

# SAGA-BOOK

VOL. XV

VIKING SOCIETY FOR NORTHERN RESEARCH  
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

1957-61

# SAGA-BOOK OF THE VIKING SOCIETY

Vol. XV 1957-1961

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# THE VALUE OF THE ICELANDIC SAGAS<sup>1</sup>

BY EINAR ÓL. SVEINSSON

## I

THE legal-minded Romans used to ask: *Cui bono?* — For whose benefit? Nowadays we say that all things are relative. When I speak of the value of the Icelandic sagas, it is only natural that I should be asked: From whose point of view? For important things are generally not equally important to all people.

In the following meditations I shall distinguish between three different points of view. They may be compared with three concentric circles. For all those within the outermost circle the Icelandic sagas have a general human value, while for those in the two inner circles they have an additional value, greatest of all for those in the innermost circle. And we shall deal with them first.

## II

The value of the sagas for the Icelanders is so great and so complex that it is difficult to define it in all its aspects. We can safely say that without the classical literature, our cultural and political struggle in later times would have met with but little understanding abroad. It is true, of course, that translations of the old Icelandic literature have not found their way into everyman's book-case in other countries, much less the original texts, and it is also unlikely that the works of Konrad Maurer, W. P. Ker, James Bryce and Andreas Heusler, to mention just a few names out of many, have ever been best-sellers. But all this has nevertheless been sufficiently well known to penetrate the mind of the civilized world. Iceland is comparable to Greece insofar

<sup>1</sup> This paper was read to the Society at a meeting in Somerville College, Oxford, on 2 November, 1956.

as its ancient civilization has made the modern world more willing to recognize the Icelanders' right to exist, their right to be free and independent.

I shall not discuss further this well-known and important fact. But our old literature, especially the sagas, has had an immense influence on the Icelanders themselves. First and foremost, the sagas relate the early history of the Icelandic people and present a memorable picture of their civilization. They have in consequence acted as a stimulus on the people, shown them the freedom and independence of the past. The old reality made our political and cultural leaders in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries take their national dreams and ambitions seriously. But, besides this, the spirit of the old literature has had a deep moral influence on the individual. When Andreas Heusler travelled in Iceland at the beginning of this century, he discovered that the Icelanders, after their 'dark ages', were what he called 'Aristodemokraten'. The ethics of the sagas, their ideals of human qualities, of honour and fair play, the great serenity that prevails in them — all this is bound to have left some traces behind. And the individualism.

I shall not enlarge upon the way in which the sagas, together with the eddic poems and their successors, the *rímur* and other poetry, have played no mean part in the remarkable preservation of the language, without which there would be no modern Icelandic culture. And it would be a long story if I tried to describe how the old literature has acted as an inspiration for Icelandic literature of later times: I mention it only in passing. But on the whole it may be said that the sagas and the old literature are the corner-stone of the Icelandic people's existence and the inspiration of all their achievements in modern times.

### III

Icelandic influence on Scandinavia is an old story. Strange as it may seem, both Saxo Grammaticus, the

Danish historian, and Theodoricus, the Norwegian historian, in the late twelfth century quote the Icelanders as authorities. Later, sagas written in Iceland, especially the Sagas of the Kings and after them the *fornaldarsögur*, the mythical-heroic sagas, found their way to Norway, where they evidently enjoyed a great reputation. After the Norwegians had lost their old language, in the sixteenth century and later, Snorri's *Heimskringla* was translated into Danish, and this legacy of the past was read by the common people of Norway, who continued to find their history in it, the picture of their old civilization in times when Norway had been an independent kingdom. *Heimskringla* remained a constant stimulus to them. Many scholars maintain that it was one of the great factors in their fight for freedom.

Scholars in Denmark and Sweden in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries found in sagas written in Iceland stories about their kings in olden times. This added to their self-respect. But the Danes had their Saxo, and although the Icelandic interest of the Scandinavians of those days sprang partly from political motives, the importance of the sagas in Denmark and Sweden was in no way comparable to their importance in Norway. On the other hand, it is not advisable to minimize their importance in the cultural and literary field. In the late Middle Ages Denmark and to a less degree Sweden were subject to a very thorough-going Low German influence, and later, up to the middle of the nineteenth century, part of the kingdom of Denmark was German-speaking, and German was the language of many of the aristocracy. An Icelandic student meditating on Danish civilization in, say, the seventeenth or eighteenth century may be inclined to think of it as half Continental-European and only half Northern. There are many factors which helped the Danes to preserve Northern characteristics and the will to be a Northern nation — amongst them, no doubt, are the Icelandic sagas.

With the advent of Romanticism in the nineteenth century it can be seen that the sagas, their subject-matter and sometimes their form and their spirit, have exerted a profound influence on the literature of these countries. It is enough to mention such names as Oehlenschläger, Grundtvig, Tegnér, Bjørnson, Ibsen, Sigrid Undset. Of course, every period interpreted the old literature in its own way, and accepted from it what was to its liking. And it is only natural that an Icelander finds a wide gulf between the Scandinavian works of the nineteenth century and the sagas themselves. But of all the Scandinavian authors I think that Henrik Ibsen shows the closest affinity to the Icelandic sagas, and when I say this, I am not thinking specially of his historical plays but of his plays with modern themes.

#### IV

Now we leave the second circle. We are no longer discussing the value of the sagas for the Icelanders themselves, or for the Scandinavians who read about their early history and civilization in them. Now I wish to examine their more universal value.

Among all nations and at all times there has existed an abundance of story material, for the compass of story is comprehensive, it can comprise both the outer and the inner world, the world of reality as well as the world of imagination. The material for stories exists always in plenty. But there must be eyes to see and tongues to tell. The existence of such eyes and tongues may be periodic, centuries apart even. For the gifts of Fortune to mankind are often mere fragments — it happens but seldom that we are given anything whole and complete.

In their literature, and especially in the sagas, the Icelanders of the old Commonwealth succeeded in creating a living picture of their world, first and foremost of their own national life and that of neighbouring peoples. Although more is told about some countries than others,

the sagas have something to say about all the areas then inhabited by the Northern peoples. And their horizon is even wider, embracing all Europe and even going still further afield. The sagas have therefore much historical value: they display the civilization and ideas of the Northern peoples at that period, and some of them preserve the heroic literature of the Germanic peoples in better and more complete form than exists anywhere else. And if we include the Eddas, we have here the greatest part of our knowledge of the heathen religion of the Germanic peoples.

## V

Nothing would be further from the truth than to call this literature merely a collection of sources for history and mythology, of an exclusively academic interest. They could be that even if they were imperfect in art. But they are so profound that they have a universal, human value: they reveal man, his life, his soul, his fate. When we consider this, the historical and geographical settings become a raiment lending the contents a particular hue: but the contents themselves are humanity, independent of time and place.

This picture which the sagas present is both comprehensive and profound.

Here we see people of all walks of life, the chief and the slave, the farmer and the tramp, the farmhand and the sailor. We meet people of all ages, from the child in its cradle to the blind old man. We see men and women. We meet these people under the most varied circumstances of life. We hear joyous speeches and lamentations, we feel hatred and love, hope and despair and most things that move the human heart.

In his *Poetics* Aristotle says that tragedy is an imitation, not of people, but of action and life. The Icelandic sagas begin by relating events — but, almost before we realize it, their main purpose turns out to be to describe people.

They never neglect the events, but people are described as they manifest themselves in the events, through their actions and words. People are described from without as if an intelligent witness were telling the story. The story-teller restrains himself, he takes care not to intrude or to relate too much the thoughts of his characters, he pretends not to have any hand in it at all, pretends to be objective, takes care not to point with his finger in order to draw the moral. He presents his work in such a way that the reader or listener can see the drama in his mind's eye. The famous words of Gustave Flaubert describe exactly the attitude of the saga-writer: 'L'artiste ne doit pas plus apparaître dans son œuvre que Dieu dans la sienne.' But then the saga-writer also expects much from his audience. The listener must concentrate, the story-teller does not shout at him like a newspaper-vendor in the street. The reader, or listener, must have sensitivity and a vivid imagination: and if he has, then all this human life in the sagas, with its force and diversity, its misery and glory, becomes clear to him.

The Norwegian writer, Hans E. Kinck, has somewhere said that an uncanny knowledge of the human mind is revealed in the sagas. This, I think, every reader will discover for himself if he studies them closely, even if the objectivity, the artistic illusion, may at first conceal the fact. But it is also evident that there is no attempt to describe the inner feelings: the diverse motives are not analysed, the nuances of emotions are not described nor the stream of consciousness. But a great deal of a person's mind can be revealed through his actions, his physical appearance or his words, which is exactly the method used in the sagas. Their point of view is dramatic, just as their movements and suspense are often dramatic also.

These strict rules were second nature to a whole group of saga-writers in a certain period: it seems to have been quite natural for them to abide by these rules, just as a

great composer creates his works of art in conformity with strict rules of which he may or may not be aware. And in this way the saga-writers created on vellum a great number of characters, many of whom are drawn with a masterly touch, impressive, true and profound. We can classify these characters according to the main types: some, for example, are intelligent, others impulsive, and so on, but we soon discover how diverse the characters are in each class. And if we wanted to classify them thoroughly according to their idiosyncrasies, the classes would be just as many as the characters themselves. This means, in other words, that the characters are individuals. Jakob Burckhart, in his famous work *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, says that with the Italian Renaissance a new understanding and appreciation of man as an individual emerged, a fresh appreciation of the idiosyncrasies which distinguish him from other people of the same class or type. In this respect, the Icelanders were ahead of the Italians, a fact of which this great scholar was not aware. If he had known the sagas, he would have been impressed by what is to be seen there.

The tendency to imitate reality by describing complex characters, by painting with mixed colours, can sometimes make the reader's sympathy balance as if on a knife's edge, as is the case when he is confronted by Egil Skalla-Grímsson and Víga-Glúm. At other times the personalities are so complex that we are faced with problem-characters — like Hamlet's; Skarpheðin is one of them. The realism of these descriptions of character is so great that the parts where they occur are not only impressive but are also often endowed with the mystery of the unknown. Here, in my opinion, we have methods of presenting character which are entirely different from those used by the Greeks or Romans. And the same applies to the few cases where development of character is portrayed, Saint Óláf in Snorri's *Heimskringla*, Njál in the *Story of Burnt Njal*. In all these respects the sagas

are the forerunners of Western literature of later times.

As I mentioned earlier, however, the descriptions of human characters in the sagas never lead the author so far astray that he forgets to tell the story, to describe the events. Often we see a peculiar relationship, an interplay, between events and characters. This interplay clearly arouses the interest of the author — it is as if he often looks with wonder, and sometimes undoubtedly with horror, at human life. The sagas are an essay on man.

## VI

In Iceland we call the era of the Commonwealth *fornöld* — ‘Ancient Times’ — and the following period *miðöld*, ‘Middle Ages’. In European history both periods belong to the Middle Ages, to their latter half, since Iceland’s history began when a third of the Middle Ages had already passed. By European terminology, therefore, our ancient literature is to be called medieval. This difference in definition shows two different ways of looking at things. We may say that the Icelandic phrase shows a narrower outlook, but even so it is not entirely wrong. It simply means that the clock in Iceland was not the same as in Europe at that time.

Iceland, of course, belonged to Europe, whose medieval Catholicism and learning were brought to Iceland and with them the art of writing. Some scholars want to ascribe as much as possible of our old civilization to foreign influences. I shall not try to solve that problem, nor to discuss the part played by the Church in the creation of Icelandic literature. Of the sagas I wish to say this: What is most remarkable in them is something that cannot be traced to medieval Europe. Perhaps my translation of *Le Roman de Tristan et Iseut* and a book called *Leit ég suður til landa* show some love of medieval literature and give me some justification for saying that the things I like best in the Icelandic sagas are those which

are *not* medieval. I take delight in the saga-writers' fondness for intelligence and common sense, their appreciation of lucidity, of cool, unprejudiced judgement and sound suspicion, and I often think of the credulity of the Middle Ages and their faith in authority. And secondly, I enjoy the purity of the sagas: the people they describe are hard without being cruel, a fact which, in my opinion, is far too often ignored; the characters of the sagas are natural people, very seldom sensual or lustful, whereas cruelty and sensuality spoil many a medieval work. I like the objective attitude in our sagas, their realism, their understanding of people as they are. It happens but rarely that saga-characters are presented as glazed pictures or dark shadows, they are not divided into angels and devils, as is so often the case in medieval literature.

Another feature I like about the Icelandic sagas is their social range. The admiration for manly deeds and valour is exactly the same in the romances of chivalry as in our sagas. Chivalry and *drengskapr* are two related ideas, and it is difficult to say which is more pronounced, chivalry in the romances or *drengskapr* in the sagas. But in the romances of chivalry the people are divided into two classes: the knights and the common people, or rather, the knights are people, while the socially inferior are despicable and ridiculous figures, hardly classed as human beings at all. The knights are the exclusive heroes of these romances, while the common people are for the most part not in view. When we compare the romances with the Icelandic sagas the difference is obvious. Any free person can be the hero of a saga, and even people in bondage are spoken of with dignity, provided they possess manly virtues, as may be seen from the anecdotes about Vífil, Ingólf's slave, or Atli, Geirmund's slave, or Bóthild, Ingjald's bondswoman. In the sagas we often come across people at work, the heroes no less than the others, even chieftains like Skalla-Grím and Arnkel *goði*. We

see the romantic lover, Björn Breiðvíkinga-kappi, at carpentry out in the field, and Kormak, the love-poet, was once on his way to the mountains to drive home the duncoloured sheep, only he preferred to remain at Gnúpsdal in Steingerð's company — and who could blame him for that? Scholars speak rightly of the aristocratic element in early Icelandic civilization, but we must not forget the democratic features which are so evident in politics, culture and literature. For this reason it often seems as if the society depicted in the sagas is a classless one, since the prevalent attitude in them is so utterly human. In this connection I shall refer only to the saga of Gísli the outlaw: how indifferent it is to the power and glory of the chieftain, yet at the same time how completely devoid of any plebeian sentiment. For here the indomitable human spirit is manifest in all its nobility and greatness. It is enough to remind you of the scene when Börk the Stout arrives with a band of men and orders the farmer at Hergilsey to deliver up the outlaw, the killer of Börk's brother, and receives the following reply: "My clothes are in tatters, and I won't be sorry if I wear them out no more, and I will sooner die than fail to give Gísli all the help I can and protect him from trouble." We should have to search far and wide to find a more magnanimous reply than this.

## VII

As I mentioned earlier, particular rules dominated the way in which the sagas were told, and by observing these rules their authors achieve certain special results, weave a peculiar magic spell. The selecting of methods and of modes of expression is sometimes called 'style', in the wider sense of the word. All the different aspects of the form, however intricate they may be, must be in harmony. If we study the narrative method of the sagas and their formal tendencies, we are bound to notice that as a

literary *genre* they are original and clearly distinguishable from all other kinds of literature. Their form is unique, peculiar only to them, they present their picture of human life in their own particular way. What is unique need not necessarily be perfect, but the best sagas achieve some sort of perfection. There is an integral relationship between the saga-writers' attitude to life and the manner in which they represent life in their works. Both attitude and manner are original, and it is by virtue of their combination that the picture of human life presented in the sagas achieves its perfection. There are other *genres* of literature, with a different vision, different methods and forms, each of them having its own kind of virtue. But no literary *genre* is so comprehensive that it can embrace everything: there are always limitations, and limitations in vision and form can be partly responsible for the achievement of a certain perfection.

The term 'style' is not only used in this wide sense, but also in the narrow sense of 'diction'. The narrative method of the sagas enhances their artistic value, because of its uniqueness, and the same is true of the diction. In the Middle Ages three kinds of diction were distinguished: solemn, humble and medium. It is easy to fit the saga-style into this system. The saga-style is in a way a reflection of the national life, where the contrasts collaborate, as it were, where *goði* and *þingmaðr* take each other by the hand as two free partners, nobility and commons form a unity which is in fact 'medium', deriving its merits from both parties. The style is natural and refined at the same time, endowed with passion and yet restrained. It is just as if the authors of these sagas had consulted Prince Hamlet: "In the very torrent, tempest, and as I may say whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness".

One of the characteristics of this style is a clarity which is reminiscent of the mountains of Iceland on a bright day.

The air is clear, all outlines are well defined, but at the same time there is evident a sensitive feeling for nuances, within the limits dictated by the restrictions of discipline. A marvellous skill is displayed by the better authors in knowing what to say and when to say it, and when to make the reader or listener deduce things for himself. In this respect the reader is shown much trust and respect by the writer. Finally, we can truly say that here we have prose in its purity, devoid of anything appertaining to poetry, as the spoken language always is. The spoken language with its rhythm and vividness is an essential factor in the creation of this style, while the diction is condensed and purified of empty words according to the dictates of art. In this manner the diction of the sagas displays to every reader who understands their language an enchanting beauty, which is unique and cannot be recreated, being the fruits of a particular society and period, which was once and will never come again.

## VIII

Once, when Árni Magnússon, the Icelandic scholar and rationalist, was defining the subject-matter of the Icelandic sagas, he said: "Farmers having a scrap". This statement is similar to those that can often be heard in club-conversation, when people amuse themselves by making things look oblique in order to see them from a new angle. The sagas, it is true, take place in a farming society and tell nothing of lords and ladies in their castles. And it is evident that if the warfare described in the Icelandic sagas is compared with warfare elsewhere then it becomes rather insignificant, and people are apt to exaggerate its importance. But it is certainly something more than 'having a scrap', because here human lives are always at stake, and the presence of death magnifies and deepens everything. It is easy to pick out descriptions of fights which are nothing but sheer barbarism — I may mention

the stories about Víga-Styr as an example — but on the whole human nature is disciplined and conforms to the ideal of honour, and it is precisely a characteristic of civilization that human conduct is disciplined by a moral code. In the sagas, revenge, which belongs in the same complex of ideas, often seems to be due to obligation rather than to innate vengefulness. Honour is the root of heroism, and honour was no more pronounced among the courtly knights than it was among these farmers. So delicate and sensitive are the stories of the old Icelandic idea of honour that they remind us of the descriptions of love in later literature.

It is not necessary to explain to the present audience that the complex of ideas that centred round the concept of honour also had its darker side in this early society. Of all this the sagas give a picture and, of course, in such a way that in one saga a certain aspect is more noticeable than in another — a picture which is comprehensive and inspired, where everything is understood from within even though it is described from without. And certainly something would be lacking in the picture of human life they present, if the current ideas of ethics were not the main strand, or indeed the vital nerve, of their presentation.

The sagas, of course, differ in quality, as is evident if they are carefully read. But in most cases we can notice, directly or indirectly, that whatever the subject-matter of a saga is, it is related with a certain ethical equipoise. The magnetic needle always points in the right direction, whatever happens; we can read between the lines the author's abhorrence of base deeds and pusillanimity and his admiration for magnanimity, nobleness, loyalty and *drengskapr*. Of all these it is perhaps the idea of *drengskapr* — fair play — which is most worthy of discussion. It is an Icelandic and Northern democratic parallel to chivalry, unassuming, strong and true — an ideal which has exerted a great influence on Icelanders of all times.

The heroism of the sagas originates in a certain conception of greatness which values certain things above life itself. But, even so, it is not in the clouds, it is in a peculiar way blended with realism. So that even here we can discern a harmony of contrasts.

## IX

Earlier in this paper I called the sagas 'an essay on man'. Very few of the sagas, I think, are composed on the basis of a preconceived idea. But in the 'essay' people and events often arrange themselves in the author's vision into systems, where a single idea, or complex of ideas, prevails, as in the saga of Grettir the outlaw where the essence of the saga is summarized in the following sentence: "Happiness and accomplishments are two different things". In most cases the main ideas in the sagas have their origin in the observation of experience and, in fact, represent a kind of layman's philosophy. And because these ideas are only to a very slight extent of foreign origin, they differ from those of the Hebrew-Hellenist-Roman civilization and consequently people often fail to realize that there are thoughts of a philosophical kind in the sagas at all. It is so easy to find what is common and known everywhere that people are apt to miss what is different. And to this we may add the fact that the authors of the sagas very seldom draw any moral conclusion from their stories. The reader must himself draw the conclusion from the 'essay on man' by close observation of the work itself, and sometimes he will find himself left with a question rather than with a conclusion.

As an example of the way in which the ideas in the sagas are closely linked with experience, I shall mention the idea of *gipta*, good fortune, which is a kind of mental and physical vital force, a faculty for enjoying and succeeding in everything which falls to one's lot. And since this

idea is based on experience, it represents something more than a transient conception. Some American must undoubtedly have written on the 'psychology of success', which is a similar thing.

Before I leave this subject, I want to mention briefly one fact. In many of the sagas there is apparent a strong belief in fate. But this belief is derived from the impact made by life itself rather than from rational thought. The old Icelandic idea of fate implies influence on events, rather than on the human will and the human mind. The early Icelanders thus believed in the power of man, much in the same way as the Stoics did. Fate was often severe. It was hard to suffer sorrow, hard to have to die at a certain moment. But fate was not actively cruel. There was no Goddess of Destiny who would rejoice at the humiliations of man. Thus there prevails in this world a peculiar calm neutrality. To the early Icelanders fate could be something more than a burden, it could also be a challenge to the free mind not to give up and not to fail to accept with courage whatever falls to one's lot. This did not imply arrogance or self-deception: on the contrary, realism and a courageous acceptance of adversity are its chief characteristics. This faith in human freedom against fate made life an art, human behaviour was subject to certain aesthetic laws. This is most evident in the stories of how people accepted death. "They are fashionable now, the broad spears," said Atli, Grettir's brother, as he received the fatal wound. "Now I delayed, but you hurried," were Helgi Droplaugarson's last words. In this manner the moment of death became the most glorious moment in life, when man was exalted above his own fate, above life and death.

## X

I have now tried to expound the value of the Icelandic sagas from various points of view, but this subject is so

vast that in a single lecture I can do no more than merely touch on some of the most important points. I have tried to describe the wide human range of the sagas, their presentation in their own independent way of a picture of human life and human fate, their peculiar vision and methods.

Art is diverse, and you may sometimes feel as if you were entering a new world when you go from one sphere of art to another, or even from one artist to another. It is rewarding to acquaint oneself with the various kinds of art: a wider outlook, a deeper understanding, is gained. No branch of literature is superfluous if it has reached any kind of perfection in its own class. This is like many different instruments in a mighty orchestra, where all the diversity is harmonized in a great symphony. The subject of this symphony is the 'essay on man'. It is composed on the themes of human happiness and suffering, human hopes and despair, the eternal and inextinguishable longings of the human heart. And I like to think that this symphony is played to the glory of eternity, as a holy gift, a divine offering.

## PATTERN IN *NJÁLS SAGA*

By I. R. MAXWELL

IN his *Preface to Paradise Lost* C. S. Lewis says that if you want to judge anything, from a cathedral to a hencoop, the first thing is to know *what* it is. It is when confronted by a new form that we realize the truth of this half-forgotten truism. I remember, thirty or forty years ago, idly turning the pages of *Orkneyinga saga* to find out where the story began. Later, when I read a few sagas in English, I found that I had been looking for the wrong sort of story. These were different stories, with rules of their own; and, although some made complex and beautiful wholes, their form was not what I should have expected in epic or novel. My first crude error arose from not knowing what a saga was — and at what stage can one be quite sure that one has found this out? All of us must at least have observed others judging amiss because they were not looking for the excellences possible in this form and proper to it.

There is one excellence that sagas possess as a class. They all tell a story well enough to make even poor stuff tolerably lively. When I was ploughing my way through the riff-raff of *Íslendingasögur* I did find that the mind retired in time before a new tale of the young *kolbíttr* who trounces the berserk and breaks the spine of the king's negro wrestler. And yet, when the berserk actually swaggered up to the earl's high-seat — although, like Tiresias, I had foresuffered all — I always stayed to see what happened. And the reason was obvious. The sagas, like our ballads, have the art of casting their story into scenes presented with dramatic economy. This is how they galvanize even the stalest trolery into some semblance of entertainment; this is how they give life to

the actions of men. And this they can all do. It is part of their traditional stock-in-trade.

Not so with their handling of the whole. They have their triumphs of form — the enigmatic circle of *Auðunar þáttir*, the imperturbable line of *Hrafnkels saga*, to take two famous small examples — and there are enough examples, great and small, to show what thirteenth-century writers could do, even if we had not guessed it from the intelligence shown in their work. Such excellence, of course, is always rare, yet one could imagine a northern Aristotle deducing from the most successful sagas the principles that should govern the genre. Or could one? He would have faced one perhaps insuperable difficulty. The sagas were not free to follow a purely artistic line of development. They were conceived as history, and their nature is governed by this fact.

Let there be no misunderstanding. I do not even ask how authentic their history is; I do not deny that it is history of a most personal kind; I am happy to indulge Nordal by calling the sagas historical novels in order to emphasise their considerable measure of imaginative freedom and put the home-grown fundamentalists in their place. But for anyone who tries to judge the sagas as literary narratives the obvious thing is that they were conceived and told as though they were histories, records of fact as well as artistic creations; it is as histories that they have been accepted; and one may add that their authors, unlike many historical novelists, are generally ready to admit gaps in the record and conflicts in tradition, and to relate their own work to a larger body of genealogical and historical belief. It is in the *form* of history that they choose to tell their more substantial stories.

This is one secret of their strength. In a novel we have generally an underlying awareness of the author's power to do what he will with his own creatures, or perhaps of his creatures' power to make their lives an

embodiment of their own inner being; and in either case the creation is superior to the event. But in a saga events move under their own power, seemingly independent of the author's will or the reader's pleasure or any intrusive demands of art or morals or any passionate claims of the dramatis personæ, with the casual inevitability of life itself. Again, the omniscient novelist has the key to the whole truth, and to withhold it is the calculated reticence of art; but the saga's silence may be the silence of history. Hence, in the sagas, as in life, persons are real in the impact of their acts and passions, often enigmatic in what lies behind; so that to explore the feelings of Kjartan for Guðrún in the light of the available evidence is like an enquiry about real people rather than characters in fiction, and curiously enough the lifelikeness of the feelings springs partly from our uncertainty about them. The saga canvas, too, is historical, giving one habitually the sense of a society and a time-span extending beyond the main events and characters, so that at their best these gain in dignity from their subordination to the larger movement of life. Unlike the romances, which characteristically seek intensity by focussing on individual passion, the sagas seem unwilling even to narrow their theme to what we should think a manageable and shapely story. In their own way they are extremely concise and selective, but they seldom select a plot that Aristotle would have approved.

Hence there are many partial failures. In *Ljósvetninga saga*, for example, the author seems to have had in mind a tale of the men of Ljósavatn, their dealings with powerful neighbours, the worth and destiny of some of their leaders — and his reward is a compliment from W. P. Ker that the character of Guðmundr ríki (their chief enemy) stands out well in "his own saga"! Of course it should have been Guðmund's saga — just as *Vatzdæla* should no doubt have belonged to Ingimundr gamli — and in a sense it is, but only by accident and in part. A plot

dictated by an interest in the facts is cracked clean across by the emergence, in the first half, of a powerful character and a situation well worth shaping into a whole. This is where an author with a classical sense of form would have looked for his story.

But suppose that, instead of isolating a tractable situation, an author were to open his arms wide, take in a century or so of time and a host of persons and passions, and somehow contrive to fashion these into one great edifice? That would be something worth seeing! One would be first moved to admiration, then curious to account for the miracle. And in the general effect of the whole there would be something to distinguish it from art not tied to facts. The march of events, seeming to be given in history, would be unlike the moulded plot that implies a human director. However patent the author's skill in selection and arrangement, passionate men would act and destiny decree and conflicts seek their issue in a certain massive independence of their interpreter. All this would appear in part the work of nature as well as art, perhaps with some marks of chance and unpruned profusion in it. Something like this may happen at times in the sagas.

Of the five *Íslendingasögur* that Vigfússon classifies as "major", *Eyrbyggja* does not pretend to this unity, and *Grettis saga* (even if what Ker calls its "imbecile continuation" were removed) would not, I think, attain it. But each of the others triumphs in its own measure over formidable obstacles. *Egils saga* has the given continuity of biography, yet it begins long before the hero's birth, expatiates more freely than *Grettla*, and divides into a first half of episodic adventure and a second of comparative calm. *Laxdæla saga* covers nearly a century and a half, and the main situation does not begin to emerge until a third of the story is told. *Njáls saga*, though its main actions fall within forty years, spreads its tentacles over all Iceland, is peculiarly

multiplex in themes, and so lavish with its dramatic personæ that not one of the original characters is left on the stage at the end. Yet each of these sagas — allowing perhaps for some dispensable things, as one should be ready to do with great and rich books — gives an impression of high imaginative unity. Certainly this is what one feels in putting the book down. Guðrún's answer to her son's question must (as Ker says) be read in relation to earlier lights on her character, but to more than that: it leaves one contemplating a whole in which the history of the settlement and the death of its great founder are relevant and enriching elements. As for *Egla* — the first saga I read in the original — I remember with what growing excitement I spelt my way through the second-last page, for of course the *last* few words are always as it were postultimate, not so much ending the story as resuming the course of life. The incident was stale enough. Long after Egil's death bones were dug up in the churchyard, and among them a skull, portentously heavy, and corrugated! The parson struck it one-handed with the hammer of an axe, and where the blow fell the skull whitened, but it did not break; and from this you may know that, when hide and hair went with it, it had not much to fear from the blows of common men. It was not the skull that enthralled me, but the dawning certainty that the author knew what he was doing with it. That terrible relic, coming up out of the earth in a Christian and comparatively civilized countryside, gathered into itself all that the saga had been saying about the grim world before the change of faith, and its power was in proportion to its commonplaceness.

In the close of *Njála* unity is confirmed with deeper power. The reconciliation of Flosi and Kári is the end to which all that long struggle has been making, the solution of some unformulated problem; and when the sea takes Flosi we are left in awe, as though the embers

of the fire had been quenched at last. When we look back over the saga it seems massive and complete — even Vigfússon, who thought it a loose compilation, perceives a grand moral unity in it — and when we analyze it we find on every page evidence of precise shaping and subtle linking, so that its planned crescendos and calculated echoes and pointed crises might be even too formal if the work were not mighty enough to justify such supports. There is indeed something almost geometrical about much of it, from which some readers may turn with relief to the effortless mastery of *Egils saga* or the simpler line of *Laxdæla*. Einar Ól. Sveinsson quotes with approval the verdict of the Swedish writer A. U. Bååth: Such is this author's command of his materials that he may be said to have had the last line in mind when he wrote the first.<sup>1</sup>

Why then does this impression of unity evaporate as soon as critics, even Bååth with his brief for the defence, examine it? Einar Ól. Sveinsson, in his monumental edition, plants himself so massively on both sides of the critical fence that simple readers may well feel bewildered. On the one hand he gives the highest general praise to the saga's architecture; on the other, he does not (in this preface) trace any real narrative unity, and he admits flaws considerable enough to give one pause. The preface to the Bayerschmidt-Hollander translation (1955) drastically summarizes some of these views, and the reader is reminded that "our more stringent conception of the unity of action and of perspective was foreign to the Middle Ages" — so we are to make allowances for this author! But really, he has only himself to blame, for the first thing the saga does on examination is to fall apart. No wonder that it was once thought a compilation, or that summarizers give us a list of headings, not a narrative argument.

<sup>1</sup> *Studier öfver Kompositionen i några isländska Ättsagor* (1885); cf. e.g. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Á Njálsbúð* (1943), 45.

A prologue of eighteen chapters leads into the first main story: how the hero Gunnarr and the counsellor Njáll maintain their friendship despite a feud between their households, and how Gunnarr falls at last to a confederacy of enemies. (All this is about three-fourths the length of the remainder and fills 81 out of 159 chapters.) The second story (commonly divided into two) is of the feuds that lead to the burning of Njáll, the consequent conflict, and final reconciliation. In this part there are two substantial sections that were once thought interpolations and whose relevance is still in question: the Conversion of Iceland in 1000, and Brian's Battle (Clontarf) in 1014.

It seems, first, that here are two stories, not one; and secondly, that the author lets his story sleep while he expatiates in history. He has indeed been charged with a "hunger for matter", an eye bigger than his stomach; and Einar Ól. Sveinsson sets out the four main counts in this charge and admits a partial agreement with them.<sup>2</sup> They include the Conversion and Brian's Battle, along with two others that I will glance at now.

One is the excessive and sometimes repetitive use of genealogies, partly justified by their ceremonial effect in reading. This surprised me. The genealogies are certainly lavish, but I had not felt them as clogs and had found them most useful in underlining new characters, especially when these are brought in a little before they begin to take an active part. This author admittedly excels in the art of introducing characters, and my untutored impression had been that he distributed the limelight (in all its forms) with almost mathematical precision. How well the relative importance and position in the story of Gizurr and Geirr (not Geirr and Gizurr, as in *Landnáma* and *Eyrbyggja*) is indicated in chapter 46; how fully the imposing ancestors of Guðmundr ríki and Snorri goði justify their appearance in chapters 113 and 114! Here, at the dramatic suit for Höskuldr

<sup>2</sup> *Á Njálsbúð*, 37-8.

Hvítanessgoði, we are to feel all Iceland involved. The South and East are already in our minds; now two chiefs from North and South are brought in to a roll of drums, and each is seen in relation to the whole country. Guðmundr (whose introduction is the most resplendent in the saga) is the ancestor of the Sturlungs and the Oddaverjar, the Hvammverjar and the Fljótamenn, indeed of all the most outstanding Icelanders; Snorri is the wisest of all Icelanders, of those that had not second sight. This emphasis is calculated and meaningful, and the author's practice is regular enough for the reader to draw firm inferences from it. If it needs a scholar to pick holes, they must surely be very little ones.

Then there are the legal technicalities, which are not always right, and which Einar Ólafur admits to be excessive. Perhaps my young days at the bar disable my judgment, but again my impression is different. How could anyone deny (and I am afraid Bååth does) the superbly dramatic use of legal formulæ in the last great suit, where the dry battle of forms reins in the passions of men, obscures the merits, and leads to the battle of arms? (This author knows what he is doing: Eyjólf's final objection is stated in the curtest summary.) If we are to have this scene, we must also have a graduated course of legal instruction earlier in the saga; and surely we must admire the judgment with which this material is gradually fed into a long succession of suits, partly for mounting tension, and partly (I think) because the concept of legal justice is one strand in the pattern of ideas. Neither of these charges is of much importance in itself, and I am not concerned to measure the quantity of genealogical or procedural detail that the average reader can tolerate. Only, I will not quite let these minor charges go by default, for each, on examination, bears out one's impression of this man as an organizer not at all likely to make crude mistakes.

I return now to the more important defects alleged:

the apparent break between Parts I and II, and the apparent digression of the Conversion. These will be enough, with no more than a glance at Brian's Battle, for our enquiry. But I wonder if you will agree with me that, at every moment of such an enquiry, there is one principle that it is quite imperative to remember?

Since I want it remembered, I shall label it "the principle of the integrity of episodes". Thus: in the opening of this saga Hrút's marriage fails, with far-reaching consequences, because of a spell laid on him by Queen Gunnhildr in Norway. A novelist would feel no need to send Hrútr to Norway; the spell could have been brought in by reference and might even have been more effective in the background. But this is not saga practice. Sagas prefer to deal with whole episodes, not pieces or aspects or reflections of them. If the spell laid on Hrútr is of vital importance, as it is, then we shall be told about the inheritance that called him from Iceland, about Gunnhild's patronage and regal impressment of him as her lover, about his place in the king's guard, his voyage and sea-battle, and the like. The account will be short, but round and whole. Einar Ólafur is a little apologetic about Hrút's adventures<sup>3</sup> — exciting no doubt to the men of that time — but they are there, not only to build up Hrút's character and answer to later excursions, but also because the completeness of the episode demands them. Hence every saga is likely to contain elements that a novelist might reject as irrelevant; we may expect to find that each part, though it touches some main action, is not fully absorbed in it. In this resides the saga's peculiar power. Each part must seem to exist and be interesting in its own right, not simply as a term in some larger argument; and to say, for example, that the story of Víga-Hrapp is a partial digression, is surely a critical error. It is largely because they avoid the fallacy of the "well made" story that the sagas, for all their concise

<sup>3</sup> *Brennu-Njáls Saga* (*Íslensk Fornrit* XII, 1954), Formáli, cxxvi.

and selective habit of narrative, are in broad effect as solid as life itself and free from the oppression of a purpose that saps each moment's independent reality. To see this seems to me a necessary first step towards any intelligent criticism of a great saga's organization.

If we grant this principle of the integrity of episodes with its corollary of their partial independence of the main theme, we must also grant the special need of an art to bring out the main structure. Dreams and the like of course serve this purpose, but we have heard a great deal about them and I confess a sneaking sympathy with Skarpheðin's "Lítt rekju vér drauma til flestra hluta." Is there not also a rhetoric of narrative by which, without explicit comment, the author may keep his readers on the track?

The eighteen-chapter prologue illustrates this well. It is the story of two women: of Hrút's ex-wife Unnr, who has lost her dowry and needs a champion to get it back, and of Hrút's niece Hallgerðr, who has been the death of two husbands and is ready for a third. Chapter 19 begins, "There was a man called Gunnarr." He is to be Unn's champion and Hallgerð's husband; and from this point the saga tells, first how he got back Unn's money, then how he married Hallgerðr. Of course these chapters are rich in further incidents and implications, and of course Hrútr plays an important part and in certain ways foreshadows Gunnarr; but we know that this is the bold outline the author intended, for he has gone out of his way to make it clear. Especially in the first and last chapters.

The first may be summarized as follows: "There was a great lawyer who had a daughter, the best match in the south country. Now the story turns to the west. There, too, a magnate with a famous brother had a daughter; she was beautiful, but her uncle Hrútr saw thief's eyes in her." The two parallel groups with an unusual break between, the woman emerging from each, the prophecy about the

second making one note the silence as to the first -- surely this arrangement is significant? Yet I have never seen it pointed out, and much puzzled discussion of these chapters and of the propriety of "Nú víkr sǫgunni vestr" might have been saved if it had been. Chapter 18 drives the nail home. We have just finished the story of Hallgerðr and might have forgotten the earlier one of Unnr. The author therefore inserts here (not at the end of Unn's story) a chapter of less than half a dozen lines to say that after her father's death she wasted her property and was left in need and unmarried. Einar Ólafur treats chapter 18 as the beginning of the Unnr-Gunnarr story, but this begins in chapter 21 (with a reference to the information given in 18). All the prologue *prepares* for Gunnarr, but his story cannot begin until he has been introduced. The function of chapter 18 is to group the two women together at the end, as at the beginning: they are the two strands to be taken up in Gunnar's story.

If, in this small instance, one can demonstrate the author's structural intention, it may be possible to do so elsewhere, though the growing complexity of the saga is likely to make the task more difficult and the conclusions more debatable.

I turn, then, to the break between Parts I and II. In Part I Gunnarr is the leading figure; Njáll is his constant counsellor and helper, and his sons perform one momentous action and help to avenge Gunnarr. Still, Gunnarr is the protagonist, and with his death we seem to begin a new story leading circuitously to the burning. This is of course not the fact, and Einar Ólafur has summarised the essential connexions.<sup>4</sup> But for the moment I shall ignore this, partly because I want to reach my own conclusions in my own way, and partly because it is instructive to see how often the pattern has been missed. Even Bååth, who holds a brief for the unity of the saga, finds that, despite many connecting filaments, it comes

<sup>4</sup> Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Um Njálu* (1933), 35, 62-3, 234-5.

apart here, and the gap is merely screened. W. P. Ker justifies Part I as giving that deep impression of Njál's wisdom and Bergþóra's dignity without which Part II would lose its pith<sup>5</sup> — but really! A competent author does not need 81 chapters (just over half the total number in the longest of the *Íslendingasögur*) to give such impressions; it is part of his competence to give them within the limits of the chosen action. E. V. Gordon says that the only real connexion between the two parts is the personality of Njáll<sup>6</sup> — a good reason for not closing the book, but no reason for admiring its architecture.

Reading on, we note that the prologue really extends to chapter 34. Chapters 19-34 are complementary to the first eighteen; they tell how Gunnarr recovers Unn's dowry and marries Hallgerðr, and incidentally introduce in careful juxtaposition Valgarðr inn grái with his son Mörðr (the deadliest enemies of Njál's house) and Ásgrímr Elliðagrímsson (its steadfast stay). But all these things are preliminaries, pointing in complex ways to later events but as yet initiating no main conflict. We know from Njál's words that Hallgerðr is the root of evil to come, but we do not yet guess what it will be.

Then two memorable chapters (34, 35) are placed together, one ending the preliminaries, the other beginning a conflict traceable to the last page.

Chapter 34 is Gunnar's wedding. It begins, "There was a man called Þráinn, he was the son of Sigfúss"; he and his six brothers were kinsmen of Gunnarr and great champions. The wedding is thronged. Along with the bride, Hallgerðr, is her father Höskuldr, her uncle Hrútr, her brothers, and her fourteen-year-old daughter Þorgerðr, a beauty like her mother. Gunnarr sits in the middle of one bench. On one hand are Þráinn Sigfússon and his brothers with Valgarðr and his son Mörðr, who must have

<sup>5</sup> *Epic and Romance* (1922), 190-91.

<sup>6</sup> *Introduction to Old Norse* (1927), 70.

been brought from his cradle to brood over this wedding. On the other are Njáll with his sons, and the sons of Þórir of Holt with their father. The affiliations of Valgarð's brother Úlfr and his son Rúnólfr (with Þráinn) and Hafr inn spaki and Ingjaldr of Keldur (with Njáll) are not so clear; but the main impression is difficult to avoid. Gunnarr is sitting between the house of Njáll and its inveterate enemies to be. We are told that it is not said just how men sat on the bench with Höskuldr and Hrútr; but this author seems fully informed about what it suits him to know. He wishes, I think, to leave this other bench in shadow.

Then a dramatic thing happens. Þráinn has been staring at young Þorgerðr. His wife rebukes him in two stinging lines; he rises in rage, takes witness that he divorces her, and has her sent away. He then asks for Þorgerð's hand, and marries her — after Njáll (on request from Gunnarr) has briefly testified to his standing and accomplishments rather than his character. (This passage might be reread by those who blame Njáll for what follows.) Immediately after this (chapter 35) comes another feast with another dramatic incident, the quarrel between Bergþóra and Hallgerðr that begins the main action. Surely all this is plain enough? We are to mark the man who steals the limelight at Gunnar's wedding; indeed, the wedding is described for him. We note that he is at once closely connected with Hallgerðr, who will soon call on him to show himself a real son-in-law (chapter 41), and our unfavourable first impression of his character makes it natural to suspect that he may become her ally. Their actions at the two feasts — he sending his wife away, she forcing her husband to take her home — are significantly alike. These chapters have been patterned to make us keep our eye on Þráinn and associate him with Hallgerðr (the known cause of evil) as well as with his kinsman Gunnarr.

Þráin's next appearance is decisive. Hallgerðr

persuades him, along with Gunnar's kinsman Sigmundr and a Swede (Skjöldr), to waylay Þórðr Leysingjason, the foster-father of Njál's sons. Sigmundr and Skjöldr are enough for the job, and Þráinn sits by while Þórðr is killed; but he was "nær staddr", as Njáll tells his sons, and this will not be forgotten. Blood has been shed on both sides before now and the wrong made good between the two friends by peaceful settlement. But the death of Þórðr is another matter: now, it seems, Njál's dangerous sons must take personal vengeance. Njáll settles at once with Gunnarr, saying that his sons will respect the peace once made. But matters do not rest here. Sigmundr, to please Hallgerðr, lampoons Njáll and his sons, and the verses are repeated at Bergþórshvoll. Bergþóra eggs on her sons, who go out by night and kill Sigmundr and Skjöldr in the early morning. At these killings Höskuldr Njálsson sits by, just as Þráinn had done. It seems, indeed Njáll asserts, that now a money settlement is out of the question; but Gunnarr asks for no compensation, and at last Njáll himself offers to pay it. This is the last incident in this phase of the story, and we are told (chapter 45) that the settlement was well kept ever after. At this point four new characters are introduced and one realizes that something new is to begin.

The incident seems to be closed, but its force is not spent. It is the killing of Þórðr that divides the sons of Sigfúss and of Njáll, and later on this is to be the fundamental division. It is the sons of Sigfúss who make the core of the opposition to Njál's sons, and they and their hangers-on form a party that one soon comes to recognize familiarly. This, therefore, is the essential connexion between Parts I and II. The malice of Mörðr (operating in parallel ways in both parts) and the counsels of Njáll (which fight a losing battle with fate up to the burning) are the other two main strands that Einar Ólafur points to; but neither of these belongs to the same order of causation as Hallgerð's hate for Bergþóra

and her family. Mörðr takes advantage of openings created by others, Njáll seeks a way out of difficulties as they arise or are foreseen; but Hallgerðr creates the situation to which the others contribute, makes and fosters division, and may be regarded as the first and continuing impulse behind the main sequence of events.

There are now two obvious questions to be asked. The first is, whether this connexion is made clear enough; for the intention of a book should be clear to intelligent readers as well as to its specialist editor, and the fact that so many readers have missed it is disquieting. The second question is, whether the main stream of acts and motives, once understood, has the sort of continuity and significance that artistic unity requires.

It is at least certain that the author has taken pains to make his readers see the essential connexion between the feud initiated by Hallgerðr and the more complex feuds that lead to the burning. It is through Þráinn and his clan that Hallgerð's spite can become politically powerful after she has failed to make Gunnarr her instrument, and we have seen how closely and memorably the two are linked at the commencement of the main action. The act that commits Þráinn to Hallgerðr — his part in the killing of Þórðr — is then given peculiar emphasis. When the peaceful Þórðr kills his man, Njáll (chapter 40) has the story told him three times, and Þórð's death is the first to be preceded by an actual vision — two trifles that point to the author's intention. But of course it is Þórð's magnanimity, his connexion with Skarpheðinn (the last word in his mouth), the affection of Njál's sons, the gentle Njál's triumph over the vengeance for him, the greater scale and intensity of the episode, that make it stand out. Þráin's comment as onlooker — "This is a bad business, and Njál's sons won't like it when they hear of it" — is ominous enough at a first reading; and for anyone who knows the saga this event will take its place in a much larger pattern. For example, Þráinn is asked

to sit by at the killing of Þórðr, as Höskuldr Njálsson is at the killing of Sigmundr and Skjöldr; the scenes are so similar that one cannot help linking them, and when a long-delayed fate overtakes the two who were “*nær staddir*” the parallel becomes significant. Again, one of the tensest small scenes in the whole saga is the one where Bergþóra eggs on her sons, and Njáll, awakened by the ring of an axe, goes out to ask Skarpheðinn where they are going (chapter 44). In chapter 92, when the brothers go out to kill Þráinn, the axe rings again on the panel, the same question is asked and the same answer given; father and son recall the earlier scene, and Skarpheðin’s curt words to Kári remind us that Þórðr Leysingjason is not forgotten. (Skarpheðin’s grateful remembrance in chapter 78 of Gunnar’s forbearance after the vengeance for Þórðr is an earlier reminder.) The climax to the first phase of Part I — the only incident in which Njál’s sons play a full part — is therefore strikingly emphasised and clearly connected with its sequel in Part II. If we follow the author’s methods, we should have no difficulty in following his story.

Nor will anyone doubt that the motives involved are powerful enough for their work in a story of such majestic proportions. It is true that this cause of quarrel sleeps until Gunnar’s death; yet the destruction of Gunnar is a move which in this long game must precede the destruction of Njáll, and it is so much the author’s practice to revive sleeping causes that this is felt to be a part of his comment on life. Nor are events the less impressive or significant because they are long in coming to birth. When the time comes, the sequel is firmly controlled. The sons of Sigfúss and of Njáll leave Iceland in the same summer not long before Gunnar’s death, so that, as Aristotle prescribed, the end of an episode will not seem to be the end of the story. At first their movements are independent, but Víga-Hrappr brings them into accidental collision, and Grím’s words in chapter 88 (“I

don't know if Þráinn will make us any good return"), remind us of the underlying ill feeling. In Iceland a point of surly pride grows to a serious difference; and in chapter 91, when the open clash comes, it is Hallgerðr who first steps in to fan the flame and later drags up Sigmund's scurrilous taunts, so that her part in this deep-seated enmity is again impressed on our imagination. The death of Þráinn confirms the division of parties which Mörðr now uses for his advantage, and so leads relentlessly though indirectly to the burning. I find this fully coherent and imaginatively effective. Events move at first as though uncertain of their direction and issue, yet the outlines are gradually seen to be bold and the impulsion steady. It is as though two groping tentacles reached out from the early part of the saga, touched, and slowly intertwined.

But it is partly by its significance that a major theme justifies its place. The evil of Hallgerðr (with Þráinn as its transmitter) and the evil of Valgarðr and Mörðr both go back to the prologue, for Mörðr is Unn's son by the marriage that Gunnar's recovery of her money enables her to make; and they operate each in its distinctive order and fashion in each part of the saga, Mörðr stepping in to exploit a dangerous situation created by others. But there is this essential difference between the two. Gunnarr is not responsible for Mörð's birth or nature as he is responsible for his own match with Hallgerðr; and Mörðr himself is a somewhat uninteresting character whom the author at once plainly labels a villain (as he labels Skammkell a rascal) and sends about his nefarious business with not much apparent interest in anything but its results. Mörðr is treated primarily as an instrument; his vices are such as to cut him off from other men, and his acts are in the nature of intrusions on the more normal human conflict. Perhaps any other conscienceless knave would have served the purpose. But the bosom evil that spreads from Hallgerðr is of quite another nature, and it

derives its structural significance from a deep inner irony that is foreshadowed when Gunnarr sits in friendship between Njáll and Þráinn at his wedding. As Hallgerðr is Gunnar's wife, so Þráinn (always seen in relation to the family at Hlíðarendi) is Gunnar's kinsman and backer, who rides with him when there is trouble with Otkell, supports him (along with his own brothers and Njál's sons) in his suits, and is mentioned to represent the friends who were abroad at the time of his death. After Gunnar's death it is the sons of Sigfúss who come to Njáll to seek means of vengeance (chapter 78). While abroad, Þráinn is repeatedly identified (chapter 82) with Gunnarr as a kind of smaller copy, taking his kinsman's place at Hlaðir and living in the glow of his reputation with Earl Hákon. This is, I think, something more than a means of bridging a gap in the story; we are meant to feel the partial identification of Þráinn with Gunnarr, yet we also know that from the first Þráinn has been under Hallgerð's thumb and is perhaps more of her kind. It is to him that she turns after Gunnar's death, bringing with her Gunnar's bad son, Grani. The two sons are very firmly and summarily distinguished (chapters 59, 75), and it is surely significant that the good one, Högni, is declared out of the saga as soon as he has avenged his father, although when Gunnarr commended him to Njáll we expected to hear more of him and although he is in fact mentioned later. But he is pushed into the background, whereas Grani (whom Skarpheðinn spares for Högni's sake in chapter 92) remains very firmly in the saga along with the mother he takes after and the sons of Sigfúss, and seems to cherish an even deeper hate than others for Njál's sons (chapter 117). This is the irony, that what is left of the house of one friend breeds the destruction of the other; it is from Gunnar's hearth that the fire at Bergþórshvoll is kindled. Hallgerð's enmity, to which the shallow Þráinn is soon committed, gives rise to a conflict which, though checked for a time while Gunnarr

lives, is coterminous with the saga. To call it the saga's backbone would be too simple a metaphor. A seemingly small cause, the grudge of a socially slighted woman, is transmitted and transformed and combined in a complex pattern of causes until it has at last attained its end and disrupted a whole society in the process. It is a process that one can follow with unfaltering interest and contemplate with a sense of completeness.

But, however sound in the spine, the narrative may still be marred by protruberances such as the Conversion and Brian's Battle, and if this were so our general estimate of the saga would have to be slightly modified and our mode of interpreting it perhaps considerably altered. Einar Ól. Sveinsson says that the Conversion is the one section that seems loose in reading, mainly because of a huddle of unorganized circumstances; that the author was probably using a written source without adapting it much; but the important consequences of the Conversion may have turned the scale and decided him to give a full account of it.<sup>7</sup> Ordinary readers will agree that this account is in part too much a summary of news-items;

<sup>7</sup> See most recently his *Brennu-Njáls Saga*, Formáli, xliii-xlv. No doubt the author used a written source, but in the evidence for this there are one or two suggestions of careless transcription that may perhaps be questioned. Gizurr and Hjalti are said to have landed "á Eyrum" (near Stokkseyri), and it is suggested that this may be a mistranscription of "á Eyjum" (Vestmannaeyjar). This is possible; yet it would seem strange to maroon them on Vestmannaeyjar when nothing is said of their doings there, and there was no reason to land them east of Eyrar if the trouble with Rúnólfr Úlfsson's thingmen was not to be mentioned — we do not know enough, I suggest, to draw any inference here. It is suggested that the reference to Glúmr "who went to the burning with Flosi" is a gauche anticipation likely to be due to thoughtless copying. But is not this detail relevant in the saga rather than in the source, and is not the earlier reference (chap. 96) to Kolr Þorsteinsson "whom Kári kills in Wales" an anticipation of exactly the same kind? In particular, I should suggest a doubt as to the carelessness imputed in note 5, p. 255, of the edition. When we are told that Þangbrandr came out "that same autumn", the editor thinks it possible that the phrase refers to some incident mentioned in the source but dropped in the saga. The obvious reference is to the incident just mentioned, the receipt in Iceland of news that Norway had changed its king and faith. This interpretation is not suggested, presumably because Þangbrandr seems in fact to have come out a year later. But it is probably true that the news and the first missionary did arrive in the same year. The first missionary was the undistinguished Stefnir (mentioned in *Kristni saga* and *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, but not in *Íslendingabók*, *Heimskringla*, or any of the *Íslendinga sögur*), and it would be an easy error to telescope him and Þangbrandr. The sense of the text seems so clear that I cannot help leaning to this explanation.

yet if we can trace something of the shaping mind in it our findings may perhaps affect our final judgment.

The account falls into two linked parts: Þangbrand's mission (997-9?) and the acceptance of Christianity at the Alþingi (1000). Þangbrand's journeys, his conversions, his troubles with warlocks and other conservatives, make necessarily scrappy reading; yet all this gives a good picture of the feeling in the country and the attitudes of saga characters. The rest of the story is well told in summary style. The whole historical episode was to be deeply influential in the saga, but it is given only its natural prominence, without elaboration or dramatic heightening. Nor is there any reason to think that the author was here "hungry for matter". He must, for example, have known the highly "sögulegt" story of the enmity between two prominent persons in his own saga, the heathen Rúnólfr Úlfsson and the Christian leader Hjalti Skeggjason. This is mentioned in *Landnáma*, which he seems not to have known, and (with a memorable little scene) in *Laxdæla* (chapter 41), which he knew well; it is elaborated in the accounts in *Kristni saga* and *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*. Our author knew it, then, from *Laxdæla* and would have been reminded of it in any fairly full account that he happened to be using. Yet, though he mentions Hjalti's conviction for blasphemy, he does not even tell us that Rúnólfr was his implacable prosecutor.

In some more positive ways one can trace his moulding of the materials. Þangbrand's mission is heralded by Njál's yearning for the new faith and his brooding apart, so that our first impression is inward to the saga. As the mission proceeds we learn of Njál's heartfelt acceptance, of the bitter hostility of Valgarðr and Mörðr, of Flosi's characteristically unprecipitate agreement to be prime-signed, and the like. Þangbrand's last convert, the wise Gestr Oddleifsson, is used to express an idea important in the saga — the need for the concurrence of the chiefs and

the sanction of law — and these words, not found elsewhere, are no doubt the author's invention. But what strikes one is that the narrative has been shaped to give special prominence to one man, Síðu-Hallr. He is the first man Þangbrandr meets, and he comes forward with a generous offer to take the boycotted missionary under his protection. (In *Kristni saga* and *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* it is Þangbrandr who asks for protection and backs his request with the king's bidding.) Hallr, as in other accounts, accompanies Þangbrandr on his journey west to the Alþingi, but *Njála* is careful to keep him in our minds by noting his kinsmen among the converts. Hallr was of course a leading figure in the Conversion — the man whom the Christians chose as their law-speaker and whose good heart and head may well have saved the day — and this is naturally brought out in the saga. But it adds (what is inconsistent with *Kristni saga* in *Hauksbók* and uncorroborated elsewhere) that Þangbrandr returned to Hallr before sailing to Norway. Clearly, everything has been done to make Hallr the frame as well as the centre of this episode — and not simply because the author was an easterner and well informed about the local magnates. Hall's prominence is, as we shall see, proportioned to his function in the saga as a whole.

The Conversion is woven in with a skill to which, I think, full justice has not been done. It comes after the establishment of the Fifth Court — an historical error that was once thought evidence of interpolation. This view has now been discarded and we may take the text as it stands. The Conversion is introduced for compelling reasons at a moment of pause. The feud between the sons of Njáll and of Sigfúss appears to have run its course; it has flared up again when Lýtingr (Þráin's brother-in-law) makes it a pretext for killing Njál's illegitimate son, but vengeance is swiftly taken on Lýting's brothers and a settlement made through the intervention of Höskuldr Hvítanessgoði, who, as Þráin's son and Njál's fosterling,

stands between the parties in a position of peculiar delicacy and danger. At this point the Conversion is introduced — just before the rapid and terrible development of events when Mörðr, who has taken no part since the Gunnarr story, steps in to renew the feud by inducing Njál's sons to kill Höskuldr Þráinsson. This is clearly the right, indeed the only place for it, and I imagine that the author deliberately juggled with history in order to give it that place.

But before entering upon Mörð's plot he inserts a chapter that no one seems willing to defend — the story of Ámundi the Blind, who miraculously received his sight for a moment to take vengeance on Lýtingr, his father's slayer. This is the first Christian miracle, and it would be easy to cite evidence that it would have looked less odd to thirteenth-century readers than it does to most of us. It comes in naturally as a postscript to the Conversion, but critics have wondered why it should come in at all.

The author was here faced with a problem, at first glance insoluble. He had done with one story, of Þráin's fall and its aftermath; he was to begin another, of Mörð's plot and the revival of old enmities. As so often in this saga, one action was to sink into quietness, another connected action to stir and gather power. A meaningful pause was required — not a luncheon-break. Yet precisely at this point it was necessary to introduce six chapters on the conversion of Iceland! How insert this wedge without splitting the narrative? The problem is solved with some ingenuity. An incident is introduced which seems a postscript to the Conversion but is in fact the end of the preceding story (the feud after Þráinn). Our sympathies are with Ámundi, whose act is one of natural justice and sanctioned by God; yet in the form of the narrative he is the counterpart of the repulsive Lýtingr, for both slayer and slain have advanced claims of dubious legal validity and contrary to legal settlements.

The symmetry of poetic justice links Lýting's killing of Njál's son with Ámundi's vengeance on Lýtingr, and the Conversion is firmly enclosed between them. A few words from Njáll make us feel the need of something more than settlements to limit the consequences of violence — a reflection intimate to the saga's thought, looking to the past yet foreboding the future. How effective this is each reader must judge for himself. I feel fairly sure that the author's conscious or intuitive intention was to achieve the sort of significant transition he desired, and that this transition is felt by most readers, although analytical critics have not seen how it was managed. "Men rode home from the assembly," chapter 106 ends, "and now things remain long quiet." We have heard this before. The main narrative has renewed its course and we await what is to come.

"Valgarðr the Gray came out; he was then heathen" — so chapter 107 opens. Valgarðr, the husband of Unnr and father of Mörðr, never lifts his hand in the saga and spends much of his time abroad; but his rare appearances are worth watching. He has already been marked, as machiavellian, and firmly associated with Mörð's envy and with the pagan faith. It cannot be an accident that his paganism is emphasised just after the Conversion and just before his malice hatches out. He appears in this chapter as Mörð's prompter (cf. chapter 65), lays down a devilish plot for him, refuses his request to take the faith (a request designed to indicate the father's recalcitrancy rather than the son's piety or prudence), breaks crosses and holy tokens, and dies in an odour of brimstone, his last act being to plan Njál's destruction. This is a pretty tall order for one short chapter! One might call it crude, but no one will deny that it is plain. This pagan evil is being deliberately set against the new light.

This is surely a hint that the six-chapter foundation has not been laid for nothing. True, the author's

moulding is unobtrusive and betrays no obvious ulterior purpose, so that the integrity of the historical episode is preserved; yet its consequences are admittedly great, and my own impression as a reader had been (like Bååth's) that it was central to the saga and pervaded its thought. But how?

The next great incident is the killing of Höskuldr Þráinsson, Njál's fosterson, at the hands of Njál's sons and by Mörð's instigation, the first step being taken at Valgarð's funeral feast. In Höskuldr there is a distinctively Christian elevation, easily distinguishable (for example) from the pagan generosity of spirit shown in Ingimundr Þorsteinsson of *Vatzdæla saga*; his death (as clearly as that of Earl Magnús of Orkney) is a Christian sacrifice — all the more unmistakable because his widow, Hildigunnr, is so darkly bent on the ancient debt of vengeance that he himself has put away. Njáll has adopted him to confirm the peace with Þráin's kinsmen, and his relation to Njáll is significant. Before adopting him (chapter 94), Njáll asks the necessary but painful question, "Do you know how your father met his death?" Yes, the boy knows well Skarpheðinn killed him, but there is no need to bring that up now that a fair settlement has been made. "It is answered better than I asked," says Njáll, as if rebuked, "and you will be a good man." The devotion of the two is a sign of their spiritual kinship and one of the ways in which Njál's deepening piety can be shown in dramatic terms. His saintly firmness at the burning makes his death, like Höskuld's, a sacrifice, of which the brightness of his body after death is a token to thirteenth-century readers.

This strand of saintliness may be contrasted both with the wickedness of Mörðr and with the tragic dilemma of Flosi, pinned as fast between opposed duties as Skarpheðinn between the gable and the fallen roof. The weight of Flosi's burden may be suggested by that provision in the Gulapíng law (as surviving in Christian

Norway about the twelfth century) that no man shall thrice seek compensation for injuries without taking vengeance between.<sup>8</sup> The valkyrie-like Hildigunnr, who lays his duty upon him, conjuring him by the power of his Christ as well as by his manhood, and the horseman appearing in vision at Reykir and crying as he hurls a flaming brand into the east,

svá er um Flosa ráð  
sem fari kefli,

both suggest to the imagination the dark and ancient world in which this duty is rooted. Yet Flosi holds a service early on that Sunday morning when he and his men ride from Svínafell; it is with his responsibilities as a Christian man on his lips that he calls for fire; and these things we may believe. He did what it was laid on him to do, carried out every consequent duty, held his judgment intact, and made his pilgrimage to Rome. But absolution did not wash this away. The rotten ship in which he made his last voyage was good enough, he said, for an old man bound for death, and this is the last we know of him. In him the conflict of old and new is most deeply felt.

But it is most clearly seen in the suits for the killing of Höskuldr and the burning of Njáll. These great public occasions recall the Conversion, with a striking echo between chapters 104 and 137,<sup>9</sup> for peace or war is again the question, and in the second the civil battle threatened

<sup>8</sup> L. M. Larson, *The Earliest Norwegian Laws* (1935), 140. On the question of date, see Introduction, 26 ff.

<sup>9</sup> Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Um Njálu*, 49, sets out the two passages, italicising the most similar phrases. Chap. 104: "En þá er þeir kómu í Vellandkötlu . . . þá kom Hjalti . . . Riðu nú margir kristnir menn í móti þeim — ok riðu þeir með fylkðu liði á þing. Heiðnir menn höfðu ok fylkt fyrir. Ok var þá svá nær, at allr þingheimr myndi berjask; en þó varð þat eigi." Chap. 137: "Riðu þeir allt þar til, er þeir kómu á Beitivöllu. Kom þar til móts við þá Gizurr inn hvíti með allmikit fjölmenni . . . Riðu þeir þá á völlu ina efri, ok fylkðu þeir þar öllu liði sínu ok riðu svá á þing ofan. Flosi ok menn hans hljópu til vápna allir, ok var þá við sjálft, at þeir myndi berjask. En þeir Ásgrímr ok þeira sveit gerðusk ekki til þess ok riðu til búða sinna." It is of course the parallel between the incidents rather than between the words that strikes the reader and is intended to do so.

in the year 1000 actually breaks out. In the first Njáll speaks with biblical overtones of his love for Höskuldr, seeking as it were to revive the pledge of peace that had failed in the living man; and he addresses his plea to two of his supporters and three of his more moderate opponents, of which last Síðu-Hallr is one. Flosi is reluctant, but the Christian Hallr now asks him to repay a personal debt and grant him a request. Flosi, though I think he knows well what the request will be, agrees, saying that Hallr will ask nothing that is not to his honour. Hallr asks for peace, and arbitrators are appointed who lay a threefold fine for Höskuldr but contribute to it generously themselves; and Hallr, announcing the decision, calls on all to contribute "for God's sake" (chapter 123). One cannot resist the impression that a new spirit is abroad, though it now struggles in vain against rooted evil and ill luck. A quarrel arises; Flosi refuses to settle, calls his men into Almannagjá, and determines to go up against Njáll with steel and fire. The burning, the law-suit and the battle that follows are unregenerate enough; but their darkness sets off the light that shines afterwards. Síðu-Hallr and his son Ljótr are engaged in parting the fighters when Ljótr is killed by a random spear. Next day (chapter 145) all go to the Law Hill. Hallr now declares that he will show himself "lítilmenni" and ask his opponent Ásgrímr to make peace. Kári stands out, is reproved by Skapti, replies in stinging verses; Snorri mutters a verse, at which a great laughter arises. As the laughter dies away, Hallr offers to lay down his son unatoned for the sake of peace. This would, I think, have been impossible under the old dispensation — contrast Gunnar's care (chapters 38, 45) to show that his settlement with Njáll is not over-generous — yet all men now respond to this act of humility and good will. What verdicts and settlements and common sense and friendship and public spirit had not done is now prompted by an act of Christian self-

abnegation; and, although Kári has still a long account to settle with the burners, the assembly of the people is at one.

In this Síðu-Hallr is the main mover, so that his prominence in the whole account of the Conversion is now seen to be fully justified. But he has, I think, a more special significance. His character and standing are confirmed on his last appearance (chapter 147) when he rides to Holt to make peace with Flosi's stubborn opponent Þorgeirr Þórisson, and if possible with Kári. Hallr is of Flosi's party, yet when they see him riding to Holt the neighbours say that he must have a good errand, and on his arrival Þorgeirr and Kári go out to meet him, kiss him, and lead him to the high-seat. Hallr is in a sense the leading representative of the Christian spirit; but it is noteworthy that his positive goodness, though it stands out above the more personal motives of others, yet seems to command their recognition and win their will to his, which is not his own. Perhaps we should call him saintly, yet I believe we should all hesitate to use that word. The interesting thing about him is that he can be so fully good without losing his standing as a chief and citizen. From the time he opens his doors to Þangbrandr and cannily stipulates that the archangel Michael shall have a special care of his convert, we see him as a man of firm judgment, practical as well as foresighted, speaking with the weight of rectitude, yet fully in touch with the standards of his own society, as his dealings with Flosi show. His goodness is of this world, whatever its allegiance to another. In him Christianity takes root in Iceland.

Others have said that the Conversion has important consequences.<sup>10</sup> I have simply tried to trace some of these in order to show how important they are, and also to suggest that, although never abstracted from the full

<sup>10</sup> A. U. Bååth, *op. cit.*, 145-6; Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Um Njálu*, 44; *Brennu-Njáls Saga*, Formáli, cxxv; Þorkell Jóhannesson, *Skírnir* CXVI (1942), 100. I have not found more than a general statement on this topic.

tide of life, they have a significant place in the total pattern. It seems clear at least that the author must have felt he had ample reason to devote six chapters to this event, which, in accordance with his common practice, he shows existing in its own right before relating it to his story. I should go further and say that he was right to make this event stand out as it does, for it seems to me to mark a most important division in the saga. The conflict of good and evil that Einar Ólafur notes in *Njála* is deeply changed with the coming of Christianity, and this change affects the action itself as well as men's attitudes to it. In the earlier part, the forces of friendship and kindness, justice legal and humane, good sense, moderation, and social conscience oppose the envy, animosity, vanity, and self-interest of human kind. The alignment of forces is of course not as simple as this, but certainly the conflict is of the secular world. When Gunnarr is at last cut down in his house and Gizurr pronounces that noble sentence on his defence, we feel that the dead and the living are both satisfied, even though vengeance is still to be taken. Gunnarr sings in his barrow. It is a very different matter when Höskuldr falls on his infield, forgiving his enemies. This sacrifice of innocence is a sin to be expiated in fire. Flosi's duty is terrible, as Gizur's was not; and the powers of good that are now called out go beyond those of pre-Christian days. May we not also trace to Christian influence a certain warm expansiveness that shows itself from time to time in the latter part of the saga — sometimes in small things such as Hjalti's offer of help in chapter 118 — and that seems to mark a significant change from the sobriety of paganism? Old things have not been swept away, but a new leaven has come in; good and evil touch deeper chords in men's minds and the human condition is seen under a new aspect. In this sense one may fairly see chapters 100-105 as the centre of the saga, and their emergence from its main course as an effective part of the design.

It seems clear that Brian's Battle — a decisive battle between the old faith and the new — is in some way linked with the ideas just discussed. The author has certainly planned the episode well in advance, before the account of the Conversion. In chapter 89, where he brings Njál's sons back to the Orkneys to winter with Earl Sigurðr and very summarily records their raids as far as Man, his purpose as an artist is probably to fix this region (the jumping-off-place for Ireland) firmly in our imagination; and certainly he records Earl Gilli's marriage to prepare us for the part he is to play 240 pages later (chapter 154) in sending his brother-in-law to Ireland against King Brjánn. It is said that Brian's Battle is linked with the main narrative only because fifteen anonymous burners fell there; but if the author felt that they were his excuse — and clearly they are not more than an excuse — for this elaborate episode, one might have expected him to make rather more of them. We are told that they went, that they fell, and that Hrafn inn rauði reported their fall as an afterthought when Flosi asked after them — "Þar fellu þeir allir", he says, and proceeds to more personal news of Þorsteinn Hallsson and Halldórr Guðmundarson. The impact of this scene (at the end of chapter 157) is in Flosi's response as he turns to Earl Gilli and says that they must be going for they have a pilgrimage on their hands. In the account of the battle — with the extravagant wonders (many known from no other source) that precede and follow it — what is emphasised is the moral and supernatural conflict; and in detail the light falls, not on anyone closely connected with the rest of the saga, but on such things as the enchanted raven banner of the Orkney earl and Hrafn's narrow escape from hell fire. To me all this appears as a kind of Brocken spectre, projecting the conflict of faiths already existing in the saga; and the well-known story of Þiðrandi Hallsson whom the *dísir* slew, retiring afterwards to north and south like the singers of the Darraðarljóð

in *Njála*, would give this interpretation some support by way of analogy. But perhaps it is enough to agree with Einar Ólafur that Brian's Battle is essential to the artistic economy of the saga, lifting it above Kári's episodic pursuit of vengeance, and clearing the air, as by a portentous thunder-storm, for his reconciliation with Flosi. Its imaginative effect is enough to justify its place, however we interpret it; and the simple experiment of removing it would show how sound the author's artistic intuition was.

. . . . .

This re-examination of the saga at a couple of key-points is something of which I am not sure that I fully approve. After all, no one denies that *Njála* makes a very impressive whole, and those who are wisely content to reread it without consulting its anatomists may well wonder what this storm in a tea-cup has been about. Great books should not be worried or over-driven, and the question whether this one is a little more or a little less closely-knit than has generally been supposed should perhaps be left to each reader to settle for himself. For my part, I am half sorry to have formulated opinions which may make it difficult for me to reread the book with a free mind.

My excuse must be that I have been prompted to formulate them by what seemed to me fairly widespread misunderstandings, and that my limited argument has at least been intended to throw some light on the character of the saga. If my findings have on the whole been right, it follows that we may read it with a firmer trust in what I have called its narrative rhetoric — a term that should include the larger moulding of the story as well as the author's more detailed indications of intention — than its commentators have always shown. Much, however, will depend on what they are looking for. To come to the sagas with preconceptions derived either from different forms of literature or from untutored logic is to court

error; and I have been uneasy lest my own blunt and summary analysis should err in this way, for it is in the nature of analysis to abstract, and this is just what the sagas do not do. As Ker puts it,<sup>11</sup> they are "immersed in matter", and the best of them "have found a way of saving the particulars of the family and local histories, without injury to the imaginative and poetical order of their narratives".

<sup>11</sup> *Epic and Romance*, 184-6.

# ICELANDIC TRADITIONS OF THE SCYLDINGS<sup>1</sup>

BY JAKOB BENEDIKTSSON

EVERY student of *Beowulf* knows the intricate problems posed by the numerous and conflicting traditions about the ancient Danish kings, the Scyldings. In these problems the Norse or Icelandic traditions play a considerable part, and they have been studied and discussed with great learning by many distinguished scholars. I am not going to try to offer any new solutions of the old problems; what I am going to discuss are the Icelandic traditions, seen from an Icelandic point of view, especially some characteristics of the Icelandic sources and some aspects of their relationship.

Roughly, the Icelandic traditions about the Scyldings, as we know them, can be divided into two groups: the historical or learned versions and the more popular forms found in the *fornaldarsögur* (the heroic sagas) and the folk-tales. Outstanding examples of the two main groups are *Skjöldunga saga* and *Hrólfs saga kraka*. This distinction must not, however, be taken too literally, because behind both groups lies the same main body of traditions; the difference consists mainly in the presentation, and the spirit of the writing. The historical works are concerned with what Andreas Heusler called 'die gelehrte Urgeschichte', the learned prehistory, of the Northern peoples. Their aim is to establish an uninterrupted chronological and genealogical sequence of the Danish kings from Óðinn to the beginnings of Icelandic history. In order to construct a coherent narrative of this sort, it was of course necessary to combine various traditions of single kings and separate episodes, because we may take it for granted that such traditions

<sup>1</sup> This paper was delivered as a lecture in the Universities of London and Oxford in May 1959.

did not exist as a chronological history or unified narrative covering a long series of kings.

The oldest and most important work of the historical group is, or rather was, *Skjöldunga saga*, the Saga of the Scyldings. This saga furnishes not only the starting-point, but also the chief problem in every discussion of the Icelandic traditions of the Scyldings. Many of the later Icelandic sources are wholly or partly derived from this saga, and all of them must be evaluated by comparison with it. Now, the difficulty of such a comparison lies in the peculiar textual history of *Skjöldunga saga*. In fact, the saga does not exist at all in the same sense as the better known kings' sagas. *Skjöldunga saga* must have been written about 1200, but of its original text only a comparatively small fragment is preserved — six vellum leaves of a fourteenth-century manuscript.<sup>2</sup> Besides that, we have some direct and indirect quotations from the saga in other works, but we cannot be sure that any of these quotations is verbally correct. The general outline of the saga is, however, tolerably well known through a Latin abstract of the text, written in the last years of the sixteenth century by the Icelandic humanist, Arngrímur Jónsson the Learned.<sup>3</sup> He used a vellum manuscript — since lost — of *Skjöldunga saga* as his main source for the first part of a Latin work, *Rerum Danicarum Fragmenta*<sup>4</sup> which he wrote at the instigation of Danish historians. These historians had, just about that time, become aware of the existence of the old Icelandic historical literature, and were anxious to get more information about it and translations or excerpts from it for possible use in their own works about Danish and Scandinavian history. The work I mentioned, *Rerum Danicarum Fragmenta*, was, in spite of its title, a reasonably well-connected history of Denmark, because

<sup>2</sup> AM 1 e $\beta$  I fol., edited by C. af Petersens and E. Olson in *Sögur Danakonunga* (1919-25), 3-25.

<sup>3</sup> See *Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana* XII (1957), Introduction, especially pp. 39-61, 107-117.

<sup>4</sup> Edited in *Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana* IX (1950), 331-474.

Arngrímur Jónsson based it essentially on two Icelandic historical works, *Skjöldunga saga* and *Knýtlinga saga*, additions from other sources consisting only of minor episodes and details. But Arngrímur Jónsson did not translate the saga, he only made an abstract of it, and, as we can see from comparison with other sources, this abstract is in some places very much abridged. Even the name of the saga is never mentioned in Arngrímur Jónsson's work — he does not as a rule give us any exact information about his sources — but we know it from Snorri Sturluson's *Ynglinga saga* in *Heimskringla*. Snorri used *Skjöldunga saga* in several places both in the *Edda* and in *Ynglinga saga*, and in one instance he expressly refers to the saga by its name. In addition, we have another proof of its existence as an independent work, in a notice written in an Icelandic vellum about 1300, where *Skjöldunga bók* — the book of the Scyldings — is mentioned in a list of saga-manuscripts.<sup>5</sup>

Arngrímur Jónsson's abstract from *Skjöldunga saga* remained little known for almost 300 years. His work on the history of Denmark was never intended to be printed, but was only written for the use of his Danish friends as source-material. The recipient of the work, the Danish Royal Historiographer Niels Krag, did not, however, live long enough to make any use of it in his writings, and although some other contemporary historians had it copied, the use they made of it was negligible.<sup>6</sup> Arngrímur Jónsson's original and all the known copies came, in the end, to the University Library of Copenhagen, where they were destroyed in the fire of 1728. By a lucky chance, a Danish scholar had it copied late in the seventeenth century, and this copy is still preserved in the Royal Library of Copenhagen.<sup>7</sup> But it was not till 1894 that the text became known, when Axel Olrik

<sup>5</sup> In the manuscript Perg. 4to no. 2 in the Royal Library, Stockholm, fol. 79r ('skiavlldunga .b.'), see *Den store saga om Olav den hellige*, utg. av O. A. Johnsen og Jón Helgason, (1941), 886.

<sup>6</sup> See *Bibl. Arnam.* XII, 71-2.

<sup>7</sup> Don. var. 1. fol. Barth. XXV.

printed most of the abstract from *Skjoldunga saga* with a scholarly discussion of the text and its implications.<sup>8</sup> In this article and in his subsequent studies in Saxo and the old traditions of Danish history, Olrik laid the foundations of the study of *Skjoldunga saga* and its relationship to other sources, Scandinavian and Icelandic as well as Old English. His pioneer labours in this field have in fact been the basis for everything that has been written about *Skjoldunga saga* since his day.

The full text of Arngrímur Jónsson's abstract of *Skjoldunga saga* was printed for the first time in its context in my edition of Arngrímur Jónsson's Latin works.<sup>9</sup> In the commentary to the edition, I undertook a new survey of the material and tried to assess the validity of some of Olrik's conclusions. I shall not go into details of this discussion, but only mention one point where I was led to a different result from Olrik's.<sup>10</sup>

By comparing them with Arngrímur Jónsson's text, Olrik discovered the traces of *Skjoldunga saga* which are to be found in old Icelandic literature, not only the preserved vellum fragment that had been published as *Sögubrot af fornkonungum* (a fragment about ancient kings), but also the material from *Skjoldunga saga* found in other texts. Olrik concluded that this material represented two versions of *Skjoldunga saga*, "a shorter and a longer version . . . the more elaborate presentation is the older of the two, the other, with more of the character of a chronicle, is the younger".<sup>11</sup> According to Olrik, Arngrímur Jónsson's version belonged to the shorter redaction. I shall not repeat my arguments on this matter, but my conclusion was, in brief, that Olrik's theory could not be proved, and that there are no valid reasons for assuming that more than one redaction of the saga ever existed.

<sup>8</sup> In *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie* 1894, pp. 83-164.

<sup>9</sup> *Bibl. Arnam.* IX, 333-49, 354-9, 458-66.

<sup>10</sup> See *Bibl. Arnam.* XII, 107-17.

<sup>11</sup> *Aarbøger* 1894, p. 153.

According to this theory, we must try to reconstruct *Skjoldunga saga* on the basis of the Latin abstract and the literary sources that are derived from the saga, without supposing a possible source of error in the form of an abbreviated version of the original text, made some time in the thirteenth century. This means that all the abbreviations and omissions we undoubtedly find in Arngrímur Jónsson's text must be due to him; and the problem is to try to understand his way of working, what he chiefly wished to preserve and what he supposed to be of less interest to his Danish readers and therefore to be abridged or omitted altogether.

There is no doubt about the chief aim of his work. It was to establish a complete and continuous sequence of the Danish kings, both chronologically and genealogically, and to give an account of the chief events of importance for the royal succession. Consequently, he is not so much interested in the exploits of the kings in other countries or in the story of the kingdoms they may have ruled outside Denmark. Only so far as these events affected their kingdom in Denmark can we expect Arngrímur Jónsson to relate them in any greater detail. As an example we may take his rendering of the story of the battle between King Aðils of Uppsala and King Áli, on the ice of Lake Vänér; as is well known, these persons are the same as Eadgils and Onela in *Beowulf*. Snorri Sturluson refers to this battle in the words: "Concerning this battle there is much said in the *Skjoldunga saga*";<sup>12</sup> this is just the quotation I mentioned before. Now, in Arngrímur Jónsson's abstract there are only a few lines about the battle.<sup>13</sup> But this is quite in keeping with his manner of working, for the battle was a Swedish affair, and its only connection with the history of Denmark was that Hrólfr kraki sent King Aðils some troops to help him against his foe.

<sup>12</sup> *Heimskringla*, ed. Finnur Jónsson, (1893-1900), I 56.

<sup>13</sup> *Bibl. Arnam.* IX, 346.

Besides the writings of Snorri Sturluson the most important historical work that has borrowed material from *Skjöldunga saga* is the expanded saga of Óláfr Tryggvason,<sup>14</sup> but as these borrowings come from the last part of the saga they do not concern us here.<sup>15</sup> But other sources too of the *fornaldarsögur*-type have preserved material derived from *Skjöldunga saga*. A fragment commonly called *Upphaf allra frásagna* ('the beginning of all stories')<sup>16</sup> depends largely upon the beginning of *Skjöldunga saga*, the *Þáttr af Ragnars sonum* ('the tale of the sons of Ragnarr loðbrók')<sup>17</sup> has borrowed some material from it, and the *Bjarka rímur*<sup>18</sup>, an epic cycle from the beginning of the fifteenth century, is to a great extent derived from the saga, but presumably indirectly, as most scholars agree that the immediate source of the *rímur* was a lost saga, which in its turn must have depended upon *Skjöldunga saga*, at least in part.<sup>19</sup>

On the other hand, the preserved saga of Hrólfr kraki seems to have made no direct use of *Skjöldunga saga*. This saga is now extant only in seventeenth-century paper manuscripts that apparently go back to a rather late redaction, perhaps from about 1400.<sup>20</sup> In many respects it differs considerably from *Skjöldunga saga*, as I shall show later. Finally, the saga of Ragnarr loðbrók seems to have been, at least in part, independent of *Skjöldunga saga*, but it is difficult to tell how much *Skjöldunga saga* told about Ragnarr loðbrók, since Arngrímur Jónsson used the *Ragnars saga* itself in his abstract, as well as *Skjöldunga saga*.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Edited in *Fornmanna sögur* I-III (1825-27); a new critical edition is in progress (*Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, udg. af Ó. Halldórsson, 1. bind, 1958).

<sup>15</sup> See *Bibl. Arnam.* XII, 114-5, 119-20, 126-8.

<sup>16</sup> *Fornmanna sögur* XI, 412-4; cf. *Bibl. Arnam.* XII, 110-11.

<sup>17</sup> *Hauksbók* (1892-96), 458-67; cf. *Bibl. Arnam.* XII, 113.

<sup>18</sup> Published by F. Jónsson in *Hrólfs saga kraka og Bjarkarímur*, (1904); see also B. K. Þórólfsson, *Rímur fyrir 1600*, (1934), 345-51.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *Bibl. Arnam.* XII, 233-7.

<sup>20</sup> See the edition of Finnur Jónsson, cited above.

<sup>21</sup> See *Bibl. Arnam.* XII, 113, 260-62.

With this material at our disposal we are able to get a somewhat clearer picture of *Skjoldunga saga* and Arngrímur Jónsson's treatment of his source. We can affirm that, even if it is as a rule too meagre for our liking, his abstract has often preserved details that are lacking in the works derived from the saga. On the other hand the secondary sources can very often be used to supplement Arngrímur Jónsson's omissions and abbreviations, and thus help us to reconstruct the character of *Skjoldunga saga*.

To summarize very briefly, *Skjoldunga saga* must have contained a sequence of the Danish kings from Skjoldr, the son of Óðinn, to Gorm the Old. About many of the kings the saga seems to have been very brief, about others it has offered longer tales, or, to put it in other terms, the saga consisted of episodes, connected with genealogical sequences. The chief episodes were the tales of King Fróði, of Hrólfr kraki and his family, of Haraldr hilditǫnn and the battle of Brávellir, of Ragnarr loðbrók and of Gorm the Old.

The sources of these episodes were oral traditions, sometimes combined with separate lays or *þulur* (mnemonic verses). Some poems of this sort are preserved; the existence of others can be inferred from a number of sources. Thus, we have in *Snorra Edda* the *Grottasǫngr*, which treats part of the story of Fróði. The prologue to the lay in the *Edda* is evidently derived from *Skjoldunga saga*, but there is no reason to suppose that *Grottasǫngr* itself was a part of the saga, even if the author knew and used the lay and the traditions accompanying it.<sup>22</sup>

A part of the story of Hrólfr kraki was treated in the old lay of *Bjarkamál*, preserved only in Saxo's Latin hexameters and in some small fragments in Icelandic sources. About the battle of Brávellir there existed a *þula*, a metrical list of the participating warriors, which

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *Bibl. Arnam.* XII, 110-11.

has been used both by Saxo and the author of *Skjöldunga saga*, as can be seen in the preserved fragment, *Sögubrot af fornkonungum*.<sup>23</sup> Finally, we can mention the rather late lay, *Krákumál*, which may have been one of *Skjöldunga saga*'s sources for the story of Ragnarr loðbrók.

Now, what I have said does not mean that *Skjöldunga saga* did not use other sources than the lays I mentioned. The author of the saga undoubtedly knew numerous traditions and possibly also lays or verses that have since disappeared without leaving any trace. It is quite certain that many and different traditions of the Danish kings were widespread in Iceland in the twelfth century. Some of these traditions may originally have belonged to different cycles, because we often see that the Icelandic sources combine stories which in older traditions, especially in Old English poetry, are told about quite different persons and events. Similarly Saxo, in many of the accounts which he most probably got from Icelandic sources, often has a version that differs considerably from the Icelandic tales. Finally, some later Icelandic sources disagree with *Skjöldunga saga* in many respects. In some instances it can be proved, by comparison with Old English poetry, that the later Icelandic sources have preserved old traditions in a more original form than *Skjöldunga saga*. The opposite is of course often the case, that *Skjöldunga saga* has the more original version or has preserved traditions that are forgotten or altered in later sources.

This is especially clear when we compare *Skjöldunga saga* with the story of Hrólfr kraki. The preserved *Hrólfs saga* is not, as I have already said, derived from *Skjöldunga saga*, but has, at least in part, used parallel sources, at any rate *Bjarkamál*. On account of its linguistic and stylistic form, the preserved version of

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Bjarni Guðnason, 'Um Brávallaþulu', in *Skírnir* CXXXII (1958), 82-128, and literature cited there. In this paper the author tries to show that the *þula* is of Icelandic origin, and probably from the twelfth century.

*Hrólfs saga* can hardly be older than from about 1400, but many old elements in the story make it probable that at least some parts of the saga existed in an older version.

Be that as it may, it is at any rate certain that *Hrólfs saga* contains some very old traditions that differ from *Skjöldunga saga*, but the context of these traditions has often been forgotten or altered. One of the most important examples is the story of Bjarki — the most celebrated of King Hrólfr's warriors — or Bøðvarr Bjarki as the Icelanders call him. In Saxo he is always called Bjarki, and the name of the lay *Bjarkamál* also suggests that this was his real name. The Icelandic name Bøðvarr bjarki is commonly explained as a misunderstanding of the composite name Bøðvar-Bjarki, that is battle-Bjarki, a sort of nickname of the same type as for instance Víga-Styrr, Víga-Glúmr. The first part of the name (properly a genitive of *bøð* = battle) would then have been identified with the personal name Bøðvarr. If this is true, this misunderstanding must be older than *Skjöldunga saga*, because in the Latin abstract the name Bodvarus is used, and the name Bjarki does not occur at all.

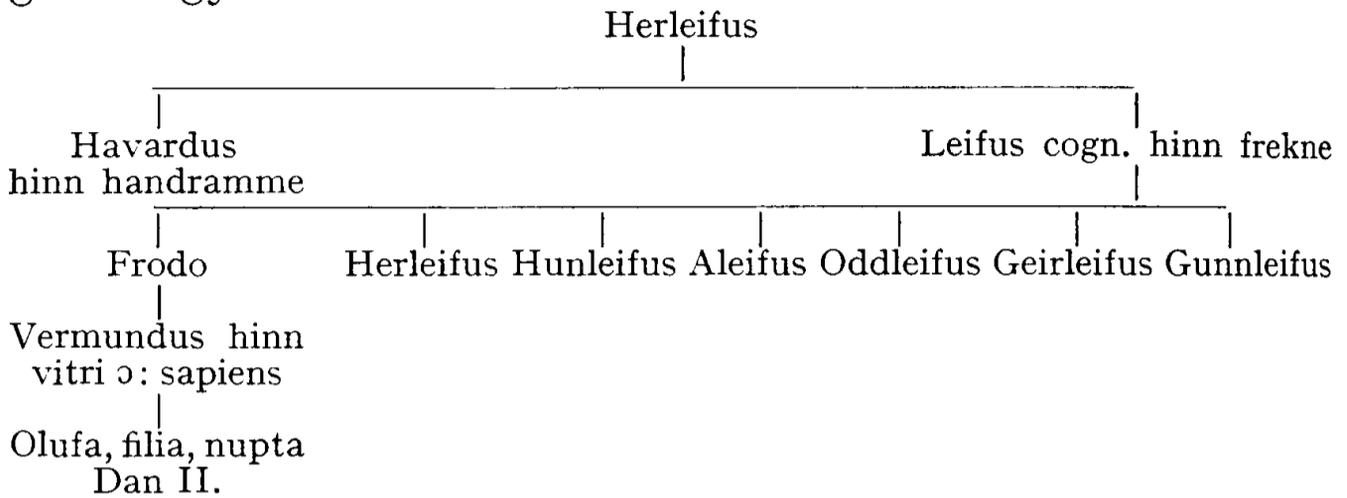
*Hrólfs saga kraka* has, on the other hand, undoubtedly preserved some very old traits from the traditions about Bjarki, and in some cases the account of the saga can explain details in Saxo that otherwise would be quite unintelligible. In addition the saga tells a long tale about his origin, that he was a son of a Norwegian prince who was turned into a bear by a wicked stepmother, and that his mother was a girl named Bera, which means a she-bear. This tallies with the name of Bjarki which in itself must mean "Little bear". We have here the well-known folk-tale motif of the Bear's son in which many scholars have seen a parallel to the Beowulf-story, and this supposition is strengthened by the fact that there are several other points in the story of Bjarki that show parallelisms to Beowulf.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> See R. W. Chambers, *Beowulf* (second edition, 1932), 54-61, 365-81.

When we now turn to *Skjoldunga saga*, it is difficult to tell how much of the tale of Bjarki was included in its account of King Hrólfr and his warriors. In Arngrímur Jónsson's abstract Bjarki is only mentioned in the brief account of King Hrólfr's warriors and of the slaying of Agnarr. His origins and his other exploits, both before and after he entered the King's services, are not mentioned at all in the abstract. We must, however, not be so rash as to conclude anything *ex silentio* from the abstract on such a matter, because it belongs to the category of material that Arngrímur Jónsson would be especially prone to abbreviate or omit altogether. And in the *Bjarka rímur*, which depend largely on *Skjoldunga saga*, there is a detailed account of Bjarki's origins and exploits, and this account differs considerably from the tale in *Hrólfs saga*. As R. W. Chambers has pointed out, only the *rímur* tell us that Bjarki was a member of the auxiliary force that Hrólfr kraki sent to King Aðils of Uppsala against King Áli in the warfare that ended with the battle on the ice of Lake Vänér.<sup>25</sup> This tale is evidently a parallel to the account in *Beowulf* where it is said that Beowulf became a friend of Eadgils and assisted him in his expedition against King Onela. Taking the equation Eadgils — Aðils and Onela — Áli for granted, this point leads to an almost certain parallelism between Beowulf and Bjarki. This element in the story must therefore be very old and may well have stood in *Skjoldunga saga*. In the story of Bjarki in the later sources other elements have been combined with this matter, some of them from folk-tales, such as the Bear's-son motif. These parts of the tale are not likely to have been included in *Skjoldunga saga*; there are no traces of them in the abstract nor in Saxo. The *Bjarka rímur* must have got this material either from a now lost version of *Hrólfs saga* or from a separate tale of Bjarki, which may also have been used in the preserved *Hrólfs saga*.

<sup>25</sup> R. W. Chambers, *op. cit.* 60.

As an example of a detail that we find only in *Skjöldunga saga* we may take a bit of genealogy from the beginning of the list of the Danish kings. Here we have, after the kings Skjöldr — Leifr — Fróði, the following genealogy:<sup>26</sup>



According to Arngrímur Jónsson, Leifr hinn frœkni became king after his brother, and after him his six sons, one after another. After the last of the six brothers, Frodo, the son of Havardus, finally succeeded to the throne, and his descendants after him. Now, this succession involves some rather embarrassing chronological difficulties, which I shall not even try to explain. Arngrímur Jónsson evidently did not find very much about these kings in his source; it is possible that the Icelandic text was confused in some way or other.<sup>27</sup> But the fact remains that three of the brothers have names that correspond exactly to those of three warriors known from *Beowulf* and the *Finnsburg Fragment*; Hūnlāf, Ordlāf and Gūðlāf. This was pointed out long ago by H. M. Chadwick; and it is clear that these names in *Skjöldunga saga* reflect in some way a half-forgotten tradition of these warriors.<sup>28</sup> In Old English tradition they are closely associated, though never called brothers, and in *Beowulf* they appear to belong to a company of Danes. But here the resemblance ends; of the fight at Finnsburg there is no trace in *Skjöldunga saga*. How the men got into the

<sup>26</sup> See *Bibl. Arnam.* IX, 336.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. *Bibl. Arnam.* XII, 228, and literature cited there.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. R. W. Chambers, *op. cit.* 252 n. 2.

genealogical table of the Scyldings we do not know. Olrik suggested that Arngrímur Jónsson had misunderstood his source, and it is evident that Aleifus, one of the six brothers, is the same person as Áleifr lítilláti, who is listed in the Icelandic genealogies as the successor of Vermundr, and the last king before Danr. Unfortunately we shall never know what stood in Arngrímur Jónsson's source, but his account shows that some traces of a tradition of the three brothers, whose names are associated in Old English poetry, must have survived in twelfth-century Iceland. The original context has been forgotten, only the names of the Danish princes remained.

These examples are by no means the only ones from which we can see that traditions of the Scyldings in several versions must have abounded in twelfth-century Iceland. More or less convincing parallels to *Beowulf* have been adduced from numerous Icelandic stories, for instance the much discussed episode in *Grettis saga* about Grettir's fight with the giantess and his diving under the waterfall to slay the giant in the cave behind.<sup>29</sup> This story and many others have never been part of the Scylding-traditions proper in Iceland. They have lived on as separate tales or motifs and have, in later works, been attached to various heroes, foreign as well as Icelandic.

Variant traditions concerning the latter parts of *Skjoldunga saga* have also been known in Iceland. As examples we can cite the traditions about Ragnarr loðbrók, known from his separate saga, and from the story of Gorm the Old and his family, where the original version of the *Jómsvíkinga saga* — composed at approximately the same time as *Skjoldunga saga* — has a genealogy quite different from *Skjoldunga saga*.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to all this material from oral tradition, we may assume that the author of *Skjoldunga saga* had one

<sup>29</sup> See Chambers, *op. cit.* 48-52, 146-82, 451-85.

<sup>30</sup> See *Bibl. Arnam.* XII, 114-15, 119-20, 126-28.

more source: a genealogical list of the Danish kings. This assumption is based on very sound reasons. First, we know that some of the most prominent chieftains in Iceland traced their pedigree back to the Danish kings, and second, we know that Ari Þorgilsson the Wise wrote both an *ættartala* ('genealogical list') and *konunga ævi* ('lives of kings') in his older *Íslendingabók* ('Book of the Icelanders'), since lost. The character of the older *Íslendingabók* is admittedly in many respects a controversial subject, but it seems probable that some part at any rate of the royal Danish genealogy was included in Ari's work, possibly only of the same character as the family-tree of the Ynglingar at the end of the preserved *Íslendingabók*. It has been assumed, with a great degree of probability, that a tale about the settler Ketilbjörn the Old was included in the older *Íslendingabók*,<sup>31</sup> but in other Icelandic sources his family is traced back to Ragnarr loðbrók. Such a genealogy or others of a similar kind may very well have been written by Ari.

This is not to say that the author of *Skjöldunga saga* found a complete genealogy of the Danish kings in Ari's work. I shall return to another possible explanation later. In fact, we can see that *Skjöldunga saga* differs markedly from Ari in a genealogical point, namely in the question of the eponyms of the royal houses of Denmark and Norway. *Skjöldunga saga* makes Skjöldr, the first Danish king, a son of Óðinn and a brother of Yngvi, the eponym of the Ynglingar. Ari, on the other hand, makes Yngvi a king of the Turks, and does not say anything at all about his descent from Óðinn.

This innovation may be older than the composition of *Skjöldunga saga*, and it has the character of a learned speculation. In this way we get three sons of Óðinn, Skjöldr, Yngvi and Sæmingr, as heads of three famous families, the Skjöldungar, the Ynglingar and the Háleygir,

<sup>31</sup> See Björn Sigfússon, *Um Íslendingabók* (1944), 65 ff.; G. Turville-Petre, *Origins of Icelandic Literature* (1953), 97-8.

the dynasty of the Norwegian earls. About the two last-named families there already existed two genealogical poems, the *Ynglingatal* and the *Háleygjatal*. The latter was a younger imitation of the former, but this of course did not necessarily hinder later writers from taking its genealogy at face value. However, from these two poems it could only be gathered that Sæmingr was a son of Óðinn but decidedly not that he was Yngvi's brother.

We must therefore suppose that an Icelander with antiquarian interests — not necessarily the author of *Skjöldunga saga* — made Skjöldr a son of Óðinn, and in order to equate the three families he gave Yngvi, too, the same position.

We have here a clear example of a trend that is very much in evidence in the earliest Icelandic literature: the learned interest, the interest in tracing back the history of the Icelanders not only to the Settlement, but also to the origin of the Scandinavian peoples, through genealogical connexions with the royal houses of Scandinavia. This interest is of course influenced by contemporary historical literature in other countries. In a way it is an interesting parallel to the first humanistic writings in Iceland in the last years of the sixteenth century, when Arngrímur Jónsson used the old Icelandic literature to connect Scandinavian prehistory with the historical theories of European humanism.

It is impossible to know for certain how much the Icelandic *literati* of the eleventh and twelfth centuries knew of contemporary historical literature. But we do know that a number of Icelanders studied abroad from the latter part of the eleventh century onwards, and that foreign schoolmasters were brought to Iceland to teach in the new cathedral school of Hólar in the beginning of the twelfth century. Both the Icelandic students and the foreigners must have brought books to Iceland and in addition must have transmitted knowledge acquired abroad to their pupils. The learned ideas of contemporary

Europe could thus penetrate in many ways into the Icelandic world of letters.

The author of *Skjoldunga saga* wrote his work in a period when Icelandic saga-writing was in the making. He did not, like his contemporary, Saxo, seek his models in classical antiquity; he followed the way of his countrymen in writing in Icelandic. For his type of work the only native models were the books of Ari and Sæmundr the Wise, the fathers of Icelandic historiography. Both had written lives of kings, and both works are lost. The relationship between them and *Skjoldunga saga* can only be guessed at.

On the other hand the author of *Skjoldunga saga* had, as source-material, the traditions and lays about the ancient history of Denmark that must have been widely known in twelfth-century Iceland. We have no reason to suppose that any of these traditions had been written down at that time. So far as we can see, the writing of heroic sagas proper did not begin until much later, when an altered taste, probably due in part to the translated tales of chivalry and romance, had paved the way for a new type of literature. The author of *Skjoldunga saga* faced a wholly new problem in presenting this material in writing. How was he to weld this fragmentary material into a unified narrative? His solution was, as we have seen, to connect the episodes by means of the genealogical list of the Danish kings, which he probably knew in writing in some form or another. In doing this he must of course have made a selection from the many more or less conflicting tales he knew, and perhaps himself made new combinations or revisions of half-forgotten stories. An important point is that the saga as a whole was presented as genuine history, connected as it was not only with the well-known royal houses of Denmark and Norway, but also with famous Icelandic chieftains of the Settlement period whose descendants were still the most prominent families in Iceland.

But why should anybody in Iceland bother to write a saga of the ancient kings of Denmark? Several years ago Professor Einar Ól. Sveinsson suggested an explanation that goes far to answer this question.<sup>32</sup> In a number of Icelandic sources there exists a genealogy of the Scyldings combined with a genealogy from the Danish king Haraldr hilditǫnn to Icelandic settlers. It was pointed out long ago that this genealogy was in fact the pedigree of the Icelandic family of the Oddaverjar, the chieftains of Oddi in the south of Iceland; and it has been suggested that this genealogy was originally compiled by Sæmundr Sigfússon the Wise. He lived from 1056 to 1133 and was thus a somewhat older contemporary of Ari Þorgilsson.<sup>33</sup> It must be added that this genealogy agrees in the main with *Skjöldunga saga*, the variations between the single versions not being so great as to form valid reasons for doubting a common origin. Einar Ól. Sveinsson took up this suggestion and elaborated it further by proposing that *Skjöldunga saga* was written by somebody closely connected with the family of the Oddaverjar. This suggestion fits neatly the facts I have outlined. Sæmundr the Wise was one of the first Icelanders to study abroad and he is known to have written a book about the kings of Norway; these facts show his historical interests and that he presumably had some knowledge of foreign historical literature. His descendants became some of the most prominent chieftains in Iceland, especially his grandson, Jón Loptsson (who died in 1197) and his sons. Jón Loptsson's mother was a natural daughter of King Magnús Bareleg of Norway, and this fact seems to have added considerably to the family pride. About 1190 an unknown poet composed the poem *Noregs konunga tal*, a genealogical poem in praise of Jón Loptsson, where the pedigree of the kings of Norway is traced down to him.

<sup>32</sup> See *Sagnaritun Oddaverja* (*Studia Islandica* I, 1937), especially pp. 12-16, 39-42.

<sup>33</sup> See Halldór Hermannsson, *Sæmund Sigfússon and the Oddaverjar* (*Islandica* XXII, 1932).

Its chief source was the work of Sæmundr the Wise on the kings of Norway. In the twelfth century Oddi was a renowned seat of learning, and it is especially significant that Snorri Sturluson got his education there as a fosterson of Jón Loptsson.

Einar Ól. Sveinsson has advanced very sound arguments for the theory that *Orkneyinga saga*, the saga of the earls of Orkney, was written under the auspices of the Oddaverjar.<sup>34</sup> The introduction to this saga deals with the prehistory of Norway in much the same spirit as prevails in *Skjöldunga saga*. It may go back to the work of Sæmundr, but at any rate it shows the interest in the learned prehistory that the two authors had in common.

As Professor Sveinsson has pointed out, it was quite natural for the Oddaverjar to be interested in the history of the Scyldings. In the first place, it is probable that their family pride would prompt them to have such a work written as a parallel to the work of Sæmundr about the Norwegian kings, so that the family might possess a saga about both the royal houses from which they descended. In addition, the literary activities in Oddi made it just the place where one would expect to find knowledge about old lays and tales, especially concerning the royal forefathers of the family. Finally, Snorri Sturluson later made extensive use of both *Orkneyinga saga* and *Skjöldunga saga* in his *Heimskringla*, and in the prologue to that work he says that he has written down certain genealogies of the kings, "as they have been taught me".<sup>35</sup> This has already been understood by several scholars as referring to his education in Oddi.

If we agree with this suggestion that *Skjöldunga saga* owes its origin to the Oddaverjar, several pieces of the puzzle begin to fall into place. Interest in the exploits of their heroic ancestors is a characteristic trait of the Oddaverjar, as may be seen for instance from the names

<sup>34</sup> *op. cit.* 16-39.

<sup>35</sup> *Heimskringla* (1893-1900), I 4.

they gave their children in the thirteenth century.<sup>36</sup> Among them we find — contrary to Icelandic custom — several names from the old heroic stories and later from foreign romances; in the first group we find such well-known names from the Scylding family as Hálfðan and Haraldr. Hálfðan Sæmundarson, a grandson of Jón Loptsson, is the first Icelander we know of to bear that name so famous in the story of the Scyldings; from *Ragnars saga loðbrókar* comes the very uncommon name Randalín.

This interest in the old heroic tales did not develop suddenly; it must have had old roots in a family, proud of its ancestry and endowed with historical interests. On those grounds, one can say, there is no family in Iceland around the year 1200 more likely than the Oddaverjar to have instigated the writing of *Skjöldunga saga*.

Finally, I should like to add a few words about the influence of *Skjöldunga saga* on later works. I have repeatedly mentioned Snorri Sturluson's use of the saga; there is no doubt that it was not only his source but also his model for the *Ynglinga saga*. But the influence of *Skjöldunga saga* upon another genre of literature is equally certain. The oldest of the *fornaldarsögur* are just those *saga* are more or less directly connected with *Skjöldunga* that: the *Völsunga saga* and *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, which, in the extant version, is written as a sequel to *Völsunga saga*. *Ragnars saga* is undoubtedly an expanded version of the tale of Ragnarr in *Skjöldunga saga*, even if the details are obscure, as I have said before. It is very probable that something similar took place with the original version of the separate saga of Hrólfr kraki, if we assume a lost redaction of the saga. *Skjöldunga saga* may thus have been the starting-point of the *fornaldarsögur* as well as Snorri's model for the *Ynglinga saga*. I began by mentioning the dual character of the Icelandic traditions of the Scyldings: the learned

<sup>36</sup> See Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 'Nafngiftir Oddaverja', in *Bidrag till nordisk filologi tillägnade Emil Olson* (1936), 190 ff.

prehistory and the heroic tales. *Skjoldunga saga* itself belongs in the first group, but it contained enough of the heroic material to become the germ from which many of the later traditions have been evolved, either by adding new material or by combining the old material in a new manner. Thus both groups are in a way derived from *Skjoldunga saga* or influenced by its example.

In order to make full use of the Icelandic traditions of the Scyldings in the study of old Scandinavian heroic legend, it is necessary to try to understand the evolution of the Icelandic sources in question. It seems to me that there is still much work to be done in this field. Many of the problems I have mentioned are far from being definitely solved. But so much is certain that the foundation for every future solution must be a closer and more painstaking scrutiny of the textual history and literary connexions of the Icelandic sources. I do not think that the last word has yet been said on these matters, neither from the English nor from the Icelandic point of view. We must still bear in mind and apply Chambers's words: "The Scandinavian stories help us to understand the hints in *Beowulf*; *Beowulf* shows the real bearing upon each other of the *disjecta membra* of Scandinavian tradition".<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> R. W. Chambers, *op. cit.* 427.

## HENRY VIII AND ICELAND

BY BJÖRN ÞORSTEINSSON

NO one can turn the pages of the great collection of Letters and Papers, foreign and domestic, relating to the reign of King Henry VIII, without soon realising that the king and his ministers often had to deal with matters concerning Iceland. No historian of his reign has hitherto attempted to give a connected account of these dealings, a fact not surprising in itself, for the sources do not tell of great events and the materials, even with the addition of some fresh documentary evidence preserved in the Staatsarchiv, Hamburg, remain comparatively meagre. Iceland was not a fateful issue in Henry's foreign policy and it was only indirectly that he had any influence on the history of the Icelanders, but nevertheless he and his council had Iceland on their agenda more often than any English government down to our own time.

### I

When Henry VIII came to the throne on 22 April 1509, English sailings to Iceland were prohibited by law but permitted in practice. The English had then been fishing, most often illegally, for just a century in Icelandic waters, since, as far as is known, it was in the spring of 1408 or 1409 that they first visited the Iceland banks.<sup>1</sup> In the following years these rich sources attracted many ships "unto the costes colde". At that time the merchants of Bergen had the monopoly of trade with the Norwegian colonies<sup>2</sup> and the English sailings were thus an encroachment on their privileges. Neither were the

<sup>1</sup> *Rolls of Parliament*, IV 79; *Diplomatarium Islandicum* XVI 80 (hereafter abbreviated *DI*; the arabic numeral after the volume number refers to the number of the document in the volume, not the page).

<sup>2</sup> *DI* IV 381.

Icelanders themselves pleased to see foreign seamen on their coastal fishing-banks. In 1413 King Eric of Denmark forbade the Icelanders to trade with foreign merchants other than those with whom they had been accustomed to trade in the past.<sup>3</sup> Such an order was valueless under the circumstances of the time, for the Danes were not a sea-power and the administration in Iceland was too weak to make the ban effective, and the king was obliged to take other measures to prevent the losses that his revenues from Iceland were suffering. Accordingly, ambassadors from the Norwegian Crown waited on King Henry V on his return from Agincourt and complained to him of the novel and illegal fishing and trading by his subjects, in Iceland and in other island-fisheries of the king of Norway.<sup>4</sup> Henry responded complaisantly to the complaints of his kinsman and prohibited English sailings for one year "unless in accordance with ancient custom" (*aliter quam antiquitus fieri consuevit*). This prohibition was then promulgated in English ports, and at the same time was strongly denounced in the Commons.<sup>5</sup> The English government seems to have done nothing to make the ban effective, and, indeed, the sailings to Iceland appear to have increased steadily. According to Icelandic annals, 25 English ships were lost in a gale on Maundy Thursday, 1419,<sup>6</sup> but otherwise we have little information about the numbers of English ships engaged in the Iceland fisheries in the fifteenth century; it is reasonable to think that there were often as many as a hundred.

Fish was Iceland's chief product, then as now, but Bergen had never been a very good market for it because the Norwegians had plenty of home-caught fish. The arrival of the English, offering prices about 50% higher

<sup>3</sup> Gustav Storm, *Islandske Annaler indtil 1578* (1888), 291 (abbreviated *Isl. Ann.*).

<sup>4</sup> Brit. Mus. MS Nero B. III, no. 25, fol. 30; *DI XVI* 77.

<sup>5</sup> Brit. Mus. MS Nero B. III, no. 25, fols. 31-2; *Rolls of Parliament*, IV 79; *DI XVI* 78-80.

<sup>6</sup> *Isl. Ann.*, 293.

than the Norwegians did, opened up new prospects for Icelandic stock-fish.<sup>7</sup> In a few years this resulted in the death of the Norwegians' trade in Iceland and the final severance of the ancient economic ties between the two countries.<sup>8</sup>

English traders were welcomed by the Icelanders from the start, but various attempts were made to prevent the activities of English fishermen.<sup>9</sup> The Icelandic authorities tried to regulate the conduct of the visitors by laws and licences agreed on by the Alþingi,<sup>10</sup> but there was interference from the Crown and from the Bergen merchants and a new governor was sent out along with a German commercial agent.<sup>11</sup> These officials abrogated the Icelanders' arrangements, dismissed various men from their posts, and tried to stir up armed opposition to the English.<sup>12</sup> In 1425 the king of Denmark repeated his edict prohibiting foreign sailings to the Norwegian colonies, but this had no effect for the English replied by capturing the king's chief officials in Iceland and carrying them off to England.<sup>13</sup> Friction between the Danish and English governments increased as a result of this violence, but stopped for a while when Parliament passed a law (29 September 1429) ordering all English subjects wishing to buy stock-fish to sail only to the staple of Bergen within the Norwegian kingdom, for there the noble King Eric had granted English merchants the same trading rights as he had to the Hanseatic merchants.<sup>14</sup> This order was repeated in a treaty between the two countries in 1432 and in an English edict of 1444.<sup>15</sup> That these enactments were little regarded by English seafarers may

<sup>7</sup> *DI* IV 337, 377; IX 243; Þorkell Jóhannesson, 'Skreiðarverð á Íslandi', *Afmælisrit til Þorsteins Þorsteinssonar* (1950), 188-94.

<sup>8</sup> *DI* III 599-601; IV 330; *Isl. Ann.*, 290.

<sup>9</sup> *DI* IV 330.

<sup>10</sup> *DI* IV 331.

<sup>11</sup> *Isl. Ann.*, 293; *DI* IV 343.

<sup>12</sup> *DI* IV 336, 341, 342, 344, 380.

<sup>13</sup> *DI* IV 381, 384; *Isl. Ann.*, 293-4.

<sup>14</sup> Rymer's *Foedera* (ed. Holmes, 1820-24), IV, part IV, p. 143; *DI* XVI 87, 91, 90; *Rolls of Parliament*, IV 347.

<sup>15</sup> *DI* IV 558, 694.

best be seen from the following lines from *The Libelle of Englyshe Polycye*, assigned to a date *c.* 1436:<sup>16</sup>

Of Yseland to wryte is lytill nede,  
 Save of stokfische; yit for sothe in dede  
 Out of Bristow and costis many one,  
 Men have practised by nedle and by stone  
 Thiderwardes wythine a lytel whylle,  
 Wythine xij yere, and wythoute perille,  
 Gone and comen, as men were wonte of olde  
 Of Scarboroughh unto the costes colde;  
 And now so fele shippes thys yere there were,  
 That moch losse for unfraught they bare.

In 1447 the Danes seized some English ships in the Øresund and so compelled the English to negotiate. A truce was agreed on in 1449 and was to last for two years, during which time English merchants were not to sail to Iceland, Hålogaland or Finnmark unless they had special licence from the king of Norway.<sup>17</sup> By this the Danish-Norwegian authorities gave up the idea of completely excluding the English from the Iceland trade. It is noteworthy that there is no mention of fishing in this agreement. On the other hand, in a collection of statutes issued by the king to the Icelanders in the following year, there was one stating that all Englishmen and Irishmen who sail to Iceland without bearing a licence from the king are outlaws and their ships and goods liable to confiscation.<sup>18</sup>

At about this time the Danes tried to strengthen the administration in Iceland and to improve the collection of taxes and other revenues there, but with no apparent success. In this period the only power in north Europe which could have checked the English activities in Iceland and Icelandic waters was the Hanseatic League, and, as

<sup>16</sup> *DI* XVI 97; Thomas Wright, *Political Poems and Songs relating to English History* (Rolls Series 14; 1859-61), II 191.

<sup>17</sup> Rymer's *Foedera* (ed. Holmes), V, *part* II, pp. 22-4; *DI* XVI 147.

<sup>18</sup> *DI* V 56.

yet, the Iceland trade had no attractions for the leading Hanse cities. The Norwegian stock-fish trade was in the hands of Lübeck merchants and seems to have been adequate to meet the needs of the continental market. When it did not prove feasible to monopolise the Icelandic trade through Bergen, the Lübeck merchants reckoned their interests were best served if it came to England, where the Hanse had no fish-trade of any size.

After 1449 English seamen could buy permission to sail to Iceland from the king of Denmark, but very few of them worried about such formalities. The voyages consequently continued to be a bone of contention between the two governments. Their representatives met in 1465, when an agreement was made allowing the English to sail to Iceland under licence from the Danish crown, but prohibiting sailings to Hålogaland and Finnmark except when weather conditions made them unavoidable.<sup>19</sup> This distinction between Iceland and the Norwegian provinces was probably introduced at the desire of the Hanse merchants.

The king of England did not ratify the article of the treaty concerning tolls on ships passing through the Baltic Straits, and in return King Christian I repudiated all the licences he had granted to English ships. Englishmen sailed to Iceland just the same and killed the king's governor there. Christian's answer was to seize seven English ships in the Øresund, 5-8 June 1468.<sup>20</sup> War between Denmark and England followed, and the north German Hanse cities were soon drawn into the conflict.<sup>21</sup> A truce was arranged in 1473, on the basis of the *status quo*, but a peace treaty was not concluded until 1490. By this Hans I granted Englishmen the right to trade and fish in Iceland as long as they obtained the

<sup>19</sup> *Norges gamle Love*, 2 R., II. 1, no. 100; Rymer's *Foedera* (1700-10), XI, pp. 551-555; *DI XVI* 210.

<sup>20</sup> *DI XVI* 210, 216; X 22-5; Rymer's *Foedera* (1700-10), XI, p. 556.

<sup>21</sup> Friedrich Schulz, *Die Hanse und England von Edwards III. bis auf Heinrichs VIII. Zeit* (1911); Walter Stein, *Die Hanse und England. Ein hansisch-englischer Seekrieg im 15. Jahrhundert* (1905).

necessary licence at seven-year intervals. When the Icelanders confirmed this treaty at the Alþingi, they deleted the clauses giving fishing-rights to the English, and in the following years they took stricter legal measures against foreign fishermen, condemning out of hand all doggers found in Icelandic waters that did not engage in trade.<sup>22</sup> From the legal point of view the Icelanders thus gave permission to fish only to those foreigners who imported necessary and desirable wares and took fish in exchange. It can be seen from English customs accounts from the earlier part of the sixteenth century that many English fishermen availed themselves of this arrangement.

All the attempts of the Danes and Norwegians to hinder the English voyages in the fifteenth century and to direct the Iceland trade back on the old route to Bergen proved unsuccessful. During the war, about 1470, the Danish crown began to encourage the Hanse merchants to sail to Iceland, but both Lübeck and the Hanse in Bergen were firmly opposed to any direct voyaging between Iceland and the Hanse cities.<sup>23</sup> Thus the Hanse merchants were not at first dangerous competitors to the English in Iceland.

For some seventy years after the first sailings *c.* 1409 the English enjoyed almost unbroken supremacy in the Iceland seas. Wars might close the coasts of Europe to them, pirates might lie in wait for them all along the Atlantic seaboard, but there was this one route to the north-west which was never closed and always safe. When Hanse ships began sailing to Iceland, the English took increased security precautions, ensuring that their vessels had sufficient armaments and provisions and sending warships to protect the merchantmen. The earliest information we possess about such precautions is found in letters issued by Richard III, 23 February

<sup>22</sup> Rymer's *Foedera* (ed. Holmes), V, *part* III, p. 29; *DI* XVI 230 and pp. 445-6; VI 617; VII 499, 550.

<sup>23</sup> *DI* VI 362-3; XI 27, 32-33, 36-8, 40-41 etc.

1484, to seamen in the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk.<sup>24</sup> By about 1500 the ships had been setting sail to the north-west in their dozens for nearly a century, sometimes as many as a hundred annually. Such voyages were something new in European history: a new naval power was coming into being, and its goal lay westwards across the Atlantic.

## II

The first act of Henry VIII's first Parliament concerned the abolition of the statutes from 1429. It includes the following passage: "By force of whiche Statute made in the seid VIII. yere divers of the Kynges Subgiectes not knowing the seid Statute adventuryng & repairyng into Islande and other parties of the Lordshipps & Domynions of the seid King of Denmark for Fyssh and other Merchaundyse hathe ben Grevously Punysshed to ther great Losse & Hynderaunce, and contrary to good concience considering that Fyssh and other Commodities of that Cuntre be mucche behovefull and necessarie towarde the comen Weale of this Realme."<sup>25</sup> — As it happens, no one is known to have been punished under the statute since *c.* 1464,<sup>26</sup> but this blank may be due only to an inadequate investigation of the records. Otherwise, the statutes of 1429 had been seldom enforced to hinder sailings to Iceland: all the English monarchy did was to issue dispensations from the statutes, in return for an appropriate fee, Edward IV being especially openhanded in granting such licences.<sup>27</sup> After 1449 the English could legalise their voyages to Iceland by obtaining licences from the English and Danish authorities and by paying tolls and taxes on their trading and fishing in Iceland. This state of affairs was not altered by the treaty of 1490, but by that time the Iceland sailings had become so 'free'

<sup>24</sup> *Letters and Papers of Richard III and Henry VII*, II 287; *DI XVI* 235.

<sup>25</sup> *Statutes of the Realm*, III (1817), I; *DI XVI* 246.

<sup>26</sup> *DI XVI*, 206.

<sup>27</sup> *DI XVI* 193-209; 211-15 etc.

and so frequent that the English had given up asking royal permission to make them. The last licence I have come across was granted in 1478 to one Johannes Forster, merchant of Bristol.<sup>28</sup> By the time of Henry VIII's succession the 1429 statute was a dead-letter, but of course a law remains law until it is repealed, and the abolition of it by Henry's first Parliament was an inexpensive way of demonstrating the young king's friendly feelings towards the large seafaring interests in the East Anglian ports.

It is clear from the sources that English vessels sailed to Iceland to trade and to fish in greater numbers in the first decades of the sixteenth century than at any other time down to the nineteenth century. A list of the Iceland fleet is extant from 1528 and includes 149 vessels, all from east coast ports, from London to Boston.<sup>29</sup> The total number of fishing vessels in English ports in the same period is estimated by Fulton at 440,<sup>30</sup> but there is nothing to suggest that the Iceland fleet was unusually large in 1528. The Crown had interested itself in the Iceland fleet from Richard III's time onwards, not unnaturally, because it derived certain revenues directly from its operations. In 1526 Iceland voyagers complained of their heavy burdens, and agreement was accordingly reached between King Henry and "certen his servantes and subiectes adventuring into Iseland for lynge or code" that they should pay annually "to the use of his househould franke and free" a certain number of fish from each ship, these to be collected by "the kinges purveyors".<sup>31</sup> This toll was soon converted into a cash payment, for in a letter sent by the Iceland voyagers in the autumn of 1532 the king is told that he receives £5 or 200 fish "of every Shyp that Carys owte Aboue X ways of Salt at hir Commyng home".<sup>32</sup> A list made in

<sup>28</sup> *DI XVI* 231.

<sup>29</sup> *DI XVI* 283.

<sup>30</sup> T. W. Fulton, *The Sovereignty of the Sea* (1911), 89-90.

<sup>31</sup> *DI XVI* 275.

<sup>32</sup> *DI XVI* 311; Brit. Mus. MS Add. 34, 729, fol. 63.

1533 by Edward Weldonne, controller of the king's household, gives 85 vessels, average tonnage 84. Against each ship is entered an amount ranging from £4 to £8 according to size, giving a total of £414. This list is in duplicate, and in the other copy the sums range from £5 to £8, again according to size, giving a total of £582.<sup>33</sup> In this year the king had probably reduced the toll payable by smaller ships from £5 to £4. The higher figure agrees with the sum mentioned in the letter of the previous year, in which, unfortunately, the amount to be paid by bigger ships cannot be read owing to damage to the document. These lists from 1533 indicate the king's direct revenue from the Iceland fisheries, and in addition customs and subsidies were paid by the Iceland voyagers on the trade they did with the Icelanders.

The Iceland fleet was not only a source of income for the king: it involved him in expense as well. In the war with Scotland and France the fleet required the protection of warships, but, despite the precautions taken, the Scots succeeded in seizing certain English ships on their way from Iceland in 1524, to the great distress of Henry and Wolsey.<sup>34</sup> The protection offered can only have extended as far north as the Scottish islands: further northward there were other dangers awaiting the English ships, but against these Henry did not employ his navy.

### III

The peace treaty of 1490 and the Icelanders' commercial legislation that followed it produced little change in the activities of the foreigners. There were frequent clashes between merchants, the Danish agents found it difficult to collect the tolls levied on the trade and fishing done by the foreigners, and the English were particularly blamed on this account. In the years 1511-14 English seamen

<sup>33</sup> *Public Record Office: State Papers Domestic*, Vol. 80, fols. 61-78.

<sup>34</sup> *DI XVI* 248, 272-3; *Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic*, IV, nos. 615, 651; Brit. Mus. MS Cal. B. VI, fol. 336 and B. III, fol. 80.

plundered some Hanse ships on the Iceland route, killed the king's agent in Iceland and some of his followers, and committed other acts of violence. English pirates were also accused of having plundered Danish merchantmen on voyages to Spain and France. Because of all this Christian II sent envoys to Henry in 1514, demanding compensation for the acts of violence committed by the English, the same privileges for Danish merchants in England as the Hanse enjoyed, and a new treaty between the two states.<sup>35</sup>

Danish embassies had always been well received at the English court, and no exception was made on this occasion. Henry wrote in friendly terms to Christian, saying that he would instruct his Admiral and his Parliament to investigate the complaints and to punish any proved offenders.<sup>36</sup> It is not known whether these promises were fulfilled, but at any rate the treaty of 1490 was renewed in 1515. In the new agreement there is no mention of Christian's demands for compensation.<sup>37</sup>

It was clear to Christian II that it was not enough to complain to the English authorities and make treaties with them, for the clashes in Iceland were in part due to the feebleness of the local administration. One of the king's complaints in 1514 was that the English were fortifying their stations in Iceland and trying to annex the country. This was not a new charge, for the Icelandic authorities had complained in 1425 that the English were building fortifications in Vestmannaeyjar.<sup>38</sup> In 1515 Christian II sent Søren Norby, the renowned Danish naval commander, as governor to Iceland with instructions, amongst other things, to build two forts, one in the Vestmannaeyjar and one on the royal estate of Bessastaðir.<sup>39</sup> Nothing came of these plans, and in 1517 the king recalled Norby and

<sup>35</sup> *DI* XI 46; VIII 156; XVI 245, 254.

<sup>36</sup> *DI* XVI 255.

<sup>37</sup> *DI* XVI p. 487.

<sup>38</sup> *DI* IV 381.

<sup>39</sup> *DI* VIII 422.

found him another post. The king then tried a new approach to the Iceland question and sent a new embassy to King Henry. The envoy had, as before, to complain of the damage suffered by subjects of the Danish Crown as a result of English lawlessness in Denmark, Norway and Iceland, but that was not all. Amongst the envoy's letters of instruction preserved in the Danish Rigsarkiv is a curious document: "De werwe Hans Holm heff van ijszland". In this he is instructed to offer to the Dutch of Amsterdam, the 'Waterlandische' cities (i.e. those of north Holland) and Antwerp the country of Iceland in pledge for 30,000 guilders, or at the least for 20,000. If the Dutch are not interested in this, the envoy is to make the same offer to King Henry of England for a sum of 100,000 florins, coming down to 50,000 if necessary. This offer is not to be made until the rest of his business has been discussed. The king of England should give to the king of Denmark a true bond (*vprichtich vorwaringes briff*), which would enable His Majesty to regain possession of his country Iceland, without hindrance and with all rights and duties pertaining thereto, as soon as the price of redemption had been paid to the king of England or his heirs in a safe place in Amsterdam or Antwerp, where the deed pledging the country should also be produced and returned to the Danish monarch.<sup>40</sup> On 6 November 1518 Henry wrote to Christian about Hans Holm's embassy. He says that in addition to the matters mentioned in the letters brought by the envoy, an important matter (*gravioris momenti*) had also been raised, which he himself had discussed with his council; some of the envoy's business had been answered in writing, but he had been entrusted with an oral and confidential message on this other important issue. This 'important matter' can only have been the proposed sale of Iceland. In the Danish Rigsarkiv there is preserved a document in which Henry VIII promises to return the

<sup>40</sup> *DI XVI* 254, 259; Marie Simon-Thomas, *Onze Ijslandsvaarders* (1935), 10.

island of Iceland with all its rights, delivered to him in pawn for an agreed sum in gold, silver and coin, as soon as that sum has been repaid in full.<sup>41</sup> The document is undated and is either a copy or a draft.

In the autumn of 1519 the Danish ambassador in Holland was engaged in unsuccessful attempts to reach agreement with Antwerp and Amsterdam on the sale of Iceland.<sup>42</sup> He would hardly have been busy in such negotiations if Henry had already been persuaded to buy the country for a satisfactory sum. The document mentioned above was probably a draft of the English side of the bargain, brought from Henry to Christian by Hans Holm. But events in Scandinavia were soon to put a stop to the whole transaction.

In 1522 a revolt against Christian II broke out in Denmark and he fled to Holland, being succeeded on the throne by Duke Frederick of Holstein. Christian's queen was Elizabeth, sister of the Emperor Charles V, and the exiled king expected help from him and his allies. On 19 July 1523 the Emperor's ambassador in London informed his master that the king and queen of Denmark had arrived at Greenwich and were seeking aid from Henry. The king of England is reported to have said that he could not give them either military or financial support, but he would do what he could by sending word to Denmark, and Christian could do the same and promise redress and reform for the future. He could thus help towards a peaceful settlement of the dispute, which would be better than the use of force, especially since Denmark's monarchy was not hereditary but elective. The Spanish ambassador rightly remarked that this was no answer to Christian's requests.<sup>43</sup> On 30 June 1523 the peace treaty of 1490 had been renewed,<sup>44</sup> but in other respects it is

<sup>41</sup> *DI XVI* 260.

<sup>42</sup> *DI XVI* 261-2.

<sup>43</sup> C. F. Wurm, *Die politischen Beziehungen Heinrichs VIII. zu Marcus Meyer und Jurgen Wullenwever* (Verzeichniss der Vorlesungen, welche am Hamburgischen akademischen Gymnasium von Ostern 1852 bis Ostern 1853 gehalten werden; 1852), 12.

<sup>44</sup> *DI XVI* 266.

clear that Henry, despite his connections and friendship with the Emperor, wished to stay neutral in the contest for the Danish throne. It is not known what passed between the two kings concerning Iceland, but from later events it is evident that the country figured in their discussions.

Before Christian II left Denmark he had put the administration of Iceland and the Faroes into the hands of a certain Tyle Petersen of Flensburg, whose duty it was to hold them against the officials sent out by Duke Frederick. Little is known of Tyle's activities in Iceland on this occasion (he had held the governorship previously), but they ended with the Icelanders' declaring him guilty of irredeemable crimes and executing him in the autumn of 1523.<sup>45</sup> It is noteworthy that the men who were responsible for this sentence were amongst Christian's strongest supporters, and they addressed their report of the sentence to him and not to Frederick. On 12 December 1523 Christian II's chancellor, Nicolaus Petri, wrote to his master from England to say that Henry would not interest himself in Iceland or the other countries on account of the news which English seamen had brought concerning the fate of Tyle Petersen and others who were supporters of Christian there; neither was the king prepared to accept them as a pledge in return for a loan.<sup>46</sup> The other countries referred to must doubtless be the Faroes. Icelandic annals, s.a. 1522, report that Christian II had sought King Henry's protection and offered to pawn Iceland to him, but that Henry had refused because "he was not certain of being able to hold it".<sup>47</sup>

King Christian had not however completely abandoned his idea of pawning Iceland. He persuaded himself that it would be easy to regain the Danish throne with a small armed force, but he lacked the money to raise it. In the spring of 1524 he told his chancellor to sail to England and

<sup>45</sup> *DI IX* 118-9, 135; *XVI*, pp. 516, 521.

<sup>46</sup> *DI IX* 149.

<sup>47</sup> *Íslenzkir annálar* 1400-1800, I (1922-7), 85.

to ask Henry for a loan of 100,000 englots against a pledge of "some of our dominions, according to your instructions". The chancellor replied shortly afterwards and made it clear that he regarded this as a profitless mission,<sup>48</sup> and that was the last to be heard of Henry's purchase of Iceland from Christian II. On 27 May 1524 a fruitless meeting was held in Hamburg to discuss the succession to the Danish throne, and Henry sent a representative who brought Christian's chancellor a present of money but did nothing else for him.<sup>49</sup> In general Henry remained faithful to his policy of neutrality in these disputes. Gustav Vasa does say, however, in a letter to the Swedish peers written in June 1526, that the Emperor and Henry had agreed to marry Henry's daughter to Christian's son, who was then to inherit the English throne after Henry's death.<sup>50</sup> It is doubtful if there was any truth in this report, even though it worried Gustav Vasa. Neither was it long before Henry found himself in opposition to the Emperor and consequently uninterested in aiding his Scandinavian policies.

On this occasion the chief things that seem to have prevented the sale of Iceland to Henry were the revolt in Denmark and England's war with France and Scotland. As will be seen below, the question was raised once more, in 1535, at the end of the Count's War.<sup>51</sup>

#### IV

Between 1520 and 1530 the Hanse merchants, especially those of Hamburg and Bremen, began to send more ships to Iceland, and English and German competition for the Iceland trade grew fiercer. The period of England's undisputed mastery was at an end, and now there were frequent clashes between English and German crews. In 1531 the Iceland voyagers complained to Henry's council

<sup>48</sup> *DI IX* 181, 184.

<sup>49</sup> C. F. Wurm, *op. cit.* 13.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.* 15.

<sup>51</sup> *DI IX* 602, 627-8.

that Hamburg men were using violent methods against them in Iceland.<sup>52</sup> When such grievances as this reached the king's ears, it was his custom to bring pressure to bear on the Hanse merchants of the Steelyard in London and threaten the withdrawal of their privileges. On this occasion the German merchants in London were at once informed of the complaints, but nothing of any importance happened thereafter. On the night of 3-4 April in the following year, however, a battle was fought between two English ships and one from Hamburg in the harbour of Bäsendar on Reykjanes. The outcome was that one of the English ships was stranded and destroyed and the other surrendered. The captured crew were harshly treated by the victors and some of them executed. The Germans had lost only one or two men in the whole engagement.<sup>53</sup> At this time one of the chief trading and fishing stations of the English was in Grindavík, a little to the east of Bäsendar, which had been fortified and was much used as a base for their fishing vessels. By Icelandic law foreigners were not allowed to fish in Icelandic waters except under licence; it was illegal for foreigners to use Icelandic harbours as bases for fishing vessels, and foreigners were also forbidden to winter in the country.<sup>54</sup> Hitherto any attempt by the Icelandic and Danish authorities to implement these laws had been defeated by the English, whose response had been either to capture or to kill the royal officials (1425, 1467, 1514). But now the authorities gained powerful allies. The Hanse merchants were not much interested in the fishing, but they were eager to get the Iceland trade into their own hands, and thus both ready and willing to lend aid against the English in return for increased commercial privileges and a share in the booty.

The leader of the English in Grindavík was John Breye, agent of a London merchant named Peter Gibson, and

<sup>52</sup> *DI* XVI 291.

<sup>53</sup> *DI* XVI 287-88, 291, 293, 295, 297, 310.

<sup>54</sup> *DI* VI 617; VII 499, 500.

one of his chief lieutenants was the falcon-catcher of the Duke of Norfolk. The Germans disputed with Breye over the sale of some fish, and the governor brought various charges against him, especially because of the fortification and armament in Grindavík. A force of 280 men, mostly Germans, was collected by the governor and proceeded to Grindavík on the night of 10-11 June 1532. They took the English by surprise, entered the defences without resistance, killed John Breye and fourteen of his companions in their beds and seized a quantity of booty, including one ship. The sources say that 40 Englishmen were killed in Iceland this summer. After this attack the matter was brought before the *Alþingi*, where John Breye and his men were condemned as robbers, their slaughter legally justified, and their ship and goods judged rightly forfeit to the king and his officer. A similar verdict was recorded on the affair at *Básendar*.<sup>55</sup>

By about midsummer 1532 the survivors from *Básendar* had arrived in England and made their complaint to the king. They estimated their losses at £3,000 and brought to the king's notice the fact that four ships from Hamburg were lying in the Thames, which they requested might be confiscated to make good their losses; they also demanded other efforts to punish the guilty.<sup>56</sup> Henry was slow to take strong-armed action on this occasion, however, and Hanse ships were able to sail unmolested in and out of English ports, as they had done hitherto, although in the winter of the same year some tons of fish from *Básendar* were sequestrated from a Hamburg ship.<sup>57</sup> The English authorities did, however, approach the Steelyard men in London with the demand that the principals in the *Básendar* battle should be arrested and their ship confiscated. The German merchants in London were afraid of punitive action against them, and they at once

<sup>55</sup> *DI XVI* 289-90, 294, 296, 298-99, 307.

<sup>56</sup> *DI XVI* 310.

<sup>57</sup> *DI XVI* 304-5.

forwarded the complaints to Hamburg (17 July 1532).<sup>58</sup> At home in Hamburg, however, people knew that something bigger was at stake and for the moment showed no signs of any conciliatory mood. As the summer passed, accusations that the men of Hamburg and Bremen were guilty of robbing and murdering English subjects in Iceland poured in to the English authorities. On 28 August the Steelyard men were summoned to meet before the king's representative, on this occasion Thomas Cromwell, who complained to them of their compatriots' violent deeds in Grindavík. If the Chancellor's lecture on this disturbed their peace of mind, however, his concluding remarks must have cheered them up again, since he then said that these charges were not laid before them because the king had it in mind to deprive them of their commercial privileges: he was indeed anxious that their trade should increase. He had, though, written two letters to Hamburg and Bremen and he wished the matter to be honestly and faithfully considered.<sup>59</sup> His letter to Hamburg is extant, dated 1 September. In it he demands punishment for the guilty, payment of compensation and settlement of the whole affair. He expresses his sorrow over the treatment of his subjects, "quod facinus multo crudelius quam mutua nostra et antiqua cum vestratibus amicitia expectasset", and he ends by saying that if compensation is not paid "nos cogamur alia juris remedia subditis hic nostris concedere".<sup>60</sup>

The Hamburg merchants were not then in a mood to be moved by threats alone. They wrote to Henry on 7 September, rejecting all the charges on behalf of the men concerned in the affair at Básendar and asking the king to accept their justification. If the king is not to be satisfied by this, they tell him to send the English complainants to Hamburg, where they will get a just

<sup>58</sup> *DI XVI* 291.

<sup>59</sup> *DI XVI* 298.

<sup>60</sup> *DI XVI* 296.

hearing. Finally they say that the embroilments are especially due to the fact that in Iceland there prevails “keine sunderliche gude ordnung und politie dan ein old ghebruck”.<sup>61</sup>

There is no mention of the slayings in Grindavík in this letter, and it soon appeared that the Hamburg men thought they had no charge to answer on this account. Reports of the excesses committed by their opponents were composed by both sides, and the Germans undeniably had more material to work on than the English. Hermann Röver, secretary of the Hamburg council, was at once sent with Henry's letter to the Danish king, since he was their sovereign as duke of Holstein.<sup>62</sup> In a letter written by Frederick I a month or so later, he tells Henry that they have “exhibited those letters vnto vs onlie to trie purge and testifie their jnnocencie by vs towarde your Maiestie”. Frederick accepted all their excuses, as will be seen below, and on 13 October he wrote a long letter to Henry, bringing many serious charges against the English, the chief of which are as follows:

1. They clayme to have a fysshinge place whiche of tyme oute of mynde our pople of Islande haue occupied in the See and challenged onlie vnto theymselffe.

2. They haue vyolentlie taken awaey the halfe parte of our tribut due vnto vs this year. [For this and other reasons] our head officer called vnto hym for ayd and help in our name the people of Hamburgh as our subiects and the Bremes as our confederates and being garnished with their industrie and secours did repell and resist the said violence by a contraire violence. In whiche conflict somme of your subiects were slayne. Nor trewlie it cannot be deneyed but that the premysses considdered, they all as they deserued ought to haue been non otherwise entreated.

3. They mowed rebellion agenste our officer appoynted in that our isle.

<sup>61</sup> *DI XVI* 296.

<sup>62</sup> *DI XVI* 300; *Kammereirechnungen der Stadt Hamburg 1501-40* (1883), 466.

4. They wolde nott paie the Custome.

5. They where not ashamed to spoyle challenge and take away for there pleasure as well our goods as goods of our saide Insulanes and Inhabitants.

Frederick says that it is obvious from this that the men could not refuse to give the aid requested of them, and he consequently bids Henry to hold the men of Hamburg and Bremen excused, "as our subiects and confederatos of our lawfull Power, and that ye will nott moleste nor hinder there causes and busynes in England, leste that a more Inconuenyence or displeasure there of do aryse".<sup>63</sup>

When the king's letter was known to the Hamburg council, they wrote to Henry themselves, declaring themselves innocent of all deeds of violence in Iceland, seeing that they had only aided the governor in the legal execution of his duty. They could also produce a letter written to them and to Bremen by the king's bailiff in Iceland, testifying that their participation against the English had been at his request and in the king's name. They also wrote to the Steelyard merchants and heartened them with an account of Frederick's attitude in the dispute.<sup>64</sup>

At this stage of the proceedings Henry found himself in some difficulty. On the one hand, some of his subjects were clamouring for extreme measures, while on the other, the king of Denmark, with the support of some of the Hanseatic League, threatened war if he tried to placate his own people. If it came to war, the Baltic and Scandinavian ventures of the English were at stake, but on the other hand the disasters of a single summer did not mean the end of the Iceland sailings. The king thus continued in his policy of demanding a treaty between the interested parties. To pacify those who were most zealously demanding redress, some Icelandic fish from *Básendar* was confiscated from a Hamburg vessel, though

<sup>63</sup> *DI XVI* 300; *XI* 104.

<sup>64</sup> *DI XVI* 301-3.

it amounted to no more than about 8 tons. This action was immediately complained of by the Hamburg council, who on 16 November despatched two sternly-worded letters to Henry.<sup>65</sup> On 4 December Henry had the Steelyard merchants summoned before his privy council. There they were told that they were responsible for seeing that the Hanse men who had plundered and slain the English in Iceland during the past summer were punished and that compensation was paid for the injuries they had inflicted. The king declared that he was astonished that anyone should dare to write such letters to him as those he had just received from Hamburg and Bremen and should hide their misdeeds behind a hypocritical plea of obedience owed to the Danish monarch's governor in Iceland. He did not hesitate to point out what kind of obedience and alliance this was: sometimes the cities were free cities, owing obedience to no prince, but as soon as they illtreated or plundered his subjects, then one of the cities found itself subject to the king of Denmark (as Hamburg and Bremen on this occasion), another to the king of Poland, others to this prince or that, so that they were fearless in their crimes and thefts. The king said it was useless for them to excuse themselves by saying that the governor had summoned them to give aid against the English: they should have refused to obey his summons on the grounds that a perpetual peace existed between them and the king of England; and in England they enjoyed greater privileges than any other foreign merchants. Henry declared that the English were popular in Iceland, as could be seen from the fact that no Icelander had been involved in the attacks on them. He pointed out that the letter from the Danish king proved that the Hanse men had given him misleading information, for the booty from Grindavík had, for example, found its way to Hamburg. If the Hanse men did not henceforth have better regard for the truce and alliance that existed between

<sup>65</sup> *DI XVI* 304-5.

them and his subjects, he would be forced to avail himself of his rightful power and deprive them of their privileges and their freedom. And if it meant that his subjects were to lose the advantages and the trade they had by long custom enjoyed in Iceland, the king would don his armour, take sword in hand and fight to prevent it.<sup>66</sup>

A letter couched in similar terms was sent to the Hamburg council on 10 December, in which he also accused them of promoting discord between himself and the Danish king. If they think that they will be permitted to commit crimes against his subjects in order to please others because of the obedience they allege as their excuse, then he bids them consider in their wisdom on what weak, indeed on what non-existent moral foundations their case is based. By their violation of justice, amity and the agreements long established between the English and the people of Hamburg, the latter were depriving themselves and other sovereign powers of the liberty to make treaties at all, and it would be imprudent to bind oneself in friendship to those whose acts were governed by the wills of others. Finally, he demands full justice for his subjects in this matter, so that he may not be compelled to seek compensation by other means. An English envoy was sent with this letter to Hamburg.<sup>67</sup>

At about the same time, Frederick's ambassador arrived at the English court to discuss the matters in dispute, and Chapuys wrote to say that Henry was well content with the case put forward by the Danes, but was less well disposed towards Hamburg.<sup>68</sup> Henry could ill afford to drive the Danish king into his enemies' camp, but he could still force the Hanse merchants to retire by threats of action against the Steelyard. The Hanseatic merchants in London were by now apprehensive about their position. They wrote to the council of Lübeck, asking them to bring about the expulsion of Hamburg and

<sup>66</sup> *DI XVI* 309.

<sup>67</sup> *DI XVI* 306.

<sup>68</sup> *DI XVI* 307.

Bremen from the League if they did not come to terms with Henry: otherwise they feared that the end of their London house was in sight. They also wrote a detailed letter to Hamburg, describing all the dire consequences that threatened them and asking them to cultivate peaceful relations with the English and punish the offenders, for otherwise the German merchants in London would suffer terrible losses. Amongst other things they said that there was no harm in Hanse ships and English ships sharing the same harbours in Iceland, because the fish which the latter exported they had for the most part caught themselves.<sup>69</sup> In using this argument the English were doubtless trying to persuade the Hanse men not to interfere in disputes principally caused by the presence of English fishermen in Icelandic waters. The fisheries were probably much more important to the English than the trade in Iceland itself.

These letters closed the matter for the year 1532, but on 15 January 1533 Henry's envoy, Dr. Thomas Lee, arrived in Hamburg on his way to meet Frederick and representatives of Hamburg and Bremen. At this there was some panic in Hamburg, for the city councillors realised to their dismay that they lacked the education to sit at the same conference-table as Dr. Lee. He was a fluent Latinist, while they were at ease in neither Latin nor English, even though they had the services of able men like Hermann Röver, their secretary. After a short stay Dr. Lee went to visit Frederick at the palace of Gottorp in Schleswig, while the Hamburg council sent hasty messages to the adjacent towns, requesting the loan of their most learned men for some weeks to represent them at the conference. One such man was then to be found in Rostock, Dr. Johannes Oldendorp, one of Germany's best lawyers at the time. When Dr. Lee returned from his meeting with Frederick on 29 January,

<sup>69</sup> *DI XVI* 308-9.

Oldendorp had already arrived in Hamburg, and during the ensuing conference he acted as the city's adviser.<sup>70</sup>

The conference began in Hamburg on 30 January, and failed entirely to reach agreement on the main issues. All the charges against the Hamburg merchants were rejected by them, especially on the strength of the condemnation pronounced by an Icelandic court, under the presidency of the bishops and lawmen, on those Englishmen who fell in Iceland in 1532. Dr. Lee for his part demanded punishment of the guilty and payment of £3,909. 10. 8, or 39,095 German marks, in compensation.<sup>71</sup> It was probably when no conclusion was reached in these matters that Dr. Lee placed before the conference draft articles for regulating the Iceland voyages of both parties. This happened on 7 February, and on 10 February a document was finally completed on the basis of Dr. Lee's articles, bearing the title: *Formulae quaedam ad conservandam in Islandia Pacem omnium negotium sic obiter concepte, ut suo tempore tum a Superioribus Magistratibus, tum a subditis ad quamcumque emendationem legitime ratificentur* (Articles agreed on for the preservation of peace between all parties in Iceland, with the proviso that they be submitted for emendation and legal ratification to the supreme authorities and to the people of the interested powers). This document is extant in many copies, in Latin and Low German, and there is in one eighteenth-century copy an Icelandic translation of it. Two versions of the document are found in the copies. A single Latin copy is written in the same hand and on paper with the same water-mark as the main statement of Dr. Lee's complaints (A-version), and the first article in this copy says that no hindrance shall be offered to anyone fishing off Iceland and that the right to fish there shall be free to all. In all the other copies (B-version) no mention is made of fishing at this point, and the document opens by

<sup>70</sup> Hamburg Staatsarchiv, *Islandica* 1533-4, fols. 8-16; *DI* XVI pp. 641-2.

<sup>71</sup> *DI* XVI 321.

saying that all men shall cultivate friendly relations with the inhabitants and with others. In the second article in the A-version it says that, by right and by obligation, all men should have the same access to the Iceland trade and fisheries; while in the B-version stands only: "Similarly the word *negotatio* also signifies fishing." In an Icelandic translation of the letter from Frederick, promulgating the treaty made between himself, the English and the cities of Hamburg and Bremen, nothing is said about fishing and only the articles dealing with trade are included.<sup>72</sup>

Final assent was not given to these regulations in Hamburg, and on 14 February the members of the conference moved to Segeberg, at the invitation of Frederick, where another meeting was opened by Duke Christian of Schleswig and Holstein, Frederick's son. The governor of Iceland was then present. The meeting was held 15-17 February, and at the end of it Dr. Lee was given a final answer to his mission. In this it is said that the troubles in Iceland in the summer of 1532 were the fault of the English, according to the testimony of those with first-hand knowledge of them, especially the governor of Iceland. The English and the people of Hamburg and Bremen (the latter had no representatives at the meeting) were bidden in the king's name to avoid in future all such transgressions in Iceland. There is no word of compensation, although on his side Dr. Lee promised that there would be no retaliation on the Hanse merchants in England. Finally, it says that the English and the people of Hamburg and Bremen are permitted to fish off Iceland (*piscature in perpetuum*) on condition that they avoided strife and showed proper obedience to the king's governor and paid the customary tolls and taxes (*una cum antiquo theolonio omnis reverentia exhibeatur*). In this *finalis responsio* there is no mention of trade but only of *piscatura*. Arnold Ræstad thinks it conceivable that this term was also meant to imply trade in fish.<sup>73</sup> It is more

<sup>72</sup> *DI XVI* 323-5.

<sup>73</sup> Arnold Ræstad, *Kongens Strømme* (1912), 135.

probable, though, that the English envoy attached so much importance to this point, in order to ensure English fishing-rights in Icelandic waters, that he finally dropped the demands for compensation when in the reply he was to take back to his master the fishing-question was clearly settled in the way he wished. It is another matter that both Frederick and the Hamburg men knew that fishing by foreigners off Iceland was forbidden by Icelandic law. The Staatsarchiv in Hamburg contains copies and translations of all the chief acts of the Alþingi concerning trade and fishing in Iceland from 1431 down to the end of the sixteenth century. In the disputes with the English the Hamburg men constantly quoted Icelandic law, which did not conflict with their own interests since their fishing operations were only on a small scale. Frederick's letter to Iceland promulgating the treaty of 1533 and the acts of the Alþingi that summer show that there had been no change in the legal position of foreigners in the Icelandic fisheries. At the Alþingi, which was attended by the governor and by representatives from Hamburg and Bremen, it was enacted that dogger-sailings in Icelandic waters were to be stopped. This act was confirmed by the Norwegian council of state, but by then war had broken out in Denmark.<sup>74</sup>

After the meeting in Segeberg, the Hamburg council met on 19 February and it was announced that, while the governor of Iceland still had to deal with the Icelandic disputes, the Hamburg merchants were clear of the whole business. Finally a great entertainment was given in honour of Dr. Lee, who was sent on his way with gifts and reimbursement for all the expenses of his stay.<sup>75</sup> Lee remained in the city till after the end of the month and after a visit to Bremen arrived home on 28 March. On 3 April Henry wrote a friendly letter to the Hamburg council, thanking them for the hospitable reception they

<sup>74</sup> *DI* IX 550; XVI 333.

<sup>75</sup> *DI* XVI 326; Hamburg Staatsarchiv, *Islandica* 1533-4, fols. 134-40, 141-8.

had given his envoy.<sup>76</sup> No more was heard in England of the fish-seizures, except that some small fines were imposed on the Steelyard merchants.<sup>77</sup> Henry and his ministers can hardly have thought that Dr. Lee got as good as he gave on his embassy, but he did not suffer for it, for he later stood in high favour with Cromwell and was often employed on missions to the Hanse cities. But the Icelandic dispute with Hamburg was soon overshadowed by new dangers and matters of high policy abroad.

On 16 June 1533 Chapuys wrote to the Emperor that six warships were being equipped and were thought to be intended for the defence of the many English ships engaged in the Iceland fish-trade and fisheries: the Scots were lying in wait for English ships at sea, and there was also suspicion of the Danes and of Hamburg. To this summer must belong an undated document containing "Instruxions for Richard Forster and other his ffelowes now departing to the sees for the sure Waffetyng of the englisse ffleets out of Islonde".<sup>78</sup> These instructions deal especially with precautions to be taken against the Scots, and there is nothing to indicate that Henry sent warships all the way to Iceland. Relations between foreign seamen there were reasonably peaceful in the following years: but the English fleet on the Iceland voyage was now little more than half the size it had been in 1528.

## V

As is well known, Henry VIII married Anne Boleyn in the spring of 1533, and in September of that year the idea was broached at a meeting of the privy council that England should seek the friendship of the Protestant princes in Germany and of the Hanse cities in order to

<sup>76</sup> *Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic*, VI, no. 296; *DI XVI* 329; *Zeitschrift des Vereins für hamburgische Geschichte* III (1851), 190-91.

<sup>77</sup> *DI XVI* 331.

<sup>78</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Spanish*, II, no. 1081; *DI XVI* 332, 334.

redress the balance in face of the hostility which Pope and Emperor had fostered against him since his marriage.<sup>79</sup> Because of this Dr. Lee was again sent to Hamburg in 1534, this time with the request that its council “velit suae Majestati in hoc sua iusta causa favere et indicare quid sua Maiestas debeat ab eis expectare”. And further, “quod Senatus Hamburgensis velit in futuro concilio vel alias suae Maiestati adesse contra iniurias, quas Romanus pontifex suae Maiestati intulit”.<sup>80</sup> Dr. Lee’s mission was thus completely different from the preceding year, but Henry clearly saw which way the wind was blowing, and this is the best explanation of his eagerness for a settlement. The Icelandic dispute was again on the agenda, but there was no discussion of compensation or punishment on this occasion, and the talks were confined to the articles of the pact establishing peaceful relations between the two sides in Iceland.<sup>81</sup>

At this time Henry began to take a more ambitious view of northern politics, one not merely confined to the Iceland voyages and their attendant disputes. Frederick I died on 3 April 1533 and the succession was contested by sharply divided factions. The Danish Rigsdag postponed the election to the throne that summer, at the instance of the Catholic party, but Lübeck under Wullenwever along with some other Hanse cities tried to create a government in the name of the imprisoned king, Christian II. Their aim was to guarantee the Hanse cities trading privileges in the Danish dominions and to hinder the Dutch voyages into the Baltic. Their chief antagonist soon proved to be Duke Christian, son of Frederick I, who enjoyed the support of the nobility in Denmark and Holstein and for a time of the Dutch also. The Count’s War (1534-6), as it is called, in which Protestant citizens, often with the aid of Catholic princes, fought against a Lutheran duke, was for much of the

<sup>79</sup> *Zeitschrift des Vereins für hamburgische Geschichte* III (1851), 192.

<sup>80</sup> *ibid.* 193-4.

<sup>81</sup> *ibid.* 204.

time waged more zealously by diplomats at the courts than by soldiers in the field, but it does not concern us here except insofar as it appears that for a while Henry nourished some hopes of extending his influence to Scandinavia if the Lübeck side came off best.

Late in 1533 Lübeck approached Henry with a request for a loan "to subdue the realm of Denmark", and in 1534 the city's agent received at least 20,000 guilders "gelehnt empfangen und zu der Stadt Lübeck Bestem aufgewendet".<sup>82</sup> In the summer of this year Duke Christian was elected king of Denmark, although he had little power at first outside Jutland, the islands being for the most part in the hands of Lübeck and her allies. Christian III soon made diplomatic contact with Henry and tried to persuade him not to lend aid to his enemies. Early in 1535 he sent his secretary, Peder Svave, to Scotland and England, with the purpose, among others, of discovering what sort of alliance existed between England and Lübeck. He was able to gain no certain information about this, but Henry did, on the other hand, convey the impression that he was eager to mediate between the contending parties in Denmark.<sup>83</sup> On 15 March 1535 Svave placed before Cromwell draft articles for a peaceful settlement and pact between Denmark, Lübeck and England, which included a provision to the effect that Iceland should be pawned to Henry for a stipulated sum. It is not known that Henry found this treaty at all desirable, and he had in any case been newly offered better terms from elsewhere.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Brit. Mus. MS Nero B. III no. 54, fol. 105b; C. F. Wurm, *op. cit.* 33: "Lord Herbert of Cherbury says: 'I find by a Dutsch history, as well as by our records, that a great sum of money was lent by our king, whereupon also they proceeded in their war, which yet at last being composed, our king demanded repayment.'" The Lübeck council appear to have succeeded in repaying these war-debts to Henry in 1543, with the Hanse merchants in London acting as middle-men. Cf. also J. N. Lappenberg, *Urkundliche Geschichte des Hansischen Stahlhofes in London* (1851), 174, and see A. F. Pollard, *Henry VIII* (1913), 311-2.

<sup>83</sup> C. F. Wurm, *op. cit.* 50-51.

<sup>84</sup> *DI IX* 602; *Forty-fifth Annual Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records* (1885), App. II, 15-16.

On 26 July Henry's envoys in Lübeck, Robert Candish and Edmund Bonner, reported to Cromwell that Marcus Meyer, Lübeck's chief naval commander in the Count's War, "is content and agreeable that the kings Highnes shall have not oonlee the castell whiche he now hath (i.e. Varberg Slot), but also elbow (i.e. Malmø), lannscron (i.e. Landskrona), coppeniehaven (i.e. Copenhagen) and elsyneur (i.e. Helsingør)". They remark later in their report "that it is much easier soo liberalle to offer, than like to bring all the same to pass".<sup>85</sup>

Huitfeldt maintains that this was not the only offer to come to Henry at this time, saying that in 1534 he was even offered the Danish crown.<sup>86</sup> Whether Henry accepted any of these offers is not known, but at any rate he did not break with Marcus Meyer as long as there was any hope of Lübeck's victory in Denmark. In the summer of 1535 prospects of such a victory grew dim; Christian III began the siege of Copenhagen on 24 July and captured 13 English ships on passage through the straits. He had thereby put himself into the strategic position from which his predecessors had regularly been able to force the English to negotiate. Messages passed between the kings in the autumn of 1535,<sup>87</sup> and in January 1536 Candish and Bonner sent a report on their negotiations with Christian on the captured ships and on the question of mediation between the two sides. Christian had told them that he had had ten ships released immediately and that he would pay for the three others. He was not encouraging when it came to discussion of Henry's mediation between himself and Lübeck, but on the other hand he sought aid from Henry, declaring that his enemies, if victorious, intended to yield Copenhagen and Malmø to the Emperor. Christian was well aware that the last thing Henry wanted

<sup>85</sup> C. F. Wurm, *op. cit.* 27; Brit. Mus. MS Nero B. III, no. 51; *Aarsberetninger fra det kongelige Geheimearchiv*, IV (1870), 5-6.

<sup>86</sup> Arrild Huitfeldt, *Danmarckis Rigis Krónicke angaaende den Hóylofflige Oldenborgiske Stamme* (1652), 1417-8; A. F. Pollard, *op. cit.* 311-2.

<sup>87</sup> C. F. Wurm, *op. cit.* 52-3.

was to see the Emperor as master of the Danish straits, and nothing could have been better calculated to restrain him from giving help to Lübeck than the knowledge that the city's leaders were guilty of double-dealing in their affairs with him and the Emperor. Candish's response to Christian's efforts to enlist English aid was to ask "upon what good ground he might make suche advertisement, alleaging it shuld not only be mete, in case they should have any money of his grace, to haue the same again restored and repaid, but also sufficient gage and pawne for the same, with other benefite and commoditie, demanding for a pawn the delyverance of Copman-haven and Elbow (Malmø) into the kings hands. Which they (i.e. Christian's representatives) answered was not possible, being Copman-haven the seate of the king of Denmark, but they said, their master had divers other isles as Iseland and Feraye, wherein his grace might be satisfied".

The day after these discussions, Candish had a private audience with the king himself and told him that he had no commission to do more than negotiate on the question of a truce and the captured ships. The king paid no attention to this and slandered Lübeck to the best of his ability, declaring that their troops had been put into the field at the Emperor's instigation, and asking for an English loan against a pledge of Iceland and the Faroes — "two great countreys . . . whereof th'one, that is Iseland he had found had great plentie of brymstone". Candish replied that the request for a loan was not an adequate basis for agreement, since Henry would pay too high a price for aiding Christian if he incurred thereby the anger of the Emperor, with whom at the moment his master was on good terms. When the English envoy proved thus adamant, Christian hastened to his council but soon returned and said "that in no wise he cold depart with any other parcel of his realm than the two islands before named, which, as he said, he was content, his grace shuld have for a token and his money repaid to;

so he wold besides be bound to pursue his grace with shippes, horsemen and fotemen at all times after for a reciproque, requiring for his ayde iijc ml angelots”.

Candish was not yet satisfied with the outcome of his mission and asked for an answer to the matters he had been especially empowered to raise, but to no avail: instead he was presented with a valuable chain as a personal gift.<sup>88</sup> Edmund Bonner had previously made it known to Peder Svave that Henry did not wish to accept Iceland as a pledge in return for aid to Christian;<sup>89</sup> what he was deeply interested in was the control of Malmø and Copenhagen, two Gibraltar-like fortresses which would have well served the interests of English sea-power. At that time they were both in the hands of Lübeck, who offered to pledge them to Henry in return for his support. In one letter to Lübeck Henry wrote as follows: “Nor is it alonely to be considered what a man may wyne and atteyne, but also by what means he may kepe and defend it when it is won and gotten”.<sup>90</sup> Christian’s troops were successful in 1535, but in January 1536 he was still by no means firmly established in power, and the Emperor, for example, was nursing thoughts of retaliation. Allies were a pressing need, but Henry demanded a high price.

There was nothing unrealistic about Henry’s policy in the Count’s War. He supported Wullenwever in Lübeck and even tried to get him released after his fall from power and his imprisonment, but he refused to aid Christian by loans or any other means except in return for control of the Baltic Straits. He could lend money to Lübeck without much risk because he always had the Steelyard merchants and the Hanse privileges in England as a guarantee of repayment. It was quite different when it came to dealings with the king of Denmark. He exercised

<sup>88</sup> *DI IX 628; Aarsberetninger fra det kongelige Geheimearchiv, IV (1870), 30-31.*

<sup>89</sup> *DI IX 627.*

<sup>90</sup> C. F. Wurm, *op. cit.* 19.

control over an important sea-route, but he had few financial or commercial interests at stake in England. As long as the English navy was no stronger than it was in Henry's time, it was best for the English to avoid any dealings with Denmark that might later lead to war. It is true that the Danish cannon at Copenhagen did not cover the Iceland seas, but it was in effect due to Danish supremacy in the Baltic Straits that Iceland remained a possession of the Danish Crown.

## VI

Hamburg was neutral in the Count's War and sought good relations and an alliance with the English. The Iceland dispute seems to have been gradually buried under the greater events succeeding it. It is true that in 1535 Henry's envoy again brought up the question of compensation for the damage done in 1532 and apparently met with some response from the city council. Nothing came of it, however, for the German merchants involved flatly refused to pay and, as far as is known, the matter was then dropped for good.<sup>91</sup>

In Iceland itself the situation was unaltered. The Hamburg merchants there drove the English out of business, and the Icelandic authorities gradually expelled them from their trading and fishing stations. The administration in Iceland both profited and suffered from the fact that Christian III's power was more firmly established than that of most of his predecessors and from his possession of a fleet. He was the first Danish king to send troops across the Atlantic in order to impose his will on the Icelanders, and now the edicts of the Danish government were worth something more than the paper they were written on, when behind them stood a powerful centralised authority and an efficient military machine. Thus, after 1536 it was difficult for the English to regain

<sup>91</sup> Hamburg Staatsarchiv, Islandica 1535 bis 1560, fols. 4-16.

what they had lost in Iceland, and it cannot be seen that Henry made any attempts to improve the position of his subjects in that sphere. The English seamen apparently made some attempt to redress the balance themselves. On 10 December 1538 Christian complained to Henry of English aggression in Iceland. Henry replied by letter on 25 February 1539 and obviously wished to bring about a peaceful settlement, since he ends by asking Christian not to resort to hostile measures (i.e. in Øresund) until there had been further investigations into the matter.<sup>92</sup> The Icelandic governor made a similar complaint on behalf of the Icelanders themselves in a letter of 20 March 1539.<sup>93</sup> In the autumn of that year the lawman in the south of Iceland instituted a court to deal with cases brought against certain named Englishmen, who, despite the disasters of 1532, must still have been based in Grindavík. They were accused of robbery, usury and violence against persons, and their possessions adjudged forfeit to the king. They might be attacked with legal impunity and any who defended them or their property brought condemnation on themselves. "And we judge the Englishmen and foreigners who stay through the winter in Iceland to be outlaws, forfeiting their right to hold property and enjoy peace in this country, according to the law of the land".<sup>94</sup> After this an attack was made on the English in Grindavík, in which some men were lost on both sides but which ended with the lawman's successful seizure of the merchants' goods there and the final expulsion of the English from the Icelandic mainland.<sup>95</sup> These events do not appear to have led to any differences between Denmark and England. It is however unlikely that no complaints were made to Henry, or that he could turn a completely deaf ear to them. On 18 April 1543 Chapuys wrote a long report to the queen of

<sup>92</sup> *DI X* 164.

<sup>93</sup> *DI X* 170.

<sup>94</sup> *DI X* 198.

<sup>95</sup> *Safn til sögu Íslands* I (1856), 86.

Hungary and said, amongst other things, that he had asked Henry what news he had of the agent "he had sent to Denmark to inquire after a man the merchants of England had sent to Iceland for the purpose of establishing a fishery in those parts". When no news came of the merchants' agent, Henry had sent another to look for him, "as the loss to English trade would be great", but now he too had disappeared. The king thought however that the lost agent would soon turn up, and he considered Hamburg to be very well disposed towards himself.<sup>96</sup> No other information about these agents has come to light, but it must be thought likely that, in this period when Danish warships were for the first time present in Icelandic waters, Henry was trying to reach agreement with Christian III and Hamburg over the Iceland trade and fisheries. It is also likely that the English merchants and fishermen themselves tried to come to some arrangement with the Icelandic authorities. But if such attempts were made, they were certainly unsuccessful. It had never been the Danish king's intention to give Hamburg a monopoly of the Iceland trade. As long as their fleet was a negligible force, the Danes supported Hamburg against England, but now they were preparing to turn against their former ally. The Iceland trade was destined for Danish merchants and the Icelandic fisheries were to be worked by the Icelanders and the agents of the Danish Crown. Late in 1542 the king reissued the edict forbidding foreign merchants to winter in Iceland, and instructed the governor to enforce this law. He acted energetically in the autumn of 1543, and at the Alþingi of 1544 he had a judgment passed to the effect that all the property of foreigners in Iceland was forfeit to the king. The property in question proved to be mainly fishing-boats belonging to Hamburg merchants, and it is not known that the English suffered any noteworthy losses on this occasion.<sup>97</sup> For some time

<sup>96</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Spanish*, III, no. 130.

<sup>97</sup> *DI XI* 167, 285.

after this the English still had a trading and fishing post in the Vestmannaeyjar, until it was finally captured by the governor, with the aid of the Scots, in 1559.<sup>98</sup> This was the end of the English bases in Iceland, and at that time the English fleet on the Iceland voyage numbered no more than 40-50 fishing vessels.<sup>99</sup> The government of Elizabeth I felt that the English ventures to Iceland had much decayed since the beginning of the century, and one of the chief reasons for this Lord Cecil declared to be “ the recovery of the Iles of Island into the possession of the Kyng of Denmark”.<sup>100</sup> There is truth in what he says. It was about the middle of the sixteenth century that the king of Denmark for the first time achieved complete control of Iceland and Icelandic waters, and this marked the end of Henry VIII’s engagement in his subjects’ affairs in Iceland and the beginning of a fateful period in Iceland’s history.

<sup>98</sup> *Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, Hatfield House, Part XIII*, 70.

<sup>99</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic*, IV 426; *DI XII* 235.

<sup>100</sup> R. H. Tawney and Eileen Power, *Tudor Economic Documents II* (1953), 105.

# SOME OBSERVATIONS ON *TRISTRAMS SAGA*<sup>1</sup>

BY PAUL SCHACH

## I

Here is recorded the story of Tristram and Queen Ísönd, which tells of the unbearable love they had for each other. 1226 years had passed since the birth of Christ when this tale was written in Norwegian at the behest and command of noble King Hákon. It was executed and written down by Brother Róbert to the best of his ability in the words which follow in the saga now to be told.

With this introduction begins *Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar*, the only member of the Thomas group of Tristan romances to be preserved in entirety. Of the courtly epic of Thomas of Brittany, only fragments comprising less than one-fifth of the work are extant. Gottfried von Strassburg did not live to complete his magnificent Middle High German adaptation; his continuators, Ulrich von Türheim and Heinrich von Freiberg, used sources other than Thomas. The English *Sir Tristrem*, from the latter part of the thirteenth century, is preserved in very imperfect form only in the Auchinleck Manuscript. And so *Tristrams saga* is "notre témoin le plus sûr du poème de Thomas,"<sup>2</sup> upon which Joseph Bédier and Roger Sherman Loomis in large measure based their reconstructions of the Anglo-Norman epic and upon which Kölbing founded his critical evaluation of Gottfried's poem in relation to its source.

*Tristrams saga* is no less important for the study of Icelandic literature. As the first of the southern metrical romances of chivalry to be translated into Norwegian and then into Icelandic prose, it had a revolutionary impact

<sup>1</sup> Portions of this paper were presented at a meeting of the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study on 4 May, 1958, at the University of California in Berkeley.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Bédier, *Le Roman de Tristan par Thomas* (1905), II 64.

upon the literary taste of the Icelanders in the thirteenth century. The native literature was strongly influenced by it, both in content and spirit. Motifs and situations, such as the ambiguous oath in the Spes episode of *Grettis saga*, were borrowed from it.<sup>3</sup> Its plot, in part or in toto, was used in imitations and adaptations; and the tragic conclusion of the story was the source of one of the finest Icelandic ballads, *Tristrams kvæði*. The romantic element of *Laxdæla saga* and *Gunnlaugs saga* can be attributed in large part, I believe, to the influence of *Tristrams saga*. Nowhere is the spirit of courtesy and chivalry stronger than in this saga, which was translated, as the initial chapters clearly show, for the express purpose of introducing that spirit at the court of King Hákon Hákonarson. None of the other translated romances remotely approach *Tristrams saga* in tragic depth and intensity; and, what is even more important, most of these translations had probably not yet been made at the time when *Laxdæla saga* was written. Thus *Tristrams saga* is the most likely source of the romantic elements of *Laxdæla*, which Einar Ól. Sveinsson discusses so succinctly in the Introduction to his edition of that saga. By the time *Gunnlaugs saga* was written, a considerable number of translated romances must have been known in Iceland. But here again the native saga seems to me to be closer to Brother Róbert's translation in theme and spirit than to any other, despite the loan-motif from *Trójumanna saga*.

Perhaps the most cogent evidence of the pervasive influence and popularity of this work is the opposition which soon arose against it. *Haralds saga Hringsbana* is a case in point. When King Dagr suggests that Haraldr would be a more fitting match for his daughter Signý than Harald's father, the young man replies that he is unwilling to become a *dróttinsvikari*, 'a betrayer of his lord', for

<sup>3</sup> For a different point of view regarding the source of this motif in *Grettis saga*, see Henry Goddard Leach, *Angevin Britain and Scandinavia* (1921), 186-189.

her sake. Margaret Schlauch suggests that this saga may have been “constructed as a deliberate reply to the French romance.”<sup>4</sup> And Sigurður Nordal is of the opinion that the author of *Eyrbyggja saga* was in “deliberate reaction against his times, frowning upon the newfangled romantic chivalrous fashions that obviously had free play in *Laxdæla*.”<sup>5</sup> Nordal points out that the contrasting description of the “dandified” Þorleifr kimbi and of the “prudent and unostentatious Snorri” looks like a sarcastic jibe (*stikpille*) at the author of *Laxdæla*, who is “insatiable in the descriptions of the love of finery of his favourites.”<sup>6</sup>

In view of the capital importance of *Tristrams saga* for the study of medieval literature in general and of Icelandic literature in particular, it seems almost incredible that so little attention should have been paid to it. There exists neither a critical edition nor a faithful English translation of this saga. Only a few years ago Jan de Vries could repeat an old error and say that *Tristrams saga* is preserved in only one paper manuscript and several vellum fragments, “which, however, belong to a strongly divergent and very defective version.”<sup>7</sup> I cite this not as a criticism of Professor de Vries, but as an indication of the lack of recent scholarly activity in this field. In the following I shall confine myself in the main to commenting on those aspects of the study of *Tristrams saga* which have hitherto been neglected or overlooked.

## II

Like most Old Norwegian translations of continental romances, *Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar* has come down to us only in Icelandic copies. The oldest manuscript of this saga is a vellum from the second half of the fifteenth century, AM 564 4to, in the Arna-Magnæan collection

<sup>4</sup> *Romance in Iceland* (1934), 151.

<sup>5</sup> Thus Stefán Einarsson, *A History of Icelandic Literature* (1957), 142.

<sup>6</sup> *Sagalitteraturen* (1953), 248.

<sup>7</sup> *Altnordische Literaturgeschichte* (1942), II 350, footnote 7.

in Copenhagen, of which only three leaves are extant. A triangular piece is missing from the lower right hand corner of the first and third leaves, which have also suffered damage from moisture and rubbing. The second leaf has been badly mutilated: four lines are missing at the top of the page, and the lower right hand corner and the left inner margin including about two inches of writing have been cut off. Through the magic of modern photography the darkened vellum manuscript has been rendered easily legible. The three leaves correspond to the following pages and lines in Kölbing's edition: 15<sup>20</sup>-18<sup>22</sup>; 18<sup>28</sup>-20<sup>33</sup>; 31<sup>36</sup>-35<sup>4</sup>. A diplomatic print of leaves one and three is appended to Gísli Brynjúlfsson's edition (pp. 201-213). On these editions see p. 113 below.

*Tristrams saga* is preserved also in three paper manuscripts: AM 543 4to, from the seventeenth century (hereafter referred to as *a*); ÍB 51 fol., written about 1688 (hereafter called *b*); and JS 8 fol., written in 1729 (*c*). *a* is in the Arna-Magnæan collection in Copenhagen; *b* and *c* are in the National Library in Reykjavík. *b* lacks a few sentences at the end of the saga and has suffered considerable damage to the lower inner and outer margins, especially of the first few pages. Most of the lacunae can be filled from *c*, which is a fairly accurate, slightly abbreviated copy of *b*. *Af Tristram* and *Og Isönd* are written at the top of the left and right hand pages respectively throughout *b*. This manuscript, written in one hand except for two pages, is from the *Svartskinna* of Magnús Jónsson of Vigur (1637-1702). The relationship of *a* and *b* to each other and to the vellum (*A*) will be clarified by a comparison of the variant readings of pertinent portions of the story. Unless otherwise indicated, the first quotation is from *A* and the second from *b* in each case. Since the paper manuscripts are divided into 101 chapters, chapter references are valid both for the manuscripts and for the editions of the saga, all three of which are based on *a*.

Chapter 15 of the saga, which relates the birth of Tristram and the death of his parents, Kanelangres and Blensinbíl, ends as follows in *A* (cf. Kölbing, p. 15):

Nu uex harmur hirdslids þeirra. vinir gretu herra sinn adrir frv sina allir huortt tueggia. mikell uar harmur j haullvm millvm hird manna af fra falli sins dyrligs herra. Meire uar sorg j svefnburum med meyvum af sinnar fru dauda allir gretu er sa sa sueininn so ungangn an bædi faudur ok modur.

[Now the grief of their court attendants increases. Friends mourn their lord; others, their lady; and all mourn both of them. Great was the grief in the halls among the men because of the death of their glorious lord; greater was the sorrow in the bed chambers among the young women because of the death of their lady. All wept who saw the boy, so young, without both father and mother.]

In view of the general situation and the translator's marked predilection for antithetical correlatives, it seems probable that *vinir* is a scribal error for *sumir* 'some'. Further evidence of scribal carelessness in *A* is the repetition of *sa* in this passage, of *snuitt* with the variant spelling *snuidd* a few lines further on, and of *fadir* on the *verso* side of leaf one.

In the paper manuscripts this passage reads differently:

Nú vex harmur hirdmönnum öllum, af fráfelle sýns Dýrdlega Herra, meiri var nú Sorg, Enn svefn, med Meyumm og konumm, þuj allar hörmudu og Grietu Dauda sinnar frúr, og suo þad, ad sveijrninn var so wngr, fódurlaus, og módur, eppter þau Bæde frammlidinn.

[Now the grief of all the men increases because of the death of their glorious lord. There was now more sorrow than sleep for the maidens and women, for all mourned and lamented the death of their lady as well as the fact that the boy was so young fatherless and mother(less) after the death of both of them.]

The corruption of this passage apparently began with the inability of a copyist to decipher the abbreviation of the second element of *svefnburum*. Although quite clear on the photograph, the first syllable of *burum* is difficult to read in the manuscript itself. The frequent use of antithesis and pairs of synonyms throughout the saga

may well have suggested the expressions *sorg en svefn* and *meyjum ok konum*.

Fearing that the child might die unbaptized, Róaldr, the faithful steward, immediately summons a priest; *ok kom þa kennemadur med krisma ok gaf barninu* 'and then a priest brought the chrism and anointed the child'. According to the paper manuscripts, however, the priest comes *med Christna trú* 'with the Christian faith'. The form *krisma*, which is difficult to decipher on the vellum, does look very much like *kristna* when seen from a certain angle. The copyist, who may not have been familiar with the word *krismi*, in any event misread it and then had to add *trú* and omit *ok gaf barninu* in order to make the sentence meaningful.

It was inevitable that the Pictish name of the hero in its Celtic form *Drystan* should come to be associated with the French word *triste* (*tristre*), both because of the sorrowful circumstances surrounding Tristan's birth and because of his tragic life and death. Gottfried, who could assume an acquaintance with the Tristan story and some knowledge of French on the part of his German audience, was able to curb his penchant for punning and keep his etymology of the name relatively simple:

nu heizet triste triure  
und von der âventiure  
sô was daz kint Tristan genant,  
Tristan getoufet al zehant.  
von triste Tristan was sîn name. (1997 ff.)

Brother Róbert, who could make no such assumption for his Norwegian audience at the court of King Hákon, had to expand the explanation somewhat (cf. Kölbing, p. 16):

Enn j þersu mali er trist. hryggur enn hum er madur ok uar þi  
snuit snuid nafni hans at fegra atkuædi er Tristam enn Tristhum,  
þui skal hann so heita . . . ok uar hann þa Tristram kalladur  
ok skirdur med þi nafne.

[But in this language *triste* is 'sad' and *hum* is 'man', and his

name was changed since Tristam sounds better than Tristhum. Therefore he shall be named thus . . . And he was called Tristram and baptized with that name.]

In the paper manuscripts the etymology is somewhat simpler:

Enn i þessu maale þýder Tristám hriggur, Og var nafne hans snúid til fegra atquædis, og skal svejrninn Tristram heita.

[But in this language Tristám means sad, and his name was changed to a nicer pronunciation, and the boy shall be called Tristram.]

Again the corruption is due partly to the condition of the vellum and partly to the ineptness of the copyist. The word *trist.* in *A* looks very much like an abbreviation of Tristam or Tristram, for there is a faint mark above the period, which resembles the ligature for *ur* or for *re*. This was apparently overlooked by the writer of the source of *a* and *b*, which we shall call *x*. Otherwise we should probably find *Tristram* rather than *Tristám* in *b* and *Tristam* in *a*. Once the scribe had expanded the supposed abbreviation to *Tristam*, the following clause *hum er madur* became meaningless. Indeed, he may well have interpreted *hū* as *hún*, so that the clause for him then read *hún er madur*. The copyist thereupon “corrected” the sentence to read ‘Tristam means sad’ and omitted the silly clause ‘she is a man’ and the puzzling form *Tristhum*.

In order to prevent Duke Morgan from discovering the true identity of the child, Róaldr decides to represent it as his own. For this purpose he has his wife go to bed and pretend she has given birth to the child. At this point Brother Róbert or an early scribe made an amusing mistake, for we read that the faithful steward bade *systur sinne at fara at hvila* (cf. Kölbing, p. 16<sup>17-18</sup>). The same error is found in *a*, but the infinitive phrase has been amended to *ad leggiast J hvýlu*. In *b* the word *systur* and the correct word *konu* ‘wife’ both occur, and at first glance it looks as though *systur* had been superimposed upon *konu*. Closer inspection, however, reveals that the

opposite is the case. The upper part of the letter *k* is lightly drawn; the lower part, on the other hand, roughly coincides with the *s* of *systur* and therefore makes the *s* stand out instead of hiding it. The writer turned the *y* into an *o* by erasing the tail and closing the top of the original letter. The second *s* stands unchanged. A heavy *n* with a line above it and a clumsy *u* were written over the last three letters of *systur*. The writer of *c* evidently understood what was meant by the resulting *kosnnu*, for he wrote *conu*.

This tendency to emend and to interpolate is characteristic of the writer of *b*. Almost every chapter contains marginal or interlinear additions as well as occasional corrections, all of which are incorporated into the text of *c*. Usually the interpolations in *b* help to clear up the meaning of a passage or to render an expression more idiomatic. Occasionally, however, they compound the confusion. When the Norwegian merchants kidnapped Tristram, for instance, they let the boat drift away from the harbour so *ad Tristram vard ei var vid firr enn þeir voru fiærre lande* (*a*). The last two words of this have been lost in *A* (cf. Kölbing, p. 18<sup>16</sup>). In *b*, however we read *so ad Trygguj hanz filgiare vard ej var vid*. Apparently the writer of *b* expanded the abbreviation for Tristram incorrectly to *Trygguj*, and thereupon, thinking of the hero's faithful tutor and companion, added two words in the margin to make the clause read 'so that Tryggvi, his companion, did not become aware of it'. After leaving the court of King Markis (Ch. 68; cf. Kölbing, p. 83), Tristram went to Brittany to visit his foster-brothers, the sons and heirs of Róaldr (*til arfa Róalds*). In *b* the final letter of *arfa* is missing and the uncompleted word is crossed out. According to *c*, Tristram goes *til Róalds* 'to Róaldr'. In the following chapter, Tristram meets Kardín's "beautiful, gentle, and courteous sister" Ísodd. Brother Róbert blundered in assigning the name *Ísodd* rather than *Ísönd* to Tristram's

wife, for the situation requires the identity of names between Tristram's sweetheart and his wife. Probably for this reason the writer of *b* or a later scribe here inserted the marginal addition *Hún hiet Ísond*.<sup>8</sup> In chapter 70 and thereafter, however, she bears the name *Ísodd*. It was on the basis of these last two interpolations that I concluded that *b* and not *a* must have been the source of an interesting excerpt of this saga made around 1700 for Árni Magnússon by an unidentified scribe.<sup>9</sup>

One of the few instances in which the writer of *b* incorrectly interpreted a word which the scribe of *a* correctly changed is found in chapter 19. In the description of the storm which befell the Norwegians after they had abducted Tristram we read in *A* that *treit var hatt enn hafit diuft* (cf. Kölbing, p. 19<sup>27</sup>). It is obvious from the upper part of the letter that the scribe had first written *diupt* and then, perhaps for phonetic reasons, altered the *p* to an *f*. In *a* the sentence correctly reads *Tried var hatt enn haffed diupt* 'the mast was high but the sea was deep'. The writer of *b*, however, changed the faulty *diuft*, which must have been the spelling in *x*, to *Dauft* 'deaf', though how he then meant the sentence to be understood is problematical.

Nearly all of the corruptions in the paper manuscripts thus far discussed resulted from the inability of a copyist to decipher or to understand *A*. There are several, however, which must have been due to carelessness on the part of the writer of *x*. In Chapter 18, for example, we read that the Norwegian merchants 'admired this young man' (cf. Kölbing, p. 18<sup>8</sup>). Although the word *undrudu* is perfectly clear in *A*, it must have been replaced in *x* by the meaningless *endu*. *a* has *Endu*. In *b*, *endu* has been altered to *unduduz*. *c* has *vndruud*. Some of the many common omissions in *a* and *b* are also due to

<sup>8</sup> This interpolation seems to be in another hand, possibly that of the writer of folios 303 and 304 of the codex.

<sup>9</sup> Leaf 19 *r-v* of MS AM 576b 4to, which I have discussed in a paper to be published in *Scandinavian Studies*.

the faulty condition of *A*; most of them, however, must be attributed to the carelessness or disinterest of the writer of *x*, who had a marked tendency to abbreviate and condense. At the end of chapter 18, for example, an entire line, perfectly legible, has been omitted. In chapter 28 Mórholdr is described as *sterkur digur ok dramb samur ok mikill vexti* 'strong, stout, and haughty, and of great stature' (cf. Kölbing, p. 34<sup>25</sup>). In the paper manuscripts he is *mikill vexti, sem sagt er* 'of great stature, as is said'.

In spite of its many interpolations, *b* is demonstrably closer to *A* in style and phraseology than *a*. During the battle in which Kanelangres was killed (Ch. 15), there were *sumer höggner, sumer saarer, sumer Dreþner af huoru tueggia Lide* 'some cut down, some wounded, and some killed in each of the two armies'. *a* omits *sumer höggner* (cf. Kölbing, p. 14<sup>34-5</sup>). In view of the frequent arrangement of words or phrases in groups of three, it is likely that *b* is nearer to *A* than *a*. When Tristram's tutor returns with word of the boy's abduction, *Hanns fósturfader vinnur harm allra annara* (*a*) (cf. Kölbing, p. 19<sup>1</sup>). Kölbing was puzzled by the last three words ('grief of all others'). In *A*, the sentence states that Róaldr *vinnur allann harmm . . .* The original reading seems to be preserved in *b*, *allann harm annara*, so that we can fill the lacuna in *A* from *b*. The sense is that the grief of Róaldr was as great as that of all the others together. A more striking example is found a few lines further on, where Róaldr, standing by the sea, gives vent to his grief (cf. Kölbing, p. 19<sup>5-6</sup>). He calls in a loud voice: *huggari minn ok herra, huggarro min ok hiarta, ast min ok . . .* (*A*). The reading in *b* is almost identical: *Huggun mýn og herra, huggarró mýnz hiarta, aast mýn og ynde*. The strongly rhythmic, alliterative phrase then means 'My comforter and my lord, my comfort and my heart, my love and my delight'. In *a* the rhythmic effect is largely lost through the destruction of one of the

alliterative word-pairs: *Huggun myn og Herra, Hugar Roo myn, ást myn og Inde*. A further interesting example is found in the passage describing Tristram's forlorn condition after the Norwegians have set him ashore (cf. Kölbjng, p. 20<sup>22-3</sup>). He looks about and can see nothing but *fiöll, og skóga og Dali, Sliett biorg og Hamra* (*b*) 'mountains and forests and valleys, sheer cliffs and crags'. *a* omits the valleys. *A* reads . . . *oll ok dali. stliett biorg ok hamra*. Borrowing a word from *b* and correcting *stliett*, we get *skoga ok fioll ok dali, sliett biorg ok hamra* as the complete reading of *A*. This piling up of five nouns in one group of three, preceded or followed by a group of two, is likewise characteristic of the style of the saga.

The one addition, the various corruptions, and the many omissions (including several entire sentences and totalling about 12 lines for the three vellum leaves) which *a* and *b* have in common as opposed to *A* indicate that the two paper manuscripts came from a somewhat corrupt and considerably abbreviated source derived and possibly directly copied from *A*. Most of the common corruptions can be explained on the basis of the state of the vellum *A*. The omissions, for the most part, must be blamed on the writer of *x*. It is obvious, of course, that *b* cannot possibly be a copy of *a*. Conversely, *a* cannot have been copied from *b*, for it contains several essential phrases and sentences which are missing in *b*.<sup>10</sup> Since *b* is less abbreviated and more faithful to *A* than *a*, it must be used (together with the extant leaves of *A*) as the basis for a new edition of the saga. Most of the many lacunae in *b* can be filled from *a* and *c*, although *c* must be used with discrimination because of the mechanical and uncritical manner in which its writer incorporated the interpolations of *b*.

<sup>10</sup> In Ch. 86, for example, the writer of *b* skipped a whole line of his source in the conversation between Tristram and Kardín about the statues of Isönd and Bringvet, whereby words and actions of Kardín are attributed to Tristram.

## III

*Tristrams saga* has been edited three times: by Eugen Kölbing (Heilbronn 1878), by Gísli Brynjúlfsson (Copenhagen 1878), and by Bjarni Vilhjálmsson (in *Riddarasögur* I, Reykjavík 1949).

The edition of Bjarni Vilhjálmsson is based on that of Gísli Brynjúlfsson, from which it differs only in minor details. It is a popular edition in modern orthography, with a brief introduction but without critical apparatus. Because of its large clear type it is very readable, and its use for quick reference is facilitated by the chapter headings.

To the text of *Tristrams saga* (according to MS *a*) in the edition of Gísli Brynjúlfsson is appended (in addition to the text of leaves one and three of MS *A*) a lengthy summary of the story in Danish. The volume also contains the text of *Möttuls saga* (with Danish summary), the Danish, Icelandic, and Faroese Tristram ballads, and a discussion of the two sagas in relation to their sources.

Although the publication of this volume by Gísli Brynjúlfsson produced only a ripple on the scholarly scene (judging from the reviews), the appearance of Kölbing's edition of *Tristrams saga* called forth a veritable wave of critical comment, especially in France and Germany. This was not due to interest in the saga itself, however, but because of the light which the saga shed on the works of Thomas and Gottfried. Indeed, almost the entire Introduction of Kölbing's edition — 140 pages of fine italic print — is devoted, as the critic in the *Scottish Review* (Vol. 14, pp. 138-172) aptly commented, to "determining a controversy which the author has with Professor Heinzel as to the sources whence Gottfried derived the materials for his celebrated poem." In a brilliantly written monograph entitled "Gottfrieds von Strassburg *Tristan* und seine Quelle"<sup>11</sup> Heinzel had advanced the now untenable view that Gottfried's

<sup>11</sup> *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* XIV (1869), 272-447.

immediate source had been a lost French Tristan epic which combined the work of Thomas with another version of the story. For the purpose of refuting Heinzel's thesis, Kölbing made a painstakingly minute comparison of the text of the saga with the extant fragments of Thomas, with Gottfried's *Tristan*, and with *Sir Tristrem*. He arrived at the conclusion that the Norwegian, German, and English adaptations were translations of various recensions of one poem, and that that poem was the lost epic of Thomas. This conclusion almost immediately found general acceptance among scholars; only Heinzel remained unconvinced. If Kölbing had been less intent on refuting Heinzel, his comparison of the saga with the other adaptations would be less difficult to read. But despite its poor organization and its other shortcomings, this treatise is a major contribution to Tristan scholarship.

The Icelandic text of this edition leaves much to be desired. Presumably Kölbing wished to produce a text which reflected the language of the first half of the thirteenth century; but as Cederschiöld pointed out, he used archaic forms such as *mínn* for *minn*, *gótt* for *gott*, and *hánun* for *honun* beside forms which are too modern, such as *vóx* and *vorðinn* for *óx* and *orðinn*, *nógr* for *gnógr*, and *-st* for *-sk* or *-z* in the reflexive verbs.<sup>12</sup> Kölbing replaced the loan-word *bifalningu* (dat. sg.) 'command' by the native word *boði* (p. 5<sup>4</sup>), but failed to change the modern masculine form *þvír skilningar* to the older feminine *þrjár skilningar* (p. 20<sup>15</sup>) or to emend *ek hefi mist þik* (p. 19<sup>7</sup>) to *ek hefi mist þín*. The criticisms directed against Kölbing in this regard are valid also for Gísli Brynjúlfsson, but to a lesser degree. Kölbing's footnotes, while inadequate, are better than those of Gísli. Kölbing erroneously wrote *Ísond* for *Ísond* or *Ísönd*. His German translation of the saga is in the main good. Neither Kölbing nor Gísli devoted much

<sup>12</sup> In a review of the two editions in the *Literaturblatt für germanische und romanische Philologie* I (1880), columns 93-97.

space to a discussion of the manuscripts, of which they knew only *a* and the first and third leaves of *A*. (Kölbing incorporated these leaves of *A* into his text.) Gísli believed that *A* could not have been the original from which *a* was copied; Kölbing thought that *A* and *a* were closely related and that the latter was possibly a transcript of the former. As we have seen from the comparison of the manuscripts, both were partly right.

In regard to content, the saga differs from its source primarily in length. The order of events has been slightly changed, but none of the essential action has been deleted. As edited from MS *a*, the saga is about half the length of Gottfried's *Tristan und Isolde*. We have seen that *a* is somewhat shorter than *b*, and that *b* is considerably more condensed than *A*. Assuming that *A* is as much shorter than the original Norwegian translation as *a* is shorter than *A*, and allowing for the expansions of Gottfried, we can estimate that Brother Róbert's translation was about two-thirds as long as its French source.

More important than the degree of compression is the question of what was suppressed by the translator. Joseph Bédier's answer to this question was brief and to the point: *Ce que le plus volontiers il a supprimé de son original, c'en est la poésie.*<sup>13</sup> Einar Ól. Sveinsson is evidently in agreement when he declares that Brother Róbert's translation "very nearly ruined that great love story."<sup>14</sup> There is little that one can say to extenuate these strictures except to suggest that some of the blame for the weakness of the saga in its present form must be shared by the scribes through whose hands it went between 1226 and 1688, and to point out the fact that it is a bit unfair to compare the first literary effort of an English cleric, as he probably was, working in a foreign

<sup>13</sup> *Le Roman de Tristan*, II 75.

<sup>14</sup> *The Age of the Sturlungs*, translated by Jóhann S. Hannesson (1953), 41; cf. also his *Sagan af Tristan og Ísól* (1955), xix.

tongue, with the magnificent poetry of Gottfried and the consummate craftsmanship of the *Íslendinga sögur*. Missing from the translation are the passages which Gottfried delighted in elaborating: the reflections of the author and the sentimental analyses of the characters. The mental torture and the moral conflict of Tristan after his marriage to Îsôt als Blanche Mains, to which Gottfried devotes several hundred lines, is in the saga summarily dealt with in a few sentences. Whereas the story of the killing of the dragon and the subsequent identification of Tristram is skilfully related, the account of the drinking of the love potion is dry and perfunctory. The scene in which Tristram and Ísönd meet under the tree in which the king is hiding is so badly bungled that one can scarcely put the entire blame for it on the translator.

In contrast to the terse, unadorned, lucid language of the *Íslendinga sögur*, the style of *Tristrams saga* is almost ludicrously turgid and embellished. Whereas the native sagas use alliteration only sparingly, *Tristrams saga* fairly bristles with alliterative word-pairs such as *vald ok virðing*, *vald ok vápn*, *vel ok viturlig*, *vel ok virðuliga*, *vás ok válk*, *angr ok óbót*, *angr ok óró*, *sæmdr ok signaður*, *sorg ok sút*, *hauss ok heili*, *harmr ok háski*, *haldnir ok herteknir*, *heilir ok haldnir*, *stormr ok straumr*, *herra ok höfðingi*, *hertugar ok höfðingjar*, etc. Occasionally the translator employs three successive alliterative words, as when he has Tristram present Róaldr to King Markis as his *frændi*, *faðir*, *ok fóstri*. Frequently he uses a series of three nouns, adjectives, or verbs. The death of Kanelangres is mourned by all who knew his *frægð*, *drengskap*, *ok góðlyndi*. Tristram declares that the false steward of King Markis will never obtain the hand of Ísönd *með falsi*, *lygum*, *og hégóma*. Mórholdr had a shield *harðan ok mikinn ok þykkvan*. This warrior was *breiðr í andliti*, *mikill at vexti*, *ok digr í limum*. When Tristram volunteers to fight against Mórholdr, the men of the court vow to *unna . . .*, *tigna . . .*, *ok þjóna* him. At particularly

dramatic or solemn moments in the story, the translator tends to use three pairs of synonyms or alliterative words. After abducting Tristram, the Norwegian merchants endure *vás ok válk, hungr ok óhægindi, hræzlur ok hryggleik*. Before engaging Mórholdr in single combat, Tristram addresses the followers of King Markis as *herrar ok höfðingjar, lendir menn ok riddarar, yngri menn ok eldri*. As we saw above, these stylistic predilections of Brother Róbert are preserved much better in *b* than in *a*. Other peculiarities of style are a tendency to use rhyme and a certain penchant for antithesis, both of which may be explained as reflections of the French source.

Probably the most awkward and objectionable stylistic feature of this saga is the frequent use of the present participle, both as part of a progressive verb-form and in a dative absolute construction. The first type is illustrated by the following sentence which describes Kanelangres' unrest after meeting Blensinbíl: Ok svá um nóttina, sem hann *er í rekkju sinni liggjandi*, þá *var* hann þetta svá *hugsandi*, at hann engan svefn né hvíld *er hafandi*. A characteristic example of the second type is found near the end of the saga: Sem Ísönd var nú af skipi gengin, þá heyrði hon fólkit allt gráta með miklum harmi, *öllum klukkum hringjandi*. These unnatural uses of the participle, as well as other stylistic aberrations, are obviously due to Latin and French influence.

#### IV

One of the most curious stories derived from *Tristrams saga* in Iceland is the rustic *Saga af Tristram ok Ísodd*, which seems to have been written around the end of the fourteenth century. Although its literary value is slight, this "boorish account of Tristram's noble passion" (Leach) is of interest and importance for the study of Icelandic literary history during the post-classical period. Space will permit only a brief discussion of the story of Tristram and Ísodd here.

The *Saga af Tristram ok Ísodd* is preserved in two complete manuscripts: a vellum from the middle of the fifteenth century, AM 489 4to, in the Arna-Magnæan Collection in Copenhagen, and a paper manuscript, Lbs 2316 4to, written *ca.* 1850, in the National Library in Reykjavík. The two manuscripts differ in a number of interesting details. There is also a portion of a paper transcript of the vellum, Ny kgl. Saml. 1745 4to, in the Royal Library in Copenhagen. The saga was edited with Danish translation from the vellum by Gísli Brynjúlfsson in *Annaler for nordisk Oldkyndighed* (1851). Only sixteen lines of Gísli's sixty-page *Bemærkninger* are devoted to the saga itself. In the Foreword the editor states that the short saga is the older of the two versions of the Tristan story in Icelandic. Later on (p. 157), he comes to the conclusion that this saga is "obviously only a later Icelandic adaptation of the original Norwegian translation of the French novel." Still later, in his edition of the longer *Tristrams saga*, Gísli rejects this explanation in favour of the thesis that the *Saga af Tristram of Ísodd* was based on a lost story which an Icelander had heard told abroad, probably in England or Scotland (p. 300). The few scholars who have concerned themselves with the shorter saga agree with the second surmise of Gísli. The *Saga af Tristram ok Ísodd*, as we shall see, is clearly based on an imperfect recollection of the longer saga, which has been further distorted by the addition of names and situations from other sources.

As the story begins, Tristram's grandfather, Philippus, is king of England. Philippus was a popular royal name in the *lygisögur*: it is borne by kings in *Valdimars saga*, *Flóvents saga*, and *Bævings saga*. The name Markis was apparently forgotten, for the son of King Philippus is called Mórodd, and his sister is named Blenziblý. In a tournament Plégrus, the lover of Blenziblý, is killed by a Spanish knight, Kalegras (evidently a corruption of Kanelangres), the son of Patroclos, vassal to King Hlöðvir of Spain. Blenziblý, watching the joust from a high tower, immediately falls in love with Kalegras and has him brought to her bower. This episode may have been

borrowed from *Ívens saga*, in which Lúneta falls in love with Íven, the slayer of her husband, and marries him.<sup>15</sup> Kalegras and Blenziblý love each other so ardently that they do not leave the bower for three years — a situation which is reminiscent of the infatuation of Erex for Evída in *Erex saga*. Kalegras goes to Spain to avenge the death of his father, and is himself mortally wounded. Blenziblý with their son Tristram is brought to Spain, but even her skill in leechcraft is unable to save her husband. Blenziblý dies of a broken heart.

Tristram is reared by his foster father Biringr. This name seems to be a combination of Bæringr (often written Beringr in the manuscripts) and of Híringr. Both of these names occur in *Mírmanns saga*, which also knows a king of France called Hlöðvir. The abduction of Tristram and his arrival at the court of King Mórodd are quite different in the shorter saga: a king named Túrnes conquers Spain, abducts Tristram, and sells him to a viking, who abandons the boy on a skerry off the coast of England. Tristram swims ashore, proceeds to the court, and introduces himself to King Mórodd. Here he is joined in due time by his faithful foster-father Biringr.

The rôle of Mórhold is played in the shorter saga by a King Engres of Ireland, who has a mother named Flúrent, a sister called Ísodd fagra, and a counsellor named Kæi hinn kurteisi (likewise borrowed from the translations of Arthurian romances). When Tristram slays Turnes, the sword-splinter remains lodged in Tristram's head and not, as in Gottfried and in Brother Róbert's saga, in the head of his dead enemy. This recalls the plight of the god Thór after his fight with the giant Hrungr. A closer analogue is found in *Havalds saga Hringsbana*, where the hero, who suffers a similar wound, must be cured by the sister of the slain Hermóðr (or, in another version, by a dwarf).<sup>16</sup>

Probably the strangest distortion of a motif in the entire saga occurs in connection with Tristram's quest for healing. Tristram sets out in a ship with sixty knights, all of whom are related to each other by blood or by marriage. As the vessel approaches the coast of Ireland, Tristram provokes a fight among these knights which ends, as he intended, in the death of all of them. No reason is given for Tristram's having his sixty companions slain, nor is there anything in the story of Brother Róbert that can explain it. Tristram is cured by Ísodd, who desists from slaying him when she learns his true identity merely because her mother asks her to. In the longer saga, the sparing of Tristram's life was carefully motivated. After slaying the dragon, Tristram cuts off a piece of the tongue;

<sup>15</sup> For other parallels see Margaret Schlauch, *Romance in Iceland*, 167.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. the study of Gertrude Schoepperle and H. G. Leach in *Scandinavian Studies* II (1914-15), 264-276. Additional analogues are listed by Miss Schlauch, *op. cit.*, 153.

Kæi, who rides past shortly afterwards, does likewise. When Kæi asserts that he has slain the dragon, the queen calls him a liar even before she has ascertained that Tristram has killed it. It is obvious that the person who composed this saga recalled that Tristram had cut out a piece of the dragon's tongue; but he had no understanding of the importance of this in the exposure of Kæi and the identification of Tristram as the real slayer of the dragon. Unmotivated incidents like these and the garbled and confused names are cogent evidence that the shorter saga is based on a very faulty reminiscence of Brother Róbert's work. Queen Flúrent offers Tristram her daughter as a reward for his slaying the dragon, but the young hero declares that only his uncle, King Mórodd, is worthy of her.

Tristram returns to England, reports to King Mórodd, and immediately sets out again for Ireland with three ships to woo Ísodd for his uncle. Ísodd indicates that she would not be averse to marrying Tristram (another point of similarity with *Haralds saga Hringsbana*), but the marriage with King Mórodd is agreed to. Ísodd is accompanied by her foster-mother, Bringven, the daughter of a certain Jarl Cúsen. After drinking the love potion, Tristram and Ísodd tarry for three months before proceeding to England. The king magnanimously offers to give Tristram his kingdom and Ísodd, since a marriage between them would be more suitable because of their youth. (In *Haralds saga*, as we saw above, King Dagr, the father of Signý, makes a similar proposal to the young hero.)

The motif of the substituted bride is somewhat modified: Bringven takes Ísodd's place for three successive nights, and "although the king was a wise man, he did not succeed in discovering this deception." The motif of the clean and soiled shirts is retained with no essential change. When the king is finally convinced of the infidelity of his wife, he sends the two lovers off to a cave, where they have to remain for a week without food. The role of the "traitor" is played by the king's counsellor, Héri hinn hyggni, who was introduced at the very beginning of the saga. The name Héri 'hare' is rare, occurring in the *Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka* and the *Færeyinga þáttur*. What is remarkable is the fact that the name is found amongst the *heiti* for 'dwarf'.<sup>17</sup> The scene with the beggar preceding the ambiguous oath, although greatly simplified, resembles that of *Grettis saga* more than that of the longer *Tristrams saga*. The incident of the audacious water, however, which Brother Róbert related with remarkable frankness and gusto for a cleric, is badly bungled. We are told that Tristram and his wife, Ísodd svarta, attended a banquet. As they were leaving, it was raining heavily. "And Ísodd said that the rain was more inquisitive than her husband." It is difficult to decide whether this amazing distortion of a piquant episode

<sup>17</sup> See *Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka*, ed. A. LeRoy Andrews (1909), 80.

was due to prudishness or ignorance, for we read in the very next sentence that "when they had been together for three years, Ísodd svarta gave birth to a boy child," which was named Kalegras. The death of Tristram and Queen Ísodd is related much as in the longer saga. Tristram helps his namesake slay seven brothers in Jakobsland. Seriously wounded, he sends for his family and his jarls. Later he sends for Ísodd fagra to heal his wound. When Ísodd svarta tells him that the white tents on the approaching ship are black, Tristram dies. Ísodd fagra mourns Tristram for three days and then dies of a broken heart. King Mórodd penitently goes off to Jerusalem and becomes a hermit. Kalegras Tristramsson, who succeeds his great uncle as King of England, marries Lilja, the daughter of the Emperor of Saxland. They have three children, a daughter and two sons. The vellum states that there is a "great saga" about these sons, but the nineteenth-century manuscript denies this.

## V

As Henry Goddard Leach<sup>18</sup> and Bjarni Vilhálmsón<sup>19</sup> have pointed out, the most cogent evidence for the fact that the Icelanders truly appreciated the deep tragedy in the love of Tristram and Isönd for each other is the naively beautiful *Tristrams kvæði*, a ballad which was probably composed in the second half of the fifteenth century.<sup>20</sup> This poem, like the Faroese *Tístrams kvæði*, relates only the death of the hero.

Mortally wounded in battle by a "heathen dog," Tristran (as his name is spelled in recension A) is carried home on his shield. He sends his men to fetch Ísodd bjarta to heal him. Overcoming the anger of the king, Ísodd sets out on the voyage, which lasts eighteen days. Blue sails are hoisted on the ships as a sign to Tristran that Ísodd is coming. When the ships come into view, Ísodd svarta tells Tristran that the sails are black. Three successive stanzas in the middle of the poem begin with the line *Til orða tók hún svarta Ísodd* 'Isodd the Black began to speak'; and each of these stanzas contains the ominous false words *svört eru segl á skipunum* 'black are the sails on the ships'. Tristran turns his face to the wall and dies.

<sup>18</sup> *Angevin Britain and Scandinavia*, 197-198.

<sup>19</sup> *Riddarasögur*, lxx.

<sup>20</sup> For a brief discussion of the four versions of this ballad, see the edition of *Tristrams saga* by Gísli Brynjúlfsson, pp. 334-339. The various recensions are found in S. Grundtvig og Jón Sigurðsson, *Íslensk Fornkvæði*, (1854-85), I.

When the ships land upon the black shore, Ísodd bjarta hears the bells tolling. She goes to the church, bends down to her dead lover, and dies. At the command of jealous Ísodd svarta, the two are buried on opposite sides of the church. From their graves grow two trees, the branches of which intertwine above the roof of the church.

The ballad consists of thirty-two stanzas (in recension A) of four lines each with the rhyme-scheme *a b c b*. The metrical pattern, which is called *úrkast*, is somewhat unusual in that the second and fourth lines have only two stressed words. Each stanza is followed by the one-line refrain — *þeim var ekki skapað nema að skilja* 'For them it was fated only to sever'. This line, which embodies and intensifies the restrained pathos and the tragic undertone of the poem, was fittingly used by Leach as a motto for the chapter "Tristan in the North" in his *Angevin Britain and Scandinavia*.

Kölbing's insistence (p. xvii) that this beautiful ballad was derived from the inartistic *Saga af Tristram ok Ísodd* seems almost preposterous. His argument is based entirely on the identity of names of the second Isolde, Ísodd svarta, "eine Namensform, die sich wohl nirgends sonst findet." The name does, of course, occur elsewhere. And even if it did not, its occurrence in the ballad would indicate at most the possibility that the name itself might have been borrowed from the derived saga. Kölbing failed to notice that the heroine's name in the ballad is not Ísodd fagra but Ísodd bjarta. Furthermore, all the other details in the ballad agree with Brother Róbert's saga. In the ballad, for example, the sails are to be blue if Ísodd bjarta is aboard one of the ships; in the longer saga we read that *Kardin siglde með Hvítum og Bláum seglum* 'Kardín sailed with white and blue sails'. In the shorter saga, there is no mention of sails; the signals are to be white or black tents (or awnings) on the ship. What is of decisive importance, however, is the fact that the ballad so effectively captures and intensifies the tragic mood of the final chapters of *Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar*.

It seems likely, as Wolfgang Golther suggested, that the ballad composer knew both sagas.<sup>21</sup> From the longer one he drew the inspiration and the material for his poem; from the shorter one, he got the suggestion for the names of the two women characters. The three verses referred to above clearly show the symbolic force of the adjective *svartur*. As the epithet of the second Ísodd, it symbolizes the evil which results from her jealousy; and the black tents and the black sands are the symbols of tragedy and death. Like the teller of folk-tales, the composer of ballads is fond of striking contrasts. *Svarta* naturally suggests *bjarta*, which not only describes the radiant beauty but also indicates the noble character of the first Ísodd. Another possible explanation of the intensification of *fagra* to *bjarta* is found in the description of Ísodd fagra in the shorter saga (Ch. 8):

She was more beautiful than any other woman. She was so fair that men saw no blemish on her; and, if one might have the boldness to say so, it seemed to people that rays of light shown from her eyes and her countenance . . . And her hair was as much fairer than gold as gold is fairer than iron.

Surely a woman so radiantly beautiful is not merely *fögr*: she is *björt*.

## VI

And finally a few words should be said about the relationship of the Icelandic folk-tale of Tistram and Ísól bjarta to *Tristrams saga*. Golther sees only a very tenuous connection between the saga and the folk-tale, which he equates with the *märchen* of Maid Maleen (no. 198 in Grimm's collection). Only the names of "the light and the black Ísodd," Golther maintains, are derived from the saga; he explains the forms *Tistram* and *Ísól* as corresponding to the names in Danish and Faroese ballads.<sup>22</sup> A careful study of the available versions of the

<sup>21</sup> *Tristan und Isolde in den Dichtungen des Mittelalters und der Neuen Zeit* (1907), 188.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

Icelandic folk-tale, however, reveals essential differences between it and the German *Märchen von der Jungfrau Maleen*, most of which can be explained as echoes of *Tristrams saga* and the derived *Saga af Tristram ok Ísodd*. One must be careful, too, in drawing conclusions from the forms of the names, for they appear in an almost infinite variety of spellings in the ballads.

In the Faroese ballad, the names are frú Ísin (obviously derived from Ísönd) and Tístram. In the two Danish ballads, the second of which exists in six major recensions, the many spellings of the names are merely variants of Ísalt (Eilhart) and Ísolt (Gottfried) on the one hand, and of Tristram or Tristran(t) on the other hand. Although Ísól does not occur in any of the Danish ballads available to me at present, this form could possibly have developed from Ísal or Ísolt, which do occur. This seems unlikely, however, since the Danish ballads have nothing in common with the Icelandic sagas or the Icelandic ballad.

The third edition of Jón Árnason's *Íslenzkar Þjóðsögur og Ævintýri*, brought out by Árni Böðvarsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson (Reykjavík 1954—), contains five variants of the folk-tale and references to two others. Their titles are:

- A. *Sagan af Fertram og Ísól björtu* (II, 308-312).
- B. *Sagan af Tístram og Ísól björtu* (II, 312-317).
- C. *Tístram og Ísól bjarta* (IV, 486-489).
- D. *Sagan af Tístram og Ísoddu* (IV, 489-493).
- E. *Sagan af Helgu Kóngsdóttur* (IV, 494-495).
- F. *Sagan af Ísól björtu og Ísól svörtu*.
- G. *Sagan af Fertram og Ísoddu*.

These stories vary greatly in length and manner of presentation. Several of them have borrowed verses from another well-known *stjúpusaga* ('stepmother tale'), the *Saga af Mjaðveigu Mánadóttur*. Some have borrowed names from other tales. It is interesting to note that the name of the hero appears in its nearly "correct" form

Tristran in *E*, which is not much more than a dry summary of the story. The names of the women in *E*, however, are Helga and Sólsvört. The heroine is called Ísól bjarta in four of the versions of this tale; but the villainess is called Ísól svarta in only one. Sólsvört in *E*, to be sure, is a corruption of this name; and in *A*, *svarta* has been replaced by the synonymous *blakka*. In *D* she is called Laufey, a name borrowed from the tale of *Líneik og Laufey*. The relatively infrequent occurrence of Ísól svarta compared with Ísól bjarta, as we shall see, is not without significance. There are more variants of this tale extant than the ones listed above, and they probably contain additional motifs and name forms. Since they are not available, they must be disregarded for the moment.

If we combine those motifs which occur most frequently in the five variants contained in Jón Árnason's collection, we arrive at the following reconstruction, which may be fairly close to the original folk-tale:

A daughter, conceived in wedlock under very strange circumstances, is born to a certain king and queen. Because of her great beauty, her parents name her Ísól bjarta. The mother dies shortly after the birth of the child. Before her death, she gives her daughter a pair of scissors, a belt with magic properties, and a gold ring.

Because of his grief at the loss of his wife, the king neglects his kingdom. Therefore his counsellors urge him to marry again. With his consent, they set out to find a suitable bride. After a stormy voyage they come to an unknown land, where they hear the strains of a harp. They follow the sound and come to an opening in the forest. Here they find a beautiful woman, sitting on a golden chair and combing her hair with a golden comb. Beside her is her daughter, Ísóta, playing the harp. Their only companion is a thrall named Kollur. The woman agrees to accompany the counsellors and to marry their lord. The existence of her daughter, who accompanies her, is concealed from the king.

Meanwhile Ísól bjarta has been living in a bower built for her by her father. At an early age she begins to devote much time to the care of the sick. She frequently goes down to the seashore in search of medicinal herbs. (According to *B* there were *græðsluhús* 'houses for the sick' there; in *C* the word is *græðslusmyrsl* 'healing ointments'.) One day she discovers a

chest which has been washed up on the shore. In it are a beautiful baby boy and a note requesting that the child be baptized and named Tistram. The boy grows up with Ísól bjarta and the two become very fond of each other.

After some time has passed, the new queen grows rather cool toward her husband because he has not collected the taxes for years. The king and Tistram accordingly set out in two ships to do so. Tistram and Ísól pledge their loyalty to each other before he leaves. The king and his crew perish in a storm.

Meanwhile the queen and her daughter, who has been called svarta because she is less beautiful than Ísól bjarta, entice Ísól and her two servant girls out into the forest and push them into a deep pit. The two servants perish from hunger; Ísól is saved by the magic power of her belt. With her scissors, she cuts steps into a wall of the pit and thus escapes. She makes her way to a hut in the forest, where she lives with an old man and woman.

When Tistram returns and asks for Ísól, he is given a drink of forgetfulness by the queen. (In *D* the queen asks him to drink a *sáttabikar*, a 'peace-beaker' or 'loving cup' with her and Ísóta svarta. But the narrator explains that this is really an *ómínnisveig*, a 'potion of oblivion', which causes him to forget Ísól.) At the urgent request of the queen and her daughter, Tistram consents to marry Ísóta svarta. It is stipulated that the bride must sew the wedding garments for her husband and herself. Since she is unable to sew, Ísóta hires Ísól, whom she does not recognize, to do this. Ísól sews a plain garment for Ísóta, and a beautiful garment with golden thread for Tistram.

Ísóta now requests Ísól to take her place during the marriage ceremony and during the three-day tour on horseback which precedes (or follows) it, for Ísóta is about to give birth to a child, the father of which is the thrall Kollur. The queen accompanies Tistram and Ísól on their wedding tour to make sure that Ísól keeps her promise not to talk to Tistram. Ísól does keep her promise, but as they ride past the ruins of her bower, which the queen has had burned to the ground, she speaks to them in a verse. Later, as they ride past the brook where she and Tistram pledged their troth, Ísól speaks a verse about this. She addresses still a third verse to a grove of trees.

After the wedding tour, Ísóta svarta, who has borne her child and destroyed it, changes places with the substitute bride. Before she can enter the nuptial bed, however, the deceit is discovered. Ísóta and her mother, who are really witches (*flögð*), are put to death. Tistram and Ísól bjarta are married and reign as king and queen.

The following are some of the motifs or incidents in the Icelandic tale which do not occur in the *Märchen von der Jungfrau Maleen*:

1. The unusual circumstances surrounding the conception of the child.
2. The re-marriage of the king at the insistence of his counsellors.
3. The ambassadorial voyage for the new bride.
4. The rôle of the harp.
5. The voyage of the king to collect the unpaid taxes.
6. The interest of Ísól bjarta in leechcraft.
7. The note requesting that the child be named and baptized Tistram.
8. The pit into which Ísól and her two maidservants are thrown.
9. The drink of oblivion.
10. The plain and the adorned bridal garments.
11. The reference to the brook and the grove as trysting places.
12. The reason for the bridal substitution.

All of these motifs have close parallels in the longer *Tristrams saga*, or the derived shorter one, or in both. The occurrence of all of these Tristan motifs indicates that the connection between the sagas and the folk-tale is not quite so tenuous as Golther believed.<sup>23</sup>

I shall comment briefly on only three of these motifs. The reference to the brook and the grove is a blind motif, a faint echo from the sagas. As the significance of the brook and the grove was forgotten, the verses in several versions of the story became corrupted or were replaced by inappropriate ones from other stepmother tales. The leechcraft of Ísodd is another blind motif. In some versions of the story it was lost for this reason; in others, it was cleverly combined with the popular motif of a child's being found in a boat or box along the sea.<sup>24</sup> The attempt of the evil queen to get rid of her stepdaughter by having her thrown into a pit is reminiscent of the passage in the

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Sagan af Trístan og Ísól*, xx-xxi.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *ibid.* xxi, where Einar Ól. Sveinsson regards the chest as a transformation of the oarless boat.

shorter saga which tells of the imprisonment of Tristram and Ísodd fagra in a cave.

The only apparent point of contact between *Tristrams kvæði* and the folk-tale is the epithet *bjarta*. But this was an important one, for the new appellative in turn attracted the form *Ísól* because of its obvious association with *sól* 'sun'; and this name then replaced Ísodd as the name of the heroine in four of the seven versions of the saga considered here. In spite of the strong tendency of folk-tales to use identical names for persons of opposite characteristics together with rhyming appellatives (*Ferdinand the Faithful* and *Ferdinand the Unfaithful*, *Golden Marie* and *Black Marie*, etc.), the name *Ísól svarta* did not supplant *Ísodd svarta* to the same degree, evidently because the combination of the adjective 'black' with a name phonetically similar to the word for sun seemed ludicrous.<sup>25</sup>

## VII

Each of the three works derived from *Tristrams saga* discussed here — the shorter saga, the ballad, and the folk-tale — reflects its source in a manner peculiar to its respective *genre*. The derived saga, based on the faulty reminiscence of oral tradition, retains the general outline of the story but garbles motifs and borrows names and incidents from a variety of other sources. In spite of the general confusion of names, the author of this story has hit upon three happy designations of characters: *Kæi* as the name of the lying suitor of Ísodd, *Héri* as the name of the counsellor of King *Mórodd*, and *Ísodd svarta* as the opponent of *Ísodd fagra*. The ballad captures and intensifies the tragic climax of the story. The contrast between the women characters is sharpened by the intensification of the appellative of the first *Ísodd* from

<sup>25</sup> In the *Fjölsvinnsmál* the father of *Svipdagr* bears the name *Sólbjart* (v. 47), and his bride *Menglöð* is described as *in sólbjarta brúðr* (v. 42). In the same poem the father of the dwarves who built the gate *Þrymgjöll* is called *Sólblindi* (v. 10).

*fagra* to *bjarta*. In the folk tale the content of the saga has been lost. There remain only the names, further confused through borrowing and popular etymology, and a surprisingly large number of motifs, which have been woven more or less successfully into the general framework of the stepmother tale.

A critical edition of *Tristrams saga* will not change the findings of Bédier and Kölbing essentially, but it will add many significant details, especially in the comparison between Gottfried and the saga, and it will bring us a bit closer to the translation of Brother Róbert and thus to the original of Thomas. It will also facilitate the study of the influence of *Tristrams saga* on Icelandic literature — an area of research in which much remains to be done. And finally, a faithful English translation based on that edition will make the saga of Tristram and Isönd available to those who are not conversant with Icelandic.

## A SOURCE FOR *HRAFNKELS SAGA*

By A. R. TAYLOR

THE short saga of Hrafnkell Freysgoði was for long thought of as one of the best examples of a saga-man's tale which, having been handed down from generation to generation, gave a substantially true account of the events which it describes. Its literary value was also early acknowledged, but many of its qualities were, by implication, attributed to its closeness to historical truth, which was supposed to account for its symmetry and unity of composition. But more recently critics have argued that the saga should rather be regarded as a literary composition, a short story with little or no basis in historical fact.<sup>1</sup> The result has been an even greater appreciation of the literary value of the saga and an increase in admiration for its author. But if the author was not describing historical events, which were the traditional basis for the Icelandic saga, are there any literary sources from which he can be shown to have taken his material?

Professor Nordal has demonstrated that the author made use of *Landnámabók*, Ari Þorgilsson's *Íslendingabók* or some other work dependent upon it, and *Droplaugarsona saga*, as well as place-names from eastern Iceland.<sup>2</sup> He adds that use may also have been made of *Heiðarvíga saga* and *Eyrbyggja saga*.<sup>3</sup> This suggestion was accepted by the late Professor Jóhannesson, who in his edition states 'it may well be that he [the author] knew many

<sup>1</sup> Cf. S. Nordal, *Hrafnkatla* (*Studia Islandica* 7; 1940) and E. V. Gordon 'On Hrafnkels saga freysgoða', *Medium Ævum* VIII (1939), 1-32. Criticism of their views are to be found in K. Liestøl 'Tradisjonen i Hrafnkels saga freysgoða', *Arv* (1946), 94-110, and in M. Olsen 'En navnefeil i Hrafnkels saga', *Maal og Minne* (1945), 93-95. Nordal's main arguments, however, remain unassailed.

<sup>2</sup> Nordal, *Hrafnkatla*, 20 and 35ff.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.* 61.

other written works'.<sup>4</sup> One of these other written works seems to have been *Fóstbræðra saga*.<sup>5</sup>

When the two sagas are read side by side, it is impossible to escape the conviction that the one is dependent upon the other: similarities of motif and verbal reminiscences are sufficient to preclude coincidence.

It is clear to the reader that the authors have two distinguishing features in common. The first is a fondness for proverbs,<sup>6</sup> and the second an antiquarian interest in place-names.<sup>7</sup> Admittedly both these characteristics will undoubtedly be found, either separately or combined, in the works of other saga-writers, and hence they can never constitute more than supporting evidence. But they must, however, weigh quite heavily when we consider how integral a part they are of *Hrafnkels saga*, which on chronological grounds must be the borrower.

Verbal reminiscences strengthen the impression of borrowing. Professor Nordal suggested *Víga-Styr* in *Heiðarvíga saga* as a model for Hrafnkell on the strength of the wording 'stóð mjök í einvígjum ok boetti engan mann fé'.<sup>8</sup> But the parallels with *Fóstbræðra saga* are still closer.

*Hrafnkels saga*

[Hrafnkell] var ójafnaðarmaðr mikill, en mennt vel . . . var linr ok blíðr við sína menn, en stríðr ok stirðlyndr við Jökulsdalsmenn, ok fengu af honum engan jafnað. Hrafnkell stóð mjök í einvígjum ok boetti engan mann fé, því at engi fekk

*Fóstbræðra saga*

Hann [Jøðurr] var garpr mikill ok hofðingi, ódæll ok lítill jafnaðarmaðr við marga menn, ríkr í heraðinu ok stórráðr, vígamaðr mikill ok boetti menn sjaldan fé, þótt hann vægi. (p. 126).

<sup>4</sup> *Austfirðinga sögur* (Íslensk Fornrit XI; 1950), p. lv. References throughout are to this edition.

<sup>5</sup> References will be made to the edition by B. K. Þórólfsson and G. Jónsson in *Vestfirðinga sögur* (Íslensk Fornrit VI; 1943).

<sup>6</sup> *Hrafnkels saga*, 102. 8, 106. 28, 115. 2-3, 122. 6, etc. and in *Fóstbræðra saga*, 138. 16, 150. 1, 187. 16, 200. 3.

<sup>7</sup> *Hrafnkels saga*, 97. 13, 98. 1, 99. 19, 105. 16, 119. 19, 124. 4, 301. 22-23; *Fóstbræðra saga*, 126. 8, 178. 10, 181. 15, 184. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Nordal, *Hrafnkatla*, 61.

af honum neinar boetr, hvat sem hann gerði. (p. 99).

Þorbjörn beiðir Hrafnkel bóta fyrir víg sonar síns . . . “Er þér þat eigi ókunnigt, at ek vil engan mann fé bæta, ok verða menn þat þó svá gert at hafa. En þó læt ek svá sem mér þykki þetta verk mitt í verra lagi víga þeirra, er ek hefi unnit.” (p. 105).

“Eptir vil ek leita, ef þér vilið nokkuru bæta víg þat, er þú vátt Hávar, fozður minn.” Jozurr mælti, “Eigi veit ek, hvárt þú hefir þat spurt, at ek hefi mǫrg víg vegit ok ek hefi ekki bætt.” “Ókunnigt er mér þat,” segir Þorgeirr; “en hvat sem um þat er, þá kǫmr þetta til mín, at leita eptir þessum vígsbótum, því at mér er nær hǫggvit.” Jozurr segir, “Eigi er mér allfjarri skapi at minnask þín í nokkuru, en fyrir því mun ek eigi þetta víg bæta þér, Þorgeirr, at þá þykkir ozðrum skylt, at ek bæta fleiri víg.” (p. 129).

The two descriptions are of the same man, and the variations are dictated by the part played by each in the respective sagas. Hrafnkell is ennobled and more sympathetic traits are added to his character, because he is to be the hero of the saga, though it is noteworthy that the germ of the idea that Hrafnkell recognises the justice behind Þorbjörn's plea for compensation is to be found in the conversation between Jozurr and Þorgeirr.

The connection between the two descriptions is further emphasised by a later parallel, in *Hrafnkels saga*, to the ‘því at mér er nær hǫggvit’ in Þorgeirr's speech above. Þorbjörn in his struggle against Hrafnkell seeks the help of his nephew Sámr and says, “Er þetta mál þann veg, þótt mér sé nánastr maðrinn, at þó er yðr eigi fjarri hǫggvit”.<sup>9</sup>

A later similarity of situation produces a further similarity of wording.

<sup>9</sup> *Hrafnkels saga*, 107.

*Hrafnkels saga*

Heilráðr muntu okkr vera, en eigi sýnisk mér þetta ráðligt. (p. 113).

(Cf. also Hina bar skjótt eptir, er lausu riðu. p. 129).

*Fóstbræðra saga*

"Eigi veit ek, hversu heilráð þú ert oss nú, því at þeir eru vinir Vermundar, ok mun þat eigi laust eptir renna, ef þeim er nokkut til meins gort." (p. 137).

In *Fóstbræðra saga* Sigurfljóð, for her own purposes, is asking Þorgeirr and Þormóðr to do something which it seems will bring trouble upon them — the anger of the chieftain Vermundr. In *Hrafnkels saga* Þorkell leppr is doing exactly the same; he urges Þorbjörn and Sámr to antagonize the chieftain Þormóðr, from whom they desire aid. In both stories, moreover, the inciters make sure, though in different ways, that their instruments do not suffer as a result.

Other verbal parallels between the two sagas are:

*Hrafnkels saga*

. . . fyrir því at má mér þat, sem yfir margan gengr. (p. 115).

. . . at leiða svá smámönnum at sækja mál á hendr honum. (p. 117).

*Fóstbræðra saga*

. . . ok má þér þat, sem yfir margan gengr. (p. 187).

. . . ok leiðir svá Íslendingum at berja á mínum mönnum. (p. 183).

The coincidence of the above similarities seems too close for accident, although the parallel of the wording in each, except for the proverb, is not exact. It may be that the author of *Hrafnkels saga* did not have a copy of *Fóstbræðra saga* before him when he wrote, but he must at least have known it well. Indeed, when we consider how free a use he made of his other sources, the inexactitude of the verbal parallels does not preclude the actual presence of this source. That it was in fact a direct source for him is made certain by a consideration of two of the motifs used by him in his saga.

Einarr Þorbjarnarson, Hrafnkell's shepherd, rides his

master's horse, though previously forbidden to do so, and in consequence is slain by Hrafnkell at the sheepfold.<sup>10</sup> This motif, of the borrowing of a horse without permission, is twice used in *Fóstbræðra saga*. Jǫðurr from Skeljabrekka is on his way to Akranes to buy flour and borrows a horse from Hávarr, promising to give it back on the return journey. But finding it more convenient to use the horse for the whole of the journey back, he decides to take it all the way home and to return it when he has no further use for it. But Hávarr sees them as they go past his farm and demands the immediate return of the horse. In the subsequent quarrel Jǫðurr slays Hávarr and keeps the horse.<sup>11</sup>

The second parallel is much closer, for the horse is borrowed in order to find sheep that have strayed — the purpose for which Einarr borrowed Hrafnkell's horse. Þorgeirr and his companions are on a journey from Reykjahólar to Borgarfjörðr. They break their journey in Miðdalr in order to rest; but when they wish to continue, Þorgeirr's riding-horse is missing and he has to content himself with a pack-horse for the time being. As they approach Hundadalr, they see a man riding a fine horse and driving sheep before him. Þorgeirr suspects that the horse is his and, on reaching Hundadalr, goes straight to the sheep-fold. The rider, Bjarni, is outside, still sitting on the horse. Þorgeirr asks him why he took the horse and bids him dismount. Bjarni refuses and is slain.<sup>12</sup>

The second motif strongly reminiscent of *Fóstbræðra saga* is in the story of the slaying of Eyvindr Bjarnason. In *Hrafnkels saga* Eyvindr, returning from abroad, rides from his ship with his wares on a train of pack-horses. As he passes below the homefield at Hrafnkelsstaðir he is seen by a garrulous serving-woman, who enters the farm and

<sup>10</sup> *Hrafnkels saga*, Ch. 3.

<sup>11</sup> *Fóstbræðra saga*, Ch. 2.

<sup>12</sup> *Fóstbræðra saga*, Ch. 8.

informs her master. Hrafnkell rides after him and slays him.<sup>13</sup>

Again this seems to be an amalgam of two episodes in *Fóstbræðra saga*. In the first Þorgeirr is riding with his wares on pack-horses past the homefield of Hœkils-Snorri's farm. The pack-horses enter the homefield and begin to crop the growing grass, and Þorgeirr tries unsuccessfully to drive them out. Hœkils-Snorri, in his annoyance, attacks the horses with his spear. In a subsequent fight with Þorgeirr he is slain.<sup>14</sup> The second episode tells how the foster-brothers, Eyjólfur and Þorgeirr hofleysa, slew each other. Eyjólfur, on his way from Reykjahólar to his home in Ólafsdalur, passes the farm at which Þorgeirr is staying. He is seen by the cowherd, Qnundr, who, just like the serving-woman in *Hrafnkels saga*, enters the farm and reports his presence.<sup>15</sup> Þorgeirr rushes out and pursues him; they fight and are both slain.<sup>16</sup>

It is interesting that all the above parallels are from that part of *Fóstbræðra saga* which tells of Þorgeirr Hávarsson. Unfortunately, at least on a preliminary survey, this makes it impossible to say whether the *Hrafnkels saga* author knew the longer or shorter version of *Fóstbræðra saga*, for the text of Hauksbók, which represents the shorter version, is defective for the greater part of the Þorgeirr story. It might perhaps suggest that Guðbrandur Vigfússon was correct in his assumption that there once existed a separate saga of Þorgeirr which was later combined with that of Þormóður to make up *Fóstbræðra saga*.<sup>17</sup> However, the divisions of the saga in Flateyjarbók seem to argue against such an assumption, and in any case there are at least two other possible explanations for the absence of parallels in the Þormóður part of *Fóstbræðra saga*: either it may be assumed that

<sup>13</sup> *Hrafnkels saga*, Ch. 8.

<sup>14</sup> *Fóstbræðra saga*, Ch. 12.

<sup>15</sup> The *griðkona* in *Hrafnkels saga* may be a composite of Qnundr and the *spákerling* in *Fóstbræðra saga*.

<sup>16</sup> *Fóstbræðra saga*, Ch. 16.

<sup>17</sup> *Origines Islandicae*, II 673.

the author of *Hrafnkels saga* himself used a defective manuscript or else perhaps he was only interested in that part of the story which told of Þorgeirr's actions in Iceland and was not attracted by the doings of Þormóðr abroad.

This connection between the two sagas helps, I think, to explain one or two puzzling elements in *Hrafnkels saga*. If its author was attracted by the Story of the Foster-brothers, it is easy to see why he chose the names Þorgeirr and Þormóðr for two of his fictional characters.<sup>18</sup> It is easy also to see why the chieftains who helped Sámr should come from the Vestfirðir. As E. V. Gordon pointed out, he could scarcely make use of chieftains from the east; they had to come from elsewhere.<sup>19</sup> Yet another puzzle remains: why the author should choose Þormóðr Þjóstarsson as the name of the third brother and why he should place him at Garðar on Álptanes. *Fóstbræðra saga* suggested the name Þormóðr, and as Nordal pointed out the full name must have come from *Landnámabók*.<sup>20</sup> Yet *Landnámabók* does not mention the name of Þormóðr's farm, but simply describes Þjóstarr as living on Álptanes. When considering this problem, Nordal points out that Garðar on Álptanes was a well-known farm in the thirteenth century and that the author may well have added it to the information that he found in *Landnámabók*. Nordal, however, does not give any reason why this particular farm should have been chosen. Again *Fóstbræðra saga* may provide a clue. As it happens, there were two well-known farms with this name in the thirteenth century: Garðar á Álptanesi and Garðar á Akranesi. In *Fóstbræðra saga* we are told that Hávarr, Þorgeirr's father, was 'kynjaðr sunnan af Akranesi' (in *Möðruvallabók* — *Ál(þ)tanesi*)<sup>21</sup> and from

<sup>18</sup> Vigfússon in *Origines Islandicae*, II 194, identifies the brothers with characters in *Gísla saga*.

<sup>19</sup> Gordon, *loc. cit.*, 6.

<sup>20</sup> Nordal, *Hrafnkatla*, 16.

<sup>21</sup> *Fóstbræðra saga* 123. Does this mean our author's original had the same reading as *Möðruvallabók* here?

*Landnámabók* we gain the additional information that Hávarr's family originated from 'Garðar á Akranesi'.<sup>22</sup> It may well be, therefore, that the *Hrafnkels saga* author was led to Þjóstarr by way of Hávarr.

Professor Nordal's stimulating monograph on *Hrafnkels saga*, which so clearly demonstrates its fictional character and the high standing of its author, is one of the most illuminating of recent documents on the art of the Icelandic sagas and urges us to further efforts towards the understanding and appreciation of their thirteenth-century authors. We shall probably never know the origins of all the elements which go to make up *Hrafnkels saga*, but the more we can learn of its sources the more we shall appreciate its author's genius.

<sup>22</sup> Ed. by F. Jónsson (1900), 13.

## BOOK REVIEWS

OBSERVATIONS ON SYNTAX AND STYLE OF SOME ICELANDIC SAGAS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE RELATION BETWEEN VIGA-GLÚMS SAGA AND REYKDÆLA SAGA. BY ARI C. BOUMAN. *Studia Islandica* 15a. 1956.

Professor Bouman's starting-point is the relationship between Ch. 16 of the *Víga-Glúms Saga* and Ch. 26 of the *Reykðæla Saga*, which has long been a problem, and he has put an enormous amount of labour into the making of this valuable monograph. In Part I Bouman examines eleven sagas, some of them complete, others only in parts, on the following five points of style and syntax: the number of periods, the number of syllables per period, the number of syllables per phrase, parataxis and hypotaxis. In Part II the results of the statistics obtained in Part I are applied to a section of the *Víga-Glúms Saga* (*V.Gl.*) and Ch. 26 of the *Reykðæla Saga* (*R*) and it appears that Ch. 13-16 of *V.Gl.* "stand in opposition" to the rest of the saga, while in *R* the problem only concerns Ch. 26. Bouman assumes that Ch. 13-16 of *V.Gl.* come from one source which he calls *X*. This source *X* contained two episodes which were originally individual units: the Kálfr-episode and the Skúta-episode. At some time one writer combined them (neither the author of *V.Gl.* nor the writer of *R*). The problem now is: which of the extant versions of *V.Gl.* and *R* is nearest the original þáttir? A very careful and thorough investigation of all the possibilities leads to the following results: the whole of *X* has been inserted in *V.Gl.*, but *R* has only inserted the *Skútu-þáttir*; the version in *Móðruvallabók* (*M*) stands nearest to *X*; both the *Vatnshyrna*-version (*V*) and *R* have come from the *M*-version through *V.Gl.* Bouman points out, however, that this may be a simplification and that " *V.Gl.*, for instance, of which *V* is a corrupt version, might, just like *M*, derive directly from *X*. *M*, being the best of all versions, may have been written down at a later stage than *V.Gl.* from a manuscript which then was still extant " (p. 70). Yet, when all is said and done, this important study raises some doubts in one's mind.

There is first of all the general doubt one always feels about the use of stylistic statistics for problems of chronology, and any discussion of the relationship between sagas naturally involves problems of dating. Professor Bouman is himself aware of this,

for he quotes Professor Turville-Petre's *caveat* (see his edition of *V.Gl.*, Introduction, p. xix and Bouman, p. 33). In matters of style and syntax one has to take into account the personality of the writers and the nature of what they have to say.

Further, Bouman does not seem to take enough notice of the implications suggested by the existence of the longer versions *V*, *C* (A.M. 5, 4to) and *R*. They seem to point to an earlier and longer version of *V.Gl.*, now lost. Bouman also assumes this (pp. 28 and 29). Turville-Petre (p. xxx) even assumes the existence in the Middle Ages of at least two longer versions of *V.Gl.* However this may be, on p. 28 Bouman states that "Both *V* and *R* are derived versions, *V* from *M*, or possibly from *R*, *R* either directly from *X*, or from *M*, or from the longer *V.Gl.*, as represented by *V*." This, however, leaves room for another possibility, that the *þættir* may have come straight from *X* in both the longer *V.Gl.* (as represented by *V*) and *R*, in which case *V* would stand nearer to the original of *V.Gl.* than *M*. Then both the *þættir* and the whole of *V.Gl.* were shortened in *M*. This relationship virtually agrees with what Turville-Petre suggests in his Introduction, p. xxix. It is the opposite of Bouman's scheme 9, with *M* at the bottom instead of at the top. Bouman calls scheme 9 least acceptable, because "we are left with the unsurmountable difficulty of *V.Gl.* and *R* being in agreement against *M*." But if one takes *V* and *R* as representatives of now lost older and longer versions and *M* as a later abridgement "though by chance the oldest palaeographically" (Turville-Petre, p. xxx), then it does become possible that *V* and *R* or the texts they represent can be in agreement against *M*. Moreover, there is a close parallel to this state of affairs in *Egils Saga*, cf. Nordal's edition in *Íslensk Fornrit*, II, pp. lxxxii ff. and Turville-Petre, pp. xxxi f., even if the abridgement is here not so drastic as in *V.Gl.*

These objections are not intended to show that the method applied by Bouman in this important study is wrong. What is unsatisfactory is the linking up of stylistic and syntactic features in authors with the time element implied by chronology. The method works much better within the literary field when comparing the style of various sagas, as Professor Bouman has himself shown in his admirable article 'An Aspect of Style in Icelandic Sagas', in *Neophilologus* 42 (1958), 50-67.

B. J. TIMMER.

A HISTORY OF ICELANDIC LITERATURE. By STEFÁN EINARSSON. *The Johns Hopkins Press for the American Scandinavian Foundation. New York, 1957. xii + 409 pp.*

In recent years no other scholar has done so much for the study of Icelandic language and literature abroad as Professor Stefán Einarsson. In 1945 he published his *Icelandic: Grammar, Texts, Glossary* (second edition 1949, since reprinted), and in 1948 his *History of Icelandic Prose Writers 1800-1940 (Islandica XXXII-XXXIII)*. At the same time he has published numerous articles on special topics; two of these of particular importance and interest are 'Alternate recital by twos in *Widsiþ* (?), *Sturlunga* and *Kalevala*', *Arv* 1951, and 'The origin of Egill Skallagrímsson's *Runhenda*', *Svenska Landsmål*, 66-7 årg. (1953-4). Now he has published a survey of Icelandic literature from the beginning to the present day.

The writer of such a history is faced with many difficulties. The older literature in most of its forms has been exhaustively treated by many scholars, although their views on many important matters are far from unanimous. There are gaps even in this early field, and from the fourteenth century down to the Reformation the gaps predominate. Thereafter we have more special studies of individual writers, but there has been little critical assessment of the relative importance of this or that author, and studies of the growth of literary forms or of foreign influences, for example, are few and far between. The later part of Stefán's book is pioneering work, and should be judged as such.

In the first part of the book the author gives a concise and readable account of eddaic and scaldic poetry, with separate chapters on sacred poetry and the secular poetry of the later middle ages; the last are particularly welcome. The study of the medieval prose literature is introduced by a chapter on the literature of the clergy (like other writers, he appears to me to overstress the dichotomy of the church-state relationship in Iceland). Consideration of the Kings' Sagas is introduced by a description of the work of Ari and Sæmundr and of the *Landnámabók*. The arrangement of the following sections on the sagas is an unhappy one in that it entails some repetition of material in the chapters entitled *The Sagas* and *The Family Sagas* respectively; and in the latter chapter there is some conflict between the chronological and topographical arrangement. Of particular value is the writer's brief discussion of various general theories, like those on the origin and date of the eddaic poems, for example, where his own views are usually judicious

and independent. There are some erroneous or misleading statements,<sup>1</sup> but these 170 pages dealing with pre-Reformation literature make a good introduction to the subject.

Roughly the same space is devoted to post-Reformation literature, and more than half of this to the period from 1874 to the present day. Here, inevitably, the book tends to disintegrate, to become a chronicle rather than a history. Each chapter begins with a few pages devoted to the discussion of foreign influences, the leaders of literary opinion, the development of literary genres, and continues with portraits of individual writers. Here the author does his best to give something more than a mere catalogue of career and publications, but in general he is too much the chronicler and too little the critic. His interest in and sympathy for younger living writers is refreshing.

The book is furnished with an admirable index, a bibliography and list of translations. There are times when precise bibliographical references would have been useful in the text instead of the mere mention of the year in which a scholar published his views. The style is sometimes curiously undignified; I do not think that this impression is entirely due to differences in American and English idiom. PETER FOOTE

ÍSLENZK ORÐTÖK. By HALLDÓR HALLDÓRSSON. *Ísafoldarprentsmiðja h.f. Reykjavík, 1954. 416 pp.*

ÖRLÖG ORÐANNA. By HALLDÓR HALLDÓRSSON. *Bókaforlag Odds Björnssonar. Akureyri, 1958. 199 pp.*

These two books are important contributions to the study of Icelandic idiom and vocabulary. In the first, the author writes a theoretical introduction of some 60 pages on the definition of the concept *orðtak*, with special consideration of the metaphorical idiom, which is his main subject, and of the changes to which such idioms are subject through factors like contamination, verbal coalescence, ellipsis, and popular etymology. This is followed by a list of idioms classified according to their origin: from warfare, sports and games, fishing and hunting, seafaring, farming,

<sup>1</sup> The count of church-dedications, p. 77, should have been taken from Guðbrandur Jónsson, *Safn til sögu Íslands V* (1915-29), Nr. 6, 29 ff., not from Jón Þorkelsson. According to the *Jóns saga helga*, 'the impious and sexy dancing' could not have been introduced by the bishop's 'French cantor' (pp. 96-7; cf. Dag Strömbäck, 'Cult remnants in Icelandic dramatic dances', *Arv* 1948). The chronological order, *Laxdæla saga*, *Eyrbyggja saga*, *Gísla saga*, p. 138, is not the one usually accepted; *Eyrbyggja saga* seems undoubtedly to have borrowed from *Gísla saga*. The comment on *Grænlandinga saga*, p. 139, must be revised in the light of Jón Jóhannesson's important article in *Nordæla* (1956), although this presumably came too late to be of use to the author.

the weather and land-travel, buildings, furniture and food, crafts and handwork, the law, popular beliefs and saga-literature, with others of foreign or miscellaneous origin. This list is enough to show at once how deeply concerned the student of idiom must be with every branch of cultural history, and suggests too that the historian of Icelandic culture will have a useful aid in the present work. The remainder of the book then consists of a list of 830 idioms, arranged in alphabetical order, each with a discussion of its meaning and a note of its earliest recorded use, parallels in other languages, and its origin. Obviously, there must often be uncertainty in the conclusions reached, and under present conditions the instances recorded as the earliest, for example, must often be doubtful.<sup>1</sup> Apart from its intrinsic value as a contribution to our knowledge of the history of Icelandic, it will also prove an extremely useful reference-book for anyone concerned with the interpretation of Icelandic texts, old or modern.

The second book mentioned above is a collection of essays on both idioms and single words and expressions, including some interesting contributions to the study of idiom from the point of view of Icelandic dialect-geography, a subject which urgently needs intensive study in all its aspects.<sup>2</sup> The most interesting essay in the book is called 'Keisaraskurður. Óborinn. Óborið fé'. In this the author comes to the conclusion that the expression *barn óborit* must be understood on the basis of the phrase *bera í ætt* and means an unacknowledged child; similarly *óborið fé* means *fé óborið undir mark*, an unmarked animal, a usage attested in the south of Iceland in the eighteenth century and in Mýrasýsla in the nineteenth. Neither of the expressions has anything to do with Cæsarian delivery, as has been commonly held in recent years. We can hardly reproach the author for not being a folklorist, but in this essay and in some others we are left hungry for more when, at the end, he refers to 'some kind of folk-belief' as an element in the full explanation of a particular phrase. Amplification of such hints on a comparative basis would be welcome.

It is important to note that in both books much use has been made of the collections of the *Orðabók Háskólans*, in preparation at the University of Iceland under the direction of Dr. Jakob Benediktsson, which have now reached such proportions that they cannot be safely ignored by any worker in the field of Icelandic linguistic history.

PETER FOOTE

<sup>1</sup> The critique by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Skírnir* CXXVIII (1954), 206-18, should, for instance, be read in conjunction with the book.

<sup>2</sup> See the admirable survey by Karl-Hampus Dahlstedt, 'Isländsk Dialektgeografi', *Scripta Islandica: Isländska Sällskapets Årsbok* 9 (1958), 5-33.

ASPECTS OF TRANSLATION. STUDIES IN COMMUNICATION 2. *The Communication Research Centre, University College, London. Secker and Warburg, 1958. viii + 145 pp.*

We must all be concerned with translation and translations. A student's introduction to medieval Icelandic literature will often be through the medium of translation, and his impression of that literature may well never lose the colouring which the translators have imposed on the originals. Given the distance in time and civilization, the use of some colouring appears unavoidable, and it becomes then a question of shades and quantities. In the end, of course, the translator is faced with a series of tiny individual problems which have to be solved in some consistent and coherent way, but to which no single formula can be applied. The first two essays in the present book can be warmly recommended to anyone interested in the general problems of literary translation. Professor L. Forster brilliantly clarifies our thoughts for us in 'Translation: An Introduction', and Dr. L. W. Tancock, in 'Some Problems of Style in Translation from French', offers much sound advice which may be safely applied in other fields than his own. The other essays in the book are concerned with other aspects of the subject, including one on the linguistics of translation by C. Rabin.

PETER FOOTE

AN INTRODUCTION TO OLD NORSE. By E. V. GORDON. Second Edition revised by A. R. TAYLOR. *Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1957. lxxxii + 412 pp., with Illustrations, Diagrams, Maps.*

It is now more than thirty years since the late Professor E. V. Gordon's *Introduction to Old Norse* was first published, and after several reprintings, the book has now received a thorough and masterly revision at the capable hands of Mr. A. R. Taylor of Leeds University, who was President of our Society from 1952 to 1954. From the compendious pages of the first edition a generation of students learnt to read the best medieval prose of western Europe with some linguistic accuracy, and gained a new conception not only of the 'fearful land' of Iceland but also of the whole Teutonic world of early times.

Only those who have attempted a similar compilation can have accurate knowledge of the difficulties of such an undertaking, for the very wealth of material at an editor's disposal makes his task all the more formidable. If there were some bad misprints in the original edition, there was also ample compensation in the classic introductory essay, the judicious selection of extracts,

and the informative Notes and Glossary. Some, perhaps, may consider the sections on Runic inscriptions and the phonology of Old Norwegian and East Norse strong meat for an *Introduction*, and think Extract IA not too happy a choice for a beginner, preferring, say, the rich variety of Snorri's account of the death of Balder, or complain that Harald the Fairhaired is slighted by one bare mention in the texts — but these are minor things and personal prejudices. The book is undoubtedly a classic, and endures to perpetuate the memory of one of the most devoted and best loved of our northern scholars.

Mr. Taylor was privileged to be Gordon's pupil; and he has spared no pains to repay the debt for the inspiring teaching he received by undertaking this revision and bringing it to so successful a conclusion. The original intention was to revise the book on the plates, but when this plan proved impracticable, the decision was taken to reset the book, and Mr. Taylor was able to bring it up to date in the light of recent scholarship. No attempt has been made, except in small details, to alter the already existing texts, but references have been given to more modern editions in the short introduction to each extract; and, by a happy inspiration, Mr. Taylor decided to replace Selection VI by the whole of *Hrafnkels saga*, in the belief that it would be an improvement if one short saga could be included in its entirety. Some alterations, too, have been made to the account of the Grammar: for example, reference is made to the theories of Kock and Sturtevant on 'Front Mutation', and to the views of Svensson on 'Fracture'; and users of the book are constantly finding themselves indebted to Mr. Taylor for observations embedded in the Notes and Glossary which clarify some of the hitherto unexplained obscurities of meaning or interpretation. Most welcome is the rewriting of the chapter on the sagas, where the results of recent investigations into their origin and development are given with clarity and in a style to match the original *Introduction*. Although the price of the book is high, it is not too much to pay for a re-issue of this standard work enriched as it is by Mr. Taylor's contributions.

G. N. GARMONSWAY

THE PLACE-NAMES OF DERBYSHIRE. By K. CAMERON. English Place-Name Society, Vols. XXVII-XXIX. *Cambridge: The University Press* 1959.

Anyone who is engaged in trying to arouse enthusiasm for "language" in university students knows the value of the

Place-Name Society's volumes; they can always be relied on to provide the link between theory and practice in little more than the time needed to consult the index and turn over the pages. The three latest volumes are as fascinating as their predecessors for the linguist, the historian and the merely curious "general reader". All three will, for instance, find great interest in the material collected around one of the distinctive features of Derbyshire: the mining, from Roman times to the nineteenth century, of lead and silver in a western area from Wirksworth to Castleton. This industry produces an element not previously noted by the Survey: *bole* "a place where ore was smelted before the invention of furnaces", as in Burton Bole and Bole Hill; and it is responsible for occupational surnames like Boler, Jagger, Miner; for the specialised meanings of *gang* as "a lead-mine which has a grove or shaft whereby to descend to the foot" (e.g. Yearde Gange (1576)), and of *rake* as a vertical vein of ore (Middlehillrake (1653)); and for an unexpected connection between Derbyshire and the South-West where, from 1308 to 1333, hundreds of the best miners from Derbyshire were impressed to work in the royal stannaries, so that Dymsdale Wood in Devonshire is almost certainly called after a family coming from Dimonsdale in Cromford. Distinctive lead-mining terms are also to be found in a group of minor names and field-names.

Although the Scandinavian element is much slighter than in the neighbouring country of Nottinghamshire (there are only ten examples of *-by*, for instance), it gave its name to the county itself and to its chief town, here replacing the native Northworthy. Many of the Scandinavian names, besides the obvious Denby, are of Danish rather than Norwegian origin, the three Normanton names serving to emphasise Danish preponderance.<sup>1</sup> Of special interest is the name Ireton, with ON *Ívi* as its first element, used of a Scandinavian who had been in Ireland before coming to England, or of an Irishman who accompanied vikings to England. It can be set beside Mammerton, which preserves the Old Irish personal name *Mael Maire*; Bretby, the farm of the Britons, probably men who accompanied the Scandinavians in their settlement; and Mercaston, containing the British *Merchiaun*.

In his preface, Dr. Cameron, while emphasising his debt to local antiquarians and "interested amateurs", comments on the fact that Derbyshire possesses no County Archives. It is to be hoped that the publication of the present volumes will encourage the authorities to make good this lack, since, as the editor says,

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. Cameron's separate survey, 'The Scandinavians in Derbyshire: the place-name evidence', *Nottingham Mediaeval Studies* II (1958), 86-118.

“work in various fields of the county’s past will inevitably suffer while such a situation persists”.

Useful features of the work are the six small maps showing the distribution of elements, and an index of field-names separate from that of town and village names.

KATHLEEN M. DEXTER

## THE ARNAMAGNÆAN DICTIONARY

IN September 1959, the staff of the Old Icelandic Dictionary undertaken by the Arnamagnæan Commission can survey the results of twenty years' work. This dictionary will include words from the earliest period down to the sixteenth century, the starting-point of the dictionary now being prepared by the University of Iceland under the direction of Dr. Jakob Benediktsson.

The editor of the Arnamagnæan dictionary (*Den Arnamagnæanske Kommissions Ordbog*), Dr. Ole Widding, writes from Copenhagen to say that the preliminary work is now nearly complete. More than half a million slips have been assembled and catalogued, from Old Icelandic texts read by qualified scholars. Full advantage has been taken of the work of modern editors, but it has been necessary to read in manuscript the many variant versions of published texts, and other items never yet printed. Material for reassessing textual traditions will be a valuable by-product of these investigations; Dr. Widding's article in the *Saga-Book XIV* (1956-7), 291-95, gives a foretaste of the results that may be expected.

There is still time for the editor to consider records of vocabulary and discussions of semantic development or other matters concerning the history of words. Dr. Widding will be grateful for offprints of articles or any similar material that scholars are able to contribute. The address is: Den Arnamagnæanske Kommissions Ordbog, Proviantgaarden, Christians Brygge 8, Copenhagen K.



# THE POET AND THE SPAE-WIFE

AN ATTEMPT TO RECONSTRUCT  
AL-GHAZAL'S EMBASSY  
TO THE VIKINGS

BY

W. E. D. ALLEN

Made and Printed in Great Britain  
by Titus Wilson and Son Ltd., Kendal

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## EDITORS' PREFACE

The account of the visit of the Moorish ambassador, al-Ghazal, to the court of the Majus in the ninth century has interested orientalists and Norse scholars for a long time. It is, in the first place, a splendidly vivid story, and it throws unexpected light on the manners and mode of life of the Majus described in it. It is now generally agreed that these Majus were Scandinavian vikings, but, while some have believed that their court was in Denmark, others have held that it was in Ireland in the days of the viking ruler Turges.

Mr. W. E. D. Allen, a member of the Society, already known as a student of the history and traditions of the Near East, has now re-examined all the original sources, Arabic, Irish and Norse, and in this thorough and original work he offers his own conclusions. He has taken full advantage of recent studies and interpretations of the Arabic texts, and it may be expected that his work will provide the basis for any future study of this fascinating record. It is in the belief that members will find it a stimulating contribution that we have devoted the whole of the present part of the *Saga-Book* to Mr. Allen's work.

Mr. Allen's monograph has also been published as a separate book in a limited edition by Allen Figgis and Co. Ltd. of Dublin, in association with the Viking Society for Northern Research.

G.T.P.

P.G.F.



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## ABBREVIATIONS

- AU* *Annals of Ulster* (cf. note 72).
- CDIL* *Contributions to a Dictionary of the Irish Language*.
- CMH* *Cambridge Medieval History*.
- Cogadh* The text of the *War of the Gaedhil with the Gaill*; see Todd, *War*.
- EI* *Encyclopædia of Islam*.
- FM* *Four Masters: Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters* (cf. note 14).
- IHS* *Irish Historical Studies*.
- IQ* *Islamic Quarterly*.
- JRAS* *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*.
- JRSAI* *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* (see *TKAS* below).
- PRIA* *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*.
- SPAW* *Sitzungsberichte d. K. Preussischen Akademie d. Wissenschaften*.
- Todd, War* *War of the Gaedhil with the Gaill* (Rolls Series; 1867).
- TKAS* *Transactions of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society*, 1849-55; subsequently, to 1867, *Journal of Kilkenny and South-east of Ireland Archaeological Society*; subsequently, 1868-89, *Journal of the (Royal) Historical and Archaeological Association of Ireland*; and from 1890 *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* (cf. *JRSAI* above).
- VA* *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland*, ed. H. Shetelig (Oslo 1940-54).
- War of the Gaedhil* See Todd, *War*.



## *Chapter One*

### PROLOGUE: THE VIKINGS IN AQUITAINE AND SPAIN, 843-6

IN a recent paper on 'The Muslim Discovery of Europe',<sup>1</sup> Professor Bernard Lewis recalls that "The earliest reports we have purporting to describe a Muslim diplomatic mission to the north is the well-known and oft-cited story of the embassy of al-Ghazal from Cordova to the land of the Vikings in about 845. The late M. Lévi-Provençal cast doubt on the authenticity of this charming story, suggesting that it is a later fabrication based on the authentic account of al-Ghazal's mission to Constantinople."<sup>2</sup>

Contrary to the view of Lévi-Provençal, Scandinavian and English specialists of the Viking period are in general agreement in accepting the validity of the report of al-Ghazal's embassy to the north. They have received support from the well-known Byzantinist, A. A. Vasiliev. There are differences of opinion only in locating the scene of the embassy. Some favour the court of the Danish king Horik in Zealand, while others have preferred the seat of the Norwegian conqueror of Ireland, Turgesius (Ir. Turgeis, probably O.N. Þorgestr, possibly Þorgils (-gísl)). None have given more than passing attention to the evidence.<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of the present essay is to review the evidence for the authenticity of al-Ghazal's embassy to the Vikings: to affirm that the first Viking attack on the emirate of Cordova in 844 was a Norwegian adventure undertaken by way of the Biscay coast from original bases in Ireland; and that al-Ghazal was sent by the amir Abd-al-Rahman II to the Norwegians in Ireland where he encountered Turgeis and his wife Ota.

Further it is suggested that some details of al-Ghazal's earlier embassy to Constantinople (840) preserved in Lévi-Provençal's anonymous manuscript from Fez,<sup>4</sup> may relate to the embassy to the Vikings. The two accounts cast a new light on some aspects of the social state of the Vikings in Ireland and confirm Irish sources; and while al-Ghazal's romantic and often salty anecdotes fit into the free and easy atmosphere of a princely Viking camp, they can scarcely be said to reflect the standards which ruled the imperial court of Theophilus and Theodora. It is possible indeed to accept the observation of Lévi-Provençal: "Sans doute, la démarche insolite de l'Empereur de Byzance à Cordoue et la descente audacieuse des Wikings sur le territoire espagnol, qui comportaient l'une et l'autre certaines données romanesques, finirent-elles par s'amalgamer en Andalousie dans la croyance populaire et y favoriser la naissance d'une légende commune, qui devait peu à peu déformer la réalité historique."<sup>5</sup> But conclusions can be drawn directly contrary to those of the distinguished historian of Muslim Spain.

A lack of precision among chroniclers contemporary with the Viking wars has not helped modern historians to distinguish between the national or regional elements among the Vikings. For instance, so good a historian as Vasiliev takes Kunik to task for describing 'the Normans' who captured Seville in 844 as 'Swedish Russians' (*schwedische Rodsen*) when they were "Danes and to some extent Norwegians".<sup>6</sup> As a matter of fact there is no evidence that Danes took part in the expedition and in this particular case the raiders are described in contemporary sources as *Westfaldingi* (Norwegians from Vestfold, round the Oslo fjord).<sup>7</sup>

The Muslims described 'heathens' as *Majus*. The name *Majus*=Magians was originally used of the Zoroastrians. It was then extended to other unbelievers, together with the associations of the term— e.g. incest and

fire-worship.<sup>8</sup> Among the Muslims of the west the same name was applied to the heathen Scandinavians who were believed to be fire-worshippers. The great fire festivals of northern Europe (which were not confined to Scandinavia), or even the seasonal burning of the heather, may have suggested this Magian connotation.<sup>9</sup> In later Arab sources the name *al-Ordomaniyun* is used; it is borrowed from the Latin forms *Normanni*, *Nordmanni*, *Lordomanni*, *Lormanans*, *Leodomanni*.<sup>10</sup> The toponym *Murman* which still survives for the extreme north-eastern peninsula of Scandinavia belongs to this group.

In Byzantine and Russian sources the names *Ros*, *Rus'* were applied to Scandinavians, mostly of Swedish origin, who had penetrated down the rivers of eastern Europe. Some of the Muslim geographers realized that the Swedish *Rus'* were kin to the Danes and Norwegians and al-Yakubi writes of the attack on Seville in 844: "into this city broke in the Majus who are called *Rus'*."<sup>11</sup>

The name Viking itself is reviewed in detail by Kendrick who prefers to define it as 'one who fares by sea'; it early came to have the pejorative sense of 'robber' or 'marauder' among the Anglo-Saxons and Frisians.<sup>12</sup> Sometimes the chronicles preserve specific regional names: as *Westfaldingi* or the Anglo-Saxon Northmen 'of Hereða lande' which is found in the Irish forms *Hirotha* and *Irruaith*.<sup>13</sup> But in general the chronicles are seldom specific and often inaccurate. In referring to the Viking attacks, the *Annals of Ulster* call the invaders *Genti* ('gentiles'); 'the Four Masters' who compiled the *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland*, use the term *Gaill* ('foreigners'). O'Donovan, the editor of the Four Masters, attributes the raids round the south coast of Ireland from 807 onwards to the *Danair* (Danes).<sup>14</sup> He cites the seventeenth-century English recension of the *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, but this work calls all Vikings in Ireland 'Danes'. The great Irish scholar, Geoffrey Keating, also writing in the seventeenth-century, states that "others

say that it was when Airtre, son of Cathal, reigned in Munster (792-802), the *Lochlonnaigh* (*Lochlannaigh*) began to come to plunder Ireland. And in this they are right." Although *Lochlannaigh* is generally taken to mean Norwegians, Keating states that "it is not a specific name for any particular tribe" but applies to "the inhabitants of the countries of northern Europe". Keating adds: "True also is the statement of those who assert that the *Lochlonnaigh* came to Ireland in the reign of Olchobhar over Munster (d. 849), but the tribe who came hither then were the *Dainfhir* or Danes from Dania, that is Denmark, and it is these are called *Duibhgheinnte* ('black gentiles') or *Dubhlochlonnaigh* ('black foreigners') in the old books of the *seanchus*, while the Norwegians are called *Finnghheinnte* ('white' or 'fair' foreigners) or *Fionnlochlonnaigh* ('white Lochlanns')." <sup>15</sup>

The name *Lochlannaigh* has been explained as 'men of the lochs' with reference to the Norwegian *fjords*.<sup>16</sup> The reason for the distinction between 'white' and 'black' foreigners is also obscure. The explanation that the Danes were darker than the Norwegians is not confirmed by anthropology; but a distinction in the colour of the armour of the Vikings may be valid. Colour symbolism in the middle ages had a significance which is not always clear. There was Red, White and Black Russia; the Golden, Blue and Apricot Hordes among the Tartars; and the Black and White Sheep Turkomans. There were 'Blues' and 'Greens' in Byzantium; and 'Red' and 'White' in the Wars of the Roses. The differentiation by colours may, indeed, have been casual and spontaneous, as in the modern example of the Red, White and Green armies during the Russian Civil War.<sup>17</sup>

Halphen, following Steenstrup, has recognised clearly enough the distinctive characters of the Swedish, Norwegian and Danish contributions to the Scandinavian epos.<sup>18</sup> Again, Shetelig, in a brief and brilliant 'Summary Analysis', has described the pattern.<sup>19</sup> The Swedish

expansion round the coasts and up the rivers of the East Baltic lands had begun in the seventh century; indeed, it seems that the movement from southern Sweden was a sequel to the earlier spread of the Goths towards the Black Sea.<sup>20</sup> Different in character, a westerly movement across the open seas out of the Norwegian *ffjords* began to be marked in the last decade of the eighth century.<sup>21</sup> It took the form of a migration directed at first toward the Scottish Isles and, through the first half of the ninth century, into Ireland. The peculiar social structure and perennial tribal warfare in Celtic Ireland encouraged Norse settlement in force.<sup>22</sup> During the ninth century, in the Orkneys and Hebrides, in Ireland and Man, were formed the first Scandinavian communities overseas — half a century earlier than in Iceland and the English Danelaw, more than a century before the duchy of Normandy, and two centuries before the Norman kingdom of Sicily. The strategic position of Ireland in the north Atlantic favoured the sea-kings. Later generations were to contend with Danes and Saxons for the mastery of Northumbria; but in the earlier decades the Norwegians raided the Welsh coast and struck south along the western seaboard of France — particularly up the great rivers, Loire and Garonne. The first Norwegian raid on Aquitaine from Ireland was recorded in 799.<sup>23</sup>

The movement out of Denmark had, again, a different character. In Shetelig's view, the Danish expeditions during the years 834-7 were intimately connected with the civil wars between the successors of Charlemagne.<sup>24</sup> Then the deterioration in conditions in the Frankish empire after the battle of Fontenay in 841 tempted the Danes — and the Norwegians in the west along the Atlantic coast of France — to become armies of professional *condottieri*.<sup>25</sup>

The first Viking attack on Spain in 844 may be explained as an accident of the civil wars in France. On the Loire in 843, a Frankish adventurer, Count Lambert, had

combined with Duke Nominoé of Brittany against the representative of Charles the Bald, ruler of West Francia. On 24th May the royalists were defeated at Messac. Lambert entered Nantes but was expelled by the citizens within two weeks. In the second week of June a Viking fleet was observed off the mouth of the Loire. The visitors established a base on the island of Hero (Noirmoutier) which had been the seat of the Monastery of St. Philibert — abandoned by the monks because of recurrent Viking raids during the past twenty years.<sup>26</sup> As a point of call for barks engaged in the Breton salt trade, “Noirmoutier was doubtless well known to the northern adventurer merchants, and it was this place which became the first goal of northern pirates in Atlantic waters.”<sup>27</sup> It was characteristic of the Vikings that trading was combined with raiding and, according to the author of *Les Miracles de St. Martin de Vertou*, the citizens of Nantes did not even shut their gates when sixty-seven Viking ships hove up the river. They supposed that the Vikings had come to trade at the great annual fair of St. John and allowed them to enter the city with arms concealed. A slaughter then took place in the streets and in the cathedral where the frightened people tried to defend themselves (24th June). After ravaging the country to the south of the Loire, the Vikings withdrew with their loot and captives to the island of Noirmoutier. The crisis favoured Lambert who was now admitted into the ruined city by the inhabitants.<sup>28</sup> The historians of Charles the Bald, Lot and Halphen, have exonerated Lambert from collusion with the Vikings on the ground that the *Chronique de Nantes* records that the pirates dared not pursue fugitives who escaped from Noirmoutier ‘through fear of Lambert’. But this restraint of the Viking crews does not exclude the possibility of an understanding between Lambert and their leaders.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, the fact that in the following summer (844) the Vikings sailed up the Garonne towards Toulouse, where

the political allies of Lambert — Pepin II, the Aquitainian pretender, and Count William of Septimania — were fighting Charles the Bald, suggests that a military understanding existed between the Vikings and the Frankish rebels. This possibility is confirmed by a concatenation of dates: Charles raised the siege of Toulouse at the end of July or the beginning of August; the Vikings appeared on the north coast of Spain during the first half of August. It is a reasonable assumption that they withdrew from the Garonne under agreement with Pepin II, and probably after receipt of a substantial contribution.<sup>30</sup>

It is a fortunate chance that the *Annales angoumoisines* preserved the regional name of the Viking host which captured Nantes. They were *Westfaldingi* = Norwegians from Vestfold.<sup>31</sup> And they had come from 'the Britannic Ocean' — the name then generally applied to the Irish Sea.<sup>32</sup> The author of *Les Miracles de St. Martin de Vertou* states that "Lambert had visited the Normans and Danes and persuaded them to cross the Ocean and come to Nantes." Lot and Halphen prefer to treat this story as "a legend deriving from the hatred of some Nantais for Lambert."<sup>33</sup> At that time contact was frequent and easy between the Viking posts on the Atlantic coast of France and the recently occupied Viking strongholds in Munster. No practical reason prevented Count Lambert from maintaining fairly rapid communications with the Irish Vikings.<sup>34</sup>

Whether or not Count Lambert summoned the Vikings to attack Nantes, there is circumstantial evidence for believing that the *Westfaldingi* came from Ireland and that they formed part of the large host which had for some years been engaged in ravaging that country under Turgeis who was himself a Vestfold prince.<sup>35</sup> By 844, Turgeis — with great strategic insight — had established his main base on Loch Rí in the centre of Ireland. He was already master of "Conn's Half" — the whole of

Ireland north of the Shannon and of the two great centres of Irish culture at Armagh and Clonmacnois. From the mouth of the Shannon, his fleets were active round the coasts of Kerry and Cork. "There came great sea-cast floods of foreigners into Munster", writes the author of *The War of the Gaedhil with the Gail*, "so that there was not a point thereof without a fleet." The presence of a fleet of threescore and five ships at Dublin is mentioned in the same context and this number corresponds closely with that of the fleet which sailed into the Loire in June 844.<sup>37</sup>

When the Westfaldingi withdrew from the Garonne, it seems that they returned to Noirmoutier and from there set sail 'to their own country'. However, they were beset by a violent north wind which carried them towards the coast of Galicia. They made a landfall near Coruña and disembarked — perhaps only with a view to replenishing supplies. They were in the kingdom of Asturias and were sharply attacked by the levies of King Ramiro I — themselves of mixed Celtic and Germano-Swabian blood and well inured to war. The Vikings suffered a bloody repulse, losing through enemy action or, partly perhaps through continuing bad weather, seventy of their ships. Fifty-four warships survived, with an equal number of attendant craft, carrying at most 3,000 fighting men.<sup>38</sup>

On 20th August this fleet lay in to Lisbon, They were now comfortably in the Portugal Current and the fine dry weather of early autumn usual on this coast. "One might have said they had filled the ocean with dark red birds," wrote ibn-Idhari in an allusion to the characteristic colour of the warships of the Vestfold kings.<sup>39</sup> At Lisbon the Muslims offered stout resistance and after thirteen days the Westfaldingi sailed south. While some of their crews raided and plundered Cadiz and Medina Sidonia, the bulk of the fleet (some eighty vessels including auxiliary craft) moved up the Guadalquivir

(*wadi-el-kebir*). Marshy Captal, a few miles south-west of Seville, offered the insular base which Vikings always sought. The rich city amid its olive groves and gardens lacked defensive walls; troops were few; and the governor fled to Carmona. After some skirmishing, the Westfaldingi entered Seville and sacked it with much slaughter. During October they scattered in raiding parties over the countryside. This normal tactic of the Vikings proved fatal in a land with a well-organised and active government used to waging war. By November Abd al-Rahman II, had gathered strong forces and, on the 11th of the month, the Westfaldingi were badly beaten at Tablada — where Seville aerodrome is now situated. Their leader and over a thousand men were killed and four hundred taken prisoners. Thirty empty warships were abandoned to the Muslims.<sup>40</sup>

The survivors were in a desperate situation. But they were mobile and they were able to trade their numerous captives against food and clothes.<sup>41</sup> They withdrew down the Guadalquivir, but they still had spirit to raid up the Tinto and the Guadiana and to make a descent on Arcila in Morocco.

These minor operations occupied the turn of the year 844-5. The Vikings were last seen by the Muslims off Lisbon.<sup>42</sup> Modern historians have not traced in detail their subsequent movements. Indeed Lot and Halphen, generally so accurate, fixed the dates of the visit to the Garonne basin and the raid on Andalucia too late.<sup>43</sup> Nothing is heard of the Vikings for some months until, in the course of the year 845, they regained the coast of Aquitaine and landed between Bordeaux and Saintes. The *Chronique de Nantes* expressly states that they had come on a westerly wind from Galicia.<sup>44</sup> It would seem clear then that they had wintered and spent the spring refitting in one of the lonely *rias* of the Galician coast (which Elysée Reclus has aptly compared to the Norwegian fjords).<sup>45</sup> It was only in the early autumn of

845 that they resumed offensive action — perhaps after some reinforcements had reached them.

Séguin, the Frankish duke of the Gascons, who was holding lower Aquitaine for Charles the Bald, was defeated and beheaded by the Westfaldingi. They then took and pillaged the towns of Saintes and Bordeaux. These events took place in October/November 845 — exactly a year after the expedition against Seville. According to the *Chronique de Nantes*, the Westfaldingi, loaded with pillage, then returned to their own country — ‘greatly longed for’ (*valde desideratam*).<sup>47</sup> But it is apparent from the *Chronicon Aquitanicum* that the Viking fleet — or a great part of it — stayed on the Aquitainian coast until the middle of 846.<sup>48</sup> In July 846 the Westfaldingi came to Noirmoutier; and here they set fire to their base and took to the sea. The fact that they destroyed a stronghold where they had been masters for ten years implied, in the view of Lot and Halphen, that they had no hope of return.<sup>49</sup> Lot and Halphen concluded that the Vikings “set sail for the Baltic and that a crisis in the Danish state took them back to their own country”.<sup>50</sup>

In fact there is no evidence for a crisis in the Danish state in the summer of 846. There was, however, a serious crisis in the affairs of the Norwegian Vikings in Ireland. Turgeis had been killed, sometime in 845, or, as I shall suggest later, in 846. Something comparable to ‘Sicilian Vespers’ flared up against the Norwegian conquerors in Ireland, and in 846-847 they suffered a series of defeats at the hands of the Irish.<sup>52</sup>

These disasters were followed by a calculated offensive of the Danes to displace the Norwegians from Ireland and Aquitaine and to secure the hegemony of the coast round the western ocean. It would appear to have been a call for reinforcements by the hard-pressed Norwegians in Ireland, which caused the Westfaldingi to evacuate Noirmoutier in July 846, and that fear of their base falling into the hands of Danish rivals may have prompted them to destroy it.<sup>53</sup>

It was against the background of the events of 845 and 846 that the twenty-month odyssey of al-Ghazal to the Vikings took place.

Neither the Westfalingi nor the Muslims can have found the campaign in Andalucia as strange as some historians have assumed. More than four decades had passed since the Norwegians had first raided the coasts of Aquitaine; Irish monks for two centuries had had some knowledge of the Spanish scene; and it is clear that the Vikings had a general idea about the peninsula before they descended on it. They found in Seville a population which was still largely Gothic and Romano-Spanish.<sup>54</sup> The Gothic elements were important in the Andalucian amirate.<sup>55</sup> The amir's household troops were composed of non-Arabic speaking 'mutes' — partly negroes and partly 'Slavs'.<sup>56</sup> Again, there were in Spain thousands of slaves imported from the eastern borders of the Frankish empire, many of them taken in the Carolingian wars, Saxons, Slavonic Wends, and, doubtless, Danes. Some of these men had become freemen and had risen to good positions in service or in trade. The Westfalingi seem to have had no difficulty in finding interpreters and in making themselves understood.<sup>57</sup>

These aspects are important in considering the background of the embassy which, according to Arab sources, was despatched by the Vikings to Abd al-Rahman II. The factor of bringing aid and comfort to some of the bands scattered about the Algarve and the Gaditarian hinterland may have entered in.<sup>58</sup> But it is hardly necessary to recall the strong trading interest of the Vikings. In their case trade followed the sword; and to these keen and reckless venturers, who had already pillaged Seville, Andalucia was a marvel of attraction as the richest and most famous part of Western Europe. On the other hand, the Muslims were interested in the products of northern Europe — all the way from the Atlantic to the Volga. Particularly attractive to them

were rare furs and strong barbarian slaves. The blonde women were favoured in Andalusian households and the men were sought after as mercenaries and labourers. The Vikings were great fur trappers in the northern lands and seas and, like their remote descendants in England and America, ruthless slave traders.<sup>59</sup> Relations with the Vikings could offer to the Andalusian merchants the opportunity of penetrating the markets of northern Europe round the oceanic flank of the Frankish empire. For the Muslims, it is suggested that there was also a political interest. Abd al-Rahman II was in a state of war with Charles the Bald, himself so hardly harassed by Scandinavian attacks. In the first decade of the ninth century, the Franks had taken Barcelona from the Muslims, and intermittent campaigns for the control of Catalonia had followed.<sup>60</sup> The weakness of the Frankish monarchy after Fontenay (841) had offered the occasion to the army of Abd al-Rahman to ravage Cerdagne and to raid as far as the outskirts of Narbonne in 843 — the year before the Viking attack on Seville.<sup>61</sup> On the other hand, the Christian subjects of the amirate of Cordova were in a ferment; risings were frequent and significant — as in Merida (828-38) and Toledo (831). There were many indications of a political and religious revival among the peoples of the peninsula — still Christian or only recently converted to Islam.<sup>62</sup> ‘The fire worshipping *Majus*’ — formidable enemies of the Christians and of the Frankish monarchy — were clearly of interest to Abd al-Rahman and his advisers.

There were indeed valid circumstantial reasons for an exchange of embassies between Cordova and the Vikings and the choice of al-Ghazal as ambassador underlined the importance which Abd al-Rahman attached to the mission. A poet of quality, a man of fashion and a celebrated wit, Yahya bn-Hakam el Bekri al Djayani (=of Jaen) was known as *al-Ghazal* for his notable good looks. In 840, he had been sent on a mission to

Byzantium to return an embassy which the Emperor Theophilus had despatched to Cordova earlier in the same year. He was in the confidence of Abd al-Rahman and was clearly the leading diplomat of Cordova. In 845, al-Ghazal had the experience of his fifty years; and he was still ardent, quick-witted and adventurous: a perfect choice for the perilous voyage to the Viking north.<sup>63</sup>

## Chapter Two

### THE SOURCES

THE original source for the embassy of al-Ghazal to the Vikings was Abu-l-Kattab-Umar-ibn-al-Hasan-ibn-Dihya, who was born in Valencia in Andalusia, about 1159, and died, almost an octogenarian, in Cairo, in 1235. The facts and anecdotes in the story were derived from Tammam-ibn-Alqama, vizier under three consecutive amirs in Andalusia during the ninth century, who died in 896. Tammam-ibn-Alqama had had the details direct from al-Ghazal and his companions. The only manuscript of ibn-Dihya's work was acquired by the British Museum in 1866: it is entitled *Al-mutrib min ashar ahli'l Maghrib* ('An amusing book from poetical works of the Maghrib'). The Arab text of the story of the embassy with a few omissions was first published by Reinhart Dozy, *Recherches* 3rd ed., II, appendix, lxxxi-lxxxviii, then by A. Seippel, *Rerum normannicarum fontes arabici*, Oslo, 1896, 13-20; and in Norwegian by Birkeland. A French translation by Dozy was reprinted by Fabricius in 1893 (see note 3). There was also a German translation by Georg Jacob, *Arabische Berichte von Gesandten an Germanische Fürstenhöfe aus d. 9 u. 10. Jahrhundert*, Berlin/Leipzig, 1927, 37-42. Jón Stefánsson published in English an abbreviated version of Dozy's French translation in *Saga-Book*, VI, 1908-9, 37ff.<sup>64</sup> Before Dozy's work, only excerpts from ibn-Dihya in incomplete shape had been known from the writings of the seventeenth-century Maghribi man of letters, al-Maqqari, whose "immense compilation of historical and literary information, poems, letters and quotations very often taken from works now lost has", in the words of Lévi-Provençal, "an inestimable value" and is "in the first rank for our sources of Muslim

Spain" (*Encyclopædia of Islam*, III 174). Al-Maqqari's chief source for historical and literary anecdotes of the earlier period in Andalusia was ibn-al-Khatib Dhu-l-Wizaratāin (= 'holder of two vizierates'), 1313-74, the celebrated encyclopædist of Granada who has been described as "the greatest and the last important author, poet and statesman of Granada, if not of the whole of Arab Spain" (C. F. Seybold, *EI*, II 206).

The account of the embassy, therefore, rests on ibn-Dihya, writing nearly four centuries after the events described and deriving his information, including the many circumstantial details, from the unidentified work of Tammam-ibn-Alqama, a contemporary of al-Ghazal. His version is cited by two of the leading literary men of the following centuries, who may be assumed therefore to have credited it. Dozy did not doubt the authenticity of the story and later historians accepted his authority, although there were different views as to whether the embassy had visited Ireland or Scandinavia.

In 1937, Lévi-Provençal published an article in *Byzantion*, XII, in which he referred to the discovery of new texts forming part of an anonymous Arab chronicle in a wing, long unexplored, of the library of the great mosque of al-Karawiyin at Fez. This chronicle, the name of the compiler of which Lévi-Provençal was unable to identify, relates to the Umayyads of Spain in the ninth century. The compilation is in the form of annals cited from older chroniclers, including Mufarriq and Isa bn Ahmed ar-Razi, living at the end of the tenth century.<sup>65</sup> The information furnished by these chroniclers complete and confirm each other. An important event described in detail was the exchange of embassies between the Byzantine emperor Theophilus and the amir Abd al-Rahman in the year 839-40. Yahya-bn-Hakam al-Ghazal was named as head of the mission which was sent to Constantinople. The author of the anonymous chronicle reproduces from the lost work of ar-Razi the full text of

the communication which al-Ghazal bore to the emperor Theophilus. He also includes a number of anecdotes and a poem which resemble closely details of ibn-Dihya's account of al-Ghazal's embassy to the Vikings.

The fact that the chroniclers cited by the anonymous Fez manuscript refer to the Viking attack on Andalusia but do not mention the subsequent exchange of embassies with the Vikings leads Lévi-Provençal to the conclusion that "le récit d'Ibn Dihya . . . n'est qu'une contamination postérieure du voyage officiel d'al-Ghazal à Constantinople."<sup>66</sup> Lévi-Provençal promised to publish later the text of the anonymous chronicle in *Documents inédits d'histoire hispano-umayyade* but I have been unable to ascertain whether this work has appeared since 1937. In 1950, in his *Histoire de l'Espagne musulmane*, I 253-4, he confirmed his earlier view: "il s'agit là d'une fable inventée de toutes pièces".<sup>67</sup> The views of this distinguished Arabist, weighed against those of specialists in Viking history, merit respect, and I shall return to the detail of his objections.

Scandinavian and Irish sources for the mid-ninth century make no mention of an embassy from Cordova to the Vikings. The earliest reference to the presence of Spanish Moors in Ireland is to be found in the *Three Fragments* of Dubhaltach Mac Fírbisigh (Dúald Mac Fírbis), the third of which relates to the Viking attack on Andalusia in 959-60, and the subsequent bringing of Moorish prisoners, known as 'blue men' to Ireland.<sup>68</sup>

The Scandinavian sources are late and sparse for this period. In the *Heimskringla* (*Haralds saga hárfagra*, ch. 33), Snorri refers to a Þorgísl, son of Harald Fairhair, who ruled in Dublin, but there is no certainty that he is to be equated with Turgeis. An identification of Turgeis with Ragnar loðbrók, proposed by Halliday and discussed by Todd, has not been accepted by later historians.<sup>69</sup>

The Irish sources are important for the history of the Norwegian invasions of Ireland and, indeed, of the whole

of the Viking age. Shetelig conceded that "we are indebted to Irish writers for a considerable amount of authentic information concerning the history of the Viking period . . ." Again, "the Irish annals give us a glimpse of historical facts left in deep obscurity by Norwegian sources, viz. the relations between Norway and the Viking kingdom about the middle of the ninth century . . . The Irish annals also shed light on Viking history in Scotland, and in the Hebrides and Man."<sup>70</sup>

The principal source for the career of Turgeis and for the solitary reference to his wife Ota is the work known as *Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh* ('The War of the Gaedhil (Goidil) with the Gaill ('foreigners)'). This has survived in a fragment bound in the Book of Leinster — dated by Todd to about the middle of the twelfth century; in a manuscript found by Eugene O'Curry in 1840, originally in the possession of Edward Llwyd, the celebrated eighteenth-century Celtic scholar — believed by Todd to have been copied in the fourteenth century; and in another manuscript in the Burgundian Library, Brussels, transcribed from the lost *Book of Cúchonnacht O'Daly* — which Todd attributed to the first half of the twelfth century. Internal evidence indicates that the original was compiled by a contemporary of King Brian Borumha at the beginning of the eleventh century, and the accuracy of the account of the battle of Clontarf in 1014 was confirmed by a remarkable calculation checking the state of the moon and the tides in Dublin Bay on 23rd April 1014 (Todd, *War*, xxvi, xxvii).<sup>71</sup>

The author of the *War of the Gaedhil* was writing just over a century and a half after the period of Turgeis: and he was a near contemporary of Mufarriq and ar-Razi. The brief reference to Turgeis and Ota in *The Annals of Ulster*, *The Annals of Clonmacnois*, and *The Four Masters* appears to have been based on the *War of the Gaedhil*; indeed, as Todd observed, "the Four Masters have occasionally transferred its very words to their pages" (Todd, *War*, xix).<sup>72</sup>

In 1185, Giraldus de Barri (Giraldus Cambrensis), a noble ecclesiastic of Norman-Welsh origin, visited Ireland and, in his *Topographia Hiberniae*, left his curious description of the career and death of Turgeis and his equally curious discussion of Gurmundus, 'who came to Ireland from Africa'. The adventures of Turgeis were apparently still 'common talk' in Ireland. Giraldus, again, implies that he had some acquaintance with the Irish histories; and his attribution of abandoned forts and earthworks to Turgeis is evidence that in the twelfth century the memory of the Norwegian conqueror was as alive in Ireland as is that of Cromwell now three hundred years after his death.<sup>73</sup>

The seventeenth-century historians, Duaid Mac Firbis (1585-1670), in his *Chronicon Scotorum*, and Geoffrey Keating (c.1570-1644), in his *History*, used the *War of the Gaedhil* for their references to Turgeis. Keating, in Todd's view, embroidered Giraldus's account of the death of Turgeis, and English historians, contemporary with Keating, gave versions which have been treated as based on Giraldus. But there is evidence to show that the historians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had access to a common source, known to Giraldus in the twelfth century, since they go into details which need not necessarily be attributed to imaginative licence. Keating certainly used material for the later history of 'the sons of Turgesius' which is neither drawn from the annals nor lifted from Giraldus and which must derive from a source still available in his time — perhaps a lost section of the work surviving in the *Three Fragments*.<sup>74</sup>

## Chapter Three

### THE TEXT

*Note:* I am indebted to Professor Bernard Lewis of the University of London for his courtesy in placing at my disposal his translation of the text of ibn-Dihya which forms part of his forthcoming book, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*, to be published by Messrs. Allen and Unwin. It is reproduced by their kind permission.

WHEN the envoys of the king of the Vikings came to Sultan 'abd ar-Rahmān to ask for peace, after they had left Seville, had attacked its surroundings and had then been defeated there with the loss of the commander of their fleet, 'abd ar-Rahmān decided to reply accepting this request. He commanded al-Ghazāl to go on this mission with the envoys of their king, since al-Ghazāl possessed keenness of mind, quickness of wit, skill in repartee, courage and perseverance, and knew his way in and out of every door. He was accompanied by Yahyā b. Habib. He went to the city of Shilb (Silvès), where a fine, well-equipped ship was prepared for them. They bore a reply to the message of the king of the Vikings and a gift in return for his gift. The envoy of the Viking king embarked on the Viking vessel on which he had come, and sailed at the same time as the ship of al-Ghazāl. When they were opposite the great cape that juts out into the sea and is the westernmost limit of Spain, that is, the mountain known as Aluwiyah, the sea grew fearsome against them, and a mighty storm blew upon them, and they reached a point which al-Ghazāl has described as follows:—

Yahyā said to me, as we passed between waves  
like mountains  
And the winds overbore us from West and North,

When the two sails were rent and the cable-loops  
 were cut  
 And the angel of death reached for us, without any  
 escape,  
 And we saw death as the eye sees one state after  
 another—

“The sailors have no capital in us, O my comrade!”

When al-Ghazāl was saved from the terror and dangers of those seas, he arrived at the first of the lands of the Vikings, at one of their islands, where they stayed several days and repaired their ships and rested. The Viking ship went on to their king and they informed him of the arrival of the envoys. At this he rejoiced, and sent for them, and they went to his royal residence which was a great island (or peninsula) in the Ocean, with flowing streams and gardens. It was three days' sail, that is, three hundred miles, from the mainland. In it are Vikings, too numerous to be counted, and around the island are many other islands, large and small, all peopled by Vikings. The adjoining mainland is also theirs for a distance of many days' journey. They were heathens, but they now follow the Christian faith, and have given up fire-worship and their previous religion, except for the people of a few scattered islands of theirs in the sea, where they keep to their old faith, with fire-worship, the marriage of brothers and sisters and various other kinds of abomination. The others wage war against them and enslave them.

The king ordered his people to prepare a fine dwelling for them, and sent out a party to greet them. The Vikings thronged to look at them, and they wondered greatly at their appearance and their garb. They were then led to their lodgings in an honourable manner and spent a day there. After two days the king summoned them to his presence, and al-Ghazāl stipulated that he would not be made to kneel to him and that he and his companions would not be required to do anything contrary

to their customs. The king agreed to this. But when they went to him, he sat before them in magnificent guise, and ordered an entrance, through which he must be approached, to be made so low that one could only enter kneeling. When al-Ghazāl came to this, he sat on the ground, stretched forth his two legs, and dragged himself through on his rear. And when he had passed through the doorway, he stood erect. The king had prepared himself for him, with many arms and great pomp. But al-Ghazāl was not overawed by this, nor did it frighten him. He stood erect before him, and said: "Peace be with you, O king, and with those whom your assembly hall contains, and respectful greetings to you! May you not cease to enjoy power, long life, and the nobility which leads you to the greatness of this world and the next, which becomes enduring under the protection of the living and Eternal One, other than whom all things perish, to whom is the dominion and to whom we return" (Quran 28/88). The interpreter explained what he had said, and the king admired his words, and said: "This is one of the wise and clever ones of his people." He wondered at al-Ghazāl's sitting on the ground and entering feet foremost, and he said: "We sought to humiliate him, and he greeted us with the soles of his shoes. Had he not been an ambassador, we would have taken this amiss."

Then al-Ghazāl gave him the letter of Sultan 'Abd ar-Rahmān. The letter was read to him, and interpreted. He found it good, took it in his hand, lifted it and put it in his bosom. Then he ordered the gifts to be brought and had the coffers opened, and examined all the garments and the vessels that they contained, and was delighted with them. After this, he permitted them to withdraw to their dwelling, and treated them generously.

Al-Ghazāl had noteworthy sessions and famous encounters with them, when he debated with their scholars and silenced them and contended against their champions and outmatched them.

Now when the wife of the Viking king heard of al-Ghazāl, she sent for him so that she might see him. When he entered her presence, he greeted her, then he stared at her for a long time, gazing at her as one that is struck with wonderment. She said to her interpreter; "Ask him why he stares at me so. Is it because he finds me very beautiful, or the opposite?" He answered: "It is indeed because I did not imagine that there was so beautiful a spectacle in the world. I have seen in the palaces of our king women chosen for him from among all the nations, but never have I seen among them beauty such as this." She said to her interpreter, "Ask him; is he serious, or does he jest?" And he answered: "Serious indeed." And she said to him: "Are there then no beautiful women in your country?" And al-Ghazāl replied: "Show me some of your women, so that I can compare them with ours." So the queen sent for women famed for beauty, and they came. Then he looked them up and down, and he said: "They have beauty, but it is not like the beauty of the queen, for her beauty and her qualities cannot be appreciated by everyone and can only be expressed by poets. If the queen wishes me to describe her beauty, her quality and her wisdom in a poem which will be declaimed in all our land, I shall do this." The queen was greatly pleased and elated with this, and ordered him a gift. Al-Ghazāl refused to accept it, saying "I will not." Then she said to the interpreter: "Ask him why he does not accept my gift. Does he dislike my gift, or me?" He asked him — and Ghazāl replied: "Indeed, her gift is magnificent, and to receive it from her is a great honour, for she is a queen and the daughter of a king. But it is gift enough for me to see her and to be received by her. This is the only gift I want. I desire only that she continues to receive me." And when the interpreter explained his words to her, her joy and her admiration for him grew even greater, and she said: "Let his gift be carried to his dwelling; and whenever he

wishes to pay me a visit, let not the door be closed to him for with me he is always assured of an honourable welcome." Al-Ghazāl thanked her, wished her well and departed.

Tammām ibn 'Alqama said: "I heard al-Ghazāl tell this story, and I asked him: 'And did she really approach that degree of beauty which you ascribed to her?' And he answered: 'By your father, she had some charm; but by talking in this way I won her good graces and obtained from her more than I desired'."

Tammām ibn 'Alqama also said: "One of his companions said to me: 'The wife of the king of the Vikings was infatuated with al-Ghazāl and could not suffer a day to pass without her sending for him and his staying with her and telling her of the life of the Muslims, of their history, their countries and the nations that adjoin them. Rarely did he leave her without her sending after him a gift to express her good-will to him — garments or food or perfume, till her dealings with him became notorious, and his companions disapproved of it. Al-Ghazāl was warned of this, and became more careful, and called on her only every other day. She asked him the reason for this, and he told her of the warning he had received. Then she laughed, and said to him: 'We do not have such things in our religion, nor do we have jealousy. Our women are with our men only of their own choice. A woman stays with her husband as long as it pleases her to do so, and leaves him if it no longer pleases her.' It was the custom of the Vikings before the religion of Rome reached them that no woman refused any man, except that if a noblewoman accepted a man of humble status, she was blamed for this, and her family kept them apart.

When al-Ghazāl heard her say this, he was reassured, and returned to his previous familiarity."

Tammām says: "Al-Ghazāl was striking in middle age; he had been handsome in his youth, and was for this reason nicknamed al-Ghazāl (the Gazelle). When he

went to the land of the Vikings, he was about fifty, and his hair was turning grey. He was however in full vigour, straight of body and handsome of aspect. One day the king's wife, whose name was Nūd, asked him his age, and he replied jestingly: 'Twenty'. And she said to the interpreter: 'What youth of twenty has such grey hair?' And he replied to the interpreter: 'What is so unlikely about that? Have you never seen a foal dropped that is grey-haired at birth?' Nūd laughed and was struck with wonder at his words. And on this occasion al-Ghazāl extemporised:—

'You are burdened, O my heart, with a wearying  
 passion  
 With which you struggle as if with a lion.  
 I am in love with a Viking woman  
 Who will not let the sun of beauty set,  
 Who lives at the limit of God's world, where he  
 Who goes towards her, finds no path.  
 O Nūd, O young and fair one,  
 From whose buttons a star rises,  
 O you, by my father, than whom I see  
 None sweeter or pleasanter to my heart,  
 If I should say one day that my eye has seen  
 Any one like you, I would surely be lying.  
 She said: "I see that your locks have turned white"  
 In jest, she caused me to jest also,  
 I answered: "By my father,  
 The foal is born grey like this."  
 And she laughed and admired my words  
 —Which I only spoke that she might admire.'

Had this poem been composed by 'Umar ibn abī Rabi'a or Bashshār ibn Burd or 'Abbās ibn al Ahnaf or any other of the (Eastern) classical poets who took this path, it would have been highly esteemed. But the poem is forgotten, because the poet was an Andalucian. Otherwise it would not have been left in obscurity, for such a

poem does not deserve to be neglected. Have you seen anything more beautiful than the line: 'Who will not let the sun of beauty set', or as the first line of this piece, or as the description of the exchange of jests? Are they not strung pearls? And are we not wronged and treated unjustly?

But let us return to the story of al-Ghazāl. When he had recited his poem to Nūd, and the interpreter had explained it, she laughed at it, and ordered him to use dye, Al-Ghazāl did so, and appeared before her next morning with dyed hair. She praised his dye and said it became him well, whereupon al-Ghazāl recited the following verses:

'In the morning she complimented me on the black-  
ness of my dye,  
It was as though it had brought me back to my youth.  
But I see grey hair and the dye upon it  
As a sun that is swathed in mist.  
It is hidden for a while, and then the wind uncovers it,  
And the covering begins to fade away.  
Do not despise the gleam of white hair;  
It is the flower of understanding and intelligence,  
I have that which you lust for in the youth  
As well as elegance of manner, culture and breeding.'

Then al-Ghazāl left them, and, accompanied by the envoys, went to Shent Ya'qūb (St. Iago de Compostella) with a letter from the king of the Vikings to the ruler of that city. He stayed there, greatly honoured, for two months, until the end of their pilgrimage. Then he travelled to Castile with those who were bound for there, and thence to Toledo, eventually reaching the presence of Sultan 'Abd ar-Rahmān after an absence of twenty months."

## Chapter Four

### COMMENTARY

The text of ibn-Dihya is a matter-of-fact, and in some parts, detailed story of a journey, interspersed with anecdotes, some original, others in traditional *genre*. There is, indeed, little flavour of the 'marvels' usual in travellers' records of the period.

The account of the itinerary and adventures of the ambassador is straightforward and in keeping with the character of ibn-Dihya's book which was in the class of *belles lettres* and intended to 'amuse' the reader, as the title indicates. In contrast to the embassy to Constantinople described in the anonymous Fez manuscript, no documents are cited illustrating the political objects and results of the mission.

#### *A The Journey Out*

From the opening sentences of ibn-Dihya it is clear that 'the ambassador of the king of the Vikings' arrived at the headquarters of Abd ar-Rahman II after the defeat at Tablada and the abandonment of Seville by the Vikings — that is during the last half of November. He came to propose not merely a cessation of hostilities but peace between the two monarchs. Abd ar-Rahman decided to accede to this request and he ordered al-Ghazal to return as an ambassador with the envoy of 'the king of the Vikings'. From this sequence of events, it is reasonable to conclude that 'the ambassador' who attended on Abd ar-Rahman was not a deputy of the invading force seeking an armistice but a plenipotentiary from the ruler to whom the invaders owed allegiance. Thus, it may be assumed that after the capture of Seville in September, the leader

of the Vikings in Andalus had sent back a ship to report, either to Noirmoutier or, more probably, direct to Ireland. This ship could have reached the south-west coast of Ireland before the end of September 844. The envoy, sent by the Viking king to the army in Spain, could have left Ireland in October and have arrived in time to witness the disastrous events of early November. As I have suggested earlier, the fact that Abd ar-Rahman sent al-Ghazal, the former ambassador to the Byzantine emperor, on the return embassy to Ireland indicates that, in spite of the aggression against Seville, the court of Cordova attached great importance — political and commercial — to the development of relations with the Viking sea-king who was master of the north-western approaches to France and Spain.

There was no delay in the despatch of the return embassy. While sporadic fighting along the Sidonian coast was still continuing between the Muslims and the Vikings, al-Ghazal, accompanied by a certain Yahya-ibn-Habib, repaired to Silves on the southern coast of Algarve (*al-Gharb*). Lévi-Provençal identifies Yahya ibn-Habib as the inventor of a sort of clock which had earned him the surname of *sahib al-munaikila*. Yahya, then, may be taken to have been a specialist in mathematics and astronomy and, perhaps, in navigational theory, and it is likely that he was attached to the mission for scientific observation of conditions in the northern seas.<sup>75</sup>

At Silves, 'a fine well-equipped ship' had been prepared to accommodate the two Yahyas.<sup>76</sup> 'The ambassador of the king of the Vikings' embarked in the ship in which he had reached the Spanish coast, and the two vessels sailed together. Al-Ghazal's poem on the storm which overtook the voyagers soon after their departure from Silves contains some interesting particulars of the conditions under which he sailed. The reference in the last line — "The shipmen have no capital in us, my friend" — seems to infer that the envoys were travelling as passengers of

the Vikings. Again, the indication that the ship carried two sails makes it clear that it was not one of the fast longships of the Vikings, used for inshore and up-river raids. These carried one square sail only — as shown on the Bayeux tapestry of the Norman invasion of England two centuries later. They were mainly dependent on oar-power. It would seem rather, from al-Ghazal's reference to the two sails, that the mission had embarked in two ships of the type known as *knörr* (or *hafskip*). These ships, "used on the big viking expeditions overseas", were different craft from the longships, "being shorter, sturdier, and carrying a higher freeboard and having a great beam and a wide bottom". Their crews relied almost entirely on sail, and oars were used only as auxiliaries if the wind fell. The *knörr* was capable of travelling about 75 miles a day. It has been calculated that some of these ships had a displacement of fifty tons or thereabouts.<sup>77</sup>

The date of the departure of the embassy may be calculated. Ibn-Dihya says that al-Ghazal arrived back in Cordova after an absence of twenty months. He had reached Santiago de Compostella two months before the end of the pilgrimage which falls in the last week of July. If a fortnight is computed for a journey by leisurely stages from Compostella to Cordova, we can reckon that al-Ghazal started his journey from Silvès twenty months before early August 846 — that is during the last half of December 844; or perhaps the first half of January 845, if allowance be made for delays between Cordova and Silvès and for embarkation at Silvès.

"Opposite the great cape which juts out into the sea and is the westernmost limit of Spain, that is, the mountain known as Aluwiyah," the ambassadors were overtaken by a tempest. Dozy identified this promontory, perhaps rightly, as St. Vincent.<sup>78</sup> "Off this coast gales from between north-east and south-west are most dangerous, as there is not a single harbour or refuge where a vessel,

overtaken by them, can find refuge." The cape may, however, have been Finisterre, which is actually the most westerly point of the Iberian peninsula. The flanks of Finisterre are rugged and run steeply to the summit which has several peaks. "Gales of force 7 or above may be expected off this part of the coast on about 7 days a month from December to March and gales of force 8 or more on about 5 days a month." The most frequent gales are from south-west.<sup>79</sup>

Alexander Bugge has suggested that al-Ghazal's ships made for Noirmoutier after rounding the great Galician headland. He was supported (tentatively) by Nansen.<sup>80</sup> Jacob does not attempt identification. I do not believe that the Vikings, with their experience of the more formidable open sea passage between Norway and the north of Ireland would have flinched from making a winter course across the ocean from Cape Finisterre to the south-west coast of Ireland. It is a mistake to believe that the old seafarers hugged the coasts; and the Westfaldingi had recent memories of the perils of an on-shore gale along the mountainous coast of Galicia. The distance from Finisterre to Noirmoutier across the Bay of Biscay is more than 300 nautical miles and it is rather more again from Noirmoutier to the south-west coast of Ireland. The direct run from Cape Finisterre to the Kerry coast is little more than 400 nautical miles — a shorter and less dangerous passage across the open seas. It seems reasonable to propose, then, that the ships bearing al-Ghazal and his escort set their course for the bays of the Kerry peninsula. The voyage can have taken from five to ten days according to the weather.<sup>81</sup>

### *B The Kerry Coast and Clonmacnois*

"Al-Ghazal arrived at the first of the lands of the Vikings, at one of their islands; where they stayed several days and repaired their ships and rested. The Viking ship

went on to their king and they informed him of the arrival of the envoys." It is clear that landfall had been made at an island in Viking occupation where there was a settlement, some amenities and some kind of repair yard. To identify the island, it is necessary to examine the extent of the Viking establishment round the south-west coast of Ireland which had been built up during the preceding four decades.

The first reconnaissance raids had been made between the years 807 and 812. Strategic points had been selected with a sure experienced eye: Inis Labrainn, an island at the mouth of the Cashen river, in north Kerry, to the south of the estuary of the Shannon; and Dair Inis, Oak Island, now Valentia, a fine position commanding the entrances to the great bays of the Kerry coast and shipping rounding the headlands.<sup>82</sup> An attempt to penetrate inland in force ended in disaster near Loch Léin (now the lake of Killarney) when the Vikings were defeated by the powerful Eoganacht and left 416 dead to be recorded by the annalist.<sup>83</sup>

Attacks were renewed only in 822; their range extended right along the south coast of Ireland and up the east coast as far as Wexford (*Víksfjörðr* — later to become a leading Viking settlement). Valentia was again raided and along the Cork coast, Ros Maeláin, Corcach (Cork) and Cluain Uamha (Cloyne) were attacked. In 824, the remote hermitage in the isle of Sceleg Michil, six miles south-east of Bray Head, Valentia, was raided, probably by ships returning from these operations.<sup>84</sup> In the same years, 822-24, took place the massive invasion of Ulaidh (Ulster), which had the aspect of a conquest intended to be permanent.<sup>85</sup>

There followed a decade of intensive attacks when the weight was directed against the north and east of Ireland. But at the same time there was a systematic occupation of the islands and penetration of the estuaries round the south-western and southern coasts. There were raids on

Inis Eoghanáin (now Inis-Shannon, up the Bandon river), on Dundermuighe (now Dunderrow near Kinsale), on Disert Tipraite (perhaps Ardmore) and on Kilmolash and Lismore up the estuary of the Blackwater.<sup>86</sup> The first reconnaissances up the main stream of the Shannon were undertaken (Mungret and Kilpeacon).<sup>87</sup>

Concentration on the Shannon continued. A base was set at Inis Sibhtonn (=King's Island). Luimnech — the name for the great stretch of the river between the later city of Limerick and the sea — was occupied along both the Clare and Kerry shores where the Vikings met with tough resistance and a defeat at the hands of the Uí Chonaill Gabhra (834).<sup>88</sup>

“There came after that”, wrote the author of the *War of the Gaedhil with the Gaill*, “a great royal fleet into the north of Ireland”, commanded by Turgeis “who assumed the sovereignty of all the foreigners of Ireland” and occupied the whole of Leth Chuinn — ‘Conn’s Half’ — the northern half of the country.<sup>89</sup> Keary has described Turgeis as ‘a man of genius’.<sup>90</sup> He certainly applied a brilliant amphibious strategy which derived from the intelligent use of his special instrument: the light-draught longship which could penetrate the network of inland waters and dominate the extensive lakes which gave access to the inner provinces of the country. The Irish, divided into small political units and involved in a protracted internal struggle for supremacy between the kings of Ulster and Munster and the spiritual centres of Armagh and Cashel, could offer little effective resistance.

Turgeis pursued his conquests with the aid of three fleets. One in Lough Neagh, dominated central Ulster along the line of the river Bann and gave him control of the great cult centre at Ard Macha (near the site of Armagh). The second, based on Carlingford Lough, threatened the east coast. A third fleet rounded the north-west coast of Ireland and sailed up the Shannon into Loch Rí (Ree). On Loch Rí, Turgeis established his

operational headquarters — probably about the year 839.<sup>91</sup> The choice was genial. With his fleet on this great stretch of inland water half-way up the course of the Shannon, the conqueror could retain control of Ulster and Connacht and strike east at Meath and Leinster or south and west at Munster. A few miles to the south of Loch Rí, at Clonmacnois, the second of the four great shrines of Ireland, his wife Ota, held her court. "It was on the altar of the great church she used to give her answers."<sup>92</sup>

Meantime the northern third of Kerry, Ciarraighe Luachra, from the strand of Tralee (Tráigh Lí)<sup>93</sup> to the estuary of the Shannon, was in the hands of the Vikings. In the inland forests stretching back to the Killarney lakes and in the wild ranges along the Kerry Peninsulas the Irish held their own. But the survival of Scandinavian family names and place-names round the coast and in the islands affirms continuing Norse settlements from the time of Turgeis. Skellig is a name of Norse origin; so is Heystone and Bolus Head and Smerwick.<sup>94</sup> Nearby Smerwick are the *clachan na Lochlannach* — 'the stone houses of the Norwegians'.<sup>95</sup> In Ventry survives the legend of a great battle on the strand which seems to recall an occasion when the mountain Irish rallied to repulse a Viking landing.<sup>96</sup> The old name for Dingle was *Cuan damh dearg* — Red Ox Haven — which may recall a favourite prow-head and ship-name of the Vikings.<sup>97</sup> South of Valentia, not far from Ballinskelligs Bay and Bolus Head is a curious structure known as Staigue Fort. It has been suggested that this name is a corruption of the Old Norse *stígr, stigr*, meaning a 'path' or an 'ascending path'.<sup>98</sup> A headland on Valentia itself, called on the Ordnance Map, Beenakrykaka probably combines the Ir. *benn*, with Scandinavian, *kria*, the tern, and *reki*, sea-wrack.<sup>99</sup> There are numerous stone fortifications on Valentia which can be attributed to several periods. One was still known in the nineteenth century as 'the

refuge of the Danes'.<sup>100</sup> The island takes the name Valentia from Irish *Béal insi* — 'the mouth of the sound.'<sup>101</sup> Its older name, Dair Inis, 'Oak Island,' derived from the oak woods for which the island was once famous.<sup>102</sup> A writer of the eighteenth century records that "the harbour is justly esteemed the best in these parts, and almost the only one, besides Dingle, of tolerable safety, after a ship has passed the river of Kenmare."<sup>103</sup>

It is likely that here was the haven of al-Ghazal's first stop. There are alternatives. Clear Island (*Insula Sancta Clare* or *Inis Damphly* (= *Daimhli*) also has its Doonagall — 'fort of the foreigners' — a south-east anchorage, and a creek on the north-west side of the island giving protection from the prevalent southerly gales.<sup>104</sup> In Bantry Bay, Beare Island again has a 'fort of the foreigners' and a haven with entrants from west and east of the bay — well protected from storms from the seaward side. "Beare and its island are richer in memories than in remains", and it has legends of remote invasions. Dursey Island (*Bea Insula*) was too exposed to attract preference in settlement.<sup>105</sup>

But at Valentia, the Vikings had everything: a sheltered haven with alternative entrants according to the prevailing winds; a secure insular retreat with abundance of cattle and other supplies, and timber for repairs. To the north-west they had a passage through the Blasket Sound — "easy to navigate in moderate weather".<sup>106</sup> Giving a wide berth to the exposed Brandon Bay and the dangerous Seven Hogs, the Vikings could make Fenit harbour on the north side of Tralee Bay. Fenit lay within Ciarraighe Luachra which they had already been occupying for some years in 845. Or they could run straight for the estuary of the Shannon, past Kerry Head and their first settlement at the mouth of the Cashen river. The Shannon is tidal as far as Limerick and the Arab travellers might well gain the impression that they were cruising among islands

and peninsulas until they reached Inis Sibhtonn (King's Island) — which the Vikings had held since 831 and which was destined to become the site of the city of Limerick.<sup>107</sup> The fall of water in the Irish rivers was heavier in the ninth century and al-Ghazal might even retain the impression of cruising through an archipelago as the two ships passed the wooded islands in the stream of the Shannon, and entered the wide waters of Loch Derg. Beyond, they would continue to row upstream on a river which is still broad and spacious. A dozen miles below the outflow of the Shannon from Loch Rí, on an open slope above the river, lies Clonmacnois, with the ruins of its churches, shrines and tall round tower. In the ninth century there were the countless stone cells of the monks and students and the wattle huts of the people. And since Turgeis and his queen Ota were accustomed to pass time there, al-Ghazal would see some of the timber-built longhouses of the Norse chieftains with their shingle roofs and finely carved portals.

Clonmacnois (properly *Cluain mhic Nóis* — 'the city of the son of Nóis') was, after Armagh, the greatest of the monastic centres of Ireland; in some periods it surpassed Armagh as a centre of learning and literature. "It was not without deep and clear insight into Irish feelings and facts that the astute Norseman, Turgeis, presided at Armagh and set his wife over Clonmacnois; he had his hand on the head and heart of the Irish church. One must think of Clonmacnois as a complex 'city of God', not as a cloister . . . It was . . . a primitive Oxford; a city, see and colleges. The city of Kieran was in a central position, on the main waterway and safest road of the island, and accessible by water from all the monasteries of the Shannon and its tributaries."<sup>108</sup>

In the eleventh century, Clonmacnois was famous for its gardens, approached by paved causeways. They still existed at the beginning of the thirteenth century and beyond them lay the spacious orchards of the bishop.<sup>109</sup>

Al-Ghazal's memory of 'flowing streams and gardens' is reflected, indeed, in a couplet from an old Irish poem:

"Clonmacnois is the city of Ciaran,  
A place of bright dews and red roses."<sup>110</sup>

### C Ireland in 845

"The king ordered his people to prepare a fine dwelling for them, and sent out a party to greet them. The Vikings thronged to look at them, and they wondered greatly at their appearance and their garb. They were then led to their lodgings in an honourable manner and spent a day there."

It may be supposed that the northern rig of the Vikings — close fitting trousers and jerkins over open shirts — was in marked contrast with the flowing robes of the Arab envoys. Yet another Muslim writer, who records that "the inhabitants (of Ireland) have Norman (Majus) habits and clothes", states that "they wear *burnus*, of which the worth of a single one can be a hundred gold pieces, and the nobles wear *burnus* set with pearls."<sup>111</sup> Here, the comparison with the *burnus* recalls the ancient Irish rather than Norse costume. This consisted of *léine* and *brat*. The *léine* was "not unlike the galabeeah worn by the natives of modern Egypt".<sup>112</sup> The *brat* was worn over the shoulders like a shawl. It could be pulled over the head, as shown in a sketch of a 'wild' Irishman in a manuscript book of Lucas de Heere in the Library of Ghent University, where the subject has a remarkable resemblance to a poor *bedû*.<sup>113</sup> This costume of *léine* and *brat* was the dress of persons of quality shown on the crosses of Clonmacnois and Monasterboice and "may be taken as the contemporary costume of the more aristocratic classes in everyday life in the tenth century A.D."<sup>114</sup> The author of *Old Irish and Highland Dress* finds that "the *brat* and *léine* costume is not at all what one would have expected to find in Northern Europe,

being loose fitting and of Southern or Mediterranean type, in fact little different in its elements from the dress of the ancient Greeks and Romans, the *peplos* and *chiton* of the Greeks, and the *sagum* and *tunica* of the Romans. The nearest people among whom analagous costumes survive today are the Berbers and Arabs of North Africa, Syria and Egypt."<sup>115</sup> One may add, perhaps, the Ethiopians.

Another undertone of the life of Ireland which may have attracted the notice of the Arab envoys were the ovoid or circular stone-roofed buildings and the round wattle huts of the people. In the seventeenth century, O'Flaherty described the *clachans* of the Aran islands as "so ancient that nobody knows how long ago any of them was made."<sup>116</sup> Estyn Evans observes that similar structures "are found either in ruins or serving as shelters . . . in south France, especially in and around the Central Plateau, in Spain, Portugal and Majorca, in the heel of Italy, in the western Balkans and in Crete where the mountain dairies appear to be very similar to the stone booley huts and shielings of Ireland and the Hebrides . . . Villages of houses with domed or conical stone or mud-brick roofs are a feature of south-east Italy and Syria, and of the dry belt stretching eastward to India."<sup>117</sup> In Gaul, the wattle form of circular house — from which the stone types derive — is recorded on a *bas relief* in the Louvre, known as the Column of Antoninus.<sup>118</sup> In north Africa, it was the characteristic dwelling of the Berbers in Roman and later times. There was a mobile type of wicker-work hut which could be moved on a wagon and which itself was a development of the nomad's tent.<sup>119</sup> The wattle or wicker-work *tukul* is still the usual dwelling in the Ethiopian highlands. It is a commonplace of ethnology that cultural phenomena sometimes survive in unaltered forms on the peripheries of an area of dispersion; and there is certainly a remarkable resemblance in detail between the Ethiopian *tukul*, the Berber *mapalia*, or *attegia*, the Gaulish huts shown on the Column

of Antoninus and the Irish *teach filthe*, the construction of which is described in literary sources.<sup>120</sup> Discussing the stone forms of circular hut, Estyn Evans finds that "whether or not the origin of this style of building in western Europe should be placed, as I am inclined to believe, in the megalithic period, there can be no doubt that it represents, in various parts of the Mediterranean-Atlantic route, the survival of an ancient method of building."<sup>121</sup>

Eleven hundred years ago, the people of Ireland lay in point of time almost half way between the present century and the fourth century B.C. when Pytheas wrote of Ierne.<sup>122</sup> And it would seem that in the ninth century A.D. elements and traditions in architecture and costume were surviving which have since disappeared. The 'Mediterranean' stratum in Ireland had already been overlain by several Celtic migrations from central Europe; and when al-Ghazal was in the country the Scandinavian intrusion from northern Europe had begun since half a century. There were already varied ethnic types in Ireland; and those which may be identified as 'Iberian' (shrine of St. Manchan and Book of Kells) and even as 'East Mediterranean' (shrine of St. Moedoc) were more in evidence than they were on the monuments of a few centuries later after the Anglo-Norman conquest.<sup>123</sup>

#### D 'The Great Island in the Ocean'

Al-Ghazal's account of the country where he had arrived is brief but replete with information. It was "a great island (or peninsula) in the Ocean with flowing streams and gardens. It was three days sail, that is, three hundred miles from the mainland. In it are Vikings too numerous to be counted, and around the island are many other islands, all peopled by Vikings. The adjoining mainland is also theirs for a distance of many days' journey." Jacob, who finds 'gaps' (*Locken*) in Dozy's

translation, has: "Between it (the island) and the mainland were three stretches of water (*Wasserläufe*) and they measure three hundred miles". Jacob adds that syntactically the sentence can be construed as "it (the island) measures three hundred miles".<sup>124</sup>

Observing that there is only one word in Arabic to render 'island' and 'peninsula', Jacob finds the island can be either Sjælland (Zeeland) or Jutland; and Fabricius, followed by Stefánsson, suggests that the seat of the king is Lejre (Hleiðr) in Sjælland.<sup>125</sup> Kendrick, who finds that the correspondence of the names of al-Ghazal's 'queen Noud' with that of Turgeis's wife Ota is flimsy evidence for the location of the embassy in Ireland writes that "it seems on the whole most likely, on the grounds of the geographical description of the lands of the *majus*, with their territory on the adjacent mainland (Scania) that Ghazal was sent to the Danish Court."<sup>126</sup>

Jacob's amendment of the text of ibn-Dihya would make the situation of 'the great island in the ocean' more puzzling and would not strengthen the view of Kendrick that the 'mainland' or 'continent' can be Scania, since early geographers, including the Arabs, regarded the Scandinavian mainland as an 'island' or 'peninsula' (*jezireh*).

Both Ireland from Fair Head to Dursley Head and the extreme length of the Danish peninsula from the Skagerak to the estuary of the Elbe can be said to measure roughly three hundred miles. Again, three stretches of water separate Jutland — but not Sjælland — from Scania.

If the thesis that al-Ghazal in fact encountered the Viking king and queen somewhere on the Shannon be considered, it may be contended that a journey up river is not indicated in the text. But the broad stream of the Shannon together with the wide Loch Derg and the approach past islands and peninsulas could well have given the impression to a stranger that he was still travelling through an archipelago even as far upstream as Clonmac-

nois — which lies a few miles below the entrance to another broad stretch of water in Loch Rí. Clonmacnois has been suggested as the place of meeting because Nūd (= Ota) is known from Irish sources to have been in residence there in 845. But if the meeting was in fact lower down the Shannon on Inis Sibhtonn — where the Vikings had already established a base which was to become in twenty years the city of Luimneach (Limerick), then indeed al-Ghazal would have had no experience of a river voyage at all. Again, if we accept the calculation that al-Ghazal can have reached the Viking court in early spring, the impression of ‘flowing streams and gardens’ would relate to south-western Ireland rather than to Denmark. In March the Irish coastlands are already glowing with gorse; and in May the whole island is white with hawthorn blossom — the sacred bush of the ancient Irish. These wild shrubs scattered over the landscape display an unforgettable grace of colour. At Clonmacnois, particularly, the monks had had their own well-cultivated gardens before the Vikings came there.<sup>127</sup>

Dozy’s interpretation of the text that the island was ‘three days journey from the continent’ and that ‘the continent also belongs to them’ explains the relation of Viking Ireland to western France rather than of Sjælland to Scania. Moreover, Jacob’s amendment — “Between it (the island) and the continent there are three stretches of water” — could describe very well St. George’s Channel between Wexford and St. David’s Head in Wales, the outer waters of the Bristol Channel across from St. David’s Head to Land’s End, and the approaches to the English Channel between the Cornish and Breton peninsulas.

The following passage presents difficulties in the context of both Danish and Irish conditions in the year 845:

They were heathens but they now follow the Christian faith, and have given up fire-worship and their previous religion, except for the people of a few scattered islands of theirs in the sea, where they keep up their old faith, with fire-worship, the

marriage of brothers and sisters and various other kinds of abomination. The others wage war against them and enslave them.

If related to the Danes, this text might be read in terms of Tammam-ibn-Alqama's information towards the end of the ninth century. But even at that date the Danes were still pagan. The only Danish prince who had become a Christian before the middle of the ninth century was the unpopular king Harald who had been expelled from his country and courted the favour of the emperor Louis the Pious (826). The first Christian missions to the Scandinavian courts were failures, and, in the words of Kendrick, "heathendom must have seemed established in unassailable strength when, at the end of twenty years of Christian endeavour, a huge Danish fleet under Horik siezed Hamburg (845) and drove Anskar, now an archbishop, from his archiepiscopal seat." The conversion of the Scandinavian peoples was late in the history of European Christendom and it was carried through only by strong kings against the fierce opposition of powerful elements.<sup>128</sup>

Individual chieftains, early in the Scandinavian epoch, were not above accepting conversion if they saw that they could procure political advantage or if they felt themselves becoming isolated within a Christian society which they had entered as conquerors; thus, King Harald in Denmark, and some of the Scandinavian princes in Dublin later in the ninth century. But there was backsliding, as in the case of the aristocratic migrants from Dublin to Iceland; equivocation as with Hákon the Good of Norway; and even apostasy, as with Pepin II of Aquitaine, a great-grandson of Charlemagne who had made alliance with the Vikings.<sup>129</sup> The position of Turgeis, in this respect, remains obscure. He had begun as the great scourge of the Irish church, but about 840 he assumed the abbacy of Armagh, with all its great prestige as the patrimony of St. Patrick, and its ecclesiastical and

civil jurisdictions. It is not clear whether he practised — or caricatured the practice of — the Christian religion in Armagh, while his wife chose to celebrate pagan rites in Clonmacnois.<sup>130</sup>

In his introduction to the *War of the Gaedhil with the Gaill*, xliii-ix, Todd discusses at length the political and religious differences between the princes and prelates of Ulster and Munster in the period when Turgeis was invading Ireland. In Cashel, Feidhlimidh (Felim), the priest-king of Munster, was as great a scourge of the northern prelacy as Turgeis himself. In 826, and again in 833, he had spoiled the *termon* lands of Clonmacnois, and he repeated this exploit in 846, following the death of Turgeis. Todd, followed by Keary and Kendrick, believed that Turgeis intended “the establishment of the national heathenism of his own country, in place of the Christianity which he found in Ireland.”<sup>131</sup> I suspect that the Vikings, like the Mongols, had little interest in proselytising the conquered. Their own beliefs were emotional, unintellectual, aristocratic and exclusive. Superstitious like all seafarers, they were sustained, not by faith, but by their superb vitality; they believed in luck, comradeship, and were resigned always to fate.<sup>132</sup>

The motives of Turgeis were political; and he seems to have been a greedy, calculating man with a cynical sense of the possible. I prefer to follow Westropp in thinking that Turgeis — after assuming the abbacy of Armagh and the pretensions of *coarb*, or successor, of St. Patrick — may well have aimed at conciliating the north Irish clergy who had for some years been suffering the assaults of king Feidhlimidh.<sup>133</sup> The readiness of Turgeis to negotiate with the Muslims, immediately after his aggression against Seville is, again, a reflection of the same practical and cynical mind: comparable, indeed, to the mind of a Mongol conqueror coping with the religious establishments of the old world.

The impact of the Norse invasions had intensified a social and religious crisis in Ireland which was tending towards a dissolution of the old traditional society.<sup>134</sup> It created an impoverished and uprooted underworld who began to revert to paganism and who were ready to join the pillaging bands of the invaders. These were the *Gaill-Gædhil*, 'the foreigner Irish'. The *Three Fragments* describe them as a people who had renounced their baptism, and they were usually called Northmen (*Normannaigh*), for they had the customs of Northmen, and had been fostered by them; and although the original Northmen were bad to the churches, these were far worse, in whatever part of Erin they used to be.<sup>135</sup>

Thus, the reference to a chronic state of war and slave-raiding in al-Ghazal's 'island' can be related rather to Irish than to Danish conditions in the year 845.

#### *E The Reception of al-Ghazal*

Two days after his arrival at the Viking court al-Ghazal was received in audience by the king. In the Middle Ages long delays were frequently imposed on ambassadors and in this case the early audience indicates a sense of the urgency of al-Ghazal's mission.

Before the audience, al-Ghazal, with his earlier experience in Byzantium, was careful to make conditions with regard to his own protocol. The story of the entrance being made low in order to compel the ambassador to crouch on his knees as he made his entry is the second point of correspondence in the details of the Byzantine and Viking missions.<sup>136</sup> It is possible that the story was invented by al-Ghazal or his entourage to emphasise the care and ingenuity with which the precedence of the amir Abd ar-Rahman had been guarded in a barbarous land. The story seems scarcely in keeping with the fastuous ceremony of the Byzantine court nor with the desire of the Emperor Theophilus, evident in his correspondence,

to conciliate the friendship and secure the alliance of the amir. Yet the story might express the mixture of arrogance and almost boyish buffoonery which was the humour of the Vikings. Another version of the story of compelling a crouching entrance was current in Spain about the widow of king Roderic, the Gothic Queen Ailo, who, when married to Abd al-Aziz ibn-Musa, made herself unpopular by imposing this form of entrance on persons seeking audience of her husband who was then ruling in Seville.<sup>137</sup> There is, again, the story of the persistent contest for precedence between Æthelstan of England and Harald Fairhair of Norway, which ended in Harald imposing by trickery his bastard, Hákon, as a foster-son on the English king, whose inferior situation was thereby implied.<sup>138</sup> The Vikings were 'protocol-conscious' and were not above sardonic tricks in their diplomatic relations. We may, therefore, relate the story of the crouching entrance, if it had a basis in fact, to the Viking or Visigothic rather than to the Byzantine milieu.

The particulars given in ibn-Dihya's account reflect the detail of princely Viking life as reflected in the sagas and confirmed by archæology. (The following brief description is based on du Chaillu, see reference in note 140.) Every prominent chieftain lived surrounded by his family, followers and servants. The collection of buildings they occupied was called *bær*; they were of different styles and varied in numbers according to the power, wealth and taste of the owners. The buildings seem often to have been far apart from each other; every house was known by a different name. They were built so as to form a large quadrangle, the front facing an open space or grass plot called *tún*, the whole being surrounded by a fence called *garðr*, through which entrance was by a gate, *grind*, or gateway, *hlið*.

The finest buildings were called *höll* (hall) and were only built by kings or jarls. "It was customary to have

large halls at the *bær*, at which people sat before long fires in the evening; tables were placed in front of the men, who afterwards slept alongside the walls, away from the fires. During the daytime the women carded and spun wool in these halls."<sup>139</sup> The halls were sometimes richly ornamented with wood carvings of mythological and heroic themes. There were two doors; one for the men and the other for the women. The walls were hung with tapestry, made by the wives and daughters of the family, which might represent the deeds of their forefathers or of their lord. Here also hung shields and stands of arms — making a brilliant background with their gold and silver and enamel inlays. It would seem that these stands of arms particularly struck the eye of al-Ghazal (text, p. 21). Stands of arms were not a decorative feature of the elegant palaces of the Byzantine emperors.

There was a special building, *salr*, which seems to have been of the same proportions as the *höll*, reserved for guests. There were separate buildings, *skemma* or *útiskemma*, sometimes used as sleeping apartments, where the women of the household dwelt or remained during the daytime, with their maids or attendants, and occupied themselves with all kinds of work.<sup>140</sup> This arrangement gave the women a good deal of privacy and freedom and would clearly make easy the exchanges which ibn-Dihya records between the queen and al-Ghazal.

The king awaited al-Ghazal 'in magnificent guise'. There are many details in the sagas of the splendid clothes and equipment of the Viking chieftains. During the audience of al-Ghazal, the king would probably be wearing the *slæða* (-ur) — "a trailing gown of costly stuff embroidered with gold and ornamented with bands". The international range of the Vikings is indicated by their affectation of *baldakin*, a stuff from Baghdad, silken caps, ornamented with lace from Garðaríki (Russia), doubtless originating from Byzantium, and *valskikkja* (French or Welsh, literally 'foreign', cloaks). Later,

following the contacts between the Vikings and Andalusia, Cordovan hose came into fashion.<sup>141</sup>

Ibn Dihya's statement that al-Ghazal took part in debates and fencing matches with his hosts is again characteristic of life among the Vikings. There was rough fare and hard drinking and, often, bloody quarrels at the Viking feasts, but the chieftains were fond of discussion, story-telling, recitations, riddles and puzzles.<sup>142</sup> It is clear from Ibn Dihya's text that al-Ghazal spent much time in telling the queen about the Muslims, their history and the countries which they inhabited. And it would seem not unlikely that the intelligent Turgeis, with his interest in the ecclesiastical politics of Ireland, may have stimulated, for his own amusement and information, debates between the distinguished Muslim savant and some of the Irish poets and clerics.

The Vikings, themselves, were scarcely the uncultured barbarians depicted in the contemporary Christian chronicles. Every young man with pretensions to rank and respect in society was expected to acquire certain intellectual and physical accomplishments known collectively as *íþróttir*. The most important of these were: the skilful handling of all kinds of weapons, riding, swimming, running on snow-shoes, rowing, wrestling, working in wood and metal, and the playing of the harp; to which should sometimes be added skill in training and managing dogs, falcons and hawks. Necessary intellectual attainments included knowledge of runes, laws, the art of poetry, so necessary for remembering the deeds of the heroes, eloquence, skill in draughts or checkers, chess and the use of foreign tongues.<sup>143</sup> Weapon exercises, including fencing and wrestling, were held in high esteem among the Vikings, but in view of the age and distinction of al-Ghazal it would seem probable that the ambassador's matches with their champions would have been limited to archery contests.<sup>144</sup>

*F Queen Nūd*

The name of the Viking queen, recorded by ibn-Dihya, is introduced quite casually in the conversation of Tammam ibn-Alqama: "One day, the king's wife, whose name was Nūd, asked him his age." It is repeated again in the poem improvised by al-Ghazal to Nūd — 'a Viking woman'. Lévi-Provençal comments: "La souveraine s'y appelle Nūd: ne seraient-ce pas, avec la confusion graphique entre *n* et *t* si courante en arabe, les trois premières lettres de la transcription du nom de Théodora?"<sup>145</sup> In 'Poème d'al-Ghazal sur le prince Michel et l'impératrice Théodora' cited by Lévi-Provençal from the anonymous Fez manuscript, the lady is described as 'fille des Césars'.<sup>146</sup>

The name of the wife of Turgeis is only given once in the Irish sources. The oldest reference is in the fragment of the *War of the Gaedhil* contained in the remains of the Book of Leinster which date from the middle of the twelfth century. Here it is stated that "after this Turgeis came upon Loch Rí . . . Cluanmicnois was taken by his wife. It was on the altar of the great church that she used to give her answers. Ottar was the name of the wife of Turgeis." In the later recensions of the *War of the Gaedhil*, the reference is: "the place where Ota, the wife of Turgeis, used to give her audience was upon the altar of Cluain MicNois."<sup>147</sup> In a footnote (xcix, 2), Todd, the editor of the *War of the Gaedhil*, proposed that "the Scandinavian name of this lady was probably Audr or Auda. She is not mentioned, so far as the editor knows, in any of the sagas." The correspondence Ota = Auðr (or Uðr, Unnr,) = Nūd was accepted by Steenstrup (1878), Alexander Bugge (1910) and others,<sup>148</sup> but not by Marstrander and Shetelig. On philological grounds there is in fact every reason to suppose that Ot(t)a represents a O.N. personal name in Odd- (Oddkatla, usually written Ott- in Icelandic sources, or even Odda).<sup>149</sup> It is also noteworthy that the name Auðr was not common among Scandinavian women, although compounds in Auð- are

common.<sup>150</sup> There was another Auðr in the contemporary Irish scene: Auðr Djúpúðga or Djúpauðga, 'the deep minded' or 'the deeply wealthy'. This Auðr was a daughter of Ketill Flatnef, jarl of the Sudreys, and a wife to Óláf the White, Norse king of Dublin after 853. Although the cognomens might make it tempting to identify her with Ota, the wife of Turgeis, there are chronological as well as philological difficulties since, according to the *Laxdæla saga*, Ketill Flatnef's daughter settled in Iceland, still in full vigour, after 890.<sup>151</sup>

It is clear from the brief reference in the Irish sources that Ota, at Clonmacnois, had certain sybilline functions. *Völur* or spae-wives were common among the Scandinavians at all social levels. Frequently they emerged from the aboriginal Finnic people, famous for magical practices and 'second sight'.<sup>152</sup> But ladies of noble and princely families in Scandinavia and among the Germans and Celts sometimes revealed prophetic gifts. C. F. Keary was the first to perceive the significance of Ota's attributes to which the Irish sources refer. He wrote:

The succession of these seeresses among the Teutons is in apostolic succession, with no break, no essential change of character, only such change as time must bring, from the day of the wife of Ariovistus, of Velea or Aurinia, through the days of a certain spae-wife, Ota, whom we discern in the dim light of the Viking period seated upon the high altar of an Irish minster, and 'giving her answers' therefrom, or of the last of the wise women among the old Germans, of whom we discover some traces in a chronicler of the ninth century . . . . Thiota by name. She was a contemporary of Ota.<sup>153</sup>

Discussing the role of the seeress in the life of the Teutonic peoples, Keary believed that "at stated times such an one came among the people."

Taking her "high seat", she sat at festivals as Ota on the high altar at Clonmacnois, and people came one by one before her to consult the oracle. There is no talk of any special frenzy like that of the Delphic priestess. But the seat of prophecy was a special one, capable apparently of imparting some virtue to the Vala (= *Völva*) . . . . Sometimes she went from place to

place in her car, and the days of her coming were days of festival; altogether the picture is not unlike the picture of Nerthus drawn round on her triumphal course; the Vala may be considered as the visible representative of the goddess, for Nerthus herself, as we know, was always hidden from view. There can be little doubt that Nerthus was a partner in the mysteries, and like her human representative especially gifted in the magic arts . . . . It would, one can imagine, give no small prestige to a king or leader could he secure one of these prophetesses for a wife.<sup>154</sup>

The transformation of the early Teutonic (or perhaps pre-Teutonic) goddess Nerthus into the later god Njörðr presents difficulties. The identity has been favoured by Keary, Chadwick and other writers.<sup>155</sup> Njörðr was worshipped as the god ruling the course of the winds and had it in his power to still the sea and to control fire. It was profitable to make vows to him for sea-faring and fishing. He came to be conceived as a god of wealth.<sup>156</sup> Again, the richly carved cart found in the Oseberg ship, as part of the funeral gear of a woman, believed to have been the Vestfold queen Ása, indicates the sacerdotal functions of a princess who was a near contemporary of Turgeis and Ota. It recalls sharply the ritual carts of the priestesses of Nerthus described by Tacitus and recorded again in the *Dáttir af Ögmundi dytt ok Gunnari helming*.<sup>157</sup>

As a prophetess and priestess of Njörðr, 'Queen Nūd' may have been identified by al-Ghazal's interpreter with the name of the god. In the same way, it has been suggested that Turgeis, O.N. Thorgestr, was known to the Irish in the form Thorgils, 'the servant of Thor'.<sup>158</sup>

### *G Conversations with the Queen*

Dozy expressed the opinion that ibn-Dihya's account of the embassy of al-Ghazal contained little information on the Norsemen — and that very vague.<sup>159</sup> Nevertheless the anecdotes about al-Ghazal's conversations with Queen Nūd contain some precious details of the psychology

and way of life of aristocratic Viking women — which are confirmed from other sources.

The reference to the retention of the 'old faith', with fire-worship and the marriage of brothers and sisters, recalls perhaps the Persian practises which the Arabs had transferred to the Vikings together with the name Majus. Again, it can reflect the perception of the incestuous or, perhaps, endogamous tradition of the northern pantheon which derives from the older stratum of the Vanir.<sup>160</sup> Njörðr's children, the son Freyr and the daughter Freyja, were the fruit of Njörðr's union with his sister, whose name is not mentioned.<sup>161</sup> Freyr and Freyja, also, were lovers. The cults of these fertility gods expressed the sexual theme. In Uppsala, Freyr is depicted *cum ingente priapo* and is called *Fricco*, 'lover', a name which appears to derive from an IE root, *prij*, 'love', to which the names Freyja, Frigg and Priapus are also related.<sup>162</sup> The hero Hadingus is seduced by his foster-mother who reasons, "c'est avec moi que tu dois coucher, te marier, parceque je t'ai donné le sein comme une mère."<sup>163</sup>

Georges Dumézil has observed: "C'est une vaste et importante étude que de classer les thèmes où intervient l'inceste dans les anciennes littératures de l'Europe, notamment chez les Celtes et chez les Germains."<sup>164</sup> Among the Scandinavians and Celts of the Viking Age, incest had long come to be regarded as a crime or a tragic accident, although in the Irish tales, as in the sagas, a famous king or hero is born sometimes from the forbidden union.<sup>165</sup>

From the background of the fertility cults derived the freedom which women enjoyed in the pagan societies of northern and western Europe — a freedom which declined with the spread of the Christian discipline and the gradual evolution of a more settled, proprietorial and feudal way of life. But already in the Viking Age relations between the sexes were complex and the position of women was not so ideal as du Chaillu has indicated in his two chapters

on the subject.<sup>166</sup> The independence and authority often attained by women of the period had its economic undertones since, during the seafaring absences of husbands, wives were frequently left in control of large and isolated estates. Separations were long; divorce could be easy on the initiative of a wife who had powerful kin ready to see her make a better match. Among the princely families marriages were often made and broken for political reasons.<sup>167</sup>

Queen Nūd's remarks to al-Ghazal are in keeping with the setting of her life: "We do not have such things in our religion, nor do we have jealousy. Our women are with our men only of their own choice. A woman stays with her husband as long as it pleases her to do so, and leaves him if it no longer pleases her."

The words ring as if they were spoken today by some free-loving 'modern' hoyden; indeed they express the same spirit after the wearing away of a thousand years of Christian disciplines. They carry the flavour of the old pagan tales, recalling the genial thought of the god Njörðr: "It is a little ill whether women take a husband or a lover, one or the other."<sup>168</sup> It is a view of life which could hardly have been invented by al-Ghazal, coming from the closed *harim*-court of Cordova. Nor does it, with other anecdotes of the embassy, fit into the fastuous environment of the Byzantine court.

We may accept the view of Lévi-Provençal that there possibly was, in later literary tradition, a certain amalgamation of anecdotes deriving originally from one or other of the two embassies.<sup>169</sup> How to combine or differentiate these incidents, and which incidents may we properly assign to the embassy to the Vikings?

During the dinner with the emperor Theophilus, there is al-Ghazal's successful manœuvre to retain as 'a souvenir' the jewelled gold cup.<sup>170</sup> As the ambassador of a master with whom the emperor was seeking alliance, al-Ghazal could permit himself this insolence. At the

Viking court, however, he refuses the gift offered by Queen Nūd and asks instead the permission to visit her at all hours.<sup>171</sup> It is again an insolent gesture but one made to a barbarian queen on whom he realised that he had made an emotional impression. For a bold and quick-witted man, each action could pass with the occasion.

Al-Ghazal is not the only retired diplomat who has regaled his friends with stories of his successes with royal ladies. Such stories are never easy to check. The descriptions of the impression which he made on the empress Theodora<sup>172</sup> and on queen Nūd correspond rather closely.<sup>173</sup> The one clearly derives from the other. al-Ghazal's technique is as old as human relations. Astonished admiration can even be observed in the first encounter of a stallion and a mare. But does the nocturnal visit of the empress to al-Ghazal's ambassadorial lodging correspond with what we know of the character of Theodora?<sup>174</sup> The emperor Theophilus was a rigid and even disagreeable husband. He had, on one occasion, ordered to be confiscated and sold a cargo which the empress had chartered from Beirut on her private account. A fervent iconoclast, he interfered in the intimate devotions of his wife and encouraged the palace dwarf to spy on her icons. During her married years, the empress displayed a mild and yielding disposition: later, as regent, she was careful to conform to the proprieties of her august situation.<sup>175</sup>

In this psychological and institutional setting, it would have been odd for the empress to have brought her little boy to pass the night drinking with the Muslim ambassador. Even Lévi-Provençal admits a difficulty here since the boy, who was afterwards known as Michael the Drunkard, can have been scarcely three years old at the time of al-Ghazal's mission to Constantinople. Yet the opening lines of the poem attributed to al-Ghazal on this occasion would seem to describe a boy of eight or ten years old.<sup>176</sup>

On the other hand, the custom of fosterage which existed among the Vikings (and the Irish) could explain well enough a visit of Queen Nūd with her son to al-Ghazal. "He who of his own free will set another's child on his knee or on whose knee another child was set without having previously obtained leave" became foster-father to that child. "To bring up 'the knee-set child' was the bounden duty of him on whose knee it had been set . . . A foster-father was looked on as a rule as an inferior in rank and position to him whose child was fostered."<sup>177</sup>

The sole authority for the fact that Turgeis had sons is a reference, seemingly erroneous, in the seventeenth-century Irish historian, Geoffrey Keating; but there is some slight evidence that Turgeis did leave sons and it seems reasonable to assume that Queen Nūd was the mother of some of them.<sup>178</sup> To try to impose fosterage of one of her boys on al-Ghazal would have been a diplomatic manoeuvre, and an appropriate and humorous response to al-Ghazal's clever avoidance of going on his knees at his reception by the Viking king.<sup>179</sup> Again, the idea of sending one of her sons to be educated at the court of Cordova, where there were many Gothic and northern military men in service, may have been attractive to queen Nūd, both as a mother and as a politician. Al-Ghazal knew how to meet the trick and composed a very charming poem as his answer.<sup>180</sup>

Then there is the salty discussion on circumcision recorded in the Fez manuscript and, also, after ibn-Haiyani in the *Analects* of al-Maqqari.<sup>181</sup> It seems scarcely a subject on which the conventional empress Theodora would touch in conversation with a Muslim ambassador, nor is it likely that the practice would be previously unknown to a lady born in the Levant. But the theme of circumcision might well arouse the curiosity of a Viking queen who had perhaps become aware of the phenomenon for the first time.

We need not linger over the anecdotes about the age of

al-Ghazal and the dyeing of his hair.<sup>182</sup> This frank and refreshing badinage, characteristic of lovers of different ages, does not occur in the anecdotes related to the embassy to Byzantium. On the other hand, the story of the pearl necklace, given by the empress as an endowment for al-Ghazal's daughters and said to have been 'the foundation of his great fortune' has no counterpart in ibn-Dihya's story of the embassy to the Vikings.<sup>183</sup> Indeed, before leaving Cordova for the northern seas, al-Ghazal, always the solicitous parent, had exacted from the amir Abd ar-Rahman pensions for these same daughters.<sup>184</sup>

Dozy complains that ibn-Dihya's story contains "absolutely nothing on the object of the embassy and on the nature of the relations which were established between the two princes."<sup>185</sup> Al-Ghazal knew how to keep his own counsel — as most diplomats do to this day. The secrets of 'the ruling few' are not for the gossips; and men prefer to forget the tensions which have become the dust of history and remember the amusing incidents which can recover youthful and sophisticated ardours. And al-Ghazal committed only the hint of an indiscretion. Tammam ibn Alqama said "I heard al-Ghazal tell this story, and I asked him: 'And did she really approach that degree of beauty which you ascribed to her?' and he answered: 'By your father, she had some charm, but by talking in this way I won her good graces and obtained from her more than I desired'."<sup>186</sup>

The answer is equivocal but in a man of al-Ghazal's worldliness, these words might be taken to imply the success of his mission rather than a flattering triumph with a barbarian princess. What did he obtain beyond what he desired? The development of trade relations between Cordova and the Irish Vikings — of which there is some evidence during the following decades?<sup>187</sup> A combination against Charles the Bald — which can have taken the form of the formidable assaults on the Frankish realm

during the years 845-846?<sup>188</sup> The destruction of the dangerous Turgeis — who met his death not long afterwards? The answer must remain an enigma in the present state of the evidence. Yet if the thesis be acceptable that al-Ghazal's embassy to the Vikings was set in Ireland between the first months of 845 and midsummer 846, some indications may be adduced from the details to suggest a new interpretation of events in France and Ireland during a period which saw catastrophic happenings in each of those countries.

## Chapter Five

### EPILOGUE, 845-846:

#### THE SACK OF PARIS AND THE END OF TURGEIS

THE end of the unusually hard winter of 844-845<sup>189</sup> saw movement along the coast of the narrow seas all the way from Brittany to Jutland. In March 845 a Viking fleet of a hundred and twenty ships sailed up the Seine and attacked and pillaged Paris. About the same time another fleet, said to have numbered six hundred ships, entered the Elbe and sacked Hamburg; but in a land battle these Danes were repulsed by the Saxon allies of Louis the German, brother of Charles the Bald. It has been assumed by most historians that the attacks on the Seine and the Elbe were related operations directed by the Danish king Horik. But there are some obscure passages in the narrative of events which can imply that the Seine expedition was undertaken by independent leaders and was neither controlled by King Horik nor in keeping with his designs.<sup>190</sup>

At the beginning of March the Viking ships appeared at the mouth of the Seine and began to work up the river. Lot and Halphen state that the fleet was formed of 'pirates danois' who had arrived after devastating some islands — 'sans doute sur la côte de Zélande'.<sup>191</sup> At the same time, it is clear from the author of *Les Miracles de St. Riquier*, that panic was caused at the monastery of Centulum (St. Riquier) near Abbeville on the Somme by the presence of the pirates in the Seine, and Lot and Halphen remark that neither Prudentius nor the *Translatio Sancti-Germani Parisiensis* record any news of the pirates along the coasts of the Channel before their arrival in the Seine.<sup>192</sup> It is probable that St. Riquier and Ponthieu were threatened on the return of the pirates

from their raid on Paris and not on their arrival in the mouth of the Seine. 'The islands of the sea' which they plundered may indeed have been the Channel islands rather than the inshore islands of the Frisian coast which they attacked and found strongly defended when they were cruising along the coast towards Denmark after the sack of Paris.<sup>193</sup> There is a case then for suggesting that the Seine fleet had not arrived directly from Denmark, but was composed of elements already wintering on the French coast and perhaps reinforced from the Viking settlements in Ireland.

The name of the leader of the Vikings in the Seine has been recorded in the Frankish chronicles as Raginerus, Ragneri.<sup>194</sup> He has been identified by modern historians with the celebrated hero of the sagas, Ragnar loðbrók.<sup>195</sup>

As had happened four years earlier, Rouen was taken without a fight and put to the sack.<sup>196</sup> The objective of the invaders was Paris — not yet a capital but a city already famous for its wealth and situation. The leisurely and complex world of the Frankish court seems to have been surprised by an attack which was unexpected. About the middle of March the young king Charles the Bald proclaimed a hosting. Many rallied but lack of forage before the end of May delayed the concentration from the provinces of the detachments of feudal cavalry — the best fighting element among the Franks. Charles made his base at St. Denis, to the north of Paris and east of the Seine. His advance guard at Bourgival feared to face the enemy. On 28th March the Vikings landed from their ships in the river and on the following day, Easter Sunday, entered Paris and pillaged the city which was already deserted by the terrified inhabitants. The French army at St. Denis refused to engage the enemy and on the advice of his nobles Charles offered to buy the withdrawal of the Vikings. An epidemic had struck the invaders and the Viking leaders were probably — as in the raids on Nantes and Seville in 844 — embarrassed by dispersion

and indiscipline. Ragnar came to interview the king at St. Denis and against a payment of 7000 pounds in silver took an oath not to penetrate further into the kingdom.

The Vikings returned to the coast towards the end of April. Lot and Halphen believe that they encamped along the lower course of the Seine, awaiting the collection of the ransom money. The *Translatio* emphasises that their withdrawal was imposed by the epidemic, an act of God, believed by modern commentators to have been dysentery. Later, the greater part of the Vikings took to their ships and cruised along the Frisian coast to Denmark. In the view of Lot and Halphen, some detachments remained round the mouth of the Seine on pillaging expeditions until the end of 845 or as late as May 846.<sup>197</sup>

The ships which reached Denmark had a bad reception from King Horik. Lot and Halphen believe that the Vikings who raided the Seine had acted without the king's consent and he may have resented their failure to rally to the invasion of the valley of the Elbe since their reinforcement might have saved him from the repulse by the Saxons.<sup>198</sup> When Ragnar's fleet arrived, German envoys were at Horik's court negotiating peace. The Danish king was not impressed by Ragnar's exploits; and, indeed, in view of his own check on the Elbe, he may have been envious of the astounding success at Paris. Ragnar's crews and prisoners had brought the epidemic with them and the king, from superstitious fear, sent to Louis the German the Christian prisoners and a part of the treasures taken from the banks of the Seine. In the autumn of 845 Horik's envoys attended the Diet of Louis the German at Paderborn.<sup>199</sup> Ragnar returned to the west where he died a mysterious death soon afterwards. The protagonist of the famous capture of Paris — an event which had resounded throughout the western world — disappears from the historic scene in an atmosphere of doom and fatality. His end is interpreted by the monkish

chroniclers as the vengeance of God and in the sagas as the fate of a hero.<sup>200</sup>

Ragnar Loðbrók remains one of the most enigmatic figures of the early phase of Viking history. His fame, recorded in the sagas of several centuries later, depends indeed on the reputation of his alleged sons who can be identified as historical figures in the contemporary records of England and France. Outside the saga literature and the legendary material of Saxo Grammaticus, the name of Ragnar is only attested in the Frankish chronicles for his Paris campaign of 845. "The whole environment of Ragnar is obscure",<sup>201</sup> not least the place and manner of his death. According to the *Annales Xanthes*, he fell in France in 845.<sup>202</sup> The story of his death in a snake-pit in Northumbria as the prisoner of the Saxon king Ælle is, in the view of Alan Orr Anderson, 'probably a literary fable'.<sup>201</sup> According to *The Chronicle of King Eric*, Ragnar, "having conquered many countries was at length killed in Ireland."<sup>203</sup> Halliday believed Ragnar to have been identical with Turgeis. The date of the disappearance of the two Viking heroes from history certainly corresponds closely enough — the end of 845 or the first part of 846.<sup>204</sup>

Ragnar has been credited with a number of wives and five sons who became famous in the sagas and in western historical sources. The only reference to sons and a daughter of Turgeis is to be found in Keating.<sup>205</sup> This is the story, perhaps derived from the source of which the *Three Fragments* formed part, of the death of three 'sons of Turgeis' (*clann Tuirgeis*) in a sea-fight off Dundalk. But this event is dated to the middle of the tenth century.<sup>206</sup> One suspects here a second Turgeis with his sons active on the Irish scene. He could have been the son of Harald Fairhair, called Þorgísl, who Snorri says was living in Dublin.<sup>207</sup> On the other hand it is possible that 'Tomrar and Turges', referred to in the oldest fragment of *Cogadh* preserved in the Book of Leinster, were sons of the first Turgesius.<sup>208</sup> According to the

*Annals of Ulster*, in a victory gained over 'the foreigners' at Sciath Nechtain (a site near Castle Dermot in County Kildare), earl Tomrair, heir of the king of Lochlann (*Tomrair erell tanise righ Laithlinne*), fell with twelve hundred of his men.<sup>209</sup>

Halliday proposed to explain the difference in name between Turgeis and Ragnar on the ground that Turgesius was the Latin form of the Norwegian Þorgils, which he inaccurately renders 'the servant of Thor'; and Tomrair, Tomar or Thormodr he interpreted as 'Thorsman' or one devoted to Thor. "Such names might have been assumed by, or applied to Ragnar and his successors as worshippers of Thor . . . in contradistinction to Christmen or followers of Christ."<sup>210</sup> This argument of Halliday might have some validity if applied to the descendants of Turgeis, but there is evidence that names derived from Thor were not current among families who claimed descent from Ragnar; a single exception seems to have been Þorstein, son of Ólaf the White and Aud the Deepminded.<sup>211</sup>

On the strength of references to his royal fleet and to his assumption of kingship in the northern parts of Ireland, modern historians have identified Turgeis as a prince of the royal house of Vestfold. As for Ragnar, we may perhaps accept the view of Hodgkin that "he owed a part of his fame, both in his lifetime and later, to the fact that he had links with more than one of the Scandinavian peoples; that while he came of a Danish dynasty, he had been brought up in Norway; that he had wives in many ports; and that his large family of sons inherited or forged connections with most of the countries of the north, from Ireland to the Baltic lands . . . The most plausible conjecture connects him in some way with Harold and Rorik, the fugitive Danish kings baptised by Louis the Pious. It is possible that he was a bastard brother of theirs, or a nephew."<sup>212</sup>

The background proposed by Hodgkin could explain the suspicion and reluctance with which Ragnar, the

victor of Paris, was received by King Horik of Denmark, the successful rival of Harold and Rorik.<sup>213</sup> The Norwegian connection could also explain an alliance of Ragnar's Seine host with Turgeis and the Norsemen in Ireland. And perhaps the omen of this combination of leaders of the Vikings in the west can have provoked, in the years 849-51, the determined onslaught of the Danes against the Norwegians in Ireland.<sup>214</sup>

Turgeis was trapped and subsequently drowned by Maelsechlainn of the Uí Néill, king of Meath. The *Annals of Ulster* give the date under 844 = 845. Todd in his edition of *Cogadh* followed this dating, although he observed in reference to another context that "it is difficult to give much weight to these chronological notes."<sup>215</sup>

If the reading of events which I propose is valid, it becomes necessary to advance the date given in the annals of Ulster for the capture and death of Turgeis by one year: 844 = 845 would then read 846. I am aware that this involves other related events recorded in the Annals for 844 = 845 and 845 = 846. But the sequence of events during those years remains obscure in the admission of the compilers of the contemporary records and modern scholars have called for some revision of the chronology.<sup>216</sup>

The death of Turgeis, like the death of Ragnar, became the subject of legend. The twelfth-century version of Giraldus Cambrensis is the earliest surviving. At the end of the sixteenth century both Edmund Campion and Meredith Hanmer repeated the story of Giraldus Cambrensis with embellishments, and in 1662 Lynch devoted three bulky volumes to the refutation of all his statements about Ireland. In the nineteenth century, Hennessy, editor of the *Annals of Ulster*, believed "the silly story to be without any foundation whatever".<sup>217</sup> But Keating's version differs from the Cambrensiian tradition in essential details and suggests access to a lost source which may well have been the manuscript of which the *Three Fragments* are the surviving parts.<sup>218</sup>

Todd summarized the account of Giraldus Cambrensis as follows: "Turgesius being enamoured of the daughter of king Maelsechlainn, it was arranged that she should receive him at a banquet, in an island on Loch Uair (now Loch Owel), where she appeared, surrounded by fifteen beardless youths in female attire. They carried arms, however, concealed under their garments, and when Turgesius, who had also fifteen attendants, advanced to embrace them, they suddenly drew their daggers and slew him with his followers."<sup>219</sup>

The more detailed version of Keating represents Turgesius as receiving Maelsechlainn's daughter and her attendants in his castle — perhaps Rintown = Ir. Rinndun on St. John's Point at the narrow neck of Loch Rí, facing across the waters of the lake Maelsechlainn's lands in Westmeath.<sup>220</sup> Further, Keating makes it clear that Turgeis was overpowered by the Irish youths dressed as girls who also got possession of the piled arms of the other Vikings about to partake in the festivities in the castle. Maelsechlainn then entered the castle with his men and slaughtered "the chiefs and underlings of Turgeis". The Viking leader himself was taken to the 'duinlios' of Maelsechlainn, "where they kept him for a time in captivity". He was drowned only later after the Lochlannaigh had suffered numerous defeats and had been banished from Ireland, "except a small remnant of them who remained under the rule of the Gaels." "After they were banished, Maoilseachlainn drowned Turgesius in Loch Ainninn (now Loch Ennill south east of Loch Owel), and this deed led to the nobles of Ireland choosing with one accord Maoilseachlainn as high king of all Ireland, since the country had been freed by him from the slavery of the Lochlonnaigh."<sup>221</sup>

In the story of the end of Turgeis, there are elements which hint at the pagan practices of the Vikings and recall the ceremonies and excesses reflected in the cult of Nerthus/Freyr. Fifteen boys and fifteen girls took part

in the ritual of the *Völur*.<sup>222</sup> The Irish youths dressed as girls recall the *Haddingjar* who have been described as those who wore the coiffure of women.<sup>223</sup> A lake is the familiar background of the Nerthic cult; and even the drowning of Turgeis may have had a ritualistic connotation.<sup>224</sup> While the story may have been embroidered with these motives derived from dim memories of the rites of Viking paganism, it is within the limits of probability that there is a historical basis for the picture of Turgeis, surprised and captured by a band of Irish youths during lakeside orgies connected with the cult of Freyr. In his death-song Ragnar compared himself to an old boar.<sup>225</sup> Well may Turgeis, whom Keating in his version pictures so well as the ageing satyr, have mimed the god Freyr with his porcine attributes, the progenitor of the Yngling race,<sup>226</sup> who was depicted in Uppsala *cum ingente priapo*, and whose worship was celebrated with orgies and religious prostitution.<sup>227</sup> In this connection, we may recall the story of the Norwegian Gunnar Helmingr who gave himself out to be the god Freyr and drove about in a sacred wagon, dressed in the god's clothes and accompanied by a beautiful girl.<sup>228</sup> In Uppsala, also, "they used to plunge a man living into the water and if he disappeared they drew a favourable omen."<sup>229</sup> It may have been that this practice suggested to the sardonic humour of Maelsechlainn the mode of making an end of Turgeis.<sup>230</sup>

Down to the end of the nineteenth century, festivities connected with the taking of a bride were celebrated in Sweden on the Eve of St. John (23rd June). They seem to have been a remote reflection of the midsummer cult of Freyr; the practise of ritual drowning was also connected with this day. It may be suggested, indeed, that the orgy which proved fatal to Turgeis took place on the Eve of St. John.<sup>231</sup> Now the only date specifically indicated for an event in the Irish annals for the years 845 — 846 was the attack by earl Onphile (? Halfdan) on

the Irish gathered for the great fair at Ros Creda (usually Ros Cré, Roscrea in Co. Tipperary) on the feast of Paul and Peter (29th June). This attack would seem to have been a direct reaction to the capture of Turgeis by the Irish and intended as the beginning of an offensive against Maelsechlainn and the kingdom of Meath. It ended in the death of the earl and disaster for the Norsemen.<sup>232</sup> This was the second setback suffered by the Norsemen during the year, for earlier, and apparently before the death of Turgeis, they had been beaten by Aedh son of Niall, King of the Northern Uí Néill and *ardri* of Ireland, at Magh Itha — a place situated in the present barony of Raphoe, Co. Donegal. An effective Irish victory here could threaten the communications of the Norsemen with the Islands and Norway.<sup>233</sup> I submit that these events — the battle of Magh Itha, the capture of Turgeis by Maelsechlainn, and the fighting at Roscrea — fell in the year 846 and not in the year 845. For if the chronology of al-Ghazal's embassy to the Vikings in Ireland is acceptable, it is apparent that al-Ghazal cannot have left Ireland on his voyage to Compostella before the end of May 846. At that date Turgeis was still a king in authority, since ibn-Dihya records that "al-Ghazal left them, and, accompanied by the envoys, went to Shent Yakub (St. Iago de Compostella) with a letter from the king of the Vikings to the ruler of that city."<sup>234</sup>

Without needing to accept the identity of Turgeis and Ragnar as proposed by Halliday, it is not unreasonable to admit the possibility of an alliance between the Vikings of Turgeis in Ireland and the fleet of Ragnar on the Seine for an attack on Paris. The alliance could give point to the implication of al-Ghazal that his embassy had been more successful than he could have desired. It would also explain his long sojourn at the court of Turgeis and Ota. Again, his intimate daily attendance on the queen is the more easily understood if we accept the probability that Turgeis himself could have been absent for some time on

the Seine expedition. And if Turgeis' force had been decimated by the epidemic which the Frankish sources record, the fact must have become evident to the Irish on his return to Ireland in the late summer or autumn of 845. The weakness of the Norse king's situation could have suggested to the Irish *ardri* the attack on his communications in the north and to Maelsechlainn the prospect of a successful revolt against the Norse hegemony.

It is useful to examine the extent to which the sparse entries in the Frankish sources can help to confirm this reconstruction of events. In the month of May 846 — which I have proposed for the departure of al-Ghazal from Ireland — the monks of St. Germain who had taken refuge at Esmans, near Montereau, returned to their abbey after an absence of a year and two months. Lot and Halphen believed that this event could imply the withdrawal of the last contingents of Vikings from the mouth of the Seine.<sup>235</sup> And I suggest that this withdrawal can be correlated with the need for reinforcements in Ireland following the defeat of the Vikings by the *ardri* Aedh at Magh Itha. During the month of July 846, the Westfalingi, who had attacked Seville in the autumn of 844 and who had been operating against Saintes and Bordeaux in October and November 845, came to Noirmoutier, set fire to their base and took to the sea.<sup>236</sup> The arrival of these men as reinforcements in Ireland could be related to a change of the military situation in favour of the Vikings during the year 847. It was a bad year for the Irish. The south was ravaged. Maelsechlainn was involved in an ugly servile war in Meath. But during the winter 847-848, the Norsemen evidently were becoming exhausted.<sup>237</sup> Irish victories followed during 848. Maelsechlainn triumphed at Farrach in Co. Meath, and Olchobar, king of Munster, won a victory at Sciath Nechtain (near Castle Dermot in Co. Carlow) when Earl Tomrar 'tanist of the king of Lochlann' was killed.<sup>238</sup> This last event was probably

fatal to the Norse situation in Ireland.<sup>239</sup> Prudentius, who laments the tributary situation of the Irish in 847, records that in 848 “the (Irish) Scots attacked the Northmen, and, winning victory, by aid of our Lord Jesus Christ, cast them out of their territories. Hence the king of Scots (Maelsechlainn) sent messengers with gifts to Charles, for peace and friendship, requesting that the way of going to Rome might be granted to him.”<sup>240</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, XX, 1957, 411-12.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, citing E. Lévi-Provençal, 'Un échange d'ambassades entre Cordoue et Byzance au ix<sup>e</sup> siècle', *Byzantion*, XII, 1937, 15-16 (= *Islam d'Occident*, Paris, 1948, 95-8). And see further Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire de l'Espagne musulmane*, Paris, 1950, I 253-4. In an earlier *art.* 'Majus', published in *EI* III 101, L-P accepted the authenticity of al-Ghazal's embassy to the Vikings.

<sup>3</sup> In his magistral work, *Normannerne* (4 vols., 1876-82), J. C. H. R. Steenstrup was the first to propose Ireland, ii, iii ff; he was followed by Alexander Bugge, *Norges Historie*, Christiania, 1909-10, I 2, 80. Haakon Shetelig (*Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland*, in 6 parts, Oslo, 1940-54), concluded that "Ireland is the only country that agrees sufficiently well with the tale" (I 138, n. 4). Allen Mawer, *The Vikings*, Cambridge, 1913, and *Cambridge Medieval History*, III 317, favoured Ireland, as also G. Turville-Petre, *The Heroic Age of Scandinavia*, 1951, 69, who suggested "the court of Turges at Armagh." A. Fabricius, who published Reinhart Dozy's French translation of ibn-Dihya's Arabic account of the embassy, *Actes du 8e. Congrès Internationale des Orientalistes, tenu en 1889 à Stockholm et à Christiania*, Leiden, 1893, 'L'ambassade d'al Ghazal auprès du roi des Normands', II 121-31, decided that the king "must have been Horik of Denmark", p. 128. He was followed by Jón Stefánsson, 'The Vikings in Spain from Arabic (Moorish) and Spanish Sources', in *Saga-Book of the Viking Club*, VI, 1908-10, 33 ff. and by Georg Jacob, *Arabische Berichte*, Berlin/Leipzig, 1927, 38, n. 5. Shetelig recalls that Eyvind Kvalén tried to show that the country visited was some part of Norway, Viken or perhaps Hordaland, *VA*, I 138, n. 4. T. D. Kendrick, *A History of the Vikings*, London, 1930, 202, regards the evidence for Ireland as 'flimsy' and believes that "Ghazal was sent to the Danish Court". Alexander Vasiliev, *The Russian Attack on Constantinople in 860*, Cambridge, Mass, 1946, 44-45, did not consider Ireland and favoured Jutland. Although he gives full and valuable bibliographical notes, the veteran Byzantinist omits reference to Lévi-Provençal's negative view in *Byzantion*, XII, 1937, 15-16, cited above.

I. I. Y. Krachkovsky, *Izbrannye Sochineniya*, IV, 1957, 133-4, follows Fabricius and Jacob. He finds the views of

Lévi-Provençal "hypercritical". (For his observations on al-Ghazal's poetical works and return through St. Iago, see *ibid.* II, 483-4). D. M. Dunlop, *Islamic Quarterly* IV, 1957, 1 and 2, p. 14, thinks the evidence indecisive.

<sup>4</sup> Lévi-Provençal, *Byzantion*, XII, 1937, 4, 12-14.

<sup>5</sup> Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire de l'Espagne Musulmane*, I, 1950, 254.

<sup>6</sup> Vasiliev, *Russian Attack*, 36; and citing E. Kunik, *Die Berufung der schwedischen Rodsen durch die Finnen und Slaven*, St. Petersburg, 1845, II 285-320.

<sup>7</sup> Shetelig, *VA*, I 19, 57, 111; and Kendrick, *Vikings*, 199, n. 2. On p. 43 of his work, Vasiliev makes three slips in half a paragraph. He writes that the Vikings "passed the straits of Gibraltar" before attacking Cadiz, Medina Sidonia and Seville. Further that they held Seville only until the beginning of October, when in fact they remained until the middle of November. Again, after their defeat, he states that they sailed north, although they remained off the coast for some time and made several more raids (see pp. 8-9 above).

<sup>8</sup> Communicated by Bernard Lewis: The word *Majus*, derived like English *Magus* through Greek *magos*, from Old Persian *magush*, is discussed in its various implications by V. P. Buchner and E. Lévi-Provençal in *EI* (III 97 ff.). Again, the Muslims of the west described Spaniards who remained Christian as *adjam*, that is "Persians" — a term used in the east for non-Arab muslims, usually of Persian origin; cf. Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire*, I 77, 130.

<sup>9</sup> cf. J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 3rd ed., London, 1913, Part VII, (= *Balder the Beautiful*, I), 106 ff., particularly 171-2; also George Henderson, *Survivals in Belief among the Celts*, Glasgow 1911, 208 ff.

<sup>10</sup> Listed by Vasiliev, *Russian Attack*, 3. As Shetelig observes, *VA*, I 16, the forms of "Norman" are of Norwegian origin. "The classical example is to be found in Alfred's writings from about 880-890, when the Norwegian Ottar is his source on this matter. Ottar speaks of the whole country, from Vestfold to Finnmark, as being 'Norðmanna land' or 'Norðweg'." It is of interest that while the Saxons were fighting the Danes, both Alfred and Æthelstan had Norwegians in the royal circle (Shetelig, *ibid.*, 17, 19).

<sup>11</sup> Vasiliev, *Russian Attack*, 3 and n. 5. The other name, *Varyag*, *Varang*, applied to Scandinavians in the east need not be discussed here.

<sup>12</sup> Kendrick, *Vikings*, 1 ff. "To go *í viking* was their accustomed expression for the favourite enterprise of plundering and trading

across the waters". E. Björkman, in a paper on the names *Scaldingi* and *Wicing*, *Saga-Book*, VII/2, 139, suggests that Viking may have been a word of Frisian origin (= O. F. *Witsing*, *Wising*).

<sup>13</sup> For Westfaldingi, see my note 31 below; for *Hereða land*, C. Plummer, *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, I, 1892, 54-55; for *Hirotha* and *Irruait*, Todd, *War of the Gaedhil with the Gaill*, = *Cogadh Gaedhil re Gallaibh*, London, 1867, xxxiv, n. 1; also Bugge, *On the Fomorians and the Norsemen*, Christiania, 1905, 15, n. 1; R. Th. Christiansen, *The Vikings and the Viking Wars in Irish and Gaelic Tradition*, Oslo, 1931, 68, 417 ff.

<sup>14</sup> John O'Donovan (ed.), *Annala Rioghachta Eireann: Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters*, Irish text and English translation, in six vols., 2nd ed., Dublin, 1856, I 432, note y.

<sup>15</sup> Geoffrey Keating, *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn: The History of Ireland*, Irish text and English translation edited by Rev. Patrick Dinneen, in four vols., London, 1901-13, III 154-7 (Vol. I edited by David Comyn).

<sup>16</sup> cf. Todd, *War*, xxx-xxxI and notes. Marstrander, *Ériu*, V 250, suggested that the origin of the name was to be found in a rendering of Norse *Rogaland*, as *l* and *r* are often interchanged. See discussion in Christiansen, *Vikings*, 416-7, who finds that "the question of the origin of the name is unsettled". It remains to observe that Duall Mac Firbis identified the Lochlannaigh with the Fomorians (*Fomhóraigh* or *fomhoir* — "sea-demons, giants or pirates") of an earlier period of Irish history. In the *Three Fragments* the same author refers to Danes as *Aunites* (*Aunites. i. Dainfir*, 158). His editor, O'Donovan, in a footnote (158, note n) suggests that "this name is, perhaps, a corruption of *Afnitae* or *Hafnitae*, from *Hafnia* (*Höfn*, the haven) called afterwards *Kaupmannahöfn* ('merchants' haven') now Copenhagen." Again, the Scandinavian settlers in Ireland were often known as *Ostmen* (i.e. 'East-men' or 'men from the east'). The name *Gaill* (= nom. pl., *Gall* = nom. sg.) was given "to all strangers who spoke a foreign language and was therefore at first confounded with *Galli*, or *Gaul*, the foreigners best known to the aboriginal Irish" (Todd, *War*, xxix, n. 3). From the twelfth century, the term *Gaill* was applied to the Anglo-Normans. The *Gaill-Gaedhil* were the mixed Celto-Norse people of the Orkneys and Galloway. Groups of apostate Irish who had reverted to paganism and attached themselves to the Vikings were also known as *Gaill-Gaedhil* ('foreign Goidels'). The whole complex of the nomenclature of the Scandinavian and Celtic peoples in the ninth century illustrates the hazards of comparing

tribal names for periods for which even less documentation exists.

<sup>17</sup> Recently, George Vernadsky has suggested that the origin of the terms 'Black Russia' and 'White Russia' may be due to the conquest of the basins of the upper Niemen and of the western Dvina and upper Dnepr by Black and White Vikings. He believes that the respective colours represented different corporations or fraternities of Vikings: "the Blacks apparently predominated among the Danes and the Whites among the Norwegians. Both corporations might have existed among the Swedes." cf. *A History of Russia*, III, (*The Mongols and Russia*), Yale, 1953, 236-7, and *The Origins of Russia*, Oxford, 1959, 246-7. "On the Oseberg textiles there is a representation of a warrior with a white shield", *Mongols and Russia*, 237, citing Björn Hougen, 'Oseberg-funnets billedvev', *Viking* IV, 1940, 104.

<sup>18</sup> Louis Halphen, *Les Barbares*, 4th ed., 1940, 299 ff., with excellent bibliographical notes. Steenstrup, *Normannerne*, I 49 ff., was the first to examine thoroughly the origin of the names *Norman* and *Dane*. See also R. H. Hodgkin, *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, Oxford, II 473 ff., with useful map of the main Viking routes; and F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, Oxford, 2nd ed., 1950, 237 ff.

<sup>19</sup> A paper read at the Viking Congress at Lerwick, July 1950, and published in a volume, *Viking Congress*, Edinburgh/London, 1954, 130-41: 'The Viking Movements: a Summary Analysis'. For a useful periodization, see Kendrick, *Vikings*, 6-9.

<sup>20</sup> cf. Shetelig, *VA*, I 10. Later research tends to push the date for Swedish expansion east of the Baltic further back. See, for instance, Christopher Tolkien, 'The Battle of the Goths and Huns', *Saga-Book*, xiv/3, 1955-6, 141-63.

<sup>21</sup> The first recorded landing of Scandinavians in England was made in the reign of King Beohrtric of Wessex (786-802) by Norwegians from Hordaland ('Norðmanna of Hereðalande') on the Dorset coast which some decades later became the hunting ground of the Danes (Shetelig, *VA*, I 3). It is probable that these raiders, like those who explored the Welsh coast in 795, had come from the Irish Sea rather than through the straits of Dover.

<sup>22</sup> For an appreciation of the original character and 'wonderful richness of colour' of Irish society in the ninth century, by a non-Irish historian, see Axel Olrik, *Viking Civilization*, English ed., London, 1930, 107 ff. He believed that the Irish had a great influence on Scandinavian decorative art and on the development of the saga form.

<sup>23</sup> Shetelig, *VA*, I 13-14. The Vikings were following traditional sea-routes which had long been open between Ireland

and western France. The theme has been studied in detail by H. Zimmer in *Sitzungsberichte d. K. Preussischen Akademie d. Wissenschaften*, XIV, XX, XXI, LI, 1909, 1910: 'Über direkte Handelsverbindungen Westgalliens mit Irland im Altertum und Frühen Mittelalter'. Archibald Lewis, *The Northern Seas*, Princeton, 1958, 62-76, has adduced evidence for Irish and Saxon attacks round the coasts of western Gaul and as far as Spain as early as the fifth century A.D. Arne Kelvinger, *Les premières incursions des Vikings en Occident d'après les sources arabes*, Uppsala, 1955, puts forward arguments, mostly based on a new interpretation of the chronology of Arabic manuscripts, for an earlier dating (eighth century) of the first Viking incursions into southern France and the Mediterranean.

<sup>24</sup> Shetelig, *VA*, I 14; *Viking Congress*, 142: "The Danes invaded Frisia as the allies of Lothar in his war against his father Louis the Gentle (= 'the Pious'). After the war Lothar granted to the Danish King Harald the fief of Walcheren as a reward for his inroads in Frisia against Louis the Gentle. Harald himself is mentioned as one of the chieftains in Lothar's army in 842."

<sup>25</sup> cf. Shetelig, *Viking Congress*, 140: "The large armies operating for years on the Continent were certainly joined by adventurers from all Scandinavian peoples, and others, Irishmen, Frisians, and Slavs. When a renowned chieftain prepared an enterprise on a grand scale, such as the invasion of England in 850 or Hasting's raid on Morocco and Italy in 860, warriors and pirates would gather from all parts."

<sup>26</sup> For the incidents round Nantes, see Ferdinand Lot and Louis Halphen, *Le Règne de Charles le Chauve*, I 77 ff. (= Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Etudes, Sciences Historiques et Philologiques, 175e fasc.); for Messac, 77, for Lambert and citizens of Nantes, 79 n. 1. St. Philibert, the founder of Noirmoutier in the seventh century, had Irish connections, see Kenney, *Sources for the Early History of Ireland*, I 491. His *Life* contains an incidental allusion to Irish commerce with the Loire: "Not much later an Irish ship filled with various merchandise came to shore, and supplied the brothers with an abundance of shoes and clothing." *ibid.* 495.

<sup>27</sup> Kendrick, *Vikings*, 193 ff. The Vikings arrived on a west wind. Lot/Halphen, 82 n. 1, citing *Chronique de Nantes*, ed. Herlet, 13. This would have been a favouring wind from the south coast of Ireland, cf. *Bay of Biscay Pilot*, 1956, 28. For appreciation of topography of Noirmoutier, see A. R. Bridbury, *England and the Salt Trade in the later Middle Ages*, Oxford, 1955, 56 ff.

<sup>28</sup> Lot and Halphen, 80 ff., 79 n. 3, for discussion of original sources. See also Keary, *Vikings in Western Christendom*, 249 ff.; Kendrick, *Vikings*, 199 ff.

<sup>29</sup> See Lot and Halphen for detailed discussion, 82 n. 1. But Kunik, *Die Berufung*, 2er Abteil., 292-3, cites *Fragmenta Historiae Armoricae*, ed. Martène, for the information that disputes over the rich spoils of Nantes had provoked disturbances among the Vikings on Noirmoutier ('*Unde inter eos magna seditione commota*'). It was the disturbances which enabled the captive Nantais to escape.

<sup>30</sup> Charles the Bald began the siege of Toulouse during the first fortnight of May 844 (Lot and Halphen, 99). On 14th June, his reinforcements were broken by the Aquitanian rebels at Angoumois (*ibid.* 113). About the same date, the royalists were defeated by Count Lambert in the region of the lower Loire (*ibid.* 117). During the same weeks, the Breton duke, Nomenoé, invaded Neustria, advancing to Le Mans on the Sarthe with scarcely any resistance from the royalists. He was suddenly forced to retire by "a shameful irruption of the Normans" into his own lands (*ibid.* 119 and n. 1, citing *Annales Bertiniani*, 31). In this case 'the Normans' were probably Danes from the Seine.

<sup>31</sup> Lot and Halphen, 81 (n. 3 to p. 79). "*Les Annales angoumoussines*, copiées par le *Chronicon Aquitanicon*, le *Chronicon Engolismense*, Adémar de Chabannes, nous apprennent que ces normands étaient des 'Westfaldingi'. Il semble que ce terme doivent s'entendre des Norvégiens du sud." cf. Shetelig, *VA*, I 16, n. 4, 57. (The *Annales angoumoussines* were later lost. Lot and Halphen, 187, n. 1).

<sup>32</sup> See Zimmer, *SPAW*, XIV, 1909, 393.

<sup>33</sup> cf. Lot and Halphen, 82 n. 1.

<sup>34</sup> cf. my n. 23 above, and see further the Commentary, Section A, above.

<sup>35</sup> cf. Kendrick, *Vikings*, 115, 276 n. 1. The archaeological evidence stresses the early and close connection of south-west Norway with Ireland. "Of a great number of antiquities of the Viking age found buried in Norwegian ground . . . the Celtic personal ornaments form by far the largest group, containing 122 specimens found in 110 graves." Of these, a substantial proportion belong to the first half of the ninth century and derive from Vestfold and the adjacent Vestland districts round the coast: Agder, Rogaland, Hordaland, Sogn, with some further north in Møre and Trøndelag. Jan Petersen, *British Antiquities of the Viking Period found in Norway*, *VA*, V, 7, 8, 10.

<sup>36</sup> Todd, *War*, II, 15; and *ibid.* n. 2, where the editor prefers the reading 'Munster' to 'Erinn'.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.* 13, para. xii of text, which follows immediately after the statement, para. xi, that Ota, wife of Turgeis, used to give her audiences upon the altar of Clonmacnois.

<sup>38</sup> Lot and Halphen, 186, citing *Chronique de Nantes*, VII, ed. R. Merlet, 20, *et volentes inde (ab Herio insula) ad regionem suam navigare, ventus aquilo violentia usque ad Galliciam deduxit.* Along the mountainous coast of northern Spain, "squalls which occur in summer may be of considerable violence, especially near the coast where very hot and sultry weather prevails; small sailing vessels . . . have been wrecked as a result of them, generally because in hazy weather the first warning signs of their approach are not apparent until the squall is imminent . . . A fairly large proportion of the infrequent strong winds which occur in summer are from about north." *Bay of Biscay Pilot*, London, 1956, 30. All this helps to explain the poor showing of the Westfaldingi in the fighting round Coruña; and the high figure for ships lost. They can have left Noirmoutier for the Irish coast with a large number of auxiliary boats loaded with captives, stores and loot. They can have made the landfall on the Galician coast very much the worse for wear and under the necessity of refitting and foraging for supplies. The *Chronique de Nantes* says that they lost all but thirty of their ships. This is an exaggeration or a miscalculation, since Arab sources confirm that the Majus appeared off Lisbon with fifty-four fighting ships and as many auxiliary vessels, Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire*, I 219. Since the attack on Nantes the previous summer, their fighting strength was reduced by thirteen ships. If the figure for loss of seventy ships at Coruña is to be accepted, it would seem that the Vikings had lost by storm, or abandoned to the Galicians, sixty or more auxiliary vessels. These latter would probably be the Breton-type luggers, commandeered or built with Breton hands round Noirmoutier, low in the stern and liable to be pooped when running before a gale — particularly if over-loaded with prisoners and loot. (cf. T. C. Lethbridge, *Boats and Boatmen*, London, 1952, 58 ff.) If the Vikings had failed to replenish supplies and had lost most of their spoils at Coruña, and if the north wind were holding, it may have been desperation rather than planning which imposed on them a continuation of the voyage south.

<sup>39</sup> Stefánsson's translation, *Saga-Book*, VI 35. For the red ships of the Vestfold Kings, see Brøgger and Shetelig, *The Viking Ships: Their Ancestry and Evolution*, Oslo, 1953, 180, and Shetelig's fine rendering of the verse from Þorbjörn Hornklofi's *Haraldskvæði*:

Methinks you know the King?  
 Dwells at "Kvinne"  
 Head of the Norsemen  
 Master of deep keels  
 Red prows  
 and scarlet shields  
 tarred oars  
 and spray-drenched boards.

Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire*, I 220, refers to 'les voiles brunes des filibustiers'. For weather conditions, cf. *West Coasts of Spain and Portugal Pilot*, 3rd ed. 1946, 7-8, 21-22.

<sup>40</sup> The Muslim sources for the Viking attack on Andalusia in 844 were first translated and published by Reinhart Dozy, *Recherches sur l'Histoire et la Littérature de l'Espagne pendant le Moyen Age*, 2 vols., Leiden. There were three editions, all now rare. I have used the second (II 271-89). Dozy's researches were the basis of the accounts of Steenstrup and later historians. In 1908-9, an abbreviated but useful translation in English was published by Jón Stefánsson in *Saga-Book*, VI 31-46. Lévi-Provençal used newly recovered sources in his *Histoire de l'Espagne Musulmane*, I 218-25. I have followed his dating and account of the military operations.

<sup>41</sup> Stefánsson, *Saga-Book*, VI 34, citing ibn al-Kutiya: "When they arrived a mile (league) below Seville, (the) Majus shouted to the people, 'Leave us in peace if you wish to buy prisoners of us'. People then ceased to throw stones at them, and they allowed everybody to ransom prisoners. A certain sum was paid for most of them, but (the) Majus refused both gold and silver. They took only clothes and food." cf. Dozy, *Recherches*, II 285.

<sup>42</sup> Dozy, *Recherches*, II 277-8, and Stefánsson, *Saga-Book*, VI 37, citing Nowairi. cf. also Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire*, I 224.

<sup>43</sup> Lot and Halphen, I 186-7. "A la fin de 844 ou au début de l'année 845."

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.* 187 n. 1, citing *Chronique de Nantes*, ed. Merlet, 20.

<sup>45</sup> Elysée Reclus, *Universal Geography*, ed. Ravenstein, I 454.

<sup>46</sup> This event is dated by a letter of Loup de Ferrières to Ganelon, archbishop of Sens, cited by Lot and Halphen, 187, n. 1 and 2. The authors amend the *Chronique de Nantes* in placing the capture of Bordeaux after the capture of Saintes.

<sup>47</sup> Lot and Halphen, I 187 n. 1, citing *Chronique de Nantes*, ed. Merlet, 20, under year 845.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.* n. 5, citing *Chronicon Aquitanicon*, under year 846.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.* 187. After the Viking practice for standing camps, the

Noirmoutier base can have contained longhouses, hutments, storehouses, repair yards and forges — all the plant potentially useful to a rival fleet expected on the coast.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Shetelig, *VA*, I 112 ff.; Kendrick, *Vikings*, 203 ff.

<sup>52</sup> cf. Todd, *War, Cogadh*, paras. xxi, xxii.

<sup>53</sup> See notes 237, 239 below.

<sup>54</sup> cf. Lévi-Provençal, *L'Espagne Musulmane au Xe siècle*, 36; *Histoire*, I 78.

<sup>55</sup> Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire*, III 184 ff. Musa al-Qasi, who took a leading part in the defeat of the Vikings at Tablada, belonged to a powerful *muwalad* family of Gothic descent.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.* III 73 ff. 'Slav' (= *Sakaliba*) became a name which covered Germans and Franks as well as Wends.

<sup>57</sup> See note 41 above; and for the multilingual character of Andalusian culture, Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire*, III 182 ff.

<sup>58</sup> Scattered bands of Vikings had been cut off in the districts east and south-east of Seville. Eventually they capitulated and became Muslims. They took to dairy farming in the valley of the Guadalquivir and for long continued to supply Seville and Cordova with famous cheeses. Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire*, I 224. It may be noted that in the fourteenth century the best rowers in the Castilian fleet came from the *marismas de Seville* (see F. E. Russell, *The English Intervention in Spain and Portugal in the time of Edward III and Richard II*, Oxford, 1955, 232.).

<sup>59</sup> Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire*, III 314 ff.; *Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, Cambridge, 1952, 162, 271, 272. The vast European slave trade was largely in the hands of Jews and Syrians. It even had its amenities. As in nineteenth-century Turkey, promising slaves were carefully educated — in philology, literature, calligraphy, astronomy and the exact sciences (*Histoire*, III 317). The Vikings traded their own slaves. "In *Laxdœla Saga* we hear of Melkorka, an Irish princess, who was exposed for sale with eleven other women at a market in Norway. The slave-dealer, a man known as Gilli (Ir. Giolla) 'the Russian' was in all probability a Scandinavian merchant from Ireland who had carried on trade with Russia." Sometimes the Norsemen, after defeats, were themselves sold into slavery, like 'the slaves ignorant of Gaelic' given as tribute to Irish kings. (See A. Walsh, *Scandinavian Relations with the Irish during the Viking Period*, Dublin, 1922, 32-3, 72-3). English slaves were sold into Ireland 'by merchants and pirates' as late as the twelfth century. After the Normans took Dublin, English bondsmen were manumitted by decree of the Synod of Armagh with a view to conciliating

Strongbow, *Holinshed's Chronicles*, (1808 ed.) VI, Ireland, 148.

<sup>60</sup> Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire*, I 178 ff.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.* 212.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.* 222 ff. In 828, Louis the Pious had written to the people of Merida encouraging their revolt and promising armed aid (*ibid.* 227). Unrest among the Christians and Mozarabs of Cordova came to a head in 850-1 (*ibid.* 232 ff.).

<sup>63</sup> For the personality of al-Ghazal, see Lévi-Provençal, *Byzantion*, XII 10ff.; *Histoire*, I 249 ff.; III 283, n. 1, for his introduction into Andalucia of a species of fig called *doñegal*; *ibid.* 443, for his objections to chess; *ibid.* 492 for his gift for satire.

<sup>64</sup> I have summarised the bibliographical information on ibn-Dihya from Vasiliev, *First Russian Attack*, 1946, 43 and n. 4-5; he gives more details but omits reference to Lévi-Provençal's contribution to the subject in *Byzantion*, XII, 1937. Add also: H. Birkeland, *Nordens Historie i Middelalderen etter arabiske Kilder*, in *Skrifter utg. av det Norske Videnskaps Akademi i Oslo*, Hist.-fil. Kl. 1954, Nr. 2.

<sup>65</sup> cf. Lévi-Provençal, in *Byzantion*, XII 7, 10; also his short notice of Isa-bn-Ahmed ar-Razi in *EI* III.

<sup>66</sup> *Byzantion*, XII 16.

<sup>67</sup> *Histoire*, I 253-4.

<sup>68</sup> The *Three Fragments*, copied from ancient sources by Dubhaltach Mac Firbisigh (*anglice*, Duaid Mac Firbis); and edited with a translation and notes from a manuscript preserved in the Burgundian Library at Brussels, by John O'Donovan, Dublin, printed at the University Press, for the Irish Archaeological and Celtic Society, 1860.

Duaid Mac Firbis was the last of a long line of *seanachies* or hereditary historians of Connacht. During the Parliamentary Wars, he was reduced to great poverty and much of his work took the form of translations of Irish manuscripts for Sir James Ware, an early English patron of Irish letters. In 1670, at the age of 85, he was murdered by a drunken member of the Crofton family.

<sup>69</sup> For discussion of the equation of Turgeis and Ragnar loðbrók see pp. 58-60 above and note 204.

<sup>70</sup> Shetelig, *VA*, I 48, 55.

<sup>71</sup> For detailed discussion of these manuscripts, see Todd, *War*, introduction, 1 ff. For a modern view of *Cogadh*, often critical, see A. J. Goedheer, *Irish and Norse Traditions about the Battle of Clontarf*, Haarlem, 1938. The author believes that *Cogadh* borrowed from the *Annals of Ulster*, but the latter only gives one reference to Turgeis (*s.a.* 844) and none to his wife, Ota. The

accounts of events in Ireland, following the capture of Turgeis, show substantial difference of treatment in *AU* and *Cogadh*.

<sup>72</sup> *The Irish Annals*. There is controversy among scholars as to the composition and chronology of the several Irish 'annals' and 'chronicles' which were kept in different monasteries. But there seems to be a degree of common agreement that the various bodies of annals stemmed from an original 'Ulster Chronicle' which was compiled in east Ulster, probably in the monastery of Bangor, c. 740 (cf. T. F. O'Rahilly, *The Two Patricks*, 1942, 11; *Early Irish History and Mythology*, 1946, ch. XIII — particularly 253 ff.; Rev. Dr. J. Ryan, in *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, Oct. 1942, 247; Bieler, *IHS*, VI 24, 1949, 248). This 'Ulster Chronicle' comprised 'world history' drawn from Greek and Latin sources and Irish records based on older materials. The *Annals of Ulster* (properly the *Annals of Senat Mic Maghnusa*, an island on Lough Erne) descend from the 'Ulster Chronicle' in a direct line; the edition translated and edited by Hennessy in the 1840's was taken from a late fifteenth-century transcript. The *Annals of Inisfallen* (on Lough Léin = Killarney), preserved in a manuscript of 1215, derive from an intermediate exemplar of the 'Ulster Chronicle'. The *Annals of Clonmacnois* survive only in an English translation of the sixteenth century; they too derive from the same source as 'Inisfallen'. The *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland*, usually known from the number of the compilers as 'The Four Masters' was completed in the seventeenth century from the older existing annals.

The nineteenth-century editors and translators of the several 'annals' — O'Curry, O'Donovan, Todd, Hennessy and Whitley Stokes — have come in for a fair share of criticism from their successors in the twentieth century (notably from the late R. A. S. MacAlister). But these critics fail to agree among themselves. For the complicated problems of the dating and chronology of the Irish annals, reference may be made to a number of articles in recent years in *Ériu* and *Irish Historical Studies*. See particularly *IHS*, II 8, 1941, 355-75, the (late) Fr. Paul Walsh, 'The Dating of the Irish Annals' — 'presented by the chronology sub-committee of the Irish Committee of Historical Sciences and prepared for publication by the Rev. Professor O'Doherty'; also *IHS*, VI 24, 1949, 247-260, Ludwig Bieler, 'Sidelights on the Chronology of St. Patrick'. In the view of Fr. Walsh, for the *Annals of Ulster*, one year should be added for the period 712-1012, thus reading 713-1013. For the period 805-904 Hennessy's dates in his edition of *Chronicon Scotorum* are correct.

For the methods used in compiling and dating the annals, see

Fr. Paul Walsh, *The Four Masters and Their Work*, Dublin, 1944. "In earlier parts of the Four Masters' Annals the margin of error is as much as five years," p. 32.

<sup>73</sup> For Giraldus, I use the handy Irish edition of John J. O'Meara, *The First Version of the Topography of Ireland by Giraldus Cambrensis*, Dundalk, 1951, 102 ff. Giraldus' attribution of abandoned forts and earthworks to the Vikings was defended by T. S. Westropp in *JRSAL*, XXXIV, 1904, 313-45.

<sup>74</sup> The Irish text of *Chronicon Scotorum* from a manuscript in the library of Trinity College, Dublin, was translated and edited by W. M. Hennessy, Dublin, 1866.

The best edition of *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* (The History of Ireland) by Geoffrey Keating, was edited with Irish text and translation by David Comyn, (Vol. I) and Rev. Patrick Dineen, (Vols. II-IV) for the Irish Texts Society in 4 vols. (IV, VIII, IX, XV of the series), London, 1901-14. Vol. IV contains an index (pp. 159-479) which is invaluable as a dictionary of Irish and anglicised name forms. The English commentators on Turgeis were: (i) Edmund Campion (1540-81), who had access to Irish manuscripts in the possession of his patron, the elder Stanihurst. Campion's work was first edited by Richard Stanihurst in Holinshed's *Chronicles*, 1587; then by Sir James Ware in his *History of Ireland*, 1633. Duald Mac Firbis was Ware's guide to Irish sources. (ii) Meredith Hanmer (1543-1604), a clergyman of disreputable character but scholarly attainments, who lived the last thirteen years of his life in Ireland. His *Chronicle of Ireland*, 'a work of merit and learning', was published by Sir James Ware in 1633.

<sup>75</sup> For Yahya bn-Habib, *Byzantion*, XII 7; Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire*, I 252. For Viking navigation and knowledge of astronomy, see *Old-Love Miscellany of Shetland, Caithness and Sutherland*, London, X 7, 1946, 293-320, Carl V. Sølvér, 'Leiðarsteinn: The Compass of the Vikings'.

<sup>76</sup> For an account of Shilb (Silvès), in the twelfth century, see Lévi-Provençal, *La Péninsule Ibérique au moyen-âge*, Leiden, 1938, 129-32. "Silvès est entourée d'un rampart solide et possède à ses abords des plantations et des vergers. L'eau potable est fournie à ses habitants par sa rivière: celle-ci baigne Silvès du côté méridionale. La mer se trouve à trois milles de Silvès à l'ouest. Elle possède un mouillage sur la rivière et un chantier de constructions navales." According to *West Coasts of Spain and Portugal Pilot*, 3rd ed., London, 1946, 207-8: "The town of Silvès, situated on Rio Silvès, about seven miles from the entrance of Rio Portimao, can be reached by vessels from 40 to 50 tons."

The entrance to the river was well protected by a bar which under favourable conditions "can be crossed at high water by vessels drawing up to 14 feet." "Ships' boats should not attempt to cross the bar without a pilot: even in fine weather, the breakers are heavy and dangerous." In the conditions of maritime warfare of the ninth century, the site of Silvès was well chosen.

<sup>77</sup> In the description of the *knörr*, I have followed Kendrick, *Vikings*, 76. See also E. Magnusson, 'Notes on Shipbuilding and Nautical Terms in the North', *Saga-Book*, IV 1, 1905, 182-237 (for a description of the *knörr*, see p. 222); and G. J. Marcus, 'The Navigation of the Norsemen', *The Mariner's Mirror*, 39/2, 1953, 112-31 where on p. 114 the author makes the point that the *hafskip* ('ocean-ship') of the Viking age was not much smaller, if at all, than 'the two Barkes' with which John Davis, in 1585, went in search of the North-West passage. For speeds and distances, see *ibid.* 119 ff.: from Norway to Iceland, 7 days sailing; from Iceland to Ireland, 5 days. I am also indebted to Mr. Michael Mason for a valuable memo on Viking ships and seafaring.

From his reading of the text Professor Bernard Lewis has informed me that he believes that al-Ghazal travelled in an Arab ship, provided at Silvès. He may be right. There is evidence that in the mid-ninth century the Andalucians already had experience of navigating in the Atlantic, cf. D. M. Dunlop, 'The British Isles according to Mediaeval Arabic Authors', *The Islamic Quarterly*, IV/1 2, 1957, 15, 18, 22-24, for the expeditions of Khaskhash and the Lisbon 'Adventurers'. But near-contemporary Muslim authors, al-Battani (c. 902) and al-Maredi (in *Muruj adh-Dhab*, 943) cited by Dunlop, pp. 16-19, imply that the Arabs had usually little taste for the 'Encircling Ocean'. I feel that the danger of separation at sea, which threatened sail down to a much later period, and the fact that they were to voyage across unknown waters, controlled by the Vikings, would have inclined the Arab envoys to entrust themselves to their more experienced hosts.

<sup>78</sup> Dozy-Fabricius, 122. cf. also Dunlop, *loc. cit.*, 13 n. 4. The reference to 'The great cape . . . the westernmost limit of Spain' seems to rule out rather definitely Lévi-Provençal's implication that al-Ghazal's poem referred to a storm which overtook him during his voyage to Constantinople (*Byzantion*, XII 10). A ship sailing from Silvès towards the Straits of Gibraltar would have run before the north-westerly gale described in the poem. Again travellers would hardly have chosen to embark from Silvès for Constantinople but rather from a Murcian port, as indeed al-Ghazal did on the occasion of his Byzantine embassy, cf. Lévi-Provençal, *Byzantion*, XII 10.

<sup>79</sup> *West Coasts of Spain and Portugal Pilot*, 3rd ed., 1946, 204, for St. Vincent; 86, 26, for Finisterre.

<sup>80</sup> Bugge, *Norges Historie*, I 2, 80; Fridtjof Nansen, *In Northern Mists*, London, 1911, II 202. Jacob, *Arabische Berichte*, does not attempt to identify this island.

<sup>81</sup> For the twelfth century, Giraldus Cambrensis mentions three days as customary for the voyage to Spain from Ireland. Prince John and his accompanying troops made the voyage from Milford Haven to Waterford in less than twenty-four hours, "the wind being at east and blowing a good gale", *Holinshed's Chronicles*, 1808 ed., VI, Ireland, 219.

Lethbridge recalls that in 1385, Portuguese ambassadors made the run from Portugal to a Cornish port in four days, *History of Technology*, II 583.

<sup>82</sup> Todd, *War*, xxxvi, n. 2; *Cogadh* (text), 5, 222.

<sup>83</sup> *ibid.*, and Keating, III 156. This was the first of several defeats suffered by the Vikings when they left their ships along the river banks and got themselves entangled in the thick woods which covered much of the country in the ninth century. ("The first name which was given to Ireland was *Inis na bhfiodhb-hadh*, that is to say 'Island of the woods' for the first comers found it to be all one forest-wood", Keating, I 97). The annalists complain of the advantage of the Vikings in arms and armour, but the lighter-armed Irish, knowing the woods, could prove a match for the sea-farers from the waterways.

<sup>84</sup> Todd, *War*, xxxviii; *Cogadh*, 7, 222.

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.* xxxix; 7, 223.

<sup>87</sup> *ibid.* xl.

<sup>88</sup> *ibid.* xli; 9, 224. For the identification of Inis Sibhtonn with King's Island, see *TKAS*, 1899, 227.

<sup>89</sup> Todd, *War*, xlii; 9, 224.

<sup>90</sup> C. F. Keary, *The Vikings in Western Christendom*, A.D. 789 to A.D. 888, London, 1891, 174 ff. Keary gives a good running account of the career of Turgeis. This book, published nearly seventy years ago, still remains, in the opinion of T. C. Kendrick, "the one important English book concerned with the Vikings: a fine work of real beauty and a masterpiece of expository style."

<sup>91</sup> Todd, *War*, xlii; 9, 224-5.

<sup>92</sup> Thus the older recension of the manuscript of *Cogadh*, see Todd, *War*, 226. The later recension has 'audience', *ibid.* 13.

<sup>93</sup> Todd, *War*, li; 15, 227; and cf. Keating, lv, 210. For topography of *Ciarraighe Luachra*, and other parts of the Kerry coast, the best source remains the series of papers by Thomas

Johnson Westropp on 'Promontory Forts in Northern County Kerry' in *JRSAI* XL, Dublin, 1911, 6 ff.

<sup>94</sup> Miss Hickson, 'Names of Places and Surnames in Kerry', *JRSAI* XXI, 1890-91, 685 ff.; *ibid.* XXII 389 ff. The names Crookhaven (O. N. *Krókr*, "crook, hook, barb, trident"), Dunmanus (= Dun Magnus) and Bere or Beare (cf. O. Frisian, *barre*, "clamour, shouting") may also be of Norse origin. The last is, perhaps, a rationalisation of the name of the Irish goddess Bea.

<sup>95</sup> *JRSAI* XXI 690.

<sup>96</sup> Westropp, 'Some Promontory Forts and similar structures in the County Kerry', *JRSAI* XL, 1910, 274-6.

<sup>97</sup> cf. Brøgger and Shetelig, *Viking Ships*, 219: "King Olaf called his only great ship the *Bison*; on the prow it had a gold-embellished ox-head and at the stern a tail. Both these, together with the neck, were gilded over. In the ballad on King Olaf his ship is called the Ox. Several ships have that name. The last we know of is King Hakon Hakonsson's *Ox*, which was not a great ship."

In view of Worsaae's theory that King Ólaf Tryggvason was baptised in Sceleg Michil, and not in the Scilly Isles, (see *JRSAI* XXI, 1890-91, 695, citing J. J. E. Worsaae, *An Account of the Danes and Norwegians in England, Scotland and Ireland*, London, 1852, 353) the connection of Dingle with the Red Ox is interesting.

<sup>98</sup> Miss Hickson 'Old Place Names and Surnames', *JRSAI* XXII, 1892, 396-7: "Staigue Fort stands on the level summit of a hill between four and five hundred feet above the sea, open to the sea on the south with a gradual descent to it." (The editor of O'Curry's *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish*, I ccc-cccvi, O'Sullivan believes the name to be comparatively modern, and to have been introduced by Sir Valentine Browne's colonists from Lancashire, where the form *stee* or *steig*, meaning "ladder" was current.)

<sup>99</sup> *JRSAI* XXII, 1892, 396. "The point is a well known haunt of the *Sterna arctica*, a noisy restless bird."

<sup>100</sup> Westropp, 'Notes on the Promontory Forts and Similar Structures of County Kerry', *JRSAI* XLII, 1912, 298.

<sup>101</sup> *ibid.* 291; and further for survey of monuments of Valentia. See also M. J. Delap, 'Some Holy Wells in Valencia and Portmagee', *Kerry Archaeological Journal*, 1910-11, 406 ff.

<sup>102</sup> *JRSAI* XL, 1910, 266. There were other "Oak Islands" — in Wexford Haven and at the mouth of the Blackwater, see Keating, IV 247-8, under *Dairinis*.

<sup>103</sup> Charles Smith, *The Ancient and Present State of the County of Kerry*, Dublin, 1773, 357.

<sup>104</sup> Charles Smith, *The Ancient and Present State of the County and City of Cork*, 2 vols., Dublin, 1750, I 286 ff. (At pp. 278-80, the author gives an interesting account of a raid on the neighbouring coastal harbour of Baltimore by two 'Algerine rovers' on the 20th June, 1631. The pirates carried off into slavery 100 English settlers. As late as the following March, the whole coast was alerted and expecting a further attack 'from the Turks'.

<sup>105</sup> For Beare and Dursey, see the fine papers by Thomas Westropp in *JRSAI*, L, 1920, 140 ff., and LI, 1921, 1 ff.; also Smith, *Cork*, I 291 ff.

<sup>106</sup> *Irish Coast Pilot*, 1941, 216.

<sup>107</sup> Rev. Timothy Lee, 'The Northmen of Limerick', *JRSAI*, 1899, 377. Todd, *War*, 274, n. 1: "The Four Masters (under 965, 969) call this place Inis Ubhdonn, whence some have conjectured that its real name was given to it by the Scandinavian settlers, and was Inis Odinn or Woden, corrupted by the Irish to Inis Ubhdonn and Inis Sibhtonn."

<sup>108</sup> T. J. Westropp, 'A Description of the ancient Buildings and Crosses at Clonmacnois, King's County'; *JRSAI*, XXXVII, 1907, 277ff.; also a summary in the form of a lecture, 329 ff. Westropp's work still remains the best description of Clonmacnois. But cf. also R. A. S. Macalister, *The Memorial Slabs of Clonmacnois: with an Appendix of the Materials for a History of the Monastery*, Dublin, 1909. For many bibliographical details and interesting discussion of sources, James F. Kenney, *The Sources for the Early History of Ireland, I, Ecclesiastical* (all published) 1929, 376 ff.

The monuments now standing date from the tenth century or later, with the exception of the South Cross opposite Teampul Hurpáin which is attributed to the early ninth century and may have been in its present position in the time of Turgeis. The pedestal of the High Cross, too, shows two fine panels — the upper of three horsemen riding southward, the lower of two charioteers driving northward. They hardly seem to relate to the scenes from the Scriptures which decorate this *cross na screaptra* and the carvings on the pedestal are more weather-worn and may be older than the monument which stands upon it. (For a drawing by Westropp, see above, 294.) An immediate predecessor of Forannan, Fland Róí, "who took the Abbacy by force and who is not mentioned at mass", is stated to have "urged on the dogs out of the chariot so that he was deposed from the

coarbship of Patrick", see H. J. Lawlor and R. I. Best, 'The Ancient List of the Coarbs of Patrick', in *PRIA*, XXXV, Sect. C., No. 9, 1919, 324-5, 349. The only fortifications standing are McCarthy's Tower, 'an unusually perfect example of the Irish round tower', built in 1124, and the Norman castle (1212).

According to *Cogadh*, the fleet of Turgeis first appeared on Loch Rí in 839, Todd, *War*, 9, cap. IX of *Cogadh*. *AU* and *Chron. Scotorum* state that a host of foreigners (with Turgeis) burned Clonmacnois in 844-845. In the oldest (Book of Leinster) fragment of *Cogadh*, this second operation of Turgeis on Loch Rí is described as follows, cap. XI under years 838-45: "After this came Turgeis upon Loch Rí and from thence were plundered Meath and Connacht, and Cluainmicnois . . . Cluainmicnois was taken by his wife. It was on the altar of the great church that she used to give her answers." The greater detail seems to justify preference for the evidence of *Cogadh*. The fact that Queen Ota apparently took Clonmacnois as a personal appendage and set up residence there indicates that the city was plundered rather than burnt. Timber houses in the Norwegian style would have been constructed with little delay for Ota and her court.

<sup>109</sup> *Annals of Clonmacnois*, under year 1026; also *JRSAI*, XXXVII, 1907, 300. The gardens were badly spoiled by the soldiers of William Burke in 1212 — "Wast and voyde, like an empty chaos without any manner of thing but their empty and foot-troden grounds", *Ann. Clon.* for 1212. In 1216, the Bishop procured compensation from King John for the destruction of his orchards during the building of the castle in 1212, *JRSAI*, XXXVII, 1907, 304.

<sup>110</sup> Brash, *The Ogam inscribed Monuments of the Gaedhil*, London, 1879, 324, citing an Old Irish poem from Bodleian manuscript Rawlinson 406.

<sup>111</sup> Kazvini, citing al-Udhri, printed by Jacob in *Arabische Berichte*, 26. The rest of the section on Ireland is occupied with details of whale-hunting—a pointer to Arab interest in the fisheries of the northern seas. For discussion of the lost work of al-Udhri, see Lévi-Provençal, *Péninsule Ibérique*, xxiv and n. 2. Also Dunlop, *Islamic Quarterly*, IV, 1/2, 17-18. Al-Udhri flourished in the first half of the eleventh century. Dunlop finds that "it cannot be shewn that he is dependent on the narrative of Yahya al-Ghazal", but the statement that "the Norsemen have no capital (*qa'idah*) save this island in all the world" seems to reflect the conditions of the mid-ninth century rather than a later period. Possibly al-Udhri drew on some lost record of the adventures of Khashkhash, one of the commanders of the Muslim fleet which

operated in the Atlantic against the Norse invaders of Spain in 859; he later made a remarkable raid into 'the Encircling Ocean' from which he returned with much booty, Dunlop, pp. 15 and 18.

<sup>112</sup> H. F. McClintock, *Old Irish and Highland Dress*, Dundalk, 2nd ed., 1950, 2.

<sup>113</sup> *ibid.* Plate 21.

<sup>114</sup> *ibid.* 3 For the varied colours and rich embroideries of these ancient Irish costumes, see further *ibid.* 13-18; and for many curious details and references see Eugene O'Curry, *On the Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish*, 3 vols., London/Dublin, 1873, I, W. K. Sullivan's introduction, xxxlvii ff., III 87-211, 'On Dress and Ornaments'.

<sup>115</sup> McClintock, 16.

<sup>116</sup> Estyn Evans, *Irish Folk Ways*, London, 1957, 115, citing R. O'Flaherty, *Westor H'Iar Connaught*, 1684, 68. On the other hand, as recently as 1952, I recall questioning a girl about one among a small group of *clachans* on the Dingle peninsula, and her replying, 'Oh, grandfather built that one'.

<sup>117</sup> Estyn Evans, *ibid.* 115-16. The author adds: "The corbelled buildings of Vaucluse, in the mountains behind Avignon, are both round and rectangular, the latter bearing a striking resemblance to Irish oratories of the type of Gallarus, Co. Kerry, which is believed to date from the sixth or seventh century."

<sup>118</sup> O'Curry, *Manners and Customs*, I ccxvii ff., with two drawings reproducing the huts.

<sup>119</sup> Stephane Gsell, *Histoire ancienne de l'Afrique du Nord*, (8 vols., 1921-28), II, 2nd ed., 1929, 217-24. The author discusses the round and oblong varieties of the primitive *mapalia*, both in wattle and stone. He believes that the circular form with conical top originated in the Sudan, 222. For this hut, he finds names in the classical authors 'which are not proper to Africa': Greek, *kalubai*; Latin, *tuguria*; and "le mot très rare *atlegiae*, dont Juvenal, xiv, 196, se sert à propos des Maures, est d'origine inconnue", 220-1. In Irish, the word for 'house' is *tech*, *teg*; for 'householder,' *aithech tigh*; for 'wicker-work house', *teach fíthe*, *Contributions to a Dictionary of the Irish Language, T — tnuithaigid*, arranged by David Greene and E. G. Quin, Dublin, 1943, cols. 95-96. See also O'Sullivan in O'Curry, I ccxcviii-ix (cf. note 114 above). The form recorded in Latin *tuguria* may be compared with Ethiopian *tukul*. The building of a wickerwork hut is described in the life of St. Colman, O'Curry, *Manners and Customs*, III 31 ff. The wooden oratory of St. Molaise, erected by Gobbán Saer, was mobile and could be everted, *ibid.* 36. Gobbán Saer, the legendary first builder in Ireland, was son of Tuirbhi, "the

rusty-faced, black, big fellow . . . . Though Tuirbhi in his land in the south was strong, it is not known of what stock was his race. Unless he was of the Mystical black race . . ." *ibid.* 41.

<sup>120</sup> O'Curry, III 31 ff. For an Ethiopian *tukul*, see the fine coloured plate 26, in *The Fountain of the Sun*, by Douglas Busk, London, 1957, and compare with Sullivan's drawings of the huts on the Antomine Column in O'Curry, I cxcvii-ix.

<sup>121</sup> Estyn Evans, *Irish Folk Ways*, 117.

<sup>122</sup> Pytheas, reference by (Pseudo-) Aristoteles, *de Mundo*, 3, cited by Richard Hennig, *Terrae Incognitae; Altertum bis Ptolemaus*, Leiden 1944, 2nd ed., 159.

<sup>123</sup> McClintock, Plate 10 for shrine of St. Manchan; Plates 6 and 7 for 'Iberian' types from the Book of Kells; Plates 8 and 9 for the shrine of St. Moedoc. Compare the Viking types and costumes of the soldiers on the Cross of Muiredach, Monasterboice, Plate 1; and the north European physiognomies shown in the manuscript of Giraldus Cambrensis, Plates 11 to 14, and in the later drawings of Dürer (Plate 17) and Lucas de Heere (frontispiece).

<sup>124</sup> Jacob, *Arabische Berichte*, 38 and n. 2. Throughout this paper I am following the new translation of ibn-Dihya, kindly placed at my disposal by Professor Bernard Lewis. I cite the earlier translations of Dozy and Jacob in order to examine the arguments of those who have preferred to locate the embassy in Denmark rather than in Ireland.

<sup>125</sup> Jacob, *ibid.* 38, n. 1; Dozy/Fabricius, 130; Stefánsson, *Saga-Book*, VI 40.

<sup>126</sup> Kendrick, *Vikings*, 202.

<sup>127</sup> See note 110 above.

<sup>128</sup> Kendrick, *Vikings*, 136, 137. "It was King Harald Gormson (d. 986) 'who made the Danes Christian', as he declares himself on the Jellinge stone; it was King Olaf Tryggvason who in the five amazing years before the tenth century closed bullied his Norwegian subjects into accepting the new faith . . . ; it was King Olof Skotkonung (995-1022), who no less energetically, though much less successfully, sought to convert the Swedes." For the survival of pagan practise in Connacht and some of the Irish islands in the twelfth century, see *Giraldus Cambrensis, Topography of Ireland*, (ed. O'Meara), 92 ff.; also n. 61.

<sup>129</sup> Du Chaillu, *The Viking Age*, 1889, I 465, citing *Landnáma*, v, c. 15 (*Íslendinga sögur* I, 1847, 321); *ibid.*, 464-7, citing *Fornmanna Sögur*, I, c. 22, 23. Léonce Auzias, *L'Aquitaine carolingienne* (778-987), Toulouse/Paris, 1937, 324 n. 56, citing *Annales Bertiniani*, s.a. 864: "Pippinus, Pippini filius, ex monacho laicus et apostate factus, se Normannis conjungit et ritum eorum servat."

<sup>130</sup> cf. Todd, *War*, 224-5, citing manuscript (*Book of Leinster*, 12th c.): "Turges himself took the Abbacy of Armagh; and Forannan, Abbot of Armagh, was driven away and went to Munster . . . and Turges in Ardmacha, and the power of the north of Erin was with him. It was then that the prophecy of Berchan, the chief prophet was fulfilled . . .

"There shall be an abbot of them over this my church,  
He shall not attend to matins,  
Without Pater, without Credo,  
Without Latin, and only (knowing)  
a foreign language."

The special status of the powerful abbesses of the shrine of St. Brigit of Kildare may even suggest an Irish precedent for the sacerdotal function assumed by Ota at Clonmacnois, cf. Kenney, *Sources*, I, 356-8.

<sup>131</sup> Todd, *War*, xlvihi; Keary, 179, follows Todd but (mistakenly) implies co-operation between Turgeis and Feidhlimidh; Kendrick, *Vikings*, 277.

<sup>132</sup> Thus:

"An age of axes, an age of swords:  
Shields are cleft;  
An age of winds, an age of wolves,  
Ere the world winks  
No man will spare  
Another man."

*Völuspá*, cited by du Chaillu, I 41. Or for a brilliant expression of nihilism, with a strangely modern ring, see *Völsunga saga*, ch. 32, cited by du Chaillu, I 438.

<sup>133</sup> For citation of Westropp's view, see Commentary, p. 34 above and note 108.

<sup>134</sup> The conflict between the ecclesiastical centres in Armagh and Cashel has not, to my knowledge, been studied in relation to the reformist movement of the Culdees (= *Céli Dé*, 'Companions of God'), which spread in Ireland in the eighth century. It is possible that iconoclastic themes, with puritanical and radical undertones, were introduced by Armenian and Coptic priests and masons as early as the sixth century. (For Culdees, see Kenny, *Sources*, 468 ff). It is curious that Rathau, where Mlle Henry noted remarkable Armenian influences in the architecture, was the seat of the Culdee Uí Shuanaig. And there was an Armenian bishop at Cill Achid, some twenty miles from Rathau. (Françoise Henry, *La Sculpture Irlandaise*, Paris, 1933, 173, n. 2, and passim).

<sup>135</sup> The *Three Fragments*, 139. The phenomenon continued

throughout the period. In the *Three Fragments*, 237, for the year 909 there is the curious entry: "In this year there came a great muster of the Brefnians (into Meath) to commit depredations . . . . Then the King of Erin said, 'It is the end of the world that is come', said he, 'when plebians like these dare to attack noblemen . . . They had never before seen a muster of Attacotts, and though they had no king at their head, they attacked the King of Erin with hardihood." Here, it is interesting to find the term 'Attacott' — which some historians have discussed as a tribal name, applied to 'Jacquots'. On 'Attecotti', see further Eoin MacNeill, *Phases of Irish History*, Dublin, 1920, 144-9.

<sup>136</sup> The first point of correspondence in the stories of the Byzantine and Viking journeys is the storm at sea. See p. 19 and n. 78 above. For the protocol and incident, see Lévi-Provençal, *Byzantion*, XII 11.

<sup>137</sup> Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 3rd ed. revised, London, 1943, 503, gives an indication that this practise was in the tradition of Visigothic royalty. The Lady Ailo (or Egilona, in Hitti) ended by having such a low entrance built to her private chapel "that Abd al-Aziz himself had to bend on entering as if in an act of worship". Rumours that he was a convert to Christianity led to his murder in 716.

<sup>138</sup> du Chaillu, II 466 ff., citing *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar (Fornmanna Sögur I, Kaupmannahöfn 1825, 17)*: "King Æthelstan had Hakon baptized and taught the true creed, good habits and all kinds of courtesy. He loved him more than anyone else, kinsman or not." Hakon 'the Good', later became King of Norway (c. 946-63).

<sup>139</sup> du Chaillu, II 242, citing *Grettis saga*, ch. xv.

<sup>140</sup> The above three paragraphs have been summarised from du Chaillu, II 241-73.

<sup>141</sup> du Chaillu, II 293, 295, 299. See also Alexander Bugge, 'Costumes, Jewels and Furniture in Viking Times', *Saga-Book VII/2, 1912, 141 ff.* Bugge recalls that cordwain, or 'Spanish leather', a speciality of the Andalucian Moors, derives its name from Cordova (the first literary reference dates from 1128 — Ordericus Vitalis, *Hist. Eccles.*, II 453). Bugge, again, proposes that the foreign saddles (*a sadlaici allmarda*), plundered by the Irish when they took Limerick from the Norsemen in 968, were of Spanish (Moorish) origin. *Hessens Irisches Lexikon*, fasc. i, 45, renders *allmarda* as "transmarine, foreign, uncouth, savage". Here, *allmarda* could be almost exactly rendered by the French *d'outremer*.

<sup>142</sup> For riddles and puzzles, see du Chaillu, II, 396, ff.

<sup>143</sup> Summarised from du Chaillu's two chapters on *iþróttir*, II 369 ff. The harp is mentioned in *Völuspá*, which dates probably from the tenth century (*ibid.* 395, and see also *Saga-Book*, VII/1, 44). The hero Gunnar "played his harp with such skill that even champions were moved. He could also play with his toes and charm snakes with its tones" (du Chaillu, II 395). On the familiarity of the Viking aristocracy with foreign languages, du Chaillu, II 45, cites *Völsunga saga*, ch. 13. "He taught him *idrottir*, chess and runes, and to speak many tongues, as then was the custom with king's sons, and many other things." We learn from Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire*, I 492, that al-Ghazal, rather surprisingly, objected to chess. The game was unknown to the Prophet who had given no indication as to whether it was permissible to Muslims. During the first two centuries of Islam, there was much controversy on the subject of whether chess came under the condemnation of *maisir* (lots) and *ansab* (images). See H. J. R. Murray, *A History of the Game of Chess*, Oxford, 1913, 186 ff. Prof. Bernard Lewis has queried Murray's reading of *ansab*, images, as *ashair*, arrows.

Professor Turville-Petre has kindly written me that he does not think that chess came to Scandinavia before the twelfth century. He finds that "chess given as a translation of *tafl* by du Chaillu is not exact. *Tafl* was a board game rather like fox-and-geese, cf. F. Lewis, *Transactions of the Hon. Society of Cymmrodorion*, 1941, 185 ff." In *Acta Archaeologica*, IV, København, 1933, 85-104, H. O'Neill Hencken discusses 'A Gaming Board of the Viking Age', made of yew wood, found at Ballinderry, Co. Meath (in the territory of the southern Uí Néill) which he dates to the third quarter of the tenth century, 93, and which he believes to have been a product of Celto-Norse art, 96. This board was made for an early game on the principle of fox-and-geese, 104.

There are, however, in early Irish sources several references to a board game which has been taken to be chess. In the Book of the Dun Cow (*Leabhar na h Uidre*), of which 138 folios survive in a manuscript of c. 1100 in the library of the Royal Irish Academy, there is a reference to a silver chess-board with golden chessmen and pawns (*ferbolga*) of plated wire of *Creduma* (copper or bronze). (cf. Eugene O'Curry, *Manners and Customs*, I, cccci; II, 190; III, 165; see also for *Leabhar na h Uidre*, *Lectures on the Manuscript Materials of Ancient Irish History*, Dublin, 1861, 21, 30, 182 ff. For other Irish literary references see Murray, 746, n. 20.) The game played on a board is an integral part of the ancient story of 'The Courtship of Etain', but the twelfth-century copyist may have embellished the original into

a game of chess. In *Cormac's Glossary*, dated to about the year 900, the definition of the game *Fidchell* (*Fithchill*) recalls chess. Cormac: "féth-ciall, fáth-ciall, i.e. it requires sense (*ciall*) and *fáth* ('learning') in playing it . . . in the first place, the *fidchell* is four-cornered, its squares are right-angled, and black and white are on it, and, moreover, it is different people that in turn win the game." (cf. *Cormac's Glossary*, translated and annotated by the late John O'Donovan, edited with notes and indices by Whitley Stokes, Calcutta, 1868, 75). The editor proposes Ir. *Fidchell* = Welsh *gwyddbwyll*, mentioned in *Mabinogion*. As Murray, 746, and Hencken, 102, have observed there is nothing to imply that there was any differentiation of piece other than that necessary to distinguish the one side from the other. Only the Irish literary references indicate grades of pieces. The *fidchell* board described by Cormac certainly differed from the fox-and-geese board found at Ballinderry and illustrated by Hencken. The earlier *fidchell* may have resembled draughts and have been interpreted by later copyists as chess. But does draughts require 'the sense and learning' stipulated by Cormac? There seems to be a possibility that before the year 900 chess had reached Ireland from Gaul or Muslim Spain. Professor Myles Dillon has also referred me to the important articles: Gerard Murphy, 'The Puzzle of the Thirty Counters', *Bealoideas* XII, 1942, 1-28; and Eoin MacWhite, 'Early Irish Board Games', *Éigse: A Journal of Irish Studies* V/1, 1945, 25-35.

<sup>144</sup> As Jacob, *Arabische Berichte*, 39, suggests: "schoss er mit ihren Helden um die Wette und stach sie ab." For an archery match, see du Chaillu, II 381-2; for sword exercises, *ibid.* 383-4.

<sup>145</sup> Lévi-Provençal, *Byzantion*, XII 16. Dunlop, *IQ*, 1/2, 14, proposes Thüd, Theuda.

<sup>146</sup> *Byzantion*, XII, 13.

<sup>147</sup> Todd, *War*, 226, 13.

<sup>148</sup> Steenstrup, *Normannerne*, II 113 and n. 1; Bugge, *Norges Historie*, II 81.

<sup>149</sup> cf. C. J. S. Marstrander, *Bidrag til det norske sprogs historie i Irland*, in *Skrifter utg. av det Norske Videnskaps Selskap i Oslo*, Hist.-fil. Kl. 1915, Nr. 5, 53, 153.

<sup>150</sup> See the forms recorded by E. H. Lind, *Norsk-isländska dopnamn*, Uppsala 1905-15.

<sup>151</sup> R. L. Bremner, *The Norsemen in Alban*, Glasgow, 1923, 77 ff., citing Muriel Press, *The Laxdale Saga*, London, 1899. It is at the same time curious that, in the disposal of her property, Aud, in Iceland, states that: "I have given the man named Erp, son of earl Meldun, his freedom, for far away was it from my

wish that so high-born a man should bear the name of thrall." Bremner, 81 n. 1, conjectures that "this earl Meldun was Maelduin, son of Muirghes, 'royal heir apparent of Connacht', slain in battle by the troops of Thorgest in 840. (*AU*, 837; *War of the Gaedhil*, xlix, 13). Erp must therefore have been about sixty years of age." To have been the widow of Thorgest/Turgeis, and the hostess of al-Ghazal, this Aud the Deep-Minded could hardly have been less than thirty in 845. In the decade 890-900, she would have been between seventy-five and eighty-five. But for the complicated problems involved in the identification and chronology of Ketill Flatnef, Aud the Deep-Minded and Olaf the White, see Alan Orr Anderson, *Early Sources of Scottish History*, A.D. 500 to 1286, 2 vols, Edinburgh, 1922, index under names.

<sup>152</sup> du Chaillu, I 385 ff; Keary, 54 ff.; McCulloch, *The Celtic and Scandinavian Religions*, London, 1948, 128, 149, 151; G. Turville-Petre, *The Heroic Age of Scandinavia*, London, 1951, 61 and 104 (for instances of temple-priestesses in Iceland).

<sup>153</sup> Keary, 54-5, citing Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, i, 50 (for the women of Ariovistus: but here there seems to be no direct reference to either of his two wives acting as seeresses, see *ibid.* 53); also Dio Cassius, xxxviii, 48; Tacitus, *Histories*, iv, 61 (for Veleda); *Annales Fuldenses*, s.a. 847, for Thiota. (Referring to the Cossacks in the seventeenth century, Dr. Samuel Collins wrote: "These people are much devoted to witch-craft, and count it an extraordinary piece of learning practiced by the chief Woman in the Country." *The Present State of Russia*, London, 1671, 43).

<sup>154</sup> Keary, *Vikings*, 55-7.

<sup>155</sup> Keary, *Vikings*, 58; Chadwick, *The Origin of the English Nation*, Cambridge, 1924 (reprint), 225 ff.; and cf. McCulloch, 113 ff.; Gudmund Schütte, in 'The Cult of Nerthus', *Saga-Book*, VII/1, 1913, 29 ff., finds that "Nerthus, main goddess of the Angles, is identified with Niaerth, or Njörðr, main god of some Scandinavian tribes. The first name is the exact older linguistical stage of the latter." Alexander Bugge, in 'Celtic Tribes in Jutland,' *Saga-Book*, IX/2, 1914-18, 355 ff., believes that the etymology of the name Nerthus cannot be explained from the Germanic languages. He connects it with O. Irish *neri*, O. Cymric, *nerth*, 'power', 'strength'.

More recently *neri* in its varying forms has been much discussed by philologists, cf. A. W. Bailey 'Analecta Indoscythica, I', *JRAS*, 1953, 3/4, 103 ff., on root *nrita-*. "Outside the Indo-Iranian, the Greek ἀνήρ, Phrygian *avap*, Armenian, *ayr*, *ain*, Italic *neriosus* are well-known. The Celtic has retained old

values in Gaulish *nerto-*, *Nerto-maros*, Irish *nert*, 'strength' and 'military force', Welsh *nerth*, 'force, strength' and 'host'. In early Welsh poetry *ner* 'lord', plur. *nyr*, *neredd* are frequent." The corresponding Irish word *ner* probably meant 'man, warrior' originally; the usual meaning 'boar' is thought by Professor Myles Dillon to be due to glossators. "The preceding evidence makes certain that a verb *æner-*: *ænr* existed in Indo-European . . . . It became particularly the word to express the force of man." In discussing the Narts, mythical giants and heroes of the Caucasus, Bailey proposes to postulate "*nrθtra-*, with *-θtra-* to suit the active meaning. The word may then be rendered by 'actively exhibiting *nar*-force' as a noun either of action or of agent. This activity of *nar-* is that of vigorous or violent men (or gods conceived as men)", *ibid.* 114. See also H. Hartmann, *Das Passiv. Eine Studie zur Geistesgeschichte der Kelten, Italiher und Arier*, 1954, 60 and *passim*. In my own view, the concept of Nerthus is pre-Germanic and derives from remote Celto-Cimmerian contacts in the Ponto-Danubian area.

<sup>156</sup> For the aspects of Nerthus/Njörðr as a sea-deity, see E. Magnússon, 'Notes on ship-building and nautical terms of old in the North', *Saga-Book*, IV/1, 1903, 191 ff., 206 ff. As a god of wealth cf. Turville-Petre, *Heroic Age*, 104.

<sup>157</sup> See *Osebergfundet*, edited by A. W. Brøgger, Hj. Falk, Haakon Schetelig, Bind III, Kristiania, 1920, plates iv-vi and figs. 18-36 for details of carvings on wagon. (I am indebted to Mrs. Shane Jameson of Tourin, Co. Waterford, for the loan of the fine volumes of *Osebergfundet*). See also H. Shetelig, 'Queen Asa's sculptors', *Saga-Book*, X/1, 1919-20, 13-56, citing, 51, A. W. Brøgger who believed that the wagon, archaistic in style and recalling earlier work of the seventh century, was "destined exclusively for certain divine ceremonies." The *þáttr* is printed in *Fornmanna Sögur* II, Kaupmannahöfn 1826, 62 ff.; *Flateyjarbók* I, Christiania 1860, 332 ff.

<sup>158</sup> Charles Halliday, *The Scandinavian Kingdom of Dublin*, Dublin, 1862, 129 ff.; also Todd, *War*, lii, 1v. The latter suggestion is improbable on philological grounds.

<sup>159</sup> Dozy, *Hist. Litt.*, 3rd ed., II 278.

<sup>160</sup> cf. E. Magnússon, in *Saga-Book*, IV/1, 1905, 191, 204, 206. An early half-forgotten name of Freyja, daughter of Njörðr was Vanadís, *Gylfaginning*, ch. 35 (*Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*, ed. F. Jónsson, 1931, 38). For a possible connection of the Vanir with the Veneti, see Magnússon, *ibid.* 206 ff.

<sup>161</sup> *Ynglinga saga*, ch. 4: "While Njörðr was with the Vanir, he had had his sister to wife, for it was lawful there so to do, and their children were Frey and Freyja."

<sup>162</sup> Proposed by Gudmund Schütte, *Our Forefathers, The Gothic Nations*, Cambridge, 1929, I 224, citing Adam of Bremen, IV, 26; cf. also the English words *frigg*, *freck*, *frike*, *frisk*; and possibly *prick* (see *New English Dictionary*, VII 1345; V 17a and b).

<sup>163</sup> Georges Dumézil, *La Saga de Hadingus (Saxo-Grammaticus, I, vi-viii): du Mythe au Roman*, Bibl. de l'École des Hautes Etudes: Sciences Religieuses, lxxvie vol., Paris, 1953, 66.

<sup>164</sup> *ibid.* 57 n. 2.

<sup>165</sup> *ibid.* for examples.

<sup>166</sup> du Chaillu, *The Viking Age*, II, chapters 1 and 2. For a more recent view see R. George Thomas, 'Some exceptional women in the sagas', *Saga-Book*, XIII/5, 307 ff.

<sup>167</sup> For political marriages during the Viking period in Ireland, see Eleanor Hull, 'The Gael and the Gall: Notes on the social condition of Ireland during the Norse period', *Saga-Book*, V/2, 1908, 378 ff.

<sup>168</sup> Dumézil, *Hadingus*, 56. Queen Nūd's reply to al-Ghazal recalls 'the very witty remark' recorded by Dio as having been made to Julia Augusta by the wife of a Caledonian chieftain. "When the empress was jesting with her, after the treaty, about the free intercourse of her sex with men in Britain, she replied: 'We fulfil the demands of nature in a much better way than do you Roman women; for we consort openly with the best men, whereas you let yourselves be debauched in secret by the vilest.' Such was the retort of the British woman." Dio's *Roman History*, lxxvii, 16 (translation by Ernest Cary on the basis of the version of H. B. Foster, in the Loeb Classical Library).

<sup>169</sup> Lévi-Provençal, *Byzantion*, XII 16.

<sup>170</sup> *ibid.* 11.

<sup>171</sup> Above, text, 22.

<sup>172</sup> Lévi-Provençal, *Byzantion*, XII 12.

<sup>173</sup> Above, text, 22 ff.

<sup>174</sup> Lévi-Provençal, *Byzantion*, XII 12-14, n. 1, for translation of the text of the anecdote in the anonymous manuscript of Fez.

<sup>175</sup> For the story of the cargo from Beirut, see N. Jorga, *Histoire de la vie Byzantine*, 3 vols., Bucarest, 1934, II 83; for the incident of the dwarf, Campbell Bonner, 'A story of Iconoclastic times', *Byzantion*, XXII, 1952, 237-241; for an appreciation of the character of the empress Theodora as regent during the minority of Michael III, A. A. Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*: tome I, *La Dynastie d'Amorium*, Bruxelles, 1935, 191 ff.

<sup>176</sup> Lévi-Provençal, *Byzantion*, XII 14 and n. 1: 'Il semble impossible que Michel ait eu plus de quatre ans en 840.'

Vasiliev, *La Dynastie d'Amorium*, 191, allows Michael six years at his accession in 842. I. I. Tolstoy, *Vizantiiskiya Monety*, St. Petersburg, 1914, 1022, states that Michael was born in 839.

For the Arabic text of the poem see Lévi-Provençal, *Byzantion*, XII 24; for French rendering, 13-14. The expression 'fille des Césars' in this poem may be compared with the compliment 'queen and daughter of a King' in the conversation between al-Ghazal and queen Nūd. Both expressions owe something to poetic licence. The empress Theodora was not of imperial blood. Nūd may have been a daughter of one of the petty kings in Norway.

<sup>177</sup> Eiríkr Magnússon, *Heimskringla*, IV, Index, London, 1905, 337.

<sup>178</sup> Geoffrey Keating, *History*, III 222-31. 'The sons of Turgesius', *clann Tuirgéis*, Sitric and his brothers Tor and Maghnus, were drowned in a sea-fight off Dundalk. There was also a daughter, named (Ir.) *Béibhionn*, *ibid.*, 222, 224. But the reference is probably erroneous since it is in the context of events of the mid-tenth century. See text, p. 58 and my notes 206, 208 below.

<sup>179</sup> Above, text, 21.

<sup>180</sup> cf. poem edited by Lévi-Provençal, *Byzantion*, XII 13-14.

<sup>181</sup> *ibid.*, 12, n. 1.

<sup>182</sup> Above, text, 23 ff.

<sup>183</sup> Lévi-Provençal, *Byzantion*, XII 12, n. 1.

<sup>184</sup> Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire*, I 275.

<sup>185</sup> Dozy, *Hist. Litt.*, 3rd ed., II 278.

<sup>186</sup> See above, text, 23. Jacob, *Arabische Berichte*, 40, renders the last sentence: "Sie war schon in der Tat ganz nett (*fiha halawe*), aber ich erwarb durch solche Rede ihre Zuneigung und erlangte von ihr mehr als ich wollte." Dozy/Fabricius, 125, gives: "Elle n'était pas mal, mais à vrai dire, j'avais besoin d'elle et en lui parlant de la manière dont je le faisais, je gagnais ses bonnes grâces et j'obtenais encore plus que j'avais osé espérer".

<sup>187</sup> cf. A. Walsh, *Scandinavian Relations with Ireland during the Viking Period*, 30-31.

<sup>188</sup> As Kunik suspected, *Berufung*, 290, n. 1.

<sup>189</sup> *hiems asperrima*, according to Prudentius, at beginning of 845, *Annales Bertiniani*, p. 32, cited by Lot and Halphen, 130, n. 1.

<sup>190</sup> For the Seine and Elbe operations in 845, see Steenstrup, I 153-6; Vogel, 104-5; Lot and Halphen, 130-41; Keary, 254-63; Kendrick, 203-4; Shetelig, *VA*, I 112; Hodgkin, II 503.

<sup>191</sup> Lot and Halphen, 132-3. *Ann. Bertin.*, 32, s.a. 845, and *Ann. Fuldenses*, 35, s.a. 845, call the pirates *Nordomanni*, *Nordmanni*.

<sup>192</sup> Lot and Halphen, 132, n. 1, citing original sources.

<sup>193</sup> *ibid.* 132 and n. 2, citing *Translatio*, chs. 2-4. "Illis autem e finibus suis cum magna egressis superbia, coeperunt praedando per diversas insulas discurrere maris quo usque fluvium Sequanae ingrederentur." For the attack on the Frisian coast after the Paris operation, see Lot and Halphen, 139.

<sup>194</sup> Lot and Halphen, 132, n. 1, citing *Miracles de St. Riquier*; Vogel, 104, n. 1, citing *Chron. Fontan.*, s.a. 845, "Ragneri dux Nortmannorum", and other sources.

<sup>195</sup> For these historians see n. 190 above.

<sup>196</sup> For the account of the Seine operation and the sack of Paris, I follow Lot and Halphen's text and notes. Keary's description, factual and interpretative, remains the most readable.

<sup>197</sup> The Frisian coast was a part of the dominion of the Emperor Lothar, brother and often rival of the other Carling monarchs, Charles the Bald and Louis the German. For dates of Viking movement round the mouth of the Seine, see Lot and Halphen, 138-9 and 139 n. 1; also Vogel, 115.

<sup>198</sup> Lot and Halphen, 140.

<sup>199</sup> *ibid.*; cf. also Vogel, 113-5.

<sup>200</sup> Lot and Halphen, 140, n. 1, indicated that they proposed to discuss the death of Ragnar Lodbrok in the second part of *Le Règne de Charles le Chauve* (1909). I cannot trace that this part ever appeared; it is not included in the bibliography of *Cambridge Medieval History*, III, Chap. 2, 1930, where reference is made only to part I. cf. also Vogel, 115.

<sup>201</sup> Alan Orr Anderson, I 293-301.

<sup>202</sup> Anderson, I 294, n. 3, citing *Mon. Germaniae Hist.*, II 228; for other references to original sources, see Lot and Halphen, 140, n. 1.

<sup>203</sup> Charles Halliday, *The Scandinavian Kingdom of Dublin*, Dublin, 1882, 29, n. 3, citing Langebek, *Chron. Reg. Danorum*, I 156.

<sup>204</sup> *Ragnar Loðbrók and Turgeis*. John O'Donovan, the editor of the *Three Fragments* (1860) first proposed that Ragnar Lodbrok was "probably the Turgesius of Irish history", *Three Fragments*, 124, n. o. Todd, *War*, liii, n. 2, recalled that O'Donovan had "borrowed the opinion" from Charles Halliday, the noted antiquary and historian of the Scandinavian kingdom of Dublin. Todd discussed Halliday's "very acute and ingenious arguments" at some length (Introduction to *War*, liii-lv and notes), without coming to a positive conclusion. Steenstrup, *Normannerne*, I 104-5, rejected Todd's exposition of Halliday's theory. It was not until 1882 that Halliday's researches were edited after his

death by John Prendergast. Halliday treated as legendary the accounts of Ragnar's death in Northumbria — a view which the Scots scholar Anderson seems to have reached without reference to Halliday (*Sources*, I 308, n. L). Hodgkin, *Anglo-Saxons*, II, 1935, 526-7, was inclined to credit the story of "the great vengeance" by the sons of Ragnar Lothbrok on king Aelle of Northumbria; as also Allen Mawer, 'Ragnar Lothbrok and his sons', *Saga-Book*, VI/1, 1909, 88. In my own view, Halliday's arguments against the death of Ragnar in England are valid (Halliday, 24-8). Again, the details of Ragnar's activities in Ireland between the years 832-5 show some coincidence with the career of Turgeis. But according to Irish sources, Turgeis' activity in Ireland over the period was continuous while, in the Scandinavian sources, the interest of Ragnar in Ireland seems to have been sporadic. (Halliday, 28-31, for detailed citation of sources).

<sup>205</sup> Keating (Dineen ed.), III 223-31.

<sup>206</sup> To the time of Donnchadh son of Flann Sionna, *ardrí*, 919-44, (Todd, *War*, 5, 37, 246; also Fr. Paul Walsh, *The Ua Maelechlainn, Kings of Meath*, Dublin, 1941, 2); of Ceallachán, king of Munster (Todd, *War*, 3); and of Cinnéide son of Lorcán, heir of Cashel, d. 949 (Todd, *War*, 45).

<sup>207</sup> *Havalds saga Hårfagra*, ch. 33, cited (as ch. 35) by Sir Henry Howorth in 'Harald Fairhair and his ancestors', *Saga-Book*, IX/1, 1920, 223, 243. cf. p. 16 above.

<sup>208</sup> Todd, *War*, 231.

<sup>209</sup> *AU* at 847 = 848; see also *Four Masters* at 846.

<sup>210</sup> Halliday, 32. In his edition of the *Four Masters* (1867), O'Donovan had already recalled that earl Tomhráir's ring was preserved by the Danes (*sic*) at Dublin in the year 994, when it was carried off by Maelsechlainn II, High King of Ireland, and he expressed the view, perhaps also derived from Halliday, that "there are strong reasons for believing that he was the ancestor of the kings of Dublin" (*Four Masters*, I 475, n. (b)). The descent of the Dublin kings presents many obscurities. Alexander Bugge (*Contributions to the History of the Norsemen in Ireland; I The Royal Race of Dublin*, Christiania, 1900, 13-14) suspected that there was "consanguinity between the Dublin and Vestfold kings" but found it "impossible to decide" whether the Dublin kings were also connected with Turgeis. Allen Mawer, *Saga-Book*, VI/1, 1909, 80-82, believed Ivar the Boneless, who was king in Dublin with his brother (?) Olaf intermittently between 852 and 873, to have been identical with a son of Ragnar Lothbrok. For exhaustive discussion of the relationship and

descendants of Olaf and Ivar, see Todd, *War*, Appendix D, 'Genealogy of the Scandinavian Chieftains named as leaders of the Invasions of Ireland', 263-302; also, for a more recent approach, Anderson, *Sources*, I, parts IX-XIII, 276-391, and W. Hunter Marshall, *The Sudreys in Early Viking Times*, Glasgow, 1929, ch. 3, 'Olaf the White'.

<sup>211</sup> For Thor names, see Miss Phillpotts in *CMH*, II 482-3; for putative descent of Olaf the White from Ragnar, see Anderson, *Sources*, I 307, table showing descent of Olaf the White.

<sup>212</sup> Hodgkin, *Anglo-Saxons*, II 504, 502.

<sup>213</sup> In passing, it may be noted that king Horik had attacked the dominions of Louis the German on the Elbe. He had no quarrel with Charles the Bald. On the other hand, Louis had been the sometime patron of Harold and Rorik of Friesland who, Hodgkin suggests, may have been closely connected with Ragnar Lothbrok.

<sup>214</sup> *AU* at 848 = 849, 849 = 850, 850 = 851; *Cogadh* at 851; cf. also Kendrick, 276-9; Shetelig, *VA*, I 51-3.

<sup>215</sup> Todd, *War*, lxxiii, n. 5.

<sup>216</sup> Under year 845, after the account of the battle of Roscrea, the author of *Cogadh* continues: "Much evil and distress was received from them and received by them all which is not written here" (Todd, *War*, 227). A learned discussion on Irish chronology is to be found in *AU*, IV, Introduction, i-clxxxii, by Rev. B. MacCarthy, D.D. (1901). According to A. O. Anderson, *Sources*, I, lxxvii, the position may be summarised as follows: "As a survival of their origin in annotated paschal calendars, Irish annals indicated the years by data copied from a calendar; such as the number in the week of the 1st of January (the ferial number) and the age of the moon on that day (the epact); and sometimes the concurrents, and the Dionysian Golden Numbers . . . But copyists often omitted these data, and indicated a new annal solely by the abbreviation K or Kl, i.e. 'Kalends of January'. Years entered in this way without events were in danger of being omitted altogether by later copyists. When several years in succession were entered without events, errors were sometimes made in the number of K's transcribed. The result is that the sequence is an insufficient indication of the years intended . . . Irish annals have hardly yet received the editing that they deserve."

If the dating of the capture of Turgeis to 846 instead of 845 is valid, it involves revision of the dating of the death of Feidhlimidh, King of Munster (*ob.* 846 = 847, *AU*); also the election to the High Kingship of Maelsechlainn of Meath (*AU*, 846 = 847); and

of his death. But Anderson has already observed (*Sources*, I 282, n. I) that: "Maelsechlainn died, according to *AU*, I, 372, on Tuesday, 30th November, 861 = 862, in the sixteenth year of his reign: but 30th November was Monday in 862, Tuesday in 863. (This point was first noted by O'Donovan, *Three Fragments*, 151, n. b; cf. also Todd, *War*, lxix, n. 4.) By his '6th year' the Fragment means probably 852; but the year-section begins by an event placed by *AU* in 848 = 849." On this basis, the first year of Maelsechlainn as High King of Ireland would, according to *AU*, fall in 848; according to the *Three Fragments* in 847. On Anderson's revised reading of Maelsechlainn's regnal dates from *AU*, I propose the following sequence of events: 846: Turgeis taken prisoner by Maelsechlainn and afterwards drowned in Loch Ainninn (Keating, III 183; in Loch Owel, *AU*, *Cogadh*); "the year before the drowning of Niall Caille" (*Cogadh*, also *AU*), 847; "the second year before the death of Feidhlimidh" (*Cogadh*, also *AU*), when "Maelsechlainn begins to reign" (as High King of Ireland), (*AU*), 848. This last date, 848, corresponds with that of the effective defeat of the Norwegians in Ireland and the despatch of an embassy by Maelsechlainn to Charles the Bald (cf. Anderson, *Sources*, I 279, citing Prudentius of Troyes, *Annales*, s.a. 848). The accidental death of the Ulster prince, Niall Caille, and the disappearance from the scene of the formidable Feidhlimidh, king of Munster, doubtless eased the way of Maelsechlainn of Meath to the High Kingship in 848.

On Feidhlimidh, Todd (*War*, xlvi, n. I) wrote: "The sacrilegious life of this plundering bishop-king did not prevent his being regarded as a saint after his death." He suggests that the latter years of his life may have been spent in retirement and penitence and that there must be some mistake in the date assigned to his death in *AU*. (See also my note 239.)

<sup>217</sup> For text of Giraldus Cambrensis, see O'Meara's ed., 1951, 104-5; for Campion, *Holinshed's Chronicles*, 1808 ed., VI 89; for Hanmer, *Ancient Irish Histories*, II, Dublin, 1809, 169; cf. also Lynch, *Cambrensis Eversus*, Kelly's ed., 3 vols, Dublin, 1848-52, III 297 ff.; Hennessy, *AU* I 350, n. 6.

<sup>218</sup> Campion and Hanmer follow Cambrensis in giving "the wily question of the King of Meath", which Keating does not repeat. Although Keating is familiar enough with the work of Cambrensis and frequently quotes him, it is clear that his account of Turgeis and Maelsechlainn is based on other materials. Of the *Three Fragments*, Fragment I ends at the year 734 or 735; Fragment II at the year 704; Fragment III begins at the year 851. John O'Donovan, the editor, comments at 115, n. I: "This extract,

which is evidently the continuation of a long story, seems to have been taken from some history of the Danish invasions, now lost."

<sup>219</sup> Todd, *War*, li, n. 6.

<sup>220</sup> Rinntown = Rinndun, probably from Ir. *rind dún* = the *dún* or fort on the point, cape or promontory, see *CDIL*, "R", 1944, cols. 71-4 under meanings (a) and (c); but possibly *righdún* = royal fort.

The ruins of the Norman structure of Rinntown still stand in isolated magnificence on the western shore of Loch Rí. The main wall, now reinforced by massive trunks of ivy, covers the narrow neck of a peninsula jutting into the waters of the loch, shallow enough along the shore. They enclose an area of several acres covered with forest growth. The traces of a stone wharf and slips for boats run down to the water.

The original *dún* of Rinntown was pre-Norman and probably pre-Norse — dominating as it did the narrow neck of the loch, here about a mile across, and the passage to the upper Shannon. There is a valuable discussion on Norman and pre-Norman fortifications in Ireland by T. S. Westropp, 'On Irish Motes and early Norman Castles', *JRSAI* XXXIV, 1904, 313-45 with refs. to Turgeis, 330 and 334; also, criticising some of Westropp's views, see G. H. Orpen, 'Motes and Norman Castles in Ireland', *ibid.* XXXVII/2, 1907, 123-52. The anonymous author of a note on 'Lough Ree and its Islands' believed that 'Randown or St. John's Point' had been previously fortified when the Normans first built there in 1227, *ibid.* 323-8.

In *JRSAI* LXV/2, 177-90, Captain J. E. Fitzpatrick devotes a special paper to 'Rintown Castle, Co. Roscommon: with a comparison of the systems of fortification used in Ireland in the 12th and 13th centuries' (with photographs). He believes that a rectangular area enclosed by earth ramparts, above the scarp of the main Norman fosse, represent an outer ward or bailey which may be the remains of a fortification which existed long before the castle was founded.

The toponym 'John's' or 'St. John's' is recorded four times in the immediate neighbourhood. According to the author of 'Lough Ree and its Islands', the story that seven kings named John ruled at Rinntown is not traceable before 1838. The church was supposed to have been founded by an Irish saint, John of Carlan, of Teach Eoin in Hy Many, who appears in the calendars on 17th August. The local 'pattern' was, however, held some days later; a tradition told how John was angry with his servant for his cruelty to a horse, and how the man was drowned when

crossing the lake. (For the legends of drowning connected with St. John, see my note 231 below). The author cites Archdall for the statement that Rathdown (*recte* Randown) was a house of Hospitallers in the reign of King John; and the *Four Masters* record under 1372 that Shane More O'Dugan, a learned historian and *ollamh* of Hy Many, died at Randown among the monks of St. John the Baptist. In O'Donovan's *Tribes and Customs of Hy Many*, Dublin, 1843, 109, there is a reference to a chieftain of Hy Many buried in the Abbey of St. John the Baptist at Randown in the year 1493.

<sup>221</sup> Keating (Dineen ed.), III 183. For a modern view of the High Kingship of Ireland, see D. A. Binchy, 'The Fair of Taitiu and the Feast of Tara', *Ériu*, XVIII, 1958, 118-38. The author finds that "while the king of Tara, as the head of the far-flung confederation of Uí Néill dynasties was normally the most powerful monarch in Ireland, his 'sovereignty' over the other provincial kings is a fiction invented by the 'synthetic' historians . . . This 'sovereignty' had neither a legal nor a historical basis."

<sup>222</sup> Du Chaillu, *Viking Age*, I 394, n. I. "In Orvar Odd we see that the Volvas performed the foretelling ceremony with fifteen boys and fifteen girls. It seems that night was the chosen time." Cambrensis, like Keating, has fifteen youths; Campion and Hanmer, who followed Cambrensis, sixteen — presumably a slip.

<sup>223</sup> cf. G. Turville-Petre, 'Professor Georges Dumézil', *Saga-Book*, XIV/1-2, 1953-5, 134; and Dumézil, *Hadingus*, 127 (see note 163 above).

<sup>224</sup> cf. Tacitus, *Germania*, 40.

<sup>225</sup> "The pigs (Ragnar's sons) would grunt now if they knew the hog's suffering", du Chaillu, II 453, from *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*; see also Allen Mawer, 'Ragnar Lothbrok and his sons', *Saga-Book*, VI/1, 1909, 73, where 'pigs' is rendered 'griskins' from ON *gríss*.

<sup>226</sup> Keary, 47; cf. also Saxo Grammaticus (ed. A. Holder, 1886), 263. In the cult of the mother goddess among the Baltic Aestii, boars' masks were worn, see Tacitus, *Germania*, ch. 45.

<sup>227</sup> Adam of Bremen, IV, 26; cf. also Saxo Grammaticus, 185.

<sup>228</sup> Fraser, *The Golden Bough*, II (= *The Magic Art*, II), 144.

<sup>229</sup> *ibid.* 364.

<sup>230</sup> For Edmund Campion's characterization of Maelsechlainn, see *Holinshed's Chronicles*, 1808 ed., VI, 89. But according to Lynch, *Cambrensis Eversus*, Kelly's ed., 295, the ancient laws prescribed "that all persons guilty of grievous crimes, and especially tyrants, traitors and parricides, should be sewn up

alive in a sack and thrown into a river." cf. also Joyce, *Social History*, I 211.

In 851, Maelsechlainn, by another ruse, captured his vassal, Cinaeth (Cinnéide) king of the Ciannachta who "was dragged out and drowned in a dirty streamlet". Here, again, the charge against the victim was sacrilege (*Three Fragments*, 118-9 and n. s). In 864, Conchobhar, son of Donnchad, 'half-king' of Meath, was drowned by Olaf, the Norse king of Dublin. The Celtic princes generally disposed of their rivals by drowning, breaking their backs with rocks, starvation in prison, or blinding. While the bodies of enemies were decapitated after battle, there seems to have been a superstition against formal shedding of blood of social equals. Similar inhibitions existed among the Scyths and Turks — hence execution by the bowstring in the Ottoman empire until comparatively recent times. Among the Celts, the superstition probably dates back to the remote period of their origins in central Europe.

<sup>281</sup> cf. Fraser, *The Golden Bough*, II (= *The Magic Art*, II), 65, 92; V (= *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*, I), 253; X (= *Balder the Beautiful*, I), 160-1, 171-2, 181-2.

Writing of Midsummer Eve (23rd June) and Midsummer Day (24th June), Fraser, *ibid.* X 160, expressed the view that "a faint tinge of Christianity has been given to them by naming Midsummer Day after St. John the Baptist, but we cannot doubt that the celebration dates from a long time before the beginning of our era." In pagan times human sacrifice sometimes formed part of the ritual of the day. "In this connection it is worth while to note that in pagan Europe water as well as fire seems to have claimed its human victim on Midsummer Day. Some German rivers, such as the Saale and the Spree, are believed still to require their victim on that day; hence people are careful not to bathe at this perilous season . . . Many a fisherman of the Elbe knows better than to launch his boat and trust himself to the treacherous river on Midsummer Day. And Samland fishermen will not go to sea at this season . . . In the neighbourhood of the Lake of Constance the Swabian peasants say that on St. John's Day the Angel or St. John must have a swimmer or a climber . . . According to others St. John will have three dead men on his day . . . In Cologne the saint is more exacting; on his day he requires no less than fourteen men; seven of them must be swimmers and seven climbers. Accordingly when we find that in one of the districts where a belief of this sort prevails, it used to be customary to throw a person into the water on Midsummer Day, we can hardly help concluding that this was

only a modification of an older custom of actually drowning a human being in the river at that time." (Fraser, *ibid.* XI (= *Balder the Beautiful*, II), 26-27.) Along the lower reaches of the Blackwater river in Co. Waterford, a superstition still exists that if one man is drowned, the river will take two more before the end of the summer. Here, as in the case of the Saale (originally a Celtic name) the water remains the hungry god, without St. John being introduced.

It is curious that legends of St. John are so closely associated with Turgeis' castle at Rinntown; even the story of St. John of Carlan's drowned servant seems to reflect in a homely way the tradition of drowning at the behest of St. John. (See my note 220 above.)

<sup>232</sup> Todd, *War*, 227, *Cogadh* fragment from Book of Leinster, ch. xv: "The foreigners came to Roscrea in this year, on the feast of Paul and Peter, and the fair had then begun, and they were given battle, and the foreigners were defeated through the grace of Paul and Peter, and immense numbers were slain; and Earl Onphile was struck with a stone there, so that he was killed thereby. Some of the men of Mumhain (Munster) were fasting to propitiate Paul and Peter the night before."

<sup>233</sup> In *AU* the battle of Magh Itha is recorded *before* the capture of Turgeis by Maelsechlainn, *s.a.* 844 = 845. The fight at Roscrea is not mentioned. *Chronicon Scotorum*, *s.a.* 845 has the battle of Magh Itha and the capture and drowning of Turgeis. The fight at Roscrea is not mentioned. *Cogadh* ignores Magh Itha; in *Cogadh* events for the years immediately before and after 845 are given in very confused sequence.

<sup>234</sup> See above, text, p. 25. 'The ruler of that city' was Ramiro I (838-850). He had repulsed a Viking attack in August 844 (see my text above, p. 8) and in 846 was in a state of irregular war with Abd al-Rahman II (see Ramon Menendez Pidal, *Historia de España*, VI, 1956, 62 and n. 70). Nevertheless, in the conditions of the time, a free passage through Asturian territory for al-Ghazal and the Viking envoys was possible.

According to *Folklore*, LXVIII, Dec. 1957, 489-91, "the first authenticated pilgrimage to Compostella was in 849". But the city was already the national sanctuary of the Asturians before the death of Alfonso the Chaste in 838 (cf. Menendez Pidal, VI 56).

The feast of St. James, the culmination of the pilgrimage, fell on 25th July. If my calculations are correct, al-Ghazal would have returned to Cordova in August 846. Just after Christmas of the same year, an embassy from Abd al-Rahman II attended the court of Charles the Bald at Rheims 'to seek peace and alliance'

(Lot and Halphen, 170, citing *Ann. Bertiniani*, 34, s.a. 847). In the view of Lot and Halphen, this embassy was undertaken to clarify the situation on the Pyrenean border, but it is possible that the catastrophe of Turgeis in the summer of 846 and the changed situation round the Atlantic coastlands, which relieved the pressures on the Frankish kingdom, may have been factors which moved Abd al-Rahman to seek a conciliation with Charles the Bald.

<sup>235</sup> Lot and Halphen, 139, n. 1.

<sup>236</sup> See above, p. 10 and note 49.

<sup>237</sup> In chapters xvi, xvii and xviii of *Cogadh*, immediately following the reference to the capture and subsequent drowning of Turgeis and the account of the battle of Roscrea, the author lists in some detail the operations of Viking fleets in what seems to have been a planned counter-offensive against the territories of the Northern and Southern Uí Néill and particularly against Maelsechlainn's kingdom of Meath. The attacks on the eastern districts of Ulster and along the Boyne may have been directed from the north, but it is probable that 'the great fleet' which appeared to the south of Dublin and ravaged most of Leinster was composed of the forces withdrawn from the Seine in the summer of 846. The attack on the south coast, Cork and Munster, described last in *Cogadh* (ch. xix), can have coincided with the arrival of the Westfaldingi from the Loire.

Maelsechlainn must have been seriously shaken by the attacks in Meath. He was defeated by one of his vassals, Tigernach of Lagore (*AU* 845 = 846), and had to contend with a *bagaud* of the tributary tribes, Luighne and Gailenga, "sons of death who were plundering the districts after the manner of the Gentiles". However, he demolished their island stronghold on Loch Ramor (near Virginia, Co. Cavan) during 847 (*AU* 846 = 847). Towards the end of 847 and into 848 the situation changed. The Vikings, probably the Westfaldingi from the Loire who had attacked round the south coast, were defeated in several fights in SW Munster (*Cogadh*, ch. xviii) and Cearbhall, king of Ossory gained a victory over the Viking Agonn (? Hákon), *AU* 846 = 847 (proposed 848), who seems to have commanded the Norsemen of Dublin (*Four Masters* 845 = 848).

<sup>238</sup> The winter of 847 = 848 was bitter in Ireland. "Great snow on the Kalends of February" (*AU* 847 bis = 848). These conditions must have made more difficult the flow of reinforcement to the Norsemen. *AU* lists the series of Irish victories: "battle (gained) by Maelsechnaill over Foreigners at Forach (now Farragh, Co. Meath) wherein seven hundred were slain. A battle (gained)

by Olchobar king of Munster, and by Lorcán son of Cellach, with the Leinstermen, over the Foreigners, at Sciath Nechtain, in which Tomrair erell, tanist of the king of Lochlann, and twelve hundred along with him were slain. A victory by Tigernach over the Gentiles in Daire Dísirt Dochonna (oakwood of Dochonna's desert, unidentified, but hardly 'Derry' as in Shetelig, *VA*, I 52), in which twelve hundred were slain. (*Four Masters s.a.* 846, *Chron. Scot. s.a.* 848, give the loss of the Gentiles at 'twelve score', which, in Todd's view, *War*, 355, n. 13, "seems more reasonable".) A victory by the Eoghanacht Caisil over the Gentiles at Dún Maeletuille ('probably near Cashel', *AU*, IV 136), in which five hundred were slain."

<sup>239</sup> The discomfiture of the Norsemen was complete when a Danish fleet of seven score ships (not 104 as in Shetelig, *VA*, I 52) "came to exercise power over the foreigners who were before them, so that they disturbed all Ireland afterwards", *AU*, I 357. The first intervention of the Danes was in 848 = 849, *AU* and *Four Masters* in the Clarendon Codex version (see note "L" in O'Donovan's ed., I 477). *Cogadh* records only the further wave of Danes arriving in 851, adding that "it was in the reign of Feidhlimidh, son of Crimhthann, that all these ravages were perpetrated" (Todd, *War*, 21). (This reference seems to confirm doubts as to the death of Feidhlimidh as early as 848, see last paragraph of my note 215 above.)

The Danish intervention against the Norwegians in Ireland preceded the first serious Danish attack on England in the winter of 850-851, cf. Hodgkin, *Anglo-Saxons*, II 497.

<sup>240</sup> Anderson, *Sources*, I 279, citing Prudentius of Troyes, *Annales*, in *Mon. German. Hist., Scriptores*, 443, *s.a.* 848. cf. also Kenny, *Sources*, I 554. There were numerous monkish fugitives from the pillaged Irish monasteries in France during the middle and latter part of the ninth century; it may be assumed that these men helped to maintain contacts between Charles the Bald and his bishops and Irish rulers like Maelsechlainn and Feidhlimidh. The celebrated Irish scholar, Sedulius Scottus or Sedulius Scottigena arrived at Liège about 848 and "it has been suggested that he was a member or companion of the embassy which arrived on the Continent in 848 from Maelsechlainn. This, however, is pure supposition. The mention of Ruadri, king of Wales 844-878, suggests that Sedulius may have spent some time in that country on his way to the Continent." Sedulius was the author of a poem which may have been written before he went to the continent. It was entitled *De strage Normannorum* and celebrated a victory over the Norsemen — "gained probably by the Irish" (Kenny, *ibid.* 561).

## EDITORS' NOTE

*Saga-Book XV 3* (1960) was devoted to Mr W. E. D. Allen's monograph, *The Poet and the Spæ-wife*. Because this was also printed for issue as a separate publication, it was newly paged (viii + 102 pp.), and did not run on from *Saga-Book XV 1-2* (pp. 1-148). Since this Part 3 is properly to be counted as pp. 149-258 in Vol. XV, the present Part 4 is paginated from p. 259 onward.



DR B. J. TIMMER

1904-1961

Benno Timmer, president-elect of the Society, died on 22nd June, 1961. He was born in Holland and studied at the University of Groningen, where he took his doctorate in 1934. He settled in this country after the last war and since 1954 had been Reader in English in the University of London at Queen Mary College.

His chief work lay in the Old English field, but his enthusiasm for Norse studies was kindled by Professor B. Sijmons and it never flagged. Benno made the invaluable index that accompanies the *Kommentar* volumes of the Gering-Sijmons edition of the Eddaic poems (1931) and won Sijmons's warm thanks for 'seine gewissenhafte und verständnisvolle arbeit'. Some evidence of his abiding interest in Norse studies and a notable tribute to the line of scholarly tradition from which he himself sprang may be found in his paper, 'Northern Research in the Netherlands', in *Saga-Book* XIV 211-25. It was with typical cheerful zest that he accepted the post of assistant secretary of the Society in 1956.

Benno will be remembered by many as a teacher and scholar. We who were privileged to be his friends will remember him for much more. We shall remember his love of music and his own great musical gifts. We shall remember his keen and kindly eye for the deserving younger student. We shall remember his discerning enjoyment of social occasions and how much he himself added to any good company he was in. We shall remember the enthusiasm with which he looked forward to his presidency, appreciative of the honour and eager to make it memorable. We shall above all remember him as a man modest and gentle and tolerant, who gave his friends more than they could ever give him.

P.G.F.



## THE ICELANDIC LIFE OF ST DUNSTAN

BY LENORE HARTY

**D**UNSTANUS SAGA is found on folios 1r to 5v of DMS A.M. 180b fol., a vellum which is written in a coarse hand of the fifteenth century and "is black and in part difficult to read, but complete save one leaf out of which a strip cut, is (*sic*) dividing the page into two parts, which have been sewn together to keep them right after the bit was clipped out".<sup>1</sup> The manuscript may have suffered still more since this was written, for fol. 3 r and v. has a large patch across lines 21-29, making all but a few words impossible to read on a microfilm, while there are tears at the top and bottom of the left side and repairs on the right, affecting lines 1-6 and 41-48. At various other places, some letters which Vigfússon could read are not visible on the microfilm.

That one folio of the manuscript was damaged before the saga was copied is shown on fol. 4 r and v where the scribe has written on either side of a V-shaped tear.

The saga has been printed, "without any attempt at criticism", by Vigfússon in the appendix to volume II of the Rolls Series *Icelandic Sagas*, pp. 385-408. Apart from the omission of one or two words and an inconsistency of spelling which is not found in the manuscript, this edition reproduces the text accurately and, as mentioned above, contains readings that cannot be deciphered on a microfilm of the manuscript.

The work consists of eighteen chapters marked in the manuscript by the indentation of the first few lines of each. The first chapter tells us that Brother Árne Laurentii has been moved by the prayers of some men of goodwill to compile this account of St Dunstan's life and

<sup>1</sup> *Icelandic Sagas*, ed. Guðbrandur Vigfússon (Rolls Series 88; 1887), II xxiii-xxiv. The cut leaf is fol. 2.

miracles, even though he refused at first, knowing himself unnt for the task. He bids all to listen with humility, and excuse his strange and repulsive choice of words, remembering that Dunstan will pray more for them if they listen to these "adventures" of his, which have been written not only in honour of the saint but for the hearers' joy and profit too.

In chapter 2, which we shall see has been taken directly from one of Áрни's sources, the author urges his listeners to follow after St Dunstan, but as they are all weighed down by their sins, he will make a ladder of all those things found "in praises, hymns and other writings", so that they can climb on it up to the heavenly heights.

Dunstan was born into a family even more renowned for their good habits and godly wisdom than for their dignities, honour and wealth; in fact his parents led such a holy life that their son was permitted to see them among the hosts of angels in heaven.

Chapter 3 gives a description of this vision, in which Dunstan saw his mother being married to the highest king. An angel, seeing him silent while all the others were rejoicing, offered to teach him the song they were singing at this wedding feast. This hymn Dunstan repeated so often that he knew it by heart when he awakened and had it written down and sung in Holy Church.

In chapter 4 we are told that while Dunstan's mother was pregnant, she went to service on Candlemas Day and was holding a taper like the others. Suddenly all the candles went out, and then God re-lit her taper with heavenly fire. The people rejoiced at this strange sign and kindled their tapers from hers, and so God revealed by this that he had selected this child, while still in his mother's womb, to light up those men's hearts which grow cold towards godly love.

At this point (fol. 2r), 20 lines are missing from the manuscript and after this gap we find the story in the middle of an account of Dunstan's adventures when he

was ill as a boy at Glastonbury. The description of this illness is missing, but we find Dunstan being attacked by devils in the shape of dogs, an event which occurred, according to other versions, when in his delirium he walked towards the monastery from the infirmary where he had been sleeping. Dunstan cut at these howling dogs with a twig he had in his hand and they fled down to hell. When he came to the monastery he found the church locked, but climbed up the builders' scaffolding and got into the church *öðru-megin þekjunnar* and from there to the dormitory where he was found sleeping safe and sound. When questioned, he could tell the brothers nothing of what happened after he had lain down to sleep in the housewife's lodging the night before. This housewife, however, bore witness to all these wondrous happenings so that all men might know them. And so Dunstan grew in favour with God and men.

Chapter 6 tells us that although Dunstan was wealthy and well-born, he did useful and secular work so that the fiend would not find him idle. After the gap of 20 lines (fol. 2v), the author is in the midst of a description of the six ages of man. When Dunstan had come to the third age of adolescence, he left Glastonbury and went to live with his foster-brother (*sic*), Adelmus, Archbishop of Rouen,<sup>2</sup> who seeing his promise, placed him in the service of King Athelstan.

When Athelstan died, his brother "Edward"<sup>3</sup> succeeded to the throne and on the advice of Dunstan and Ethelwald of Winchester watched over and improved the monasteries. At "Edward's" death, Dunstan and others chose his son Edward to succeed, as his father had wished, and, despite opposition, Dunstan consecrated him under

<sup>2</sup> The manuscript has *Rodobernensem* which must be a slip for *Doroberensis*, a name for Canterbury used by author B, Adelard and Osbern in their Lives of St Dunstan, cf. e.g. Osbern in *Memorials of Saint Dunstan*, ed. W. Stubbs (Rolls Series 63; 1874), 107.

<sup>3</sup> This "Edward" is a combination of Edmund, Athelstan's brother, who succeeded him in 940, and Edgar, Edmund's younger son, who succeeded his brother Edwy as king of all England in 959.

the holy banner of the Cross, for he had brought Edward up and loved him as a son.

In chapter 7, we are told of young Edward's martyrdom, for when he had ruled well for three years and eight months, his step-mother Elfrida plotted to kill him and put her son Ethelred on the throne. When the king came alone to visit his brother one day, Elfrida kissed him like Judas Iscariot and plunged the knife she was concealing under her mantle into his belly. Many miracles take place at his tomb in the nunnery of Uisturina (*sic*).<sup>4</sup>

In chapter 8, Árni declares that Dunstan was appointed Abbot of Glastonbury by Edward the Elder, and he then denounces the practice of kings' appointing bishops and abbots. By his martyrdom St Thomas Becket brought freedom from the evil custom.<sup>5</sup> Dunstan instructed his monks so well, that the effect of his work was spread throughout England.

Chapter 9 contains the story of Ethelred's being beaten with a taper by his mother when he wept for the death of his step-brother, Edward. After that, he hated tapers and would never look at them nor have them burnt before him. When Ethelred was born, Dunstan heard angels singing "Pax Anglorum". This was King Ethelwardus (*sic*).<sup>6</sup>

Chapter 10 tells of the death of Archbishop (*sic*) Elfegus of Winton, and how Dunstan, when offered the bishopric, refused until he had a vision of the saints Peter, Paul and Andrew, who each gave him the apostolic blessing and offered him the sword he was carrying. St Andrew said "Tollite jugum . . ." but St Peter struck Dunstan's hand with his palmatorium saying that this was his punishment

<sup>4</sup> The manuscript has *Uisturina*; *Icelandic Sagas*, II 393, has *Uistunina*. Perhaps a mistake for Wiltunie? Edward was buried first at Wareham and later at Salisbury.

<sup>5</sup> It is perhaps not surprising to find an Icelander digressing on this iniquitous habit and mentioning St Thomas Becket. See *Thómas Saga Erkibyskups*, ed. Eiríkr Magnússon (Rolls Series 65; 1883), II vi-xxxii.

<sup>6</sup> The assigning of this vision to the time of Ethelred's birth instead of Edgar's may be part of the author's attempt to whitewash Ethelred. See p. 271.

for refusing Winton and a sign not to refuse such honours again. When he awoke, Dunstan consented *án dvöl* and was *síðan vígðr á viðrkæmiligum tíma* and installed as bishop of Winton.

After some years, Dunstan resigned this see and Edgar made him father and overseer of bishops' sees and bishop of Worcester and London. When Oddr (Odo) died, Dunstan was made Archbishop. During his rule Ethelwald of Winton died, and in obedience to the command of St Andrew, Dunstan had Abbot Elfegus appointed in his place.<sup>7</sup>

In chapter 11 Áрни declares that as Primate, Dunstan adorned his life with miracles, and showed a holy zeal in being before others in wisdom and virtuous behaviour. God's angels and saints often appeared to him, and three times the Holy Ghost came to him in the likeness of a dove. Only a small part of the tokens and signs which God made for the worth of St Dunstan is written in this book.

One of these signs is described in chapter 12. An earl committed incest, and Dunstan reprimanded him with fatherly kindness, until, seeing that no heed was taken of these warnings, he was forced to excommunicate the man. The earl appealed to the king, who took up his case, but Dunstan remained firm: "Langt sé burt frá mér at ek fyrir líta svó Guðs lögmál, at ek leysa nokkurn bannsettan mann fyrir bæn eðr kröf nokkurs veralligs höfðingja". Realizing that Dunstan would not be moved, the earl dressed in the garb of a penitent and went humbly to the Archbishop as he sat in his court. Dunstan was merciful to the repentant sinner and absolved him.

Another time, as chapter 13 tells, Dunstan refused to celebrate mass until three convicted forgers had had their hands and feet cut off in accordance with their sentence, even though it was Whitsunday and the punishment had

<sup>7</sup> The words *ábóta er hét Elfegus, sá sem fyrr var nefndr* seem to show that the author is confusing Elfegus of Winton in ch. 10, whom he calls archbishop, and this Elfegus now given Winton and later to become archbishop in 1006.

been delayed because of this. When the criminals had been beheaded (*sic*), Dunstan went gladly to mass, but shed tears and prayed piously for the forgers, thus showing that he had acted out of regard for the law, not from gladness at the penalty. And God bore witness to this, for as Dunstan was celebrating mass, a snow-white dove hovered over him with wings outspread. Afterwards the clerks were so busy talking over the portent that no one was there to receive Dunstan's cope when he took it off, but it hung in the air so as not to disturb Dunstan nor fall to the dusty ground until the serving men came to retrieve it.

Chapter 14 tells of the occasion when Dunstan had come to a village to consecrate a church which had been built by a nobleman, and there was not sufficient water for the service. Dunstan struck the floor with his staff and a clear fountain sprang up and is still there today. At another consecration, when the church did not point to the east as much as he thought it should, Dunstan moved it to the proper place by the pressure of his shoulders and body. It is said that because of wicked men and his zeal for holy truth and God's law, Dunstan was exiled, but God sent holy men to comfort him, as well as a vision of St Andrew.<sup>8</sup>

Chapter 15 gives the first of two accounts of the death of St Dunstan. This is attributed to Alvernus, who is apparently the Alfgar of Árne's sources. Alfgar's *vision* of Dunstan's calling is given as a report of the actual event in the Saga. While Dunstan was praying in Canterbury Cathedral before the feast of the Resurrection, a band of cherubim and seraphim rushed in to summon him to keep the festival with them, but Dunstan refused to go as it was his duty to feed all the congregation with the bread of Heaven. The angels replied that he must be ready the next Saturday to go to Rome with them and

<sup>8</sup> *sem fyrr var sagt*, says Árne, apparently referring to ch. 11. The chronology is very muddled here.

sing everlastingly Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus. During mass the next morning, the Archbishop gave three sermons and preached as he had never preached before. He told the people of his approaching death, took communion and on his way out of the church showed his men where he wished to be buried. Then an illness seized him and on the Friday he took to his bed. On the Saturday he received the viaticum, and as he waited for death, three times his bed was lifted as high as the rafters and then lowered gently to the floor. Dunstan absolved and blessed the people, urging them to follow the way he had taught them, and then he died.

The second account of Dunstan's death is given in chapter 16, where it is said that after matins on the Friday, the saint called his people together and died while saying "Memoriam fecit . . . ." As he died the people heard angels singing the *Kyrie* which many call *Dunstanus-kyrie*. Then follows a panegyric on Dunstan, a brief résumé of his career, a careful dating of his death, and a prayer that God may bring us all to the same bliss.

Chapters 17 and 18 tell of two miracles that occurred after Dunstan's death. The first one tells of a brother in Lanfranc's day who was possessed by a devil, until a good and righteous brother placed Dunstan's cross over him, thus putting the devil to flight. The second tells how Lanfranc himself was strengthened in a law-suit against the bishop of Bayeux by a vision he had of Dunstan the night before the case. Next day he completely routed his opponents.

It must be obvious even from this brief description of the contents that Áрни is not interested in history as such, but wishes to use St Dunstan's life as an exemplum for the people, who if they listen carefully will gain spiritual profit. And so Áрни concentrates on the miraculous side of Dunstan's story, as in chapters 3-5, 9, 10, 14-18, and on his spiritual life and attitudes as in 12 and 13. Both these aspects are treated in some detail, whereas the main

historical events in his life are passed over as quickly as possible, so quickly and carelessly in fact, that the chronology becomes muddled and it is difficult to follow Dunstan's career without help from other sources.

As far as history is concerned, Áрни does tell us that Dunstan was brought up at Glastonbury, which he leaves to live with Adelm, is placed in Athelstan's court, helps "Edward" (Edgar) with the monastic reforms, consecrates Edward the Martyr (chapters 5-6), is made abbot of Glastonbury by "Edward the Elder" (chapter 8), becomes bishop of Winton but resigns this see under Edgar to become overseer of bishops and then bishop of Worcester, London and finally Archbishop of Canterbury (chapter 10), but the author's indifference to historical fact can be seen in the order of this list, which violates chronology, in the muddling of the kings' names, as well as in the inclusion of the miracles which are found even here.

With regard to the muddling of the kings' names: in chapter 6, Áрни says that when Athelstan died his brother "Edward" succeeded him and *var inn röskevasti riddari í bardögum, mjök vópn-djarfr*. This, of course, should be *Edmund* the magnificent. The next sentence: "En síðan hann var einvaldz-konungr yfir öllu [Englandi], lagði hann allan hug á at auka ok styrkja Guðs kristni, ok sæma hans þjónustu-menn", could apply to Edmund who made Dunstan abbot of Glastonbury and was generous to that monastery, but it is a better description of Edgar, his younger son, who became king of Mercia and Northumbria in 957, but king of all England when his brother Edwy died in 959. The rest of chapter 6 is certainly about Edgar, for it tells of his reform of the monasteries with the help of Dunstan and Ethelwald, and names his two sons Edward and Ethelred.

In chapter 8, Edmund the magnificent becomes Edward the Elder, King Alfred's brother, who died when Dunstan was a child.

Edgar's name occurs correctly in chapter 10 as the king

who appointed Dunstan overseer of bishops' sees<sup>9</sup> and then bishop of Worcester and London, and also in chapter 12 as the king who supported the earl against Dunstan.

No mention is made of Eadred (in chapter 10 Dunstan is chosen as bishop of Winchester *af öllum góðum mönnum*, not by the king), nor of Edwy and the story behind Dunstan's exile, though the exile itself is mentioned at the end of chapter 14.<sup>10</sup>

Árni's treatment of Ethelred is interesting, for in chapter 6, he says that of the two brothers, Edward was "þeirra ellri ok siðsamari, ok at öllu betr at sér gjörr, ok síns feðr meiri eptir-líkari í öllum góðum verkum", and one would expect this to lead on to the usual account of Ethelred as an unsatisfactory if not a wicked man, of whom Dunstan prophesied evil not only at his baptism but at his coronation.<sup>11</sup> Instead Árni begins to whitewash Ethelred by saying that he and Edward his brother "untuzt harðla mikit ok hjartanliga" (chapter 7), that he wept bitterly for his brother's death and "var með öllu hreinn ok hlutlauss af því vónða verki, er móðir hans h[afði gört]", and finally by transferring to his birth the vision Dunstan had had at Edgar's, when angels sang "Pax Anglorum ecclesie! exorti nunc pueri et Dunstani nostri tempore". Árni adds the further comment "Var þat þessi konungr Ethelwardus,<sup>12</sup> því at hann var friðsamr ok réttlátr, mjúkr ok myskunsamr við alla góða menn þar sem þat hæfði" (chapter 9). This is in great contrast to all other accounts of Ethelred.

Some parts of Dunstan's life are obscure and sometimes the authorities disagree on the order and details of events,

<sup>9</sup> Is this a version of author B's statement that Edgar made Dunstan bishop so that he could be at court? Unfortunately the text is so damaged at this point that it can no longer be read, and there are gaps in Vigfússon's text too.

<sup>10</sup> If this manuscript has a long history behind it, then the muddling of the kings' names may of course be due to bad copying by the different scribes. On the other hand, the confusion fits in well with the picture of an author who is careless about historical facts.

<sup>11</sup> cf. William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum* (Rolls Series 90; 1887), II 10, as well as *Memorials*, 114-5, 215, 309.

<sup>12</sup> Even here, Árni cannot name the king correctly, though he calls him Ethelredus in ch. 6. Or is ch. 6 the work of a second author? cf. p. 292.

but even where they agree, Árni is prepared to cut and change their narrative with little regard for fact. For instance, in his version of the story of the bishopric of Winton, he does not say that Eadred asked his mother to persuade Dunstan to accept the post or that Dunstan asked the king to interpret his vision for him. Instead he has Dunstan interpreting the dream himself and *accepting the bishopric after it*, a version which is in none of the Lives of St Dunstan.<sup>13</sup>

Minor disagreements with his sources are found in chapter 6 where Árni describes Adelm as Dunstan's foster-brother, not his uncle, and we have seen already that he has muddled the two clerics who are both called Elfegus.<sup>14</sup> He does not give names to Dunstan's mother and father, nor to the Mayfield Church (chapter 14), though his sources have them.

And yet in chapter 7, Árni says King Edward ruled for three years and eight months<sup>15</sup> and in chapter 16, he dates Dunstan's death most precisely.<sup>16</sup>

But despite his disregard for historical accuracy, Árni carried out his purpose of compiling "í fylgjandi frásögn þau æventyr sem mjög hafa staðit sundr-dreift í imissum bókum af fyrr-nefndum Guðs vin ok vórum andligum feðr Dunstano". Sometimes it is difficult to say why Árni chose one "adventure" and not another, why, for instance, he leaves out all mention of Eadred and his mother in the story of the bishopric of Winton or why he does not give the reasons for Dunstan's exile, though

<sup>13</sup> It is not certain whether Eadred wished to give Dunstan Crediton or Winchester; see T. Symons, *Regularis Concordia* (Nelson's Medieval Classics, 1953), xvii note. Dunstan did not accept either see. See also E. Shipley Duckett, *Saint Dunstan of Canterbury* (1955), 55.

<sup>14</sup> See note 7 above.

<sup>15</sup> *Icelandic Sagas*, II 392, reads: "Nú sem Ethwardus hinn ungi konungr hafði stýrt sínu ríki vel ok guðréttliga um þrjú ár ok átta mánaði . . ." Unfortunately this occurs under the patch on fol. 3r and cannot be read on a microfilm. If the word is *þrjú*, then the saga is inaccurate, for Edward ruled for *two* years and eight months (cf. F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (1947), 366-8), although Osbern has "after three years" and *Gesta Regum* gives *three* and a half years. But the saga is not alone in this precise inaccuracy, for the *Annales regii* say: *Edwardus . iiij. am. ok . xvi. vikvñ minnr* (G. Storm, *Islandske Annaler indtil 1578* (1888), 104).

<sup>16</sup> See p. 292 for a discussion of this.

that story should have appealed to him, or why he does not tell that Dunstan was attacked by the devil in the shape of a bear, and consecrated *archbishop* by Odo in the service of ordination to the bishopric of Worcester, and so on. All these except the second occur in Árni's main source, Adelard's *Vita Sancti Dunstani*, and they and others even more striking are found in Eadmer's two books, *Vita* and *Miracula Sancti Dunstani*, which he seems to have used as well.<sup>17</sup>

The Latin lives of St Dunstan were edited by Stubbs in 1874.<sup>18</sup> Five of them were written well before the fourteenth century — the *Life* by the so-called Author B, the series of lessons based on Dunstan's life by Adelard, two versions of the *Life*, each with a book of miracles, by Osbern and Eadmer, and a *Life* by William of Malmesbury.

According to Stubbs,<sup>19</sup> the first biography by B was written c. 1000, for it is dedicated to Elfric who was Archbishop of Canterbury from 996-1006, and by 1004 a revised version of it had been sent to France.<sup>20</sup> Árni does not seem to have known this version at all, unless his statement in chapter 10 that Edgar made Dunstan "faðir ok forstjóri yfir biskups stóla" is based on B's account of Dunstan being elected a bishop without a see.<sup>21</sup>

Adelard of Blandinium's series of lessons based on Dunstan's life (= A)<sup>22</sup> is undoubtedly Árni's main source. It was written before 1011, since it is addressed to Elfege who was archbishop from 1006-1012. The set of lessons contains some material from B, but has in addition many traditions about Dunstan then current.<sup>23</sup> It was copied many times and is the main source of the breviary lessons for St Dunstan's Day.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>17</sup> cf. E. Mogk's statement, *Geschichte der norwegisch-isländischen Literatur* (1904), 893.

<sup>18</sup> See note 2.

<sup>19</sup> *Memorials*, x f.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, xxvii f.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, 36 and xci.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, 53-68.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, xxx-xxxii.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, 445 ff.

Between the time of B and A the legend of St Dunstan had grown luxuriantly, and A is the first to tell the stories, or give the details, that lie behind chapters 4, 5, 10, 14-16 in the Saga.<sup>25</sup>

The next life, by Osbern (= O), was written *c.* 1080, or before Anselm became archbishop, and it has a book of miracles attached to it.<sup>26</sup> Although this version seems to have been popular and was copied many times, it does not appear to have been used by Árni.<sup>27</sup>

Eadmer's two books on St Dunstan (= E) were written, so the author claimed, to correct Osbern's work,<sup>28</sup> though this is probably just an excuse for writing a new work.<sup>29</sup> The date of Eadmer's *Life* is *c.* 1109, and although it was apparently never very popular, it is certainly one of the sources for *Dunstanus Saga*. Some of his additions to and variations from Osbern are the stories Árni decides to tell in his Saga.<sup>30</sup> For example, Eadmer enlarges on A's story of the nobleman and the dispensation, which O omitted;<sup>31</sup> he gives the story of the forgers, which O would not tell, and gives in detail the story of the hanging chasuble which O slurred over;<sup>32</sup> he returns to B's version of the hymn in the vision of the marriage of Dunstan's mother;<sup>33</sup> and he gives an account of the orientation of Mayfield church.<sup>34</sup>

William of Malmesbury's *Life* (= WM) written after 1120, was also intended to supersede O, which William used together with B and A, but not E.<sup>35</sup> There is only one MS. of WM.<sup>36</sup> This version is much more soberly historical than the others and would probably not have

<sup>25</sup> For details see *ibid.*, lx f.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, xxxi-xxxii.

<sup>27</sup> But see below, pp. 287-8.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, xxxiii-xxxv.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, lxvii.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, lxviii.

<sup>31</sup> *Icelandic Sagas*, II 396 (ch. 12).

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, II 397 (ch. 13).

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, II 387 (ch. 3).

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, II 399 (ch. 14).

<sup>35</sup> *Memorials*, lxix-lxxi.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, lii.

appealed to Áрни even if he had seen the book. The material for chapters 7 and 9 of the Saga (the martyrdom of Edward and the beating of Ethelred) is found in WM, but the same stories occur in his *Gesta Regum*, a more likely source, and indeed they may have come to Áрни by more indirect means.<sup>37</sup>

With regard to the sources of his work, Áрни makes several statements in the Saga itself. In chapter 1, he says “. . . því hefi ek saman lesit í fylgjandi frásögn þau æventyr sem mjög hafa staðit *sundr-dreift í imissum bókum* af . . . Dunstano”. (Later in the same chapter, Áрни admits he is just a translator when he says “Í fyrstu mun ek fram bera *með Norænligu móður-máli* er til heyrir svó vóttandi sem hér fylgir”.) In chapter 2 it is stated “. . . munu vér saman bera þá hluti sem vér höfum fundit *í lofsöngum ok ymnum ok öðrum heilögum ritningum* af . . . Dunstano”, but as we shall see this is just an elaboration of a sentence taken direct from A, and sheds no light on Áрни’s work.<sup>38</sup> Again in chapter 11 Áрни says “. . . hyggjum vér þó at lítill partr sé skrifaðr í þessum bæklingi af þeim mörgum táknum ok jarteignum er Guð hefir gjört fyrir verðleika heilags Dunstani. En þó höfum vér saman lesit þat sem vér höfum fremst fundit af hónum”.

Towards the end of the Saga there are references to sources by name. In chapter 15 there is the sentence: “Nokkurr klerkr, Alvernus at nafni, Kantara-byrgis kirkju fyrir-söngvari, er öllum mönnum í Englandi var fróðari í þann tíma at sönglist ok allra handa klerkdómi, hefir með þvílíkum orðum skrifat af anláti ok framför heilags Dunstani svó segjandi”. Chapter 16 is introduced by the statement “Svó segja sumir Enskir sagna-meistarar . . .”, while at the end of that chapter we have a reference to a book itself “. . . eptir því sem sá meistari segir, er diktat hefir *Speculum Historiale*”.

All these statements, except the third, give a true

<sup>37</sup> See p. 285.

<sup>38</sup> cf. *Icelandic Sagas*, II xxiv.

description of what Árne did to compile this saga: he translated from Latin into Icelandic the "adventures" he found in A and E; he seems to have used the *Regularis Concordia* (= RC) and perhaps the *Speculum Historiale* (= SH) by Richard of Cirencester, unless the material from the latter was added by a later hand.<sup>39</sup> Whether he used O or WM is very doubtful.

The pattern of his borrowing is seen in the following table:

|      |    |        |                       |                                |
|------|----|--------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| Saga | 2  | A 1    |                       |                                |
|      | 3  |        | I E 29 <sup>40</sup>  |                                |
|      | 4  | A 1    |                       |                                |
|      | 5  | A 2    |                       |                                |
|      | 6  | A 3    |                       |                                |
|      |    |        |                       | RC pp. 1-3                     |
|      |    |        | I E 35                |                                |
|      | 7  |        |                       | ? SH 26 or WM 20               |
|      | 8  | A 3    |                       |                                |
|      | 9  |        |                       | ? SH 27 or WM's<br>Gesta Regum |
|      |    | A 3    |                       |                                |
|      | 10 | A 4    |                       |                                |
|      |    | A 7-8  |                       |                                |
|      | 11 | A 8    |                       |                                |
|      | 12 | (A 12) | I E 26                |                                |
|      | 13 |        | I E 27                |                                |
|      | 14 |        | I E 28                |                                |
|      |    | A 6    |                       |                                |
|      | 15 | ? A 10 | ? I E 37<br>I E 38-41 |                                |
|      | 16 | A 11   |                       |                                |
|      |    | A 12   |                       |                                |
|      |    |        |                       | SH 27                          |
|      | 17 |        | II E 16               |                                |
|      | 18 |        | II E 17               |                                |

<sup>39</sup> See p. 292.

<sup>40</sup> I E = Eadmer's *Vita*, II E = Eadmer's *Miracula*.

From this it is clear that Áрни's chief source was A, for he follows in the main the order A has for his lessons, using E to illustrate a statement of A, as in chapter 3 where he retells the story of the heavenly marriage of Dunstan's mother which A merely mentions in *Lectio 1*, and he uses the same technique in chapters 12-14 and 17-18. In fact E is used to embroider A with "mörgum táknum ok jarteignum er Guð hefir gjört fyrir verðleika heilags Dunstani", for *all* the material from E (including the first account of Dunstan's death in chapter 15) has to do with signs and miracles, whereas A is used for the more sober facts and legends of Dunstan's life.

It is not surprising that A should be Áрни's chief source, for as we have seen above (p. 273), A was one of the most popular versions of Dunstan's life, being written as lessons to be read in the nocturns of Dunstan's feast day.<sup>41</sup>

Then too, both authors have the same aim — not to write a biography of Dunstan, but to retell some of the events of his life for the edification of their hearers.<sup>42</sup> As Áрни says in chapter 1: "Því at hann biðr því framar fyrir yðr til Guðs, sem þér veitið honum meiri sæmd ok heiðr í atstöðu ok hlýðing þessarra fáu æventýra, sem sagna-meistarar hafa honum til sæmðar gört enn oss til gleði ok andarligrar nytsemdar í ímissligum bókum eptir látin".

Sometimes Áрни has merely taken his information from A, as in chapter 10 where he cuts out many details given in A but gives the necessary facts,<sup>43</sup> in chapter 11 which follows A *lectio 8*, except that Áрни uses his own words in praising Dunstan, and in the third part of chapter 14 which briefly describes Dunstan's exile in much the same way as in A *lectio 6*.

<sup>41</sup> See *Memorials*, 444 ff.

<sup>42</sup> cf. A's prologue, *Memorials*, 53.

<sup>43</sup> cf. ch. 10 and A *lectio 4*. See p. 272 above for omissions in the Winton bishopric story. Áрни also deletes the setting of the vision in Rome, the inscription on the swords, etc., and the last clause of St Andrew's quotation. In the second part of the chapter, he has to make Dunstan resign Winton, he states that Edgar made him overseer of bishops' sees, deletes the story of Odo and the consecration of Dunstan, and does not tie up his promotion with the vision of the three apostles.

Sometimes his debt to A is more complicated. For instance, in chapter 16, Árne follows A lectio 11 for the first part of his account, puts in the story of Dunstan's *Kyrie* at this point on his own authority,<sup>44</sup> and bases the rest of his chapter, where he compares Dunstan to the prophets, patriarchs, virgins and martyrs, on A lectio 12, but does not follow A in any detail, preferring to "write up" Dunstan in his own rather inflated way. (The rest of the chapter seems to come from SH, see below p. 286.)

Chapters 5 and 8 are quite clearly nearer to A lectio 2 and 3 than the other versions, though in chapter 5 Árne inflates A's account to get all the drama he can out of the story of Dunstan's adventures when delirious, and in chapter 8 he has confused the kings' names as well as adding the digression on St Thomas Becket. Nevertheless, despite all additions, there are phrases at various points in the narrative taken straight from A which show that Árne must have had A before him as he wrote.

The following transcript of chapter 2 and A lectio 1 shows just how Árne used A in most of his saga.

Meðr því at vér höldum með hátíðligum vökum ok tíðagjörðum heimferðar-dag sæls Dunstanni erchibiskups, á hverjum vér trúum hann hafa fram farit af þessu fallvalta lífi ok sorgarfullum útleigðardal til lifandi manna jarðar, ok himneskrar föður-leifðar, byrjar oss, hinir kærustu bræðr, at skríða til jarðar Lausnara vórs, gangandi fótspor þessa ens blezaða biskups með góðum verkum ok andligri gleði.

Quia solemnibus excubiis transitum beati Dunstani colimus, quo eum ad Christum migrasse credimus,

post eum fratres carissimi suspiremus, et ad Christum post eum læti quique tendamus.

<sup>44</sup> But Adelard had told his version of the *Kyrie* in lectio 9. Perhaps a tradition had grown up, later than the twelfth century, that this *Kyrie* was heard at Dunstan's death, although it seems unlikely that there was enough interest in Dunstan then to give rise to such a story.

En því at vér erum stórliga þyngdir (?) af vórum syndum, sem vér trúum, í dauðligum líkam, munu vér saman bera þá hluti sem vér höfum fundit í lofsöngum ok ymnum ok öðrum heilögum ritningum af þessum Guðs játara herra Dunstano, ok með áeggjangeligum hætti svó sem einn stiga saman setjandi, ok eptir þessum Guðs vin skundandi til himneskrar hæðar upp rísa. Er þat í fyrstu greinanda, at hann var getinn af mikils háttar mönnum ok kynferðugum at veraldar virðingu, sæmdum ok auðævum. En svó göfug sem hans feðgin vóru at heims mekt vóru þau miklu göfgari í góðum siðum ok guðligri spekt. Var faðir hans ok móðir svó háleitem lifnaði ok heilagligum prýdd hér á jarðríki, at eptir þeirra andlát öðlaðizt heilagr Dunstanus í andligum líkam skipaðr at sjá þau í millum engla-flokka í himinríki, sem eptir-faranda capitulum vóttar.

(*Icelandic Sagas*, II 386).

As can be seen from this, Árni is continually embroidering the plain cloth of A's tale: A's *solemnibus excubiis* becomes "með hátíðligum vökum ok tíðagjörðum", *post eum læti quique tendamus* becomes "gangandi fótspor þessa ens blezaða biskups með góðum verkum ok andligri gleði", and *quo eum ad Christum migrasse credimus* develops into the impressive "á hverjum vér trúum hann hafa fram farit af þessu fallvalta lífi ok sorgar-fullum útleigðar-dal til lifandi manna jarðar, ok

<sup>45</sup> See p. 287 below.

Sed quoniam mortalitate gravati ad nos relabimur, quae de eo agnovimus inter hymnos divinos conferamus,

et sermone exhortatorio quasi scalam nobis post eum tendendi erigamus.

Ac primo dicendum, quod tam sanctis parentibus ortus claruit

[O. 3, *Memorials*, p. 71.<sup>45</sup> magnis quidem pro sæculi dignitate parentibus, sed ad religionem, quae Christianos decet, longe majoribus]

ut eos sæculo exemptos inter choros conspiciere mereretur angelicos.

(Adelard, *Memorials*, p. 54).

himneskrar föður-leifðar". This is typical of Árni in his treatment of all his sources. He likes high-flown language, particularly when he is talking about death and eternal life, and sometimes his words seem so different from A or E that the reader begins to suspect he is using another source, until reassured by a direct quotation from the text, for Árni never strays far from A and E which must have been in front of him as he wrote. He keeps the idioms he finds there, he even uses the phrase *hinir kærustu bræðr*, and keeps and expands *inter hymnos divinos*, though it is not true of his own work that he used songs of praise and hymns. "Other holy writings" is vague enough to cover his own position.

Árni uses the same technique in chapter 4 which is an expansion of A lectio 1. He adds an explanation of the meaning of Candlemas, a statement that the people praised God when they saw the sign, and such clauses as "er Guð sendi af himni móður heilags Dunstani", "án vind nokkurum eðr mannlígunum áblæstri, svó at öngvan varði".<sup>46</sup> The last sentence again shows his method:

Meðr þessu æventýri megum vér merkja, hinir kærustu bræðr, at Guð hefir kosit ok valit sér þenna smá-svein þegar í móðurkviði, ok skipat hann þjónustumann eilífs ljóss, at með trúarinnar logbrandi skuli hann upp tendra þeirra manna hjörtu sem kólna eðr með öllu slokna í guðligum ástar . . . . [gap occurs here].

(*Icelandic Sagas*, II 388).

Quid, fratres mei, Deum hoc in facto dicemus praefigurasse nisi filium ex ea nasciturum, in matris jam utero a Se electum, et aeterni luminis ministrum affuturum?

(Adelard, *Memorials*, p. 54).

Árni's use of E is on the whole freer than his use of A. As we have seen above (pp. 276-7), E is the only possible

<sup>46</sup> Both WM and E have this detail about the lack of wind, which is not in A. Árni may have read E's account and remembered this, but it would be such a natural thing to add anyway that it is probably Árni's independent addition.

source for chapters 3, 12, 13 and 14, the material for which is not found, or only referred to in passing, in A and O. The same is true of 6, 17 and 18, for although the material is found in O as well as E, it is clearly E that Árni follows. A transcript of chapter 3 shows how Árni used E:

Á nokkurri nótt sem heilagur Dunstanus nærði sik til guðligrar þjónustu með náttúrligum svefni, var hans skynsemdar-andi gripinn upp til himneskrar sýnar eptir guðligri forsjó.

Sýndizt hönnum sem mikit hóf ok hátíðlig veizla færi fram í himinríkis höll. Undiastóð hann at þar var brúðkaups-veizla, ok þótti sem móðir hans væri brúðr hæsta konungs. Sýndizt hönnum ok, sem at þessari veizlu væri margir mektögir höfðingjar ok ótölulikt fjölmenni í óumræðiligri gleði ok óendiligum fagnaði. Sá hann þar ok föður sinn gleðjazt með öðrum konungs hirðmönnum. Þótti hönnum öll sú höll listuliga þjóta með ymnum ok lofsöngum þessa konungs, ok organ, ok salterium ok cithara ok allzkonar hljóðberanligum strengfærum. Sem hann þessa hluti hugleiðandi gladdizt hann (*sic*) af fáheyrðum fagnaði, gékk at hönnum einn ungr maðr í hinum bjartazta búnaði svó segjandi: “Fyrir hví öllum mönnum fagnöndum ok sætliga lof Guði syngjöndum, enn þú einn saman þegir í

Quadam etenim nocte cum membra quieti dedisset

per visum in superna raptus est.

Conspexit itaque et ecce, mater sua cuidam regi potentissimo in conjugium sub immensa confluentium magnatum laetitia exultatione copulabatur,

resonantibus undique hymnis ac laudibus in gloriam ejusdem regis, organis quoque ac diversis melodiis concrepantibus in his regalibus nuptiis.

Quibus dum ipse magnifice delectatus intenderet, atque ad ea totum sui cordis affectum arrigeret, accessit ad eum juvenis quidam candidissimo tectus amictu, dicens illi, “Cum videas et audias istos laetantium ac jubilantium choros, cur te illis non

svó háleitu brúðkaupi móður þínnar er samtengir [hana] með óleysiligu sambandi himneskum brúðguma, hvers fegrð sól ok tungl mikilliga undrazt?" Dunstanus and-svaraði, segjandi sik ekki makliga kunna til lofs at syngja svó háleitum ok voldugum dýrðar konungi. Hinn ungi maðr sagði: "Viltú at ek kenna þér hvat þú skalt syngja?" Dunstanus sagðizt þat feginsamliga vilja. Engillinn [talaði] þá enn til hans: "Syng þessa symphoniam<sup>47</sup> eptir þeim orðum ok hljóðagreinum sem ek syng fyrir þér:

"O rex gentium, dominator omnium, propter sedem majestatis tuae da nobis indulgentiam, rex Christe, peccatorum, Alleluia.

[Translation of antiphon.]

Saung heilagr Dunstanus ok optliga endrtók þessa Antiphonu er Guðs engill hafði kennt hónum, gleðjandizt mikilliga of sætleik hljóðanna ok mikilleik sýnarinnar. Sem heilagr Dunstanus vaknaði,

mundi hann gjörla orð ok thon sagðrar antiphonu, látandi skrifa hana ok í heilagri kirkju syngja; ok görði Guði góðfúsar þakkir sem verðugt var, fyrir þessa anda-gipt ok gleði, er hann var hónum sýnandi sín feðgin millum engla-flokka sætliga Guði lof syngjandi. En af því er hér eigi skrifaðr thon sagðrar anthifonu, at hon er eigi sungin í kirkjum.

(*Icelandic Sagas*, II 386).

<sup>47</sup> The manuscript has anpho. (= antiphon?).

copulas? Cur laudibus eorum non commisces laudes tuas? Et quidem si in desponsatione matris tuae a voce laudis et exultationis cuncti silerent, tu silere non deberes, nedum illis non tacentibus solus taceas". Ad haec verba, quid in laudem tanti regis cantaret ignorare se respondit.

Sciscitatur ergo an a se quod decenter canere posset instrui vellet. Quod cum sibi acceptissimum fore profiteretur, docuit eum antiphonam istam,

Quam pater per visum saepius repetens et in laudem praefati regis frequentius canens, mira jocunditate pascebatur.

Expergefactus autem a somno surrexit, gemens eo quod a tantis gaudiis tam subito se in hujus mundi aerumnis invenit. Antiphonam vero statim ne oblivioni daretur scribi praecepit, eamque a suis postmodum cantari saepius in sui praesentia fecit.

[Interpretation of vision.]

(Eadmer, *Vita*, in *Memorials*, pp. 205 f.)

At other times, Áрни cuts out a great deal of E's account, in contrast with his usual inflation of A. For instance, in chapter 12 he leaves out the incident of the papal letter,<sup>48</sup> the trial of the case and Dunstan's grief at the king's attitude and the reaction of those present at the earl's penitence. On the other hand, Áрни says the earl found Dunstan "mjúkan ok myskunsaman", where E has him sitting stern-faced and unmoved by the man's tears for an hour before forgiving him.

In chapter 15 which is based on I E 37-41, Áрни is continually expanding phrases, altering idioms, changing the words of speeches as well as cutting down much of E's inflated language and his account of the actual events. Yet these alterations do not conceal the fact that he is using E for his source. The same is true of chapter 18 (II E 17) which though abbreviated and very free is still clearly based on E, and not on the O version of the story.

Chapter 17, based on II E 16, which tells of the unhappy experiences of a brother possessed of a devil until Dunstan's staff laid over him cures him, differs from its source in several details. E's *teterrimos et horridos malignorum spirituum vultus* becomes "reiðiligar ásjónur helvízkra blámanna"; the brother, who in E is the actor, is now dragged from his seat and dashed against the prior apparently by some unseen force; his blasphemies are now dictated by the devil; he is now treated not tortured in the infirmary; the moral of the confession story is pointed in some detail; the brother himself feels the devil like a puppy in his belly; there are some more vivid and unpleasing details about the devil's exit from the brother's belly and there is no account of the reformation that follows the miracle. Nevertheless, there is no doubt about Áрни's source for this chapter, and various phrases lifted straight from E seem to show he had the text in front of him. In particular:

<sup>48</sup> This is in A too, and seems to be the main point of the story. Even WM mentions the papal letter when describing Dunstan's severity against unlawful marriages, though he does not tell this tale.

Við þessa sýn at hann var (*sic*) mjög hræddr ok ótta-sleginn, at hann greip til erchibiskupsins; en hann á Guðs líkama haldandi, kreistandi hann mjök sterkliga millum sinna armleggja,

með hárrri röddu hræðiliga æpandi ok svó segjandi; “Christus regnat, Christus vincit, Christus imperat”.

[The Latin is then translated.]

Allir þeir sem heyrðu, urðu mjök hræddir, en hann bróðirinn vitlauss var borinn eptir messuna af nokkurum riddarum í leyniligt studium erchibiskups.

[*Icelandic Sagas*, II 404.]

ad quorum aspectum nimio pavore perterritus, antistitem inter manus sacra tenentem utrisque brachiis strictim amplectitur

horrido clamore vociferans ac dicens “Christus vincit, Christus regnat, Christus imperat”.

Conterriti sunt omnes qui aderant, et arreptum juvenem milites de ecclesia in pontificis cameram rapiunt.

(Eadmer, *Miracula*, in *Memorials*, p. 234.)

Whether Árne had the full version of E before him it is impossible to tell, but he took his material from both the *Vita* and the *Miracula*, and although it is possible that someone had made a selection from these works which Árne then used, it is more probable that Árne himself chose what he wanted from E, altering it when it pleased him to do so, quoting E verbatim when it seemed best.

The question of WM's influence on the Saga is an interesting one. Of all the authorities, WM is the only one who gives an account of Edward's martyrdom (chapter 7) and this occurs not only in his *Vita Sancti Dunstani*<sup>49</sup> but also, originally, in his *Gesta Regum* II, § 162.<sup>50</sup> The Saga version differs very much from WM: there is no mention of hunting, Edward's step-mother kills him with her own hand, and there are none of the

<sup>49</sup> *Memorials*, 308.

<sup>50</sup> *Gesta Regum*, I 183.

dramatic details of the horse running away with the dying boy, whose body is said to lie in “Uisturina”, not Wareham or Salisbury. Later chroniclers such as Roger of Wendover and Richard of Cirencester follow WM’s account closely. Árni’s version is the only one that makes the queen mother the murderess, and presumably this is on his own authority, perhaps based on a misreading of his source. The other differences may have come about quite simply by Árni’s cutting down the story and not being interested enough in the innocent young martyr to keep to the details. It is strange though that he did not mention the horse and the blood-track when he adds the following with such gusto: “þvíat þegar lagði hún í gegnum konungsins kvið með því saxi sem hún bölvað bar undir sínum mötli, svó at þegar lágu úti iðrin”.<sup>51</sup>

The material for chapter 9 (the story of Ethelred’s mother beating the young king with a taper) occurs in WM’s *Gesta Regum* II, § 164, but Árni whitewashes the character of Ethelred.<sup>52</sup>

Now it is possible that Árni had read *Gesta Regum*, even if he had not seen the *Vita Sancti Dunstani*, but both these stories are also found in chapters 26 and 27 of Richard of Cirencester’s *Speculum Historiale*,<sup>53</sup> where they are taken practically verbatim from *Gesta Regum*.

Ok einn tíma er pilltrinn  
grét beiskliga dauða b[róður]

. . . a móðir greip nokkur  
kerti ok barði piltinn mjök  
harðla, þvíat henni var þat  
næst hendi, heptandi með  
þessu hans grát ok kveinkan.

De isto praeterea rege Ethelredo legitur, quod, cum esset puer decennis, fratrem necatum conclamari audiret. Fletu suo furentem genetricem adeo irritavit, ut, quia flagellum ad manum non habebat, arreptis candelis innocentem caederet, nec prius desisteret, quam pene exanimem relinqueret, et ipsa lacrimas infunderet.

<sup>51</sup> cf. too his delight in the story of the puppy in the brother’s belly in ch. 17.

<sup>52</sup> See p. 271.

<sup>53</sup> ed. J. E. B. Mayor (Rolls Series 30; 1869), 131 and 134.

Urðu hónum síðan svó leið kerti ok hatrsfull, at hann vildi aldri nær sjá þau eðr fyrir sér láta brenna.

(*Icelandic Sagas*, II 394.)

Quapropter tota vita sua ita candelas exhorruit in posterum, ut nunquam ante se pateretur inferri lumen earum.<sup>54</sup>

(SH, p. 134.)

In chapter 16, Árni quotes from SH 27:

Enn er liðit var frá hingatburð vórs Herra Jesu Christi tólf árum minnr enn þúshundrut ára, ok þá er hann hafði veit erchibiskup í Cancia xxx ára ok þrjú ár, *eptir því sem sá meistari segir er diktat hefir Speculum Historiale*. En þá vóru liðnir frá fæðing sæls Dunstani með öllu sjautigir ára, þá leið hans en blezaða önd . . . .

(*Icelandic Sagas*, II 404.)

Anno Domini noningentesimo octogesimo octavo . . . anno patriarchatus sui tricesimo tertio,—

nativitatis suæ circiter septuagesimo . . . .

(SH, p. 136 f.)

None of the other authorities dates Dunstan's death so precisely.<sup>55</sup> So it is possible that Árni used SH not only for this dating but also for the material in chapters 7 and 9.<sup>56</sup>

The only other source used by Árni is the *Regularis Concordia*. In his account of "Edward's" (i.e. Edgar's) restoration of the monasteries in chapter 6, Árni seems to be summarizing the material in the Proem to this work<sup>57</sup> and ends with a quotation from it.

<sup>54</sup> From the words *quod cum* this is a quotation from *Gesta Regum*, II § 164, with the addition of *esset, relinqueret* and *sua* only.

<sup>55</sup> In his *Speculum Historiale*, Vincent of Beauvais certainly puts Dunstan's death under the year 988, but he calls this year "Anno Othonis tertii 5" (*Spec. Hist.*, lib. 24, cap. xcii-xcvii). My thanks are due to Dr E. M. Dalziel for checking this reference for me. Icelandic annals record his death *s.a.* 988, see G. Storm, *op. cit.*, 105, 178.

<sup>56</sup> For the problem this raises with regard to the date of the Saga, see p. 292.

<sup>57</sup> Edition cited in note 13.

En hans dróttning skyldi vitja systra-klaustra, ok með vakri áhyggju móðurligrar umhyggju . . . þá hluti sem þeim til heyrði, at karlmaðr karlmanni, en [kvinna] kvinnu mætti án nokkurri grunsemd vóndri viðrkvæmiliga við hjálpa.

(*Icelandic Sagas*, II 391.)

As a Benedictine, Árni might be expected to know this work, or others in which it was quoted.

Did Árni know Osbern's work? Occasionally in the Saga there is a statement that seems nearer to O than any other of the versions. We have already noticed the one in chapter 2,<sup>58</sup> but also in the account of the coronation of Edward the Martyr in chapter 6, which is based on E, occurs this sentence:

Ok þá er hann skyldi vígja konunginn greip hann heilagt kross-mark þat sem vant var at bera fyrir hónum ok erchibiskups tígn í Cancia til heyrði, setjandi þat fram á mitt gólf . . . .

(*Icelandic Sagas*, II 392.)

Several phrases in the vision of the apostles in chapter 10 seem to come from O rather than A.

. . . heyrði hann sælan Andreas postula mæla með blíðu andliti þessi guðspjallz-orð til sín talandi: . . . .

Sem nokkur skóla-meistari bauð hann Dunstano fram rétta höndina. Ok sem hann fram rétti sinn lófa sem

coniugique suae Ælfthrithe sanctimonialium mandras ut impauidi more custodis defenderet cautissime praecepit; ut uidelicet mas maribus, femina feminis, sine ullo suspicionis scrupulo subueniret.

(RC, p. 2.)

In cujus electione dum quidam principes palatini adquiescere nollent Dunstanus arrepto crucis vexillo, quod prae se ex more ferebatur,

in medio constitit . . . .<sup>59</sup>

(Osbern, *Memorials*, p. 114.)

Interea Andream *exhilarato vultu* aspicit conniventem, et evangelicis verbis *audit* praecinentem:<sup>60</sup> . . . .

Tunc a beato Petro jussus laevam extendere

<sup>58</sup> See p. 279.

<sup>59</sup> cf. I E 35, *Memorials*, 214.

hlýðinn lærisveinn, gefr hann hönnum plágu svó at *skall við*; svó segjandi: “Þetta (MS: þessi) skal vera þín þína fyrir þat er þú hefir neitað at vera Winthonar biskup . . . .

(*Icelandic Sagas*, II 395.)

modicum *crepitantis* ferulae ictum excepit hoc ab illo audiens, “Hoc tibi sit poena abjecti, et signum ulterius non abjiciendi pontificatus”.<sup>61</sup>

(Osbern, *Memorials*, p. 97.)

Similarly chapter 17 has one detail that seems to come from O rather than E. In O the young brother sees the evil spirits *juxta altare*<sup>62</sup> (cf. *Saga þar nær altarinu*) but E has *coram se*.<sup>63</sup>

But these are minor points and occur when Árni is not keeping as close to his main source as usual. They are all probably chance similarities in phrasing which must happen when writers are dealing with the same subject matter. When such phrases from E occur in parts borrowed mainly from A, they may be reminiscences of that work which Árni had undoubtedly read.<sup>64</sup> But on the whole such phrases are commonplace.

Occasionally Árni strikes phrases that are reminiscent of WM: e.g. chapter 5, which is based mainly on A, has: “hlaupa þeir allir at hönnum í senn með gapanda gini ok greypiligri gnauð”, while WM has (*Memorials*, p. 256): . . . *magnum latrantium agmen rapidis in properantem inhians rictibus obviam veniebat*; again “niðr drekkjast gegnum jörðina til helvítis hylja ok brennesteinsliga pytti . . .” is nearer to WM’s *furvis inferni unde emerberat se indidit umbris* than the other versions. Still, it is more probable that Árni added these details himself.

The only parts of the Saga unaccounted for are the beginning of chapter 6 and the end of chapter 8. Chapter

<sup>60</sup> cf. A lectio 4, *Memorials*, 57: “Tunc sanctus Andreas blande ex evangelio modulando *cecinit*”. Cf. also I E 13, *Memorials*, 186.

<sup>61</sup> cf. *ibid.*: “Sanctus autem Petrus arguendo virgam levavit et in palmam *levem ictum* vibrando dixit, ‘Hoc habeas commonitorium, de non recusando ulterius jugo Domini’”; and also I E 13, *Memorials*, 186.

<sup>62</sup> *Memorials*, 145.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*, 234.

<sup>64</sup> In ch. 4 the detail of the lack of wind may have come from I E 1, *Memorials*, 165, in this way. See p. 280 above and cf. the end of ch. 11 (*Icelandic Sagas*, II 396) and I E, *Memorials*, 217.

6 begins with the statement that although he was the son of a wealthy family, Dunstan did worldly work so that the devil would not find him idle. At this point 20 lines are missing and we cannot tell just how Áрни continued with this theme. Perhaps there was an account of his building and metalwork which otherwise receive no mention in the Saga, unless the likening of Dunstan to a goldsmith at the end of chapter 8 was stimulated by the tradition of Dunstan as a metalworker.

After the gap in the manuscript, Áрни is in the middle of an account of the six ages of man. The ages of man is a common idea from Greek and Roman times onward and was used as a subject for art from the twelfth to the sixteenth century.<sup>65</sup> The number of the ages varies from five to twelve, ten and especially seven being the most popular. Isidore of Seville talks about the *six* ages of man,<sup>66</sup> but divides *Senectus* into two, the second being *Senium* or senility. The *Promptorium Parvulorum* of c. 1440 follows him in this, but Áрни does not and his description of these ages differs from that of Isidore.

From *Laurentius Saga* we know a little about the bishop's bastard son, Áрни, born of Þuríðr, a Norwegian woman, but living as a Benedictine monk at Þingeyrar.<sup>67</sup> Both his father and his father's friend Bergr Sokkason, also of Þingeyrar, were notable clerks and teachers, so it is perhaps not surprising that Áрни followed in their footsteps. In chapter 33 it is stated "Á Árna lagði hann [Laurentius] alla ástundan at kenna honum látinu ok letr. Varð hann inn framasti klerkr ok skrifari harðla sæmiligr ok *versificator*. Sannliga mátti þat segja, at fagrligt var þat klaustr, sem svo var skipat af slíkum munkum sem þá var at Þingeyrum."<sup>68</sup>

<sup>65</sup> The various forms of the idea are discussed, with massive bibliographical apparatus, by A. Hofmeister, 'Puer, iuuenis, senex: zum Verständnis der mittelalterlichen Altersbezeichnungen' in *Papsttum und Kaisertum: Forschungen . . . Paul Kehr . . . dargebracht*, hsegeb. von A. Brachmann (1926), 287-316.

<sup>66</sup> *Etymologiarum* lib. XI ii, De ætatibus hominum.

<sup>67</sup> *Byskupa Sögur* (ed. Guðni Jónsson, 1948), III 55.

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*, III 75-6.

Árni accompanied his father when he went to be consecrated bishop,<sup>69</sup> but supported his cloister against his father before Archbishop Eilífr of Nidaros, and was commended by the Archbishop for this.<sup>70</sup> In chapter 44 we are told that Árni was made a teacher at Hólar, where there were always fifteen pupils or more.<sup>71</sup> Árni was ordained priest by Bishop Jón of Skálaholt as Laurentius did not think it right for a father to ordain his own son.<sup>72</sup> The author then goes on: “Stóð ok bróðir Árni aldrigi hjá föður sínum, nema þá hann fermdi börn. Var bróðir Árni inn bezti klerkr ok *versificator* ok kenndi mörgum klerkum. Fór hann hvern tíma í *visitacionem* með herra Laurentio, föður sínum, ok svaf í einu herbergi ok hann. Hafði hann ok innsigli byskupsins ok bréfagerðir ok Einarr djákni”.

The next comment on Árni is not so promising. In chapter 64 is an account of his illness and of how his father lectured him on his drunken and wicked ways.<sup>73</sup> “Ef þú vilt því heita guði ok mér, at þú skalt fara þegar eftir í klaustrit þitt at Þingeyrum, sem þú missir mín við, þá mun ek þora at óverðugu biðja fyrir þér til guðs, at þér batni sóttar þessarar, því at í klaustrinu á Þingeyrum máttu gera mikinn þrifnað, kenna ok skrifa. Berstu þat fyrir at brjóta þetta vort boð ok fara til Nóregis, er þú missir vor við, þá óþrífst þitt ráð, því at vér vitum, at þú leggst í ofdrykkju ok annan ófögnuð, ok nýtr þá heilög kirkja ekki þinnar menntar.’

Létti byskup eigi fyrr við en hann komst við ok táraðist beiskliga, játandi því, at hann skyldi til Þingeyra aftr fara ok staðfestast, þegar hann missti byskupsins við, hver hans fyrirheit urðu miðr en hæfði. Fór svo um hans ævi sem faðir hans sagði fyrir.”

His father died on April 16, 1331,<sup>74</sup> but we are not sure

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*, III 93.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*, III 97 f.

<sup>71</sup> *ibid.*, III 100.

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*, III 107.

<sup>73</sup> *ibid.*, III 146.

<sup>74</sup> See *Icelandic Sagas*, II xxiv-v.

what happened to Áрни, for though Vigfússon says “an ominous silence covers his career from the death of the Bishop, 1330 (*sic*)”,<sup>75</sup> it is possible that the ‘fratrem Arnerum Laurentij sacerdotem’ referred to in a Norwegian letter of 1337<sup>76</sup> is the author of this saga. It appears that this Arnerus is working for the Dominicans of Trondheim and this fact may perhaps explain the disapproving tone of the later references to him in *Laurentius Saga* — though of course it is impossible to prove that the same Áрни is referred to in each case. The last mention of Áрни occurs in chapter 65: “Bróður Árna, syni sínum, skipaði hann aftr í klaustr sitt at Þingeyrum, skrifandi með honum til Guðmundar ábóta, hvat hann skipaði klaustrinu af því gózi, sem hann hafði. Var þat nærri fimmtán hundruð ok umfram klæði hans ok bækr”.<sup>77</sup>

Vigfússon gives the date of Áрни’s birth as *c.* 1296<sup>78</sup> but the evidence of *Laurentius Saga* seems to show that it was about seven years later, for in chapter 16 between mention of the consecration of Pope Benedict XI (October 1303) and of his death (July 1304) is the statement: “Þuríður Árnadóttir af Borgundi kenndi síra Laurentio pilt, er Áрни hét”.<sup>79</sup> Presumably Þuríður would have done this soon after the child’s birth. Again, Vigfússon says that Áрни compiled the *Dunstanus Saga* at the beginning of the fourteenth century,<sup>80</sup> but if he used the *Speculum Historiale* as a source, the compilation of the Saga must be dated after the middle of the century when Richard of Cirencester wrote the work. (Richard was a monk of Westminster from 1355 till his death in 1400 or 1401,<sup>81</sup> and presumably wrote his history during that period.)

This would make Áрни a man of over fifty when he read

<sup>75</sup> *Sturlunga Saga* (1878), I cxxxvi.

<sup>76</sup> *Diplomatarium Islandicum*, II 715 ff. (no. 455).

<sup>77</sup> *Byskupa Sögur*, III 151.

<sup>78</sup> *Sturlunga Saga*, I cxxxvi.

<sup>79</sup> *Byskupa Sögur*, III 32.

<sup>80</sup> *Icelandic Sagas*, II 385.

<sup>81</sup> J. E. B. Mayor, edition cited note 53, pp. viii ff.

the work, and it is difficult to say where he could find the *Speculum* without travelling to England.<sup>82</sup> Of course it is possible that Áрни did not return to his monastery when his father died, but went back to Norway<sup>83</sup> and perhaps even to England before his own death, and during this time wrote the Saga. Or another clerk may have brought to Iceland an account of the *Speculum* and some information taken from it. But really we have no evidence at all as to when Áрни wrote the work. Was it while he was teaching at Hólar, while he was at Þingeyrar,<sup>84</sup> or thirty years after his father's death when he might by some means have seen the *Speculum* or been given some extracts from it?

Perhaps the reference to the *Speculum*, together with the careful dating of Dunstan's death, is an addition by a later author or reviser, between the time of the compilation of the Saga and the fifteenth-century manuscript in which it is found. Certainly it is rather strange that a writer who was so careless of history as Áрни seems to have been in his treatment of kings' names and his vagueness about chronology, should suddenly become interested in dating Dunstan's death so precisely, especially as this date is not found in his main source A, nor his secondary source E.

If this supposition is true, then perhaps this reviser has added the length of Edward's reign in chapter 7 — the only other sign of precision in the Saga — or perhaps the whole of chapter 7 *and* chapter 9, the martyrdom of Edward and the beating of Ethelred, which are both found in SH, are his additions too. It does, however, seem unlikely that he would transfer the story of Dunstan's vision at Edgar's birth to Ethelred — a move which is quite in keeping with Áрни's practice.

If this Saga has come down to us as Áрни wrote it, then

<sup>82</sup> There seems to be only one extant manuscript of the work, cf. *ibid.*, clxv.

<sup>83</sup> The evidence of the Norwegian document referred to above would support this.

<sup>84</sup> The references to "my dearest brothers" need not refer to Áрни's fellow monks, or even his fellow men, for they are taken direct from Adelard.

he must have compiled it when he was an old man in the second half of the fourteenth century, using A and E as his main sources, and quoting from SH and RC. On the other hand, if he wrote it, as Vigfússon said, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, then he must have used material from William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum* for chapters 7 and 9, or else, they, as well as the dating of Dunstan's death and the reference to SH in chapter 10, are the additions of a later copyist.

There is little doubt about the "holy writings" which lie behind *Dunstanus Saga*, but just when Árni compiled his work from them remains uncertain, and must do so until the problem of the quotation from the *Speculum Historiale* is solved.

## ST ERIC OF SWEDEN\*

By J. E. CROSS

SWEDISH scholars have always enjoyed “the rigour of the game” and no problem in mediæval Swedish history has been debated with more vigour, nor perhaps with more diligence, than that of Eric, patron of Sweden. The reason is that Eric, his life, and the early growth of his cult, form a focal point for many of the questions about a poorly-documented period. Speculation and debate are necessary when documents are few and the time is important. Eric died in 1160,<sup>1</sup> within a century from the destruction of the pagan temple at Old Uppsala,<sup>2</sup> and at a time when Christianity had opportunity to hold the Swedish people. His descendants were kings and throne-claimants in fierce struggles with a powerful rival family<sup>3</sup> well into the thirteenth century. Eric’s name is

\*Abbreviations used in the notes:-

- S.R.S. = *Scriptores rerum Svecicarum* (3 vols.) Vol. I ed. E. M. Fant (Uppsala, 1827); Vol. II ed. E. G. Geijer and J. H. Schröder (Uppsala, 1828); Vol. III ed. C. Annerstedt (Uppsala, 1871-76).  
D.S. = *Diplomatarium Suecanum*, (later *Svensk Diplomatarium*), ed. J. G. Liljegren *et al.* (Stockholm, 1829 —). I have followed Swedish scholarly tradition in citing by vol. and page or number of document for the first two volumes, but inserting vol. number for the later volumes.  
S.T. = *Sveriges Traktater*, ed. O. S. Rydberg and others (Stockholm, 1877 —).  
H.T. = *Historisk Tidskrift* (Stockholm).  
E. = *Erik den Helige, Historia, Kult, Reliker*, general editor B. Thordeman (Stockholm, 1954).

*Svenskt Biografiskt Lexicon* provides a bibliography of papers on St Eric up to 1951, and refers to *Erik den Helige*, ed. Thordeman, which was then available in page-proof.

I wish to thank the Librarian of University College, London, and the Director of the Swedish Institute, London, for obtaining periodicals and books, and allowing me to hold them on extended loan. Without their help this survey could not have been written.

<sup>1</sup> According to the *Vita*, S.R.S. II i, p. 276; but there is no reliable confirmation of the date. Differing scholarly opinions about the legend’s accuracy derive from conflicting traditions about the succession from Sverker the Elder to Knut, Eric’s son, and will be discussed with the problem of the length of Eric’s reign.

<sup>2</sup> I. Anderson, *A History of Sweden*, trans. C. Hannay (1956), p. 30.

<sup>3</sup> The descendants of Sverker the Elder.

connected with the dominant part of Sweden in these centuries. He ruled from the province of Uppland; he was certainly buried at Old Uppsala,<sup>4</sup> which kept its sacred quality, and, in 1164, became the seat of the first Archbishop of Sweden.<sup>5</sup> Eric's remains were translated to the new and present cathedral of Uppsala (then Östra Aros) in the thirteenth century,<sup>6</sup> and he became one of the

<sup>4</sup> *Sverris saga*, ch. 100: "Eiríkr konungr hvílir í skríni í Svíþjóðu at Uppsölum"; and the chronicle of kings in the Law of the Västgötar, (Codex Holmiensis, B 59): "Tolfte war Erekaer konongaer . . . oc ben hans hwilaes i wpsalum". Quotations of the complete passages are given in E. Carlsson, 'Translacio Archiepiscoporum', *Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift*, 1944, pp. 87 and 83 resp. The statement in *Sverris saga* derives, at latest, from the first half of the thirteenth century, that in the Law from the mid-century. The place of burial is confirmed by information on the translation of relics and references to the cult. See below note 6.

<sup>5</sup> Pope Alexander III appointed Stephen, a monk from Alvastra, to the archbishopric and stated: "Et ne de cetero prouincie swecie metropolitani possit cura deesse, commissam gubernacioni tue vpsaliam, vrbem eiusdem prouincie, perpetuam metropolim ordinauimus" (D.S. 49, August 5th 1164). A second bull was sent on the same date informing the Swedish bishops of the appointment (D.S. 50).

<sup>6</sup> The events leading up to a translation of relics and move of the archbishop's seat from Old Uppsala to Uppsala are clear enough, but the actual date of the move has been hotly debated because of conflicting evidence in mediæval records. A move had been suggested by Pope Innocent III in 1215 or 1216, though then the new venue was to have been Sigtuna. From time to time letters tell of damage by fire to the old church (1245, D.S. 326, and 1257, D.S. 444), and exhortations to carry out a move came from the curia (1258, D.S. 451, for Bishop Karl of Västerås to take charge; 1259, D.S. 458 and D.S. 462, explaining this to the other bishops; and the same year, D.S. 460, D.S. 461, informing Birger Jarl and King Valdemar). But Eric's remains were still in Old Uppsala in the 1260s on the reliable evidence of Israel Erlandsson, author of *Miracula S. Eriki*. He narrates that, in his boyhood, "corpus Beati Eriki . . . tunc in antiqua requiescebat Upsalia" (Miracle XXV, S.R.S. II i 294). In the autumn of 1270 however, King Valdemar called a meeting of prelates and noblemen at Söderköping to decide again on a move (D.S. 546). When the Swedish bishops met at Östra Aros in 1271, the move appeared imminent, for they sent out a letter offering indulgence to those who gave help for the foundation of a new cathedral (D.S. 554). Many scholars believe that it took place in 1273, on the evidence of three documents. On July 28th, 1273 (D.S. 570), King Valdemar wrote from Stockholm confirming gifts to Uppsala "in translacione reliquiarum beati erici regis et martiris gloriosi". A note in the calendar of Uppsala cathedral (dated 1344), against July 4th, also refers to 1273: "translacio archiepiscoporum de antiqua vpsalia ad vpsaliam, Anno D:ni M<sup>o</sup>CC<sup>o</sup>LXX<sup>o</sup>tertio" (D.S. II ii, p. xvii). Finally, according to the chronicle of archbishops in *Registrum Ecclesie Upsalensis*, the relics of bishops and archbishops except Olov Basatömir were moved under the direction of Archbishop Folke Ängel, while he was still archdeacon (S.R.S. III ii, p. 99). Folke had been appointed archdeacon in 1253, and became archbishop on August 17th, 1274 (D.S. 414, 579).

S. Söderlind, H.T. (1950), p. 132 seq., however, recalls a conflicting record, the paschal tables of the *Registrum Eccles. Upsal.*, which date the year in relation to events. It records: "anno translacionis reliquiarum Vpsalensis ecclesie lxxvii" together with other events, one of which dates the entry as before May 19th 1344. This statement thus suggests that a translation was carried out either in the latter part of 1276 or in the early months of 1277. Using

cathedral's patrons. In the *Miracula S. Erics* compiled at the request of the cathedral chapter towards the end of the century<sup>7</sup> we find the names of later kings, and of noblemen and noblewomen of Uppland, men who ruled the state as members of council and men who ruled the church.

Clearly every statement and speculation about St Eric had to be considered. So it was not surprising that the spate of papers began to flow when the fullest account of his life and person, the *Vita S. Erics*,<sup>8</sup> was rejected by

this as a basis, Söderlind states that the event took place under the direction of Archbishop Folke Ängel (died March 1st 1277), on July 4th 1276.

S. Lindqvist, "Eriksmiraklerna", *Svenska Landsmål* (1953-54), pp. 143-144, takes evidence from Miracle XXV (see above) to suggest that the relics of St Eric had been moved from Old Uppsala by 1277. His argument is based on a discussion of the archetype and a grouping of the miracles into times of writing. Thus, in the words quoted above, Israel is noting a different resting-place for the relics from that in his boyhood. The evidence is not conclusive since the miracle is not actually dated, but the argument is sound and agrees with the evidence of the majority of records.

Miracle II (S.R.S. II i, p. 291) has been adduced as evidence that the cathedral church was still in Old Uppsala in 1293 when it recounts Magnus Johansson Ängel's pilgrimage of that year. Lindqvist, *op. cit.* pp. 144-147 adequately disposes of this suggestion.

A conservative conclusion is that the move of the seat and relics took place between 1271 and 1277, probably in 1273.

<sup>7</sup> See note 70.

<sup>8</sup> The texts of *Vita S. Erics* and early printings of these are described most fully in *Vita et Miracula Sancti Erics Regis Sueciæ*, (facsimile of Cod. Vat. Reg. Lat. 525), ed. Axel Nelson (Copenhagen, 1944), pp. xxi seq. Extant texts in Latin and Old Swedish are:-

- i. *Registrum Ecclesie Upsalensis*, fol. 151v fol. 161v, a Latin text of the Life and Miracles. The text is dated 1344, and is now in the Swedish Public Record Office, A 8, (S. Lindqvist, *op. cit.* p. 114).
- ii. *Codex Vaticanus Reg. Lat. 525*, a Latin and Old Swedish text of the Life and Miracles. The text was once in the library of Queen Christina of Sweden and catalogued by her librarian, Isaac Vossius, about 1651. Nelson, p. xxi, dates the MS. to the beginning of the fifteenth century from the handwriting and style of illustration. Two accounts of miracles occurring in 1403 and 1411, which are added in the margin of the *Reg. Eccles. Upsal.* text, appear in the text of the Vatican MS. Lindqvist, p. 115, states however that these notes were written in after the main description.
- iii. *Codex C 15 Uppsala University Library*, fol. 191r - 208v, a Latin text of the Life and Miracles. The codex belonged to Vadstena monastery in the Middle Ages. Nelson, p. xxvii, regards this as a copy of the same type of redaction as that in the *Reg. Eccles. Upsal.* text, but Lindqvist, p. 117, notes that C 15 reveals independence by readings which sometimes support *Vat. Reg. 525* against *Reg. Eccles. Upsal.* and sometimes vice-versa.
- iv. *Codex Bildstenianus, Uppsala University Library Codex C 528*, fol. 157v - fol. 158v, an Old Swedish text of the Life. It is dated to 1420-1450 by R. Geete, *Fornsvensk Bibliografi*, p. 69. The text is printed by E. V. Gordon, *Introduction to Old Norse*, revised Taylor (1957).
- v. The written and printed breviaries and other liturgical books of the Middle Ages which contain the office of St Eric, and, thus, references to

Knut Stjerna<sup>9</sup> in 1898 as hagiographical idealisation.

The historic value of the legend is the central problem and, despite a great deal of subtle argument and amassing of irrelevant information, no external evidence has been presented to prove early composition, and internal evidence points to a date approximately a century after Eric's death at the earliest. In order even to place the legend's composition in the mid-thirteenth century, one statement has either to be regarded as a later addition or to be "explained". This is the phrase which identifies the site of Holy Trinity Church, Östra Aros — "ubi nunc metropolitana fundata est ecclesia". The writer is referring to the present cathedral of Uppsala, whose French builder, Estienne de Bonneuil, was not invited to Sweden before 1287.<sup>10</sup> Even if the words describe a symbolic<sup>11</sup> founding of the cathedral when the relics of the archbishops were translated from Old Uppsala, this probably did not happen before 1273.<sup>12</sup>

A reading of the legend, in both its "standard" and "shortened" versions,<sup>13</sup> shows that the hagiographer has

parts of the *Vita* and *Miracula*. They have been collected and discussed by T. Haapanen, 'Olika Skikt i S:t Eriks metriskä officium', *Nordisk Tidskrift för Bok- och Biblioteksväsen*, XIV (1927), pp. 53-83, and discussed by T. Schmid, 'Erik den Helige i Liturgien', E., pp. 155-171. The oldest breviary text was published by E. Jørgensen, *N.T.B.B.*, XX (1933), pp. 190-191, from B.M. Additional MS. 40146. The three lections in this office are now regarded as "the shortened legend" in the scholarly discussion. Dr. Schmid presents evidence to show that this breviary was intended for use in the diocese of Linköping during the last decades of the thirteenth century, and thinks it possible, (E. p. 167), that the lections were an abbreviation of an Uppsala legend which was not the *Vita* now extant. This possibility has been taken up by E. Lönnroth, 'Kring Erikslegenden', *Septentrionalia et Orientalia* (1959), pp. 270-281, and his conclusions will be discussed below (notes 21 and 87).

The oldest Latin versions of the *Vita* in the MSS of the Uppsala *Registrum* and of *Vat. Reg.* 525 vary insignificantly (see the printing with variant readings in E. pp. xi-xiii), and are the texts used in the historical discussion. The Old Swedish texts are clearly derivative and any extensions or omissions in these may be ignored for this purpose.

<sup>9</sup> Knut Stjerna, *Erik den Helige, en sagohistoriske studie* (Lund, 1898).

<sup>10</sup> D.S. II, p. 32, dated 1287, is an attestation from Renaut le Cras that Estienne de Bonnueill, (tailleur de pierre, maistre de faire l'eglise de Vpsale en Suece), was formally commissioned as builder, in order to take craftsmen and apprentices with him, and that he had been paid 40 Parisian pounds for this purpose.

<sup>11</sup> Y. Brilioth, *Svenska Kyrkans historia* (Stockholm, 1941), II, p. 18.

<sup>12</sup> See note 6.

<sup>13</sup> See note 8, and appendix.

had a free hand, uncontrolled by an audience who knew the historical events. In both versions Eric is presented as an ideal Christian king, and is described with features and in phraseology found in other legends of royal saints. He behaves in the manner prescribed by St Augustine in *De Civitate Dei*, especially Book V, chapter xxiv, and repeated in such "mirrors for princes" as the *Via Regia*<sup>14</sup> of Smaragdus (ninth century), in moral *florilegia* such as Isidore's *Liber Sententiarum*,<sup>15</sup> in the widely read seventh-century Irish tract *De Duodecim Abusivis Sæculi*,<sup>16</sup> and, finally, in those applications of principles to persons, the legends of our own royal saints, Oswald and Edmund, and the Scandinavians, Knut of Denmark and Olav of Norway.

Eric is chosen king for his "natural gentleness and goodness of life". He divides his time in three ways. First, he supports the church. Gregory the Great had emphasised that the king must rule according to the counsel of the church and that the priesthood was above the kingdom.<sup>17</sup> And the colonising Cistercians propagated this view, which was formally expressed in the *Gratiani Decretum* (c. 1150), the basis for Canon Law.<sup>18</sup> Eric therefore builds churches as St Oswald does,<sup>19</sup> "in imitation of Old Testament Kings" such as David and Solomon.<sup>20</sup> Secondly, he acts as a just ruler and judge. Even the phraseology here is traditional, when it says that he dispenses justice on the *via regia*,<sup>21</sup> "declining neither to

<sup>14</sup> Migne, P.L. 102, col. 931 seq.

<sup>15</sup> P.L. 83, col. 537 seq.

<sup>16</sup> P.L. 4, as Pseudo-Cyprian; P.L. 40, as pseudo-Augustine. According to M. W. Laistner, *Thought and Letters in Western Europe 500 to 900* (revised edition, 1957), pp. 145-146, the "ninth abuse", the section on the unjust king, was popular with Carolingian writers concerned with theory of government and the relation of the spiritual to the temporal power, and was quoted in the records of Church councils and synods held during the ninth century. See also K. B. Westman in E., p. 48.

<sup>17</sup> K. B. Westman, E., p. 4.

<sup>18</sup> E. W. Kemp, *Canonization and Authority in the Western Church* (1948), p. 82.

<sup>19</sup> Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, III iii. St Olav and St Knut did the same (Westman, E., p. 51).

<sup>20</sup> Wisdom IX, 8.

<sup>21</sup> For the information on *via regia* see L. Weibull, 'Erik den Helige', *Aarbøger for Nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie* (1917), pp. 115-116, and K. B.

the right for favour or gift, nor turning aside to the left for fear or hate'. The *via regia* is used concretely as "the king's highway" in Numbers xxi.22, but when Smaragdus took this Biblical text for his title, *Via Regia*, he used the phrase metaphorically and with ethical application. The *De Duodecim Abusivis* follows this tradition when condemning the people without law in these words: "many go the ways of perdition, they neglect the only *via regia*, which declines not to the right or the left, the law of God. Christ says about this: 'I am the way'." Eric does not waver, nor does St Edmund decline — in his case from the true doctrine. And Eric seems also to avoid the four pitfalls of a judge enumerated by Isidore — timor, cupiditas, odium, amor — copied and defined in the fourteenth-century English *florilegium*, *Speculum Christiani*.<sup>22</sup> Thirdly, Eric undertakes an Augustinian *justum bellum* like Oswald, but against the enemies of

Westman, E., p. 55. Swedish scholarly opinion takes it that this *via regia* refers on a realistic level to an *Eriksgata*, (probably "all-ruler's way" though a seventeenth-century opinion has it as "Eric's way"), the progress which a king made after election by the Svear in Uppland in order to be accepted by the other provincial assemblies in turn before returning to Uppland to be acclaimed king. If the legendary statement has realistic application however, it seems no more than a royal progress for the dispensation of law and justice. The *via regia* is not linked with Eric's election in the words of the *Vita* — even in the "shortened legend" the election is mentioned in *Lectio* I and the *via regia* in *Lectio* II. And judicial decisions on an *Eriksgata* appear to be limited to the normal courtesies of welcome for a new king, as in the Law of the Västgötar, *Rättslösabalken* I, that the king shall grant reprieve to three criminals, and the Law of the Östgötar, *Dråpsbalken* V § 1, that the king is to receive a "greeting tax".

E. Lönnroth, *op cit.* p. 275 finds further connotations in his comment on *Lectio* II of the "shortened legend": "*via regia* incedens nec ad dexteram favore vel pretio, nec ad sinistram timore vel odio, sed tramite recto, qui ducit ad patriam, inflexibiliter gradiebatur'. He notes that, in mediæval statutes, *patria* stood for "native land", representing the people's rights in opposition to the royal power, and regards the phrase as having three-fold meaning. *Patria* is Uppland, the end of an *Eriksgata*; heaven, the reward for a righteous life; and the people's rights against those of the king's power. Lönnroth regards the "shortened legend" as an embryo of the "standard legend", but we should note that the only statement which allows concrete application of the words appears only in the "standard legend", where, before *via regia*, appears the phrase: "deinde regnum suum circuiens ac populum visitans universum". In view of the phraseology in the "mirrors for princes" and other moral tracts and legends, the phrase in the "shortened legend" can only be a metaphorical expression for behaving justly and righteously.

<sup>22</sup> ed. G. Holmstedt (1930), p. 236, in the section, "Of justices". The Isidorean passage, *Liber Sententiarum*, lib. III, cap. liv, 7, is not identified in this mediæval English text.

the faith in Finland.<sup>23</sup> Here, says the legend, commenting on Eric's sorrow after the battle, his grief was like that of the good friend of God, Moses, who wept over the idolators (Exod. xxxii, 25-32). Moses is the example of just severity and compassion, comments Gregory the Great in his *Moralia* xx c. 5.<sup>24</sup>

Many more holy acts and virtues are enumerated for St Eric. As a man of influence and power he defended the weak against the strong and was merciful to those in adversity, like the king of the Old Testament who is to protect widows and orphans (Deut. x, 18, and Exod. xxii, 22), and like the *rex justus* of the *De Duodecim Abusivis* who indeed had to defend strangers, minors, widows, to nourish the poor with alms, and, at certain times, to devote himself to prayer and fasting. Eric's virtue of liberality is high-lighted by his refusal of the fines offered to him by a grateful people. Other men with power were similarly liberal. We recall Oswald's silver dish,<sup>25</sup> but more relevantly, Adam of Bremen records the refusal of a gift by Bishop Eginno of Lund, and the legend of St Knut narrates how the Danish king, Eric Ejegod, also declined the gift of a generous people.<sup>26</sup> Eric's minor Christian virtues, his attentiveness to prayer and generosity in almsgiving, are noted in such mediæval catalogues as the seven works of mercy and the seven works of spiritual mercy,<sup>27</sup> and those virtues distinguish St Oswald also.

As if the Swedish king were not ideal enough, he appears also as an ascetic. He obeys the command of St Paul,

<sup>23</sup> Note Oswald's prayer in Bede, *Eccl. Hist.*, III ii, before the battle of *Heofonfeld*: "He knows that we fight in a just cause to save our nation"; and his wars to extend his kingdom; and Ælfric's insertion in *The Maccabees* (Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*, ed. W. W. Skeat, E.E.T.S. O.S. 76 (1881-90), Vol. II, p. 115): "*Justum bellum* is just war against the cruel seamen, or against other peoples that wish to destroy our land".

<sup>24</sup> P.L. 76, col. 144. The word *Mosen* is later added above the line in Cod. Vat. Reg. 525.

<sup>25</sup> Bede, *Eccl. Hist.*, III vi.

<sup>26</sup> L. Weibull, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

<sup>27</sup> Recorded in *Speculum Christiani*, ed. cit., pp. 40-46.

(I Cor. ix, 27),<sup>28</sup> and constrains the desires of the flesh like Augustine's Christian ruler. At his death he was found to be wearing a hair shirt like Thomas Becket who had become a popular saint in Scandinavia;<sup>29</sup> and during times of fast or festival he often abstained from his consort's bed, cooling the animal heat of his flesh with cold baths, even in winter. His slight difference from the practice of Celtic and Anglo-Saxon ascetics,<sup>30</sup> who preferred a lake or the sea, may be explained by the thickness of Scandinavian ice.

This selective account suggests that, apart from certain proper names in the text, the *Vita* could have described any other ideal Christian king. We expect such identification in this literary genre which has connections with the modern obituary notice in its search for virtue. Both obituary and saint's legend can however select from life, and, despite the stereotyped features of Eric's character, historians have had to test the possible historicity of individual statements in the *Vita*.

In some legends the intimate and distinctive detail of certain events marks them as factual, but Eric's legend does not compare with the stories of other royal Scandinavian saints in this respect. The *Vita S. Erics* contains only a few names of people — Henry, Magnus, and Pope Alexander III; only a few places are named — Uppsala, Östra Aros, Finland. Who were Eric's secular supporters? Who was his queen? Who was the Swedish ally of Magnus? Exactly where did Eric land in Finland? The legend gives no answer. There is an air

<sup>28</sup> Gordon and Taylor, *Introduction to Old Norse*, p. 255, are inaccurate in saying that "this sentence, (jac pinar . . . thænist), does not correspond exactly with any passage in the scriptures etc". The Latin version is an exact copy of the Vulgate text, and indication is given in the Old Swedish text of Cod. Vat. Reg. 525: "som apostolus paulus sisher om sigh sielffuan".

<sup>29</sup> T. Schmid, E. p. 168, notes that the foremost models in the period after their deaths were Thomas of Canterbury and Peter of Verona. "In Scandinavia there is manifold evidence that they were known, valued, and venerated, and that one and another motif and quotation was taken over from their legends for Scandinavia's own martyrs." See also a report by Professor A. Lindblom in *The Manchester Guardian*, June 5th 1950, of an account of the cult of St Thomas in Sweden.

<sup>30</sup> See B. Colgrave, *Two Lives of St Cuthbert* (1940), p. 319.

of distance about the account, as Sven Tunberg said.<sup>31</sup> And it contains demonstrable mistakes of fact. According to the legend, Magnus marched against Eric on Ascension Day and was killed on the same day, later identified as May 18th, 1160. But Ascension Day fell on May 5th in that year.<sup>32</sup> We are also told that Eric died in the tenth year of his reign. Yet his predecessor, Sverker the Elder, was certainly King of Sweden when a papal letter was addressed to him with that title in 1153 or 1154,<sup>33</sup> and independent sources state that he was murdered about the mid-decade.<sup>34</sup> There is probably a third error, for Magnus is called "the son of the king of the Danes". If he is Magnus, son of Henry the Halt, as almost everyone agrees, he is not a king's son. Henry was son of Sven, a bastard son of the Danish King, Sven Estridsson.<sup>35</sup>

Yet one piece of information in the legend is undoubtedly true, and, interestingly, this is the only information which needs to be true for Eric to be called saint at this time. When I discussed the stereotyped features of the legend a notable omission was the death

<sup>31</sup> S. Tunberg, 'Erik den Helige, Sveriges Helgonkonung', *Fornvännen* (1950), p. 136.

<sup>32</sup> Gordon and Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 255, are incorrect in identifying "hælga thorsdag" of their O. Swed. text as "Maundy Thursday, which in that year fell on May 18th". Holy Thursday is a name for Maundy Thursday, the day before Good Friday, in O. Swed. texts, but the *Reg. Eccles. Upsal. Vita* has: "instabat die illo festum Ascensionis", i.e. Ascension Day. Maundy Thursday can never be as late as May 18th. On the dating of Ascension Day 1160 as May 5th, see K. B. Westman, *Den Svenska Kyrkans Utveckling från S:t Bernhards Tidevarv till Innocentius III:s* (Stockholm, 1915), p. 97.

<sup>33</sup> D.S. 38, addressed to "S. regi et vniuersis proceribus Swechie".

<sup>34</sup> There are different traditions about the way in which Sverker was murdered, and about the names of the murderers. A papal letter of Nov. 13th, 1208 (S. T. I n. 59), says: "prædecessores Erici (Eric, St Eric's grandson) . . . illustris recordationis S. Sueciæ Regis morte per quendam ipsius camerarium (probably "servant", here) procurata". Saxo, whose *Gesta Danorum* is knowledgeable on Swedish affairs, but biased in favour of the Sverker family, says that Sverker was murdered, while he slept, by his servant at the instigation of Magnus, son of Henry the Halt, and dates this about 1156 by reference to a contemporary Danish event of this time. The chronicle of kings in the Law of the Västgötar adds that Sverker was killed on his way to church for Christmas matins. For a convenient summary see K. B. Westman, *op. cit.* p. 66.

Gordon and Taylor's note p. 254 on "*regno vacante*, referring to the period 1134-50, when there was no king in Sweden", is inaccurate.

<sup>35</sup> Westman, E. p. 38, and others. Gordon and Taylor's note on Henry the Halt as "King of Denmark", p. 255, is inaccurate.

scene. In this too there is an obvious attempt to copy the ideal model, the Passion of Christ. Apart from Biblical reference — the image of the crushed seed (John xii, 24) — and verbal echoes of phraseology found in the legends of other royal saints,<sup>36</sup> events and motives appear to be adapted. When the slayer Magnus is said to be incited by the Devil, and his associates are said to be enticed by gifts and promises, the treachery of Judas is recalled. Such identification may have caused the inconsistency about the day of Eric's death, since Ascension Day may have been added so that Eric can "happily ascend after our Lord through the palm of martyrdom".<sup>37</sup> Perhaps also the place of Eric's devotions was not historically Holy Trinity Church, Östra Aros, which is conveniently called "mons Domini", and would turn the listeners thoughts to Calvary. For, on this point, the "shortened" legend differs from the "standard" legend, and says that Eric "was martyred at Uppsala", where he was enthroned, i.e. Old Uppsala. Maybe this was the fact later altered to fit new conditions when Östra Aros, or present-day Uppsala, replaced Old Uppsala as the seat of the archbishop. The site of the new cathedral, which was on that of the old Holy Trinity Church,<sup>38</sup> would be even more venerated for its connection with St Eric.

But a hagiographer's most difficult task is to make the

<sup>36</sup> See L. Weibull, *op. cit.*, pp. 116, 118, 120-121, 124, for verbal similarities between *Vita S. Erici* and texts of the legends of St Olav and St Knut.

<sup>37</sup> N. Ahnlund, H. T. (1948), p. 316, regards it as "undeniably striking that Eric's Mass, May 18th, 1273, was also Ascension Day"; and, in E. p. 115, adds that "probably this can really be ascribed to the conditions in 1273", when the move of the archbishops' seat was carried out. This however would imply that Ascension Day was joined with May 18th as the day of Eric's death in or after 1273, and that the statement would be an interpolation. My speculation leads to no further complications and is based simply on acknowledged common practice of hagiographers.

<sup>38</sup> S.R.S. II i 276: "in Ecclesia Sanctæ Trinitatis in monte . . . ubi nunc metropolitana fundata est ecclesia". This Holy Trinity Church is not the one bearing the name in present day Uppsala. Mediæval tradition has it that Eric died at the foot of the hill where the Cathedral stands, thus very near the place of his last devotions. Canon Arnerus (canon 1330-39) is said to be the first to build a chapel of stone, further down (*inferius*) on the place where Eric died (D.S. V 3835). This chapel was situated, (Ahnlund, E. p. 116), close to the present *St Eriks Källa* (spring) whose name recalls the miracle of the spring rushing forth where Eric fell.

historic death of a king exactly the same as the Passion of Christ, because a violent death and a change of ruler are remembered long after deeds of piety in life, and because the Lord is the example of non-resistance. Admittedly, St Edmund, who had no other alternative when surprised by an overwhelming Danish force,<sup>39</sup> can happily follow Christ's example, and his biographer relishes the situation. St Eric, at best for the writer of his legend, can only delay resistance. He must fight and he dies violently: "Wounds were doubled on wounds for the Lord's anointed as he lay on the ground. His enemies raged still more fiercely against him as he lay half-dead, and mocking him, they irreverently cut off his revered head." This untimely death is confirmed by independent sources within living memory of the event. About 1191 A.D. the Pope wrote to King Knut of Sweden and referred to his father, Eric, "revered in memory, killed by his enemies".<sup>40</sup> Sweden's oldest book of laws, the Law of the Västgötar, laments that Eric "was taken from life all too soon",<sup>41</sup> in its comments on the kings. Such information, in the right hands, fulfils the only requirement for royal sainthood in the early mediæval period, for supporters were eager to assume that a Christian king, violently killed, gained a martyr's crown; and many kings, who were often unknown in Rome, became local saints revered only in their own diocese merely by dying in battle or by assassination.<sup>42</sup> The Norwegian king Sverre commented ironically after the bloody battle of Bergen in 1179: "There was a good

<sup>39</sup> According to Abbo of Fleury in *Memorials of St Edmund's Abbey*, ed. T. Arnold (Rolls Series, 1890), I pp. 15-16.

<sup>40</sup> D.S. 825, from Pope Celestinus III (1191-2) referring to Knut Eriksson: "postmodum vero claræ memoriæ N [al. O and En(ricus)] patre suo, ab inimicis occiso".

<sup>41</sup> A translation of the phrase in Codex Holmiensis B 59: "han war vsini swa brat of ðaghum takin". The other MS, Codex Holmiensis D4, has: "han war slaghin i en striidh widh opsala oc ther ligger han". The complete passages are printed in E. Carlsson, *op. cit.* pp. 83 and 85 resp.

<sup>42</sup> Ahnlund, H. T. (1948), p. 306: "It was very common during the older middle ages, almost the rule in Scandinavia, that a new native saint was acclaimed because of his violent death, without real scruples of a theological nature." A number of examples are given in L. Daae, *Norges Helgener* (1879), p. 190 seq.

supply of sainted men in the town after this battle.”<sup>43</sup> There was no question of official canonization for most of these kings, and indeed, often no request, for twelfth-century popes did not claim the sole right to canonize. Interestingly, the first occasion when a pope spoke of the “*reservatio papalis*” was in a letter,<sup>44</sup> written some time in the 1170s to a certain King K of Sweden, (probably Knut Eriksson), where he forbade the worship in Sweden of a man killed in a drunken carousal. But the “*reservatio papalis*” did not become formal canon law until 1234 in the decretals of Gregory IX. The older formality for recognition of sainthood was by elevation of the bones

<sup>43</sup> *Sverris saga*, ch. 34, noted by Ahnlund, E. p. 120.

<sup>44</sup> P.L. 200, col. 1259 or D.S. 41. The letter is dated *Tusculani ii Non Julii* and was written by Pope Alexander III to “*karissimo in Christo filio K illustri Sweorum et Gothorum regi*”, and to the Jarl, bishops, clergy and people of Götaland, forbidding the veneration as saint of a man “*in potacione et ebrietate occisum*”. It was written in one of the years 1171, 1172, 1180 when the Pope was in Tusculanum on July 6th. Some Swedish scholars have regarded the dead man as St Eric, and the letter as early evidence of a cult, but the evidence is uncertain. The argument assumes that the letter was written at the earliest possible date and that the addressee was a certain Kol, brother of Karl Sverkersson, who was a throne-claimant after Karl’s death. Obviously, if the addressee were Knut Eriksson, the pope would be unlikely to speak of St Eric in the letter’s terms. The theory also assumes that St Eric was killed in a drinking-bout since there is no evidence for this. Others have speculated that Knut Eriksson was the addressee, the most likely King K in the 1170s, and therefore that the dead man was of the opposing faction, the family of Sverker, or even Sverker the Elder himself, though no record suggests that Sverker died while drunk. Another candidate was the Norwegian King Harald Gille, who was killed in his mistress’s bed after a drunken evening, but more than a quarter of a century earlier, in 1136.

For a summary of these opinions and his own theory see E. Carlsson, ‘Erikskultens Uppkomst’, *Saga och Sed* (1938), pp. 1-48. The most satisfactory speculation is that of N. Ahnlund, H.T. (1948), pp. 305-11. Ahnlund agrees that the dead man was among the group of powerful Scandinavian leaders who became saints, and suggests the Danish king, Knut Magnusson, who was killed at the feast of Roskilde 1157, a story fully treated by Saxo and in the *Knýtlinga saga*. He was regarded as a saint both in Denmark and in Sweden, probably in Östergötland especially, since he was related to the Sverker family whose estates were there. Thus the derogatory reference to him could be sent to Knut Eriksson, and be directed also to the leaders and people of Götaland.

E. W. Kemp, *Canonization and Authority in the Western Church* (1948), pp. 99 seq., discusses the importance of the letter in connection with the history of the *reservatio papalis*. Apparently the paragraph forbidding the worship of the man became detached and appears in collections of decrees and eventually in law-books. Kemp states that although popes of the second half of the twelfth century were “quite sure of their position and authority” (p. 101) in regard to declaration of sainthood, there was still doubt among the glossators and interpreters. But the paragraph from the letter of Alexander III was the text eventually accepted as authority in the Decretals of Gregory IX in 1234 (p. 107).

from the grave to a shrine placed in a prominent position — often on or above the altar — where they could be more easily venerated.<sup>45</sup> Eric was never canonized, but his remains were laid in a shrine. The *Sverris saga*, whose hero married Eric's daughter, notes that: "King Eric rests in a shrine at Uppsala".<sup>46</sup> The home of the relics can be identified from that time though the present shrine in Uppsala cathedral is not the original one.<sup>47</sup> From time to time, the shrine was opened, the first time in 1303<sup>48</sup> when Archbishop Nils Allesson was in charge and some bones were abstracted for favoured devotees of the saint, the most recent in 1946 when Professor Bengt Thordeman, the State Antiquary, co-ordinated the work of archæologists and physiologists, and found macabre confirmation of the legendary statement.<sup>49</sup>

They found that the bones in the shrine, apart from one, belonged to one man, about 40 years old. These include, among others, two thigh-bones and two shin-bones which were clearly hacked by a sharp-edged weapon, and the cuts are quite different from ones made after death. The neck-bone is also cut through, not from the back, as in formal execution, but probably when the body lay on its side or back. And apparently the remains were raised from the grave before the flesh had decomposed from the bones. Their colouring suggests that the flesh was removed artificially by softening in water or even boiling which was a fairly common method of preparation before it was forbidden by papal bull in 1299.<sup>50</sup> Long fine scratches on the bones also indicate artificial preparation

<sup>45</sup> Kemp, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>46</sup> See note 4.

<sup>47</sup> See A. Bygden, 'Sankt Eriks skrin genom tiderna', in E. pp. 321-383.

<sup>48</sup> D.S. 1395, and J. Peringskiöld, *Monumenta Ullerakerensia* (Stockholm, 1710-19), II p. 53.

<sup>49</sup> See B. E. Ingelmark, 'Skelettdelarna i Erik den Heliges Relikskrin', in E. pp. 233-261.

<sup>50</sup> *Les registres de Boniface VIII*, ed. G. Digard (1890-94), II no. 3409, cited by Ingelmark, E. p. 260, together with examples of preparation of relics in Scandinavia and elsewhere. He refers to the relics of Magnus Erlendsson, jarl in the Orkneys (after 1115), of the Danish local saint Theodgarus (about 1065) and St Birgitta, whose bones were certainly prepared shortly after her death in 1373 for a journey back to Sweden from Rome.

and were probably made by some instrument for scraping. As the report maintains, if the relics were faked the man who did it was a remarkably knowledgeable anatomist.<sup>51</sup>

So it seems that Eric met a violent death in battle and that his body was prepared for a shrine rather soon after his death. The most probable time for the elevation was during the comparatively long reign of Knut Eriksson, c. 1167-95. The conditions then were favourable and the reason was obvious. For Knut had defeated his rival Karl, son of Sverker, at the Battle of Visingsö, and it was the turn of the family of Eric to rule. It would be an advantage for Knut to derive from "holy stock".<sup>52</sup> Eric's position as founder of a dynasty was of paramount importance for his elevation, and his violent death was an acceptable excuse. By 1198 he is recognised as a saint in a church document, the Vallentuna calendar, where his name, *erici regis*, is entered against May 18th in dark ink in contrast with the red ink denoting the great festivals.<sup>53</sup> Thus by that date he has become a minor local saint in the place where the calendar originated, probably in the Mälardistricts, and possibly from Sigtuna church.<sup>54</sup>

The sources have been painstakingly sifted for other independent confirmation of the legendary statements but with small success. Certain general statements are probably true, such as the description of the way in which Eric was elected, because this was the normal procedure at this time.<sup>55</sup> But statements about Eric's distinctive actions have no decisive support. His activity as defender

<sup>51</sup> Ingelmark, E. p. 258.

<sup>52</sup> *beata stirps*.

<sup>53</sup> A facsimile reproduction of the relevant folio is given in E., plate IX, facing page 112. From this it may be seen that an 'h' of *herici* has been partially erased, and commentators state that the cross and *festum*, which are added after *regis*, were written in during the thirteenth century.

<sup>54</sup> Ahnlund, E. p. 114, and note 15, referring to *Liber ecclesie Vallentunensis*. ed. Toni Schmid (1945).

<sup>55</sup> As indicated in the Laws of the Swedish Provinces. There has been discussion whether the Swedish crown was inherited or gained by election, but H. Schück has discussed apparently discordant statements in early Scandinavian sources, (in H.T. (1913), pp. 258 seq.), and concludes that "the kingdom, like the family estates, was regarded as belonging to the family and nothing seems to hinder the observation that the people of Sweden, as elsewhere, had the right of choice within the family".

and propagator of the faith abroad has particularly fascinated investigators, partly because it suggests an early development of the Swedish influence in Finland which still continues. Only the other day a new document was added to the collection surrounding but not applying directly to St Eric. This is a papal letter of 1193<sup>56</sup> describing Knut, Eric's son, as a "lover of the Christian religion" who "is always fighting against the pagans for the extension of the holy church". This reference to the twelfth century may be collated with another papal letter of 1171 or 1172,<sup>57</sup> where Archbishop Stephen of Uppsala and other Swedes are warned about the treacherous behaviour of the Finns to the Christian faith. Apparently they are Christian while a Swedish army remains but revert to paganism when the Swedes retire. The pope tells the Swedes to take safeguards against past mistakes and, of course, implies knowledge of some early crusading activity, which the letter of 1193 also attests for later decades. It is also quite certain that Christianity could easily have gone on the Eastern Way before the time of St Eric, for Russian sources speak of *ledung* fleets, one of them with a king and a bishop aboard, sailing on the way to Novgorod, both in 1142 and 1164.<sup>58</sup> Yet Eric's name does not appear in any independent source in connection with Finland, and his companion, the Englishman, Bishop Henry,<sup>59</sup> is a suspiciously obscure figure until his

<sup>56</sup> From Pope Celestinus III (1191-98) to Knut Eriksson, quoted in Swedish translation by Gerhard Hafström in 'Den Historiske Erik den Helige', *Svensk Dagbladet*, June 12th, 1960. The letter was discovered in a Spanish manuscript volume.

<sup>57</sup> S.T., I no. 46, from Pope Alexander III.

<sup>58</sup> Hafström, *loc. cit.*, and Schmid, E. p. 166.

<sup>59</sup> The earliest information about St Henry of Finland, apart from *Vita S. Eriki*, is a short legend in the *Breviarium Upsalense*, (printed in S.R.S. II i, 332-335), probably originating in the 1290s, (Westman, E. p. 64). There it says that Henry was an Englishman, (oriundus in Anglia), who ruled the church at Uppsala when Eric was king. When Eric returned from Finland, Henry remained, but finally met his death at the hands of a wrongdoer whom he censured. A later Finnish tradition, (S.R.S. II i, 336-7), adds details of the saint's death. His murderer was a *bonde* named Lalli, who killed Henry near Nousis. Henry was buried at Nousis church, which was dedicated to him, but his relics were translated to Åbo church in 1300. Henry is regarded as the fourth of five bishops before 1164 in the Uppsala list of bishops (written at the earliest in the fourteenth century), (S.R.S. III ii 97); and the Swedish

cult as patron saint of Finland is well established.

To hear again of Eric's specific church building at Old Uppsala we have to rely on such traditions as the notes of Bishop Karl of Västerås,<sup>60</sup> and his dating appears too convenient to be true. He records that the old pagan temple had been destroyed by early Swedish Christian kings and that one had built a small Christian church there. This was improved and extended by Sverker the Elder and completed by Eric in 1150. The date, however, conveniently agrees with the first year of Eric's reign according only to the legend, and confirms the priority of his pious activities.

As a law-giver Eric is honoured in the Law of Uppland, written in 1296. Here he is mentioned twice: once generally, in the oath which required a king on accession to follow the law of his forefathers, including Eric;<sup>61</sup> once specifically, in connection with the law on women's rights in marriage.<sup>62</sup> It is most likely however that he did no more than christianise traditional marriage vows since the phraseology of the law is in an alliterating and rhythmical pattern so familiar in laws transmitted orally.

chronicler, Johannes Magnus, says that Henry was appointed by his fellow Englishman, the papal legate Nicholas Breakspear on his visit to Scandinavia in 1152. One scholar, K. Grotenfelt, 'Erik den Helige och hans korståg till Finland', *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland* (1920), pp. 111-125, has drawn on these and other late traditions in his argument for the historicity of Eric's crusade.

<sup>60</sup> *Annotationes ex scriptis episcopi Karoli Arosiensis*. These however were burned in a fire of 1702 and only a copy remains, now in Uppsala University Library, S. 142. Their unreliable nature was demonstrated in the seventeenth-century debate between two Swedish scholars, Verelius and Schefferus, according to C. M. Kjellberg, 'Några blad ur Upsala domkyrkas äldre byggnadshistoria', *Upplands Fornminnes Föreningens Tidskrift*, XVII (1895), p. 142 seq. Peringskiöld, *op. cit.*, I, 161, appears to draw on these notes for his statement that the Old Uppsala church was begun by Sverker, completed by Eric, and consecrated by Bishop Henry in 1150.

<sup>61</sup> "ok wilium wir fylghia i laghum þæmmæ warum forfæprum Erikinum hælghæ, Byghiri iarli ok Magnusi kunungi"; quoted by Westman, E. p. 99, note 270.

<sup>62</sup> The Law of Uppland, *Ärvdabalk* III: "han a kono manni giptæ til heþær ok til husfru ok til siæng halfæ, til lasæ ok nyklæ ok til laghæ þriþiunx, ok til alz þæs han a j lösörum ok han atflæ fa, utæn gull ok hemæ hion, ok til allæn þæn ræt ær uplænzlk lagh æru ok hin hælghi Erikær kunungær gaff, j namþn faþurs ok sons ok þæs hælghæ andæ"; quoted by Westman, E. p. 99, note 271.

See especially, K. Stjerna, *op. cit.*, section G on the qualities of Eric; and S. Ambrosiani, 'Uplandslagens Ärfda B. III — ett bidrag till Erik den heliges historia', *Nordiska Studier till A. Noreen* (1904).

Apart from the legend there is little information about Eric, but one account proves beyond doubt that he held the Swedish throne towards the end of the 1150s. The extremely reliable record of the foundation of the Cistercian monastery at Vidtskøl in Jutland<sup>63</sup> in 1158 names Eric and his queen Christina in a story clearly deriving from life. Apparently Sverker the Elder and his queen had invited two convents of monks from Clairvaux to Sweden, one of which, after difficulties, was eventually offered a house at Varnhem by a noblewoman, Sigrid. After a while however an unnamed "powerful" man persuaded Sigrid to expel the monks, but they were hastily recalled when the punishment of God in the form of leprosy and blindness fell on her. Her kinswoman, Queen Christina, who inherited the estate after Sigrid's death, renewed the persecution by inciting the local people against them, on one occasion even breaking up a Palm Sunday procession of monks by the intrusion of "lightly-clad dancing girls". Finally the abbot Henry began a journey to Rome to complain to the Cistercian general chapter there. But in Denmark King Valdemar was sympathetic, and, at the synod of Roskilde, he offered support to found a new monastery at Vidtskøl. Henry sent for his convent to join him but some decided to stay, and later, when Eric and his queen became more favourably disposed to the monks, Gerard of Alvastra, their head in Sweden, persuaded some to return from Denmark and made up the complement from his own convent under a new abbot.

It appears that this detailed account falsifies the legendary picture of an Eric burning with zeal for the faith, yet one need not deduce from it as Knut Stjerna did, that Eric was a "luke-warm Christian". Most probably<sup>64</sup> the king regarded the affair as a purely secular

<sup>63</sup> "Narratiuncula de fundatione monasterii Vitæ scholæ in Cimbria", printed in *Scriptores Rerum Danicarum*, ed. J. Langebek, (Copenhagen, 1772-1878), IV 458 seq.

<sup>64</sup> Westman's analysis in E. p. 54.

matter of the legal right to an inherited estate, and the church did not always encourage the view that hard business was beneath it. It is likely that Sigrid's gift was made without reference to her heirs, and while the church hoped that such gifts would be accepted as binding, Swedish civil law still denied that they should. Within the law Christina could claim Varnhem, though some of her methods to eject the monks were more hard-headed than reverent. Now, probably, Gerard of Alvastra, a church diplomat honoured by all as a true man of God,<sup>65</sup> negotiated with king and queen and persuaded them to give up their inheritance. So successful were his methods that Varnhem was favoured by Eric's descendants and became the family burial-place.

There is little more to add about the historic Eric. He is the son of a certain Jædhuard (Icelandic, *Játvarðr*),<sup>66</sup> a Swedish pronunciation of the English name of Edward, but the kind of connection with England which gave the name remains as speculation. A late tradition<sup>67</sup> says that Eric's mother was Cecilia, daughter of King Sven, possibly the heathen king, Blót-Sven. Eric however certainly married into a royal line by taking Christina, a descendant of King Inge the Elder. There are two different traditions about her descent,<sup>68</sup> but the more reliable in *Knýtlinga saga* makes her Inge's grand-daughter. It therefore seems that Eric would really need the strong support of nobles and commons, since his claim by inheritance is somewhat insecure.

Here the search for the historic Eric must end despite much ado about a "lost legend" by some scholars.<sup>69</sup> They

<sup>65</sup> Westman, *loc. cit.*, referring to Cistercian record.

<sup>66</sup> See C. M. Kjellberg, 'Erik den heliges ättlingar och kronpretendenter bland dem', H.T. (1923), p. 351 seq.

<sup>67</sup> A chronology in *Liber Memorialis ecclesie Uppsalensis*, printed in S.R.S. I i p. 83, dated 1307: "Mater ejus fuit Cecilia filia Swenonis Regis".

<sup>68</sup> *Knýtlinga saga*, the older tradition, states that Christina was the daughter of a Danish prince Björn and Katarina, daughter of Inge the Elder. The Swedish "list of kings up to 1333" (S.R.S. I i p. 4) names her: "Christina filia Ingonis iunioris".

<sup>69</sup> Notably E. Carlsson, 'Translacio Archiepiscoporum', see note 4.

refer to the statement in "the standard legend" that: "reliqua vite eius et translacio sancti corporis ac miracula que dominus operatus est per sanctum suum et vsque in presens non desiuit misericorditer operari que hic ommissa sunt breuitatis causa alibi scripta sunt". There is an extant miracle-collection<sup>70</sup> written by Israel Erlandsson before 1311 and now attached to "the standard legend" in the oldest text. No *account* of a translation is extant however, though there is a reference to a commonplace miracle which happened at a translation. Apparently Israel's uncle, Folke Ängel (who became Archbishop at Uppsala in 1274), had given his nephew some notes on miracles of St Eric and Israel recorded them as headings. One of these was: "De lumine quod apparuit in translatione Sancti Erici".<sup>71</sup> So presumably the statement in the *Vita* refers to a fuller account of St Eric which is now lost. But the information leads nowhere unless it can be proved that existing texts drew on an older "lost legend", and this cannot be done. Nor can it be assumed, as one writer did,<sup>72</sup> that because Eric was venerated by the church in 1198, distinctive texts about him would be

<sup>70</sup> Latin texts of *Miracula S. Erici* are extant in *Reg. Eccles. Upsal., Cod. Vat. Reg. Lat.* 525, and *Cod. C. 15, Uppsala Univ. Lib.*, referred to above in note 8. S. Lindqvist, *op. cit.*, pp. 112-158 discusses the texts and suggests an archetypal arrangement of the miracle-accounts. It appears that there are no major differences in the text.

The author, as he himself says, (S.R.S. II i 314), is Israel Erlandsson, prior of the Dominicans at Sigtuna, and this statement dates the completion of the *Miracula* as before June 30th, 1311, when Israel is called *episcopus* (Bishop of Västerås). S. Lindqvist (p. 155) rejects the ending of Miracle 48, describing an event of 1311, as a marginal addition, and considers that the collection was completed by the end of 1310 (for which there are 2 dated miracles, nos. 48 and 50), or the beginning of 1311. Israel had been requested to undertake his task by "certain canons of the church of Uppsala" *sede vacante*, but opinion differs on the identification of this vacancy in the archbishopric. There were two lengthy periods without leadership, one of seven years before Archbishop Folke Ängel was appointed in 1274, and another from 1291-5. (See Lindqvist, p. 148).

Biographical information about Israel is presented by G. Ekström, *Västerås stifts herdaminne* (Falun, 1939), I i pp. 40-58, abstracted in English by J. Cross, 'The Authorship of *Vita S. Erici*', *Vetenskaps-Societetens i Lund Årsbok* (1952), pp. 23-25.

<sup>71</sup> Miracle no. 44, S.R.S. II i 306. A further possibility is that the phrase "in translatione" means on some anniversary of the translation. Thus the miracle need not necessarily have been drawn from an account of the original translation of St Eric's relics. The reference might also be to the translation to the new cathedral of Uppsala c. 1273.

<sup>72</sup> E. Carlsson, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

written for divine service. For, in such a case, material for an office could be taken from the *commune sanctorum*<sup>73</sup> — the general masses and offices for the different categories of saints.

We need to look to a later period before the name of Eric becomes prominent in Swedish and foreign records, and then, in the mid-thirteenth century, comes a notable activity. He is first called *beatus* in a papal bull of 1256 (Oct. 23rd),<sup>74</sup> when Pope Alexander IV grants forty days indulgence to those who visit St Eric's grave at Old Uppsala. As the pope says: "A crowd of people flocks there". Again in 1266 (Oct. 21st),<sup>75</sup> Pope Clement IV promises the same respite for the same purpose and refers to "*corpus beati Erici*" and the festival "*ipsius sancti*". Since the terms *beatus* and *sanctus* are interchangeable at this period,<sup>76</sup> Eric has obviously been accepted by Rome as a saint "*per viam cultus*", i.e. in view of an established cult. The Law of the Västgötar had already spoken of miracles happening at his grave.<sup>77</sup>

Probably the first liturgical texts for an office of St Eric were composed after the mid-thirteenth century, as a story in the *Miracula* indicates.<sup>78</sup> In this Israel Erlandsson narrates his own cure from a quartan fever by the aid of St Eric. He had been advised by his uncle Folke Ängel to speed his cure by reciting "an antiphon with a versicle and a collect" about the glorious martyr, and this means that a *memoria* or *commemoratio*<sup>79</sup> was in existence at the

<sup>73</sup> T. Haapanen, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

<sup>74</sup> D.S. 435 "... sicut asseritis ad sepulchrum beati Henrici Regis cuius corpus in uestra requiescit ecclesia deuote concurrat populi multitudo" etc.

<sup>75</sup> D.S. 523: "Cupientes igitur, ut ecclesia uestra in qua corpus beati Erici martiris, ut asseritis, requiescit, et in qua festiuitate ipsius sancti ob eiusdem reuerentiam populi conuenit multitudo congruis honoribus frequentetur" etc.

<sup>76</sup> Kemp, *op. cit.* p. 116.

<sup>77</sup> "Nu ær hans sial i ro mæð guðhi oc hans hænglum oc ben hans hwilæs i wpsalum, oc hawir þær teeth oc oppenbaræt margh faghær iærtिंगni mæð gudz naðhum." ("Now is his soul at peace with God and his angels, and his bones rest at Uppsala, and have revealed and made manifest many wondrous miracles there by the grace of God.") Quoted in E. Carlsson, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

<sup>78</sup> Miracle XXV, S.R.S. II i 296: "tradidit (Folke Ängel) etiam ei Antiphonam cum versiculo et collecta, quæ de glorioso Martire frequenter recitare deberet".

<sup>79</sup> Defined as the smallest possible kind of office by Haapanen, *op. cit.*, p. 79 note 2, and often used for the festivals of less important saints.

time the miracle occurred. At this time Israel was a schoolboy at Linköping which indicates that this *memoria* was in existence in the 1260s; and this approximate date is confirmed by an analysis of the extant liturgical texts. The most complete office for St Eric reveals strata of composition, the earliest layer being two antiphons, possibly on English models, one of which could have been included in the *memoria* described by Israel.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>80</sup> T. Haapanen, *ibid.*, has scrutinized all the liturgical material available to him, (30 texts from thirteenth to sixteenth centuries), and the progress of his argument may be of general interest:

- i. The material divides into 2 groups, for a *festum novem lectionum*, (3 nocturns, 9 lections), and for a *festum trium lectionum*, (1 nocturn, 3 lections).
- ii. The *festum trium lectionum* is the earlier since it was composed for the day of Eric's death, May 18th, which, with few exceptions, fell within the period of Easter, when the Church limited individual festivals even for saints of high rank. Alternatively, a *festum t.l.* could be composed for a saint of low rank (a black letter day saint, as Eric was in the original composition of the Vallentuna Calendar).
- iii. The original nocturn in this *festum t.l.* was the one printed as number III in S.R.S. II i, 325, 326, from the *Breviarium Upsalense*. It begins *Rex*. *Rex* differs from the other two beginning *Opem* and *Pugil*, both metrically and in the kind of melody to which it was sung, whereas *Opem* and *Pugil* are the same; and these two show similarities to, and were influenced by, the office for St Eskil, composed certainly after 1278, and probably much later. Also *Opem* and *Pugil* repeat the content of *Rex*.
- iv. *Opem* and *Pugil* were probably added to the Office for St Eric either when May 18th fell outside the period of Easter, (this occurred in 1283 for the thirteenth century), or for the feast of the translation of Eric on January 24th. The Uppsala official calendar does not mention this feast in 1344, and its first specific naming is in 1420 (D.S. III p. 539): "sancti Eriks afton, som wm wintrin kombir", while a reference from 1419 (*ibid.* p. 448) implies such a feast with the expression: "sancte Erix dagh, som wm somaren kombyr". Probably the two nocturns were composed at the end of the fourteenth century or the beginning of the fifteenth century.
- v. Speculations are made about phases of composition for the *festum t.l.* The hymns, which are in iambic metre, need not have been composed at a different period from the antiphons and responses, which are in hexameters, since iambic was the most common metre for hymns, the hymns appear in the oldest texts, and both iambic and hexameter parts show influence from the office for St Dominic (melody, metrical structure, and even lines of text). Haapanen notes that there were cliché-lines in liturgical texts but the points of contact are numerous, including the first lines of the hymns "Adest dies lætitiæ", and "hymnum nouæ lætitiæ", and 2 lines of the sequence "A defunctis revocatum/matri vivum reddit natum". He suggests that the songs for the mass and the songs for the office were composed by a Dominican, most probably from the monastery at Sigtuna.
- vi. There may be an even older phase — the *memoria* mentioned in Miracle XXV, being an antiphon, a verse and a collect. The antiphon in a *memoria* is always a *Magnificat* or *Benedictus* antiphon, so that if a *memoria* were to be selected out of the complete office, one of three *Magnificat* or *Benedictus* antiphons would be chosen. Such a *memoria* is actually extant at the end of the *Breviarium Upsalense* and the antiphon is *ad Magnificat*, for the first vesper in the office: "Ave martir pretiose/miles Christi gloriose". Haapanen's suggestion that this antiphon and another beginning "Miles Christi gloriose" are influenced by English models is not

There appear to be various though inter-connecting reasons for an interest in St Eric at this time which cause a number of scholars to maintain that the extant versions of the legend originated after the mid-thirteenth century. For both political and ecclesiastical conditions, aligned with hints in the legend, suggest that the *Vita* had a secondary purpose as a political pamphlet directed against Birger Jarl and the son he placed on the throne in 1251, King Valdemar. Their most troublesome opponents in the thirteenth century were the Folkung party, a group of landed noblemen, connected by kin or estates to the province of Uppland, who were identified, on some occasions at least, with the Uppland commons.<sup>81</sup> In the main their activities supported the claims of St Eric's descendants — when their policies coincided. They had put one of them on the throne in 1231, and had revolted on two other occasions with members of St Eric's family in 1247 and 1251, the last action being against Birger Jarl.<sup>82</sup>

Birger Jarl stood for the power of the pope over the international church and for the strength of the king against the ancient rights of the people as represented by the independence of their provincial assemblies. The opposing Folkung programme is stated in the Older Law of the Västgötar, part of which emanated from the Lawman Eskil, who had connections with their party. There it says that the people of Uppland, the Svear, "have the right to choose and depose<sup>83</sup> the king". The elected king is then to present himself to the other provincial assemblies in turn, by undertaking an *Eriks-gata*, finally to return to Uppland to be enthroned. The bishop

convincing, although the possibility is not excluded when we note that the models are the offices for 2 royal saints, Edmund and Oswald.

Haapanen's results are not invalidated by the discovery of the oldest text of the office, by Jørgensen in 1933, (see note 8, v), for this is a *festum trium lectionum*.

<sup>81</sup> See E. Lönnroth, 'De äkta folkungarnas program', *Från Svensk Medeltid* (Stockholm, 1959), pp. 15-16, for the statements in this paragraph.

<sup>82</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>83</sup> According to G. Holmgren, 'Taga och vräka konung', *Förnvannen* (1937), p. 19 seq.

also was to be elected and receive his ring and staff from the king. So too was the lawman, and it is added that he can take the king's place when the ruler cannot exercise his office. Thus the rights of the people are confirmed to control the three most important offices in the kingdom, and for the provincial legislature to function at times independently of the king.<sup>84</sup>

These words of the law had real meaning in the 1220s and might easily stand as verbal principles for a revolutionary party at a later date. But in 1248 Birger Jarl met the papal legate and Swedish bishops at Skänninge<sup>85</sup> to agree on economic independence and immunity in law for churchmen. No longer could king or jarl lay hands on priests without fear of excommunication. No longer could parish tithes go to laymen. Canon law was clearly accepted in that the election of bishops should be in the hands of the church. By making these concessions Birger Jarl gained the support of the international church, and he himself strengthened the power of his son Valdemar in other ways. He built royal castles to hold permanent garrisons. He raised the level of taxation — the Law of the Ostgötar (Dråpsbalk XIV) states that he trebled the fines to the king for manslaughter during the king's peace, and for killing a king's man — and Valdemar introduced permanent taxation. More incitingly Birger had ordered the estates of the rebellious Folkung leaders to be confiscated.<sup>86</sup>

If we now read the legend against this background of events, we may detect a bias which has more relevance to the historic situation after the mid-thirteenth century than that of any other period.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Lönnroth, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.*, p. 24, and E. Lönnroth, 'Kring Erikslegenden', *Septentrionalia et Orientalia, studia Berhhardo Karlgren dedicata* (Stockholm, 1959), p. 274.

<sup>87</sup> Lönnroth has directed attention to the hints in the legend in his stimulating paper, 'Kring Erikslegenden', and I accept some of his conclusions, but his method of argument is, to my mind, unsound, and inconsistent in its application. He begins with the working hypothesis that the "shortened legend" represents an earlier tradition than the standard legend, (for arguments *pro* and *con* see Schmid, E. p. 159-160), and assumes that extensions in the

The most jagged edge in this formal saint's legend is the sudden outburst of feeling expressed as comment on Eric's refusal of the fines which should have gone to him by law: "O just prince", exults the hagiographer, "so rarely found in high places, who was content with his own and did not greedily seek to gain the possessions of those under him." It seems as if some real grievance has goaded the writer to break the smooth recital of regal virtues, and this could have been the increased taxation and appropriation of estates.

Less positive but prompting a question is the reference to Magnus's Swedish ally as a "certain prince of the land". Why is this man not named? If he was, as a late traditor says,<sup>88</sup> Karl, son of Sverker the Elder, who was Knut Eriksson's strongest rival for the throne, clearly the omission of the name was not made at an early date. Eric's family in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries would be only too eager to blacken the reputation of their foremost rivals. The lack of name however may allow a later listener to choose a head to fit the cap.

Interestingly, and perhaps relevantly, there is an exact parallel between the claim of Magnus and that of Valdemar to the Swedish throne. Magnus claimed "by inheritance through his mother". Such a claim was upheld for

*Vita* indicate a political purpose and suggest a date of composition about the mid-thirteenth century. But a working hypothesis should also be a conclusion, and if *all* the extensions and changes do not point towards that conclusion then the hypothesis is at fault. Apart from the extensions discussed by Lönnroth we note in the "shortened legend": that Eric is not *beatus*; that, on his *via regia*, he does not go on a progress around his kingdom since "deinde regnum suum circuiens ac populum visitans universum" appears only in the *Vita*; that he is not credited with the completion of Old Uppsala church; and that Magnus's claim is not specified as false (Lat. *perperam* in the *Vita*).

To be consistent Lönnroth should not have suggested that Eric undertook an *Eriksgata* (p. 274), and should have held that Eric was not regarded as a saint before the mid-thirteenth century, a fact which the existence of a *festum trium lectionum* attests. It is clear that the "shortened legend" need not have been brought into the discussion of the *Vita* as a political pamphlet. As a general point, sources and models are useful in aiding the understanding of a work of literature but they are not necessary.

<sup>88</sup> The Prose Chronicle (composed about 1450) which says (in translation) about Karl: "He was chosen as king by the Götar before Eric was chosen in Uppland, and he was a conspirator for the death of St Eric. For this Knut, son of Eric, killed him at Visingsö" (S.R.S. I i p. 246).

Valdemar<sup>89</sup> in 1250 against his rival Philip Knutsson of the Folkung party and a direct descendant of St Eric. It has been suggested that the *Vita* here and in the comment on Eric's election stresses the rights of the provincial assemblies to choose the king and, of course, this generally would be the Folkung party programme against Birger Jarl and Valdemar.

Obviously too there is some anti-Danish feeling in the legend directed against Magnus, and, in the extension in the "standard legend", by the comment on the prohibition of foreigners from ruling. Anti-foreign feeling was strong in the 1270s when another Folkung group revolted against King Magnus Ladulås and directed their opposition towards foreign favourites of the king. By 1319 the prohibition was made legal and arose from antagonism towards King Birger Magnusson's foreign counsellors and prince Magnus Birgersson's Danish invading army.<sup>90</sup> But if the legendary statement has point it can scarcely be against these later kings who both took an interest in the cult of St Eric and are mentioned favourably in the late thirteenth-century *Miracula S. Erics*.<sup>91</sup> It could however be a cut at the Danish sympathies of Birger Jarl and Valdemar. In 1259 Valdemar married Sophia, daughter of the Danish king Eric Ploughpenny who had died in 1250, whose remains were translated in 1258, and who came to be regarded as a saint both in Denmark and Sweden. Birger Jarl certainly favoured the cult of the Danish Eric and visited his grave at Ringsted once in the 1260s.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>89</sup> Lönnroth, 'King Erikslegenden', p. 273, who makes the following suggestion.

<sup>90</sup> *ibid.*, p. 272. We should note however that, according to Saxo, the Swedes rejected the Danish Magnus Nilsson and chose Sverker the Elder in the twelfth century because they did not wish to have a foreigner as king. See Westman, E. p. 28.

<sup>91</sup> Magnus Ladulås and his queen witnessed the revelation of two miracles in 1277 (Miracle XXIV); Birger Magnusson was healed of pleurisy in his youth at the intercession of St Eric (Miracle XXVI).

<sup>92</sup> See Ahnlund, H.T. (1948), pp. 311-316, who argues convincingly that rivalry between the cults of the Erics was also a factor in the growth of the cult of the Swedish Eric.

This information, the historic fact of the papal letters, tentative deductions about the bias of the legend, and results of research on the composition and date of the liturgical texts, shows that the cult of Eric flourished in the mid-thirteenth century and suggests that it was directed by the Folkung supporters, though also by the church who would gain from the revival of interest.

This interest is still limited mainly to the area of Uppland and its immediate neighbourhood in the thirteenth century, for when the miracles are recorded only a few are placed outside the area of Lake Mälaren.<sup>93</sup> But the seeds of a greater influence are already sown because Eric is linked with foundations which are centres of power in mediæval Sweden. In or about 1273 his relics were translated to the site of the new cathedral of Uppsala and he is the only native patron saint of this church. The *Miracula* was certainly completed before 1311 and many of the important names in national and church history witness or attest miracles performed by invocation of the saint.<sup>94</sup> By now he is favoured by the Uppsala cathedral chapter who had commissioned the *Miracula*, and, in 1275, his figure appears for the first time on a seal, the counter-seal of the chapter.<sup>95</sup> St Eric also begins a connection with Stockholm, for when the patrons of Stockholm church are mentioned for the first time in 1419,

<sup>93</sup> Cross, *op. cit.*, p. 31, and Ahnlund, *op. cit.*, p. 311. Ahnlund considers, p. 312 note 1, that Miracle XV (about the calming of a storm on Lake Vättern for the Dominican Prior of Dacia, Petrus de Rusquillis) can very well refer to the Danish Eric. There is no need to assume this, however, since the Dominicans, among them Israel Erlandsson who wrote the *Miracula*, were zealous for the cult of the Swedish Eric. The event is best dated 1305, when the provincial capital at Skänninge, mentioned in the account, took place, (D.S. 1476), not 1303 as in the *Reg. Eccles. Upsal.* text. This is a period of great activity for the cult of St Eric of Sweden, but the Danish Eric seems to have fallen into the background by this time.

<sup>94</sup> Cross, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-29. Church dignitaries include two archbishops of Uppsala, Folke Ängel and Nils Allesson (Miracles XXIII, XXV, XLV, XLVIII), and men of high rank in the Franciscan order (II, IX, XVIII); while the nobility, including members of the king's council, are named in III, V, XVII, XX, XXVI, XXVIII, XLII, L.

<sup>95</sup> Imprinted on a document of that year, and described by B. Thordeman, E. p. 179. The saint appears as a young, beardless king holding orb and sceptre and the inscription runs: "Sanctus Ericus Rex et Martir".

Eric is one of a group of four.<sup>96</sup> But as a future symbol of nationalism he has the advantage over all his early rivals, since of all the patrons of Stockholm and Uppsala cathedral he is the only native royal saint. The cult of St Olav of Norway, a co-patron of Uppsala, faded because he was foreign, the national popularity of the others because they were not kings. Thus Eric later became the *patronus regni*,<sup>97</sup> the *rex perpetuus* at times of difficulty and interregnum, and there is a possible indication of this as far back as the crucial period for the cult, the mid-thirteenth century. In 1951 a coin was found in Jämtland stamped on only one side with a cross and the inscription *Rex Upsalie*. Nils Rasmusson,<sup>98</sup> who has considered its origin most closely, states that it was probably coined between 1235 and 1250, and, by analogy with older and twelfth-century usage, regards the phrase *Rex Upsalie* as synonymous with *Rex Sweorum*, King of the Swedes. The lack of a king's name suggests that it was coined during a real or supposed interregnum. Rasmusson will not speculate further, but Professor Bengt Thordeman<sup>99</sup> states that "the unnamed king (of Uppsala) can scarcely be other than St Eric, put forward as opposing king to Valdemar . . . who was illegitimate in the eyes of the revolutionaries". I do not presume to stand between the archæologists, although recognising the inter-related speculations on which Professor Thordeman's statement is founded. Yet St Eric has certainly become *patronus regni* at a later period, notably in the fifteenth century,

<sup>96</sup> The patrons of Stockholm church are named as St Nicholas, St Olav, St Erik, and St Catherine in a letter from the citizens to the curia in this year, (Ahnlund, E. p. 145). The patrons of Uppsala were St Lawrence (who had been patron of Old Uppsala cathedral), St Olav, and St Eric.

<sup>97</sup> The figure of St Eric which appeared to Olav of Måby in his severe illness (Miracle I) is a foreshadowing of the *patronus regni* concept. There he appears in regal clothes wearing a crown and holding a sceptre in his hand.

<sup>98</sup> 'Rex Upsalie', in *Arkeologiska forskningar och fynd, Studier utgivna med anledning av H.M. Konung Gustav VI Adolfs Sjuttioårsdag* (Stockholm, 1952), pp. 283-294.

<sup>99</sup> In a lecture to *Finska Vetenskaps Societeten*, Sept. 21st 1959, available to me in typescript kindly sent by Professor Thordeman. This paper has been of the greatest value in directing me to the most recent discussion about St Eric.

the period of uneasy union with Denmark. Then Engelbrekt revolted in the name of St Eric with the common people against the crown because of excessive taxation and because of Danish "bailiff-dominion".<sup>100</sup> By 1439 the Swedish national seal bore St Eric's picture during time of interregnum,<sup>101</sup> and, in the fifteenth century, coins known as "patron's coins"<sup>102</sup> were struck, bearing Eric's head in place of a king's. The rallying-cry became "With God and St Eric",<sup>103</sup> and when Sten Sture the Elder defeated Christian I of Denmark in 1472, a rhyming-chronicle speaks of a flaming sword in the heavens which rallied the Swedes. "Surely" says the chronicler, "St Eric, the king, who is protector of Sweden, caused his sword to be waved then."<sup>104</sup>

The religious cult obviously extended too. From 1273, when Valdemar made a donation to Uppsala cathedral at the end of his reign,<sup>105</sup> a succession of kings and regents had often favoured Uppsala for the person of St Eric. By the fifteenth century the cult of Eric had spread to Norway, Denmark, and even Germany.<sup>106</sup> But the Lutheran reformation of the sixteenth century ended all this. Like other European kings of this period, Gustav Vasa broke the power of the Catholic Church within his kingdom, and the reformation swept away the proces-

<sup>100</sup> Engelbrekt's revolt in 1434 is described in a letter written home on August 1st by a Danzig merchant then in Stockholm. I quote from the translation by Carolyn Hannay of Ingvar Anderson, *A History of Sweden* (1956), p. 79: "They (the men of Dalarna) therefore wish Sweden to return to her state under King Eric, whom the country now worships as a saint. In his time no customs duties or taxes existed and no burdens were laid upon the peasants, and they will therefore have back the same rights as in former days".

A German chronicler says, *ibid* p. 86, of Engelbrekt that he "rose against King Eric (Eric of Pomerania 1412-1439), for he would not suffer the overweening indignity to which knights, citizens, peasants, and the whole Swedish nation were subjected by King Eric's bailiffs and captains".

<sup>101</sup> First mentioned in 1439 as: "War rikis insigle", (Ahnlund, E. p. 139), and made for the National Council who were then opposing the king, Eric of Pomerania. The seal is described by Thordeman, E. p. 181.

<sup>102</sup> Ahnlund, *loc. cit.*

<sup>103</sup> Ahnlund, E. p. 138.

<sup>104</sup> Andersson, *op. cit.*, p. 97; and A. Schück, 'Sankt Eriks Minne', *Svenska Turist-Föreningens Årsskrift* (1942), p. 214.

<sup>105</sup> The letter discussed above in note 6.

<sup>106</sup> Ahnlund, E. p. 148 seq. The *Vita et Miracula* is extant in a German translation, printed at Lübeck, 1507 (S.R.S. II i, 319-321, for the German "Life").

sions<sup>107</sup> and pilgrimages. St Eric's figure, which had graced a door of Uppsala cathedral, was removed because of the superstition which "old and common people" continued by "rubbing the clothes of the sick on the image in a papish manner".<sup>108</sup> Protestant historians, such as Olaus Petri,<sup>109</sup> could speak of him as an ideal king, but the veneration for his saintly powers was erased.

Today there are still reminiscences of his veneration and influence — the naming of Stockholm as "St Eric's town", the title of the annual industrial fair, *Eriksmässa*, place-names within Uppsala, *St Eriks gränd*, *St Eriks källa*, the shrine and tapestries in Uppsala cathedral, the wooden statue in the country church of Roslagsbro, a copy of which stands in the Town Hall of Stockholm — but to most of my Swedish friends he is now no more than a figure of history whose deeds are artificially recalled when reports of scholarly investigation are popularised in Swedish newspapers.

<sup>107</sup> Miracle II refers to a procession with St Eric's shrine from Old Uppsala to Uppsala on the Rogation Days, "sicut moris est"; and Peringskiöld, *op. cit.*, II p. 51, states that it was borne between the two cathedrals on May 18th and on "Festum Translationis S. Eri". Processions with the shrine also took place at other high festivals and at times of need. One interesting episode took place as late as 1521 when two of Gustav Vasa's officers marched against Uppsala, and the cathedral chapter, the burgomaster and the council, requested the officers not to hinder them from bearing the shrine and relics of St Eric, "during the feast of St Eric, with due ceremony and procession to Old Uppsala, as the custom was", (translated from *Peder Swart, Konung Gustaf I:s Krönika*, ed. N. Eden (1912), p. 29).

<sup>108</sup> According to A. Schück, *op. cit.* p. 215.

<sup>109</sup> Quoted by S. Tunberg, 'Erik den Helige, Sveriges Helgonkonung', *Fornvännen* (1941), pp. 257-8.

## APPENDIX

## THE LIFE OF ST ERIC

I "*The standard legend*" from the oldest text, *Registrum Upsalense*, 1344, now Codex A17 Swedish Public Record Office, Stockholm. Translation from the Latin printed by T. Schmid in *Erik den Helige*, ed. B. Thordeman (Stockholm, 1954), pp. XII-XIII.

This brief account for men of our own time touches on the origin, life, and happy consummation of the blessed Eric, the glorious martyr of Christ, and at one time, the most illustrious king of the Swedes. He was of royal lineage and of a line of noble Swedish lords. When the throne was vacant he was chosen by the lords of that country and by all the people because he was loved for his natural gentleness and the conspicuous goodness of his life, and was unanimously elected king, and was raised with due ceremony to the royal throne at Uppsala. When this worshipper of the Holy Trinity was established on the height of royal power, he divided his time — more to undertake responsibility than to increase his power — in three ways, adorning and occupying his days up to the consummation of his life by his illustrious martyrdom. For, in imitation of the examples of the holy kings of the Old Testament, he set his hand to great deeds, giving himself wholly, first to the building of churches and the restoration and spread of divine worship, next to the ruling of the people and the proclaiming of the justice of laws, and finally to the expulsion of enemies of the faith and of the kingdom. For, with great care and laborious effort, he was zealous to complete the church of Uppsala which had been founded and partially built by his ancestors, the ancient kings; he undertook this before all else and set ministers of divine worship therein. Next he went around his kingdom and visited all his people, treading the king's way (*via regia*), walking firmly along the right path which leads to our home (*patria*), declining neither to the right for favour or gain, nor to the left for fear or hatred. So he made peace between enemies, freed those who were oppressed by the more powerful, guided those who walked righteously in the ways of God, expelled the wicked from the land, and distributed and apportioned his law to every man with even balance on the scale of justice. And when he had become beloved by all his people because of these and similar deeds, all desired with one accord to give him the third part of the fines paid by criminals which, according to the custom of the land, legally belonged to the state treasury. He is said to have given this reply to those who made the offer:

"What is mine is enough for me; you keep what is yours. For perhaps your descendants may need it in future times".

'O just prince, so rarely found in high places, who was content with his own and did not greedily seek to gain the possessions of those under him!'

But, since it is right that he who judges and rules others by virtue of his office should first judge himself by subjecting the flesh to the spirit and by guiding the spirit towards the Lord, according to the verse: "I chastise my body and bring it into subjection" (I Cor. ix, 27), so our holy king, assiduous in prayers, frequent in vigils, constant in fasts, suffering with those afflicted by misfortune and generous in giving alms to the poor, exhausted his body by the discipline of a hair-shirt, with which, as it were with a breastplate of justice, he was likewise clothed at the time of his passion, and which even today is preserved in the church of Uppsala, stained (as it is) with his precious blood. Indeed, how he bore himself towards our familiar foe who sleeps in the bosom of man is clearly seen from this, because when he often abstained from the queen's bed during times of fast or at other holy seasons he often bathed secretly in a vessel of cold water, even in winter, in order to repress the rising lusts of the flesh, and cured his heat with the cold. With a firm mind he himself checked the desire of his flesh. Finally, as we said above, when the church was built and the kingdom set in order, he turned his hand against the enemies of the faith and of his people. He gathered an army together and, taking with him the blessed bishop Henry from the church of Uppsala, he led an expedition against the Finns. The faith of Christ was first revealed to them and peace offered to them, but they refused it and rebelled, so he attacked them with a strong force to avenge the blood of Christians and conquered them in war. When he had won such a great victory he prostrated himself in prayer, and, since he was always devoutly pious, he was weeping as he prayed to the Lord. He was asked by one of his company why he was weeping, when he ought rather to be rejoicing at the victory over the enemies of Christ. He is said to have replied:

"Indeed I do rejoice and glorify the Lord for the victory which is given to us, but I grieve deeply that so many of their souls have perished today that would have been preserved for everlasting salvation if they had accepted the sacraments of the faith".

In this he was imitating that friend of God and mildest of men who, fired with zeal, laid low the idolaters and avenged the injuries done to God, and then, moved by compassion, prayed to God for the sin of that same people. So he gathered together those who were left of that people, granted them peace and caused the Christian faith to be preached; and when most of them had been baptised and churches had been founded, he set over them the blessed bishop Henry whom we mentioned above and who was afterwards crowned with martyrdom there. And when priests had been organized there and the other things that pertain to Christian worship had been arranged, he returned to Sweden in glorious victory.

Now in the course of the tenth year of the reign of our illustrious king, in order that tribulation might test the just man and the

crushed seed might bear fruit more richly, the ancient foe incited as his adversary a certain man, named Magnus, the son of the king of the Danes, who falsely claimed the right to rule by inheritance through his mother, contrary to the custom of the land which prohibits foreigners from ruling. Wherefore he allied himself with a certain prince of the realm and other wicked accomplices who, corrupted by gifts and enticed by promises, unanimously conspired for the murder of the illustrious king. They assembled an army secretly and attacked the king, who knew nothing about this and suspected nothing hostile, at Östra Aros with a strong force. On that day the feast of our Lord's Ascension was at hand, when he was to ascend joyfully after our Lord through the palm of martyrdom. When on that day he was present at the ceremonies of mass in the church of the Holy Trinity on the hill which is called the mount of Our Lord, where now the cathedral is founded, he was told by one of his men that the enemy were approaching the city and that they ought to meet them at once with armed force. He is said to have replied:

“Let me hear in peace the mysteries of such a great ceremony to the end for I hope in God that what remains of his service we shall hear with solemnity elsewhere”.

With these words he commended himself to God and, first signing himself with the sign of the cross, he left the church and armed himself and his men. Though they were few he went bravely to meet his enemies with them. The enemies engaged them in battle and directed their attack against the king himself above all others. Wounds were doubled on wounds for the Lord's anointed as he lay on the ground. His enemies raged still more fiercely against him as he lay half-dead, and mocking him, they irreverently cut off his revered head. Thus as a victor he crossed over from war to peace, joyfully exchanging his earthly kingdom for a heavenly kingdom.

(Two miracles are now recounted of a fountain which gushed forth where Eric fell, and of a blind woman who regained her sight when she touched her eyes with the martyr's blood).

The rest of his life, the translation of his holy body and the miracles which the Lord has performed through his saint and mercifully has not ceased to perform up to the present day, which are omitted here for the sake of brevity, are written elsewhere. The blessed Eric died in the year of our Lord's Incarnation 1160 on the eighteenth of May when Pope Alexander III ruled the Church of Rome under the rule of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom is all honour and glory, world without end. AMEN.

II "*The shortened legend*", being 3 lections from an office for St Eric in the oldest extant Scandinavian breviary, now Additional MS 40146, British Museum, dated late thirteenth century. Translation from the Latin printed by E. Jørgensen in *Nordisk Tidskrift för bok- och biblioteksväsen*, XX (1933), p. 191.

- I When the throne of Sweden was vacant, the glorious martyr of God Eric was unanimously elected king by the lords of that country and all the people, because of his natural gentleness and the goodness of his life; and was raised with due ceremony to the royal throne at Uppsala.
- II When he was established on the height of royal power, he set his hand to great deeds, giving himself wholly, first to the building of churches and the restoration of divine worship, then to the ruling of his people and the proclaiming of the justice of laws, and finally to the expulsion of enemies of the faith and of the kingdom, treading the king's way (*via regia*) walking firmly along the right path which leads to our home (*patria*), declining neither to the right for favour or gain, nor to the left for fear or hatred.
- III Now in the course of the tenth year of his reign his head was cut off and he was martyred at Uppsala on the feast of Our Lord's Ascension, by certain accomplices who had been corrupted by gifts and promises by Magnus, the son of the king of the Danes, who claimed the right to rule by inheritance through his mother, contrary to the custom of the land.

ADVOCACY AND ART IN  
*GUÐMUNDAR SAGA DÝRA*

BY JACQUELINE SIMPSON

IT is well known that a deep preoccupation with honour and good name was a fundamental characteristic of the Icelandic mentality, and indeed of the whole Germanic code of ethics. Whatever else Amlóðr the Dane would have disowned in Hamlet, this at least he would have recognised:

Thou liv'st; report me and my cause aright  
To the unsatisfied . . . .  
O God, Horatio, what a wounded name,  
Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me!

From this care for honour springs the desire that the tale should be told, and rightly told; more, that it should be so told as to win over "the unsatisfied". The teller must be well informed, and must also be an able advocate.

When in the early thirteenth century we see the rise of a new branch of saga-writing, the secular Sagas of Contemporaries, we find this same motive at work; as Einar Ól. Sveinsson has said:

The passion for fame is also the underlying motive when sagas begin to be written about notable Icelanders of this time . . . sometimes these works are evident vindications of the heroes or direct attacks on their enemies.<sup>1</sup>

The artistic effects resulting from this motive can be clearly observed in one of the earliest Contemporary Sagas, *Guðmundar saga dýra*, which, though no longer existing independently, has been preserved in the *Sturlunga saga* compilation.<sup>2</sup> It is not a biographical saga, despite its

<sup>1</sup> Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *The Age of the Sturlungs*, tr. Jóhann S. Hannesson, (*Islandica* XXXVI; 1953), 90.

<sup>2</sup> The chief editions of *Sturlunga saga* are those of Guðbrandur Vigfússon (Oxford 1878); Kr. Kaalund (Copenhagen 1906-11); and Jón Jóhannesson, Magnús Finnbogason and Kristján Eldjárn (Reykjavík 1946). All references here are to the last-named edition, unless otherwise stated.

title; it is the story of a feud culminating in deeds of unusual cruelty — the burning-in of Qnundr Þorkelsson and the slaying of his son and several supporters by Guðmundr dýri in May 1197, and then, some months later, the cold-blooded killing of four of Guðmundr's nephews by Qnundr's surviving kinsmen.

The author of the saga<sup>3</sup> is concerned to trace the early causes of the feud, to explain its growth, and to describe its climax and consequences; but he goes deeper than this, for he seeks to interpret the motives of the main actors, and, above all, to defend Guðmundr by showing him to have been unendurably provoked. It is the author's wish to understand, to interpret, and to convince others of the validity of his interpretation; this is not only the primary reason for the writing of the saga, but also the source of whatever literary merit it can claim. The falling-off in quality of the last sections of the saga is one sign of this; after the deaths of Guðmundr's nephews the narrative is no more than a factual chronicle — always clear, sometimes touched by a vivid detail, but uninspired; the last chapters are mere scattered anecdotes. By contrast, the first two-thirds of the saga presents selected material shaped into a pattern, a pattern determined by the psychological interpretation on which the author bases his defence of Guðmundr.

His main aim, paradoxical as it may seem, is to present Guðmundr as a peace-loving chieftain whose power is based on a reputation for justice combined with moderation, whose position is slowly undermined by the

<sup>3</sup> It has been argued by Magnús Jónsson in *Guðmundar saga dýra. Nokkrar athuganir um uppruna hennar og samsetning* (*Íslensk Fræði* 8; 1940), that this text should not be regarded as a single saga with a single author, but as a mere collection of materials towards a saga, gathered and partially worked over by several hands. This view, in my opinion, conflicts with evidence to be obtained from a study of the text; my arguments for rejecting it have appeared in detail in an article in *Skírnir* CCCX (1960), 152-76. For the purposes of the present article I shall throughout speak of the author as a single person and assume that his work was intended to be read in substantially the same form as we now have it. It bears every mark of being based on abundant first-hand information and eye-witness accounts, and can be dated c. 1215.

sneers of those who mistake moderation for cowardice, and whose appalling vengeance on his rival Qnundr is the necessary act of a man goaded beyond endurance. After the burning he makes every effort to pay the heavy fines laid on him; some months later he is again forced to fight when Qnundr's kinsmen break the truce, and at length he crushes them.

The first eleven chapters deal with events which, although they are not immediate causes of the feud, have been selected to form two interwoven patterns: the rise and fall of Guðmundr's prestige, and the contrast between his character and Qnundr's. Guðmundr is shown as wise and resourceful, well able to protect his followers and outwit his rivals, but always respecting the laws; Qnundr and his friend Þorvarðr Þorgeirsson, by contrast, are shown as contemptuous of law, overbearing, stubborn, willing to use armed bands or hired killers, and by no means scrupulous over the justice of the causes they take up. This contrast is established from the moment that Guðmundr appears (in ch. 3), and all the material presented in the first part of the saga is intended to emphasize it.

If this intention is not always plain at first glance, the explanation lies in a characteristic feature of the narrative technique. The author wishes to trace the remote causes of the event with which he deals, yet at the same time he keeps rigidly to a chronological scheme. Thus each episode must begin with persons and events remote from the main characters, and only gradually draw near enough to affect their lives. Nor does the author explain the point of an episode before embarking on an account of it; facts must be given first, and only later will their link with the main theme appear. Constantly, therefore, the narrative begins at the periphery, works inwards to the centre, and then returns to the periphery to start a fresh episode.

The danger of this method is that it may create

confusion or overload the story with details about persons on the outer edge of the tale. The author of *Guðmundar saga dýra* is not indeed always firm enough in controlling his material, although his very failures are of interest for the light they throw on the process of composition. But whatever its risks, the method has one great advantage in the hands of an advocate: the step-by-step unfolding of events gives the impression not merely of accuracy but of impartiality, while at the same time it affords opportunity for those brief comments, revealing remarks, and striking juxtapositions by which an author can predispose his audience to make those judgements which he wishes them to make. Thus, when the end of an episode reveals its real point, the reader readily assents to the author's interpretation of it.

The first three chapters illustrate this well. They tell of a lawsuit over an inheritance, the *Helgastaðamál*, a case in which there was room for sharp difference of opinion, and which became a source of danger when powerful and obstinate chieftains tried to profit from it. The first chapter tells in detail why, when a certain rich young man died, it was hard to see who was his legal heir. The second tells how one chieftain bought up the right of inheritance from one claimant, while Qnundr and Þorvarðr bought up that of the other claimant; then these chieftains met, but "could come to no agreement, because each party claimed to be owner of all that they were disputing over; no compromise was possible between them, for neither would yield any part of his claim."<sup>4</sup> The third chapter introduces Guðmundr, who "sided with nobody in these disputes",<sup>5</sup> and it immediately establishes his character by showing how he prevented fighting at the *þing*: "Qnundr and Þorvarðr prepared to defend themselves by battle, not by a legal defence, but Guðmundr interposed himself with his men, so that

<sup>4</sup> *Sturlunga saga*, I 163.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, I 163.

neither battle nor lawsuit took place."<sup>6</sup> The same point is made again and again by various touches, all designed to show Qnundr's ruthlessness and the growing risk of serious fighting, which Guðmundr's disinterested intervention twice averts. At length, a shrewd and wise chieftain from another district comes to consult with Guðmundr, and together they arrange a settlement. The author then makes his explicit comment on the whole episode: "Thereupon they went away; and neither of those parties that had disputed this case won honour from it, and the honour then went to Guðmundr."<sup>7</sup>

With this judgement the reader concurs, largely because the detailed treatment of every stage in the dispute has enabled him to form his own opinion, while the selection and presentation of details has ensured that that opinion will match the author's.

Another striking instance of this technique is to be found in ch. 11. Here we read a detailed account of a fight between three farmers (one a follower of Guðmundr, the others two of Qnundr's men); the right is made to seem so clearly on the side of Guðmundr's follower that the reader, were he a thirteenth-century Icelander, would already be mentally assessing the compensation. Then Þorfinnr (a son of Qnundr, married to Guðmundr's daughter) offers to arbitrate; he awards terms so grossly unjust to Guðmundr's man that the reader finds himself in full agreement with the comment: "that settlement was unpopular".<sup>8</sup>

Some critics, notably Magnús Jónsson,<sup>9</sup> have severely criticized this saga for the allegedly disproportionate space given to minor episodes. Yet I believe that the method of peripheral approach is not only valuable as a means of persuasion, but is potentially of artistic merit. It enables the author to present the growth of the feud

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, I 163-4.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, I 166.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, I 183.

<sup>9</sup> *op. cit.*, especially pp. 8-10, 14, 16, 50.

up to the burning as an advancing, wave-like series of threats, each of which apparently retires but leaves the central situation one step nearer the inevitable clash. This is an inherently dramatic method, and one which more skilled saga-writers were able to put to impressive use.<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, it is instructive to see the treatment which this author gives to "irrelevant" characters. One such is a certain Guðrún Þórðardóttir, of whom he gives a full and venomous sketch in chapters 5 and 6. She is an artful, hypocritical, hysterical, and unscrupulously selfish woman, who, after two unsuccessful marriages, inveigles Guðmundr's nephew Hákon into killing her husband for her — so providing an occasion for Guðmundr's rivals to try to damage his position, though in fact he outwits them and saves Hákon from the consequences of his deed. Guðrún's earlier life is described with a wealth of detail which, however interesting as an acute psychological sketch, is disproportionate to the slight part she plays in the saga as a whole. From one point of view, one would prefer to be told less about Guðrún and more about Guðmundr's increasing power, of which a brief and enigmatic remark at the opening of ch. 6 provides a glimpse. Yet need this extended treatment of Guðrún be considered a total artistic error? An interest in character for its own sake is a valuable feature in saga-writing, and the great sagas obtain striking and vivid effects from the extended treatment of "minor" personages and "digressive" episodes.

Moreover, on at least one occasion the author shows considerable skill in such matters — in the brief episode of Gálmr, the innocent man who chose to die in the burning farm in the hope that his sacrifice would force

<sup>10</sup> A fine example can be seen in *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða*, where in the earlier part of the saga (up to ch. 15) the causes of enmity between the two chieftains are steadily built up; in the second part the pattern is reversed, and a series of apparently inevitable clashes are each narrowly averted, till permanent reconciliation is achieved. See Ursula Brown, *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða* (1952), xvi-xx.

Guðmundr and Kolbeinn to abandon their onslaught:

In there there was a man called Gálmr; he was the son of Grímr. He was a well-to-do farmer, and lived at a place called Dynhagi. He was a friend of them all, and of none more than of Kolbeinn Tumason. He went to the door to talk to them, and the harm done by the fire was not yet so great that one could not have saved everything. He asked Guðmundr and Kolbeinn to turn back for that time and offered them all his wealth if they would, and he was a rich man and had a very fine farm. Kolbeinn answered and said that he would himself give Gálmr as much money as he wished if only he would come out. Gálmr answered: "You have long laughed over the fact that I enjoyed baths and often drank a great deal. Now here is the chance of a bath; but I find it hard to see how I will manage about the mead-drinking." And he did not go out.<sup>11</sup>

An episode such as this is a fine example of economy, vividness and dramatic force, limited to its right proportion in the general scheme of the saga. Furthermore, the very fact of recording information about people who were only marginally involved in the feud prevents the saga from becoming over-systematized or over-simplified, and preserves in it some of the complexity of truth.

It seems to me that the author of *Guðmundar saga dýra* is groping towards, and has here attained, that mastery in the treatment of episodes which Professor Maxwell has analysed in his discussion of "the principle of the integrity of episodes". A good saga will not relegate any episode to the background but will give it a place of its own, an account "short, but rounded and whole". The episode may only touch the main action at one point, but it "must seem to exist and to be interesting in its own right, not simply as a term in some larger argument"; thus the saga itself as a whole will be freed "from the oppression of a purpose that saps each moment's independent reality".<sup>12</sup>

It is another notable quality in this author that, though obviously guided by partizan motives, he never

<sup>11</sup> *Sturlunga saga*, I 190.

<sup>12</sup> I. R. Maxwell, 'Pattern in *Njáls saga*', *Saga-Book* XV 1-2 (1956-9), 25-6.

exaggerates his case by presenting Guðmundr and his kinsmen as irreproachable, nor by totally blackening the characters of Qnundr and his supporters. The courage of Qnundr and his son Þorfinnr, the touches of magnanimity in his son-in-law Þorgrímr, the horror of Þorfinnr's death — all these things are plainly shown. Similarly the author does not hide the marked streak of cruelty in Guðmundr (most visible in ch. 19, where he is prepared to let his followers rape and maim in the pursuit of vengeance). The whole character of Guðmundr is indeed somewhat enigmatic; the deeper motive for his patience under insults remains unclear — perhaps it was piety, but perhaps also he would not fight till he was sure of victory. “The odds are not those that I would choose”, said Guðmundr once, when with thirteen men he came face to face with Qnundr, who had fourteen.<sup>13</sup> It would be rash to claim that the author never suppressed facts in the zeal of his advocacy, for in one episode there are signs that he did,<sup>14</sup> but on the whole the picture he draws is convincing in its refusal to oversimplify the enigmas and complexities of human nature.

One cause of this must be the fact that the author was writing so soon after the events and addressing himself to men whose knowledge of the facts might be almost equal to his own, even if their interpretation differed from his. Falsification would have been easily detected and would have defeated its own aim, by rousing public indignation. So the writer, though making plain where his sympathies lie, keeps his advocacy within bounds and produces a credible and balanced interpretation.

<sup>13</sup> *Sturlunga saga*, I 186.

<sup>14</sup> This is in ch. 10, an account of a quarrel between Guðmundr's nephews (sons of Þórðr of Laufás), and Qgmundr Þorvarðsson sneis. It is well told, but seems irrelevant here, for it barely touches Guðmundr's life. It so happens that the same incident is mentioned in ch. 25 of the *Resensbók* version of *Prestssaga Guðmundar góða* (see *Biskupa sögur* (1858-78), I 446-8). There it is made plain that Guðmundr dýri and Qnundr were both drawn into the quarrel, though the part they played was ineffectual. Therefore it seems likely that the author of *Guðmundar saga dýra* has here suppressed something which he thought discreditable to his hero, while at the same time feeling bound to include some reference to the episode — the point of which consequently remains obscure.

His narrative is closely based on eye-witness accounts — so closely that one can often see who his informant for a given passage must have been. His respect for fact is such that on one occasion he directly informs the reader, speaking in the first person, that he is ignorant of a crucial conversation; yet it is worth noting too how he turns his very ignorance to advantage by suggestive touches which amply reveal what, in his opinion, must have taken place. The episode in question is in ch. 9, which tells how Qnundr's son, Þorfinnr, fell in love with Guðmundr's daughter Ingibjörg, and how Guðmundr, who had strongly opposed the match, at last consented to it:

That week Qnundr and Þorfinnr left home, and they were fifteen in all, and they rode up to Bakki. Guðmundr was at home, with not many men, and the farmhands were at their work and were working far from the house. I do not know what they said to one another, but there is something to be said about the outcome of their errand, for then Ingibjörg was betrothed to Þorfinnr before they went away; and arrangements were agreed on for the wedding feast and also for the money which he was to receive with her.<sup>15</sup>

The author here merely states certain facts, but by juxtaposing the mention of Qnundr's band of men with that of Guðmundr's isolation, he strongly implies that it was by threat of violence that the latter's opposition was broken down. This is his usual technique, and it is an important factor in the art of the saga that impressions should be so unobtrusively yet firmly produced.

Other means too are used towards the same end. One is the straightforward comment on a character, not in the form of a set description at his first appearance, as is common in sagas, but in the form of casual remarks:

Qnundr . . . valued men according to his opinion of their loyalty to himself, and not so much according to their popularity with other people.<sup>16</sup>

It was a fault in Guðmundr's character that he loved other women besides the one he had as wife.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> *Sturlunga saga*, I 178.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, I 167.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, I 175-6.

The author also makes occasional use of that appeal to public opinion which is so characteristic a feature of sagas, as when he says of a settlement that it was unpopular, but this is by no means a regular part of his technique. He prefers to quote the opinion of some particular man to reinforce the impression he is seeking to make, especially if that man is one whose words are likely to command respect. Thus in ch. 4 he quotes Bishop Brandr's advice to certain chieftains to seek Guðmundr's help because "in the cases of greatest importance the previous summer" (i.e. the *Helgastaðamál*) "it had been Guðmundr who had produced all the best solutions".<sup>18</sup>

The most striking example of this method is in ch. 18. After Qnundr's death his kinsmen accepted a large compensation awarded by Jón Loptsson, but eighteen months later, egged on by Qnundr's daughter Guðrún and led by her husband Þorgrímr, they broke the truce, killed four of Guðmundr's nephews, and wounded two other men. Then they fled south to Oddi, where Jón's son Sæmundr took them in and half promised them further help. Jón by then was dead. But Ormr, another son of Jón's, rebuked Sæmundr in the name of the respect due to their father's memory:

"I think that our honour is involved," he said. "We had a father who was held in such high honour in this land that there was no man who did not think his case in good hands if he was to arbitrate in it. Now I do not know," said he, "which was the more unprecedented: the nature of those cases which were laid before him, or the terms of the settlement, which were the last he laid down. Now," said Ormr, "they<sup>19</sup> have paid up the great sums which were imposed, and which everyone expected would never be paid, so that that would break the settlement. But the others, who accepted the payment, have now broken and made void every declaration he made in this affair; and it goes against the grain for me to help Þorgrímr, and dishonour our father's words, and himself, and all of us, his sons."<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, I 168.

<sup>19</sup> i.e. Guðmundr and his followers.

<sup>20</sup> *Sturlunga saga*, I 200.

By ascribing this long and impassioned declaration to Ormr, the most respected of Jón's sons, the author has done more than explain why Sæmundr then ceased to help Qnundr's avengers; he has evoked the immense prestige of Jón Loptsson and has used it to make their action appear not a heroic vengeance, but a dishonourable truce-breaking. Without passing open judgement himself, he has, at a crucial moment, most effectively directed the judgement of his readers.

Much of the literary interest of this saga lies in the co-existence within it of strongly effective passages and of others where the pressure of the author's purpose relaxes, and which are in consequence flatly written or downright clumsy. For there are grave blemishes on this saga, both as a work of art and even as a factual record. There is the tendency, already mentioned, to cram the narrative with details; the ending peters out in petty anecdotes; and, most serious, the connections between certain episodes and the main theme remain so obscure that a modern reader can only guess at them. Some such points would presumably have been no puzzle to a contemporary reader, but other obscurities are certainly due to inadequate technique. The author himself comes near to admitting his difficulty in arranging his material; at the beginning of ch. 9, which contains three interwoven episodes (two of which remain apparently unrelated to the main story), he remarks: "Now more than one thing happened at once, and yet they can only be spoken of one at a time."<sup>21</sup> The formula serves well to sum up the problem of an inexperienced writer struggling to interpret a complex series of events within the rigid limits of chronological narration.

And yet, for all his faults, the author has three qualities which can at times raise his work to a high level. Two have already been discussed: the sense of purpose that gives shape and persuasiveness to the narrative, and the

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, I 175.

realistic insight into characters, which are never oversimplified for the sake of cheap effectiveness or a ready-made pattern. His third quality is a sense of drama, which can be seen both in his love of vivid revealing remarks and details, and in his firm, sure handling of the first climax of the saga: the burning-in of Qnundr.

The immediate cause of the burning is a series of insults to Guðmundr.<sup>22</sup> A certain Rúnólfr had been banished by Guðmundr and Kolbeinn, had returned to the district in defiance of their decree, and then, after giving them presents to obtain their pardon, had changed his mind, taken back his gifts, and placed himself under Qnundr's protection:

Guðmundr behaved as if he knew nothing of this, and Guðmundr's honour diminished greatly and was thought to be sadly shrunk through what had happened. And Qnundr's men said that he (i.e. Guðmundr) was sitting on a sanctuary chair up in Øxnadalr, and they said they would build a wall across the valley at both the upper end and the lower, and then turf it over and bury Guðmundr's honour there.<sup>23</sup>

The author says little of Guðmundr's reaction to this; instead, he tells vividly how one of Kolbeinn's men caught Rúnólfr unawares and cut off his hand; how Rúnólfr's brothers and Þorfinnr Qnundarson retaliated

<sup>22</sup> Guðmundr may have had more than the average sensitiveness to all that touched his good name. It is said that on one occasion Hvamm-Sturla, having a grudge against Guðmundr, pointedly ignored him, while greeting his brother Jón. "Someone asked why he greeted the latter, but not Guðmundr. He answered and said that at that time Jón was the more widely known for outrageous deeds" (*viðfrægstan at endemum*) (*Sturlunga saga*, I 109). This seems to imply that both Jón and Guðmundr were eager for fame, and furthermore that Sturla did not think either of them worthy of much respect. Guðmundr's nickname (which could be rendered as "the Excellent", "the Noble", "the Honourable", perhaps even "the Glorious") also points in the same direction.

<sup>23</sup> *Sturlunga saga*, I 185. For a discussion of the nature and privileges of a "sanctuary chair" (*friðstóll*), see J. Simpson, 'A Note on the word *Friðstóll*', *Saga-Book XIV* (1953-7), 200-10. The reference to building a wall round the area containing Guðmundr's farm is puzzling. It is true that the limits of certain sanctuary areas, e.g. churchyards, could be marked by walls, but the limits of an area made holy by a *friðstóll* seem to have been marked by crosses, not walls. Perhaps the wall should rather be associated with the idea of burial, since there is some evidence that heathen Icelanders sometimes cut off access to a burial mound by a wall, apparently as a precaution against "after-walking". (See *Eyrbyggja saga* ch. 33, *Íslensk Fornrit*, IV 95). Guðmundr's honour is to be so efficiently buried that it will never rise from its grave.

by wounding a close kinsman of Guðmundr; and how Guðmundr and Qnundr came unexpectedly face to face as each rode with a band of men to visit his wounded follower. It was on this occasion that Guðmundr refused his nephew Hákon's wish to stand and fight the matter out, declaring that the odds against him (of one man!) were "not those he would choose".

Hákon said: "Such are the odds that I should like best, for now everything in our encounter can go as fate will have it."

Guðmundr answered: "I will not allow jeers or assaults from my band to provoke them; but receive them as vigorously as possible, if they make any move against us."

But it was easy to see from Hákon's air that he did not shrink from giving provocation. Qnundr and his men halted on a little rise. But Guðmundr and his men passed by, and neither side attacked the other.<sup>24</sup>

This is the last sight we have of Guðmundr before he and Kolbeinn stand at Qnundr's door with ninety men behind them and refuse all terms of peace. Whether it was mere prudence that had held him back; or whether genuine moderation still had a hold on his mind; at what moment he decided to avenge his honour in blood — all this the author does not say, perhaps even did not know. But the outward and visible facts he does give, and these he shapes into a pattern which foreshadows that which the authors of the Family Sagas were to use in similar circumstances.

The most striking, indeed startling, feature of his treatment is the focussing of attention at this point on Qnundr and his household. It is impossible to believe that the author did not know what Guðmundr was doing in those last few weeks before launching his attack; had he so wished, he could have described directly the sending of messages, the plans and preparations, the secret mustering of Guðmundr's allies. Instead, he chooses to speak of Qnundr and his men, and merely to hint at Guðmundr's doings through the unheeded warning brought to Qnundr by Erlendr the Unlucky. This

<sup>24</sup> *Sturlunga saga*, I 186-7.

change of focus is most effective in heightening the tension; it is a first step in building up that sense, so necessary at the climax of a saga, that events are now advancing by their own impetus and that nothing can change their fated course.

Erlendr comes to Qnundr with news that men are gathering at Guðmundr's farm in unusual numbers, but two of Qnundr's men brush aside the warning with a sneer — a sneer which echoes the earlier taunt at Guðmundr's dead honour:

“A little while ago we both went through all Øxnadalr and searched all the upland pasture and found no sheep, except one hornless ewe whose fleece had all fallen out, and she will not go far this spring. And we think that Guðmundr is sitting firmly on his sanctuary chair.”

Qnundr answered: “It is possible that he is sitting for a while. But if he does stand up, then it is not certain how small his stride will be.”<sup>25</sup>

It is interesting to note here a type of sarcasm based on homely symbolism which is frequent in Family Sagas.<sup>26</sup> The taste for such things was certainly widespread in all periods in Iceland, and the invention of such a sneer against Guðmundr is not in itself remarkable. The literary merit of the passage lies in the author's realization that by inserting this conversation at this point of his narrative he can reveal so much. The implications of the jest itself are far-reaching: Guðmundr is a womanly coward (“hornless ewe”), he is afraid to leave his own valley, his followers and prestige are dwindling (“her fleece had all fallen out”), and he is helpless in face of trouble. The jest is framed between Erlendr's warning that Guðmundr may be planning to attack, and Qnundr's half tribute (“if he does stand up, it is not

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, I 187.

<sup>26</sup> cf. the animal imagery of certain mocking offers of compensation to apparently helpless persons: in ch. 8 of the reconstructed part of *Heiðarvíga saga* Víga-Styrr offers young Gestr “a male lamb, grey in colour, with torn fleece, which would not thrive” (*Íslenzk Fornrit*, III 231); in *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings*, ch. 5, Þorbjörn offers old Hávarðr a broken-down horse “grey in colour, very old, and his back covered with sores, who has been lying flat on his back till now” (*Íslenzk Fornrit*, VI 308-9).

certain how small his stride will be"). The contemporary reader, knowing the outcome, could appreciate the validity of the warning, the blind stupidity of the sneer, and the greater insight shown by Qnundr. By including this conversation the author gives proof of the true saga-writer's talent for revealing much by the most economical means.

The next stage of his narrative is equally significant in its anticipation of a typical device of fictional and semi-fictional sagas, for it is the recording of two portents:

It happened in the spring that servants came indoors at Langahlíð in broad daylight, wanting to find Qnundr because of something they needed. They did not see him. And three times it happened thus, and yet he was sitting in his own place.

At that time Arnþrúðr Fornadóttir and her sons<sup>27</sup> were living at Sakka in Svarfaðardalr. There was something that happened one morning as men were asleep in the sleeping-room: two axes whistled loudly on the axe-beam. Then they were taken down, and they were those of the brothers Snorri and Þorsteinn, sons of Arnþrúðr. They still whistled, even when they were held. Then Guðmundr Arason the priest was sent for, and then they fell silent when he sprinkled them with holy water.<sup>28</sup>

It is clear that to the author these events had a plain significance: Qnundr was invisible because he was soon to die,<sup>29</sup> and the axes whistled for the blood they would soon be shedding. Yet the author gives no explicit interpretation, but relies on the placing of the incidents to convey their meaning. Here once again we see the recording of fact (or what the author accepted as fact) merging into art, for incidents are selected and the narrative shaped according to a sense of drama which foreshadows the use the Family Sagas make of portents as vital elements in their accounts of great disasters. Contemporary superstition, like the contemporary taste for symbolic taunts, has been used with artistic effectiveness.

<sup>27</sup> Arnþrúðr was Guðmundr's neice.

<sup>28</sup> *Sturlunga saga*, I 187-8.

<sup>29</sup> This interpretation seems certain to me, but I have not been able to find an exact parallel among the various death omens recorded in the sagas.

After this passage, the author takes up the tale again from the point of view of Qnundr's friends. Even the march of Guðmundr's men on Langahlíð is not described directly, but at one remove, through the eyes of Qnundr's loyal friend, Erlendr the Unlucky. Erlendr, convinced that an attack is imminent, tries to reach Qnundr to warn him again; on the way he is stopped by a group of Guðmundr's kinsmen, one of whom parleys with him:

Sqxólfr said: "Turn back, Erlendr, and go no further. I know that you think that you have noticed that men are gathering against Qnundr and that there is some threat to him, and it is brave of you to wish all the same to warn him of it. Yet now nothing can come of this, and it may be that you are exposing yourself to danger. It cannot now be kept secret that a meeting between us is to take place now. You can see now that at the mouth of Øxnadalr, by Grænabrá, a band of men is advancing; and where the sun shines down onto the scarps you can see shields flashing, and the men there have come from out along the fjord, from Svarfaðardalr. And all that host will meet, and visit Qnundr tonight."<sup>30</sup>

This placing of information and description through dialogue shows considerable skill. It makes possible such vivid touches as the mention of the sun flashing on the distant shields, which would be out of place in the particularly bare style of direct narration usually used by this author. Moreover, Erlendr's forebodings and the tribute Sqxólfr pays to his courage both serve to bring out the tense drama of the situation, in a way which a blunt factual account of Guðmundr's march on Langahlíð could not have done.

The author now speaks alternately of Guðmundr's men and Qnundr's; of the mustering of the attackers on the river bank; of Qnundr's fatal decision, against advice, to defend his house from within. The passage reads almost like a summary of the dialogue between Njáll and his sons in the same situation:

There were some earthworks there round the buildings, and they said that the defence could be kept up for a long time outside. Qnundr said that he had often known of cases of an

<sup>30</sup> *Sturlunga saga*, I 188.

attack proving difficult when men were attacked indoors in a house. They answered and said that they thought that then fire would be brought against them. Qnundr would not let himself be convinced by that and insisted on having his own way, and the men all went indoors.<sup>31</sup>

Guðmundr's men surround the farm, and when Qnundr, standing in the only open doorway, asks who is their leader, Guðmundr answers in symbolic language which echoes and develops that of the taunts:

"The leadership is poor. Here now that hornless ewe has come, having gone down out of the valley, even though a great deal of her fleece is gone; and the bell-wether is in no better shape than that. And yet she is now resolved that one of two things must happen: either she must now lose all her fleece, or else go home with the fleece whole."<sup>32</sup>

The account of the actual burning is given in the detailed, clear, and factual manner typical of this author, which here takes on an added grimness from the nature of the subject. It is too long to quote here, but it is interesting to note how many details scattered through it anticipate episodes in the burning of Njáll. Some may of course be due to a natural similarity of events at any burning, but several are very marked: the fatal decision to fight from indoors; the kindling of fire in the roof when attempts to start a blaze in the doorway have failed; the killing of a man who tries to smuggle weapons out when quarter is given to women and servants; the voluntary death of some whom the attackers wished to spare (Gálmr in *Guðmundar saga dýra*, Njáll, Bergþóra and young Þórðr in *Njála*). Of course there are clear differences too. In *Njála* the story is told for the most part through dialogue, has a markedly heroic tone, and is told from the point of view of those within the house; *Guðmundar saga dýra* sees through the eyes of the attackers, is terse and factual, and says nothing of conditions within the house. One gruesome episode,

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, I 189.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, I 189.

however, may have provided the author of *Njála* with a hint for his account of Kári's escape:

No-one could then come near the fire, and when the buildings began to blaze, fragments were thrown up out of the buildings so high that they came down very far off. They then saw something being thrown out through a gap where the walls were broken down, but they did not recognise it until it moved, and they asked what it was. He answered and said that it was Þorfinnr . . . . Everything about him was on fire, both his hair and his clothes.<sup>33</sup>

Such parallels make it very probable that the author of *Njála*, writing three-quarters of a century after the burning of Qnundr, drew upon it for hints for his description of the most famous of all Icelandic burnings. As Einar Ól. Sveinsson has remarked: "It is evident that the various burnings which took place in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were much in the mind" of the author of *Njála*, and among these the burning of Qnundr shows most points of similarity with that of Njáll.<sup>34</sup>

But the literary interest of *Guðmundar saga dýra* does not rest only on the use a later and greater writer may have made of it, but on merits of its own. The author's struggle to marshal his carefully-gathered facts into order has produced many passages of good narrative, and his sense of drama does justice to the great moments of the story, even if the selectiveness needed to achieve good structure is not evident in his work as a whole. Moreover, he possesses the fundamental quality of a saga-writer: interest in human nature, the wish not merely to record events but to probe into their causes and lay bare the motives of those who play a part in them. And the driving force behind his whole undertaking is the desire that the reader should accept his interpretation of these

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, I 191.

<sup>34</sup> Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Brennu-Njáls saga* (*Íslenzk Fornrit* XII; 1954), pp. cxiv-cxv. There is also reason to think that the author of *Njála* drew on chs. 7 and 8 of *Guðmundar saga dýra* for some details of his Víga-Hrappr episode (see Barði Guðmundsson, *Andvari* LXXIV (1949), 23-39). Signs of influence of *Guðmundar saga dýra* on the account of an attempted burning in *Ljósvetninga saga* have been mentioned by Björn Sigfússon in his edition of that saga, *Íslenzk Fornrit* X, p. xxxviii, and by Barði Guðmundsson, *Andvari* LXXV (1950), 105.

motives, should concur in his judgement on these events. Basically he is not a chronicler, despite his respect for fact; he is an advocate, pleading Guðmundr's cause by the use of every technique at his disposal. It is significant that at the climax of the saga he has recourse to one of the oldest Icelandic methods of persuasion, the quoting of laudatory verses. He tells us that as Guðmundr's troops rode home in the morning after the burning, Kolbeinn Tumason composed a verse on it; this verse he quotes, and it is the epitome of the whole interpretation which the saga is designed to present:

Fighters full of wiliness,  
fierce amid the sword-storm,  
blamed the moderate mood of  
manly-hearted Guðmundr.  
The lordly man has lit this fire!  
They've learnt now, those shield-wielders,  
that he who stirred this storm of blades  
in strife is no meek weakling.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> *Sturlunga saga*, I 191-2.

## WHEN WAS MAGNUS ERLINGSSON CROWNED?

By G. M. GATHORNE-HARDY

PROFESSOR Halvdan Koht, the distinguished *doyen* of Norwegian historians, has, in his eighty-seventh year, given welcome proof of his continued intellectual vitality by making a fresh contribution to the still unresolved controversy on the date of Magnus Erlingsson's coronation.<sup>1</sup> His views on this subject were previously expressed, twenty-seven years earlier, in a celebrated lecture to the Norwegian Vitenskaps Akademi, in which, however, this chronological point was only incidentally treated.<sup>2</sup> Since his arguments on this point are repeated and elaborated in his recent contribution, it is to this that I propose to devote my principal attention here.

It may seem surprising that the precise dating of this historical event should have been deemed of such importance, since it only involves a choice between two consecutive years — 1163 and 1164. Yet I most certainly agree with Professor Koht when he says — “Many historians — including myself at one time — have been content to say that the coronation took place in 1163 or 1164. *But we cannot stop there.* For the context of events will be different, according as one or the other year is chosen.” Among early Norwegian sources, our method of reckoning time by the *anno Domini* was an unfamiliar practice which is almost exclusively confined to the Icelandic Annals, the earliest of which was not compiled before the late thirteenth century, so that the dates ascribed to earlier events were derived from other authorities. Previous writers were accustomed to measure the lapse of time between one event and another by the passage of winters, beginning in the October of one calendar year and ending in the April of the next, and

<sup>1</sup> *Historisk Tidsskrift (Norsk)*, 40 (1960-61), 232.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, 30 (1934-6), 81; see pp. 98 ff.

while seasons and church festivals gave a clue to the time of year they gave no direct guidance to the date. In these circumstances, the fixing of an indisputable date to serve as a point of departure is an achievement of great value. What the historical records of those days can tell us with reasonable accuracy is the sequence of events and the interval between them, and if the nearest point of departure is wrongly calculated, the whole surrounding history may be thrown into confusion and create serious difficulties. The soundest method for us is to start from a point as to which no uncertainty exists, and to use this in our calculation.

The earlier Norwegian historians of the nineteenth century followed Snorri Sturluson (and the Icelandic Annals) in placing the date for Magnus Erlingsson's coronation in 1164. At a later stage, both Alexander Bugge and Absalon Taranger are said to have asserted that the correctness of this choice could be proved.<sup>3</sup> In 1904, however, Ebbe Hertzberg presented the case for 1163 supported by impressive arguments,<sup>4</sup> and his view was backed up — as already stated — by Professor Koht, some thirty years later. In spite of these arguments, however, the question has remained unresolved, and the attitude of later historians has been generally hesitant and non-committal. In these circumstances I have the temerity to put forward my objections to the conclusions of the advocates of 1163, and to support the case for 1164 with my own arguments.

To supplement the evidence which they deduce from the direct historical sources, which are Snorri's Saga of Magnus Erlingsson, *Fagrskinna*, and — particularly stressed by Professor Koht in his recent article — the more nearly contemporaneous testimony of Saxo Grammaticus, the advocates of 1163 introduce—

(1) A reference to the coronation by an English writer

<sup>3</sup> *HT(N)*, 30 (1934-6), 99, note 1.

<sup>4</sup> *HT(N)*, 4 Række, 3 Bind (1905), 30-55.

in the *Gesta Henrici Secundi* (referred to as the *Gesta* hereafter).

(2) An argument based on the presence at the ceremony of the Icelandic bishop, Brand Sæmundsson.

(3) Statements as to Magnus's age at the time of his coronation, found in *Fagrskinna* and in *Sverris saga*.

(1) In the History of King Henry II of England, completed before the end of the twelfth century, and therefore practically a contemporary record, there is interpolated under the year 1180 a fairly accurate summary of events in Norway, from the arrival of Harald Gilli in the reign of Sigurd the Crusader to the flight of Archbishop Eystein to England in 1180, after Sverre's defeat of Magnus in the battle of Iluvellir. The *Gesta's* information is therefore plausibly conjectured to have been derived from the archbishop himself or someone in his immediate *entourage*, though this assumption has been challenged by Ludvig Daae.<sup>5</sup>

The evidence of the *Gesta* on the subject of Magnus's coronation is as follows:—

. . . Insurrexit ergo in eum Siwardus frater Haconis, (i.e. Sigurd Markúsfóstri) et habito inter eos proelio Siwardus frater Haconis interfectus est, et Magnus coronatus est et inunctus in regem, secundo anno regni sui et quinto anno aetatis suae . . . anno scilicet quarto papatus Alexandri papae tertii, magistro Stephano de Urbe Veteri misso illuc legato.

The relevance of the opening words, which precede the mention of the coronation, will be shown later, but, as will be seen, here are three chronological statements. The first is of disputable accuracy, since Magnus was chosen king in 1161, but it is defended as possible by reckoning the beginning of the reign from the death of his rival, Hakon the Broad-shouldered, in 1162. The second statement — “the fifth year of his age” — is plainly erroneous, but here it is argued that the *Gesta* has confused a statement as to Magnus's age when accepted as king (1161) with his age when crowned. So far, however, there

<sup>5</sup> *HT(N)*, 4 Række, 3 Bind (1905), 20.

is little to encourage confidence in the report's accuracy. As to the third statement, the papacy of Alexander III began in September 1159; his fourth year consequently ended in September 1163. But it should be observed that the *Gesta's* evidence at this point is linked with the arrival in Norway of the Legate, Stephen of Orvieto, who was certainly present at the coronation, though he is generally believed to have come on quite a different mission. The writer may easily have regarded his arrival as the start of the coronation proceedings, but the Icelandic Annals, though dating the coronation in 1164, agree that the Legate reached Norway in the previous year, and this, as we shall see, is confirmed by *Fagrskinna* (cap. 268). But what the writer of the *Gesta* was told may easily have been in some such form as this:— In the fourth year of his papacy, Alexander sent the Legate Stephen to Norway, and the coronation took place in his presence. The language of the passage quoted would then seem a perfectly legitimate paraphrase. Of these three statements, therefore, one proves wholly inaccurate and another questionable, while the third is capable of an interpretation supporting either date. This evidence, then, proves quite indecisive.

(2) Bishop Brand Sæmundsson undoubtedly arrived in Norway in 1163, but his journey, too, had nothing to do with the coronation, though he in fact attended it. Having been designated bishop in Iceland, he came to receive his episcopal ordination at the hands of Archbishop Eystein. The date of his consecration is given in the episcopal history known as *Hungrvaka* as 8th September 1163. If, therefore, the coronation took place — as alleged — in the summer of 1163, Brand was not yet a bishop, and since he was given a prominent and honoured place in the ceremony, together with his four Norwegian *confrères*, and was entertained by Erling at a great banquet, one would have expected his ordination to have taken place in time. *Hungrvaka* tells us that Brand left

Iceland in the summer of 1163, that he and Jón Loptsson — Snorri's fosterfather and doubtless his source of information on this event — both stayed in Bergen for the winter, and that Brand did not return to his see in Iceland till the summer of the following year. If he left by the first possible boat — about May — he could not have been present at a coronation held later in the summer of 1164. Hertzberg's argument really depends on the assumption that he must have made this early departure.

But personally, I cannot imagine any man, still less a bishop, so completely apathetic and unenterprising as to miss so unique an opportunity for the sake of catching an early boat! Here — on the assumption that this great unprecedented event has not yet taken place — here he is in Bergen in 1164, in the thick of all the elaborate preparations for it, as described by Snorri. He is presented with the chance of participating in the assembly of the greatest in the land, with his archbishop and a papal legate, and sharing with his four Norwegian colleagues the honour and pleasure of tasting Erling's regal hospitality in a splendid banquet, and perhaps of being presented with a really valuable souvenir of the occasion. And he will be the *only* colonial bishop so privileged, if only he stays for a month or two longer! I feel sure that any newly-appointed colonial bishop must have jumped at the chance — and stayed. And if so, the whole argument for 1163, so far as he is concerned, disappears.

(3) *Statements of Magnus's age.* In *Fagrskinna*, cap. 269, appears the statement that Magnus was "seven winters old" at the time of his coronation. If true, this statement would support the belief that the date of the ceremony was in 1163. Snorri, however, and the Icelandic Annals, say that he was eight winters old. The primitive Norwegian method of reckoning age by the passage of winters lasting from mid-October to mid-April must, one would think, have made the calculation of the age of a young child rather difficult and uncertain, though in most

cases a mistake or difference of a year would not be important. If, as asserted by Hertzberg,<sup>6</sup> “when a new-born child had survived the whole *or part* of the winter half-year, this was his first winter”, a strict application of the system might have the Gilbertian effect of separating by a whole year of official age infants born but a few days apart, on either side of the dividing line in April! But, even if we ignore the possibilities of mistake or misapplication of the system, there is more to be said as to this statement of *Fagrskinna*. The chapter in which it occurs has the appearance of an afterthought or footnote, based on information derived from some (unknown) source distinct from the main authority followed. It contains no more than 32 words, most of which are employed to convey this statement of the young King’s age. Moreover, the information conveyed by it directly contradicts that given in the immediately preceding chapter (268), which clearly agrees with Snorri in dating the coronation in 1164. For it opens by recording the arrival of the papal legate “one winter after the fall of King Hakon (the Broad-shouldered)” in other words, in 1163. This gives us an indisputable point of departure. We are next told how, “in the following spring” — i.e. the spring of 1164 — Erling came north from Viken, and held an important discussion with the archbishop, which is also mentioned by Snorri, when it was finally agreed that the coronation should take place during the same summer, in Bergen. In this account there is no discrepancy between the two sources, except that Snorri places the interview with the archbishop in Bergen, while *Fagrskinna* says it was Trondheim; this, however does not affect the chronology.

It is clear that the compiler of *Fagrskinna* cannot possibly have realized the implications of his brief interpolation, from an unknown source, relating to Magnus’s age. He could not otherwise have set two

<sup>6</sup> *HT(N)*, 4 Række, 3 Bind (1905), 36.

completely contradictory statements in immediate juxtaposition, and the fact that he did so can only raise a doubt as to the reliability of so careless and unintelligent a historian. *Fagrskinna*, in fact, can be cited in support of either or both of the alternative dates, and its evidence cancels out.

A similar statement as to his age is also put into the mouth of Magnus himself by the writer of *Sverris saga* (cap. 89). This of course does not imply the authority of Magnus himself, all it means is that the saga-writer, having found somewhere — very likely in the same unknown source from which *Fagrskinna* derived it — this statement whose authority we have no means of testing, has made use of it to embellish his narrative. It has been cynically remarked that “history may not repeat itself, but historians repeat one another”, and thus falsehood as well as fact gets perpetuated. Two repetitions do not make a statement more trustworthy, and we have no means of ascertaining the degree of authority which either of them carries. This evidence, then, cannot outweigh that of any facts pointing to a different conclusion.

So far, the argument has merely been directed to establishing that the evidence adduced in favour of 1163 is inconclusive, a point which seems pretty generally agreed. To reach a positive conclusion, we must critically examine and compare the existing source material, and try to judge what parts of it to accept. To do so, let us start with a date so well authenticated as to command general agreement, and see the chronological results of following the course of subsequent events in all the available sources. A good starting-point for this purpose is the death of Sigurd Jarl of Reyr, in the battle of Ré, near Tønsberg, as to which there is an exact consensus of evidence. The date of this event was 20th February 1163.

For the history of the period under consideration, we depend on Snorri and *Fagrskinna*, both obviously based

on and frequently rendering in almost identical language an earlier common source, now no longer in existence, but generally conjectured to have been the missing portion of *Morkinskinna*, the original of which is ascribed to c. 1210. The late thirteenth-century copy which now exists and to which the name properly belongs is incomplete, carrying the history no later than c. 1157. Where our two sources are in agreement, therefore, their narrative may be taken to carry a high authority.

In connection with the question here under consideration, much play has been made of the divergencies between Snorri and *Fagrskinna*, but for the most part they disclose a very considerable measure of agreement, and some of the points on which they confirm one another, in matter which seems clearly to be drawn from their common source, provide, perhaps, some of the strongest evidence on the question which we are considering.

I hope later to develop my reasons for thinking that the only serious difference between the two narratives in the chronology of events following February 1163 may be explained as the result of a single quite intelligible slip made by *Fagrskinna* when it reaches the spring of that year. But for the moment I would first stress the tremendous importance of the fact that both sources are in complete agreement in presenting Erling with a formidable alibi for the whole of the year 1163, in which Hertzberg and Professor Koht contend that the coronation took place. For it certainly took place in Bergen, and both Snorri and *Fagrskinna* are agreed in testifying that Erling and his son were far away, in Viken, for the whole of the year 1163 and beyond it.

In his recent article, Professor Koht repeatedly accuses Snorri of "*konstruksjon*", which he defines as "reasoning his way towards the chronology into which he finds it right to fit the events".<sup>7</sup> This practice, honestly applied,

<sup>7</sup> *HT(N)*, 40 (1960-61), 239: "Han resonnerer seg fram til den tidsfylgja han finn det rett å setta hendingane inn i".

is surely the proper function of any historian, who, like a judge or juryman, has to sift the available evidence and decide on the relative credibility of its different parts. Indeed, Professor Koht himself supplies a remarkable instance of this procedure. In concluding that the coronation took place in 1163, he assumes the presence of Erling and Magnus in Bergen in the teeth of *all* the historical evidence. In both our sources, Erling remains in Viken, first for clear strategic reasons and then because of adverse winds, until after the death of the pretender, Sigurd Markúsfóstri, and the subsequent mopping-up operations in the south, which continue, according to Snorri, until the spring of 1164, and in *Fagrskinna* considerably later. According to Snorri, the sequence of events is as follows:— in spring (? April) Sigurd the pretender and his foster-father arrive in Viken, having acquired some ships, and base themselves off the island of Hising, near Konungahella. Immediately on hearing of this, Erling crosses the fjord from Tønsberg to Konungahella and captures the enemy ships, soon after which Markus and the pretender retire overland to Trondheim, where Sigurd is accepted by the Øreting. Erling, being held in the south by adverse winds, sends Nikolas Skjaldvörsson and others to guard Bergen and the western coast. Throughout the summer, the adverse winds continue to an extent which grew proverbial; Markus and his foster-son had all the luck of the weather, and sailed about the western coast, collecting all the royal dues. In the late summer, having sailed as far south as Lister, they turn back, but are intercepted, captured and executed, by Nikolas Skjaldvörsson, the local commander, at Michaelmas, 1163.

The correct fixing of this date is of crucial importance. For in the spring of 1163 *Fagrskinna* makes what seems to me its one serious slip, apparently without seeing the chronological results of it. Its compiler omits Erling's *spring* offensive at Hising, being perhaps confused by the

fact that another operation took place in the same locality in the autumn. The writer of *Fagrskinna* continues to follow his main source with painstaking fidelity, and in fact only changes a word or two. Snorri says — “Markus and his foster son Sigurd came down into Viken when spring began (*er váraði*) and acquired some ships. But when Erling heard of it he crossed to the east after them.” *Fagrskinna* innocently but fatally alters the meaning by the addition of the words “in the autumn” to “when Erling heard of it”.<sup>8</sup>

This amended statement sounds completely absurd. It is hard enough to believe that Erling would have left his opponents undisturbed from early spring till autumn, but it is surely impossible to swallow the assertion that Markus and Sigurd remained totally inactive and immobile at Hising for the greater part of a year, or that Erling’s intelligence service would not have informed him of their presence across the fjord for the same period! *Fagrskinna* must be mistaken, but the results of the slip were catastrophic. For a form of chronicle which very rarely mentions dates, but depends on the mere sequence of events, the change from spring to autumn necessarily advanced most of the events of this year to the next. I do not think the compiler of *Fagrskinna* realized this; he went on faithfully recording these events in due order, but the ultimate effect was that the execution of Sigurd was no longer at Michaelmas 1163, but in the late summer — possibly on the same day — of 1164.

Professor Koht accepts this later date with equanimity, but apparently, like the text he follows, without considering the effects upon his argument. All those events connected with the appeal of the defeated Markusmen to Valdemar of Denmark, as recorded by Saxo, can no longer be placed in 1163, where Professor Koht is

<sup>8</sup> cf. Snorri: “er Erlingr spurði þat, þá fór hann austr eptir þeim”, with *Fagrskinna*: “um haustit eptir, er Erlingr spurði, fór hann austr eptir”. (*Magnús saga Erlingssonar*, ch. 15, in Finnur Jónsson, *Heimskringla* (1893-1901), III 454; idem, *Fagrskinna* (1902-3), 362 [ch. 91]).

determined to place them. For Saxo makes it quite clear that even the prior appeal of the Markus-men to the King of *Sweden* did not take place till after the death of their leader. They were, he says, “*victoria pariter ac rege privati*”. But, leaving Saxo for the moment, the statement that Sigurd was liquidated in 1164 is quite incompatible with a general consensus of testimony that this event *preceded* the coronation, as, indeed, we should naturally imagine. It seems scarcely possible that an assembly so elaborate and important could be arranged in Bergen while the rival claimant to the throne was still alive and active, and even in a position to sail up and down the west coast of Norway collecting the royal revenues! *Fagrskinna* clearly implies that the coronation came later, its author having probably failed to grasp the logical consequences of his initial error, just as he does not seem to have realized the implications of Magnus’s age. For he deals with Sigurd’s death in cap. 266, two chapters *before* introducing the subject of the coronation, winding up the incident with the words — “Magnus was now the sole King of Norway”. Snorri, of course, tells us plainly that the coronation was subsequent to Sigurd’s death, and, more surprisingly, the author of the *Gesta* confirms the same point in the words quoted earlier — “*Siwardus interfectus est, et Magnus coronatus est*”. It is perhaps significant that *Fagrskinna* in cap. 268, having found a new point of departure for its chronology in the date of the arrival of the papal legate, falls back into line with Snorri, and now clearly tells us that the coronation was in 1164.

I hope I have now established a convincing case for preferring Snorri’s precise date — Michaelmas 1163 — to that implied in *Fagrskinna*. But if this point is established, it follows that Erling’s absence from Bergen in the summer of 1163 is additionally confirmed, since, according to *both* sources, the retreat of Markus and Sigurd from Lista was occasioned by the news of Erling’s

continued presence in Viken, with an irresistible force.<sup>9</sup>

Erling's alibi is much more unassailable than may at first sight appear. A coronation is not an event like a murder in a detective story, which can be carried through in a matter of minutes. To stage such a ceremony, and still more the important legislative assembly associated with it, would need elaborate and lengthy preparation; to attend both functions would involve considerable time. The arguments of A. O. Johnsen as to the time needed to convene such a *rikssting* as this on an earlier occasion<sup>10</sup> seem altogether to preclude the possibility that this was a last-moment improvisation. And of course it all involved the presence of the young King and his father.

The final operations, resulting in the dispersal of the Markus-men to Sweden and Denmark, are ascribed by Snorri to spring 1164, and this event introduces the evidence of Saxo, to which Professor Koht attaches particular importance, but which he interprets in a way which I find it impossible to follow. It is at first sight difficult to see the bearing of Saxo's evidence on the question of the coronation, which, according to either theory, was over by the end of summer 1164. But since Professor Koht insists that Saxo says that King Valdemar invaded Norway in 1163, and contends that Erling's absence from Viken at the date of the Danish invasion confirms his presence in Bergen at this time, and therefore breaks or weakens the alibi, we must consider his interpretation of Saxo a little farther. The passage on which he relies is cap. 29 of Saxo's fourteenth book. This consists of a *résumé* of Norwegian history from the days of Harald Gilli and Sigurd Slembidiákn to the point where the Markus-men appeal to King Valdemar, to which event a passing reference is made in the opening words of the chapter, but to which the author returns, with a more

<sup>9</sup> *Magnús saga Erlingssonar*, ch. 18 (*Heimskringla*, III 457); *Fagrskinna*, 363 (ch. 93).

<sup>10</sup> A. O. Johnsen, *Studier vedrørende Nikolaus Brekespears Legasjon til Norden* (1945), 93-5.

definite clue to the date, later in his summary. The opening words are, however, "*per idem forte tempus*", and the Professor argues that this refers to the birth of Valdemar's son, Knut, in 1163 an event with which, he says, the previous chapter concludes. This relation of the two events is, however, a slender and precarious foundation for his argument, since it is widely held among learned textual authorities that cap. 29 has been placed in an inappropriate context. In Holder's edition of Saxo, the two passages in question have been separated by about eight pages of intervening matter (p. 541, line 12 to p. 549, line 17), and although the Danish edition published in Copenhagen in 1931 is arranged in conformity with Professor Koht's statement, its editors make it clear that cap. 29 is, in their opinion, "*minus apte a Saxone hic insertum*", and does not fit appropriately into the chronology, and that the view that this chapter is wrongly placed is shared by other authorities.<sup>11</sup>

In any case, it is doubtful whether the opening words of this chapter are meant to have any precise chronological significance. The sentence of which "*per idem forte tempus*" forms part is simply a justification of the digression into Norwegian history which it introduces, and means no more than "at this point" or "now". The whole introductory passage may fairly be rendered as follows:—

It now happened that some emissaries of the Norwegians visited the King (Valdemar), entreating him to attempt an attack on the rulers of Norway, which was wasted by incessant civil war and fearfully oppressed by tyrants, till it was now bled white and nearly destroyed. And since external affairs are at this point bound up with our own, take it not amiss if I give a brief summary of the Norwegian situation.

With this prelude, the summary starts, eventually reaching its original starting point, when the date referred to is made clearer. For it goes on to say that the fugitives *after the defeat and death of Sigurd Markúsfóstri* (*Victoria*

<sup>11</sup> J. Olrik and H. Raeder, *Saxonis Gesta Danorum* (1931), I 444, note to lib. XIV, cap. xxix.

*pariter ac rege privati*), first applied to King Karl Sverkerson of Sweden, to be their new candidate for the throne. He, however, put them off *for a long time* (*diu*) with ready promises, till they concluded that he was really more concerned to keep his own kingdom than to gain another. Not till then did they turn to Valdemar with the same proposition, whereupon he, “thinking it foolish to engage in so serious a war on the bare representations of these envoys”, decided first to investigate public opinion in Norway by means of a secret mission (*tacitis legationibus*). On hearing the report given by these secret agents on their return, he started his invasion “without delay” (*absque cunctatione*). He did not, however, encounter Erling, who had removed to “*abstrusas Norvagiæ partes*”.

All of this, right down to Valdemar’s invasion of Norway, Professor Koht asks us to believe is assigned by Saxo to the year 1163! Koht even puts Valdemar’s invasion in the *spring* of that year.<sup>12</sup> But in fact Saxo does not, at any point, mention any date whatever, and it is clear that the interval between the first appeal to Karl Sverkerson and the final dispatch of Valdemar’s secret investigators, who are obviously identical with the pseudo-pilgrims mentioned in the Norwegian sources, must have been considerable, even if we date the *Swedish* negotiations immediately after the execution of Sigurd and Markus, i.e. about October 1163. Professor Koht is not really entitled to do this, since he accepts the statement in *Fagrskinna* which leaves the pretender alive till the late summer of 1164! Actually, it seems more probable that even the appeal to Sweden did not begin till after the final dispersal to Denmark and Sweden following Erling’s final operations in the spring of 1164, and Valdemar may not have been approached until considerably later. Snorri’s chronology from this point corresponds most remarkably

<sup>12</sup> *HT(N)*, 40 (1960-61), 241. See also the time-table at the end of his article.

with Saxo's narrative, particularly considering that the Norwegian sources differ radically from the Danish on the subject of Valdemar's motives, and are thus shown to be completely independent. We are safe in concluding that the approach to Valdemar was not before May 1164, and very likely later. His secret mission, travelling overland as pilgrims, did not reach Trondheim till late in the year; *Fagrskinna* says it was "autumn or even the beginning of winter" (cap. 270); Snorri's account seems to make it slightly later. They left to return to Denmark "late in Lent" 1165, which would be, in that year, towards the end of March. Valdemar, on the receipt of their report, did indeed act — as Saxo says — "*sine cunctatione*" and must have been in Norway in May 1165, while Erling was in Trondheim (*abstrusas partes Norvagiæ*) dealing with the local "Quislings".

In fact, from beginning to end of this enquiry, we find no difficulty in following Snorri's chronology, while the advocates of 1163 are in constant trouble, as indeed Professor Koht in his earlier article frankly admitted.<sup>13</sup> Is it not the explanation that their whole theory is mistaken?

<sup>13</sup> *HT(N)*, 30 (1934-6), 100: "Men når vi så skal føre dei dagtala vi såleis har funne fram til . . . inn i dei andre meldingane vi har om norsk historie i denne tida, så råkar vi ut i nye vanskar."

# NOTES ON PRE-CONQUEST CHURCHES IN THE DANELAW<sup>1</sup>

By Dr H. M. TAYLOR

IN these notes the term "Saxon" is used to denote churches showing any distinctive Saxon feature and those showing mixed Saxo-Norman features, typical of the period just before and after the Conquest. The total number of these churches of which distinguishable features survive in England is close on 400, but the statistical notes in the following paragraph are based on an analysis of 336.

## *Distribution of characteristic features.*

No less than 103 of the 185 Saxon churches in the Danelaw have towers, while only 21 of the 151 churches elsewhere have towers. The incidence of churches with towers is roughly the same in East Anglia (55%), Northumbria (50%), and Mercia (44%). In other features, however, these regions show well-marked differences. Thus, for example, long-and-short quoins are found in 28% of Mercian churches and 22% of the East Anglian, but only in 5% of the Northumbrian. Double-splayed windows are in 22% of Mercian churches, in 42% of East Anglian churches, while in Northumbria only a single example is known. This one example at Jarrow is in a type of dressed stone found otherwise only in west and south-west England and must be associated with the re-building by the Gloucestershire monk Aldwine in 1073.

## *Northumbrian towers.*

A unique feature of six Northumbrian towers<sup>2</sup> is the

<sup>1</sup> These notes form an abstract of an illustrated talk given to the Society at its meeting in University College London on 4th December 1959.

<sup>2</sup> Monkwearmouth, Billingham (Co. Durham); Bywell, Ovingham (Northumberland); Wharram-le-Street, York, St Mary Bishophill Junior (Yorkshire). Strip-work round some Norfolk belfry openings is rather differently treated.

presence of strip-work hood-moulding round the double belfry windows, and this may be safely regarded as a sign of pre-Conquest origin.

At least five Northumbrian churches<sup>3</sup> have post-Danish towers built above pre-Danish porches. The intention appears to have been not only to provide suitable hanging sites for bells but also to give access to upper chambers in the church and to provide further rooms; architectural evidence can be adduced for the occupation of these tower-rooms. These facts suggest that we have to do with an indigenous development in tower-construction and one not solely the result of Italian influence from the ninth century onwards, as is generally maintained.

#### *Lincolnshire towers.*

Of 42 surviving Saxon churches in Lincolnshire, 33 have towers, and 17 of these are of the type called "Lincolnshire towers", found only here and in the adjacent counties. Good examples are St Mary-le-Wigford and St Peter-at-Gowts in Lincoln itself. They may be safely assigned to a pre-Conquest period. A notable feature of the "Lincolnshire towers" is that none of them has long-and-short quoins, although several of them have been added later to naves with quoins of this type. Thus, in Lincolnshire at least, long-and-short quoining had gone out of fashion before the latest period of pre-Conquest building.

#### *Round towers of Norfolk.*

Round towers exist in 201 churches in the country, of dates ranging from Saxon to modern times; of these 139 are in Norfolk, 46 in Suffolk and only 16 elsewhere. A prime reason, but not the only one, for this local peculiarity is the lack of good stone for making the angles of a square tower. 24 of the Norfolk towers may be counted pre-Conquest or Saxo-Norman. Examples are at Colney (double-splayed round-headed windows and a

<sup>3</sup> Monkwearmouth, Jarrow, Corbridge, Bardsey, Ledsham.

broad pilaster-strip running up the tower at its junction with the nave), at Forncett St Peter (double belfry openings in conjunction with double-splayed circular windows, all in undressed stone, and typical Saxon tower arch), and at Bessingham (double belfry windows outlined by strip-work).

*Stair turrets.*

There are three complete stone staircases of pre-Conquest date in churches in the Danelaw, at Brixworth (Northants.), Hough-on-the-Hill and Broughton (Lincs.). At Brixworth the stone steps are laid on a spiral barrel-vault of rubble, and at the other two the steps are separate from the newel. Thus, all three can be distinguished from the Norman staircase, where the newel is formed by the inner ends of the overlapping step-slabs themselves.

*Transeptal churches with central towers.*

Two of these of Saxon origin exist in the Danelaw, at Norton near Billingham in Co. Durham, and at Stow near Lincoln. The latter is the greatest of the surviving transeptal churches in England of pre-Conquest origin. Three building periods may be distinguished at Stow. The earliest, possibly ninth-century work, had its upper structure destroyed by fire (perhaps in the Danish incursions c. 870); the second entailed the re-building of the walls; and the last saw the creation of the great arches at the crossing. This latest building must be connected with the monastic establishment and endowment at Stow, within the outside limits of 1004 and 1055.

*Further references.*

More detailed accounts of a number of the features described here may be found in the following:  
H. M. Taylor, 'Some little-known aspects of English pre-Conquest churches,' in *The Anglo-Saxons. Studies . . . presented to Bruce Dickins* (1959), 137-58.

H. M. Taylor, *English Architecture in the Time of Bede* (The Jarrow Lecture, 1961).

Joan and Harold Taylor, 'The dating of Anglo-Saxon churches', *North Staffordshire Journal of Field Studies* I (1961), 58-76.

## WILLIAM MORRIS AS AN INTERPRETER OF OLD NORSE

By J. N. SWANNELL

A mild interest in Old Norse themes is not unusual among the poets and essayists of the nineteenth century: Carlyle, Tennyson, Matthew Arnold, Robert Buchanan, and others, all found a certain amount of inspiration in the Eddas or the sagas. But to them Old Norse was always an exotic, a convenient source of subjects for an occasional poem, a useful set of symbols for political or theological controversy; the Norse element is incidental, rather than significant. For William Morris, however, Old Norse literature was an overwhelming influence; it dominated him — obsessed him, one might say — for nearly thirty years. His most impressive original poems, *The Lovers of Gudrun* and *Sigurd the Volsung*, are taken direct from Norse originals; he devoted many hours of a busy life to translating a surprisingly large amount of Old Norse prose and verse; and his late prose romances, perhaps his most considerable achievement, grow naturally and inevitably out of his devotion to the sagas.

The influence of his Norse studies on his political development is less easy to estimate, but it is certain that in the “ethic of the north” he found a philosophy of life, a “religion of courage”<sup>1</sup> as he called it, which gave him faith and inspiration when he needed them most.

Not that he was a Norse scholar in the modern sense of the word, though he learned to read the language easily and could speak a certain amount of modern Icelandic. He was certainly no philologist. He was, after all, a poet, a painter, a tapestry-maker, a designer, a dyer, a printer, a factory-owner, a shopkeeper, and a political agitator,

<sup>1</sup> May Morris, *William Morris, Artist, Writer, Socialist* (1936), I 450.

as well as a student of Old Norse, and at no time in his life did languages come to him easily. What he had above all, though, was a natural affinity with Old Norse literature, a unique sense of kinship with the Saga Age. Morris always had an instinctive knowledge of how things were made and used in the Middle Ages (“How Morris seems to know things, doesn’t he?” said his friend Faulkner during their Oxford days),<sup>2</sup> and in the same way he seems to *know* about the domestic details of the Viking Age — how the houses and booths were constructed, how the land was cultivated on an Icelandic farmstead, how the Viking ships were manoeuvred. He himself had something of the Viking chieftain’s ability to turn his hand to anything.

William Morris — and this can be said of very few of us, even in this Society — would feel quite at home with Njál and his sons in Bergthor’s Knoll. In fact, in 1884 we find him complaining, in a lecture to the Secular Society of Leicester,<sup>3</sup> of the “foolish rabbit warrens” of “our well to do homes”, and longing for the Germanic hall, the “rational ancient way which was used from the time of Homer to past the time of Chaucer, a big hall, to wit, with a few chambers tacked on to it for sleeping or sulking in”.

But this remarkable innate sympathy with Norse literature did not find full expression until 1868, when he began to study the Icelandic language. Before this date his medieval sympathies were more diffused. From early childhood the Middle Ages were as real to him as the present. He was absorbed by the history, the literature, and the art of medieval England, a period symbolised in his mind by the glories of Gothic architecture; but his medieval world is the world of Chaucer, Malory, and Froissart — what he was later to call the “maundering side of medievalism”<sup>4</sup> — and it was in these authors,

<sup>2</sup> J. W. Mackail, *The Life of William Morris* (World’s Classics, 1950), I 46.

<sup>3</sup> *Works*, ed. May Morris (1910-15), XXIII 199.

<sup>4</sup> *The Letters of William Morris to his Family and Friends*, ed. Philip Henderson (1950), 186.

especially Malory and Froissart, that he found his inspiration for his first book of poems, *The Defence of Guenevere*, in 1858.

His first awareness of Old Norse literature, which later captivated him entirely, came in 1852, when Burne-Jones introduced him to Thorpe's *Northern Mythology*. This stimulated his interest and encouraged him to look for other works on the same subject, and by 1868, the year of his meeting with Magnússon, he had acquired a very creditable knowledge of Norse matters. He had read Mallet's *Northern Antiquities* in the 1847 edition containing Scott's abstract of the *Eyrbyggja Saga*; he knew Laing's *Heimskringla*, and Dasent's translations of the *Prose Edda*, *Njal's Saga*, and *Gisli's Saga*; he had some idea of the *Poetic Edda* through the versions of Cottle, Herbert, and Thorpe; and he had also read some of the many travel books about Iceland which were being published in the fifties and sixties.<sup>5</sup> All he lacked was first-hand knowledge of the Norse language.

By 1868, too, his contemporary reputation as a poet had been well established by *The Life and Death of Jason* and the first volume of the *Earthly Paradise*. It must be admitted, however, that in spite of Morris's intensive reading of books about Old Norse, and his knowledge of the literature in translation, there is very little that is intrinsically Norse about any of his early poems. There is clear evidence of his reading, here and there, but the Norse references are no more than ornament or local colour. The general effect is always medieval and romantic, rather than heroic. The only poems of this period which seem to promise us more are *The Wooing of Swanhild*, published after Morris's death, and *The Fostering of Aslaug*, published in Part IV of the *Earthly Paradise* in December, 1870, though written before the autumn of

<sup>5</sup> See Stefán Einarsson, 'Eiríkr Magnússon and his Saga Translations', *Scandinavian Studies and Notes*, XIII (1934); and Karl Litzenberg, *The Victorians and the Vikings* (University of Michigan Contributions in Modern Philology, no. 3; April 1947).

1868. The substance of both poems Morris took from Thorpe's *Northern Mythology*.

*Swanhild*, which runs to well over a thousand lines, was never finished; the story is taken as far as Randver's meeting with Swanhild, and no further. Morris turns it into a leisurely, ornate story, heavy with impending doom, but entirely romantic in tone, and he probably abandoned it once he had acquired some knowledge of the original Norse texts. *Aslaug*, on the other hand, is a complete poem, the last attempt of William Morris to recreate a Norse atmosphere from secondary sources. Morris's version is successful enough as a poem, but its qualities are those of the earlier tales of the *Earthly Paradise*, not those of the sagas — though it is true that the Aslaug episode of *Ragnar's Saga* is, even in the original, unusually romantic in tone. *The Fostering of Aslaug*, in short, is much the sort of poem Morris's readers would expect. There are not many Norse stories which could slip, almost unnoticed, into the *Earthly Paradise*, as this one does.

And so Morris might have continued. But in 1868 came his meeting with "a real Iclander", Eiríkr Magnússon, and from this time onwards Morris was to find his inspiration not in abstracts and translations but in the original Norse texts.<sup>6</sup>

Magnússon had been in England since 1862, and now, after five or six years of frustrating and unsatisfactory collaboration with George Powell<sup>7</sup> — a curious foreshadowing of the later partnership with Morris — he found an enthusiasm for Icelandic literature which equalled his own. Certainly, no teacher could have hoped for a more eager pupil; to Morris, as his daughter tells us, it was a wonderful moment: "a poet's entering into possession of a new world, only partly his till now".<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Eiríkr Magnússon's accounts of his meeting with Morris and their subsequent collaboration are to be found in the preface to *Works*, VII, and the preface to *The Saga Library*, VI (1905).

<sup>7</sup> Stefán Einarsson, *loc. cit.*

<sup>8</sup> *Works*, VII xv.

Magnússon, for his part was struck by Morris's remarkable appreciation of the spirit of Norse literature: "he entered into the spirit of it", he says, "not with the pre-occupied mind of the foreigner, but with the intuition of an uncommonly wide-awake native".<sup>9</sup>

In this atmosphere of mutual understanding and sympathy they agreed to meet three times a week to read Icelandic together, and these lessons were well established by October, 1868. Morris, though, was not the man to submit to the discipline of grammar and syntax, and Magnússon, obviously pained by this disregard of the academic proprieties, yet swept away, as always, by Morris's overwhelming personality, gives a vivid description of their first lesson:<sup>10</sup>

"I suggested we had better start with some grammar. 'No, I can't be bothered with grammar; have no time for it. You be my grammar as we translate. I want the literature, I must have the story. I mean to amuse myself' . . . ."

Almost immediately he is insisting on trying for himself:

"'But, look here, I see through it all, let me try and translate'. Off he started, translated, blundered, laughed; but still, he saw through it all with an intuition that fairly took me aback . . . in this way the best of the sagas were run through, at daily sittings, generally covering three hours, already before I left London for Cambridge in 1871".

The method they adopted at this early stage seems to have suited them both, and they kept to it during the many years they worked together: after they had gone through the day's task, Magnússon would write out a literal translation at home and give it to Morris the next time they met, leaving Morris to prepare a final version for publication. And this method gave quick results. Their translation of *Gunnlaug's Saga* was finished in two weeks and published in the *Fortnightly Review* in January 1869, by which time *Grettir's Saga* was ready for the press. During the early part of this year they also worked at the

<sup>9</sup> Preface to *The Saga Library*, VI.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*

*Laxdale Saga*, and though their version was never published, Morris's verse re-telling of part of the saga was completed by July and published, as *The Lovers of Gudrun*, in the third part of the *Earthly Paradise* (December 1869).

Imperfect though it may be, judged as a reconstruction of the Saga Age, *The Lovers of Gudrun* is a tremendous advance on *Aslaug*. Those modern readers who turn to *Gudrun* after the saga itself may be distracted by the limpid verses, the occasional lushness of description, the Pre-Raphaelite wanness of the heroine; but to an audience conditioned, as we say nowadays, to these characteristics, the change of atmosphere was significant and startling. In spite of its faults *Gudrun* has an intensity and a firmness of outline which are new to the *Earthly Paradise*, as though the poet has at last emerged from a world of dreams; his characters are sharply etched; there is something, certainly something, of the starkness of saga narrative.

When *Gudrun* appeared, Morris and Magnússon were hard at work translating the *Völsunga Saga*, "which quite throws all the other stories into the shade", as Morris writes to Swinburne in December 1869.<sup>11</sup> Morris had not been particularly impressed with the saga when Magnússon first drew his attention to it — it was "rather of the monstrous order",<sup>12</sup> he told his wife — but he soon began to write of it in superlatives, and when the translation was published, in 1870, the saga of the Volsungs is described, in Morris's introductory verses, as "the best tale pity ever wrought", and, in the Translators' Preface, "the Great Story of the North, which should be to all our race what the Tale of Troy was to Greeks".

An original poem which may belong to this period is entitled, rather pretentiously, *Of the Wooing of Hallbiorn the Strong, A story from the Landsettling Book of Iceland*

<sup>11</sup> *Letters*, 31.

<sup>12</sup> *Works*, V xvi.

*Chapter XXX*, and it is indeed based, very freely, on the grim little incident in *Landnámabók* in which Hallbjörn kills his wife Hallgerd and is himself slain by Snæbjörn. May Morris implies that this is a poem of the seventies (it was not published until *Poems by the Way* in 1891),<sup>13</sup> but the treatment of the story is quite unlike Norse narrative; it is a kind of medieval ballad, quite pleasing, but very “literary” and romantic. I see nothing in it to suggest that it is later than the meeting with Magnússon. The title is impressive, but it so happens that the story is told in one of Blackwell’s supplementary chapters in the 1847 edition of Mallet, with a footnote giving a reference to *Landnámabók*, ii, 30. Morris can hardly have missed it, especially as the moral which Blackwell draws from it (that ladies who are allowed too much liberty are apt “to let their passions get the upper hand, and lead them into scrapes which they sometimes have occasion to repent of”) would have annoyed him very much.

Whatever date we may assign to *Hallbiorn*, there can be no doubt that Morris had by 1870 surrendered himself whole-heartedly, with the passionate intensity which characterised all his enthusiasms, to the spell of Old Norse literature. And then, in 1871, came the supreme experience: the first of his two visits to Iceland, with Magnússon and two other friends. His *Journals*<sup>14</sup> convey something of the deep emotion with which he found himself, at last, in the land of Njál and Grettir. The expeditions had their lighter moments, but to Morris they were essentially pilgrimages to a holy land. This was his spiritual home: “the touch of Iceland”, as Mackail puts it,<sup>15</sup> “was something that stirred him with an almost sacramental solemnity”; or, as Morris himself wrote after the second visit in 1873, “it was no idle whim that drew me there, but a true instinct for what I needed”.<sup>16</sup> For

<sup>13</sup> *Works*, IX.

<sup>14</sup> *Works*, VIII.

<sup>15</sup> Mackail, *op. cit.*, I 304.

<sup>16</sup> *Letters*, 59.

the rest of his life this "terrible and tragic, but beautiful land"<sup>17</sup> was never far from his thoughts. The memory occurs and reoccurs in his letters and in his conversation, in his lectures and articles on politics and art, and in the long prose romances which were the solace of his last years.

The study of Old Norse literature continued after the visits to Iceland. In 1875 came the publication of *Three Northern Love Stories*, containing *Gunnlaug*, *Frithiof*, *Viglund*, and a number of short tales. Other translations made in the seventies were not published until twenty years later, but Morris had been occupied for some time with an original poem which was to re-tell, for his own age, the great story of the Volsungs. He had been tempted by the idea as early as December 1869, when he had written to Professor Charles Eliot Norton: "I had it in my head to write an epic of it, but though I still hanker after it, I see clearly it would be foolish, for no verse could render the best parts of it, and it would only be a flatter and tamer version of a thing already existing".<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, some five years later he set to work, encouraged by Magnússon, and *Sigurd the Volsung* was published towards the end of 1876. Morris omits the Jormunrek-Swanhild episode, but, this apart, attempts a comprehensive treatment of the whole Nibelung legend, drawing on the *Edda* poems as well as the *Volsunga Saga* (though he abandons his Old Norse authorities at the end of his poem in favour of the *Nibelungenlied* version of the death of Sigurd's murderers).

To Morris these legends were in a very real sense a part of English tradition; he was much influenced by writers like Laing and the Howitts, who (as some contemporary reviewers complained) stressed the importance of our Scandinavian heritage by belittling our Anglo-Saxon ancestors. Morris felt it his duty, therefore, to restore this lost heritage to his English readers. Yet the atmosphere which he evokes in *Sigurd* is not that of the

<sup>17</sup> *Letters*, 58.

<sup>18</sup> *Letters*, 32.

sagas, or even of Norse epic verse; it reminds one rather of Old English epic, of *Beowulf*. There is the same leisured dignity of narrative; the poet is always ready to pause for long descriptions or to dwell on the moral implications of his theme; it is the long paragraph which predominates, not the pregnant, strophic arrangement of Old Norse verse. As in *Beowulf*, the emphasis is on the stately splendour of the Germanic court; the lofty halls adorned with gold, the precious swords and ancient coats of mail which gleam on the warriors as they unlock their store of words in formal discourse. The Morris translation of *Beowulf* is almost unreadable, but it is perhaps to be regretted that Morris did not attempt a version of *Beowulf* on the lines of *Sigurd the Volsung*. Be that as it may, this vast poem is something unique in nineteenth-century literature; Morris has perhaps attempted the impossible, but it is difficult to name any other poet of his day who could have equalled his achievement.

After 1876 Morris became increasingly involved in political controversy, and though he continued to read and translate Old Norse nothing was published for the next fifteen years. Then in 1890 came the collaboration with the publisher Bernard Quaritch which resulted in the *Saga Library*. In July of that year Morris writes: "I have undertaken to get out some of the sagas I have lying about. Quaritch is exceedingly anxious to get hold of me, and received with enthusiasm a proposal to publish a *Saga Library*".<sup>19</sup>

Fifteen volumes were originally planned, but only six appeared: Volume I (*Howard the Halt, The Banded Men, Hen-Thorir*) in 1891, Volume II (*Eredwellers*) in 1892, Volume III (*Heimskringla Part I*) in 1893, Volume IV (*Heimskringla Part II*) in 1894, and Volume V (*Heimskringla Part III*) in 1895. Volume VI (notes, indexes, genealogical tables, etc.) was the work of Magnússon, and did not appear until 1905.

<sup>19</sup> Mackail, *op. cit.*, II 260.

The *Saga Library* represents the work of Morris and Magnússon over several years. The *Eredwellers* must have been finished before April 1871, since Mackail tells us that Morris had made an illuminated copy of it by that date.<sup>20</sup> *Howard the Halt*, *The Banded Men*, and *Hen-Thorir* belong to the early seventies, for Morris made a copy of them in 1874, when he was working at calligraphy and illumination.<sup>21</sup> As for *Heimskringla*, we know from Morris's letters that he was working on it in 1873,<sup>22</sup> and his daughter May tells us that "a painted book of the first fifty-five chapters" was one of his holiday tasks for that year.<sup>23</sup> (*Ynglinga Saga*, in the *Saga Library* translation, actually contains fifty-five chapters.) The translation clearly continued for several years, for May Morris, elsewhere, quotes short passages from *St Olaf's Saga* (*Saga Library* Vol. IV) and from the *Saga of Harald Harðráði* (*Saga Library* Vol. V), and says they are translations of the "late eighties".<sup>24</sup> So it would seem that the actual translations were more or less complete when *The Saga Library* was planned, and only needed to be carefully revised and prepared for the press.

These six handsome volumes are a pleasure to read and to handle. They are admirably printed, as one would expect, and the critical apparatus and explanatory notes, nearly all the work of Magnússon, are almost frighteningly elaborate and detailed. There could be no more fitting memorial to the twenty years of close collaboration between the two men; every volume expresses their sense of wonder and delight in the great stories of the north; to Morris and Magnússon the sagas are not "texts" but human documents, as real and as immediate as to-day's newspaper. The serenity is broken only by the bitterness of Magnússon's references to Vigfusson and Powell: Magnússon could never forgive those remarks in

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, I 286.

<sup>21</sup> Preface to *Works*, IX.

<sup>22</sup> *Letters*, 53.

<sup>23</sup> May Morris, *op. cit.*, I 454.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, I 455-6.

the *Corpus Poeticum Boreale* about “the affectation of archaism”, “pseudo-Middle English”, and “specious nullity of false phrasing”.<sup>25</sup>

Many other critics have commented unfavourably on Morris's style;<sup>26</sup> it has been dismissed, often unread, as “Wardour Street English”; fashions in translation have changed, and Morris has suffered accordingly. Yet the archaisms of Morris's early poems are not particularly remarkable; they are to be found in all romantic poets. Those who condemn Morris as one who writ no English are judging him, whether they realise it or not, by the later prose romances, where we do find a special language, a vocabulary and syntax peculiar to Morris. This highly individual style may not be to everyone's taste, but it is something far removed from the “tushery” of second-rate historical fiction; it is a deliberate creation; it is in all essentials the style evolved by Morris and Magnússon in their translations from Old Norse. We find it, fully grown, in the first translation, *Gunnlaug*, and in all the sagas which follow. It is not really true to say, as C. S. Lewis does, that “Morris invented for his poems and perfected in his prose romances a language which has never at any period been spoken in England”; it is not found in *The Defence of Guenevere* or in the *Earthly Paradise*, or even in *Sigurd the Volsung*. In these poems we have only what may be called the usual, conventional archaisms: betide, brand, dight, eld, erewhile, whiles, wot, and the like. The language perfected in the prose romances, with its strange words and phrases — almost all of them disguised Norse words and idioms — is taken over bodily from the saga translations; it is a blend of Old Norse and the romantic archaisms taken from Chaucer, Malory, and Spenser, the common property of all poets. It is clear that Morris's joy in Norse literature extended to the very words and idioms of his originals, and he felt it his

<sup>25</sup> G. Vigfusson and F. York Powell, *Corpus Poeticum Boreale* (1883), I cxv.

<sup>26</sup> See Karl Litzenberg, ‘The Diction of William Morris’, in *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 53 (1937).

duty to give something of this pleasure to his readers. This may be enthusiasm taken to excess, but the results are often vigorous and stimulating, particularly in the rendering of gnomic utterances and proverbs. Of course he goes too far; he became so skilful at this transmuting process that he sometimes forgets his readers and becomes unintelligible.

But why did he adopt this new and peculiar style? I suspect that it grew out of those first attempts at verbal translation which Magnússon describes in his preface to the sixth volume of the *Saga Library*. Morris was impatient to get at the story:

“Off he started, translated, blundered, laughed; but still, he saw through it all with an intuition that fairly took me aback. Henceforth no time must be wasted on reading out the original. He must have the story as quickly as possible. The dialect of our translation was not the Queen’s English, but it was helpful towards penetrating into the thought of the old language. Thus, to give an example, *leiðtogi*, a guide, became load-tugger (load = way, in load-star, load-stone; *togi* from *toga* to tug (on), one who leads on with a rope); *kvænask* (*kvæna sik* from *kván* = queen, woman) to bequeen one’s self = to take a wife, etc. That such a method of acquiring the language should be a constant source of merriment, goes without saying . . . .”

Now Morris was passionately fond of old words, and particularly resented the Romance elements which had driven out so many of our native, Germanic words, (he deplored the fact that we had not preserved our language “as the Germans have theirs”),<sup>27</sup> and it may well be that he saw in this rough, literal method of translating the solution to the difficult problem of rendering the saga into modern English. Magnússon’s comment is interesting in this connection:<sup>28</sup>

“From the beginning Morris was strongly impressed by the simple dignity of style of the Icelandic sagas. There must be living many of his friends who heard him frequently denounce it as something intolerable to have read an Icelandic saga rendered into the dominant literary dialect of the day — the English newspaper language . . . this dignity of style cannot be reached by the Romance element in English. If it is to be

<sup>27</sup> *Works*, XVIII xviii.

<sup>28</sup> *Works*, VII xvii.

reached at all — and then only approximately — it must be by means of the Teutonic element in our speech — the nearest akin to the Icelandic . . . Morris's saga style is his own, the result of an endeavour by a scholar and a man of genius to bring about such harmony between the Teutonic element in English and the language of the Icelandic saga as the not very abundant means at his command would allow''.

It is curiously ironic. This style was Morris's most treasured offering at the shrine of Old Norse literature, yet his translations are now more likely to repel the modern reader who tries to use them as a substitute for the originals. Yet they can give much pleasure to those who do read Old Norse, and they are much more readable than brief quotations would indicate. It is only fair to him to remember the kind of English he was reacting against: late-Victorian Latinized prose — "the English of our drawing rooms and leading articles . . . a wretched mongrel jargon that can scarcely be called English, or indeed language . . . the language of critics and 'superior persons' . . . ." <sup>29</sup>

It is worth noting, at this point, that Morris was very insistent that Magnússon should not be robbed of his share of the credit for these translations. In a letter to the *Athenaeum* in 1879 he writes: <sup>30</sup>

"I have noticed that Mr Vigfusson, in his recently published Prolegomena to the Sturlunga Saga, speaks of me as the sole translator of the English version of the Grettis Saga and the Gunnlaugs Saga Ormstungu, omitting to mention the name of Mr Eiríkr Magnússon, my *collaborateur*. As a matter of fact, when we set about these joint works I had just begun the study of Icelandic under Mr Magnússon's mastership, and my share in the translation was necessarily confined to helping in the search for the fittest English equivalents to the Icelandic words and phrases, to turning the translations of the 'vísur' into some sort of English verse, and to general revision in what might be called matters of taste: the rest of the work, including notes, and all critical remarks, was entirely due to Mr Magnússon's learning and industry . . . Mr Magnússon's responsibility and labour was, therefore, much greater than mine in these works, which if his pleasure in the labour was half as much as mine, it was great indeed''.

<sup>29</sup> *Works*, XXIII 241.

<sup>30</sup> *Letters*, 127.

This would be a fair statement of the situation throughout their long collaboration, though, of course, Morris's knowledge of the language increased steadily. This fact is confirmed when we examine the manuscript of their translation of *St Olaf's Saga*.<sup>31</sup> In this manuscript we can see how Magnússon's learning and industry serve as the raw material for Morris's finished product.

The left-hand pages of the manuscript book are usually left blank, and the right-hand pages contain the translation in Magnússon's neat, flowing hand-writing; Morris's corrections and emendations are written, between the lines or wherever there is room for them, in a bolder, more flamboyant script, usually perfectly readable. At times, though rarely, Magnússon's rendering is erased with such vigour that it is quite undecipherable. Sometimes whole sentences are rewritten, sometimes an individual word is altered, so that Morris's emendations form a continuous commentary on Magnússon's version, turning Magnússon's "unconsidered journalese" (May Morris's unsympathetic phrase) into "a language more worthy of the subject". And it is a remarkably thorough process; it is rare to find two continuous lines without some alteration.

It is clear that Morris is emending with the Old Norse by his side, for when Magnússon accidentally omits three and a half lines Morris, on the opposite blank page, inserts a translation of the missing words. On another blank left page Morris writes "what is *aukvísi* literally?" He notices, too, that Magnússon has used the wrong English word in one of the verses: "Thou didst champion the most valiant king" (*brauzt bág við*); Morris writes: "to champion a man means, I think, to fight *for* him, not *against* him", and translates accordingly: "thou daredst the king most valiant".

<sup>31</sup> Through the kindness of the Librarian of the Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, I was provided with a microfilm of this manuscript. I am also very grateful to Professor G. N. Garmonsway, who directed my attention to it.

A few, a very few, of Morris's emendations are corrections of Magnússon's spelling or grammar. I have noticed only about half a dozen misspelt words, so far, but "ye" and "you" seem to worry Magnússon a little, and he sometimes drops the second person singular in mid-sentence; Morris carefully corrects all these minor lapses.

It is Morris, too, who decides the paragraphing. But the bulk of the emendations are definitely stylistic, designed to bring everything into conformity with the highly individual style Morris thought appropriate.

Some are very slight adjustments, like these, and are of no real importance:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <i>Magnússon</i> King Olaf then sailed west        | <i>Morris</i> Then sailed King Olaf west        |
| <i>Magnússon</i> She was a most high-mettled woman | <i>Morris</i> She was a woman most high-mettled |
| <i>Magnússon</i> in the following spring           | <i>Morris</i> next spring                       |
| <i>Magnússon</i> swiftly                           | <i>Morris</i> speedily.                         |

Then there are many words which Morris obviously considers essential to his style; they are favourite archaisms, many of them found in his earliest works. Magnússon sometimes remembers to use them, but often forgets, and Morris emends. Morris's word is the second of each pair in the following examples:

aware: ware; anything: ought; nothing: nought; much: mickle; when: whenas; whenever: whenso; later: sithence; happened: betid; went: fared; custom: wont; between: betwixt; counsels: redes; fields: acres; wealth: fee; get ready: dight (me); got: gat; (they) thought: were minded; vowed (*or* accepted): yeasaid.

Morris is very fond of "let" with the infinitive, and is always altering Magnússon's less archaic constructions, e.g.:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <i>Magnússon</i> King Olaf had a cut made         | <i>Morris</i> King Olaf let dig a dyke       |
| <i>Magnússon</i> There King Olaf had a wall built | <i>Morris</i> There let King Olaf do a wall. |

Sometimes the emendations replace individual words by English words and expressions more closely akin to Old Norse. Morris's word is again the second of each pair:

quarters: harbour (*herbergi*); message: wordsending (*orðsending*); war: unpeace (*ófriðr*); men and women: carles and queans (*karlar ok konur*); council-chamber: Thing House (*þinghús*); door keepers: doorwards (*durverðir*); funeral: corpse-fare (*líkferð*).

The results of this process are not always fortunate, and there can be no doubt that Magnússon's version is usually the more comprehensible. Morris's close watch on the Norse text has its disadvantages:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <i>Magnússon</i> he kept out spies<br>on his journeys                | <i>Morris</i> he let bear spying on<br>his ways ( <i>bera njósn til fara<br/>hans</i> ) |
| <i>Magnússon</i> There also he<br>had marked out building<br>ground  | <i>Morris</i> There also he let mark<br>tofts ( <i>toptir</i> )                         |
| <i>Magnússon</i> plead this case                                     | <i>Morris</i> to flit this case ( <i>mál<br/>flytja</i> )                               |
| <i>Magnússon</i> The Earl giveth<br>King Olaf his oath               | <i>Morris</i> The earl winneth oath<br>to King Olaf ( <i>vinna eiða</i> )               |
| <i>Magnússon</i> Ragnhild . . .<br>about to give birth to a<br>child | <i>Morris</i> . . . should be lighter of<br>a child ( <i>skyldi léttari verða</i> )     |
| <i>Magnússon</i> what loss of life we<br>have suffered               | <i>Morris</i> what man-scathe we<br>have gotten   |

and then, by analogy, as it were:

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <i>Magnússon</i> baneful to Christ-<br>ian faith | <i>Morris</i> wherein was Christ-<br>scathe ( <i>kristnispell</i> ). |
|--|--|

A particularly unsuccessful example of Morris sacrificing all to preserve a Norse idiom occurs when Magnússon writes: "Stein nowise kept himself tonguetied . . . both in prose and poetry". Morris cannot resist the Norse *sundrlausum orðum ok samföstum*, and alters the manuscript to: "in speech both loose and knitted up". By the time the text appears in print he has gone even further, and we read: "both in speech loose and in speech upknitted".

Magnússon, of course, is perfectly in sympathy with Morris's principles of translation. His own style is fairly straightforward and not unattractive; it is slightly archaic,

and though he is concerned only with producing an intelligible and accurate translation, he often tries to meet Morris halfway, and regularly uses words like “few-spoken” (*fámálugr*), and “a-many”. But it is amusing to find that Morris is not always ready to accept Magnússon’s attempts at morrismisms; Magnússon’s ear was obviously not *quite* attuned. For example, Magnússon writes: “it is a wont of long standing that . . .” which seems to have the genuine ring, but Morris alters it to: “it has long been that . . . .” On another occasion Magnússon produces: “the greater scathe in men” (*mannskaði*), but Morris goes one better with: “the greatest man-scathe”.

We may suspect that Magnússon is tiring at one place — or is it a gesture of protest at a surfeit of archaism? “But the Swedes gainsay this”, he writes, “and call it all gammon (*telja hégóma*) that any men were lost there”. Morris primly emends to: “and reckon it vain that any men were lost there”. Such colloquialisms are very unusual. Magnússon does not often “use a word too homely . . . which brings it down a little” (this is Morris’s comment on Dasent’s *Njáls Saga*),<sup>32</sup> and I have noticed only two other examples, both duly amended by Morris: “Earl Hakon, who has now bolted out of the land” (emended to “fled”), and: “she takes this with exceeding fuss” (emended to “mickle eagerness”).

And so the process continues, page after page, until Magnússon’s unambitious but very creditable prose is transformed — and in some places contorted — into the characteristic, highly criticised dialect of William Morris.

The verses of the Saga need special mention. Morris, like most of us, found them extremely difficult. “As to the Vísur”, he writes to Magnússon, “I will do my best, only I must say I look forward to the job with little short of anguish, for truly sometimes they are really *un-translatable* . . . I agree we ought to make the vísur

<sup>32</sup> *Letters*, 84.

literal, if we *can*, but sometimes I can't keep it verse at the same time. However, with your help I may manage".<sup>33</sup>

The solution meant more work for Magnússon. Whenever he comes to a verse he writes out the Norse text, in prose order, and, underneath, a literal word-by-word translation, with, very occasionally, an explanatory note. When Morris reaches the verse he writes out his own metrical translation on one of the blank pages of the manuscript, with surprisingly little correction or emendation, and erases Magnússon's version. All Morris's verses are numbered as he translates them, perhaps two or three together on the same page, so he writes "Insert A", "Insert B", etc. at the appropriate place in Magnússon's translation, and passes on.

So there is nothing casual about this process. This manuscript is ample proof, if proof were needed, of the devotion of these two remarkable men to the language and literature of Iceland. Morris has been dismissed as a mere dilettante. He was much more than this. He did so many things well that his considerable achievement in this one narrow sphere can easily be overlooked. Without Magnússon, as he freely and publicly admitted, this achievement would have been impossible, but it can hardly be doubted that Morris was the driving force in their collaboration. Between them they introduced to English readers a vast amount of Old Norse prose and verse; Morris, with his reputation as a poet and craftsman, could reach a far wider audience than Magnússon, and in his lectures, and in his private conversations, he strove unceasingly to impart to his contemporaries something of his own feeling for Norse literature — not only because of its intrinsic qualities as pure literature, passionately though he admired those qualities, but because he found in it an attitude to life, a noble courage and steadfastness, which might serve as an example to his own time, and which gave him hope for the future.

<sup>33</sup> May Morris, *op. cit.*, I 459.

## ON TRANSLATION — I

A REVIEW BY IAN R. MAXWELL

EVERY age looks for translations adapted to its own habits of speech; that is, to its own habits of thought. Thus the moderns are well served, and Proust loses little at the hands of Scott Moncrieff; but Homer must be content to know that the *Odyssey* holds its own with other novels in the Penguin series. (What Proust would lose if adapted to the minds of Achilles and Anticleia in a Hades Penguin there is fortunately no need to enquire.)

As for the Icelandic sagas, it is now generally held that they should be turned, as far as possible, into up-to-date English, partly on the (sandy) ground that they were modern to thirteenth-century Icelanders, and partly perhaps because our speech is thought to suit them better than our grandfathers'. So Bayerschmidt implies in the preface to his version of *Njáls saga*:

A new translation seems called for, since Dasent's, though outstanding for its time, bears many earmarks of Victorian style (and prudery) less appropriate for rendering the realistic manner of Icelandic sagas.

There is of course no royal road for translators. They must consider their audience, their purpose, the nature of their original and their medium, not least their own tastes and talents; and each version may shed its own light. Let Lang, Leaf and Myers do their best with the English of Wardour Street, and Samuel Butler retort in the English of Tottenham Court Road. We may profit from both. Yet each method has its own merits and drawbacks; and these are worth weighing, especially in an age when it seems to be pretty generally agreed that only one method is right, or at least that one is definitely wrong.

Professor Schach's readable and handsome version of

*Eyrbyggja saga*<sup>1</sup> may be examined from this point of view. It seems fair to say that on the whole he accepts the principle of translation into modern English; and his work would appear to illustrate some of the difficulties and dangers of the attempt.

Any translator from the sagas may be forgiven some trouble with his English. Even the best leg-roped sentence is apt to gore its neighbours, and to observe strict keeping from first to last is perhaps a dream and folly of expectation. Still, one may fairly be alarmed to read "he did not want to stand for it that they should defile the field" (p. 11), where the brawny rouseabout Stand-for-it and the silver-haired Mr Defile are locked in a construction that owes nothing to nature and everything to dire necessity; or "Thórólf's answer wasn't a whit more conciliatory" (p. 62), where the matey "wasn't", the aged "whit", and the prim "conciliatory" are neatly juxtaposed in a symmetry of discord. When a farmer protests, "In that case we will flatly refuse permission for this search if you mean to initiate and conduct it in illegal fashion" (p. 27), he has clearly missed his vocation — he should have been articulated to an attorney. It is, I repeat, extremely difficult to avoid lapses of this type, but they could well be fewer and smaller. How is it that so many of them are now finding their way into print?

Schach and Hollander reject the Morris-Magnússon tradition, for reasons good as far as they go. It seems to have been Morris's task to give the text its finished form, and (unfortunately) to pepper it with archaisms from his private pot. Would that he had wotted naught of "thenas" and had less of a mind to "withal", and that he had seen something a little ludicrous in saying that Vermund the Slender was "marvellous wholesome of redes" (*Eyrbyggja*, ch. 18). The archaisms are too many, too obtrusive, often too unconvincing; they tend to clog

<sup>1</sup> *Eyrbyggja Saga*. Translated from the Old Icelandic by Paul Schach, Introduction and Verse Translations by Lee M. Hollander. The University of Nebraska Press and The American-Scandinavian Foundation, 1959.

the vigour of the original, and I confess I can seldom read half a dozen lines without being troubled by them. Still, it would be a pity not to see past these striking defects. Morris worked on a close translation (at times, I admit, too close to the words to give the sense) that had been made or checked by an eminent Icelandic scholar; and he tried to make his English imitate the Icelandic. “Then Snorri set forth that the thralls were indeed out of the law on the field of deed” (*þá færði Snorri þat fram, at þrælarnir váru óhelgir á þeim vættvangi; ib. ch. 31*) may suggest to the puzzled reader that he is dealing with a foreign system of law, but a glance at Index III will solve his problem and refer him to the Icelandic word. For Morris and Magnússon did at least plan their work in a generous and scholarly way. They gave copious information, often, as it were, naturalizing an Icelandic term and inviting their readers to learn its meaning by seeing how it was used. For readers of a scholarly bent who do not know Icelandic, this is perhaps the best plan. In its execution we find serious defects; yet the translation is sometimes brilliant (e.g., the interview with Earl Eric in “The Story of Gunnlaug the Worm-tongue”, ch. 7) and often unobtrusively close and vigorous; and it is at any rate the work of a *writer*, who felt the life of words and knew the demands of keeping. We should not ignore the problems Morris faced simply because we cannot altogether accept his solution. Morris is a man to learn from.

Are we not tending now to ditch him and hope for the best? Of course we must put up with a few archaisms — when old gods and warrior kings and fate and fetches come into a story, it would be strange if an occasional “naught”, “thereby”, “behold”, or even “dwelled” did not sneak past our pickets — but we have only to call up our young battalions (“his permanent residence”, “its present site”, “the loss he had sustained”, “revenants”, “as much involved as I”, “whatever the circumstances in which we

kinsmen are placed", "to experience the hostility of", "a reconciliation of the contending parties was brought about immediately") to make the reader feel that he is comfortably back in his own age, with his morning newspaper, his secretary's report, and the pronouncements of his fellow committee-members. The trouble is that all this seems so unlike the Icelandic. You and I may feel quite at home with a phrase like "most of the wood of which it had been constructed" (p. 4), but if the original says "most of the timbers that had been in it" (*flesta viðu, þá er þar höfðu í verit*) should we not resign ourselves to the ruder phrase? Why prefer "the place where the fighting had occurred" (p. 28) to "where they had fought" (*þar sem þeir höfðu barizk*)? Some readers may even think the simple Icelandic the better English: all should wish to gather from the version some notion of the style of the original.

It is of course not impossible, though it grows increasingly difficult, to write modern English without slipping into modern jargon; but, quite apart from this, the dangers of trying to translate sagas into a selection of the language we naturally use about our own affairs are manifold. There are of course good reasons for avoiding, in a thirteenth-century story, anything that bears an obvious twentieth-century stamp; and the common sense of *The King's English* on archaism, negative and positive, still stands. But something more than decorum is at stake here. The standard phrasing that has been made to fit the standard sentiments of our day is almost certain to distort the sentiments of thirteenth-century Icelanders; and a translator — however determined he may be to avoid the "antiquarian language flavoured with English dialecticisms" that Professor Hollander deplors in his Introduction — must begin by breaking down the barrier that his own linguistic habits interpose between him and his text. If he is committed to the current idiom, he will be hard put to it to avoid misrepresentation.

The point may be simply illustrated. Thorstein Thorskabít was “very precocious” (p. 9), a phrase that does in some sense translate *allbráðgörr* but that should be dismissed by reason, if not by taste. We seldom use “precocious” without a hint of ridicule or at least apprehension, and we use it primarily of a premature heightening of the brow (little Johnny in goggles gravelling the dominie) or flowering of the temperament (young master making advances to the housemaid), and not of being beyond one’s years in strength, sense, and character. (Morris’s “very quick of growth” is awkward but nearer the mark.) Again, to say that Ásdís was “vain and showy” (p. 53: *ofláti mikill*) or Thuríd “much given to vain display” (p. 105: *skartskona mikil*) is to dismiss her foibles with summary contempt; but I see no such contempt in the Icelandic words (cf. *Laxdæla*, ch. 20: “þat var göfugt kvánfang; var Gjaflaug væn kona ok ofláti mikill”) and the Elizabethan “brave” seems more apt to express the old attitude to personal display. That Snorri goði was “unforgiving and revengeful” (p. 21) is no doubt true, and might stand for *langrækr ok heiptúðigr* in a list of the man’s sins. But this is rather a list of his qualities as a chieftain (cf. the cool machiavellian appraisal of Hákon the Mighty in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, ch. 50, or the king’s curt judgment on Jón Kuflung in *Sverris saga*, ch. 105); and an antiquarian phrase like “constant in vengeance and mindful of his wrath” would be truer in this respect to the spirit of the words, though in others more fitting for Jehovah than the master of Holyfell. To make *inn mesti ójafnaðarmaðr* “an extremely unjust and overbearing man” (p. 10) is to do no injustice to Thórólf Lamefoot, yet it imports an attitude of shocked reproof that seems absent from the saga phrase. The word “extremely” is the obviously damaging one, and perhaps the more natural a word seems to us the more likely it is to suggest our own attitudes in our own policed society; hence, “a man most unjust and over-

bearing” would be better *because* it has no modern tone. In all these examples, a leaning to the ready modern “equivalent” results in some distortion; and there are other more obvious examples. When Thórólf rates Snorri for following up his case “with so little energy” (p. 64), *our* thought and *our* phrase are simply substituted for the characteristic thought and phrase of the Icelander, *svá lítilmannliga*. The ideas of the original, which should be of interest to any reader and especially to students, are similarly obscured when *kolluðu alla þá hafa fallit óhelga* is rendered “declared that there should be no indemnity for those” (p. 13), or *at þiggja inar sœmiligstu gjafar af höfðingjum* “of receiving such valuable gifts” (p. 66). There is really no reason why the notion of falling “unhallowed” (which recurs in the saga and may be linked with our own common law definition of murder) should be thought untranslatable or uninteresting in a saga like *Eyrbyggja*; and the reduction of *sœmd* to its cash value is a brutal oversimplification, even for a commercial age. But to use by preference expressions that lie on the tip of the twentieth-century tongue is to risk keeping one’s readers in twentieth-century blinkers.

To confuse translation with explanation is a pitfall in the path of a scholar committed to his own age and professionally occupied in making things clear to novices. The addition of explanatory words — “the Dales *District*”, “*the farm Hrísar*”, “*came out to Iceland*” — is deliberate and may sometimes be required; but, each time, the feeling of being in the story and among Icelanders is slightly weakened. One could scarcely justify “because of the hostilities *which ensued*” (p. 1: *fyrir þeim ófriði*) or “on the point of the ness *projecting into the sea*” (p. 6: *á tanganum nessins*); and when we are told that men were “busy sorting out sheep” on a tongue between rivers and that some of Snorri’s men “went there *to help gather and sort the sheep*” (p. 43), a reader who does not know that the words I have italicized correspond to nothing in the

Icelandic may still wonder what they are doing in English. When *um stefnudaga* becomes “at the time legally set for summoning” (p. 23), *seta fjölmenn* “a large body of armed men” (p. 12), *trogsgöðull* a “trough-shaped saddle” (pp. 17-8), *stakkgarður* a “fenced-off haystack” (p. 28), *með oxarhamri* “with the blunt part of his axe” (p. 122), one sees the excellence of the translator’s intention; but things begin to dissolve in definitions — as though one took a small knife with folding blades to sharpen one’s inkless writing instrument — and one begins to long (as perhaps the lovers of “English dialecticisms” did) for words that men might be supposed to have used about the things they saw and handled. Nicknames must be a thorn in any translator’s flesh, and which of us would lightly cast the first stone? Yet how could any two sisters have been actually *called* Aud the Profound and Jórunn the Sagacious, unless perhaps in one of Gilbert’s operas? Bolverk the Rash has a footnote (p. 10) to explain that his nickname was Gadfly-snout and that this may (or possibly may not) denote rashness; but surely the text is the place for the name and the footnote for the dubious explanation? (We should not translate the Iron Duke as “Wellington the Unyielding”, or Triphammer Jack as “John L. of the Ponderous Punch”!) The same curious confusion appears when we are told in the text that Eyjólf was given “the right to determine the indemnity himself” (p. 18) and in the note that injured persons were sometimes given “self-doom”. To name a thing and to expound its nature are, in art, two very different things. Habitual explanation reminds the reader at every turn of his own remoteness from the action and of the proximity of a kindly guide. This is just what one does not feel in the sagas themselves; it weakens the illusion and can sometimes seriously blunt the narrative. Thus, when Thórólf Lamefoot died, “all thought there was something uncanny about his death” (p. 68: *öllum þótti óþokki á andlátí hans*); and, before his hauntings are related, we

read, "it seemed to many that there was something uncanny out of doors as soon as the sun got low" (p. 69: *þótti morgum monnum verra úti, þegar er sólina lægði*). This last is well said; but for any good writer there is a difference between what he elects to say and what he expects us to gather. The saga does not say, on either occasion, that things seemed uncanny — the voice that here breaks in is that of the teacher making things clear to his class. A translator should tell us what his text says, even if he himself sees no advantage in allowing a sense of something "worse" at sundown to usher in the actual revelations.

In general I should plead for a more literal rendering, as close an adherence as possible both to the words and order of the original. The less a translator interferes the better. He may fairly claim to have given the substance of the original when he says that old Thorbjörn, looking out at night, "discovered his son Gunnlaug lying unconscious before the door" (p. 23); but it would be as easy to give the form too, and say that he "found his son Gunnlaug before the door; he was lying there senseless" (*fann hann Gunnlaug, son sinn, fyrir durum; lá hann þar ok var vitlauss*). To me, the saga's way of putting this seems right — try it on an audience — and the translator's an enfeebling summary in which the sense of action is lost; and, even if this tiny example seems trifling, it is of the essence of the saga technique to follow the game, not simply to give the closing scores. But there is no need to argue this. The point is that the reader should know how the saga puts it and judge for himself. Similarly, if the text says *segir* there is no need to make it "retorted" (p. 122), even if this word aptly characterizes the speech; for better or worse, saga-writers generally prefer to avoid this sort of comment — and so distinguish themselves from the authors of novelettes. Thórd's advice to Björn, *þat mun þó vera yðvart ráð, at eigask fátt við ok snúa frá hug sínum, þar sem Þuríðr er*, is translated: "And yet it

would be best for you two not to see each other any more. Try to forget Thuríd, Bjorn” (p. 83). The pathetic finality of “not to see each other any more” seems to me to strike a false note, but I shall not press a matter of opinion. It is surely not matter of opinion that to break up the sentence and introduce a direct personal plea is to misrepresent the tone of Thórd’s advice. “Still, it will be best for you to keep away from each other, and to get your mind off Thuríd” might offend purists and is too blunt, but it seems to me to be nearer the original in spirit as in form.

We may glance at a short speech in chapter 37 that Morris and Schach translate with some instructive differences. Arnkel’s enemies are approaching, and his thralls urge him to run for it.

Arnkel svarar: “Hér kann ek gott ráð til, því at hér skulu gera hvárir, þat er betra þykkir; þit skuluð hlaupa heim ok vekja upp fylgðarmenn mína, ok munu þeir koma skjótt til móts við mik, en hér er vígi gott í stakkgarðinum, ok mun ek heðan verjask, ef þetta eru ófriðarmenn, því at mér þykkir þat betra en renna; mun ek eigi skjótt verða sótt; munu mínir menn koma skjótt til móts við mik, ef þit rekið drengiliga ørendit”.

(Fornrit ed. pp. 100-1).

Arnkel answered: “Good rede can I give thereto, and now shall each of us do what each best liketh. Ye shall run home and wake up my following, and they will come quickly to meet me, but here in the rickyard is a good place to make a stand, and from hence will I defend myself if they come in warlike wise, for that meseems is better than running; nor shall I soon be overcome, and speedily will my men come to me, if ye do your errands in manly wise”.

(Morris).

Arnkel replied: “I have a good plan: let each do what he considers best. You two run home and wake my men, and they will come at once to join me. There is a good vantage ground for defense here in the enclosure, and I can stand them off from here if these men mean to attack me. I consider that better than running away. They won’t get the better of me so quickly, and my men will soon be here if you do well what I told you”.

(Schach).

Poor Morris has much to answer for. “Good rede”, “thereto”, “liketh”, “in . . . wise”, “meseems” — even when one has got used to this sort of thing it is a load for one short speech. The verbal faithfulness of “my following” does not justify it as against Schach’s brisk and natural “my men”; and indeed Schach’s version is often the livelier, with the notable exception of “a good vantage ground for defense here in the enclosure”, where

*vigi* expands into a definition with nothing like the life of Morris's phrase, and *stakkgarðr* fades into a category. But there is another and a deeper difference. On the whole Morris follows the original closely, and with his help one might hope to understand it. Arnkel is handling a ticklish situation with composure. The thralls are good for nothing; one is to perish in a waterfall through sheer panic, the other will forget to summon help; and, since we have just been told that Arnkel worked his thralls day and night, we may suspect mulish resentment behind the forgetfulness. Arnkel knows that he must calm and encourage the pair. His speech is level, easy, persuasively reasonable — the point of *því at* (because) is slightly blunted in Morris's "and now" — but marked by an unobtrusive irony. It is an irony implicit in the situation and realized (with a touch of amused exasperation?) by Arnkel, but it becomes explicit (for us, not for the thralls) in "for that seems to me better than running away" and "if you do your [coward's] business *manfully*". One would have a much better chance of checking this interpretation from Morris's version than from Schach's. Once the speech is broken up and gingered up, it changes its character: the opening phrases become bright suggestions, losing their persuasive roundness and hint of ironic reserve; "I consider that better than running away" becomes smug, uncalled for, a little ridiculous; the point of *drengiliga* is simply missed. This sort of thing will happen naturally — not, of course, inevitably — when a scholar attempts to bring an old story to his contemporaries. It is less likely to happen when an artist attempts to sink himself in the old story and copy it as faithfully as he can, so that his contemporaries may be led back to it. The more humble and literal approach will at least have the merit of keeping his eye fixed on the words of his text, and he may sometimes tell his readers things he had not noticed himself.

A different approach to the problem would of course

raise its own difficulties and expose one to attack from another quarter. Yet the defects I have noted are worth examining, because they are growing common and almost taken for granted; because they are natural hazards in an age when translation into modern English seems to have become an article of faith, without, so far as I can see, very much enquiry into the kind of English that would best suit the sagas; because I find them distracting, and suspect that in half a century's time they may seem as strange as the "antiquarian language flavoured with English dialecticisms" of an earlier generation.

## ON TRANSLATION — II

A COMMENT BY GEORGE JOHNSTON

A translation may be close or not very close, and its vocabulary may be either up-to-date or rather archaic in tone. These seem to be the chief distinctions in kind between translations from the older languages. Ian Maxwell has argued for close translation and a vocabulary with a slightly archaic flavour, in his review, and he has used William Morris's practice as a point of reference. He has shown that Morris kept close to the Icelandic and succeeded, in some passages, in giving the flavour and texture and the sense too of the original in English where the more modern translation had failed. He regrets the heavy mannerisms of Morris's archaic style, but feels that some archaisms are nevertheless a good thing, and that certainly an archaic style in general is likely to be better than an up-to-date style.

These are really separate problems. A translation may be both free and archaic as well as close and archaic, and indeed I was surprised to learn that Morris's translation was so close. But a translation may be also close and modern, and this is the sort I would prefer to make. Of course, Ian Maxwell does not ask for an archaic vocabulary but merely a vocabulary with an archaic flavour. I agree that an up-to-date flavour is not right for the sagas, but I think it is possible to choose words from ordinary English of our time which will not be incongruous, and I would prefer these to words with any touch of quaintness. The events and sentiments of the sagas must be given an appropriate setting, and it is true that this is not one we are likely to be at home with. A word that reminds us of our own city kind of life breaks the setting and takes us out of the story. But on the other hand, their feeling of actuality is perhaps the most important quality of the

sagas, and any hint of quaintness, any suggestion that their events belong in a never-never land helps to weaken this feeling of actuality. This is the most serious complaint that is made about Morris's translations; their world is marvellously consistent, but it is never quite real.

They are very good translations just the same, and their strength lies mainly in the closeness of their rendering of the Icelandic. This is a point on which I agree with Ian Maxwell altogether, and perhaps I would emphasize it even more strongly than he does. Most critics assume that literalness is not a desirable quality in a translation because they think it is dry and unimaginative. Even those who expect a translator to be scholarly hardly ask him to be literal, and most writers prefer to "re-create" their original, and capture its spirit rather than its letter. There are strong arguments to be made on both sides, but I am convinced that close translation — from the Old Icelandic at any rate — will produce a better English text than a free rendering. Literal rendering and free rendering must be understood as relative terms; it is neither desirable nor possible to be absolutely literal, and the translator must always be governed by respect for the English language. Nevertheless, it is surprising how close to the Icelandic English can come without strain, and indeed contemporary English often seems to be given new life by the effort.

I will show what I mean by reference to a translation of the *Gísla saga* which Peter Foote and I have made in collaboration. Ian Maxwell looked over our first complete version, which we had made as a free rendering, and his comments made me realize that a close translation, which I had deliberately avoided, would be better than what we had done. The new and much more literal version that we then made turned out to be livelier, richer in texture, and better English than the free rendering, besides being closer to the Icelandic, both in letter and in spirit.

Close translation, however, is an ideal; it should provide

a working principle and not an unbreakable rule. Few manuscripts of older works are perfect, and where two or three are available it would be absurd not to eke out the best with borrowings from the others if this helps the telling of the story. In this kind of work a difficulty sometimes arises in deciding between the scholar's and the story-teller's conscience. My tendency would be to rely on the scholar's conscience because its criteria are likely to be less personal and whimsical. At the same time one must remember that if the translation is not readable, it might better have been left in the Icelandic. A few passages in our manuscript of the *Gísla saga* seemed rather flat-footed in tone, but these we kept conscientiously because they were integral. This was a case in which the story-teller's preference was likely to be misleading, even from the standpoint of readability.

Some qualities of Old Icelandic prose seem to resist direct translation into current English. The most obvious of these, in the *Gísla saga* especially, is the handling of the tenses, which shift back and forth between the simple present and the simple past apparently on the whim of the writer or scribe, and according to no consistent principle. When they are turned straight into narrative English these tenses at first seem awkward, but an unprejudiced reader will soon recognize their effectiveness. In fact they are familiar in colloquial English, and good yarn spinners and anecdote tellers shift their tenses with exactly this kind of freedom and liveliness. In my opinion the tenses of the Icelandic should be followed as closely as possible; their effect is startling and vivid, the events come before the eye of the reader as they seem to do in life, unpredictably and unceremoniously.

Other Icelandic peculiarities can be turned into English with the same directness. Many translators seem to be embarrassed by the abruptness with which the characters are introduced into the sagas. "There was a man named Thorgeir who was called heathcock; he lived at

Heathcock's steading'' sounds unsophisticated in English, and one is tempted to smooth it out. "A man by the name of Thorgeir, who was called heathcock, lived at Heathcock's steading''. The sense is hardly changed from one passage to the other, but the bite has been lost. English prose makes use of many participles, relatives and adverbial subordinations, and almost seems to apologize for its independent clauses. But narrative prose is made of independent clauses, and the principle of subordination belongs to a different kind of writing in which novels, for instance, are written. When a novelist like Ernest Hemingway writes what is really a fine narrative prose, made up of strings of independent clauses, he can hardly help sounding affected. But the cadences of Old Icelandic prose will translate into a true English narrative which sounds abrupt perhaps, but hardly affected. It seems absurd to me that a translator should attempt to smooth out this abruptness, which is part of the character of the prose, not only in Icelandic but also in English. These are cadences that English might profitably rediscover.

Two versions of the same passage from our translation of the *Gísla saga* will serve as general illustrations. The first is a free rendering, the second follows the Icelandic much more closely. Ian Maxwell first drew our attention to the inadequacy of the free rendering.

1. Gisli stayed with Ingjald over the winter and built a boat for him, and several other things. It was easy to recognize whatever he made because he was much skilfuller than most men at this work. People began to wonder why so many of Ingjald's things were well made when he wasn't good with his hands. Gisli returned every summer to Geirrhjofsfjord.

It was three years since he had dreamt, and the protection that Ingjald gave him was the fullest he had enjoyed. But people were beginning to suspect that he was still alive and not, as had been reported, drowned. They saw that Ingjald now had three well-made boats, and after a while Eyjolf the grey heard rumours that Gisli was staying at Hergilsey, so he sent Helgi out to investigate.

2. Gisli is there over the winter, and he builds a boat for Ingjald, and many other things. And whatever he made was

easy to recognize because he was handier than most men are. Men began to wonder why so many things were well made that Ingjald has; for he was not skilful with his hands. Gisli is always at Geirthjofsfjord over the summer; it goes on so for three years from the time he had dreamt, and this is the best shelter he has had, which Ingjald gives him.

It seems to men, now, that all these things taken together are suspicious, and they begin to think that Gisli must be alive, and have been with Ingjald, and not drowned, as had been said. Men begin to talk about the fact that Ingjald now has three boats, and all well made. These rumours come to the ears of Eyjolf the grey, and it falls to Helgi's lot to set out again, and he comes to Hergilsey.

Nothing will be proved by these two passages, and tastes will differ over the second, but to me the contrast is clear between the ordinariness of the first and the restless vitality of the second, in which the narrative seems to be hunting for its course, and dropping the scent and picking it up again. I think the wandering of the tenses contributes to this effect.

Problems of vocabulary are more likely to arise in close translation than in a free rendering, but they are a separate kind of problem, in my opinion. Ian Maxwell has said that he prefers a slightly archaic vocabulary, and my preference, like his, is for a tone that is not noticeably up-to-date. The events and sentiments of the saga world are not, as I have said, ours, and they sound out of place in our idiom. This is especially true in the dialogue. Here the translator is under strong temptation to use familiar colloquial expressions to represent the lively familiarity of the original; but such liveliness is dearly bought, at the cost of incongruity. Nevertheless, I think a twentieth-century translator is unlikely to use an even slightly archaic vocabulary with success. The words will not sound as though he has really said them. An exception must be made of technical words which have no modern equivalent.

It may be that I have underestimated vocabulary problems, but I am not inclined to be a hunter for the *mot juste*. Some words do fit certain special contexts better

than others, and a writer must hunt for them, but a word that has taken much finding is likely to be self-conscious. In prose — and in poetry too, I think — a word should know its place. I would rather see a commonplace word, in all but a very few contexts, than a self-conscious one.

The most satisfactory answer lies again, I think, in close translation. The vocabulary of the sagas is not extensive, and most of its words can be represented by English words in current use. In the *Gísla saga* we relied on the Icelandic word order, which we followed as closely as we thought English would allow, to give a special environment to the story — a somewhat outlandish and yet not archaic or romantic environment — in which the events would not seem incongruous, and we drew our vocabulary from our conversational word stock. Much trial and rewriting led us to this principle and it is, I think, a simple and good one.

The “accent” of the translation is another aspect of its vocabulary that has to be considered in modern English. Ian Maxwell was conscious of it, though he did not mention it specifically. The differences between English, American and Australian usage, to name the three most obvious, are not many, nor even very significant, but readers are touchy about them. No writer should inhibit himself on account of his readers’ touchiness, but he can avoid many obvious expressions without feeling much hampered. Some words, however, are stubborn. *Viðr* is an example: this would be called lumber in America, and the English word timber would not do instead, because it would mean standing trees. But lumber would be either comical or misleading to an English reader. Our solution, “dressed timber” has the shamefaced look of a compromise. Perhaps a translation should decide on one usage — English *or* American *or* Australian — and stay with it.

Latin words raise a similar difficulty. They are so much a part of our everyday talk that they can hardly be left

out of a piece of writing without making their absence felt. Yet they do not belong in the saga world; they are at two removes from what they stand for, whereas the saga words sound like life itself. And they are lighter in weight than English words or old borrowings, and their accent is not reliable. Schach and Hollander's *Eyrbyggja saga* and Magnússon and Pálsson's new translation of the *Njáls saga* both use Latin words freely, but I would rather avoid them, or at any rate keep their numbers down, in order to make the translation as close as possible. However, it would be absurd to pretend that Latin words do not belong in literary English; they have their place even in translation of the Icelandic verses, but they need not be allowed to presume on it.

The verses present problems of their own. Ian Maxwell has said nothing about them, and every translation I have seen has followed its own principle in dealing with them. The *dróttkvætt* stanza is such a demanding and artificial one that most writers can see little justification for following it in English, except loosely. However, even a literal prose translation has to straighten out the syntax of the original and provide footnotes for the kennings, and once one has decided to make the translation in verse the temptation arises to explore the difficulties as far as possible. In the *Gísla saga* I had the writing of the verses, and I decided to keep to the Icelandic conventions — the alliteration, the pattern of three staves per line with an unstressed syllable at the end, the *skothendings* and the *aðalhendings* and as many of the kennings as we could fit into the sense. I was anxious to make the literal meaning clear, so I had to straighten out the syntax, and because of the importance of the small grammatical words in English I was more often than not unable to keep the number of syllables down to six. My verses are only fairly near to the Icelandic, but they are a good deal nearer than I expected when I started out, and I think they could be brought, with practice, nearer yet. And I

think they are worth the considerable effort. The closer they come to the strict Icelandic form, and the more fully they manage to include the kennings, the better English poetry they turn out to be. And the kennings are more intelligible in this strict form than in the freer forms, or in the literal prose translations.

These verses are frankly contrived, and their artificiality in contrast with the apparent artlessness of the prose, gives an effect which I have not seen elsewhere than in the sagas. The poems are centres of emotion in the stream of events, made intense by the very strictness of the formal limitations. This justifies, I think, the concentration of effort that they require.<sup>1</sup>

The one quality that no translation or any other piece of writing can do without is life, obviously, because without this it will not be read. Where is its life to come from? Some is bound to come through from the Icelandic, which is full of energy, but care and conscientiousness may stifle it as surely as bright, up-to-date language may falsify it. Ian Maxwell has given the answer to this too: he asks for an artist who will attempt to sink himself in the old story and copy it as faithfully as he can. "Sink" is the important word: my ideal translator is humble before scholarship and hopes that he may be an artist. The liveliness of his writing comes from the energy he has put into it, and the pleasure he has taken in doing it. Close translation requires patience and much hard work, both of which are likely to generate life. It also imposes

<sup>1</sup> It may be interesting to see two of my versions of the same verse, as an illustration of my views on their translation.

Earlier version.

My shield to the screaming  
Swords stood and warded,  
The poet's protector  
Played with the blade points;  
Courage came to me:  
There sang the loud clangour  
Of battle before I was  
Dumbed by their numbers.

Later version.

My shield fenced my skald's life,  
The sounding blades found my  
Wooden bastion wide-hard  
Toward them, loud sword points;  
Metal dinned on meeting;  
Much their power touched me,  
Quelled me, though my called-for  
Courage faced their murder.

(The verse is no. 33 in *Gísla saga* in *Vestfirðinga sögur* (Íslensk Fornrit VI, 1943), 105-6.)

anonymity, which is an especially valuable quality. In Morris's translation, the faithfulness to the original is what holds the reader; the idiosyncrasies are what put him off and take away his attention. Morris's sort of individuality, which calls for eccentricities of style, belonged to the nineteenth century. Most of the saga writers were anonymous, and the translator will want to render as closely as possible the common, manly qualities of their style. I am convinced that the vocabulary for this can be found in twentieth-century English, and as an example, I will give the *New English Bible*, which is deliberately modern, and shows the life and anonymity that I have been talking about.



# ON THE FRAGMENTARY TEXT CONCERNING ST THOMAS BECKET IN STOCK. PERG. FOL. NR. 2

By P. G. FOOTE\*

## I *Introduction*

The chief extant Norwegian and Icelandic sources concerning St Thomas Becket are these:

(1) A Norwegian translation of the *Quadrilogus prior*. The Latin work was produced by a conflation of material from the lives by John of Salisbury, Alan of Tewkesbury, Herbert of Bosham and William of Canterbury and from the *Passio* by Benedict of Peterborough. It was finished just before 1200; the Norwegian translation probably belongs to the second half of the thirteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

(2) An Icelandic recension of the *Vita* and *Gesta* post martyrimum preserved in the codex called *Tómasskinna*, written c. 1400. Some fragments are extant from other

\* I wish to express my gratitude to Mrs J. Turville-Petre, Oxford, Dr E. F. Halvorsen, Oslo, and Dr V. P. Underwood and Mr A. G. Watson, both of University College London. They have readily given the advice and information I sought from them.

<sup>1</sup> The Norwegian and Latin texts of the *Quadrilogus* are printed by C. R. Unger, *Thomas saga erkibyskups* (1869), 1-292. The Latin text is in J. C. Robertson, *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket* (Rolls Series, 1875-85), IV 266-430. (This collection is henceforth referred to as *Materials*.) Unger dates the *Quadrilogus* translation to the latter half of the thirteenth century, probably near its close (*op. cit.* III). Others have suggested that it belongs with the literary work done at the instigation of King Hákon Magnússon (reigned 1299-1319), see e.g. Finnur Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske Litteraturs Historie* (1920-24), II 969, F. Paasche, *Norges og Islands Litteratur* (ny utg. ved Anne Holtsmark, 1957), 488; Paul Lehmann, *Skandinaviens Anteil an der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters II* (Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akad. der Wissenschaften, Phil.-hist. Abt. 1937, Heft 7), 81, says the translation was done "unter der Leitung Arnis von Bergen" (bishop 1305-14), but this is to read altogether too much out of the fact that a *Tómas saga* was in Bishop Árni's library. That Unger's vaguer and somewhat earlier dating is preferable is shown by the fact that the *Quadrilogus* translation was used in the recension of *Tómas saga* followed in a collection of Mary-miracles made in all probability before 1300 (see note 16), and that the manuscript in which it is extant is dated c. 1300 and is certainly not the original, see V. Gödel, *Katalog öfver Kongl. Bibliotekets fornisländska och fornnorska Handskrifter* (1897-1900), 58, Kr. Kålund, *Palæografisk Atlas* (1905), no. 43. Professor Seip appears to regard c. 1300 as the *terminus ante quem* for its production, see *Palæografi* (Nordisk Kultur XXVIII:B, 1954), 66.

manuscripts that contained the same recension. The recension is referred to as T.<sup>2</sup>

(3) Two sets of fragments containing parts of an Icelandic recension, or recensions, different from T.<sup>3</sup> The first set (= D) are from a text of the Vita, remnants of four leaves from a codex written at the beginning of the fourteenth century now preserved as no. 67 a-d in the Riksarkiv, Oslo.<sup>4</sup> The second set (= E) are from a text of the Gesta post martyrium. They are found in AM 234

<sup>2</sup> T is edited by Unger, *op. cit.* 295-504, with the fragments, 519-27; and largely from this edition by Eiríkr Magnússon, *Thómas saga erkibyskups* (Rolls Series, 1875-83), I (the Vita), II 2-240 (the Gesta post martyrium), 245-61 (fragments). References here are only to the latter edition, distinguished as EM I-II. The most recent description of the codex *Tómasskina* (Gl. kgl. sml. 1008 fol.), correcting in several points the information given by Eiríkr Magnússon, is in O. A. Johnsen and Jón Helgason, *Den store Saga om Olav den hellige* (1941), 1034-42.

<sup>3</sup> Printed Unger, *op. cit.* 527-44, as fragments F and G, EM II 261-84, as fragments D and E. The date given for D is from Unger, *op. cit.* 527, followed by D. A. Seip, *Palæografi*, 128.

<sup>4</sup> Eiríkr Magnússon, EM II 1-lii, distinguished between no. 67a and 67b-d, because he believed that the texts they offer belong to different recensions. The first he considered to be a kind of abstract, the second a proper history where "the narrative assumes its natural breadth". It is hard to agree with this hypothesis. The fragments are in the same hand (cf. plate), and since they have the same provenance in Norway it is reasonable to assume that they come from the same codex. (Fragments 67a-c were used in the binding of accounts from Sunnhordland in 1628, 67d for the same purpose and from the same place in 1629.) There is some difference in presentation between the text on 67a and that on 67b-d, but this is not surprising when we consider that the matter on 67a is descriptive and most of that on 67b-d consists of quotation of speech and letters. 67a is like the other fragments in indubitably containing some material derived from Robert of Cricklade, cf. p. 421, and both in its text and in that on 67b are references to what appear to be otherwise unknown life-time miracles of St Thomas, see EM II 262<sup>9-10</sup>, 264<sup>2-9</sup>. It may be noted here that some other fragments written in the same hand as these from a text of *Tómas saga* are also found in the Riksarkiv as no. 67e. They consist of five snippets from a single leaf containing part of the text of *Jóns saga postola* (printed C. R. Unger, *Postola Sögur* (1874), 443-5, cf. *ibid.* XXII), and three others, again from a single leaf, containing matter from *Stephanus saga* (corresponding to the text Hms. II 303<sup>14-17</sup>, 303<sup>26-32</sup>, 304<sup>2-9</sup>, 304<sup>23-29</sup>, 305<sup>7-10</sup>, 305<sup>16-23</sup>). Two of the fragments in 67e were with material from Sunnhordland, dated 1628 and 1637, and three were with material from Sogn, dated 1628, 1629 and 1633. Although it is believed that the binding of such accounts took place in the districts themselves and not at some centre (see Anne Holtsmark, *Studier i norrøn diktning* (1956), 9, with reference), it seems less likely that this was so in the case of the present fragments. Cf. also on this E. F. Halvorsen, *The Norse Version of the Chanson de Roland* (Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana XIX, 1959), 36 and note 17. The feast-days of the saints whose lives were written by this one scribe are 26 December (Stephen), 27 December (John) and 29 December (Thomas). It seems most likely that these texts were closely associated in a single codex that contained a vernacular legendary, or part of one, arranged as is most usual according to the calendar. There is no hope at arriving at any firm estimate of the length of the D-E recension, but the fact that it existed as part of a legendary at any rate suggests that it was nothing like the size of the T recension.

fol., fols. 79-81. This is a codex from Skálholt, usually dated to c. 1325.<sup>5</sup> On other texts representing originals similar to D and E, see pp. 407-8 and the Appendix.

(4) A fragmentary text in the codex Stock. perg. fol. nr. 2, fols. 1-2ra 29. The codex was written in Iceland c. 1425-45.<sup>6</sup> The two leaves on which the text is preserved represent the second and seventh leaves in the first gathering in the codex. Eiríkr Magnússon characterised this work as a 'homiletic abstract',<sup>7</sup> and it must have been a comparatively short work, since it filled only just over six folios in Stock. 2. He noted that the text was related in some way to that of D,<sup>8</sup> but otherwise little attention has been paid to it.

Of these texts T is undoubtedly the youngest in origin. Its author made use of the *Quadrilogus* translation and an older Icelandic text, or texts, generally equated with the version or versions represented by the fragments D and E; he also knew Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum historiale*.<sup>9</sup> On several occasions he refers to a certain Prior Robert 'af Cretel' as his source.<sup>10</sup> This man was identified by Eiríkr Magnússon as Robert of Cricklade (Crichlade), a twelfth-century prior of the Austin house of St Frideswide's, Oxford. He was known as the author of other works and to him was now attributed an otherwise unknown life of Thomas Becket<sup>11</sup>. Both the identification and the attribution have been generally accepted.

More light was thrown on Robert of Cricklade and his

<sup>5</sup> Guðbrandur Vigfússon, *Biskupa sögur* (1858-78), I xxxv (not much before 1350); C. R. Unger, *Mariu saga* (1871), xi (c. 1325); Kr. Kálund, *Katalog over den Arnamagnæanske Håndskriftsamling* (1888-94), I 194 (first part of the fourteenth century); D. A. Seip, *Palæografi*, 128 (beginning of the fourteenth century).

<sup>6</sup> Printed C. R. Unger, *Heilagra manna sögur* (1877), II 315-20 (abbreviated Hms. hereafter). On the codex, see P. G. Foote, *Early Icelandic Manuscripts in Facsimile* IV (1962), 7-18.

<sup>7</sup> EM II xlix, lvii-lviii.

<sup>8</sup> EM II 1.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Unger, *Thomas saga*, III; EM II xlviii-lviii; Finnur Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske Litteraturs Historie* (1920-24), II 876-7.

<sup>10</sup> EM I 32, 36, 38, 50, II 92-108, 110, 114, cf. 284.

<sup>11</sup> EM II xcii-xciv, followed, with some further information, in *DNB* XLVIII 368-9.

work by E. Walberg,<sup>12</sup> and the fullest details of his life and literary work have recently been collected by A. B. Emden.<sup>13</sup> Walberg was able to show that the Icelandic texts were not the only available source of our knowledge about Robert's life of St Thomas, for this work had also provided the material for an Anglo-Norman poem on the saint, composed by Beneit, a monk of St Albans.<sup>14</sup> He was able to date Robert's work and the poem with some accuracy. The former was probably written in 1173, at any rate soon after 1172 and certainly before 1180. The latter was written between 1183 and 1189, probably in 1184.<sup>15</sup>

Walberg arrived at his conclusions on the source of Beneit's poem (= B) by a comparison between it and the Icelandic texts, D and T. Both he and the later editor of the poem, B. Schlyter, neglected the text in Stock. 2. It is the aim of the present essay to bring this text into the discussion in order to gain a better understanding of its nature as an 'abstract' and to demonstrate its importance for the study of the textual history of the Icelandic work derived from Robert of Cricklade's Latin life.

Before this can be done, it is necessary to clarify the position of the fragments D and E in relation to T and to the Latin texts that are their ultimate source.

<sup>12</sup> E. Walberg, *La tradition hagiographique de saint Thomas Becket avant la fin du XIIe siècle* (1929), 9-33 (also in *Romania* XLIV (1915-17), 407-26).

<sup>13</sup> *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500* (1957-9), I 513-4. Emden thinks that Robert is probably the Robert 'magister de Criklade' who witnessed a charter c. 1125. He was a canon of Cirencester before 1141, when he became prior of St Frideswide's, an office he gave up c. 1174.

<sup>14</sup> Edited by B. Schlyter, *La Vie de Thomas Becket par Beneit* (Etudes romanes de Lund IV, 1941); see pp. 10-12 for a table of correspondences between the poem and the saga.

<sup>15</sup> Walberg, *La tradition hagiographique*, 14, 25, 32-33. The year 1180 given by him as the limit for the composition of the Latin work was the date he knew as the termination of Robert's office as prior. This, he thought, probably meant Robert's death in or about that year. Emden has emended the date for the vacation of office to c. 1174, and if this is thought to coincide approximately with Robert's death, then the composition of his life of Thomas can only be assigned to 1173-4. Cf. note 102.

## II *The relationship between D, E and T*

(i) Are the fragments D and E from the same recension?

The fragments D and E come from different manuscripts and from different kinds of text, the former from a *Vita*, the latter from an account of the *Gesta post martyrium*. Regarded in isolation, there is no way of telling whether they belonged to the same recension or not. Unger noticed, however, that in a version of a Mary miracle (= M) there are passages which parallel material now extant both in the D fragments and in the E fragments, and this furnishes a strong argument in favour of the supposition that they belonged to a single recension.<sup>16</sup> M tells the story of how St Thomas received from the Virgin the gift of pontificalia and thereby silenced his fellow-students, who had taunted him for having no present to show from his sweetheart. This story is followed by a description of St Thomas and an account of his martyrdom and merits. The miracle-story itself is paralleled in T,<sup>17</sup> and the matter that follows the story in M is certainly borrowed from some form of the *Tómas saga* (cf. pp. 426-8 below).

In his discussion of the question, Eiríkr Magnússon decided that the whole of the passage in M, miracle and what follows, was borrowed from a text similar to T.<sup>18</sup> He refers only to T and E, and does not mention D. But that Unger was right in referring to the text of D and E, rather than to the text of T, is proved by the presence in M of this sentence:

Guðs móður Mariam elskaði hann umfram alla [helga] menn ok fal henni á hendi alla sína framferð næst almátkum guði.

This sentence is in D, in the same position as in M, but it

<sup>16</sup> Unger, *Thomas saga*, V. M is printed in C. R. Unger, *Mariu saga* (1871), 198-203, from the miracle-collections denoted *MarS* and *MarE*<sup>1</sup> (see Ole Widding, 'Om de norrøne Marialegender', in *Opuscula* II, 1 (Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana XXV, 1, 1961), 1-9). These related sources are from an original which probably came into being towards the end of the thirteenth century. The text of M is reprinted EM II 284-9.

<sup>17</sup> EM I 20<sup>12</sup>-24<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> EM II clvii-clx.

is not in T.<sup>19</sup> If Unger was thus correct, we must recognise the existence of an Icelandic Vita and Gesta post martyrium in what may be called the D-E recension. On the sources of this recension, cf. pp. 422 ff. below.

Eiríkr Magnússon assumed that the miracle-story in M was itself borrowed from a text of the *Tómas saga*. If his assumption is correct, then the D-E recension must have contained the story, just as T does. He bases his argument on the fact that near the beginning of the text in M comes:

Þegar í æskublómi, *sem fyrr var greint*, setti signaðr Thómas guðs móður Mariam sinn vakran verndarmann ok göfugligan geymara —.

He maintains that the italicised words are unjustified in M, and points to an earlier passage in T, where St Thomas's devotion to the Virgin is spoken of. In T this passage is followed by some remarks introducing the miracle-story that comes in the next chapter.<sup>20</sup> If the miracle-story were also in the D-E recension, it ought also to have contained something corresponding to these earlier words in T, to which Eiríkr Magnússon thought reference was made in the phrase *sem fyrr var greint*.

There are a number of reasons for thinking that Eiríkr Magnússon's view is mistaken. The text in M does not begin like an extract from the saga:

Svá er senniliga skrifat, at einn klerkr [enskr] Thómas at nafni var á ungum aldri til náms í Paris —

and the story could and did exist separately.<sup>21</sup> In D's defective state we cannot tell for certain whether it contained any passage corresponding to the earlier one in T on Thomas's devotion to Mary. It seems unlikely that it did. That passage in T is from John of Salisbury,

<sup>19</sup> M 202<sup>20-22</sup> = D, EM II 262<sup>17-19</sup> (*Guðs móður Mariam dýrkaði hann ok virði umfram alla aðra helga menn ok fal henni á hendi allt sitt ráð næst guði*), cf. T, EM I 28<sup>16</sup>. (Where necessary I have normalised quotations from Icelandic texts.)

<sup>20</sup> See EM I 18<sup>8-24</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> In Icelandic as well as Latin: see the two other texts in Unger, *Martín saga*, 1160-2, containing only the miracle-story, not the material from the saga.

derived through the *Quadrilogus* translation.<sup>22</sup> Now, the sentence beginning *Guðs móður Mariam* —, quoted above from D, seems also to depend ultimately on the influence of this same text from John of Salisbury (see p. 423). Its position in D follows the description of the saint's appearance, which in this recension comes late, after his consecration as archbishop (cf. p. 422), and consequently there is small reason to think that the same passage would have been used earlier as well, or, having been used, would be repeated. There is no indication that the miracle-story itself is very ancient,<sup>23</sup> or that it was in the chief sources of the text in D (cf. pp. 422-30). Indeed, there is a marked difference in style between the miracle-story in M and the material that follows it derived from a text like D-E. Finally, if the author of T made use of a recension like D-E, as he certainly did, then he should have obtained his account of the Mary-miracle from it as well, and the similarity of his account to the separate version of the miracle in M should be obvious. But this is not so, for although the two correspond in the details of the

<sup>22</sup> EM I 18<sup>8-15</sup>, cf. the *Quadrilogus* translation, Unger, *Thomas saga*, 2<sup>6-9</sup>; *Materials* IV 269-70. That T may also depend in part on a text like D is suggested by the phrase they both have: *umfram alla aðra helga menn* (EM II 262<sup>18</sup>, cf. EM I 18<sup>11</sup>), which is not in the *Quadrilogus* translation or the original Latin.

<sup>23</sup> The legendary story, which may have had its origin about the end of the twelfth century, is not thought to have been attached at first to any named person. It appears in this anonymous form in the first version of the Middle High German poem known as *Thomas von Kandelberg*, where the identification of the central character as Thomas of Canterbury is only made as a scribal addition. This poem dates from the latter part of the thirteenth century. One would assume that the connection of the story with Thomas Becket was first made in England. See H.-Fr. Rosenfeld in K. Langosch, *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon* IV (1953), 453-5. In Latin sources the story appears connected with Thomas in the interpolated Book III of the fragmentary *Libri VIII miraculorum* of Caesarius of Heisterbach, see A. Hilka, *Die Wundergeschichten des Caesarius von Heisterbach* (Publikationen der Gesellschaft für Rheinische Geschichtskunde XLIII, 1933-7), III 173. The *Libri VIII* were written 1225-7, but the manuscripts of the interpolated text are from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (Hilka, 13, 6-8). The date of the interpolated text is thus uncertain, but it must have been after the composition of Jacob de Voragine's *Legenda aurea* (1255-66), because legends from this work appear in it (Hilka, 10-11). The middle or third quarter of the thirteenth century seems the likeliest time for the origin of the story in its Thomas Becket form. It could then appear in the Icelandic collection of Mary-miracles towards 1300 and in some German manuscripts of about 1300 (cf. Rosenfeld, *loc. cit.*). Cf. also the study by R. Scholl, *Thomas von Kandelberg* (Form und Geist 7, 1928), 70-78, 81-6.

narrative, they are verbally very different. I should be unwilling to deny that it was beyond the powers of the author of T to re-write his source so thoroughly, but one would think that a text like M would have well suited his stylistic preferences, with at any rate no more than minor alterations.

If the miracle-story was not in the D-E recension, the phrase *sem fyrr var greint* in M remains to be explained. It seems possible to regard it as meaning no more than *sem nú var greint*. The opening lines after the first pair quoted above, *Svá er senniliga skrifat* etc., appear to be an editorial ebullition on the virtue, chastity and love for Mary of St Thomas. The opening lines have the phrase *á ungunum aldri* and these following lines refer to *hinn ungi Thómas*. Then the story proper begins with the above-quoted: *Þegar í æskublómi, sem fyrr var greint* —. The reference back throws emphasis on St Thomas's youth, something which the preceding text has twice mentioned. The word *fyrr* can answer simply to *supra*, and it is a feature of the latinate style to make frequent use of the diplomatic formula 'aforesaid' and so forth.<sup>24</sup> Bearing this in mind, we need not go outside the passage as it stands to find what has occasioned this clause of reference in M.

The story of the miracle was thus not in the D-E recension. This story existed separately in Latin and it was translated and extended by material from the D-E recension to give it the form it has in the miracle-collections in which it is now extant. The author of T obtained it in a different translation from that used in M, or perhaps translated it himself.

(ii) D, T and Robert of Cricklade's Vita.

Walberg has shown that B, the poem by Beneit, and

<sup>24</sup> Cf. J. Fritzner, *Ordbog over det gamle norske Sprog* (1883-96; 1954), s.v., especially the references to Hms. II; B. Berulfsen, *En stilistisk og språklig undersøkelse av brevene fra Håkon Erlingsson* (Bidrag til nordisk filologi IX, 1933), 54-6. There are two examples in the Latin text of the miracle (Hilka, *op. cit.* 173<sup>20, 21</sup>), the one parted from its antecedent by eight, the other by three lines.

the fragment D have two passages in common, and since these passages do not appear in the same form elsewhere, they must be derived from the same source, Robert of Cricklade's life of St Thomas.<sup>25</sup> The first of these, which is also found in T, is an account of St Thomas's experience when Christ Himself promised him the crown of martyrdom. Walberg thought that the differences between D and T, although slight, were enough to permit the conclusion that the two are different translations of the same original. The passages from D and T and the corresponding stanzas from B are as follows:<sup>26</sup>

D [heyrði er]kibyskup rödd, svá mælandi: "Heyrðu Thómas, *mín kirkja man dýrkaz í þínu blóði.*" Hann svaraði, "*Hverr ertu dróttinn?*" Röddin mælti, "*Ek em Jesus Kristus, guðs sonr ok faðir þinn.*" Thómas svaraði, "*Verði svá vel dróttinn at þú dýrkiz í mínu blóði.*" Röddin svaraði, "*At sönnu man mín kirkja dýrkaz í þínu blóði, ok þá er hon tignaz af þér, þá skaltu tignaz af mér.*" Nú eptir þessa ena dásamliga vitran ok [er] af leið mannligr ótti, þá girntiz hann á þetta eitt, er fyrr var sagt. Ok þá gengr ábótinn fram ok segir svá, "*Þetta má þér óumbræðiligr fagnaðr vera, herra, því at þú hefir við mælt sjálfan guð í dag.*" Thómas svaraði, "*Hversu máttu þat vita?*" Ábótinn svaraði, "*Vittu þat at ek heyrða á.*" Thómas bað þá ok bauð at hann skyldi engum manni segja meðan líf hans væri, ok hann gjörði svá.

T kemr yfir hann rödd svá hljóðandi: "Thóma, Thóma, *kirkja mín mun dýrkast í blóði þínu.*" Erkibyskupinn svarar: "*Hverr ertu, Dróttinn?*" Röddin talar: "*Ek er Jesús Kristr, bróðir þinn.*" Sæll Thómas segir: "*Verði svá vel, Dróttinn minn, at kirkja þín dýrkist í blóði mínu!*" Guðs Son mælir þá enn: "*Sannliga man kirkja mín dýrkast í blóði þínu. Enn þá er hon dýrkast af þér, skaltu tignast af mér.*" Af þessi vitran fyldist hinn sæli Thómas með svá háleitum fagnaði, sem eingi má orðum skýra, ok svá mikill

<sup>25</sup> *La tradition hagiographique*, 29-32.

<sup>26</sup> EM II 264<sup>10-28</sup>, I 316<sup>18</sup>-318<sup>18</sup>. There must be some doubt as to which of the readings, *faðir* D 4 and *bróðir* T 4, is better, because for *pere* B 977, other manuscripts of the poem have *frere*, see Schlyter, *La Vie de Thomas Becket*, 114, note *ad loc.*

12 hiti guðligrar ástar gekk þegar at hans hugskoti, at  
 hann *gírvntist þetta fyrirheit* umframm alla luti, at  
 gefa sitt líf fyrir Guðs nafni. Þessu samtíða, sem  
 15 sæll Thómas þiggr birtingina, var ábótinn staðarins  
 innan kirkju svá leyniliga, at erkibyskup vissi eigi.  
 Ábóti sá prófast svá valdr maðr, at hann heyrði alla  
 18 þá orðræðu, sem fyrr var skrifat, millum Græðara  
 vors ok erkibyskups, því *geingr hann framm* af leyni  
 ok víkr at erkibyskupi svá mælandi: “*Þetta má*  
 21 *yðr, herra, óumvæðiligr fagnaðr vera, at þér hafit talað*  
*vit sjálfan Guð.*” Signaðr Thómas svarar: “Hversu  
 kom þat í þína skilning ok kynning?” Ábótinn  
 24 segir: “Svo sanna vissu hefir ek þar af, at ek heyrði  
 öll ykkur orð.” Erkibyskup talar: “Ef svá er, sem  
 þú talar ok sannar, *þá biðjum vér yðr ok bjóðum*, at  
 þenna lut segir þú eingum manni, meðan vér lifum í  
 27 líkam.” Ok þat trúist ábótinn vel fyllt hafa.

B 961 L’abbes l’atendi el mustier,  
 Pres de li suz un piler,  
 Priveement.  
 Une voiz oï od li parler  
 Mes rien ne vit sei aprismer  
 Corporeument.

967 La voiz dist: “Jeo ai escutee  
 Ta oresun ke mult m’agree  
 E atalente.  
 Kar en tun sanc ert glorifíee  
 Tute seynte Iglise e honuree  
 Sanz lunge atente.”

973 Des paroles mult s’esjoist  
 Seint Thomas e tost enquist  
 Ki il esteit.  
 La voiz respundi, si li dist;  
 “Jeo sui tun pere, Jhesu Crist,  
 Ke trestut veit.”

979 Seint Thomas graces l’en rent  
 E puis li dist mult humblement,  
 Cum a seignur:  
 “Ma volenté serreit e mun talent  
 De souffrir la mort benignement  
 Pur vostre amur.”

- 985 Dunc dist Jhesu: "Thomas, Thomas,  
Verreiemment pur moy morras  
En seinte Eglise.  
E quant glorifié en sanc l'avras,  
E tu glorifié de moy serras  
Pur tun servise."
- 991 L'arcevesque out joie grant,  
Unkes en sa vie jur devant  
N'out greynur.  
Des dunc alad le mund perdant  
E sa premesse mult desirant  
Pur Deu amur.
- 997 Idunc s'est l'abbes demustré  
E l'arcevesque ad araisuné,  
Si li dist:  
"Mult poés estre joius e lié,  
Kant buche a buche avez parlé  
Od Jhesu Crist."
- 1003 Dist l'arcevesque: "Vus ke savez?"  
Respund li abbes: "Bien le sacez  
Ke jeo l'oÿ."  
Fait l'arcevesque: "Des ore gardez,  
Tant cum viveray le celez  
Cum ami."
- 1009 E li abbes issi le fist —

The italicised parts of D and T above are enough to show that one text lies behind both. D appears to be superior to T in its arrangement, since it must have agreed with B in introducing the abbot at the outset, not, as in T, in the middle (T 13-17). D also agrees with B against T in D 13-14 (*Tómas svaraði — heyrða á*), and 16 (*ok hann gerði svá*), cf. B 1003-5, 1009, perhaps also in D 4, cf. note 26. T, on the other hand, is certainly more original than D in the inclusion of T 8-10, cf. B 991-3, and in T 12, *girntist þetta fyrirheit*, corresponding to B 995, *E sa premesse mult desirant*, where D 9, *girntiz hann á þetta eitt*, is clearly the result of scribal error. The use of direct

speech T 24-27 also parallels B 1006-8, where D 14-16 has indirect speech, and it may be that the repeated vocative in T 1 is more original, cf. B 985.

From this comparison it may be concluded that the author of T had a text like D (part of the D-E recension), but this immediate source of his was fuller than D and thus nearer the ultimate original. In spite of D's deficiencies, it must still be counted in arrangement and language a faithful representative of the early Icelandic translation of Robert of Cricklade's work. (On parts of D attributable to a source other than Robert, see p. 423.) We learn also that this early translation was in general a plain and literal version of the Latin source, just as Beneit's poem must itself often have been a pretty literal versification of those parts he selected for treatment, and we learn that the author of T was capable of revising both the arrangement and style of the older work he was using.

The closeness of the original Icelandic translation to Robert of Cricklade's Latin is confirmed by the second passage which D and the poem have in common, the end of a speech made by the Earl of Arundel before the Pope.<sup>27</sup> There may be some abridgment in the Icelandic and various modifications in the poem, but there is, for example, a particularly striking parallel between the following:

D            Nú er hvárgi keisarinn yðr at fulltingi, en hinn hvártveggi er vel viljaðr. Ok ef þér týnið vináttu annars hvárs konungsins, þá hugsið ér hvern skaði af má göraz yðr ok heilagri kirkju. Páfanum þokkaðiz enskis þeirra ræða jafnvel sem jarlsins, ok svarar fá ok vel —

B    895    "Des empereurs, bien le sachez,  
          A vostre pru nul nen avez,  
          Ceo peise mei.  
          E si wus des rois nul perdez,

<sup>27</sup> EM II 263<sup>24</sup>-264<sup>2</sup>, B 847-912.

Grant damage en averez,  
Si cum jeo crey.'

901 L'apostoile bien l'escuta,  
De ses paroles s'esmerveila,  
C'est la sume.  
Beau respundi mes poi parlad —

907 De tuz ceus ke vindrent od li,  
Un sul n'i out si bien oÿ,  
Cum il esteit —

In T the Earl makes a different speech. What has happened is that the author of T has rejected his source like D in favour of the *Quadrilogus* text,<sup>28</sup> perhaps because the suggestion of papal *Realpolitik*, apparent in the speech in Robert of Cricklade's work, was not to his taste.

None of the remaining matter in the other D fragments is paralleled in Beneit's poem, but this is doubtless to be explained by the fact that from events of 1165-66 (ending line 1134) Beneit passes rapidly to events of 1169 (line 1153). In two of the intervening stanzas, however, he refers to missives from St Thomas to the king and bishops and others from the Pope, and it is precisely correspondence of this order that takes up most of the other fragments of D. In the Icelandic presentation all these letters are referred to 1165-66,<sup>29</sup> within the period Beneit passes over so rapidly. Some of this matter in D has been used by the author of T, apparently with some rearrangement of the order.

<sup>28</sup> EM I 282 ff.; the Latin text is in Unger, *Thomas saga*, 129-30 (the Norwegian translation of the *Quadrilogus* has lost two quires at this point, cf. Unger, 120, note 2), and *Materials* IV 338-9.

<sup>29</sup> The first letter, not elsewhere extant, is apparently referred to 1165, cf. EM I 322 ff. and II cxx-cxxii. The second letter is from 1165 and the third from either 1165 or later, but both are fitted into events towards the end of 1166, cf. EM I 376, note 15, II cxxix-cxxx, *Materials* V 175, 202 and note b. The fourth letter is from 1169, but both in D and T it appears in an earlier context (1166, 1165), although not in the same place, cf. EM I 332 ff., II cxxv, *Materials* VI 565. It may be noted that the exchange of letters between Thomas and the bishops given EM I 394-410 is something that T has in common with B 1015-98, and there can be no doubt but that this is derived in both from Robert of Cricklade; cf. Schlyter, *La Vie de Thomas Becket*, 11. The same is probably true of these letters also preserved in the D fragments and T. Cf. also the letters referred to in the Appendix.

III *Stock. 2 in relation to the other texts*

As was mentioned above, Eiríkr Magnússon observed that the text in *Stock. 2* was related to that of D, in that these two alone say that St Thomas went himself to fetch the pallium, using closely similar words. Being related to D, *Stock. 2* must also be related to Robert of Cricklade's work. The nature of that relationship can only be established by a collation of its text with that of Beneit's poem and with T, D and E.

(i)(a) Sources of Hms. II 315-318<sup>35</sup>.

The fragmentary text in *Stock. 2* begins with the end of the story of St Thomas's escape from drowning as a young man, Hms. II 315<sup>4-7</sup>. This is not in B, but it is found in T, EM I 30-34, where at 32<sup>20</sup> there is a reference to Robert, "who wrote in Latin the life of St Thomas". Robert is presumably the source for the *Stock. 2* text as well, an assumption supported by a verbal similarity between it and T in a passage where the author of the latter expressly says that he is using Robert's words (cf. Hms. II 315<sup>6</sup> with EM I 34<sup>5</sup>). There has certainly been some abridgment in *Stock. 2*, but it is difficult to assess because of the defective opening and T's stylistic revision.

The following text, Hms. II 315<sup>7-318</sup><sup>35</sup>, tells of Thomas's service with Archbishop Theobald, the king's notice of him, his invitation to court, and his authority and influence as chancellor. His justice, generosity and piety are described, as well as his personal appearance, speech and character: though given to pride and pomp, his piety outweighed all. King Henry was in Normandy when the death of Archbishop Theobald occurred, but he ordered a meeting of prelates and made it known that he wished Thomas to be elected archbishop. This is done after some discussion, Thomas is told and he finally consents; he goes to Canterbury by way of Merton, where he professes as a canon; he is ordained priest and takes charge of the archdiocese. His character changes with

his ordination. Nearly all of this is closely paralleled in Beneit's poem, thus: Hms. II 315<sup>8-14</sup>: B 85-93; 315<sup>15-16</sup>: B 109-112; 315<sup>23-26</sup>: B 121-6; 315<sup>26</sup>-316<sup>1</sup>: B 133, 139-42; 316<sup>1-3</sup>: B 143-4; 316<sup>4-8</sup>: B 136-8, 145-7; 316<sup>8-9</sup>: B 163-5; 316<sup>11-18</sup>: B 175-86; 316<sup>18-20</sup>: B 211-6; 316<sup>30-31</sup>: B 199-200, 203-4; 316<sup>32</sup>: B 205; 317<sup>6</sup>-318<sup>25</sup>: B 223-348; 318<sup>25-27</sup>: B 355-7; 318<sup>27-34</sup>: B 361-90. Naturally, not all the details correspond, but in essentials the two works, each in its own way, must be faithful renderings of Robert's Latin. Sometimes, as was seen with D above, the Icelandic and the Anglo-Norman are surprisingly close. A couple of passages will suffice as illustration (Hms. II 315<sup>23-26</sup>, B 121-6; Hms. II 318<sup>22-24</sup>, B 343-8):

— at hann lét hann vera féhirði sinn ok ræðismann ok sér nágönglan at öllum ráðum um sitt ríki, ok engi maðr var sá í hirð konungsins, er honum væri kærri en Thómas nema kona hans ok börn.

Pus fist de luy sun chancelier,  
De tut le regne cunseiler  
E du tresur.  
Suz ciel n'out home ke plus eust chier  
Fors ses enfanz e sa mulier  
Alienor.

Gjörðu sem Páll postoli, er fyrst herjaði á helga kristni ok hennar vini, en síðan þoldi hann dauða fyrir ástar sakir við guð [honum] til vegs ok dýrðar —

“Fetes si cum seint Pol fist,  
K'a seinte Yglise guerre prist  
En la primur,  
E puis a mort pur li se mist,  
En l'onur de Jhesu Crist,  
Sun seignur. —”

Much of this matter in Stock. 2 reappears in T, although not always in the same order.<sup>30</sup> The discussion of the prelates at the meeting to elect the new archbishop corresponds closely in the two texts, but one need only

<sup>30</sup> cf. e.g. Hms. II 316<sup>35-37</sup>, 14-23, EM I 54<sup>18-56</sup>; Hms. II 317<sup>21-23</sup>, 15-18, 23-26, EM I 74<sup>5-9</sup>, 12-14, 16-21.

compare the text of T answering to the last passage quoted above from Stock. 2 and B to see what great stylistic revision the original may undergo in the new editor's hands. In T it reads (EM I 80<sup>26</sup>-82<sup>3</sup>):

Leið þér til minnis, hversu hann gerði Paulus, hann var fyrri mótstöðumaðr Guðs kristni, enn síðan mestr uppheldismaðr í orði ok eftirdæmi, ok dýrkaði hana at lyktum með sínu banablóði.

(i)(b) Passages not paralleled in B.

So far in Stock. 2 there are three passages of some significance that are not paralleled in B: Hms. II 315<sup>17-22</sup>, 316<sup>20-29</sup>, 316<sup>35</sup>-317<sup>6</sup>. The first of these tells of the king's recognition of Thomas's abilities and his request to the archbishop to allow Thomas to come into his service. This is not in T, so doubt must remain about its provenance, although in all probability it is from Robert of Cricklade, perhaps in abridged form (Hms. II 315<sup>17-18</sup> and B 130-2 may both echo the same original text). The first part of the second passage, Hms. II 316<sup>20-23</sup>, is not paralleled exactly in B, but may be said to be in general agreement with the matter found in B 173-4, 196-8, 208-10, and such a text as that in Stock. 2 was used in T, see EM I 56<sup>5-6</sup>. The second part of this passage is only partially legible in the manuscript, but it concerns Thomas's devotion to God while chancellor and the king's appreciation of his piety. The passage contains the phrase, *vakti mjök á bænum*, something which is repeated in the third passage noted above: *Hverja nótt vakti hann lengi á bænum, stundum í rekkju sinni, en stundum í kirkju úti*. Now, in T (EM I 50-54<sup>15</sup>) there is a general effusion on St Thomas's devotion and chastity, followed by two stories to illustrate them: the second story is taken from the *Quadriologus* translation,<sup>31</sup> but the first tells of how the saint was found by night lying in prayer outside a church and it is specifically referred to Robert's authority. The editor of the Stock. 2 text has

<sup>31</sup> Unger, *Thomas saga*, 8-9; *Materials* IV 273.

here evidently abridged the original text by omitting the anecdote. How far his words may represent Robert's introductory matter and how far they are his own cobbling-stitches cannot be told.

The third passage mentioned here and not paralleled in B concerns St Thomas's character and follows immediately after the description of his person which will be discussed below. The last lines of this passage, *Hverja nótt vakti hann lengi* etc., were quoted above; they are followed by an expanded quotation from a psalm, Hms. II 317<sup>3-6</sup>. This is not found in T. The earlier part of the passage reads thus:

Sæll Thómas var röskr í sóknum, sem sagt er frá hinum helga Sebastiano, trúr í heitum, forsjáll í ráðum, ágætligr í öllu, siðprúðr í búningi, þá er hann fylgdi konungi, þó bar hugprýði hans meir af öllum mönnum í hverju góðu ráði, ok þótt nökkurt bil (?) sýndiz hann drambsmaðr í sinni prýði líkamligri, þá var hann öllum framar í dýrligum hugrenningum ok lítillátr í guðs augliti.

Such a passage as this has been adapted in T. The parallel with St Sebastian is found EM I 54<sup>18-27</sup>, but it would be difficult to recognise the literal kinship of T and Stock. 2 if the former did not contain the words, *trúlyndr í fyrirheiti, forsjáll í ráði* (cf. line 2 in the passage from Stock. 2). The phrase *röskr í sóknum* (line 1 above) may be responsible for the line in T, *hversu röskr maðr hann hefir verit til stríðs*, which occurs in a different passage in combination with other material, based on the *Quadrilogus* translation (EM 56<sup>30-582</sup>).<sup>32</sup> It also seems likely that the last sentence in the passage quoted above (*ok þótt — augliti*) is echoed in the following earlier passage in T, EM I 48<sup>25-29</sup>:

<sup>32</sup> Unger, *Thomas saga*, 10<sup>14</sup>-11<sup>5</sup>; *Materials* IV 274, from Herbert of Bosham. This correspondence with the *Quadrilogus* is ignored by Eiríkr Magnússon, EM I 56, note 10, cf. II ciii, though correctly seen by Unger, *Thomas saga*, IV. Given this passage in the *Quadrilogus*, there is no justification for Eiríkr Magnússon's speculation that the 'book' referred to here in the Icelandic might be Robert of Cricklade's work. There are other signs that he underestimated the influence of the *Quadrilogus* translation on T, as well as the ability of the author of T to rewrite his sources. Cf. note 62.

Ok þótt hann væri líkr metnaðarmönnum í veraldar eftirlæti, var hann þeim harðla ólíkr, er elska þetta líf, því at hann virði aldri at minna góðan mann, þó at fátækr væri, ok aldri vondan at framar, þótt férikr væri.

The last part here (*því at hann virði — férikr væri*) corresponds to a different sentence in Stock. 2, Hms. II 316<sup>13-14</sup>:

ok svá gerði hann góðan mann [eigi] at minna, at fátækr væri, né illan at meira, at auðigr væri.

That this is in its rightful place in Stock. 2 and has been shifted in T is shown by the parallel passage in B 175-80.

After the passage comparing St Thomas and St Sebastian, T has some lines on the archbishop's charity and authority, EM I 54<sup>27</sup>-56<sup>10</sup>. These undoubtedly depend on a text like that in Stock. 2, Hms. II 316<sup>14-23</sup>, where again comparison with B 180-6, 211-6, shows that Stock. 2 must have the original order and doubtless, in the main, the original language.<sup>33</sup>

Here, then, T is seen to have matter which, dispersed and rephrased though it often is, must depend on an older text like that in Stock. 2.<sup>33a</sup> Beneit's poem shows that some of this matter is certainly from Robert of Cricklade and that Stock. 2 is more original than T in its arrangement. We may reasonably conclude that the matter which T and Stock. 2 have in common, but which is not in B (or any other source), is also from Robert. In this, as in the long passage preceding, Stock. 2 must be counted, despite its omissions, our only close

<sup>33</sup> The last part of this passage in T, EM I 56<sup>6-10</sup>, contains a reference to a fief given to Thomas, *er nýir menn kalla barúniam*, which, according to EM II cii-ciii, must be drawn from an unknown source. In B 592 the Earl of Leicester speaks to Thomas and says: *De la barunie ke vus tenez* —. It may thus be that this matter in T is also from Robert of Cricklade.

<sup>33a</sup> A possibility that must be borne in mind is that the Latin text of Robert of Cricklade's work was still extant in Iceland in the fourteenth century and that the author of T had recourse to it, as well as to the older translation derived from it. That translation may have been abridged from the start. This editing and amplifying of an older vernacular text by reference to the Latin original has been postulated, for example, in the case of the *Jóns saga ens helga* (Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Dating the Icelandic Sagas* (1958), 109, note 1), of the *Stephanus saga* version in Stock. 2 (Ole Widding, *Acta Philologica Scandinavica XXI* (1952), 154-5), and of versions of the *Martinus saga* (P. G. Foote, *Early Icelandic Manuscripts in Facsimile IV* (1962), 20).

representative of the original Icelandic translation of Robert's work.

(i)(c) The description of St Thomas: sources of Stock. 2, and D-T.

The description of St Thomas's person, speech and mental powers offers the only opportunity to put the texts of B, Stock. 2, T and D side by side. As will be seen, this comparison is important for an assessment of the nature of the text represented by the fragment D.<sup>34</sup>

B 199 Hum esteit de bele estature,  
Nent trop grant mes a mesure,  
Cum dis einceis.  
Semblant out de bone nature,  
De vileynie n'out unkes cure,  
Tant fu curteis.

205 Facunde out bone de parler  
Pur grant affere en curt mustrer  
Reinablement.

Cf. 217-9 Ceo est la fin, tant fu vaillant,  
Curteis e pruz e bien parlant  
E de tel sens —

Stock. 2 Thómas var heldr hár meðalmaðr at vexti . . .  
kurteiss, svartr á hárslit, heldr lang[nefjaðr],  
3 skýrmæltr ok hvellmæltr ok blíðr í máli, ok nökkut  
stamr stundum, ok mælti hann brosandí nökkut.  
Hvárki fylgdi hans [máli] hlátr né stemi svá at til  
6 lastar þótti, heldr þótti [þat] vera með blíðleik ok  
þokkamóti.

D Erkibyskup Thómas var hárr maðr á vöxt, grann-  
vaxinn ok ljóslitaðr, svarthárr, neflangr, réttleitr,  
3 blíðligr í yfirbragði, hvass í hugviti, inndæll ok  
ástsamligr í allri viðræðu, skorinorðr í formælum ok  
líttat stamr. Hann var svá hvass ok gleggr í

<sup>34</sup> B 199-207, 217-9; Hms. II 316<sup>30-35</sup> (emended by reference to the codex); EM II 262<sup>10-21</sup> (= D, completed by quotation in brackets of text from Unger, *Mariu saga*, 202<sup>16-18</sup>; similar text also in Add. II, 242, see Appendix); EM I 28<sup>9-16</sup>.

6 skiln[ingi at hann greiddi vitrliga vandar spurningar.  
Svá var hann ok minnigr at þat sem hann] heyrði í  
ritningum eða lagadæmum, þat var honum allt  
9 tiltækt þá er hann vildi þat frammi hafa. Guðs  
móður Mariam dýrkaði hann ok virði umfram  
alla aðra helga menn ok fal henni á hendi allt sitt  
12 ráð næst guði. Forsjáll var hann [í] meðferð sinni ok  
ráðagjörð, vandykr í sak . . .

T grannvaxinn maðr ok ljóslitaðr, svartr á hár, neflangr  
ok réttleitr, blíðr í yfirbragði, hvass í hugviti, inndæll  
3 ok ástúðigr í allri viðræðu, skorinorðr í formæli, ok  
stamr nokkut lítt; svá snarpr í grein ok skilning, at  
hann greiddi jafnan vitrliga vandar spurningar; svá  
6 var hann ok furðuliga minnigr, at hvat er hann  
heyrði af ritningum ok lagadómum var honum  
tiltækt á hverri tíð, er hann vildi frammi hafa.

Of the physical description itself there is little to be said. It looks as though Stock. 2 may well be nearer the original in its *heldr hár meðalmaðr at vexti* (cf. B 199-200), and T is evidently based on a text like D. What must be observed, however, is the position of this passage, which differs in the three Icelandic texts. In T it occurs after St Thomas has finished his schooling in France, before he takes service with Archbishop Theobald. In D it occurs at some point much later in the narrative, after he has become archbishop. But in Stock. 2 it appears in essentially the same position as in Beneit's poem. Here Stock. 2 must be nearer the original, while D represents a revision.

The matter in D 5-9, T 4-8, above is not paralleled in Stock. 2 or in B. Mere absence in these two last texts does not of course mean that matter in D could not have been in Robert of Cricklade's work. But here it is evident that the lines in question are related to a passage in John of Salisbury, which forms part of the sentence in which he describes St Thomas's appearance:

tantoque rationis vigebat acumine ut prudenter inauditas **et**  
difficiles solveret quæstiones; adeoque felici gaudebat memoria

ut quæ semel in sententiis aut verbis didicerat, fere quotiens volebat, posset sine difficultate proferre.<sup>35</sup>

One would conclude that the editor of D has not only altered the order of the original text but also conflated that text with material from John of Salisbury.

Such a conclusion is supported by an examination of the remaining lines in D 10-13 in the passage quoted above, and of other parts of the first fragmentary leaf of D. Compare the following with lines 10-13:

- (a) . . . didicit . . . beatam virginem . . . dulcius invocare, et in illam post Christum totam jactare fiduciam.
- (b) Erat quoque providus in consiliis, et in ventilatione causarum diligens —.<sup>36</sup>

And further, e.g.:

- (c) Allar stundir þær sem á milli urðu svefns ok tíða ok líkams nauðsynja, þá sat hann yfir málum manna eða ritningum eða merkiligu hjali —  
Post epulas autem et somnum ubi necessitas poscebat exactum, denuo præter pensum horarum aut negotiis aut scripturis aut honestis colloquiis insistebat —<sup>37</sup>
- (d) Þrætumenn forðaðiz hann ok aldri vildi hann samneyta bannsettum mönnum, ok hvern dæmði hann þann sinn óvin er á móti sneriz heilli kenningu.  
Hæreticos et schismaticos infatigabiliter expugnabat, et nunquam induci potuit, ut excommunicatis communicaret; et quisquis sanæ doctrinæ adversabatur, eum sibi hostem futurum in Christo non dubitabat.<sup>38</sup>
- (e) Mikla stund leggr konungr á at samþykkja Thómas við sik bæði með [. . . ei]gi við hótin né blotnar við blíðmælin.  
Conatus est ergo rex archiepiscopum promissis et blanditiis ad suum inclinare consensum. Sed vir Dei . . . nec blanditiis emolliri potuit, nec minis terri —<sup>39</sup>

<sup>35</sup> *Materials* II 302.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.* 302-3; 307. In connection with the first passage, it is proper to note that B 401-2 has:

Kar il ama Deu parfitement  
E sainte Marie.

But the lines in themselves are trite and they occur in a different context from that under discussion in D.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.* 308.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.* 309.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.* 309.

- (f) — refsing rangynda til grimðar ok ágangs, fjárheimtur kirkna til ágirni, húskarla fjölða til metnaðar, ok þat er hann tók suma hluti frammar en hinir fyrri byskupar, þá mátu þeir til djarftæki. Ok svá mátti at kveða at ecki gjörði hann þess né mælti er eigi þýddi hans óvinir afleiðis ok á vinstra veg —

Zelum justitiæ crudelitatem mentiebantur; quod ecclesiæ procurabat utilitates, avaritiæ attribuebant . . . curialis magnificentia fingeatur elatio . . . quod antecessorum metas in tuendo jure sæpe videbatur excedere, temeritatis arbitrabantur indicium. Nihil jam ab eo vel dici vel fieri poterat, quod non malitia infelicium hominum depravaret —<sup>40</sup>

The correspondences between D and John of Salisbury, not exhausted by the passages quoted here,<sup>41</sup> are too many and too close to permit any conclusion other than that there is a literary connection between them. If this material in D is from John of Salisbury, it must have been drawn from a separate text of his work, not from the *Quadrilogus*, since, although the *Quadrilogus* has most of this material from John, it does not have it all.<sup>42</sup>

It might still be argued that this matter was in Robert of Cricklade's work if a case could be made for believing that Robert had borrowed from John or, alternatively, that John had borrowed from Robert. The latter suggestion can hardly be right. Walberg has shown that John himself adapted material from William of Canterbury and the author of the Anonymous Lambeth life, and some of the material he borrowed from the latter author reappears in the Icelandic.<sup>43</sup> Here it is sometimes evidently in a form closer to John than to the Lambeth

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.* 310.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. EM II 262<sup>32</sup>-263<sup>1</sup>, on Thomas's generosity to the poor, followed by the beginning of a comparison with Archbishop Theobald, with *Materials* II 307; EM 263<sup>3-7</sup> with *Materials* II 309.

<sup>42</sup> Passage (c) and the second passage mentioned in note 41 are not in the *Quadrilogus*. The translation of the passages here that are in the *Quadrilogus* is clearly independent of the Norwegian translation of the whole work.

<sup>43</sup> *La tradition hagiographique*, 173-85. Passages (b) (c) (f) and the two passages mentioned in note 41 are based on matter in the Lambeth text.

text,<sup>44</sup> and if we wished to believe John obtained it from Robert, we should have to assume that Robert first took it from the Lambeth life and then transmitted it to John — a theory which appears to have no other evidence in its support. Chronologically it might have been possible, for the Lambeth life is dated to the end of 1172 or the beginning of 1173, Robert's work to 1173 (probably), and John of Salisbury's to 1173-6. William of Canterbury also wrote in 1173 or the beginning of 1174.<sup>45</sup>

A possible argument in favour of the alternative theory, that Robert himself borrowed from John, might be that the Icelandic in the passages quoted above appears to treat the original so freely that it must indicate that the Latin had already been reworked. I do not see how such an argument can be proved or disproved on its own, but there is certainly plenty of evidence to show that Icelandic and Norwegian authors were capable of free translation, especially in the early period, not to mention stylistic revision in the stages of editing. Against the theory may be adduced the chronology of the texts, as noted above, although the dates are not precise enough to refute it entirely by themselves. There is also the complete absence of this matter comparable with John of Salisbury's text in Beneit's poem and Stock. 2 — despite the unsatisfactory nature of these sources, this must be allowed some weight. Finally, we must recall that D is a fragment of the D-E recension, a text in which there has certainly been a conflation of sources and some rearrangement of the narrative (cf. p. 422), so that there are no *a priori* grounds for expecting D to present a pure text of the Robert of Cricklade translation.

At this point it is desirable to consider the sources of

<sup>44</sup> Cf. e.g. the following with the opening of passage (b), Latin and Icelandic: ... *in propriorum ordinatione providus, in causarum decisione promptus et justus* (*Materials* IV 88). But in one instance the Icelandic has an expression corresponding to the Lambeth text rather than to John, although the whole passage in which it occurs is nearer his text. Cf. the following with the last sentence in (f): *Denique vix aliquid boni visus est agere, quod non in sinistram partem retorserint* (*Materials* IV 92).

<sup>45</sup> Walberg, *La tradition hagiographique*, 133-4.

the text preserved in E, fragments representing the *Gesta post martyrium* as it appeared in the D-E recension. Leaves 2-4 of E present no problem: they contain matter translated and abridged from Benedict's *Miracula*,<sup>46</sup> followed by two miracles derived from Robert of Cricklade's work.<sup>47</sup> Most of this matter re-appears in T.

The sources of the text on the first leaf of E are not so easy to define.<sup>48</sup> The limited range of the material here can be extended by reference to the text of the Mary-miracle concerning St Thomas (M; and cf. Appendix). As was seen above, p. 410, the man who wrote that text made use of a text of the D-E recension, and it is natural to assume that he obtained all his comparatively brief material (other than the miracle story itself) from that one recension. A combination of M and E gives us the following matter: (1) Reflections on the character, qualities and death of St Thomas: M 200<sup>7</sup>-201<sup>7</sup>. This corresponds to the opening of the *Gesta post martyrium* in T, EM II 2-4<sup>14</sup>. Presumably both T and M drew it from the D-E recension.<sup>49</sup> (2) A brief description of

<sup>46</sup> EM II 274<sup>23</sup>-283<sup>28</sup>, *Materials* II 23-31, 56-62.

<sup>47</sup> EM II 283<sup>29</sup>-284<sup>14</sup>, cf. pp. 435-6.

<sup>48</sup> An insoluble problem at present is that of the source of the letters found in E and T. E has two, one from King Louis and one from Count Theobald of Blois, both addressed to the Pope, EM II 272<sup>20</sup>-274<sup>21</sup>, *Materials* VII 428-9, 433-5. They reappear in T (EM II 14, 20), with a letter from Archbishop William of Sens inserted in its proper chronological order between them (EM II 16, *Materials* VII 429-33). Later in T there is a letter from the Pope to Bishop Bartholomew of Exeter (EM II 50, *Materials* VII 534-6), and another from him to the people of England on St Thomas's canonisation (EM II 190, *Materials* VII 547-8). The first three were widely known, and doubtless the fifth also, but the fourth is apparently rare. It would have been chronologically possible for Robert of Cricklade to have included them in his work (the latest of the letters, that on the canonisation, is dated 12 March 1273), but whether he did so must remain pure speculation. It is altogether more likely that the letters extant in D were from Robert, see note 29. It is perhaps impossible to trace a source for the letters. Cf. Canon Robertson's words: "It would seem that small collections of the letters relating to the history of Thomas of Canterbury were very early made; and such collections, varying in extent and in matter according to the opportunities which each scribe enjoyed, are in many cases annexed to the MSS. of the different Lives" (*Materials* V xv).

<sup>49</sup> The reference in M 200<sup>7-8</sup> to Thomas *son Gilliberts ok Moaldar* [sic] appears to depend on the reference at the beginning of the passage in T, EM II 2<sup>6-8</sup>, to the fulfilment of a prophetic vision seen by his mother at the time of his birth. This reference firmly links the *Gesta post martyrium*, here beginning, with the *Vita* itself, since this vision is described at the outset of the latter, EM I 14<sup>12-15</sup>. It is moreover said to be peculiar to the Icelandic

Thomas's death and last words, M 201<sup>7-20</sup>. (3) A description of the saint's dead body,<sup>50</sup> M 201<sup>20-202</sup><sup>10</sup>. (After this comes the personal description, discussed above, pp. 421 ff.) (4) Exhortation to consider the outstanding things in his martyrdom, the cause, the victom's status, the time and the place, M 202<sup>24-203</sup><sup>7</sup> = E, EM II 270<sup>7-14</sup>; lacuna in T. (5) Pious remarks surrounding a precise statement of the year, day and hour of the martyrdom, M 203<sup>8-22</sup> = E, EM II 270<sup>14-27</sup>; lacuna in T. (6) Description of the rifling of the palace by the murderers (the king had the loot returned later); the burial of the archbishop was forbidden, but the monks and clerks made hasty preparations, finding his hairshirt on his body as they made it ready, and laid him in a grave in the church, E, EM 270<sup>28-271</sup><sup>28</sup>. Not in M; lacuna in T, but the author of T knew this text, cf. below. (7) The fear and horror of all the population described, with two anecdotes to illustrate the power of the secular over the church after the martyrdom, E, EM II 271<sup>29-272</sup><sup>18</sup> and T, EM II 6<sup>11-8</sup><sup>18</sup>.

Passages 2 and 3 here are derived from the *Quadrilogus* translation. The former is a brief summary of its text, but shows unmistakable verbal similarities; the latter is a straightforward quotation from it.<sup>51</sup> Passage 1 is almost certainly from the same source, but the Norwegian text is defective at this point, and one can only go by the fact that the passage in M and T appears to be a shortened and simplified version of the chapter *Altior consideratio*

text (EM II xcvi), and the possibility thus exists that it is derived from Robert of Cricklade, who we know from B 25-61 included at least one such vision in his work. There thus need be no difficulty in believing that the reference and the earlier passage referred to were both in the D-E recension.

<sup>50</sup> Something corresponding to passages 2 and 3 might have stood in the lacuna in T (following EM II 6<sup>11</sup>), but the description of the martyrdom at the end of the life proper in T, EM I 542-58, is largely based on the *Quadrilogus* translation, just as these passages in M are.

<sup>51</sup> For passage 2 cf. M 201<sup>9, 10-11, 12-14, 14-15</sup> with Unger, *Thomas saga*, 259<sup>2, 260</sup><sup>2, 4-5, 261</sup><sup>19-20, 262</sup><sup>2-3</sup> (M seems on occasion to have a better text than the *Quadrilogus* manuscript). For passage 3 cf. M 201<sup>20-202</sup><sup>10</sup> with Unger, *Thomas saga*, 272<sup>5-273</sup><sup>2</sup> (*Materials* IV 404-5). The passage in M here is obviously drawn from a longer text because the last four words, M 202<sup>10</sup>, are included in error — they properly belong to the following sentence in the *Quadrilogus* translation.

*martyrii et argumentum*, taken into the *Quadrilogus* from John of Salisbury.<sup>52</sup> Passage 4 appears to some extent as a repetition of passage 1 insofar as it reflects ideas from this same text in John of Salisbury's work; it is much shorter than passage 1 and verbally independent of it.<sup>53</sup>

The source for the opening and close of passage 5 is uncertain. The middle part, on the time of the martyrdom, is in M a closely literal translation of a passage in the *Quadrilogus*, derived there from Benedict's *Passio*.<sup>54</sup> The Norwegian translation is again defective at this point. The corresponding passage in E differs considerably, yet must, it seems, be more original than M. For the date it gives appears to be based on the Gerlandus chronology, a system which gives a figure for the years of our era seven years lower than the normal.<sup>55</sup> This manner of dating is paralleled only in Icelandic texts composed towards the end of the twelfth century and in the earliest decades of the thirteenth.<sup>56</sup> It thus seems likely that in E this passage goes back to the early translation of Robert of Cricklade's work. We must then presume that in the form of the recension used in M that early dating has been replaced by the much less ambiguous text of the *Quadrilogus* translation.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. the Latin text, Unger, *Thomas saga*, 265<sup>20</sup>-266<sup>7</sup>, *Materials* IV 400. The following text in T, EM II 4<sup>14</sup>-6<sup>11</sup> (after which comes the lacuna), is said by Eiríkr Magnússon to come from Herbert of Bosham's *Liber melorum* or some similar record, see EM II cxlviii-ix, 6 note 8. But the last four lines are joined with matter from the *Quadrilogus*, or perhaps direct from John of Salisbury, cf. EM II 6<sup>7-11</sup> with Unger, *Thomas saga*, 266<sup>10-12</sup>, *Materials* IV 400 = II 317. The possibility that the preceding passage, EM II 4<sup>14</sup> onwards, was in Robert of Cricklade cannot be discounted.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. *Materials* II 316<sup>30-32</sup>, 317<sup>4-16</sup>, 317<sup>24-29</sup>, 318<sup>14-28</sup>, IV 400-1.

<sup>54</sup> *Materials* IV 407-8, II 19. In *Thomas saga*, 278, Unger prints the text from M (justifiably correcting the text of *MarS* by reference to *MarE*, see M 203 note 6).

<sup>55</sup> EM II 270<sup>20-22</sup>: *á fjórða ári [hins .vii. tigar] hins .xii. hundraðs fra holligum guðs getnaði. Eptir Dionisium m°. c°. .lxx.*

<sup>56</sup> On Gerland's system see G. Turville-Petre, in *The Anglo-Saxons: Studies . . . presented to Bruce Dickins* (1959), 105, and Jón Jóhannesson, 'Um tímatal Gerlands', *Skírnir* CXXVI (1952), 76-93, whose conclusions, 87 note 2, I follow in the reading given in note 55. In Beneit's poem, 1813-18, there is support for the hypothesis that the year given in E's first statement is counted as beginning 25 December. He dates the martyrdom 1171 years after *la seinte incarnaciun de Jhesu*. The reference both in B and E may also be to a year beginning 25 March (the Annunciation). Cf. also Edward Grim, *Materials* II 439.

Material corresponding to passage 6 is of course to be found in all the lives of the saint, and Beneit's poem shows that Robert of Cricklade's work certainly contained something of the same kind as well.<sup>57</sup> There is however one point in the Icelandic here which suggests that his work is the ultimate source for this passage. Alone amongst the sources, it says that when the murderers came to the king, he was ill pleased *ok lét flest aftr fara þat er þeir höfðu tekit* (EM II 271<sup>2-3</sup>). T has a reference to this in a different position (after passage 7, EM II 8<sup>21-26</sup>):

— þær bækr, er framast fylgja Heinreki gamla, setja þat í fyrstu eftir andlát erkibyskups, at ránfengi þat er honum fluttist af Kantúaría léti hann flest aftr færa. Enn þat segir eingi bók, at hann fénytti sér eigi nokkuð af.

There are things in Beneit's poem and in the Stock. 2 text which show that Robert's book might well be counted, perhaps with William Fitzstephen's, amongst those *er framast fylgja Heinreki gamla*.<sup>58</sup>

A problem which must be considered is that there are parts of this passage which are very close to John of Salisbury's description of the murder.<sup>59</sup> But here there can be no question of a conflation at any stage in the Icelandic transmission, simply because it is inconceivable that these same details were not already in the account we presume to have come from Robert: it would have been a very curious description without them and there was no question of Robert's having better information than John. Robert must have used John's description, but we are still no nearer a certain solution of the problem

<sup>57</sup> B 1777-1812.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Hms. II 319<sup>8</sup>, 23-24: *Heinrikr konungr var bæði vitr maðr ok ríkr; — konungrinn var vitr maðr, ok hugr hans var lengi staðfastur á ást við Thomas*. And B 91-108 (praise of Henry's beneficent power), 1201-6 (the king not to be blamed for wishing his son to be crowned — he did it *mult sagement* to keep the kingdom in peace), 2065-2082 (exhortation to pray for the king). We may note too that Robert dedicated his abridgment of Pliny's *Natural History* to Henry, cf. Walberg, *La tradition hagiographique*, 25. On William Fitzstephen's case, see *Materials* III xiv-xv; differently EM II lxxviii-lxxx; and a synthesis of views in D. C. Douglas and G. W. Greenaway, *English Historical Documents* 1042-1189 (1953), 699.

<sup>59</sup> cf. EM II 270<sup>28-2711</sup>, 271<sup>5-8</sup>, 16-21, 22-26 and *Materials* II 320<sup>28-3218</sup>, 322<sup>5-10</sup>, 321<sup>23-29</sup>, 322<sup>12-16</sup>.

of the source of the passages in D discussed above, because Robert need not have used the *Vita* by John, but simply the letter he wrote in 1171(-2) describing the murder.<sup>60</sup> This letter was used in the Anonymous Lambeth text, by Edward Grim and Benedict of Peterborough, possibly by William of Canterbury, and it is repeated by John himself in his *Vita*.<sup>61</sup> It would have been natural for Robert to use it as well, and there are no chronological difficulties to face, as there are if borrowing from John's *Vita* is assumed. Passage 4 above could then depend on the same use.

Little can be said about passage 7 above. No source is known for it. It too may be from Robert of Cricklade.

In the text of the D-E fragments themselves, then, we find a combination of material from Robert of Cricklade and John of Salisbury, with the inclusion of letters and with the *Gesta* post martyrrium completed by material from Benedict's *Miracula*. We have seen that it is likely that Robert made use of John's description of the murder and following events, and the simplest explanation of the passages in D that are related to John's work would be that they too were already in Robert's work. But the simplest explanation is not always the best and there are difficulties in the way of this one. The more complicated explanation would be that Robert wrote a life of Thomas Becket in which he used John's letter describing the death of the saint. This was translated early into Icelandic. Later, this work was extended by material from John's *Vita* and from Benedict's *Miracula* to give us the D-E recension.<sup>61a</sup> Taking M into account, we see that its source was a form of the D-E recension which had been extended still further, at any rate in the parts dealing with the martyrdom and its immediate sequel, by

<sup>60</sup> The letter is printed *Materials* VII 462 ff. On the date cf. Walberg, *La tradition hagiographique*, 176.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Walberg, *La tradition hagiographique*, 124-32.

<sup>61a</sup> It may be noted that John of Salisbury's *Vita* could appear as an introduction to Benedict's *Miracula*, cf. *Materials* II xxi.

reference to the *Quadrilogus* translation. (As mentioned earlier, it seems less likely that the author of M would have consulted two recensions in putting his short text together, and it is easier to assume that he made use of a recension which had already borrowed from the *Quadrilogus* translation.) This conclusion explains the repetition that appears in passages 1 and 4 and the discrepancy between E and M in passage 5: in each case E has the original text, while in M (and T) that text has been expanded or revised by reference to the *Quadrilogus* translation.

(ii) Sources of Hms. II 318<sup>35</sup>-319<sup>32</sup>.

After Hms. II 318<sup>35</sup> close comparison between Stock. 2 and Beneit's poem is impossible. The lines Hms. II 318<sup>35</sup>-319<sup>5</sup> tell very briefly of his life of devotion while at Canterbury, his consecration and his going to the pope to receive the pallium (cf. D, EM II 262<sup>1-7</sup>). Only his charity and devotion are spoken of after his consecration in B 397-400:

De sa vie esteit comencement  
De vivre tut dis honestement,  
Sanz vilainie,  
De vestir e pestre povre gent —

There is a long detailed account in T, EM I 94-110, of the archbishop's customs. Although the chief source for this appears to be the *Quadrilogus* translation, it may be that matter from Robert of Cricklade is amongst it and could be disentangled from the rest.<sup>62</sup>

In the following text in Stock. 2, Hms. II 319<sup>5-32</sup>, St Thomas is said to take control of all churches and incumbencies, matters in which the king had earlier had

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Unger, *Thomas saga*, 24-44. Eiríkr Magnússon does not recognise the use of the *Quadrilogus* translation, EM II cv-cvi. His claim that the mention of Pope Urban III as one of Thomas's companions, EM I 106<sup>12-13</sup>, is found only in T is an oversight, for it too is from the *Quadrilogus* translation, Unger, *Thomas saga*, 39<sup>13</sup>, although not in the *Quadrilogus* itself, cf. *Materials* IV 289. The ultimate source for the insertion is presumably Herbert of Bosham's *Catalogus Eruditorum*, see Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 190, col. 1289, cf. H. K. Mann, *The Lives of the Popes* X (1914), 288.

much say. He refuses to crown Prince Henry, on the grounds that two kings cannot be in the same kingdom at one time. The archbishop of York and another bishop, enemies of St Thomas, slander him before the king, although it is difficult and takes a long time to arouse the king against him. They then crown the prince. On hearing this, Thomas writes to the pope, who excommunicates the bishops and the young king.<sup>63</sup> "And when they knew this their dishonour, they asked the king when he would . . . ." Here the text breaks off and there is a lacuna of four leaves.

The writer of the Stock. 2 text, having spent some time on Thomas's youth, his election and consecration, was evidently intent on then getting as quickly as possible to the heart of the matter, the events that formed the immediate background to the martyrdom.<sup>64</sup> The earlier part of this passage and the narrative order in which it occurs are in agreement with Beneit's poem, where immediately after the description of St Thomas's life as archbishop, ending B 402, come three stanzas, B 403-420, which tell of his protection of clerks and Holy Church, and of the enmity of Satan and the slanders and misunderstandings he caused to come between archbishop and king. The poem later contains reference to the crowning of the prince (1177-83), to the letters to the pope (1225-30), and to the excommunication of the archbishop of York and other bishops (1297-1302). Such matter is common to the lives of St Thomas, of course, but, given that the preceding matter in Stock. 2 is from Robert of Cricklade, it may at any rate be said that no positive objection can be maintained against a view that regards this passage also as a very rapid and not wholly accurate summary of

<sup>63</sup> There could hardly have been warrant in Robert's work for the inclusion of the young king here, cf. B 1298-1302.

<sup>64</sup> The incitement of the bishops, led by the archbishop of York, was commonly regarded as the immediate cause of the king's anger, cf. D. Knowles, *The Episcopal Colleagues of Archbishop Thomas Becket* (1951), 115, 137-9.

material found in the Icelandic translation of Robert's work.<sup>65</sup>

(iii) Source of miracle, Hms. II 319<sup>34</sup>-320<sup>6</sup>.

After the lacuna we find ourselves in the middle of an account of a miracle, in which a boy, lifeless for three nights, is restored by the water of the saint; see the text Hms. II 319<sup>34</sup>-320<sup>6</sup>. This must be the miracle in which the son of a knight, Jordan, is cured, given by Benedict of Peterborough and by William of Canterbury and also found in T.<sup>66</sup> The details in T correspond very closely to Benedict's account, but only an extract is given — the restoration to life of the boy, as in Stock. 2 — and not the whole story, which tells further of Jordan's failure to fulfil his vow and the punishment he suffered. No verbal connection is evident between the Icelandic texts in Stock. 2 and T, but in the exchange of words between priest and father it is clear that Stock. 2 is much nearer a Latin text like or the same as Benedict's than T is. Compare the passages:<sup>67</sup>

Benedict . . . sacerdos . . . ait illi, "Utquid, domine, sepultura differtur defuncti? ecce jam secunda dies defluxit, postquam puer decessit." Et contra ille, "Nequaquam sepelietur filius meus; revera namque testificatur mihi cor meum, quod per martyrem Thomam mihi reddendus sit: afferte aquam domini mei."

Stock. 2 Þá mælti prestr enn, at eigi þyrfti at dvelja at jarða hann, "nú hafa liðit .iii. nætr," sagði hann, "þaðan frá er hann andaðiz." Bóndinn svaraði, "Öllungis eigi mun sonr minn enn vera grafinn, fyrir því

<sup>65</sup> Cf. note 63. Two bishops are named, *Jokell* of York, and another, *Gillibjarkr*. These presumably stand for Jocelin of Salisbury and Gilbert Foliot of London, both of whom, with other bishops, assisted Roger of York at the coronation of Prince Henry. And it was they who, with Roger, went to the king in Normandy and stirred him up against the returning archbishop. See D. Knowles, *op. cit.* 136-7.

<sup>66</sup> *Materials* II 229 ff., I 160 ff.

<sup>67</sup> *Materials* II 229-30, Hms. II 319<sup>34-39</sup>, EM II 160<sup>1-10</sup>. In a text of this kind no significance can be attached to the discrepancy in the length of the time given for the boy's death. It has simply undergone a stereotyped magnification in the younger text.

at svá býðr mér í skap sem sæll Thómas muni eigi vilja at ek missi enn sonar míns: færi mér," kvað hann, "vatn dróttins míns —"

T Riddarinn . . . seger þat sitt hugboð, at heilagr Thómas leiði aftr son hans í veraldligt líf . . . Prestrinn . . . seger, at þetta er vitleysi at varðveita svo lengi dauðan mann. Jordan seger, at betr skal prófa þat mál, áðr enn piltrinn er grafinn: "Því at mér víkst aldri hugr um þat," sagði hann, "at Thómas erkibyskup muni til sín um taka —"

From this it seems permissible to conclude that there originally existed in Icelandic a full translation of this part of Benedict's text, or of one very like it. In Stock. 2 it has been abridged but the original language is retained as far as it goes; in T it has been re-written and re-arranged. This conclusion agrees with our earlier findings on the relations between the Icelandic texts. The question that remains is whether the original translation was in fact from Benedict or from Robert of Cricklade. As happens so often, the answer to this question must be couched in terms of possibility and probability rather than in terms of certainty.

We know that Robert's work included the report of miracles. In T his authority for accounts of miracles is expressly referred to on three occasions. In each case there is a great wealth of circumstance in the description and in all three Robert is to some extent personally involved. That these three did not exhaust his miracle-collection is suggested by Beneit's poem, where there is reference in general terms to the miracles of St Thomas and one example — one of the stories referred in T expressly to Robert's authority — is given in some detail.<sup>68</sup> See also pp. 437 ff. below.

<sup>68</sup> B 1921-80. The passage begins:  
Des miracles voil tucher  
E aukes briefment demustrer,  
Par un trespas —.

It is not improbable that the references to life-time miracles in D (see note 4) are also derived from Robert. Very few miraculous events are ascribed to Thomas in his life-time, but some are reported from Pontigny in Guernes de

The first of the three miracles certainly from Robert in T is Robert's account of his own cure, described by him in a letter to Benedict of Peterborough. The Latin text appears in Book II of Benedict's *Miracula*, following the account of a cure for a different ailment also experienced by Robert through the saint's intercession.<sup>69</sup> Since Benedict's *Miracula* were also known in Iceland, it might be thought that Robert's letter was drawn from this source. Benedict introduces the letter with: *quod . . . ipse nobis postea, salutatione præmissa, rescripsit sic*, and having referred to the 'salutation' in this way, does not quote it. In T the salutation and exordium are found in full at the beginning of the letter: *Priórr Robert, minnsti þræll Guðs þjóna, sendir bróður Benedictó þá kveðju . . .* (EM II 94<sup>9-15</sup>). Similarly, the Valete remains at the end in T (EM II 100<sup>20-21</sup>), but is absent in Benedict. Eiríkr Magnússon also pointed out that some differences exist between the Icelandic text of the letter proper and the Latin text in Benedict's *Miracula*.<sup>70</sup> Some of these differences may well be due to the stylistic revision of the author of T, but hardly all of them.<sup>71</sup> The beginning of this miracle is also found in the fragment E (EM II 284<sup>7-14</sup>), where it is not given in the form of a letter and is thus told in the third person, not the first. It has evidently been abridged to some extent, but even so, it answers better to the opening of Benedict's text than the letter in T does. It is technically possible for the account in E to be from Benedict and that in T to be from Robert.

Pont-Sainte-Maxence's poem (composed 1172-4), see E. Walberg, *La Vie de Saint Thomas . . . par Guernes* (1922), 3651-75, cf. *ibid.* lxxxiii-iv. There is some discussion of such miracles, with further references, in P. A. Brown, *The Development of the Legend of Thomas Becket* (1930), 86-91.

<sup>69</sup> EM II 92<sup>16-100</sup>, *Materials* II 97 ff.

<sup>70</sup> EM II lxxiv-lxxv, 100 note 26. Eiríkr Magnússon ingeniously connects Robert's visit to Italy with the confirmation of the privileges of St Frideswide's by Pope Hadrian IV (1154-9).

<sup>71</sup> Especially the sentence in the first person, EM II 94<sup>17-20</sup>, not in Benedict, although it is not impossible to regard even a sentence such as this as the result of 'stylistic' revision. Matthew Paris, for example, did not mind adding tendentious bits of his own composition to letters he quotes from Emperor and Patriarch, see R. Vaughan, *Matthew Paris* (1958), 132-3.

Since, however, the author of T knew a version like D-E in a fuller form than the extant fragments, it seems most likely that T and E are from the same source, the original translation of Robert of Cricklade's work, in which he must have included a copy of his letter to Benedict. This has been cut down in E and embellished in T.

The second miracle attributed to Robert's authority comes immediately after the account of his own cure. While in Canterbury he hears tell of a man who, after being blinded and gelded, was miraculously restored through the merits of St Thomas. He meets the man himself, who attests the miracle, and it is fully confirmed by a clerk of Bishop Hugh of Durham, who had given the man a physical inspection, and by the bishop himself.<sup>72</sup> The man's crime, punishment and restoration are told comparatively briefly in William of Canterbury's Book II and at length in Book IV of Benedict's *Miracula*.<sup>73</sup> There are no grounds for thinking that there is any connection between Benedict's account and Robert's. The miracle is also told in outline in Beneit's poem, 1933-50, the only miracle he gives at any length. It also appears in much abridged form in E (EM II 283<sup>29</sup>-284<sup>6</sup>), where there are, however, verbal connections with the account given in T. They must thus both be dependent on the original translation from Robert of Cricklade.

This story is then followed by the third miracle introduced on Robert's authority. In this case, he hears of a man in Perigord miraculously saved after being hanged.<sup>74</sup> The same miracle is told by William of Canterbury,<sup>75</sup> but there is certainly no literary connection between Robert and William at this point. The miracle must obviously have taken place before William completed his Books I-V, in 1174-5, a time confirmed by

<sup>72</sup> EM II 102-106<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>73</sup> *Materials* I 155-8, II 173-82.

<sup>74</sup> EM II 106<sup>26</sup>-118<sup>10</sup>. The part from 114<sup>15</sup> is an example drawn from Robert's own experience of a man whose life was saved even after being hanged.

<sup>75</sup> *Materials* I 369-73.

the letter to Odo, prior of Canterbury, included in his account. (Odo became abbot of Battle in 1175.)<sup>76</sup> Benedict does not have this miracle at all.

These three miracles that are certainly derived from Robert of Cricklade belong to an early period after the martyrdom and are paralleled either in William of Canterbury's work or in Benedict of Peterborough's. In E they appear in abridged form, in T at any rate with some revision and expansion. The Jordan miracle in Stock. 2 fulfils the same conditions. It is found in William and Benedict; in Stock. 2 it has been abridged, in T revised. It shows verbal similarities to Benedict's text, but Benedict's account of miraculous cures experienced by Robert and his quotation of Robert's letter show that literary contact existed between them (cf. p. 435). The possibility has thus been established that the Jordan miracle was to be found in Robert's work.

Some further discussion of the *Gesta post martyrium* found in E and T may add a degree of probability to a theory that the Jordan miracle was in Robert's work and derived from there in Stock. 2.

Eiríkr Magnússon divided the stories of visions and miracles found in T and E into two groups, based on the occurrence of the three miracles from Robert spoken of above.<sup>77</sup> All but one of the visions and miracles before them are found in Benedict's *Miracula* and are derived from that source (nos. 1-17 in his list). All the miracles after them are from Robert (nos. 21-35),<sup>78</sup> including the

<sup>76</sup> Cf. *Materials* II xix; Walberg, *La tradition hagiographique*, 73.

<sup>77</sup> EM II clv-clvii.

<sup>78</sup> So the list EM II clvi-clvii, but no. 23 has been inadvertently omitted and the numbers should read 21-34 (this correction has not been made in the references here). Eiríkr Magnússon includes nos. 32-35, as if they too were from Robert of Cricklade, but this is out of the question, as he himself recognises elsewhere, see EM II xlix, liii, cxlviii. In these places he does not come to a firm conclusion as to what should be regarded as the end of the original work: p. 172 (after no. 32), 168 (after no. 31) or 184 (after no. 33). The miracles do not offer any internal evidence as to their date of origin, and only no. 21 has a certain analogue in William of Canterbury, although no. 32 may have (cf. references EM II clvi). No. 31 seems the likeliest limit, but doubts may be raised about nos. 28 and 30, neither of which sounds like a near contemporary account, cf. the phrases EM II 156<sup>15-18</sup>, 164<sup>17-18</sup>. No early

story of Jordan's son (no. 29). This is a reasonable inference from the introductory words in T, before the three miracles expressly attributed to Robert are given:<sup>79</sup>

. . . priór Robert, er marga hluti hefir skrifat í latínu sælum Thómasi til virðingar, ok þar af skal *í fyrstu* setja þat, er hann boðar af sjálfum sér —

Here the italicised words naturally suggest that after the stories in which Robert himself figured, others were to come which he had recorded but in which he was not personally concerned. Unfortunately, it does not seem to be quite as straightforward as that. The last miracle-stories in T certainly cannot be from Robert (cf. note 78 above). It still remains necessary to account for the close similarity between the details of the Jordan story in T and the same story in Benedict. And Eiríkr Magnússon does not include in his list a reference to two cures which appear in T between his nos. 24 and 25, where a woman with a hurt knee and a crippled woman are helped at the saint's tomb.<sup>80</sup> These miracles are from Benedict and they occur in fuller form and in their proper place in E,<sup>81</sup> whence Eiríkr Magnússon included them rightly in his list as nos. 16 and 17. It is again technically possible that E has them from Benedict and T from Robert, but it seems at least as likely that the editor of T has moved them and altered them, so that they now appear amongst miracles that would otherwise be attributed to Robert's authorship. But if he has done this with these stories, he may also have done the same thing with the Jordan story, which is also paralleled in Benedict's *Miracula*.

If we consider what appears in T and E from Benedict's *Miracula*, it becomes however less likely that this was also the source for the Jordan story. The visions and

origin can be suggested for no. 33, for it departs even further from the facts than does the independent version of the story found in H. Gering, *Isländzk Æventyri* (1882-83), I 67-9, cf. II 58-9.

<sup>79</sup> EM II 92<sup>18-21</sup>.

<sup>80</sup> EM II 138<sup>11-24</sup>.

<sup>81</sup> EM II 283<sup>7-28</sup>; *Materials* II 61-2.

miracles in the Icelandic are from well-defined sections of Benedict's work. First come visions that betoken Thomas's sanctity and they are from the opening of Book I of the *Miracula*. They take us up to Easter 1171. Then come miracles performed just before and at Eastertide 1171, and they come from the end of Book I and the beginning of Book II.<sup>82</sup> In the middle part of Book I, Benedict, having got as far as Easter with his visions, then goes back in time to speak of other earlier marvels,<sup>83</sup> and this part must have been omitted by the Icelandic writer not only because he wished to abridge but also because he wished to avoid the chronological inconsistency. He has thus restricted himself to material from the beginning and end of Book I and the beginning of Book II, and it would be odd if after this he then selected one, and only one, other miracle from Benedict's scores, the Jordan story, which is moreover found in Book IV of the *Miracula*, far removed from the other material adopted in the Icelandic.<sup>84</sup> Under the circumstances, it appears probable that the Jordan story is not from Benedict but from Robert. It may be noted in passing that some lines from Beneit's poem also make it reasonably certain that Robert's work included some account of miracles which restored the dead to life, B 1927-30:

Ainz ke dous anz fussent passez,  
Après k'il fu martirisez  
El Deu servise,  
Out Deus cinc morz resuscitez —<sup>85</sup>

<sup>82</sup> See the list EM II clv-clvi. Nos. 1-7 are from *Materials* II 27-34 (ending with a prophetic vision fulfilled when access was given to the tomb in Easter Week 1171); nos. 8-14, 16-17 are from *Materials* II 55-62 (beginning Maundy Thursday 1171). It can be seen from no. 1 that the correct sequence of E has been altered in T. Miracle no. 15 is not apparently to be found in any other source, another fact which must call Eiríkr Magnússon's neat division in question.

<sup>83</sup> *Materials* II 35<sup>15</sup>, first a prophecy from ten years earlier, then miracles (p. 37) from 31 December 1170 onward.

<sup>84</sup> *Materials* II 229 ff.

<sup>85</sup> If the story of the hanged man of Perigord were counted a 'resuscitation' (no. 20, certainly from Robert) and if nos. 28 and 30 were dismissed from those miracles tentatively ascribed to Robert (cf. note 78), we should have five people raised from the dead in the Icelandic (in miracles nos. 20, 29 and 31). But obviously this result is far too dearly bought to be taken seriously.

If the Jordan story in the Icelandic is from Robert, then the text in Stock. 2 shows that we must assume that there was close verbal similarity between Robert's Latin and Benedict's. This may be explained either by presuming that Benedict culled his account from Robert — the two were certainly in touch and Benedict's Book IV was written at the earliest in 1179,<sup>86</sup> which makes such a loan chronologically easy — or by presuming that both used the same source, perhaps a record at Canterbury made when Jordan's vows were fulfilled.

(iv) Source of conclusion, Hms. II 320<sup>7-25</sup>.

All the material so far in Stock. 2 may be referred with certainty or with varying degrees of probability to Robert of Cricklade's work. When we turn now to the concluding paragraph of the text, Hms. II 320<sup>7-25</sup>, we are again left pondering possibilities and probabilities. The first ten lines of this part are general remarks on the signs at St Thomas's shrine and his innumerable miracles; the remainder is an invocation to the saint. A specific literary source can be found for the opening:

Þat er sagt, at .v. sinnum hafi brugðit vatn hins helga Thómas bæði öðli sínu ok lit: fjórum sinnum hefir þat sýnz sem blóð, en eitt sinn sem mjólk. Fjórum sinnum hefir ljós komit af himni hátíðardag Thómas í Kantarabyrgi, ok hafa kerti kve[yk]z í kirkjunni yfir hans helgum dómi honum til dýrðar ok lofs —

This must translate the third and fourth antiphons sung at lauds from the rited office for St Thomas:<sup>87</sup>

Aqua Thomae quinquies  
varians colorem  
In lac semel transiit,  
quater in cruorem.

Ad Thomae memoriam  
quater lux descendit  
Et in sancti gloriam  
cereos accendit.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. p. 406; Walberg, *La tradition hagiographique*, 57.

<sup>87</sup> G. M. Dreve, *Analecta hymnica* XIII (1892), 238-41.

The interesting thing about this rimed office is that it is the work of Benedict of Peterborough and must, it seems, have been composed by him before he issued Books I-III of his *Miracula*, i.e. before 1173.<sup>88</sup> Chronologically it would therefore have been possible for Robert of Cricklade, probably also writing in 1173, to use the words in his own epilogue. These lines in the Icelandic are followed by the remark that nothing is impossible to St Thomas,

þar sem hann hefir reista menn af dauða, rekit djöfla frá óðum mönnum, gefit sjón blindum, heyrn daufum, höltum göngu, hreinsaða líkþrá, ok nú fær engi manns tunga talt né hugr ætlat hans jartegnir, svá margar ágætligar sem eru.

That something corresponding to these lines in the Icelandic was in Robert's work near the end is suggested by Beneit's poem, 1967-74:

Les surdz oïr, les muz parler  
E ciuz veanz.

Nul ne savereit acunter  
Ne les miracles anumbrier  
Ke Deus ad fait  
En Engleterre e utre mer  
Pur seint Thomas, sun ami cher,  
Ke seit beneit.

It may also be noted that there is a near parallel to such a combination of lines closely related to verses from the office and a catalogue of wonders in the prologue to Benedict's *Miracula*.<sup>89</sup> There can of course be no certainty that either Benedict or Robert served the other as model, but at least the parallel passage in Benedict shows that there is nothing inherently improbable in

<sup>88</sup> See R. W. Hunt in *Liber floridus . . . Paul Lehmann . . . gewidmet* (1950), 359-60. The early date for the composition of the office is probably also indicated by the fact that one verse is given in a dream to a monk of Canterbury before Easter 1171, see *Materials* II 33-4, cf. EM II 64.

<sup>89</sup> *Materials* II 26<sup>8-21</sup>. After the catalogue comes: *Quater etiam invisibiliter advenit ignis, et extincta vel super vel circa tumbam ejus luminaria reaccendit*. Cf. the Icelandic and the verse from the office quoted above.

ascribing the Icelandic text to a translation from Robert's work. Such catalogues are however commonplace (Benedict's itself is based directly on the Gospels, Matthew 10, 8, Luke 7, 22) and too much cannot be made of such correspondences. Similar catalogues are found in the verses of the rimed office itself.<sup>90</sup> This was doubtless known in Iceland,<sup>91</sup> and it might be counted the inspiration for the whole passage here in Stock. 2. It is possible however to point to two words in the invocation at the end, *nöckvi* and *auðræði*, both of which indicate a date early in the thirteenth century for its composition.<sup>92</sup> They are in harmony with the assumptions we may reasonably make about the date of the original translation of Robert of Cricklade's work.

#### IV *Author and date of the translation of Robert of Cricklade's work*

In the collections of tales edited by Gering there is one that sets out to explain how the royal power in England came to have so much authority over the Church before St Thomas's time.<sup>93</sup> The matter is almost all from Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum historiale*, and the oldest of the manuscripts containing it are from the fourteenth

<sup>90</sup> Cf. e.g. the responsoria for the third nocturn, *Analecta hymnica* XIII 240, and the antiphons for the third nocturn in a different rimed office, *ibid.* 243. Such catalogues are found in other prose texts as well, see *Materials* II 288, 322 (used in the *Quadrilogus*, *Materials* IV 407).

<sup>91</sup> The *Thomas saungur* and *Thomas historia*, clearly titles for the same work, found at Ás (Norður-Pingeyjarsýsla) in 1318 and 1394 (*Diplomatarium Islandicum* II 429, III 586), must have contained a text of a rimed office. It is reasonable to identify this as Benedict's work, of which G. M. Dreve says: "Das Officium gehört wie zu den vollendetsten Reimofficien, die es giebt, so zu den verbreitetsten" (*Analecta hymnica* XIII 241).

<sup>92</sup> The great majority of the occurrences of these words are in archaic texts. Not much weight could be placed on the occurrence of either one alone, but the two of them together offer evidence that can hardly be ignored. On *nökkvi*, cf. e.g. Cleasby-Vigfússon, *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, s.v. *nekkverr*, A. Noreen, *Altisländische Grammatik* (1923), § 475, Anm. 1. I hope to publish a note on the word *auðræði* in the near future but it may be noted here that the word occurs twice elsewhere in texts of *Tómas saga*, once in D, EM II 269<sup>7</sup>, and once in T, EM I 82<sup>17</sup>. Both these passages are best regarded, on other grounds, as derived from the translation of Robert's work.

<sup>93</sup> H. Gering, *Islendzk Æventyri* (1882-3), I 51-60, cf. II 42-44.

century. In one old and two young manuscripts, the text begins:<sup>94</sup>

Merkiligir tveir kennimenn, Bergr Gunnsteinsson ok Jón hestr, hafa skrifat lífssögu virðuligs herra Thomæ Cantuariensis erkibiskups, hvárr með sínum hætti —.

It remains uncertain who Jón hestr was,<sup>95</sup> but the identity of Bergr Gunnsteinsson is generally regarded as established. He was the son of Gunnsteinn Þórisson of Einarstaðir in Reykjadalr (Þingeyjarsýsla). Þórir, his grandfather, was killed in 1136. Gunnsteinn married Hallbera, daughter of Þorgils Oddason of Staðarhóll (in Saurbær in Dalasýsla), and he was in that district in 1160. He seems to have settled in the west and Bergr, his son, was probably brought up there. Gunnsteinn's sister, Guðrún, was married to Tumi Kolbeinsson of the Ásbirningar of Skagafjörður. It can be seen from these marriage alliances that Gunnsteinn's family was counted a distinguished one.<sup>96</sup> We hear of Bergr on only two occasions. He is said to have been with Guðmundr Arason on his voyage to be consecrated bishop of Hólar,

<sup>94</sup> AM 586 4to (fifteenth century), AM 664 4to (early eighteenth century), cf. Gering, *op. cit.* I xxvii, xxxi, and Kr. Kålund, *Katalog over den Arnemagnæanske Håndskriftsamling* (1888-94), I 747, II 76. It is also found in AM 727 4to, written 1644 by Jón Guðmundsson, cf. EM II lviii-lix, Kålund, *Katalog* II 154-5.

<sup>95</sup> For suggestions see Gering, *op. cit.* II 44, EM II lix, Finnur Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske Litteraturs Historie*, II 876-7. If, as these writers assume, Jón hestr were the priest Jón holt who in 1284 is said to have been nearly 40 years in Hítardalr (*Biskupa sögur* (1858-78), I 734) and who died in 1302, it would be easiest chronologically to connect him with the D-E recension (cf. note 102), rather than with the *Quadrilogus* translation (so Eiríkr Magnússon) or with T (so Finnur Jónsson). Eiríkr Magnússon argues that the lines: *Merkiligir tveir kennimenn . . . hafa skrifat lífssögu . . . Thomæ . . . hvárr með sínum hætti, hversu hann þreytti fyrir guðs kristni í Englandi allt til þíningar* mean that "both men wrote a saga of Thomas *up to his passion*" (his italics), and thus "the second, composite saga of T., which is the saga of the miracles, is not contemplated". This is obviously wrong. *allt til þíningar* goes with *þreytti*, not with *hafa skrifat lífssögu*, cf. e.g. *Materials* II 291 (from Caesarius of Heisterbach): *Beatus Thomas . . . qui nostris temporibus pro ecclesiæ libertate usque ad mortem dimicavit* —.

<sup>96</sup> On the family, see Eggert Ó. Brím, *Athuganir við fornættir nokkrar . . . í Sturlunga sögu* (Safn til sögu Íslands III, 1902), 524-8; Björn Sigfússon, *Ljósvefninga saga* (Íslenzk Fornrit X, 1940), 263-4 (genealogical tables); idem, *Saga Þingeyinga* (1946), 79, 90-91; Jón Jóhannesson, *Sturlunga saga* (1946), II, 22 ættskrá; Steinn Dofri, 'Rannsóknir eldri ætta V', *Blanda* VIII (1944-8), 377-88.

1202-3.<sup>97</sup> He is called priest, and he must have been a man of some years and standing.<sup>98</sup> He is mentioned again as leaving Iceland in 1212 with Arnórr Tumason.<sup>99</sup> Bergr is thus well at home in an influential circle in which we know interest in Thomas Becket flourished — from all points of view.<sup>100</sup> A link between Bergr and Canterbury is easily forged too through Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson, who had been on pilgrimage to St Thomas's shrine before 1200 and who also accompanied Guðmundr Arason on his voyage for consecration.<sup>101</sup> If Bergr composed a life of St Thomas, a date about 1200 is by far the most likely for it, and, as far as we can tell, his chief or only source must have been the work of Robert of Cricklade. Insofar as the texts of Stock. 2 and parts of D represent the original translation by Bergr, it may be said that their style answers to what we have come to expect of early Icelandic works derived from Latin sources. It is simple and unadorned and although it may be influenced by the Latin, it does not affect any larger imitation of it.

This essay has led to the conclusion that much of the text concerning St Thomas Becket in Stock. 2 is certainly,

<sup>97</sup> *Biskupa sögur* (1858-78), I 481 and note 7. He is not named in the parallel passage in *Sturlunga saga*, cf. *ed. cit.* I 158.

<sup>98</sup> The canonical age for priest's orders was the twenty-fifth year, but this requirement was not infrequently waived. We can only guess at Bergr Gunnsteinsson's age, using the analogies offered by the careers of other members of his family. His brother, the priest Þorgils, was adult in 1185; Þorgils's son was Lambkárr ábóti, whom Bishop Guðmundr Arason took to foster in 1200 (Lambkárr is thought to be the author of the *Prestssaga Guðmundar*) — a fact which strengthens the link between Bergr and the bishop's circle. One of Bergr's brothers, Hallr, died in 1228. Probably the outside limits for Bergr's life-time are c. 1160-1230. Guðbrandur Vigfússon, *Sturlunga Saga* (1878), I cxxxv, mistakenly gives the year 1211 as the date of his death, and this error is repeated by Finnur Jónsson, *op. cit.* II 876, and Páll E. Ólason, *Íslenskar Æviskrár* (1948-52), I 147.

<sup>99</sup> G. Storm, *Islandske Annaler indtil 1578* (1888), 124, cf. 183, 325, and *Flateyjarbók* (1860-68), III 523. Presumably Bergr sailed in the same ship as Arnórr. Of the six chieftains who were summoned with Bishop Guðmundr Arason to appear before the archbishop of Nidaros, Arnórr was the only one who undertook the voyage. He may well have been glad of the company of a learned cleric on this occasion, one with whom he had some connection. (His father Tumi had been married to Bergr's aunt, as is mentioned above, but Arnórr was the son of a different wife.)

<sup>100</sup> See e.g. EM II xii-xiv, xviii-xxii, G. Turville-Petre and E. S. Olszewska, *The Life of Gudmund the Good* (1942), xxv-xxvi.

<sup>101</sup> *Biskupa sögur* (1858-78), I 641-2, 481.

and all is possibly, drawn from the translation of Robert of Cricklade's work, probably made by Bergr Gunnsteinsson about 1200. The discussion has however led far afield, and the following tentative conclusions have also emerged: (1) The early translation by Bergr Gunnsteinsson was at some time joined with material perhaps from John of Salisbury's *Vita* and certainly from Benedict of Peterborough's *Miracula* to make the D-E recension.<sup>102</sup> (2) This D-E recension was later expanded, at any rate in part, by reference to the Norwegian *Quadrilogus* translation, and this second edition of the D-E recension was used by the author of the Mary-miracle, M.<sup>103</sup> (3) The author of the T recension used this second edition of the D-E recension, which he appears to have known in a fuller and better text than that represented by the extant fragments, but rejected much of its narrative in favour of material drawn largely from the *Quadrilogus* translation, and he used other sources as well. One of his motives seems to have been to rid the text of anything that might be held to disparage saint or church or give credit to Thomas's enemies. In his work there are many signs of extensive revision of style and arrangement.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>102</sup> It is difficult to date this recension with any certainty. It existed in a second edition by the end of the thirteenth century. Some elements in the style of parts of the E fragment, particularly the alliteration and substantive doublets in the letters and some of the translation of Benedict's *Miracula* (EM II 272 ff.), suggest a date in the later part of the thirteenth century rather than in the earlier part. (The possibility that the letters were in Robert of Cricklade's work is only a remote one, cf. note 48, and there is a notable difference between the style of the letters in D probably in the early translation of his work, see note 29, and the letters in E.) The conjectural association with Jón holt (see note 95) would make any date after *c.* 1245 possible, and it might have been a text of this recension that was read to Þorgils skarði on the night of his murder in 1258 (*Sturlunga saga* (1946), II 218). If it is decided that the material in the D fragments related to John of Salisbury's work is there because Robert borrowed from John, it is necessary to emend the dates for the production of their respective lives of St Thomas — John's could possibly be from early in 1173, Robert's from late 1173, or possibly from 1174. Cf. pp. 406, 425 and note 15.

<sup>103</sup> The original collection of miracles in which M is found came into being towards 1300. The second edition of the D-E recension might thus be dated *c.* 1275. If this is so, then the translation of the *Quadrilogus* was made before that date. Cf. notes 1, 16.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. pp. 415, 429 and note 58. T in its present shape must have been made after 1299, cf. EM II xxxvi. The oldest fragment of this recension is AM 662a 4to II, dated to the latter half of the fourteenth century, see Kålund,

These tentative conclusions need further detailed investigation, and it is to be hoped that someone will undertake a new full collation of T and the other sources, Icelandic and foreign. Eiríkr Magnússon's pioneer study was naturally chiefly concerned with what the Icelandic texts might offer of significance for English history.<sup>105</sup> In the literary history of these texts much remains to be uncovered, both in the investigation of sources and in the comparative study of style and language from part to part of the extant recensions. And indeed, until the literary history of these sources has been exhaustively studied their historical value will not be fully revealed. It seems likely that in the end their historical value will be a good deal less than Eiríkr Magnússon believed and will essentially depend on what in their texts may be reasonably used to reconstruct Robert of Cricklade's *Vita*.

As an instance of this reconstruction and one which may help to compensate for the "much cry and little wool" of this essay, I may mention the vindication it helps to bring of the report of St Thomas's stammer, found only in the Icelandic sources.<sup>106</sup> Appearing in Stock. 2 as it does, there can be little doubt but that it is derived from Robert of Cricklade, a contemporary English witness, and it is not merely a codification of some rumour that reached remote Iceland in the course of the century following the martyrdom. It is a detail prized by historians, and it may make them happier to know that we can say — with only the standard reservations — that it must be true.

*Katalog*, II 74. In its style, in its conflation of numerous sources and its large-scale reorganisation of the material, it belongs with works such as the B-version of the *Karlamagnús saga* and Bergr Sökkason's *Nikolaus saga*, both of which are probably from c. 1320-50.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. EM II clxxi.

<sup>106</sup> M. D. Knowles, *Archbishop Thomas Becket: A Character Study* (The Raleigh Lecture on History, British Academy, 1949), 6 and 24 note 7, speaks of it as a "widespread tradition", having gathered from EM II xcvi that it is mentioned in all the Icelandic accounts. But, of course, all the Icelandic accounts are derived from one and the same source and do not each bear independent witness.

## APPENDIX

Since writing the above, Professor Jón Helgason has drawn my attention to some excerpts concerning St Thomas in manuscript British Museum Add. 11,242. This is the well-known miscellany manuscript written by the priest Gottskálk Jónsson in Glaumbær (c. 1524-1590).<sup>107</sup>

The source of all the excerpts except the last must have been a manuscript of the D-E recension, apparently in a form similar to that known to the author of M (cf. pp. 407 ff., 426 ff. above).

(1) Fol. 8r. Thirteen lines of text beginning: *Thómas erkibyskup var maðr einkar sæmiligr ok kennimannligr í sínu lífi* —.<sup>108</sup> This text parallels M 202<sup>11-22</sup> and the fragmentary D, EM II 262<sup>10-21</sup>. The latter goes a little beyond M and ends: *vandyrkr í sak[a]* . . . (see the text printed p. 422 above). The text in Add. 11,242 continues:

giptum ok sa[. .] gi[. . .] sóknum, smásmugall í spurningum ok eigi vandbúinn við andsvörum, eigi vinhallr í dómum eða í mannvirðingu, virði meira málaefni en manna [ . . . ] eigi drógu hann fégjafir né fagrmæli [ . . ] riettd . . .

(2) Fol. 16v. Twelve lines of text, with the heading *Úr decretum sanctorum patrum. Decreta sancti Thome erkibyskup[s]*. The passage begins:

Ef klerkar verða staddir at manndrápi eða ljótum hórdómi, stuld eða ráni eðr þvílíkum hlutum, þá skulu þeir fyrst missa embættis ok því næst kirkjugöngu, síðan excommunicari, ad ultimum degradari, ok síðan skulu þeir undir leikmanna lögum búa.

Then comes a comparison between the power of the Church and the power of the King. It ends:

Hversu megi þér þá mik dæma, þar sem ek á at réttri setningu

<sup>107</sup> See Jón Þorkelsson, *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* VIII (1892), 217 ff. On pp. 221-2 he points out the similarity between passage 3 below and the text of D, printing the two side by side. On Gottskálk's miscellany see also Jón Helgason, *Ritgerðakorn og ræðustúfar* (1959), 115-7.

<sup>108</sup> I have normalised the spelling but not the forms, beyond writing *eigi* for *ei*. The number of points given in square brackets roughly indicates the number of lost letters (often of course abbreviated forms).

[. . .] yðr at dæma, ok eigi at eins hér á jarðríki heldr ok jafnvel á himni ok jörðu.

This text, including the title, is paralleled in abridged form in T, EM I 152<sup>4-18</sup>, in a description of the proceedings at a council held in London in 1163. Eiríkr Magnússon says that the chapter here “contains much which is not found in the extant lives”, but Schlyter has demonstrated the presence of comparable matter in Beneit’s poem, B 421-510.<sup>109</sup> The source for the Icelandic, as for the Anglo-Norman, must thus be Robert of Cricklade.

(3) Fol. 17r. Nine lines of text, beginning *Svá segir heilagr Gregorius páfi* —, ending *fyrirdæmiz þeir eigi á efsta dómi*. Then two lines of text: *Sjálfir guð virðir þat til sín gjört er til hans er gjört, at sjálf[um] honum svá mælandi, Qui vos recipit me recipit, qui vos spernit me spernit*.

The first passage offers a parallel text to part of D, EM II 269<sup>16-30</sup>, a translation of a letter from Pope Alexander to King Henry (Add. 11,242 has a title to this effect). The second is from the same letter, but D does not extend so far. Cf. *Materials* VI 565-6, 567<sup>11-15</sup>. The translation of the letter, much abridged and rewritten, was used in T, EM I 332.

(4) Fol. 17r. Nine lines of text, with a note at the top: *í öðru bréfi Alexandri*. It begins:

Svá er ritið ok boðit hverjum yfirboðara, Clama et ne cessa,<sup>110</sup>

And ends:

Er nú ok þar komit at vér munum eigi lengr byrgja munn á er[. .] Tómas, svá at eigi greiði hann fram skuld síns embættis ok hefni sinna mei[na] ok sinnar kristni vanréttis með sverði guðligrar stríðu.

This translates part of a letter from Alexander to King Henry, of 22 May 1166, *Materials* VI 437-8. The text was known to the author of T, who seems to have made use of it both with the text of the letter from which the

<sup>109</sup> EM II cix, Schlyter, *op. cit.* 10-11.

<sup>110</sup> The manuscript has *nesse*, as one word. Isaiah 58, 1 has *Clama, ne cesses*, —.

excerpts noted under no. 3 above were taken (cf. EM I 334<sup>24-25</sup> *ok upp segjum vér lengr at byrgja hans munn* —), and also separately, EM I 422-4. On these letters cf. EM II cxxiv-vi, cxxxiii.

(5) Fol. 17r. Twelve lines of text, beginning

Heilagr Thómas erkibyskup dvaldiz í grámunka klaustri einu þá er hann var í útlegð frá stól[. .] Þar þokkaðiz hann hverjum manni vel ok ástsamliga [. . . .] var engi sá [. . . .] munklífi at sér meinlætti meir eða fleiri vega en hann.

The passage then describes his harsh life, especially his dress and the flagellations he submitted himself to in secret. It ends:

Þess háttar var h[. . . .] vetr svá at þessa [. . . .] vissu öngvir nema klerkr ok skósvei[nn]

This is not paralleled in any other Icelandic text, but it is certainly related to B 931-948, cf. 931-33, 937-9:

A Punteny ad sujurn pris,  
Un' abeie de moines gris,  
De bone gent.—

N'i out moine en l'abeie  
Ke plus demenast seinte vie  
Ke il feseit.—

It may be noted that what precedes and what follows this section in B, B 869-900 and B 949-1014, are precisely the two passages which, as Walberg pointed out, are closely paralleled by parts of the D fragments (see pp. 411-15). All of this must be indubitably derived from Robert of Cricklade's work.<sup>111</sup>

(6) Fol. 20r. Seventeen lines of text, with the heading: *epistola Tome arc[h]iepiscopi til Heinriks konungs*. It begins:

Heinriki Englands konungi sendir kveðju Thómas erkibyskup með guðs myskunn lágr þjónn Cantar[a]byrgis kristni. Því

<sup>111</sup> St Thomas's austerities, including the flagellation, are also described by Edward Grim when he tells of the sojourn at Sens; the description is followed immediately by a brief account of the vision, as in B, see *Materials* II 417-9. It may be that Robert of Cricklade was following Edward Grim at this point; the latter's life is thought to have been written in 1172, cf. Walberg, *La tradition hagiographique*, 105-7.

svá segir postolinn, Allir þeir, segir hann, er í guði vilja lifa, þá þoli afgerð ok ofsókn manna —

and ends:

sem Davíð ok Ezechias ok öðrum mörgum.

This corresponds, after the greeting, to part of a letter from 1166, see *Materials V* 279<sup>7</sup>-280<sup>14</sup>. The same letter was used in T with the language much revised and with large omissions, see EM I 342-4, cf. EM II cxxvii. On this and the other letters, cf. p. 415 above.

(7) Fol. 51r. A passage of five lines describing St Thomas taken from the *Quadrilogus* translation, see Unger, *Thomas Saga*, 37<sup>5-11</sup>. It seems likely that Gottskálf got this from a separate text, unconnected with the source of excerpts 1-5. The passage is so closely repetitive of what is already in Stock. 2, D-E and T, that it is hard to believe that it would have been included in the conflation of the D-E recension and the *Quadrilogus* translation which is postulated as the immediate source of M (cf. pp. 426-31).

## BOOK REVIEWS

THE ANGLO-SAXONS. Studies in some aspects of their history and culture presented to BRUCE DICKINS. *Bowes and Bowes*, 1959. 322 pp.

We have good reason to welcome this book. The recipient is a great scholar who has been for many years one of our Honorary Members, and of the eighteen contributors to the volume no less than thirteen are members of the Society. Even though the present notice is a belated one, we may perhaps feel that our congratulations to Professor Dickins have already been presented. Four of the papers in the book concern Northern Research more particularly. Professor Dorothy Whitelock gives an authoritative survey of the dealings of the kings of England with Northumbria in the tenth and eleventh centuries. She traces what policy is discernible, especially in lay and ecclesiastical appointments, in the delicate matter of preserving a strong Northumbria as a bulwark against the Scots and preventing that same strong Northumbria from exerting its independence of the south. She points out that after Eric Blood-axe's expulsion in 954 "contemporaries naturally could not know that Eric was to be the last Scandinavian king to establish himself at York", and that, right down to 1066, English uneasiness as to how the Northumbrians would act when it came to conflict between English and Scandinavian was not without cause. Professor Turville-Petre writes interestingly of legends of England in Icelandic manuscripts. He deals with references to Bede in Icelandic sources and an Icelandic version of the story explaining his title of *venerabilis*, and gives a study of the story by Hermann monachus concerning the canons of Laon and their tour through southern England in 1113 which appears in an Icelandic collection of Mary-miracles. Miss M. Ashdown writes on an Icelandic account of the survival of Harold Godwinson, i.e. the story found in the *Hemings þáttur Áslákssonar*, with some useful comparative material on "survival" legends from other lands and times. Mrs N. K. Chadwick, in a long paper "The Monsters and Beowulf", argues "that the motifs of Beowulf's encounters with the monsters are not the *dissecta membra* of folk-tales, but are found in traditions of courtly literature in the Old Scandinavian world, and are associated more especially with the ruling families of Scandinavia". In her discussion of some early Norse monster stories one would have welcomed a stricter analysis of the literary connections between the various tales.

There is much else in the book to read and ponder. All concerned with the production of this volume, not least Dr Clemons, the editor, deserve great praise.

PETER FOOTE

KELTEN UND GERMANEN. By JAN DE VRIES. (Bibliotheca Germanica IX). *Bern und München: Francke Verlag, 1960.* 139 pp.

Jan de Vries has added to the long series of works, for which Germanic scholars owe him so great a debt, a book which will serve as an admirable introduction to early Celtic studies for those whose interests lie mainly in the Germanic field. This will hold good, even if the author's main thesis is not in the long run upheld. This is that certain similarities of Germans and Celts in religion, social life, and poetical practice, are due to contact between the two races, occurring in an early post-Indo-European period of mutual intelligence, which was followed by long years, during which they drew apart in language as in other matters, so that they came to the notice of classical antiquity sharply contrasted.<sup>1</sup>

Before further consideration of this conjecture, a word may be said in appreciation of the manner in which de Vries presents in footnotes his source for every important statement, and for the admirable examples of source criticism which he offers. For example, the growth of the hoary legend that the Celts drank out of the skulls of their enemies is traced (pp. 11-15), rhetorical commonplaces concerning "savages" are pointed out (pp. 97, 104), and the liability of ancient authors to repeat the remarks of their predecessors, even when they might be most expected to report their own observations, is stressed (pp. 81-2, etc.). On the other hand, the sources are often well defended, as for example when the word *Germanis* of the Marcellus inscription is rescued (pp. 57-9).

The material upon which de Vries bases his main conclusion may now be rapidly reviewed. At the outset, it may be said that the last thing he can be called is a man with an axe to grind. He often shows the weakness of an argument as clearly as could any defender of an opposite point of view. Thus the chapter on religion and cult opens with a consideration of the existence of a Germanic equivalent (other than as a late loan-word) of Celtic *nemeton*, "sacred grove", which reduces it to an outside possibility.

<sup>1</sup> See particularly pp. 63, 78-9; the re-union of Celts and Germans is referred to the La Tène period (p. 133 and passim).

De Vries proceeds in a similarly open-minded spirit to show that the Germanic priest was not so totally different from the Druid as might be thought, and that the Germans were sacrificers (despite Caesar, *De bello Gallico* vi, 21), and temple-worshippers (despite Tacitus, *Germania* ix), in both respects resembling the Celts. He rightly brushes aside Caesar's allegation that the Germans worship only what they can see (Sun, Moon, Fire). He might have added that it is a rhetorical commonplace to declare that man is most prone to worship what he can see. As a loyal supporter of Dumézil, de Vries naturally finds reflections of Indo-European mythology among both the Celts and the Germans, and it is not clear that the chapter claims to offer support for the theory of a Germanic-Celtic post-Indo-European common culture. Rather, it implies that the two races had sufficient common ground of ancient origin to develop such a culture readily in favourable circumstances (p. 100). In the chapter on social life, tribal land-ownership and the *comitatus* are the main subjects, and some similarities of Celts and Germans are pointed out. Lastly, in the chapter on poets and heroes, there is first an interesting discussion of early Celtic and Germanic poetry, which cannot be said to contribute much to the theory of a common culture,<sup>2</sup> and secondly a consideration of motives of heroic story common to Germanic and Celtic, illustrated mainly from the story of Sigurd and the Irish sagas. This last has been more fully discussed by de Vries elsewhere,<sup>3</sup> and is the solidest support for his theory.<sup>4</sup>

Most of de Vries's material could be explained as the result of the ultimate common ancestry of the Celts and the Germans. That the results of this common ancestry are traceable outside the linguistic field de Vries is a firm believer. Often he adds to

<sup>2</sup> This discussion fails to distinguish the heroic panegyric, which was certainly Celtic and presumably Germanic, from the epic lay, which was certainly Germanic, but for which there is no evidence in Celtic. (De Vries quotes *Three Fragments* [under 722] as evidence for the existence of poems describing the wars of the men of Leinster. But the text is of uncertain date, romantic in character, and is preserved only in an early modern manuscript by an antiquary fully equal to improving his exemplar.)

<sup>3</sup> *P.B.B.* lxxv, 225-47.

<sup>4</sup> Here de Vries might have pointed out the frequent parallels to his material outside Germanic-Celtic. The hero vulnerable in one spot only is well known, and Brunhild's flame-guarded castle has a readier parallel in the keep of Tartarus (*quae rapidus flammis ambit torrentibus amnis*) than in Maelduin's island. Sigurd's mastery of bird language is given by contact with a serpent, and so belongs to a dispersed folk-tale group, the salmon of the Irish version is an isolated divergence. The only peculiarly Germanic-Celtic motives produced by de Vries are, (1) the combination of the hero vulnerable in one spot only with the wife who betrays her husband's secret, and (2) the testing of steel by cutting something soft or fine. (Scott has an elaborate version of the second of these, *Talisman* xxvii, but he probably knew the story of Sigurd.)

his Germanic-Celtic correspondences a third witness (usually Greek or Indian). One wonders if the evidence for special Germanic-Celtic correspondences can ever appear great, unless the theory of descent from Indo-European for matter other than linguistic be abandoned. However, de Vries's book can be recommended as the work of an honest scholar, perhaps a little desirous to have the best of two worlds, but anxious to establish the present position of knowledge, although well aware that the time for the final word is yet to come.

A. CAMPBELL

THE VIKINGS. BY JOHANNES BRØNDSTED. *Penguin Books*, 1960. 320 pp.

THE VIKINGS. BY HOLGER ARBMAN. *Thames and Hudson*, 1961. 212 pp.

*Scandinavian Archæology* by Shetelig, Falk and Gordon appeared in 1937 and in its latter chapters has been a useful companion to Norse studies for the British student. Archeological research has been so intensively pursued in the intervening years, however, that most people would agree that it stands in urgent need of revision. It is true that such collaboration between archeologist and philologist is more difficult today, partly because people find it easier to dismiss Icelandic sources altogether than to undertake the arduous task of sifting them, and partly because the archeologist tends to set increasingly stern limits on his interpretation of the material he excavates. The resulting approach is sometimes unnecessarily narrow, for however proper it may be to reject late and uncertain literary sources, it is certainly wrong to ignore the illumination that language, here essentially the names for things within the field of material culture, can shed upon archeological material. To take a small example from Professor Arbman's book, he notes that in tombs in Kiev and in other Scandinavian graves in Russia the axe found is of the light, short-hafted Slavonic type, while the other weapons are Scandinavian. This adoption by the Swedes in Russia of the Slavonic axe gives a firm background against which to assess one of the very few Slavonic loanwords in Norse, the first element in *taparox*.<sup>1</sup> Since from Norse the word came into Old English, attested in a couple of sources from the eleventh century,<sup>2</sup> it is not a bad example either of the links that bound the whole world of Viking expansion.

<sup>1</sup> The latest list, in Jan de Vries, *Altnordisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (1957-61), xxxiii, gives sixteen words counted certain loans, including this one.

<sup>2</sup> Hj. Falk, *Altnordische Waffenkunde* (1914), 110; Bosworth-Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, s.v. *tapor-æx*, and *Supplement*, p. 720.

Of the two books to be noticed here, it is Professor Brøndsted's that comes nearest to being a new and expanded version of the relevant part of *Scandinavian Archæology*. He devotes a third of his volume to the history of the Viking Age, describing it synchronically, century by century; another third to weapons, tools, dress, transport, towns, coins, weights and measures, runic inscriptions and art; and the last third to the Viking way of life, religion and burial customs, and to "Poetry and the Viking Spirit". It will be evident that he is not afraid of drawing on late literary sources, and he does it sensibly. He carries his learning lightly, writes pleasantly and is able to explain complex things in simple terms. It would be an admirable book for the student-beginner if the author had not been so execrably served by his translator and proof-reader. The translator evidently has excellent command of Danish and English, but knows nothing about Vikings or the languages of the sources on which our knowledge of them depends. One would think an intelligent publisher would understand that a technical work needs a specialist translator — if he is in doubt in such a field as this, he could do worse than come to the Viking Society for advice. As it is, it is only safe to recommend this book to an inexperienced student in its Danish edition, which unfortunately costs six times as much as the Pelican.

Professor Arberman's book appears in a series called *Ancient Peoples and Places*, and from such a title one might expect the same kind of work as Professor Brøndsted's. In fact it covers a much narrower field, partly doubtless because each of the Scandinavian countries is to have its own volume. What we have is a chapter on the general Scandinavian background, chapters on the history of the Viking movements in a geographical arrangement, with a concluding chapter on Viking art. The historical sketch is well done, although necessarily impressionistic in so brief a compass. The brevity leads to a common defect, in that the author, especially in the first and last chapters, seems to expect too much expert knowledge on the part of the reader. Mr A. L. Binns, who has translated and edited the book, has apparently felt that the book was rather too narrow in scope, for he contributes an introduction on the Viking as "technologist", writing with learning and love on ship-building and sword-forging and, with much less learning, on poetry as well. His literary history is a little hazy — he manages to get Chaucer's dates, or the dates of the classical *Íslendinga sögur*, wrong by a century — and he makes some generalisations whose rashness he would doubtless admit himself, but all in all his essay is not an entirely misplaced

effort to lay emphasis, lacking in the book itself, on certain important features of Viking outlook and accomplishment.

The book is handsomely produced and very well illustrated, although some of the line drawings are too small to be helpful. Its bibliography compares unfavourably with that in Professor Brøndsted's volume. One thing that it has entirely in common with the Pelican volume is the inadequate preparation it has received for press. Two or three sentences are unintelligible as they stand, misprints abound (*logoumaðr* and *Pjórsárdalr* on one page, for example!). Professor Arbman or Mr Binns, or both, also have an irritating tendency to use parentheses where it is normal English, and I think Swedish, practice to use commas, but that may not upset everyone asmuch as me.

PETER FOOTE

EGIL'S SAGA. Translated by GWYN JONES. *Syracuse University Press for the American-Scandinavian Foundation*, 1960. 257 pp.

Although Professor Jones's translation of the *Egils saga* is sometimes unnecessarily far from the Icelandic and occasionally inaccurate, it may be commended for its general vigour and clarity. Temptations to which the author sometimes succumbs are, on the one hand, to write a sort of committee-English, and, on the other, to liven up the Icelandic by the use of a more colourful or forceful expression than the original warrants. An example of the first may be found on p. 31: "Associated with him was the man known as Berdla-Kári —" (*Með honum var í félagskap sá maðr, er kallaðr var Berðlu-Kári* —); and of the second on p. 153, in the description of the disposal of Skalla-Grim's corpse: "Next they whipt him off down to Naustanes —" (*Báru þeir hann þá í hviðinni ofan í Naustanes* —). In the latter instance it is a word of sustained movement rather than of sudden movement that is required, but I also harbour the suspicion that the choice of the English verb here shows a certain lack of respect for what is a serious and urgent description in the Icelandic. We should always beware of lending saga-authors, even Snorri Sturluson, too much of our modern superiority. The verse-translations seem to me good, and the translator catches particularly well the movement of the *kviðuháttir*. In his versions of the *dróttkvætt* stanzas he shows himself so adept in finding chiming sounds in English that one wonders why he did not attempt a much closer imitation of this complex metre. As it is, we have an unsystematic profusion of alliteration and *hendingar* without the shapeliness that helps to set so fine an intellectual

edge on the best scaldic verse, much of which is here in the *Egils saga*. The translation is prefaced by an introduction where the main sections are on the saga and tradition and on the date and authorship. In the former a clear account is given of the Vínheiðr-Brunanburh problem and special attention is paid to the setting and authenticity of the *Höfuðlausn*. In the latter Professor Jones states his firm belief in the attribution to Snorri and would put its composition in the years 1220-25. He has throughout accepted and assimilated the views of Professor Nordal and he re-presents them freshly and readably but without adding any novel evidence or arguments. Under these circumstances it is especially to be regretted that Professor Jones has not translated for himself the one long passage he quotes from Nordal's work but has given it in the somewhat garbled version of another writer. The text is followed by seventeen pages of illustrative notes, sometimes rather uncritical (see e.g. the reference to the burning of Blund-Ketill on p. 245). Occasionally it seems as if a prose version of a verse has not been translated from the literal prose ordering found in the notes of the *Fornrit* edition, which would have been helpful, but from the modern Icelandic paraphrase found in the same place, which is not. I wish the author had had second thoughts about the inclusion of the last sentence of note 1. There is some carelessness about diacritical marks and there is no index in what is otherwise a well-produced book.

PETER FOOTE

FØROYSK-DONSK ORÐABÓK. By M. A. JACOBSEN and CHR. MATRAS. *Føroya Fróðskaparfelag, Tórshavn, 1961*. (Agent for the Faroes: Helgi Justinussen, Tórshavn; Foreign Agent: Munksgaard, Copenhagen.) xxxvi + 521 pp.

A notable landmark in Faroese studies was the publication in 1928 of this Faroese-Danish dictionary by M. A. Jacobsen and Chr. Matras. Now, as a second edition, Professor Matras gives us what is virtually a new dictionary, published at the expense of the Landsstýri and under the auspices of Føroya Fróðskaparfelag, the learned society which in the few years of its existence has done so much to put Faroese intellectual life on the map. (Every member of the Viking Society who has influence on the purchases of a library with any interest in Northern Research, ancient or modern, should see to it that a subscription is taken out for *Fróðskaparrit*, the journal of this Faroese academy.) The new dictionary is substantially larger than the older one, containing

many hitherto unrecorded words, and many more compounds and many more verbal phrases than the first edition. One need only compare the articles on common verbs like *ganga* or *kasta* to see what an enormous expansion has been made and how useful this work will be to the would-be speaker or reader of Faroese. It would also be hard to better the glosses themselves in economy and precision. An important departure has been made in the treatment of pronunciation. In the earlier work the pronunciation was indicated with each word, but now this is only done when the pronunciation of a word departs from the normal rules. The pronunciation is indicated by a "coarse" phonetic script, making use of no special symbols. The "normal rules", those, that is, that apply in the speech of a central area comprising chiefly southern Streymoy with Tórshavn, are described in an introductory and not too elaborate survey by Mr Jørgen Rischel, where the "coarse" phonetic script is defined in relation to the conventional spelling of Faroese and to what might be called a "professional" phonetic notation. "A coarse phonetic script of this kind does not reproduce the pronunciation of words in detail; but, unlike the spelling, it stands in an unambiguous relationship to the pronunciation —". For the untrained student such a system will be useful, and it is to be hoped that it will be generally adopted, for, despite its limitations, it is far better to have a single "coarse" system of this kind than for each writer to construct his own.

Every student of comparative Germanic philology, every student of Icelandic and the Scandinavian languages, ancient or modern, should buy this book. It will mean the acquisition of a first-class tool of scholarship and, since any income from the sale of the book is to go to a special dictionary fund, the purchase will in itself be an aid and encouragement to further work in Faroese lexicography.

PETER FOOTE

HRÓLFS SAGA KRAKA. Edited by D. SLAY. *Edittones Arnamagnæanæ, Series B, vol. 1. Copenhagen, 1960. xix + 132 pp.*

THE MANUSCRIPTS OF HRÓLFS SAGA KRAKA. By D. SLAY. *Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana, Vol. XXIV. Copenhagen, 1960. x + 168 pp.*

Dr. Slay's edition of *Hrólfs Saga* is based on a thorough examination of the thirty-eight known manuscripts, all from the seventeenth century or later. He publishes separately a detailed description of the manuscripts, with discussion of their

provenance and an interesting account of early references to the saga and of the composition of some of the codices. The conclusions that emerge from this exhaustive study are (i) that all the manuscripts ultimately derive from one lost original (or does Dr Slay mean archetype?), probably of the sixteenth century (it would have been helpful if more prominence had been given to this conclusion in *Bibl. Arnam.* XXIV either by a stemma or in the General Survey, p. 4); (ii) that twelve manuscripts are primary and are (presumably) derived either directly from the lost original or from good copies of it, in the same way as AM 9 fol. is derived from AM 12b fol. which survives only as a fragment (Dr Slay nowhere states categorically what he considers the relation between the primary manuscripts and the lost original to be); (iii) that, of the primary manuscripts, five show themselves by their close correspondence to be reliable versions of a common original, while the remaining twenty-six can be traced to one or other of the primary manuscripts (these relationships are often complex: Dr Slay's handling of them seems admirable). In his edition he gives the text of one of the five reliable manuscripts, with variants from the other four and from one unreliable primary manuscript (the readings of AM 12b fol. should surely have been included here in full rather than in a 'fairly full' list of the differences between it and AM 9 fol. in *Bibl. Arnam.* XXIV). Ample quotation is given in *Bibl. Arnam.* XXIV of variants from the six 'rejected' primary manuscripts to show the character of each and to record phrases of interest that would otherwise not see the light of day. Dr Slay's full and meticulous work provides a very thorough record of an important text. As to the printing of the text, however, one must regret the decision (not Dr Slay's) to use the diæresis sign for the double accent which in the manuscripts indicates a long vowel: each page is dotted with the confusing symbols ä and ö for á and ó (cf. the outlandish fááräd, p. 73). This seems inexcusable especially in a text which is not diplomatic; a single accent would have been preferable if distinctive type was not available (cf. the edition, p. xvii).

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