition that the stanzas are quoted ‘out of order’ and that stanza 34, although placed after stanza 35, adds additional information.

The third *Grímnismál* block consists of three stanzas, *Poetic Edda* stanzas 46 and 47 and a third containing parts of stanzas 48, 49, 50 and 54. In RTW, the block is used in an unusual way: it is clearly introduced as quotation coming from elsewhere but is not used as an evidence stanza: “ok enn hefir hann nefnz á fleiri vega þó er hann var kominn til Geirröðar konungs.” The quoted stanzas that follow almost function as dialogue as Óðinn speaks in the first person. From the point of view of maintaining good control over the narratorial delivery of the story, it is understandable that more first person verse is not included, since it introduces yet another narrator in the already complex scenario of narration in *Gylfaginning*, something avoided when standard evidence verses do not mention an additional speaker. In U, however, these *Gylfaginning* stanzas are quotations in contrast to how U usually differs to the other manuscripts in terms of introductory contexts. In the other cases, U omits an introductory phrase altogether, leaving open the possibility of the quoted verses instead functioning as dialogue rather than as evidence stanzas (see the quotations of *Vafþrúðnismál Poetic Edda* stanza 35, *Grímnismál Poetic Edda* stanza 15, *Vafþrúðnismál Poetic Edda* stanzas 51, 45 and 47).

To conclude, the quotation of stanzas in *Gylfaginning* is deliberate, and should be considered as part of the rhetorical strategy of the text.

<sup>1</sup> *Grimnismál* stanza 15 in U is embedded in the prose without the use of an introductory phrase, and as such simply runs on from the prose as part of the narrative sequence rather than providing evidence.

<sup>2</sup> Lindblad (1980) suggests that Snorri had access to written versions of eddic poems, in which case *Snorra Edda* was not the first stage in the transition of Norse mythological material between orality and the written record.

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# Dreams in Old Norse-Icelandic Royal Biographies as Representations of the Dynastic Identity: The Case of the Fairhair Dynasty

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## 1: Two Kinds of Dreams as Representations of the Dynastic Identity of the Fairhair Dynasty

Two Old Norse royal biographies (Kings' Sagas), *Fsk.* and *Hkr.*, relate a well-known prophetic dream concerning the rise of the medieval Norwegian Dynasty. The accounts share the same basic outline: King Hálfðan dreams one day, in a pigsty, that he becomes a man with the finest hair, although the color and length of each ringlet vary. One curl excels in color, brightness and length, signifying St. Olaf, national saint of Norway. A wise man interprets this dream for the king: Hálfðan will have many offspring, and they will rule Norway with great honor, although one will be crowned with more glory than the others (ÍF XXIX: 57f.; ÍF XXVI: 90f.). The purpose of the dream is clear: to qualify the paternal offspring of King Hálfðan the Black (and those of King Harald Fairhair, the only son of Hálfðan and legendary founder of a united Norwegian kingdom) as legitimate future kings of Norway. The ringlets represent the dynastic identity of those related to Harald and Hálfðan. Snorri Sturluson also incorporated a different dream to (seemingly) reinforce the ideology of the Fairhair dynasty in his *Hkr.* narrative. In the dream, Queen Ragnhild, mother of Harald and wife of Hálfðan, takes a thorn from her garment and holds it in her hand; the thorn gradually grows into a tall, stout tree, whose crown covers the whole land of Norway and further. Three different colors distinguish its trunk: the lowest part is red as blood, the upper part is bright green, and the twigs of the crown are snow-white (ÍF XXVI: 90). According to *Hkr.*, this dream signifies the fate of Harald and his progeny: the red part of the trunk anticipates his deeds as an excellent warrior, the bright green symbolizes prosperity in his kingdom, the white twigs in the crown mean his long reign, and the wide expanse of the crown anticipates the flourishing of his descendants (ÍF XXVI: 148).

Recent historical researches have begun to challenge this traditional view of King Harald Fairhair as a historical founder both of a unified kingdom and of ruling family in Norway (cf. Krag 1989). Instead, they tend to underline the late development of the tradition. While this new scholarship believes the identity of Fairhair's dynasty to be fictive, however, few researchers have explored the political-ideological motive behind the development of the tradition. Furthermore, although some scholars have considered the dream motif in Old Norse literature (Cf. Turville-Petre 1958), few have analyzed its symbolical, political-ideological meaning. The question I would like to explore is whether these two dreams express the 'same' ideological concept of the Fairhair dynasty. Indeed, previous researchers have often muddled them up, and sometimes tried to ascribe both of dreams' concepts to Snorri (Cf. Røthe 2008: 125-30). But it is the earlier tradition, that also appeared in *Fsk.*, not Snorri, which originally employed the ringlets

dream – in order to promote the fame of St. Olaf. The incorporation of the dream into *Hkr.*'s narrative seems to suggest that Snorri was not hostile to such a typological-hagiological view of Norwegian history (Weber 1987), but attention should also be directed to the other dream. *Hkr.* diverges from *Fsk.* by inserting the analogy of the tree instead than of the ringlets into the dynastic historical narrative.

## 2: Two Dreams of Trees Anticipating Two Haralds in *Heimskringla*

Snorri employed the motif of the tree dream not once, but twice in his narrative in *Hkr.* The other dreamer is King Sigurd 'the Jerusalem-Traveller' Magnússon. One day, at Jæren in southwestern Norway, he dreamed that a tall tree, though rooted in the ocean, was approaching the shore. When the tree landed, it broke into pieces of diverse sizes, and drifted along the coast of Norway. The episode concludes with the king's interpretation: 'The dream anticipated that a certain person would arrive and settle in Norway. His descendants are also to be scattered over Norway, although all of them would not be equally great' (ÍF XXVIII: 264f.). According to the commentary, the person anticipated in the dream was the illegitimate Harald Gille, half-brother of King Sigurd himself.

Almost the same account appears in the extant manuscript of one more ON royal biography, *Msk.* (ÍF XXXIV: 146f.). The two dreams are clearly interrelated. First, both anticipate the arrival of two namesake monarchs, i.e. Harald, to Norway – men who later became important figures in Norwegian history. Unfortunately, the textual relationship between the manuscripts of these three royal biographies, *Msk.*, *Fsk.*, and *Hkr.*, is so intricate that we cannot speculate on which of these two tree dreams is older, and so original (Cf. Turville-Petre 1958: 93; Louis-Jensen 1977: 70-108). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that *Hkr.* is the only work that contains two tree dreams. Hence, it is reasonable to assume that *Hkr.* represents the tradition of these two dreams: the best as well as the closest to the original.

Alternatively, it could be argued that Snorri himself combined these two dreams, inventing and adjusting one episode to accord with the other. Then, it is likely that the purpose of duplication was to compare the newer figure of Harald Gille as an antitype of the older Harald Fairhair, based on a Christian typological perspective. Snorri certainly knew the concept of such a Christian typology (Weber 1987: 109-15), as the comment on the ringlets dream in the previous section suggests.. If we accept this suggestion, the purpose of inventing the older Harald's dream was to promote the legitimacy of the newer Harald, i.e. Harald Gille.

### 3: Dynastic Image Defined by Two Haralds: Harald Fairhair and Harald Gille

The arrival of Harald Gille and the death of his brother, Sigurd (1130), triggered a new era – the ‘Civil War’ period in medieval Norway, which lasted until 1240. Several royal claimants, including some with dubious legitimacy, competed for the throne of Norway. Researchers have traditionally assumed that the lack of the rules governing royal succession, and above all, the loose definition of eligibility for kingship, was behind the conflicts (Jochens 1987: 240; Sigurðsson 2008: 24). Harald Gille was first of a series of candidates, all claiming royal descent but on less certain grounds. And, born away from Norway, their paternity was not self-evident.

Under these circumstances, royal claimants turned to literary works to reinforce their legitimacy. In this context, the legendary figure of Harald Fairhair must have constituted a dynastic anchor: being the offspring of a remote ancestor could at least to some extent compensate for the lack of a direct line of paternal succession.

The introduction of the second tree dream in *Hkr.*, anticipating the arrival of Harald Gille, is arguably one such effort to re-define the dynastic identity at that time. Descent from Harald Fairhair was not enough: to be king of Norway, you needed to be offspring of another Harald, i.e. Harald Gille. In contemporary Denmark, several hagiographies were written for promoting the fame of murdered royal saints, in order to qualify a related offshoot of the dynasty as a more suitable candidate for the throne over other royal members (Hoffmann 1975: 58-89). In Norway, the Cult of St. Olaf has often been regarded as a variant of such a royal cult. Yet, few researchers have noted that Harald Gille was likewise assassinated by his political rival, and is mentioned as a saint by both *Hkr.* and *Msk.* (ÍF XXIV: 177; ÍF XXVIII: 303; Cf. Haki Antonsson 2007: 164-66). I suggest that the account in *Hkr.* served a similar political-ideological function, and exploited the tradition of an underdeveloped cult of the assassinated Harald Gille as a literary tool to favor certain royal claimants who were related to him.

### 4: Snorri Sturluson and the Birkebeins

This additional qualification for royal succession helped legitimize one major political faction during the ‘Civil War’ period. As the struggles went on, diverse personal alliances gradually converged on two political factions: King Sverri and his successors, and the anti-Birkebeins.

It is important to note the differences between the genealogies of the rulers of each faction. While all the kings representing the Birkebeins, such as King Sverri, were descendants of Harald Gille, most of the ‘opponent-kings’ belonged to the branch of King Sigurd ‘the Jerusalem-Traveller’, his half-brother. This meant that it was only the rulers of the Birkebeins who were the offspring of two Haralds. Emphasizing the

relationship with Harald Gille supported the Birkebeins' claim to be legitimate rulers of Norway. It also served as a polemic against the anti-Birkebeins, excluding them from the stock of eligible candidates.

Snorri's life and work were also entwined with this political and cultural atmosphere. As Guðrún Norðal stresses, Snorri's Norwegian connection is a key to understanding the historical context of his literary activity (Norðal 2006). He needed to find a cultural and political supporter abroad, in order to gain ascendancy over other Icelandic chieftains taking part in the ongoing power struggle in thirteenth-century Iceland. His cultural talents, such as the art of skaldic eulogy and historical writing, were useful for currying favor with patrons. In fact, the medieval numeration of skaldic poets, *Skáldatal*, mentions Snorri as a skald serving five rulers of Norway. It is worth remarking that all of these rulers belonged to the Birkebeins. This political orientation corresponds markedly with the re-defined representation of the Fairhair Dynasty in *Hkr.*, as demonstrated above.

## 5: Concluding Remarks

Our observations have so far illustrated the diversity of the concept of the Fairhair Dynasty as a political-ideological agenda in Old Norse royal biographies, focusing on *Hkr.*'s special position among them. Above all, *Hkr.*'s definition of dynastic identity, represented by the two tree dreams, explicitly diverges from another contemporary work, *Fsk.*, with regard to the favor attributed to the offspring of the two Haralds whose arrival the dreams anticipated. In the light of the royal struggles of the Civil War era, the ideological message of these two dreams must have pleased certain rulers of the Birkebeins, whose support Snorri eagerly sought. The historical traditions of Harald Fairhair and his dynasty developed in twelfth- and thirteenth century Iceland, not as isolated, purely literary fictions, but as political agendas, entwined with the political and ideological power struggles in contemporary Norway. And this presentation has illuminated one aspect of *Hkr.* that has often been overlooked: Snorri did not merely follow the existing discourses of the Fairhair Dynasty, but actively manipulated them to conform to the contemporary political milieu. While the political bias of other works has been relatively well-known, we should now reassess *Hkr.*, analyzing this compilation of royal biographies more carefully and closely, as a unity with a certain historical point of view.

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## *Heimskringla* in Italian

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In spite of a growing interest of the Italian public in Scandinavian literature and a considerable number of translations of *Islendingasögur* and *Fornmannasögur*, Old Norse literature concerning historiography has never been translated into Italian. A group of Italian scholars has undertaken the task of translating Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla*, which they believe would be of great interest both for specialists of Medieval history, language and philology, and for a wider public, including students. This translation will give Italian scholars who are not confident with Old Norse the opportunity to access an important source of Scandinavian Medieval history, covering, among other things, the fundamental event of the conversion to Christianity and its implications for Scandinavian relations with the rest of Europe and the Roman Church.

In order to facilitate the comparison with the original, the translation will be based on the normalized edition in the *Íslensk fornrit* series vols. 26-28, since this text is easily available and accessible also to students.

The main editor of the project, Maria Cristina Lombardi, and the co-editors, Simonetta Battista and Giovanna Salvucci, would like to present a poster illustrating the aim of the translation, the criteria adopted, the target public, the working plan and the problems involved in translating such a work into a Romance language. The Saga Conference will be the ideal forum for exchanging experience with scholars who have been dealing with similar projects.

## Islandske middelalderhåndskrifter og norrøn kulturhistorie – samarbejdsprojekt i fire lande om oplysningssiden Handritin heima / Islandske håndskrifter (www.handritinheima.is)

Soffia Guðný Guðmundsdóttir and Laufey Guðnadóttir, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í  
íslenskum fræðum and Námsgagnastofnun, Iceland

*Handritin heima* (Islandske håndskrifter) er en oplysningsside til formidling af kendskabet til islandske middelalderhåndskrifter, deres tilblivelse, indhold, bevaring samt deres rolle og funktion i norrøn forsknings- og kulturhistorie frem til idag. Oversættelser til tysk, svensk og dansk er en del af et samarbejdsprojekt mellem sidens forfattere og institutter og universiteter i alle landene. Projektet fik et bidrag fra Nordisk Kulturfond i 2010 samt flere andre fra de forskellige deltagerlande.

I den første del, 'Handritið', beskrives bogfremstillingshåndværket i middelalderen, fx tilberedelse af skind, penne og blæk. Derudover er der en indføring i læsning af håndskrifter og en oversigt over de vigtigste hovedpunkter af skriftens udvikling. Der fortælles om skriverne og deres arbejdsforhold og -metoder. Endvidere beskrives håndskrifternes illuminationer, herunder marginal-billeder, og deres stilhistorie. Endelig oplyses der om håndskrifternes bevaring og kildeværdi, både, hvad angår indhold, og det vidnesbyrd de giver om håndværk og kulturtilstanden i middelalderen.

'Sagan' handler om „håndskriftshistorie“ og tidligere tiders bogkultur. Denne del indeholder bl.a. afsnit om den tidligste bogproduktion, historieformidling, litteratur og videnskab for at belyse den islandske skriftkultur fra flere forskellige sider. Ændringer inden for håndværk og boglig dannelse i slutningen af 1300tallet gennemgås, ligesom bogtrykkets og papirets indførelse, de senere århundreders afskriftstradition og interessen for oldtiden i 1500 og 1600tallet. Håndskrifternes indhold og de ydre sammenhænge, de indgik i tillige med tanker om bøger og litteraturens samfundsmæssige vigtighed før og nu, fremdrages, og endelig berøres håndskrifternes receptionshistorie.

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'Sagenhaftes Island' på bogmessen i Frankfurt 2011.

## Anglo-Danish Contacts c. 950-1100

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Contact and exchange of various forms are concepts inseparable from the Viking age. This is no less true for England where continuous Viking attacks followed by Scandinavian settlement and later conquest by Danish kings left a significant mark on Anglo-Saxon culture and society. But what happens if we turn around this picture and look instead at how these developments influenced the Viking homelands? North Sea contacts were never unilateral but formed part of a larger network of cultural, political and economic relations reaching across and beyond the North Sea region.

The iconic Viking raids of the ninth century have left few traces in Scandinavia and evidence for direct contact from the Danelaw settlements back to Scandinavia is equally sparse. For the eleventh century the situation does however improve. Written as well as archaeological material conveys evidence of English influence and presence in Scandinavia in this period. Although increases in the source material available might account for some of this, it is mainly due to a change in the relations between the two areas. For Denmark this change is most clearly demonstrated by Sven Forkbeard's conquest of England and Cnut the Great's creation of a North Sea empire, but evidence suggests that the cultural and social relations between England and Denmark, and consequently the possibility of English influence in Denmark, go before and beyond these events.

This research project focuses on contact, relations and exchange between England and Denmark c. 950-1100 and examines, through an interdisciplinary method including theories on cultural transfer and social networks, how the contact across the North Sea influenced the development of late Viking age and early medieval Denmark. At this time Denmark experienced a series of changes that would have relied to a great extent on foreign expertise in their adoption and implementation. These included but were not limited to Christianisation, development of towns, introduction of a monetary economy, and of supra-regional institutions. This study will contribute to a more coherent and detailed picture of early medieval Denmark in a European context and give a better understanding of the developments spanning and underlying the transition from the Viking to the early medieval period.

The Christianisation and the development of the early Danish Church is the area in which English presence and influence in Denmark is most easily recognisable. Adam of Bremen in his '*Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*', the most important historical source for the early Scandinavian Church, mentions the appointment of five English bishops to Denmark; first Gotebald to Scania or Lund shortly before the year 1000, then Bernard for Lund, Gerbrand for Roskilde, and Reginbert for Odense in the 1020s, and finally around 1060 Henric was appointed to the see of Lund. It is likely that these were not the only English clerics in Denmark, and clerics of Danish origin, like bishop Odinkar the Younger of Ribe, were possibly educated in England. As late as c.

1095 a community of monks from the monastery of Evesham founded the priory of St Cnut in Odense, where Ailnoth of Canterbury later wrote the Life of St Cnut.

Additionally, it might be relevant to note that several Old Danish words relating to Christianity and Christianisation derive from Old English. This is the case for the Old Danish words 'kristindom' (from Old English 'cristendom') and 'ærkibiskup' (from Old English 'arcebisceop') and it is likely that the word 'kors' (ultimately derived from the Latin 'crux') also made its way to Denmark from the British Isles. Additionally a number of English saints were venerated throughout Denmark. The church in Odense was dedicated to St Alban, and Lund, Viborg, and Roskilde had churches dedicated to St Botolph.

The written evidence for English influence on the early Danish Church is greatly supported by archaeology. Most notably, excavations of the earliest churchyard in the important episcopal city of Lund dated c. 990-1050s suggest that the associated church dedicated to the Holy Trinity served as a central church or minster for a larger parish exceeding the early medieval town of Lund. Parallels to this parochial organisation are found in Anglo-Saxon England. In Roskilde the small parish church of St Clemens (now St Jørgensbjerg) shows clear architectural links to English churches of the early eleventh century and the earliest church on this location dated 1029-1035 is likely to have been built by English masons. The same could be the case for the earliest stone church preceding Roskilde Cathedral though it has yet to be identified. According to written sources this church was commissioned by Cnut the Great's sister Estrid, mother of the later king Sven Estridsson, possibly in the late 1020s.

From the above it is clear that the English influence on the early Danish Church was significant and included a broad spectrum of ecclesiastical elements. This is not to say that other influences did not operate alongside that of the English and it is clear from the documentary sources that the German church and especially the Archiepiscopal see of Hamburg-Bremen was in no way unimportant in the conversion and later Christianisation of Denmark.

The examples given here constitute only the most distinctive evidence of English influence on the early Danish Church and as such they point towards a concentration of English influence around the reigns of Sven Forkbeard and Cnut the Great. It seems reasonable then to conclude that much of the English presence in the early Danish Church was due to the dual kingships c. 1013-1042. While this is to some extent undoubtedly true, it is interesting to note that the first English bishop was appointed to Denmark c. 999. It was consequently not Sven Forkbeard's capacity as conqueror of England that made him able to find a bishop there. Furthermore, the church of St Clemens in Roskilde with its modest size and location is unlikely to have been built at the command of the king, and the introduction of English terminology and English saints may have required a more widespread acceptance and recognition of the English elements.

Instead we must assume that other relations existed between Denmark and England at this time. Here the written record provides important evidence of elite contacts across the North Sea. An English charter makes mention of a plot by Anglo-Saxon nobles to receive Sven Forkbeard as king in Essex in the 990s, the ‘Encomium Emmae Reginae’ relates that a certain English matron brought Sven’s body back to Denmark after his death in 1014, and the ‘Vita Ædwardi Regis’ tells how the Anglo-Saxon earl Godwin accompanied Cnut the Great to Denmark and married the sister of a Danish jarl. Four Danish rune stones are known to have been raised in the memory of men who went to England. While four of the five men mentioned died abroad we must assume that others on similar travels and campaigns made the way back and perhaps brought with them new ideas. After the Norman Conquest it seems certain that Danes who had previously settled in England returned home and on the basis of William of Malmesbury’s ‘Gesta Rerum Anglorum’ it seems likely that some Anglo-Saxons left for Denmark as well.

Contacts between Denmark and England are thus evident throughout the late tenth and eleventh centuries and they operated on a level of society where it is reasonable to suggest that a significant transfer of culture could have taken place. The lack of any direct evidence linking these people and events to developments in Denmark does however make it difficult to determine more precisely how the elite contacts across the North Sea affected Denmark and in this context the early Danish Church. If the assumption that the church of St Clemens in Roskilde was not commissioned by the king but by a local magnate is valid, it opens the possibility that reliance on English expertise in ecclesiastical matters was not limited to the king but instead a common practice among the higher levels of Danish society.

It consequently becomes relevant to review the history of the early Danish Church in the context of Anglo-Danish relations. Where parallels with England can be found these might provide a greater and more nuanced understanding of the earliest phases of the Danish Church. This is especially applicable for the questions of early church organisation and liturgy. It is important, however, to bear in mind that other foreign impulses were also active in Denmark, and the role of the German church in the process of Christianisation is undeniable. That being said, there were times when the presence of the German church in Denmark lessened or was directly discouraged. The changing alignments of both the Danish king and the elite are important for the understanding of the internal developments of early medieval Denmark.

The case of the early Danish Church constitutes an important example of how North Sea contacts formed part of these developments, but it does not stand alone. English influence can also be traced in the process of urbanisation, royal administration, and elite representation. Further research into these areas will provide important insights into the socio-cultural impact of the English relations in Denmark c. 950-1100.

## Named Artefacts in the Sagas – a Remnant of the Past?

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Studying cultural biographies of things is a recognized tool in the disciplines of anthropology, sociology and archeology. Biographies of things tell important things about social interaction, values and worldview in any given society, but it has not been used in the study of Old Norse textual sources even though these obviously provide a huge amount of empirical data. A cultural biography is made by taking the viewpoint of the thing and studying its shifting relations, meanings and moves in exchange, its “life”.

I will use this method with regards to the named artefact, for instance the swords Gramr and Mistilteinn, the ship Elliði and the armring Svíagrís. It is at the same time a physical object and a literary motif, and so presents a meeting-place for two very different disciplines, those of literary studies and archeology. Thus it is possible to compare the stories about the Scandinavian past found in *fornaldarsögur* and *konungasögur* with the actual past dug out of the ground. The consequences of this case study of Scandinavian oral tradition is both insight into the worldview of the Viking Age and a better understanding of the nature of Scandinavian oral transmission from past to paper.

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## Using Norwegian Medieval Manuscript Fragments from the Period c. 1000-1300 to Study Ecclesiastical Connections between England and Norway

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In Norway, there are approximately 6500 fragments of medieval manuscripts, in the Sweden there are about 22 500 manuscript fragments in the *Riksarkivet* in Stockholm. Only a relatively small proportion is from the eleventh century. These fragments are the remnants of Norway and Sweden's medieval manuscript cultures which were systematically shredded and re-used as bindings and covers for post-reformation paper tax accounts. In addition, the majority of these fragments are from liturgical manuscripts. As a result, the fragments represent the majority of our evidence for medieval ecclesiastical scriptoria in Scandinavia on the one hand, but also for the wider Church and its development in Scandinavia on the other hand.

In the eleventh century, both Norway and Sweden were, of course, still in the process of Christianisation. As a result, most of the impetus for, and staff of, the developing Church in both countries came from abroad. Historical sources refer to the involvement of the English Church in both Norway and Sweden in the eleventh century, for example, Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, scattered references in English documents to ecclesiastics who had worked in the Scandinavian mission field as well as the retrospective narratives of the Icelandic sagas and Norwegian histories. The missionaries and English clergy who came to found religious houses in Scandinavia brought with them manuscripts and it was under their influence – as well as from other areas, notably Hamburg-Bremen - that the first scriptoria were founded. The fragments of these manuscripts are therefore a rich resource for studying contacts between England, Norway and Sweden.

My PhD project aims to use the palaeographic study of the manuscript fragments in Norway and Sweden, which are thought to come from English scriptoria or to have been influenced by English scribal practice, to explore ecclesiastical networks between England, Norway and Sweden in the eleventh century. Ecclesiastical networks, of course, cannot be separated from political and economic networks and therefore it is my aim to open up the manuscript fragments as historical evidence for international contacts in this period.

The fragments present a number of factors which complicate their use as historical evidence. The situation differs between Sweden and Norway: in Sweden, the fragments tend of larger because the parchment was used to create covers for the Swedish tax accounts and, further, the sixteenth-century provenance of the fragments is often

known; in Norway, the fragments are usually smaller, having been used to strengthen the bindings of the tax books, in addition, the post-Reformation provenance is only rarely preserved because the fragments were frequently removed from their bindings.

Consequently, palaeography is often the only tool by which one can date and localise a fragment, particularly in Norway. Although, there are of course other features such as notation and liturgical differences in the content of the fragments which can be indicative of origin and date.

The palaeography of the eleventh-century fragments has been studied relatively more than later centuries and furthermore, the eleventh-century Swedish fragments have received more scholarly attention than their Norwegian counterparts, with some important exceptions. In the last decade, there have been authoritative attempts made to establish criteria by which to differentiate between manuscript fragments written by English scribes in England and those produced in Norway or Sweden under English scribal influence. However, more needs to be done: a comprehensive and widely-acceptable terminology needs to be fully developed; many eleventh-century fragments are still un-studied; finally, there is a pressing requirement for the Swedish and Norwegian eleventh-century fragments to be studied in relation to one another.

One of my project's primary aspects is to work toward establishing successful criteria for defining differences between scribes and scripts in English-influenced fragments. In order to do this, I will take advantage of the methods being developed by the DigiPal project at King's College London. Briefly, the DigiPal project uses the advantages offered by digitisation to team images with palaeographical descriptions which use a carefully developed, and fully explained, terminology which can then be straightforwardly searched. The advantage this offers for my research is that it provides a logical framework with which to systematically describe the manuscript fragments, whilst ensuring that the written description is always linked to an image of the script. By doing so, my arguments based on the fragments should be easily comprehensive and open to full interrogation by non-palaeographers.

Consequently, a principal purpose of my project is to create a framework for the study of the eleventh-century manuscript fragments which allows them to be used as historical evidence for ecclesiastical contacts between England, Norway and Sweden.



## Social Change in the Archaic Greece and the Icelandic 'Free State': Perspectives of a Diachronic Comparison

Peter Zeller, University of Tübingen, Germany

The scientific access to the heterogeneous processes of social forming in archaic Greece (circa 750–500 B.C.) is highly limited through the lack of written sources. The social and institutional structures of single communities are roughly known, but there are still a lot of unsolved problems: Especially concerning the spaces of social interaction, the identification of several social groups, and in general the conditions of political, legal, and social processes of development and differentiation.

Therefore we've looked for a pre-modern society, which has comparable basic conditions and social structures, and whose history is much better documented. The only European society that meets these criteria is the so called Icelandic Free State (circa 930–1262 B.C.). In spite of the ongoing philological and historical discussions, the Sagas of Icelanders can be seen as very fertile sources for the processes of social forming during this time. The consequent analysis of these sagas makes it possible to draw a much differentiated picture of the beginnings of mediaeval Iceland, because they are not as schematically as the other written source material. Such a written record is absolutely singular in the history of pre-modern Europe.

In our project we use these unique existing sources for the first time systematically as an object of comparison for problems of classical ancient history. To sum up, our work combines complex methodological questions and the differentiated description of the political, legal, and social development of a pre-state society.

## Parallel and Hybrid Uses of Runic and Roman Scripts

Kristel Zilmer, University of Bergen, Norway

The purpose of my poster is to present the small yet significant corpus of medieval Scandinavian epigraphy (ca. 1150-1400) that besides employing the native runic writing system displays the parallel usage of the Roman script. The existence of a two-script community and the use of vernacular and Latin in medieval Scandinavia have been discussed on various occasions. The runic script and the newly introduced Roman alphabet have been characterized as complementary writing systems, functioning within their distinct domains, linked with different layers of society and even mentalities. At the same time, there is evidence of the parallel and/or hybrid use of the two scripts on different types of objects that relate to varying communicative contexts. Over fifty medieval Scandinavian runic inscriptions contain shorter or longer sequences or passages in Roman letters (in the vernacular or in Latin). The poster presents some results of an examination of this material with regard to the following issues: a) two scripts and the display of orthographies and literate conventions; b) functionality, hierarchy and status; c) choice of script and the mixing of scripts – purposes and motivation. A point of discussion concerns the use of two scripts and identity formation, keeping in mind that the choice of script(s) may have also served to mark one's belonging to specific (written) traditions.

## Latest News from the Dictionary of Old Norse Prose

Simonetta Battista, Alex Speed Kjeldsen and Þorbjörg Helgadóttir

Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog / A Dictionary of Old Norse Prose, Denmark

At the Saga Conference in Durham in 2006 the staff of A Dictionary of Old Norse Prose (ONP) presented the plans for the digitisation of the Dictionary. The Arnamagnæan Commission had decided to run a ten-year project including the scanning of all the slips and texts, structural organisation of two word-classes, verbs and prepositions, and pre-editing of the simplex substantives.

Now past the halfway mark, we will give an update on the project. We will firstly present what we have achieved in the last six years. Secondly we will give a guided tour through our material on the web, with emphasis on how the different sections of the database (wordlist, articles, registers, bibliography) can be used for scholarly purposes. This will include a comparison between the articles edited in the three printed volumes of the Dictionary and the ones which are progressively being posted on the web, based on revised editorial principles. Finally we will tell you a little about the time ahead.

[www.onp.hum.ku.dk](http://www.onp.hum.ku.dk)

## Gender in Medieval Scandinavian Texts: A Reevaluation

Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, The Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies, Iceland; Kristen Mills, University of Toronto, Canada; Elizabeth Walgenbach, Yale University, USA; Giselle Gos, Harvard University, USA

The papers in this session take new approaches to gender and gender roles in medieval Scandinavian literature. Studies of gender in Old Norse texts suffer from a focus on a narrow range of sources, and a small number of the family sagas have often been privileged in the critical literature. Furthermore, these investigations often deal with stock figures or situations, such as the whetting woman or the stoic warrior. As a result, characters' behaviour that departs from these expectations is viewed as aberrant, when it may simply stem from the demands of different genres, audiences or settings. These tendencies obscure the rich and varied forms of gendered expression occurring across the corpus of Old Norse-Icelandic literature. In this session we explore and complicate some of the polarised images that have dominated critical discussion about gender in the past, as well as bring to light the critical importance of marginal texts and variant versions for the study of gender in medieval Scandinavian literature.

In recent decades, an increased interest in recovering women's voices and perspectives has led scholars to focus on female-voiced laments and displays of grief as sites of female expression and societal influence. Male grief and mourning, however, have been largely neglected, and our understanding of medieval Scandinavian societal norms for male grief has been overshadowed by received clichés of Viking stoicism. Moreover, scholars' tendencies to collapse genres and time periods when discussing the emotional registers of texts, as well as lack of attention to social and historical context of individual texts and authors has exacerbated this trend towards oversimplification. In "Masculinity and Mourning in Medieval Scandinavian Texts", Kristen Mills offers a new and nuanced analysis of depictions of male grief, and especially weeping, in a selection of medieval Scandinavian texts, including *Heimskringla*, *Gesta Danorum*, *Njáls Saga*, and the *Prose Edda*, paying particular attention to the importance of circumstance, age, social status (both of the mourner and of the deceased), and cultural milieu in assessing the attitudes towards male weeping in these texts.

In the second paper, "Saga Depictions of Violent Women," Elizabeth Walgenbach confronts the dominant image of the whetting woman by examining the complex interaction of femininity and violence in the family sagas, the contemporary sagas, and the bishops' sagas. She explores instances in which women are depicted committing violence directly, lashing out against insults or breeches of discipline or indeed carrying out calculated murder. In these scenes, she observes that women's violence is narrated differently than men's violence, often being given more symbolic weight and less grisly detail. Moreover, in contrast to the maiden kings of the *fornaldarsögur*, in these saga genres, the women most depicted as enacting violence are married, widowed, or otherwise sexually experienced. Women in the sagas are not merely whetters: this paper

examines their active turns to violence to complement and enhance existing views on saga women.

Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, in “Gender and Power in Two Versions of *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar*” also examines alternative and changing images of women and men. *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar* is preserved in two rather divergent medieval redactions that show significant differences in the representations of and narratorial attitudes to ideal masculinity and femininity. In contrast with the terser, less charming character in the shorter, earlier version, the later, fourteenth-century protagonist’s courtliness is amplified, presenting a new model of behaviour for men in this period when courtly values were increasingly pervasive among Icelandic aristocracy. The *meykongr* episode, where the protagonist woos the battle-clad maiden-king, is particularly pertinent for analysing gender and power: the *meykongr*-figure problematises binary notions of gender when at different points in the plot, she successfully performs a martial male role and an ideal female one. *Hrólfs saga* in its different medieval manifestations opens up questions about gender, power and ideal behaviour.

Finally, the fourth paper “Translation, Adaptation and Gender in *Bevens saga*,” speaks to the ways in which translated sagas can provide valuable evidence for contemporary attitudes to gender. In this paper, Giselle Gos analyses femininity and female subjectivity in a *riddarasaga* of Icelandic provenance, *Bevens saga*, translated from the Anglo-Norman romance *Boeve de Haumtone*. Comparative work with the Anglo-Norman *Boeve de Haumtone* has begun to shed light on the literary and ideological pressures governing the Icelandic adaptation, but while a few individual points of difference between the original and translated text relevant to women and gender have been noted, a sustained investigation of the cultural translation of gender in this saga is yet to be undertaken. This paper presents a careful reading of the differences between *Boeve* and *Bevens saga* in an effort to describe the shape of femininity and female subjectivity in the saga. In addition, attention to current scholarship on gender in *Boeve* and Anglo-Norman romance places in sharper relief the unique way in which gender operates in the Icelandic text.

# The Variance of *Njáls saga*

Research Project at Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, Iceland

## 1. General Introduction, Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir

This ongoing project is investigating the linguistic, philological and literary “variance” of *Njáls saga* both synchronically and diachronically, taking as its starting point the increasing emphasis on the significance of manuscript variation. The aim is to show what the living tradition of *Njáls saga* was like at each stage of its transmission, what characterised the *Njála* text and the material appearance of *Njála* manuscripts at certain points in time from the 14th to the 19th centuries, and how the manuscript variation reflects the changing views and needs of the saga’s numerous scribes, patrons and wider audience. XML-files of individual manuscripts will form the basis of an electronic text archive on *Njáls saga*; a new edition of the saga is one of several planned outputs.

## 2. Language Change in the 14th-century Manuscripts of *Njáls saga*, Haraldur Bernharðsson

*Njáls saga* is preserved in numerous manuscripts from different periods and, presumably, different areas in Iceland. The scribes of these manuscripts have, to varying degrees, adapted the text of *Njáls saga* to their own language by incorporating the language changes (social variation and regional variation) that have taken place since the time of writing of the saga. In this presentation, the manifestation of selected language changes in some 14th-century manuscripts of *Njáls saga* will be discussed and compared with other contemporaneous manuscripts containing other texts.

## 3. Linguistic Variation in the 14th-century Manuscripts of *Njáls saga*, Ludger Zeevaert

Synchronic linguistic variation is often an indicator of ongoing language change. One must also account for the fact that individual scribes seem to exhibit quite a pronounced intention to improve their exemplars by changing expressions and grammatical constructions to adapt the text either to their own language use, or to a style deemed appropriate for intended readers. This presentation will discuss examples of variation in constructions of indirect speech found in 14th-century *Njáls saga* manuscripts, and their relevance for the linguistic and stylistic development of Icelandic.

#### 4. Gráskinna: A Medieval *Njála* Hybrid, Emily Lethbridge

The 14th-century Gráskinna (GKS 2870 4to) is an important piece of the *Njáls saga* puzzle but not one which has been the object of much previous study. By the early 16th century, it had suffered extensive damage which was made good in various ways. As a whole, the codex is an interesting artefact from the perspective of its continued use and presumed value to owners at different times. In this paper, the results of a preliminary study of certain material and textual aspects of Gráskinna will be presented.

#### 5. Four Pieces of the Puzzle: The Reconstruction of a Late *Njáls saga* Vellum Manuscript, Susanne M. Arthur

The Icelandic vellum fragments AM 921 4to I, Lbs. fragm. 2, JS fragm. 4, and likely the now lost fragment Þjms. I have been dated to the late 16th/early 17th century and all originally belonged to the same codex, as codicological features prove. Additionally, all four fragments preserve the same redaction of *Njáls saga*, the so-called *Oddabók*-version. This paper attempts to reconstruct the provenance and date of the original codex and will examine its relationship to other manuscripts containing *Njáls saga*, namely its possible exemplar AM 466 4to (*Oddabók*, c1460), and the paper manuscript AM 396 fol., which preserves a *Njáls saga* written by the same scribe as the vellum fragments.

#### 6. The Cultural Situation of *Njáls saga* in the 17th Century, Margrét Eggertsdóttir

Around 20 manuscripts of *Njáls saga* from the 17th century are still extant. This paper will focus on the owners of these manuscripts as well as their scribes, endeavouring to answer questions such as who commissioned the manuscripts, for what purpose, and where scribes got their exemplars from. The relationship between the manuscript transmission of *Njáls saga* and other sagas and the cultural impact of the printing press in Iceland will also be explored.

#### 7. Lbs 747 fol.: Visualizing *Njáls saga* in the 19th century, Þorsteinn Árnason Surmeli and Sveinn Yngvi Egilsson

Post-Reformation paper manuscripts of *Njáls saga* sometimes include illustrations, albeit less professional than some medieval saga illuminations by trained scribes and artists. The focus of this paper, Lbs 747 fol., is a case in point. It was penned in 1871–1873 by two brothers who worked as farm hands in the Breiðafjörður area and copied sagas in their spare time. The extensive illustrations show how the 19th-century audience imagined and reinvented the characters and situations of *Njála*, and demonstrate an active interplay between text and pictures which reception theory can throw light on.

## The *Jómsvíkinga saga* – Part of Old Norse Historiography?

Sirpa Aalto, University of Oulu, Finland

The purpose of the paper is to investigate whether the *Jómsvíkingasaga* can be considered as part of Old Norse historiography and, if so, on what basis. The question is approached by looking at the genre features as well as some contextual elements of the saga. It has been difficult for scholars to categorize the saga on genre basis, because the saga is obviously intended to entertain (Finlay 2006, 256) and as the amount of surviving manuscripts shows, it has been successful in doing so.

The entertaining elements seem to diminish the value of the saga as a historical source. However, these elements should not prevent from studying the saga's source value. The early date of the saga in its written form (c. 1200) may be a sign that it was produced during a time that was important for the development of the saga genre(s) (Tulinius 2002, 191). Although the sagas are usually divided to more or less reliable as sources for historical events, it should be taken into account that strict division to history (fact) and literature (fiction) was not obvious for the authors or the audience in the Middle Ages.



## Of Wolves and Cranes in the Land of Geats

Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir, University of Iceland, Iceland

The Icelandic *fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda*, mostly written in the 13th and the 14th centuries, deal with the Nordic past. Even if the heroes of the sagas may easily travel outside Scandinavia in their search for fame and fortune, the narrative is usually set somewhere in the Nordic countries. In this paper, we will deal especially with sagas staged in the land of Geats, or Gautland/Götaland, a small cluster of *fornaldarsögur* that might even be called “Gautasögur”. The main focus will, however, be on only one of these sagas, *Úlfhams saga*, which seems to have exceptionally strong connections to Götaland.

As *Úlfhams saga* is not preserved in its medieval prose form, but rather in the form of *rímur* from the 14th century and later prose versions, it has usually not been considered to belong to the traditional genre of *fornaldarsögur*. In this paper, however, the saga will be dealt with as belonging to this genre, with an emphasis on its Geatish characteristics. For example, some of the names of the characters are alien to Icelandic saga tradition, while reminiscent of Geatish place names. Furthermore, *Úlfhams saga* deals especially with wolves and cranes, neither of which are found in Iceland. While wolves were probably common all over Scandinavia, cranes have long been especially common in Götaland. This paper will examine whether the saga might deal especially with motifs from Geatish story telling tradition and if so, whether it could possibly throw light on pictures on the rune/picture stone from Sparlösa, which have otherwise been difficult to interpret.

# The Saga Outlaw and Conceptions of the Past

Joonas Ahola, University of Helsinki, Finland

This paper, based on my PhD research, focuses on the production and contemporary reception of the sagas of the Icelanders through the case of conventional presentations of outlaw figures in a large sample. The Saga World, as a reflection of the past, was in many ways closely tied to the prevailing circumstances in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century Iceland.

The category “outlaw” encompasses a wide range of characters from outright villains to heroes in saga literature because in the Icelandic Saga Age society, which stressed values such as honour and family loyalty on the individual’s behalf, even actions that were morally acceptable could lead to outlawry. Outlaws signified social space as characters who were banished to the margins of the society. They defined the social systems and the relationship of those social systems to the law by creating controversies between the law and different categories of social conduct. The roles of outlaws in this function gained depth and powerfulness in additional significations which were created through referentiality. With referentiality, I mean signifying references to literature, tradition and collective perceptions of the reality that were realised in narrative conventions that connected saga narration to other forms of conception.

I will discuss outlawry in the sagas of the Icelanders as polysemic, culturally central and narratively compelling concept from the past through which the Icelanders could reflect on questions such as those of morality, justice and law.

## Dispensation “By the Book.” Instrumentality and AM 671 4to

Joel Anderson, Cornell University, USA

Recently, scholars have begun to reassess the relationships between medieval Icelandic society and the canon law of the medieval Church. Against this backdrop, my paper will address the place of canon law in medieval Iceland with specific reference to a little-noticed and mostly-unedited manuscript: AM 671 4to. As I will briefly discuss, this fourteenth-century clerical “handbook” contains several unidentified and overlooked excerpts (in Latin) from important canonical-legal works, including Innocent IV’s *Commentaria decretalium*, Gregory IX’s *Decretales*, and Hostiensis’ *Summa*. Kristoffer Vadum’s forthcoming University of Oslo dissertation, *AM 671 4to som kilde til Bolognakanonistenes kirkerettslige tekster i Nidarosprovinsen ca. 1270-1298*, promises a detailed investigation of the manuscript’s contents and its contexts.

The presence of previously unnoticed works of canon law – the institutional rules of the universal Church – in fourteenth century Iceland should lead us to ask new questions about the extensions of these rules into the peripheries of Christendom. My paper’s point of departure will be the canonical-legal procedure known as the dispensation. “Dispensation” refers to the suspension, by a competent authority, of an ecclesiastical law in a particular case. For example, a man who had married more than once during his lifetime needed to obtain a dispensation from his bishop in order to be ordained. At least in theory, ecclesiastical officeholders granted dispensations based on individual circumstances and on specific needs. If a dispensation were granted, the act merely removed a particular case from the power of the law. The general rule (e.g. the prohibition against ordaining twice-married men) remained hypothetically in place. Medieval theories of dispensation represent a rich conceptual field for the investigation of boundaries, limits, and jurisdictions – between the universal aspirations of canonical-legal authority and particular circumstances, between the demands of fundamental rules and those of exigent necessities, and so forth.

AM 671 4to references dispensations in various ways. In addition to specifying the dispensary powers of various members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, marginalia in the manuscript contain simple formulae for granting dispensations – “Ego dispenso te” (“I dispense you”) – as well as formulae for the absolution of various sins. Short memorial poems in the manuscript spell out the “cases” that only a bishop can provide a dispensation for:

Enormes anathema cremans mutacio uoti

usus sollempnis tibi dentur episcopo sex haec. (AM 671 4to, fol. 36r)

[“To you, o bishop, let these six be given: *Enormes anathema cremans mutacio uoti usus sollempnis.*”]

Such features, I argue, highlight the ways in which AM 671 4to might be seen as an *instrument* of ecclesiastical governance, a portable object that aimed to produce and reproduce canonical-legal categories and procedures. Focusing closely on the page-layouts of specific folia, the paper will investigate some of the visual, verbal, and acoustic mechanisms that AM 671 4to used to conceptualize doctrine, to address its audiences, and to administer the law. From this perspective, AM 671 4to might be seen as a material text that was instrumental in the work of extension – extending the reach of canon law and creating subjects to that law in a remote region of Christendom.

At the same time, the notion of a dispensation allowed for broad spaces of contradiction and variation in the application of canon law. With reference to particular high-profile dispensations described in the *Biskupa sögur*, I will conclude by offering some suggestions about the degree to which, and the ways in which, medieval Icelandic clerics might have conceived of themselves within the juridical framework of the medieval Church.

## Sea Traffic in the Sagas

Ted Andersson, Indiana University, USA

In 1907-15 Bogi Th. Melsteð compiled the saga reports on Icelandic voyages abroad from the saga age to the Sturlung Age. More recently the emphasis has been on the archeological evidence, while the literary evidence has been relatively neglected as being less reliable. The present paper tries to extract some firmer conclusions from fifty sagas and *þættir*. These sources record a total of 224 landing sites and locations in Iceland, many of them in a number of iterations. For example, the landing sites at Gásir in the north, Hvítá in the west, and Eyrar in the south account for 38 of the 224 mentions, or about 16.5%. They therefore had a significant but not an overwhelming role in the minds of the saga authors. If, on the other hand, we consult *Sturlunga saga*, we find 81 mentions of landing sites. Of these 81 mentions, 50 are references to Gásir, Hvítá, and Eyrar. The share of the main harbors has thus grown to about 62%. There are in addition 10 unspecified mentions of Eyjafjörðr, which could well refer to Gásir, whereas there are only 11 references to other landing sites. This realignment may allow us to conclude that the main harbors had become considerably more important over time; three leading landing sites had in effect become regular seaports in the thirteenth century while other landing sites and anchorages and declined in importance. The new proportion may also allow us to conclude that the writers of the saga-age stories did not draw their information from their contemporary experience in the thirteenth century. Had they done so, they would have projected a similarly disproportionate role for Gásir, Hvítá, and Eyrar into the saga age and would not have imagined such a great diversity of harbors for the earlier period. They therefore had sources of information that suggested a quite different inventory of harbors for the saga age.

## The *Humidum Radicale* and its Lexical Implications in Old Icelandic Texts

Aliki-Anastasia Arkomani, University College London, England

The *humidum radicale* or ‘radical moisture’ was a prominent topic of discussion in European universities from the twelfth century and throughout the Middle Ages. Rooted in Hippocratic and Galenic theories of humours and moistures, it was systematized in the *Canon* of Avicenna and introduced to the West through the translation of the *Canon* by Gerard of Cremona. The nature of this elusive substance, which constituted the essence of life in the human body, preoccupied physicians, as well as theologians and philosophers, as it raised numerous questions regarding disease, ageing, mortality and resurrection. In this paper I will first examine the adaptation and domestication of this concept in Icelandic literature using the evidence of medical, theological and natural-philosophical texts. I will then proceed to discuss the effect that this concept had on lexical choice in Icelandic translations of scientific texts, with particular reference to the formulaic phrase *þorna ok morna*: An expression which conveys female grief in the Icelandic sagas is ascribed a new meaning in Icelandic pharmacological literature, influenced by European scholasticism and medieval medical theories.

## The Supernatural Geography of the Middle Ages

Arngrímur Vídalín, Aarhus University/Háskóli Íslands, Denmark/Iceland

In this paper I will discuss supernatural and monstrous beings in the *Íslendingasögur* in context of medieval theology. Supernaturality is distinguished from monstrosity in the *Íslendingasögur* by its geographical placing and liminal restrictions; monstrous creatures are a natural part of creation, only to be found on the peripheries of the known world, whereas revenants (afturgöngur) are an unnatural abomination only to be found creeping around close to home. This exact dichotomy can also be found in contemporary theological writings.

I will argue that the supernatural/monstrous beings, as represented in saga literature, are rooted in the contemporary Christian world view. The foundation for this argument is a thorough analysis of supernatural and monstrous beings in *Íslendingasögur*, cross-examined in light of European religious beliefs. This is e.g. indicated by their depiction on the various mappae mundi – a theological representation of contemporary world view – and their allegorical representation in medieval bestiaries, such as the Icelandic and Middle-English Physiologi, both of which themselves are inspired by such religious authorities as the writings of St. Augustine and Isidor of Sevilla, who argued that the verifiable existence of monsters was a sign of God's creation and infinite power.

The supernatural/monstrous as a literary and theological motif in medieval sources indicates not only that the very notion was universal rather than homegrown Icelandic fantasy, but that the belief in such beings was very much real in the minds of ordinary Christians in medieval times, no less so than God himself; and as a consequence, that the *Íslendingasögur* are firmly rooted in European culture and tradition.

*Landnámabók's Contents and Character. Comparison of Narratives about Settlers and their Offspring in Landnámabók and Eyrbyggja saga*

Auður Ingvarsdóttir

What kind of work is *Landnámabók*? In modern time many scholars have been inclined to observe the original *Landnámabók* as rather practical list of landed property. It has for example been suggested that the compilation of *Landnámabók* has some connection with the introduction of the tithe system or some other practical purpose for the ruling families. According to many researchers, the structure of the oldest *Landnámabók* was very organized and the text was brief and formal in style. All preserved versions of *Landnámabók* include numerous of historical narratives which often has been rejected as real *Landnáma* stuff but rather considered as unimportant extracts from the family sagas or other often unknown sources. . It is impossible to ignore the obvious literary connections between *Landnámabók* and the family sagas. It is interesting in this context to compare the *Eyrbyggja saga* text and the text of *Landnámabók*. Was it Sturla Þórðarson who made input from *Eyrbyggja saga* in his *Landnáma* redaction or was it the writer of *Eyrbyggja saga* who used an old *Landnámabók*?



## The Sagas and European Historiography

Sverre Bagge, University of Bergen, Norway

The term “saga” is specific to Old Norse narratives and suggests a unique genre and a radical difference from mainstream historical writings in the rest of Europe, usually referred to as “chronicles” or “history”. In my previous work, I have often pointed to the differences between the Old Norse and Latin tradition of historical writing. In the present paper, I want to give an overall assessment. It would then seem that the difference regarding genre is less than the terminology may suggest and even that Latin historiography in some respects may have been an important source of inspiration for the saga writers. On the other hand, this does not prevent the sagas from differing radically from their Latin counterparts in other respects, such as narrative style, understanding of history and secular versus religious attitude.

## Learning from the Past: Knowledge, Memory, and the Use of the Legendary Past in *Háttalykill inn forni*

David Baker, University of Cambridge, England

The importance of the twelfth-century poem known as *Háttalykill inn forni* ('the Old Key to Metres'), and attributed to the Norwegian Rognvaldr Kali, jarl of Orkney, and the Icelandic poet Hallr Þórarinnsson, has long been recognised.<sup>1</sup> Ever since its first publication in nineteenth-century editions of Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*, however, scholarly emphasis has been placed primarily on the significance of the poem as a foreshadowing and likely model of Snorri's *Háttatal*, often to the detriment of an appreciation of the aesthetic qualities of this earlier *clavis metrica* (see, for instance, Faulkes 1999 [1991]: xvii). In her recent book on twelfth- and thirteenth-century skaldic poetics, for instance, Guðrún Nordal seeks to place *Háttalykill* firmly in the context of 'the systematic study of language [and] *grammatica*' in twelfth-century Iceland and Orkney, alongside such works as the *First Grammatical Treatise* (Nordal 2001: p. 34), although she proves more sympathetic to the poem's content than many other critics.

While acknowledging the poem's indebtedness to the type of metrical and stylistic experimentation found elsewhere in twelfth-century 'academic' skaldic verse, in this paper I would like to approach the problem of *Háttalykill* from another perspective: namely, that of its representation of the *gestes* of the legendary heroes and kings that form the poem's subject matter. In the (rather badly damaged) form in which it now survives, *Háttalykill* takes the form of a poetic catalogue of verseforms and, simultaneously, of some forty-one kings and heroes drawn from the past collective memory of the Norse world, from Sigurðr Fáfnisbani onwards [*HI* 3-58]. In its later stanzas the poem becomes a semi-genealogical list of the kings of Norway starting with Haraldr hárfagri [*HI* 59-82] and shifting ever-increasingly into more 'historical' time, before breaking off with the reign of Magnús berfœttr (d. 1103).

In the first part of the paper, I discuss the structure of the poem and consider the significance of setting the distant past within a framework which owes as much to native as to foreign models (genealogical *tal*, wisdom dialogue, etc.), before moving on to examine the poets' depiction of individual heroes and the narrative values associated with them. Following this, I open up the discussion to analyse the way in which the passage of time in the poem is mediated by the interplay of the poetic voice, memory, and authoritative claim to knowledge of *forn fræði* ('ancient learning') made on behalf of the poets. By way of tentative conclusion, I suggest that the use of the legendary past in the context of contemporary poetics in *Háttalykill* allows for a representation of that past which reflects something of the cultural and ethical needs of the present.

## Notes:

<sup>1</sup>All skaldic quotations are taken from the Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages unless otherwise indicated and my referencing system for the verse follows the website's abbreviations: <<http://skaldic.arts.usyd.edu.au>>.

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## Land-naming in the Migration Myth of Medieval Iceland: Constructing the Past in the Present and the Present in the Past

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This paper examines the literary representation of the *landnám* (land-taking or settlement of Iceland) in the sagas and *Landnámabók*. It focuses on one stage in particular, the land-naming process, which takes place once the settlers have reached the shore. I begin with the premise that such narrative conventions concerning Iceland's past were used by saga authors to construct notions of social and cultural identity; a process reflecting tensions particular to a colonising people keen to cultivate a meaningful relationship with their new land. If the *landnám* narratives expressed medieval Icelanders' need to fix themselves to the land and make sense of an unfamiliar, unpopulated terrain, then the place-naming strategies described in the texts were a fundamental part of this process.

As with much Old Norse literature, these texts incorporate more than one chronological layer, both looking back to the *landnám* past while at the same time rooted in the twelfth- and thirteenth-century world in which they were produced, with its territorial land-claims and political power struggles. Viewed through the retrospective, fictionalised lens of the Old Norse-Icelandic literary corpus, it is clear that the *landnám* place-names and place-naming traditions are strongly influenced by subsequent chronological layers of social occupation and cultural memories. Nevertheless, close analysis of the place-names and place-naming stories described in the sagas and *Landnámabók* reveals that at certain points in the texts we may detect echoes of earlier chronological layers encoded in these place-naming narratives, with meaning for the *landnám* era itself all the way up to the later medieval period of writing.

Through close textual readings of the *landnám* narratives, I will demonstrate how these multiple timeframes operate, blending myth and reality with cultural memories both past and present. The sagas and related texts such as *Landnámabók* are hybrids of cultural myth and social history, in the sense that, as Kirsten Hastrup puts it, 'myth embeds the past in the present, while history embeds the present in the past' (*Culture and History in Medieval Iceland* (1985), 266). Thus, in these medieval Icelandic *landnám* narratives, threads of myth, history, cultural memory and physical topography are interwoven to create a culturally meaningful, historically fluid mapping of the country, with its place-names located not only in a landscape but in what Tim Robinson calls a 'timescape' that articulates the intersection between time and space (*Stones of Aran* (1985), 1–13).

## Memory and Friendship: The Parting Gifts in *Egils saga*, Chapter 61

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In chapter sixty one of *Egils saga*, Egill and his friend Arinbjörn exchange gifts before parting ways in England. This scene is placed immediately after one of the climaxes of the saga, when the main character is pardoned by his enemy, King Eiríkr, due to both his own skill as a poet and the intercession of Arinbjörn on his behalf. As the latter is part of the royal retinue, these scenes can be understood as illustrating a tension between divided loyalties towards lord and friend. In this context, this scene of parting gifts is presented in great detail, in contrast with the formulaic, stereotypical shape parting gifts scenes usually have in the sagas. In this case the gifts exchanged (two rings and a sword) are given a history by the donors at the moment of the exchange. This exchange displays materially a memory of the bonds between the ancestors of both characters. Moreover, it also provides a hint on the stance the saga takes on the relative priority of loyalties. This paper examines this exchange under the light of anthropological views on gifts as bearers of history, in order to discuss its role to produce, reproduce or present bonds of alliance and friendship between men.

My aim is to analyze the scene from two different perspectives. First I will examine the scene as a window to the social patterns of medieval Iceland, with no focus on its particular historical or narrative situation. I want to examine how a scene of gift exchange between two agents whose friendship goes beyond political alliance operates against the background of current analytical trends that emphasize strategic maximization over institutional compulsion. A short discussion of major trends in the anthropology of exchange and their application to Norse studies will be given as a framework for the analysis.

The second part of the analysis will focus on the scene as part of a narrative produced in a specific context, that is to say, as part of a politically-oriented saga written during the “civil war” period. My aim here is to see what could be the reason for the author of the saga to include this scene, with particular emphasis given to the possibility that it was composed by Snorri Sturluson himself or at least by someone in his immediate milieu. The discussion here will focus on the suggestion that *Egils saga* was produced primarily as a justification of Snorri’s right to rule the area of Borgarfjörður based on an ancestral claim to the land by his family. I want to examine which is the role gift exchange could have in the production of an ideology of lineage as a justification for stable differences of status among men. Here I will draw especially on the ideas of A. Weiner and M. Godelier on the inalienability of gifts, which have not yet been used extensively in the field of medieval Scandinavian studies.

## The Sons of Síðu-Hallr

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The paper concerns the way in which two of the sons of Síðu-Hallr are portrayed in 13th and 14th century saga material. Síðu-Hallr came to play a prominent role in the christianization of Iceland in the year 1000 AD as one of the leading figures of the Christian faction in Iceland.

The strong association of Síðu-Hallr with the coming of Christianity appears to have impacted on not only the way in which he himself was remembered and portrayed, but also on how two of his sons were remembered.

The story about Þiðrandi who was killed by the *dísir* is well-known and has been discussed many times. Less discussed is the story of Ljótr who was killed at the battle of the Alþingi in 1012, but in fact both stories serve very similar purposes – each in their way – namely to emphasize the values, ethics and strengths of Christianity at the same time as showcasing the dangers and terrors of heathendom.

Through a comparison and analysis of the two stories told about Ljótr and Þiðrandi, this paper seeks to throw some new light onto the syncretistic treatment of heathen humans and deities by later Christian saga writers.

## Viktorinsk innflytelse i den norrøne kirkedagsprekenen?

Kirsten M. Berg, Åbo Universitet, Finland

Det var Hans Bekker-Nielsen som først antydet at forfatteren av den norrøne kirkedagsprekenen, ofte kalt Stavkirkeprekenen, kunne ha vært influert av viktorinerne, og at han kanskje også hadde studert ved St. Victor-klosteret i Paris. Dessverre går han ikke nærmere inn på eventuelle drag i teksten som kan støtte denne hypotesen, men viser til at både Hugo, Adam og Richard av St. Victor var viktige representanter for den arkitektoniske symbolismen på 1100-tallet og at forbindelsen mellom nordiske kirkesentra og St. Victor er veldokumentert (1969: 131f). I mitt paper vil jeg forsøke å analysere teksten med utgangspunkt i sentrale teologiske tanker hos Hugo av St. Victor, og på den måten forhåpentligvis styrke Bekker-Nielsens hypotese.

Prekenen er bevart i fire handskrifter: AM 237 a fol. (ca. 1150), *Gammelnorsk homilieboek* (AM 619 4to, ca. 1200), *Islandsk homilieboek* (Holm. Perg. 15 4to, ca. 1200) og AM 624 4to (ca. 1500). Tekstkritiske undersøkelser har vist at også den eldste versjonen må være en avskrift, noe som plasserer den norrøne originalprekenen i de berømte viktorinernes samtid. Trygve Knudsen anslår tilblivelsestiden til ca. 1130–1140 (1952: 28). Denne prekenen har en usedvanlig velstrukturert komposisjon. Den faller i seks klart atskilte deler, og avslutningen binder sammen de foregående delene til en logisk sammenhengende helhet.

- 1) 95.7–19: Bibelens fortelling om Salomons innvielse av templet, som sies å være opphavet til kirkene og feiringen av kirkens innvielsesdag.
- 2) 95.19–96.4: En påminnelse om hva vi mottar i kirken, nemlig sakramentene: dåp, nattverd, skriftemål og gravferd.
- 3) 96.4–97.24: Første hoveddel. Den allegoriske, eller symbolske, tolkningen av kirkebygningen, dvs. alle mennesker i fortid, nåtid og i det hinsidige som til sammen utgjør den kristne Kirke.
- 4) 97.24–99.1: Andre hoveddel. Den tropologiske, eller moralske, tolkningen av kirkebygningen, dvs. de ulike dygder som bør kjennetegne den enkelte kristne som bygger et tempel for Gud i sitt hjerte.
- 5) 99.1–22: En moralsk formaning som understreker sammenhengen mellom del 3 og 4 og minner om at den ytre kirkedagsfeiringen bør avspeiles i en indre kirkehelg.
- 6) 99.22–36: En påminnelse om å vise omsorg for vår neste på samme måte som Kirken viser omsorg for oss. Knytter tilbake til del 2 om sakramentene.

Både den allegoriske og den tropologiske tolkningen har røtter i Bibelens tekster, men det var først og fremst den allegoriske tolkningen av kirkebygningen, eller andre arkitektoniske strukturer, som kom til å bli en fast bestanddel i prekener, hymner og sanger til kirkeinnvielse.

Karel Vratný (1913) hevdet at mye av arkitektursymbolikken i den norrøne kirkedagsprekenen måtte stamme fra Honorius Augustodunensis' (ca. 1080–1157) verk *Gemma animæ*, som tidlig ble oversatt til norrønt, eller fra en av hans prekener til kirkeinnvielse. Gabriel Turville-Petre (1972) framholdt på sin side at bok XIV av Hrabanus Maurus' (780–856) *De universo* på mange måter lå nærmere den norrøne prekenen enn Honorius' verk. Teologen Oddmund Hjelde (1990) oppsummerer tidligere forskning og forsøker å finne ytterligere paralleller og analogier i den europeiske tradisjonen. Han mener å kunne påvise en tydelig innflytelse fra Bedas (672/673–735) skrifter, men finner også paralleller og beslektede utsagn hos Hrabanus, Honorius og andre. For den andre hoveddelen, den tropologiske symbolikken (del 4 ovenfor), finner han påfallende færre paralleller i de latinske kildene, og mener dette er tegn på flere selvstendige nydannelser. Selv om han også her finner enkelte paralleller til Hrabanus, Honorius og Beda, og til et par verk av Hugo av St. Victor, anser han det meste av denne delen for å være særegne tolkninger (1990: 300). Tidligere forsøk på å finne europeiske forbilder for kirkedagsprekenens symbolikk har altså stort sett kunnet påvise disse i den allegoriske delen.

Selv om tropologisk arkitektursymbolikk forekommer i enkelte tidlige prekener til kirkeinnvielse, er det først på 1100-tallet at den blir mer framtreddende, og da særlig ved St. Victor-skolen, som la vekt på analogien mellom det ytre og det indre menneske (Brinkmann 1980: 125).

Dersom man skal sannsynliggjøre at den norrøne kirkedagsprekenen er inspirert av viktorinsk tankegang, er det ikke den allegoriske symbolikken som er mest interessant, men den tropologiske, samt understrekingen av at den ytre kirkedagsfeiring bør være modell for den indre kirkehelg den troende bør feire i sitt hjerte, som er Guds tempel. Tilnærmingen bør være teologisk, mer enn filologisk, for innflytelsen viser seg ikke først og fremst i direkte tekstlige paralleller, men mer i den grunnleggende teologiske tankebygningen; i den eksegetiske metoden, i forståelsen av begrepet «kirke», i benyttelsen av kirkerommet som pedagogisk modell for sjelens kirke eller tempel. Når Hugo av St. Victor i *De sacramentis* skal forklare den mystiske betydning av de liturgiske handlinger biskopen utfører ved kirkeinnvielsen, åpner han med ordene “*Domus dedicanda, anima sanctificanda est*”. Det synes å være grunntanken også i den norrøne kirkedagsprekenen.



## Defining the Medieval Icelandic *þættir*

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A plausible first reaction to the title of this paper might be: “Hasn’t that already been done?” As to so many questions regarding medieval Icelandic literature the answer is complicated and consists of both a *yes* and a *no*. Indeed many good attempts have been made to describe and explain what *þættir* are. A.U. Bååth in 1885 argued that they were the building blocks of sagas and Vogt in 1920 agreed with him. This notion became to be known as the *þátrr*-theory and was harshly objected and the general view for decades was that *þættir* were digressions malforming the otherwise good and historical sagas that they were preserved within. The 1970s were a golden age for *þættir* research and different scholars took different approaches to describing and defining *þættir*. John Lindow took an etymological approach and explained the roots of the word ‘*þátrr*’ and where and in which context it appears in medieval Icelandic sources. A. Faulkes used the method of comparison and described *þættir* through their differences from sagas and argued the relationship between the two was similar to that of the modern novella and a novel. Under the influence of other structuralistic approaches to medieval Icelandic literature it was also in the 70s that Joseph Harris made his renowned structural and thematical analyzes of the 31 *þættir* that have become known as the *Íslendingaþættir*, featuring, as the name indicates, an Icelander in the main role. In more recent years Ármann Jakobsson has in his zealous writings *Morkinskinna* however argued for the king as a main character in *þættir* and emphasised their function in the narrative context they are preserved. So *yes* there are many good descriptions of *þættir*, but as all previous research has only addressed a limited number of *þættir* and leave the rest of the corpus unexplained I must say *no* as an extensive definition of the corpus is lacking.

The contradictions are rooted in the diversity of *þættir*. *Þættir* are preserved in the context of all saga genres but also share characteristics that suggest that they are a genre of their own. They can seem as malformations in their context but are also brilliantly written. Their subjects range from fantastic trolls and travels to domestic feuds, from featuring heroes on the verge of having superpowers to scalds seeking fame and fortune and further to simple farmers. The shortest *þættir* are only a page in an edition while the longest compare to the shortest of sagas. In manuscripts *þættir* are transmitted as interpolations, independent narratives and appendixes to sagas and can be called addressed as a ‘*þátrr*’, ‘*hluti*’, ‘*ævintýr*’ or a ‘*saga*’ if indeed addressed at all. This does however not make them indefinable, but means that one definition does not fit all.

Based on my analyses of the structure, contextuality and terminology of *þættir* in *Morkinskinna* and *Flateyjarbók* I find it reasonable to speak of three different *þættir* types. I have (for the lack of better terms) chosen to call them *interlaced* *þættir*, *differentiated* *þættir* and *unnamed* *þættir*, and though my primary aim will be to introduce and argue for these three *þættir*-types, I hope to present a model that can contribute to explaining and uniting to the hitherto divided *þættir* research.

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## Erik or Jonas? Taking in the New Faith and Mapping Christianity

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In Viking Age Svealand, Christianity had a hard time getting a grip on the souls of the population. Adam writes about their unwillingness to accept Christ and the relapses into heathendom. But what is conversion and when are person or a population Christians at heart? Richard Bulliet studied the introduction of Islam into Persia and figured that personal names could be a meter of how much the new religion was accepted and considered a part of the culture. The early Christian kings of Scandinavia all had Christian names but the traditional names were the ones that were used. The Christian runic inscriptions do not contain any large amount of Christian names until late. There is also a possibility that the use of heathen grave fields for Christian burials could be an indicator of the internalization of Christianity. The grave field of Kyrsta in Uppland is continually used in to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. This paper argues that Bullietts method may be used on the Scandinavian material and that we may be able to map the rate at which the Christian faith were internalized by the population of each territory.

Fornjótr's Descendants. Reading *Orkneyinga Saga's* Origin Myth

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*Fornjótr hefir konungr heitit; hann réð fyrir því landi, er kallat [er] Finnland ok Kvenland.* This is the very first sentence in the compound text now known as *Orkneyinga saga*. It introduces a rather unusual Scandinavian origin myth which proclaims Fornjótr as the ancestor of the earls of Orkney. Fornjótr may be identical with the primeval giant and anthropomorphic figure Ymir (Aurgelmir), made of the elements fire, air and water. Fornjótr's line continues with Kári (the north wind), Frosti (frost) and Snær (snow), who are equally associated with these elements, personifying the northern winter. Thus, taken together with the geographic position of Fornjótr's realm, *Orkneyinga saga* describes the ancestors of the earls of Orkney as archaically rooted in the far and wintry north, as giants and as kings, and also as exclusively male. With these elements, the origin myth of the earls of Orkney differs markedly from those of their Scandinavian peers, the earls of Hlaðir or the Hárfagri kings of Norway. The paper discusses the Orkney earls' mythical origins in a comparative perspective within the context of the time(s) of compilation of the text and proposes possible cultural, political and ideological interpretations.

## “Noirse-made-earsy”: Old Scandinavia in *Finnegans Wake*

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This paper will aim to answer two questions. First, why did James Joyce make such extensive use of Old Norse-Icelandic literature in *Finnegans Wake*? Second, what are the main characteristics of his use of the Old Norse literary past?

The paper will make an answer to these two related questions by way of an analysis of the chapter of the *Wake* richest in Old Norse-Icelandic material, II.3, sometimes known as ‘The Pub’. The analysis will show how Joyce understood Old Norse-Icelandic literature as something of the past, as well as the ongoing significance this past has for the present in the *Wake*. This will involve answering why, for his final and most ambitious work, Joyce felt it was necessary to include so much material from Old Norse-Icelandic literature. The analysis will then outline how this past is used creatively in the *Wake* in order to produce a new work of imaginative literature.

## Kings, Colonies and the Myth of the North Atlantic

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From the mid-eighth century onwards, Scandinavian immigrants, primarily from Norway, left their homelands to found new colonies across the North Atlantic. The result was a Norse-speaking diaspora that encompassed settlements as far-flung as Orkney and Greenland, but which still had an over-arching ‘pan-Atlantic’ identity exemplified by language, culture, and the influence exerted by the kings of Norway. This, at least, is the impression given to us in thirteenth-century Icelandic saga literature—but how realistic is this impression? Could the ‘pan-Atlantic’ identity simply be a literary myth created by medieval Icelanders?

In this paper, I aim to offer a reassessment of the pan-Atlantic identity through a close study of Iceland’s neighbouring colonies in the North Atlantic — Orkney, the Faroe Islands and Greenland — looking in particular at the way in which these settlements are depicted within some of our key literary sources. My starting point is a group of texts that were probably produced in Iceland around the start of the thirteenth century. These texts include *Færeyinga saga* and *Orkneyinga saga*, two texts sometimes termed ‘political’ or ‘colonial’ sagas;<sup>1</sup> and two sagas that record events in Greenland, *Eiríks saga rauði* and *Grœnlendinga saga*. Each of these sagas purports to describe the history of Iceland’s neighbouring colonies, tracing their settlement and their conversion to Christianity, as well as detailing —however briefly — the connections between these settlements and the kings of Norway. To an extent, these sagas are problematic as historical sources, being the products of a time and place far removed from the events they purport to describe. Nonetheless, their very production may tell us something, if not about the societies that they depict, then about the thirteenth-century Icelandic society in which they were composed; and it is from this point of view that I use these sources.

This paper explores the fact that these sagas texts were all produced in Iceland within a space of twenty to thirty years, and questions the circumstances that may have given rise to these texts. Given that these sagas were produced around the time of, or shortly after, the writing of the first *konungasögur*, I question whether this Icelandic interest in the wider North Atlantic was simply an extension of their focus on Norwegian history, or whether the Icelanders had separate reasons for choosing to look closely at their neighbours before they wrote their own history. Central to this discussion is the interaction between these colonies and the kings of Norway as they are represented within these literary sources.

I focus on three key points in the sagas — settlement, conversion to Christianity and submission to Norway — and explore the way in which Norwegian kings always seem to be at the heart of these events. Certain kings — included among them Haraldr hárfagri, who triggered the migration to the new North Atlantic settlements, and Óláfr Tryggvason, who Christianised them — are typified in the literature as unifiers and

claimants to the greater Norse world in the Atlantic. I suggest, however, that these presentations are literary rather than historical, and that these kings were used by the Icelanders as a basis for the medieval notion of a unifying pan-Atlantic identity. I trace how myths about kings such as Haraldr hárfagri and Óláfr Tryggvason may have built up over time, culminating in their presentation in the thirteenth-century saga texts about the North Atlantic, and I question the way these myths may have been used by Icelanders in the face of growing Norwegian expansionism. Finally, I argue that the saga creation of a pan-Atlantic identity, in which all the Norse colonies were considered to be connected to Norway, the unifying roles awarded to the Norwegian kings, and in fact the very production of these saga texts, may tell us much about the mindset in Iceland in the thirteenth century. When the Icelanders chose to produce sagas about Orkney, the Faroes and Greenland, it was therefore not simply because they were interested in the role of the Norwegian kings in these islands, but also because they were interested in what the history of these settlements revealed about the status quo in Iceland itself. In this sense, these sagas, although looking at the wider North Atlantic, in fact tell us much about the cultural identity of the medieval Icelanders themselves.

#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Berman, M, ‘The Political sagas’, *Scandinavian Studies* 57 (1985), 113–29; Rowe, *The Development of Flateyjarbók: Iceland and the Norwegian Dynastic Crisis of 1389* (Odense, 2005), p. 17. A number of arguments exist that would see *Orkneyinga saga* as the product of an Orcadian rather than an Icelandic milieu; see, for example, Mundal, E., *The Vikings and Scotland—Impact and Influence. Report of a Conference organised by the Royal Society of Edinburgh, 20–22 September 2006*, Edinburgh. Nonetheless, a majority still hold that *Orkneyinga saga* had an Icelandic provenance, and that will be the viewpoint followed here.

## Disruptive Heroes and the Problematic Past: Odinic Anxieties in Saga Tradition

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That disruptive figures are a mainstay of Icelandic saga-narrative is nothing new – characters that cause (or attract) problems that disrupt the ideal rhythm of society are obviously necessary to a narrative tradition whose plots rely upon conflict. But interpreting the many sagas' portrayals of disruptive characters who are also heroes has proved difficult indeed. Not simply two-dimensional stock characters, the saga-authors' conflict-creating heroes are carefully rendered persons of startling contradictions, individuals whose moral ambivalence often perplexes the modern reader as much as it fascinates.

Our puzzlement has resulted in a wide-ranging scholarly discussion of disruptive heroes' literary antecedents, their complex roles in saga-narrative, and their broader importance to the social-history of Norse communities. This paper seeks to contribute to that overall discussion with a reading that views disruptive heroes as embodiments of a discomfiting past – that is, as persons in whom pre-Christian values and social practices, viewed as problematic and even anti-social, are often figured. By examining several kinds of disruptive figures – the poet-hero of the *Íslendingasögur* (Egill Skallagrímsson, Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld, etc.), the hero of outmoded values (Gísli Súrsson), and the legendary hero of Otherworldly antecedents (Sinfjötli, Starkaðr, etc.) –, and by drawing upon the insights of disability and queer theory, this study sheds new light on how saga-authors and their audiences understood, used, and were made uncomfortable by their past.



## Wit and Wisdom: Óðinn, Haukr Erlendsson and the Different Redactions of *Hervarar saga*

Hannah Burrows, University of Sydney, Australia

To many earlier societies, riddles were a crucial method of coming to terms with physical and mental environments. Writers and thinkers such as St. Paul, Aristotle, Augustine and Thomas Aquinas used them to grapple with theological and philosophical conundrums, and *aenigma* was an important trope in classical and medieval rhetorical teaching. Riddles must ultimately appear truthful to their audience's experience, yet also confound expectation. By pointing up the anomalous, they implicitly shed light on the everyday and how it differs to the riddle's description; in acknowledging what is unusual, perhaps even humorous, they allow us an insight into how the cultures that produce them construct their understanding of the world, and demonstrate their particular take on it.

Whether or not riddles are considered part of a culture's 'wisdom literature', it is a common observation that they may share certain aims and strategies. Interconnections between eddic wisdom poetry the collection of Old Norse-Icelandic riddles found in the *fornaldarsaga Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks* have sometimes been observed, but the topic requires further investigation. In this paper I explore the ways in which the world view of the riddles can be compared to that of eddic poetry, but also, and crucially, how the riddles' nature and form makes their perspective different.

The *Hervarar saga* riddles are a repository of information on issues ranging from mythology to morality, the natural world to the human condition, and skills and crafts to leisure activities. I will look at how the riddles perceive and depict their subjects, and what they can add to our understanding of how medieval Scandinavians conceptualised and defined their world and their relation to it. I will also consider the ways in which the riddles are playful and tongue-in-cheek, creatively engaging with poetic traditions and delighting in the more cerebral aspects of poetic technique.

The transmission history of the Old Norse-Icelandic riddles has much to say about their function and purpose: both their inclusion, as part of *Hervarar saga*, in the wide-ranging manuscript Hauksbók, and their separate existence in other learned contexts. I will therefore consider the evidence for how the riddles were used to illuminate their place in interpreting and explaining the world.

## The Laws of King Óláfr the Saint

Alexander V. Busygin, University College London, England

The slogan of just and equitable laws, the ‘laws of St Óláfr’, played a conspicuous part in the dynastic struggles of the late twelfth century in Norway, as well as in the subsequent rise of the strong monarchy of the thirteenth century. These laws were presented in contemporary sources as ever-valid in principle, but subject to oblivion, decay and disregard in practice and thus often in need of restoration. The theme of this paper is an examination of the origin and early history of this political myth. In attempting to go beyond the overused model of the fictionalization of a historical fact and to bring into clear focus divergent and sometimes conflicting factors that contributed to the growing importance of the presumed laws of the saint king, I will analyse some chapters in the Frostathing Law that refer to ‘the days of Óláfr’ as a benchmark for defining people’s rights and obligations and will suggest a new explanation for the marking-off of the ‘text of Óláfr’ and the ‘text of Magnús’ in the manuscripts of the Gulathing Law. It is hoped that by studying the legendary ‘laws of St Óláfr’, additional light may be thrown on medieval Norwegian concept of law in general.

## Archaeology, Sagas and the Mosfell Excavations

Jesse Byock, UCLA, USA

Iceland has extensive combination of sources for the study of its earliest period. These include significant archaeological remains, numerous medieval narratives, and wide-ranging possibilities for scientific analysis. The question of how to combine these various sources into a viable study has been a source of great confusion. In particular, there is the immediate problem of how to combine archaeology with Iceland's medieval writings.

This paper considers the issues of integrating sagas and archaeology, and it is set in contrast to the modern Icelandic archaeological trend of ignoring the written sources. The discussion draws on the archaeology undertaken in recent years by the Mosfell Archaeological Project (MAP). The lecture reviews the Mosfell excavations in light of the specific findings: longhouse, graveyards, and church.

The Mosfell excavation is an interdisciplinary research project. The work employs the tools of history, archaeology, anthropology, forensics, environmental sciences, and saga studies. The research is constructing a picture of human habitation and environmental change in the region of Mosfell (Mosfellssveit) in southwestern Iceland. The Mosfell Valley (Mosfellsdalur), the surrounding highlands, and the lowland coastal areas are a 'valley system,' that is, as an interlocking series of natural and man-made pieces. Beginning in the ninth-century settlement or *landnám* period this valley system developed into an Icelandic community. Focusing on this valley system, we are unearthing the prehistory and early history of the Mosfell region. We seek the data to provide an in-depth understanding of how this countryside or *sveit* evolved from its earliest origins. The archaeology, and the concept of how to employ Iceland's written texts, has implications for the study of the Viking Age.

Misplaced, Misread and Misunderstood?  
*Vafþrúðnismál* in Codex Upsaliensis DG 11

Maja Bäckvall, Uppsala University, Sweden

The quoting of eddic poetry in *Gylfaginning* is often explained by scholars as a way of lending authenticity to the mythological stories told by the *æsir*. The narrative in *Gylfaginning* also paraphrases eddic poetry, both in direct connection to a quoted stanza and elsewhere. This use of eddic poetry suggests that the author/compiler of *Edda* considered it to be a trustworthy source of pre-Christian mythology. That view of eddic poetry must have been shared by the audience of *Edda*, either beforehand or through reading/hearing the work. In that light, studying the eddic poetry in *Edda* can give us clues to how the poems were perceived in medieval Iceland. I study the quotations of eddic poetry in the Codex Upsaliensis DG 11, well known for being one of the main manuscripts of *Edda* while also being deemed too corrupted for much use in critical editions. Regardless of whether or not you agree with that opinion, it cannot be contested that the manuscript was used in the 14<sup>th</sup> century when it was written, and that the variants in it must have some bearing on how the work *Edda* was constructed in the minds of the audience. In my paper, I will discuss the stanzas quoted from *Vafþrúðnismál* in DG 11; they contain some of the more intriguing variants, and the poem may also be the reason why one chapter of *Gylfaginning* seems to have been “moved” in DG 11.

## Why Were the Sagas of Icelanders Written?

Chris Callow, University of Birmingham, England

This paper aims to offer fresh insight into one of the fundamental questions about this well-known genre of sagas. It draws on the recent work on the nature of Íslendingasögur of, among others, Gisli Sigurðsson and Theodore Andersson. It will consider a small number of case studies of particular Íslendingasögur within the wider context of the recorded political histories of the regions in which they are set and the production of other texts in (or for) those regions including Landnámabók and the Contemporary sagas (samtidarsögur). It will assess the degree to which individual Íslendingasögur were designed to passively record local tradition or else to actively shape view of the past in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Iceland.

## Mythic-Heroic Motifs in *Eiríks saga víðfǫrli*

Christian Carlsen, University of Oxford, England

Over the past few years, the brief but wide-ranging saga about Eiríkr víðfǫrli has on several occasions featured in arguments concerning fourteenth-century codices and their thematic design. With reference to several of the five surviving medieval text witnesses of the saga Elizabeth Ashman Rowe and Elise Kleivane have suggested that the story told in *Esv* – a saga which fits uneasily into any of the categories of Norse prose commonly distinguished – becomes more accessible when approached through the textual environment in which it figures. The two most interesting MSS in this respect are AM 657 c, 4to (c. 1350-1400) and GKS 1005, folio (*Flateyjarbók*; c. 1387-95). In the first, *Esv* is embedded in a distinctly homiletic group of texts made up of *Mikjál's saga*, *Mariú saga egipzku*, and *Guðmundar saga*. As Kleivane argues, this environment, if drawn into our reading, could help augment *Esv*'s devotional themes and in turn suggest one angle from which contemporary audiences approached the narrative. In the second MS, *Flateyjarbók*, the themes at play in the texts surrounding *Esv* are chiefly historiographic. It is preceded by a genealogical poem describing the settlement of Norway (*Hversu Noregr byggðist*), and followed by the substantial sagas of Óláfr I and II and the story of Western Scandinavian conversion contained therein. As Rowe has shown, this historiographic context accentuates especially those aspects of *Esv* concerned with the theme of conversion and ideologies of kingship.

Kleivane's and Rowe's analyses have led to new insights as to potential contemporary understandings of a text, and, given that the author of the saga evinces a keen interest in different generic conventions, an awareness of inter-textual relationships also within codices is interesting and relevant. Yet it is doubtful in how far this approach helps us to understand the design of the saga itself, and especially the notion that the saga's meaning is somehow constructed by its environment seems to do the narrative injustice. As *Esv* has in fact received very little attention as a unified narrative in the past, the objective of this paper is to examine some of the motifs integral to the story for what they may tell us about the saga's thematic versatility. I focus especially on the intertextual qualities of three features that seem to define the plot across the different redactions – the protagonist's epithet, *viðfǫrli*, the object of his quest, *Ódáinsakr*, and the striking scene of the dragon on the *steinbogi*.

Common to these three moments in the narrative is that they produce strong associations with contemporary historiographic and mythic-heroic literature. The sobriquet *viðfǫrli*, applied as it is to a pre-Christian Norwegian royal, links the protagonist to family of mythologised heroes of Scandinavian and Eastern origin. In Snorri's *Ynglinga saga*, Óðinn is described as «mjök viðfǫrull», a kind of far-travel bound up with martial ambition and prestige; also Alexander the Great and Hercules bear this by-name in ON encyclopaedic writing and historiography. When Eiríkr returns to Norway as a kind of prototypical Scandinavian apostle, however, the implication of this motif changes, and

we are made to think of prominent Christian far-travellers, figures such as Yngvar of *Yngvars saga* and Þorvaldr of *Þorvalds þáttur* who in the tenth and eleventh centuries developed into standard-bearers of the new faith on the peripheries of Christendom.

It is unclear what, if anything, the ‹field of the undead› may have meant to pre-Christian northerners. The sources that do mention such a place – Saxo's *Gesta Danorum* and *Hervarar saga* – differ markedly in their portrayals of it. J. Grimm suggested that the term may have developed from \**Óðinsakr*, and thus have been associated with *Valhöll*. In the course of the saga, this quasi mythic realm which Eiríkr instinctively set out to discover is given a fresh definition; the King of Miklagard explains that it is in fact no other than the Christian 'land of the living' – Paradise. The *dreki* guarding the *steinbogi*, finally, is a popular motif in fourteenth-century Riddarasögur, echoed amongst other places in *Konráðs saga keisarasonar* and *Hectors saga*. It also recalls heroic narratives of earlier provenance, however, the *stānboga* in the lair of *Beowulf*'s third dragon perhaps furnishing its *Urtyp*. Instead of confronting the dragon physically, the protagonist – in the most curious scene of the story – jumps into its gape and gains by this route entry into the Earthly Paradise.

Is there a pattern behind the employment of these mythic-heroic motifs in the saga? Rich echoes of contemporary narratives direct us to similar topoi outside of the saga. This highlights their conventionality but also ways in which the *Esv*-author manipulates conventions. May this active involvement of contemporary literary motifs help explain the saga's diverse codicological homes and potential contextual functions?

## Konungsbróðir, konungsmágr and konungsfrændi: Royalty by Proxy?

Edward Carlsson Browne, University of Aberdeen, Scotland

During the civil war era in Norway a succession of child kings and weak rulers created power vacuums which were quickly filled by those closest to them, whether friends or relatives, who shared in the benefits of royal status and exercised power on their behalf. In this context I intend to study a succession of individuals who appear in sagas dealing with the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and who bore the bynames *konungsbróðir*, *konungsmágr* or *konungsfrændi*.

*Konungsbróðir* is used once in Snorri's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, but these terms are otherwise only found in sagas dealing with the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Some refer to influential figures, such as Árni konungsmágr á Stóðreimi and Skúli jarl Bárðarson, whereas others such as Marteinn konungsfrændi are merely a name in a list and we cannot even tell the kings they claimed kinship to.

I will study the usage of my terms in respect of the frequency with which they are used to describe individuals, the kings to which they were related and their apparent social statuses.

I will also investigate why other individuals who were close kin to royalty are not referred to using this form of byname and assess whether this is meaningful for our understanding of faction dynamics in civil war Norway. The question of whether we should think of these individuals as royal or non-royal, and indeed of whether such a binary opposition is a useful concept, will form the underlying basis of my discussion.



## Posts of Power: The Sagas' Use of the Past Exemplified by an Iron Age Building.

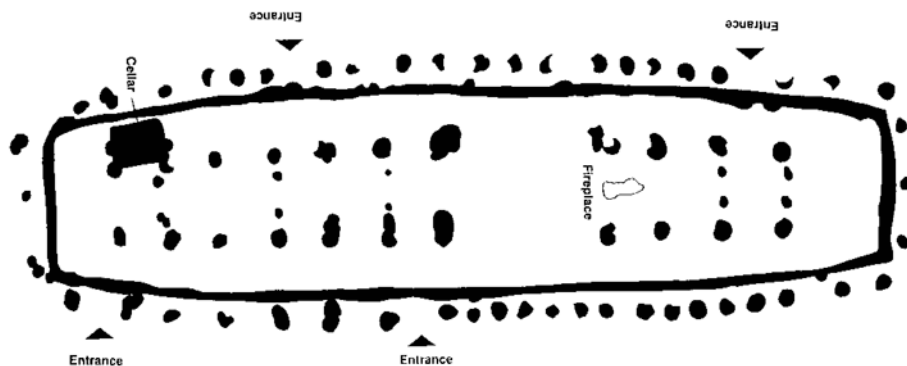
Lydia Carstens, Stiftung Schleswig Holsteinische Landesmuseen Schloss Gottorf,  
Germany

The Iron Age “hall” is a well-known phenomenon in recent archaeology. Several so called “halls” have been detected in Northern Europe and the number is still increasing. The impressive measurements, location, context and find distribution indicate that a chieftain or king had lived there.

The frequently used term “hall” thus derives from Old Norse literature, where “*holl*” is mostly presented as the residence of the Scandinavian kings. But other terms occur as well, for example *salr*, *hof*, *skáli* or *stofa*. The differences between these terms, probably depending on time, geography or a different use, are still under discussion. A proper distinction was still lacking in philology when archaeology started using the term for a special kind of building. This resulted in a huge amount of “halls” between the Lofoten Islands and Hedeby, which soon made it hard to believe that so many kings should have lived there at almost the same time.

However, archaeology can provide posts and finds – literature might fill the building with life. Therefore, one possibility to solve the dilemma of the different terms would be to look for the description of halls in the different texts of Old Norse literature. Does a hall occur in the Sagas of the Icelanders as well as in Legendary sagas or Eddic poetry? Is there any difference? Do the literary descriptions fit the archaeological account? Can the medieval Old Norse *holl* be found in the remains of the Scandinavian Iron Age? Can the written accounts be transferred into archaeological records or do we have to separate text and finding strictly from each other? And the other way round: How did the sagas use the past – how were physical remains treated in literature?

Using the example of the Iron Age hall the saga's use of the past will be investigated. This investigation is made to receive a deeper insight into the composition of the text, but also to look for a possible *longue durée* phenomenon, which is to portrait power and wealth with the help of monuments. In the Iron Age power was illustrated in the landscape by monuments. In medieval literature these monuments were taken up as well and it is one possibility, that they were used almost in the same manner: To portrait power and wealth. The time gap between text and thing would be filled by the symbolic meaning of the object – a thought worth to discuss?



The hall in Lejre (house IV), after Tom Christensen, Lejrehallen. In: Kongehallen fra Lejre – et rekonstruktionsprojekt. International workshop 25-27. November 1993 på Historisk-Arkæologisk Forsøgscenter, Lejre, om rekonstruktionen af vikingehallen fra Gl. Lejre og et vikingetidsmiljø. (Teknisk Rapport Nr. 1. 1994) Lejre 1994, p. 23.

## L'aumône en vivres comme expression du mouvement communautaire dans l'Islande médiévale

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Dans l'Islande médiévale, la vie locale était rythmée par une institution aux origines obscures, le *hreppur*, proche des charités et des guildes d'Europe. On confiait à cinq *sóknarmen* la tâche d'évaluer la richesse et les ressources de chaque *bóndi* habitant la communauté. Ils avaient pour tâche principale de collecter l'aumône en vivre (*matgjöf*), de l'entreposer puis de la distribuer aux réunions d'automne entre les pauvres de la communauté (*ómagar*). Les sections de la *Grágás* concernant le *matgjöf* sont nombreuses. Pourtant, ce ne sont pas les chapitres concernant les indigents et les communautés d'habitants qui fournissent des informations sur la provenance et la composition de cette aumône, mais les *Kristinna laga þátr* (*Grágás* Ia, pp. 30-31). L'aumône en vivres est prélevée sur la nourriture économisée par les membres d'une maisonnée pendant trois jours de jeûne lors du Carême. La *Grágás*, imprécise dans le dénombrement des jours, explique plus loin qu'il s'agit du mercredi, du vendredi et du samedi des quatre semaines du Carême (*Grágás* Ia, pp. 32-33). On peut émettre l'hypothèse que cette nourriture, qui doit être conservée jusqu'à sa distribution à l'automne, ne peut être composée de denrée périssable. L'interdiction de mettre de côté du poisson indiquerait que le *matgjöf* se composerait principalement de viande, nourriture interdite lors des jeûnes du Carême. La partie des lois chrétiennes concernant les fêtes religieuses et les interdits alimentaires des Islandais peut fournir des indications sur le type de viande mis de côté à l'attention de l'aumône en vivres (*Grágás*, Ia, pp. 33-35). La viande autorisée par ces lois provient tout d'abord de l'élevage puis de la chasse et enfin la pêche.

Les sources diplomatiques offrent également des informations sur l'aumône en vivre et principalement sur la place qu'occupe la viande de baleine dans cette distribution. Plusieurs chartes mentionnent l'usage que la communauté fait des baleines échouées. La charte de la « demeure du Christ » à Upsal dans le Landbrot (1150), insiste sur le rôle des *hreppstjórar* dans l'administration locale et leur influence sur le *bóndi* du lieu (*DI*, I, pp. 199-200). Mais une charte de coutume se distingue de l'ensemble des sources diplomatiques par son détail de la procédure juridique à adopter en cas d'échouage d'animaux. Il s'agit d'une réglementation concernant l'usage des communaux de la région d'Hornafjörður. Le texte fut établi en 1245 par ordre de Sæmundur Ormsson de la lignée des Svínfellingar, seigneur du Quartier Est (*DI*, I pp. 536-537). On y lit un témoignage concernant la répartition des baleines échouées entre les membres de la communauté d'habitants et les indigents. Le *hreppur* fonctionne ici dans un cas concret puisqu'il est bien stipulé qu'un dixième de la baleine doit être versé aux nécessiteux par le biais des *hreppstjórar*. Les obligations concernant les aumônes en vivres apparaissent également, établies selon le revenu du propriétaire foncier et collectées sur la consommation de l'ensemble de sa maisonnée. Ce document fournit un exemple unique sur le fonctionnement de l'aumône en vivres au sein de la communauté d'habi-

tants et pose aussi la question du rapport entre les élites et les communautés d'habitants à l'échelle régionale.

Il existe très peu d'exemples consacrés au fonctionnement des *hreppar* dans les sagas. Pourtant, même s'il est difficile d'interpréter le silence des sagas, on peut essayer de lire entre les lignes en ayant les textes de loi à l'esprit. La *Ljósvetninga saga* est la seule source narrative qui mentionne explicitement les provisions concernant les communautés d'habitants (*Ljósvetninga saga*, éd. IF X, 1940, pp. 117-121 : *hreppaskil*). On y découvre des *bændur* appauvris par les mauvaises récoltes, qui fournissent malgré tout l'aumône en vivres aux *ómagar*. Dans ce récit, les *bændur* se tournent vers un des leurs, un influent *bóndi*, Ófeigur, pour solliciter de leur *góði* Guðmundur le puissant qu'il réduise les coûts de sa visite annuelle. On comprend que même les *bændur* aisés conservent un statut précaire avec la venue d'épisodes de disette. L'aumône en vivre qu'ils doivent fournir leur permet de vivoter durant l'hiver, mais ne leur laisse pas assez pour se permettre une hospitalité trop coûteuse envers leur chef et son escorte. Malgré le silence des sources narratives, les communautés d'habitants et l'aumône en vivres constituent une part importante de la vie communautaire islandaise. Les lois décrivent une société plus complexe et hiérarchisée que ne le laisse entendre la littérature de sagas. Les communautés d'habitants offrent ainsi un équilibre social permettant de faire face à des conditions de vie difficiles et à des événements imprévisibles. Quiconque tente d'échapper à son devoir au sein de la communauté se voit railler par les membres, comme en témoigne cette strophe :

*Hefr of hrepp inn øfra,*

*- hann er görr at þrotsmanni,*

*Þats kotmanna kynni -,*

*Kalfr matgjafir halfar.*

(*Sturlunga saga*, éd. [1988] 2010, ch. 169, p. 228.)

The Mystery of *Siðbót* 47-49:  
The Role of Modern Transcriptions in Textual Transmission

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The devotional poem *Siðbót* occupies folios 71r-73v, the final leaves of AM 713, 4to. This is the only medieval witness for the text. Many of the leaves at the front and the back of the manuscript are in poor condition, and fol. 73v is so badly worn and discolored that three stanzas of *Siðbót* are by and large illegible. It is uncertain how or when the leaf was damaged. Three distinguished nineteenth- and twentieth-century Icelandic scholars transcribed the text at the Arnamagnæan Institute in Copenhagen: Steingrímur Thorsteinsson, Jón Þórkelsson, and Jón Helgason. Steingrímur, the first among them, noted that stanzas 47-49 were illegible. Jón Þórkelsson, the next, and Jón Helgason were seemingly able to transcribe the entire text without difficulty, although they did not arrive at precisely the same readings. This paper will outline the problem of this unusual transmission history with the help of facsimiles and discuss the challenge it presents to a modern editor of the poem. That editor would be me, and I look forward to receiving the reactions and suggestions of the audience.

## A Voyage round Egill Skallagrimsson

George Clark, Queens University, Canada

I begin with an analysis of the scene in chapter 80 (in Bjarni's edition) and chapter 78 (Nordal's) in which Egill buries his most loved son, returns home and locks himself in his bed-closet, his wife sends a servant to summon Egil's daughter, Thorgerdr, and the episode which ends Egill's quest for death and his composition of the *Sonatorrek*. The episode illustrates the depth of Egill's love for his son, Boedvarr, his wife's love for Egill, his servants loyalty to Egill—few men enjoy the respect of their servants—and his daughter's willingness to risk her life to save her father's. The episode has three acts; at its the turning point Egill asks (Thorgerdr, the audience at large) “what hope/expectation is there I can live with this loss/grief,” the question admits, for the first time in this drama, Egil's realization that his course of action bears powerfully on other people including those he loves.

Egill capitulates readily to the ruse that saves his life, and his daughter's, as he realizes that dying for sorrow at the death of one loved child will entail the death of another. He composes the *Sonatorrek* and proceeds to ensure the futures of his daughters, his step-daughter and niece, and his least-loved son, Thorsteinn whose son Skuli, Egill's grandson, becomes a Viking, fights seven battles abroad, participates in the defeat and death of the Norwegian king, Olaf Trygvason, and (like Egill) returns to Borg, lives a long life leaving many distinguished descendants. Skuli's story briefly recalls Egill's and validates Egill's status as hero.

## Lack of Agency in *Landnámabók*'s Haraldr hárfagri

Betsie A. M. Cleworth, Birkbeck, University of London, England

This paper will explore the portrayal of King Haraldr hárfagri in the Sturlubók and Hauksbók redactions of *Landnámabók*. It argues that Haraldr lacks agency in *Landnámabók*, being depicted only through the actions of his subordinates and the reactions of his subjects. This depiction of Haraldr in *Landnámabók* is compared to his portrayal and that of other early Norwegian kings in Old Icelandic literature as a whole. To investigate to what extent this portrayal is fictional, and the role of collective cultural memory in its construction, these questions are considered: is Haraldr's lack of agency a mere function of the focus and style of *Landnámabók*, or is it caused by the absence of a clear historical tradition about Haraldr hárfagri's role in Iceland's settlement? A further possibility is that the portrayal is designed to convey a political message about Norwegian kings, relevant both to Iceland's settlement and to the contemporary political environment of the redactors. This possibility, that Haraldr's portrayal is a politically motivated fiction, is then considered in some depth and its features and implications outlined.

## What Were the Uses of the Past According to Old Norse Literary Texts?

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The matter at issue breaks down into two related questions: where do we find expressions of the pastness of the past in Old Norse-Icelandic texts and what use do these texts, and presumably their composers and audiences, make of ‘the past’?

This paper will consider a representative sample of texts from various genres, both prose and poetry, and consider different kinds of ‘pastness’, the cultural past (including religion, myth and legend), the past of officialdom and historical record, and the past according to families and individuals, noting that these categories do overlap in certain circumstances. The paper will look at the different uses of the past within these various categories of discourse and attempt an overview of what ‘pastness’ meant to Viking-Age and medieval Scandinavians.



## The Jew Who Wasn't There: Anti-Semitism, Absence and Anxiety in Medieval Scandinavia

Richard Cole, University College London, England

In the year 1350 the island of Gotland was seized by blood-soaked hysteria. Nine Gotlanders confessed to being “villains ... poisoners and betrayers of all Christendom”<sup>1</sup> - “...”. They plotted to poison fresh water sources “in the cities of Stockholm, Västerås, Arboga [and the rivers] which flow through Sweden”. The devastation they supposedly planned would have been nothing less than genocide: “... within one year not one living person would have survived on all the island of Gotland, except their own.” They carried letters signed in Greek or Hebrew, and admitted to being hired by Jewish agents abroad. The plot thickened: not only was the plan to have taken place over Easter, but two of the nine criminals claimed to be priests. The head of the so-called conspirators, an organ player named Didrik (Tidericus), cried out “even as he went to the flames <All of Christendom is lost...>”.

Of course, such fits of panic, hatred, and bloodshed were not uncommon during the age of the Black Death, and excepting the brief sojourn of the Iberian Ibrāhīm ibn Ya‘qūb, who described Hedeby in 965 A.D, there are no records of Jewish visitors anywhere in Scandinavia until the end of the sixteenth century. Thus the hysteria on Gotland has been attributed to “an attitude that was obviously imported to Visby from abroad”.<sup>3</sup> This fits with the way that antagonism towards Jews has traditionally been modelled elsewhere in Medieval Scandinavia. Consider Bjarne Berulfsen’s designation of anti-Semitism in Norway and Iceland as an *importvare*.<sup>4</sup> The implication is that such sentiments were largely irrelevant in the mind of the average Scandinavian. Later Berulfsen hints at the distinction of anti-Judaism (pertaining to religion) vs. anti-Semitism (pertaining to ethnicity).<sup>6</sup> Discussing the general treatment of Jews in Old Norse literature, he commented that “[t]his ill-feeling can hardly be interpreted as anti-Semitism in the modern sense”<sup>7</sup>. The orthodoxy has been that the absence of Jewish settlement in Medieval Scandinavia led to an absence of concern over the Jews as people. Any (mis) treatment the Jews might receive in literature or art derives from concern over Judaism as a religious belief.

But can it be that the horror of what unfolded in Gotland was not simply a case of ‘seeds falling on virgin soil’? By 1350, the image of the Jew had been steadily maturing and developing beyond the form of a simple didactic implement for over a century. For example, the Swedish *Fornsvenska Legendariat*, Norwegian/Icelandic *Mariu saga* and even the Latin *Historia Norvegiæ* all contain explicitly racialised images of Jews.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, rather than imagining the Jews as a distant, irrelevant or foreign element in Medieval Scandinavian thought, there is a case to be put for conceiving of them as a powerful and disturbing source of collective anxiety. We should not forget that the Scandinavians - in particular the Icelanders - were some of the last Europeans to receive

the Christian faith. Reconciling Christian identity with a pagan past is a position we can see being negotiated in many genres of Old Norse literature. Every textual encounter between a Medieval Scandinavian and the Jewish topos can be figured as a dialogue between the first and last witnesses of Christ. Perceiving, maintaining, and yet questioning the absence of the Jews was just as emotive to authors in thirteenth century Iceland and Norway as it was to the lynch mobs of fourteenth century Gotland. Seen against this background, ought we to imagine the events of 1350 not as the beginning of anti-Semitism in Medieval Scandinavia, but its bloody climax?

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup>All references are translated from:

*Codex diplomaticus Lubecensis, Lübeckisches Urkundenbuch 1. Abt. Urkundenbuch der Stadt Lübeck.* vol. 3. (Lübeck: F. Asfchenfeldt, 1871) no. 110, pp. 105-106.

<sup>2</sup>Benedictow, Ole Jørgen. *The Black Death, 1346-1353: The Complete History.* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2004) p. 178.

<sup>3</sup>This article is, to my knowledge, the only substantial treatment of anti-Semitism in West Norse literature:

Berulfsen, Bjarne. "Antisemittisme som litterær importvare", *Edda*, 58 (1958)

<sup>4</sup>Ibid. at p. 125.

<sup>5</sup>For further definitions:

Gager, John G. *The Origins of Anti-Semitism.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985) pp. 13-33

<sup>6</sup>Berulfsen, Bjarne. "Jøder. Norge og Island" in *Kulturhistorisk Leksikon for nordisk middelalder.* vol. 8. (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde & Bagger, 1963) p. 77.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid. at p. 76.

<sup>8</sup>For example:

*Ett Forn-Svenskt Legendarium.* ed. by George Stephens. 3. vols. (Stockholm: P.A. Norstedt & Söner, 1847) pp. 80-86.

"Af klerk ok gyðingvm" in *Mariu Saga. Legender om Jomfru Maria og hendes jertegn, efter gamle haandskrifter.* ed. by C.R. Unger(Christiania: Brøgger & Christie, 1871) pp. 203-207.

*Historia Norwegie.* ed. by Inger Ekrem & Lars Boje Mortensen. trans. by Peter Fisher. (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2006) p. 65, 67.

## Mediating Memories in *Íslendinga saga*

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The study of memory in Old Icelandic literature tends to focus on memories of the distant past, with the emphasis on the way in which the contemporary situation influenced and constructed the writers' views of the past. In contrast, comparatively little attention has been paid to how memories were mediated in literature about the contemporary situation; how the saga writers' present was viewed through the prism of inherited narrative conventions.

This paper examines the construction of memory narratives in *Íslendinga saga*, the section of the *Sturlunga saga* compilation attributed to Sturla Þórðarson and described in the text as based in part on eyewitness reports and personal memories. Working from the premise that memories are culturally conditioned and that existing narrative forms and conventions, whether oral or written, will influence the way events are remembered before they are written down, I will analyse the contrasting narrative strategies used to mediate episodes from the recent past in *Íslendinga saga* and consider what narrative frameworks were available to writers in the late thirteenth century and beyond, and conversely what kind of memories could not be articulated. In particular, I will query the commonly held view that the passing of time was one of the principal factors in the process of saga narrativisation and that the content itself was neutral.

## Bifröst Re-interpreted

Mark-Kevin Deavin, University of Bayreuth, Germany

This paper seeks to re-examine traditional interpretations of Bifröst in the Poetic and Prose Edda, and suggests an alternative explanation of the name and the possible concept behind it. Bifröst is identified at various places in Snorri's *Gyfalginning*, as well as in the Eddic lays *Grímnismál* and *Fáfnismál* where it is described as Bilröst. It will be argued that not only can the root words of Bifröst and Bilröst be seen to be close etymologically, but that they appear to share a common metaphoric meaning.

Most explanations interpret Bifröst as a literal bridge connecting Midgard and Asgard (ásbrú), or else follow Snorri in arguing that the concept represents a rainbow (*regnbogi*). Interpretations of the word Bilröst have tended to support this line of argument, by proposing a meaning of 'temporary path' (ON *bil* : moment).<sup>1</sup> In contrast, Jan de Vries has proposed the possibility of interpreting *bil* as having a root meaning in 'trembling, shaking' and on this basis raises the possibility of a link to ON *bifa* and consequently to Bifröst as '*der schwankende weg*' (the trembling/shaking path). In de Vries' view, however, Bilröst is the Milky Way : '*die schwankende, nachgiebige himmelstrasse*'.<sup>2</sup>

This paper argues that while de Vries is probably correct in his interpretation of the etymological roots and literal meaning of Bifröst/ Bilröst, he neglects to recognise the most appropriate metaphoric connotation. This is because the key to unlocking the meaning of the names appears to lie in the realisation that they are actually poetic kennings which conform in form and meaning to numerous other kennings representing the same phenomenon : namely the trembling, shuddering, shaking movement of the sea or ocean.

Evidence for this can be found by analysing the roots of the names Bifröst/ Bilröst. It has been speculated that name could denote a way, path, trail or road of some kind (e.g. Simek : '*swaying road to heaven*'), but what appears not to have been considered is the specific association of these concepts with the sea in Old Norse and skaldic poetry. This association is substantiated by one of the largest groups of sea kenning which denote the sea as a way, road, path or trail. Within this group are a significant number of examples using *röst* - some examples being *bláröst* (the blue trail); *hafröst* (sea-way); *lǫgröst* (water -path); *Gylfa röst* (Gylfi's road) and *Huglar röst* (Hugl's (island) way).<sup>3</sup>

Anthony Faulkes has pointed out, moreover, that Bifröst is depicted by way of ON *rein* meaning 'strip of ground' or 'way', referring specifically to a kenning for Heimdallr being *ragna reinvári* i.e. reliable defender of *rein* i.e. Bifröst. This is

significant because ON *rein* also appears at several places in skaldic prose depicting the sea. Again, the sea is described as ‘the way’: examples being *Haka vögna rein* (*the way of Haki’s carriages*), and the kenning for ships: *Rökkva reinar* (*steeds of the way*).<sup>4</sup>

The same image also appears in *Gylfaginning* 12-14 when Gangleri asks High: ‘*What way is there from heaven to earth?*’, and High answers ‘*.....the gods built a bridge ...called Bifröst.*’ So here Bifröst is envisaged as the ‘way’ of the gods connecting heaven and earth, and the concept of the bridge equating with this way or road seems logical and consistent. Additionally, the word used to describe ‘way’ in this passage is ON *leið*, which also appears in Snorri’s list of sea heiti, and which is used as a description of the sea as ‘way’ or ‘road’ at various other places in skaldic prose.<sup>5</sup>

Further evidence supporting a connection between Bifröst and the sea seems to be evident in the literal and metaphoric meaning of the first part of its name: generally recognised to be related to ON *bifr* meaning trembling, shaking, shuddering or quivering. Not only are there a large number of kennings depicting the sea’s unsteady and often violent movement using such imagery, but several utilise the word *bifr* to epitomise this characteristic. Considering Bifröst/Bilröst as the sea, therefore, appears to hold interesting potential for shedding new light upon key sections and figures in Norse Mythology.

#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Rudolf Simek’s *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, Stuttgart, 1993, p.37

<sup>2</sup> Jan de Vries, *Altnordisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Leiden, 1961, p.35-36

<sup>3</sup> Rudolf Meissner, *Die Kenningar der Skalden: Ein Beitrag zur skaldischen Poetik*, Bonn und Leipzig, 1921, p 15; pp.92-93; pp.95-96

<sup>4</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Edda: Skáldskaparmál*, Vol 2. Glossary and Index of Names, Edited by Anthony Faulkes, London, 1998, p.375

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Faulkes, *Skáldskaparmál*, Vol 2. Glossary, p.343; E.A. Kock und R.Meissner, *Skaldisches Lesebuch, Teil 2: Wörterbuch*, Halle (Saale), 1931, p. 104.

# On the Transmission of the Old Norse-Icelandic Legend of Saints Mary Magdalen and Martha

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The composite Old Norse-Icelandic legend of Mary Magdalen and her “sister,” Martha of Bethany, likely composed in the fourteenth century, tells the tale of the two women from Bethany who welcomed Jesus into their home and whose brother, Lazarus, Jesus raised from the dead. Since Mary of Bethany was conflated with two other biblical women in the Middle Ages, the so-called *Mǫrtu saga ok Maríu Magðalenu* also tells the story of Mary Magdalen, the faithful follower of Jesus out of whom he cast seven demons, and of the unnamed sinner in the Gospel of Luke who anointed Jesus’ feet and dried them with her hair.

This paper treats the transmission of the legend in the five medieval Icelandic manuscripts in which it is preserved, either in part or in full: AM 233 fol. (ca. 1300-1400), Stock. Perg. 2 fol. (ca. 1425-1445), AM 235 fol. (ca. 1400), NoRA fragm. 79 (ca. 1350), and AM 764 4to (ca. 1376-1386). It examines the text as it preserved in each of these manuscripts against the saga’s various Latin sources, which include the Vulgate and the works of various church fathers and biblical exegetes, and presents a stemma establishing the relationship of the extant witnesses. It is demonstrated that the extant witnesses of the legend fall into two groups: (I) a redaction represented by AM 233a fol., and (II) a redaction represented by AM 235 fol., Stock. Perg. 2 fol., NRA 79 fragm. AM 764 4to, which contains extracts of the saga pertaining to Martha as part of a universal chronicle, may be considered a subgroup derived from this second group, which serves to demonstrate a unique Icelandic focus on the otherwise almost universally overshadowed “sibling” of Mary Magdalen.

## *Flateyjarbók* and Europe? An Investigation on Art-historical Connections to Norway and Great Britain's East-Anglia

Stefan Drechsler, University of Kiel, Germany

The benedictian priest Magnús Þórhallsson is today to most scholars known as the illuminator and one of the two writers of the kings' saga codex GKS 1005 fol. *Flateyjarbók* from 1387–1394, as well as the painter of the beautifully illuminated Manuscript of *Stjórn* AM 226 fol. from around 1350. But apart from the assigned works barely nothing is known about Magnús's life, apart from the fact that he wrote and illuminated manuscripts between 1350 and 1400 – and lived in northwest Iceland during his life.

However, both assigned manuscripts were in 1966 collected by icelandic scholar Ólafur Halldórsson in a group of 16 manuscripts, that are connected by palaeographic features to the augustine monastery of Helgafell in the north of Snæfellsnes. Generally, most of the named 16 manuscripts share also an artistic feature, that in accordance to Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir “[...] is characterized by elongated figures with small heads and oddly short arms. In addition, the figures are often depicted in stiff, exaggerated poses, while gaping eyes and raised eyebrows give them a surprised expression.”<sup>41</sup> It is no great surprise, that this feature is generally to be found in both works of Magnús Þórhallsson, too. Before Magnús moved to Helgafell, where his name is stated in a letter in 1395, it is most likely, that he finished *Flateyjarbók* at Viðidalstunga, the orderer's estate near the well-known and oldest benedictian monastery of Þingeyrar. Not just because of the small distance to that monastery it was argued, that not only *Flateyjarbók*, but also other assigned works of Magnús (as a scribe) were done at *Þingeyrar*, just as the lost Family sagas' manuscript *Vatnshyrna*, the *Jónsbók* AM 139 4to and parts of the *Riddarasögur* codex AM 567 XXVI 4to.

Not only because of the rather wide field of Literature, that Magnús copied – he copied texts from Family sagas, Kings' sagas, Legendary Sagas and law texts –, he also illuminated codices, that belong to several kinds of Old Norse Literature in general. By doing that, he used typical medieval christian-iconographic models of european origin and changed them and set them in parts into a new textual surround, in special regarding GKS 1005 fol. *Flateyjarbók*. Since the textual surround mostly not support a direct repetition of christian motifs, Magnús changed the original models partly to let the experienced christian reader both understand the strong christian message of the text but also to get known to contemporary christian art of the time.

In the paper several historical illuminations of *Flateyjarbók* will be presented and their design and style will be compared to selected 14<sup>th</sup> century altar frontals from Trondheim and Bergen in Norway and several contemporary wall-paintings from Denmark, which all show similar design patterns in subject matters. Additionally,

selected decorated folios of manuscripts of the East Anglian school of manuscript illumination (most active in the late 13<sup>th</sup> and early 14<sup>th</sup> century) will be shown and compared to two richly decorated folio leaves from *Flateyjarbók*.

The general intention is to point out that the illumination of GKS 1005 fol. *Flateyjarbók* follows patterns of contemporary art from (Northern) Europe and took a strong influence in technique and style from East Anglian gothic manuscript illumination. So *Flateyjarbók* is not only a well-known statement for vernacular book painting of late 14<sup>th</sup> century Iceland but also a (considerably later) child of contemporary European gothic illumination.

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup>Quote: Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir 1997, p. 96.

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## Attitudes to Knowledge and Memory in Old Norse Literature

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In this paper I will discuss attitudes to knowledge and memory in Old Norse literature. The nature and production of intellectual knowledge, and its interdependence to *memoria*, is a majorly discussed issue amongst philosophers from antiquity to the Middle Ages. This is an essential process, relatable to various faculties of the body and the soul, and is classified by some as a product of sensory experience, by others as a primarily rational enterprise, and yet by others as possible due to the existence of and our faith in God. This multiplicity of opinions testifies of relatively individualistic and cognitive approach to production and reproduction of knowledge. In this paper, I will examine whether there existed a variety of attitudes to knowledge in Old Norse culture as well. I will study samples from various literary genres, translated and indigenous, prose and verse, for information on the nature of knowledge, whether 'new' knowledge can be created or is it eminently existent and just needs to be acquired and used, the relationship between 'new' and 'old' knowledge. The differences between various genres will have implications for our understanding of, among other things: 1.) the significance of knowledge and memory in Old Norse culture, 2.) the degree of intellectual individualism in Old Norse culture, 3) the nature of translating vs. the production of original texts and 4.) the dynamic relationship between ideational and textual production in Europe and Scandinavia in the Middle Ages.

## Medieval Icelandic Astronomy: A New Approach

Christian Etheridge, Aarhus University, Denmark

In 1916 Natanael Beckman and Kristian Kålund wrote *Alfræði Íslenzk II Rímtol*, to date the most detailed work on medieval Icelandic astronomy. Amongst the manuscripts that were used in the book is GKS 1812 4to, an important document that was compiled from several authors and dating from the late 12<sup>th</sup> century to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Since the work of Beckman and Kålund, almost one hundred years ago, there has been very little scholarly interest in the manuscript and for that matter very little interest in medieval Icelandic encyclopaedic material in general. This is understandable as the material can be very hard to understand and often shows a fascination with very arcane systems of calculation and philosophy. However I have looked into the manuscript GKS 1812 4to for some time now and using *Alfræði Íslenzk II Rímtol* as a base, I have made some very interesting discoveries. I have been able to trace the source of several of the diagrams and pictures which eluded Beckman and Kålund due to the progress made in the study of medieval astronomy in the past hundred years. The most important of these is a series of constellation pictures and associated text that come from a type of astronomical document known as *De ordine ac positione stellarum*. The GKS 1812 4to material is fragmentary but it is the only type of this document to be found in Scandinavia. My talk will focus on this and other discoveries I have made.

## The *Mariú saga*: a Story of the Virgin Mary in Old Norse?

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This paper concerns the Old Icelandic saga of the Virgin Mary. Accounts of her life are related in the apocryphal Infancy Gospels, the *Protevangelium Jacobi* and its Latin versions, and accounts of her death and of her Assumption, in the *Transitus Mariae*. The *Mariú saga* is the narrative of Mary's life from her conception until her Assumption. The saga is extant in three versions, A, E and S. The three texts are from the 13<sup>th</sup> century to the early 14<sup>th</sup> century. During this period, the compilers re-translated, adapted and augmented existing material.

The paper deals with the way the compiler – the question of the authorship is still unsolved – of the Old Icelandic saga adapted its narrative models to his contemporaries, even if the life of the Virgin does not belong to temporality. For example, the summary of what was said during the Fourth Council of Latran (1215) consequently contributes to insert the story of Mary in the same temporality of its readership. In the same way, the historical sections relating some episodes of the reign of King Herod insert the historical background in Sacred History. Eventually, the translation in Old Norse of the Latin Apocrypha provoked a sort of “loss of sacredness” as Latin was considered a sacred language in Middle Age.

This paper will then try to demonstrate that the *Mariú saga* can also be read as the exhaustive and chronological narrative of moments taking place at the same time in a small eternity and in History.

### La *Mariú saga* : une histoire de la Vierge en norrois ?

Au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, les clercs islandais ont retraduit les textes latins, hagiographiques et apocryphes, et les ont remaniés en interpolant des passages tirés des grandes sommes encyclopédiques médiévales et des écrits des Pères de l'Église ; au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle, tout en procédant de la même manière que leurs prédécesseurs, les compilateurs vont adapter le matériau exégétique et narratif à l'environnement culturel qui était celui de leur audience. Ceci est particulièrement flagrant dans le cas de la *Mariú saga*. On trouve, par exemple, dans la saga le résumé de ce qui s'est dit lors du Quatrième Concile du Latran (1215). Ce passage contribue dès lors à inscrire l'histoire de la Vierge dans une même temporalité que celle de son lectorat. Il en va de même pour le chapitre relatant certains épisodes de l'histoire d'Hérode tirés des *Antiquitates Judaicae* de Flavius Josèphe. L'histoire sainte s'inscrit alors dans l'Histoire. Enfin, la traduction en norrois des évangiles apocryphes de l'enfance implique une part de narrativité que les originaux latins ne possédaient pas forcément et une « désacralisation » des textes sources. De fait, la *Mariú saga* se veut le récit exhaustif et chronologique d'une suite d'événements prenant place dans une histoire sainte ; la Vierge devenant alors un personnage *söguligr*.

## Underspecified Reality: On Gapping in the Historical Sagas

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Narratologists refer to a particular, ubiquitous type of omission in narratives as gapping or underspecification (Ryan 1991; Herman 2002): details are left out in a way that impels the audience to fill them in themselves. So, e.g., when we read “Þorkell (or Óðinn, or Jens Peter Schjødt, etc.) spoke,” we assume that the author means us to imagine a human(-oid) whose words emerge from a mouth located between the chin and the nose on his face — rather than, say, from a blue proboscis growing from his left shoulder. Omission of specifics concerning the speech organ obscures nothing and ambiguates nothing; instead, it illustrates an aspect of all texts’ irreducible openness (Eco 1989 [1962]) that serves to involve the audience in the process of meaning-making. Elsewhere, I have proposed a structuralist model for understanding all texts as operating on two distinct levels: a surface governed by the logic of readability and a depth governed by the logic of intelligibility. I argued further that, in application to the historical sagas, we may confine our search for historical data to the depth level, whose intelligibility depends on mimetic realism (Falk 2010). In the present paper, I examine the contribution gapping made to the ‘reality effect’ sagas evoked in contemporary audiences, simultaneously enhancing the verisimilitude of the sagas’ depth and insinuating correspondence between this realistic substrate and a medieval Icelandic audience’s sense of its lived reality. Underspecification thus served to enhance the sense that sagas were records of fact rather than works of fiction.

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## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Representations of the North in Robert E. Howard's Conan Works

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Conan, often known as Conan the Barbarian, is a famous figure of the *fantasy* genre created by the American author Robert Erwin Howard in 1932. His adventures take place in Hyboria, a world inspired by 19<sup>th</sup> century euro-centric representations of history and mythology. Howard tends to be considered as very influential on the *Fantasy* genre as the creator of the *Sword and Sorcery* subgenre. It must also be noted that his writings came before Tolkien's major impact on the *fantasy* literature and are therefore worth looking at to understand another influential branch of nowadays popular culture. In 2002, the franchise Conan has been bought and brought back to life by *Paradox Entertainment* and inherits almost 70 years of rewritings of Conan's adventures. Interestingly, the discourse around renewal of the franchise "Conan" is said to be more faithful to the original writings and raises the question of cultural heritage and the role of the actors in this transmission.

One particular Conan short story, "The Frost-Giant's daughter", originally published as "the Gods of the North", is based on the Stories of Nordic Origins, especially the Eddas and the Heimskringla. The story starts by Conan fighting for the *Aesir* against a *Vanir*, naming death as the way to Valhalla. After the battle, the daughter of Ymir, Atali, leads him into a trap where he will have to fight against two Frost Giants and she disappears at the end leaving almost no trace. In this particular novel, one can find references to several texts of the Norse Mythology: The euhemerist representation of mythology in the Heimskringla, several characters have the name of Nordic Gods and are members of the people called Aesir and Vanir who fight against each other; Atali, the frost-giant's Daughter, is a reference to the Valkyries; and the giants are masters of illusions, like in the episode where Thor, Loki and Thjálfi encounter Útgarda-Loki in his castle.

The short story has then inspired comics, fan fictions, animation TV series, movies and games. One can then find elements of Stories of Nordic Origins in several and sometimes unexpected Medias. I will identify three ways of circulations. First, through a "reproduction process": The story is reproduced identically in several anthologies or in other places, on the web or sometimes even games manual. This leads to a circulation where the content of the short story is not altered but has to be thought in the context of appearance which can give another meaning to the work. This particular short story has had an interesting development as it wasn't accepted as a Conan story at the beginning but was reintroduced in a late anthology of Conan's work. One can here see the importance of actors' participation, being publishers or fans, in the circulation of cultural elements.

Second, through an “adaptation process”: several adaptations of the short story conveys element through similar patterns, that is to say, they tend to spread the story as it appears in Howard’s work but using different representations and narrative processes. One of *Paradox entertainment*’s goals is to make sure that all new products have a kind of homogeneity, by helping the “co-creation” (Jenkins, 2006) and sharing of representations.

Third, through an “expansion process”: some media expend the world of Hyboria and offer then possibilities to develop ideas around the initial patterns of Howard’s story. In this kind of works, some elements are often borrowed from other *fantasy* settings and from various authors, creating a process of circulation in the field of popular culture in a process of “Cultural Bricolage” (DiTommaso, 2006) leading to the idea of “world building”.

Through mainly content analysis this paper aims at presenting new contemporary material that has up to now not been explored by Scandinavian scientists and wants to open gates for the study of the reception of the North today. The example of a not so well studied author will also help to discover another branch of popular culture which intersects with the whole field and understand the way cultural elements are spread and reappropriated.

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## Translating *Heimskringla*

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*Heimskringla*, written in Iceland but concerning the history of Norway, has always been appropriated by (and was perhaps written for) an audience beyond Iceland. In medieval times the export of kings' saga manuscripts to Norway was widespread. Between 1600 and 1900 translations into Norwegian, Danish and Swedish were commissioned by regal or government order, reflecting the role of the text in the national identities of the Scandinavian countries.

The chief focus of this paper, however, is on translations into English and their influence on the perception of the medieval North in the English-speaking world. Samuel Laing's 1844 translation defined the Scandinavian old North, and the very genre of saga, for English readers long before the sagas of Icelanders were available in English, and has had an extended afterlife, repeatedly reprinted in the Everyman Library and, latterly, widely available on the internet. This translation is compared with those of William Morris and Eiríkr Magnússon (1893), Monsen (1932) and Hollander (1964), observing the shifting emphasis on the text as either historical source or literary masterpiece. In particular the treatment of the verses and their relationship with the prose is examined and an argument put forward for rendering them in such a way as to indicate to historians using the translation as a resource the extent to which the verses serve as a source for the prose. This will be demonstrated using a new translation by Alison Finlay and Anthony Faulkes, the first volume of which was published in 2011.

# Skaldediktningens gud og den bevarte diktningen.

## En vurdering av skaldedikt med Odin eller Tor som sentrale karakterer

Rune Flaten

Skaldediktningen er noen av de viktigste samtidige kildene vi har til førkristne religiøse oppfatninger. De ulike redaksjoner av Snorres Edda er hovedkilder til både dikt og religiøse ideer. Her virker det som om Odin er spesielt tilknyttet skaldediktningen og fyrstemakt. Gjennom en analyse av de bevarte diktene med tilsynelatende religiøst innhold knyttet til Odin eller Tor vil jeg søke å vurdere Snorres fremstilling av de nevnte gudene opp mot diktenes.

Med Snorres fokus på Odin som skaldskapens gud, skulle man tro at Odin var godt representert i den bevarte skaldediktningen med førkristent religiøst innhold. Dette er ikke tilfelle, selv om mye av diktningen nettopp er bevart i redaksjoner av Snorres Edda.

Det er bare fire dikt som på noen måte kan sies å omhandle Odin; billediktene *Húsdrápa* og *Haustlǫng*, og fyrstediktene *Eiríksmál* og *Hákonarmál*. *Húsdrápa* og *Haustlǫng* er billedbeskrivende dikt, og sier således lite om skaldediktningen. Da står vi igjen med to dikt, i versemål vanligvis forbundet med eddadikt (*fornyrðislag/ljóðaháttur*). *Hákonarmál* gir inntrykk av å være en pastisj over det anonyme diktet *Eiríksmál*, som således blir mest interessant som uttrykk for odinsforestillinger i skaldediktningen.<sup>1</sup>

For torsdikt er utvalget vesentlig større, med i overkant av ti bevarte dikt og fragmenter av dikt, hvorav bare to kan oppfattes som billedbeskrivende. Jeg vil forsøke å finne årsaker til det tilsynelatende misforholdet mellom Tors og Odins status og det bevarte materialet, derigjennom også materialets representativitet, og gyldigheten av Snorres fremstilling av Odin som fyrste- og skaldegud.

### Noter:

<sup>1</sup>Jeg vil i denne sammenheng ikke ta hensyn til det store antall kenninger med Odin eller Tor som bestemmende ledd i andre dikt. Fokus vil utelukkende ligge på dikt med innhold som kan tolkes som religiøst.



# Myth as Referent: Saga Sources as Evidence of Oral Intertextuality

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The recognisability of a traditional narrative, directly or indirectly reflected in another narrative or generic form of expression (e.g. kennings), constitutes a variety of intertextuality. The term intertextuality has been used in a variety of ways that are not necessarily consistent (Allan 2000), and intertextuality in oral cultures has been viewed with scepticism. The present paper will outline a semiotic framework for assessing the probability of intertextual manipulations of mythological material in saga prose, following the model outlined in my dissertation (Frog 2010) and refined in several short articles in *RMN Newsletter*. Focus is on intertextual uses of vernacular mythological narratives. These uses are less likely to have emerged on the basis of Christian models. Use as a socially recognizable intertextual referent is also consistent with semiotic functions of mythology in a culture, and with the relationship of mythological narrative material to cultural competence.

The paper will open with general remarks on intertextuality in Old Norse oral culture. Four sets of examples will then be presented:

- diverse uses of the death of Baldr in *fornaldarsögur*
- diverse myths employed as referents in *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*
- intertextual plays on the Rape of Iðunn in *Bósa saga* and *Njáls saga*
- intertextual referentiality in narratives associated with Sigurðr Fáfnisbani

Owing to time constraints, presentations will be a rather fast-based survey providing an overview to show a semiotic cultural phenomenon that was used as a rhetorical strategy and for the generation of meanings. The general argument is that the saga literature reflects the adaptation of intertextual strategies associated with the oral tradition. The introduction highlights skaldic poetries among other evidence as show beyond any reasonable doubt that intertextual reference to mythological narrative material was both interesting and valued as a rhetorical strategy. Several examples of intertextual uses of the death of Baldr in *fornaldarsögur* will then be reviewed, providing evidence that intertextual reference to mythological narratives was not inherently exceptional as a phenomenon. From examples of the use of one myth, *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks* is discussed as a case of several mythological narratives employed within a single saga. The use of multiple myths as referents supports the identification of intertextuality as more general a strategy rather than being unique to the Baldr-material. Variation

between manuscript redactions of *Hervarar saga* are discussed as evidence that these are conscious intertextual strategies rather than unconscious or completely accidental, and that the intertextual references were accessible to audiences and scribes in the Christian cultural environment of manuscript production and transmission. Uses of the Rape of Iðunn in *Bósa saga* and *Njáls saga* show that the strategy of intertextual use of myth as a referent was not restricted to *fornaldarsögur* – i.e. that it was not ‘genre-dependent’ (following Foley 1991: 15). Finally intertextuality in narratives associated with Sigurðr Fáfnisbani will be addressed. This culminating discussion is of particular importance. First, the Sigurðr material can be reasonably identified as rooted in oral traditions rather than deriving exclusively from literary paradigms employed by manuscript authors and copyists. Second, intertextual referentiality associated with Sigurðr can be compared with other material associated with this figure (e.g. in the *Nibelungenlied*, where the intertextual references appear to have become suspended or fossilized although the relevant mythological narratives seem to have long since disappeared). Consequently, these intertextual strategies could not only be employed conventionally in different heroic narratives, but an intertextual relationship to the referent could be maintained as a long-term historical process – in this case potentially maintained in the oral tradition from the Migration Period – and traces of such intertextual references could continue to be maintained in conservative processes of transmission even after the mythological narrative had dropped out of use and the significance of certain features had become obscure.

Discussion will close by considering some potential implications of the recognition of patterns of intertextual reference in saga prose. These considerations include the potential interest and value of intertextual references in sagas to inform us concerning individual mythological narratives and their cultural activity. Attention is given to forms in which these were potentially recognizable; episodes, motifs or images that may have held greater prominence in reference; conventionalization of reference as a narrative pattern; how these references can be approached; and limitations of their use as well as hazards of speculation. The question will be raised concerning whether intertextual reference might potentially reveal evidence of otherwise ‘lost’ myths, and, if this is the case, whether that has any potential for research or can only be regarded as a possibility but left outside of investigation as irresolvable and indemonstrable.

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## Apulia in Saga Literature

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In Old Norse sagas Southern Italy occurs often mixing few facts and an overwhelming amount of fiction. Mentions of these places as fable-like settings for stories drawn from Imperial Germany, such as *Piðrekssaga af Bern*, or from the French-speaking Europe – first and foremost the compilation known as *Karlamagnússaga*. The fictional sources for these sagas ultimately originated from historiographical forgeries aimed at anchoring these lands to the Carolingian West, asserting that Charlemagne and his paladins had actually won back these lands from the Saracenes.

Fantastic sagas, such as *Mirmans saga*, *Nítiða saga* and *Sálus saga ok Nikanors*, mention Southern Italy in an Angevine perspective, adding details that can often (but not always) be dismissed as inaccurate. The *Mirmanns saga* in particular shows a fullness of details that suggests a ultimate Sicilian origin of some matter, though possibly mediated through a lost French source.

Faint traces of Frederick II's Kingdom can still be found in later medieval texts, such as *Jarlmanns ok Hermanns saga*, where it is considered almost as a Moorish land, and *Sörla saga sterka*, where the ancient name *Púl* is confused with Poland: the pieces of information gathered by the authors in this context are intended entirely as a source for entertainment. As its connection with Western Europe mainly passed through France and Spain, the Italian Mezzogiorno grew then increasingly distant for Icelanders, indeed for all Scandinavians.

# Bad Death in the Viking Age

## Apotropaic Practices Related to the Burial of the Dead

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The concept of ‘bad death’ refers to situations when a person passes away in unusual circumstances, which might cause fear among the community. The aim of this paper is to examine selected cases, which could be interpreted as ‘bad death’ in the Old Norse literature and Viking Age archaeology, with particular attention paid to various apotropaic measures that were undertaken to protect the community against the dangerous powers of the dying or the deceased.

Among the relevant saga narratives is the description of the funerary procedures associated with the burial of Þórólf bægifótr (*Eyrbyggja saga*) and Skalla-Grímr (*Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*). In both instances, it appears that the people responsible for the burial were afraid of walking in front of the corpse and ensured to close the eyes and other orifices of the deceased. Furthermore, they carried the corpse not through the door, but through an artificially made hole in the wall of the house. In the sagas there are also other examples of apotropaic rituals employed in dealing with malevolent individuals (e.g. sorcerers) or animated corpses.

The fear of ‘evil eyes’ as well as (re)burying the dead with the employment of apotropaic rituals or objects may also have some reflection in the available archaeological material. In this paper three types of special or ‘deviant burials’ will be considered: *prone burial*, *decapitation* and *stoning*.

### 1. Prone burial

Prone burial occurs rarely at Viking Age cemeteries and mostly males were buried in such a way. Sometimes the prone burial could be supplemented by other, apparently apotropaic rites – such as decapitation or stoning. In most cases the deceased are not accompanied by any artefacts – and if these are present, they seem to have played a very special role. One illustrative example is grave P found at the Viking Age cemetery in Bogøvei in Langeland, Denmark. There a man was buried in a prone position and his body was covered with large stones. At his feet was a knife, which was intentionally thrust into the ground.

### 2. Decapitation

Graves of decapitated individuals, similarly to prone burials, are not very common at Viking Age cemeteries. Predominantly men were subject to decapitation, but there are also some examples of female graves. Decapitation may also be noted in the case of some double graves in which the deceased were buried in a wooden chamber or in which the

bodies were superimposed.

Among the best known examples is the chamber grave FII from Stengade in Langeland, Denmark. In this grave two males were buried side by side in a supine position. The man in the northern part of the chamber was decapitated and it seems that his limbs were tied. Interestingly, the only artefact that accompanied the deceased was a spearhead whose shaft originally lay diagonally over their bodies. One may speculate if this weapon had some special role in the funerary rituals and whether it is possible to connect it with some practices related to Óðinn cult.

Another grave worthy of considering is Bj. 959 from Birka. In this grave a decapitated female was buried in a supine position, with legs slightly flexed. In contrast to many other 'deviant' graves – she was well dressed and equipped. What seems most striking is that the woman's jawbone appears to be missing and instead a pig's jawbone was placed above her neck. Perhaps the act of severing the woman's jawbone was intended to prevent her from speaking or uttering curses? It may also be argued that the pig's jawbone played the role of a musical instrument employed at the funeral. Similar instruments are known from many cultures and they were used by rubbing a piece of wood or bone against the teeth.

### 3. Stoning

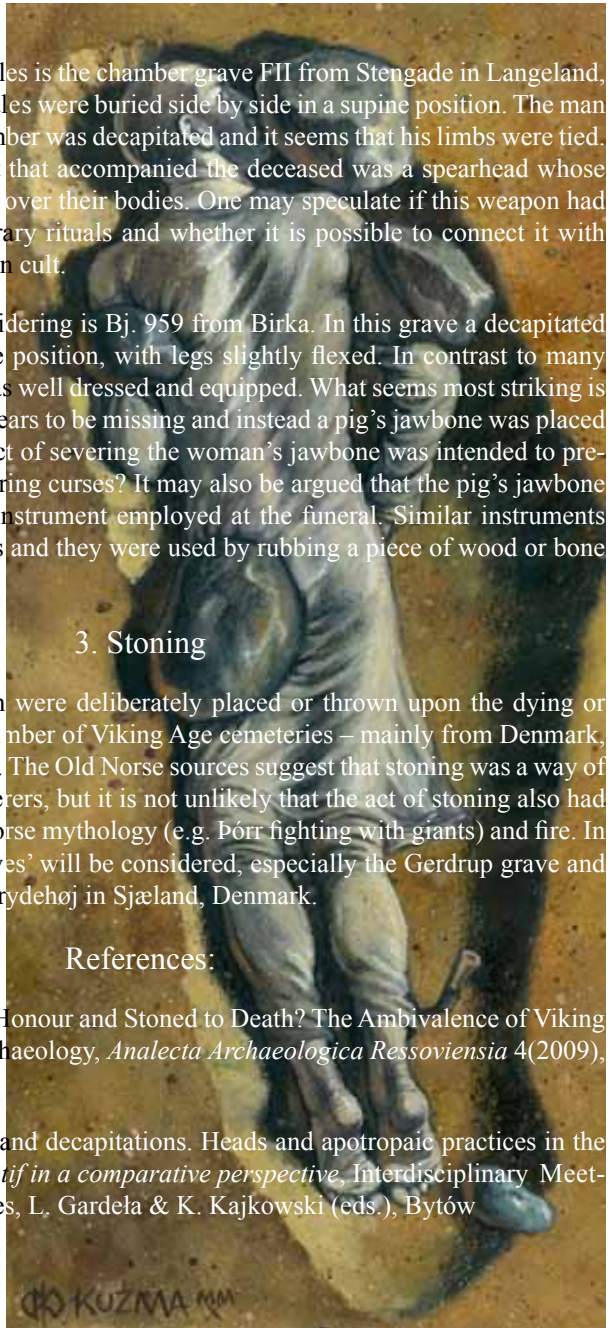
Stones of varying sizes which were deliberately placed or thrown upon the dying or deceased are known from a number of Viking Age cemeteries – mainly from Denmark, Sweden (Gotland) and Iceland. The Old Norse sources suggest that stoning was a way of getting rid of malevolent sorcerers, but it is not unlikely that the act of stoning also had some associations with Old Norse mythology (e.g. Þórr fighting with giants) and fire. In this paper several 'stoned graves' will be considered, especially the Gerdrup grave and grave A505 from Trekroner-Grydehøj in Sjælland, Denmark.

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Picture:



Artistic reconstruction of grave P from Bogøvej, Langeland, Denmark. Drawing by Mirosław Kuźma. © Leszek Gardela & Mirosław Kuźma

## The Progress of Christianisation in Denmark in the Later Eleventh Century

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Over a century after Harald Bluetooth's baptism, the work of Christianisation was still incomplete in Denmark. In 1080, Pope Gregory VII sent a letter to King Harald Hen in which he urged the king to put an end to his people's habit of blaming priests for bad weather and disease. Matters evidently did not improve quickly, as the English monks who settled at Odense around 1095 seem to have found when they complained that the Danes were unwelcoming to foreigners and especially to clerics. Moreover, they found the Danes lacking in knowledge about the faith and unwilling to observe the proper days of fasting.

This paper will take a critical look at the reigns of Harald Hen (1076–80) and Knud the Holy (1080–6) and assess what can be said about their approaches to Christianisation. Harald was remembered alternatively as a great and just legislator or as a pawn of an entrenched and unchristian nobility: I will argue that the latter view is wrong by examination of his correspondence with the Papacy. Although there is little evidence for his laws, I will argue for a new approach which could shed light on his brother and successor Knud (later to be Denmark's first royal saint) as a legislator and Christianiser.

## The Battle in Hafrsfjord in Icelandic Memory

Gísli Sigurðsson, Árnastofnun, University of Iceland, Iceland

The written texts from medieval Iceland contain a varied reflection of the oral memory in the 12th, 13th and 14th centuries about the political unrest in Norway, culminating in the efforts of Haraldr *hárfagri* to unite Norway under his kingship, with the sea-battle in Hafrsfjord (dated to 872 in many annals) as a decisive moment in the narratives.

Many chieftains and free men are said to have left Norway in connection with Haraldr's rise to power, moving to the Norse colonies in the British Isles/Ireland and ultimately to Iceland where they established a new society. The society in Iceland is portrayed as a reaction to the growing royal power in Norway with chieftains getting together in the new country as equals and forming a new societal order. Different perspectives on this history are reflected in the preserved texts, not least because some of them are primarily written for domestic purposes in Iceland whereas others were at least partly put together with export to Norway in mind.

It is well known that the medieval texts represent enormous problems when it comes to determining their historical authenticity. Oral memory about the distant past is likely to reflect contemporary interests (such as ideas about kingship) at any given time but the tradition can also preserve historical information and it is very difficult to determine which is which because there are only a few contemporary sources to compare the written reflections of the oral memory with. An obvious problem for example is that the combined chronology of the texts contains conflicting information and cannot therefore be matched in all details. Rather than to try to solve all the problems which the texts present from the viewpoint of actual history it is advisable to analyse them all in their own right, as the different reflections of oral memory which they are, from among different families and groups of people in different parts of the Norse/Gaelic world. From that angle it may be said that the battle in Hafrsfjord is remembered as very important for the political development and movements of people from Norway and the Norse colonies in the British Isles and Ireland to Iceland.

## The Fictionality of Memory

Jürg Glauser, Universität Zürich and Universität Basel, Switzerland

Memory theory has been one of the central issues of cultural analysis of the past 15-20 years (see e.g. the series *Media and Cultural Memory*, ed. by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, 2004ff.). Studies made in the vein of this so-called ‘mnemonic turn’ have demonstrated not only that all memory is fiction, but also that, at the same time, fiction always includes aspects of cultural or collective memory. In my paper I will look at what might be called instances of such a ‘fictionality of memory’ in the body of Old Norse-Icelandic literature, i.e. I will discuss examples from the sagas and Eddic poetry which expose features of the literariness, i.e. the literary and aesthetic constructedness of the memorial culture in medieval Scandinavia as well as of the memorizing functions of almost all Old Norse-Icelandic texts. I would thus like to show that ‘memory’ and ‘fiction’ cannot be understood in terms of opposites. They are rather undistinguishable elements in every narrative communication.



## Travelling to Paradise along the Eastern Route

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The theme of *Eiríks saga víðförla* (*Esv*, c. 1300), viz. an attempt to reach the Christian Paradise, is unique in the saga tradition, therefore the study of its sources has been concentrated mainly on the Christian influences. It has been shown (H.Jensen, R.Power, R.Simek, D.Ashurst, etc) that the saga largely derives from medieval learned and visionary literature. Whereas the Old Scandinavian tradition behind the saga has received less attention, probably because structurally only the beginning of *Esv* places it in the context of other writings (Saxo's *Gesta Danorum*, Þorsteins *saga bæjarmagns*, *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks* and other sagas) about travels to the places believed to represent the pagan Otherworld (*Glæsisvellir*, or *Óðainsakr* as its analogue). In my paper I will concentrate on the traditional elements in *Esv*.

*Esv* is usually classified as a *fornaldarsaga*, though its setting is not typical of this saga group. Together with some other texts (*Yngvars saga víðförla*, Þorvalds þátr *víðförla*) characterized by similar features (see Hermann Pálsson and Edwards 1989:24–26; Glazyrina 2002:34–38; Sverrir Jakobsson 2006) *Esv* belongs to the group of sagas about travellers. In a wider literary context *Esv* can also be regarded as one of the sagas which describe travels to the Otherworld.

The composition of *Esv* is similar to other Otherworld narratives not only in the choice of events that make up the story but also in their sequence. According to R.Power, *Esv* contains sixteen of the seventeen basic compositional elements she has singled out in the texts of this type (Power 1985). The study of narrative devices in *Esv* demonstrates that the author's choice of narrative features typical of visions (see Patch 1950:80–133) was restricted to those that could be come across in the Eddic poetry and *fornaldarsögur* (e.g. the region of darkness, river as a barrier, the bridge, someone guarding the passage to the Otherworld, a green field, sweet air, etc). These features become topoi for describing Otherworld travels, both in the pagan or the Christian context. They are naturally combined with elements that belong to Scandinavian narrative tradition (e.g. dragon as a guard).

*Esv* is structured by means of saga narrative motifs and patterns: Eiríkr's promise to find Óðainsakr (quests voluntarily undertaken, see Boberg 1966:157, H1220); travel pattern used in *Esv* three times; all three travels (from Norway to Denmark, from Denmark to Byzantium, from *Miklagarðr* to the Paradise and back home) are similarly described: getting ready for the trip, choosing companions, travelling to a certain destination; staying in *Miklagarðr* (Damico 1995, 1997); an eye-witness to confirm an event, this being the only function of the personage; special significance of an event for the hero: Eiríkr returns to Norway not only to tell people about the power of Christian God, but because, without this, they might imagine his horrible death; the last option characterizes the Viking ideals better than the Christian ones.

Travel is presented in *Esv* as a linear, horizontal, geographically defined movement. It is in contrast to what is described in the visions where a soul either rises or descends leaving the earth. The geographical layout in *Esv* reflects the *oecumene* of the Viking Age Scandinavians. Eiríkr travels along the standard routes to Eastern Europe: regular sailings between Norway and Denmark (mentioned by Adam of Bremen in IV:32), sailings to *Garðaríki* and *Miklagarðr* along the *Austrvegr* (described in many sagas). It is more difficult to reconstruct the exact routes from Byzantium further east which Scandinavian warriors, merchants and travelers were, no doubt, familiar with.

The B and C manuscript variants of *Esv* which are most reliable for the study of the older text have preserved several East-European place-names (*Esv*/Jensen:8, 54–55, 100–101) of Scandinavian origin. Their distribution in the narrative, as well as their occurrence in thematically alien contexts, suggests that the author of *Esv* relied on a traditional tale of a travel to *Austrvegr*, using it as a guideline for (at least a part) of his story which he reworked into a saga about a travel to the Paradise combining narrative elements and patterns belonging both to Old Scandinavian and Christian traditions.

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The Joy of Memory:  
Happiness as a Catalyst for Composition in the *Strengleikar*

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Although a majority of the Old Norse *Strengleikar* are said to have been translated at the behest of King Hákon Hákonarson from a collection of Old French Breton *lais*, the tale known as ‘Strandar strengleikr’ has no known source. It is convenient, therefore, that the *lai* itself ostensibly tells the story of its own genesis: waiting in France for a wind to cross the English Channel, William the Conqueror commissions the *lai* from a Breton woman in order to remember the happiness of his stay on the French coast. As the *lai* becomes known at William’s court, those who hear and perform it experience a sense of enjoyment akin to that which first moved William to commission it. This paper will argue that ‘Strandar strengleikr’ thus provides an unusual moment of metatextual reflection about the origins and aims of the *Strengleikar* collection: while in other *lais* the Old Norse translator repeatedly asserts the pedagogic value of memorializing good or noble behaviour, in ‘Strandar strengleikr’ he suggests that the commemoration of a positive emotion is the true function of a *lai*. This paper will investigate the role of emotion as an impetus to composition in the *Strengleikar* collection and demonstrate the unusual role of happiness as a vehicle for remembering ostensibly historical events.

## The Role of the Game Meeting Places

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Alþingi and other þing gatherings were not only times when people gathered in Old Iceland. Sometimes – especially a Yule they gathered for different purposes, for gaming, playing and sports. Moreover in the sagas we find a lot of place-names containing the word *leikr* (play) like *Leikvangr* and *Leikvöllr* which means “play field”. There are also places which are known for horse-fights, here too we have place-names connected to this custom: Hestaþing. As we might suspect, these places and gatherings had a special role in Icelandic society and life. In my paper I would like to present part of my PhD dissertation focusing on the role of these places where such meetings took place. Why were these so important for Icelanders, or for saga-writers. I also want to find out why after the Sturlunga age – there are few accounts of such gatherings in contemporary sagas or annals.

Text in Time: the Making of *Laxdæla*

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In this paper I will discuss the early transmission of *Laxdæla saga* from the oldest 13th-century fragment to the end of the 14th century, and attempt to place the making of the saga within a distinct cultural milieu in Iceland in the 13th century where we find women who travelled to Norway and stayed at the royal court. I will discuss the deliberate omission of verse in the saga, its focus on women and the fact that two endings of the saga have been preserved.

## Einar Hafliðason – an Icelandic Author from the 14th Century

Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson, Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies,  
Iceland

The manuscript AM 420 b 4to (*Lögmannsannáll*), in the collection housed by the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies in Reykjavík, is an important one. This is not only on account of its content but because it is the oldest Icelandic autograph, as far as we know. Most of the manuscript was written in 1361 though the last leaf (annal entries for the years 1362–92) is younger and was written by other scribes. The author (and the scribe of the main part of the manuscript) is Einar Hafliðason (1307–93), an official in the diocese of Hólar in northern Iceland. His hand is found in a few other documents, thus scholars have been able to identify the hand of the *Lögmannsannáll* manuscript as his. Einar was also the author of *Laurentíus saga biskups*, which is the life of Laurentíus Kálfsson (bishop of Hólar 1324–31), though the original manuscript of this saga is not extant. *Lögmannsannáll* is remarkable because the scribe alternates between *textualis* and *cursiva*, sometimes many times on each page. In this paper, I will present detailed information about the manuscript, its content (the annals), the author and other works by him, the author's handwriting, and the reasons for his switching between different scripts. The manuscript is now only 11 leaves but originally was larger, and is thought to have covered the years 70 A.D. to 1361. It is clear that the author made use of an older annal for the entries from the beginning to his own time, but it is not clear where he stopped copying and began to write his own text—this is a question I will also address in my paper.

## Pillage Idiots: Fools and Madmen in Commonwealth Iceland

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Fools and madmen play minor yet essential roles in several of the *Íslendinga sögur* and in the *Sturlunga saga* compilation, where they tend to appear with some regularity. Of these roles, perhaps the most studied is the “Hamlet-lunacy”, i.e. feigning madness in order to appear as inoffensive.

In this paper I will analyse some of the other kinds of mental illness, whether fake or real, depicted in the aforementioned saga genres. I will start by analysing linguistic evidence in order to determine the vocabulary of idiocy in medieval Iceland. Which were the different kinds of mental disease that they did distinguish and name, and which were the characteristics that they ascribed to each one of them? In this section I will limit my research to the study of what was a madmen or a fool at the time of the composition of the sagas. My objective is to find the medieval Icelandic concept of madness through examples provided in the sagas and not to prove that such or such characters were madmen according to modern definitions.

In the second section I will analyse the social/narrative role that these characters play in the sagas. That is: Which is (are) their typecast(s)? Which are the narrative patterns one should expect once an idiot enters the scene?

## Pantheon? What Pantheon?

## Concepts of a Family of Gods in Pre-Christian Nordic Religions

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Largely on the basis of the evidence of *Grimnismál*, *Vafþrúðnismál*, *Völuspá* and *Snorra Edda* (and the classical models of Greek and Roman religion), it has generally been accepted that “Old Nordic Religion”, often depicted as a set body of beliefs and rituals over a wide area of space and time, involved a pantheon of gods who lived in the same space (Ásgarðr) under the rulership (and fatherhood) of Óðinn. In recent years, however, an increasing number of scholars have started to question this understanding of Old Nordic religion, suggesting that rather than representing a set body of beliefs and practices, the forms and emphases of Old Nordic religion are more likely to have varied by time and space, depending on social, geographical, political, economic, environmental conditions, and external influences (see, for example, Andrén 2007 and 2012; Brink 2007; DuBois 1999; Gunnell 2005; McKinnell 1994; Price 2002; and Schjødt 2008). Such ideas are supported not only by later saga texts, but also place name evidence and a growing amount of archaeological evidence. The same evidence also gives us also good reason for questioning the commonly accepted idea that Óðinn was regarded by most people in Scandinavia as the chief god and *alföðr*, as Snorri (and the Eddic and skaldic poetry) suggests. Indeed, as is noted in Gunnell (forthcoming) and Andrén (2012), it seems that in settlement Iceland, and most of western Norway and Gotland, for example, the chief god and father figure during the late Iron Age was Þórr, who is said to have had the central position in Uppsala, Hlaðir and Gudbrandsdal, and was even seen by Ælfric as having been the father of Freyr and Freyja. (Indeed, even Snorri seems to have problems with placing Þórr, making him both ancestor and member of the younger generation in the *Prologue*.)

These observations, and the fact that Yngvi-Freyr, who Ari *fróði* regarded as a personal forefather and whose personal name implies clan-rulership, was also seen by some as the “Veraldargoð” (*Ynglinga saga*, ch. 10) give us reason to be very wary of trusting the image of Nordic religious beliefs presented by Snorri. More than this, they also give us good reason to question the generally accepted idea (supported by Dumezil and others) that people throughout Scandinavia believed in an Olympus-like pantheon body of gods (ruled by Óðinn) and that individuals would then give their personal allegiance to a particular god that suited them, their class, their sex, their profession or their temporary needs, rulers or priests calling on Óðinn, the lower agricultural classes calling on Þórr (the god of rain and wind); while farmers or upper classes might call on Freyr. In fact, while there is clear evidence that many of the Danes, and the new class of rulers intent on national and international dominance (and those living around them) certainly appear to have taken on the cult of Óðinn, it also seems other rulers and chieftains (such as those in Hlaðir) gave their allegiance to other gods. This lecture will thus examine



the possibility that rather than religious allegiance being individual and class based, it was actually more connected to area and clan or tribe. It will also consider whether, rather than believing in a hierarchical pantheon or family of gods with different associations (under Óðinn's rulership), most people had a more limited view, seeing Þórr, Freyr, Njörðr and others as solo all-purpose gods with their own bodies of mythology who carried simultaneously the different functions of creator, fertility god, warrior god, ancestor and clan protector (which is not to say people had not heard of the other gods worshipped by their neighbours).

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## Ormr Stórolfsson, Einarr þambarskelfir and the Battle of Svǫldr Episode in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*

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The paper aims to draw attention to a connection between one of the last episodes of *Orms þáttur Stórolfssonar* and the famous episode of the battle of Svǫldr as it is described in *Heimskringla*, *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* and in the *Flateyrbók* redaction of the latter saga. The episode relates Ormr's visit to Einarr þambarskelfir at Gimsar (ch. 11). Ormr arrived when Einarr was in church and his bow was standing outside the church door. He picked up the bow, put an arrow to the string, drew the bow to the arrow's tip and then went away leaving the arrow in the bow at its full length (*lagði ör á streing ok dró firir odd, ok lét svǫ örina standa í boganum, ok lagði síðan niðr aftr ok gekk í brottu*). Einarr was greatly impressed by this feat of strength and said that the man who had done this was obviously “no weakling” (*ekki skræfa verit hafa*). Antony Faulkes, the editor of the story (*Two Icelandic Stories: Hreiðars þáttur, Orms þáttur*. 2nd ed., 2011, p. 26), is apparently inclined to believe that the episode may go back to certain oral reports about Ormr: as he writes, “after his other achievements the episode with Einarr's bow is so tame as hardly to seem worth anyone's while to invent”. There are good grounds to think, however, that the episode in *Orms þáttur* alludes to the Svǫldr episode where Einarr, whose reputation as an outstanding Bowman is well known, has handled King Óláfr's bow, which he was supposed to use after his own bow had been split, in exactly the same way as Ormr later did his, thus having surpassed the best Norwegian archer.

According to Snorri Sturluson's account of Óláfr Tryggvason's last battle, after Einarr's bow had been destroyed by Finn's arrow the king had given him his own bow and ordered him to shoot with it. Einarr took the king's bow and at once drew it in front of the arrow's tip and said: “Too soft, too soft is the almighty king's bow” (*Einarr tók bogann ok dró þegar fyrir odd orvarinnar ok mælti: “Of veykr, of veykr allvalds bogi” Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, ch. 108, *ÍF*, XXVI, bls. 363); after that he flung away the bow and fought with his sword. It is most likely that when inventing the Gimsar episode the author of *Orms þáttur Stórolfssonar* had in mind this scene, which appears for the first time in the *Heimskringla* version of King's Óláfr's biography and is preserved in the later redactions of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*. The comparison between Einarr þambarskelfir as one of the most eminent defenders of Ormr inn langi (the Long Serpent, the king's ship) and Ormr Stórolfsson aimed to show the superiority of the latter, which is in line with other episodes of the last part of the *þáttur*. *Orms þáttur* is incorporated in the *Flateyrbók* redaction of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* where it is placed among stories which follow the saga report about the king's death (it is noteworthy that one of these narratives is *Halldórs þáttur Snorrasonar inn fyrri* in which Einarr þambarskelfir plays a prominent role). As stated in *Orms þáttur*, its protagonist was not present at the battle of Svǫldr and he learned about the defeat and the king's death only after having

returned from pilgrimage to Rome. Ormr became Earl Eiríkr's follower, but before that he had proven himself to be the strongest of all the champions, so that the earl was compelled to admit that Ormr inn langi would never have been defeated if Ormr had been among its defenders. Ormr is thus represented as the only warrior who could save the life of King Óláfr, while even the most valiant of his men, like Einarr, had failed to protect their king.

## Distant Past – Omnipresent Truth: The Use of Gregory the Great's *Dialogues* in Old Norse Literature

Ferne Vergangenheit – allgegenwärtige Wahrheit:

Verwendung und Funktion der *Dialogi* Gregors des Großen in der norrönen Literatur

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Die *Dialogi* Gregors des Großen zählen zu den wichtigsten didaktischen Werken der mittelalterlichen Kirche und haben in ganz Europa eine enorme Verbreitung erfahren. Sie gehören auch zu den ältesten ins Altnordische übersetzten Texten. Ihre Bedeutung für die norröne Literatur wurde immer wieder unterstrichen und anhand von Zitaten und Anleihen aus den Dialogen, die sich in der autochthonen hagiographischen wie auch in der Sagaliteratur finden, unter Beweis gestellt.

Mein Vortrag will dieser langen Fundliste nicht einfach weitere Posten hinzufügen, sondern untersuchen, *wie* und *warum* die Dialoge verwendet werden – sowohl als Zitate und Allusionen, aber auch in den eigentlichen Übersetzungen, deren Anwendung und Funktion anhand der überlieferten Handschriften sichtbar wird.

Den Konzepten »past« (Vergangenheit/Geschichte) und »truth« (Wahrheit) kommt dabei meiner Meinung nach eine Schlüsselrolle zu, die in zwei Richtungen weist: Auf der einen Seite finden Gregorzitate durch die Betonung ihrer Geschichtlichkeit als historische Belege Anwendung. Werden die Erzählelemente der Dialoge jedoch um ihre historische Verankerung reduziert, gewinnen sie ein allgemeingültiges Gepräge. Der so »verflüssigte« Text kann in neue Formen gegossen werden – ohne daß er den Anspruch auf »Wahrheit« einbüßt. Auch im neuen hermeneutischen Zusammenhang weist die »flüssige Essenz« für das wissende Publikum auf ihren Ursprung zurück und schafft so einen Metatext, der die Autorität Gregors mitschwingen läßt.

Mit diesem Vortrag möchte ich gleichzeitig zur Diskussion stellen, wie diese hermeneutischen Aspekte in einer geplanten Neuedition der *Dialogar* repräsentiert werden können.

# The Transmission of Romance-sagas in the Dalir in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

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It is well known that north-west Iceland produced large numbers of manuscripts from the medieval period up to the twentieth century, but the precise details of the scribal cultures in this region are little understood. This paper builds on an ongoing project establishing the complete stemmas of the Icelandic romance sagas *Sigurgarðs saga frækna*, *Jarlmanns saga og Hermanns*, *Nikulás saga leikara*, *Konráðs saga keisarasonar*, and *Nítíða saga frægu*.<sup>1</sup> In each case, research on these sagas has not only found the expected dense cluster of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century manuscripts in the Dalir region, but demonstrated that the manuscripts in these clusters are textually closely related, and reflect a distinctive culture of conservative copying. The Dalir region of Iceland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries enjoyed an unusually tight-knit scribal community drawing ultimately on textual traditions established by the late medieval and early modern scholarly centres of the Vestfirðir, and this paper will examine how this community functioned.

Previous research on Icelandic manuscript transmission has generally looked only at individual sagas, leaving us with little understanding of how saga-collections were compiled. By examining the stemmas of several romances together, however, it is possible to investigate how far compilers copied blocks of sagas and how far they picked and chose from different exemplars. This makes it possible to get some feel for aesthetic choices, and to identify nodal compilations and key compilers in the manuscript culture. The stemma overleaf provides a preliminary sketch of the kinds of interconnections which I will be presenting: it shows the Dalir branches of the textual traditions of *Konráðs saga keisarasonar*, *Sigurgarðs saga frækna*, and *Nikulás saga leikara* and indicates how disparate copies of these texts were brought together in the eighteenth century to establish a grouping of *Sigurgarðs saga* and *Nikulás saga* which flourished to the end of the nineteenth century, against a background of continual experimentation in which some sagas came and went (e.g. *Konráðs saga*, *Sigurðar saga turnara*), came and stayed (e.g. *Nítíða saga*), or never entered the textual tradition at all despite being in circulation in the same region (e.g. *Jarlmanns saga og Hermanns*, *Viktors saga og Blávus*).

The paper will connect the stemmas with prosopographical evidence to explore who was copying off whom and, where possible, why; and take literary approaches to interpreting the popularity of certain saga-collocations.

Manuscripts featuring prominently will include: Rask 31–32 (Ólafur Gíslason Saurbær, Dalasýsla); Lbs 998 4to (at Knararhöfn, Dalasýsla); JS 632 4to (Ólafur Jónsson Arney, Skarðshreppur, Dalasýsla); Lbs 1217 4to (J. Jónsson Stóra-Vatnshorn, Haukadalur); and the collections of Magnús Jónsson í Tjaldanesi.

## Notes:

<sup>1</sup> *Nítíða saga* is being researched by Sheryl McDonald in her Leeds doctoral thesis. For further information on my methodologies, with some preliminary findings, see my working paper ‘Making Stemmas with Small Samples: Testing the Stemma of *Konráðs saga keisarasonar*, and New Media Approaches to Publishing Stemmas’, available at: [http://www.alarichall.org.uk/working\\_paper\\_on\\_stemmas\\_from\\_small\\_samples](http://www.alarichall.org.uk/working_paper_on_stemmas_from_small_samples). The research also builds on Keren H. Wick, ‘An Edition and Study of *Nikulás saga leikara*’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 1996), now available at <http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/1632/>.

## Early Images of *Njáls Saga*'s View of History

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In an early manuscript of *Njáls saga*, *Kálfalækjarbók* (AM 133: ca. 1300), there are three illuminated capital letters, two of which appear at the points where Gunnarr and Njáll are introduced into the narrative. The first, which contains the picture of a lion fighting a dragon, decorates the **G** of *Gunnarr* (at the start of chapter 19), while the second, in the **N** of *Njáll*, the first word of chapter 20, depicts a man armed with shield and sword piercing a dragon. Lars Lönnroth (*Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 90 (1975), p.70) comments that these two illuminations are 'obviously intended to complement each other'. He suggests that the images may represent the complementary virtues of Gunnarr (*Fortitudo*) and Njáll (*Sapientia*), fighting in conjunction against Evil, although he remains cautious, claiming no more than that 'the large initials contain pictures which seem to bear on the content'.

The motif of the lion fighting against the dragon is conventional, and occurs frequently in church carvings. Its appearance on corbels is widespread, and it is commonplace on misericords: G.L. Remnant's *A Catalogue of Misericords* lists twenty-six examples of the motif, with two in Carlisle Cathedral, three (authentic medieval examples) in Gloucester, and four in the Minster at Lincoln. The well-known Easter hymn *In Resurrectione Domini*, attributed to Fulbert of Chartres, appropriately depicts Christ as a lion and his enemy as a dragon: appropriately, since the battle between the lion and the dragon is a traditional Easter motif. Augustine had set out the background in a sermon on the Resurrection: God the Father, like a lion, awakens his sleeping cub, Christ, with a mighty roar, just as Christ, as a lion, awakens the dead with a living voice.

The illuminated capital at the start of chapter 20, which introduces Njáll into the narrative, shows a beardless man thrusting a sword through the body of a dragon. This is not a representation of *Sapientia*: Scripture portrayed *Sapientia* as female, and wisdom, when personified, is invariably portrayed as female during the Middle Ages. This tradition was maintained in Scandinavia, as found, for example, in the personification of Wisdom in *Konungsskuggsjá*. Neither is this a picture of Njáll, as is evident from the man's appearance. Njáll is already middle-aged when first introduced into the narrative, while the long, thick, curling hair of the man in the picture clearly shows him to be young.

Combats between dragons and beings of human shape, who may or may not have wings, occur not infrequently within capital letters in medieval manuscripts, and it would therefore appear that the artist responsible for these pictures in *Kálfalækjarbók* worked within a tradition of illumination. The paper will discuss three examples of such combats, arguing that in each case the dragon's opponent is the Archangel Michael. Scriptural eschatology states that the final, eternal imprisonment of the devil and his angels is preceded by St Michael's defeat of the devil as dragon (Apoc. xii, 7-8, the Scriptural source for the

very many carved and pictorial representations of St Michael as a warrior in combat with the dragon). It therefore seems extremely likely that the figure in the illuminated capital N in *Kálfalækjarbók* also represents St Michael.

If the picture from *Kálfalækjarbók* is indeed taken to be a representation of the Archangel, the youthful appearance of the figure is also explained: tradition had it that angels appear in the likeness of youths, and the tradition was known in Norse, an example occurring in *Agathu saga Meyiar* II, ch. 6. But the identification with St Michael also presents a problem: whereas representations of the Archangel that show him fighting with a sword typically depict him with the weapon raised behind his head, as if about to strike down at the dragon, here he is depicted as having thrust his sword right through the dragon's body. It seems possible that the illuminator of *Kálfalækjarbók* combined the iconography of the Archangel with that of Sigurðr Fáfnisbani, the other great dragon-slayer familiar to medieval Scandinavia (and the ancestor of Hallgerðr, and therefore also of Hǫskuldr Hvítanessgoði, in *Njáls saga*). The syncretism of Michael and Sigurðr is found in carvings produced widely over the West Norse world, and it is characteristic of all these carvings, that the dragon is depicted as transfixed by the hero's sword.

This paper agrees with much of what Lönnroth suggested: it seems likely that the two pictures in *Kálfalækjarbók* are indeed complementary, and that both depict the battle against Evil. But both apparently make implicit references to historical events: Christ's first and second comings (leading to the Harrowing of Hell, and the Last Judgement). Mankind, redeemed at the Harrowing, may now share the hope given to Síðu-Hallr by the missionary Þangbrandr, that at the Last Judgement his good deeds will be mercifully weighed by the Archangel Michael.



“Ekki fellr oss þat ór minni”:

*Völsunga saga* as a Memory of the Heroic *Poetic Edda*

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*Völsunga saga*'s plot depends on two crucial moments of drink-induced amnesia: Sigurðr forgetting his betrothal to Brynhildr, and Gudrun forgetting her anger at the murder of Sigurðr. These incidents demonstrate the significance of memory throughout the text. Memory is frequently used to create a sense of identity: for example, in the employment of amnesia to establish family unity. The identity of Sigurðr as a member of the Gjúkungar is created partly by his memory erasure; he can only become part of the family through the removal of the memory of his previous oaths and loyalty to Brynhildr. In this instance, memory erasure creates a group identity between the Gjúkungar and Sigurðr at the expense of the continuity of Sigurðr's identity over time. In *Völsunga saga*, the memory removal is seen less as a trick, as it is depicted in the *Poetic Edda*, and more as a pragmatic solution to join two noble families together. Memory is crucial for the performance of social identity.

The importance of a collective memory of events, to establish family and cultural identity, is indicated throughout the text. After the death of Sigurðr, *Völsunga saga* insists on the enduring nature of his fame. In doing so, however, the text also reveals the fragile nature of cultural memory, as it is described as only existing in certain languages and geographies. *Völsunga saga*'s depiction of the performance of identity through memory, and its alteration depending on later constructions of narratives, results in a realisation of the contingency of identity. The commemoration of characters from the past plays with concepts of time, and demonstrates that memory is not just concerned with a replication of past events. A reading of *Völsunga saga*'s portrayal of prophecy as a type of memory extends this idea of the interaction of memory and time.

It may seem strange to continue a discussion of memory by exploring the prophecies that take place in *Völsunga saga*. Yet prophecy can be understood in some ways as a counterpart to memory, in that it is a narrative of the future. Indeed, in a re-writing, instances of prophecy can be seen as memory in a more direct manner as they depict a version of events that will take place in the narrative future, but have already occurred in the previous versions of a text so are simultaneously part of the narrative past. Prophecy is a way of playing with the temporal reality of a text, and disrupting a sense of temporal continuity. Prophecy also invites an awareness of how concepts of fate, and character agency work in a text; do the characters have any ability to act against the predictions? If the prophecy is not delivered just to the audience, but to the characters of the text, how do they react to this? And how accurate are the prophecies that are delivered? The questions that the use of prophecy in a text, and especially in a re-writing, raise are interesting in their own right, but especially as part of a wider consideration of the construction of identity. Prolepsis invites an exploration of the

extent to which the fixed nature of events in the text accords with a fixed conception of the identity of the characters involved in the narrative.

*Völsunga saga* only provides one possible narrative, rather than revisiting the same material in different ways like several of the poems of the *Poetic Edda*, and this creates a different temporal stance in the re-writing. The relationship between past, present and future appears to be linear. Yet as a re-writing, *Völsunga saga*'s narrative present and future are actually simultaneously in the past. Through an undermining of the possibilities for textual prolepsis, and the presentation of the fragility of social memory, *Völsunga saga* suggests that memories of the narrative cannot necessarily be relied upon, and emphasises the constructed nature of memory. In turn, this indicates that identity is also changeable. It may seem that reducing the *Poetic Edda*'s polyphonic discourses to a continuous prose narrative would create a sense of unified identity in *Völsunga saga*, but this does not appear to be the case. Although it is unlikely that we will ever be able to establish the intention of the author or compiler of *Völsunga saga*, it seems clear that there is an urge to both preserve and re-shape the narrative of the *Poetic Edda*. *Völsunga saga*'s memory of the *Poetic Edda* reconstructs the original text as much as it recalls it.

## Never Look a Gift Horse in the Mouth: Óðinn as Horse-god in Old Norse Tradition

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The eight-legged horse, Sleipnir, is Óðinn's most striking familiar, not only capable of crossing world-boundaries, but also, according to *Sigrdrífumál* (v. 15), an instrument in the performance of runic ritual. Sleipnir's association with esoteric practices derives partly from the circumstances of his conception, which involved Loki's transformation into a mare and his seduction of the stallion, Svaðilfæri, (*Gylfaginning*, ch. 42), but the association was no doubt amplified by the horse's relation to Óðinn, a practitioner of magic and a carver of runes. In *Hávamál* (vv. 138-9), Óðinn acquires knowledge of the runes by hanging from the world-tree for nine nights, and the name of the world-tree, Yggdrasil ('Yggr's [Óðinn's] steed'), suggests a similar association between the horse and esoteric, specifically, sacrificial, practices. In *Gautreks saga* (ch. 7), Starkaðr is instructed by his foster-father, who has revealed himself to be Óðinn, to sacrifice his lord, King Víkarr, to him. Reluctant to perform such a shameful deed, Starkaðr stages a mock-sacrifice, hanging Víkarr from a tree, but because Óðinn has demanded the death of the king, Starkaðr's contrivance is futile and Víkarr is killed. The Odinic nature of this sacrifice is clear, involving hanging from a tree and piercing with a spear (cf. *Hávamál*, vv. 138-9), but what is also interesting is the name Óðinn adopts as Starkaðr's foster-father, Hrosshárs-Grani ('Horsehair-Grani'). Again, the horse is associated not only with Óðinn, but also with sacrifice, and similar associations are activated in other *fornaldarsögur* in which Óðinn appears. In *Völsunga saga* (ch. 13), for example, Óðinn helps Sigurðr choose a horse, which turns out to be descended from Sleipnir and whose name, like Starkaðr's foster-father, is Grani.

The precise nature of these associations is obscure, but it is certain that the horse is the symbol through which they are focalized. Yvonne S. Bonnetain has suggested that the horse is a symbol of a para-mundane journey, particularly a journey to the world of the dead, evidenced most clearly by Óðinn's 'ride' on Yggdrasil and Sleipnir's ability to cross world-boundaries (Bonnetain, 2006). Elsewhere, however, accusations of *ergi* made against those considered unmanly or sexually perverse are also configured in equine terms, most notably in the topping of a *níðstung* with a horse's head (see, for example, *Vatnsdæla saga*, ch. XXXIV), and Loki, who allowed himself to be penetrated by the stallion, Svaðilfæri, would have been vulnerable to such accusations. The practice of *seiðr* is similarly regarded as unmanly, as Snorri Sturluson makes clear in *Ynglinga saga* (ch. VII), and it is significant that the product of Loki's unmanly liaison, Sleipnir, becomes the property of Óðinn, a practitioner of unmanly *seiðr*. In addition to being a symbol of a para-mundane journey, Sleipnir can also be interpreted as a symbol through which the *ergi* associated with both feminizing sexual relationships and the practice of *seiðr* by men is focalized and recuperated.

In this paper, associations between the horse, sacrifice, sex and death will be examined across a range of Old Norse-Icelandic texts, focusing particularly on the triangulation of Loki, Óðinn and Sleipnir and the bearing this has on the depiction of Óðinn. It will be argued that Óðinn may have been conceived of as a horse-god in pre-Christian Scandinavia and that remnants of this belief survive in later medieval texts. Óðinn's role as horse-god is likely to have involved sacrifice, configured in terms of a journey to the world of the dead and perhaps related to the practice of *seiðr*, which some scholars, such as Thomas A. DuBois, have linked to shamanic traditions and might have encompassed a form of spirit-journey (DuBois, 1999, pp. 121-38).

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# On the Birth and Death of Medieval Manuscripts

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It is customary to estimate that not more than around 5–10 % of medieval manuscripts have survived (see e.g. Åström 2005, p. 1071). Somewhat more optimistically, the paleographer Bernhard Bischoff has estimated that one in seven manuscripts have been preserved from the 9th century Carolingian scriptoria, i.e. a survival rate of around 14% (McKitterick 1989, p. 163). From a more recent point of view, Uwe Niddermeyer has made his estimates of book preservation by extrapolating from what we know about the loss of early printed books (up to 1500), and suggests that the survival rate of medieval manuscripts may be around 7 % (Niddermeyer 1996). In a recent and rather unorthodox article in the journal *Science*, John L. Cisne proposes to use a paleodemographical method, treating manuscripts as fossils and estimating the growth of the manuscript population as a Markov birth-and-death process. His estimates, using the well-attested manuscript tradition of the venerable Bede, is not too far from that of Bischoff.

In this talk, I will look at some methodological avenues to follow in the highly elusive pursuit of manuscript birth and death, viz. (1) the stemma and its proportion of preserved and reconstructed manuscripts, (2) the degree of fragmentation, using data from medieval Latin and vernacular manuscripts, and (3) the proportion of law books in relation to other genres. While the first criterion is of a general nature, the next two will be based on Norwegian data.

Finally, I would like to discuss to what extent these figures can say anything useful about the survival of (a) works, (b) genres, (c) manuscripts and (d) parts of manuscripts, or in other words how serious the death rate really is for our understanding of the medieval textual culture.

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## Contradictory Cosmology: A System, After All?

Eldar Heide, University of Bergen, Norway

This paper presents a new understanding of the cosmology of pre-Christian Scandinavian mythology. The sources seem to give contradictory information: for example, the gods are located in multiple places: in the centre of the world, in the west, in the east, under the sea, and in the sky, and Hel underground and beyond the sea. In recent studies, this has led to the conclusion that there is no system. I believe that there is and that we misunderstand the *passages* to other worlds. The otherworld can be defined as ‘the world beyond what we can access by natural means’. The starting-point is the realm physically accessible to a human, which forms a compressed, wide “bubble” around him/her, because horizontally, our natural range is very long, the whole circle around, but very limited downwards and upwards. Still, people have always imagined that it is possible to *supernaturally* transcend this “bubble” through certain passages. These passages point in many directions from the middle of the “bubble”, but the locations of the passages do not give the location(s) of the other world(s), because the passages are replaceable with each other and normally lead to the same (kind of) land/place. The other worlds have interfaces with each other and with this world, but no location in relation to it – they are just ‘beyond the passages’. This system becomes clear when we examine not only the limited Old Norse information, but see it in light of the abundant post-medieval folklore throughout Northern Europe.

## The Uses of Royal History in 11<sup>th</sup> Century Norway

Helgi Skúli Kjartansson, University of Iceland, Iceland

The paper seeks to identify elements in the historical tradition of Viking Age Norway, as portrayed in the Kings' Sagas, which would have been of political significance at various stages in the transmission, when Norwegian politics was dominated first by the competing dynasties of Norway, Lade and Denmark, then (from ca. 1060) by the royal dynasty and its opponents, and finally (from ca. 1090 onwards) by competing factions of that dynasty. In particular, the entire tradition (or myth, unsupported as it is by contemporary evidence) of the dynasty of Norway descended from king Harald Fairhair would have been highly relevant for the political cause of the Viking adventurers St. Olaf and king Harald hardrada and their sons. While the tradition might have been fashioned, even invented, largely for royal political purposes, individual elements seem to reflect storytelling with a different political agenda, either promoting the cause of the ducal Lade dynasty or a more general opposition to royalty. Later storytellers and the compilers/creators of the Kings' Sagas as we know them would then add their own emphases, for reasons either political or artistic. Two final questions concern, firstly, the value of skaldic poetry as more direct evidence of different storytelling trends and, secondly, how all of this reflects on the historicity (or otherwise) of the tradition.

## Sagas as Evidence for Authentic Social Structures

Helgi Þorláksson, University of Iceland, Iceland

The impact of social history was felt in the 1970s and this opened up the way for anthropological concepts in saga studies. New ideas concerning 'social structures' were introduced.

Already in the late 1960s, a case had been made for literary structures of conflicts as the central theme in the Icelandic sagas. This was criticized on the grounds that the conflicts of the sagas were made too simple. Such conflicts were more complex and reflected the mechanics of real feuds or blood-feuds. In other words, saga conflicts mirrored the structure of real feuds. It was pointed out that such feuds in the Icelandic sagas had their counterparts in the contemporary sagas and were best explained as real social structures.

Some historians viewed the sagas as representations of modes of actions among people in general, portraying forms of behaviour that were both customary and traditional. These were seen as modes of life as lived in the 12th century and even earlier. Such social structures and norms could be laws and rules applicable for large groups, like slaves, women, and chieftains (*goðar*). Or they could be representations of customary affinities within smaller groups, like fosterbrothers, friends and chieftains and their followers (thingmen).

One objection was that contemporary sagas might be dubious as historical sources since they were said to be shaped by literary conventions. This may be true in some instances, for example, in descriptions of the hour of death of some individuals described in the contemporary sagas, where these instances seem to be formulaic and staged. However such conventions hardly affect the reproduction of social structures and norms in the sagas.

Comparisons with Iceland can be made with corresponding bilateral societies which are without any central authority or a weak one. They sometimes reveal similar social structures and norms. In numerous social settings, altercations among people lead to violent attacks and these follow the same or similar path or pattern that we see in the sagas. These include alternating attacks and counter-attacks, escalating violence and so on. Such customary behaviour also applies to women who urge men to take vindictive actions, for instance, by displaying tokens to remind them that the deceased had not been avenged. Along with the family sagas, we find such goading in the contemporary sagas. So also there is witness of such customs in Corsica and Albania and other corresponding societies with weak central authorities or none at all.

We can rest assured that the mechanics of feud were a cultural heritage brought to Iceland by the settlers. This begs the question, what about other social structures and



norms, figuring prominently in the family sagas, like gift-giving, formal friendship, fosterbrotherhood (fictive blood brothers), or fostering? In other words, we can ask this of all kinds of vital affinities with rules, rituals, customs and norms. As in the case of feuds, we have reason to believe that such customs had ancient roots. However, more comparisons have to be undertaken before we can be certain.

Historians and anthropologists who trust that the Icelandic sagas represent social structures and norms in a factual way have been advised by others, especially literary scholars, to take caution. One of the critics maintains that the sagas can never be used as sources for historical reality since they do not mirror it. Another contends that the text of the sagas is a world of its own, and we can never get outside it. A third addresses a historian in 2007 and writes that ‘the assumption that the narrative structure of a saga text is a faithfully ‘realistic’ mirror of its feud structure’ is hardly valid, and ‘Literary texts rarely mirror reality, not even in the sagas, and even though feuds are important in most sagas, they cannot alone determine how the narrator chooses to tell his story’. A fourth scholar addresses the same historian by writing in 2010, ‘Life and literature are two different things ...’ and furthermore that there is no way that ‘... saga literature imitates life ...’

There are questions before us such as: Is it really to be expected that the narrators of the Icelandic sagas took liberties and altered the mechanics of feuds for some artistic reasons? There is no hint of anything like that when compared with feuds in the contemporary sagas. And the same goes for comparisons with other corresponding societies.

The benefits of interdisciplinary cooperation have been much acclaimed in recent decades. For such cooperation to be successful scholars of different disciplines have to learn to discuss matters and understand each other. The international saga conferences provide ample opportunities for such discussions. I would like to explain to others that the Icelandic sagas do not mirror reality in a minute detail. However, as a rule they are most likely truthful renderings of social structures and norms.

*Seinfyrnd skip dverga:*  
Dynamics of Memory and Forgetting in Old Norse Texts

Kate Heslop, Universität Zürich, Switzerland

*Og er þad var ad so mikill fjólde giördist ad vm jarðteikner enns sæla Thorlaks byskup<s>, ad monnum vard vm afl i minne ad hafa, enn þær voru margar ad huör var annare líkj þa dofnade hugur manna, og mæddust malgögninn... (Þorláks saga helga, Jarðtegnabók önnur: Byskupa sögur, p. 403).*

And when it was that a great multitude [of narratives] accumulated around the miracles of the blessed Bishop Þorlákr, so it was beyond people to keep them in memory, and there were [so] many that each was like the other, then people's minds became numbed, and their organs of speech wearied...

The word 'memory' denotes a fundamental element of both individual minds and human culture. Its semantic range stretches from 'the action or process of commemorating, recollecting, or remembering' (*Oxford English Dictionary*: 'memory' I), through 'the faculty of recalling to mind' (*OED*: 'memory' II) to 'something that perpetuates remembrance or stimulates the memory' (*OED*: 'memory' III, common in the late medieval-early modern period and now obsolete) – so, then, the activity of remembering, the faculty which enables it, and the objects which act as triggers. Although memory has only fairly recently come to prominence in academic discourse, the expansive, ramified nature of the concept means there is a vast scholarly literature devoted to it, extending across many disciplines, and including at least one dedicated journal, *Memory Studies* (2008-).

Forgetting is the inevitable flipside of memory, as innumerable book titles demonstrate, but it has tended to be treated in a rather *stiefmütterlich* fashion; a typical quotation from the psychological literature runs, 'in order to understand how memory works we need to understand how and why we forget' (Della Sala, 2010). Over the last ten years or so, however, forgetting has attracted increasing interest in its own right. Harald Weinrich's *Lethé: Kunst und Kritik des Vergessens*, a wide-ranging cultural history published in 1997 and translated into English in 2004, is a pathbreaking work in this connection, and areas of current research activity include processes of collective or cultural forgetting, the role of oblivion in social practices such as amnesty, forgiveness and commemoration, the semiotics of forgetting, and forgetting's medial trace.

But how does one focus on forgetting? As Edward Casey writes, ‘the content of forgetting, its very mass, is at once indeterminate and non-narrational’ (1992, 287), rendering forgetting difficult to capture in either theoretical and narrative frames. Even more so than is the case with memory, attempts to talk about forgetting also run the risk of spreading to include almost any discourse about the past -- in the case of forgetting, those concerned with loss, lack, and deficit in particular. And memory, remembering and forgetting turn out to be in most instances so tightly imbricated that it is not, in fact, realistic to concentrate exclusively on forgetting. Rather, my paper will attempt a shift of emphasis towards viewing forgetting as an element of memorial dynamics, not merely as the involuntary loss which memory culture attempts to recoup.

My paper will discuss the words and metaphors used to talk about memory and forgetting in Old Norse texts, the role of forgetting in commemoration and compensation, the cross-medial functions of forgetting, and the kenning as a medium of memory (and so, forgetting). Central to this discussion will be the *Prose Edda*. At first glance there seem to be few explicit references to memory and forgetting in the *Prose Edda*, our major source for discursive self-reflection within the system of skaldic poetry: there is no river Lethe in its mythic topography, for instance. But as the *Prose Edda* is a text with an explicitly historical and canonical orientation, memory is key to its project, just as forgetting is, in the form of selection, excision and suppression. Moreover, the *Prologue* to the *Prose Edda*, in its euhemerism, founds the outermost textual frame on forgetting, first the forgetting of God’s name which makes the first people susceptible to the wiles of the *Asiamenn*, then the Northmen’s forgetfulness of their original language and customs in favour of imports, and finally, at the end of *Gylfaginning*, their forgetting of the true (human) nature of the Æsir.

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## Drinking Horns and the Perception of the Past

Anne Hofmann, LMU München, Germany

Aside from being found in numerous archeological contexts, the drinking horn is also an object frequently mentioned in Old Norse saga literature. Several prominent drinking horns are mentioned, such as Heimdallr's famous *Gjallarhorn* in Snorri's *Edda* or the curious horn called *Grímr inn góði* from *Þorsteins þáttur bæjarmagns*.

A close examination of this motif in saga literature brings to light some interesting aspects of the medieval Icelandic understanding of the past. A comparison of the drinking horn motif used by the saga writers in both *Íslendingasögur* and *fornaldarsögur* shows that writers possessed an idea of how the use of those objects varies between saga genres. The saga evidence demonstrates that an object, which is clearly used as a normal, everyday vessel in Family Sagas, can have a completely different meaning in another kind of literary work. In their use of a single motif, the drinking horn, saga writers obviously distinguished between descriptions of the near past and the distant past. In my paper I will show how the use of one object in these two textual genres indicates that the saga writers were aware of genre distinctions and utilized drinking horns in situations appropriate to the narrative style.

## The Gulathing Law – the Result of Learned Law in Norway?

Anna Catherina Horn, University of Gothenburg, Sweden

In my paper I will discuss the Old Provincial Law of Gulating – *Gulatingssloven* – in relation to European legal texts in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century. My main focus will be on the ecclesiastical law, called *Kristindomsbolkr* in Old Norse. The ecclesiastical law of Gulating stands out from the ecclesiastical laws of the other judicial provinces in Norway in that the paragraphs are organized in a different order. For example, while paragraphs concerning baptism are placed in the beginning of all the other ecclesiastical laws, they are placed in the third quarter of the ecclesiastical law of Gulathing. My question is whether the structure of the ecclesiastical law of Gulating may be influenced by the structure of European texts.

After the rediscovery of Roman Law and the Gregorian reform in the late 11<sup>th</sup> century, law schools were established all over Europe. In the following decades, papal decretals and legal provisions were spread over Europe. This generated a need to systemize the body of provisions which often contradicted each other. Law studies then flourished during the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, and closely connected to the establishment of the new universities, it became a profession of its own. Like theology, and all the trivium arts – rhetoric, logic and grammar, it was based on the systematic reading of texts.

The compilation made by Gratian ca 1140, called the *Decretum*, was a result of this new mode of reading, and it soon became the authoritative text for law makers all over Europe. Still, it was not organized into subject areas which could be useful for a lawyer who wanted to solve a problem. The immense flow of new decretals and letters from the Pope in the last decades of the 12<sup>th</sup> century necessitated a better organisation of the decretals. In 1190, Bernard of Pavia systemized the decretals into five books in his collection *Breviarium Extravagante*. The collection was immediately accepted in the law schools, and the division into these five books served as a model for later collections, like *Liber Extra*, which was ordered by Pope Gregorius IX. The collection was finished in 1234 by Raymond de Pinafort, and was copied all over Europe in the following decades.

The main structure of *Breviarium* and *Liber Extra* is the five books. The first book, treats of persons who exercise ecclesiastical jurisdiction, the second of civil judicial processes, the third of matters pertaining to clergy, the fourth of marriage, the fifth of ecclesiastical crimes and criminal procedure. Three main tendencies concerning the development of learning and making of laws in Europe in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries are to be extracted from the development of law in Europe: A more systematic reading of texts like the *Digest* and *Decretum*; the organizing of texts into authorized collections

like *Brevarium* and *Liber Extra* according to certain principles; and finally, when a collection was authorized and copied, later collections would only consist of decretals which were ordered by the Pope after the former collection was authorized.

There was close contact between the papacy and the Norwegian and Danish kings from the late 11<sup>th</sup> century, and many Norwegians studied law at European law schools. Fragments of *Decretum* and the *Digest* written in Norway in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century have survived, so there is no doubt that Norwegians were familiar with canon law. It is reasonable to assume that the Norwegians who learned canon law and Roman law, adapted these systems when writing Norwegian laws, and these principles served as premises for law making in Norway.

The oldest fragments containing provincial laws, including the Gulating law, are dated to 1200-1250. The writing of Norwegian laws coincides then with the period when the Pope and his canonists worked towards the making of a useful law collection. In this paper, I will discuss the possible influence of this work on the structure of the Gulating law.

## Transmission Studies of *Sörla saga sterka*

Silvia Hufnagel, University of Copenhagen, Denmark

*Sörla saga sterka* belongs to the group of *fornaldarsögur norðurlanda*, popular stories that are set in Scandinavia (*norðurlönd*) before Iceland's settlement (*fornöld*). It exists in thirty paper manuscripts dating from the seventeenth to the early twentieth century and is also found in eight sets of *rímur*, one of them from medieval times. The saga is transmitted in three distinct versions. Version B was edited by Erik Julius Björner in his *Nordiska Kämpa Dater* in 1737 and version A by C. C. Rafn in his *Fornaldarsögur norðurlanda* in 1829-30. A digital edition of version C is in preparation.

Material and textual aspects were analysed for transmission studies of *Sörla saga sterka*. Material aspects are the size of margins, the number of lines per page and the number of characters and abbreviations per page. Also decoration, the binding, if original, and structural elements of the layout like running titles are included in the analysis. Textual aspects are for example chapter division, word order and lexical variation. The results of the material and textual analysis are set in relation to the social and economical backgrounds of the scribes. They reveal the impact that the context has on the making and creating of the manuscripts and *Sörla saga sterka*. The results prove that the manuscripts of *Sörla saga sterka* are truly social products, created for specific purposes that become visible in their physical form and textual variance.

## The Slippery Slide of “Saga” from “History” into “Fiction” during the Eighteenth Century.

Shaun F. D. Hughes, Purdue University, USA

When Bishop Þórður Þorláksson brought the one printing press in the country to Skálholt, among the innovations he introduced was the printing of historical literature. However in 1703 the press returned to Holler where it resumed its old habit of printing nothing but ecclesiastical material. Bishop Halldór Brynjólfsson died in 1752 and he was not replaced until 1755. In 1754 Björn Markus son, *varalögmaður sunnan og austan*, was appointed civilian administrator of the See and even though Gísli Magnússon was ordained bishop the following year, Björn continued to administer the press until 1765. Despite considerable activity during the previous half century, the press had achieved little commercial success. When Björn took over the administration of the See he was faced with the problem of what to do with an entire pack-house full of unsold volumes. Jón Ólafsson frá Grunnavík had raised the possibility with Halldór Brynjólfsson in 1750 of printing a selection of *Íslendingasögur*. But this immediately raised a problem. The press was committed to spreading “truth” and even though the word *saga* can mean “history,” there can hardly be said to have been much reflection in Icelandic circles over what “history” actually was.

Writing sometime around 1130, Ari *fróði* Þorgilsson says, “and what ever is incorrectly stated in this work, one should rather take that which is proven to be the more true.” This suggests a certain scrupulousness with sources and in this Ari differs significantly from Bede, who blamed any errors not on himself but on the sources he was using. Not that everything that had the word “saga” attached was necessarily true, but the elite class’s notion of “truth” was far apart from the popular perception. Eggert Ólafsson noted visiting the fishing camps on Snæfellsnes that the *rímur*-poets there base their composition upon “the most wretched lying saga” as well as those that are true, and adds that “they are few who know how to distinguish between the two.” Furthermore an Ecclesiastical Ordinance was sent to all parsons in 1746 instructing them to prevent their parishioners from listening to “false histories, sagas, amorous verses and *rímur*, harmful *lygisögur* and sagas about trolls ... , which have seemed the best entertainment to many of the common people.”

In response Jón Ólafsson argued that “I do not think that any examples exist where [such narratives] have brought people to do any of wicked deeds they describe.” Jón Ólafsson brought the matter up again with Gísli Magnússon when he was in Denmark for his ordination. Björn saw this as an opportunity to get the press back on a sound financial footing. Two volumes of sagas were published in 1756 along with *Þess Svenska Gustav Landkrons Og Þess Engelska Bertholds Faabreitileger Robinsons* in the Preface to which Björn equivocates about their truth-value referring also to Þormóður Torfason who when he was preparing his four-volume history of Norway encountered the



same dilemma as his British counterparts did when faced with the problem of Geoffrey of Monmouth's twelfth-century *Historia Regum Britanniae*. Despite the doubts that had been cast on Geoffrey's reliability, it continued to be used until well into the eighteenth century, because not to use it would be to leave the early history of the country a blank. Without the *Fornaldarsögur* Scandinavian historians would have had little to say about the period before 900AD. Þormóður saw his responsibility to report what he found in manuscripts no matter how unlikely, because a kernel of truth may be hidden there and it is up to the reader to decide. 1750 Þorsteinn Pétursson began an autobiography, inspired by the example of Gustav Landkrón (whose story he must have read in the Danish edition of 1745), so Björn was in good company in suggesting that the narratives he was publishing were true. Yet in 1821-1826 C. C. Rafn gathered together a translation of many of the same sagas used by Þormóður under the title *Nordiske Kæmpe-Historier eller mythiske og romantiske Sagaer*, signaling that these works are no longer history but fiction. Here some of the steps in the process are investigated by which *saga* (or at least some categories of *saga*) moved from the status of an unproblematic term to being a highly contested one, and the role played in this transformation by the early writers of "fictional history," Jón Bjarnason á Ballará (*Sagan af Parmes loðinbjarna*, 1770), Eiríkur Laxdal (*Ólands saga*, begun c. 1775), and Jón Oddsson Hjaltalín (*Ketlerusar saga keisaraefnis*, before 1800). All of which suggests that there was a much greater awareness of European literary issues including the rise of fiction in the Icelandic countryside during the eighteenth century than is usually considered to have been the case.

## ”Det er bedre at ride end at gå” Hestenes funktion i islændingesagaerne og i Eddaskrifterne

Lise Hvarregaard

Når man slår op på en tilfældig side i en saga, fremgår det næsten med sikkerhed at der henvises til heste eller til at man red: Hestene spiller således en ikke uvæsentlig rolle i sagaernes verden. Mange heste nævnes i forbindelse med transport, men enkelte heste, der var enmandsheste og/eller kamphingste beskrives nærmere og nævnes ved navn. De knappe beskrivelser med få adjektiver, der generelt karakteriserer sagastilen, kommer således også til udtryk i forhold til hestene. Udover den praktiske funktion har hestene i nogle tilfælde udfyldt en æstetisk og en symbolsk funktion.

I paperet belyses hestene ud fra den optik at dyrene har haft en praktisk, en æstetisk og/eller en symbolsk funktion ud fra de forskellige sammenhænge, de nævnes i. Under den symbolske funktion medregnes det fantastiske: De mytologiske flyvende heste: Odins Sleipnir og Freys Blóðughófa. Som et udtryk for æstetisk funktion ses farveavl, der henvises til i flere sagaer.

Vi møder heste i sagaerne og i Eddaskrifterne, men fremstillingen af hestene sker ikke på samme måde; der synes at forekomme et skred i betydningsproduktionen omkring heste, der kan have sammenhæng med at kristendommen vinder indpas i Island. Der kan ses et fald i opfattelsen af heste fra Eddaskrifternes poetiske beskrivelser af flyvende navngivne heste i forhold til de mere profane og ordknappe beskrivelser i sagaerne. Her er hestene blevet til fysiske realiteter – medens de i Eddaen omgærdes af en religiøs og ophøjet sfære. Fremstillingen af Freyfaxi i Hrafnkels saga udgør en mellemstatus mellem disse positioner.

Sagaerne rummer en række beskrivelser af hverdagsaktiviteter med heste, der kan inddeles i en række motivkredse. Som eksempelvis: At ”låne” en anden mands hest, at ride med håndhest, at ride skarpt, samt det tilfældige der kommer til udtryk i det uberegnelige element: heste der snubler, der bliver halte, stikker af, bliver skræmt eller bliver væk. Sådanne forhold spiller en ikke uvæsentlig rolle for udfaldet i sagaen.

Hestekampe og heste som gave motiverne vil blive berørt sporadisk.

Paperet rummer en række eksempler der belyser hypotesen om den praktiske, den æstetiske og den symbolske funktion i forhold til hestene i saga og Edda.

## Finding a Founding Father: The Case of Ingólfur Arnarson

Verena Höfig, UC Berkeley, USA

Everyone in Iceland knows the accounts of how Ingólfur from Norway is said to have settled the island in the year 874. However, archaeologists have found traces of settlement activity which some claim precede the date and location of Ingólfur's supposed arrival on the island. Scholars still differ over the extent to which the well-known accounts of the first settlement in *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók* can be considered accurate, as a recent debate in the magazine *Skírnir* demonstrates.

What is it that makes the first settler such an important figure for Icelanders?

In search of the places and the objects which represent the cultural memory of Icelanders, this paper argues neither in favor nor against the existence of a historical Ingólfur Arnarson and the role he may have had in the foundation of the Icelandic commonwealth.

Instead, the symbolic quality of Ingólfur Arnason and of his farmstead, and their utilization in the course of Icelandic history from medieval times to the present, will be examined.

In what way can the figure of the founding father guide us to Icelanders' sites of memory, those material or non-material entities which symbolize the memorial heritage of their community?

# Why Is Heiðrún, the Goat, a Goat? Who Is Heiðrún and What Is her Symbolic Value?

Ingunn Ásdísardóttir, University of Iceland, Iceland

Heiðrún, the goat which in *Grímnismál* is said to bite the leaves of the tree Læraðr (Yggdrasill), has not enjoyed much scholarly interest; in most cases she is just mentioned as an unexplained phenomenon on the roof of Valhöll. She however provides the *einherjar* with their drink, just as the boar Sæhrímnir, who has been analyzed as a symbol for sacrificial activity, provides their meat. It seems, however, that Heiðrún and the mead streaming from her udders, present some interesting puzzles when one starts looking closer at her name, function and animal form.

Mead was often used to seal contracts of such importance as needed religious solemnity and rituals, which opened contact to supernatural powers. This carries connotations not only of other-worldly qualities, but also of a divine life-giving female element.

Only few scholars have given special thought to Heiðrún (F.R. Schröder, Jan de Vries, Else Mundal, Ulf Drobin), and they mainly connect her to fertility cult.

In this paper I will analyze the connotations that Heiðrún's characteristics bring forth, such as the possible connections of the components of the name Heiðrún to the *völva* and runic knowledge; the connection between Heiðrún's mead to the role of the *valkyrjur* who "*bera einherjum fl*" and the connection between Heiðrún's goat shape and her mead to the race of the *jötnar*.

On the basis of my investigation I will argue that the goat Heiðrún is closely related to the numinous and sacred knowledge of the *jötnar* as well as to their feminine element, and that she encompasses a more important, many-faceted role in the Nordic mythological world and ideology than hitherto has been credited.

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## Sigvaldi and the Jomsviking Laws: Changing Attitudes in German Saga Retellings

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The death of their founder marks a turning point for the *Jómsvíkingar*: Shortly after Sigvaldi has succeeded Pálna-Tóki, the formerly strict adherence to the league's own rules declines, and as the new leader woos a wife at the risk of creating a personal enemy, he evokes the doom of the community.

*Jómsvíkinga saga* has been subject to several retellings<sup>1</sup> in German, dating from the 1920s to the 1940s, which often apply great phantasy to the original plot and details. While some of them show literary ambitions, the bulk is carrying obvious ideological intentions, particularly when published in anthologies or readers. Nevertheless, the attitudes expressed towards both Sigvaldi himself and the circumstances of the further events are highly controversial among them.

Hence, this paper is going to focus upon the individual representation of Sigvaldi's personality, the extent of his presence, the relation between leader and led, his role model function and the actual meaning of females in this context; it will also investigate into how the decay of discipline is addressed and connected with the later oath-taking at the feast organised by King Sveinn.

Secondly, seen before the background of the Jomsviking laws, the manipulations themselves raise some questions: Is there something to "correct"? Is it only Sigvaldi who spoils the image? Or is there some general flaw to hush up?

The result of this paper will be an analysis of the contradiction between cursing and excusing Sigvaldi as the two approaches those retellings are taking.

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup>Retellings are understood as covering the story completely, regardless of their length or depth of details, which distinguishes them from the selective use of saga parts in thematic and/or ideological contexts. The texts to be examined here are by K. H. Ball, F. Fahnenmann, E. Hersen, L. Kath, H. Lawrenz and G. Ramlow plus one contained in *Wikingerfahrten* – for their bibliographical details and an introductory study see my paper "Die deutschsprachigen Fassungen und Verarbeitungen der *Jómsvíkinga saga* von den 1920er bis zu den 1940er Jahren." In: *Á austrvega. Saga and East Scandinavia. Preprint papers of the 14th International Saga Conference, Uppsala, 9th–15th August 2009*. 2 vols. Coll. and rev. Agneta Ney, Henrik Williams, Fredrik Charpentier Ljungqvist. Gävle 2009: Gävle University Press. (Institutionen för humaniora och samhällsvetenskaps skriftserie, 14.) Vol. I, pp. 420–428. <<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:his:diva-4837>>

Búri as *deus terra editus* and Þórr as *Jarðar burr*:  
The Earth-born Gods in the Scandinavian Mythology

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This paper deals with mythological anecdotes concerning the gods who are born from the earth: the progenitorial god of the race, Tuisto (or *Twisco*) in *Germania* or Búri in *Snorra Edda* on the one hand, and Þórr, who is ‘Jarðar burr’ in *Þrymskviða* and ‘Son ... Jarðar’ in *Snorra Edda* on the other. Apparently, two different traditions were incorporated into Snorri Sturluson’s *Edda*.

In *Germania*, Tacitus describes the attribution of Tuisto as ‘*deus terra editus*.’ Tuisto bears Mannus, as if autogenously, while Mannus begets three sons, most insinuatingly in its context, by his own wife. With an interval of almost 1100 years, Snorri Sturluson tells in his *Edda* that the body of Búri, the progenitor of gods, comes out of a stone when Auðhumla has licked it for three days. Búri begets Borr alone, while Borr has three sons by his wife. The parallel between Tacitus’ and Snorri’s narratives is so striking that one would be tempted to think that the Germanic oral tradition concerning the ancestral earth-born god might have been inherited in Iceland.

However, in *Snorra Edda* and the Eddaic tradition, it is Þórr who is regarded as the son of the earth, ‘Jarðar burr’. Although Snorri also refers to him as ‘Son Óðins ok Jarðar’, Adam of Bremen’s testimony supports a possibility of earlier tradition in which Þórr could stand independently as the earth’s son. Furthermore, though the etymology of ‘Búri’ is controversial, a modern Norwegian word *bura* ‘roar’ may well suggest Þórr’s connection with Búri.

‘Scythia er uær köllum miklu Suíþjóð’:  
Memory, Fiction, or Something Else?

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The *Stjórn*, as well as the Icelandic sagas and geographical treatises of the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, mention a place-name *Scythia* that, according to the authors of these works, is synonymous with the name *Svíþjóð in mikla* which is also used in these texts. This paper will provide an overview of a large number of occurrences of *Scythia* and *Svíþjóð in mikla* in the Old Norse-Icelandic written sources of different genres, and their comparison, where possible, with the Latin prototypes. The question that arises in this connection is whether we are dealing with an echo of some ancient knowledge or with something else.

To take an example of the Apostles’ sagas (*postola sögur*), it should be noted that they are based on the Latin lives of the Apostles that came to Iceland and Norway after the adoption of Christianity and belong to the very first texts translated into Old Norse (cf. K. Wolf, ‘Postola sögur’, *Medieval Scandinavia. An Encyclopedia*, Ph. Pulsiano, ed., 2003, p. 511-12). The sagas demonstrate three different ways of rendering the geographical name *Scythia* of the Latin texts.

In the *Tveggja saga postola Philippus ok Jacobs II* we read that “the Holy Philip, the Apostle of our Lord Jesus Christ, went after His Ascension to these lands called *Scithia* and preached there and made straight the faith there for twenty winters” (*Postolasögur*, C.R. Unger, ed., 1874, p. 740; translation – Omelian Pritsak, *The Origin of Rus’*, 1981, vol. 1, p. 509). If we compare this passage with the original Acts of St. Philip by Pseudo-Abdias, we shall see that *Scithia* in the Icelandic text stands for *Scythia* in the Latin text: “After the Ascension of the Saviour blessed Philip continuously preached for twenty winters the Gospel to heathens in *Scythia*” (*Codex Apocryphus Novi Testamenti*, J.A. Fabricius, ed., 1719, vol. II, p. 738). So, here we see a one-to-one correspondence.

This is not the case with every occurrence of *Scythia* in the Latin lives of the Apostles. The matter is that the authors of the Icelandic versions of the *postola sögur* replaced personal names, such as those of classical gods, and some place names with those that “would have more vivid associations for people brought up in the northern tradition. Thus, in the *Clemens Saga*, Þórr, Óðinn, and Freya replace Jove, Hercules, and Venus” (G. Turville-Petre, *Origins of Icelandic Literature*, 1953, p. 129). *Scythia*, too, is often replaced in these texts, its substitute being *Svíþjóð in mikla* ‘Sweden the Great’. For instance, Apostle Andrew is known to have taught in *Scythia*. In the *Ecclesiastica Historia* by Eusebius of Caesarea the following passage appears: “Meanwhile, the Holy Apostles and Disciples of our Saviour were scattered over the whole world. Thomas, tradition tells us, was chosen for Parthia, Andrew for *Scythia*, John for Asia



[Minor]” (Eusebius, *The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine*, tr. by G.A. Williamson, 1965, p. 107). In *Andreas saga postola I* a similar passage is found, but the description of Apostle Andrew’s destination has its ‘northern’ name: “And when the Apostles dispersed to the nations, then the Apostle Andrew went first to *Svíþjóð in mikla* there to offer to God the manifold fruit of his preaching” (L. Harty, *Andreas saga postola*, Ph. D. diss., University of Otago, Dunedin, N. Z., 1970, p. 1–2).

In some of the Apostles’ sagas, however, *Svíþjóð in mikla* neither substitutes *Scythia* of the Latin original, nor is used on its own by a Scandinavian author, rather it is used as an explanation of *Scythia* (which is supposed to be no longer familiar to the reading/listening audience): “*Scythia*... that is called by some men *Svíþjóð in mikla*” (*Postolasögur*, C.R. Unger, ed., 1874, p. 736).

The paper will demonstrate that all such occurrences of *Scythia* / *Svíþjóð in mikla* are only borrowings from ancient and early medieval writers – Augustine (354–430), Gregory the Great (ca. 540–604), Isidorus Hispalensis (ca. 560–636), Honorius of Autun (the first half of the 12th cent.), Peter Comestor (died in 1178 or 1198), Vincent of Beauvais (1190–1264), on the one hand, and the result of intellectual efforts of a number of learned Icelanders, on the other.

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## Icelandic Poets and Norwegian Kingship: the Case of Hákon Hákonarson

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The practice and performance of skaldic poetry is rooted in history and memory, claiming authenticity and intertwined with the medieval rulers of the northern world—particularly those of Norway. For centuries, Icelandic skalds documented the reigns and achievements of Norwegian kings, offering praise and censure and serving as the primary form of historical record in an oral society. Eventually, however, skaldic poetry began to face competition of various sorts: sagas and chronicles as alternative forms of historical record, the Church as another means of royal legitimation, and romances as a new form of entertainment. This paper will examine the period when all three of these things were in full force: the reign of Hákon Hákonarson. Hákon's saga claims him to be the most Christian king since St. Óláfr and he is generally believed to be the instigator behind the first translations of romance, *lai*, and *chanson de geste* into Old Norse. As such, his reign is typically associated with the importation and adaptation of continental literature. However, he is also known to have been a reader—perhaps even a patron—of sagas and is listed in *Skáldatal* as having a respectable eight skalds, including Snorri Sturluson and Sturla Þórðarson. His reign, therefore, is one of literary productivity and variety, simultaneously producing literature sprung from very different societies with divergent structures, traditions, and practices. This paper will examine the tensions and interactions between these two literary traditions at the court of Hákon Hákonarson, with a focus on the institution of kingship as it is portrayed in both skaldic poetry and romance.

## Sagas and Things: Verbal Cultures at Local and General Assemblies in the Viking Diaspora

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The þing — an umbrella term for the local and general assemblies found throughout Scandinavia and the Viking diaspora — has long been recognised as a locus for storytelling, match-making, news-gathering and other social exchanges not directly related to the primary legal function of the assembly. The close connections between poetry, law and sagas, and their various (but overlapping) practitioners, have also been recognised, though still relatively little discussed. This paper will (a) analyse the evidence for different kinds of verbal cultural practice, at different kinds of assemblies, in different parts of the Scandinavian-speaking world, and (b) explore the role of these verbal practices in maintaining the cultural cohesion that is such a remarkable feature of the Viking diaspora.

## To Transform One's Own Culture through the Translation of Another - The Death of Sigurðr Fáfnisbani in *Þiðreks saga*, *Völsunga saga* and Eddic Poetry

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The death of Sigurðr is described differently in the various Old Norse sources. In *Völsunga saga* he is slain in his sleep in bed with Guðrún, while in *Þiðreks saga af Bern* the killing takes place during a rest in the forest. In eddic poetry Sigurðr's death is mentioned in *Guðrúnarkviða önnur* and in *Brot af Sigurðarqviðu*. At the end of *Brot af Sigurðarqviðu* there is a prose section providing information about three different traditions about the death of Sigurðr. Here we find what must probably be considered literary references to other narratives. This text also echoes the wording of the prologue to *Þiðreks saga* about a tradition carried by *þýðverscir menn* 'German people', and the evaluation that all are univocal, *segja allir einnig* 'all say the same'. As the mention of Sigurðr being killed in bed and asleep refers to the story as it is found in *Völsunga saga*, it seems as if the compiler of Codex Regius has known three different narratives about this event, the one he has just written, one attributed to German traditions of the kind found in *Þiðreks saga*, and finally one tradition reminding of *Völsunga saga*. A similar comment on Sigurðr's death is found in the version of the story found in *Norna-Gests þáttur*. In my paper I will discuss the relation between the various versions of the death of Sigurðr from a perspective of cultural *translatio* or the interfoliation of local lore and European traditions in 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century manuscripts.

## Differences in Text Transmission from South to North between East and West

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In my paper, I intend to investigate the ways of text and manuscript transmission from the central European continent to the medieval North. My focus is on the differences between the reception of texts in Western and Eastern Scandinavia, and on the development of genre. I will concentrate on the beginnings of historical writing in the vernaculars with its roots in Latin historiography and follow the varying ways of transforming history into sagas and annalistic writings on the Western hand, and to rhyme chronicles and other historical writing on the Eastern hand. A sketch of the routes on which European texts in their manuscript form traveled north will be drawn. As to the late transmission of the Rhyme chronicles, following my overview starting with the beginning of the transmission, I will have to limit the paper to very few examples each and hope to be able to track greater lines of transmission. This is part of a comprehensive investigation of text transmission from central Europe to the North which will cover a greater range of text genres.

## Emotions, Illness and Health in Medieval Iceland

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In my paper, I will discuss medieval Icelandic emotions and their connection with illness and health. Like pointed out by William Miller, emotions in sagas were usually depicted in somatic changes of the body or in dialogue. However, from the perspective of the modern reader, it appears to be difficult to distinguish sometimes how emotions are perhaps connected with physical symptoms of illnesses. I will examine descriptions of emotions in *Íslendingasögur* and *samtiðarsögur*, and study how the emotions depicted in them are categorised. Are they represented as illnesses, and is there a connection between illness and emotions, or health and emotions? Are there any particular emotions that were considered as signs of health, or emotions that the medieval people considered an illness?

*Vaxinn vøllum hæri*: Making Sense of *mistilteinn* in *Vøluspa* 31-32

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The perennial trouble with the *mistilteinn* in *Vøluspa* is that it is described as a tree (*meiðr*) that stood (*stóð*) at some height (*vøllum hæri*), while the mistletoe with which we are familiar is a scraggly hemi-parasitic plant. A great deal of scholarship has been dedicated to making this problem go away. Some have blamed an Icelandic poet who, having no idea what the word actually referred to, got its physical characteristics wildly wrong; others have argued away the most intuitive reading of the stanzas. I suggest that the lines do not reflect misunderstanding but a deliberate misrepresentation, a reference to a story that made clear that that *mistilteinn* was transformed into its present humble form after serving to make the weapon that killed Baldr. If *Vsp* 31-32 are set in a time before mistletoe came to look as it does in the mythological present, the characteristics of real mistletoe that have most vexed scholars are made sensible as an example of motif A2720: *Plant characteristics as punishment*. Though not, to my knowledge, recorded in the Old Norse sources that survive, such narratives are widely attested across northwestern Europe and Britain. With cautious use of later folklore and some of John McKinnell's recent ideas about *Vøluspa*, we have a chance to explain *mistilteinn* instead of explaining it away.

## Sitting on the Burial Mound - a Literary Invention or a Real Ceremony?

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In the paper I am going to examine such procedure as “sitting on the burial mound”. The situation, when a konungr, a king, is being described as sitting on the burial mound of his ancestors occurred in several sagas. Mostly these sagas are so-called *Fornaldarsögur*, written down from the XIVth century on: *Völsunga saga*, *Friðþjófs saga ins frækna*, *Gautreks saga*. But still it is highly possible, that the strange phrase could have a real background, a ritual. A Danish scholar Axel Olrik has examined the cases where “sitting on the burial mound” is mentioned in the sagas in his article “At sidde på høi” (1909). He showed, that not only Fornaldarsögur, but the royal sagas as well, and also some eddic poems (*Brymskviða* and *Hlöðskviða*), do know this procedure. Sitting on the mound has always a tinge of royalty, and is described as an occupation peculiar to a king, or to a member of king’s family.

The cases, taken into consideration by Olrik, didn’t include *Styrbjarnar þátttr Sviakappa*, where the episode with “sitting on the burial mound” definitely refers to Styrbjörn’s intention to claim the power in the kingdom. The search for the explanation of this ritual brings us to the collections of the Scandinavian medieval laws, especially the Swedish ones, which describe how the newly “chosen” king of Sweden should be “put on the Mora stone”, indicating his power over the land. The same procedure is known also from the Norwegian *Hirðskra* under the name of “konungstekja”.

Comparing the two mentioned rituals, one has to admit, that there is a big symbolic correspondence between them, and thus “sitting on the burial mound”, preserved only in the written saga tradition, detects a real ceremonial background.



## Writing Geography in Medieval Icelandic Manuscripts: The Case of AM 736 I 4<sup>to</sup>

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While a number of scholars have engaged with the influence of European geographical and cartographical models on the geographical culture of medieval Iceland, the world maps of medieval Iceland have attracted curiously little critical attention. The manuscript with the shelf mark AM 736 I 4<sup>to</sup> in the Arnamagnæan collection features a number of geographical texts and images written between the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. This bifolium features a trio of maps framed by two geographical narratives: on folio 1r there is a description of the three continents, and on folio 2v is a description of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, appended in the manuscript AM 194 8<sup>vo</sup> to the *Leiðarvísir*, an itinerary to Rome and the Holy Lands reportedly dictated by the Benedictine Abbott Nikulás in the twelfth century. Between these two geographical accounts there are three maps and shorter texts. On folio 1v there is a world map of the zonal-quadrupartite type. This map shows the zonal divisions of the Earth, the three continents of the Old World, the antipodes, and the positions of the Sun and Moon at the solstices, with Old Norse legends. On the same folio there is an astral diagram with Latin inscriptions, showing the Earth at the centre of the seven celestial spheres. Preserved alongside these two maps are a note on the error in the Julian calendar and a text on the seasonal variation in the tides. On the facing recto is a pictorial map of Jerusalem, on which important buildings and gates into the city are marked with Latin legends.

This paper challenges the assumption that meaning is a quality fixed within the map image, and demonstrates that meaning in this bifolium is generated by a complex suite of interactions between the map images and their framing narratives. Modern editions of these materials create an artificial sense of bibliographic distance between texts and images that were placed together in the same manuscript book, even manuscript folio, and subsequently encountered in that configuration by a community of readers. This paper is an attempt to restore to these materials some of the features of the manuscript that would have conditioned their reception by medieval readers.

## Early British and American Travel Writers and the Lure of Medieval Iceland and Its Sagas

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The focus of this paper is on the portrayal of the medieval Icelandic Commonwealth and Icelandic saga literature in travel books published before the mid-point of the Victorian era (1869) by British and American visitors to Iceland. The period has been termed the ‘heroic age of Icelandic travel’ and by the end of the 1860s this heroic age was considered by contemporaries to be over. A regular monthly steamship service between Edinburgh and Reykjavík, running March to October, had been established in 1858, and in a book published in 1867 J. Ross Browne claimed, one suspects with exaggeration, that ‘A trip to Iceland nowadays is little more than a pleasant summer excursion’.

A published bibliography has identified twenty-eight books of Icelandic travel published in English (mostly in Britain) between the second half of the eighteenth century and the end of the 1860s, but some of these were translations from other European languages (notably the notoriously unflattering account by the Viennese Ida Pfeiffer, published in seemingly quite independent translations on either side of the North Atlantic in 1852). Others are clearly the work of writers who never journeyed any closer to Iceland than their library. The *bona fide* British and American travellers are diverse, and towards the end of the period included men (there were no women among them) of more modest means and professional travel writers. But many were English or Scottish gentlemen of independent means, or people in the service of such patrons.

Their reasons for travel to Iceland were also varied, but until near the end of the period primary motivating forces tended to be a spirit of adventure and a wish to encounter the exotic and practically unknown, a desire for a respite from civilisation, or a wish to conduct research in geology or natural history. Early writers might be well read in Continental European scholarship relating to Iceland, and well informed about the origins and history of the Icelandic Commonwealth (by the standards of an era which usually accepted *Landnámabók* and the sagas as trustworthy historical sources). They might express admiration for the medieval ‘constitution’, and regret at how matters had sadly changed in Iceland (though unlike some twentieth century Iceland enthusiasts they did not discern strong democratic elements in the medieval Commonwealth). They tended at least to mention that Iceland had a considerable literature dating from the medieval period, and noted the custom of reading aloud from this literature in peasant households; and some discussed the literature at length, though without any reverential awe. What interest they displayed was far more in the poetic heritage – the *Poetic Edda* rather than the skaldic verse – than in the prose. Some mention in passing that medieval Icelandic literature is of considerable quality; others, such as William Jackson Hooker,

who visited Iceland in 1809, display an attitude that would not seem remarkable in the work of a Victorian anthropologist discussing the oral traditions of a newly encountered African tribe.

By the 1860s attitudes were clearly changing, although older ones had not entirely disappeared. Clearly evident is the idea of travel to Iceland as a pilgrimage to the onetime homeland of a dynamic and venerable culture which had nurtured men and women of the noblest kind, and produced one of the great literatures of the world. Intimately related in the minds of most of those who admired medieval Iceland, was the further idea that this culture was part of the racial heritage of nineteenth century Anglo-Saxons, who could and should claim kinship with medieval Icelanders. A growing interest in the previously rather neglected *Íslendingasögur* is evident, though in an era when English translations of sagas were still few, Eddaic poetry is still at least as strong a focus of interest. One encounters strong enthusiasm for the Old North as exemplified by medieval Iceland, and even some gentle and friendly mockery of the more extreme forms the enthusiasm could take. But while a visit to Iceland could evoke reverential awe at stepping where saga heroes once trod, the reality of nineteenth century Iceland and nineteenth century Icelanders could also be depressing for the pilgrim. ‘Icelandophile’ travellers of the period faced the dilemma which would challenge admirers of Nordic greatness for decades after their time: if it was to the Nordic element in their genetic heritage that Englishmen ‘owe most of their dash, their love of enterprise, their frankness, their liberty’, as Frederick Metcalfe wrote in 1863, why were the contemporary Scandinavian nations not in the forefront of Europe’s industrial and economic development, and in the creation of empires which would spread their values throughout the world?

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*Travels in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Iceland: Sources/Bibliography*

<http://www.northernlite.ca/19thcenturyiceland/sources/bibliography.htm>

## *Sturlu saga*: Inheritance Cases – Hard to Understand

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In *Sturlu saga* four disputes over inheritance cases are related, all of them with some wealth of detail. Yet, they are rather difficult to understand, especially if we try to understand them with the help of the inheritance section of the *Grágás*.

After the death of their father Þorkr's elder brothers sold the land of Gunnarsstaðir. When Þorkr came of age he "kallar /---/ í hendr Þórhalli til landsins". How did this case and Þorkr's claims correspond to the obligations that lay upon the elder brothers according to paragraphs K 118 and 122. The saga gives us insufficient information and nothing is said about the later destiny of Gunnarsstaðir.

In the disputes over Búðardalr and Heinaberg the chieftain Einarr Þorgilsson attempted to appropriate the inheritances from the heirs. In the dispute over Búðardalr we don't even know how closely or distantly the heirs were related to Gizurr. In both cases Einarr accused heirs of illegitimate birth, but the text doesn't confirm his charge. In both cases women were considered unable to take care of their inheritances. but did their inability meet the juridical demands for mental incapacity outlined in paragraph K 118?

Contradictory to our expectations, these two cases give us the impression that Einarr was more interested in goods and cattle than land. Neither in *Sturlu saga* nor in *Íslendinga saga* are we informed about the future of the two farmsteads.

The most famous inheritance case in *Sturlu saga*, and perhaps in all saga literature, is the *Deildartungumál*. It started when Þorlákr Þórhallsson on August 9, 1178 returned to Iceland with the message that Þórir Þorsteinsson had died in March during their pilgrimage to Rome, that his son Björn had died in July, and that the latest report from his wife Þorlaug was from August, all in 1177. Although there were two illegitimate sons and a sister, Vigdís, remaining, Þorlaug's father, Páll Sölvason claimed, with the support of bishops and many chieftains, that he was legal heir. Bøðvarr Þórðarson of the *lundarmannagoðorð* supported Vigdís in her claim as "réttan arftökumann Þóris". Eyjólfur of the *stafhylltingagoðorð* supported the claims of the two sons Leggr and Liðr.

Many scholars from Björn M. Ólsen and Vogt to Foote, Tranter, Byock and Úlfar Bragason have studied the case and accepted Páll Sölvasons argument. Some have even argued that Bøðvar's and later Hvamm-Sturla's interventions in the case were unjust.

According to the inheritance section of the *Grágás*, paragraph K 118 the inheritance after Þórir went from his son to the son's mother, Þorlaug, and then from Þorlaug to her father. The result must have been astonishing not only to Páll but also to Vigdís, Leggr and Liðr. Suddenly all the inheritance was lost for Þóri's offspring. That

was black letter law. But if we read paragraph K 118 forgetting the order of the deaths and recognizing that Þórir and his family were extinct, we don't find wives or fathers-in-law listed at any level of heirs. That reflects the spirit of the law, the law in action. Accordingly, Bøðvarr argued in agreement with the spirit of the law.

The support for Páll can only be understood as a product of his strong position in the Icelandic clerical aristocracy.

The *Deildartungumál* was obviously so unique, astonishing and even dubious, that many decades later it was used in *Laxdæla saga*, chapter 18, in an altered form, to describe a story of fraud.

Many obscure details remain in the *Deildartungumál*. It is stated that Bøðvarr at the end of the case received one third of Þóri's fortune. Was that one third of 200 or 400 hundreds? Did he receive the hundreds for himself or on behalf of Vigdís? And when Páll, chapter 33, said that Hvamm-Sturla's claim of 200 hundreds would make him destitute, it was an exaggeration by the rather greedy priest and chieftain. It was actually no more than Þorlaugs share in the marriage with Þórir. We also have to ask if Þorlaug really died on her pilgrimage. The latest report about her related only that she was in poor condition.

In all these cases that are so difficult to understand, we have to emphasize that the *Grágás* in our hands presumably didn't exist in the same form in the twelfth century.

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## Skjoldbeskrivelsen i *Saulus saga ok Nikarnos* – gjenbruk av litterære tradisjoner

Karoline Kjesrud, University of Oslo, Norway

*Saulus saga ok Nikanors* er en saga bevart i manuskripter fra 1400-tallets Island. Et vesentlig avsnitt i sagaen er viet en skjoldbeskrivelse der referanser blant annet til trojanernes historie og bibelhistorie blir presentert. Skjoldbeskrivelsen står ut som noe eget i forhold til den omsluttende narrativen og jeg mener den bør ses i sammenheng med andre litterære billedbeskrivelser, *ekphrasis*, være seg for eksempel av norrøne skaldedikt så vel som Homer's *Iliaden*. Den litterære formen fungerer som et retorisk verktøy for det budskapet som formidles i beskrivelsen av skjoldets dekor.

Problemstillingen for mitt innlegg formuleres i følgende spørsmål: Hva forteller skjoldbeskrivelsen i *Saulus saga ok Nikarnos* om gjenbruk av litterære tradisjoner? Med denne innfallsvinkelen vil jeg belyse både form og innhold. Jeg vil først redegjøre for innholdet i skjoldbeskrivelsen. Deretter vil jeg foreslå mulige forbindelseslinjer mellom referansene som her er formidlet og andre lærde tekster. Del to av innlegget vil jeg rette mot den litterære formen, ekphrasen. Således vil jeg plassere billedbeskrivelsen i *Saulus saga ok Nikarnos* i en større litterær tradisjon. Ut fra disse perspektiver vil jeg avslutningvis vurdere hvorfor europeisk historie og bibelhistorie ble innlemmet i beskrivelsen av skjoldet til en aktør i *Saulus saga ok Nikarnos*. Har skjoldbeskrivelsen en distinkt funksjon?

# Textuality and Epigraphic Inscriptions

Elise Kleivane, University of Oslo, Norway

In this paper I will first address some medieval epigraphic inscriptions in light of the term textuality. Then I will discuss epigraphic inscriptions as text witnesses, and argue the case for a wider inclusion of epigraphic material in the study of medieval textual culture.

Discussing medieval textual culture we mainly focus texts found in manuscripts, and also – lately – more and more on the material aspects of the textual culture. When other «media» than manuscripts (*codices* and *diploma*) are considered, runic inscriptions are consulted, most often as a contrast to the manuscript culture.

The *runic material* is (for the most part) epigraphic. The epigraphic material where *Roman script* is used, is on the other hand very rarely mentioned or considered in relation to medieval textual culture. This is reflected in museum catalogues and exhibitions: Objects with runes are presented with a reading and possible interpretation – even if only one or a few runes are written/preserved and no interpretation can be given. However, if an object has Roman letters written on it, there might be a brief mention of letters on the object, but often no further description.

This is in my opinion ignoring important and most likely rewarding source material for the study of medieval textual culture, and I will illustrate this by giving examples from the epigraphic material (runic and Roman script), and relate this to manuscript material.

## A Giantess Deceived: A Re-investigation into the Origins and Function of *Hávamál* Stanzas 104-110 in the Light of Sacral Kingship

Dorian Robert Heaton Knight, Háskóli Íslands, Iceland

My paper would illuminate stanzas 104-110 in *Hávamál* as a motif of initiation into sacral kingship by a comparison to the very same theme within Celtic mythology.

Using Gísli Sigurðsson's premise that Eddic Poetry was more open to Irish influence in oral tradition than normally assumed, combined with the inherent conservatism of the pagan Irish sacral kingship tradition I will focus on the following points: through a detailed analysis and comparison of selected 11<sup>th</sup> century Old Irish texts I would illustrate that salient mythological aspects in *Hávamál* point to an initiation into sacral kingship underlying the text. Furthermore, in a similar manner to that which Gro Steinsland has recently provided for certain other Eddic poems I would attempt to show that these stanzas in *Hávamál* were written by a poet using the *hieros gamos* motif on behalf of a Norwegian royal lineage, with *Gunnlöð* as ancestress of Hörðaland.

However if stanzas 104-110 can be understood as a motif of sacral kingship, certain elements appear to be missing. In all the Eddic poems identified by Steinsland as comprising *hieros gamos* an offspring is produced. In *Hávamál* this is not the case as *Óðinn* steals the mead and *Gunnlöð* is left betrayed and weeping with no offspring forthcoming, parodying the traditional roles of the sovereignty goddess in such motifs. This indicates that although the editor of the stanzas had a deep knowledge of pagan sacral kingship he is parodying the *hieros gamos* motif to means that I will fully explore in the duration of my paper.



## Fetters, Høft and Bønd

Kolfinna Jónatansdóttir, University of Iceland, Iceland

In many mythological cycles around the world, the idea of gods having to fight, and conquer, creatures of chaos in order to be able to establish cosmos is present. As well as the thought that an established cosmos is a prerequisite for creation to be able to take place. Some of these monsters are killed and others are fettered, and will only break loose once the end of the world seems nigh, and then they will fight the gods again, only to lose and be killed, leaving the gods as the champions.

In Old Norse myths fetters and fettering are a recurring theme, and among the kennings for the gods are the words høft and bønd, both meaning fetters. In contrary to the pattern described above, the fettering seems to take place after the creation, not prior to it, and in the final battle the gods will die as well. Constant threat and fear also seem to be looming over both the gods and the monsters; the monsters are threatened to be fettered and the gods are often reminded that once the monsters have broken loose from their fetters, Ragnarøk begin.

The focus of this paper will be on the two detailed accounts of fettering in Gylfaginning, when Loki and Fenrisúlfr are bound. How the act and the fetters are described, as well is why those acts are necessary and how they affect the cosmology of the mythological world and whether or not other sources support those accounts.

## The Social Context of the Berserks in the Old Norse Texts in Comparison with the Irish *ríastrad*

Karolina Kouvola, University of Helsinki, Finland

This paper concerns the social context of the berserks in the Old Norse texts and their counterparts in the Early Irish tradition. The aim is to understand in what kind of context a group of warriors called *berserks* appeared in the Old Norse texts and what similarities as well as differences there are in the Early Irish texts concerning the *ríastrad* or the battle fury and the *fian*. The Old Norse texts offer a complex picture of the berserks. On the other hand they are trusted men who aid the king or the ruler in fighting, but at the same time they are unpredictable and live outside the society. In this presentation, the social context is used as a term for the heroic reality of the Old Norse and the Early Irish texts. I will apply to the study of the berserks Marie-Louise Sjoestedt's (*Gods and Heroes of the Celts*, Berkeley: Turtle Island Foundation, 1982) theory of the hero of the tribe/the heroes outside the tribe.

The key element which marks out the berserks from the other warriors is their capability to achieve a frenzied state of mind or the battle fury. This fury helps them in battles making them stronger and more dangerous opponents. In the Early Irish tradition, the hero of *Táin Bo Cuailgne*, Cú Chulainn, comes under similar state before certain battles and this state is called the *ríastrad*. His appearance changes dramatically and his whole body grows in size. Cú Chulainn is a typical hero of the tribe. Sjoestedt describes in her study how he is the defender and champion of his tribe. This part of my presentation concentrates on how the distortion Cú Chulainn is represented in the *Táin Bo Cuailgne*, and how it can be compared with the Old Norse accounts. The main questions for this part are as following; how the battle fury was understood and valued by the authors of these accounts? What part does the battle fury play in the storyline?

The other part of my presentation is about the social space that the berserks have in the society according to the Old Norse material. They are outside the society's borders but this doesn't mean that they wouldn't have a place within the society. They have interaction with the society even though they live outside its' boundaries. To understand more deeply a warrior band living outside the society's borders, I compare the berserk bands with Early Irish *fian* which occurs mostly in the Fenian Cycle or the *Fianaigecht* in which this band of warriors is led by character Fionn mac Cumhaill. The members of the *fian* were usually young men, who were probably part of the aristocracy. They were too young to inherit the land yet, so they became part of the *fian* in which they lived by hunting and securing the landowners' property. The earliest accounts of the Fenian Cycle are from the seventh century, but mostly sources date from tenth to twelfth century being in some cases contemporary with the accounts of the berserks. The institution of *fian* is also known from the early medieval Irish law tracts. The *fian* is an example of

the heroes outside the tribe which can be described as a caste in social terms according to Sjoestedt. The heroes outside the tribe live in their own semi-nomad group which is run by their own leader.

The berserk tradition has been evaluated from different aspects before but by comparing this tradition with similar traditions from the Early Irish textual sources I'm hoping to suggest some new ways of understanding the representation of the bestial warrior who functions outside the society's borders. There might even be a wider concept of a differential warrior band which ranges from Ireland to Iceland and Norway.

## Why Should the Boar Be a Symbol of Fertility? Is There Any Evidence in Norse Sources?

Lenka Kovárová

The purpose of this paper is to look at usual interpretations of the role of the boar in Old Nordic Religion and show possible reasons why the boar has been for many years understood as a symbol of fertility (agricultural and/or sexual), when the sources, as I will show in the first part of paper, do not prove such an interpretation. Archaeological finds, names, or even myths show rather different qualities of the boar: anger, speed, nobility, but not its fertility. The reasons for this fertility concept thus lay not in sources themselves but must lie in scholarly theories, which have caused presumptions about the boar. The reasons for such opinions possibly begun in the stressing of fertility rites by earlier scholars (Frazer, for example); comparative religion (using Greek and Roman rites as a support); and, most importantly, by the interpretation of the boar only as an attribute of Freyr and Freyja. Here, Georges Dumézil and his tripartite theory, which put Freyr and Freyja into group of gods of fertility and agriculture, was particularly influential. In the light of this overview, we will see that the sources are in the contradiction with influential scholarly theories. This is important not only for understanding the boar in Old Nordic religion, but as a case study of problems in the field more generally.

## The Dialectic of Seduction: Óðinn and Vǫlundr

Jan Kozák, Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic

The focus of my paper is a comparison of the two-part love/seduction adventure of Vǫlundr in Vkv with that of Óðinn in Hvm and an interpretation of the presented common structure:

The story of Vkv consists of two clearly distinct halves. Each half is associated with a certain female figure (1/2 Hervǫr, 2/2 Bǫðvildr). In the seduction myth of Óðinn (Hvm 95-110), there are, as in Vkv, two episodes and two women (1/2 ‚Billings mæꝛ‘, 2/2 Gunnlǫð), both halves are connected through paralelisms, and although some are quite concrete, generally the structural equivalence is less evident than in Vkv — however when both texts are put side by side, the correspondences become clearly visible and a certain structure emerges as a common denominator: it is a structure of a (1/2) first failed attempt, a promise of romance, which ends up with the hero being deceived, rejected and/or abandoned by ‚in horska mæꝛ‘, followed by (2/2) second attempt, which is in both mythic narratives an inversion or antithesis of the first one: the hero is here the clever, scheming, unscrupulous seducer, who deceives the ‚góð kona‘, the innocent and credulous girl, sleeps with her and immediately afterwards abandons her by flying away — in both cases the flight is a literal flight, i.e. the hero turns either into a bird or uses bird-like wings enabling him to escape.

This is the core of the argument I want to present at the conference. In addition to what is summarized above, I'm going to add more details to the comparison, bring up other parallels and offer an interpretation of the proposed common structure with regard to the wider context of initiation myths.

## Patron Saints as a Source for the Christianisation of Denmark

Annette Kruhøffer, Københavns Universitet, Denmark

Due to the deep wounds from the Reformation we've lost much information about which saints were chosen to guard the early Danish churches. Even if it's not possible to make a complete list we do know some of the patron saints. Their geographical distribution shows an interesting pattern.

Some saints have been popular all over Denmark. That counts for instance for St. Michael and St. Peter while others are more unevenly scattered on the map. Saint Olav-churches concentrate within a shower covering the Jutlandish ridge and eastwards. St. Clemens, St. Bothulf and St. Thomas can be found in the same area but also at Limfjorden and Sønderjylland.

Two of the earliest saints imported from Germany were St. Mauritius and St. Willehad – both worshiped in Bremen. We are aware of ten Danish churches of which they are patron saints, and all of them except one are situated within a crescent covering the Jutlandish west coast. How come, that these two saints aren't represented in eastern Denmark like the other?

St. Willehad was a missionary assigned by Charlemagne to the northern part of Saxony, and he succeeded in building a church in Bremen shortly before he died. Anskar, who became bishop of Bremen half a century later, wrote *Miracula Willehadi* in 860 A.D. in order to promote the cult of St. Willehad for the good of his diocese and a number of St. Willehad churches were erected in the Frisian area besides the ones in Denmark.

St. Mauritius was not at all as local as St. Willehad. As a roman soldier and head of the Theban Legion, his earthly remains were found in the late fourth century in what is now the Swiss canton of Aargau. The cult of St. Mauritius spread through Europe – in particular the mid-western part from Germany to northern Italy - and emperor Otto I made him patron saint for the empire.

It is striking that churches dedicated to these two saints can't be found in the eastern parts of Denmark in spite of their importance. In this context it's interesting, that the greater part of the churches dedicated to one or the other of these two saints seem to be placed either on medieval royal land or on infrastructural junctions.

An explanation could be that these churches originally were founded at an early stage of the Christianization of Denmark and possibly before the gravity of power in Denmark moved further east.

# Accomplishments in the Education of Noblemen in Scandinavia and on the Continent in the High Middle Ages

Jana Krüger, University of Kiel, Germany

In literature discussing the ON term *íþrótt* f. (pl. *íþróttir*) ‘skill, accomplishment’ it is often cited a *lausavísa* attributed to Rögnvaldr Kali Kolsson, jarl of Orkney (r. 1139-1158/9). In this *lausavísa* Rögnvaldr boasts nine different kinds of *íþróttir*: “I am quick at playing board games; I have nine skills; I forget runes slowly; the book is a preoccupation with me and also craftsmanship. I am able to glide on skis; I shoot and I row so that it makes difference; I am able to understand both: harp-playing and poems.” (Jesch 2009, 576).

The paper will draw the attention to a comparable passage in Petrus Alfonsi’s *Disciplina Clericalis*, where seven knightly skills are enumerated as follows: “Riding, swimming, archery, boxing, hawking, chess and verse writing.” (Hermes 1977, 115).

Parallels and differences between the Continent and Scandinavia in the education of noblemen in the High Middle Ages will be determined and possibly existing influences will be examined.

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Jesch 2009: Judith Jesch (ed.), Rögnvaldr jarl Kali Kolsson, *Lausavísur*. In: Kari Ellen Gade (ed.), *Poetry from the Kings’ Sagas 2: From c. 1035 to c. 1300. Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, vol. 2. Turnhout 2009, pp. 575-609.

*Andra saga* and *Bjarka saga*, Reconstructed from *rímur*

Hans Kuhn, Australian National University, Australia

Rímur were a transposition of existing sögur into a different medium, with few deviations or additions except for the added mansöngvar. *Andra saga* has perished in its prose form, and the surviving *Bjarka saga* is younger than its rímur version and hence could well be its (re-)transformation into prose.



# National Epic and Nordic Identity. The Reception of *The Poetic Edda* in Estonia

Mart Kuldkepp, University of Tartu, Estonia

My presentation focuses on the reception context of the first (and only) Estonian translation of *The Poetic Edda* (Sepp 1970). Translated by the solitary poet and mystic Rein Sepp who had little access to scholarly works on the text's philological nuances, the end result was as above all a literary and spiritual exercise. In an atmosphere of the economic and cultural stagnation of the 1970's and 1980's Soviet Union, however, Sepp's translation came to be read by a generation of young Estonian intellectuals as an authentic source reflecting the common cultural heritage of the peoples of the whole Baltic Sea area, including Estonians. This interpretation had some political significance, as the reassurance of Estonian "Nordic identity" and its imagined historical commonality with Scandinavia was a way of clandestinely contesting the Soviet ideological hegemony in an era when Estonians were facing the threat of becoming a minority in their own land. Hungry for more esoteric Nordicness, many of these intellectuals undertook pilgrimages to Rein Sepp's home, where he told to his fascinated guests about his mystical visions of the myths of Thor and Loki playing out in the Southern Estonian/Northern Latvian landscape.

I would argue that Rein Sepp's translation of *The Poetic Edda*, published in a series of translated National Epics of the publishing house *Eesti Raamat*, proved during the last decades of Soviet rule in Estonia to be a more effective identity-building tool than the official National Epic *Kalevipoeg*. The latter, a product of the 19<sup>th</sup> century national romanticism, was known to be an essentially artistic creation with only tangential connections to actual folk poetry. *The Edda*, on the other hand, became invested with meanings of deep authenticity and ancientness supporting its political relevance as a pointer at an Estonian-Scandinavian connection.

Since Rein Sepp's *The Poetic Edda* was the first longer Old Norse text to be translated into Estonian, and as it played the above-described covert political role, it set in many ways a precedent that subsequent translators and educators in the field of Old Norse literature have either had to accept and live up to, or somehow attempt to move beyond. I will conclude with some personal reflections what it means to be working in Rein Sepp's shadow in 21<sup>st</sup> century Estonia.

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## Die altisländischen Marienmirakelsammlungen

Irene Kupferschmied, University of Göttingen, Germany

Mehr als 40 Handschriften überliefern das altnordische Marienleben (= *Mariu saga*) und/oder Marienmirakelsammlungen in vollständiger Form oder fragmentarisch. Beliebte waren die Marienmirakel im Mittelalter allerdings nicht nur im Norden, sondern in (fast) ganz Europa – der größte Teil der über 200 Mirakel, die meist in verschiedenen Versionen überliefert sind, ist aus lateinischen Sammlungen bekannt.

Die sog. B-Sammlung bildet mit ca. 50 Mirakeln eine Art Grundstock. Spätere Handschriften, vor allem D und E zeigen mit um 200 überlieferten Mirakeln demgegenüber beträchtliche Erweiterung. Handschrift E und S sowie mit diesen verwandte Handschriften zeigen einige Besonderheiten: Für einige ihrer Mirakel lassen sich keine direkten lateinischen Vorlagen finden; dies gilt im Besonderen, aber nicht ausschließlich für Mirakel, die sich mit historischen Persönlichkeiten befassen. Diese erweisen sich häufig als aus mehreren (lateinischen) Quellen zusammengestellt: Zum einen aus Mirakeln oder Viten, zum anderen aus theologischen Texten, häufig Predigten. Die Zusammenstellung dieser unterschiedlichen Quellen scheint auf einen isländischen Kompilator zurückzuführen zu sein. Einmal mehr wird daran erkennbar, wie umfassende Kenntnis der europäischen theologischen Literatur auf Island herrschte und wie lebendig die Partizipation der isländischen Geistlichkeit an dieser war.

Innerhalb der ähnlichen Überlieferung von E, S und einiger weiterer Handschriften fallen allerdings auch erkennbare Abweichungen auf: S besitzt oft einen umfangreicheren Text, während E im Vergleich kürzt. Dieser Befund passt zu den Ergebnissen, die zu den verschiedenen Versionen der *Mariu saga* vorliegen: Die Fassung von Handschrift S ist die längste, während E die kürzeste Fassung besitzt. Dies zeugt von einer bewussten Zusammenstellung von *Mariu saga* und jeweiliger Mirakelsammlung.

## Son of Bestla Family Ties and Figures of Speech

Henning Kure

Óðinn is the son of the giantess Bestla and Burr/Borr, son of Buri, who is a primordial anthropomorphic being regarded as a giant by some and the first god by others. We have this information from Edda by Snorri Sturluson (ca. 1220), who in turn most likely has it from poetic metaphors for Óðinn (*bestlo sonr* in Vellekla 4, *bestlo niðr* in Steinarr Síónason 2, *burar bors bura arfa* (referring to the owner of the mead of poetry) in Þórvaldr blönduskáld 2, *burs arfþegi* in Hyndluljóð 30). Almost all information on progeny and descent among gods and giants have been transmitted to us along this path, and subsequently been systematized as genealogy charts in practically every handbook and web-site on Old Norse mythology. It has been repeated so often that we now take it for granted as ancient (or at least pre-Christian) lore, though it is in fact extrapolated data. Almost none of this information plays any explicit part in the myths known to us. Many hypotheses over the past decades – particularly on races, social hierarchies, and family feuding in the mythology – build directly on this conjectural foundation without discussing it.

Snorri tends to turn figurative language into literal fact in his exposition of Old Norse myths and poetry, as shown by Margaret Clunies Ross (2005). Could this also be the case of the divine family relationships? Is *bestlo sonr* really to be understood as the literal son of a specific giantess, or is it rather a figurative expression describing Óðinn as bound in some way (*bestla* is a heiti for ‘woman’ most likely associated with binding; cf. *bönd* and *hapt* as designations for gods)? Are mythical mothers and sons to be understood strictly in terms of family matters, or rather more broadly as origins and results of certain abstract qualities and processes?

I shall examine these and related questions and suggest some examples of how they may open the source material for new interpretations.

## Oral Tradition and Literary Inspiration in the Íslendingasögur

Sigurd Kværndrup, Linné-universitetet, Sweden

My paper consists of a presentation of one of the few Scandinavians who have played a role in the international research on orality and literacy, namely professor Lars Lönnroth, who has recently published his selected papers on Old Norse literature in *The Academy of Odin* (2011). My point of departure is a discussion of Lönnroth's major work on the sagas, *Njáls Saga: A Critical Introduction* from 1976. Contrary to his earlier works, this is based on Parry's oral-formulaic theory and Lord's *The Singer of Tales* (1960). Lönnroth shows that the shape of Njáls Saga is determined by action patterns, stock motifs and narrative segments that must have been part of a tradition for oral storytelling, making the sagas reminiscent of epics and folktales created by oral performers. But this is not Lönnroth's final point, because behind Njáls Saga he shows us an author with "a clerical mind". I suggest that he – like our own Saxo Grammaticus - must have combined that education with the study of law, for in the absurd series of intricate lawsuits that fills out the end of Njáls Saga lies its' very meaning. In both works we may have a glimpse of an author who combines knowledge of oral tradition with high literary skills, a clerical mind and a burning engagement into lawmaking and the opposite, feud and corruption.

‘Menn drukku ok full frænda sinna, þeira er heygðir höfðu verit...’  
 Ancestor Worship: a Central Part of Old Norse Religion?

Triin Laidoner, The University of Aberdeen, Scotland

It has been nearly 150 years since the English anthropologist Edward Tylor wrote his *Primitive Culture* (1871) and drew special attention to ancestor worship, or – following Roman terminology – as he called it, the worship of *Di Manes* (the divine dead). The main question the author posited was whether ancestor worship should be considered a primitive system of religious beliefs from which higher religions had emerged, or whether it is simply an inevitable part of human nature and thus, an extension to all religions. Tylor was obviously influenced by the cultural and intellectual setting of 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe, and so his views were closely linked to concepts such as folk tradition and the theory of evolution formulated by Charles Darwin (*On the Origin of Species*, 1859). These novel directions led to the rise of evolutionary anthropology, which centred a great deal around vegetation beliefs, death customs, the growth of funeral rites into cults, and in connection with this, the worship of ancestors. Some scholars went so far as to argue that every religion originates in ancestor worship (Spencer, *The Principles of Sociology*, 1897). These intellectual trends were naturally also applied by Scandinavian scholars to Old Norse material.

It must be admitted that ancestor worship is a tricky and complicated subject and that in studies of this concept one can find seemingly endless confusion as to what an ancestor is, what worship means and what exactly constitutes ancestor worship. It is therefore difficult to say much on the subject without becoming involved in debates over issues that are not only open to discussion, but raise a host of questions. This fuzziness in the definition of ancestor worship is one reason why the over-excitement of the evolutionary anthropologists caused a rebound in the works of following generations of scholars who often went to the other extreme and were inclined to question the existence of ancestor worship altogether. In this latter approach the term was reserved for those examples where the dead were explicitly worshipped as ancestors and in this way the alternative religious practices that have to do with belief in souls, spirits, reincarnation etc. were excluded from discussion of ancestor worship. It is a challenge to arrive at a balanced perspective on such a complex question, but if we are open to the idea that beliefs in the continuing influence of the departed did occupy a central place in pre-Christian religions, it is reasonable to assume that there should be some sort of evidence of this in every society, including pagan Scandinavia.

Despite the complexity of the subject, certain fundamental aspects seem clear. Ancestor worship involves customary beliefs and practices that are directed towards deceased forebears who continue to influence and even determine the well-being of the living. Death is not seen as putting an end to the interaction between the living and dead members of the family, it simply means opening a new channel of communication. Se-

condly, the relationship with the dead must take the form of ritual activity, be that ritual prayers, sacrifices, ceremonial eating and drinking and so forth. That this kind of attention given to dead had moral significance also for the people living in the northern areas is observable in both archaeological material and literature. Sources providing evidence for the worship of outstanding persons after death range from family sagas to dynastic histories, which sometimes emphasise the worship of early Scandinavian kings; worship which in times of need extended to the whole nation, but as will be argued, originated in the domestic sphere.

Although the scattered pieces of information must be taken with a dose of scepticism, the evidence for the belief in the continuing power of the dead in Old Norse literature is suggestive and points towards the worship of figures that might merit the title of ancestors, or at least, ancestral powers. Although we are working with memories from the very first, – to some extent supported by later traditions and folklore –, traces remain that are fairly consistent; be it in evidence of the worship of mounds, in traditions connected with spirits, outstanding settlers or with early kings, we can see signs of purposeful behaviour suggesting the worship of the dead. Their ties to specific areas and people point to the existence of ancestor worship in early Scandinavia, which over time emerged and developed into various forms. This includes the cults of prominent individuals and noble families, which will be under scrutiny in the presentation.

Þorsteinn Þorsteinsson á Heiði:  
Handwritten Books in the Long Middle Ages

Tereza Lansing, University of Copenhagen, Denmark

Histories of literature have been mainly concerned with works that appeared in the official medium of print in 19th-century Iceland, as if the composition and copying of sagas had stopped after the end of the middle ages. Little is therefore known about the vast amount of different kinds of saga literature transmitted among common people in manuscripts. A representative figure of this private domestic book market is the farmer and fisherman Þorsteinn Þorsteinsson á Heiði (1792-1863). Although by no means wealthy, he was among the most productive scribes of his time in Skagafjörður, one of the areas with a traditionally high rate of literacy. Þorsteinn created a substantial book collection, and the ca. 60 preserved manuscripts from the collection contain a sample of texts that circulated among common people at the time. Þorsteinn's activities shed light on several issues: the kinds of saga literature that people in 19th-century Iceland actually read, the status of the historical and pseudo-historical saga literature consisting of *Íslendingasögur* and *fornaldarsögur* compared to other saga genres, and the cultural role of the historical genres when circulated in manuscript as opposed to print.

## Sistering in the Samtíðarsögur and the Íslendingasögur: Social Norms and Generic Expectations

Carolyne Larrington, Oxford University, England

Stories about sisters are relatively scarce in medieval literature; once a high-status woman marries in continental literature she sees very little of her birth family, often living what Lévi-Strauss calls ‘the hard life of the exile’. The Icelandic sister is an exception; even after marriage she often lives not far away from her kin or else she interacts with her family at the Alþingi or at *leikar*. In narrative terms, the sister usually becomes interesting when she marries, providing a *mágr* for her brothers to interact with. The sister’s marriage is thus a motor for drama. Other stories of sisters in the sagas speak to universal social norms for sisterly behaviour; nurturing and solidarity, but they also attend to the underlying psychological mechanisms generated by siblinghood: anxieties about differentiation and substitutability. Examining some sistering-episodes from contemporary sagas and sagas of Icelanders, this paper will illuminate the different kinds of narrative norms at work across the two genres, showing how variation in literary genesis can cut across generic expectations in unpredictable ways.



## Bird Heads and Big Noses: Translating the Teratological

Philip Lavender, University of Copenhagen, Denmark

My paper takes up one aspect of my doctoral thesis, the subject of which is the little-known and understudied *fornaldarsaga*, *Illuga saga Gríðarfóstra*. I focus on one point of connection between that narrative and an analogue in book VIII of Saxo Grammaticus' *Gesta Danorum*—Thorkillus' second journey to the North—to see what light it sheds on determining the fields of resonance surrounding these texts.

The point I look at is the connection between Gríðr's aquiline features and the strange eagle-headed creatures who appear in Saxo. Davið Erlingsson ('*Illuga saga og Illuga dans*', *Gripla II*) says that:

Mætti láta sér detta í hug, að fyrir Saxa hafi vakað lýsandi tröllsheiti á borð við Arinnefja (og hafi hann tengt það við fuglsheitið örn, ari, lat. aquila) (p.16)

He admits that his statement is just speculation but points to the fortuitous conjunction that in the saga Gríðr's hands are said to be like 'arnarklær' ('eagle-talons'). This leitmotif seems like a very tentative connection—it could be coincidence—but at the same time this strand is also tantalising—the plots are almost the same so maybe these details are connected.

With Saxo as a starting point, other examples of supernatural beings with eagle features in Old Norse texts are easy to find. In addition, taking Davið Erlingsson's supposition about Saxo's onomastic interpretation at its word, I also examine appearances of the name Arinnefja.

An anthropomorphic-animist viewpoint seems to attribute the terrors of the northern seas to eagle-giants, as Maria Elena Ruggerini's article on 'Tales of Flight in Old Norse and Medieval English Texts' (*VMS II*) establishes. Hræsvelgr in *Vafþrúðnismál* is the prime example of this, a giant in eagle form who creates the North wind. This idea is also germane to the *fornaldasögur* where being blown off course is almost always a prequel to an encounter with a troll, as in the sagas of the Hrafnistumenn and *Illuga saga* itself (where the unspoken implication is that Gríðr caused Illugi's seafaring difficulties).

Beings called 'Aquili' are also mentioned elsewhere in Saxo, namely Book II along with a list of other nature spirits and diabolical beings who pose a threat to valiant youths in the nighttime hours. Hilda Ellis Davidson points us in the direction of Remigius of Auxerre's Commentary on Martianus Capella as a possible source. We may ask ourselves if these creatures are of continental or septentrional origin (or both) and how

far the etymological connotations of ‘aquila’ (‘eagle’) with ‘aquilo’ (‘North wind’) may have influenced the idea of gigantic aquiline propellers as in early texts such as Þjóðólfr of Hvinir’s *Haustlǫng* (the giant Þjazi) and *Vafþrúðnismál*.

A propos of Davið Erlingsson’s intuition about the source of the eagle image in an eagle name, a significant appearance of the Arinnefja (as ‘Arinnefia’) comes in a list in *Rígsþula*, as one of the daughters of Þræll and Þír, progenitors of the race of slaves and bonds(wo)men but no particular supernatural or ornithological connection obtains. Other appearances of Arinnefja in *fornaldasögur* do, however, represent her as a trollwife and Queen of Jötunheimar, such as in *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar Berserkjabana*, but this satirical royal portrait has little in common with the creatures appearing in Saxo’s tale.

Working in reverse from the eagle-claw reference in *Illuga saga*, a similar imbrication of concerns comes into view. ‘Arnarklær’ is not a common compound in Old Norse, appearing elsewhere, according to the *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog*, only once: namely *Bevens saga* where a dextrous thief is described as having nails as hard as eagle-claws, a simile which is contextually self-explanatory, as they aid him in climbing. The use in *Illuga saga*, on the other hand is not pragmatically transparent.

If we look at *Rígsþula* again, however, this compound makes more sense. The father of Arinnefja in this poem, Þræll, is described as having gnarled knuckles and wrinkled skin on his hands, while the mother, Þír, is said to have sunburnt arms and a down-turned nose. These details resonate strongly with the description of Gríðr in *Illuga saga* with her ‘arnarklær’, burnt sleeves and runny nose.

In my talk I will argue in greater detail that *Illuga saga* and Saxo’s analogue seem to touch in light of these two fields of resonance, one of the troll-woman as part of a social satire and another in which supernatural females (giantesses?) are associated with controlling the winds. Peculiar external features can be calloused hands which reveal low social status (contrasting with Gríðr’s prior position as a princess) or a link to somewhat nobler nature-controlling ancestors clothed in their ‘arnarhamir’ (‘eagle-skins’). The point of connection I choose is a minor one, but I will attempt to justify the use of minor and non-self-explanatory textual features in the comprehension of such fields of resonance.

## The Forest Pleas of Rockingham: A (Re)Discovered Instance of Sculptural *Níð*?

Sean B. Lawing, Bryn Athyn College/Háskóli Íslands, USA/Iceland

In 1272 some dozen men in Northamptonshire, England were pursued by king's wardens for poaching deer in the royal forests of Rockingham. Legal records for the ensuing case, "forest pleas," tell us that they caught up with the poachers at a certain clearing where members of the band set up a deer's head on a stake, directed as an insult against the king and his men. Bo Almqvist, in his defining work *Norrön Niddiktning* (1965), cites this incident, which occurs in a Norse settlement area, as an instance of sculptural-*níð*. Thomas L. Markey references it again in his own study "Nordic níðvísur: An Instance of Ritual Inversion?" (1972). Since then little notice has been given to it. But should there be? After all, detailed descriptions of sculptural-*níð* are rare in historical sources. This paper revisits the claim that this forest plea contains an instance of sculptural-*níð*. In examining the strength of the evidence, the paper raises several methodological questions specific to this case but also to the study of *níð* in general.

There are two main source types from the 13<sup>th</sup> century that inform us about *níð*, laws and sagas. The law codes of Iceland and Norway give us only the barest of details; namely, that sculptural-*níð* is related to fantastic, sexually defaming insults and involves a pole made of wood, inscribed or carved, and raised. The Icelandic sagas give us more to work with, outlining two types of *níð*-poles: 1) Those depicting men engaged in sex (*Gísla saga Súrssonar*, *Bjarnar saga Hítödlakappa*), and 2) Those featuring dead horses mounted on poles (*Egils saga*, *Vatnsdæla saga*). An additional episode in Saxo Grammaticus' *Gesta Danorum* held to be *níð* adds credence to the equine interpretation. Though they all have scorning an opponent as an aim, these accounts, nevertheless, fail to agree in substantial details and more importantly in primary function. Namely, are we dealing with magic or solely with slander? Given this ambiguity, the historicity of sculptural-*níð* accounts in sagas is suspect.

Turning to England, the purported episode of *níð* found in the 1272 forest pleas of Rockingham - if it is indeed one as Almqvist and Markey maintain - would supplement Old Norse accounts of *níð* and clarify its definition. Since they are legal documents, the forest pleas have the additional advantage of matching source type with Old Norse laws. The claim for English *níð* is based on two principles: 1) It occurs in a Norse settlement area, and 2) It agrees with accounts of *níð* in Old Norse sources. Concerning the former, there is no dispute. Concerning the latter, the forest eyre episode - a mounted deer's head on a pole - agrees with Old Norse *níð*-poles in several aspects, particularly with the equine manifestations in *Egils saga* and *Gesta Danorum*: 1) It features an animal-head, mouth-gaping, mounted on a pole; 2) The apparatus is directed towards an opponent and perhaps towards efficacious spirits; and, 3) It is intended to register scorn ostensibly to achieve ritual status reversal. In addition, the use of a stick to prop open

the deer's mouth is a singular detail registered in *Gesta Danorum* and in a further Norwegian law concerning corpse desecration. These similarities bolster the thesis in favor of English *níð*. There are, nevertheless, crucial differences. Notably, the deer's head derives its significance from courtly hunting protocol rather than from opaque religious or gender-identity rationales that have been cited for including horses in Old Norse *níð*. Most importantly, without more evidence of transmission, it is impossible to effectively demonstrate that an incident occurring in Northamptonshire, England in 1272 derives from a cultural practice inherited from postulated, *níð*-practicing Norse ancestors who settled there in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. The furthest one might say is that these English and Old Norse episodes manifest similar cultural attitudes and practices that *possibly* derive from a common antecedent.

The approach of this paper has been skeptical of uniform understandings of *níð* based on combining evidence in disparate sources and it attempts to delineate strict boundaries. I find that the provenance of the forest eyre incident cannot be conclusively linked to sculptural-*níð* as depicted in Old Norse sources. It is, nevertheless, a warranted comparison that informs us about the structure, function, and limits of *níð*. Moreover, the forest eyre episode – even if it is not *níð* per se - shows that a ritual like *níð* depicted in the sagas could and did occur even if sagas cannot be trusted with having gotten details right.

## Signs and Portents: the Language of Epidemic Disease in Saga Narratives

Christina Lee, University of Nottingham, England

One of the most poignant episodes of *Eyrbyggja Saga* is outbreak of disease that befalls the household. The narrator uses many images that point to an outbreak of epidemic disease and on the basis of this saga and other texts I want to show in my paper how certain narratological elements were adopted by the Icelandic writers.

## Vikings amongst the Slavs - the Runic Evidence

Michael Lerche Nielsen, University of Copenhagen, Denmark



The bold and cheerful Jómsvikings have amused generations of saga scholars and Scandinavian school children. Before the famous battle of Hjörungavágr and the subsequent capture and beheading scene, the Jómsvíkings had established a stronghold on the Baltic coast – Jómsborg - which is now identified by most scholars as the Polish town of Wolin. Apart from the clearly fictive description of the stronghold, the way in which the native Slavic population received the Scandinavians in Wolin seems to be either purely hostile or obedient. According to the saga and to historical sources such as Saxo Grammaticus' *Gesta Danorum*, the rude and pagan Slavs were gradually enlightened and subjected by the Scandinavians and Saxons. Archaeologists, however, have revealed another story of flourishing trade and cultural exchange, mostly peaceful. In addition, historians emphasise the political links and bonds of marriage between the ruling houses on both sides of the Baltic as the most important innovation towards the establishment of the "modern" kingdoms around the Baltic as a political factor between Western Europe and Byzantium. This leads us to ask whether the Jómsvíkings were in fact merchants or diplomatic officers rather than pirates?

One way of scrutinizing this problem is to draw in linguistic material. Loan-words, personal names and place-names are three major sources for revealing linguistic contact. In addition, there is a fourth and in my opinion largely neglected source of information on linguistic contacts between West-Slavonia and (Southern) Scandinavia, namely c. 20 runic finds from Slavic towns. Both the find circumstances, the types of objects and the runic inscriptions shed light on the interaction between Slavs and Scandinavians in the late Viking age. The paper will mainly focus on this corpus of runic inscriptions from Northern Germany and Poland. Were the people who wrote these inscriptions the true Jómsvikings?

# Íslendingasögur, Saga-Pilgrims, and Reading the Sagas of Icelanders in their Landscapes

Emily Lethbridge, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, Iceland

In 2011, I spent 9 months travelling around Iceland in order to read the Íslendingasögur in the locations in which their action unfolds. The principal objective was to explore, physically, the relationships between the sagas and the landscapes in which they are set. A second aim was to collect information about saga-related place-names and oral traditions that are still in circulation in any one area, and to assess the extent to which – and how – Icelanders still know and engage with ‘their’ local saga, and the sagas as a corpus more generally. Finally, I made recourse to 18th-, 19th-, and 20th-century travel literature in which visits to saga-sites are described. As well as being entertaining, these accounts are interesting in the way they can constitute another lens through which to view saga landscapes.

My critical understanding of the sagas was sharpened in different ways as I explored their settings. I acquired a tangible sense of place, a feel for how individual episodes in any one saga play out over and around a space, and overall a more consolidated appreciation of the dynamics of the saga narratives as a whole corpus. I also began to develop ideas about how the sagas can be ‘read’ or processed in different ways or modes when one is familiar with the landscapes in which they are set – not necessarily chronologically from the first chapter to the last, but spatially, according to one’s movements around an area.

In this paper, I will present some examples of how my experiences as a “21st-century saga pilgrim” has led to various insights regarding critical approaches to the sagas as literature, and to questions concerning their composition and medieval and post-medieval transmission in Iceland. I will also outline my plans to build an interactive, online digital ‘saga map’ using the material I collected over the course of the year, and my photographs of specific places. It is hoped that this ‘saga map’ will be a useful resource for students and scholars of the sagas, as well as non-specialists with a general interest in the sagas and Iceland.

Archived reports about individual sagas written as I travelled during 2011 can be accessed online at [www.sagasteads.blogspot.com](http://www.sagasteads.blogspot.com).

*Bergbúa þátr* and Skaldic Oral Tradition

John Lindow, University of California, Berkeley, USA

In *Bergbúa þátr* a troll challenges two humans, sheltering in his cave on the way to church, to learn word-for-word twelve dróttkvætt stanzas he will recite three times. Þórðr, a well to do man, succeeds, and, we learn thereafter, lives a long and full life. His servant learns not a word and is dead within a year.

First, from a purely technical point of view, we consider carefully the plausibility of learning a short skaldic poem with only three hearings of it, even as we read the þátr in light of other evidence about skaldic training.

The þátr looks very like what folklorists would call a legend, and its simple message is “do what the supernatural beings tell you to do,” at least when you are in their territory. But there is obviously a bigger message here, about the significance of the transmission of verse. To learn and to transmit verse—that is, to participate in the oral tradition that encoded knowledge—is to live; to fail to do so is to die. Clearly too the þátr reinforces issues of social status and the relationship of such status to the skaldic oral tradition. And the juxtaposition of “pre-Christian” content with Christian values in the þátr surely reflects the same tension within learned circles in Iceland.



## Animals in Kings' Sagas

Maria Cristina Lombardi, Neaples University L'Orientale, Italy

Animals have always played an important role in medieval texts (e.g. Bestiarii). Their symbolic value is often crucial for understanding those texts properly. They occur in skaldic kennings which are often bound to mythological accounts and in some episodes narrated in several kings' sagas. My paper aims at analyzing these aspects in *Haraldsaga Harðráða* (in *Heimskringla* and in *Morkinskinna*) which appear both in skaldic stanzas quoted in the saga and in prose narration in order to explore the ways in which the author adapted different sources in support of his historical account. As to the prose narration, the portrayal of the king seems to be conspicuously dependent on passages reporting his acts involving the use of different animals. Such an interaction between the king and some animals is also expressed in poetry by rhetorical figures and linguistic elements which show a plurifunctional character mirroring the complex personality of Haraldr Harðráði.

## The Invention of Tradition in Medieval Icelandic Literature

Inés García López, Universitat de Barcelona, Spain

The purpose of my paper is to analyse the influence of medieval European literature on the composition of the Icelandic Sagas. The literary production in medieval Iceland becomes especially important when an antimonarchical, anti-courtly faction of intellectuals appears on the mostly monarchical European stage. The search for a cultural identity has a fundamental effect on the world of literary creation.

The fundamental question of the invention of tradition in Iceland in the Middle Ages works as a trigger for the observation of the problematic involved in its literary production. Pre-Christian myths, Latin literature, old poetry and beliefs crystallized in the so called by Meulengracht Sørensen “paradox, of a copious and highly developed literature in a remote country”<sup>1</sup>. The explanation given by now to this paradox from a literary and sociological approach is to consider that an exceptional society, formed in exceptional circumstances, as is the case in medieval Iceland, produced an exceptional literature. Beyond the isolating terms implied in this conception, this “exceptional” character will be our actual matter of work. Considering it not as a solitary development rooted in ancient times, but as a “response” to its contemporary European scenery. A courtly literature would have had no reception in a small farming population, organized far from a kingly structure. It is this exceptional sociological and political situation, in contrast to the birth of European kingdoms, a great companion for the creation of a literature in terms of invention of tradition. Challenging the theory of a self-constructed isolated literature, we will reveal within the texts of the sagas how the different voices from the Viking Age are set to dialogue with its contemporary European text-context referent.

### Note:

<sup>1</sup> Meulengracht Sørensen, Preben, “Social institutions and belief systems of medieval Iceland (c. 70-1400) and their relations to the literary production”, p. 10, in Clunies Ross, M. *Old Icelandic Literature and Society*, Cambridge University Press, 2000.

## *Förnaldarsögur* Reception in Seventeenth Century Europe

Jeffrey S. Love, University of Cambridge, England

My paper will discuss how *fornaldarsögur* were received by audiences both in Iceland and abroad during the seventeenth century. A mountain of literary evidence survives from this period as sagas were copied into manuscripts at an unprecedented rate and printed into new books. This presentation will primarily serve to raise questions surrounding how legendary sagas were reshaped by their seventeenth-century consumers. The genre has recently been gaining interest among literary scholars for several reasons, among them being the growing realization that legendary texts enjoyed sustained popularity from the Middle Ages until well into the modern era. Margaret Clunies Ross and Andrew Wawn have demonstrated the influence Icelandic texts like *Friðþjófs saga frækna* wielded on post-medieval audiences, particularly in Victorian England. Even before this, delegations from fledgling Scandinavian nations were already feverishly collecting Icelandic legendary texts during the seventeenth century. Mats Malm and others have shown how these sagas rapidly gained influence among the Swedish elite during the *stormaktstid*. Antiquarian interest in the *fornaldarsögur* flourished in academic circles, particularly in Sweden through the efforts of Olaf Verelius and Olaf Rüdbeck, but learned men in Iceland and Denmark were also beginning to engage critically with medieval sources. Icelandic *rímur* based on *fornaldarsögur* also appear in numerous manuscripts from this period. Some of these are contemporary compositions, such as *Hervarar rímur*, penned by Ásmundr Sæmundsson in ca. 1650, which might suggest a literary revival taking place parallel to the academic studies.

## Just Splitting Hairs?

### Observations on the Lexicon of the Old Norse Translation of 'Judith'

Nicola Lugosch, Durham University, England

In 2000, Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir published an article in *Gripla* which contained the diplomatic edition of the Old Norse version of the Biblical book of Judith and an accompanying introduction, extended from her doctoral dissertation on the AM 764 4to codex submitted in the same year for her degree at University College London.<sup>1</sup> In her work on the manuscript, she discovered the previously unknown Judith text and in so doing, opened a new line of enquiry into the medieval Icelandic scholastic and ecclesiastic traditions. I wish to highlight aspects of the translator's word choice which show not only great sensitivity in his comprehension of the text, but may also draw upon the body of exegetical and patristic literature which was current in insular and continental libraries and possibly available in Iceland.

As Svanhildur notes, the translator of Judith seems to have made a deliberate attempt to render the text in idiomatic vocabulary rather than relying upon loan words; for instance, he uses the native term *lemandi* where other translators generally borrowed the Latin *locusta*; he also uses *eskimær*, which is not found elsewhere but in the introduction to *Grímnismál* to describe Frigg's handmaiden Fulla.<sup>2</sup> The deliberate nature of the translator's word choice, coupled with his usual practice of literal translation, invites the reader to examine the his lexicon with particular care. A close reading reveals a number of unusual vocabulary choices which open the text to a deeper interpretation, particularly the Judith-as-Ecclesia tradition. Although the text is, for the most part, faithful to the Vulgate original, there are several specific instances of unusual choices in translation which I intend to discuss. The words in question function as modifiers for the overall impression of her beauty - always a significant factor in literary or artistic representations of Judith - to place her in an ecclesiastical rather than a secular context, and possibly reflect the traditions of patristic and exegetical writings as they may have been represented in the medieval Icelandic Church.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Respectively, Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, 2000. "The Book of Judith: A Medieval Icelandic Translation". *Gripla* 11, 79-124; Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, 2000. "Universal History in Fourteenth-Century Iceland: Studies in AM 764 4to." Unpublished PhD thesis, University College London.

<sup>2</sup> Judith, 94.

## Norse Myths in the 21st Century and their Receptive Tradition

Sarah Lütje & Debora Dusse, Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main, Germany

Paper will be given in English.

Nordische Mythen bevölkerten 2011 die Kinos in weiten Teilen der Welt. Kenneth Branaghs prominent besetzter Film *Thor* zeigt, dass sich die eddischen Götter im 21. Jahrhundert steigender Beliebtheit erfreuen. Er ist in mehrerer Hinsicht typisch für den gegenwärtigen Umgang mit Stoffen der altnordischen Literatur: Wie die meisten Adaptionen nordischer Mythen greift der Film nicht direkt auf die norrönen Quellen zurück – die Vorlage ist hier die Marvel Comic-Serie um den Superhelden Thor, der in den 1960er Jahren erfunden wurde. Sind die Comics ein populärkulturelles Phänomen, das sich an eine spezifische Gruppe von Lesern richtet, so transportiert der Film die Stoffe in den kulturellen Mainstream, wo es keine Grenzen zwischen verschiedenen Milieus und Genres mehr zu geben scheint. Charakteristisch ist weiter, dass die mittelalterlich vor allem textlich überlieferten Stoffe in verschiedene Medien und neue Kontexte transportiert werden: Der Film kombiniert Text, (bewegtes) Bild sowie Musik, und in seinem Zusammenhang entstanden weitere Thor-Adaptionen wie Filmplakate, ein Computerspiel und ein Zeichentrickfilm. Diese Medien- und Genrevielfalt zeigt sich auch sonst in der Rezeption nordischer Mythen: in Fantasy- und Kinderliteratur, in Heavy Metal-Musik und in der Buchillustration, um nur einige Beispiele zu nennen.

Das Nachleben nordischer Mythen untersucht seit mehreren Jahren das Forschungsprojekt »Edda-Rezeption« an der Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main unter der Leitung von Julia Zernack. »Edda« steht hier als Kürzel für die mythologische Überlieferung des skandinavischen Mittelalters. Der Begriff des Mythos ist dabei weit gefasst: Wir verstehen darunter Erzählungen von Göttern und Helden und verknüpfen dies mit Hans Blumenbergs rezeptionsästhetischem Mythenverständnis.<sup>1</sup> Das Projekt reflektiert in seinem methodischen und thematischen Zuschnitt die Charakteristika der Edda-Rezeption: Es untersucht das Nachleben nordischer Mythen interdisziplinär und komparatistisch und erforscht die rezeptionsgeschichtlichen Traditionen der Quellen. Die konstatierte Eigenschaft dieser Stoffe, sich den verschiedensten Medien und Genres verfügbar zu machen, ist insbesondere für die Moderne so augenfällig, dass es geboten scheint, das Phänomen aus der Perspektive verschiedener Disziplinen zu analysieren. Damit ergänzt und erweitert dieser Forschungsansatz die bisherige Forschung, die v. a. Texte untersucht. Im Forschungsprojekt Edda-Rezeption entstehen literatur-, religions-, musik- und kunstwissenschaftliche Studien, die sich exemplarisch der bisher weitgehend unerforschten Rezeption in der Moderne widmen. Das Nachleben nordischer Mythen im Ganzen steht im Fokus zweier weiterer Teilprojekte: In einer Datenbank, die in den nächsten Jahren online publiziert werden soll, erfassen wir Quellen und Forschungsliteratur zur Rezeption nordischer Mythen jeglicher Art ohne zeitliche Beschränkung.

Von der Oper bis zur Produktverpackung, vom Zeitschriftentitel bis zum Historienbild, von Japan bis nach Brasilien, vom Mittelalter bis ins Jahr 2012 reichen die über 15 000 Zeugnisse, die bisher verzeichnet sind. Explizit nehmen wir dabei keine Bewertung der Qualität oder Bedeutung der Quellen vor. So erfassen wir die Edda-Rezeption länder-, zeiten-, medien- und milieuübergreifend. Einen Überblick vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart bietet ein *Rezeptionsgeschichtliches Lexikon zur nordischen Mythologie und Heldensage*, das 2013 erscheinen soll. Neben mythologischen Figuren und Stoffen behandelt es bedeutende Rezipienten und wichtige Kontexte des Phänomens. Das Lexikon ist ebenfalls interdisziplinär und komparatistisch angelegt, hat seinen Schwerpunkt aber auf den deutsch-, skandinavisch- und englischsprachigen Ländern, da die nordischen Mythen dort besonders intensiv rezipiert werden. Im Zuge der Projektarbeit entsteht zudem eine Sammlung mit umfangreichem Material zur nordischen Mythologie und deren Rezeption, die gemeinsam mit den Beständen des Frankfurter DFG-Projekts Edda-Kommentar einzigartig sein dürfte. Die Sammlung umfasst Forschungsliteratur zur eddischen Dichtung und zur Snorra Edda, zahlreiche Edda-Ausgaben und -Übersetzungen, Graphiken, Comics, Reklamesammelbilder, Musik-CDs, Notendrucke und vieles mehr.

Das Projekt wird seit 2007 von der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) gefördert und läuft bis 2013. Verschiedene Folgeprojekte sind in Planung: Neben einer Ausstellung zum Nachleben nordischer Mythen ist momentan ein Edda-Portal in Vorbereitung, das im Internet seriös und wissenschaftlich fundiert über nordische Mythologie informieren soll. Hier soll in absehbarer Zeit die Datenbank zur Edda-Rezeption veröffentlicht werden, neben einer bibliographischen Datenbank zur Edda-Forschung und dem Katalog der Edda-Sammlung.

In unserem Vortrag wollen wir die bisherigen Ergebnisse des Projekts an ausgewählten Beispielen vorstellen.

<sup>1</sup> Wirklichkeitsbegriff und Wirkungspotential des Mythos. In: Manfred Fuhrmann (Hg.): Terror und Spiel. Probleme der Mythenrezeption. München 1971, 28.

## Den mytologiske tingplassen

Nanna Løkka, Høgskolen i Telemark, Norway

I dette foredraget ønsker jeg å løfte fra tingplassen som mytologisk motiv. Jeg vil vise hvordan tingplassen framstilles i eddadiktene, både med hensyn til kvantitet og kvalitet. Jeg vil deretter tolke dette materialet innenfor en bredere mytologisk kontekst. Jeg vil også kort kommentere den ideologiske dimensjonen som kan ligge bak den mytologiske betoningen av tingplassen.

Nyere teori viser at steder og landskap er en meningsbærende i den sosiale konstruksjonen. Også innenfor religionsstudier har steder blitt et populært tema. Innenfor norrøn religion er dette imidlertid en tematikk som i liten grad har opptatt forskningen, og den mytologiske tingplassen har meg bekjent ikke vært problematisert som et selvstendig motiv. I min nylig publiserte avhandling *Steder og landskap i norrøn mytologi* (2011) settes fokus nettopp på den stedlige dimensjonen ved den norrøne mytologien, og ett forhold som undersøkelsen avdekker er at tingplassen er et helt sentralt sted i den mytologiske verden. Tingplassen framstår i eddadiktningen som et betydelig mytologisk motiv og den viktigste plassen i Åsgård. I flere sammenhenger er Åsgård og tingplassen identiske. Dette er en viktig erkjennelse fordi tingplassens posisjon i gudverdenen kan si oss mye både om betydningen av Åsgård som mytologisk motiv og om hvordan mytologien inngikk i den ideologiske overbygningen i det førkristne samfunnet. Tingplassens betydningsfulle posisjon kan også belyse det komplekse forholdet mellom Åsgård og jotunheimene.

## Mittelalterliche Sagatexte als Stilvorbilder isländischer Texte aus dem 16.-19. Jahrhundert – direkte Personendarstellungen.

Magnús Hauksson, Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel, Germany

Haben isländische Texte aus dem Mittelalter Einfluss darauf, wie Texte aus der Zeit nach der Reformation und bis zum 19. Jh. stilistisch in Form gesetzt werden? In dem Vortrag wird untersucht, ob sich in zwei prominenten Gattungen Stileinflüsse aus genannter Richtung ausmachen lassen: in Biographien staatlicher und kirchlicher Amtsträger aus der Frühen Neuzeit einerseits, in „Sagnaþættir“ aus dem 19. Jh. andererseits. Der Fokus liegt dabei auf einem bestimmten Element, den direkten Personenbeschreibungen.

Die Personendarstellungen der „Sagnaþættir“ des 19. Jh.s (hier ist der Blick vor allem auf die Werke Gísli Konráðssons (1787-1877) gerichtet<sup>1</sup>) sind weitgehend vom Vorbild der Isländersagas und stilistisch verwandter Gattungen geprägt – knappe und prägnante Aussagen, die gerne bei der Vorstellung und den genealogischen Informationen zu der Person stehen. Ein bedeutender Teil des Wortschatzes in den direkten Personendarstellungen der „Sagnaþættir“, die für diesen Beitrag untersucht wurden, ist auch in den Beschreibungen in den Isländersagas vorhanden – einzelne Wortverbindungen aus den Isländersagas werden gerne in den Personenbeschreibungen der „Sagnaþættir“ Gísli Konráðssons verwendet: „fríður sýnum“, „gildur bóndi“, „vel fjáreigandi“, „rammur að afli“ – aber ein etwas größerer Teil des Wortschatzes in den Personendarstellungen ist nicht in der Konkordanz der Isländersagas<sup>2</sup> zu finden. Oft werden Charakterzüge genannt, die die Voraussetzungen der Menschen betreffen, den tagtäglichen Lebenskampf bestreiten zu können, z.B. Arbeitseifer, Intelligenz und soziale Kompetenzen. In diesem Zusammenhang begegnen etwa folgende Phrasen: „vel hagr og vinnumaður góðr“, „fengsæll á sjávarafli“, „okrsamr“, „vel að sér“, „óaldarmaður“, „ofláti“, „ráðvönd og fáskiptin“. Die direkten Personendarstellungen in den „sagnaþættir“ von Gísli Konráðsson bestehen aus knappen Sätzen und sind überwiegend parataktisch aufgebaut. Ein häufig vorkommendes Stilmerkmal sowohl in den Isländersagas als auch den „sagnaþættir“ ist, dass Eigenschaften in Paaren zusammengefügt werden: „Pétr var gestrisinn ok mannúðlegr ákomu, tölugr ok hélt sér til skrauts“, „Sigríðr var skapstór og marglynd.“ Hin und wieder kommt spruchartige Ausdrucksweise vor, die an gewisse Stellen in den Sagas erinnert oder auf sie hinweist: „Aumkuðu margir óhamingju hans, svo gervilegur sem hann var.“ Von schwülstigem Lob mit gelehrten Stilzügen kann keine Rede sein, Gísli kann hingegen recht direkt hinsichtlich der Charaktereigenschaften seiner Protagonisten sein und seine Wortwahl ist manchmal recht subjektiv. Er fügt – was jedenfalls sehr selten in den Isländersagas zu beobachten ist – gerne kurze Anekdoten in seine ausführlicheren Personendarstellungen ein, um seine Darstellung sogleich zu untermauern.

Hätten Gísli Konráðsson und andere Verfasser von „Sagnaþættir“ im 19. Jh. Vorbilder für direkte Personendarstellungen und deren Einbindung im Text in ande-



ren Werken als den Sagas finden können? Diese Frage lässt sich bejahen: Es wäre für sie ebenso möglich gewesen, ihre Stilnormen bzw. stilistischen Vorbilder in den zeitlich näher liegenden historischen und biographischen Texten der Frühen Neuzeit zu suchen. Damals wurden u.a. Biographien von Gelehrten und Amtsträgern verfasst. Die direkten Personendarstellungen der postreformatorischen Biographien (hier liefern die *Biskupasögur* og *Hirðstjóra annáll* Jóns Halldórssonar (1665-1736) das Material<sup>3</sup>) nehmen in den meisten Fällen die stilistische Gestalt eines Nachrufs an. Insgesamt wird die Darstellung häufig in Verbindung mit dem Ableben der Person eingefügt. Es wird darauf Wert gelegt, die inneren Charakterzüge zu beschreiben – Talente, Kenntnisse, Interessen, der gewohnte Tagesablauf und Beziehungen zu anderen Menschen kommen vor allem zur Sprache. Der Text erweckt nicht selten den Eindruck, dass der Verfasser oder ein Gewährsmann mit der behandelten Person nahe bekannt gewesen ist; persönliche Nähe prägt häufig die direkten Personendarstellungen und subjektive Beurteilungen und Aussagen finden darin ihren Platz. Sie geraten in diesen Texten überschwänglicher als es in den Isländersagas üblich ist. Längere und kompliziertere Sätze fallen dabei auf. Ebenfalls zeigen sich immer wieder einzelne gelehrte Stilmerkmale, wie z.B., dass das Genitivattribut vor dem Hauptwort in einer Nominalphrase steht: „lærðra manna uppfærðing“, „hans góðum vinum“, Fremdwörter treten auf: diktari, forfarinn. Es lässt sich jedoch beobachten, dass Jón Halldórsson seine Texte teilweise im Hinblick auf den Stil der Isländersagas und stilistisch verwandter Texte formuliert. Dies tritt manchmal deutlich zu Tage, wenn er das Aussehen seiner Protagonisten beschreibt.

Im Vortrag wird versucht darauf einzugehen, welche Faktoren die stilistischen Ähnlichkeiten der Personenbeschreibungen der Isländersagas und der „Sagnaþættir“ bedingt haben könnten: Beeinflussung durch Texte, die als Stilnormen heranzuziehen für die Verfasser der „Sagnaþættir“ offenkundig naheliegend war? Erzähltechnischer und gattungsbedingter Bedarf?

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Bezüglich Gísli Konráðsson weise ich auf folgenden Beitrag und die dort zitierten Werke hin: Magnús Hauksson: „Die Sagas und die isländische Laiengeschichtsschreibung“, *Á austrvega. Saga and East Scandinavia*. Ed.: Agneta Ney, Henrik Williams and Fredrik Charpentier Ljungquist, Gävle University Press 2009, 635-642. <http://hig.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2:224754>. Zu den Personendarstellungen in den Sagas weise ich auf folgende Beiträge hin: Þorleifur Hauksson und Þórir Óskarsson: *Íslensk stílfræði*, Rv. 1994, 279-282 und Lars Lönnroth: „Det litterära porträttet i latinsk historiografi och isländsk sagaskrivning – en komparativ studie,” *Acta philologica scandinavica* 27 (1969), 68-117.

<sup>2</sup> *Íslendinga sögur [margmiðlunargögn]: orðstöðulykill og texti*, ritstjórar orðstöðulykils Bergljót S. Kristjánsdóttir ... [et al.], Rv. 1996.

<sup>3</sup> Jón Halldórsson: *Biskupasögur*, Rv. 1903-15 und Jón Halldórsson: *Hirðstjóra annáll* (Safn til sögu Íslands og íslenzkra bókmenta að fornu og nýju 2), Kopenhagen 1856, 593-784.

## The Wormianus Redactor and Interpretation

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The greatest compilation of grammatical literature in Old Norse, or indeed in any medieval vernacular apart from Manuscript 239, Bibliotheca Centrale, Barcelona, is AM 242 fol, more commonly known as Codex Wormianus (below W, c. 1340–70). Most of the texts contained in it, though, are also known from earlier manuscripts. This makes it possible to identify certain passages in W as additions. Furthermore, these additions seem to have been made precisely to accommodate the texts in the compilation that is W, or possibly to some form of exemplar for W. I will also discuss two texts that were probably composed for inclusion in W, or at a time and place and with a purpose that roughly coincide with the preconditions for W. The conclusions drawn will thus be relevant for W and its cultural context, even though details in W's genetics may remain unclear. The new texts and textual additions have not as yet been treated comprehensively. In this paper I will try to do so and, more specifically, I wish to focus on a tendency toward theological interpretation common to all but one of them, and how that tendency fits into a fourteenth-century context.

Juan Andrés,  
*Of the Origins and Progress of all Literatures* (1782-1799):  
Some Reflections on the Sources and the Appraisal of  
‘the Septentrional Literature’  
in the Work of this Spanish Exiled Jesuit Priest.

Teodoro Manrique-Antón, Universidad de Castilla la Mancha, Spain

Following the expulsion of the Jesuit order from Spain in 1767, one priest, Juan Andrés y Morell, travelled to Italy where he eventually came under the protection of the Bianchi family in Mantua. Their patronage allowed him to dedicate himself absolutely to his literary endeavours, in particular his most famous work, a seven-volume history of the literatures of the whole world. *Of the Origins and Progress of all Literatures* (originally published in Italian) was a pioneering example in the field comparative literature and a witness to the increasing importance of Nordic mediaeval literature in a European context. The aim of this paper is a brief discussion on the sources Andrés used in his chapter on the Poetic Edda and a comment on his impressions.

Hvenær var Tristrams sögu snúið?  
The Origin and Transmission of the *Riddarasögur*

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While the Norse versions of Old French romances are generally assumed to have been composed around the middle of the thirteenth century, little is known about the exact time and circumstances of their emergence. Yet, the prologues and epilogues of a few *riddarasögur* provide us with a point of reference – most prominently that of *Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar*. Due to the dating of its composition to 1226 in the prologue to the saga, the tale of Tristram has often been suggested to be the first *riddarasaga* that was composed in thirteenth-century Norway. However, as this prologue only comes down to us in a single manuscript, AM 543 4<sup>o</sup> which is commonly dated to the seventeenth century, it is problematic to put so much emphasis on the dating it offers.

In this paper, I want to distance myself from earlier attempts of arranging the composition of the *riddarasögur* according to information that is only preserved in comparatively young manuscripts. Instead, I want to propose that a lexical analysis of various *riddarasögur* and their treatment of the Old French sources can give us an indication of the order in which they were introduced in medieval Norway. By analysing how ideals and practices relating to chivalry are referred to in the different texts, I will examine the extent to which knowledge of this foreign institution is revealed – and presupposed – by their translators. Thus, we can reach new hypotheses concerning the time and order in which Old French romances were translated into Old Norse.

‘Trust in their own might and main’:  
Personal Heroism and Pagan Past in *Hrólfs Saga Kraka*

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*Hrólfs saga kraka*, a relatively late *fornaldarsaga*, features a few idealized heroic characters living in the heathen era. Though the saga-author’s approach to paganism seems to be very traditional for late *fornaldarsögur*, negative characters often being sacrificers and evil sorcerers, no evident references to Christian faith are present in the text, except for the regretful remark that the central heroes ‘had no knowledge of their Creator’. King Hrólfr and his men thus live in a world without the Christian God, where supernatural beings are mostly evil, and worshipping them does not become a noble hero. The theme of the heroes’ resentment against their fate personified by Óðinn has parallels in other texts such as Saxo Grammaticus’ *Gesta Danorum*.

The paper considers the peculiar image of the Norse pagan past created in the saga and dwells upon the story’s central conflict between the idealized central heroes and the heathen world painted in lurid colours, into which the heroes do not ‘fit’. This contradiction gradually becomes more glaring throughout the text and leads to the final catastrophe.

Although it is a historically unreliable depiction of 6<sup>th</sup> century Scandinavia, *Hrólfs saga kraka* features a remarkable image of pre-Christian heroic past and its tragic heroes. The purpose of the paper is to look into the literary means of creating this image and examine it within the historical framework of the high Middle Ages.

## The Battle of Father and Son in Old Norse Literary Tradition

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The battle between father and son lies at the centre of the plot in *Þiðreks saga* (ch. 406–408), *Snjólv's kvæði*, the Old High German *Hildebrandslied*, later German ballads such as *Das Jüngere Hildebrandslied*, as well as seventy variants of Russian bylinas.

Hildebrand becomes the hero of *Ásmundarsaga Kappabana*, in which he fights not his son but his half-brother. The compiler of the saga adds that before the fight Hildebrand kills his own son, to motivate the lines about the murder of the son by the father in the poetic *Hildebrand's Death-Song*. This Song is also preserved in the Latin rendering of Saxo Grammaticus, where the same fratricidal story is told and the motive of the killing of the son by the father is preserved. *Gesta Danorum* shares common motives and images with *Ásmundarsaga*: two swords inherited from the mother's kin, a weak king unable to rule adequately, the plot of a battle between the two brothers united with the motive of bridal quest. Both have poetic versions of the hero's death-song, undoubtedly going back to the same source, and both poetic texts mention the filicidal motive, though in the prose text accompanying the verse there is no mention of the son. This similarity shows the stability of the tradition, which has retained the plot of the father-son combat as well as fragments of the flyting accompanying the fight.

The Faroese ballad *Snjólv's kvæði*, which could have been based on a more ancient tradition than the saga, sheds light on the relation between the Scandinavian and the German traditions. In the ballad the same characters are present as in the saga, but as in the German tradition the plot centres round the battle of father and son. The plot of the father-son battle is more archaic than the fratricidal combat, as it occurs in more numerous and more archaic texts. Initially the filicidal motif must have been present only in poetic texts, in the Old High German *Hildebrandslied*, the Faroese ballad and in *Hildebrand's Death-Song*, which goes back to a more ancient tradition than the prose context in which it occurs.

As in the archaic versions of the plot, the fight in the Scandinavian *Þiðreks Saga af Bern* (ch. 406–408) finishes with the father's victory. The narrative of the father-son battle in *Þiðreks Saga* bears great resemblance to the description of the fight of Ilya Murometz and Sokolnik in Russian bylinas.

Here we find not only shared images and motives (deserted wife, crossing of the well-guarded heroic boundary, flyting, temporary victory of the son) but also resemblance in details: the ally threatens death to the father by his son (in the bylinas Dobrynya Nikitich tries to frighten Ilya by describing Sokolnik's extraordinary, unheard-of valour; in *Þiðreks Saga* Konrad intimidates Hildebrand by describing Alibrand as having no equal in fighting), the ages of the opponents are contrasted, the son is described as having no equals, a falcon is sitting on the son's hand (in the bylinas the son's name So-

kolnik comes from *sokol* – “falcon” which is motivated by the fact that he has a falcon sitting on his hand), he is riding on a white horse accompanied by dogs, the father does not seek peace with the son but chooses to fight with him, the son inflicts a treacherous blow on the father (in the bylinas the father radically changes his attitude to his son after this blow and usually relentlessly murders him). Coincidences in details and verbal parallels are too numerous to be without significance. There are parallels in the bylinas even to the peaceful ending of the fight when the father does not kill the son but reconciles with him (cf. the Pechora and Mesen variants). However the reconciliation motive must have been later, whereas the tragic ending with the father killing the son must have been original.

The similarity of Þiðreks Saga to the bylinas can be accounted for by their origin (the former being based on oral German sources, ancient lays and tales). Among these “ancient lays” could have been a lay of the battle of father and son. The creator of Þiðreks Saga knew the name of Ilyas, which he connected with the King of Russia, Valdimar. Saxo Grammaticus also connects the battle of the two brothers with Russia where one of them departs to defend Ruthenians (Slavonic tribes). To account for the similarity of Þiðreks Saga and bylinas it is not enough to rely on typology. Although the plots of heroic epic usually appear as a result of cultural diffusion (the plot of battle between father and son being a wandering plot *par excellence*), in some unique cases we have to assume that there could be a genetic proximity as well as a typological similarity.

## Gender Liminality in *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*

Mariya Mayburd, Háskóli Íslands, Iceland

This paper will examine Hervör's cross-dressing from the perspective of her confrontation with the dead on Sámsey, attempting to break beyond the conventional binary-gender model which still continues to be employed in saga criticism. Past scholarship on Hervör has largely divorced her from the magical context of her narrative, interpreting her through the social lens of inheritance issues or fitting her into the romance-derived *meykóngur* paradigm, wherein marriage signals patriarchal submission. The imposition of modern theoretical gender frameworks in such interpretations upon texts stemming from different cultural contexts not infrequently leads to a circular argument, ironically constructing the very same discriminatory attitudes towards women in Old Norse sources that they stand in criticism of.

Aiming to situate the present inquiry within the discursive matrix of Old Norse-Icelandic worldview, we engage recent research on *seiðr* and *ergi* which challenges standard readings of these concepts, expanding *ergi* from mere "unmanliness" to the broader notion of "queerness" as sexually ambiguous and perverse magical otherness, and *seiðr* to supernatural empowerment. A closer examination of the *ergi* complex will provide us with a platform from which an interplay of multiple gender possibilities may be observed - not as fixed dichotomous polarities as they appear in modern perspective, but as a polyphonic inter-gender continuum. One's positioning within this continuum, then, depends upon the extent of one's immersion into the supernatural. The case of Hervör will be used as an illustration of how the inter-gender dynamics of sexual abnormality play out in her own situation.



## Animal-*Fylgjur* – Cultural Memory or Literary Fiction?

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*Fylgja* (pl. *fylgjur*) is the name customarily given to the animal seen in a dream before a man meets his death; in many cases, what happens to the animal prefigures the way in which the man dies. Although frequent in the Sagas of Icelanders, dream-animals are not, in fact, confined to Iceland but are also found in works produced in England, such as the Anglo-Norman *Chanson de Roland* (dated 1140-70) and William of Canterbury's life of Thomas Becket (d. 1174).<sup>1</sup>

The use of the word *fylgja* to designate a single dream-animal is also not as common as might be imagined, being found only in *Njála* and *Vatnsdæla*. The plural *fylgjur* is more common. It is first recorded in *Orkneyinga saga*, in which it has the meaning of fate or destiny.<sup>2</sup> In the late thirteenth-century Old Norse translations of the lost Latin sagas of Óláfr Tryggvason by the monks Oddr and Gunnlaugr, originally written c. 1190, the word has the sense of good fortune. In *Ljósvetninga saga*, the plural word refers on separate occasions to both abstract fate and a single dream-animal, an ox which makes a tour of inspection of the farm in the same way as the doomed householder does every evening. In *Gunnlaugs saga*, the plural word refers to birds seen in a dream which represent an as yet unborn girl, the two men who kill each other for love of her, and the man who eventually wins her; the dream is a symbolic rather than a literal representation of what will happen.

Symbolic dreams are, in fact, very common in all types of saga. We can see from *Sturlu saga* that medieval Icelanders believed that a man's fate was revealed in dreams; the problem lay in the interpretation (ch. 29). In historical and religious writings, this belief is often used by authors to make a point. For example, in the Bishops' Sagas (early thirteenth century), Bishops Þorlákr and Gunnlaugr, who were both unpopular with secular authorities, are depicted as seeing dreams with religious symbols before they are elected to their see; the dreams imply that their election was foreordained and presumably sanctioned by God. As the thirteenth century progresses, more and more of the Sagas of Icelanders give accounts of dreams in which an animal is seen before a man dies. Yet when we look at works with a greater claim to historicity than the *Íslendingasögur*, such as the *Landnámabók* and the *Sturlunga* compendium, we find no dream-animals. This lacuna is particularly striking in *Sturlunga*, for, although many dreams are recorded there – including several with dream-women, who also feature in the *Íslendingasögur* – in no saga does a dream-animal appear, suggesting that such creatures are a literary convention rather than a record of human experience.

Why should Icelandic writers decide to introduce dream-animals into the *Íslendingasögur*? To answer this question, let us turn to two texts first composed in the twelfth century. In both the *Landnámabók* and Oddr's saga of Óláfr Tryggvason, there are explicit descriptions of shape-shifting. That Icelanders believed in the practice is not surprising; belief in shape-shifting was widespread in ancient societies. Such beliefs were, however, condemned as heretical by the Church.

During the medieval period, Iceland appears to have gone through a phase of eradication of paganism.<sup>3</sup> A belief in shape-shifting would have been one of the pagan superstitions that churchmen tried to eliminate, and several writers appear uneasy with the topic. For example, whereas in both translations of Oddr's story of Þórir hjörtr (ÍF XXV, 258) a hart leaps out of dead Þórir's body, in the *OSTM* version (c. 1300) the question of shape-shifting is avoided altogether and the story rationalised: Þórir hjörtr is a normal human being who happens to be *allra manna fot huataztr* (*OSTM*, II, 128).

Even if believing in shape-shifters is heresy, believing that men can appear in animal form in dreams is not. In this paper I suggest that the literary convention of the dream-animal, which was possibly carried from England to Iceland by a travelling cleric, arose out of a desire to wean Icelanders away from a heretical belief in shape-shifting to something more acceptable to the Church.

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> The relevant passage is translated by R.J. Glendinning in "Saints, Sinners and the Age of the Sturlungs," *Scandinavian Studies* 38 (1966): 90. According to Glendinning, "A high degree of probability...exists that details of Thomas' life ... were well known to Icelanders during the second half of the thirteenth century, and probably much earlier to Latinists."

<sup>2</sup> E.O.G. Turville-Petre, "*Liggja fylgjur þínar til Íslands,*" in *Nine Norse Studies* (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1972), 52-58.

<sup>3</sup> Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson. *Under the Cloak: A Pagan Ritual Turning Point in the Conversion of Iceland*, 2<sup>nd</sup> extended edition (Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan, 1999), 172.

## Some *Nitida saga* Manuscript Groupings

Sheryl McDonald, University of Leeds, England

The late medieval Icelandic romance *Nitida saga* survives today in 65 manuscripts and fragments ranging in date from the fifteenth to the twentieth century. The vast majority of these manuscripts are post-medieval paper copies. Despite the saga's obvious popularity in the centuries after its composition, neither the relationships among these manuscripts, nor the possibility that different versions of the saga exist, have yet been investigated. Instead, studies of *Nitida saga* mostly refer to the version published by Agnete Loth in 1965 (volume five of her editions collectively titled *Late Medieval Icelandic Romances*). While this version, based mainly on AM 529 4to, one of the oldest, vellum manuscripts, is still a valuable resource for studying the saga, my study of more of the post-medieval manuscripts has made it clear that this version is only one of at least two medieval versions, both of which likely stem from a single original source. Furthermore, what scribes do with the text in later centuries also reflects on the medieval saga's popularity and reception, as in total there appear to be up to six basic groupings of *Nitida saga* manuscripts, which can be roughly divided into two groups according to the two likely medieval versions, which I call A and B.

Group A contains the greatest number of manuscripts and appears from the seventeenth century until the late nineteenth century, with a good number of seventeenth century texts. Despite there not being any surviving vellum manuscripts with a Group A *Nitida saga* text, this group's affinity to Group B and the presence of scribal variation (including errors) among the earliest examples suggests that these were copied from earlier, medieval manuscripts. Group A versions also display an intertextual connection between *Nitida saga* and *Nikulás saga leikara* that has until now gone unnoticed. Additionally, Group A manuscripts, where provenance is known, are geographically concentrated in the Westfjords and Dalasýsla regions of Iceland. Group B is as far as can be known at present the oldest group, with AM 529 4to (1500s, vellum) as one of its members, but within this group there are more manuscripts from the eighteenth century than from any other time period. Group C also flourishes in the eighteenth century, and can be linked more easily to Group A than to Group B, but how the two groups relate to each other, precisely, is still uncertain. Some Group C manuscripts appear to have been copied in northern Iceland, as do some Group D manuscripts. However, Group D appears likely to derive from Group B, from the late eighteenth century onwards. Manuscripts belonging to Group E do not appear until the mid-nineteenth century, and some of these exhibit possible links to Group A. Interestingly, Group E manuscripts seem to originate exclusively in the Eastfjords of Iceland. Finally, Group F, of which there are only four closely related examples, is also a nineteenth-century group, and seems also to relate back to Group A.

While these findings are still only preliminary, in that I have so far only been able to consult a little over two thirds of the surviving manuscripts in person or facsimile, they do show broad trends and relationships that have not been discovered before among a majority of *Nitida saga*'s manuscripts. Presumably, the remaining manuscripts to be consulted will fit into the groups I have already identified, add weight to these discoveries, and perhaps even explain some of the proposed links between groups. The results I am presenting are based on analysis of data that comprise transcriptions of excerpts from the manuscripts consulted. These transcriptions focus on the saga's beginning, ending, and a particularly geographically rich episode in the middle. Additionally, for the purposes of making more thorough comparative case studies, a select few manuscript versions were also transcribed and studied in their entirety.

## On the Word *draugr*

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In Old Norse prose, the word *draugr* refers to a revenant, one of the ‘walking dead’ who were believed to inhabit grave-mounds; it seems likely that this meaning is ancient. In verse, there are some instances where it clearly has the same meaning, but also others, all elements in warrior-kennings, where it has traditionally been translated ‘tree’ – a word which, if it really existed, appears in no other kind of context. In this paper, I shall try to show that the proposed etymologies underlying the interpretation ‘tree’ are unsatisfactory and based on circular reasoning. There are good reasons for taking nearly all of the early occurrences of the word in skaldic verse to mean ‘revenant’, while in the later ones it becomes simply a traditional element in warrior kennings. The first text that clearly associates it with the meaning ‘tree’ appears to be the mid-fourteenth-century Codex Wormianus of *Snorra Edda*, where it may be an attempt to give meaning to a kenning element which the writer did not understand. Several other elements in warrior kennings do indeed compare warriors to trees, but it is also possible that the grim connotations of the word *draugr* led to the interpretation ‘tree’ via a popular association with stories about supernatural *trémenn* such as the one preserved in *Þorleifs þáttr jarlsskálds*, and with a tradition of folktales about wooden scarecrows that are brought to life by supernatural figures.

## Er kongesagaenes bilde av Ladejarlene resultat av revisjonistisk historieskrivning?

John Megaard

Ladejarlene - Sigurd jarl, Håkon jarl, Eirik jarl og Svein jarl - spiller en viktig rolle i kongesagatradisjonen helt fra de eldste bevarte kildene. Artikkelen argumenterer for at bildet av Ladejarlene er fullt av motsetninger, og drøfter hvorvidt hovedtrekkene i denne beretningen går tilbake til Sæmund frodes krønike. Artikkelen reiser spørsmålet om den overleverte tradisjonen om Ladejarlene representerer en bevisst opposisjon mot en versjon av historien som er eldre enn Sæmunds, og knytter dette sammen med at enkelte kilder nevner «Ísleifs krønike».

## The Use and Disuse of the Past: Two Christian Rulers among the Heathens and their Fates after Christianization

Elena Melnikova, Russian Academy of Sciences, Russia

The life-stories of the first Christian rulers of the times before both Norway and Rus became Christian, Hakon the Good and princess Olga (OI *Helga*), though differing in details, follow a similar pattern. Both rulers were baptized abroad, both attempted to introduce Christianity but their efforts were harshly refuted, both expressed their will to be buried in a Christian way but Hakon was buried according to the pagan ritual. Hakon's and Olga's religion, however, became appreciated differently after the introduction of Christianity. Olga's remains were translated to the church founded by Vladimir the Saint (d. 1015) after official Christianization of Rus in 988, and her worship emerged during his reign. In the late 11<sup>th</sup> and early 12<sup>th</sup> century writings she is represented as a harbinger of Christianity and a saint. Hakon's Christianity, on the contrary, remained the fact of the past. The introduction of the new faith in Norway was associated with the two Olafs. The difference in attitudes to the first Christian rulers might derive from varying perceptions of the spread of Christianity. Old Russian chronicle-writers brought up in traditions of the Byzantine church indifferent to missionary work perceived the penetration of Christianity as the process of its spontaneous dissipation crowned by its official adoption by Vladimir. In Norway the introduction of Christianity was viewed as the result of missions, and both Olafs were represented as missionary kings. This attitude nullified the significance of Hakon's personal Christianity.

## The Legend of the Three Kings in *Reykjahólabók*

Andrea Meregalli, University of Milan, Italy

In the last two decades the legendary known as *Reykjahólabók* has been the object of increasing investigation, which has shed new light on the activity of the translator and compiler Björn Þorleifsson. Analyses devoted to single legends have added new details for a better understanding of the whole work. In this context, the legend of the Holy Three Kings has been rather neglected so far. The purpose of this paper is therefore to analyse this text and its characteristics vis-à-vis the critical issues raised by scholars about other legends of the collection.

As concerns the sources, deeper knowledge of the presence of this legend in medieval German literature may provide new elements to appreciate the history of this material. In this perspective it is especially interesting to observe the peculiarity of this story within the corpus of hagiographic literature. In fact, the short reference in Matthew's Gospel is unfit for the *Vita*-model, and further information is supplied in later works, the most significant being John of Hildesheim's *Historia trium regum* with its vernacular translations.

In relation to the legendary as a whole, the text will be compared to other legends in order to verify the presence of stylistic features underscored by previous research, such as Low German influence on vocabulary and syntax, as well as specific narrative devices.



## Creative Memory: Rewriting King Olaf and the Human Sacrifices

Nicolas Meylan, University of Lausanne, Switzerland

A number of Old Norse historical texts base their claim to facticity upon memory. However, memory is hardly impeccable. Historians have to revise or supplement the mnemonic record with their own constructions, i.e. fictions. It remains for the historian to prove skilful enough in his fashioning to do so without taking away from the text's aura of authenticity, and when historians succeed, historical texts can contribute significantly to the refashioning of identities. Indeed, through histories, Iceland sought to refashion its memory to influence the extra-textual context.

While there is a tension in *konungasögur* between fact and fiction it is not this tension that will be of interest here, rather the ideological potential of the combination of memory and fiction. I focus on two versions of the tale of King Óláfr Tryggvason and the human sacrifices in Trøndelag to illustrate political uses to which historical fictions could be put.

Chapter 67 of *Heimskringla's* Óláfs *saga Tryggvasonar* shows the king, with a force of thirty ships, organising a banquet at Hlaðir to which he invites local chieftains who wanted him to sacrifice to the pagan gods. Responding to their demand, he tells them: “if I am to turn to sacrifices with you, then I wish to have the greatest sacrifice known and sacrifice men. To that end I will not choose slaves or criminals,” but rather chieftains. Seeing they are outnumbered, they choose baptism instead.

*Heimskringla* insists it is the Christian king and not the pagans who wish to sacrifice humans. The latter's wish is for Óláfr to respect the custom that demands that the king take part in communal sacrifices. These, described by *Heimskringla's* *Hákonar saga goða*, eschew human victims. They consist in a communal meal for which livestock is slaughtered. Although Óláfr claims to be referring to pre-Christian ritual memory to justify the sacrifice, the text contradicts him attributing the responsibility for this atrocity to the king.

Is this a case of the ends justifying the means? The answer requires comparison with Oddr Snorrason's Óláfs *saga Tryggvasonar*, written c. 1190. An Icelandic monk, Oddr writes that the pagans had prepared a human sacrifice and meant to compel the king to participate. To this he responded: “Let us now remember, lads, that we are increasing the sacrifices, but let us not sacrifice slaves and old folks who are of no worth, now take your women or nobles and give them to the gods.”

There are two main differences between the versions. Oddr holds the pagans responsible for the sacrifice, not the king, Óláfr only changes the victims. The second concerns the balance of power between king and farmers. According to Oddr, the king has one ship, for Snorri, thirty. In the first case, Óláfr must use persuasion, in the second he can rely on numbers to achieve his goal. With Snorri, the king appears as a cruel man playing with trusting opponents.

To understand the reasons behind Snorri's alterations requires asking what Óláfr represented around 1200. In early vernacular sources, he is mostly unknown. In 1075, Adam of Bremen accused him of black magic and added that it was his namesake St Óláfr who Christianized Norway. The representation of the king as missionary is probably a later Icelandic fiction culminating around 1190 in Oddr's saga. The monk takes Óláfr Tryggvason's and kingship's side, representing kings as defenders and leaders of the Church. This favourable attitude towards kingship led Oddr to accept as a necessity the use of violence against pagans and to cast the king as Iceland's apostle.

Snorri's position is diametrically opposed and leads to Óláfr's transformation. He is violent and arbitrary, more pagan than the pagans. Two elements explain this. In 1197-98, the Icelandic Church acknowledged Þorlákr Þorhallsson's sanctity. Iceland acquired its saint, the islanders no longer needed foreign religious figures.

The second element is the political context of *Heimskringla's* composition. By 1220, Norway set its sights on Iceland. This imperialist policy constituted a twofold problem. It went against Iceland's myth of origins (the flight from Haraldr Fairhair's tyranny) and many in the Icelandic dominant class felt threatened by the possible loss of their privileged position.

Snorri's version reads as an illustration not so much of kings' propensity to sacrifice humans but rather of kingship's excesses and arbitrariness. By making Óláfr responsible for human sacrifices, Snorri presents a king as a figure of otherness – violating the rule that excludes such atrocities from *our* practices, and transgressing customary laws.

Whether there is any 'truth' in the stories Oddr and Snorri told is beyond the point, which is that they wrote to address political aims. Possibly, one is closer to 'what really happened', more likely, both fictionalized. These texts suggest that attempts to establish an opposition between myth and history in terms of truth should be viewed as suspect.

## The Slave-Epithets of *Rígsþula* and their Contexts

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This paper will discuss the epithets used for *Þræll* and his descendants in *Rígsþula*, paying particular attention to their context. A substantial proportion of the poem is given over to physical, mental and occupational descriptors of its three prototypical classes. I will consider how these epithets separate the slave from the free classes, creating a distinctive social ‘Other’. Indeed, the epithets are not merely qualities but names which define their existence. I will argue that the depiction of the free classes depends upon the depiction of the slave to distinguish the each group’s characteristics. The slave is necessary to define the free man, both *karl* and *jarl*.

I will then discuss the relationship of these epithets with the depiction of slaves in the saga material. I will ask whether there are common characteristics which represent a consistent attempt to justify slavery through the degradation of slaves. I will place this in the context of European depictions of slavery, particularly those which concentrate on physical and mental characteristics inherent in slaves.

I will contrast this with what we know of the realities of slavery in medieval Scandinavia, particularly the composition of the class of slaves, and the relationship of that class to the rest of society. This will reveal the gulf between myth and reality in the depiction of slaves in *Rígsþula*. By contextualising this gulf, I hope to emphasise the importance of physical traits in the mythologisation of slavery, and how this is related to European tradition.

## The Concept of Royal Power in *Jómsvíkinga saga*

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Marta Rey-Radlińska, Jagiellonian University, Poland

The legend of Jónsborg is colorful, passionate story of group of ideal, brave and skillful warriors, who meet their fate during the battle of Hjorungavag. The legend, most thoroughly described in preserved redactions of *Jómsvíkinga saga*, gives us also a chance to study an image of Danish monarchs who appear in narratives referring to the legend. Despite their status, they mostly play rather negative roles in this story. Their royal power is weak, they often appear as cowards and plotters, not willing to act openly and honorably. They are opposed by group of jarls (Palnatoki, Strút-Harald, Véseti) and leaders of Jomsvikings, who play positive roles and earn their fame thanks to being complete nobles and warriors. Both, circumstances of Harald Gormsson's death and capture of Sveinn Forkbeard by Sigvaldi, are good examples of this tendency.

The purpose of our paper is to look for factors that influenced such display. Thus we would like to investigate the way the saga presents monarchs in comparison with other Old Norse narratives. Moreover, we would like to study to what extent the concept of royal power in the saga was influenced by both: memory of the past (reign of Jelling dynasty) and more contemporary political events in 12<sup>th</sup> century Denmark.

*Valkyrjur, Wælcyrgran, and Witches:*  
An Anatomy of Old-English and Old-Norse Valkyries

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The Valkyrie, although well-known in modern western culture, is a complex and multi-faceted figure. Extant “Valkyries” include the tragic-heroic female lovers of the heroic poems of the *Poetic Edda*, the celestial barmaids of *Grímnismál*, *Eiríksmál* and *Snorra Edda*, and the apparently mortal witches of the Old English *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*. What is more, other female figures and spirits, including *fylgur hamingjur*, *dísir*, and possibly even *nornir*, all display similar attributes – a causative association with death, appearance in a man’s final days of life, the power of flight, links with battle and bloodshed – that might be termed ‘valkyric’.

This paper seeks to break away from the overarching Romantic image of the Valkyrie popularised by Wagner in the nineteenth century, and to examine primary evidence for how these female spirits were regarded in the early medieval north, particularly in Old Norse- and Old English-speaking regions. It seeks to consider, and propose answers to, the following questions: which extant individuals can be positively identified as *valkyrjur* or *wælcyrgran*? What do these figures have in common? Can any attributes or functions be positively identified as definitive of these figures? Is it possible – or useful – to draw distinctions between *valkyrjur* and *wælcyrgran*, or between them and other female spirits described by extant sources? What constitutes, when all is said and done, a Valkyrie?

## Bruk og misbruk av skaldedikt hjå norske historikarar

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Dei kjeldekritiske undersøkingane åt Lauritz Weibull frå 1911 og seinare devaluerte dei norrøne fortidssogene som kjelder til den eldste nordiske historia. Samstundes vart skaldedikta, som for ein stor del er overleverte i dei same sogene, di meir viktige. Heilt fram til våre dagar har skaldedikta vore rekna som autentiske leivningar av den samtida dei skildrar, og dei har difor vore mykje nytta som kjelder av norske historikarar.

Likevel er det tydeleg at historikarane vantar objektive verkty til å analysera skaldedikta med. Skaldedikta er uheilt overleverte, dei inneheld lite spesifikk informasjon, og det innfløkte skaldespråket gjer dei vanskelege å tolka. I tillegg kan det reisast tvil om autensiteteten åt einskilde strofer. Stelte andsynes desse problema har historikarane ein tendens til å nytta dei opplysningane og tolkingane som høver med eigne hypotesar, men vanda andre som ikkje høver like godt inn. Og framleis ser ein ofte at prosakonteksten får det avgjerande ordet.

I dette føredraget vil det verta peika på slik ulagleg bruk av skaldedikt hjå norske historikarar. Eit døme er måten poetiske synonym (*heiti*) vert mistydde på, som når ein ut frå ei formulering som *niðjungr Haralds* ‘Haralds etterkomar’ (= ‘Haralds son’) om Olav Haraldsson vil slutta at samtida meinte at Olav var etterkomar av Harald Hårfagre, eller når ein i omtalen av Harald sjølv som *ungr ynglingr* ‘ung fyrste’ har vilja sjå ei stadfesting av nedættinga frå ynglingekongane i Uppsala.

Føredraget vil munna ut i formuleringa av nokre prinsipp for korleis ein kan utnytta den sparsame informasjonen som skaldeversa trass i alt gjev. Desse vil vera språkleg-metrisk analyse, omgrepsanalyse og innhaldsanalyse.

## Heidne motiv hos kristne skaldar

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Kenningssystemet i skaldediktingi føreset kunnskap om den førkristne mytologien, som i Tjodolfs vers ”Gauts berr sigð á sveita / svans orð konungr HÁrða” (*Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigting* B I: 346). *Gautr* er som kjent eit Odins-heiti (*Edda*: 25, jf. Turville-Petre 1968: 16), Odins sigd er ei omskriving for drapsvåpen, og på grunn av denne relativt lett gjennomskodelege kenningen (jf. Turville-Petre 1968: 14) kan ein forstå innhaldet i den meir kompliserte *sveita svans orð*. ”Ein tenkjer seg då til vanleg at skaldane var berarar av den religiøse tradisjonen, og kenningane vitnar om det” (Fidjestøl 1991: 120).

Olav Haraldssons skaldar brukte lite og inkje av slikt materiale, truleg fordi Olav i utgangspunktet var skeptisk til skaldekunsten, ”konungr sagði at hann vill ecki lyða kveði hans. oc hann vill ecki lata yrkia um sec” (*Den store saga om Olav den hellige* I: 82). Sigvat skald innførde ein enklare stil, med mindre bruk av kenningar. Det har vorte sett i samband med at han var kristen, og ville frigjera skaldestilen frå den heidenske tradisjonen (Fidjestøl 1994: 76). Hallfred Vandrådeskald tok liknande omsyn til Olav Trygvason, han ”avhöll sig från kenningarnas hedniska mytologi” (Hallberg 1962: 138f.). ”Bruken av kjenningar, særleg av mytologiske kjenningar, fall drastisk etter kristninga, for så å ta seg oppatt etter ei tid» (Mundal 2004: 253).

Men det høgt kompetente og kunnskapsrike skaldemiljøet rundt Harald Hardråde har kjent både gamle strofer og gamle mytar, og skaldane og kongen sjølv har heller ikkje tvika med å bruka dei som byggjemateriale i kenningar (jf. Kuhn 1983: 309). Det myldrar av gudenamn og allusjonar til heidenske mytar i strofene frå dette militaristiske miljøet, ikkje minst i kenningar for krig, kamp og stridsmann, men ogso i andre kunnskapskenningar. Ein kan nesten tillata seg å snakka om ei motebylgje. Både Harald sjølv og hovudskalden hans, Tjodolv, utnyttar heidenske motiv og alluderer til Odins rolle som valherre (jf. Nedreliid 2005).

Somme av fyrstane var sjøelve skaldar. I korpuset er det overleverte strofer tilskrivne Olav den heilage, Magnus den gode, Harald Hardråde, Magnus Berrføtt, Sigurd Jorsalfare, Sigurd Slemde og Ragnvald Kale Orknøy-jarl. Harald Hardråde og Ragnvald jarl har både den største og den beste produksjonen av fyrstane, ein kan tillata seg å kalla dei for skaldefyrstar. Det ser ut til at Ragnvald alluderer til Harald i den kjende idrettsstrofa (Nedreliid 2005: 193).

Harald Sigurdsson, fødd i 1015, deltok i slaget på Stiklestad i 1030. Etter at broren fall, flydde han til Gardarike, og derfrå drog han vidare til Miklagard, der han vart offiser i væringgarden hos keisaren. Han vende heim med gods og gull, og i 1046 lukkast det han å bli medkonge saman med brorsonen. Etter Magnus den godes død vart Harald einekonge. Han fall i slaget ved Stamford bru i 1066. I korpuset er det overlevert

19-20 strofor som er tilskrivne Harald, og det finst ei rad tætter som fortel om Harald og skaldane hans, særleg i *Morkinskinna*. Kale Kollsson, fødd ca 1100, truleg på Agder, tok namnet Ragnvald etter ein kjend orknøyning då han vart jarl over Orknøyane etter morbroren. Ragnvald er kjend som kyrkjebyggjar og krossfarar, og etter han fall i 1158, vart han rekna som heilag. Han blir hugsa for at han dikta *Háttalykill* saman med Hall Þórarinnsson. Kvadet inneheld 40 versemål som blir demonstrerte i 80 strofor om 40 kongar og heltar. «Dikteren har vært en skolelærd mann; mange av finessene er ikke funnet i skaldskap før hans tid», skriv Anne Holtsmark. I tillegg inneheld skaldekorpuset osso meir enn 30 *lausavisor* som er tilskrivne Ragnvald. Det seinare heilagmennet har kjent til og brukt det tradisjonelle byggjestoffet, herunder heidenske gudenamn, i kjenningane sine.

Innlegget vil særleg konsentrera seg om mytologiske kjenningar i strofone til desse to skaldefyrstane.

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## En Route to Giant-land: The Structure of Gods' Journeys in Scandinavian Mythology

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A considerable number of individually distinguishable mythological narratives in *Edda* are concerned with a god's journey to another realm. In eddic and skaldic poetry there are also several narratives with the journey as the main theme, and it seems that both Saxo and medieval Icelanders relating þættir and *fornaldarsögur* found narratives of gods' journeys useful to develop into tales about heroes and kings. This makes the gods' journeys a prominent type of narratives throughout the corpus of literature that is traditionally used as source material for Scandinavian mythology.

The structural analysis of a couple of mythological narratives in Snorri Sturluson's *Edda* has been carried out successfully by Clunies Ross (1986) using Vladimir Propp's pattern for the folktale (1968). Inspired by this work, I have applied Propp's pattern to nearly all the narratives of gods' journeys in Scandinavian mythology and found that the greater part of this pattern is an appropriate tool for analyzing this type of stories in the mythology. The following narratives of Scandinavian mythology are diagnostically similar in their patterns when analyzed with Propp's pattern:

<b>Prose narratives from <i>Snorra Edda</i></b>	<b>Eddic poems</b>
Þórr's journey to Útgardaloki	<i>Skírnismál</i>
Þórr's battle with Miðgarðsormr	<i>Hymiskviða</i>
The death of Baldr	Þrymskviða
Þjazi's abduction of Íðunn	<i>Baldrs draumar</i>
Óðinn's acquisition of the mead of poetry	
Þórr's duel with Hrungnir	
Þórr's Journey to Geirrøðr	
The Æsir's encounter with Hreiðmar (The prelude to the tale of Sigurðr Fafnisbani)	
<b>Prose narratives from <i>Gesta Danorum</i></b>	<b>Skaldic poems from <i>Snorra Edda</i></b>
Thorkillus's journey to Geruthus	Þjazi's abduction of Íðunn in <i>Haustlǫng</i>
Thorkillus's journey to Ugarthilocus	Þórr's journey to Geirrøðr in Þórsdrápa
Þorsteins þátrr bæjarmagns	

With few (but some) exceptions these narratives exhibit a common quadripartite structure of phases that is identifiable in Proppian terms as *preparation*, *complication*, *donor situation* and *confrontation*. The preparation is an initial situation of crisis, which often involves a sequence that leads to an act of *villainy* (Propp 1968: 25-35), carried out against the Æsir collective. This promotes a need for action to restore an initial imbalance that arises with the preparation phase, and thus introduces the complication (Propp 1968: 35-9) where someone from the collective is chosen – or automatically chooses – to undertake a journey to the distant otherworld. When the journeying god comes in close proximity to the primary inhabitant of the otherworld – the object of the journey – he is faced with a representative of the otherworld, who occupies the donor’s function in the Proppian schema (Propp 1968: 39-50). The nature of these encounters is multifaceted but seems to serve the minimal purpose of leading the journeying god on to the confrontation with the primary inhabitant of the otherworld – sometimes their only function is simply to signal proximity to the point of destination. Hereafter follows a confrontation with the primary inhabitant of the otherworld, which is paradigmatically expressed as combat or trial in strength and wits when it is a male-male confrontation, but is of a different nature if the primary inhabitant is female. However, if the primary inhabitant is female, the narratives generally incorporate a donor sequence where the donor is hostile and life-threatening.

This structure reveals the dynamics between the point of origin (Ásgarðr) of the journeying god and his destination in the otherworld. It has been proposed in recent scholarship about Scandinavian and Old Norse cosmology (Brink 2004; Steinsland 2005; Løkka 2010) that the avid antagonism between Æsir and giants is overstated, and it has even been suggested that a cosmic arrangement of opposition between gods and giants was mainly reliant on a ‘rhetorical polarity between heaven and hell’ which is expressed in *Edda* (Brink 2004: 298). My analyses of the gods’ journeys give the impression that there is in fact a strong pattern of opposition and antagonism between the Æsir collective, the outer realms and the otherworld in the structuring of mythological narratives across different genres. In my presentation I will give an overview of how the Proppian pattern is used in these analyses and discuss the implications of the discerned structure in relation to cosmic world-models in Scandinavian mythology.

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*Ynglingatal* and the Skjöldungar: Ari versus Sæmundr

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Why no *Skjöldungatal*? If forging ancient genealogical poems was really so easy in the late eleventh to early twelfth centuries, someone in Iceland would have come up with a poem of this name with which to rival *Ynglingatal*. The latter work, though traditionally assigned to Þjóðólfr of Hvinir in *c.* 890, is seen by some scholars as a twelfth-century fiction, particularly in regard to the slapstick humour which continues to defy all sober attempts to justify the poem as what Snorri (in his Prologue to *Heimskringla*) says it is: a work of genealogy. It seems that *Ynglingatal* is genuine, but not quite the work Snorri made it out to be. It seems also that the real fiction is the construction which Ari, Snorri's predecessor, placed on *Ynglingatal* when he helped to preserve it. This paper argues that Ari misused the poem to connect himself to the kings of Sweden, and that his stimulus for doing so, perhaps the only reason *Ynglingatal* survived, was the Skjöldung-genealogy connecting Sæmundr to the kings of Denmark.

# The Relation of Soul and Body – How Can Sagas Contribute to the Holistic Approach to Human Being in the Contemporary Science?

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In our culture there is a deeply rooted idea that it is possible to talk about a human being from two different, partially antagonistic perspectives which we call soul and body. This distinction dates back to the period of ancient Greece and a parallel was developed in India too. In the 20th century the rehabilitation of the body gradually began and contemporary researchers in humanities are looking for a new way to view the human nature as a whole.

This issue is perceived to be the greatest problem by psychology. There we can see how difficult it is to overcome the dualisms of soul and body in thinking about human being even if we put this as our goal. Most theories stay behind by stressing the body's influence on the soul or possibly their parallel interactions. Nevertheless, the true holistic approach requires us to stop viewing this dichotomy as important and find a different perspective. Psychologists in their quest for the body often got inspiration from Zen and Taoist traditions, but why not look into a tradition closer both geographically and intellectually, which does not only overcome dualism but is able to manage completely without it.

In the ON literature we can see that people undoubtedly understood them self as a unity. In their monism they went perhaps furthest of all Indo-European cultures and that is why we can look for inspiration for humanities which we find in the three following fields.

## 1. Interconnection of the material and immaterial

### 1.1. Posthumous body

The concept of afterlife in Valhalla and the revenants shows that dead people preserve their own bodies. The corporality of revenants even distinguishes them from revenants in other cultures. The idea of a subtle mode of the body imprinted into the soul provides a legitimate way of thinking deeper link between soul and body, which was then not made of molecules of inanimate matter.

### 1.2. Heredity of the soul

Concepts of *fylgja* and *hamingja* show us that heredity is not only material but it even covers such immaterial entities as happiness. *Hamingja* as happiness was inherited in the same way as a big nose and the greater the happiness, the greater the woman representing *hamingja*. Similarly, family strength was inherited as a family *fylgja*.

## 2. Internal shape

In this context, *hamr* (skin, shape, form) is the key concept. It was the shape that we strongly associate with matter, that was understood as separable from the body. It could occasionally get separated from its holder and move over large distances in the form of an animal or human being. *Hamr* is not an external shape, but the individual's own, that in a way determines him or her. In our logic, the question may be asked who or what acquires this shape, but the ON does not ask like that. Here we touch closely upon the psychological concept of Gestalt. An analysis of the ideas associated with the concept of *hamr* might help to stress, within the bounds of Gestalt-therapy, that the body is not only a structure reflecting a function, that the primacy cannot be determined and that the exterior form is the expression of the interior.

## 3. Movement

Movement is inseparably linked to ON ideas concerning the human body and soul. Terms *fjQr* and *önd* are the movement itself, the concepts *hugr* and *oðr* are associated exclusively with an activity and always indicate a specific state. *Hugr* is the force that causes the current situation, inspires human behavior. *Oðr* moves a human being – in sagas it is a rather negative force (the berserks' estate), earlier also associated with poetic inspiration and love.

Soul was understood at the moment of its activity. A motionless, inert soul was unthinkable or not worth mentioning. The modern science laboriously learned us to think about stillness, an eminently unnatural and very specific situation, as about a legitimate basis to perceive the world as a machine. A more natural (in the *fysis* sense) representation of the world is a tree, Yggdrasil – the world as living, emerging, changing and merging.

## Conclusion

We could see how human being as a whole was perceived by one of the few European cultures not affected by the Greek philosophy, where the perspectives of soul and body are not contradictory. It enables us to view human being in other polarities, because polar thinking is probably firmly connected with the western way of thinking. ON terms *fjQr*, *önd*, *oðr*, *hugr*, *hamr*, *fylgja*, *hamingja* include both polar opposites soul and body. The concept of human being that would emerge from this could then provide inspiration to the streams of contemporary psychology which have gone furthest in their focus on the body when working with a person, such as Gestalt-therapy and bioenergetics.

## The Somewhat Unexpected Ways of Poetic Runic Composition

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Starting from Olsen's runic reconstruction of the "níðstǫng" composed by Egill, as it appears in the Egill's saga, I pretend to have discovered another poem encrypted in the depths of the runic series. This poem I have managed to reconstruct in what I would consider its original form, carefully respectful of its essential formal and rhetorical items. The encrypted poem constitutes the ground on which some narrative elements of the prosa context have been constructed.

## Aspects of Smell and Olfactory Perceptions in Old Icelandic Literature

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This paper will focus on aspects of odour, on the descriptions of smells and olfactory perceptions in Old Icelandic literature – more precisely in the Sagas – from a literary critical and cultural scientific point of view. The literary constructions of smell and its literary depiction will be analysed. This will show if there are any possible topographies of smell and give an insight into the narrative functions of descriptions of smells and olfactory perceptions in these texts. Finally, possible directions of further research based on this topic, on smell and olfactory perceptions in Old Icelandic literature, will be worked out. By this means the paper will have a look at a phenomenon and make a little contribution to the research in a field that has been neglected – in spite of the intensive scientific work on literature and body during the last years – not only in the Scandinavian literature of the Middle Ages.

Reception Studies and the Emergence of Fictionality  
in Icelandic Saga Literature:  
Some Thoughts on AM 152 fol. and Other Late Mediaeval Manuscripts

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Drawing on recent reassessments of the creative practice of *historia* in mediaeval Europe, a number of recent saga studies have questioned the view that *fornaldarsögur* and *riddarasögur* are unproblematically 'fictional' texts. However, while it is now clear that we cannot take the fictionality of sagas for granted, many of these sagas flirt with fictionality in a number of ways. Several of them contain short prologues or epilogues which seek to defend the saga proper against the charge of fabling or 'lying', but often in a playful or slippery manner which leaves the question of historical truth-value unanswered. These defensive passages are textually very unstable, suggesting that individual scribes exercised considerable freedom in attaching, omitting or altering such metatextual remarks in relation to a given saga. Some late mediaeval manuscripts (such as AM 152 fol.) not only exercise freedom in this way, but gather together a number of different sagas with defensive remarks attached. Attention to these passages in the context of a whole manuscript can therefore illuminate the strategies and purposes of an individual scribe. Conversely, the intimate tie between the presence or absence of these metatextual remarks and the needs of specific scribes underlines how essential a reception-based perspective is to an understanding of the emergence of fictionality in saga literature, and confirms the philosophical truism that the fictionality of a given text depends on whether or not that text is *received* as fictional by its audience (including its scribes).



## *Hér myndi nú*: Speaking Skalds and Absent Audiences

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*Lausavísur* or occasional verses incorporated into saga narratives at times address an audience who is absent from the narrated scene. At other times, an audience described in a saga as present when a skald recites is apostrophised or unacknowledged within that verse. Prosimetric discrepancies such as these have generally been explained as a result of the chronological gap between the ‘initial’ performance of skaldic verses and their later incorporation into prose narrative. This chronological gap makes it necessary to distinguish between the context invoked in verse and the context described in prose (Marold 1983: 62). When these contexts are recognised as temporally discrete artistic expressions, it is not unexpected that the re-contextualisation of skaldic performances within saga narratives should sometimes miss the mark (Townend 2003: 68-9).

Discrepancies between verse context and saga context can be attributed to various factors, for example: scribal oversight or misunderstanding; artistic accommodation by which the prosimetric form absorbs the skaldic genre primarily as a voice of history (Meulengracht Sørensen 2001: 181-2); or a ‘double vision’ in which audiences recognised that a skaldic verse could be incorporated into multiple narrative contexts (Poole 2001: 13). Such explanations are plausible and convincing where a verse preceded or had a form independent of the extant prose, for a saga author composing a stanza to suit his narrative would be unlikely to mismatch deliberately the content of verse and prose (O’Donoghue 1991: 16).

No singular study has investigated the numerous instances of prosimetric disparity as regards the audiences of skaldic performances in saga texts. Many of these scenes display noteworthy points of connection, which suggest the operation of undetected angles of saga-style. In this paper I will consider several of these scenes within both *Íslendingasögur* and *Konungasögur*, focusing in particular on the relationship between the performances and audiences of *lausavísur*. Both the ‘initial’ performance and textual re-performance of skaldic verse will be assessed using discourses recently employed in skaldic performance studies, including those of folklore studies (Bauman 1986) and narratology (Jesch 2006; O’Donoghue 2005) as well as socio-historical concerns (Townend 2003; Morawiec 2009 and 2010). Comparison of these scenes reveals skalds and saga authors who were skilfully anticipating multiple audiences and performance contexts for stanzas as opposed to capturing one ‘initial’ performance situation in verse or recreating a single past performance in prose.

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## The Great Manuscript Exodus?

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Between 1870 and 1914, over 14,000 Icelanders left for the New World. Among the personal belongings they brought with them were an undocumented number of manuscripts. Mass emigration certainly had implications for manuscript transmission in Iceland in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, as both active scribes and their exemplars left the country en masse within the space of several decades. At the same time, emigration to Canada and the United States also served to expand (if only temporarily) the boundaries of the Icelandic-speaking world, and manuscripts that emigrants took to North America often continued to circulate within Icelandic communities, offering new opportunities for transmission.

Unfortunately, the Icelandic manuscripts that remain in Canada have not yet been catalogued, making it difficult to address the question of how many manuscripts emigrants took with them and to what extent emigration changed the ‘manuscript landscape’. In my paper, I will examine the age, regional distribution and content of some 100 Icelandic manuscripts found in archives and private collections in Manitoba and discuss the patterns that emerge from this study.

## Prophecy and Suspense in the *Íslendingasögur*

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This paper examines the effect of prophecy on the audience's reaction and expectations of the *Íslendingasögur*, and explores the idea that suspense is generated by how, not by what, events will unfold. Prophecy is integral to the aesthetics of saga literature and is crucial to the development of dramatic episodes, heightening emotions and keeping certain themes, such as that of conflict, at the forefront of the narrative. This impacts on the perception of saga figures' attitude and behaviour towards heroism and fate. Apparently incongruent actions and inaction could be explained with reference to an audience's familiarity with the plot elements through oral tradition, leading such motivational cruxes as the death of Kjartan in *Laxdæla saga* to be entirely consistent with the expected sequence of events in the mind of the audience. The hypothesis that an audience would have been aware of the basic events and patterns that take place in the sagas has implications for the working of prolepsis as a narrative technique. The predictability and familiarity of certain plot types would mean that prophecy could be deployed as a device to foreground political and social ideologies without disrupting the suspense of the narrative providing it is consistent with the expectations of the audience. Overall the paper will argue that though there are many instances of authorial invention or learned patristic influences relating to prophecy these are likely to have been congruent with the general understanding of orally transmitted plots in order to be aesthetically successful.

## Old Norse Nicknames and their Narratives

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Nicknames, which occur in all cultures and time periods, play a vital role in highlighting identity, and provide a window into popular culture. The function of nicknames in the Middle Ages is peculiar, however, when men (as in medieval Iceland) would kill for a carelessly dropped word if it was considered to be detrimental to their honor, yet often tolerated the most demeaning nicknames. The pool of personal names was limited, thus most people were identified with their nicknames. This circumstance created a trace in the interweaving saga plots where many nicknames recur across works. The quantity of nicknames in Old Norse literature is uniquely rich, and recurring nicknames provide a tool for understanding saga transmission and intertextuality.

Saga nicknames may be ancient, formed earlier in the popular imagination, or fanciful interpretations penned by authors. They may have provided a basis for a character's biography, and could be used to construct a narrative. Mentions of nicknames arise most often in the narratological circumstances in which they are appropriate, most often in the introduction of a chapter where new individuals and subsequent generations are illuminated. Most nicknames found in the sagas go unexplained, but dozens of passages comment on them. Where nicknames are explained, they most often appear in the narratological conditions of an anecdotal type. Nicknames are also important in providing motivation for actions or behavior (imagined by a saga author or otherwise) that occasionally plays a role in the plot. If a nickname was genuine (even if posthumous), many narratives developed from it and prove a degree of accuracy or inaccuracy in medieval memory and narrative transmission. An illustrative passage in ch. 8 of Þorsteins *saga hvíta* (ÍF Vol. XI 1950, 19) reveals what medieval Icelanders themselves seem to have thought about the importance of nicknames:

Fekk hann af þessu þat viðrnefni, at hann var kallaðr Brodd-Helgi, en þá þótti mönnum þat miklu heillavænliga at hafa tvau nöfn. Var þat þá átrúnaðr manna, at þeir menn myndi lengr lifa, sem tvau nöfn hefði.

[He received the nickname from this event, so that he was called Brodd-Helgi (Spike-Helgi), and back then it seemed to people greatly promising to have two names. At that time it was people's belief that people who had two names would live longer.]

Several categories of nicknames are found in Old Norse literature, such as those describing physical features, mental characteristics, or one's deeds or habits (good or bad). Nicknames could be used in place of a given name in skaldic poetry, functioning similarly to *heiti*. Nicknames are also substituted for personal names elsewhere, where they may have at some point in oral transmission become better known than the personal name (for example, Snorri and Grettir), and they often were passed down in patronyms (for example, Gísli Súrsson, whose father's full name was really Þorbjörn

súrr Þorkelsson). Negative nicknames are rather common, ranging from sexually-charged insults to unflattering physical characteristics, and several nicknames referring to genitals are found in the corpus. Nicknames also appear to have had some currency among Norsemen who raided and settled the British Isles, and many of these nicknames made their way to and from the Anglo-Saxon and Gaelic cultural sphere. Likewise, several nicknames appear in Icelandic literature, primarily genealogies, directly brought into Old Norse via a Celtic-Old Norse language interchange.

The medieval mind seems to have made a distinction between nicknames and hypocorisms (pet-names). One custom consisted of the giving a shortened byname (that is truncated, familiar pet forms) such as Óli for Óláfr and Tósti for Þorsteinn, many of which through frequent use became personal names proper. The other custom consisted of giving a secondary name or agnomen to supplement a given name. It is the latter tradition with which I intend to give a fuller description. In numerous cases this attached name, most often in the form of a weak adjective, could also function as a replacement for the given name, showing that nicknames were just one of several components of an individual's given name. Since surnames in the medieval period were extremely rare in the North, nicknames were the closest equivalent in that they were often attached to and indistinguishable from a personal name. I will neglect mentioning medieval family names and occupational bynames (that is, titles) in Scandinavia in so much as they do not concern nicknames directly. For this reason, unless there is some distinct reason to discuss occupation bynames (such as *konungr*, *jarl*, and the like), such as if there is an additional epithet attached (for example, Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld 'troublesome poet'), I will treat them as titles, not nicknames. Likewise, bynames which merely reflect geographical origin will not be treated as nicknames unless they suggest that this component of a name contained a meaningful epithet as an identifier of an individual.

## So, Who Copied Whom? The Relationship between *Knýtlinga saga* and Saxo's *Gesta Danorum* in the Light of Proper Names

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In the present paper I am investigating the potential of the proper name usage and the character of the names used in *Knýtlinga saga* and *Gesta Danorum*, respectively, for establishing the relationship between the two sources.

*Knýtlinga saga* (ca 1260–70) and Saxo Grammaticus' *Gesta Danorum* (ca 1190–1208) are two medieval texts similar in their choice of subject, but different as historical sources. Both depict the history of Denmark to the death of Bogislaw of Pomerania in 1187, but the Old Icelandic saga is at least three times shorter than its Latin counterpart, missing a number of narrative elements found in *Gesta Danorum*. However, it has been established that *Knýtlinga saga*'s last part and Saxo Grammaticus's books 14–16 correspond in a notable way. Since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the striking similarities between the two texts have been explained differently, spurring a never-ending debate on the relationship between *Knýtlinga saga* and *Gesta Danorum* in general and *Knýtlinga saga*'s status as a source in particular.

The early pluralism of opinions on the matter was in the 20<sup>th</sup> century replaced by the monopoly of textual explanations which were seen as the only plausible ones. The idea that a textual relationship lies behind the similarities between the sources, has been propagated by Curt Weibull (1915, 1976) and Gustav Albeck (1946).

However, these two researchers represent very different viewpoints. Weibull argues that there existed a common source, *Ur-Knýtlinga*, which both *Knýtlinga saga* and *Gesta Danorum* are based on. Albeck in his turn is convinced that the saga as a younger source has made a direct use of the older source, *Gesta Danorum*. Thus, either the author of *Knýtlinga saga* copied Saxo's *Gesta Danorum* or – in principle – *vice versa*. In the second case *Knýtlinga saga* turns out to be an independent and valuable source for the history of Denmark, while in the first the saga represents only a distorted summary of *Gesta Danorum*.

Proper names in general and place-names in particular play an important role of their own in this debate. Saxo is claimed to be reluctant to use proper names in his work, while *Knýtlinga saga* is fond of them and supplements Saxo's narrative in a number of shared contexts. This tendency manifests itself clearly if one compares the corresponding parts of the two sources, where according to Weibull (1976, p. 17) Saxo lacks 16 personal names, 52 place-names and a couple of Wendish theonyms. Using, among others, this argument, Weibull reaches the conclusion that the saga did not use *Gesta Danorum*.

I have carried out both quantitative and qualitative analyses of the corresponding name stocks in the saga and *Gesta Danorum*, to further investigate the “proper name argument”. I have, for example, not only looked at the proper names which are missing in Saxo in comparison to *Knýtlinga saga*, but also at the names in *Gesta Danorum* which lack counterparts in the saga. The result of the comparison is that the saga lacks 76 place-names, 128 name bearers and 3 theonyms, while Saxo lacks 43 place-names, 43 name bearers and 4 Wendish theonyms. Moreover, the findings show that a number of the place-names concerned appear in the contexts common for both sources, which – with the saga’s postulated interest for names in mind – is hard to reconcile with the idea that *Knýtlinga saga* has directly copied its material from *Gesta Danorum*. But where did the saga, a much shorter source, get the supplementing name information? The character of the proper names used can shed light on this question.

The qualitative analysis of the place-name stocks used in both sources show that they partly overlap and contain some unique Scandinavian forms which are opposed to their Latin counterparts used elsewhere, e.g., *Guðakrsá* : *Gudacra amnis* : *Warnou fluvius* (Helmold’s *Chronica Slavorum*). The analysis of the Wendish place-names used in *Knýtlinga saga* reveals that the names in question belong to a marginal tradition, since most of them are not attested in other Old Norse sources. Moreover, they include some local names, for example, a name of a Wendish sacred grove. This suggests that the saga’s unique place-name material originates in a “narrow” oral tradition. The Danish king Valdemar Sejr (via Óláfr Þórðarson, the saga’s most probable informant) is likely to be responsible for *Knýtlinga saga*’s topographic competence.

On the basis of my study I argue that oral transmission provides the best explanation for the similarities and dissimilarities between *Knýtlinga saga* and Saxo. I believe I have found further support for the view introduced by Jørgen Olrik (1930–31), namely that the saga retells Valdemar Sejr’s version of *Gesta Danorum*. *Knýtlinga saga* is thus an independent source containing exclusive information on e.g. Wendland’s topography, and its last part originates in retelling, rather than copying, of Saxo’s work.



## The Ecology of *Eyrbyggja saga*: Greening Saga Studies

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Since the 1960s many ‘theoretical’ approaches to literature have taken an explicitly utilitarian approach to texts from the past, unashamedly making use of them for political purposes (whether Marxist, feminist, queer, or postcolonial), and claiming that the liberal humanist tradition had itself made use of texts for extra-textual ends, though it often failed to admit that it was doing so. One recent approach, ecocriticism, is just beginning to have an impact on medieval studies, with Gillian Rudd and Alfred Siewers in particular revealing the potential of medieval English and Celtic texts for green reading.

This paper explores the possibility of using the sagas in environmental debate by attempting an ecocritical reading of one particular text, *Eyrbyggja saga*. I argue that this saga is a narrative about the transition from nature to culture, the relationship between the two, and the way in which nature is conceptualised in relation to the establishment of the Icelandic nation. I show that the development of community and the adoption of Christianity in Iceland are understood in terms of people’s relationship with, and control of, the environment. The prominence of the supernatural in the saga calls into question twenty-first century understandings of the relationship between nature and culture and I conclude that this challenge to ecocriticism to account for the supernatural is one of the most valuable contributions medieval literature, including the sagas, can make to contemporary green studies.

## Were the Danes really so Bad in the Skaldic Art?

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In the *Morkinskinna* version of *Sneglu-Halla þáttur*, Sneglu-Halli describes to the King of Norway the bad stanzas he offered to the ignorant King of England. Amongst the many features of these bad stanzas, Halli mentions that “*Verðrat drápa /með Dönum verri.*” (no *drápa* could be worse among the Danes), suggesting the Danes were reputedly so bad at composing *drápa*, if not so bad skalds altogether, that they could be seen as a commonplace reference for bad poetry. Knowing the mischievous and often mocking temper of Halli, which probably got him his nickname, it might be doubted that this affirmation is a trustworthy source of information about the quality of poetry by medieval Danes. Although it could be pure diffamation, the stanza does not rise any protest within the audience, as if the bad quality of Danish poetry were common knowledge. As the Latin juridic principle has it, “*Testis unus, testis nullus*” (One witness, no witness), this sole testimony is hardly sufficient to draw any conclusion about the quality of the Danish medieval poetry and poets. But a look at *Skáldatal* reveals that almost no Danish skald is mentioned, as if none had been considered good enough to be counted among these skaldic authorities. Commenting Halli’s stanzas, Lee M. Hollander, in *The Skalds. A selection of Their Poems, With Introduction and Notes* (1947, 203) notes that: “It is not clear whether “Danes” stands here generically for “men”, or whether it really refers to the Danes, amongst whom, it is true, we know of no real skald.”

Our paper therefore aims at testing this apparent commonplace by looking into the skaldic corpus and the various scenes of sagas where Danes and poetry are referred to, in order to find confirmation or contradictory information. Our leading interrogation will thus focus on the reality of this bad reputation as well as on its origin, were this reputation confirmed.

## Pariahs or Heroes? Two Icelandic Medieval Outlaws as Scapegoats

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The aim of this paper is to apply the theory of the scapegoat coined by the philosopher and anthropologist René Girard, in his book *Le Bouc-Emissaire*, to the two main outlaw sagas of medieval Iceland, *Grettir saga Ásmundarsonar* and *Gísla saga Súrssonar*. This could help to understand the ambiguity of the penalty applied to medieval Icelandic outlaws, the *skóggangr*. Prevented from leaving the island (*óferjandi*), hunted down and persecuted, the outlaws are nevertheless admired and useful for the society. Why keep trouble-makers inside the enclosed space of the island instead of forcing them to leave the place (as it was the case with sentences to lesser outlawry)?

We intend first to make a critical overview of the main penalties (*fjörbaugsgarðr*, *skóggangr*, few cases of death penalty) applied to criminals in Iceland during Medieval times, based on both normative sources as the *Grágás* and narrative sources as the sagas. From this historical specificity, we will then take a look at its development in narratives such as *Grettla* and *Gísla saga* and underline the process turning the outlaw from criminal to victim.

According to René Girard's theory, in time of crisis society gathers against an outcast character, an easy target, and sacrifices him in order to establish a temporary peace between the members of the very same society.

We will describe point by point how both *Grettir* and *Gísli* are persecuted in their narratives and can be said to be represented as scapegoats. First, to be a scapegoat one must have committed a crime that is more than a crime, that is to say a crime which challenges the values of his own social group, in general involving bestiality, infanticide, incest, profanation or any aspects involving atrocity. Second, the target must have as well previous victimal aspects, either connected with a minority (religious or cultural) or of a purely physical type. The simple fact to be abnormal in some way (disease, madness, deformation, mutilation, special abilities) is a trait that can be simultaneously interpreted as sacred and cursed. As a consequence, thanks to the scapegoat mechanism, the violence of everyone against everyone, very present in the Icelandic feud tradition, is turned into the violence of everyone against one, where all gather to face a greater threat, the outlaw, and stop for a time internal feuds.

By choosing an individual to carry on his back the tensions generated, society is expelling temporarily violence out of its borders, while at the same time praises the condemned for its sacrifice. The final stage of the scapegoat mechanism is the scene of the sacrifice and death, a key-moment in both sagas, where the victim changes radically his pattern of behaviour and meet the expectation of his own social group. This post-

mortem return is prepared in the narrative thanks to a slow progression from fairness to unfairness. We will point out how Grettir and Gísli, persecuted during their life, are pictured as being unfairly killed in a one-versus-many final scene, and then praised right after their death to enter the pantheon of heroism.

Thanks to a narrative turning a legal criminal, a pariah, into an heroic figure able to persist through time in the audience's mind, Grettir and Gísli become what can be called "sacrificial outlaws", rejected and needed at the same time. We will finally discuss some aspects of the sacrificial function of full outlaws in Medieval Iceland. The sacrificial outlaw is a spectral figure who is not sharing the same pattern of behaviours and preoccupations as the other members of the society. The narrative is building the figure of the outlaw as anachronistic, a victim of transition, praiseworthy for his heroic sacrifice. The outlawry depicted in both sagas involves a similar mechanism, despite obvious style differences between them. Outlaw tales are not only about a direct punishment of a precise violation of the law but about a process, characterizing Grettir as a last stand hero from the past and Gísli as an anticipation of Christianity.

Resurrecting a Skaldic Stanza in *Gísla saga Súrssonar*

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On each of the two nights previous to Vésteinn's murder, Gísli's dreams a dream which forewarns him of the event and hints at the identity of the culprit. In the first dream he describes how 'af einum bæ hrökkðisk höggormr ok hjøggi Véstein til bana' and on the second night: 'vargr rynni af sama boe ok biti Véstein til bana'. The fact that these dreams are recounted in prose is a striking anomaly in a saga where every other dream is expressed in verse. However, the alliteration in the two sentences quoted above, as well as the fact that the biting animals 'höggormr' and 'vargr' could easily be read as weapon kennings, rather than symbolic beasts, strongly suggests a poetic origin. Most likely this took the form of one or more stanzas which, over time, were only remembered in fragments and incorporated into the prose text. This paper will explore the implications of this hypothesis within the context of the composition of the saga as well as the oral/written transmission of skaldic verse.

## Rethinking Identity, Culture, and Environment in *Bárðar Saga Snæfellsáss*

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The little studied text *Bárðar saga snæfellsáss* is grouped as part of the *Íslendingasögur*, yet often its position within this genre has been a source of debate, and as a result it has also been assigned the sub-categorisation of *trollsögur*. This paper uses an onomastic approach to explore how the names of the saga characters act as both points of connection and separation between the characters and the rest of society. It examines how the names of characters grouped under a specific collective term such as *tröll* are more closely connected to the environment than others who are grouped under other collective terms such as *þurs*. Whilst personal names in *Bárðar saga* have been used previously to analyse the identity of the characters, this paper triangulates the personal names in the texts, the semantics of monster terms, and the environment. This allows for an exploration of *Bárðar saga* which moves beyond the interaction between character names and toponyms which has previously dominated discussions on the saga, and explores the way in which a dynamic cultural construction of environment takes place within the text.

## The Shallowed Depth of the Eddic Past

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Old Norse literary genres represent the ancient past in markedly different ways, the sequencing of generations that structures compilations of *konungasögur*, for instance, of little importance in eddic heroic poetry, even though both genres depict ancient kingship. A plumb-line back through the historical events that provided the inspiration for the material of the heroic cycle would locate figures who loved or fought together in eddic time at depths centuries apart in chronicled time. Seen through the lens of eddic memory, the people and events of the Migration Age are drawn up into the Viking Age and further forward through the centuries, their interactions set in a time distinguished from the present by its distance ago: ‘Ár var, þat er . . .’ (*Gðr I* and *Sg*: ‘It was early in time when . . .’). While moments in the eddic past were invested with significance because of their distance back in time – ‘Vara þat nú né í gær, þat hefir langt liðit síðan, er fát fornara, fremr var þat hálfu’ (*Hm*: ‘It was not now or yesterday, a long time has passed since then; few things are more ancient, and this was twice as long ago) – they remained relevant because they were regarded as the dawn of the present.

The sights of eddic poets were accordingly trained on past moments and encounters that constituted the cultural fundament. To keep the contours of this distant past sharp, it was characteristically foreshortened to concentrate on just a few players and on just one generation (parents are conspicuously absent from most of the eddic action and direct descendants are few). The distillation of the past into an intense layer of social experience resulted in a reiterative poetics, where the same material could be examined and re-examined in different lights. The first poems of the heroic cycle in the *Codex Regius* compilation, for instance, explore permutations of the foundational relationship between a king and a valkyrie-princess, replaying the interaction three times (or four, if the later encounter between *Sigrdrífa* and *Sigurðr* is included). Instead of envisaging sequence through historical development across generations, poets duplicated the Helgi-valkyrie coupling. The generation of each new pair was ascribed by the compiler to reincarnation rather than to chronological progression: ‘Helgi ok Sváva er sagt at væri endrborin’ (*Hhv*: Helgi and Sváva are said to have been reborn); cf. ‘Helgi ok Sigrún er kallat at væri endrborin’ (*HH II*). The life of Helgi Hundingsbani was in fact replayed from the beginning a second time round in the compilation, but with a different ending (*HH I* and *HH II*).

Elsewhere in the compilation, the same story line is replayed with apparently no devaluation of the poetic compositions expressing it (one *Atli* poem after the other is a prominent example). And the block of poems about *Sigurðr* stage and restage the crucial events and conversations of his short adult life in a cluster of poems that represent it in prospect (through advice and prophecy), in summary and, finally, in retrospect. The figure of *Guðrún* is perhaps the quintessence of the tendency to reiterative sequencing in the compilation, with each of her marriages a new constellation of treacherous

intentions played out across fraught kinship ties, even to the point where the transition between poems in the manuscript has to bypass life's natural end in order to contrive the beginning of a new marriage: 'Guðrún . . . gekk út á sæinn ok vildi fara sér. Hon mátti eigi sökva. Rak hana yfir fjörðinn á land Iónakrs konungs. Hann fekk hennar' (prose before *Ghv*: Guðrún waded out into the water and wanted to drown herself but she could not sink. She drifted across the fjord to the land of King Ionakr who married her).

A sequel which intensifies the underlying meaning of an encounter between figures in an eddic poem is apparent in other preservation contexts as well. At the end of the summary of the poem *Grottasöngur* within *Skáldskaparmál*'s survey of kennings for gold, the plot of another encounter between Fenja and Menja and a king is given, the sea-king Mýsingr forcing them to mill endless salt for him aboard his ship (a story unconnected with gold except in the replaying of the plot of retributive justice). The brief snatch of dialogue reported in the account – 'ok á miðri nótt spurðu þær, ef eigi leiddiz Mýsingi salt' ('and they asked him at midnight whether he might not yet have tired of salt') suggests an incipient dialogue poem where supernatural figures test and depose another impolitic king in a memorably dramatic encounter. It is as if the eddic tradition enfolds within itself the critical cultural situations which needed to be replayed in endless configurations to make sense of where the society that transmitted the poetry imagined itself to have come from.



‘Guðrún leit til hans ok brosti við’:  
Formulas and *Formulopoesis* in *Laxdæla saga*

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As saga scholars and medievalists we are continually confronted with the specificity of texts we are studying. Unlike their post-print age counterparts, these traditional narratives evolved for long periods of time and were produced not merely ‘quill in hand’, by single individuals, but rather by entire creative networks of oral storytellers (and their audiences), writers, redactors, scribes and compilers. However, while we are usually ready to acknowledge this specificity, in our interpretations we often continue to apply the intuitions and narratological tools tailored to the post-print texts, thus routinely ignoring one of the sagas’ most conspicuous traditional features – their formulas. It is as though the formulas’ very conspicuousness makes them innocuous, renders them akin to literary clichés that are more or less devoid of intellectual and emotional content. In this way we blind ourselves to an aesthetically rich play of associations or ‘traditional referentiality’ (Foley 1991) which each formula is capable of triggering through its ability to reach out of its immediate instance of application, drawing on the semantic acumen of the entire tradition and conveying subtle and complex meanings to informed audiences.

Focusing on the treatment of the ‘no reaction’ formula in *Laxdæla saga*, on what expectations it raises and what effects are achieved by departures from these expectations, I will try to suggest what kinds of interpretational possibilities open up once we sensitise ourselves to the aesthetics of *formulopoesis* and ‘traditional referentiality’.

# The Inheritance of Classical Knowledge in Old Icelandic Grammatical Literature

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The present paper is intended as a kind of completion of a previous study of mine (1998) on the same subject. On that occasion I focused on the presence of references, both explicit and implicit, to authors – i.e. grammarians, poets, philosophers, theologians etc. – from the classical and early post-classical period in the four so-called Old Icelandic grammatical treatises (henceforth abbreviated OIGTs as a whole and FiGT, SeGT, ThGT, and FoGT singularly), deliberately leaving out of consideration the technical, viz. grammatical and rhetorical, vocabulary they resort to. Now, on the contrary, I will concern myself only with the latter aspect, in an attempt to fill the lacuna, albeit in a very elemental way.\*

Each of these works naturally employs a more or less extensive and articulated terminological apparatus, by which the various concepts of grammar and literary rhetoric are presented and discussed. The relevant question is: how much does the linguistic analysis carried out in these writings have in common with the much more renowned and well-established classical grammatical tradition, and how much does it differ from it? And, consequently, to what extent does the technical vocabulary appear to be influenced by this prestigious and authoritative model?

With the possible exception of SeGT, all of the OIGTs are deeply rooted in medieval Latin scholarship. No wonder, then, that much of the material dealt with in these writings is directly drawn from medieval Latin grammarians, who in turn were largely dependent on ancient grammarians, both Latin and Greek. Obviously enough, Greek influence appears, as a rule, to be mediated by Latin tradition, a fact which may in part account for certain mistakes and inconsistencies occurring in the treatises, such as the misspelling of some technical terms and, most notably, the misinterpretation of their meaning. This applies especially to ThGT and FoGT, which are the most intimately connected with classical tradition.

When technical vocabulary is considered, a sharp distinction must be made among the four Icelandic treatises. While FiGT and SeGT – two orthographic and, so to speak, ‘elementary’ works – show a terminological apparatus which is for the most part independent from that of classical tradition, ThGT (especially its second part, devoted to literary rhetoric) and FoGT are characterized by the presence of a considerable number of Latinisms and Graecisms, obviously due to the more advanced and sophisticated level of their subject matter.

A handful of examples out of dozens occurring in the four treatises will serve to provide a general idea of the structure and variety of their technical vocabulary and its varying degree of dependence on Latin and Greek models. The following progression is observable in terms of adherence to the classical terminological apparatus (in decreasing order):

(1) Some Latin or Greek terms are simply explained and described in Icelandic, with no attempt whatsoever to render them in the vernacular. They are therefore taken into the Icelandic text as pure loanwords (*barbarismus, soloecismus, metaplasmus, diaeresis, metathesis, cacemphaton, macrologia, tautologia, zeugma, synecdoche, sarcasmos* (ThGT); *prosopopeia, emphasis, parabola, euphonia, climax, anthropopathos* (FoGT) etc.) or slightly adapted to Icelandic (*títull, vers* (FiGT); *sincópa* (in addition to the pure Greek-Latin form *syncope*), *trópr* (in addition to the Latin *tropus*) (ThGT); *apostropha, icona* (FoGT) etc.). This is the usual method in ThGT and FoGT, while only two such instances are found in FiGT and none in SeGT. Sometimes, comparable but seldom fully equivalent terms belonging to skaldic technical vocabulary are mentioned in connection with rhetorical figures. The most conspicuous instance of this is represented by *metaphora*, which the author of ThGT essentially equates with the skaldic *kenning* and some of its subtypes.

(2) Other terms, after being briefly defined, are promptly rendered with their Icelandic equivalent(s), if they exist, or ‘translated’ into Icelandic by means of one of the possible adaptation processes (mainly by structural and/or semantic calque): *diphthongus/diphthoggos*: ‘tvíhljóðr’, *schema lexeos*: ‘skruð máls eða ræðu’, *periphrasis* ‘umkringingarmál’, *aenigma*: ‘gáta’ etc.

(3) Still other terms, although clearly derived from Latin as lexical or semantic loans, are directly mentioned in their current Icelandic form, without any reference to their Latin models. This category includes most of the terms denoting basic grammatical concepts, such as ‘vowel’ (*raddarstafr*), ‘consonant’ (*samhljóðandi*), ‘pronoun’ (*fornafn*), ‘adverb’ (*viðrorð*), ‘case’ (*fall*), ‘gender’ (*kyn*) and the like.

(4) Finally, mention should be made of those grammatical terms which, despite having a semantic equivalent in Latin tradition, are not patterned on Latin models or have no Latin counterpart at all, e.g. *samstafa/samstofun* ‘syllable’, *hljóðsgrein* ‘accent’, *málsgrein* ‘sentence’, *limingr/limingarstafr* ‘ligature’, *lausaklofi* ‘vowel di-graph’. Instances of this kind imply a substantial independence from the Latin model and clearly point to the parallel presence of an autochthonous, pre-Latinate grammatical tradition.

Some essential conclusions will be proposed in the oral presentation of the paper.

\*Relevant bibliographical references will be given in the oral presentation of the paper.

## Alfar in the Old Norse Literature

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*Alfar* are ktonic beings in the Norse mythology and folklore, perceived to inhabit a world beneath the earth, living in the mountains and in other places in the landscape. The descriptions and the functions of *alfar* in Old Norse literature are varying, often depending on the literary genre. Sometimes these beings are connected to illness and health, while other stories mention them as ancestors. A couple of texts mention people making sacrifice to *alfar*. Due to similar descriptions and contexts, the term *landvættir* seem to be connected with *alfar*. Although *vættir* in itself is a general and sweeping term, probably a noa word (a non-taboo word used to avoid summoning something by mentioning its real name, a kind of euphemism), this specific compound put these beings in the same place as *alfar*. *Landvættir* are primarily mentioned when the story is dealing with settlement and ownership of land, but it also seems as if kings and rulers need the consent of the local *landvættir* to be able to reign over their country. This paper will deal with the first preliminary results from the ongoing work with my doctoral thesis about *alfar* in the Old Norse literature.

A Medieval Lady in a Post-Medieval Era -  
The Development of the Religious Aspects of 'Helena the One-Handed'  
in its Transmission to Denmark and Iceland

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The subject of my paper, *Helenu saga einhentu* (the Saga of Helena the One-Handed), has its earliest known roots in a French 'chanson de geste', composed around 1300, but did not find its way into Scandinavian literature until it is printed in Danish in the seventeenth century. Shortly after, it was translated into Icelandic, and, judging by the number of printed editions in Danish and extant Icelandic manuscript versions, it received considerable popularity in both languages until the late nineteenth century. The paper presents some of the findings of my PhD thesis from University College London (2009).

As a genre 'chanson de geste' was warrior literature, influenced by the atmosphere of the Crusades, and *La Belle Hélène de Constantinople* (the French title of the story) is no exception. It is literally full of lengthy battle scenes, that often draw attention from what should be the real centre of the story, the trials and tribulations of the beautiful title character. Numerous saints appear in the story, and the number of miracles can hardly be established - so many are they.

As mentioned above, the story doesn't reach Denmark and Iceland (via German) until well after the Reformation, and this is evident in its earliest versions in both languages; the role of the Crusades has diminished a great deal, and most saints have disappeared from the story, together with most of the miracles they performed. But the development of the religious aspects does not stop there.

## The Floating and the Fixed Gap: Collective Memory and the Sagas

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The paper will look into the concept of collective memory, the sagas as expressions of an Icelandic collective memory, and the way this is evident in the texts.

Scholars today generally agree that most sagas, although written down in the high Middle Ages or even later, have some kind of root in an oral tradition stretching back much farther. It is nigh impossible for us today to isolate such ‘original’ elements in the texts from ‘authored’ medieval and/or Christian elements, especially since by definition these elements must have been transmitted orally before being written down – and changed in the process.

Still, in the paper I argue that the saga genre as a whole can be seen as an expression of an Icelandic collective memory – both of the medieval Icelanders who wrote down the stories and of their ancestors who transmitted them through generations before that.

My approach is mainly inspired by the theories of three different scholars. French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs first introduced the concept of ‘collective memory’ in *La mémoire collective* (1950) and treated memory as a social construct.

French historian Pierre Nora took up Halbwachs’ ideas and, in *Les lieux de mémoire* (1984-92) further developed the idea of memory as crucial in shaping the identity of a group. With the title of his book, he also coined the term ‘realms of memory’ to describe the key elements that bind together a society’s common past.

Finally, Dutch historian/anthropologist Jan Vansina conducted numerous field studies in various contemporary pre-literate cultures in Africa. His concept of a ‘floating gap’ (introduced in *Oral Tradition* from 1985) or caveat in their fund of knowledge about the past is central to my view of the Norse material. In the paper I argue that Vansina’s model is fairly universal and can indeed be adapted to an Icelandic context – and that the idea of a ‘floating gap’ in a purely – or mostly – oral culture can be modified and reused, even after that culture becomes literate.

## Constructions of Past and Present in the Contemporary Sagas

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This paper will investigate different modes of constructions of the past in the secular and ecclesiastical contemporary sagas, i.e. *Sturlunga saga* and the *Biskupasögur*. Although strongly based in the present or recent past and following a strictly chronological structure, these narratives nevertheless refer to personage and events at different stages of the past in a number of ways. Earlier studies have stressed the genealogical aspect (cf. Úlfar Bragason 2004 and 2007) and references to orally transmitted knowledge and traditions in these texts (Ásdís Egilsdóttir 2006). I will continue along these lines and point out further types of references to former times. In a comparative approach, I will analyse these references in the two subgenres of saga literature in terms of context, time and localisation of the referral. A first sifting seems to reveal rather different modes of relating to the past in the two groups. Questions I will dwell on in this first part of my paper are: How do the texts relate to the narrated time itself, is it perceived as past? How do they relate to earlier periods in time and how can former times enter the chronologically organised discourse: Is it possible to identify specific narrative framings of the past? How is the referral to the past related to constructions of images of self and other (cf. e.g. Foerster 2009, Ármann Jakobsson 1994)?

In a second step, I will explore the interdependencies of the two time levels by asking to what extent the inclusion of the past influences the construction of contemporary history. I will thus investigate the setting of the narrated time in space and time that we meet in the two subgenres of saga literature, as one “type of configuration” of historiographic and hagiographic writing, i.e. as one aspect of creating a (historiographic) story about a given time (cf. White 1990 and 1991).

Finally, I will contextualise the results of the analysis by discussing the codicological contexts of the contemporary sagas in order to find out what they might reveal about (changing) underlying ideas of present and past, simultaneity and historicity, affinity and continuity in the course of the transmission. I will do this by looking at the medieval manuscript tradition of the secular and ecclesiastical contemporary sagas (leaving out minor fragments). While the first medieval manuscript transmitting *Sturlunga saga*, Króksfjarðarbók (AM 122 a fol., dated to c. 1350–70), only contains the text of *Sturlunga saga*, the second medieval manuscript, Reykjarfjarðarbók (AM 122 b fol., dated to the last quarter of the 14<sup>th</sup> century), also contains (fragments of) *Árna saga biskups* and *Guðmundar saga biskups* and is thus the only codex containing contemporary sagas of both kinds. In this context, I will also take up the question of the arrangement of texts in *Sturlunga saga* as to what it reveals about ideas on historicity (cf. e.g. Krömmelbein 1994).

Of the manuscripts transmitting *Biskupasögur* AM 645 4to (c. 1220), AM 234 fol. (c. 1340), Holm perg 5 fol. (c. 1350–1365), and AM 657 c 4to (c. 1340–1390) are most interesting in our context, as they are all compilations featuring saints' sagas of different kinds – reaching from the apostles to the near contemporary Edward the Confessor, but also texts such as *Eiríks saga víðförla* or *Vilhjálm's saga sjóðs*.

On an abstract level, by pursuing these questions, I hope to shed new light on the authors', compilers' and recipients' conception and understanding of past and present.

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## Saga History or Annalistic History? Icelandic Interactions of Genre and Concepts of History

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The undated, interlaced Icelandic saga narratives and the year-by-year, linear clerical annals appear to be quite different forms of historiography, yet a few authors either wrote both annals and sagas or else drew on annals for their sagas. For example, *Prestssaga Guðmundar Arason* adheres to a strict chronology, with every event being set in a particular year of Guðmundr's life and with annalistic notices being included for extra precision. *Hákonar saga gamla Hákonarson* is a much more expansive narrative, but in a similar fashion it proceeds yearly and is supplemented with documentary material. Its author, Sturla Þórðarson, would in the last years of his life (1280 or 1281 to 1283 or 1284) continue his exploration of clerical historiography by compiling his own set of annals (now known as *Resens annáll*). In the middle of the fourteenth century, Einar Hafliðason, the most learned cleric in northern Iceland, composed *Laurentíus saga biskups* and compiled a set of annals (now known as *Lögmanns annáll*) that overlaps with the saga. Drawing on these three sagas, I will investigate the varieties of interaction between the two concepts of history (that embodied in the saga-form and that embodied in the annals) and the two historiographical genres of saga and annalistics. In all cases, the interactions are affected by social and political factors such as the need to demonstrate that the Icelanders were part of the dominant cultural paradigm, the perceived authority of the genres, and the public or private nature of the histories.

## Polotsk and the Western Dvina Way: View from Scandinavia

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Polotsk is the ancient Belarusian town and one of the oldest and most important centers of Old Rus' called in the Old Norse sources *Garðaríki*. Old Rus' including the territory of modern Belarus was one of the main parts of *Austrvegr* in the Scandinavians' world picture. The written sources reflect the great importance of Polotsk in geopolitical space of Eastern Europe. It was largely caused by Polotsk' advantageous position in the zone of transcontinental waterways crossing of both the Baltic-Volga trade route and the Baltic-Dnieper way called "*from the Varangians to the Greeks*". Polotsk controlled the middle part of the Western Dvina region. The Western Dvina route related to the Principality of Polotsk is known from such sagas as *Gutasagan* and *Kristni Saga*. From *the Russian Primary Chronicle* it is seen that appearance of the oldest Belarusian town on historical scene is connected with inclusion of Scandinavians in process of early state structures forming in the territories of East Slavs and Finns that also explains why Polotsk is known in the Old Norse sources. It is mentioned in sagas and geographical tractates by names "*Pal(l)teskja(u)*" and "*Palteskjaborg*". According to *Eymundar þátr* the Principality of Polotsk – "*En Palteskju ok þat ríki, er þar liggir til*" – was one of the three main parts of *Garðaríki*.

Significant position of Polotsk was surely one of the main reasons for arriving of Rogvolod in the Western Dvina land in the middle of 10<sup>th</sup> century. Rogvolod is the first historically known Polotsk Prince. From an entry AD 980 in the *Russian Primary Chronicle* it is possible to suppose that Rogvolod came together with Tury who became the founder of the Principality of Turov. The statement about the Scandinavian origin of the first Polotsk Prince is based on two grounds. The first ground is the *Russian Primary Chronicle* report that Rogvolod "*had come from overseas*". The second one is a Scandinavian etymology of the name "Rogvolod" – *Ragnvaldr* and the name of his daughter – "Rogneda" – *Ragnhildr/Ragnheidr*. The name of another leader – "Tury" – *Þórir* is also of Scandinavian descent.

Rogvolod, Rogneda and Tury are the symbols of the beginning of the state formation on the territory of Belarus. According to accounts of the *Russian Primary Chronicle* from the time of Rogvolod and up to the 12<sup>th</sup> century princes of Polotsk competed with the great princes of Kiev, the supreme rulers of Old Rus'. This competition caused by the fact that there were two princely dynasties of the Scandinavian origin in Old Rus' – the Rurikids who ruled in Kiev and controlled Novgorod and the Rogvolodovichs who ruled in Polotsk. A well-known Danish scholar A. Stender-Petersen suggested that in the 10<sup>th</sup> century there were two Scandic-Slavic early states in Old Rus' – Novgorod-Kiev Principality and Polotsk Principality.

The major data concerning the origin of Rogvolod, Rogneda and Tury have been revealed in *Orkneyinga saga*, *Haralds saga hins hárfagra* from *Heimskringla* and *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*. In *Orkneyinga saga* and *Haralds saga hins hárfagra* it is reported about Ragnvald Eysteinnsson Mørejarl and his descendants. In his family there are all names that go with Rogvolod, Rogneda and Tury: 1. the name Rogvolod corresponds to the name of Ragnvald Mørejarl; 2. the name Rogneda corresponds to his wife's name Ragnhild; 3. the name Tury corresponds to the name of his son Thorir. The rules of name-giving in the Viking Age Scandinavia show that a kin especially noble one had characteristic names which repeated from generation to generation and were therefore steady. Analysis of the Old Norse sources showed a rare compatibility of names Ragnvald – Thorir within the same kin or family. The name Thorir was typical for representatives of different social strata – from slaves to earls and kings. It is important that in the period of the second half of the 9<sup>th</sup> – the first half of the 10<sup>th</sup> centuries – the most approached time to appearance of Rogvolod and Tury there were three owners of name Thorir among Norwegian elite according to *Haralds saga hins hárfagra*. As for the combination Ragnvald – Ragnhild it was actively used in Scandinavian tradition for noble families. Moreover, *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* accounts tell about Hrólfr military campaign to the Western Dvina. *Heimskringla* and *Orkneyinga saga* make Hrólfr the son of Ragnvald Eysteinnsson.

The aforesaid reasons ground my hypothesis about the Norwegian origin of Rogvolod and Tury. They could be grandchildren or great-grandchildren of Ragnvald Eysteinnsson Mørejarl. Coming to power of the Scandinavian leader in Polotsk became one of the grounds for forming the Principality of Polotsk as one of the main parts of Old Rus'. It wasn't fortuity that Rogvolod-Ragnvald became the ancestor of the Polotsk princely dynasty. Scandinavian origin of the first Old Rus' princes reflects the organizing and consolidating role of Scandinavian warrior teams and their leaders in formation of Eastern Slavs' early state structures.

## Notes on Heimdall

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Central to my paper is the origin of the Old Norse god Heimdall. This deity occurs in some mythological compositions of the Poetic Edda, some of them late compositions, and also, with different details, in late tenth-century skaldic poetry. The last source guarantees that the figure is not just a product of antiquarian imagination of post-Conversion times. However, if the figure harks back to the pagan era, what was his function there? Since Heimdall does not figure in place names, we are hardly dealing with a genuinely Old Germanic godhead. Nor is there any other indication that the figure ever had any cult or functional domain of its own. To judge from the sources, Heimdall's role was confined to the realm of myth—in particular speculations/expectations about the fate of the world and mankind—, where he displays a number of features normally associated with the archangel Michael, such as the blowing of the trumpet which signals the last battle. Arguments will be presented that this similarity is no coincidence, and that Heimdall is nothing but an indigenised spin-off of the Christian archangel. In my opinion, the figure must be regarded as the result of free-wheeling Christian influence which reached the pagan (or only marginally christianized) areas of North-West Europe prior to their ultimate conversion. It is this adoption of early Christian lore, which, in mutated form, gave rise to new mythical conceptualisations of the kind also encountered in figures as Loki, Surtr and Fenrir.

## Demonstration of an Electronic Edition of the A-version of *Agulandus þáttr* in *Karlamagnús saga* - A Joint Project

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Karlamagnús saga lends itself particularly well to electronic text presentation on the Internet, and this is especially the case with *Agauandus þáttr* which has an unusually complex transmission. Manuscript quires in the A version have been muddled up in the course of the transmission resulting in a somewhat confused narrative that no longer reflects the Anglo-Norman source (see Povl Skårup, «Om den norrøne oversættelse i *Karlamagnús saga* af den oldfranske chanson d'Aspremont,» *Opuscula* VI 1979).

An electronic edition based on 3 Old Norse manuscripts is presented in conjunction with a hitherto unpublished Anglo-Norman text of the Old French original, edited by Povl Skårup: the *Chanson d'Aspremont* (British Library: Lansdowne 782), with variants from other mss., principally Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, fr.1598, and a text of the additional Latin source, the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*.

By segmenting the ON text in relation to the Old French *laisses* the user, thanks to database technology, can choose a presentation of the various texts either in the surviving ON order of narrative, or in the order that must have existed earlier, i.e. the order which follows the French more closely; variations between the two main manuscripts of the A-version can also be visualised. The technology is designed and fine-tuned to its present purpose by Tarrin Wills on the basis of modules incorporated in the *Scaldic Verse* project.

The demonstration will incorporate a discussion of the potential this type of presentation offers, especially for translated works alongside their sources or multi-version texts.

## *Rex Felix et Munificus: The King as Guarantor of Prosperity and Abundance in Snorri Sturluson's Heimskringla*

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In Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla* the representation of the king as author and guarantor of prosperity expresses an essential function connected with the supremacy.

This is highlighted by *Ynglinga Saga's* figures as Njörðr, Freyr, Fjelnir and Dómarr but also by some of Óðinn's characterizations, even though Óðinn rather embodies more the other aspect of the supremacy, that is the warlike element.

However, the text of the *Ynglinga Saga* contains detailed critical remarks, resulting in an evident disowning of this mythical element, as in the profile of Braut-Önundr, or in the narrative dealing with the worship of Freyr's human remains and, above all, in the explanation about the famine king Óláfr *trételgja* was considered responsible for and, therefore, sacrificed to Óðinn.

Thus a new concept is outlined in the *Ynglinga Saga*: the prosperity is the result of particular factual conditions, as we read in the story of Svíar's migration, dictated by the need of exploiting new lands, from Sweden to Norway

There is a connection between these two conceptions of sovereignty, as shown by the vocabulary used to describe them, and in particular by the substantive *ár*, whose meaning continues to be deeply attached to the worship of earth.

In this paper I'll outline the evolution of the king's function in the *Heimskringla*, analyzing the different meanings of the substantive *ár*. Moreover, I'll try to highlight the gradual process of rationalization, leading to the idea that prosperity depends on the king's political and economical choices, rather than on his own miraculous virtue.

A Word to the Wise:  
Imagining the Oral Contexts of Eddic Wisdom Poetry

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The Old Norse eddic wisdom poems present their content as ancient lore, transmitted as the overheard conversations of mythological characters. The origin of at least parts of this poetry is widely believed to extend back to oral compositions, but as we have them these poems are preserved in manuscript form and cannot be presumed to have escaped the influence of literate culture. Nonetheless, eddic wisdom poems consistently present wisdom transmission as a more or less oral process: the ability to extract desired knowledge in conversation, or to boil down the insights gleaned from personal experience into speech, are the skills considered most necessary for becoming wise; and a common preoccupation is with the precarious nature of spoken language as the medium for knowledge transfer. In this paper, I will examine the continuing importance of this imagined oral context of transmission for literate audiences, and how it illuminates complex attitudes towards the authority of traditional material in later medieval society.

## The Proverb on the Page and the Person behind the Pen

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In the mid-sixteenth century, a father and his two sons worked as scribes in the Westfjords region of Iceland. This “feðgar” trio has drawn a fair amount of critical attention since the 1930s, and as a result we know a fair amount about which surviving manuscripts these three scribes copied and what their personal circumstances were; the biography of Jón Arason, one of the brothers, is particularly well-documented. Yet the lesser-known brother, Tómas, left a striking record of his personal connection to the manuscripts he penned when he collected a large number of proverbs in the margins of a book of poetry. The codex, AM 604 4to, has been reproduced in facsimile, and the marginal proverbs were published separately, but although the collection is often mentioned in passing, they have yet to be discussed in detail.

My paper takes up the question of what it meant for Tómas to collect these proverbs in the margins of a book of traditional Icelandic poetry. I argue that he partakes in a tradition of using the margins as a space for archiving; but at the same time, he combines this archiving impulse with a drive to leave a record of himself, which contains not only complaints about the quality of his handwriting but also verse of his own making. In selecting the specific proverbs he records, and in linking them with his own personal circumstances, he gives us a portrait of himself that is perhaps even more compelling than the biography of his more famous brother.



## Intertextual Reference as a Narrative Tool in the Late Medieval Icelandic Romances

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In an extraordinary scene *Mágus saga jarls* combines some of the best known heroes of Old Norse literature. On a “glerhiminn” Högni and Gunnar, Sigurðr sveinn, King Ísungr, Þiðrekr af Bern and King Hálfir meet and fight each other, only to be eventually pummelled by a group of giants with iron rods, also known from *Þiðreks saga*. Albeit such exuberance is remarkable, intertextual reference of one kind or another is a well established feature of most late medieval Icelandic romances. *Ectors saga* eponymous hero wields Hercules’ sword and carries the shield of Achilles, which is adorned “suo sem segir ij Troiomanna sǫgu”, while “meistara Galteri” considers Ector equal to Alexander the Great. Sigurðr of *Sigurðar saga þogla* owns King Arthur’s chess set, whereas his bride Seditiana is the daughter of Flóres and Blankiflúr, known of course from *Flóres saga ok Blankiflúr*. The list could go on and on, but these few examples may suffice.

Although the late medieval Icelandic romances have gained ever more scholarly attention since the work of Marianne Kalinke and Jürg Glauser in the 1980s and 1990s, the study of intertextual relationships has always been one-sided. The focus was invariably on locating the sources of any given text and the implications for the literary tradition. Building upon this previous work my paper goes one step further. Following recent trends in the literary theory of intertextuality I am not so much concerned with conventional source study but ask why and to what effect references to other texts were incorporated into a narrative. These references add semantic value to the text far surpassing the straightforward wording. Why should it be mentioned that Ector’s sword formerly belonged to someone called Hercules? This statement is of no relevance until the audience makes the connection to the character Hercules as he is known from numerous tales. This narrative device enriches the text with additional meaning.

The benefits of studying intertextual references are twofold. First, they are an integral part of storytelling. Analysing the late medieval Icelandic romances narratologically reveals that intertextual references were not only used in abundance but in abundantly different ways, which my paper will explore and present. To get an idea of the narrative potential of intertextual references imagine two people listening to the above passage of *Mágus saga jarls*. One of them knows Sigurðr sveinn from the Eddic poems while the other one is also familiar with *Völsunga saga*. The way in which both imagine Sigurðr in *Mágus saga jarls* will be different and they will judge his actions accordingly. Thus how an intertextual narrative is received by its audience is dependent upon their literary knowledge. This gave saga writers a very powerful and versatile tool in narrating their stories. They could presuppose different levels of literary knowledge and shape their texts correspondingly. Just a very basic familiarity with the aforementioned heroes

is needed to enjoy the scene from *Mágus saga jarls*. However, the more you know about these characters the more meaning will be added for you and your reading/listening experience will be all the more pleasurable for of it.

Second, because of this dependence on the audience, the research of intertextual references enables us to study the audience as well as the texts. Over time a saga's audience and their available knowledge changes. As a consequence it might have been necessary to rewrite the passages including intertextual references to adjust for these changes. If a referred text is no longer known the reference will have to be explained or has to be omitted. Through tracking these changes in the manuscript tradition inferences about the audience can be made. The study of intertextual references therefore allows us an insight into the inner mechanics of saga composition as well as the culture in which the late medieval Icelandic romances were received.

## The Overwhelmed Dwarf

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Motif analysis is a field of literary history that has for a long time not experienced significant theoretical progress. In Old Norse studies, in projects comparing larger groups of texts, the notion of ‘motif’ is often used to compare the similarity of texts’ contents, sometimes positing possible dependency relations between them or deducing interests of the presumed readers, authors or patrons of those texts.

There is, albeit, no methodology for describing the knowledge about a certain motif and its variants as well as the knowledge presupposed by its individual instances. The present paper approaches this gap from the perspective of *cognitive poetics* and offers a methodology for modeling motifs as knowledge structures through *script analysis*.

The example for this endeavor is the motif of the ‘extorted dwarf’, as it is found in a number of sagas, most of which are being identified with the *Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda* and the Late Medieval Icelandic Romances (aka indigenous *riddarasögur*) that are known for their ‘schematic’ nature. These Sagas offer rich prospects for the investigation of the variance of the motif and the knowledge about the motif presupposed by its individual instances. Changing presuppositions indicate an altered *horizon of expectation* (*Erwartungshorizont*) which is considered one of the main characteristics of a genre. Tracing the horizon’s change adds to the understanding of the development of saga genres through their dissemination from the Middle Ages to Early Modern times. The analysis shows that no single instantiation of the motif supplies all the literary knowledge needed to understand the motif. Furthermore, the oldest instantiation of the motif found in *Völsunga saga* proves to be the one presupposing most literary knowledge and is at the same time the least prototypical one regarding the motif’s outward presentation.

## Text Variance and Text Stability in Translated *Riddarasögur*: Various Concepts of Text Transmission within one Genre

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The paper concentrates on *Elis saga*, *Beyvers saga*, *Flóvents saga* and *Partalopa saga*, with focus on their text transmission and text variance.

Text variance as it is used here, includes orthographical variation as well as the substitution, omission or addition of letters, words, phrases or sections which comes to light by comparison of the individual saga manuscripts. Textual variants may or may not cause a change in meaning within the text (*Bedeutungsunterschiede*). The less striking the text variance (in terms of a change of meaning), the more we can call the text stable. For instance, *Ívens saga*, *Erex saga* and *Parcevals saga*, show an almost insignificant degree of text variance within the various manuscripts which results in a continuance of meaning which I call text stability (*Textstabilität*). In contrast, *Elis saga*, *Beyvers saga*, *Flóvents saga* and *Partalopa saga* show a larger degree of text variance.

It becomes obvious that within one genre separate sagas show similar or various levels of text variance and tendencies of adaptation (*Bearbeitungstendenzen*), which naturally root in the manuscript evidence. Moreover, various concepts of text transmission (*Überlieferungskonzepte*) can be found within one genre by comparison of the sagas' tendencies of adaption. Further interesting questions arise: Are concepts of text transmission able to reveal various levels of text perception? Can concepts of text transmission reflect the so-called openness or do they in fact also reveal a "closeness" of text? Do those concepts apply to a certain group of manuscripts or group of sagas?

## On Skugga-Baldur

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In his novel ‘Skugga-Baldur’ (2003) set in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Sjón (Sigurjón Birgir Sigurðsson) delves into traditional Icelandic legends. The title is ambiguous. It refers to a creature from folk legends – the offspring of a cat and a fox – and at the same time it means an evil spirit (or a sinister person). There is a play on both meanings in the novel.

On the other hand, as a name of the book’s protagonist, Skugga-Baldur traces its roots back to the compound names of the characters one can find in Icelandic sagas. Such names have a nickname as their first element and can be divided into four groups:

- 1) A nickname is connected with some episode in the live of a character (Hænsa-Þórir, Svíðu-Kári).
- 2) A nickname is derived from the place of abode of a character (Síðu-Hallr, Tungu-Oddr, Miðfjarðar-Skeggi).
- 3) Meaning of nicknames can be defined as occupation (Galdra-Heðinn, Kaupa-Heðinn).
- 4) A nickname denotes some distinctive feature of a character (Skalla-Grímr); in this case a nickname trends to turn into the first part of a name (Skallagrímr, cf. Egill Skallagrímsson).

A special subgroup here includes a relatively large number of characters with the nickname Víga- (from víg ‘a fight, battle’): Víga-Barði, Víga-Bjarni, Víga-Glúmr, Víga-Gunnarr, Víga-Hrappr, Víga-Hörðr, etc. This nickname is a kind of epithet denoting a person’s warlike temper which is also usually mentioned in introductory descriptions of the characters. It correlates with Víg-/Vig- in such names as Vígdís, Vigfúss, Vígbjóðr, Vígharðr, Víglundr, Vígúlfr but this has a more concrete meaning and functions as the modifier restricting the meaning of the second part which can be derived either from a noun or an adjective, e.g. Vigfúss ‘wishing for battle’, Vígharðr ‘severe in battle’, Vígbjóðr ‘the one who offers battle’. Some of these are used as appellative compounds in Skaldic poetry, cf. vigfuss which is a poetic synonym for ‘sword’; víglundr ‘tree of battle’ which is a kenning meaning ‘warrior’.

The name Skugga-Baldur has common features both with names like Víga-Glúmr and the names like Víglundr. On the one hand, the element Skugga- functions here as the epithet which applied metaphorically to the dark sides of human nature. On the other side, the name as a whole can be interpreted as a kenning. In this connection, cf. the kenning elsku-Baldr ‘Baldr of (Christian) love’ used by a Benedict monk and skald Arngrímr Brandsson to denote the famous Icelandic bishop Guðmundr Arason.

## The Puzzle of *Heiðarvíga saga*: Minor but Memorable Characters

Joanne Shortt Butler, University of Cambridge, England

As with many *Íslendingasögur*, the medieval text of *Heiðarvíga saga* is populated with minor characters who contribute in a variety of ways to the saga. I intend to examine the roles of the people introduced to the saga in the lead-up to the *heiðarvíg*, in particular Þórðr á Breiðavaði, Þorvaldr í Sléttadal and the men introduced as Barði Guðmundarson's allies in battle.

Þórðr enters the saga as the owner of a pair of horses stolen by Barði's foster-father Þórarinn to facilitate his scouting missions into the territory of their enemies, the Borgfirðingar. When Þórðr's horses are returned to him by Barði we might expect this to be his last appearance in the saga, however his recurrence in a later chapter raises questions about the use of this type of character by *Heiðarvíga saga*. Þorvaldr is named amongst the men expected by Þórarinn to join Barði's troop, although he appears to have been included as part of a genealogical reflex, named alongside his brother Auðólfr even though he himself is not to be a part of the troop. After his omission from the battle he apparently reappears in a gift-giving scene with Þórðr á Breiðavaði, linking the absence of these two characters from the troop at the *heiðarvíg*.

These characters are not particularly memorable to the modern reader, and may have contributed towards criticism levelled at *Heiðarvíga saga*'s 'puzzled' narrative style (Andersson, 1967), however their appearance in the saga can tell us about what was memorable information to a medieval audience.

“Harðindi hafði ek þar í hendi”:  
Saga Rhetoric and Clerical Themes in *Lárentíus saga*

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With its many competing methods of recording the past (annals, administrative writing, and sagas), the fourteenth century provides scholars with a unique method of studying the relationship between genre, memory, and the recreation of the past. This paper will explore how accounts of the recent past were created in the complementary genres of bishops' sagas and annal writing, with a particular focus on accounts of the death of Bishop Lárentíus in *Lárentíus saga* and the annal known as *Lögmannsannáll*, two major texts attributed to the priest and ecclesiastical administrator Einarr Hafliðason. In *Lárentíus saga*, Einarr made use of both the learned conventions of ecclesiastical biography, as well as very traditional saga conventions. These elements are missing, however, in Einarr's annal, the *Lögmannsannáll*, which on the other hand provides a much more intimate account of the death of Bishop Lárentíus, emphasising community, personal devotion, and the relationship between Einarr himself and the bishop. By analysing these, and other variations between these two accounts, I will provide deeper insight into the purpose of these two historical genres, as well as the role of narrative and saga style in the creation of the history of the recent past. Analysis of these texts allows us to better assess the meaning and nature of Icelandic narratives for earlier periods, and the nature of Icelandic sources more generally.

## The Scandinavian Past in Norman Historiography

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It would seem obvious that the rich Norman Historiography of the 11th and 12th century in Normandy, Sicily, and England would preserve memories of their Scandinavian past, but such allusions to the past of the Scandinavian settlers in Normandy are actually quite rare. The present paper tries to investigate these scarce remnants of memories of the Scandinavian origins, presenting the sources available in Normandy and Sicily during the last phase of the Viking Age, ranging from the Latin chronicle of Dudo of St. Quentin (before 1015) to the latest and longest of these works, the vernacular *Chronique des ducs de Normandie* of 44.544 verses by the Norman Benedictine Benoit de Ste. Maure (died 1173). It will also be tried to show what the agenda of these authors were, by whom and why they were commissioned to write their texts and what bearing this could have on the contents of their chronicles.

In the southern Italian and Sicilian expansion areas of the Normans, the sources are far scarcer, starting with the Latin (but lost) cronicle by the Benedictine monk Amatus of Montecassino (around 1080), preserved only in a later French translation, and ranging to the *Carmen de rebus Siculi* by Petrus de Eboli (before 1197).

The paper shall also make an attempt at categorizing the material preserved in the Norman sources so as to show what they may tell us about the Scandinavian or at least the earliest Norman past in Normandy.

This includes little on the actual history of Scandinavia during the Viking Age, and only a few set pieces as far as the early Scandinavian history before the Viking Age is concerned, but rare glimpses of Scandinavian habits still existant – and identified as such by the romanized Norman writers themselves – in the late 10th and early 11th century, including occasional references to the pre-Christian religion.



## Who Has to Perish in ragnarök?

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The dramatic event of *ragnarök* belongs to the best known episodes from Old Norse mythology. In narrations concerning it, there are still some points of which we need a better understanding. Among such questions is the following: Who actually has to perish in *ragnarök*, or which categories of mythic beings were imagined to be affected by *ragnarök* and which were not. I will analyze especially the question of whether the Vanir had anything to do with *ragnarök*, concluding that they had nothing to do with it, as it was an event of no importance for their world.

In *Vafþrúðnismál* 39 Óðinn, answering Vafþrúðnir's question, informs us about Njörðr:

*í aldar rök hann mun aptr koma heim*

This can only mean: "In *ragnarök* (*aldarrök* means simply 'doom of the age') he (=Njörðr) will return home". This statement explains why, in the battle on the field of Vigriðr where *ragnarök* culminates, Njörðr does not appear at all. He obviously has nothing to do there and, when the world of the Æsir must collapse, he can return home, free of his obligation to stay in Ásgarðr as a hostage.

Freyr will be however fighting there one of the most important duels (or even the most important one). We tend to count Freyr among the Vanir as the son of Njörðr. Snorri was of a different opinion. We have to remember here that our sources take a very legal point of view! If Freyr was born in Ásgarðr after Njörðr had already come there as a hostage, he thus belongs to the Æsir having a character typical for the Vanir inherited from his father. Having such features, Freyr also had duties of the Æsir and fulfilled them on Vigriðr field, fighting and dying there.

The myth about the reconciliation between the Æsir and the Vanir and exchange of hostages not only explains the situation of Njörðr, but – almost in mirror-image – also that of Hœnir, who was a hostage of the Æsir among Vanir. Hœnir also does not appear on Vigriðr field but (according to *Völuspá* 63) he has to appear after *ragnarök* in the new, re-born world. It seems that Njörðr escaped home to Vanaheimr before *ragnarök* in order to avoid the last battle, whereas Hœnir decided to remain there a bit longer, waiting until the battle was over. In this way, both these gods survive!

This would mean that *ragnarök* is not the end of the world of the Vanir! *Ragnarök* is only the end of the world of the Æsir, and of the world of beings created by

the Æsir (men and dwarves), and of the world of objects created and ruled by the Æsir (such as the stars and Sun). The other worlds may survive. Thanks to *Vafþrúðnismál* 39, we know that this is the case of the world of the Vanir. The same can be assumed about Hel. According to *Völuspá* 62, it seems that Baldr and Höðr will return from Hel to the world reborn after the destruction – and this implicitly means that Hel will still exist. Regarding the destiny of the world(s) of the Giants we know nothing, yet we know that Giants will fight on the side of the victors – so their world(s) does not seem to be in danger. The same should be assumed about Muspell. What happens to the Disir we simply know nothing!

It seems that *ragnarök* was imagined as a great defeat affecting some great tribe from the time of the Migration Period, with its most important champions killed, settlements burned and women captured (let me presume such a destiny for the Disir!). It is also not simply the pagan equivalent of the Doomsday of the Christians. Rather some features typical for a more traditional image of the end of the world, which, as in India, is neither the first nor the last but belongs to the frame of cyclically appearing and disappearing worlds, are visible in the sources (see *Völuspá*, cf. Schjødt 1981; 1992).

Bearing in mind the statement from *Vafþrúðnismál* 39 about what Njörðr will do at ‘the doom of the age’, and remembering Hœnir, who according to *Völuspá* 63 will survive the *ragnarök*, I would like to conclude that the world of Vanir (which may quite naturally be called Vanaheimr) will be a safe shelter during the end of the world. Yet the fact that it remain not affected by *ragnarök* – precisely like Hel (and Jötunheimr and Muspell as assumed above) – tells us something about the Vanir placing them quite close to the other (or chthonic) world.

### Literature:

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## Alternative Media and Contemporary Visions of the North: between Geographic Confusion and Authenticity Quest

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Geography can be understood not only as a spatial area, but also as a scenery composed by a multitude of background elements. Trying to seize contemporary images of the North in a coherent temporal and spatial line can sometimes lead to confusion. One can usually notice a historical ‘chaos’ in uses of timeline: Vikings and North Mythology are sometimes associated to Middle Ages, whereas they can also be linked to Roman Antiquity or even to a total imaginary period. Does such a placement have an effect on the depicted geography? And are there – beyond different representations – common aspects or principles one can find in all these depictions?

The present study will analyze a few examples of short movies, both animation and fan-made films (i. e. “Jotun” [France, 2007], “The Saga of Biorn” [Denmark, 2011], “Roads of Asgard” [United States, 2009]). All the videos to be taken into consideration consist in small, non-lucrative productions, created either in the context of school projects or as an expression of personal interest. These videos were later disseminated online through video-sharing websites (such as YouTube) in order to attract a broader attention. Some of them managed to reach a large public, which can be perceived through the amount of viewers (for example, “The Saga of Biorn” has reached approximately 1,3 million of viewers on YouTube within one year), while others have a lower popularity. Furthermore, these websites provide data which will allow us to reflect on matters such as target groups, age range, viewers’ location and feedback.

Our aims will be to study how these works try to create an impression of authenticity by adopting landscapes and elements that are set to appear convincing. We will try to determine which features are usually present in these representations and what role(s) they play towards creating a feeling of authenticity.

## Mythology, History and Allegory in *Snorra Edda*

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The mythology mediated in the part of *Snorra Edda* known as *Gylfaginning* presumably have a larger contemporary audience than any other text within the corpus of Old Norse literature and yet it is among the most difficult Old Norse texts to interpret.

The difficulties stem from basically three circumstances; one concerning the textual transmission of *Snorra Edda*, one concerning *Snorra Edda* seen as a whole and one concerning the rhetoric of *Gylfaginning*.

Beginning with the textual transmission the extant manuscripts show that *Edda* was repeatedly revised on different levels by later scribes, which makes detailed questions of Snorri's intentions for writing the work somewhat futile. Furthermore, an investigation of *Snorra Edda* as a whole, which seems to be a hand-book in skaldic poetry, has to take into account that the four parts, *Prologue*, *Gylfaginning*, *Skáldskaparmál* and *Háttatal*, were probably not originally conceived as a whole but written as an ongoing process where the completion of each part created the need for a new part and that the unification of these parts is not a trivial matter as they are rather loosely patched together and display a significant difference in style. And thirdly we find a very complex narrative mode in *Gylfaginning*, which will be the focus of the rest of this paper.

Most of *Gylfaginning* is staged as a dialogue between the local Swedish king Gylfi and three æsir kings (Hár, Jafnhár and Þriði) just immigrated to Sweden. The dialogue, in fact a contest in knowledge of traditional mythology, as well as its subject matter must be seen in close connection with the fact that from the very beginning both Gylfi and the æsir kings try to trick each other. This is particularly apparent towards the end where Gylfi realizes that the æsir's hall where the dialogue takes place is an optical illusion and the æsir disappear in order to avoid losing the contest. Gylfi as well as the æsir are not only deliberately unreliable, they are also unable to see through what the average medieval reader would easily have figured out, namely that the way the æsir describe the world is an echo of the Christian world-view and this makes them unreliable as informants. The consequence is that the narrative is fundamentally ironical meaning that several interpretations are simultaneously sustained by the text.

The multiplicity of meaning can be exemplified by the presence of the three æsir kings. Old Norse gods are called æsir but in the frame narrative æsir are claimed to be human and descend from noble people in Troy. The æsir apparently immigrated to Scandinavia and their success led people to believe that they were gods. It is not clear from the narrative whether the three æsir kings are descendants of Odin or Odin himself is present somehow, as the three characters all have names that are among well-known names for Odin. They are authorities on Old Norse mythology in contrast with Gylfi who is rather ignorant of the mythology although he calls himself by the Odin-name

Gangleri. Consequently, the *æsir* are staged as knowledgeable and yet dubious informants in a setting, which suggests an intricate interplay between Old Norse myth, history and Christian learning. Although Gylfi and the *æsir* kings are ignorant on different levels their dialogue nevertheless reflect a Christian truth due to the intellectual capacity that God has granted man - even pagans - in spite of that the pagans according to the *Prologue* lack a spiritual understanding of the world. The complex hermeneutical set up just described is admittedly clearest in the beginning of *Gylfaginning*, however, it is reasonable to surmise that it also applies for the remainder of the text.

The synthesis of Christianity and Old Norse mythology in *Snorra Edda* is well established and has been explored in a number of surveys by primarily A. Faulkes, M. Clunies Ross and K. von See and the Christian use of pagan myth in a wider Medieval context by e.g. J. Seznec. The aim of the present paper is to elaborate on this synthesis by exploring the meaning of the form in *Gylfaginning* and to suggest that although the frame narrative seemingly is a narrative device to create distance to the myths narrated by the *æsir* and the staging calls for an allegorical interpretation of Old Norse mythology as an imperfect forerunner of Christianity, the irony indicates a double-edged relation which rather positions indigenous Old Norse Mythology in a complex and balanced relationship with - and not just as a vehicle for - Christian learning.

## The Narrative Runestone

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Every runestone tells a story. Or rather, there is a story behind every runestone. Parts of these stories are clear: a monument was put up to commemorate someone who died. While we can assume that the story behind each monument differed from the next, for many runestones the narratives behind their creation are lost. Some inscriptions, however, elaborate on aspects of the commemorated person's life or how and where they died. The more of such inscription-elements are present, the more that inscription becomes a mini-narrative that tells a unique story.

Background information is also revealed (mostly implicitly) by the standard elements of the memorial formula: the names of the people involved and the relationship between them, expressions of Christian faith and whether the carver that was employed is named. Similarly, uncommon features of the inscription, like the use of verse and various runic scripts, and the decoration on the stone communicate information about the preferences and social role of the people involved.

In this paper I aim to explore to what extent the stories behind the creation of a runestone might be reconstructed, using examples of the different narratives in the inscriptions.

## ”Helgedomens beskyddare”: heliga platser, rituella restriktioner och härskarideologi i det förkristna Skandinavien

### ”The Protector of the Sanctuary”: Sacred Places, Ritual Restrictions and Religious Ruler Ideology in Pre-Christian Scandinavia

Olof Sundqvist, Akademin för utbildning och ekonomi, Sweden

Frågan om den fornskandinaviska härskarmaktens religiösa dimensioner har debatterats under många decennier. Fram till 1960 var forskarna i princip eniga om att det fanns ett sakralt kungadöme i det förkristna Skandinavien. I och med Walter Baetkes källkritiska arbete *Yngvi und die Ynglinger* (1964) kom den ståndpunkten att ifrågasättas. Baetke menade att sakralteorins viktigaste grunddrag endast gick att belägga i den medeltida isländska prosan och inte alls hade stöd i de mer direkta källorna, till exempel den fornvästnordiska skaldediktningen eller runinskrifterna. Under en lång tid var det därför få forskare som överhuvudtaget befattade sig med frågan. Men 1991 publicerade Gro Steinsland sin avhandling *Det hellige bryllup og norrøn kongeideologi*. Enligt Steinsland fanns ett så kallat ”utgårdsäktenskap” mellan en gud och en jättinna i inledningen av de nordiska härskarätternas genealogier. Genom sina studier visade Steinsland att det fanns en relevans i att undersöka den förkristna härskarideologins religiösa bakgrund. I avhandlingen *Freyr's offspring* argumenterade jag själv för att den allmänna ledaren i Mälardområdet, kungen, jarlen eller hövdingen, omfattade viktiga rituella funktioner, till exempel i anslutning till offerhandlingar och de ceremoniella gästabuden. Härskaren tycktes också ha haft en mycket specifik relation till kulplatser. Det är just den frågan som jag vill belysa i föreliggande ”paper”. Jag kommer att utgå från ett idékomplex som uppträder i många källor, nämligen föreställningen att härskaren är den som beskyddar och råder över kulplatser. I till exempel *Ynglingatal* (ca 890 e.Kr.) kallas sveakungen Yngve för *vörðr véstalls* ”helgedomsaltarets vårdare el. beskyddare” medan Sigurd jarl hyllas för sina frikostiga gästabud i *Sigurðardrápa* (960 e.Kr.). Jarlen kallas i detta sammanhang för *vés valdr* ”helgedomens härskare (beskyddare)”. På Rökstenen (Ög 136) (ca 800 e.Kr.) finns sekvensen **sibi uiauari**, som har tolkats ”Sibbe, helgedomarnas väktare”. Här är det alltså en östgötsk hövding eller en lokal härskare som är vårdare av *vi*-platserna. I mitt ”paper” ska jag försöka förklara vilka tankar och ideologiska aspekter som kan ligga bakom idén att härskaren ”styr över” eller ”skyddar” helgedomarna.

Arkeologen Charlotte Fabech har i artikeln ”Samfundsorganisation, religiöse ceremonier og regional variation” (1991) hävdats att det sker en centralisering av offerkulten i Sydsandinavien under folkvandringstid. Offerceremonierna utfördes från stenåldern fram till romersk järnålder vid våtmarker, som låg långt från bebyggelsen. Men under folkvandringstid sker förändringar i offerpraxis. De offentliga offerceremonierna flyttas nu till den centrala bebyggelsen, främst härskarsäten och hövdingagårdar. Mönstret kan iakttas i arkeologiska källor. Man har till exempel funnit så kallade guld-gubbar vid aristokratiska boplatser från yngre järnåldern, till exempel i Borg vid Lof-

ten och Helgö vid Mälaren. Guldgubbarna avbildar troligen mytiska scener, eventuellt kärleksparet Frö och Gerd. Kanske fungerade de även som offer till gudarna eller som ett slags härskarsymboler. Det verkar således som en ny härskarideologi växer fram, där bland annat ritualer, symboler och andra religiösa uttryck blir betydelsefulla, till exempel hallar och kultbyggnader på stormannagårdar. Det faller sig då naturligt att härskaren framställs som "helgedomsvaktaren", eftersom helgedomen var hans egen egendom och lokaliserad på hans gård. Enligt min mening kan man förklara relationen mellan härskaren och helgedomen också på andra sätt, som hänger samma med ritualer och härskarideologi.

I mitt "paper" ska jag med stöd av olika källtyper och allmänna religionshistoriska synsätt formulera en hypotes. Den kan kortfattat sammanfattas på följande sätt: Benämningarna *vörðr véstalls*, *vés valdr* etc. indikerar att härskaren/hövdingen är både en religiös och politisk ledare. Det är han som inviger kultplatsen med ett komplex av offentliga riter. I samband med detta statuerar han vilka rituella restriktioner och regler som ska råda där. Det är också härskarens roll att övervaka dessa regler (och därför kallas han *vörðr véstalls*). Om härskaren kan skydda kulten och kultplatserna kan han också skapa en god förbindelse med den mytiska världen. Den förbindelsen kan få en kosmisk betydelse, det vill säga att landet som han styr över förvandlas till ett paradissiskt tillstånd, där åkrarna ger goda skördar, djuren god avkomma, med mera. Härskaren kan eventuellt också rituellt avsluta en kultplats, genom att till exempel avlägsna vissa rituella föremål från platsen, såsom högsätesstolpar. Han kan också återinviga helgedomar, som skändats. Dessa rituella roller utövades offentligt och gav således prestige. De renderade även i de äretitlar som nämns ovan. Enligt min mening tillämpades denna ideologi rent generell av politiska makthavare på olika sociala nivåer vid kultplatser i det forna Skandinavien, alltså bland hövdingar, jarlar och kungar.

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## Heads or Tails? or, Metrical Marking of Compound Stems and Family Tree of Old Norse Metres

Ilya V. Sverdlov

Compound nouns *are* metrical patterns in Old Germanic poetry. Sievers's five types map compound structures of Old Norse and Old English, with short lines often filled entirely by compounds, e.g. Beo 39a *hilde-wæpnum*, Vsp 43-2 *Gullin-kambi*, where the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> compound elements occupy, respectively, the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> lifts of the short line. The same compounds may undergo a different metrical treatment – the 2<sup>nd</sup> element may be relegated to a secondary position, as happens with *-dalar* in Vsp 1-4 *mögu Heim-dalar*, or to a drop altogether, as is the case of *-wulf* in Beo 53b *Béo-wulf Scyldinga*. Whatever the treatment, 2<sup>nd</sup> compound element never occupies a position of significance – even when on a lift, it never alliterates.

This situation seems to reflect the phonetic laws of ON and OE – in a compound, the principal word stress is on the 1<sup>st</sup> compound element. Thus element No. 2, apparently, has no chance to acquire prominence – and yet doing this very thing may be poetically useful. My paper explores the cases when several Old Germanic metres try to circumvent the phonetic laws of their respective languages, and the tricks they resort to in order to bring this about – tricks that come at a price, as neither compounds nor metre remain unscathed. In particular, my paper studies the similarity of compound treatment in *ljóðaháttr* and *dróttkvætt*, and contrasts it with treatment of compounds in *fornyrðislag* and *Beowulf*, arguing for a closer evolutionary relationship between *dróttkvætt* and *ljóðaháttr* than between *dróttkvætt* and *fornyrðislag*.

## Uppsalaeddans tillkomst

Daniel Sävborg, University of Tartu, Estonia

Snorra Edda har bevarats i fyra oberoende handskrifter. Codex Regius, Wormianus och Trajectinus kan sägas återge en version (RTW) och Codex Upsaliensis (U) en annan. Det som skiljer de två versionerna åt är dels dispositionen av Skáldskaparmál, dels längden och stilen i berättande avsnitt. Forskningen har länge tvistat om vilken version som står det ursprungliga originalet närmast. Hittills har forskarna låtit graden av kvalitet, korrekthet och logik avgöra prioriteten. Olika forskares bedömning av detta har dock varit motsatt, och man har heller inte kunnat enas om brist på kvalitet, korrekthet och logik skall vara ett kriterium för primär eller sekundär status. Andra metoder behövs därför, och dessutom bör olikheterna förklaras. Eiríks saga rauða finns också i två versioner, där texten också skiljer sig åt vad gäller stil och längd. Här vet vi att Hauksbók utgör en omarbetning av en text som har legat nära den som finns i Skálholtsbók; det är i handskriften Hauksbók som bearbetningen äger rum. Genom att analysera relationen mellan U och RTW i ljuset av relationen mellan Hauksbók och Skálholtsbók vinnas ny kunskap om hur Snorra Edda har bearbetats. Särskilt beaktas den växling mellan troget återgivna avsnitt och starkt omarbetade som är påfallande i relationen Hauksbók-Skálholtsbók, beroende på växlingen mellan olika skrivare, och som också har motsvarighet i relationen U-RTW. Mitt paper argumenterar för att förklaringen till växlingen är densamma i fallet U-RTW som i Hauksbók-Skálholtsbók. Det mönster som påvisas i växlingen används i mitt paper för att avgöra prioriteten mellan U och RTW.

# A History Shaped in a Moment: Fate and Cosmogony in *Völuspá*

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Describing the forging of existence was as difficult a task a millennium ago as it is today. Even with the crutch of science, twenty-first century discourse is still reliant on negation and antithesis to circumscribe the concepts of pre- and non-existence, on terminology like *a-spatial* and *no-thing*.

For *Völuspá*, this is a fundamental psychological and artistic problem, and one that the poem attempts to evade through an imagery of crafting – with profound consequences for the conceptualization of cosmogony and of cosmology.

Miðgarðr is judged as any created object would be. It is a thing that naturally decays over time and which is intrinsically linked, in terms of its constitution and quality, to the calibre of its materials and workmanship. Hence, the entire history of the world necessarily crystallizes within the instant of its creation: Miðgarðr's fate and its physical qualities are interdependent, being shaped together in a way that reflects the nature of this act. The same deed that creates the world consigns it to Ragnarök and its destruction.

This paper proposes that cosmogony and fate should therefore, whether as belief or literary metaphors, be approached with less fixity than is customary, taking into account that impressions of them almost definitely varied between poets and audiences and that the form of fate in particular may deviate from our received ideas.

The research presented here is related to an article that will be published in the forthcoming issue of *Northern Studies*.

## The Play of Language in *Grettis Saga*

Torfi H. Tulinius, University of Iceland, Iceland

The treatment of Grettir's body parts after his death, as described by *Grettis saga* has not received sufficient scholarly attention. In my paper, I will show how Grettir's fragmented corpse can be understood in light of medieval Christian attitudes to the body as well as to the dialectic of redemption and damnation so important in medieval Christianity. Against this Christian backdrop, I will study in more detail the idea of fragmentation in the saga, focussing especially on the play of language in the saga, especially on the way parts of words appear and disappear in the narrative. This playing on the signifier will finally be studied in its relationship to the fiction of Grettir's life and the meaning generated by the saga as a whole.

## Myth and Memory in the Construction of *Arons saga*

Úlfar Bragason, Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies, Iceland

*Arons saga* is a contemporary saga written in the first half of the fourteenth century. As it is younger than the *Sturlunga* compilation of contemporary sagas (from ca. 1300) it was not included there or in later manuscripts of the compilation but preserved separately.

*Arons saga* is a biography of one of the renowned heroes of the 13th-century Iceland, an eager supporter of Guðmundr the Bishop of Hólar in the bishop's controversies with the Icelandic chieftains, not least the Sturlungs. Finally Aron was outlawed from Iceland.

The story of Aron was of interest to many. He is mentioned in *Íslendinga saga* by Sturla Þórðarson, and Sturla's brother, Ólafur hvítaskáld, composed a laudatory poem in his memory. A certain Þormóður Ólafsson composed two poems about Aron. Aron is also mentioned in the Saga of Guðmundr Arason.

The paper will discuss the relationship between the different sources of Aron's life and the saga's background in myth and memory by taking into consideration new theoretical approaches for that matter.

*Landnámabók, Íslendingabók and Kristni Saga*

Jens Ulff-Møller, Columbia University, USA

It has often been argued that Ari fróði Þorgilsson (1067/8-1148), the author of *Íslendingabók* (IS, c. 1130) also composed *Landnámabók* (LNB) which seems unlikely since a lacuna is apparent from around 1030, as lawspeakers and goði, and even most of Ari's own ancestors are not mentioned, and the Ur-landnáma may have been composed at that time from a fairly young oral tradition. The original text of *Landnáma* has not survived, but only later versions which are heavily interpolated. The LNB is a land register of the estates of goði families, whereas Ari has little knowledge of secular power, as he concentrates on the history of Iceland, its Church, and his own genealogy. Interpolations of later descendants were introduced by Haukr Erlendsson (d. 1334) and Sturla Þórðarson (d. 1284), who also compiled *Kristni saga*, which may be considered a supplement to the ISB (which it cites), as the text complements list of missionaries with other names than those mentioned in the *IS*.

The genealogical information is fairly consistent, and consequently, I have been able to enter 1,700 names into a computerized genealogy program. About 400 landnamsmen are mentioned with a mere 2,500 descendants, a number that was much larger in the 12<sup>th</sup> century texts. Therefore, the Ur-Landnáma must have been written down in earlier than assumed: Genealogies change with each new generation - and would be misremembered after very few generations. *IS* mentions a mere 200 persons, half of which also appear in LNB. Consequently, I consider the LNB as an example of Ruth Finnegan's *Oral-Written Continuum* (ed. S. Rankovic et al), a response to W. J. Ong's concept of a divide between oral and literary cultures.

How does the information in *IS* compare with that of LNB:

I. The settlement of Iceland, chapters 1-9 of LNB was composed by Sturla Þórðarson in part verbally from *IS*. He also added the introductions and conclusions to each quarter section.

II. Settlers and the establishment of laws. Whereas LNB mentions around 400 settlers, Ari mentions only four, beginning in the east (as the M version) and moves clockwise round the country – as does the *Ládnámabók*. Sian Grønlie states that Ari could trace his own ancestry from them: Hrollaugr, Auðr, and Helgi, whereas Ketilbjörn was an ancestor of his foster-father, Teitr. A certain mythical air surrounds the accounts of the first settlers (e.g. Auðr-Olafr hvíti), which may signify the influence of oral tradition.

Ari's text suggests he did not know the names of the foremost chieftains in 981 and in 1118; it is possible that the two lists of the most prominent Icelanders that appear in *Kristni saga* might have been created by Ari (they resemble his method). Most names of the 1118 list do not appear in LNB, and that the names of goði in LNB end with those living around 1030: Gilsbekkingagoðord: Hermundr Illugason (1020-50), Stafhyltinga:

Þorkell Þorgeirsson (1030-65), Myramanna: Þorstein Egilsson (975-1016), Vatndæla: Þorkell krafla Þorgrímsson (980-1030), Ævlingar: Már Húnroðarson (1022-1070, his successor Hafliði Mátsson is mentioned in *IS*). Ari's knowledge is particularly weak when it comes to Eastern Iceland, whereas his knowledge of the *goði* families in the West (Þórsnesingagoðorð and Hvammverjagoðorð) is almost complete.

III. Ari's double explanation of the establishment of the **Alþing** (c.930) is evidently the result of oral tradition: Grimr Geitskǫr, who is otherwise unknown, explored the whole of Iceland to find a location for the Alþing. The entire statement is, however, undermined in the next chapter (III), which states that the alþing was established on the land of an outlaw.

IV. In chapter IV, Ari explains the Icelandic calendar reform using long hundreds, which is glossed over using Arabic numerals, uncommented in the Viking society translation, resulting in errors in the transcription of the number of inhabitants (ch. X) two of which were introduced into LNB.

V. In chapter V Ari confuses who is burned by Hænsa Þorir in comparison with the LNB. How trustworthy is then Ari's argument that the ensuing lawsuit led to the country being divided into Quarters?

VI. Omissions: Chapter VII and VIII explain how Christianity came to Iceland with the arrival of foreign missionaries. The text may be politicized, since the *Kristni* saga mentions a large number of bishops and priests that Ari excluded, and the LNB mentions Christians that neither Ari nor *Kristni* saga mentions: Órlygr Hrapppsson, Glumr Þorkelsson, Ásólftr alslik Konálsson, Ketill enn fíflski, Órlygr enn gamli, Helgi bíóla, Jǫrundr kristni, possibly because they adhered to the Celtic version of Christianity. The Bishops' genealogy (*Ketilbjörn*) is the only encompassing genealogy that Ari presents, beside his own.

VII. In chapter X, Ari presents names of **lawspeakers** that LNB omits: Þorkell Tjörvason (1034- 53), Gunnar spaki Þorgrímsson 1063-65, Kolbeinn Flosason 1066-71; Gellir Bølverksson 1054-62 & 1072-74 is mentioned in H.

The idea that Ari froði Þórgilsson was the author of *Landnáma* as stated by Haukr appears highly unlikely. An earlier date would establish LNB's precedence over the *IS* (1122-33), and the *Íslendingasögur*. "The internal consistency of the Sagas of Icelanders (and LNB) ... shows that they must have built on a tradition that is rooted in history" (Jón Viðar Sigurdsson).

## The Talk of the Tits: From the First Comments to *The Poetic Edda*

Fjodor Uspenskij, Russian Academy of Sciences, Russia

The paper will examine one intriguing reading from *Norna-Gests þáttur* (preserved in *Flateyjarbók*). One of the passages of this story is rather close to the text completing the *Brot af Sigurðarkviðu* in Edda, where different versions of Sigurðr's death were described. In the prosaic fragment of the poetic Edda as a source of the information of Sigurðr having been killed when he was going with sons of Gjúki to the assembly is indicated *Guðrúnar kviða inni forna* (cf. *Oc svá segir í Guðrúnar qviðo inni forno, at Sigurðr oc Giúca synir hefði til þings riðit, þá er hann var drepinn*). In the corresponding lines of the *Norna-Gests þáttur* as a respectable source of this information 'tits' (*igðurnar*) or some small birds are named which of course seems mysterious to the modern reader (cf. *en þyuerskir menn segia Sigurd drepinn hafa uerit uti a skogi. en igdurnar sögdu sua at Sigurdr ok Giuka synir hofd(u) ridit til þings nokkurs ok þa dræpi þeir hann*).

Where from have those tits appeared, that are equal in their testimonies with the Germans, and "most people"?



## The Never Ending Story of Auður/Unnur djúpúðga Ketilsdóttir Cultural Memory and Religious Identity

Sofie Vanherpen, Ghent University, Belgium

When individuals and families chose to emigrate from Viking Age Scandinavia, their decisions had a major impact on their personal lives. For some this meant amongst other things a change of faith. While most migrants remained faithful to the old pagan beliefs, some converted to Christianity prior to their arrival on Iceland. The early settlers of Iceland were both pagans and Christians.

Medieval Icelandic literature recounts stories of both pagans and Christians settling in Iceland, though none of these stories is as strange as that of Auður/Unnur djúpúðga Ketilsdóttir. The question of Auður's religion is an interesting one and a puzzle at that. Two traditions exist parallel to one another. The first tradition is transmitted through *Landnámabók*, *Íslendingabók* and several *Íslendingasögur*. According to these sources she converts to Christianity somewhere on the British-Irish archipelago before setting sail to Iceland. She erects several crosses and demands to be buried in the Christian fashion. Through oral transmission this Christian tradition has been elaborated and has survived. It is preserved in the Icelandic folk legend *Gullbrá og Skeggi í Hvammi* written down by Jón Þorleifssonar. The other tradition is preserved only in *Laxdæla saga*. In this saga Auður, who is named Unnur here, remains pagan and is buried accordingly. These alternative traditions form a good example of the difference between real and constructed memory of Viking and religious identity. They illustrate how cultural memory and religious identity are shaped, altered and extended over time.

This paper will not attempt to determine which of these traditions is real, but will give an overview of the alternate traditions as they are preserved, how these were modified, why and how these alternate religious identities were created. The discussion will focus on religious and funerary customs.

### Manuscript:

Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, Reykjavík

JS 494 8vo (*Ein bæn Auðar diupauðgu*, leaf 10verso)

## Primary sources:

- A. *Landnámabók* and the family sagas are cited from the series Íslenzk Fornrit published in Reykjavík by Hið Íslenska Fornritafélag. The English translation of these texts are cited from *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders* published in Reykjavík by Leifur Eiriksson Publishing. I refer to the following individual sagas:

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*The saga of the people of Laxardal*. Keneva Kunz (trans.). In: The Complete Sagas of Icelanders V. Reykjavík: Leifur Eiriksson Publishing, 1997. Pp.1-120.

- B. The folklegend about Auður and Gullbrá is taken from the collection of Jón Árnason. The text has been translated into several languages. I make use of two English translations.

*Gullbrá og Skeggi í Hvammi*. Jón Árnason (coll.). In: Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og æfintýri I. Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1862. Pp. 146-150.

*Gold-Brow*. Jón Árnason (coll.), George E. J. Powell, and Eiríkur Magnússon (trans.). In: Icelandic legends I. London: Richard Bentley, 1864. Pp. 113-120.

*Audur and Gullbrá and Skeggi*. Malone, Kemp (trans.). In: Scandinavian studies presented to George T. Flom. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1942. Pp. 57-65.

## Loki and the Witch-Queen: Gendered Aspects of Divine Royal Relations

David H. Varley, Durham University, England

The purpose of this paper is to provide a new perspective on the actions, character and function of the god Loki by analysing them in the context of the literary tradition of the negatively received regal witch.

The starting point will be an overview of the literary figure of the witch who marries into a royal family, describing the terms in which she is expressed and the scenarios which accompany her. She is a culturally alien 'other' who brings her power into the centre of society, and whose actions serve to weaken or destroy the royal dynasty and the community that surrounds it by inverting the situation of the ideal royal bride. Rather than being a powerful support for the king and a provider of heirs, the Witch-Queen saps his power, enfeebles his masculinity and weakens his line. She is a literary creation that acknowledges the vulnerability of masculine dynastic hopes.

Bearing this figure in mind, the paper will analyse the character and function of Loki in his specific interactions with the key figures of the notional royal family of the Æsir: Óðinn, Frigg and Baldr. Given Loki's unique proclivity for the female form, it will be possible to cast him in the figure of the regal witch, and map out the many parallels between the situations of royal and divine family politics. In conclusion, it will be suggested that Loki is actively functioning in the Witch-Queen tradition, and that this in some part explains his unique approach to gender.

## Influences from Humanist Script in Ásgeir Jónsson's Manuscripts

Giovanni Verri, Háskóli Íslands, Iceland

At the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century a new kind of script, called Humanist Script, was developed in Italy from the Carolingian Minuscule in humanistic circles. This new script was also employed, from the 16<sup>th</sup> Century onwards, in Germany and Scandinavia in texts written in Latin or Romance languages. From the 17<sup>th</sup> Century is possible to find personal names and Latin or French words written with Humanistic Script in vernacular manuscripts from those countries, that are otherwise in Gothic Script.

AM 627 fol. contains letters from 16 Icelanders to Ole Worm, the earliest from 1626, the latest from 1649. The letters are written in Latin, so one might expect to discover whether Humanist Script was within the range of scripts available to Icelanders at the time or not. A quick peek at the script is enough to discover that Humanist Script is to be found in them, but blended together with Gothic *Kurrentschrift*. The proportions of this blending is different for each hand, as well as for each letter. Speed in writing seems especially to influence the outcome, as speed seems to align better with the quick, sharp traits of Gothic Script rather than with the round shapes of Humanist Script.

Although we might be tempted to think that Humanist Script had reached Iceland in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, and it does not seem entirely unlikely that children learning Latin in school would be taught Humanist Script as well as Gothic Script, one needs to bear in mind that 15 of those 16 Icelanders had studied in Copenhagen, and the remaining one was fostered by a one who had been there to learn. For this reason it is also reasonable to assume that they learned to write Humanistic Script in their university years, and the reason behind the mixing of the two scripts might be the fact that they learned Humanistic Script at a later age, and then never to its full extent.

If we turn our attention to Árni Magnússon, who also studied in Denmark and is younger than the aforementioned 16 Icelanders, we find influence from Humanist Script in his Latin texts and Latin words in the vernacular texts, but pure Humanist Script is nowhere to be found in his writings. The ascender of *d* is never straight, but this needs not necessarily be an indication of a Gothic Script letter (Kroman 1975:73). The *e* and *r* are never as in *Kurrentschrift* in Latin words and words derived from Romance languages. The shape of the letter *h*, in the variant that Stefán Karlsson (1970:289) calls  $h_3$ , has no descender in Latin words and words derived from Romance languages. This shape is to be found in Humanist Script, but not in Gothic Script, where the *h* has a descender to the right. One might note that Árni Magnússon uses this kind of *h* ( $h_3$ ) not only in Latin texts, but also in most transcriptions of vernacular texts with Latin words, but apparently not in names.

My question is then, what about Ásgeir Jónsson, scribe to Árni Magnússon first and Þormóður Torfason later? Some traits in his manuscript-hands seem to indicate

some influence from Humanistic script already between 1686 and 1688, when he was in the employ of Árni Magnússon. Did he learn or pick up Humanist Script at some point in his life, or did he simply take up some characteristics of his first employer's script instead? To address this question, I will examine the manuscript AM 773a 4to, where the Latin text of *Gronlandia*, by Arngímur Jónsson, is to be found in the hand of Ásgeir Jónsson.

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## Mirroring the World: Material Culture and the Transmission of Narrative in the Icelandic Family Sagas

Teva Vidal, University of Nottingham, England

The Icelandic Family Sagas contain a high level of detail in their description of the material world, both in terms of geography and landscape, as well as the objects and buildings used by people in their daily lives. This helps set the saga narratives in a world that is both believable and recognisable. However, the representation of material culture as a reflection of the ‘real’ world has to be evaluated critically, especially when considering the chronological divide between the Viking-Age events purportedly related by the sagas (largely 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> century) and the medieval period of their writing (as of the 13<sup>th</sup> century). By focussing on the representation of houses in samples from *Grettis saga*, *Gísla saga* and *Eyrbyggja saga*, this article proposes to examine how material culture is represented in written texts, and how the complex interrelationship between material culture and narrative demonstrates reciprocal influence. The progression of plot and storyline will, for example, influence which parts of buildings are described and the level of detail that is employed. Conversely, material culture can also act as a nucleus around which narrative is built, and can therefore be seen to play a role in the transmission of narrative. Furthermore, examples of the representation of houses seem to indicate that there exists a legitimate material memory of the Viking-Age past that is depicted in medieval saga writing.

## Largesse and Power in Medieval Iceland and its Sagas

Viðar Pálsson, The Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies, Iceland

The paper addresses the sociopolitical functionality of feasting and gift giving as fundamental modes of political communication in later twelfth- and thirteenth-century Iceland, primarily but not exclusively through its secular prose narratives. It aims to place that functionality within the larger framework of the power and politics that shape its applications and perception.

Exchange articulated friendship. Unlike modern friendship, however, its medieval namesake was anything but a free and spontaneous practice, and neither were its primary modes and media of expression. None of these elements were the casual business of just anyone. While duly emphasizing the contractual functions of demonstrative action—the backbone of traditional scholarship—the paper also highlights its framework of power, subjectivity, limitations, and ultimate ambiguity. In particular, it argues that Icelandic magnates neither were, sought to be, nor could have been as magnanimous as much of their past and present reputation nevertheless maintains.

## The Ultimate Man: The Masculinity of Viking Metal

Ashley Walsh, University of Oslo, Norway

Viking metal is a dynamic and popular subgenre of metal music of burgeoning popularity coming primarily from Scandinavian countries. These musicians use their nations' Viking histories and saga material as inspiration for their lyrics and this historical background is used to make commentaries on modern society. Their idealization of the past is similar to the treatment of the Vikings in the Victorian era and in the National Romanticism movement. The portrayal of the ideal Viking male is one of a heroic heathen warrior who seeks out adventure and does not fear death. Lyricists tend to ignore the peaceful trading aspects of Viking culture and instead focus on the brutal warrior that was portrayed by the early Christian chroniclers and mix it with the heroic romantic imagery found in the poems of Erik Gustav Geijer and Esaias Tegnér. Bands frequently stress the importance of a warrior having a good reputation which is directly taken from the *Hávamál*. This paper will examine how Viking metal lyricists use medieval sources and later medievalisms to portray the ideal masculine figure and what this says about their conceptions of gender in history and modern life. Examination of the gender constructs featured in metal music can reveal interesting facts about the reception of medieval source material in modern culture and how it is used to reimagine one's cultural past and create a self-identity.



## Creation and Foundation: Narratives of Beginnings

Sabine H. Walther, Universität Bonn, Germany

Recent research pointed out the importance of foundation myths for societies. Jan Assmann's studies on cultural memory were an inspiration for many scholars in different fields. Cultural memory transforms factual history in remembered history – and that means myth, according to Assmann. Further, he says that a myth is a founding story told to explain a present situation from its origin, and that a myth has normative and formative power.<sup>1</sup> Since the origins of peoples or institutions are in the focus of this theory, it is mainly applied to historiographical texts.

There is no shortage of founding myths in medieval Icelandic literature. Apparently, the history of the settlement is a point of reference for the construction of an Icelandic identity. It is told in the *Islendingabók* and the *Landnámabók* most prominently, but also many Sagas of the Icelanders take their starting point from there. Other texts as the Prologue of the *Snorra Edda* or *Ynglinga saga* tell the story of Odin migrating from Asia to Scandinavia – clearly the product of a learned age. Stories about migration and settlement are typical for founding narratives. They are found in the Bible as well as in the narrative traditions of “new nations” as the United States of America, Australia, South Africa and so on.<sup>2</sup> The question for the origin can also be answered by constructing a connection to the very beginning through a genealogy reaching as far back as possible including heathen gods as well as classical tradition and biblical history.

Creation myths belong traditionally to the realm of the history of religion and mythology in a stricter sense. In the Scandinavian Middle Ages, we have on the one hand biblical stories of creation as a “mainstream,” but on the other hand we have alternative, “heathen” stories of creation in the Icelandic literature, especially in Eddic poetry. Those stories are usually put in an Indo-European context, compared to similar stories in other cultures in different times. But the question is: Why do we have alternative – unchristian – creation stories in the Christian Middle Ages at all?

For treating these apparently so different kinds of stories together, political myths on the one hand and religious myths on the other, it is necessary to find a definition of myth that is not only applicable to religious myths as is this definition by Alan Dundes defining myth as a “sacred narrative explaining how the world and man came to be in their present form”.<sup>3</sup> The basis for analysis will therefore be a broader definition as it was developed by G.S. Kirk who defines myth as a traditional story and does not restrict it to sacred stories. Rather he finds a set of qualifying criteria to distinguish it from other traditional stories like folktales, e.g. that myths and folktales belong to different social classes, and that “[t]he characters [of myths], particularly the hero, are specific, and their family relationships are carefully noted; they are attached to a particular region” and that “myths tend to possess that element of ‘seriousness’, in establishing and confirming rights and institutions or exploring and reflecting problems or preoccupations.”<sup>4</sup>

In this paper, I would like to present shortly the main points of of doctoral thesis. I would like to ask if these both kinds of narratives of beginnings have something in common apart from being both narratives of beginnings. What are their functions? Why are narratives of beginnings so important? How are they told? And what does it mean, to have different accounts of beginnings at the same time – on the one hand competing accounts within Iceland and on the other hand from the European mainstream differing accounts?

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Assmann, Jan: *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* [1992]. 5th ed. München: Beck 2005 (=Beck'sche Reihe 1307), p. 52 and p. 61.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Hartz, Louis: *The Founding of New Societies. Studies in the History of the United States, Latin America, South Africa, Canada and Australia*. With contributions by Kenneth D McRae, Richard M. Morse, Richard N. Rosecrance, Leonard M. Thompson. New York: Harcourt Brace & World 1964.

<sup>3</sup> Dundes, Alan (ed.): *Sacred narrative, readings in the theory of myth*: University of California Press 1984, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Kirk, G.S: *Myth: Its Meaning and Functions in Ancient and Other Cultures*. London, Berkeley: Cambridge University Press; University of California Press 1970, p. 36-41, for the definition see p. 28; cf. Burkert, Walter: *Mythos - Begriff, Struktur, Funktionen*. In: Fritz Graf (ed.): *Mythos in mythenloser Gesellschaft. Das Paradigma Roms*. Stuttgart: Teubner 1993, p. 18.

## The Form of Memorizing the Past in Old Norse Historiography and its Construct of Identity

Laura Wamhoff, Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel, Germany

This paper intends to look at several texts of Old Norse historiography (namely *Landnámabók*, *Íslendingabók*, *Heimskringla* and *Snorra Edda*) which implicate foundation myths to examine their construction of the past.

Instead of looking at the texts as religious or historical sources, I want to examine them from an anthropological point of view in order to show how the texts memorize the past and establish which identity they construct. For this reason it is necessary to enlighten the relationship between history and myth in Old Norse historiography. It immediately suggests itself that they appear very close together. As a result of this there is a need to define myth in an anthropological way: Myth is foundational history which is based on selective memory (by JAN ASSMANN): “The only thing remembered is what is communicated and can be located in the reference frame of the collective memory” (ASSMANN, 2000). Myths are founding the identity of a group in the form of the collective memory – so myth is remembered history. Twenty years ago the debate of “cultural memory” began to arise and a lot of research has taken place since then, particularly concerning the *Íslendingasögur* and their relationship to the historiographical material for instance *Landnámabók*. Only a few investigations broached the issue of the historiographical texts and their treatment of the past. For this reason my aim is to take a closer look at certain texts as narrative material. It seems to be very useful to compare the texts with each other and establish different forms of the past. For instance a brief look on *Landnámabók* will first be taken and in a second step its relationship to *Ynglinga saga* will be studied. At first glance *Landnámabók* seems to be a register with a lot of independent short stories written in the 13<sup>th</sup> century to legitimate the various families and clans and that it is interpolated with different saga episodes. But no one saw an independent character - a text in it - more or less an arbitrary list of a few “saga-like” episodes, because there can not be detected any structure at first sight. Besides the composition of the text (prologue, the beginning is chronologically structured, divided into parts and so on) there is one thing also striking: the regular appearance of mythic and religious elements mostly in the context of the *landnám*. So it becomes clear that there seems to be an overarching structure (a sort of interpretive patterns) namely the organization of the content as framed by ritual and mythic elements. This structure can be divided into two parts: the „mythic *landnám*“ and the „natural religion“ which can tell more about the form of commemorating the past in *Landnámabók*. Comparing *Landnámabók* and *Ynglinga saga* it becomes clear that the texts are characterized by the same structure so that the foundation myths are very similar to each other. The reason for this common founding structure does not depend on the subject of the texts, but rather on their same meaning. All these similarities indicate that the texts belong to a repertoire of obligatory cultural memories which construct identity.

With this paper I want to draw attention to a new perspective on texts like *Landnámabók*, *Ynglinga saga*, *Íslendingabók* and *Snorra Edda* to show that history and myth in Old Norse texts are closely linked and that their understanding is the key for understanding how the texts construct the past.

Remembering and Forgetting in *Þórðar saga hreðu*

Elisabeth I. Ward, UC Berkeley, USA

The focus of my dissertation has been a little-studied saga, *Þórðar saga hreðu*, usually assumed to be a derivative and unremarkable post-classical saga. In this paper, I would like to focus on how utilizing the theory of Cultural memory can offer an intriguing insight into this sagas popularity for its early 14<sup>th</sup> century recipient audience. To do so, I draw not only on Cultural memory as a function of literature, but also on several related aspects of memory studies. This includes the possible mnemonics of the text itself, and its relationship to the real geography of Northern Iceland. Anthropologists have long recognized the memory-making function of the landscape, but in so doing have tended to reify the stories associated with the landscape as “true.” I offer a reading of this saga that at once recognizes it as a nested narrative fully concerned with its local milieu, and yet one which manipulates fictional narratives for the purpose of directing memory. What results is an opportunity for social forgetting, rather than remembering.

## Old Norse Classical Mythology

Jonas Wellendorf, University of California, Berkeley, USA

In my paper I wish to explore the *Nachleben* of some myths of Classical Antiquity in Old Norse learned literature of the High Middle Ages. I will focus on the extended passages on classical mythology that can be found in the introduction to *Trójumanna saga* as it appears in *Hauksbók* and in the longer prologue to the younger *Edda* (found in *Codex Wormianus*). Both passages appear to be interpolations in their host texts, and it can therefore be assumed that the interpolators felt that this material was somehow lacking in the originals. The material from *Hauksbók* and *Codex Wormianus* will be contrasted with the long section on pagan gods in *Barlaams saga ok Jósafats*.

## Christianisation and Heathen Resistance Recorded on Rune Stones in Eastern Sweden

Roger Wikell, Haninge hembygdsförening, Sweden

Harald Bluetooth's rune stone in Jelling are in many aspects a visible starting point for the Christianisation of Denmark. In eastern Sweden the custom of rune stones is clearly connected to the Christian mission during the eleventh century. A new Christian message, written with heathen iconography, met the reader of the rune stones. Re-use of pagan Saga material like Sigurd Fafnersbane, Thor and the Midgardsorm and even the old worldview with Yggdrasil/Midgardsorm (Ragnarok) are used as symbols for the Christian message.

In spite of the big number of Christian runes stones, there are some stones with a Heathen message. These stones – and even the lack of stones – can be connected to pagan sacral place names. These stones are telling us that not only the Christians were using the concept of rune stones as a part in a socio-political strategy, but even that pagan people used the Christian custom of erecting rune stones, but this time with a clear pagan iconography and message. We shall see examples of Thor and Frey as the centre of interest instead of the Cross or the Lion.

The rune stones are nearly 1000 years later silent witnesses – picture proofs – of a socio-political struggle. The stones are also contemporary evidence that the later Saga literature have reliable information for modern researchers of this session: Christianisation of Denmark and Eastern Scandinavia.

## Sagas and the Culture of Honour

Tarrin Wills, University of Aberdeen, Scotland

Nisbett and Cohen's 1996 book, *Culture of Honor*, brings together historical, sociological, psychological, behavioural and political analysis to explain the difference in violence between the US North and South. In particular they identify a central theme which accounts for most of the difference in homicide rates between the North and South, and which resonates strongly with the culture we see in the *Íslendingasögur*: the willingness to respond violently to an insult. They provide a multidisciplinary approach to argue that the culture of honour originates in a frontier-herding society of the original settlers. This paper critically applies the findings of Nisbett and Cohen's work to the society represented in the *Íslendingasögur* in order, firstly, to add a multidisciplinary dimension to the understanding of violence in the sagas; and secondly, to understand the origins of the culture of honour in early Iceland. This approach helps to explain other phenomena, such as the continuation and escalation of violence after conversion, and despite the increasing institutionalisation and centralisation of power in Iceland.



# The Subjunctive and Shifting Perspectives in Saga Prose

Kendra Willson, UCLA, USA

Nygaard's (1883, 1885, 1886, 1905: 272-338) thorough discussion of the use of the subjunctive in Old Norse includes numerous contexts in which the subjunctive and the indicative appear to be in free variation. I will revisit these contexts with an eye to later changes in Icelandic.

In a sample of family sagas, the subjunctive is used consistently after concessive conjunctions *nema* 'unless' and þó at/þótt 'although', in finite complement clauses after *vilja* 'want' and in unambiguous contrary-to-fact cases, but its use in reported speech and similar contexts is inconsistent and largely confined to situations in which a hypothetical element is present, as in example (1) from *Hrafnkels saga*:

(1) Einarr spurði, hver sú væri.

Einarr asked, what that would be.

Halldór Ármann Sigurðsson (2010: 50) claims that "In Modern Icelandic, the most important factor that triggers subjunctive marking in these complements is that the speaker does not take responsibility for their truthfulness, whereas their actual truthfulness (according to the speaker) seems ... to play a certain role in Old Norse." According to Halldór Ármann (1990), the Modern Icelandic subjunctive creates a "secondary ego" within the text, which explains its correlation with the scope of long-distance reflexivization.

I will discuss the extent to which this holds for Old Icelandic and interactions between mood and other factors, such as tense, deixis and anaphora, which mark shifting perspectives within saga prose, both in express dialogue contexts and within the "dialogic" narration (cf. Bakhtin 1981) which lends family sagas novelistic consciousness (Halldór Guðmundsson 1990).

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## Body Language in Medieval Iceland: A Study of Gesticulation in the Sagas and Tales of Icelanders

Kirsten Wolf, University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA

Gestures - those bodily movement phenomena that are often used to supplement or substitute spoken words - have long fascinated scholars. Most of the research on the topic has, naturally, be done by psychiatrists, anthropologists, sociologists, linguists, and neurologists, but medievalists, too, have looked at gestures as a key to cultural codes and examined the manner in which visible bodily behavior is used to communicate people's thoughts, emotions, and dispositions in the prose, poetry, drama, and art of the English, French, German, and Italian Middle Ages.

In his preface to *Gestures and Looks in Medieval Narrative*, Burrow comments that “[n]on-verbal communication in the medieval West is ... a vast and varied subject, and only some patches of it have so far been investigated.” This paper covers one small patch by drawing attention to descriptions of gestures in Old Norse-Icelandic literature. It analyzes not only which gestures are used, but also the manner in which the composers of the various works bring in descriptions of bodily movement as a means of non-verbal communication. More specifically, it examines, if the meaning of some of these non-verbal signs have undergone change over time, and if the conventions governing their use remain the same.

The Sagas and Tales of Icelanders are in the forefront of the analysis and yield approximately 150 references to gestures. In line with the standard definition of “gesture” as a movement of the body or any part of it that is expressive of thought or feeling, only examples of gestures that are relevant for communication have been included. Occurrences of laughter, smiling or weeping are not included. Neither are those actions that are taken in the course of performing some task, whether it be eating, wrestling, or manipulating objects. Facial expressions have also been excluded.

The study shows that people in the Sagas and Tales of Icelanders communicate with body language as well as speech, and their gestures serve obvious public and private functions. Most of the gestures are voluntary and conventional. They typically occur within the context of speech and serve as intensifiers. Gestures are rarely used as the sole means of utterance. The range of gestures used by women seems more limited than that used by men, possibly because women were more restricted in public activities than men and because their actions were of less consequence to the composers of the texts examined.

Composed as they are before drama exerted a strong influence on other literary genres, the Sagas and Tales of Icelanders use gestures more sparingly than modern literature does. There is, for example, no mention of wringing one's hands as a sign of despair and headshaking as a silent “no.” And some current and common gestures, such as

thumb up as a sign of approval, may have been unknown in medieval Iceland. Although the limited mention of gestures may possibly be attributed to the rather terse style of these works, it is also quite possible that the use of gestures in the texts presents a realistic picture of interpersonal communication, for the stereotype says that Northerners gesticulate less than, for example, Mediterranean people. Whether or not it is possible to make such generalizations, it is a fact that already by the late medieval period, various writers had noted that gestural practices differed widely from one region to another. Modern studies of the uses and meanings of gestures have revealed that cultural areas within Europe differ significantly in the number and repertoires of gestures.

The culture of the Middle Ages has been called a “gestural culture,” and the importance of gesture has by some historians been regarded as a result of the weakness of literacy. Certainly, handclasping as a pledge of oath must parallel what would now be a written document drawn up by a notary and signed by both parties. Accordingly, handclasping for these purposes has become obsolete. Other gestures have largely fallen out of use. These include gestures expressing hierarchies between social groups. Yet other gestures have undergone changes, such as public kissing, which has become more the exclusive privilege of the private sphere.

As Thomas points out in *A Cultural History of Gesture*, “[t]he human body ... is as much a historical document as a charter or a diary or a parish register ... and it deserves to be studied accordingly.” Despite the somewhat restricted range of gestures mentioned in the Sagas and Tales of Icelanders, the texts nevertheless give an idea of the levels of gesticulation as accepted social acts. They also show that the body provided medieval Icelanders with a principal means of expression, and that speech and action served as a cohesive whole.

## When Norwegian Royal Pedigrees Fired Icelandic Collective Imagination

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So far, the earliest archaeological remains of human settlement in Iceland, some of which lie almost directly upon the «*landnám*-tephra» dated within two years of 871, trace a North-Atlantic culture focussed around dairy production whose impact upon the Icelandic biosphere was unsustainable above a certain demographic threshold. Settlers' techniques of animal husbandry required timber for the construction of winter shelter for both man and beast (during the most archaic stages, home and byre were polarized areas within the same structures), while open pastureland often came at the expense of the Icelandic native woodlands. In the absence of a social organization capable of mitigating human impact, Icelanders ran the risk of ecological collapse.

Norse cultural requirements for timber suitable to building homes and ships soon denied Icelanders any option of economic autarchy. Norway appears to have offered Icelanders the most attractive timber market, especially as the British Isles and the Baltic coasts became increasingly deforested during the Middle Ages. Indeed, Norse settlements in Greenland appear to have preferred Norway to *Markland*, as source for such commodities. Yet the costs of geographic isolation threatened Icelandic traders with economic dependence to, rather than interdependence with, their exchange partners.

As narrated in Ári Þorgilsson's *Íslendingabók*, Icelanders' needs to call at Norwegian ports gave Óláfr Tryggvason leverage to wrest from them sovereignty in questions of religion: exigencies of material culture became the Trojan Horse whereby the Catholic Church of Rome could extend its influence over Icelanders. Yet unlike its Imperial Roman, or even Carolingian, predecessors, the Church of Rome did not enforce its hold through direct force: as a transnational organization centred amid the most technologically developed area of the region, it allied its ideological and material demands with an assortment of local interests, to whom non-core functions, like policing, could be selectively outsourced. Wherever suitable candidates for entering into such partnerships were wanting, the Church had the means and know-how to facilitate their generation.

Political submission to the Church of Rome can be viewed historically as a prelude to Iceland's eventual capitulation to the Norwegian crown, whereby King Hákon's conquest came at no effective risk of military engagement by Norwegians themselves. Between the turn of the millennium and 1262, a greater sea-change had possibly come about in Icelanders' hearts and minds than in their material lives, although climate change and environmental impact were taking their toll all along.

Ári's historiography opens a tradition which will extend over the second half of this period and beyond: among his contemporaries operated the founding dynasts of the domains (*riki*) which would come to rend apart the constitutional structures whose de-

velopment Ári narrates. While Íslendingabók may appear to be retrospectively oriented, when a historiographer is equipped with the ideology of an omnipotent god working his design in the providential fabric of the universe, history can but thrust into the future. The reconstruction of the past is not the logical task of unwinding casual sequences of contingencies when the course of events must be bearing down on destiny. Conditioned through the revelation of prophetic certainty, historical method can leverage an awareness of the future to more effectively interpret the inescapably fragmentary knowledge of the past. Cultural memory can be aligned to match expectations: Iceland could only be evolving so as to assume her place among the satellite handmaidens in the grand scheme of a universal theocracy on Earth, as in Heaven.

Íslendingabók further offers an unprecedented vantage upon a tradition evolving to incorporate the technology of writing into its communicational repertoire. Just as Ári came to be cited by subsequent historiographers, his work builds upon predecessors which can now only be reconstructed indirectly.

Such subjectivity in historiography opens an avenue to reconstruction. Whatever its factual basis, Ári's pedigrees for Norwegian royalty, which underpin *Heimskringla* and the greatest sagas of the two Óláfar, can be shown to legitimate a son of Haraldr harðráði Sigurðarson as exclusive royal claimant within the framework of Norwegian hereditary law. This indicates the reign of Óláfr hinn kyrrri Haraldsson as pivotal in the formation of Norse historiographical imagination, while the corpus of poets who enjoyed Haraldr harðráði's patronage substantiates the mnemonic deposits quarried in formulating such a vision for the kingdom's foundations.

The presentation aims to document the legal basis for proposing Óláfr hinn kyrrri as a paramount beneficiary from the construction of a Norwegian monarchy founded upon the personage of Harald hárfagri. In contrast to the largely prosaic transmission of this genealogical framework, evidence from the scaldic encomiasts will be explored, which testifies to the sway over Norway's political identity theretofore held by the Hlaðajarl dynasty. Thus, in their sifting of poetic heritage according to the exigencies of their patrons' political agenda, court poets like Sigvatr Þorðarson and his immediate successors can be seen as creative fosterers for royal historiography in Iceland and beyond.