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# THE MORAL SYSTEM OF HRAFNKELS SAGA *FREYSGOÐA*

By R. D. FULK

## I

PERHAPS the most intensely studied of the *Íslendingasögur* is *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða*, and for a variety of reasons.<sup>1</sup> The saga lies at the heart of the most prolonged debate in saga criticism: scholarly credence in the historicity of the *Íslendingasögur* in general was profoundly shaken by the conclusion of E. V. Gordon (1939) and Sigurður Nordal (1940) that *Hrafnkels saga* is historically impossible, and has features of a bookish composition (the *Buchprosa* position).<sup>2</sup> What once perhaps seemed a dead issue has been reinvigorated by the appearance of several studies suggesting that even *Hrafnkels saga*, the strongest case for the *Buchprosa* theorist, must rather accurately reflect oral traditions transmitted from the tenth century to the thirteenth, when the saga was committed to writing (the *Freiprosa* position).<sup>3</sup> But *Hrafnkels saga* has attracted an exceptional amount of attention for other reasons, as well. Perhaps more students of Old Icelandic read it in the original language than any other saga, since it is of a convenient length for completion in a semester, and so has appeared in a number of editions, as well as in what has so far been the most popular elementary Old Icelandic textbook for English speakers, E. V. Gordon's *Introduction to Old Norse*. And then there is simply the literary craft of the saga: pre-eminently among the family sagas, *Hrafnkels saga* appeals to twentieth-century taste in narrative structure. The events follow a causal sequence from first to last, every character and incident serves a discernible function relevant to the whole, there are studied parallels in the action that lend the work a pleasing sense of wholeness and symmetry, and in fact there is hardly an extraneous word in the saga.

The appeal of *Hrafnkels saga* is, however, in despite of enormous uncertainties of interpretation, uncertainties that result naturally from saga style, characterized by the narrator's guise of uniform objectivity. Hrafnkell's unprovoked attack on Eyvindr poses the most striking problem: it is difficult to imagine how this act can be

approved under any ethical system, and so logic tempts one to the conclusion that Hrafnkell is not the hero of his own saga. It is in fact the conclusion of more than one study that he is not intended to engage our sympathy.<sup>4</sup> Nearly as striking a problem is the narrator's observation that Hrafnkell's humiliation at the hands of Sámr effected a change in the man's character, rendering him gentler and more likeable. That he then kills Eyrindr is peculiar, and has even led some to contradict the narrator and insist there has been no change in Hrafnkell.<sup>5</sup>

At first it perhaps seems ironic, then, that the one saga with a genuine claim to centrality in the development of twentieth-century saga scholarship, and the subject of so much critical debate, has not even yielded to a consensus opinion on so fundamental an issue as its meaning. But in fact the problems of literary interpretation and saga origins do not seem to be entirely separable. To resolve difficulties of interpretation the practice has regularly been to invoke one of two moral systems, and the choice of moral system has to a remarkable extent governed each reader's views on the composition and historicity of the saga. Those who consider Hrafnkell a hero largely view the moral system of the saga as a fierce pagan one, whereby the ability to outwit one's opponents — regardless, apparently, of the means — itself constitutes heroism. Since this moral system is rather antithetical to thirteenth-century Christianity, concomitant with this view of Hrafnkell is the inclination to adopt the *Freiprosa* position that the saga more or less accurately reflects tenth-century conditions because it is faithful to oral tradition transmitted from the pre-Conversion age. A recent variation on the *Freiprosa* position is to suppose that actual events of the tenth century have here been recast in the mould of a grim thirteenth-century secular outlook inspired by political events of the bloody *Sturlungaöld*. Both versions of the *Freiprosa* position unfortunately lead to the distasteful conclusion that the saga celebrates lawlessness and commends the hero for mere fierceness and self-gratification. The alternative is to judge Hrafnkell on the basis of Christian precept; but then there can be no genuine sympathy for him. The impulse to apply Christian ethics is strong, perhaps because the saga has a modern character, and because unlike other *Íslendingasögur*, this one strikes nearly everyone as a work primarily devoted to exploring a moral issue, even if it is not clear what moral stance is favoured: Theodore Andersson (1967, 282), for instance, begins a discussion of the saga with the remark, '*Hrafnkels saga* is the most obviously moralistic of the sagas'. That

moral atmosphere distinguishes this saga from other *Íslendingsögur*, since, as Peter Hallberg (1956; tr. 1962, 2) remarks about the sagas, 'Formally, at any rate, there prevails an almost complete freedom from moral value judgment'. But it is dissatisfying to isolate *Hrafnkels saga* so from other saga literature, especially when in other respects it is such a paragon of the genre. Though seemingly Christian impulses may surface in saga characters, especially as a device for ending the escalating violence (e.g. Flosi Pórðarson's remarkable forbearance at the close of *Njáls saga*), on the whole, real Christian virtues are not simply absent from the saga world, but are actually inimical to it. And so if Christianity were the moral system against which we were expected to judge Hrafnkell and his adversaries, this saga really would stand apart from all others. That supposed uniqueness strains plausibility when we recognize that so many saga heroes, all killers, are Christians, while Hrafnkell certainly is not. Christianity is conspicuously absent — the saga is set in pre-Conversion times, and unlike most family sagas, makes no mention of anything Christian — and so one is wary of applying Christian ethics, especially when the hero is thereby rendered unsympathetic.

These contradictions suggest the saga can reflect neither pre-Conversion nor Christian ethics. A third possibility has not been properly explored: if the saga really is a product of the thirteenth century, and yet does not reflect thirteenth-century morality, then the exclusion of Christian thought is surely purposeful. It would be a natural choice for an author seeking verisimilitude to exclude Christian morality from a saga set in the tenth century. The moral outlook of the saga then does not reflect real pagan values, but a thirteenth-century Christian's conception of morality in a pre-Conversion world. Thus the old Germanic code of honour and vengeance is naturally the proving ground for the moral opposition explored in the saga. On the one side stand those who regard the code as an abstract good in itself, regardless of its benefit or detriment to those who live by it. For these people, honour is the highest good, and they will insist on justice at all costs. They are idealists inasmuch as they will consistently stand on their principles, but their principles (especially those pertaining to vengeance) are often at odds with common sense, or what even jaded saga readers might consider plain decency. Simply, the most striking trait of these people is the overzealous prosecution of their honour. There is even a term for such people in Old Icelandic, *ofrkappsmenn*, though here they will be referred to as *ideologues*.

On the other side stand those who also live by the Germanic ethics of honour and vengeance, but who regard them as good only insofar as they accomplish practical, social ends. For this group, honour is not an end in itself, and these people will put certain other, less abstract considerations first. They will never exact vengeance merely for the sake of satisfying their own offended honour: some larger benefit must always accrue to such a grave action. The conditions under which they *will* take vengeance will be explored below. Let us call these people the *pragmatists*.<sup>6</sup> The opposition between pragmatists and ideologues provides convincing solutions to all the interpretative problems associated with the saga, and the solutions to those problems in turn reflect unambiguously on the *Freiprosa/Buchprosa* controversy as it pertains to *Hrafnkels saga* — a subject that will be taken up at the end of this paper, after a thorough examination of the opposition between pragmatism and ideology in the saga.

## II

Hermann Pálsson (1966, 114-22; 1971a, 75-9) has aptly likened *Hrafnkels saga* to a story of equally refined narrative structure, *Porsteins þátr stangarhoggs*. The comparison is especially apt because the two have much in common: they are both *Austfirðinga sögur*, apparently coeval, and present revenge episodes involving equivalent character types — a powerful *goði*, a poor farmer, and the farmer's hapless son. The similarities are such that the two stories might even be the work of a single author. I believe there is another important similarity: the two present the same opposition of moral priorities. To demonstrate the opposing forces of pragmatism and ideology it will be useful to begin by explicating the moral system of this *þátr*.

Unlike *Hrafnkels saga*, this *þátr* is a comedy, and the most broadly comic character is Pórarinn. He is presented in ironic terms from the beginning, where we are told he had been a *rauðavíkingr* in his youth (lit. a 'red' Viking, i.e. a particularly fierce one: *Austfirðinga sögur* 1950, 69), and even now that he was old and nearly blind it was unpleasant to have any dealings with him. Because of the enormous expense of arms, there is a wry implication in the narrator's observation that although Pórarinn was poor, he owned a good many weapons. He naturally turns out to be quite grim about matters pertaining to honour. He grossly overreacts to the discovery that his son had been struck with a prod

at the horse-fight, and he exaggerates the incident, saying Þorsteinn had been beaten senseless like a dog (*lostinn í svíma . . . sem hundr*, p. 70). He even goes so far as to call his good-natured son *ragr* — an excessive and wildly inappropriate accusation, especially between father and son, since this is one of the three words one could be outlawed for using, according to *Grágás*. The exaggeration of Pórarinn's vehemence, especially in an old and half-blind curmudgeon, renders him a mere type. The comedy in his irritability is nowhere clearer than at the end of the *pátrr*, where he feigns elderly infirmity in order to draw the *goði* Bjarni within range of his short-sword hidden in the bed. At any rate it is clear that Bjarni is amused rather than alarmed at the trick, since he immediately reveals his own ruse and says he will provide servants to tend Pórarinn's farm, thereby condemning him to a life of leisure.

It seems everyone in the *pátrr* is eager to pit the two reluctant protagonists against each other in a duel to the death, for the sake of their offended reputations, and it is important to recognize the comedy in the portrayal of these other hawkish types. There is unmistakable humour in the character of Bjarni's wife Rannveig, for after she finally succeeds in goading him to his long-delayed revenge, to her horror she discovers he intends to take his revenge honourably: he will challenge Þorsteinn to single combat rather than descend on him with a mob. The suddenness of her change of attitude renders her even more comic: immediately she pleads with Bjarni not to risk his life alone against such a hellish brute (*heljarmaðr*, p. 74) — an amusing characterization, given poor beleaguered Þorsteinn's stolid and endearing placidity. We can see that Rannveig, like old Pórarinn, is easily excited, and continually prepared to overreact.

The two other characters who most concern themselves with Bjarni's honour, the brothers Pórhallr and Þorvaldr, are also comic, since they are introduced at the beginning of the *pátrr* as gossips (*uppastrarmenn miklir um allt þat, er þeir heyrðu í heraði*, p. 69). There is some dry wit in their exchange over the *sviðueldr* about wethers and Bjarni's honour, but since our sympathy is entirely with Bjarni, especially after one of the other men at the fire points out the *goði*'s reason for leaving Þorsteinn alone, the real comedy lies in the brothers' chagrined discovery that Bjarni had heard every word of this. Equally unheroic (and therefore comic, given all their talk about honour) is the way they go about fighting Þorsteinn: they lure him outside with a self-abasing lie, attack without warning, two-on-one, and still manage to lose their lives.

Even Bjarni looks slightly comic once he accepts the premise that it is incumbent on him to exact vengeance. In the course of the duel it becomes apparent that Þorsteinn is holding back his superior strength, all the while pretending to be afraid of the *goði* in order to convince him he can end the fight and still maintain his superior dignity. The comedy lies in Bjarni's naively firm declaration that by no means can Þorsteinn talk his way out of it now (*Eigi mun nú stoða at beiðask undan*, p. 76), followed by his slow realization that he is severely overmatched (e.g. *Bjarni mælti: 'Betr bítr þér nú í sama vápnit, er þú hefir áðr í dag haft'*, p. 76). There is comedy also in Þorsteinn's remark upon the *goði*'s sword that it cannot be the same one he bore to his famous battle at Bøðvarsdalr. There can hardly be any malice intended in this remark — after all, Þorsteinn is endeavouring to placate Bjarni all the while. Rather, this can only be pure naivety on Þorsteinn's part, turning Bjarni's unspoken rage into comedy.

In sum, all the characters who are most insistent about honour and the old vengeance ethic are presented as comic. On the other hand, those characters who are not comic (Þorsteinn and, outside of the duel scene, Bjarni) are precisely the ones who put honour after more pragmatic considerations: Bjarni refuses to take vengeance because Þorsteinn is Pórarinn's only support; and Þorsteinn is so thoroughly unconcerned with the bauble reputation that he repeatedly claims to be frightened of Bjarni, simply to escape a duel he could himself easily win. (The consequences of winning the duel would of course be disastrous for both Þorsteinn and his father.) Moreover, it is an entertaining and pointed irony that the characters who insist on the maintenance of honour are the ones who act dishonourably, while the two pragmatists are exceptionally meticulous about honourable behaviour. As mentioned above, Pórarinn employs a ruse to bring Bjarni within stabbing distance; Rannveig is horrified at the thought of a fair and equal duel; and the brothers try to trick Þorsteinn and force unequal odds upon him. On the other hand, despite his pragmatism Bjarni insists on single combat. And Þorsteinn refuses to take advantage of Bjarni during the duel: twice Bjarni puts down his sword, to drink from the stream and to tie his shoestring, and despite these opportunities Þorsteinn stands idly by. This is what Þorsteinn is referring to when he later remarks that he could have taken advantage of Bjarni (*Orðit hafa mér svá færí í dag á þér, at ek mætta svíkja bik*, p. 76).

And so what we have in *Þorsteins þátr stangarhoggs* is a witty tale about conflicting values: the self-importance of the old vengeful

Germanic values versus the self-effacement of accommodation and cool-headedness; the old order versus the new; to put it most generally, the old idealism versus the new pragmatism. Given the many similarities between *Porsteins þátr* and *Hrafnkels saga*, it should not now be entirely surprising to find that the saga is about the same conflict of values.

## III

The corpus of *Hrafnkels saga* criticism demonstrates considerable critical sympathy for the plight of Porbjörn, the murdered shepherd's father. This is perhaps a natural attitude to assume: no one can approve of the murder, and Hrafnkell himself clearly thinks ill of it, so it seems the natural conclusion that Porbjörn's case is wholly just. Still, a few dissenting voices have portrayed Porbjörn rather differently, and it is striking to find an opinion such as Finnur Jónsson's (1920-24, II 517): 'One feels sorry for Porbjörn for not accepting this offer . . . He is petty and malicious, besides ill-endowed and short-sighted and, when everything seems to be going against him, a thoroughly feeble wretch (he cries at the Althing)'.<sup>7</sup> This assessment of Porbjörn looks considerably more accurate once evaluation of his character is divorced from the recognition that Hrafnkell was wrong to kill Einarr. Hermann Pálsson-(1966, 115-6) has pointed out that Porbjörn and Pórarinn are counterparts. But the two characters' affinities are perhaps even closer than has been supposed, since it seems Porbjörn is as preoccupied with honour as the old *rauðavíkingr*. His refusal of Hrafnkell's offer of compensation is certainly essential to the plot, but it detracts from the value of an extraordinarily well-constructed saga to suppose Porbjörn's refusal is out of character, or that character has been subordinated to the exigencies of the plot. Pórarinn grudgingly accepts a similar offer from Bjarni Brodd-Helgason, at the same time acridly remarking that *goðar* make such offers only to solace an immediate grief, and forget their promises a month later. Hermann Pálsson (1966, 116) remarks that although Porbjörn does not himself state his reasons for rejecting Hrafnkell's offer, 'vel má vera, að höfundi hafi verið svipað í huga og Pórarini'. But it is not necessary to conclude that Hrafnkell's offer is not trustworthy or honourable. First it should be remembered that Pórarinn himself is not to be trusted, and it is remarkable that the old man complains so bitterly about the offers of *goðar* at the same time as he accepts Bjarni's offer. It seems the author saw

this as another opportunity to exploit the old man's irascibility for the comedy it affords. In fact there is good reason to believe the *pátrr*'s thirteenth-century audience did not regard the old man's accusation as realistic, because the action of the *pátrr* ends with Bjarni's announcement that Pórarinn will be provided with servants, and will suffer no want the rest of his life. This could hardly have served as a satisfactory dénouement if the promises of *goðar* were as insubstantial as Pórarinn claims. Second, it is a strong indication of the generosity of Hrafnkell's offer that without hesitation Porbjörn's nephew Sámr and his brother Bjarni (*at Laugarhúsum*) both commend it, and apparently harbour no suspicion the *goði* would not honour his promises. (On Bjarni's and Sámr's reliability, see below.) In the sagas, kinsmen who demand lavish compensation are not mercenary. The purpose of compensation is to reaffirm the honour of the slain and to show that the prestige of his kinsmen is undiminished by his murder. Porbjörn's rejection of Hrafnkell's offer cannot be said to stem from either of those considerations: the offer is generous enough to reaffirm a shepherd's honour, and Porbjörn simply never had any prestige of the sort we find solaced by monetary compensation in the sagas. He may naturally have any amount of self-respect, but that is a rather different matter from comparing one's *prestige* to that of a rich and powerful *goði*. And yet his motive in rejecting the offer apparently is what Hrafnkell says it is: his insistence on arbitration implies he considers his own prestige equal to Hrafnkell's. It is not because of anything we know about medieval Icelandic attitudes that we are inclined to sympathize with Porbjörn's egalitarianism and ignore the disparity in the two men's prestige. But there can hardly be another saga in which the class status of the opposing forces is so disproportionate (except perhaps *Qlkofra pátrr*, though there the comic portrayal of Qlkofri rather confirms than refutes the point), and certainly none in which the forces on one side are referred to by the narrator as *einhleypingar* (*Austfirðinga sqgur* 1950, p. 109). The word is certainly pejorative in this context, and though the translation 'vagrants' (Hermann Pálsson 1971b, 47) has connotations that are too forceful, there is at any rate an implied connection between the men's social status and the value of their cause. This epithet can hardly be said to have any point, considering the outcome of the saga, if it is not designed to belittle Hrafnkell's opponents by characterizing them as upstarts.

It appears, then, that rather than getting fair compensation for the death of his son, Porbjörn's only concern in his meeting with

Hrafnkell is his own self-importance. To us this perhaps seems a harsh judgment of a man who has just lost his eldest son. But Þorbjörn's actions after rejecting Hrafnkell's terms make it clear this is the attitude we are intended to take. At this point Þorbjörn and Þórarinn seem particularly alike, since both are irascible enough to call their closest kinsmen cowards. That Þorbjörn is in the wrong about his kinsmen cannot be doubted. In the case of Bjarni at Laugarhúsum we have a character who appears nowhere else in the saga, and so serves no other purpose than to assure Þorbjörn he has acted foolishly. Therefore, if Þorbjörn were right, Bjarni would serve no purpose in the saga at all, since it can hardly matter to the development of the story if he is a coward. But if Bjarni is right, his function is clear: he is empowered to characterize Þorbjörn for us (and with some annoyed incredulousness, at that) as rash and vain; and we may rely on Bjarni's impartiality to the extent that any prejudice on his part ought to stem from considerations of kinship, disposing him in his brother's favour. In the case of Sámr the indications are even clearer. Whatever we decide about Sámr's character later in the saga, here at his first appearance in person he is no coward. He seems unruffled by his uncle's insults. He proves his courage when he accepts the case, and so when, after that, he still thinks Þorbjörn is a fool (*mér þykkir þar heimskum manni at duga, sem þú ert*, p. 108), the equitableness of his judgment is reliable. Given the supreme importance of the uncle-nephew relationship in early Germanic society, it is of some significance that Þorbjörn has difficulty convincing even Sámr to lend his support. Sámr has no illusions about the likely outcome of the case, and so in his equanimity he is a fine foil to Þorbjörn, who in this exchange with his nephew alternates with self-abandon between abusive gall and ingratiating sentimentality. When Sámr points out to him that they will bring home only humiliation from the Althing, Þorbjörn's response epitomizes the emotionalism of his outlook: *Pó er mér þat mikil hugarbót, at þú takir við málinu. Verðr at þar, sem má* (p. 108).

Modern commentary on the saga has not been kind to Sámr, and at times the criticism of his character has been stinging: in one place he is called 'a notorious blab . . . conceived in comic terms' (Thomas 1973, 420); in another he is 'the supreme fool in the saga' (Heinemann 1975a, 448); and in a third he is an 'ehrgeiziger, skrupelloser Mann' (de Vries 1967, II 440). It is perhaps possible to lay too much emphasis on Sámr's foolishness, grasping at the one character in the saga we can be certain of. It is indeed a tactical

blunder for Sámr to spare the hero's life (as Porgeirr seems to take some pleasure in pointing out to him), but his doing so does not characterize him as mindless. He specifically says he is sparing Hrafnkell's life because the man has many young children to provide for. If we ought to admire Bjarni Brodd-Helgason for leaving Porsteinn untroubled for the sake of his old father, it would be odd to condemn Sámr's compassion for Hrafnkell's children. After all, Sámr is neither witless nor out-and-out malicious, and if he were either, the saga would suffer for it. In fact, the author seems to have foreseen the difficulties that would ensue from providing Hrafnkell with an unworthy opponent, and has made an effort to redeem something of Sámr's character. For example, Sámr is said to have made a good *goði* in Hrafnkell's place: *Sámr var vinsell af sínum þingmönnum, því at hann var hægr ok kyrr ok góðr órlausna* (p. 125).

Likewise Sámr seems to have been prevented from revealing his most objectionable characteristics until the very end of the saga, again in order not to spoil his status as Hrafnkell's foil. The effect is that we see Sámr develop in the course of the story. When we first hear him speak, he seems to stand a reasonable chance of being considered a pragmatist, because there is no taint of vanity or offended honour in his advice to Þorbjörn, despite the latter's taunts. Rather, he offers to return humbly with his uncle to Aðalból and find out whether the *goði* will still tender the same generous terms. But when Sámr says he will take over the case from Þorbjörn, against his better judgment, solely because they are kinsmen — a consideration that did not manage to sway Bjarni — he looks considerably less pragmatic. It is not long then before he begins to appear as much of an ideologue as his uncle. At the Althing, when even Þorbjörn is ready to admit what a fool he has been, it is Sámr who takes up the standard of irrationality. His stated reason for refusing to give up the case is as misdirected as the one that drove his uncle to initiate the action: it is a matter of honour, since Þorbjörn questioned his courage till he accepted the case (*Fryðir þú oss mjók hugar ok qlum þeim, er í þetta mál vildu eigi ganga með þér*, p. 110). This speech is ironically crowned by the maudlin spectacle of Þorbjörn bursting into tears, so moved is he by Sámr's resolution in the face of heroic odds. Of course Sámr's is precisely the sort of sentiment Þorbjörn ought to revel in, given what a slave to honour he is himself, and so his approval comically seals Sámr's high-mindedness with a metaphoric kiss of betrayal — the first clear instance of comedy in what has so far been a sober saga.<sup>8</sup>

Sámr's idealism surfaces again several times in the saga. A particularly distinct instance is his unconcern when Porgeirr points out to him that there is no advantage to winning the court case — the victory could in fact bring Sámr worse trouble from Hrafnkell — without the ability to enforce the verdict. But because the author has done some balancing of Sámr's character throughout the saga, for the purpose of rendering him a worthy opponent for Hrafnkell, the real nature of Sámr's conception of honour is not revealed till the very end, where his mean-spiritedness is at last allowed full range. His mission to Porskafjörðr having proved a failure, he rejects the Pjóstarssons' gifts, and calls the brothers faint-hearted (*litlir i skapi*, p. 133), and this sort of behaviour suggests a strong family resemblance. The pettiness of Sámr's reaction is highlighted by the contrasting generosity of the brothers: they offer to move Sámr and his family out to the West, where they will protect them from Hrafnkell; when Sámr prepares to leave in a huff and asks for an exchange of horses, they agree with alacrity (*Var þat begar til reiðu*, p. 133); and of course they offer him the gifts he rejects. His pride is hurt by Porgeirr's evaluation of his dealings with Hrafnkell, and this offence to his honour eventually leads him to turn even on those who had been his staunchest support.

Sámr's brother Eyvindr has raised some persistent difficulties in the interpretation of the saga. Hardly a reader has failed to remark that Eyvindr is an innocent bystander to Hrafnkell's feud with Sámr, and so it is not fair that he falls victim in the struggle. Nor is there anything ignoble about Eyvindr's actions for the short while we are acquainted with him, and in fact the narrator offers some remarks quite to the contrary. For instance, when Eyvindr goes down fighting we are told he defended himself well and manfully (*Eyvindr varðisk vel ok drengiliga*, p. 129). Likewise after it is explained that he had raised his young relation the *skósveinn* out of poverty, taken him abroad (quite an honour), and treated him as an equal, it is remarked that Eyvindr got quite a bit of credit for his treatment of the boy (*Petta bragð Eyvindar var uppi haft, ok var þat alþýðu rómr, at færi væri hans líkar*, p. 126). At first glance, then, it seems the author's purpose is to elicit sympathy for Eyvindr, and the inevitable result is that Hrafnkell looks quite the villain for killing him.

The uncertainty about Hrafnkell's heroic status as a result of this killing is unfortunate, since a close examination of the text suggests just the opposite was intended. Rather than to derogate Hrafnkell's character, the mention of Eyvindr's noble qualities is

intended to amplify Hrafnkell's prestige in overcoming such an adversary. This intent should be evident from the start, since the narrator introduces Eyvindr as the most heroic of men (*inn vaskasti maðr*, p. 125). The implication of this remark is that Eyvindr as a character really does not matter much, since the remark is a clear violation of that standard of formal objectivity that Lars Lönnroth (1976, 83) calls *impassibilité*. A narrator may at the very outset establish any number of attributes of a character (temperament, accomplishments, appearance, etc.), but an overt evaluation of a character's *worth* (male characters' worth being measured generally in *vaskleikr*) is strikingly at odds with saga conventions. It would be an appalling breach of decorum to introduce, for instance, Gunnarr á Hlíðarenda this way, and so the necessary conclusion is that Eyvindr's valour does not matter in the same way as genuine heroes' valour matters. This departure from saga conventions becomes comprehensible, on the other hand, if we understand the author's real dilemma: he needed to provide Hrafnkell with a worthy conquest, but at the same time saw the dangers of gratuitously slowing the action and creating unwarranted sympathy for Eyvindr if he established the man's worthiness through dramatic rather than expository characterization.

The creation of the character Eyvindr is itself a response to difficulties raised by Sámr's character. It was remarked above that the author must have recognized the problem that arose from making Sámr look too absurd, since he made an effort to mitigate Sámr's foolishness, and kept the man's worst characteristics in reserve till the end of the saga. Still it is apparent that Sámr could not serve as a target of revenge commensurate with Hrafnkell's dignity. And so the narrator introduces Eyvindr and tells us flatly at the outset that here is a noble man. The point is openly reiterated more than once: the *gríðkona* at Hrafnkelsstaðir, for instance, calls him worthy of Hrafnkell's revenge (*svá menntr, at hefnd væri í honum*, p. 127). The tacit corollary is that revenge has not been taken before this because Sámr would *not* serve that purpose. Then Porgeirr is made to state that corollary explicitly in the last chapter: he explains that Hrafnkell left Sámr in peace and waited till he could take his vengeance on someone who seemed to him a better man (*er honum þótti þér vera meiri maðr*, p. 133). Porgeirr's comment in particular carries an air of authorial approval, coming as it does at the very end of the saga. At any rate, if the author expected us to disagree with Porgeirr's evaluation of Hrafnkell's prudence, it is a mystery why he would put this evaluation at the

end of the saga, where it looks distinctly like a final summary, and into the mouth of a character whose approval of Hrafnkell cannot by any means be attributed to a prejudicial fondness for him. And so the opinions of Porgeirr and the *gríðkona* about the appropriateness of killing Eyvindr may be taken at face value, after all. Nor then are such minor characters' opinions expressed for no very good reason, though it seems that is what must be assumed if the opinions of Porgeirr and the *gríðkona* are not taken for attitudes we are expected to share. The saga now begins to look remarkably straightforward, to the extent that its most direct statements may be interpreted literally, without any elaborate contrivance.

Since, as it now seems, Eyvindr's character is determined solely by the requirements of the plot, there is no good reason to suppose much sympathy is intended for him, and in fact it now becomes apparent that he is, after all, something of an ideologue. It would of course be making the saga too schematic to suppose that every character must be either a pragmatist or an ideologue, even a character as unimportant as Eyvindr. But Eyvindr does have some traits like those of Hrafnkell's other opponents, or at any rate unlike those of the hero himself. One of these traits is hinted from the start, since the second piece of information we learn about Eyvindr, immediately after he is called *vaskastr*, is that although he is told about Sámr's feud with Hrafnkell, he pays little heed to it (*ok lét hann sér um þat fátt finnask*, p. 125). Perhaps he is right *in principle* to suppose the matter does not directly concern him, but it is a characteristic of Hrafnkell's opponents to put their faith in principles divorced from reality. The foolishness of Eyvindr's faith in the abstract rightness of his uninvolvement is what is being stressed by this immediate mention of his unconcern. Moreover, we know Eyvindr really does believe the matter does not concern him, given his subsequent actions. His indifference is mentioned immediately because this self-delusion is destined to be his downfall, and so undergoes considerable development as the chase proceeds. So patterned and economical are the introduction of Eyvindr, the indication of his tragic flaw, and the narration of his downfall, that the story is like an exemplum. When the *skósveinn* urges him to ride away and save his life, we can predict what Eyvindr's response will be: he has no quarrel with Hrafnkell. But when it becomes apparent that despite the wrongness of it all, Hrafnkell really is pursuing him, and as the boy's appeals grow more insistent, Eyvindr is forced to admit his real motive: he would

be ridiculed if he rode away, only later to discover that Hrafnkell had not actually been menacing him. The *skósveinn* in fact seems to have been created primarily to solve the problem of how to elicit this confession. Fredrik Heinemann (1974, 111) remarks: 'Although this emotion probably motivates a good many saga characters, they are seldom forced to confess this fact under pressure.' Then there can be little doubt about the author's motive in having Eyvindr make such an unheroic admission, especially after he has made a point of referring to him as *vaskastr*. After all, this exchange with the *skósveinn* — in fact, this whole slow chase rather than a quick ambush — just is not necessary to the plot. It is included because the author had a point to make: outnumbered, Eyvindr goes to it, sacrificing his life and the lives of his four companions on a point of pride.<sup>9</sup>

Finally among Hrafnkell's opponents are the Pjóstarssons. Sigurður Nordal (1940, 63; tr. 1958, 53) was the first to point out that there is a strong contrast between the characters of the brothers: 'Thorkell is brisk, goodhearted, inexperienced, eager for risky enterprises, and anxious to court danger. ('Nothing ventured, nothing gained' is his motto.) Thorgeirr is circumspect, staid, slow to undertake anything, but fearless once he lets himself go, realistic and merciless.' Leaving aside the approval implied in calling Porkell goodhearted, these contrasting portraits could well serve as types of the ideologic and the pragmatic. The contrast is established from the moment we first see the brothers together. That Porkell takes an interest in the case at all reveals he is not a pragmatist, but his idealism is most strongly characterized by the terms in which he tries to solicit his brother's interest, since they pertain only to *virðing*: the most honour accrues to him who defeats the most formidable adversary; and there is no dishonour in defeat at Hrafnkell's hands, since that has been the fate of everyone who has opposed him (pp. 114-15). If the author had not intended to portray Porgeirr as a pragmatist, these inducements might have been successful. But Porkell's brother remains unimpressed by appeals to honour, and it is only to avoid ill will between them that Porgeirr finally agrees to lend his support (p. 115). Porkell's behaviour here is remarkable. When his appeal to honour fails, he turns petulant, saying his advice is little esteemed, and he just might go where he is better appreciated. One is reminded of Porbjörn's peevishness when seeking help from Bjarni and Sámr. Likewise Porgeirr's initial reaction to the mention of Hrafnkell's crime is that like the other *goðar*, he has no intention of getting

involved (p. 114), and one is reminded of Bjarni's and Sámr's initial reactions to Porbjörn's incitements. It seems to be a characteristic of ideologues to turn sullen when thwarted (and Sámr is no exception), and a characteristic of pragmatists to know their minds immediately, regardless of what we should consider the moral issues involved.

The contrast between the brothers' outlooks is maintained throughout the saga, and the two are assigned parts consistent with their views — so consistent that on this basis Sigurður Nordal (1940, 63; tr. 1958, 53) approves a textual emendation, reassigning to Porgeirr a particularly pragmatic speech attributed to Porkell. For instance, when Sámr displays his unabashed impracticality, strutting about the Althing and revelling in his victory without a thought for the future, it is practical Porgeirr who is assigned the task of pointing out to him the precariousness of his position. Likewise it is Porgeirr who sees to the practical matter of conducting the *féránsdómr* while Porkell chooses to amuse himself watching Hrafnkell and his men hang by their hamstrings. Perhaps the clearest example comes at the end of the saga, when the Þjóstarssons decline to assist Sámr in opposing Hrafnkell again. The narrator makes an emphatic point of telling us *this time* it is Porgeirr who answers for the brothers: *Porgeirr hafði meir svqr fyrir þeim bræðrum í þat sinni* (p. 132). Of course if Porkell answered it would be in character for him to grant Sámr's second request, for the same reasons he granted the first. E. V. Gordon (1939, 6-8) and Sigurður Nordal (1940, 10-17; tr. 1958, 7-13) have pointed out that Porkell and Porgeirr have no discoverable historical counterparts, and have argued that the two are in fact products of the author's imagination. If the brothers are the author's creation, surely he needed to create just one benefactor for the sake of the plot. That he created two, with the additional explanations that duality entails (e.g. the sharing of the *goðorð*), must be an indication of the thematic importance he attached to the contrast between their characters.

#### IV

This distinction between pragmatists and ideologues puts Hrafnkell's own character into a different light. The change in Hrafnkell's character should now appear obvious, being a conversion from the one point of view to the other. When he kills Einarr his motives are entirely ideologic: he stands idealistically by his

oath to Freyr, and so this is a killing entirely on principle. The repercussions of the act teach the hero how ill-motivated some principles can be, and how like some of his opponents' motives his own have been.

It is not difficult to show that we are intended to take a dim view of this killing. In addition to Hrafnkell's own admission that this is among the worst of his homicides, we have the implication that the author saw it as particularly bad, since he seems to have taken some extraordinary precautions in order to palliate Hrafnkell's crime, and so ensure that the *goði* will not lose his heroic status and our sympathy. Most notable in this respect is the way Einarr's disobedience and death are presented. It is unlikely anyone would really believe that Einarr deserves to die for riding the horse, and so it is remarkable that the author highlights the shepherd's culpability by having him state, himself, that it would be pernicious of him (*meingefit*, p. 102) to ride Freyfaxi after he had been warned.<sup>10</sup> More important, the way Einarr treats the horse is shameful: he rides Freyfaxi from morning to evening, travelling fast over an extraordinary distance — at least 90 kilometres of rough terrain if the traditional topographical identifications are correct.<sup>11</sup> The narrator is explicit about the awful condition of the horse after this treatment (p. 103). Note also that it is the treatment of Freyfaxi, not the mere fact that the horse was ridden, that Hrafnkell responds to when the stallion arrives at Aðalból (p. 104). Einarr is not and can never be a villain, and so it is all the more remarkable a sign of the author's regard for Hrafnkell that he has attempted to minimize our sympathy for Einarr.

The riding of Freyfaxi is also arranged in such a way as to suggest fate is forcing a regrettable course of action upon the characters. When Einarr goes to mount a horse, they all run away except Freyfaxi. For the purposes of the plot it would suffice to leave the matter at that, but the narrator makes a curious point of relating how the horses had never before been so shy, and in contrast, how still Freyfaxi was, as if he were rooted to the ground (p. 103). The suggestion is that the supernatural is at work, and one's suspicion becomes a conviction when Freyfaxi reveals an anthropomorphic will, galloping down to Aðalból to let Hrafnkell know how he has been treated, holding a strange conversation with the hero, and returning to the herd the moment he is dismissed. Edward Condren (1973, 521) sees something supernatural in the disappearance and reappearance of the sheep, and O. D. Macrae-Gibson (1974-77, 257) suggests Einarr's not having heard the sheep the first time he

rode by the *gil* is another manifestation of fate working against Einarr. It is no coincidence that these are the only supernatural elements, other than Hallfreðr's dream, in an otherwise realistic saga, because they serve an important purpose. The implication is that Hrafnkell had the situation thrust upon him by unopposable forces.

But the author goes to even greater lengths to mitigate our censure of Hrafnkell, by removing any taint of malice from the killing. Like all good saga heroes, Hrafnkell sleeps on the matter, and so we know this is not a rash act committed in a moment's anger. He styles himself not as an avenger going to battle, but as the instrument of justice, wearing black and carrying a single weapon (*Hann ríðr i blám klæðum. Óxi hafði hann í hendri, en ekki fleira vápna*, p. 104). His composure, even his equanimity, is stressed by having him compliment Einarr on the quality of his husbandry, despite his intention to execute him immediately afterward. And the blow when it comes is not bloody and exultant, like the slash of the avenger, but swift and undramatized: *pá hljóp hann af baki til hans ok hjó hann banahögg. Eptir þat ríðr hann heim* (p. 105). Finally, avengers do not raise cairns over their victims, as Hrafnkell does over Einarr. Killers were required by law to bury their victims, but a cairn is a different matter altogether, since *vorður* are intended as memorials of one kind or another, the function they serve elsewhere in the Old Icelandic records.<sup>12</sup> In this particular, the absence of malice on Hrafnkell's part is expressed in terms of a certain generosity, since this appears to be no mean monument: it is remarked that from the shieling the cairn was used to mark mid-evening, and the purpose of this observation apparently is to indicate that the cairn was sizeable.

If Hrafnkell's crime is not the result of anger, nor even of personal ill will toward Einarr, it must be due to an error in his reasoning, and the narrator conveniently tells us the *goði*'s reasoning the moment before the execution: *En við þann átrúnað, at ekki verði at þeim mönnum, er heitstrengingar fella á sik, þá hljóp hann af baki . . .* (p. 105). The killing then is a matter of principle, and so reflects well the attitude of an ideologue. The problem with principles of this sort is that their maintenance is prompted solely by a fatuous self-regard, rather than considerations of social welfare, though properly it is for its social value that we esteem the virtue of keeping one's word. It is a recognition of the difference between these two types of motivation that characterizes the change in Hrafnkell. Given the narrator's state-

ment, *en miklu var maðrinn nú vinsælli ok gæfari ok hægri en fyrr at qliu* (p. 125) after Hrafnkell's move to Fljótsdalr, it is remarkable how many scholars have flatly contradicted the saga, claiming there is little or no change in Hrafnkell.<sup>13</sup> But even if we did not have the narrator's statement, it would be evident that the author believed Hrafnkell undergoes a change. After all, the author would not have created all these extenuating circumstances for the killing of Einarr in order to moderate our criticism of Hrafnkell unless he believed both that Hrafnkell is the hero of the saga and that the hero is acting unwisely at this point. Hrafnkell must be acting wisely at the end of the saga in order to rank as the hero, and so he simply must undergo a change.

Another piece of evidence for a real change in Hrafnkell is his renunciation of the Æsir. Many have viewed this breach of faith as a covert Christian element in the saga.<sup>14</sup> But as a Christian impulse the renunciation serves no discernible purpose of any relevance to the rest of the saga, and ascribes to the hero belief in a moral system that is frankly contradicted by his later killing of Eyvindr. However, if the real issue is not Christianity versus paganism, but pragmatism versus ideology, the renunciation of the gods is a more apposite expression of the change in Hrafnkell than any other could be. In abjuring them he abjures his ideology in a rather literal sense, since his idealistic adherence to his oath was the cause of the killing of the shepherd — in renouncing his faith he is in effect saying he will never again allow himself to be governed by anything as unpragmatic as an oath to a god. But this is also a renunciation of ideology in a figurative sense, since the gods embody the old pagan values, especially those we find most objectionable in the ideologues of the saga: insistence on honour, and thirst for vengeance.

The reason so many refuse to believe Hrafnkell changes in the course of the saga is that to most minds the killing of Eyvindr is as bad as, if not worse than, the killing of Einarr. To believe that Hrafnkell changes then requires one to believe that we are expected to approve of the later killing. It may be true, as argued above, that the author intended no real sympathy for Eyvindr, and even made him look foolish in his ideology, despite his necessary valour; but it is a rather different matter to say Hrafnkell is right to kill him. Nor is it entirely satisfying to suppose, with Sigurður Nordal (1940, 59-60; tr. 1958, 49-50), that Hrafnkell's motive is simply to ensure that there will be no danger of revenge from Eyvindr once Hrafnkell finally settles the score with Sámr. This

could be part of Hrafnkell's reasoning, but if it is true, as argued above, that Eyvindr is introduced into the saga solely because Sámr is not himself a worthy target of revenge, then the threat Eyvindr poses can only have been an afterthought on the author's part. The opposition of pragmatism and ideology explains how we can be expected to commend Hrafnkell's actions here. It seems neither pragmatists nor ideologues are categorically opposed to killing, but the two groups have different ideas about what motives justify homicide. The ideologues insist on retribution at the slightest provocation, and it seems no offence is too petty to merit the ultimate vengeance. The pragmatic are rather more circumspect, and in order to establish what they believe justifies a killing it will be useful to examine *Porsteins þátr* once again.

No reader is particularly surprised at Porsteinn's first murder. Pórðr is a thoroughly disagreeable and threatening character, and there is some satisfaction in seeing him get his deserts. Porsteinn's psychological consistency here is questionable, since elsewhere he is portrayed as even-tempered; but perhaps the psychological motivation can be overlooked, since the murderer has such a transparent moral motivation: the reader is not displeased to see Pórðr punished. The case is not the same with Porvaldr and Pórhallr. They are shameless gossips, and too clever for their own good, but they are by no means threatening. In fact, they at least have sufficient introspection to realize how foolish they have been (*Nú þykkjask þeir víst ofmælt hafa*, p. 73). And so because they are not shameless the way Pórðr was, Bjarni's sending them to their deaths seems harsh. Of course Porsteinn must kill them once they attack him, but the moral motivation for their deaths is not clear. Psychological motivation seems to break down entirely when it comes to Bjarni's decision to fight Porsteinn. Certainly it is necessary to the plot that they fight, but it is difficult to believe that Bjarni, who has been so reasonable throughout, and had such good reasons to leave Porsteinn undisturbed, would suddenly and for no very good reason decide to fight the man. Such disregard of psychological consistency would diminish our estimation of the *þátr*.

I suggest there is psychological consistency here, and that Bjarni and Porsteinn share a single reason for their decisions to kill. Porsteinn takes no action against Pórðr until his father goads him to it. Just as Hrafnkell's killing of Einarr is curiously dispassionate, so is Porsteinn's approach to Pórðr marked by a composure that is odd, considering it was only minutes before that his father's

taunts provoked him to the decision: Porsteinn even goes so far as to offer Pórðr an easy way out of the coming fight, if he will say the blow at the horse-fight was an accident. The conclusion seems inescapable that Porsteinn has not been wrought up to a passion by his father's insults, and so he must have a rational motive. The most likely reason, then, is that he realizes life with his father will be insupportable if he does not act. The importance of this psychological motivation increases when we recognize that the supposed moral motivation is flawed: our moral satisfaction in the killing is marred by the realization that Pórðr apparently is unarmed when he is murdered. Why then does Bjarni send Porvaldr and Pórhallr to fight Porsteinn? He must know they will be killed — or failing that, at least it is odd that Bjarni at this point forsakes his intention of leaving Porsteinn alone. As pointed out above, a killing seems a harsh consequence of a little gossip, no matter how maliciously intended. The answer must be that Bjarni does this for much the same reason Porsteinn kills Pórðr. Bjarni must realize that life for him at Hof will be difficult if this situation continues. He will not maintain his authority for long if even those who most owe him their respect and support, his own servants, mock him and question his courage. Either he must prove himself to them or put an end to their talk altogether. In this instance he chooses the latter course because he correctly surmises that the ridicule of him is not general at Hof — as we see, the other farmhand who speaks at the *sviðueldr* clearly does not share Porvaldr and Pórhallr's opinion. It is the other course, proving himself, that Bjarni chooses when he decides to fight Porsteinn. This is the clearest case of all, since Bjarni's choice is in direct response to Rannveig's assertion that he is losing the support of his *þingmenn*: *Pykkir þingmönnum þínum eigi vænt til halds, þar sem þú ert, ef þessa er óhefnt, ok eru þér mjok mislagðar hendr í kné* (p. 74). There is an apt parallel in *Hrafnkels saga*, where pragmatic Porgeirr Þjóstarsson agrees to lend his support to the case only when he sees that it will create enmity between his brother and himself if he does not. In sum, then, Porsteinn's and Bjarni's decisions to kill will no longer seem out of character once we recognize the importance these two men attach to preserving their positions in their own homes.

If a pragmatist will take vengeance not for the sake of any supercilious sense of honour, but rather for the sake of retaining the confidence of servants and supporters, and maintaining peace in his own home, it immediately becomes apparent why Hrafnkell

decides to kill Eyvindr. When even the lowliest servant in the house, a *griðkona*, can berate Hrafnkell with impunity over his affairs with Sámr — to his face, and in front of the household — it is time for him to act. This is not to denigrate the importance of the construction Porgeirr at the end of the saga puts on Hrafnkell's delay in taking revenge: we must accept as accurate his explanation that Hrafnkell was waiting for a better victim than Sámr to arrive on the scene. But introducing the woman provided the author with an effective way to keep Hrafnkell's motives from seeming at all unpragmatic. After all, the woman is not a necessary character, and her *hvøt* in particular seems at first glance superfluous. She is introduced because the failing support that her criticism implies forces Hrafnkell to act, regardless of whether he had actually been waiting for Eyvindr to return to Iceland. If he had attacked Eyvindr on his own initiative it would surely have seemed an ideologue's act, a response merely to slighted honour. But with his credibility at home in question, Hrafnkell has a more immediate motive, tied to reason rather than emotion. Note that there is a considerable difference between this killing and the first. Had he spared Einarr, Hrafnkell stood to lose no one's good opinion but Freyr's. He faced no crisis of confidence in his own home, the way he does in the second killing, and the way Þorsteinn does in his *bátr*. In fact, I think most readers' opinion of Hrafnkell would improve considerably if Einarr were spared, and the author's referring to Hrafnkell as a bully (*ójafnaðarmaðr mikill*, p. 99), and his efforts to provide mitigating circumstances for the first killing, imply that his opinion was the same. Note also that there is a considerable difference between Hrafnkell's allowing himself to be swayed by a servant's opinion and, for instance, Sámr's giving in to Þorbjörn's insults. In the latter instance, Þorbjörn's motives are anything but selfless. He stands to benefit monetarily if he manages to cow Sámr into accepting the case; and we know as well that his opinion is baseless, since for all his other faults Sámr is no coward — he is foolhardy, if anything. Nor is there any reason to think Sámr would suffer unduly for allowing his uncle to maintain a low opinion of him. (Cf. how Porgeirr indulges Porkell, with whom he must live under the same roof.) Things are otherwise with Hrafnkell and the *griðkona*. She stands to gain nothing by this killing, and so unless she is simply perversely bloodthirsty, it is likely her attitude reflects the general opinion in Fljótsdalr.<sup>15</sup> His own father's refusal to help shows that Sámr would lose no one's high regard but Þorbjörn's by refusing the case. Conversely, Hrafnkell seems already to be losing

his own household's respect. Finally, we just do not sympathize with Porbjörn's unreasonable demands, while there is some reason to believe that the author intended us to take a certain satisfaction in the slaying of Eyrvindr. The best evidence lies in the terrible cruelty of Sámr and his party, as shown by the torture of Hrafnkell.

If there are any doubts about where one's sympathy ought to lie, they are dispelled at the *féránsdómr*. I suspect the thirteenth-century audience was even more offended than we by the torture of Hrafnkell, since, as Einar Ól. Sveinsson (1940; tr. 1953, 73) remarks, even in those violent times of the Sturlungs, torture was not an Icelandic practice. It has been pointed out, moreover, that outside of *Hrafnkels saga*, torture of an enemy is entirely foreign to the family sagas (Steblin-Kamenskij 1971; tr. 1973, 100; Stefán Einarsson 1957, 132). The physical cruelty of the torture of course is abhorrent, but that is only a small part of the overall cruelty. If Sámr and the Pjóstarssons really were noble opponents there would be no torture, just an outright killing. Offended honour demands only monetary compensation or a retributive slaying — torture is no satisfaction to offended honour, but only to the sort of personal spite Hrafnkell did *not* feel when he killed Einarr. Instead the author makes it clear that the Pjóstarssons take delight in this cruelty. Porgeirr points out to Hrafnkell that he probably never imagined he would be put to so much shame; Porkell says he will stay with Hrafnkell rather than choose to conduct the *féránsdómr*, because it seems the easier task; and Porgeirr tells Sámr, after the confiscation, that he can do what he likes with Hrafnkell, since he looks tame now (pp. 120-121). These remarks are directed toward the only person whose pride they could hurt — Hrafnkell. The brothers are amusing themselves by humiliating him while they torture him. The author further solicits our indignation by setting this shameful behaviour in contrast to the nobility of Hrafnkell's conduct: at first the hero pleads for his own life and the lives of his men, who are innocent; but when this proves ineffectual he continues to plead for his men's lives. Certainly it is essential to the plot that Hrafnkell choose not to die, but to live with this stain to his honour. However, the author makes a point of providing him with a noble motive for this consummately pragmatic choice, perhaps the first sign that his idealism is on the wane: he is putting his sons' welfare before his own sense of honour. Sigurður Nordal (1940, 59; tr. 1958, 49) is surely right that Hrafnkell's choice is the more difficult one, in defiance of normal saga standards of heroic behaviour.

And so just as in *Porsteins þátr*, it is the ideologues, those obsessed with honour, who act dishonourably, while the pragmatist behaves nobly. At any rate this incident of torture seems to be designed to induce in us enough contempt for Sámr and all those associated with him, that the long delay before the hero takes revenge will seem like superhuman forbearance. Hrafnkell's nobility of character is later reaffirmed by the generosity of his terms, once he has Sámr in his power. Sámr has done nothing to gain our sympathy, and so after the cruelty of the torture one naturally expects an equally bad or worse fate for him. Under the circumstances it is no less than astonishing that Sámr's punishment is to return to living just as he had before he usurped Hrafnkell's *goðorð*. Surely the point is not that living with disgrace is a fate worse than death. After all, if Hrafnkell's intention really were to see Sámr live miserably, one would expect that he would reduce Sámr to poverty rather than allow him to repossess his former estate. Rather, the real point in allowing him this much seems to be that Sámr at this point is no more worthy a target of revenge than he has ever been, and to take any sort of vengeance on him would be beneath Hrafnkell's dignity. He is as far beneath Hrafnkell's regard as Einarr ought to have been: that Hrafnkell took revenge on one such insignificant character, but not the other, is surely a sign of the change in him. He is a gentler man, as the narrator says, precisely because he knows better now what persons and what acts merit vengeance.

Finally, Hrafnkell's new-found pragmatism is also expressed in his assumption of a posture that must seem fairly unheroic by the standards of the older Germanic values. There seems no other good reason for the narrator to remark that twelve of Hrafnkell's seventeen companions were killed in overcoming Eyvindr and his four men. He also pointedly notes that Hrafnkell died of an illness (p. 133). Of course it is unheroic to die in one's bed, but in this instance the hero's death has particular significance, given Hrafnkell's renunciation of Freyr, since dying in his bed would deny the hero entry to Valhöll. The implication, then, is that the hero's hard-earned pragmatic outlook remained with him to the end of his life. By the end of the saga Hrafnkell cares not at all about conventional ideas of honour and heroism, and we ourselves are not intended to judge him by these standards.<sup>16</sup> By the end of the saga we are expected to understand that a good and a powerful *goði*'s obligations are only in small measure to himself. The weightiest of his obligations are to those dependent on him. This is the

effect of the Pjóstarssons' advice to Sámr, that makes it possible even for him to become a successful *goði*. It also expresses well the change in Hrafnkell.

## V

The author of *Hrafnkels saga* has been rather original in employing the opposition between these principles I have called ideology and pragmatism. He did not invent them, since we find them in a great many sagas. The restoration of stability after a prolonged feud almost invariably requires certain concessions of a pragmatic kind. Likewise there are countless saga antagonists who appear to be ideologues, inasmuch as they pursue vengeance solely for honour's sake, disregarding the larger consequences, especially to themselves. But still there are important differences in the way these principles are treated in *Hrafnkels saga*. In other sagas a protagonist may have unpragmatic motives for pursuing revenge, and still manage to maintain his heroic status. So, for instance, in *Njáls saga* Gunnarr á Hlíðarenda's motives for killing Ottell Skarfsson and his companions are anything but pragmatic. Rather, Gunnarr's is an emotional response to insults and injustice, as he makes clear just before attacking: consider, e.g., his remark, *Munuð þér nú ok reyna, hvárt ek græt nökkut fyrir yðr* (*Brennun-Njáls saga* 1954, 137), referring to Skammkell's insult of the previous week. It is worth note, in this context, that at the same time as Gunnarr purges his resentment here, the author intends him to appear more pragmatic than that: there is high irony in the remark, after Ottell and his men are all dead, '*Hvat ek veit*', *segir Gunnarr, 'hvárt ek mun því óvaskari maðr en aðrir menn sem mér bykkir meira fyrir en qðrum mónum at vega menn'* (pp. 138-9).

Another difference in the ways *Hrafnkels saga* and other sagas treat this moral opposition resides simply in the importance attached to it. The difference between pragmatists and ideologues is the point of *Hrafnkels saga*. Though both character types may appear in other sagas, the centre of interest in those sagas does not lie in the opposition between the two points of view, as represented by distinct parties acting consistently. Consider, for example, *Vápnfirðinga saga*, in which none of the principal characters seems above a purely emotional response to the feud.

The treatment of this opposition in *Hrafnkels saga* is also unusual in that the hero and his adversaries are *defined* by their positions on the issue. In other sagas the antagonist is not commonly identi-

fied by his overzealous adherence to the code of honour and vengeance, but usually by his failure, in some way, to abide by the code. The antagonist generally violates the code by valuing something more than his honour, e.g. his life, his hatred of the protagonist, greed, jealousy, or pure spite.<sup>17</sup> In *Hrafnkels saga*, on the other hand, though the hero's adversaries may well eventually demonstrate such foibles, it is these characters' regard for the code — their overzealous prosecution of their honour — that initially assigns them the role of antagonists.

A final characteristic that distinguishes the ideologues in *Hrafnkels saga* from those in other sagas is the extravagance of their idealism. As pointed out above, Hrafnkell is thoroughly dispassionate in his manner of dispatching Einarr, and I do not know of another saga killing as unemotional, nor one motivated by such an abstract principle. So, too, there is an equally perverse innocence in Sámr's self-satisfaction in having won his case at the Althing, without his giving a thought to future dealings with Hrafnkell. His idealism is such that he is altogether satisfied with a victory in principle. The implication is that he regards this battle solely as a conflict between abstractions rather than a clash between men.

The originality of the author, then, consists not in the invention of the moral opposition explored in the saga, but in the way he has made that opposition the controlling theme, and suited every detail of the narrative to the exposition of the moral question at hand. Two considerations suggest that this choice of theme was natural, almost inevitable. First, apparently this conflict was of some concern to the author's contemporaries. Einar Ól. Sveinsson (1940; tr. 1953, 91) remarks that before the thirteenth century in Iceland even the most trivial slight to a man's honour was avenged as a matter of course; but during the age of the Sturlungs, when the whole social fabric seemed to be unravelling, a more pragmatic attitude toward vengeance was required:

In the thirteenth century men have their hands so full that they cannot put the same stress on matters of form as before. They consider themselves fortunate to escape by flight, have to put up with being spoken ill of, as long as they have hopes of practical results. This does not mean that they are not touchy and sensitive of their honor, but the most pressing need must come first.<sup>18</sup>

Second, even without events of the *Sturlungaöld* for the author's model, it is natural that he should have chosen to explore this particular conflict, considering the nature of the saga material itself. Fidelity to that material demanded that Christianity play no

part in this tenth-century setting. It must have been an engrossing puzzle for an Icelander of his age, to imagine the nature of moral thought outside the context of Christianity. After all, saga literature as a whole is the best evidence that his own age was not short-sighted enough to suppose there were no moral choices before the advent of Christianity. And so in addition to its other modern tendencies, *Hrafnkels saga* shows a careful avoidance of anachronism: the author has stepped outside a Christian perspective and presented us with his conception of moral thought in an age in which everyone measured his behaviour by standards rather different from Christian virtue.

Thus the value of the pragmatist/ideologue contrast for understanding other saga literature is necessarily limited, and the real value, for saga scholarship at large, of a coherent view of the moral system of *Hrafnkels saga* remains its relevance to the question of saga origins. My own inclination is to agree with Carol J. Clover's assessment (1982, 16) that we ought 'no longer ask whether the saga is literary or oral, but what in the received saga can be ascribed to the literary author . . . and what to a native tradition'. That view is threatened by those recent studies that, in reaction to *Buchprosa* theory, portray *Hrafnkels saga* as largely faithful to an oral tradition.<sup>19</sup> There is value in demonstrating the errors in *Buchprosa* analyses of this saga — and it is almost unavoidable that there should have been errors; so unwelcome was evidence of the bookish nature of *Hrafnkels saga* that the case was perhaps inevitably overstated. But since *Hrafnkels saga* is central to the question of saga origins, these attempts to reestablish its fidelity to oral tradition are ultimately disturbing. Therefore, that the saga is primarily fiction needs to be reaffirmed. Few would deny that *Hrafnkels saga* is exceptionally well crafted, but since there are these elements of the saga that have eluded clear interpretation, it has been urged that such elements constitute evidence that the author had before him material transmitted orally from the tenth century, some of which he himself did not understand entirely (see Hofmann 1976, 31-4). But as Klaus von See points out (1979, 49), if such elements can be shown to serve a clear thematic purpose, then they actually serve as the best sort of evidence there is for the fictive nature of the saga. Certainly the foregoing analysis provides evidence of that sort, since it has perhaps never been so clear how artificial the craft of the saga is. Characters are invented for very specific purposes. So for instance Porbjörn disappears after he has served the purpose of typifying Hrafnkell's opponents as

vain and unreasonable upstarts; Bjarni at Laugarhúsum is introduced solely for the purpose of characterizing his brother Þorbjörn as a fool; the *gríðkona* provides Hrafnkell with a reasoned, immediate, and, most important of all, overt incentive (maintaining his authority) for exacting a vengeance he apparently had been planning all along; and Eyvindr himself is nothing but a noble victim, a character introduced for purely artistic reasons, simply because it would have cast doubt on Hrafnkell's own character if Sámr had been portrayed from the start as a worthy opponent. The Pjóstarssons, too, even disregarding the lack of historical evidence for their existence, carry a fictive air to them, since the contrast between their characters pointed out by Sigurður Nordal can now be seen to lie at the very heart of the saga's theme.

The same literary purposiveness also can be seen to underlie every event of the saga, and this is especially important in the case of those incidents that formerly seemed, because of their apparently marginal relevance, to bear the stamp of historical fact. So for instance the destruction of Freyfaxi serves to elicit proof from the hero's own mouth that he has learned his lesson and reformed himself. More transparently, the protracted chase serves no purpose but to allow Eyvindr to characterize himself as noble but deluded in ways that Hrafnkell is not. And since onomastic details in the sagas have been made a cornerstone of *Freiprosa* theory, which asserts that these details have been inserted for the purpose of assuring the historical authenticity of the events related, it is significant that the mention of the origin of Einarvarda can now be seen to serve solely a literary purpose, demonstrating the hero's munificence, and so his lack of personal spite in the killing of Einarr.

This free invention of character and incident is antithetical to the sort of preserving spirit that is and must be attributed to any oral tradition held responsible for this and other sagas. If there was such a meticulousness of oral tradition that historical fact could be handed down over three centuries, it makes no sense that a thirteenth-century Icelander steeped in that tradition should have played so loose with it when it came to committing the tradition to writing. *Hrafnkels saga* is simply too precisely constructed to be anything but the most meticulously conceived work of a mature literary craftsman. While we may be delighted to discover actual traditional elements in the saga, there is no returning to the view that the story of Hrafnkell as we have it is at all like any tradition about him that could have been transmitted orally from the tenth century.

**Notes**

<sup>1</sup> This paper has benefited from the invaluable suggestions of Alfred David, Evelyn Firchow, John C. McGilliard, and George Roundy, Jr., to whom I am very much indebted; but especially from the lengthy and meticulous comments of the late Foster Blaisdell, whose sudden death was deeply felt by all his friends and colleagues.

<sup>2</sup> For surveys of the *Freiprosa/Buchprosa* controversy see Scovazzi (1960), Andersson (1964, 65-81), and Mundal (1977).

<sup>3</sup> For a helpful bibliographical discussion of the new *Freiprosa* analyses of *Hrafnkels saga* see Hughes (1980); and to the bibliographical references there add Ström's essay (1979) mentioned below, n. 16. A recent and useful bibliography of *Hrafnkels saga* criticism is provided by Larsson (1983).

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., Halleux (1963, 72-6; 1966, 36-44) and Óskar Halldórsson (1976, 58-67). In addition, Hermann Pálsson (1971a, 53, 70) remarks that the author must have thought Hrafnkell deserved to die for the first murder; and he disapprovingly notes that 'it is often assumed in saga criticism that the author's sympathy must lie with the principal hero'.

<sup>5</sup> For references see below, note 12. I should say that I do not question, as some do, the emendation of *land* to *lund* adopted in Chapter Seven by almost all editors (see *Austfirðinga sogur* 1950, p. 125, with n. 2); but the point is actually immaterial to the question of whether or not we are to understand a change in Hrafnkell's character, since the narrator relates (immediately after the *lund* crux) that Hrafnkell was now *vinsælli ok gæfari ok hægri en fyrr at qllu*.

<sup>6</sup> Óskar Halldórsson (1976, 62) makes a similar point when he divides the characters of *Hrafnkels saga* into two groups, with Hrafnkell, Bjarni, and Porgeirr on one side, and Sámr, Porbjörn, and Porkell on the other. He remarks that the men in the former group 'einkennast af veraldarhyggindum og kaldrifjuðu mannviti, en hinir meir af tilfinningasemni en raunsæi'. A recapitulation of Óskar's views is also available in Swedish translation in his 1978 essay.

<sup>7</sup> 'Det gör en ondt for Torbjörn, at han ikke vil modtage disse tilbud . . . Denne er smålig og ondskabsfuld, dertil lidet begavet og kortsynet og, når alt synes at gå ham imod, en ren uselryg (han græder på altinget)'. As evidenced below, Hermann Pálsson's views on the ethics of the saga characters do not lend themselves readily to my assertion that Hrafnkell is a sympathetic character while Porbjörn is not, but he does at one point remark that Porbjörn's demand is 'syndsamlega eðlis', while Hrafnkell's reaction is 'næsta skiljanleg' (1966, 42); and elsewhere he refers to '*heimsku* Porbjarnar (að hafna rausnarlegu boði Hrafnkels)' (1982, 30). There seems also to be little sympathy for Porbjörn on the part of R. George Thomas (1973, 426), who, in speaking of Hallfreðr, Bjarni, and Porbjörn, says that the last 'occupies an apparently more central place to provide comic relief'.

<sup>8</sup> For an analysis of some of the comic elements in *Hrafnkels saga* see König (1972, 2-14) and Heinemann (1975b, 453-62). I think there is little likelihood in the supposition that we are meant to sympathize with Porbjörn's tears. The idea might be credible if they were tears of despair (cf. Nordal 1940, 57; tr. 1958, 47), or of humility and self-knowledge (cf. Davíð Erlingsson 1970, 32; and Hermann Pálsson 1966, 48; 1971a, 59); but it is directly after Sámr's stirring promise never to give up that the saga states, *Pá fær Porbirni svá mjók at hann grætr* (p. 110). Porbjörn's tears do then seem to be intended as a comment on Sámr's sentiments, and as such they serve an immediate contextual purpose (which they would not, if considered a sign of despair); they reflect saga style very well, demonstrating the author's opinion without any direct statement; and they are, certainly, a witty

device. Finally one might compare the tears of Qlkofri in the *pátrr* by his name — as in fact Hermann Pálsson does (1971a, 66, n. 6), though he draws no conclusions from the comparison. Apparently we are intended to sympathize with his plight but not his crying, since the hero Broddi Bjarnason has no patience with it, remarking, *ok eigi skaltu snokta* (*Austfirðinga sogur* 1950, 86). To suggest a man has been crying of course is a great insult in the sagas, as Gunnarr á Hlíðarenda's dealings with Otkell Skarfsson in *Njála* demonstrate. And so it is hardly likely that Þorþjórn's tears are intended to engage our sympathy, especially considering how he earlier attempted to portray himself not as a weak old man, but as an inflexible *ofrkappsmádr*, in refusing Hrafnkell's offer.

<sup>9</sup> Hermann Pálsson (1971a, 28) also faults Eyrvindr for this conduct, saying the man is guilty of 'being too proud to save his own life'.

<sup>10</sup> The word *meingefit* is a hapax legomenon, and so it is difficult to translate with absolute assurance. Jón Jóhannesson suggests 'gefíð það lánleysi' (*Austfirðinga sogur* 1950, 102, n. 2), and Finn Hódnebø glosses it as 'uvettig' (Fritzner and Hódnebø 1886-1972, IV 244). But both of these definitions seem unjustifiably neutral, since compounds in *mein-* otherwise retain the original sense of the word and so indicate injury, offence, or blameworthiness. Cf. Hermann Pálsson's translation 'wicked' (1971b, 40) and the gloss 'one is maliciously inclined', which appears to be Arnold Taylor's (Gordon 1957, 369).

<sup>11</sup> O. D. Macrae-Gibson (1974-77, 255-6) suggests an alternative identification of Reykjasel that would slice 35km. off the distance Einarr travels, reducing it 'from the phenomenal to the merely exceptional'. Of course if the author's point is to highlight Einarr's cruelty, the believability of the distance covered should not be a factor in determining whether Reykjasel ought to be relocated.

<sup>12</sup> For example, in *Orkneyinga saga* Kali Kolsson raises a *varða* to commemorate how he and his companion Hávarðr swam across a pool inside a cave when none of the other men with them dared to do so. Likewise in *Landnámaþók*, the slave *Rönguðr* raises a cairn to mark the place where he, travelling in the interior from the Nordlendingafjórðungr, found footprints coming from the South, after which travel between the North and the South across the interior became regular. The only other use of the word *varða* in Old Icelandic records, I believe, is in *Gísla saga*, where Njósar-Helgi and his companion Hávarðr build a cairn at night to mark the spot where they saw a light, so they can find it again it daylight.

<sup>13</sup> That Hrafnkell has not changed in any significant way is the opinion of a remarkable number of scholars. Pierre Halleux, for example, claims: 'Si celui-ci s'adoucit dans l'adversité, il ne faut pas croire à une conversion' (1963, 73; see also 1966, 44). Davíð Erlingsson (1970, 24) comments: 'Hrafnkells karaktärsändring är sålunda klar, men den är inte särskilt djupgående' ('Hrafnkell's change of character is thus clear, but it is not especially profound'). Hermann Pálsson (1971a, 69), too, remarks that 'the experience of pain makes him milder and gentler to begin with, but when his servant urges him to take revenge his sense of pity is easily blunted'. Peter Hallberg's solution to the problem is to suggest a distinction between 'social attitude' and 'ethical code': the words used to describe the change in Hrafnkell, 'vinsell' "popular", *geærfr* "pleasant" and *hægr* "amenable" . all concern Hrafnkell's social attitude, but tell us nothing of the inner man, nothing of a change in Hrafnkell's ethical code' (1975, 443). Óskar Halldórsson (1976, 60-61) suggests Hrafnkell merely affects a change, in order to delude his adversaries. But then the narrator's mentioning the change at all, it seems, would be gratuitous.

<sup>14</sup> Perhaps most explicit on this point is Walter Baetke (1952, 16-17), who argues that the main action 'wollte zeigen, dass Hrafnkels eifriger Götzendienst und sein

Vertrauen auf Frey ihn zu Hochmut und Gewalttätigkeit verführen, in falsche Sicherheit wiegen und schliesslich ins Verderben stürzen'. His renunciation of Freyr precipitates a profound moral change in the hero. Therefore the author's intent is devotional, and the saga 'ist ein echtes Werk des Hochmittelalters', covered with an antiquating veneer of tenth-century morality. See also Andersson (1967, 282-3), and cf. Bjarni Guðnason (1965, 74-82), whose intent is to counter Hermann Pálsson's arguments for strong Christian influence in the saga.

<sup>15</sup> It also seems to be Óskar Halldórsson's judgment that the *griðkona*'s opinion is general in Fljótsdalr: he remarks, 'Almannarómurinn hljómar í eggjun griðkonunnar' (1976, 61). I should point out, though, that even if the woman's opinion is representative, I should be the last to disagree with Peter Hallberg (1975, 443) that she is essentially a comic character. The comedy serves a good purpose, because if she were not comic her taunts would bite harder than they do, and it would then be difficult for Hrafnkell to accept her advice with any sort of dignity. Her silliness invites his (and our) indulgence of her critical attitude toward him.

<sup>16</sup> It is because of such unheroic elements in the reformed Hrafnkell's character that it is so difficult to accept the analysis of Marco Scovazzi (1960, 39), who remarks that 'la saga abbia voluto rappresentarci in maniera esemplare l'evoluzione drammatica di uno spirito pagano fortemente attaccato a quel bene ideale, che definiamo "onore", e deciso fermamente a non accettare mai una sua contaminazione o diminuzione. La morale e le azioni di *Hrafnkell* sono schiettamente pagane, dal principio alla fine della saga' ('the saga sets out to represent by way of example the dramatic evolution of a pagan spirit firmly attached to that fine ideal we call "honour", and fully determined never to accept any stain to or diminution of that honour. Hrafnkell's morals and actions are frankly pagan, from the beginning to the end of the saga'). Åke V. Ström (1979, 65), whose intent is to champion Óskar Halldórsson's efforts to revive the theory of a *Freiprosa* origin for *Hrafnkels saga*, cites Scovazzi's views, in support of the claim that the saga is untouched by thirteenth-century thought. But even if it were possible to reconcile Hrafnkell's unheroic posture with Scovazzi's views, the admitted absence of overtly Christian elements would remain perhaps the one feature that cannot have any bearing on the extent to which the saga might be said to reflect accurate oral tradition. Of course the seeming absence of thirteenth-century morality in a thirteenth-century composition is necessarily deliberate.

<sup>17</sup> Examples are, respectively, Porkell Geitisson in *Njáls saga*, the brothers Hallvarðr hardfari and Sigtryggr snarfari in *Egils saga*, Þorbjörn qngull in *Grettis saga*, Bolli Porleiksson in *Laxdæla saga*, and Hönsa-Pórir in his saga.

<sup>18</sup> A specific model for *Hrafnkels saga* in the events of the thirteenth century has been suggested by Hermann Pálsson (1962).

<sup>19</sup> See above, note 3. For a view similar to Clover's see Hermann Pálsson (1981, 11-12).

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## THE POSITION OF FREED SLAVES IN MEDIEVAL ICELAND

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FREED slaves are mentioned in various passages of *Landnámabók* (*Ldn*), the Family Sagas and other works that deal with the history of Icelanders in the tenth century. These accounts will be set forth in this essay, and in the first place I shall try to estimate their value as sources with reference to the authority of the works in which they appear. The next step will be an attempt by comparative methods to throw light on the position held by freedmen in the early days of the republic. Material for comparison is chiefly drawn from the law-texts, but a few later sources are also taken into consideration.

Two recensions of *Ldn*, *Sturlubók* (*S*) and *Hauksbók* (*H*), tell how the settler Geirmundr heljarskinn bestowed freedom on his slave Atli. There is also an account in the *Geirmundar þátr heljarskinns* (*Gþ*) of *Sturlunga saga*. The story begins by describing how Vébjörn Sygnakappi and his companions were shipwrecked. Then the three texts continuë:

*Gþ*: Þá tók við þeim óllum skipverjum um vetrinn Atli þræll Geirmundar heljarskinns. Atli var ódæll ok hamrammr mjök. En er Geirmundr vissi þessa órlausn þrælsins, þá frétti hann þrælinn: 'hvat kom þér til þess, er þú tók svá mikil á hendr við Vébjörn ok forunauta hans?' Prælinn svarar: 'þat kom mér til þess, at ek vilda þann veg syna, huersu mikid gaufug-menni ok stor-menni sa madr uar, er þann þræl atti, er slik storréði þordi a hendr at takaz'. Geirmundr bad þrælinn hafa þauck firir sitt orréði ok gaf honum firir þessa [sök frelsi ok búland] (*Sturlunga saga* 1906-11, I 5).

*S*: En um vetrinn tók við þeim óllum Atli í Fljóti, þræll Geirmundar heljarskinns. En er Geirmundr vissi órlausn Atla, þá gaf hann honum frelsi ok bú þat, er hann varðveitti; hann varð síðan mikilmenni (*ÍF* I, 188).

*H*: En um vetrinn tók við þeim óllum Atli, þræll Geirmundar heljarskinns, ok bað þau engu launa vistina, sagði Geirmundr ekki vanta mat. En er Atli fann Geirmund, spurði Geirmundr, hví hann var svá djarfur at taka slíka menn upp á kost hans. Atli svaraði: 'Því at þat man uppi, meðan Ísland er byggt, hversu mikils háttar sá maðr mundi vera, at einn (hans) þræl þordi at gera slíkt utan hans orlofs.' Geirmundr svarar: 'Fyrir þetta þitt tiltœki skalt þú þiggja frelsi ok bú þetta, er þú hefir varðveitt.' Ok varð Atli síðan mikilmenni (*ÍF* I, 189).

Translation of the passage in *Gþ*:

'Then Atli, thrall of Geirmundr heljarskinn, housed the whole crew throughout the winter. Atli was overbearing and much given

to shape-shifting. And when Geirmundr got to know of the relief afforded by the thrall, he asked him: "What induced you to take on the responsibility for Vébjörn and his companions?". The thrall replied: "My reason was that I meant in this way to show how noble and magnanimous the owner must be if his thrall dared take on a project so great." Geirmundr thanked the thrall for his resourcefulness, and because of it granted him freedom and land to settle'.

In *Gþ* the story consists of 96 words, in *H* 93 words. *S* has 34 words. By Haukr's own account, he composed his book from *Sturlubók* and *Styrmisbók* (*ÍF I*, 395, 397; also cvi-cix). Thus it is natural to find similar turns of phrase in *S* and *H*. There is one place where the wording is identical in *Gþ* and *S*: *en er Geirmundr vissi (bessa) órlausn* 'and when Geirmundr got to know of the relief afforded'. By contrast, a comparison of the accounts here quoted from *Gþ* and *H* shows that there is little similarity of wording between these two texts. The material is in broad outline the same, apart from the occasional factual difference, but there is considerable difference of tone. I will take first the points on which *Gþ* and *H* diverge.

In *Gþ* the term *þræll* is applied seven times to Atli, who is also described as 'overbearing' and 'given to shape-shifting', both derogatory terms typical of those commonly used of slaves (cf. Foote 1977, 50). There is no confirmation of these terms in what follows, except in so far as Atli could be called overbearing for lodging the ship's crew over the winter without asking leave. Geirmundr's reaction to the outcome of the affair could have been responsible for the disappearance of this feature from the description of Atli, and so from the tale itself. In *H* the term *þræll* appears twice only, and once in *S*. Atli is once mentioned by name in *Gþ*, twice in *S*, and four times in *H*. The magnanimity of Geirmundr is strongly emphasized in *Gþ*. Atli refers to him as *gofugmenni* and *stórmenni*. In *H* he uses the expression *mikils háttar*, certainly a term of approbation yet not nearly as strong as the two former. There is a material divergence at the end of these accounts. According to *Gþ*, Geirmundr gave Atli freedom and land to settle, while *S* and *H* say that he gave Atli freedom and the farm which had been in his charge. This is a big difference, since it is said that Atli supervised the work of 12 or 14 other slaves at the farm under his control (*ÍF I*, 154-5). *S* and *H* follow up with the statement that Atli became a man of importance. In these versions he is finally the hero of the story.

The chief conclusions to be drawn from this comparison are:

1. The narratives of *Gþ* and *H* are of much the same length and similar in content, but very different in phrasing. The indication is that these accounts were written independently. There is a difference of tone and emphasis between *Gþ* on the one hand and *S* and *H* on the other which suggests that tales of the encounter between Geirmundr and Atli went through a long oral transmission.

2. There are two reasons for thinking that the version of *Gþ* is much older than the version of *S* and *H*. Frequent use of the term *bræll* in *Gþ* points to a time when the slave-community was a living reality, and the distinction between slave and householder was clear in men's minds (cf. Foote 1977, 41). The treatment of freedom and landholding in the narrative of *Gþ* also seems closer to actuality, and this again points to an older stage of the tale.

3. The fact that in *S* and *H* the slave gives way to the character Atli suggests a long formative period in oral tradition. To some extent Atli takes over the role of hero from Geirmundr. The statement in *S* and *H*, that Geirmundr gave Atli a large estate with his freedom, again suggests that we are at a long remove from the reality of any imaginable original account.

4. All three sources agree in stating that Atli was a slave when he gave shelter to Vébjörn Sygnakappi and his companions, and for this reason Geirmundr gave him his freedom. It seems to me natural to suppose that this is the historical nucleus, the report of an unusual event of a kind likely to be long remembered.

The conclusion that *Gþ* is older than *S* or *H*, here reached on the internal evidence of their textual relations, accords in essence with the results of earlier studies on the age of these works. Jón Jóhannesson suggested in his time that *Gþ* was related to *Melabók* (*M*), which is based on a recension of *Ldn* older than *S* and *H* (cf. Jóhannesson 1941, 165). I myself was led to a similar conclusion in separate observations on the material in these texts relevant to the history of religion (Aðalsteinsson 1978, 21). On the other hand, it is clear from this comparison that the section of *Gþ* in question is not textually related to the lost *Styrmisbók*.<sup>2</sup>

In *Ldn* there is an account of the land-taking of Auðr djúpauðga, followed by the statement that she granted land to her crew and her freedmen. Four of her freedmen are named: Vífill of Vífilsdalr, Hundi of Hundadalr, Sókkólfr of Sókkólfssdalr and Erpr, to whom Auðr gave Sauðafellsþönd (*ÍF* I, 140-2). Erpr is the only one of Auðr's freedmen whose ancestry is given; he is said to be son of Earl Meldún of Scotland and Myrgjol daughter of Gljómall king

of Ireland. It is said that Earl Sigurðr killed Meldún and enslaved the mother and son. Auðr gave a high price for Myrgjol, who with Erpr accompanied her to Iceland. Six children of Erpr are named, with their descendants (*ÍF I*, 142).

Hundi and Sókkólfr exist only as names; the valleys of the same names raise suspicions that they could as well have taken their names from the valleys as the valleys from them. On the other hand, a line of descent from Vífill is given, and he gets separate recognition both in *S* and *M*. In *M*: ‘Vífill was the name of Auðr’s fourth freedman, forefather of a distinguished kin and an influential man; . . . he appeared to be the offspring of a man of rank, as Auðr foresaw.’ In this recension a line of descent connects Vífill with Snorri Markússon of Melar (*ÍF I*, 141). *S* quotes Auðr’s remarks about Vífill: ‘She said he might pass for a man of rank wherever he was.’ The group of Vífill’s descendants in *S* includes three bishops, and his son’s daughter became a daughter-in-law of Snorri goði (*ÍF I*, 141). Porbjörn was a son of Vífill’s, and his daughter Guðríðr married Porfinnr Karlsefni. One son of Guðríðr and Porfinnr was Snorri, father of Hallfríðr, mother of Bishop Þorlákr (1118–33). Their other son was Porbjörn, father of Pórunn, the mother of Bishop Björn (1147–62). The son of Snorri Porfinnson was Porgeirr, father of Yngvildr, the mother of Bishop Brandr (1163–1201) (*ÍF I*, 141).

All the bishops mentioned here were alive in the period when *Landnáma* was first being recorded; the eldest of them was contemporary with Ari fróði and a prime mover in the writing of *Íslendingabók*. Here it is also relevant to recall that one of Ari’s oldest named authorities for *Íslendingabók* was Þuriðr, daughter of Snorri goði (*ÍF I*, 4). Thus many reasons indicate that what *Landnáma* says of Vífill the freedman of Auðr djúpauðga is based on historical fact, i.e. that Vífill came to Iceland as Auðr’s slave, and that she gave him freedom and land to settle on.

In *Eiríks saga rauða*, Vífill is the only one of Auðr’s freedmen mentioned by name, as follows: ‘One of them was called Vífill; he was a man of good family, who had been captured in the Western Isles and was regarded as a bondman until Auðr freed him’ (*ÍF IV*, 196). In this passage it is specially emphasized that he was ‘regarded as a bondman’, for this is a patent effort by the writer to make Vífill’s status no lower than circumstances warranted. To say that he was ‘a man of high birth’ is an increase of emphasis as compared with the statement in *M* that he was offspring of a man of rank. It has been pointed out that *Eiríks saga*

*rauða* shows a strong tendency to enhance the dignity of Guðríðr Porbjarnardóttir and her line (Strömbäck 1935, 56). This appears, for instance, in the words of her father Porbjörn refusing an influential suitor, son of a freed slave: 'I never thought to hear this from you, that I should consider marrying my daughter to a thrall's son . . .' (ÍF IV, 204). These words are all the more remarkable when in fact Porbjörn was himself son of a freedman. In spite of the tendency in *Eiríks saga rauða* to elevate Vífíll and his descendants, the saga makes no effort to gloss over the fact that he had been a thrall, had arrived in Iceland as part of the household of Auðr djúpauðga and had been freed by her. *Eiríks saga rauða* is dated to the later part of the thirteenth century (cf. KHL s.v. *Eiríks saga rauða*).

A similar tendency to elevate a freed slave and his descendants occurs in *H*, in connection with Steinrøðr the freedman of Þorgrímur bíldr. The wording of *S* is: 'His freedman was Steinrøðr, son of Melpatrekr of Ireland; he took possession of the whole of Vatnslǫnd and lived at Steinrøðarstaðir. Steinrøðr was the comeliest of men' (ÍF I, 388, 390). In *H* the words 'a man of high rank' (*gofugs manns af Írlandi*, ÍF I, 389) are added as a description of Steinrøðr, and it is further stated that Steinrøðr married the daughter of the man who freed him. A line of descent is given from Steinrøðr to Brandr of Pingvellir, who lived in the latter part of the twelfth century (see further Ólason 1948-52, I, 269).

It is said of the settler Ánn rauðfeldr that he raided in Ireland and later went to Iceland, where he spent the first winter in Dufansdalr, and afterwards went to Eyrr. *H* says: 'Ánn gave Dufansdalr to his thrall Dufann,' but *S* has: 'Dufann was the freedman of Ánn; later he lived in Dufansdalr' (ÍF I, 176-77). *S* and *H* proceed to tell of Ánn, his son Bjartmarr and his grandson Végestr: 'Hjallkárr was Ánn's freedman; his son was Björn, thrall of Bjartmarr, who freed him. Björn then made money; Végestr objected to this, and ran him through with a spear, but Björn beat him to death with a mattock' (ÍF I, 178-9). The story of the quarrel between Végestr and Björn is not known from other sources, but here we have particular and exceptional incidents likely to stick in the memory, whatever may have happened to the names. As for means of transmission, it may be noted that Auðr, sister's daughter of Végestr (reputedly beaten to death with a mattock) was related by marriage to Pórdís, grandmother of Snorri's daughter Puriðr, an authority named by Ari fróði (ÍF I, 180 and note).

There are more freedmen mentioned in *Ldn* who could conceiva-

bly be of Irish descent. Two brothers Hildir and Hallgeirr are said to have taken land between Markarfjót and Rangá. *S* puts their origin in the Western Isles, but *H* states that the brothers were Irish. The text continues: 'Dufþakr in Dufþaksholt was freedman of the brothers' (*ÍF I*, 355).

There is sometimes mention of particular grounds for granting freedom, as in the account of Atli, thrall of Geirmundr. Thus *Ldn* tells of two settlers, Lón-Einarr and Laugabrekku-Einarr, who fought each other. After Lón-Einarr had fallen, the thrall of Laugabrekku-Einarr saw the thralls of the other Einarr running away, pursued them and killed both: 'In reward Einarr granted him freedom and land' (*ÍF I*, 109). Again, reasons are given for granting freedom when we read that Eiríkr in Goðdalir sent his thrall south across the mountains to spy out the land, and the thrall discovered a route across the uplands between northern and southern Iceland: '... and Eiríkr granted him freedom as a reward for his journey' (*ÍF I*, 232). The thrall is said to have raised a cairn on the new route, which thereafter bore his name and was called Rangaðarvarða. The name Rönguðr quoted for the thrall or freedman is unparalleled, and is quite as likely to derive from the name of the cairn as the other way round.<sup>3</sup>

*Ldn* records of Ingólfur, settler in Reykjavík, and his thrall Vífill: 'Ingólfur granted freedom to Vífill, who settled at Vífilstóptir ... and became a responsible man' (*ÍF I*, 45). The term *skilríkr* applied to this freedman indicates that he attained to full rank of thane in the community. The place-name *Vífilstóptir* is found only in this passage in *S*; the text of *H* places Vífill at Vífilsstaðir, a later form of the name (*ÍF I*, 45). *Tópt* was used in Old Icelandic of foundations and walls before the roof was built, e.g. *skálatópt*; in later Icelandic *tóftir* commonly refers to ruined buildings. *Vífilstóptir* in *S* could therefore indicate that the site was not occupied when the original of *S* was written. Vífilsstaðir is a site in the settlement of Ingólfur about 10 km. from Reykjavík.

According to *Ldn* and *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, Skalla-Grímr of Borg occupied a wide area in Borgarfjörð and Mýrar. At the end of the description of his settlement, *Ldn* says: 'Freedmen of Skalla-Grímr were called Gríss and Grímr; he gave them land up near the mountains, Grísatunga to Gríss and Grímsdalr to Grímr ... Sigmundr was the name of one of Skalla-Grímr's freedmen; to him he gave land between the rivers Gljúfrá and Norðrá. He lived first at Haugar, before he moved to Munaðarnes; Sigmundarnes is named after him' (*ÍF I*, 88). Two more freedmen

are named in *Ldn* as settlers in the area taken by Skalla-Grímr: 'Porgils knappi, a freedman of Kolli Hróaldsson, took possession of Knappadalr' (*ÍF I*, 94). And further: 'Skorri, freedman of Ketill gufa, took possession of Skorradalr above the lake, and was there killed' (*ÍF I*, 71). Finally there is a thrall said to have settled in Skalla-Grímr's district: Flóki, thrall of Ketill gufa, took possession of Flókadalr and was killed there' (*ÍF I*, 72).

The freedmen said to have settled in Skalla-Grímr's district, his own freedmen and those of others, are mostly empty names. In *Egils saga* Gríss is the name of a freedman with Skalla-Grímr in Norway, and there also Sigmundr is mentioned as Skalla-Grímr's household slave after his arrival in Iceland (*Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* 1933, 62, 75). A line of descent is given for Porgils knappi only. The accounts of Skorri and Flóki are highly suspect. There could of course be no question of land-taking in land already occupied, and moreover a thrall could not take land. It is also quite possible that the names of the freedmen and the thrall are topographical, i.e. personal names derived from place-names.<sup>4</sup>

In a final example taken from *Ldn*, it seems to be assumed that a thrall had been granted freedom, although this is not stated outright. It is said that Ingimundr gamli owned a slave called Friðmundr, and later comes the statement: 'Friðmundr took Forsæludalr' (*ÍF I*, 219). Here it seems necessary to assume that Friðmundr received his freedom before he took possession of Forsæfudalr.

It has been argued above that some of the allusions to freedmen in *Ldn* have in all probability a historical core, that the settlers in question did actually grant freedom to named thralls of theirs. The chief people concerned are Atli freedman of Geirmundr, Vífill and Erpr freedmen of Auðr djúpauðga, Steinrøðr freedman of Þorgrímr bíldr, Dufann and Hjallkárr freedmen of Ánn, and Björn freedman of Bjartmarr. The arguments for this conclusion are twofold. On the one hand, lines of descent are given from the freedmen to people contemporary with the period of composition. This applies to Vífill, Erpr and Steinrøðr. On the other hand, specific tales are associated with the grant of freedom. The account of Atli exists in two recensions and bears some evidence of a long transmission, and the account of Björn is unusual, and also not far from the earliest written record. Dufann and Hjallkárr are associated with the tale of Björn.

The seven freedmen here discussed all have this in common, that they arrived in Iceland from western lands. It is specifically stated of some that they came from Ireland.

The authority of the accounts of freedmen in *Ldn* must be assessed in conjunction with other elements in *Ldn*. Much has been written on the origin of this work and its transmission and revision between roughly 1100 and 1300; for during this period the material was in the hands of historians. Specialists on *Ldn* do not agree on the initial incentives to the composition of the work, and opinions also differ to some extent on the internal relations of separate recensions.<sup>5</sup> The most convincing theory of origin seems to me that studies of the settlement were formulated gradually, partly for the purpose of land disputes about tenure, but also as specialized information brought to bear in the field of genealogy. In the course of time efforts were made to work this information up into one whole, and then people began collecting comparable material about areas that had not been covered before (see especially Jakob Benediktsson in *ÍF I*, cxvi-cxvii and refs.). This method of compilation would make *Ldn* a source of variable authority, since the knowledge of its compilers could not be equally reliable at all points. And the anecdotes accompanying the material had also gone through different stages of transmission. The later recensions of *Ldn* contain many additions, especially concerning those areas most familiar to later writers. All this needs to be kept in mind when we are assessing the accounts of freedmen in *Ldn*.

One of the authors of *Ldn* alludes to the purpose of the work, in a postscript: 'Many people say that recording the *landnám* is superfluous erudition. But it would seem easier to reply to foreigners who disparage us as the descendants of slaves or rascals, if we are sure about our true lineage; and also to those who seek knowledge of antiquity or want to draw up pedigrees, if we begin at the beginning rather than cut in half-way. Indeed this is true of all discerning peoples who seek to discover the beginning of their settlement, or the origin of individuals or families' (*ÍF I*, cii).

This postscript is preserved only in the *Pórðarbók*-redaction of *Ldn*. In *Gerðir Landnámabókar*, Jón Jóhannesson attributed the postscript to Styrmir, and thought that it first appeared in the lost *Styrmisbók*. He based this view mainly on the words óskyldr fróðleikr, 'superfluous erudition', which recall the preface to *Hungrvaka* (cf. Jóhannesson 1941, 203). But later he thought that for various reasons the postscript came from the lost original *Landnámabók* (cf. Jóhannesson 1956, 36). Sveinbjörn Rafnsson has pointed out that the arguments for Styrmir's authorship are very weak, and according to his estimate of the relations between different versions it is virtually certain that the postscript is from

*M*, and was derived from an ancient recension of *Ldn* (cf. Rafnsson 1974, 99). Also, the explanation given for compiling an account of the *landnám* fits better in one of the oldest and first recensions than in the later ones. The need for an explanation of this sort would be greatest at the time when the work was first put in hand.

The age of this postscript does not materially affect the matter here under discussion, since whether these words were written in the early twelfth century or a hundred years later, they were likely to encourage the tendency to play down accounts of slaves and freedmen in earlier and/or later recensions of *Ldn*. Considering these words, we can also expect to find that pedigrees from freedmen do not rate high in *Ldn*. It follows that what is even so said of slaves and freedmen in *Ldn* acquires greater authority in view of this expressed prejudice, and that lines of descent from these are on the whole no more suspect than other pedigrees.

There is yet another argument to support the view that slaves were freed in Iceland already in the settlement period. Ari fróði says in *Íslendingabók*, explaining the choice of Pingvellir for the site of the General Assembly: 'But a man who owned land in Bláskógar had been put under penalty for unlawfully killing a thrall or freedman' (*ÍF I*, 8). Ari is here cautious as usual in framing a statement about something he does not know for certain, which shows that the tradition he was recording was not unambiguous. This does nevertheless indicate that shortly before A.D. 930 the affair might just as well have concerned a freedman as a slave. In other words, historic tradition took it for granted that by 930 there were both slaves and freedmen in Iceland.

According to the sources I have drawn on, there were five principal methods of obtaining slaves and renewing the supply:-

1. Captives in battle were enslaved.
2. Slaves were bought at a market dealing in this commodity.
3. Children were born in slavery and reared as slaves.
4. A debtor was enslaved by the man to whom he owed money (*Grg II*, 194).

5. Slavery was the punishment for theft (*Grg Ib*, 165).

There is no reason to doubt that owning slaves was a long-standing practice in Norway before Iceland was colonized (cf. Foote 1975). Consequently it is natural to suppose that settlers took their household thralls with them to Iceland. It is sometimes expressly stated in *Ldn* that a thrall had been bought, and reference may be made to the accounts already noticed of Auðr djúpauðga buying Myrgjol and Vífíll. It is said in *Laxdæla saga* that Höskuldr

had bought the bondwoman Melkorka, and there is a long story attached (*Laxdæla saga* 1934, 27). The historic truth of this story must evidently be treated with caution. It is pretty sure that the four or five slave-gangs mentioned were quite exceptional for Iceland in the early age of settlement.

Revolt of slaves is once mentioned in *Ldn.* Hjørleifr, foster-brother of the settler Ingólfur, is said to have made a foray in Ireland, where he captured ten thralls; these he harnessed to the plough with his ox at seed-time after his first winter in Iceland. The thralls killed the ox and said that a brown bear had done it. ‘And when they went out in search of the bear and were scattered through the woods, the thralls attacked them severally, and killed every one’ (*IFI*, 43). Since *S* and *H* have this account of the slaves’ revolt, and there is a fragment of it in *M*, it is quite possibly based on an ancient tale.

There were three ways of freeing slaves:-

1. Without payment.
2. Other people paid to free the slave.
3. The slave freed himself.

It is quite possible that thralls in Iceland were freed from bondage without payment during the first decades of settlement, but not credible as a general rule. A thrall was property that could be used as legal tender (*Grg Ib*, 143). Thus people could hardly be expected to renounce such property without compensation, any more than they would other kinds. In a given situation, it would not be unreasonable for men of means to buy their kinsmen out of slavery, and people may well have lent money to thralls to pay for their own release (cf. Foote 1977, 56 and n. 38). The third method was probably most usual, for a thrall to buy himself out. It is as well to consider some passages which throw more light on the freeing of thralls and the status of freedmen.

Snorri Sturluson, in his *Óláfs saga helga*, tells of Erlingr Skjálgsson and his thralls: ‘Erlingr always had thirty slaves at home besides other servants. He set his slaves a defined day’s work and gave them time afterwards and permission, so whoever wanted to work for himself at dusk or at night, to him he gave arable land to sow corn on for himself and turn the crop to his own gain. On every one of them he set a price and a ransom, and many freed themselves in the first or second years, and all who had anything in them at all freed themselves in three years. With that money, Erlingr bought himself other slaves. Some of his freedmen he put on to herring-fishing, and some to other livelihoods. Some cleared

woodlands and built themselves homesteads there, He got them all on in one way or another' (Snorri Sturluson 1941-51, II 30).

Since Erlingr Skjálgsson lived some 200 years before Snorri, we must be cautious about the historical truth of this account. But realism is not the most interesting aspect here, rather the pattern of granting freedom that is revealed. The system that Snorri attributes to Erlingr Skjálgsson secures for the slave-owner maximum profit from each individual slave. The labour-power of the slave is used to the full while his working ability is highest, and thereafter he frees himself and thus repays the owner's outlay when he bought the slave. This payment is laid out in buying new slaves, and so the process is kept going.

Next we have to consider the likelihood that slaves in Iceland in the early tenth century freed themselves by the method of Erlingr Skjálgsson described above. There are no direct records of this, and so it is necessary to feel a way along other approaches. *Grágás* has provisions for individual ownership by thralls, termed *órkostr* 'means to pay' (*Grg* Ia, 202; II, 33, 396). In the provisions laid down by *Grágás* it is also assumed that thralls might work for their own profit much as the thralls of Erlingr Skjálgsson were said to work at dusk or at night. 'If a man's slaves or bounden debtors work after *eykt* of their own accord, they are fined four ounce-units if they have the means to pay' (*Grg* II, 33). There is also a provision in *Grágás* to the effect that a thrall may be given his freedom when he has paid half the price or more: 'A slave does not become free until half his price or more has been paid' (*Grg* Ia, 192). Two points emerge from these provisions. In the first place, thralls in Iceland were allowed to work for themselves, thus presumably outside the working hours assigned to completing obligatory tasks for their owner. Secondly, the thrall was freed when he had paid half of the freedom-price. Yet there was no question of complete freedom until the freedman had been 'led into the law' as it was phrased, legally received into the community of free men. On this matter also *Grágás* has precise directions: 'A slave is given full freedom when he is led into the law. The *goði* in whose assembly-group he belongs is to lead him into the law' (*Grg* Ia, 192). *Grágás* also has particular provisions for those freedmen who have gained freedom but have not been led into the law. This indicates that the process was apt to take some time, which was natural enough while the freedman was earning the second half of the freedom-price. *Grágás* says: 'If a slave is given freedom but not led into the law or brought onto the assembly-

slope, then he is to take neither a free man's personal compensation 'nor a slave's; and he is then called a "spade-freedman" '(Grg Ia, 192). A *grefleysingr*, 'spade-freedman', might not bear weapons, and had to defend himself with his mattock or spade if he were attacked (cf. KHL s.v. *Leysingi. Island*). This situation recalls the tale of the freedman Björn mentioned above, who beat Végestr to death with his mattock (p. 37). It indicated that Björn was a *grefleysingr*. The story goes that Végestr accused Björn of making plenty of money. It is not clear how Björn had offended in terms of the laws and customs of the time, but in *Grágás* there are provisions covering the obligations of an owner towards the man he had freed, showing that they were associated in some kind of relationship: 'Each man is to maintain his own freedman, unless he has means of support or has a son born a natural heir, or a daughter who can manage to maintain him' (Grg Ib, 17). The owner was also prosecutor in a suit for killing of his freedman: 'It is prescribed that, if a freedman is killed, that case lies with his freeborn son, or else with the freedom-giver' (Grg Ia, 172). A freedom-giver inherited on the death of his freedman, and if the freedman had so disposed of his property as to diminish the inheritance of the man who had given him freedom then the owner had the right to enslave his freedman once more: 'If a freedman diverts the right to inherit from the man who freed him, the latter has the right to revoke his freedom' (Grg Ia, 247). Possibly the tale of Végestr and Björn retains some faint memory connected with this provision.

Damages for the killing of a freedman were less than those for that of a freeborn man. The charge of having sexual intercourse with a bondwoman who had been freed was not as grave as for sexual intercourse with other free women. On the other hand, freedmen's children held equal rights with other men's children, and the charge of sexual intercourse with a freedman's daughter rated the same as that with any other free woman. A freedman could free his own thrall, and was then entitled 'the superior freedman' (Grg Ia, 202; Ib, 48; Ia, 172; II, 337).

It cannot be firmly decided whether these particular legal provisions were observed in Iceland during the first decades of settlement. But the history of slavery in the North goes back far beyond the settlement of Iceland, and we may safely believe that very early on people ensured their rights in relation to freedmen as in other matters. *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók* each mention the holding of a *þing* before 930. Ari fróði speaks of a *þing* held at

Kjalarne in the days of Þorsteinn, son of the settler Ingólfur; in *S* and *H* it is stated that Pórólfr Mostrarskegg established a *þing* in his district, and there are anecdotes concerning this particular *þing* (*ÍF I*, 8; 125). All this goes to show that it was already possible to 'lead a freedman into the law' in the early tenth century. Attention should be drawn to the fact that freeing of slaves was less complicated in Iceland than in Norway. The children of Icelandic freedmen were totally free; but by the Norwegian Laws of Gulathing, reciprocal obligations existed between the freedom-giver and the freedman, binding their families to the third degree of kinship, to the fifth degree according to the Laws of Frostathing (*Norges gamle Love II*, 53; cf. Foote 1977, 57).

The fact that freeing from bondage in Iceland was far less consequential and much simpler than in Norway indicates that it might have been an advantage for Icelandic slave-owners to free their thralls, or at least some part of the slave-gang. There are sound reasons of cultural development in support of this suggestion. Once the provision of shelter and other tasks essential to a prototype settlement were completed, and before the stock of cattle had grown appreciably, there must have come a time each year when the need for a large work-force was less than at other seasons. Yet thralls and free labourers needed the same amount of food and clothing whether they worked longer or shorter hours. In the first years of the settlement land was the principal disposable property, so presumably the best prospect of a good return lay in the leasing or selling of land. Freedmen, and others who acquired land in this way, could count on yearly returns for longer or shorter periods from the land that the settler had originally taken into possession, and knew that such land could hardly be utilised by other methods. Since the freedman was moreover under an obligation to his former master, it might be worth while in more than one way to have him living at a convenient distance to the settler's estate, for instance at times of unrest.<sup>6</sup>

On page 41 above, it was proposed that thralls were acquired by five different methods; and subsequently, that there is reason to think that they were either household slaves or else people taken in battle and sold. Those examples of freedmen which appear to have some historical basis all concern captives or bought slaves, thus presumably people of free birth. This conclusion agrees admirably with what might seem probable. In a land lightly occupied and thinly settled, freeborn slaves were likely to be more troublesome than those inured to slavery from childhood. But also, they

were more likely to make their own way in the world if they were given freedom.

In sum, there are several reasons for thinking that it was economic for a settler who had taken a large tract of land to free his thralls (or at least some of them):-

1. Slaves who worked for their own benefit out of obligatory working hours were not likely to rise in revolt.
2. The owner saved on food and clothing for a work-force beyond his needs.
3. The owner recouped what he had spent on buying the slave.
4. The owner derived profit from the land that the freedman occupied.
5. The freedman was in duty bound to support his previous owner, tied to him by various obligations, and often settled within easy range so as to give him warning of approaching trouble.
6. The owner succeeded to the property of a freedman who had no legal heirs.

All the items here listed were calculated to increase the goods and extend the power of the slave-owner. Of course we are not talking about historical proof of the processes involved, but rather of probability from the point of view of cultural development; the course that events might have taken, judging from sources that are both meagre and hard to interpret. The chief conclusion must be that arguments from cultural development tend to show that it would have been economic for settlers in Iceland to free some part of their slave community.

It is difficult to judge of the condition of freedmen in the first decades of settlement in Iceland. To start with, we can assume that they worked for their own benefit at dusk and at night, until they had earned half the price of freedom. They had to find the balance at the same time as they were paying rent or tenancy by instalments (always supposing they had no other source of income) and supporting their families. In these conditions, it is safe to suppose that some proportion of freedmen gave up the struggle and reverted to their previous servitude. No doubt others struggled on, but in the conditions facing freedmen (judging from the laws) it might be expected that they were often short of ready money. There is a direct reference to this situation in what is said of Þorbjörn Vífilsson (see pp. 36-7). In *Eiríks saga rauða* he is reported as saying: 'But now my estate is running into trouble for lack of ready money, and up to now it has been considered respectable. Now I prefer to sell up, rather than lose my honour' (*ÍF* IV, 205).

This is the reason that Þorbjörn went to Greenland. With the reservations already expressed about the reliability of *Eiríks saga rauða*, we can detect here a theme that was familiar enough where freedmen or their sons were concerned. From the standpoint of cultural development, it makes no great difference whether this motive was applied to one freedman rather than another.

Yet sagas may also represent freedmen or their sons as well off. In *Eiríks saga rauða* it is said of Porgeirr of Porgeirsfell: 'He was rich, and he had been a freedman.' Of his son Einarr: 'Einarr voyaged from one country to another, and he prospered' (*ÍF IV*, 203). There is no comment on the financial standing of this father and son, and the author refers to their state in the same matter-of-fact way as he does to Þorbjörn's shortage of money later in the story.

In two accounts it is expressly said that a freedman made a lot of money, but in both it is further shown that this prosperity cost him his life, indirectly. One story concerns Björn the freedman of Bjartmarr, already mentioned (pp. 37, 44); the other is in *Laxdæla saga*, concerning the freedman of Hrútr Herjólfsson, who established his freedman just outside his own boundaries on the land of his brother Höskuldr. There was disagreement about which of them he should pay, and the freedman was killed (*ÍF V*, 70).

These few accounts of the status of freedmen allow of no certain conclusions. It could not be expected that sagas would have much to say about this group of people, since they dwell most upon those individuals who are outstanding in one way or another. Also, there are particular reasons for including anecdotes of the freedmen and their descendants noticed above. Þorbjörn Vífilsson is mentioned for the sake of his descendants, the bishops. The anecdote about Einarr and his father comes in because Einarr was the man that Þorbjörn refused as suitor for his daughter Guðriðr. The incidents of Björn and of Hrútr's freedman are used in connection with a dispute and a killing. None of these passages sets out to say anything specific about the conditions of freedmen, and this gives additional authority to what they do say.

So these are the main conclusions of this investigation:

1. Historical reasons lead us to think that certain named thralls were granted freedom in Iceland already in the settlement period, c. A.D. 900. The thralls concerned here have one feature in common: they were all obtained in the Western Isles.

2. Arguments from cultural development indicate that it might well have been economic for settlers who took large territories to grant freedom to some proportion of their thralls.

3. Little can be certainly affirmed about the condition of these freedmen and their descendants. Considering the laws probably in force at this time, it seems fair to suppose that their circumstances were rather pinched and they were especially liable to run short of money. There is an allusion to this in the tale of the freedman's son (cf. p. 46 above). But on the other hand there are tales to show the opposite state of things. We may well think that there is something to be said for accounts of each kind, but as things stand the question will not be settled by the evidence so far available.

#### Notes

1. Slightly edited from a seminar paper given at University College London, 23rd February, 1984. Translated here by Joan Turville-Petre.
2. See, however, Jakob Benediktsson's introduction to his edition of *Ldn* (*ÍF I*, ci and n. 15) where other views are expressed.
3. *Róng* means 'bent, somewhat crooked'; see further Note 4.
4. See Vilmundarson 1980, 57-140.
5. See Jóhannesson 1941, 203, 226, and Rafnsson 1974, 81, 88, 142; also Jakob Benediktsson in *ÍF I*, cvi-cxx and refs.
6. Cf. the farm-name *Leysingjastaðir*. See Foote 1977, 46-7 and refs.

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- Grg* = *Grágás* I(a-b)-II. 1852-70, 1879. (Ed. Vilhjálmur Finsen.) The translation of passages from *Grágás* is based on that in *Laws of Early Iceland*. *Grágás* I, tr. Andrew Dennis, Peter Foote, Richard Perkins, 1980.
- Gþ* = *Geirmundar þátr heljarskinns* in *Sturlunga saga* 1906-11, I 1-7.
- H* = *Hauksbók*-redaction of *Landnámabók*.
- ÍF* = *Íslenzk fornrit*. 1933- (in progress).
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57-140.

## NEW THOUGHTS ON *VQLUNDARKVIÐA*

By LOTTE MOTZ

THE tale of Völundr, a highly gifted craftsman, who experienced great cruelty and exacted a terrible retribution, has been of great appeal in the Germanic area through the ages. Folk-tales, poems and prose narratives have kept his memory alive so that even in modern times Richard Wagner considered composing a work about the vengeful artisan.

The Eddic poem *Völundarkviða* is one of the fuller documents concerning the master craftsman. The poem has frequently engaged the attention of students of Germanic literature because of the heterogeneity of its elements and the unorthodox nature of its hero. Dealing with the central theme of heroic literature, the restoration of honour after injury, it contains episodes which would be better suited to a fairy-tale, and, in contrast to the conventions of the genre, it shows a warrior humbled by a smith.

Various interpretations of the work have therefore been proposed: that it is a myth (Schröder 1955), a heroic poem (Genzmer 1912-22), a folk-tale turned into heroic poetry (Grimstad 1983) or an account of a ritual regeneration (Taylor 1963). Recently a structural reading has been given which points to the parallels between the various parts (Burson 1983).

After studying the poem and its interpretations I conclude that it owes its present form to a number of cultural environments. A story, current in the primitive setting of north-Eurasian peoples, where water birds are of importance, incorporated themes associated with the figure of the master-craftsman of agricultural communities, and was then reshaped by a poet with the outlook of a heroic warrior society.

The story of the poem in brief is as follows: Völundr and his brothers each gain a swan woman as a bride, but these leave after several years of marriage never to be seen again. Waiting for the return of his spouse, Völundr is attacked, fettered and mutilated by the retainers of a king. Though lame and powerless, he manages, through his cunning and skill, to murder the king's sons and seduce his daughter. He then rises in triumph into the air to escape from the place of his humiliation.

Clearly we have before us two distinct and separate stories: one

of love and loss, and another of injury and revenge. Scholars agree that a new narrative begins after Völundr's wife has broken the bonds of marriage. Much speculation has arisen concerning the relation of the swan woman's story to Völundr's. It has frequently been held that two separate and unconnected tales were here brought together by the poet. I too shall, among other things, deal with this problem, and try to reach a conclusion by approaching the poem through its components.

Even a superficial reading of the poem shows that it was acquainted with diverse geographic regions. Völundr and his brothers are described in the prose introduction to the poem as 'sons of the king of the Finnar', i.e. they were born in Finland or Lapland, and they glide on skis through snow-covered forests to obtain their prey; they marry women from the south, one of them the daughter of the king of France (Valland). Völundr falls victim to Níðuðr, a king in Sweden according to the prose, king of the Njárar according to the poem. Mountains near the river Rhine are mentioned.

We deal, moreover, with diverse cultural environments. Völundr and his brothers are brought before us as ski-hunters. This type of hunting, requiring courage, skill and strength, was developed in pre-historic times in arctic regions by societies of fishermen and hunters. Images of men on skis, dated to the second and third millennium B.C. and belonging to the so-called Arctic Rock Art, were incised into the rock face in circumpolar lands (Clark and Piggott 1965, illustration 80). Olaus Magnus describes the ski-hunting of sixteenth-century Lapps in his treatise on the customs of northern nations. Völundr, the son of the king of Lapland, thus pursues, in the swan maiden episode, a mode of gaining sustenance of extremely ancient roots.

After the departure of his wife he changes his way of life and turns into an artisan. His skills surpass those of other men and he lives apart from any group. It appears that a class of specialized craftsmen arose, also in very early times, in archaic peasant cultures. The kilns of Arpachijeh, on the shores of the river Tigris, produced pottery for the surrounding regions in neolithic times. The presence of centres for the manufacture of stone axes and pottery in the New Stone Age has also been established for England, Jutland and parts of Germany (Smith 1974, 120-23; Schlicht 1971, 11).

The practitioners of special skills appeared in the eyes of others as beings of superhuman powers who could control the forces of nature and human life. They were thus viewed with admiration,

awe and fear (Eliade 1971; Motz 1983). The many tales of folk-tradition and mythology concerning an artisan of superhuman and magical talents — in which he often lives apart from other men — must have arisen at the time of origin of this special class. And we may attribute the powers of the master smith Völundr over his surroundings to the outlook and beliefs of early peasant cultures.

The poem, as we have it, is set, however, in the environment of the early Middle Ages, with the landscape divided into the kingdoms of Christian Europe and the warriors protected by medieval coats of mail (*negldar vóru brynior*, Vkv 6). The greed for gold which led Níðuðr to capture Völundr appears as a motivating force elsewhere in heroic literature, and the craftsman's overriding thirst for vengeance belongs to the ethos of heroic warriors of the age of the migrations.

The poem thus accepted themes and motifs from three divergent cultures and developed its plot using a protagonist from each group: the hunter, the craftsman and the warrior. I shall now examine these themes and motifs as they appear outside the poem, in their own environment. I shall then try to trace the form in which they entered the Old Icelandic text.

#### *The episode of the swan woman*

In the Icelandic work this episode is placed by its physical setting (snow-covered landscape) and the descent of its actors (sons of the king of Lapland) in the context of a northern hunting culture. There are yet more elements which imply that the tale belongs to this environment. The marriage of a human with an untamed animal and the change from animal to human form belong to the intellectual world of cultures with close dependence on beasts of the chase and the sea (Findeisen 1956, 70-73; Eliade 1972, 163). Here strong ritual ties were developed between the sphere of men and the sphere of beasts. The story of the swan woman is indeed spread widely in northern lands where archaic economic systems have been retained in many ways. While in more southern countries, where the narrative is also found, it is frequently incorporated into a fairy-tale, it appears in northern regions in the form of a myth and in conjunction with elements of faith.<sup>1</sup>

The tale is disseminated among the Buriat, the Chukchee, and the Ainu, and is also well remembered among the Eskimo. While in these areas we obviously encounter many variations, we also

meet with a number of common features. In contrast to the European versions, the husband always endeavours to recover his lost companion, and he almost always succeeds in his venture.

The variant versions of the myth as they exist among the Eskimo have been gathered, examined and analysed by Inge Kleivan, and she has also reconstructed a hypothetical basic form.<sup>2</sup> In this form a man sees women bathing in the water while their feather shifts are lying on the shore. He steals the garments and returns them one by one, keeping the dress of the loveliest, whom he thus forces to become his wife. Several elements indicate that she is really a water bird, a goose. Thus she cannot overcome, for instance, her distaste for human food. She stays with her husband, bearing him a son, but she patiently gathers feathers for a new dress until one day, taking her child with her, she escapes.

Without delay the husband sets out on his perilous journey of recovery, meeting and escaping many dangers. One day he comes upon a man at the shore of a lake, and by asking him the proper question, receives information about the location of his lost family. He is, moreover, provided with a vessel.<sup>3</sup> Passing further trials on his sea voyage the husband finally reaches the 'Land of Birds'. Here he finds his wife remarried, frequently to a bird, an eagle, gull or crane. In some versions the new husband gives up his rights without any struggle, in others the first husband must engage in fight. After he has won, he may stay in Birdland, or he may return with his family to his own home. Sometimes he receives a feather garment from the girl's father so that he too may rise aloft. In two versions the girl once more escapes. In all versions she has children.

The tale touches upon religious faith through two of its elements: the woman's entry into Birdland and her motherhood. It is assumed among North-Eurasian nations that migratory birds reside in Birdland at the time of their winter absence. The Vogul and the Ostyak place this location at the source of the river Ob, where also lies the country of the dead (Róheim 1954, 20). It is entered by a narrow gap. The Chukchee believe in a moving sky which lifts and sinks; when it rises a small opening is created and through this opening the birds rush out to leave the earth (Paulson 1962, 28). The departure is, however, not without its danger, for the sky may crush the creatures as it comes down upon them. The Gilyak of the Amur country envisage a woman seated at the edge of the horizon, trying to catch and kill the fowl in their passage (Róheim 1954, 20-21).

Some versions relate the swan woman's departure to the yearly

migration of the water birds. A swan maiden thus requests of the birds which pass her house in their travels that each drop a feather to her (Bogoraz 1902, 611). Another woman who escapes requests that every spring and autumn, at the time of the birds' passage, ceremonies be enacted in her honour (Harva 1916-32, 501). It is likely that the story of the departing swan woman (goose or duck) originated in the experience of the yearly departure of migratory birds and in the fear that they might not return to communities which depended on them for subsistence.

In all stories the bird woman functions as a mother and in some as an ancestress. The Transbaikal Buriat thus are said to have descended from a swan woman's daughter who had stayed behind (Findeisen 1956, 10). The chiefs of the tribe of the Dörböt derive their origin from the bird woman, and they offer sacrifices at a specific lake, near Urumtsch in Turkestan, where their ancestor had bedded the bird lady (Findeisen 1956, 10).

The tale thus serves in some places as a myth of origin. It must be related to the frequently encountered function of swans or other birds as totem or ancestral animals. The Yurak claim descent from eagles or from swans. According to Uno Harva (1938, 470) swans are ancestors to several Turco-Mongolian peoples.

Let us restate that the swan maiden myth appears of importance among nations in which water birds contribute to the economic well-being of the community. The tale seems to reflect the experience of, and the fear and anxiety generated by, the yearly departure of migratory birds. Though it is plausible that the myth was enacted ritually to ensure the return of migratory birds, there is to my knowledge no evidence of such a performance. The tale is, however, overtly related to a belief in which water birds are seen as ancestral beings, and it functions as a myth of origin in some places. It is thus significant that the marriage of man and bird woman always has an issue.

Having examined the swan maiden story in the context in which, apparently, it originated and in its fullest version, let us now see which elements have entered the Eddic lay. Let us recall that in the beginning of the Eddic tale Völundr suffers the loss of a beloved mate and that he later manages to bed a woman who will be the mother of his child. We thus deal here, as in the full version of the myth, with the loss and the regaining of a woman, even though the role has been divided between two persons in the Eddic lay. We note that Völundr fully claims Bögvildr, the king's daughter, as his wife and the child she carries as his own.<sup>4</sup> His act of vengeance

thus consisted, not in bringing the shame of unwed motherhood (a Victorian notion) to the royal household, but in wresting a woman from her family of birth, just as the goose woman is wrested from the Land of Birds and as Gerðr, of another Eddic poem (*Skírnismál*), is wrested from her family of giants.

A child claimed and recognized by his father, especially a supernatural father, is not stigmatized as a bastard. Heracles was not a lesser hero because he was begotten in adultery. Tales of the abduction and ravishment of women abound in myth and are frequent in Old Icelandic literary texts. In these the action may be motivated by lust, by the desire for a wife or for off-spring; it may also be committed as an assertion of superior power or in disdain for the laws of the community. By claiming Bœvildr as his wife Völundr asserted his superior power (*þvíat hann betr kunni*, Vkv 28). Let us also note that, after her seduction, Bœvildr weeps not only in fear of her father's wrath but also in sorrow over the separation from her lover (Vkv 29).

That the story which was incorporated into the Eddic lay had contained a search for the fickle woman is supported by the action of Völundr's brothers. After discovering the absence of their wives they immediately set out on skis to regain them (Vkv 4). Völundr, on the other hand, deviates at this point from the pattern of the tale, not only in his patient and lonely wait, but also in his change of occupation.

Non-Eddic sources support the view that Völundr's adventure ends, indeed, in his marriage. In *Piðriks saga* he wins Bœvildr as a wife and he makes her the mother of a famous son, Viðga. The English tradition shows Beadhild in alliance with Weland and as the mother of his child.<sup>5</sup> In the Middle High German works *Friedrich von Schwaben* and *Heldenbuch* the story of Wieland is concerned with his marriage to a princess rather than with his achievement of revenge.

In the non-Eddic sources the artisan belongs to a well established, partly non-human, family or dynasty. In *Piðriks saga* his descent is traced to a king and a mermaid; she gave birth to Velent's father Vaði, a giant. Velent, in his turn, became father of a mighty hero. Not only Weland but also his family are remembered in the English tradition. The place names *Hwittuces hlæw* ('mound of Hwittuc', his son), *Beahhildæ byrigels* ('Beahhild's barrow'), and 'Wadde's grave' together with 'Wayland's pond' or 'Wayland's smithy' indicate that he, as well as members of his family, had remained alive in folk belief.<sup>6</sup> His father has a connection, as in

the Old Norse sources, with the sea, and, as a giant would, he has built a causeway for his wife; thus the old Roman road from York to Dunsley bears the name 'Wade's Causey' (Davidson 1958, 151).

In the *Heldenbuch* Wieland is driven from his country, learns smith-craft in a mountain and marries the daughter of king Hartwich. In *Friedrich von Schwaben* prince Friedrich, also known as Wieland, marries his beloved Angelburg after many dangerous adventures. An evil spell had been laid upon this princess so that she was changed into a dove; by taking her dove garment while she was bathing in a well Friedrich releases her from her enchantment.<sup>7</sup> If we recall that king Vilkin, grandfather of Velent, in his turn, had won the love of a non-human woman who had later given birth to Vaði, then we realize that the themes of gaining love and marriage and of begetting children loom large in the stories of Wieland/Velent. They may be considered tales of the origin of a family, a dynasty or a famous hero. It is just this type of tale, as we have seen, that is represented by the myth of the swan woman.

Non-Eddic versions of Völundr's story reveal yet more themes of the ancient myth. The hero of the arctic tale reaches the shore of a lake where a man drops wood shavings into the water. From these shavings a vessel is created for the husband. On coming to a shore Velent of *Piðriks saga* creates a vessel for himself (*Piðriks saga* 1905-11, 8). In one of the Eskimo variants the vessel produced for the husband is fitted with a tightly closing lid so that it resembles a submarine. It is just such a snugly fitting vessel that belongs to Velent in *Piðriks saga*.<sup>8</sup> In some northern versions the woman patiently gathers feathers of birds passing overhead; in the Icelandic saga Velent sews a garment from feathers gathered by his brother.

It must be clear that the bird woman tales arose and stayed alive in countries where water birds were of economic importance. In these cultures such fowl were imbued with a special mythological significance. We have already noted that the swan is often the ancestral animal among Siberian nations. In Ugric mythology, among the Vogul and the Ostyak, the ruler of the sky himself is often in the shape of a water bird, a duck or gander. A swan is frequently the love partner of this god. The mighty Mirsusne-Chum thus flies in the form of a duck, crane or gander to the Land of Birds to meet his beloved, a wild goose or swan. In Ostyak fairy-tales the bride of the ruler of the world lives as a swan on a wonderful and hidden island and he visits her in the shape of a gander or a swan (Ferdinand 1956, 20, 24-5).

It appears that some of the themes and motifs of such mythologies attached themselves to the stories and the figure of Vqlundr. There are indications that bird form had belonged to Vqlundr or his brothers, the love partners of swan women. Alvitr (as she is called in the prose introduction) embraces the 'white neck' of Vqlundr (Vkv 2); his brother's name Slagfiðr is translatable as 'wet feathered';<sup>9</sup> Vqlundr mentions his 'webbed feet' (*fitiar*). After seducing Bqðvildr and accomplishing his vengeance he rises like a bird into the air (Vkv 29, 38).

Large birds are always present in those images which are said to represent scenes from Vqlundr's life. The Franks Casket shows a craftsman in his smithy with a decapitated body at his feet, two female figures, and four long-necked birds (Becker 1973, Table I, 274). On the Gotland picture stone Ardre VIII we recognize the tools of smith-craft and two headless bodies within a house, a woman leaving, and a huge bird arising from the 'smithy' (Lindquist 1941-2, I 22-5). On a stone from Leeds a fettered man holds a woman above his head; a smith's tools are lying on the ground, and his fetters are in the process of transformation into wings (Becker 1973, 160). The pictures, all of which are held to relate to the master craftsman, indicate that large birds were inextricably associated with his fate and his adventures.

Yet another theme of Ugric mythology is discernible in the story of the smith. Recurrently in this mythology the son of the sky god descends to earth, usually in the shape of a duck, and here he performs the office of a healer and a shaman.<sup>10</sup> Sometimes, however, he suffers injury at the hands of men and takes vengeance. The son of the shaman Doh of the Ostyak thus came to earth in the form of a bird; people shot him thinking he was an ordinary bird and were then punished by their own deaths (Findeisen 1929, 39; Donner 1933, 94).

A Vogul myth shows a particularly strong resemblance to *Vqlundarkviða*. In this myth the son of the sky god descends to earth and is enslaved to a family of Samoyed. He is tortured and mistreated and told that he will soon be sacrificed. His superhuman powers enable him, however, to destroy the people and the animals connected with the intended sacrifice, including his master's son, whom he kills by cutting out his tongue, half-blinding him and impaling him. He then places the corpse on his father's knees while he returns triumphantly to his own father in the sky (Róheim 1954, 37, quoting Munkácsi 1892-1921, II, part 2, 105 and part 1, 73).

The tale of the mistreatment of a god and the god's revenge and

epiphany appears elsewhere in the *Edda*, in the story of king Agnarr and Grímnir (Óðinn) in *Grímnismál*.

In the final stanza of *Völundarkviða* the artisan triumphantly describes to the king the fullness of his vengeance. If this encounter may indeed be interpreted as a form of epiphany, then we can more clearly understand the humility of the king's reply when he is told of the slaying of his sons and the raping of his daughter. 'No man is so tall,' the king exclaims, 'that he can take you from horseback (*þic af hesti taka*), nor so mighty that he can shoot you from below where you soar up near the clouds' (Vkv 37).<sup>11</sup> This avowal is clearly less characteristic of a heroic warrior's stance before his enemy than a man's prostration before the glory of a god. Surely, a warrior of heroic poetry, though vanquished, never would concede defeat to a human foe, but rather, even on the point of death, hurl an insult at his enemy.

The king's avowal bears, in fact, a resemblance to a statement made by Vogul singers about the ruler of the sky: 'In the whole world there is no army with wings, no army with legs, that he cannot conquer. Idols and gods who soar high he holds firmly in his hand; idols and gods who walk low he holds firmly in his hand' (Róheim 1954, 68). We may also observe the image, evoked by Níðuðr, of Völundr's ride through the air. This too is an activity associated with the chief Vogul god (Ferdinand 1956, 24, 25). Bögvildr's words, which end the poem, affirm, in their turn, the power of her elfin lover: 'To withstand him I had neither strength nor knowledge' (Vkv 41).

Let us summarize at this point. The myth of the swan maiden, her marriage, motherhood, escape and recovery, as it is told among the Uralic, Altaic and Paleo-Siberian nations, finds echoes in the Germanic story of the skilful smith. We discern in the stories of Völundr further images and themes of an archaic faith in which water birds were of importance, scenes and pictures deprived of their original significance, yet strangely vital in themselves.

### *Legendary craftsmen*

A god of smith-craft is well known in mythology. Hephaistos of the Greeks and Koshar-u-Khasis of the Canaanites forge magic objects for the other gods. These objects are often essential to the establishment and support of cosmic order. In Germanic mythology dwarf-smiths have wrought such inestimable gifts as the fetter

which keeps the wolf Fenrir immobile and thus postpones the day of ultimate disaster, and the hammer which helps the god Pórr to smash the skulls of trolls. That the craftsman produces objects for the use of others, who are thus dependent on him, shows that the tales developed in societies which possessed a class of workmen with special skills. In the folk-tales and legends of many lands the legendary artisan is thus a man apart from his community who renders the services of his special talents to his group. In the tales of the Germanic area he is frequently insulted or abused by those who benefit from him. Sometimes he takes effective vengeance. Sometimes he merely withdraws from further intercourse with men.<sup>12</sup>

The craftsman of mythology and the folk-tales lives almost always in a hidden place, in mountains, caves or water, far from the settlements of men or gods. In the folk-tales, therefore, men may have to place their order at the entrance to the hidden smith's dwelling. In this place they must also leave their payment, and here they will also find their finished work (Motz 1983, 43-5).

The most important of the Germanic folk-tale figures is the *Grinkenschmied* of Westphalia. He creates, among other artifacts, ploughshares which will never rust, and he lends his spit against payment for all festive gatherings. In the most frequently recurring tale about him a farmer tries to cheat him of his wages. In consequence he must endure the harsh punishment meted out by the mighty smith (Kuhn 1859, I 84-93).

In the Norse heroic sagas (*fornaldarsögur*) the legendary smith is depicted, above all, as a creator of precious swords which may be magically endowed. Sometimes the weapon is freely given to a warrior, sometimes it is taken by brute force from the artisan.<sup>13</sup> And, as in the folk-tales, the craftsman's vengeance, carried out by magic means and never in open battle, may overtake the warrior hero.

The smith Hephaistos played a vital role in the miraculous delivery of Athena from the head of Zeus, and gave rise to living beings by creating servants out of gold. The Egyptian smith-god Ptah gave birth to all living things on earth. The Germanic dwarfs shaped a living creature, Freyr's boar, with bristles of gold, and they themselves originated in the earth or in the blood and bones of a slaughtered giant (*Skáldskaparmál* 122-3; *Edda*, *Völuspá* 9, 10; Motz 1983, 150-52).

While the smiths of myth are thus often vital to miraculous deliveries and to the birth of living creatures by magic means, they

are not shown (and neither are the folk-tale smiths) in successful erotic relationships, winning a wife, begetting off-spring or establishing a family.<sup>14</sup> Hephaistos is cuckolded by his wife and the marriage has no issue. The *Grinkenschmied* lives alone or with an apprentice. Koshar-u-Khasis has no spouse. We must conclude that the craftsman's way to creativity is through the magic of his forge and not through the power of his loins.

After this brief outline of some of the aspects of the legendary smith, we shall now consider which of the themes are encountered in the lay of Völundr. Like Hephaistos and the Germanic dwarfs, Völundr forges objects which are used by others. During his captivity he lives hidden and distant from the company of men, and no one dares to visit him except the king (Vkv, prose after v. 17). Like the craftsmen of the *fornaldarsögur* he is robbed of a precious sword through the brute strength of warriors. He too achieves vengeance through his cunning and his wiles.

If we remember that the creations of the craftsman's forge were thought to carry magic powers, then we may find a new interpretation for one of the actions of Völundr. While his brothers, as we recall, set out on an attempt to recover their wives, Völundr stayed behind to await the return of his 'light-coloured lady' (Vkv 5). We may wonder why he, who does not seem less active or resolute than his brothers, should accept his lot with such passivity. He may, however, not be as resigned in his reaction as it appears.

With grim energy he shapes rings in the fire of his forge (Vkv 5). What are the *lindbaugar* (a *hapax legomenon*) which he welds and rounds so carefully? Why would he, we may ask, heap jewels on a woman who broke her troth when he did not do so in the fullness of their love relation? Would a man of Germanic society wait in sorrow, like a medieval troubadour, for a woman who might never return?

Let us recall that magicians (and smiths were thought to be magicians) excel above all in the art of fettering and binding. The artisan-magician is thus able to recreate in the roundness of a ring the enchantment of the magic fetter from which no one may escape. Rings, symbolic of the magic fetter, have remained in use into modern times.<sup>15</sup> Völundr shaped seven hundred golden rings while waiting for 'Alvitr'. On discovering his empty dwelling, Völundr may merely have renounced the traditional manner of recovering his spouse. He did not embark on a dangerous journey, so reminiscent of the shaman's voyage, but chose the craftsman's way: the creation of objects of compelling force. One of the seven hundred

rings was stolen and given to the princess; when it broke she came secretly to the craftsman to have it mended. This visit led to her seduction; thus it was indeed a ring which brought a woman to Völundr's arms.<sup>16</sup>

If we understand that the ring was thought to radiate magic force we may also understand that Bögvildr was in the craftsman's power as soon as she had placed it on her arm. The interpretation suggested would change the traditional reading of some lines. Völundr exclaims after he was robbed and maimed: 'Now Bögvildr wears the red rings of my bride; I shall not get any recompense.'<sup>17</sup> The lines are generally interpreted as a lamentation over the theft of the ring(s) for which he will not even be given compensation. But if the ring has powers of enchantment, as I have suggested, it would mark Bögvildr as Völundr's wife. 'My bride' would then refer to Bögvildr rather than 'Alvitr'. The passage would then mean: 'Now Bögvildr wears the red rings of (being) my bride (as my bride); for this I do not await compensation (with this I am well satisfied)'.

Völundr, it is true, bares his teeth in anger when he sees the ring on Bögvildr's arm (Vkv 17). His anger might be aroused because she, who is by rights his wife, is not yet in his possession.

That the figure of Velent-Weland fully partakes of Germanic folk-tradition we may understand from the legend attached to the Wayland Smith of England. He lives, like the *Grinkenschmied*, hidden from the sight of men, in a Stone Age burial mound called 'Wayland's Smithy' near Ashbury in Berkshire (Davidson 1959, 149). He will provide shoes for the horse of a farmer or traveller if a silver penny is laid before his door and the horse tied up in the vicinity. On the next day the man may retrieve his horse and find that his coin has been accepted.

We cannot find a counterpart to Völundr's mutilation either in swan maiden stories or in Germanic folk-tales of the smith. A possible analogue is found in Greek tradition. Hephaistos was hurled from the sky by Zeus and was injured in his fall to earth so that he was lame (*Iliad* I 586-94, 607; Motz 1973-4, 111-14). If we accept the Greek account as a true parallel then we must class the maiming of Völundr with the motifs belonging to the legendary smith.

In contrast to the smiths of myth and folk-tale, Völundr is a member of a family or dynasty. He succeeds in gaining a woman for his embrace and in engendering a son. These achievements do not belong, as we have seen, to the life pattern of the smiths of

Germanic myth, folk-tales or prose narratives. We must conclude, therefore, that the seduction of Bøðvildr was taken from a different source, i.e. from the myth of the swan maiden.

We may thus understand that although the Eddic lay follows the structure of the full tale of the swan woman in the sequence of winning, losing and recovering a wife, the archaic myth, developed in a hunting culture, must at some stage have become entwined around the figure of the master craftsman who had come to prominence in a different social setting. The following features of the lay may be traced to the legends of the smith: Völundr's mysterious and lonely dwelling-place, his powers of craftsmanship, the stealing of his treasures, and his revenge.

On the basis of my examination I thus assert that the tale of the smith's vengeance was embedded in the narrative of the swan maiden between her loss and her return where in the archaic myth the husband meets the dangers on his way. Both stories give an account of a recovery: that of his lost wife by her husband, and that of his lost honour by the smith.

Ann Burson believes, as do most scholars, that in the Eddic poem two separate tales, the swan maiden's and the smith's, were brought together. Yet she finds that the *two* conjoined stories contain a *single* pattern of the sequence and structure of a *Märchen*-type folk-tale as these were proposed by Vladimir Propp. She concludes that the creator of the Eddic poem must have known an 'extended' form of the swan woman story (Burson 1983, 11). She thus considers an 'extended' form what I understand to be the full and non-fragmented version of the archaic myth. And she therefore does not take the step taken by me, and believe that it was precisely this version that had served as a basis for the poem. Let us now look at the heroic aspects of the lay.

### *Heroic aspects*

We already noted that the external environment is that of the early Middle Ages. There is reference to the gold on Grani's path (Vkv 14). This gold was gained by Sigurðr, the most famous warrior of Germanic heroic literature. Völundr's transformation of the skulls of the slain princes into drinking cups parallels a custom among such warrior nations as the Scythians or the Huns. These would, at times, turn the skulls of their slain enemies into cups for drinking.<sup>18</sup>

The story, moreover, has been humanized. Characters are stripped of their superhuman ancestry: Völundr is not descended from a giant but from a human king. The swan maidens, in their turn, are here the daughters of king Hlǫðvér and king Kiárr. They are also given the features of Germanic battle maids (they are called valkyries in the prose introduction). The change of the superhuman women from swan maidens into human princesses bears on our view of Bǫðvildr. She may have undergone a similar change. As she represents the recovered wife of the full tale of the swan woman (as argued earlier in this article), she may have had a superhuman ancestry, lost it, and become the daughter of a king. She bears a name which would clearly suit a valkyrie. Both elements in it, *bögð* and *hildr*, mean 'battle'; the second is frequently found in women's names.

Human emotions have become central to the poem. In folktales and myth the man gains the woman only because he robs her of her dress, and she escapes as soon as she can counteract his trickery. The women of the Eddic poem choose their husbands in tenderness and leave out of longing for their former life (Vkv 2-3). The prose introduction still mentions feather dresses lying on the shore. Yet this fact has lost its function in the progression of the plot. The image has remained as the vestige of an earlier causation, serving now aesthetically to add vividness and colour to the scene.

While elsewhere the swan woman is important as an ancestress and Bǫðvildr as the mother of a famous hero, Völundr's partner is not even shown as a mother in the Eddic lay. Like the feather garments on the beach she has lost her earlier function. Deprived of her role as an ancestress she has become a person in herself: fearing her father's wrath when her ring is broken, in childlike trust before the smith, weeping over the departure of her lover, carrying his seed within her womb, remembering his power and his strength, she has grown from child to woman before our eyes.

The ruthlessness of his greed had incited Niðuðr to his action; we are also shown his rage against his wife and his despair when his sons fail to return; in the end he recognizes in humility the power of Völundr. He too has changed profoundly in the course of his experience. His sons, in their turn, are propelled towards their death by their boyish curiosity (Vkv 20). As the king was driven by his lust for gold, so Völundr is driven by his passion for revenge. The queen, a fierce and cunning woman, was probably motivated by jealousy of one who might rival her in magic knowledge; she is called *kunnig* (Vkv 25, 30) but Völundr surpasses her.

Emotions are brought into sharp focus and illuminated by telling states and gestures: the women clasping their lovers in their embrace, Níðuðr sleepless in his sorrow, Bǫðvildr weeping, Völundr baring his teeth when he sees the ring on Bǫðvildr's arm, his eyes glowing with the fires of his hate, sleepless in his thirst for vengeance, and breaking into harsh laughter in his triumph.

The poet also moved the desire for revenge and its fulfilment into the centre of the plot. Since all interest is focussed on how the act of vengeance is accomplished, we may understand why here alone, among the many versions of the story, the humbling of the king is more important than the winning of a bride or the begetting of a famous son. The need for vengeance so overrides and engulfs all other needs, that, apparently, it incorporated the act of love or lust into the master-plan against the king. That a quest for the restitution of a loss is also present in the myth of the swan maiden, and an intent to repay an injury important in the legends of the superhuman artisan, must have made the blended story highly appealing to a poet who wished to glorify heroic deeds.

In the Eddic poem we have indeed turned from the world of myth to that of heroic literature, for it is a truly human story, concentrating on the deeds of men and on the passions which drive them to glory or to death. From the genesis which I have proposed we may understand the various puzzling features of the lay as remnants of earlier concepts and beliefs, remains of a structure that has been superseded. Even so, many mysteries remain. We do not know, for instance, why Völundr and Bǫðvildr were both violated while sleeping in their seats, or understand Völundr's apparent affinity with such animals as wolves, bears and snakes (discussed in Grimstad 1983). They belong to some forgotten context which also it might be tempting to reconstruct.

We may wonder if the name Völundr/Velent/Weland had belonged originally to the hunter or to the master smith. The alliteration apparent in Völundr's genealogy — Wachilt (the mermaid), Wade, Wieland, Witticko — would indicate that Völundr had a legitimate position in his family, and his name would thus be part of the tale of a superhuman dynasty, i.e. that of the swan woman.

Scholars agree in placing the origin of the Völundr legend within areas of north or north-west Germany. Folklore would support such an origin, for in modern lower Saxony and northern Westphalia we meet the richest fund of stories out of all Germany of the superhuman artisan. Near Osnabrück, Münster, and the small town of Bramsche grew the towering figures of the *Grinken-*

*schmied*, the *Hüggelschmied* and the craftsman of the Darnssee (Motz 1983, 60-63). Towns and cities in this region incorporated the name of the famous smith Mime in their designation, as in the case of *mimigernaford*, the old name for Münster, or Minden from *mimidun*. As a ruling local spirit a legendary artisan would have been absorbed into the lore concerning a superhuman dynasty. We must also remember that it was from just these areas of lower Saxony that tribes departed across the sea and brought the story of the wise and glorious craftsman to the British Isles.

It is clear that the medieval poet of the lay of Völundr did not know the earlier significance of the themes and stories, originating in hunting and peasant cultures, which he employed. The poem thus bears testimony to the fact that images and tales live immeasurably longer than the society which gave them birth.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Holmström (1919) offers a survey of the world-wide distribution of the motif (D.361.1). He notes that it may combine with other folk- and fairy-tale themes, such as that of 'The Man in Quest for a Lost Wife' (Type 400), or 'Girl as Helper in the Hero's Flight' (Type 313), or 'Man Persecuted because of his Beautiful Wife' (Type 465). He understands that the swan maiden part of such stories might more clearly belong with folk-tales, while the latter portions, which contain many adventures, would belong with fairy-tales.

<sup>2</sup> Kleivan 1962, 25-7. In the arctic tales the man *always* sets out to search for his lost companion after discovering her flight. We certainly deal here with one continuous tale and not with two conjoined stories. I suggest that when the narratives were told in the more sophisticated regions of Europe, they lost their earlier significance so that they became fragmented and the second portion of the tale frequently disappeared.

<sup>3</sup> Kleivan 1962, 20-2. The man met by the husband has a deformity, for he is hollow from the mouth to the anus. The man asks the approaching husband from what direction he has come, and the husband tactfully names a direction from which he could not have noticed the deformity. The vessel originates from wood shavings and is usually a living salmon.

<sup>4</sup> Vkv 33. As he reveals the extent of his vengeance Völundr also admonishes the king not to hurt his, Völundr's, wife. He calls her in this stanza both 'wife' and 'bride'. Ann Burson believes that these terms are used ironically; in *Piðriks saga*, however, Böðvildr does become the artisan's wife.

<sup>5</sup> The Old English *Waldere* names Widia as the son of Weland and the grandson of Niðhad. The poem *Deor* speaks of the sad fate which befell Welund and of Beaduhild's sorrow on discovering her pregnancy. The poem does not expressly state that she had been Welund's mistress. It seems, however, unlikely that another Beaduhild (not a common name) would find herself in the same circumstances as Welund's paramour, and that her fate would be mentioned immediately after Welund's. Her anguish might be motivated, like that of Böðvildr in the Eddic poem,

not only by her state, but by her sorrow over her lover's departure and by fear of the anger of her father.

<sup>6</sup> *Hwittuces hlæw* is mentioned in the same charter which mentions Wayland's Smithy and has been identified as a knoll lying about one mile from the megalithic monument. *Beahhilda byrigels* is mentioned in a charter of 856 A.D. and lies near the Swine Brook about two miles distant from the monument and about one mile away from 'Hwittuc's mound'. Another charter speaks also of 'Behhild's slough' and 'Behhild's tree'. These places, in their turn, are less than five miles away from Wayland's Smithy. The proximity of these places to one another would support a relation to the Weland story even though the names are not completely identical with those of the literary sources. Hwittuc is close in sound to German Witticko, and Beahhild has been interpreted as scribal error for Beadhild (Grinsell 1939). In *Piðriks saga*, Vaði is the son of a woman of the sea. He is depicted as wading across a sound; the English tradition has kept a memory of Wade's boat (Davidson 1958, 152).

<sup>7</sup> The princess whom Wieland meets at the beginning of the story had been enchanted by her stepmother. He marries the girl after he has released her from her enchantment, yet she dies after some years and he marries a second time. We thus find here the elements of gaining, losing and recovering a wife, as they are found in the swan maiden story.

<sup>8</sup> It was noted in note 3 that the vessel was usually in the form of a living salmon. In the case of the 'submarine' type of boat the fish was hollow inside and the man was fitted into it. His voyage thus contains a theme found in shamanistic contexts, that of being swallowed by an animal. The Finnish sorcerer Väinämöinen thus entered the body of a whale. The Biblical tale of Jonah and the whale is well known. These considerations might throw new light on the origin of Velent's submarine vessel (Kleivan 1962, 22).

<sup>9</sup> The component *-fiðr* of the name may be related to German *Feder*, Icelandic *fjǫðr*, English *feather* (de Vries 1960), rather than to *finnr*. Kluge and Götz 1943 postulate a Germanic \**feþero* and cite Old High German *gifiðri* 'collectivity of feathers'.

<sup>10</sup> Kannisto (1951, 323) quotes the magic song of the son of god, the 'World Surveyor Man', who is a goose or a duck.

<sup>11</sup> The expression *taka af hesti* can be interpreted in two ways; it could mean 'unsaddle', and this view is taken by F. Detter and R. Heinzel 1903, II 303. The words could also be related to an action performed while sitting on a horse, and this meaning is assumed by B. Sijmons and H. Gering (1931, 24). I favour the first interpretation because of the symmetry between the two lines (5-6 and 7-8) of the stanza. The first part of each line appears to deal with Völundr's imagined enemy, the second part with his fate; *hár* 'tall' would correspond to *qflugr* 'mighty', and *þic af hesti taki* 'unsaddle you' with *þic nedan sciðti* 'shoot you from below'. It would also not make much sense to describe an imagined enemy so carefully; and one would assume that if the *af hesti* referred to the horse of Völundr's enemy, the words would be placed right after *hár*. In *Piðriks saga* Velent is, in fact, in possession of a swift horse.

<sup>12</sup> Thus a craftsman living in the Darnssee of lower Saxony served the human community for many years. When a farmer left his excrement instead of payment, the smith withdrew into the depths of the lake and ceased working for the villagers (Kuhn 1859, I 48).

<sup>13</sup> Such an incident is also described in *Piðriks saga*: here the warrior meets the dwarf Álfrígr (German Alberich), seizes him and does not release him until he

promises to forge a mighty sword. In this way Þiðrikr obtains the sword Nálhringr. It may be significant that the dwarf's name, which perhaps means 'ruler of the elves', corresponds to the appellation used by Níðuðr for Völundr, *vísi álfa* (Vkv 13, 32; *Piðriks saga* 34).

<sup>14</sup> It is true that the folk-tales sometimes show dwarf-smiths as members of a nation under the rulership of a king; it is also true that dwarf-smiths appear as fathers of children. Still we do not ever find stories in which they marry or beget a child. The dwarf-smiths of Germanic mythology all seem to be male and unable to beget a child or have a heterosexual love relation with one of their own kind.

<sup>15</sup> Bächtold-Stäubli 1927-42, entry *Ring*, 5; here it is understood that the basis of ring symbolism is that of creating a magic tie; 'Der Ring ist der sichtbar gemachte Zauberkreis, der als Bindung zu dienen hat.'

<sup>16</sup> The episode of the broken ring occurs also in *Piðriks saga*, though the ring here was not produced by the artisan. Yet another jewel is sent by Völundr to the princess, and this jewel also is in rounded form (*brióstkringlor*, discs or rings for the bosom). We may observe that Völundr creates the rings for his 'light-coloured' wife (Vkv 5); her name, however, is not given there. The 'white-browed' Bögvildr might also answer to this description. In Vkv 17 the ring is designated as 'Bögvildr's ring'; it would be reasonable to assume that by wearing the ring intended for Völundr's wife she became his bride.

<sup>17</sup> Vkv 19: *Nú berr Bögvildr/brúðar minnar/—biðca ec pess bót/—bauga rauða.* There is an inconsistency here, since only one ring is given to Bögvildr according to the prose after Vkv 16. It is a minor one, however, and has no bearing on the development of the story or its interpretation.

<sup>18</sup> Archaeologists have come upon workshops, ascribed to the Scythians, for turning skulls into drinking vessels in their excavations of the steppe fortress of Gorodisce of Bel'sk. In many cases the bone of the temple served as a handle (Rolle 1980, 91-3; cf. also Altheim 1951, 22).

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## NOTES

### 1. ON THE ENDING OF FLÓRES SAGA OK BLANKIFLÚR

By GERALDINE BARNES

THE RELATIONSHIP OF the various versions of the tale of Floris and Blauncheflur to their ancestor, the Old French 'aristocratic' romance of *Floire et Blancheflor* (or Version I), has been the subject of discussion and contention ever since Edéstand du Méril raised it in 1856 (xxviii-lxxxix). The ending of the Old Norse *Flóres saga ok Blankiflúr*, a blend of heroics and hagiography unique in the Floris corpus (delivery from execution of the youthful hero and heroine by the former himself in judicial combat; stipulation by Christian Blankiflúr that unless pagan Flóres embrace her faith, she will take the veil; the couple's eventual retirement to the religious life in establishments which they have founded — *Flóres saga* 1896, XXII-XXIII), is only one loose thread in a web of possible interconnections and influences.<sup>1</sup>

Opinion on the origin of the saga's conclusion is divided between those who attribute its account of the trial scene and subsequent events to the independent hand of a Norwegian translator/adapter, deliberately deviating from known manuscript traditions of the French romance, and those predisposed to the notion of a 'lost' source. Gustav Storm, for example, regarded the trial by combat as a specifically Norwegian innovation suiting a thirteenth-century taste for chivalric literature (1874, 35). Noting that the duel 'must have appealed much more to Scandinavian taste than the exhibition of forensic oratory contained in the romance', Margaret Schlauch (1934, 182) considers certainty either way impossible. Others incline in the other direction (du Méril 1856, lxi; Herzog 1884, 206; Degnbol 1979, 75-6). Degnbol points (without specific examples) to reported similarity between the saga and a fragmentary Anglo-Norman manuscript of the romance (Leclanche 1971, 559) discovered in 1916 (Christ 1916, 82-3; Giacone 1979, 401-2) as possible evidence that 'changes in the *saga* at points where only the Continental French texts are available for comparison could derive from lost sections of the Anglo-Norman text' (p. 75). Since this manuscript lacks the ending (and the beginning) of the story, the argument for an Anglo-Norman saga source, largely in agreement with the plot of known French texts but abruptly diverging from it in its latter stages, must perforce remain speculative. Degnbol attempts to bolster it by offering some similarity between a list of tortures proposed for hero and heroine in the trial scene of the Flemish *Floris ende Blancefloer* and the saga (although they have only hanging in common — *Floris ende Blancefloer*, lines 3479-84; *Flóres saga* 1896, XXII: 7) as possible evidence that 'the *saga*'s public cry for revenge, specifying various methods of torture, was contained in a common French/Anglo-Norman source and should not be viewed as an innovation on the part of the Norwegian translator' (pp. 75-6).

This suggestion does not withstand closer scrutiny. If such apparent correspondences between Flemish and Norse extended beyond this point, there might be grounds, other than wishful thinking, for postulating a lost common source. However, from the trial scene to the end of the work (some five hundred lines in

the French) the Flemish is remarkably faithful to the story line of extant French manuscripts: portraits of hero and heroine, absent in the saga, are retained at a point exactly equivalent to that in the French (*Floris ende Blancefloer*, lines 3579-3603; *Floire et Blancheflor*, lines 2845-2910), there is no judicial combat, no tour of inspection of the churches of Paris (a feature of Blankiflúr's campaign to convert Flóres in the saga), and no retirement to the cloister.

Criticizing Herzog's persistence in attributing similarities between different versions of the tale to lost sources, F. C. de Vries (1966, 56) sounds an apt note of caution about this type of conjecture: ' . . . in investigations of this kind one runs the constant risk of attaching too much importance to agreements between passages in the various versions which may be merely accidental and, similarly, to interpolations or omissions which again need not point to a common source.' De Vries's argument (p. 57) that adapters of *Floire et Blancheflor* could have both independently altered their sources and also familiarized themselves with other versions prior to composing their own is an attractive one. In the case of the tortures, for example, the likelihood of influence of Flemish on Norse, or even vice versa,<sup>2</sup> is no less plausible than their possible derivation from a common Anglo-Norman source.

Taking his argument beyond the limitations of manuscript comparison, and endorsing Lorenz Ernst's opinion (1912, 36-7) that Hartmann von Aue's *Erec* is a demonstrable influence on Konrad Fleck's *Floire und Blanschesflür*, de Vries (p. 60, note 89) makes the further pertinent observation that 'by concentrating one's sole attention on differences and agreements between the versions of one poem one runs a risk of developing a dangerous form of intellectual myopia.' One possible cure for this condition which could be useful in unravelling the tangle of sources of and influences upon the tale's various retellings is to investigate the literary backgrounds of its many adapters. Could other works known to the saga-writer account for his alterations to the plot of *Floire et Blancheflor*? The 'popular' version of the romance (Version II), a work slightly later than Version I,<sup>3</sup> also contains a judicial combat, although not at an equivalent point in the story, in which Floire saves the falsely accused Blancheflor from execution and then returns to his school books (lines 963-1210). Whether or not the author of the saga knew this work we cannot know, but he was obviously familiar with saints' lives. Degnbol (p. 74) discounts the possibility of independent hagiographic influence on the saga, but there is considerable evidence of it throughout (Barnes 1977, 55-64). While other versions, like the sixteenth-century Spanish *Flores y Blancaflor* and the fifteenth-century German prose adaptation of Fleck's work (ed. by Herzog 1884, 218-26), also strongly emphasize the religious element inherent in the pagan-Christian opposition of the original, none goes so far as to make the couple finish their days in separate religious houses.

The mixture of hagiography and heroics which distinguishes the conclusion of the saga can be found elsewhere in Old Norse literature, most prominently in *Karlagnús saga* but also in some accounts of the life of Olaf Tryggvason. Parallels with the major divergences in *Flóres saga* from its original can be found in a number of branches of *Karlagnús saga*: single combat between an adolescent prince and a pagan nobleman; visits to the churches of Paris; the building of churches and endowment of monasteries and convents; retirement of hero or heroine to the cloister. In *Oddgeirr pátr danska*, for example, Karlagnús's son, Karlot, only six weeks a knight and said by his father to be *barn at aldrí* challenges the pagan king, Sodome, to a duel (*Kms* 1980, 146); Karlagnús himself frequently visits the church of St. Denis in Paris (*Kms* 1980, 33, 241; *Kms* 1860, 132),

builds churches and founds religious houses (*Kms* 1980, 50, 52, 248, 319; *Kms* 1860, 133); Vilhjálmr korneiss retires to a monastery (*Kms* 1980, 305-6). Olaf Tryggvason is also precocious in the performance of martial exploits (pp. 24-9), fights the heathen, and ends his days as a holy hermit (p. 260) in Oddr Snorrason's *Saga Óláfs Tryggvasonar* (ca. 1200), a work which Lars Lönnroth (1975, 38) characterizes as 'a curious blend of hagiography and romance and heroic legend', probably influenced by the clerical Charlemagne tradition.

Perhaps the greatest concentration of resemblances to the end of *Flóres saga* is to be found in the second branch of *Karlasmagnús saga*, *Affrú Ólif ok Landrés syni hennar*, the story of the pious Olive, sister of Charlemagne, wrongly accused of adultery. This, according to the prologue (*Kms* 1860, 50<sup>3-12</sup>) was composed after Bjarni Erlingsson of Bjarkey found its (now lost!) English source (Smyser 1941, 69-84) in Scotland in the winter of 1286-7. Kölbing (*Flóres saga* 1896, 71-2) pointed out the similarity between the tortures proposed for Ólif and for Flóres and Blankiflúr; these have more in common than those to which Degnbol draws attention in the Flemish version:

sumir báðu hengja, sumir halshöggva þau; en aðrir dœmðu, at þau skyldi vella í brennanda biki; sumir, at þau skyldi grafa kvík í jörð, ok hófuðin stœði upp or jörðu, ok steypa síðan vellanda oleo yfir hófuð þeim; sumir dœmðu, at þau væri flegin kvík ok lifði síðan í sterkum fjötum til viðrsjónar ǫðrum, slíks at dirfaz (*Flóres saga* 1896, XXII: 7).

báðu nú sumir brenna hana á báli, sumir hálshöggva, sumir báðu draga hana kvika sundr (*Af frú Ólif*, *Kms* 1860, 59<sup>14-15</sup>).

Like Ólif, Flóres is accused of sorcery, a charge not found in the French:

Væntir mik, at þú sér gerningamaðr (*Flóres saga* 1896, XXII:9).  
ek vil segja yðr, at hon er hin mesta görningakona (*Af frú Ólif*, *Kms* 1860, 58<sup>8-9</sup>).

Judicial combat is also Ólif's means of defence, although the attempt fails because her accuser attributes his defeat to her witchcraft (*Kms* 1860, 59<sup>3-5</sup>); finally vindicated, she declines a reconciliation with her husband and, like Flóres and Blankiflúr, retires to a convent (*Kms* 1860, 75<sup>19-29</sup>).

In the face of the difficulty of establishing precise dates for the composition of *Flóres saga* and the various branches of *Karlasmagnús saga*, it is, of course, impossible to suggest, let alone nominate with any confidence, specific sources or influences in either direction. Nevertheless, the parallels between the major divergences in *Flóres saga* from *Floire et Blancheflor* and episodes in *Karlasmagnús saga*, particularly in *Af frú Ólif*, are striking. If *Flóres saga* was composed after 1286-87, it could be argued that the similar circumstances leading to Ólif's arraignment (both she and Floire and Blancheflor are found in compromising bedroom situations) influenced its author to adopt the motifs of judicial combat and retirement to the religious life from the story of Olive.

Another loose thread in the Floris and Blauncheflur network is the 56-line prologue to the extant French manuscripts of Version I which, among other things, refers to the later careers of hero and heroine as rulers of Hungary and parents of Berthe, mother of Charlemagne (ll. 7-12, 25-30). This information, which has no bearing on events of the romance, may be a scribal attempt dating from the late thirteenth century to attach the tale to the matter of Charlemagne (Pelan, 1956, 139). None of this prologue appears in the saga, and there are no means of establishing whether its author was familiar with it. It is interesting, however, that

although there is no mention of Berthe or Charlemagne in the saga, its emphasis on pagan-Christian conflict and conversion of the heathen is reminiscent of the crusading spirit of the Carolingian *chansons de geste*. Perhaps the story is simply one which lends itself to attachment to French epic or, in the case of *Flóres saga*, to attracting material characteristic of the genre.

One of the most curious features of *Floire et Blancheflor* is the diverse character of its numerous adaptations. A great many 'lost' versions would be required to account for all these variations on the original if they are not the work of individual translator-adapters. The martial and devotional tone of *Flóres saga ok Blankiflúr* could very well be the work of a Norwegian cleric, well versed in saints' lives and, like Oddr Snorrason in an earlier era, familiar with the matter of Charlemagne, composing some time in the latter part of the thirteenth century.

### **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> The most detailed survey of scholarship on this question, with extensive bibliography, is Giaccone (1979).

<sup>2</sup> A fragment of the saga dates from the beginning of the fourteenth century. The work is generally thought to have been composed some time in the latter half of the thirteenth. Leendertz (*Floris ende Blancefloer* 1912, cxv) dates the Flemish from the mid-thirteenth century.

<sup>3</sup> Pelan (1975, 16) suggests that Version II was composed 'peut-être avant la fin du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle'. Leclanche (1971, 566-7) argues for a date between 1147 and 1149 for Version I.

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## 2. ON THE YOUNGER AND THE YOUNGEST RUNIC INSCRIPTIONS IN SWEDEN

BY MARIT ÅHLÉN<sup>1</sup>

WE HAVE more than 2,000 runic inscriptions on stone from eleventh-century Sweden, so it is not surprising that it is with these Viking-Age monuments that writing in runes is most often associated. One might also have assumed that runes went out of use when the custom of raising rune-stones died out around the year 1100 and the Latin alphabet was established by the Church as the normal medium of writing. But such an assumption would be wide of the mark. It should not be forgotten that runes were primarily intended for carving on wood, and as such proved a most serviceable tool for everyday communication. As a form of writing used by the common people, runes lived on for several centuries, in inner Dalarna right up to the beginning of this century (v. Friesen 1933, 244). While visiting Älvudalen in Dalarna during an expedition in 1734, the famous botanist, Carl von Linné, noted that 'the farmers in this parish, as well as using runes, still to this day write their names and owners' marks with runic letters, which appear on walls, stone sinkers, bowls, etc. A practice which is no longer known to exist in any other place in Sweden' (*Carl von Linnés Dalaresa* 1960, 46).<sup>2</sup> Runic inscriptions from later centuries can also be found in other parts of the country, but it is most unlikely that any of these represent an unbroken tradition. In such cases, we seem to be dealing with recently acquired knowledge.

The 16-symbol *fupark* of the Viking Age developed little by little into a more complete system of writing, in all probability under the influence of the Latin alphabet. What is usually known as the medieval or the dotted runic alphabet gradually took shape. In this, every rune corresponds to a Latin letter (see Fig. 1). The symbols also appear in the same order as the letters of the Latin alphabet, and no longer in the *fupark* order. The graphemic inventory of the 16-symbol *fupark* was incomplete, in that, to put the matter in a rather simplified way, no distinction was made between voiced and unvoiced consonants, nor between mutated and unmutated vowels. Thus, the same symbol was used, for example, for

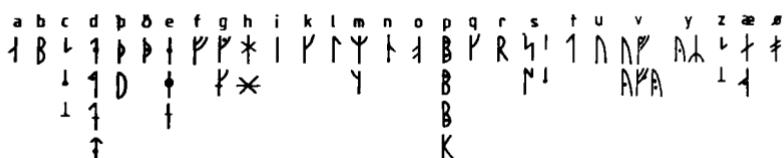


Fig. 1. The medieval runes and their variants (from Svärdström 1982, 2).

/k/ and /g/, and for /o/ and /ø/. As early as the Viking Age, attempts were made to expand the system with so-called dotted runes. By placing a dot on or in certain runes, it was possible to make minimal distinctions that previously had gone unmarked. The system was gradually extended, so that eventually a fully dotted runic alphabet was in use all over Sweden (and elsewhere in Scandinavia). This alphabet persisted at least until the close of the Middle Ages (Svärdström 1972, 77-97).

In the following account, I shall give some examples of late runic inscriptions from various parts of Sweden.

The pastor of Runsten parish in Öland carved the following inscription on the choir-wall of his church some time in the sixteenth century: *tæt bør soknahærræn kunnæ runær læsæ ok skrivæ*, 'The pastor should be able to read and write runes' (Öl 34, cf. Jansson 1963, 180).<sup>3</sup> The pastor's rune-carved recommendation to his colleagues brings to mind two lines from Erik Axel Karlfeldt's poem *Sång efter skördeanden* ('Song after the harvest'): *Han talar med bönder på böndernas sätt Men med lärde män på latin*. ('He talks to farmers in the farmers' fashion, but with learned men in Latin.')

According to the antiquarian, Johannes Bureus, another recommendation — this time of a more jocular kind — could be seen in the seventeenth century carved on the wall of the house in Stockholm's Gamla Stan in which Olaus Petri, one of the principal figures of the Swedish Reformation, lived. It read: *skæggjot · haka · klæbær · ikkæ · væl · i · dansæ*, 'A bearded chin is unbecoming at a dance' (U1, p. 74). It is well known that Olaus Petri was interested in runes. This can be seen in his historical chronicle as well as in his short article entitled 'Om runskrift'.

More interesting than these two inscriptions are in my view those in which one or more proud craftsmen have sought to ensure that posterity knew who was responsible for their creations. That this was a fairly common practice is clear from the account of such inscriptions given by Moltke (1976, 342-69). The existence of such inscriptions from more recent times does not of course mean that the craftsmen concerned signed their works in runes because this was their normal method of writing. Possibly they became familiar with the medieval practice after coming across examples in the course of their labours and decided to emulate it. Acquaintance with the antiquarian studies which were coming into vogue at this time may also have led them to consider the use of runes eminently suitable for a church building. The search for archaeological remains, including runic inscriptions, was after all largely in the hands of churchmen. There is another inscription in Runsten church in Öland which reads: *iustus : iohan : söderbark : molari : korlen : förkullari : iakobson : snikari : 1847*, 'Justus Johan Söderberg, painter, Corlin, gilder, Jakobson, carpenter, 1847'.<sup>4</sup> On a pillar dated c. 1670 in Strå church, Östergötland, we read: *giærmun · kiærþæ : mik :*, 'Germund made me.' This is strongly reminiscent of two medieval inscriptions from Västergötland. On a door in Varsås church, it says: *asmuntær : giærpi : tyr :*, 'Asmunder made the door' (Vg 220), while in

Gällstad church there is a baptismal font with the inscription: **antreos : kærþe kar**, 'Andreas made the vessel' (Vg 252). A certain similarity can also be found with the inscription on a silver spoon from Gotland from the end of the fourteenth century, which reads: **sihlavir · a mik**, 'Siglaivir owns me' (G 147). It seems highly likely that Germund took a medieval inscription as a model for his own effort in Strå church — especially so since the verb form **kærþæ** must have gone out of use long before the 1670s (v. Friesen 1934, 123-64).

In 1957 a painted runic inscription was discovered in Täby church, just north of Stockholm, on the back of one of the banisters enclosing the steps up to the pulpit. The pulpit itself was removed to Täby church in 1692 from Slottskyrkan in Stockholm. At first it was situated on the south side of the church, but in 1757 it was moved over to the northern side, and it was during this move that it was painted. On one of the banisters the painter has written in three lines: **þenna preþig : stol : x̄hr : malab : ANNO MDCCLVIII AF samuel cronberg**, 'This pulpit is painted [then in Latin letters] in the year 1758 by [and again in runes] Samuel Cronberg.' He was clearly quite familiar with the runic alphabet, but his knowledge was not perfect. He does not seem to have been able to remember how to write the æ-rune, but he solved the problem by placing over an 'x' the diacritic dots that transform Latin 'a' into 'å'.

About 20 kilometres north of Täby church stands the church at Vallentuna, which was built at the end of the twelfth century. In separate inscriptions, two of the stone-masons who took part in the construction have preserved their names for posterity. On a stone which was subsequently removed from the church, and now lies, somewhat damaged, in the wall of the vicarage, the verb **tæhldi** can be seen. Thanks to older drawings, by Bureus and O. Celsius among others, we know that it once said **[dafip] tæhldi**, 'Dafip cut'. According to Celsius, it lay 'at the southern corner of the church (down by the ground), which consists entirely of cut sandstone right from the ground to the roof' (U 220).<sup>5</sup> Carved across several stones in the corner structure at the north-western side of the tower, the following inscription can still be seen: **andur : telhti þinna fakra sten : host**, 'Andor cut this beautiful stone . . .'. The last four runes, which are transliterated **host** in *Upplands runinskrifter*, have proved difficult to interpret (see U 221). Celsius suggested they concealed the word **ost**, 'cheese', to which an **h** had been added in error. His view, then, was that the smooth, evenly cut cornerstones may have been called 'stone cheeses' because of their shape. Sven B. F. Jansson proposes the word be taken as some kind of adjectival addition to the carver's name, but he makes no suggestion as to what the sequence **host** might mean. The two s-runes in the inscription have completely different shapes. The first, which occurs in the word **sten**, has the form **¶**, probably a variant of the more usual **¶**, while the second, which is found in the final word of the inscription, is the more usual **¶**. In medieval runic writing this rune can also stand for the 'c' of the Latin alphabet, which would give a reading **hoct** rather than **host**. Jansson considers this possibility too, but once again makes no pronouncements about the possible meaning of such a word.

There was a close parallel to the Vallentuna inscription in old Skatelöv church in Småland. One of the stones in the wall of the church (now demolished)<sup>6</sup> bore a runic inscription, the latter part of which reads: **bosi : talhi sten til skatma kirkiu**, 'Bosi cut the stone for the Skatelöv dwellers' (?) church' (Sm 6).

In Löt church in Öland there is an inscription on one of the pillars by the chancel, carved by a dissatisfied craftsman who clearly considered that he had been paid insufficient for his work: **hævþen : þe : mera : mik : givit : pt : useret : bætar : skrivit**, 'If they had given me more, then it would have been better written' (Öl 54).

There is another group of late runic inscriptions, quite different in type from those I have so far discussed. They belong to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, especially the latter. They are sometimes incorrectly referred to as 'false runic inscriptions', but this is based on a misunderstanding, since those who carved them never intended to fool anyone into believing they were genuinely old. They are quite simply late inscriptions of varying kinds, carved by people who wished to give expression to their interest in runes and in the past, and who doubtless had great fun in the process. That the carving of runes could be considered fun is apparent from a c. 1.5m. long ribbon in the shape of an 's' which decorates a rock on Svartsjölandet, one of the islands in Mälaren. In translation the inscription reads: 'Herbert and Lars and Karl cut runes. It was fun.' On a piece of bedrock near Sollentuna church north-west of Stockholm, there is a long band of runes which, judging by what they say, were not carved in quite the same happy frame of mind. This inscription runs: 'In an evil hour, mocked by hate, lonely, ill, poor, without hope, without friends, I carved here a memorial. Albin Tinglet.' The same Albin Tinglet is also responsible for at least two other runic inscriptions in the vicinity — these, too, in bedrock. One is in the shape of a bell and carries the message: 'To Albert Torvald Matson from A[lb]in T[ing]let'. The second consists of a long ribbon formed into three circles in the shape of a pyramid. Inside the ribbon a runic inscription announces: 'Best wishes to mother Anna on her fiftieth birthday, the thirteenth of August, nineteen hundred and thirty-eight, from Albin and Rune' (Rune was Albin's son). One imagines that Albin must have felt the runic alphabet's lack of numerical symbols rather keenly when he carved this inscription. One wonders, too, whether it is mere chance that a man so clearly interested in runes christened his son Rune.

On a raised stone in Harestad in Bohuslän a grandmother has been honoured with a runic inscription bearing the following message: 'Magnus carved this for his mother, Kristina. Cut the stone did son and grandson.' The local history society (*hembygdsförening*) in Täby, Uppland, who wished to honour their faithful colleague, Sven Erik Vingedal, when he reached the age of 70 in 1976, had a stone raised with the following runic inscription: 'Tord and Torsten and Sven had the stone raised for Sven, their good friend, while he still lived. He knew the whole of Täby. Hans cut [the runes].' The latter part of the inscription harks back in somewhat jocular fashion to the inscriptions on the well-known Jarlabanki stones. Jarlabanki was a local bigwig in Täby in the eleventh century. He had several almost identical runestones carved for himself while he was still alive and active. As an example, I quote here U 164, Täby Tä: 'Jarlabanki had these stones raised in his memory while still alive, and he made this causeway for his soul and alone owned the whole of Täby. God help his soul.'

A primary school teacher by the name of Rudolf Magnusson, who in 1926 worked at Lindhult school in Västergötland, made a runic inscription while he was there, the last part of which is a copy of the Ågersta stone from Uppland (U 729). The Lindhult inscription reads: *rūna · risti · r · m · 1926 · rāpi · tikr · þar · run si  
runum · þim · sum · b · r ·*, 'R. M. cut runes 1926. Let that man read, who rune-skilled is, those the runes that B[alli] c[ut].' By way of comparison, I include here, in translation, the complete text of the Ågersta stone: 'Viðhugi had this stone raised in memory of Særæifr, his good father. He lived in Ågersta. Here shall stand the stone between farms. Let that man read, who rune-skilled is, those the runes that Balli cut.' The text of the Lindhult inscription is an exact copy of Ågersta, except that Magnusson ignored Balli's dotted i- and u-runes, thereby altering the *tekr* and *ryn* of the original to *tikr* and *run*. He also abbreviated the signature 'Balli cut.'

A rune-carver in Närke went to Old Norse literature for his material. In the outhouse of a property in Örebro there is a large, limestone slab on which someone has carved a rather clumsy ribbon in the form of a snake (a common technique in Viking-Age inscriptions) with the following runic text: *ainstóþ x im x ik x urþin x sim x asb x i x hulti x falin x at x friantum x sim x fura x it x kuisti*. This is part of a stanza from the Eddaic poem *Hamðismál*. In Old Icelandic it runs:

Einstœð em ek orðin,  
sem ǫsp í holti,  
fallin at frændum,  
sem fura at kvisti.

('Lonely I have become, like an aspen in a forest (of evergreens?); family has dropped away like twigs from a fir.')

These lines can also be found carved round the base of the statue *Bältespännaarna* ('The belt duellers') in Stockholm, one of the works by the celebrated sculptor, Pelle Molin (1814-73). The two inscriptions are identical (except for an error on the limestone slab which has it for the final *at*; see N, pp. 57-8), and it seems highly likely that the Örebro inscription was copied from the statue. Who was responsible for this is not, however, known.

A pastor's son from Värmland by the name of Fridrik Fryxell, something of a genealogist and collector, made two runic inscriptions in which echoes of a number of runic monuments from the Viking Age can be heard. Fryxell lived between 1724 and 1805. On a rock now covered by a building in the parish of Väse, Värmland, he carved an inscription in memory of his brother, Mats. In translation it reads: 'On this rock eight brothers carved runes of sorrow in memory of Mats, their brother, who was a retainer of King Fridrik and died one thousand, seven hundred and forty-six winters after the birth of our Lord.' Forty years later he made an inscription in memory of another of his brothers, this time on a raised stone which now stands in Sunne churchyard (see V, pp. 78-9). This inscription runs: 'Ulrica had runes of sorrow carved in memory of Johan, her husband, who was rural dean and pastor in Fryksdal. Magnus and Mats and Axel raised the stone for their father. Fridrek, his brother, carved [the runes].'

'In the depths of the forest' — as the position is given in the Supplementary Index of Runverket (Sweden's runological institute) — in Sollentuna, north of Stockholm, two names have been carved on a large boulder. Gustaf and Hulda Björklund sought to preserve their names for posterity by carving them in runes. This is the most common type of late runic inscription: one, or sometimes a couple of names, cut on a stone, and nothing more. This example, 'from the depths of the forest' can serve as a representative of the whole group.

In Fullersta park in Huddinge, south of Stockholm, the following runic inscription can be found on a stone: *fullirsta // aukust · rista · pissa runor · till minni : iffir · sik* 11.4.1882, 'Fullersta. August carved these runes in memory of himself 11.4.1882.' The form *rista* provides an example of the loss of the ending *-de* in the preterite of verbs of the first conjugation, a feature typical of the *Sveamål* dialects. The same phenomenon occurs in an inscription from another suburb of Stockholm. In Flaten woods in Tyresö, there is a runic carving which, oddly enough for one of this late date, employs the old 24-symbol *fupark*. It runs: *bent : okk : ulla // telta : her*, 'Bengt and Ulla camped here.' Loss of *-de* in the preterite ending is found yet again in an inscription from Västergötland, which, like the Tyresö carving, is also in the older *fupark*. One Theodor Tholinson sought to inform the world of the year in which he moved to Mölndal and took up residence there (in a house

which has since been pulled down). He wrote: **þeodor þolinson flytta hit anno MDCCCCXIII**, 'Theodor Tholinson moved here in the year 1913.' He is said to have carved other runic inscriptions, but this is the only one known today.

I may include as my final example of Sweden's youngest runic inscriptions the serpent-shaped ribbon from Fåfängan cliff in Stockholm. It was discovered in 1923, and contains the following message: **ontirs immo kosto storm minni of uistilsin i foſinkon 19-05-06 lifui niktirhitin**. It was only some considerable time after the discovery that an interpretation was forthcoming. This was provided by Elisabeth Svärdström (1969), who translates the inscription along these lines: 'Anders, Emma, Gösta Storm. In memory of the days spent at Fåfängan 1905-6. Long live sobriety.' Gösta Storm was born in 1892. Anders and Emma were his parents. It was at Fåfängan that the local branch of the International Order of Good Templars in which the Storm family was active used to hold their celebrations. Gösta, who moved to Gotland in 1921 and eventually became editor of *Gotlands allehanda*, has explained that he modelled his runic serpent on one he found in the Swedish reader he used in primary school. This also contained the runic alphabet with Roman equivalents. The carving of the inscription took three days.

#### **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> Translated here by Michael Barnes.

<sup>2</sup> 'Bönderna här i församlingen, förutom det att de brukar runstavar, skriva än i dag sina namn och bomärken med runiska bokstäver, som synes på väggar, skötstenar, skålar etc. Det man på intet annat ställe i Sverige ännu vet kontinueras.'

<sup>3</sup> Inscriptions, where published, are cited by the abbreviated title of the volume of *Sveriges runinskrifter* in which they appear, followed by their number (where applicable). Details are given in the bibliography.

<sup>4</sup> Inscriptions, both old and new, that have yet to be published can be found in the so-called Supplementary Index kept by the Swedish Riksantikvarieämbete's Runverket (runological institute). The director of Runverket, Helmer Gustavson, kindly gave me permission to use this Index in the preparation of my article. Where inscriptions are cited without a source reference, the text is taken from the Supplementary Index.

<sup>5</sup> 'På södra Kyrkohörnet (ned vid jorden), som är med huggen sandsten ända up i från jorden till taket.'

<sup>6</sup> The stone is now in Smålands museum in Växjö.

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### 3. DE NORMANNORUM ATROCITATE, OR ON THE EXECUTION OF ROYALTY BY THE AQUILINE METHOD

BY BJARNI EINARSSON

IN 1984 Professor Roberta Frank of Toronto (R.F. hereafter) published a challenging paper entitled 'Viking atrocity and skaldic verse: the rite of the blood-eagle'. She finds that in recent Viking scholarship there has been a marked tendency to 'stress their [scil. the Scandinavian invaders of England's] demonic side, to expose the dark virulence and fanaticism of Norse paganism'. The most sinister expression of this unpleasant side of Nordic nature and nurture is seen in the custom of 'carving conquered enemies according to the Odinic rite of the blood-eagle'. R.F. cites one modern authority as saying that 'examples of this practice may have included: King Ælla of Northumbria, Halfdan son of King Haraldr Harfagri of Norway, King Edmund . . . , King Maelgualai of Munster, and just possibly Archbishop Ælfheah.'

This refined method of execution seems thus to have been reserved for royals, though one story says that a giant was similarly distinguished.<sup>1</sup> The archbishop can be left out, for no source whatever indicates that he was paid the same compliment.

It is R.F.'s undisguised aim on the one hand to deprive Vikings of their reputation as connoisseur killers of kings and on the other to reprove scholars who, allegedly, have been taken in by a verse of the famous skald, Sighvatr Pórðarson. This verse is in his *Knútsdrápa*, a eulogy of Canute the Great made in that king's lifetime. According to R.F., it gave rise to disastrous misunderstanding on the part of saga-authors and of the poet of one Eddaic lay (cf. note 1). On the strength of their misconception these entertainers then proceeded to regale audiences by describing how Vikings slaughtered conquered enemies by cutting open their backs.

Sighvatr's lines are (*Skj. B* I 232):

Ok Ellu bak,  
at, lét, hinn's sat,  
Ívarr, ara,  
Jórvík, skorit.

R.F. asserts that 'an experienced reader of skaldic poetry, looking at Sighvatr's stanza in isolation from its saga context, would have trouble seeing it as anything but a conventional utterance, an allusion to the eagle as carrion beast, the pale bird with red claws perched on and slashing the backs of the slain: "Ívarr had Ella's back scored by an eagle".'

With this I am convinced that no experienced Icelandic reader of skaldic poetry could possibly agree. The main reason is that use of the verb *skera* is inconceivable in any context where carrion beasts rip into dead bodies by claw, tooth and neb. In the old poetic language *skera* invariably refers to cutting with a knife or sword or, in general, with weapons or some sharp tool. By transfer it is also often used of ships cutting through waves (*LP*, s.v. *skera*). This is in full agreement with usage in the modern language. In Sighvatr's lines the verb *skera* is of course correctly translated in English as 'cut' (R.F.'s 'scored' is not appropriate). But because you may be able to say in English that a carrion bird 'cut a corpse' (and that does not sound entirely natural either), it does not follow that you can say *Hræfugl skar ná* in Icelandic. You would have to say that the bird *sleit* or *át*, 'tore' or 'ate', the dead flesh. These are the verbs used in skaldic poetry for describing what eagles and ravens, and wolves too, do to corpses: *þtu ernir / af jofurs dolgum; hrátt gat hravn at slíta / hold; sleit qrn gera beitu; hrátt brátt hafði at slíta / hravn tafn* (*Skj. B I* 496, 257, 452, 491).<sup>2</sup>

Besides, no eagle in his right mind would try to open the back of his victim. He might of course tread over the backs of the slain and stand on their heads, cf. Snorri, *Háttatal* 51: *ilsportnat getr qrn / aldrlausastan haus* (*Skj. B II* 75), but he would get the corpse face up before beginning to *slíta*. It follows that the expressions *skera* and *bak* in Sighvatr's lines are both unsuitable in a description of the natural behaviour of carrion birds; but along with the verb *rísta*, 'cut, slash, scratch', they are the correct terms to use in speaking of cutting a 'blood-eagle' in the back of a captured enemy.

It goes without saying that Sighvatr's verse is not proof that King Ella was in fact executed by the aquiline method some 150 years and more before the lines were composed. But it must be counted evidence showing that there was a Scandinavian tradition about it already in the first third of the eleventh century, as there probably also was about the killing of Hálfdan, son of Haraldr hárfagri, by the same method.

There is no reason why we should believe that 'romantic' ideas about the exploits of Vikings and their cruelty towards victims did not arise before the late twelfth century, when it is supposed that kings' sagas began to be written in Iceland – not to mention Saxo's *Gesta Danorum* (1931, 263), where King Ella's death by the aquiline method is also reported.

It would of course be futile to indulge in speculation about how cruel the Scandinavian invaders of England really were, but we may reasonably doubt whether they matched any notion of the 'noble savage'. According to English sources, they began their ravages with an attack on Lindisfarne in 793, killing defenceless monks, looting and burning. This became the pattern for their raids in the British Isles.

We have no reliable information about the treatment of royal enemies captured by Viking chiefs or the leaders of the Scandinavian hosts who came bent on conquest and settlement. But it seems not at all unlikely that they reserved special torments for those who merited special revenge – those who had themselves done Viking leaders to death, for example. There is ample evidence of man's cruelty to man, from the earliest times to the present day, and it is not the intention of this note to collect evidence of torture inflicted on captives or other defenceless people. But as we are speaking of 'primitive' people, one well-documented instance of vengeance on a captive king may be cited from African history. In 1835 the last Mambo-or Ba-Rozwi king was defeated in battle by an invading tribe and then skinned alive (Davidson 1962, 259).

In speaking of some saga-writers' postulated misunderstanding of skaldic verse,

R.F. mentions with approval Klaus von See's contention that the author of *Kormáks saga* took literally, and wrongly, a poetic allusion in one of the stanzas attributed to Kormákr. In the episode in question the saga describes Steingerðr as peeping at Kormákr from the wainscotting 'under Hagbarðr's beard' (*Kormáks saga* 1939, 208). His companion then asks: 'Kormákr, do you see the eyes out there by the Hagbarðr-head?' Kormákr then improvises three stanzas in succession, all on the theme of tragic love. In the second half of the third of these he uses the phrase *á halsi Hagbarðs*,<sup>3</sup> and this must be logically connected with the preceding description; 'Hagbarðr's neck' and 'under Hagbarðr's beard' must refer to the same thing. What the thing is, is not explained, but it must have been some part of the room or its furnishing. From the first mention of Hagbarðr in the prose and on through the following stanzas with tragic love as their theme and to the point at the end where the name Hagbarðr is repeated, reference is clearly intended to the famous love-story of Hagbarðr and Signý. The contention supported by R.F. is that the saga-author failed to understand the Hagbarðr allusion in a stanza handed down by tradition; but this is totally unwarranted and stems from the quite unfounded, though widespread, belief that the stanzas in *Kormáks saga* are older than the saga itself.

The stanza in question reads (cf. *Skj. A I* 81, *B I* 71; *Kormáks saga* 1939, 210):

Hófat lind né ek leynda  
líðs [MS liðr] hyrjar því stríði  
bands man ek beiða rindi  
baugseum af mér augu,  
þá [es] húnknarrar hjarra  
happþægi bil krapta  
helsis scem á halsi  
Hagbarðs á mik starði.

The second half of the stanza, all that matters in the present connection, is not at all easy to understand, but, as noted above, the crucial words *á halsi* stand in clear relation to the girl who is staring and the prose statement at the outset that she is looking *undir skegg Hagbarði*. Von See (1977, 63), on the other hand, offers this version: 'Die halsbandgeschmückte Frau starrte auf mich zum Hagbard-Hals (starnte auf meinen Hagbard-Hals).' In this he apparently follows the interpretation of Ohlmarks (1957, 382), who says, 'Jag tror att *starði á mik at Hagbarðs-halsi* helt enkelt betyder "hon stirrade på mig och på min Hagbards-hals" (min hals som löpte samma risk som en gång Hagbards gjort).'

R.F. has in earlier contributions (e.g. Frank 1972) demonstrated an extensive knowledge of skaldic poetry and an intuitive faculty of interpretation. In this case it is difficult to believe that she re-read this stanza; she must instead have taken von See (and Ohlmarks) on trust. It is hardly necessary to be a native speaker of Icelandic to see that the dative construction *á (at) halsi Hagbarðs* in lines 7-8 cannot be the object of *starði* at the end of line 8. We need not here try to explain the kenning for woman in this second half of the stanza, but the only possible sense of the *helmingr* as a whole is: 'when the woman with the fine necklace, (standing) by the neck of (the) Hagbarðr, stared upon me.'

But it is also obvious that these lines of verse cannot be properly understood without the help of the preceding prose. That is the crux of the matter: prose and poetry in this saga make an indivisible artistic whole.

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> I do not know where (if at all) the two last-named kings are said to have been executed by the aquiline method. Four 'blood-eagle' victims are named in Icelandic

sources: (1) King Ella of Northumbria, in *Ragnars saga* and *Ragnars sona þátr*, see *Vølsunga saga ok Ragnars saga loðbrókar* (ed. Magnus Olsen, 1906-8), 168, 193, and *Hauksbók* (ed. Eiríkur Jónsson and Finnur Jónsson, 1892-6), 464. (2) Hálfdan, son of King Haraldr hárfagri, in *Haralds saga ins hárfagra*, see *Heimskringla* I (ed. Bjarni Áðalbjarnarson, Íslenzk fornrit XXVI, 1941), 132, and in *Orkneyinga saga*, see *Orkneyinga saga* (ed. Finnbogi Guðmundsson, Íslenzk fornrit XXXIV, 1965), 13, and cf. *Flateyjarbók* I (ed. Guðbrandur Vigfússon and C. R. Unger, 1860), 223. (3) Lyngvi, son of King Hundingr, in *Reginsmál* 26, see *Edda* 179, and in *Pátrr af Norna-Gesti*, see *Flateyjarbók* I 352-3. (4) The giant Brúsi in *Orms þátr Stórlfssonar*, in *Flateyjarbók* I 531, cf. *Two Icelandic stories* (ed. Anthony Faulkes, 1967, repr. 1978), 81/526-7 and note *ad loc.*

<sup>2</sup> The poets are Rognvaldr and Hallr in *Háttalykill* (*bis*), Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld and Einarr Skúlason.

<sup>3</sup> The only manuscript has *a halsi*, but scholars agree that the original was probably *at halsi*. It is a point of no significance in the present discussion.

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## REVIEWS

EDDA, SAGA, SKALDENDICHTUNG. AUFSÄTZE ZUR SKANDINAVISCHEN LITERATUR DES MITTELALTERS. By KLAUS VON SEE. *Carl Winter Universitätsverlag*. Heidelberg, 1981. 539 pp.

This book brings together a series of articles, reviews, and notes published by Klaus von See between 1957 and 1981. Six of them are concerned with mythological and wisdom poetry in the Eddaic style, especially *Hávamál* and *Rígsþula*. Another nine deal with heroic poetry, especially as preserved in the Elder Edda, with emphasis on *Hamðismál*, *Guðrúnarhvöt*, *Bjarkamál*, and the legends of Brynhildr and Sigurðr. Another four deal with praise poetry in the Eddaic style: *Haraldskvæði*, *Eiríksmál*, *Hákónarmál*, and *Darraðarljóð*. There are eight studies of skaldic poetry, focussing on metrical developments, the profession of skald, and Christian poetry, together with such individual skalds as Torf-Einarr, Hjalti Skeggjason, Hallfreðr, and Haldórr ókristni. The five articles on saga devote special attention to the question of oral narrative, with individual discussions of *Hrafnkels saga*, *Porgils saga ok Hafliða*, *Piðreks saga*, and *Fóstbræðra saga*. The book is rounded off with a general conclusion and a set of additional notes on eight of the preceding articles, both published here for the first time. It is introduced with a general survey of medieval Norse-Icelandic literature, reprinted from *Lexikon des Mittelalters*.

The author's range is very wide. His interests as a comparativist emerge, for instance, in the discussions of heroic poetry and in his illuminating appraisal of the Malone edition of *Widsith*. His knowledge of the law texts is usefully brought to bear upon skaldic poetry. A brief review like the present necessarily cannot do justice to the major scholarly achievement which this book represents.

As to formal unity, the book stands halfway between a monograph and a collection of articles. The individual studies have a distinct thematic cohesion when read in sequence, and this cohesion is reinforced by the concluding article, where the author lays stress on three main concerns which he sees as underlying his work. These are, crudely summarized: the text in its extant form; the individuality of the text and of the author who lies behind the text; and the writing of literary history, with as precise as possible a periodization of texts. I shall elaborate briefly on each of these points.

Von See counts himself as a defender of the synchronic approach against the diachronic. He shows that with both poetic and law texts the dedicated hunt for scraps of Germanic antiquity may lead to serious misunderstandings of the text as it stands. In contrast to Malone, whose interest in *Widsith* lay chiefly in its fragments of ancient tradition, von See points to the formulas 'life and light' and 'sing and say' as evidence that the extant poem is the work of a Christian author. His suggested structure for *Widsith*, though fragile in some of its details, does much to rescue this work from the category of catalogue poetry. Similarly, with *Bjarkamál*, he advocates that we come to terms with Saxo's poem as it stands, rather than, with Olrik, attempting to reconstruct the lost vernacular original from it. He concludes from the dialogue form of Saxo's poem that the original is unlikely to have been of early date, but here subsequent investigators will need to take into account Karsten Friis-Jensen's research on Saxo's classical models. It is also

consistent with von See's general philosophy that he should defend the integrity of *Atlakviða* as it stands against Aage Kabell's attempts to reduce this and other works to a set of A-verses (i.e. initial half-lines) and to develop from them a speculative theory concerning the origins of Germanic metrics.

In stressing the role of the individual poet von See opposes the notion of unfixed oral epic narration, freely variable from performance to performance. He envisages the individual artist conferring system (a strong central theme, stylized characterization, and an organization into dramatized scenes with dialogue) upon the original amorphous narrative materials: this version then becomes fixed. The inclusion of the notion of amorphous material in this model seems to me logically suspect, because necessarily all narrative has a shape, deriving from the subjectivity of the narrator: one could more validly talk about degrees of stylization, and clearly the extant heroic poetry is very highly stylized indeed. Von See is also uneasy at the concept of 'intertextuality', as tending to constrain the individuality of the artist and our awareness of it. This term, however, seems to be used rather loosely in recent theoretical writings; it does not entail a close interdependence among texts of the kind we see in much Old English poetry. More generally, von See defends Heusler against criticism of what some have seen as undue emphasis on the personal and individual in not merely the author but also the theme and reception of heroic poetry. He seeks to direct exegesis away from a hypothesized communal function of poetry (for instance, recitations of genealogies or the incorporation of poetic texts in cultic ceremonies) and back to the idea of entertainment, notably by means of poems which celebrate an expression of individual will.

A few examples will show how this theoretical stance expresses itself in the detailed philology of von See's articles. Noting that the repetitions to be found in skaldic poetry have been a favourite target for rather mechanistic explanations, such as plagiarism or oral formulism, he proposes an alternative mode of explanation that flows from the deliberate artistry of the poet. Hallfreðr's apparent re-use of lines from Haldórr ókristni is explained as deliberate citation with a polemical purpose. Where oral narrative is concerned von See seeks to show that much of the apparent evidence can be accounted for in other ways. Thus the contrast between the strong verse tradition in early Continental vernacular literatures and the equally strong prose tradition in early Norse-Icelandic literature need not lead to postulation of similarly contrasting substrates of oral narrative. Von See would give prime importance to purely literary influences, so that the genres first attempted in the vernacular literature of a particular region will be those currently in the ascendant in the international Latin literature. The reports of oral saga performances in *Porgils saga ok Haflíða* are accounted for as ex post facto inventions, designed to heighten the prestige of the *lygisaga* by conferring upon it antiquity and a respectable audience.

A major argument for the existence of an oral prose narrative tradition has been the belief that the skaldic stanzas eventually incorporated into certain sagas would have been unintelligible if heard or read in isolation. The lack of precise identifications of persons and places in many skaldic stanzas gives this argument a definite plausibility. In answer, von See shows that the five revenge verses attributed to Torf-Einarr need no *Begleitprosa* if they are simply read in uninterrupted succession, shorn of the prose which separates stanza from stanza in *Orkneyinga saga* and *Heimskringla*. Since three of the verses are found in just this undiluted state in *Fagrskinna*, I am surprised that von See does not accord more importance to that text. He credits Snorri with a re-shuffle of the stanzas, but here the evidence of *Fagrskinna* suggests that Snorri was not the innovator. Latterly a debate has

developed between Dietrich Hofmann, who sees the time references in v. 1 as separating it from the other stanzas, and von See, who argues that these time references are not so specific as they look. Here too *Fagrskinna* should be brought into the picture. It places the recitation of all the cited stanzas, which include v. 1, after the killing of Torf-Einarr's major opponent. This suggests to me that the five verses are indeed a single poem, as proposed by von See, and that, specifically, they combine to constitute that type of dramatic monologue where the action described proceeds as the speaker describes it: thus what is present when the speaker speaks v. 1 is past when he speaks v. 2.

Von See's investigation of prose narratives accompanying verse citations also takes in the *Njáls saga* account of *Darradarljóð*. While perhaps nobody would accept this account with full literalness von See boldly extends the normal distrust by arguing that the poem is not a charm or spell, uttered to influence the course of a battle, but a praise-poem, recited to the glory of the victorious leader and couched (at least in part) in metaphor. This view of the poem seems to me a wholly justified demystification. Some details do, however, remain incompletely resolved. Whichever interpretation of the poem as a whole one chooses, the repeated phrase *vindum vef* poses real difficulties: nothing is to be gained by preferring Fritzner and Finnur Jónsson's incorrect explanation of the technical operation referred to over Falk's correct one, as von See does. An appended note, taking account of Marta Hoffmann's *The warp-weighted loom*, would have been welcome here. Two other quibbles I have are with the needless emendation of *kveð ek* to *kvað ek* in v. 7 and the failure to cite Nora Kershaw's discussion of the date of the battle and the historical personages involved in it, when Genzmer's much weaker article on these problems is given attention.

The third of von See's general points is the need for a stricter periodization of the surviving texts, genres, stylisms, motifs, and so on. He urges us to resist the impulse (which I think grows fainter year by year) to assign all motifs to a genuine Viking antiquity. He makes a very good case for regarding the story of the recitation of *Bjarkamál* before Stiklastaðir as a borrowing from William of Malmesbury's account of the Battle of Hastings. Similarly with a familiar stylistic: alliteration in law and other prose texts should be attributed to medieval Latin rhetoric rather than to native pre-Christian tradition. An analysis of ideas about the heart, in its physiological make-up and presumed psychic function, enables von See to separate out a number of poems which are evidently influenced by biblical conceptions of this useful organ. Among these poems is *Hávamál*, to which von See had already accorded a late date on other grounds. Both in dating and in the search for literary affiliations von See has been unafraid of controversial solutions. Given the paucity of hard evidence some of these solutions are likely to remain as mere suggestions: thus the very interesting proposed link between the sagas of skalds and the Provençal *vidas* of the troubadors.

This collection of von See's *Kleine Schriften* is highly welcome. The author's style is lucid and incisive; his arguments are often brilliant and convincing and always stimulating. The publishers are to be congratulated on a well-produced volume which makes these exciting publications much more conveniently available than heretofore.

RUSSELL POOLE

ESSAYS IN SHETLAND HISTORY. HEIDURSRIT TO T. M. Y. MANSON. Edited by BARBARA E. CRAWFORD. *The Shetland Times Ltd.* Lerwick, 1984. xiv + 271 pp.

This collection of essays was published in 1984 to honour the eightieth birthday of Dr. Thomas Mortimer Yule Manson on 9 February. Mortimer Manson's first

interest was, of course, a deep passion for the culture and traditions of Shetland. But he has been active in many other fields – he was the organizer of the first Viking Congress in Lerwick in 1950, and the inspirer of its successors, and was an early enthusiast for the Faroe Islands, being fired by the belief that Shetland had much to learn from her northern neighbours. It is thus entirely appropriate that *Essays in Shetland history* should not be narrowly confined to Shetland. One essay is about Orkney, one is jointly about the Faroes and Shetland, and one is about the Faroeman Jakob Jakobsen, whose reputation depends on his work on the Shetland Norn. The other essays make helpful references to conditions up and down Scandinavia. The time-scale of the book is equally impressive. Dr. Barbara Crawford contributes an article ‘The cult of St. Magnus in Shetland’ and Paul Bibire gives us ‘“Few know an earl in fishing-clothes”’, both of which have something important to say of *Orkneyinga saga* and the cults which arose from its incidents. More recent material is dealt with in John Graham’s ‘Education in Shetland in the eighteenth century’ and Dr. Ronald Cant’s ‘Church life in Shetland in the nineteenth century’. Perhaps the most impressive group of contributions concerns land tenure. John Baldwin’s ‘Hogin and Hametoun: thoughts on the stratification of a Foula tun’ is particularly interesting, both for the detailed knowledge shown of the island of Foula, and the comparative material from Gásadalur in the Faroes. Brian Smith’s ‘What is a scattald? Rural communities in Shetland, 1400-1900’ threw a great deal of light on a term which had long puzzled me. Dr. William Thomson’s ‘Fifteenth century depression in Orkney; the evidence of Lord Henry Sinclair’s rentals’ is a scholarly treatment of Orcadian agricultural depression during the difficult century following the Black Death. A very surprising contribution is that by the late Dr. Ronald Popperwell, ‘Music in Shetland’. Probably most of us were unaware of Dr. Popperwell’s musical interests, or his close connection with Shetland. In preparing this article, the next to last in the book, the author acknowledges information from Dr. Mortimer Manson, whose father was a noted figure in Shetland musical life from 1881 until his death in 1941. Equally surprising is the final article, which applies genuine scholarship to the portrait of a man carrying a huge fish, which became a trade-mark for Scott’s Emulsion. Dr. Margaret Mackay gives us an account of Shetland oral tradition in her article ‘Heard, seen, told: the oral record in Shetland’. The classification of oral tradition into *legend*, *memorate* and *personal experience* is a valuable one, and can be used in the evaluation of both recent and more ancient traditions. This tool is of equal value with place-name research in throwing light on Old Norse literature. Place-name research is the principal concern of the first two articles in the book, Lindsay MacGregor’s ‘Sources for a study of Norse settlement in Shetland and Faroe’ and Dr. Per Andersen’s ‘Peter Andreas Munch and the beginning of Shetland place-name research’. The latter article throws considerable light on the growth of topographical research by the establishment of the rules: 1: of establishing the earliest form of a place-name; 2: of comparison of similar place-names in different areas of settlement (for instance, Shetland and Orkney, or Shetland and the Faroes); 3: of the use of place-names containing administrative elements (e.g. *-ting*); and 4: of the use of topographical and climatic character of the place in question. In view of the last criterion it is surprising that Munch never went to Shetland. An important factor to the credit of this book is the wealth of notes at the end of each article. The reader can easily follow each researcher’s tracks. Mere consideration of the bibliographies can be an education to the enlightened reader in the best that has been produced in each of the varied fields considered. Mistakes are rare. I detected only one, where Lindsay MacGregor on page 12 quotes an alleged legal enactment issued c. 1271

by Magnus Håkonsson of Norway, extending Gulathinglaw to the Faroes. Jakob Jakobsen himself, cited by the author, thought this document suspect, and Christian Bærentsen, writing in the supplement to the agricultural report of 1911, regarded it as an outright forgery; no ancient copy exists, only an alleged paper copy from about 1600. But Mr. MacGregor is not the first to have made a slip over this matter. It is a trivial blemish to a large and scholarly book, very well illustrated and edited, and well worth the price (£15) for almost anyone concerned with northern studies.

JOHN F. WEST

FESTSKRIFT TIL LUDVIG HOLM-OLSEN PÅ HANS 70-ÅRS DAG DEN 9. JUNI 1984. Edited by BJARNE FIDJESTØL, EYVIND FJELD HALVORSEN, FINN HØDNEBØ, ALFRED JAKOBSEN, HALLVARÐ MAGERØY, MAGNUS RINDAL. *Alvheim & Eide*. Øvre Ervik, 1984. 328 pp.

This book contains, as well as a scholarly biography of and a bibliography of the works of Ludvig Holm-Olsen, 29 articles by scholars of international standing which, as is usual in such celebratory volumes, reflect the interests and activities of the recipient over the years. Thus, many of the contributions deal with aspects of Old Norse (particularly Old Norwegian) linguistic history, including runes and personal names. Old Norse literature is well represented, with articles on Eddaic and skaldic poetry, sagas and historical writings. As well as some articles on miscellaneous topics, a number of the contributions are devoted to manuscript studies.

The two articles on skaldic poetry by Bjarne Fidjestøl ('"Har du høyrt eit dyrare kvæde?" Litt om økonomien bak den eldste fyrstediktninga') and Peter Foote ('Things in early Norse verse') complement each other neatly, as both are concerned to discover the historical reality behind the phenomenon of skaldic poetry: Fidjestøl the economic and social position of skalds and poetry, Foote the reality of legal terminology reflected in skaldic poetry. Both describe their method as one of 'sieving', and such a sifting out of historical kernel and literary accretion in texts (without devaluing either) seems to have become something of a programme in Old Norse studies of late. It leads naturally to a concern with the life of texts, with their development through various stages of composition, copying and redaction, and to a more subtle appreciation of the contexts of and reasons for any changes made. Thus, Dietrich Hofmann ('Die Vision des Oddr Snorrason', following on from a paper he contributed to *Speculum norrænum. Norse studies in memory of Gabriel Turville-Petre*, 1981) attempts to find the background for Oddr's vision (recounted in one manuscript of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*) in his literary activities at Pingeyrar. Alfred Jakobsen ('Omkring Selsbane-tåtten') analyses Snorri's adaptation of the story of the death of Sel-Pórir and emphasizes his historical perspective, feel for psychology and talent for logical reasoning. Hallvard Magerøy ('Ei fallgruve i prologen til Sverris saga') interprets the shorter version of this prologue in the light of medieval historical theory and logic, and traces its further development in *Flateyjarbók*. Else Mundal, in a thorough and convincing article ('Íslendingabók, ættar tala og konunga ævi') concludes that the three eponymous works of her title were three independent works of Ari Porgilsson, but that they were from the first combined in a single codex, and this is what has led later scholars to assume that the genealogies and kings' lists were a part of the lost, older version of *Íslendingabók*. This codex provided a kind of 'Foundations of Icelandic history'

and was a model for subsequent medieval Icelandic historiography. The presence in this volume of three editions of manuscript fragments ('Et fragment av Kongespeilet' by Jón Helgason, 'Om himmel og helvede på gammelnorsk. AM 238 XXVIII fol.' by Stefán Karlsson and 'Roted fragmentum membraneum, um Sanctam Luciam og Agatham' AM 921, V, 4° by Agneta Loth) as well as James Knirk's 'Uleselige' steder på 1r i AM 81a fol.' are clearly meant to reflect Holm-Olsen's activities as an editor. Yet they raise a general question which applies to all such collections: should such editions be published in *Festschriften*? It would be more useful for future users of these texts if they could all be published in more or less the same place — perhaps a series especially for editions of fragments that do not deserve a volume to themselves — for, given the quality of work being done at the respective manuscript institutes, it can be assumed that these will be definitive editions for some time to come. *Festschriften* can often be difficult to get hold of in 20 or 30 years' time and it does not seem a good idea to spread editions about in them. At least the series produced by the manuscript institutes (*Gripla* and *Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana*), while also mixing editions with articles, have indexes to make finding the editions easier. For surely editing manuscripts is not an end in itself, but meant to be a service to philologists and literary historians? Another general question raised by most such celebratory volumes is, would not the scholar in question be even better honoured by a collection of his or her own articles rather than the miscellaneous contributions of colleagues? The recent volume for Peter Foote (*Aurvandilstá. Norse studies*, 1984) is an example of a really useful book, collecting articles printed in odd places, with the master's own comments on his youthful works. Such a volume of course means less work for the editors and more for the birthday scholar, and can hardly be kept a secret (although what *Festschrift* is a real secret?). In the case of Holm-Olsen, it would have been interesting to read some of his many newspaper articles, even if these might not be strictly speaking 'scholarly' works. But the old *Festschrift* tradition will soldier on.

JUDITH JESCH

NORTH-WESTERN EUROPEAN LANGUAGE EVOLUTION. NOWELE. Edited by ERIK W. HANSEN and HANS F. NIELSEN. *Odense University Press*. Odense. Vol. 1, August, 1983, 112 pp. Vol. 2, December, 1983, 107 pp. Vol. 3, June, 1984, 112 pp. Vol. 4, October, 1984, 111 pp.

Of journals which primarily deal with Scandinavian historical linguistics, *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* goes happily from strength to strength, but *Acta philologica Scandinavica* seems to have been inactive recently. In Iceland, after the unhappy decease of *Íslenzk tunga*, a new and outstanding periodical has arisen from its ashes, *Íslenzkt mál*. A separate periodical devoted to Icelandic place-names, *Grímnir*, also makes a sporadic and idiosyncratic appearance. It is a pleasure to welcome an excellent new periodical in the historical linguistics of the (Germanic) languages of north-western Europe. It hopes to present articles, in English or German, on development and variation in 'Icelandic, Faroese, Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, Frisian, Dutch, German, English, Gothic and the early Runic language (sic)', and will also accept articles on Baltic, Slavonic, Celtic, Romance and Finno-Ugrian languages in so far as they demonstrate the effect of these languages on any of the primary languages. It will also accept theoretical articles. It does not present reviews. Four volumes of NOWELE, which appears twice a year, have so far been published (as of December, 1984). Each has contained four or five

substantial articles, the standard of which has been impressively high. The editors have also clearly taken advantage of the 'new technology' to produce a handsome text at low cost. Most of the volumes which have hitherto appeared contain at least one article on Indo-European, and one on the language of runic inscriptions, including one by our own Patrick Stiles on the interpretation of *swestar* on the Opedal stone (vol. 3, June, 1984). In the first volume, Hreinn Benediktsson published a fundamental study of the origins of the Germanic subjunctive, which will remain of permanent value. Also in that volume, Gillis Kristensson applies place-name evidence to Old English Second Fronting, in a welcome but not necessarily convincing attempt to solve the intractable problem of the status of its products. In the most recent issue to date (vol. 4, October, 1984) Bente Hansen contributes an important review of the Scandinavian linguistic elements in English, in the light of the attempts by historians such as Peter Sawyer to re-evaluate the Viking settlement, and that of the work by scholars such as Kenneth Cameron and Gillian Fellows-Jensen on place-names. The modern languages are not neglected, however: there are articles on Chaucer's vocabulary, the decay of the Shetland Norn, the development of voiced fricatives in Dutch, a possible Irish pun in Shakespeare. These are leavened by occasional articles on linguistics. This standard and spread of interest has been consistently maintained. NOWELE presents material of uniformly high standard across a wide but well-integrated range. This reviewer's only fear is that the recent appearance of a number of journals, not all of which can have substantial financial support, may lead to the early demise of a periodical. Those working in these areas are becoming fewer, and remain, alas, under continual threat from those who consider that generative grammar, or George Eliot, are the only proper areas of study. Let us hope that NOWELE may stimulate sufficient new interest to maintain itself without displacing other journals, and to spread the gospel of historical linguistics among those as yet unconverted.

PAUL BIBIRE

GERMANIC ACCENTOLOGY 1, THE SCANDINAVIAN LANGUAGES. By ANATOLY LIBERMAN. University of Minnesota Press. Minneapolis, 1982. xx + 381 pp.

It is difficult to do justice to a book of such quality in a review of sensible length. I would imagine, also, that its subject matter lies outside the main fields of interest of many *Saga-Book* readers. I will therefore restrict myself to a few general remarks.

*Germanic accentology 1, The Scandinavian languages* is, as the long list of publications under Liberman, A. in the bibliography makes clear, the culmination of some twenty years of research. And it is a work of truly massive erudition. Whatever view one takes of the principal thesis, this is a study which, because of the author's encyclopaedic knowledge, the closeness of his argumentation and the all-embracing nature of his approach, will be seen, certainly as a milestone, and perhaps as a turning-point in the study of Scandinavian accentology. On the long but fascinating journey towards his main conclusions, Liberman discusses, *inter alia*, the phonetic and phonological properties of accents (tones) and of *stød*, West Jutland *stød*, preaspiration (especially in Modern Icelandic), oralised *stød*, and the accentological problems of apocope (including circumflex). Almost 100 pages are then devoted to a chapter entitled 'The origin of Scandinavian accentuation' in which Liberman argues, on the basis of the preceding discussion: 1. that the Scandinavian languages were originally *mora* counting and that the tool of *mora*

counting was *stød*, which was the marked member of the opposition *stød*:*no-stød*; 2. that following apocope (medieval apocope, not the sixth-seventh-century variety), which appeared earliest and had its nucleus in words with a long sonorous sound (i.e. words with *stød*), *stød* became limited to monosyllables and disyllables with a second closed syllable; 3. that *stød*, while retaining its mora-counting function, thereby also became a partial marker of monosyllabicity, while *no-stød* came to mark di- and polysyllables; 4. that the phonetic realization of *no-stød* changed according to its new, clearly defined role as the marked member of a syllable-counting opposition — in most cases it acquired a strong second peak, and accent (tone) 2 was born; 5. that where this occurred, *stød*, which up to then had functioned both as a mora-counting device *and* a marker of monosyllabicity, lost the former function and with that the innate features of its realization — it became purely an unmarked counterpart of accent 2, i.e. accent 1; 6. that ultimately accent 1 extended to virtually all monosyllables, irrespective of whether they had had *stød* or not. I have of course omitted here all the subtleties and many of the basics of this reconstruction of events, not to mention the persuasive arguments that lead up to it, but I hope I have given the absolute fundamentals.

Liberman's approach is functional. He asks not is this or that articulation or change of articulation plausible or conceivable, but why should such an articulation or change of articulation occur — what is its function? It is this approach that leads him inexorably to apocope as the key which will unlock for us the secrets of Scandinavian accentuation: 'While comparing facts from various Scandinavian languages and dialects, I often felt that I was going through an enchanted palace that would come alive if I could find the sleeping princess and kiss her. I think there are really two such princesses: *function* for all periods and *apocope* for diachrony. There is nothing in the late history of Scandinavian accents that is not in some way or another connected with apocope, and nothing is worth anything at all until it is subjected to functional analysis' (p. xviii).

When writing examiners' reports for Oxford higher degrees, it is customary, however brilliant the thesis, to sound some note of criticism. Lest readers think I am failing in my duty as a reviewer, I will follow that useful practice here. Among several doubts that assailed me as I read *Germanic accentology 1*, three are perhaps worth mentioning. First, if it was apocope that triggered the development of accents 1 and 2, it is odd that in spite of the apparently early and certainly very thorough-going Jutlandic apocope so few Jutlandic dialects exhibit tonal distinctions. Second, the persistence in Danish, Norwegian and Swedish of accent 1 or *stød* in disyllabic words which in Old Norse were monosyllables seems to me a problem. We can certainly argue, as Liberman does, that whether or not words like *bitr* 'bites' were mono- or disyllabic at the time of apocope in the different dialects, 'inasmuch as acc. 1 has superseded *stød* and the forms under consideration have acc. 1, the accent's predecessor in them must have been *stød*' (p. 197). But this does not really answer the question why a word like *myrðir*, 'murders', which, according to Liberman's theory, originally had *stød*, came to have *no-stød* or accent 2, while *bitr*, likewise with original *stød*, retained this or developed accent 1. Third, one of the 'preliminary considerations proving a greater antiquity of the *stød*:*no-stød* opposition in comparison with that of acc. 1:acc. 2' (pp. 191-2) is certain phenomena in the dialects of Hedemora and Flekkefjord, for 'as always in areal linguistics, isolated phenomena occurring on discontinuous territory are likely to reveal the original state' (p. 191). If not entirely on discontinuous territory, the tonal dialects of Danish seem to be 'isolated phenomena', and fading ones at that. Are they not likely to reveal the original state?

These are, I think, more than minor quibbles, but they in no way diminish this splendid work for which I have nothing but admiration.

MICHAEL BARNES

THE UNMANLY MAN. CONCEPTS OF SEXUAL DEFAMATION IN EARLY NORTHERN SOCIETY. By PREBEN MEULENGRACHT SØRENSEN. Translated by Joan Turville-Petre. *The Viking collection. Studies in Northern civilization, volume 1*. Odense University Press. Odense, 1983. 115 pp.

*The unmanly man*, Joan Turville-Petre's excellent translation of Preben Meulengracht Sørensen's Danish *Norrøn nid. Forestillingen om den umandige mand i de islandske sagaer* (Odense, 1980; 2nd ed., 1982), is the first volume of The Viking collection, a new series of scholarly studies in Old Norse literature and civilization. The general editors are the author of the present volume and Gerd Wolfgang Weber. Their choice of *The unmanly man* to launch the series gives one a clear idea of the editors' general aim: to make available to specialists and non-specialists a series of interdisciplinary studies which examine Old Norse literature in society and other central topics in early Scandinavian cultural history. They are to be congratulated for their initiative in encouraging works of this kind, for they are badly needed in the field of Old Norse studies, which has in the past been rather slow to adopt the methodologies of other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. There is no doubt that *The unmanly man* is a brilliant example of interdisciplinary methodology and it has illuminated the realization in literary texts of a dominant semiotic code of medieval Icelandic society, that of sexual unmanliness, or 'passive' homosexuality, as a symbolic vehicle for the expression of social and moral unworthiness in a man. Although many fine studies of *nið*, or sexual defamation, already exist, what is new in Preben Meulengracht Sørensen's approach is his insistence that one must look at the written texts of thirteenth century Iceland not primarily as keys to unlock cultural traditions and ideologies of earlier ages, but as a textual medium for expressing the relationship between inherited tradition and contemporary thought. *The unmanly man* is one of the first sustained analyses of Old Norse literature as social semiotic and it is very good, both in its utilization of frames of reference from other disciplines such as anthropology and in its at times superb, fine-grained literary analysis of the significance of *nið*-motives to the fabric of whole sagas. The chapter Meulengracht Sørensen devotes to *Gísla saga* is a case in point, and he has made his study of this saga even more comprehensive since the first, Danish edition. Some reviewers of the Danish version of the book (e.g. Carol Clover in *Journal of English and Germanic philology*, LXXX:3, 1982, 398-400) have considered that the author should have foregrounded comparative, anthropological and Christian material more than he did, and he has obviously taken note of such criticisms to the extent of introducing succinct references to medieval Christian attitudes to homosexuality beyond what was in the first edition. However, to have introduced sustained comparisons would have been to have written a different kind of book and one probably less of a methodological *tour de force*. There is, of course, more to be said about *nið* in early Icelandic society, but we should be grateful to Preben Meulengracht Sørensen for showing us how to write a new kind of literary criticism of Old Norse texts and how to read the texts themselves. It is to be hoped that this volume reaches a wide audience of socio-linguists and anthropologists as well as scholars of Old Norse.

The volume is beautifully produced by Odense University Press; I noted a few typographical errors, especially clustering round pages 18 to 20.

MARGARET CLUNIES ROSS

**BÁRDAR SAGA.** Edited and translated by JÓN SKAPTAÐON and PHILLIP PULSIANO. *The Garland library of medieval literature, volume 8, series A. Garland Publishing, Inc.* New York and London, 1984. xxx+147 pp.

This edition consists of a short introduction, a select bibliography, the text with a parallel translation, brief textual notes, an index and an appendix. The series in which the book appears is expressly intended for the general, non-specialist reader, and the introduction follows a prescribed pattern. In sections titled 'Authorship', 'Artistic achievement' and 'Sources and influences', the editors discuss questions of dating, the unity of the present text, thematic and structural features and literary models. This is all very clear and balanced. The evidence and views advanced by earlier commentators on such questions as dating, possible multiple authorship and the existence of a separate *Gests pátr* are touched on, but the editors refrain from forcing any conclusions, themselves presenting little that is original, though it must be said that they show sensitivity to the saga's merits and literary techniques. This editorial unobtrusiveness, while perhaps furnishing the general reader with digestible material, errs by omission at times and becomes even facile in a way that will fail the more demanding reader in an age when editions are frequently doctoral theses with far more commentary than text. For example, the three-page section 'Sources and influences' fails to consider the relationship of *Bárðar saga* to works other than *Landnámaþók* in sufficient detail, and could have given far more information without greatly increasing its length. A case in point is the statement (p. xxii): 'The author was obviously familiar with a wide range of sagas and *pættir* which he drew on in composing his work. "Hálfdánar pátr svarta ok Haralds hárfagra" in *Flateyjarbók* describes a dream similar to Bárðr's dream in Chapter I.' The discussion proceeds no further, leaving, perhaps, the impression that the source of the passage has been found. Of course there are many important features in common between the two dreams, but Hálfdan's dream is of hair, not a tree, and the tree dreams in *Hálfdans saga svarta* in *Heimskringla*, *Flóamanna saga* and *Harðar saga* could have been brought in for thoroughness. The textual policy seems sound, and the text is normalized, with important variants given below it. The translation reads well and is generally good, though not without lapses. *Nordr hingat í hálfuna* (p. 4) does not mean 'here in the northern hemisphere'; it is incongruous to call a trolls' *jólaveisla* (p. 68) a 'Christmas feast'; and the translations of *i seli* (p. 62) and *Hann hafði selför* (p. 66) as 'in a fishing shed' and 'He had a fishing outpost' respectively are wholly unwarranted. 'Out onto the cliff' for *út á bergit* (p. 70) does not fit the context, and 'Pór is wise to Frigg' is a lamentable rendering of the line *Pór er vís (sic) til Friggjar* in the verse on p. 38, which also deserves a note as a *miðavísá*. The book's frontispiece map of the vicinity of Snæfellsjökull is sketchy and not improved by a glaring spelling mistake (some Icelandic words in the introduction, and three proper names in the bibliography are also misspelled) and the photograph of the oldest manuscript page has been reproduced far too small to be of any use. Despite these criticisms, this edition will be of use to learners of the language and makes available an interesting and rather neglected saga.

JEFFREY COSSER

EIRÍKS SAGA VÍÐFÖRLA. Edited by HELLE JENSEN. *Editiones Arnamagnæanae, series B, vol. 29. C. A. Reitzels Forlag.* København, 1983. cciv + 145 pp.

Carl Christian Rafn included *Eiríks saga víðförla* in the collection of texts which he published in 1829-30 under the title *Fornaldar sögur Norðrlanda*; however, the blatantly clerical character of the work caused it to be expelled from the canon of *fornaldarsögur* by Guðni Jónsson in the fourth edition of Rafn's anthology. Helle Jensen's is the first edition of this curious text to be prepared from all existing manuscripts, of which there are more than fifty, the oldest dating from the fourteenth century. The saga, which recounts the journey of Eiríkr the son of Prándr (the eponymous founder of Trondheim) in search of the earthly paradise ('which heathen men call Ódáins akr'), is a remarkable example of the odd mix of Latin learning (and pseudo-learning) with native Germanic material which characterizes many of the later Icelandic prose narratives. In preparation for his quest, Eiríkr spends several years at the court of the Emperor of Constantinople, where he absorbs a fund of geographical lore and Christian wisdom, which the author of the saga conscientiously reproduces for the edification of his readers. Helle Jensen includes in her introduction a discussion of the Latin sources of this material, much of which is based on passages from two of the most popular works of Honorius Augustodunensis, the *Imago mundi* and the *Elucidarius*. She also examines briefly some literary analogues for particular details in the subsequent account of Eiríkr's visit to Ódáins akr. At points in her introduction Jensen is more laconic than one might have wished. She remarks, for instance (p. xl), that the discussion of cosmography in the commentary on Genesis 1: 6-8 in *Stjórn* (ed. C. R. Unger, p. 12) provides no close parallel for the synthesis in *Eiríks saga* (A 101-111, B 85-95, C 100-110) of information from the *Imago mundi* and the *Elucidarius* on the arrangement of the heavenly spheres. At the same time, however, she notes a certain similarity between this section of *Eiríks saga* and a discussion of the heavenly spheres in *Páls saga postola II* (ed. C. R. Unger in *Postola sögur*, p. 268, ll. 15-16), without mentioning that this passage would appear to be based, at least in part, on the chief source for the commentary on Genesis 1: 6-8 in *Stjórn*, viz. Peter Comestor's *Historia scholastica* (*Patrologia Latina*, CXCVIII, 1058 A-B). (On the question of Latin sources, see further Rudolf Simek, 'Die Quellen der *Eiríks saga víðförla*', *Skandinavistik* 14.2 [1984], 109-14; and Helle Jensen, 'Eiríks saga víðförla: Appendix 3.' In *The Sixth International Saga Conference. 28.7.-2.8.1985. Workshop papers I.* [1985], 499-512.) This is a small detail, however, which hardly detracts from the general usefulness of the introduction. This edition will be welcomed not only by those interested in the impact of Latin learning upon the popular literature of medieval Iceland, but also by students of the rich body of medieval literature pertaining to the Other World.

DAVID and IAN McDougall

POESIE EINER ACHSENZEIT. DER URSPRUNG DER SKALDIK IM GESELLSCHAFTLICHEN SYSTEMWANDEL DER WIKINGERZEIT. By HERMANN ENGSTER. *Europäische Hochschulschriften, Reihe 1, Deutsche Sprache und Literatur, Bd. 667. Peter Lang.* Frankfurt am Main, Bern and New York, 1983. 384 pp.

The point of departure for this book is the circumstance that skaldic poetry appears to have its inception at the onset of an era characterized by great material, social, and cultural upheavals. The author contends that eras of similar rapid transition are often attended by major shifts in consciousness, for example from

the collective to the individual or from the concrete to the abstract. He sees skaldic poetry as embodying a consciousness of a Janus type, looking back in some respects and forwards in others. In an earlier publication the author has traced a similar pattern in Holberg's comedy *Jeppe på Bierget*.

As a literary historian Engster sees his task in terms which go back to Adorno and ultimately to Hegel. It is not a question of placing artistic works in their social and historical context — itself a difficult task where so little is known — but, more ambitiously, of showing the structure of society to be immanent within the artistic work. The emphasis is on artistic creation as an acting and reacting element within society, rather than as a distinct entity. Accounts which stress ludic or 'art for art's sake' qualities in skaldic verse are seen as ultimately unfruitful. Engster's concern is with skaldic poetry as a genre and particularly with its technical evolution over approximately its first hundred years of attested works. In concentrating on form, at the apparent expense of content, Engster cites the precedent of Adorno, who in his analysis of Balzac used a formal aspect, the hyper-realism of the novels, to point to an underlying unease about a transition in society from individualism to the anonymity of the bureaucracy and large commercial enterprises.

The mention of Balzac prompts the comment that a great deal is known about the life and works of this novelist and the society in which he lived. The development of the novel genre can be documented in enormous detail. Such is not the case with skaldic poetry. A prerequisite in a genre study like this book is a discussion of just which attested poems can be regarded as authentic examples of practice in the century that begins with Bragi's *floruit*. We need some assessment of the evidence supporting attributions, notably those to Egill Skalla-Grímsson, and this the author fails to provide. The author's conception of the development of skaldic poetry also relies heavily on the assumption that until the completion ca. A.D. 800 of the major phonological shifts which separate Primitive Norse from Old Norse a strict, syllable-counting, highly compressed form like *dróttkvætt* would not have been possible. But this does not seem to me a safe assumption on which to build further hypotheses. The Strøm runic inscription, *wate hali hino horna haha skapi haþu ligi*, is obviously based on syllable counting, albeit rudimentary. Eilfrðr Goðrúnarson and the poet of *Hymiskviða* appear to be aware of a disyllabic treatment of the name *Pórr*, which, as a feature of actual pronunciation, must antedate Bragi. The later poets could not have inferred the disyllabic form if it had not occurred in pre-Bragi syllabic verse. Certain Primitive Norse words would admittedly be awkward to accommodate in any metre resembling *dróttkvætt*, but the poets might well have solved their problems through the evidently early device of tmesis, as later poets certainly did — for instance with the metrically difficult name *Stiklastaðir*. It is safe to assume that the far-reaching linguistic changes would have led to the metrical dissolution and loss of some poems; it is not safe to assume that the syllable-counting techniques that we see after these changes were a wholly new possibility.

Engster is on firmer ground when he traces developments after Bragi. He cites a large body of work by previous scholars to demonstrate a rapid tightening of formal control on the part of the poets. Kuhn's observations on the increasing strictness over internal rhyming and the syntactic cohesion of the *helmingr* and stanza as a whole are supplemented by Marold's on the avoidance of trope-dependent kennings in the nominative case and Mohr's on the distribution of kenning material through the *helmingr*. Engster sees this formal strictness as emanating from a poetic consciousness where the diversity of the world is integrated into a unity, and the consciousness in turn he sees as mirroring the new individualism

of the Viking Age. The new formality is specially linked to the court of Haraldr hárfagri, while for a time at least the skalds of the earls of Hlaðir and of Iceland and Orkney are looser (and, as Engster sees it, more traditional) in their compositions. I must admit to a failure to understand why the new individualism did not equally affect these peripheral groups, perhaps in particular the very independent-minded settlers in Iceland. An individual subjectivity is manifest in the verses of Torf-Einarr, if we believe these to be correctly ascribed. Although I agree with Engster that a process of individuation is going on, I think it applies to the collectivity and not to particular persons. The rapid evolution of a 'metropolitan' style would add a distinctive element to the ceremonies at Haraldr's court and so assist in the general magnifying of its prestige that attended the incipient unification of Norway.

The forward-looking Janus head of skaldic poetry is therefore, in Engster's analysis, its tendency to abstract patterning. The creation of unity through these patterns is a formal complement to a more abstract and centralized hegemony in society, which, in a rapid Viking Age transition, supplants the older kinship organization. The development of *rekit* kennings is another aspect of the move to abstraction, because in their task of decoding multiple kennings the audience was presumably aided by an awareness of abstract kenning types (e.g. 'fire of water' means 'gold'). The backward-looking head is differentiated by its contrasting attitude to kennings. It treasures them as the surviving fragments of the *pensée sauvage* (or mythic logic) which operated in the collective consciousness prior to the Viking Age. To establish this potentially very fruitful theory Engster begins with the likelihood that kennings antedate *dróttkvætt* as we know it. The evidence is frail but consistent in its direction. Bragi's very complex kennings presuppose antecedents of a simpler kind; *naseu* on the Eggjum stone can be explained as a kenning for 'blood' and dated ca. A.D. 700; kennings are attested in other contemporary or older poetries, such as Old English and Irish (though how far these are truly comparable remains problematic). Further to this, the author argues that kennings are not images but signs: they constitute a second-order language superimposed upon ordinary language. This feature they share with mythic logic, as described by Lévi-Strauss. A second shared feature is the strategy of analogy. On this analogical basis of the kenning and on the connections with mythic logic generally, the author's arguments are unfortunately rather thin. This is a pity, because Engster's theory would provide a broader and historically more convincing account of kennings than, for example, the idea of cultural taboos or sheer play with language or a deliberate dissolution of reality into dream.

The value of this book will lie, I suspect, in renewed and invigorated debate about the origin of kennings and of skaldic verse generally. The author's synthesis of material and theory from the realms of literature, history, archaeology, anthropology, sociology, and philosophy is impressive and at times genuinely instructive. But at times too the learning seems unassimilated. Footnotes swell to relentless length, one excursus spawns another, afterthoughts are awkwardly appended, cross-references become laboured and fussy, sentences are overladen and parenthetic. The typography of the book is unpleasing: Norse words or sometimes individual characters are in a different fount and type-size from the main body of the text, creating problems with spacing and lineation and leading to omissions. The reader is referred to endnotes not by means of superscript numerals but by numerals in brackets, which adds to the general parenthetical appearance of the text. The handwriting of a Greek word on p. 234 is a distinctly amateurish touch (why not simply transliterate if no Greek fount was available?).

In short, Engster's ideas are interesting and potentially very illuminating, and I hope we shall see them again in a revised, elaborated, and more skilfully presented form.

BOOKS RECEIVED: The Society has also received the following: *The Anglo-Saxon chronicle Volume 17. The annals of St. Neots with Vita prima Sancti Neoti*, ed. David Dumville and Michael Lapidge. D. S. Brewer. Cambridge, 1985; Gillian Fellows-Jensen, *Scandinavian settlement names in the North-West*. C. A. Reitzels Forlag. Copenhagen, 1985. J. P. Lamm and H.-Å. Nordström (eds.), *Vendel period studies. Transactions of the Boat-grave Symposium in Stockholm, February 2-3, 1981*. Statens Historiska Museum. Stockholm, 1983. Sean McGrail (ed.), *Aspects of maritime archaeology and ethnography. Papers based on those presented to an international seminar held at the University of Bristol in March, 1982*. Trustees of the National Maritime Museum. London, 1984.

## EDITORIAL

From this issue onwards, *Saga-Book* will appear in a new format. Ostensibly annual, it has in the past frequently been published biennially in double issues and this has often meant the late appearance of notes and reviews. The Council of the Society has therefore decided to publish *Saga-Book* in two separate sections. *Notes and reviews* will appear on a regular, annual basis, beginning with this issue. *Articles* will for the present appear biennially, beginning with an issue in 1988. Volume numbers and pagination will continue as before, the two sections together going to make up a complete *Saga-Book*. Subscribers will receive both sections of *Saga-Book* automatically without any further action on their part.

We hope readers will be pleased with this arrangement and will enjoy receiving their regular dose of *Saga-Book*.

The Editors  
*Saga-Book (Notes and reviews)*

### NOTE

Contributions to both sections of *Saga-Book* are welcomed for consideration and may be sent to:

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## NOTES

YNGVARR'S EXPEDITION AND THE  
*GEORGIAN CHRONICLE*

BY MATS G. LARSSON

J. SHEPARD has in an afterword to his detailed and thorough paper on Yngvarr's expedition to Serkland presented some critical views on my paper on the same subject, where I proposed identifying the Varangians of the battle of Sasireti in the *Georgian Chronicle* with the expedition of Yngvarr (Shepard 1984-85, 276-83, Larsson 1983). Shepard's criticism is mainly based on the gap between the dating of Yngvarr's death according to *Yngvars saga* (YS) and the Icelandic annals, 1041, and the dating of the battle of Sasireti, which Shepard and many other scholars set to 1046/47 (Shepard 1984-85, 277). He also criticises me for stressing some resemblances while suppressing other important details of the saga. I will here discuss some problems which unfortunately have not been mentioned in either of the two articles and give my views on the significance of *Yngvars saga* for my theory. As this is my main aim I will only peripherally comment on Shepard's other views on Yngvarr's expedition as presented in his paper. The references and the bibliography in Shepard's paper are very comprehensive. In particular, many of the works in Russian are new to me and I am pleased to note that the translation by Papaskiri (1981, 169) of the part of the *Georgian Chronicle* where the Varangians are mentioned is in agreement with my exegesis, which is also noticed by Shepard (1984-85, 279). As Shepard and I seem to agree that the Varangians probably came from Scandinavia and not from Byzantium, which I saw as the most important problem, I can here concentrate on the chronology of the *Georgian Chronicle* and on the identification of the Varangians recorded in it.

As I mentioned in my paper (Larsson 1983, 100-101), there have been different opinions among scholars on the dating of the battle of Sasireti. The difference between the datings is five to six years. Allen (1932, 90) has dated the battle to 1041. Shepard rejects that dating and states that it is incompatible with the

*Georgian Chronicle* as translated by Brosset (1849), and that modern scholars have followed the sequence of events which sets the second return of Dimitri and the battle of Sasireti after the Byzantine annexation of Ani in 1045 and the death of the amir Jafar, which according to these scholars should have occurred in the same year (Shepard 1984-85, 276-77). However, the main source for Allen's chronology is also the *Georgian Chronicle* as translated by Brosset (1849, 319-21), which Allen has interpreted in combination with other relevant sources. Unfortunately he has not discussed the dating problem in his text, so that his analysis of the events cannot be known. I will, though, argue below not only for his chronology not to be rejected, but why it in my opinion should be preferred.

The identification of what is said of Ani in the *Georgian Chronicle* (Brosset 1849, 319) with the events related to the Byzantine annexation of Ani 1045 is, to my knowledge, the reason why several scholars have set Jafar's death and the battle of Sasireti after that year. The same argument is delivered by Shepard. However the *Georgian Chronicle* supplies no datings and this identification is very uncertain. As Brosset notes (1849, 319, n. 2), the Georgian text says that Ani was *delivered* by its inhabitants to Bagrat's mother, Mariam, while the Armenian sources for the year 1045 on the contrary say that *some* of the inhabitants *proposed to submit to Bagrat*. In the same paragraph of the Georgian text it is stated that a person named West joined Bagrat with nine fortresses belonging to Ani. Brosset ends his comments with the statement that he does not believe that the event recounted by the annalist belongs to the year 1045, but that it is more probable that there is a question of some proposition made to Bagrat soon after the death of the Armenian king Achot IV in 1039, as his son Gagik II became king first in 1042. Brosset also comments on the dating of the events by saying it ought to be somewhere around 1040 or 1041 according to the order in which they are told by the annalist (1849, 319, n. 4). In his 'Additions et éclaircissements', Brosset sets the capture of Tiflis, which according to the annals was contemporary with the death of Jafar, to 1040 (Brosset 1851, 227). The dating is here identical with Allen's (1932, 89). The second return of Bagrat's half brother Dimitri is placed by Brosset in 1042 in the same chronology, while

Allen here supplies the year 1041. Shepard states in a former paper on Armenia in the 1040s (1975-76, 293, n. 32) that Ani according to the *Georgian Chronicle* was held by Queen Mariam at an *unspecified date*. The conclusion must be that Brosset's version of the *Georgian Chronicle* cannot form a basis for rejecting Allen's chronology or indicate that the battle of Sasireti took place after 1045.

The Byzantine annexation of Ani in 1045 was more a result of palace intrigues against the king Gagik II than of military actions by the Byzantine emperor. The main military events connected with the annexation were the defeat of the Byzantine commander, the *parakoimomenos* Nicholas, outside the gates of Ani in 1044, the amir of Dvin breaking into the areas of Ani on behalf of the emperor in the same year, and the emperor sending an army, consisting to a large extent of Armenians and Georgians, against Dvin in the autumn of 1045, thus breaking the terms with the amir after the annexation (Grousset 1947, 574-82; Minorsky 1953, 52-53; Shepard 1975-76, 296-98; 1984-85, 252). The march against Dvin is the only part of these events that may be identified in the *Georgian Chronicle*, which says that Liparit marched against Dvin to make war against the commander of that city in the interest of the Greek emperor (Brosset 1849, 322). Grousset states that Liparit was the commander of the Georgian troops in the emperor's campaign against Dvin in 1045 (1947, 582). Shepard (1975-76, 303, n. 61) dates Liparit's march to 1047, referring to the *Georgian Chronicle*, which says that one year after coming home from the war against Dvin Liparit participated in the Byzantine war against the Turks in 1048 (Brosset 1849, 322-23). However, the chronicle does not say that the march *started* one year before the Turkish war. It seems more probable that Liparit led the Georgian troops mentioned in the emperor's march in 1045, as Grousset concludes, and returned home when the war with the amir ceased in 1047 (Grousset 1947, 584; Minorsky 1953, 54; Shepard 1975-76, 303). The *Georgian Chronicle* sets the march against Dvin a number of events and reasonably a number of years *after* mentioning the delivery of Ani to Bagrat's mother (1849, 319), and also clearly after the battle of Sasireti (1849, 321). Thus, following the order of the chronicle, the most probable conclusion is that the first mention of Ani does

*not apply to the events of 1045 and that the battle of Sasireti must have taken place before 1045.*

The development of events in Armenia before the Byzantine annexation is rather complicated, with many different groups and rulers involved during a short time. In the general confusion after the death of Achot IV and Hovhannés-Sembat, the *vest* or intendant of Ani, Sargis, tried to assume power over the city and took control of a great number of fortresses and castles. Different groups opposed him (1040-41) and wanted to place Gagik, the son of Achot, on the throne. After an uncertain sequence of events, Gagik II was officially crowned as king of the Armenians, probably in 1042 (Grousset 1947, 569-71; Shepard 1975-76, 285-87). The period when Vest Sargis, probably the same person as the one named West by the *Georgian Chronicle* (Brosset 1849, 319), had control of the fortresses belonging to Ani was thus 1040/1041. His joining Bagrat with nine fortresses, mentioned in the *Georgian Chronicle* in connection with the account of Ani's delivery to Bagrat's mother, was accordingly probably during that period, as Brosset has also proposed, and not in 1045. Yuzbashyan (1978, 158) has come to a similar conclusion and dates the event to 1041. Parallel with the events referred, the Armenian king David Anholin used the situation and tried to invade the area around Ani, Chirak. After being repelled, David incited the Byzantines against Gagik. A short time before his death in 1041, the Byzantine emperor Michael IV sent an army against Ani in accordance with the will of Hovhannés-Sembat, in which Ani was left to the Byzantine emperor. The Byzantine army did not succeed and was forced to retreat to Constantinople, possibly during the reign of Michael V (1041-42) (Grousset 1947, 569-71; Minorsky 1953, 52; Shepard 1975-76, 285-86).

The Armenian or Byzantine sources do not mention any Georgian interventions in the struggles of 1041/42. However, the events may be connected with the paragraphs in the *Georgian Chronicle* which tell that Liparit acted treacherously against Queen Mariam in the city of Ani and that the Greeks arrived to the area after that. The chronicle also says that King David of Armenia joined Liparit and the Greeks against Bagrat (Brosset 1849, 320-21). As Shepard has assumed in his earlier paper (1975-

76, 293, n. 32), Liparit may have participated in one of the Byzantine attempts on Ani (i.e. *before* 1045). Considering the other details, that participation probably occurred in connection with the campaign in 1041/42. In the *Georgian Chronicle*, these events are recounted in direct connection with the record of Bagrat's brother Dimitri's second return, which resulted in the battle of Sasireti, recounted in the following paragraph. The battle of Sasireti is in the *Georgian Chronicle* followed by an account of the death of Dimitri and a failed meeting between Bagrat and Liparit. In the next paragraph the chronicle tells about a revolt among some Meskhian nobles against Liparit, and that Bagrat supported the revolt. That lead to a new battle between Bagrat and Liparit, the latter again supported by the Greeks, where Bagrat was beaten a second time (Brossel 1849, 322). The Greeks mentioned in this paragraph could possibly have a connection with the reinforcements sent by the emperor to the *parakoimomenos* Nicholas in 1044 (Grousset 1947, 575; Minorsky 1953, 53). It is first after that battle that Liparit's march against Dvin with the same army appears in the *Georgian Chronicle*.

The conclusion from this analysis of the *Georgian Chronicle* in relation to Armenian history ought to be that Allen's dating of the battle of Sasireti cannot be rejected, but should be preferred, and that the battle was probably connected with the Byzantine campaign against Ani in 1041/42. As stated above there is unfortunately no evidence from Byzantine or Armenian sources that Bagrat or Liparit were directly involved in this campaign. The same applies to the annexation in 1045. Considering the complicated sequence of events of the period in question and the absence of clear datings in the *Georgian Chronicle*, neither of the datings can be taken as certain, and we are here compelled to work with probabilities. In my opinion the possibility of identifying the Varangians of the *Georgian Chronicle* with the expedition of Yngvarr, known to have ended ca 1041 and to have had the same area as its goal, increases the probability that Allen's dating is correct. No other expedition by Scandinavians (*Varangians*) is known through Scandinavian, Russian or other sources for that time and to that area. Shepard, however, states that there is no discernible connection between the information of

the *Georgian Chronicle* and Yngvarr's expedition. He is instead of the opinion that we here have indications of another expedition of Scandinavian mercenaries or explorers, which however as he himself states is not commemorated in any known runic inscriptions (Shepard 1984-85, 275-76).

When deciding which is the most probable of the two alternatives, one expedition close in time and well documented in other sources and one unknown, I can see no reason to prefer the latter. Shepard's contention that various groups of Scandinavians in quite large numbers could have reached the region of the Caucasus in the first half of the eleventh century (1984-85, 276) seems to me exaggerated. The probable numbers of the population of especially eastern Scandinavia during the time in question make such a conclusion unlikely. For instance, in my calculations of the number of Swedish participants in Yngvarr's expedition from settlement archaeological material, I have estimated them at 500 - 1000 men. These calculations certainly are approximate, but a number greater than 1000 must be seen as improbable even for this major expedition (Larsson 1986, 105-7). It is furthermore unlikely that a new expedition should have started already a short time after (following Shepard's dating of the chronicle) the two catastrophes which followed Yngvarr's expedition in 1041 and the Russian attack on Constantinople in 1043.

However, the possibility of an unknown expedition to Georgia must still be considered. When evaluating the probability of that alternative compared to identifying the Varangians of the *Georgian Chronicle* with Yngvarr's expedition, we may use *Yngvars saga*, which is the only known source for the latter event except for the runestones and the Icelandic annals. If one could find significant resemblances between the information of the saga and the description of conditions in Georgian geography and history for the time in question, the probability that the Varangians in Georgia were Yngvarr and his men, and that the saga had a basis in reality, increases. (As Shepard devotes himself to analysing the saga for several pages of his paper, e.g. 1984-85, 268-71, he might agree with me here.) That the saga should give an *exact* description of the Georgian conditions, which Shepard seems to demand in his criticism of my

interpretation of it (1984-85, 277-81), cannot however be expected.

*Yngvars saga* contains, as Shepard emphasizes, a mass of fabulous material. To be able to find a possible core of reality in it one must try to analyse it critically. It is thus necessary to leave out certain details which must be regarded as unrealistic and were probably added during the time the saga was repeated orally or during the recording of it. I have in my paper (Larsson 1983) sorted out the obviously legendary parts with dragons and other mythical creatures, the romantic story where the queen falls in love with Yngvarr and wants to marry him and make him king of her realm, the great friendship between Yngvarr and the king, Yngvarr as the hero of the battles, and the exaggerated Christianity of Yngvarr and his men, who in some parts of the saga seem to belong more to a missionary tour than a Viking expedition. The remaining part I have tried to use in comparison with Georgian conditions. Below I have made a summary of the most important parts corresponding in general with my hypothesis and of the details in which they differ:

The river used was the greatest and the middle one of three rivers flowing *austan*, i.e. with a direction from east to west, around *Gardaríki*, and the ships were turned *austr*, i.e. to the east, when the journey on the river started (YS 12). As I have emphasized in my paper this does not in any way correspond to the Volga, which flows mainly from the west to the east and from the north to the south. Some scholars have used the word greatest to deduce that the river was the Volga, but the text only says that the river was *the greatest of three rivers* flowing in the same direction and in the same area. That corresponds however very well with the Rioni, the river on which Bashi — the campsite of the Varangians in the *Georgian Chronicle* — is situated. The Rioni flows from the east into the Black Sea and is surrounded on both sides by smaller rivers flowing in the same direction. Regarding the wording 'around *Gardaríki*', it may be noted that *Gardaríki* (Russia) in the Icelandic sagas was thought to reach as far as to Byzantium (Shepard 1984-85, 225).

- The city Citopolis, also situated on the river in question, had a magnificent queen, Silkisif, and was built of white marble stones (YS 15, 29). As Shepard comments (1984-85, 278) there is a resemblance between the name of the city and the Greek and Latin name of Kutaisi (Cytaea). This city, situated on the Rioni ca. 20 km northeast of Bashi, was probably during the time in question ruled by Mariam, Bagrat's mother, whom I have proposed to identify with Silkisif. The queen was according to the sources a dominant figure and, as an example of that, the *Georgian Chronicle* states, as mentioned above, that the city of Ani was delivered to her and not to Bagrat. That she in the oral Norse

tradition should come to be regarded as the queen of a separate country can thus not be considered a major objection against the identification with Silkisif. Furthermore, after a visit to Kutaisi I have become aware of the monumentality of the Bagrat cathedral, which already existed in Yngvarr's time. It was adorned with white and veined marble and formed the main landmark of the city (Mepisashvili and Tsintsadse 1977). This great cathedral, situated within the citadel on the high rock forming the heart of Kutaisi, just by the Rioni, must have made a great impression on the northern visitors. The saga's account of the city built of white marble could be a memory of that impression.

The streams and narrow gorges with high crags on the route to Júlfr's kingdom (YS 16) do not correspond with the conditions of the greater river Dnepr, which Shepard proposes (1984-85, 280). There a portage was necessary, but not with ropes uphill over steep crags, as described in the saga. Nor can the gorges be regarded to be as narrow as told in the saga (compare Porphyrogenitus 1949, where the narrowness of Dnepr at one of the rapids is compared with the width of the polo-ground in Constantinople). That the conditions were exceptional on Yngvarr's route according to the Norse tradition could be deduced from the afterword by the author of the saga (YS 48), where he reproduces a tradition of the expedition rowing in darkness between high crags for two weeks. Although telling about dragons and giants elsewhere in the saga without any comment, he finds that tradition unbelievable. As I have described in my paper (Larsson 1983, 98), the gorges of the Tscherimela, the upper tributary to the Rioni, must be regarded as very special. Shepard here objects that the saga tells of *one* river, while the road Rioni/Kura includes two, separated by a mountain range. The objection is correct, as is the one about the long time to come from Citopolis to Heliopolis according to the saga (Shepard 1984-85, 278-79). The mountain range separating Rioni and Kura and the pass over it is however in my theory just the part with the crags described in the saga.

- The political situation in Georgia, with Bagrat for the time in question being in the eastern parts fighting his vassal Liparit and his brother Dimitri, corresponds, as I have shown in my paper, in major parts with the description of the combat between Júlfr and Biólfr in *Yngvars saga*. This applies especially to the battle of Sasireti, where the Varangians of the *Georgian Chronicle* participated. There is however probably a confused part in the description of the battle in the saga, where Júlfr, whom Yngvarr had helped in the fight, came back and attacked Yngvarr. I have interpreted this as the tradition being corrupt in that part and that it originally was Biólfr, the enemy and brother of Júlfr, who came back, as being the most logical course of events. With that change the saga and the description of the battle in the *Georgian Chronicle* are largely in agreement. Even in the saga Yngvarr, having been described as a hero in the preceding battle, seems to retreat with his men to the camp when they are surprisingly attacked the second time and, after an adventure with women coming to the camp, the expedition returns to Citopolis in the west, as the Varangians in the chronicle return to western

Georgia after the battle and the settlement with Liparit (Larsson 1983, 101-2). The forest of Sasireti, where the battle took place, is situated ca. 40 km northwest of Tiflis, on the banks of the Kura (Wakhoucht 1842, maps 2 and 3; the location stated in my paper [Larsson 1983, 100] is thus not correct, but applies to another Sasireti). The account of *Yngvars saga* that the battle took place close to the boats of Yngvarr and his men thus corresponds to the conditions of the place (YS 25).

That a few resemblances occur between a saga and other sources cannot form evidence that they refer to the same events. However, when a number of correspondences occurring in the right order are found, the probability that the two sources have the same foundation is increased. The different arguments presented above taken together must be considered when evaluating the two main alternatives: that the Varangians of the *Georgian Chronicle* were Yngvarr's expedition, or that they were another Viking raid. The second alternative is still not impossible, but after the comparisons with *Yngvars saga* and the correspondences demonstrated, I cannot see why one should draw the primary conclusion that the *Georgian Chronicle* tells about another — contemporary — expedition which has left no other traces, but from which some of the details could have survived in *Yngvars saga* (Shepard 1984-85, 280).

There are some other parts of *Yngvars saga* with a special interest, even if they do not have anything directly to do with Georgia. They show, however, that the saga includes parts which definitely can be stated to have a realistic core. Two such parts are the description of the Greek fire (YS 20-21; Larsson 1983, 99; Shepard 1984-85, 280) and the account of the round boats which seem to be very similar to the quffas of Eufrat and Tigris (YS 16; Larsson 1983, 98-9). A third part, and a most interesting one when trying to reconstruct the route of Yngvarr, is the account of the abyss *Gapi* or *Belgsóti*. Shepard has not commented on my identification of that description with Kara-Bugaz of the Caspian. He only states that the description of the saga is just another one about great waterfalls, where this one falls into the Ocean (Shepard 1984-85, 270, 279). The account is, however, too close to reality to be dismissed in that way. The saga tells about a sea, *Lindibelti*, the source of the river for the journey. From that sea another river falls into *Rauðahaf* (the Red Sea), where there is a great abyss called *Gapi*. Between the sea and the river there is an

isthmus. The river flows a short way before it falls over the rocks into *Rauðahaf* (YS 18, 23-4). I have in my paper shown that there is a very close correspondence between that description and the real conditions at Kara-Bugaz (the Black Abyss), by the eastern Caspian Sea. In addition, the salt bay into which this rapid falls lights the sky above with a red tone, according to Russian descriptions, a phenomenon which has always frightened seamen (Larsson 1983, 100). With these facts as a foundation for the description of *Gapi* and the name *Rauðahaf* I can see no reason to conclude that the abyss described in the saga is just one of the saga's waterfalls and that *Rauðahaf* should be another name for the Ocean. The account of the saga in this part in fact forms evidence for Yngvarr reaching the Caspian, even if it cannot be excluded that another tradition of the gulf has been included in *Yngvars saga*.

The *Georgian Chronicle* and the saga taken together have formed the basis for my attempt to reconstruct Yngvarr's expedition. As I have discussed in my first paper there are still many questions to be answered. Why did such a large number of Varangians come to Georgia and why did they divide into two parts after Bashi? Were there any Russian troops in the force coming to Bashi? The large number of participants in the expedition compared to my calculations based on archaeological material (see above, p. 103) seems to indicate that the force, 3000 men, could not have been entirely Scandinavian. I have suggested that the part which went over the Likhi mountains to eastern Georgia, 700 men, were the Scandinavians and that the saga's account is for obvious reasons mainly concerned with them, while a greater Russian force stayed in Bashi. This can only be an assumption, based on my combination of *Yngvars saga* and the *Georgian Chronicle*. Regarding the reason for the expedition to the area I think Papaskiri might be right when he suggests that it may have been sent by Jaroslav as a part of the hostilities between Russia and Byzantium, even if I do not agree with the time proposed, 1043-46 (Papaskiri 1981, 172). The hostilities began according to Michael Psellos already under the rule of Michael IV (1034-1041), when the Russians are said to have prepared for an attack on Constantinople, arming with all energy and building big and small ships for the attack, which however was postponed until

1043 (Psellos 1928, 8). Even if Psellos' account cannot be accepted in all its details it may contain some truth (Shepard 1979, 211-12). It could possibly be an explanation for Yngvarr's three year stay with Jaroslav (ca. 1036-1039 according to the saga's account [YS 12]) and the following expedition. A military reason could thus be a possible alternative to the commercial aim suggested in my paper (Larsson 1983, 96-97).

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STEIGAR-PÓRIR'S COUPLET AND  
STEINN HERDÍSARSON II: NOTES AND QUERIES  
BY RICHARD PERKINS

ON PAGES 120-21, Peter Foote reviews Bjarni Einarsson's recent edition of *Ágrip* and *Fagrskinna* in the *Íslensk fornrit*-series (1984; abbreviated: *If*, XXIX). As Foote suggests, we have good reason to be grateful to Bjarni for his new volume. Editions of both *Ágrip* and *Fagrskinna* were previously not easy to come by; this was particularly true of *Fagrskinna*. And yet both works are important sources for the study of the Kings' Sagas and, of course, for the history of Norway for the period they cover. *Ágrip* is of interest for its early date and the influence it exerted on other works. *Fagrskinna* drew on a number of older histories and, as Bjarni confirms, must have been a major source for Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla*. And Bjarni's edition has special value for another reason. Both *Ágrip* and *Fagrskinna* are of no small interest for the skaldic poetry they contain. The text of *Fagrskinna* carries some 270 skaldic strophes or parts of skaldic strophes. And to the author of *Ágrip* quite possibly falls the distinction of being the first Norse history-writer to incorporate skaldic verse in his work. Bjarni's edition, then, gives us the opportunity to review a not inconsiderable part of the skaldic corpus. Skaldic studies are in a particularly healthy state at the moment. At the same time, there is still much work to be done in the field. The present note, then, takes occasion to reconsider two pieces of skaldic poetry which appear in Bjarni's edition, to make observations on them and to raise certain queries in connection with them.

**A. Steigar-Pórir's couplet**

This appears twice in Bjarni's volume, in *Ágrip* (*If*, XXIX, 44) and in *Fagrskinna* (*If*, XXIX, 305), as well as in *Morkinskinna*, *Heimskringla* and *Hulda-Hrokkinskinna* (cf. Finnur Jónsson (ed.), *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning*, 1912-15 (abbreviated: *Skj*), A, I, 434; B, I, 403). It is:

Vórum félagar fjórir  
forðum - einn við stýri.

It may be commented on under four headings, as follows:

(1) What relationship the couplet has to the prose which surrounds it in the five works in which it appears is not easy to say. In all five cases, Steigar-Pórir is represented as uttering the verse when about to die on the gallows. The couplet may, then, perhaps be intended as a reminiscence of earlier, happier days. But this is a matter we may steer clear of in the present context. We have no particular grounds for believing that the couplet is the original composition of the historical Steigar-Pórir (an eleventh-century Norwegian), nor do any of the texts say it was *composed* by that person. At least three of its seven words are formulaic (see (2) below). We may, then, regard the couplet as anonymous, composed at some time before about 1190 (the approximate date we can assign to *Ágrip*; cf. *If*, XXIX, x). It is not, therefore, an unreasonable approach to consider it more or less *in vacuo*. (It is, however, perhaps worth noting incidentally that in all but one of the texts in which the couplet appears — the exception is *Ágrip* — the surrounding prose contains what appear to be set words of command given to a vessel's helmsman, crew or rowers, albeit in a transferred context; cf. Hjalmar Falk, 'Altnordisches Seewesen', *Wörter und Sachen*, IV, 1912, 6; Haakon Shetelig and Hjalmar Falk, *Scandinavian archaeology*, 1937, 348.)

(2) The words *einn við stýri* with which the second line ends are formulaic: we may compare Pórarinn (*Skj*, A, I, 153; B, I, 145): *en hundr við stýri*; Hallar-Steinn, *Rekstefja*, v. 15 (*Skj*, A, I, 547; B, I, 528-9): *hilmir stýrði*; Anon. (XII), B, 3 (*Skj*, A, I, 591; B, I, 592; cf. B below): *Magnúss stýrir*. In the three instances just cited, the formula ends the line. And in all three cases, the verse in question refers to the rowing of ships. Cf. *Saga-Book*, vol. XXI, parts 3-4, 1984-5, 196, 198-9, 205.

(3) All the many manuscripts of the couplet have *vórum* (*várum*, etc.) as its first word except one: the Codex Frisianus of *Heimskringla* has *reyrum*, 'we rowed'. This reading is not without interest. It seems quite possible that it appears in the Codex Frisianus not necessarily as a result of its scribe (or a forerunner) misreading or miscopying his exemplar, but rather because the scribe in question, in addition to finding the couplet in his exemplar, also knew a variant of it independently from oral tradition and substituted the first word of the oral version known

to him. At all events, the variant *reyrum* need not surprise us unduly. That at least three of the *félagar fjórir* were engaged in rowing seems clear. Skaldic verses which mention rowing, in both present and past tenses, are numerous (cf. *Saga-Book*, vol. XXI, parts 3-4, 1984-5, 212-13, for examples, to which may be added Steinn Herdísarson's verse discussed below). And as just mentioned ((2) above), the other three verses that contain the formula which ends the second line also refer to rowing. (When Codex Frisianus has *færðom* (so spelt) as the first word of the second line, this is a reading it shares with other manuscripts and one clearly derived from its exemplar; cf. *Skj*, A, I, 434, variants. Can any sense be made of this word as a verb *færðum* (so spelt in various manuscripts) in this context? Might we, for example, translate the second line: 'We placed one (of our number) at the helm'? First person plurals of verbs in both present and past tenses are not uncommon in Old Norse sea-poetry (cf. *Saga-Book*, XXI, parts 3-4, 1984-5, 159, 200 and *passim*).)

(4) Parallels to the couplet ascribed to Steigar-Pórir may be considered.

In Jón Árnason's and Ólafur Davíðsson's *Íslenzkar gátur, skemtanir, vikivakar og þulur* (1887-1903 (abbreviated: *Ígsvp*), II, 130), we find the following description of the children's game *að róa í sel*:

Tveir únglíngar setjast flótum beinum á gólf og halda saman höndum. Þeir eru róðrarmennirnir og róa hvor á móti öðrum. Hinir sem eru í leiknum, eru selirnir og eru þeir að Valkóka kríngum sjómennina. Pegar minnst að vonum varir, kasta róðrarmennirnir einhverju í selahópinn. Það er skutull. Sá dettur niður er skutullinn hittir og læzt vera steindauður. Róðrarmennirnir smámjaka sér að honum, taka hann og leggja yfir fæturnar á sér, taka þeir svo aptur að róa og skjóta, fera sig og innbyrða... Það er vist einginn efi á því, að þulan "Róum við í selinn, rostúngs út á melinn" bendir til leiks þessa.

The *þula* Ólafur Davíðsson refers to here begins as follows (*Ígsvp*, IV, 222):

- (i)    Róum við í selinn,  
rostúngs út á melinn;  
skjótum og skjótum,  
skreipt er undir fótum....

This verse does not, of course, bear any particular resemblance to Steigar-Pórir's couplet. On the other hand, in vol. I of his

*Íslenzkir sjávarhættir* (1980, 439), Lúðvík Kristjánsson refers to the following variants of it:

- (ii) Róum við í selinn  
rostungs út á melinn,  
stýrimaður og stjóri,  
þá erum við fjórir.
- (iii) Við skulum róa,  
því við erum fjórir:  
báturinn og státurinn,  
stýrimaður og stjóri.
- (iv) Við skulum róa á selabát  
fyrst við erum fjórir.  
Það er bæði þú og ég,  
stýrimaður og stjóri.

And perhaps most interestingly this:

It is not necessary to detail the likenesses between these last three verses (particularly (iv)) and Steigar-Pórir's couplet. Nor, of course, should these likenesses be exaggerated. But similarities there are (particularly if we read Codex Frisianus's *reyrum* in Steigar-Pórir's couplet) and it seems quite possible that these are more than fortuitous. Accepting, at any rate, that they are, one may wonder what relationship there might be between the skaldic couplet and the modern Icelandic verses just quoted. Here we are on speculative ground. Could Steigar-Pórir be quoting (part of) a children's play-verse, put into the past tense? This is not impossible, although *forðum* puts the verse as it stands emphatically in the past tense. But another possibility presents itself: In *Saga-Book*, vol. XXI, parts 3-4, 1984-5, pp. 155-221, it was suggested that some of the skaldic verses we have preserved may be rowing chants. Now that there was some relationship between children's play-songs of the type quoted as (i)-(iv) above and genuine rowing chants does not seem at all unlikely. Gustaf Cederschiöld (*Rytmens trollmakt*, 1905, 80), for example, sees a connection between cradle songs of the type *Ro, ro till fiskeskär* (cf. the Icelandic *Róum við, róum við / fram um fiskisker...in Ígsvþ*, IV, 263) and rowing chants:

Bland andra grupper [of cradle songs] förtjänar den att särskildt uppmärksammas, som börjar med:

Ro, ro till fiskeskär,  
många fiskar få vi där,

eller någon variation af samma tanke. Också i Norge är dessa visor rikt representerade. I fortsättningen uppräknas vanligen de fiskar, man skall fånga. Dessa visor tyckas snarare ha uppkomit vid verklig rodd eller då man lekt "rodd" med små barn genom att taktmässigt föra deras armar fram och tillbaka. Om detta är den egentliga användningen, har övferflyttningen till vaggningen kunnat bero på likhet i takt, på analogien mellan vugga och båt, vaggning och rodd, samt kanske också på ordet, *Ro*, som ju i annan betydelse börjar många vaggvisor.

Many a Scandinavian child of the Middle Ages would, like the proverbial Faroese *dreingjabarn*, have been born, as it were, with 'an oar in his hand'. Many would, like Faroese children, have begun rowing at a very early age (cf. V. U. Hammershaimb, *Færøsk anthologi*, I, 1891, 411-2). Prior to that, rowing games of the type described above would have begun to prepare them for a life at the oar. And even before that, as Cederschiöld suggests, when their mothers dandled them in early infancy, they may have put them through the motions of rowing. For many of them, then, rowing and chants connected with that activity would have been with them almost literally from the cradle to the grave. And that children's play songs of the type in question were based on genuine rowing chants does not seem at all unlikely. Steigar-Pórir's couplet might be part of a rowing chant on which the sort of children's verse exemplified by (i)-(iv) were based.

Another, admittedly rather remote, parallel to Steigar-Pórir's couplet might be seen in a *helmingr* (see *Skj*, A, I, 139; B, I, 130), attributed variously to Brennu-Njáll (*Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*, ed. Finnur Jónsson, 1931, 175) and Haraldr harðráði (*Morkinskinna*, ed. Finnur Jónsson, 1932, 86), but probably, in fact, the original production of neither: *Senn jósum vér, svanni, / sextán, en brim fexti, / dreif á hafskipa húfa / húm, í fjórum rúnum*. Here we find: (a) the first person plural of a verb (i.e. *jósum*) (cf. *vórum/reyrum*) denoting a work process (i.e. bailing; cf. Codex Frisianus's *reyrum*); (b) a preoccupation with ships and the sea; (c) a preoccupation with numbers (*sextán, fjórir*), also suggested by the *fjórir* of Steigar-Pórir's couplet. (And with *Senn jósum vér, svanni*, etc., we may compare the following from

*Friðþjófs saga ins frækna* (*Skj*, A, II, 275; B, II, 296-7): *Jós um vér, meðan / yfir gekk svölur, / bragnar teitir / á bæði borð, / tíu dægr ok átta;* cf. *Saga-Book*, vol. XXI, parts 3-4, 1984-5, pp. 160-61, 195-6).

### B. Steinn Herdísarson II

The first *helmingr* is as follows in Bjarni's edition of *Fagrskinna* (p. 266; cf. *Skj*, A, I, 409; B, I, 378):

Hét á oss, þás úti -  
Ulfr - hókesjur skulfu -  
róðr vas greiddr á grœði,  
- grams stallari - alla.

And Bjarni translates: 'Úlfur, stallari konungs...eggjaði oss alla, hásketar kesjur (spjót) bifuðust, þá er róðr var hertur úti á sjó.' Now I wonder if Bjarni, together with various previous editors and translators (cf. e.g. *Skj*), may not have met with 'en liten olyckshändelse på havet' (cf. e.g. Ernst A. Kock, *Notationes norrænæ*, 1923-44, XI, 10-12) in interpreting the *hákesjur* of the second line as some sort of spear. I doubt whether the men referred to by the pronoun *oss* really had much time for shaking weapons. I also doubt if the weapons shook by themselves. Against the first proposition speaks the consideration that the *hásetar* would probably have had too much to do at their oars, their *há-kesjur*, 'thole-spears' or 'thole-halberds'. Bjarni himself (*If*, XXIX, p. 192) recognizes that the *hádýr* of v. 4 of Pórarinn loftunga's *Tøgdrápa* might mean 'thole-animal', 'ship'. And at *If*, XXIX, 325, he interprets *há-Skrauti* in his verse 263 as 'thole-Skrauti', 'ship' (with *Skrauti* taken as a *gríðungsnafn*; cf. the ship-names *Uxinn* and *Vísunldr*). Surely, then, a *há-kesja* might be an oar. After all, a spear, particularly a halberd, resembles an oar more closely than an animal (including an ox) a ship. (On *kesjur* generally, see *Kulturhistoriskt lexikon*, 1956-78, XVI, cols. 511-12.) On page 87 of *If*, XXIX, in the second verse of *Fagrskinna*'s version of *Hákonarmál*, Bjarni emends the manuscripts' *dolgar* to *dolgárar*, 'strife-oars', 'spears', in accordance with the *Jöfraskinna*-text of *Heimskringla*. Such an emendation seems entirely appropriate. And if 'strife-oar' could mean 'spear', so surely could 'thole-spear' mean 'oar'. And

*skjálfa* is a perfectly apposite verb for the movement of oars: in verse 3 of Pórðr Kolbeinsson's *Eiríksdrápa* (cf. p. 130 in Bjarni's own edition), we are told how *margr hlumr skalf* (cf. *Skj*, A, I, 214; B, I, 204); in Snorri's *Háttatal*, verse 75, *ræði raungóð skjálfa* (*Skj*, A, II, 72; B, II, 82); and in an unattributed verse in *Morkinskinna* (ed. cit., 1932, 331) and *Formannana sögur* (1825-37, VII, 66-7), *mjór skelfr sjautøgr vøndr* (*Skj*, A, I, 591; B, I, 592). The second half of Steinn's verse confirms the impression (prose word order): *Skeleggjaðr spjalli snjalls landreka bað leggja skip sitt vel framm með skylja, en seggir jóttu.* ‘The dauntless friend of the brave ruler ordered the ship to be drawn up well forward alongside the king's; the men assented.’ Battle has not yet commenced. What Úlfr's men assent to do is to row. They have no need of weapons yet.

## REVIEWS

DANSK LITTERATUR HISTORIE 1. FRA RUNER TIL RIDDERDIGTNING O. 800-1480. By SØREN KASPERSEN, SIGURD KVÆRNDRUP, LARS LÖNNROTH and THORKIL DAMSGAARD OLSEN. *Gyldendal*. Copenhagen, 1984. 608 pp.

The Scandinavian countries have long had a tradition of producing multi-volume works of reference and synthesis aimed at the 'educated lay reader'. Such works, mainly histories of the world, the nation, or their literatures, have a tendency to appear at generational intervals. The volume under review is the first of a nine-volume history of Danish literature, written by a collective of 47 authors and generally acknowledged to be the *summa summarum* of what has been known as the '68-generation', a generation whose star is fading fast, even in Denmark.

The lasting achievement of this generation, and one which will outlive them, has been to wrench literary studies from their splendid isolation somewhere in the higher reaches of the stratosphere and to insist that literary texts be seen in their *gesamt*-cultural context, as well as in their interrelationships with political, economic, social and historical developments. Such an insistence is the guiding principle behind this literary history, making it a truly new departure from other efforts. However, this approach does have its inherent dangers, with at least two consequences which are apparent in this first volume. On a general level, the difficulty of separating literary from other forms of history (once one has descended from the stratosphere) demands a dialectical approach which, even if not entirely unsuitable for proselytizing to the lay, does create problems of presentation to a non-specialist audience. Moreover, the attempt at a unified approach to the history of Danish literature from 800-1980 forces the first 400 years (a third of the whole period!) into a methodological straitjacket from which they never really escape.

An English translator of this work would have to consider whether the title meant 'A literary history of Denmark', or 'A history of Danish literature' or even 'A Danish history of literature'. Although grammar would suggest the second or third interpretation, it is in fact the first which seems to be the controlling framework. It would at any rate account for the choice of the year 800 as a starting-point. This date accords rather better with the definition of the beginnings of Denmark as a single kingdom by historians (Else Roesdahl, *Danmarks vikingetid*, 1980, 16; Niels Lund, 'Viking Age society in Denmark — evidence and theories'. In Niels Skyum-Nielsen and Niels Lund (eds.), *Danish medieval history — new currents*, 1981, 28) than with any generally-accepted literary-historical or even linguistic milestone. The second interpretation of the title is only acceptable if one feels able to stretch the term 'Danish literature' to include texts by Danes (but not in Danish), or about Danes, or indeed neither of these things, such as the largish chunk of Old Norse-Icelandic literature which forms the basis of much of the argument of the first part of this volume.

This first section (pp. 11-112) is called 'Den oldnordiske kultur ca. 800-1200' and is written by Lars Lönnroth. Because it stands at the beginning

of the whole work and, in the absence of any kind of general introduction, must needs introduce the history, it deserves closer attention than I will have the space to pay the rest of this first volume. Unfortunately, the historical perspective which I detected in the choice of the date 800 does not inform anything else about this first part. It is odd, considering that the dates of this first section nearly coincide with what is usually known as 'The Viking Age', that the term 'vikingetiden' is relatively infrequent and tends to be used without any clear demarcation from 'oldtiden' (or sometimes even 'middelalderen'). It is true, the term 'Viking' is much overused these days and the reader is grateful to be spared yet another potted account of deeds of derring-do at home and abroad. Yet the author has not been able to free himself from outdated approaches largely deriving from 19th-century Romanticism, for he adopts the retrospective method, using later texts to illuminate Danish Viking Age literary culture, which means mainly 'sagaerne og Saxo' (p. 13) with a leavening of Eddic and skaldic poetry. By this means the author performs the astonishing feat of using Old Norse-Icelandic texts and Saxo to illustrate the 'social milieus' in which literary culture took place in Denmark and then deducing from this the kind of literary culture that took place. And this, not unnaturally, resembles that of the Old Norse-Icelandic texts and Saxo, which are the last repository of 'ættesamfundets myte og digtning' (p. 112). Lönnroth is probably aware of the viciousness of his circular argument, as he draws attention to it elsewhere (p. 13), yet it is precisely this dialectical approach which will confuse the hypothetical lay reader. The specialist reader, on the other hand, will not be impressed by Lönnroth's final reference (p. 112) to the 'omfattende filologisk rekonstruktionsarbejde' which is needed to 'udskille de gennemgribende omarbejdninger af ældre overleveringer, som Saxo og andre repræsentanter for middelalderens kristne kultur har foretaget'. This is certainly what Lönnroth ought to have done, for it is not the retrospective method *per se* which is at fault, but the way in which it is applied. And the whole method stands or falls according to the viewpoint from which we choose to look back. This is where Lönnroth seems particularly wrong-headed with his Romantic Pan-Scandinavianism, his old-fashioned emphasis on concepts like 'æt og ære', the importance of the farm as a 'literature-producing milieu' and not least his sweeping assertion that the 'grundlæggende levevilkår var dog nogenlunde ens over hele Norden' (p. 17).

What should a poor author have done, then, when his 46 collectivists were pressing him to provide them, not only with an account of Danish literature 800-1200 (whether or not such literature existed), but also with an explanation of its social basis? It may seem too obvious to mention, but it would have been very useful to begin by providing a summary of what does exist from this period. Runic inscriptions are mentioned briefly on pp. 69 and 94, and on pp. 109-10 the Karlevi inscription is contrasted with two or three others of lesser dimensions, but nowhere in this book would the curious reader find any account of the number, distribution, date or content of this one branch of 'literary culture' which is indisputably Danish, of the requisite period and excellent material for a social-historical analysis (Klavs

Randsborg, *The Viking Age in Denmark*, 1980, 25-44). It is fair to say, however, that the volume as a whole consciously eschews providing any information in tabular or other easy-reference form, preferring to entangle the reader in 606 pages of unremitting argument — another obstacle to the lay reader, I would have thought. More in keeping with the rest of this Volume 1 and its new internationalism (for the other contributors are very keen to underline Denmark's participation in, nay total dependence on, the 'European' culture of the time — *Ja til EF* seems to be the watchword here), Lönnroth might have followed his own exhortation (p. 112) and performed 'a systematic comparison with Old English literature'. There is no shortage of recent work which suggests that what might be termed the North Sea culture of the Viking Age was a truly dynamic, international force which, taken as a whole, was greater than the sum of its parts. Moreover, a lot of the cross-fertilization seems to have taken place along the England-Denmark axis in particular (cf. several of the contributions in Colin Chase (ed.), *The dating of Beowulf*, 1981; Inge Skovgaard-Petersen, 'Fra sagn til historie og tilbage igen'. In *Middelalder, metode og medier. Festschrift til Niels Skyum-Nielsen*, 1981, 297-319).

To be fair to Lönnroth, much of this new work may just have been too recent to be taken account of, for *Dansk litteraturhistorie* is a project that has been in progress for some time. The specialist reader will wear lightly the misfortune of being presented an out-of-date account of the earliest centuries of Danish culture and will look eagerly to the next generation to provide a convincing account of the 'literature' of Viking Age Denmark, on its own terms and not on terms borrowed from those conservative old Norwegians and Icelanders. It will be an exciting project and will be more truly interdisciplinary than Lönnroth, despite his ritual bows to archaeology, social and religious history, and anthropology. However, it is unfortunate that a non-specialist audience is given the impression that the type of analysis performed by Lönnroth is the latest thing in early literature studies, it can only confirm most people's assumption that tedium increases in proportion to the remoteness from us of a historical period.

It is unfair to dismiss the rest of the volume in a few sentences, as I am going to do, for there is much good in it, particularly in section 2, 'Kristning og feudalisering 950-1250' (pp. 113-378, written piecemeal by the other three contributors to the volume). Here, too, there are problems of presentation — Saxo, for instance, crops up both in Lönnroth's section and in this one, but there is no attempt to link the two (if only to draw attention to Saxo's split personality!) and the lack of apparatus makes it difficult to make one's own cross-connections. Apparently, notes, bibliographies and indexes will appear in Volume 9 of the history, a fact which has made it impossible to check the sources of any statements in this book. The chapter on 'Folkevisen' (pp. 476-546, by Kværndrup) deserves a review to itself, if only because it, like Lönnroth's section, is both curiously at odds with the ethos of the volume and also seems to reflect an antiquated attitude as to what belongs in the first volume of such a history (is 'medieval' for most Danes still synonymous with sagas, Saxo and *Ebbe Skammelsen*?). Needless to say, Kværndrup does not

accept the revisionary redating of Danish ballads to the 16th century (pp. 517-20). His contribution, as a whole, is curiously parallel to Lönnroth's, in its use of the retrospective method and the fact that he is forced into concentrating on a hypothetical, reconstructed 'social history' of his literary texts (themselves partially hypothetical or reconstructed) rather than the equally interesting, and knowable, 'social history' of ballad variants (which would, of course, have had to come in another volume of the history).

It would be easy to criticize much of the detail in the book. The illustrations are lavish and fun, but it is not always clear what they are meant to illustrate. The publishers and editors will by now be tired of having it pointed out to them that the 'shields' on p. 23 are in fact brooches. The numerous 19th-century representations of Nordic Antiquity would have been better off in a later volume on the 19th century. In fact, the whole section on Old Norse-Icelandic literature could with profit have been placed in a volume dealing with the Romantic period, for surely that was its period of greatest influence on Danish literature?

JUDITH JESCH

AURVANDILSTÁ. NORSE STUDIES. By PETER FOOTE. Edited by Michael Barnes, Hans Bekker-Nielsen and Gerd Wolfgang Weber. *The Viking collection. Studies in Northern civilization, volume 2.* Odense University Press. Odense, 1984. 311 pp.

We are grateful to the editors of this excellent volume for various reasons. Many of us are bored with the convention of festschriften — a convention which too often allows the idle to dust whatever article has been resting in the obscurity of a filing cabinet and offer it for publication, doubtless to the embarrassment of editorial board and festschriftee alike. These editors however have recognised with becoming modesty the far more valuable compliment that is paid to a first-rate scholar in bringing his own distinguished work to a wider public. Our field is one in which most of the incisive scholarship is produced in articles, but such articles, scattered through the journals of various countries, are not readily found by undergraduates, sometimes not even by postgraduates, especially those who do not have the good fortune to work within the vicinity of a copyright library. And whereas any student of Old Norse benefits from reading such precise and vigorous scholarship as Peter Foote's, those — probably the majority in this country — who are reared in English Departments without benefit of modern Scandinavian tongues, specifically and desperately need the guidance of experts in a whole range of literary and philological approaches. Obviously the articles brought together in this book represent in some ways an amorphous collection. They range from that detailed textual analysis which Peter Foote invariably handles with the cheerful assurance of a true philologist to those wider discussions represented by such articles as 'Secular attitudes in early Iceland'. Still there are themes and subjects which form useful groups. Several articles on points of detail in *Færeyinga saga* are given contextual support from another more general approach to the saga. A

second group of essays deal specifically with problems of reading and interpreting skaldic poetry. The one on 'Wrecks and rhymes' is a particularly useful warning to those in other disciplines who too lightly assume they may link vocabulary with artefacts without understanding the pitfalls of language study, or who dismiss too readily the range of evidence that intelligent use of language sources offers to the historian or archaeologist. No one discussing Viking ships yet again in the future will be able to ignore the questions raised here. Similar clear warnings are sounded in the 'Notes on the study of skaldic poetry'. Peter Foote refers in his obituary for Gabriel Turville-Petre to 'younger scholars ...happily blinkered by methods of source-criticism that are valid for documentary history but less appropriate for study of a transitional period between non-literate and literate cultural stages'. His own approach is not merely unblinkered, it is keenly perceptive, and he particularly draws to our attention here the need for refining our methodology, indicating some of the ways in which this might be done. A number of articles deal with religious or secular attitudes in the sagas. One that I have particularly enjoyed re-reading is the early and excellent 'Sturlusaga and its background' which includes a typically astringent assessment of Hvamm-Sturla:

Wit of the kind Sturla exercises needs self-control — which is perhaps why Sturla took to his bed when he was grieved over something.... One might suspect, however, that Sturla, once between the blankets, spent his time in thinking up savagely witty remarks for use on hypothetical occasions.

Without wishing to imply that Sturla could in this respect have taken Professor Foote's correspondence course, it is clear from Foote's sharpened, polished style that he has devoted a good deal of time not only to his scholarship, but also to its articulation. The chosen title of the volume is suitably serious and suitably light-hearted, according excellently with the wit and wisdom of the book. Readers of it will note and approve the sentiments of the editors who 'express their gratitude to the author for giving them a gift on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday of far greater value than any gift they could have given him'.

CHRISTINE E. FELL

AGRIP AF NÓREGSKONUNGA SQGUM. FAGRSKINNA - NÓREGS KONUNGA TAL. Edited by BJARNI EINARSSON. Íslenzk fornrit, XXIX. Hið íslenzk fornritafélag. Reykjavík, 1985. cxxxii + 420 pp.

Hið íslenzka fornritafélag and Dr Bjarni Einarsson deserve warm congratulation for making this handsome volume available. *Ágrip* has perhaps not been very difficult to get in Finnur Jónsson's 1929 edition in *Altnordische Saga-Bibliothek* 18 or in Gustav Indrebø's 1936 print, with a *nynorsk* translation, in *Norrøne bokverk* 32, but Finnur Jónsson's standard edition of *Fagrskinna*, published in the *Samfund* series as long ago as 1903, is something of a rarity. Lack of a handy edition may account in part for the comparative neglect of *Fagrskinna* by students of early Norwegian-Icelandic

literature. Another prominent reason is that it has long been seen in the shadow of *Heimskringla*. Literary historians have tended to regard it as a dry piece and their comments may well have discouraged people from discovering its peculiar merits and defects for themselves. Another very uneven work, the *Legendary saga of St Óláfr*, is in a similar case, and we may be grateful to Professor Anne Heinrichs and her colleagues in Berlin for providing a new normalised text of this, with parallel German translation, in the *Germanistische Bibliothek* (Heidelberg, 1982). It is educational to read these works as foils to Snorri, but they can, and should, also be read for independent pleasure and profit. Bjarni Einarsson writes an ample and lucid introduction. Half of it is devoted to *Ágrip* (though *Fagrskinna* is six times as long), with a detailed discussion of its relations with *Historia Norwegiae* and Theodoricus's *Historia de antiquitate regum norwagiensium* and an account of its language and style as contributions of major interest. On *Fagrskinna* Bjarni has two sections which are especially illuminating: a concise survey of the verse (there are 272 *visur* of one kind and another) and a lengthy analysis of the histories contained in it, with attention to sources, demonstrable and putative, and selective, but telling, comparison with extant works, *Heimskringla*, the *Legendary saga*, and *Morkinskinna*. He is disposed to believe that *Fagrskinna* was written by an Icelander working in Norway, and in that does not differ from an opinion long and widely held. He would however shift its date of composition, usually set at about 1220, forward by a few years. A date towards or about 1230 would certainly help to explain why Snorri appears to have made some but not full use of it. The footnote commentary has the usual *Fornrit* character, succinct and helpful but presupposing a good deal of general knowledge on the part of the reader. Interpretation of the verse is clear and sometimes fresh. There are no fewer than sixteen maps, four in the body of the book, the rest at the end. Altogether it is an edition very easy to read and use. I could wish one novelty in *Fornrit* practice, on the model of the 1946 *Sturlunga saga* edition by Jón Jóhannesson and his collaborators, and that is the insertion of marginal dates where these are known or can be safely inferred.

PETER FOOTE

CULTURE AND HISTORY IN MEDIEVAL ICELAND. AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF STRUCTURE AND CHANGE. By KIRSTEN HASTRUUP. Clarendon Press. Oxford, 1985. xii + 285 pp.

This is a very interesting book. In it, medieval Icelandic society and its attitudes and values are examined, using the approach and methods of modern anthropology. The theoretical considerations underlying such an examination, in particular the problems of applying them to the examination of a historical society where first-hand evidence is not available, are extensively discussed; indeed some might think that rather too much space is devoted to discussion of theory and method. But it is important to realize the partial nature of the sources for such a study, and that they not only give an incomplete picture, but one which inevitably contains various kinds of bias

more difficult to eliminate than those which affect examination of contemporary societies. The book is based on a doctoral thesis submitted in 1979, revised, the author says, by 1982. It is a pity that the author was unable to take account of the equally interesting (and problematical) examination of Icelandic society down to the present by Richard F. Tomasson in *Iceland. The first new society* (1980). This is quite a different sort of book, though in it, too, the methods of modern anthropology and sociology are applied to the study of Icelandic society. Tomasson, however, seems much more taken in by the still prevailing myth of Iceland as a place of independence, egalitarianism and freedom than Hastrup, whose results are in many ways unexpected and unromantic. On p. 31, Tomasson quotes various views about the possibility of the anthropological study of Iceland in the Middle Ages, including that by Victor W. Turner that the sagas 'are many and rich and full of the very materials that anthropologists rejoice in when vouchsafed to them by informants in the field', and also calls *Njáls saga* an 'anthropological paradise'. Hastrup's book, however, is not primarily based on the sagas at all. It is to a large extent based on secondary sources (including both historians and literary historians, some of them writing a long time ago), though primary sources are widely quoted, with an emphasis on documentary material rather than literary (especially *Grágás*). Consequently, the picture of medieval Icelandic society that results is quite different from the one one gets from reading the sagas. There is much emphasis on kin structure, legal organization, geography, chronology and the calendar, but very little mention of honour and heroism and individuality and the spirit of adventure. This is perhaps a good thing, in that it may be a more accurate picture of the reality than the romanticized view that saga-authors present. But the vocabulary of the sources most often used in the analysis is so alien to that in the sagas that the question must arise as to which set of terms really expresses the normal concepts of everyday life in Iceland. An example is the word *úthaf*, found in learned writings, and derived, as Hastrup points out (p. 64), from European Latin sources, but never, it seems, used in ordinary speech. The traditional opposition of learned and popular is not invoked in this book, and it may be that it is not considered relevant by anthropologists, but it seems to reflect a real division in medieval societies, and it is rather simplistic to assume that there was only one culture in medieval Iceland, and that the vocabulary of learned works can give us a direct insight into the categories and values of the general population. It is not that Hastrup dismisses the sagas as evidence. As she points out (pp. 11-12), the Icelanders' own understanding of their history and society is as much evidence for the anthropologist as other peoples', though it has a different status, and imaginative literature is revealing about conceptual relationships though it may be misleading about everyday reality. The problem, as always, is which texts can be taken to reveal normal conceptual relationships, and which reveal those of a limited group of people. Legal texts and sagas do give different pictures.

The book is divided into two major parts, the structural analysis and the analysis of historical change in Iceland down to 1262. The latter is given plenty of attention and is not underestimated, but there is continual emphasis

(as there is in Tomasson's book) on the continuity and persistence of attitudes and values in spite of the fundamental change resulting from the adoption of Christianity, and Hastrup speaks of the entire, generalized world-view of the Icelanders — whether heathen or Christian. The evidence for this is extremely problematical, resting as it does on mythological sources. It is interesting that Hastrup assumes a binary opposition between Útgarðr and Miðgarðr, rather than a trinary scheme including Ásgarðr: gods and humans, she maintains, were associated together against giants who were symbols of disorder. This seems to me to be a helpful way to view Norse mythology. But to make an analogy between horizontal models of cosmology and social and spatial realities (p. 151 and elsewhere) seems to me to be imposing anthropologists' jargon onto medieval Icelandic thought. Would Vikings really have perceived their social and kinship relations as horizontal rather than vertical so that their concepts of society, kin and cosmology affirmed each other? Would they have understood this modern metaphor?

In accord with her view of Icelandic concepts and attitudes as having been consistent from the time of the settlement to the end of the 'Freestate' (as she calls it), Hastrup sees the 'fall' of the Freestate as the most significant change in the structure of Icelandic society. She does indeed discuss whether to a contemporary Icelander this 'fall' would necessarily have seemed the catastrophe that she takes it to have been, but nevertheless lays great stress on the change of identity that must have resulted from the political change. She also tries to account for what she sees as the historical inevitability of the fall by finding essential imbalances or contradictions in the structure and concepts of Icelandic society from the time of the Settlement (pp. 134-5). Though all due wariness is expressed, it is this attempt to identify an inherent source of instability in the concept-structure of early Iceland that I find most unsatisfactory. Because a modern anthropologist finds that the conceptual system of an early society does not fit neatly into modern schemes of classification (vertical and horizontal), it does not necessarily follow that there were inherent weaknesses in that society. The weaknesses may be in the classification system. I doubt if the conflict between two modes of perceiving kinship, if there were one, would necessarily lead to social instability. I still incline to the traditional view that the loss of independence in 1262 was due to the lack of a strong executive power in Iceland, combined with the increasing effects of changes in the world outside Iceland, both economic and political. It is the effects of these external changes that are most underestimated in Hastrup's book. Indeed what I miss most in the early chapters on temporal and spatial categories is any systematic comparison with systems of classification outside Iceland. 'Measuring the world in Iceland', we are told, 'was a matter of collating temporal, spatial, and social realities' (p. 69). Is this not true of all societies? And in discussing items of vocabulary so as to deduce the classification systems of medieval Iceland, too little attention is paid to the extent to which these items may have been simply borrowed from abroad or inherited from Norway, rather than being newly created to represent the Icelanders' perception of reality.

The analysis in this book is largely based on a study of the vocabulary of medieval Iceland, with, as I have said, rather little consideration of the extent to which the vocabulary that is discussed can be assumed to have been ‘normal’. A lot of it is based on lists of words compiled by earlier scholars — a selection of a selection. There are unfortunately clear signs that Hastrup is not entirely at home with the vocabulary she discusses, and has rather little familiarity with the Icelandic language. It is untrue that in Icelandic ‘the term “friend” was indistinguishable from the term for “kinsman”’ (p. 75). The terms are *vinr* and *frændi*. Here as elsewhere Hastrup is misled by her secondary sources. It is not true that ‘terminologically there was no distinction between a “trader” and a “skipper”’ (p. 224). Because the same term could be used for both, it does not mean that there was no means of making the distinction. ‘Norn’ was not the contemporary label for the ancient Norse language in the British Isles (p. 224). *Sekt* is not an adjective (p. 137). The term ‘Fornmanns Sögur’ is wrongly applied on p. 143. Where passages of Old Icelandic are quoted and translated, the translations leave something to be desired. On p. 184 the words *kristni* and *kristnir* are confused, an error against which all first-year students of the language are warned when they first read *Íslendingabók*. ‘Frjádagr’ does not mean ‘Frey’s day’, nor does *laugardagr* mean ‘washing day’ (p. 25). A number of such mistakes could have been avoided if excessive reliance had not been placed on the Cleasby-Vigfusson dictionary, which is too widely regarded as a totally reliable source of information about the Icelandic language. There are also some incorrect and misleading references. The term *skyldskapr* (for ‘kinship’), which I do not believe existed, is not mentioned in one of the two (secondary) sources quoted for it (p. 75), and the term *aukanætr* (presumably an error for *aukanætr*) is not on the page of *Grágás* quoted as a source (p. 27). These sorts of inaccuracy, and the insecure grasp of the language which they imply, are a serious flaw in a study where the chief source of evidence is linguistic usage. There are other places where the evidence cited is intolerably partial or tendentious. On pp. 68-9 the concept of *veröld* is discussed but there is no mention of the term *heimr*. It is true that much in the Icelandic laws ‘cannot be traced back to the Norwegian laws upon which the Icelandic laws were allegedly built’ (p. 88), but this is because those laws were not recorded; the Norwegian law books are all from a later period, so that there is no evidence that the Icelandic system was unique. *Rígsþula* is cited as evidence for Norwegian categorization of class in the 10th century without any questioning of its date and provenance, and the inconvenient final verses (in what survives of the poem) are dismissed as ‘out of line’ (p. 254). A note on slaves (pp. 253-4) is concerned with English terms rather than Icelandic ones, and seems to abandon methodology. Was the term *alpingi* ‘more or less synonymous with “our law”, that is, the nation’ (p. 122)? Did Pórr’s fights invariably remain undecided (p. 148)? The statement ‘he always nearly won, but not quite’ does not correspond to my reading of the mythology. When arguing (p. 148) that ‘the distinction between gods and giants was blunted’ (in some myths), it might have been mentioned that the same is true of the distinction between men and giants, and between both and dwarfs, for instance in the

Völsung story, and there should have been some discussion of the significance of the frequent interesting myths of marriages or attempted marriages between gods and giants. In mentioning the origin of the name Iceland (p. 8), it would have been relevant to mention the reason that the source gives for the coinage. When the evidence of the sources is clearly very partial or conflicting, it seems to me that conclusions should be a good deal more tentative than Hastrup makes them. Surely the great uncertainty about the month-names in Old Icelandic means that their interpretation is of no value, at least as anthropological evidence? Particularly in regard to the temporal terms, there is enormous uncertainty about which terms are normal and universal, and which just learned and artificial. There are signs of slack thinking and incomplete analysis. Is it true that there was in Iceland a contradiction between a democratic and an aristocratic principle? Indeed was there a democratic principle at all? I know of no evidence that there was. The section on spatial categories seems vague and general in a way that does not reflect the rather precise way in which medieval Icelanders seem to have regarded space. The discussion of the orientation system does not refer to more recent accounts of the problem than 1928 (p. 65), since when there have been several major contributions to it (see references in *The Old English Orosius*, ed. Janet Bately, 1980, p. lxiv). The change in the number of *göðar* from 39 to 48 is not explained (p. 212). The analysis of the kinship system leaves one confused. It is claimed that there was a mixing of principles which led to instability, and yet on p. 104 it is stated that the appearance of more or less contradictory principles is 'the result of translation' since the language of social anthropology does not have a term to describe the Icelandic system. While describing the ability of medieval Icelanders to adapt their institutions to changing circumstances, Hastrup claims (p. 230) that these adaptations themselves caused disruption. This is a pessimistic view of human development. On p. 232, it is stated that 'owing to the increasing inflexibility of the system in relation to itself and to its environment, it seemed in retrospect to have been doomed to destruction from the start.' To whom? The author seems to have herself fallen into the trap that she warns against, of attributing a modern hindsight to medieval Icelanders. The account of the breakdown of Icelandic society in the thirteenth century is logically the least satisfying part of the book. It assumes that the breakdown was inevitable and the result of the inherently self-defeating nature of the social system. While this is a relief from the usual over-romanticization of early Iceland, it involves a strangely old-fashioned view of the role of the historian and anthropologist, as one whose aim is to explain fate and evaluate the efficiency of different social systems. Another kind of carelessness occasionally appears, such as the mention of 'Snorri' without previous introduction or reference on p. 33, the several references to books lacking page numbers on p. 84 and elsewhere, and various printers' errors, including, if it is one, the word 'judical' on p. 129.

Like other books from the Clarendon Press recently, this one is less than well produced, with various blots and blemishes and irregular spacing and unpleasant word-divisions. But in spite of everything it is, as I have said,

a very interesting book, and thought-provoking, and thoroughly well worth reading. It forces one to reconsider one's own assumptions about medieval Iceland by presenting the subject from a new and unfamiliar viewpoint. Whether it gives a truer picture of the reality is difficult to say. It is certainly not a definitive account of the anthropology of medieval Iceland, but nor does it claim to be. And in spite of the disclaimer, the claim (p. 7) that her 'story tells the truth; and if this is not the whole truth, then it is at least *one* whole truth, about the early history of Iceland' is a bold one.

ANTHONY FAULKES

THE SCANDINAVIANS IN CUMBRIA. Edited by JOHN H. BALDWIN and IAN D. WHYTE. *The Scottish Society for Northern Studies*. Edinburgh, 1985. vi + 167 pp.

This collection of essays, which has emerged after some delay out of a conference held by the Scottish Society for Northern Studies in 1981, reproduces a familiar pattern in containing a dozen very varied essays at best only loosely linked around the theme declared in the title. The majority of the contributions are informative if unexciting, self-contained pieces on aspects of medieval Cumbria with a general bias towards trying to set some otherwise unobtrusive Scandinavian settlers within the pictures drawn. A variety of evidence is considered, and the most positive contributions come from studies of place-names and unfamiliar documentary evidence on social and economic organization set against the agrarian topography of the region. Archaeology and more familiar literary historical sources produce little that is new for us.

North-western England ought to be a significant area for the generation or testing of propositions concerning the Viking-Age Scandinavian settlements and their cultural consequences in England as it is an area producing a substantial corpus of sculpture, crowned by the Gosforth Cross, and apparently a Norse-influenced dialect of Middle English differing from that east of the Pennines. In this regard, a well-presented set of papers such as this throwing up a number of useful titbits has its merits, but substantial progress requires an integrated not a cumulative effort. The grossly perceived parameters of Scandinavian settlement in Cumbria remain little different: there is no new evidence or argument for dating the settlement, although N. J. Higham's ascription of a later ninth-century burial at Ormside to a Scandinavian raiding group unable to guarantee the grave security outside of hallowed land provokes more doubts than it dispels. It is repeatedly accepted as most plausible that Scandinavian settlement proceeded by an 'aristocratic' takeover of established estates, followed or accompanied by the new settlement of more marginal land. The argument that the immediate origin of the settlers is to be sought around the west coast of Scotland rather than in Ireland is pressed particularly hard, in addition to which Gillian Fellows-Jensen finds place-name evidence of influence, and thereby possibly settlement, from the Danelaw.

Rather than offering summary judgements or random comments on individual efforts, attention may more usefully be drawn to one or two general issues which might repay greater attention in the future. With regard to place-names, too ready a willingness to assume a simple correlation between place-name distribution and density or location of colonization, or, in essence, between language and ethnic identity, is a recurrent feature, although controverted by Mary Higham as it suits her in searching out Britons in the Forest of Bowland. Place-name evidence is particularly unsatisfactory as virtually the only evidence for the nature of any Anglian settlement in Cumbria. The principle is appreciated by both N. J. Higham and A. J. L. Winchester in discussing the *-thwaite* place-names but needs greater emphasis. Place-names in *-thwaite*, and other forms, may belong to the linguistic part of a remarkably consistent Anglo-Scandinavian culture in tenth-century Cumbria, a culture emerging from the integration in regular patterns of diverse elements of English, Hibernian and Scandinavian origins in thought, the language, the sculpture and other aspects of material culture. From the evidence of this collection it would appear that a distinctly Scandinavian element in social and economic culture is lacking, but rather than simply noting that 'there is no evidence' for Scandinavian influence in this respect and that these aspects of culture may be more ancient, in a study nominally devoted to the Scandinavians in Cumbria it is a more dynamic question to ask in face of the other aspects of cultural integration 'if not, why not?'. Studies of the Scandinavians in any region of England will be very much more vital when they no longer simply accumulate evidence in specialist compartments, but attempt an imaginative synthesis of the processes of cultural contact and change as an integrated whole.

JOHN HINES

HÁVAMAL. Edited by DAVID A. H. EVANS. *Viking Society for Northern research, text series, volume 4. Viking Society for Northern Research*. London, 1986. 157 pp.

David Evans's new edition of *Hávamál*, together with a lengthy introduction and commentary — a glossary, done by Anthony Faulkes, is to appear in the near future — is the first English edition since Daisy Martin-Clarke's of 1923; indeed, as Evans points out in his preface, no annotated edition of the poem has been produced in any language since Sijmons and Gering's *Kommentar* appeared in 1927. Much has happened in *Hávamál*-studies since that time. In 1927, scholars were chiefly concerned with determining which verses constituted the 'original' *Hávamál*, paying particular attention to the first eighty-odd stanzas of the manuscript, 'das alte Sittengedicht', as Heusler called it. They excised the 'unechte' verses and re-arranged those remaining in an order more congenial to the logic of the modern reader, an approach which culminated in Lindquist's 1956 monograph, *Die Urgestalt der Hávamál*. However, as early as 1930, de Vries had already pointed out the many verbal connections which link together the

verses in the gnomic section of the poem; since the work of Schneider, published in 1948, and von See's monograph of 1972, *Die Gestalt der Hávamál*, it has become impossible to deny some degree of unity to the first eighty verses of *Hávamál*. Evans has thus a great deal of ground to cover in his Introduction, but he succeeds in giving a lucid and comprehensive account of these critical developments in *Hávamál*-studies, although the discussion of the scholarship of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century (p. 11) might have profited from some indication of chronology, or at least the inclusion of a few dates. In dealing with more recent studies, Evans makes perhaps too sharp a distinction between Schneider's view of the poem and that of von See. Schneider's comment on *Hávamál* I, 'keine Spruchsammlung, sondern eine Spruchhaufe' has often been quoted, by von See among others, as if it were Schneider's final verdict on the poem. This leads Evans to suggest that Schneider's *Redaktor* figure was a mechanical and unskilled compiler of ancient verse from various sources, and to contrast this figure with von See's 'deliberate artist who created a harmonious and coherent design' (Intro., p. 10). Yet at several points in his study Schneider concedes the skill of his *Redaktor*, particularly in creating the striking and intelligently-structured opening section. While exaggerating Schneider's view of the *Redaktor*, Evans also takes issue with von See's 'deliberate artist', seeking a middle ground between the two conceptions of *Redaktor*. He is right to object to von See's inclination to argue that verbal links between verses prove both (i) that the verses belong to an old, original series, and (ii) that one verse has been composed by the *Redaktor*, taking theme and vocabulary from older verse, a tendency noted by most reviewers of von See's book. However, the verbal links undeniably exist, whatever inference the critic may choose to draw from them, and I see no reason to query, as Evans does, von See's connection of *gott* in v. 12 with the comparative *betri* in vv. 10 and 11. Von See's suggestion that *Hávamál* was in fact composed under the influence of *Hugsvinnsmál* is discussed in some detail in the Introduction pp. 16-18; most of von See's arguments are convincingly rebutted. Evans himself inclines to the view that the origin of the Gnomic Poem lies in 'native heathen antiquity' (p. 16). As evidence for this view, he refers to 'a certain unity in the tone' (p. 9) — a unity which ought to have been more clearly demonstrated. Evans believes the Gnomic Poem to be of Norwegian origin: citing the *bautarsteinar* of v. 72, the references to cremation practices, wolves and kings, and the use of certain verbs, e.g. *glissa* and *glama* in v. 31, which, although unrecorded elsewhere in Old Norse, exist in certain modern Norwegian dialects. Little of the philological evidence is to be regarded as certain: 'The adjective *neiss* (49) is perhaps only Norwegian; if *dauðr* in 70 is taken to be a noun, this too has clear parallels only in Norwegian, and the use of *sær* to mean 'lake', which is probably the sense it bears in 53, is alien to Icelandic usage'. While it is quite feasible that the un-Icelandic wolves and kings of the poem are remembered from the Icelanders' Norwegian heritage, there is no necessity to assume that the poem as we have it was actually composed there, any more than the references to ship-burials and cremation in *Beowulf* constitute evidence that the poem was composed at the same time as the Sutton Hoo burial.

The Introduction also discusses other issues of *Hávamál* criticism: what proportion of the Gnostic Poem is constituted of pre-existing proverbs and how may these be identified? Can the parallels which several scholars have detected between parts of *Hávamál* and certain classical and Biblical texts be attributed to a direct literary influence? With regard to the first question, Evans shows the problems inherent in attempting to identify proverbs in a dead language, and suggests that only a small number of lines in the Gnostic Poem can be identified as proverbs with any degree of certainty. He is justifiably sceptical of most of the parallels adduced by Hagman, Pipping and Singer. Comparative study of wisdom verse, between cultures widely separated in place and time, where there can be no question of literary influence, shows that pre-industrial societies tend to produce similar manifestations of collective wisdom at a cultural level. No anthropologist, after Lévi-Strauss, would argue that such parallels as those suggested by these three scholars must be the result of direct influence or even general cultural diffusion.

In his treatment of the later mythological sections of the poem, Evans suggests plausibly that the *Redaktor* has been responsible for drawing together the whole poem as a presentation of different modes of wisdom under the fiction of a monologue spoken by Óðinn. He points out that much of the original material of the *Hávamál* was not written as an Odinic monologue: hence the puzzling references to Óðinn in the third person, and the ambiguous *ek* of the Gnostic Poem, who is clearly Óðinn in vv. 13-14, but most probably a human narrator figure in the other references. The Introduction contains a few surprising asides: that the concept of the world tree is 'fairly marginal in Norse tradition' (p. 34) — despite its appearance here, and in *Völuspá* and *Grímnismál* — and the assertion (p. 38) that *Sólarljóð* is the only Christian poem composed in *ljóðaháttir*, when *Hugsvinnsmál* has already been discussed at some length earlier in the Introduction. Evans's summary of previous scholarship is broad-ranging and accurate, and he argues convincingly against several views which are in danger of becoming received opinion among scholars who are not *Hávamál*-specialists (cf. John Lindow's entry for *Hávamál* in *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, vol. 6, p. 144). Yet in the end, we are left to fall back on the 'traditional position', whatever that may be. Old arguments are knocked down, but we are given little in their place. In a text designed mainly for undergraduate use, too doctrinaire a position should perhaps be avoided; nevertheless the reader with some previous knowledge of the poem is left slightly disappointed by the Introduction.

The text of the poem, presumably newly re-edited, although the editor does not tell us from where, is fairly conservative. The Commentary is full and detailed: many difficult verses, such as 49 and 50, are given extensive treatment, and the different interpretations offered by earlier scholars enumerated. Evans is never afraid of admitting that some lines are beyond interpretation, and wisely does not struggle to produce a convincing explanation for every *locus desperatus*. In some places, in his comments on v. 6 for example, his choice of translation verges on the idiosyncratic, and his

approach to emendation is somewhat inconsistent: he objects to the emendation of *á bröndum* in v. 2 to *at bröndum*, as Rask, Resen and Neckel, following a paper manuscript suggest, which would eliminate the difficulty in translating *bröndum* as 'hearth', while he freely emends *rás* in v. 151 to *rams* 'strong', despite the occurrence of *hrás viðar* in a similarly magical context in *Skírnismál* 32.

It is curious, given the prominence which is given in the Introduction to the question of the ordering of the verses, that Evans does not note the scribe's accidental reversal, subsequently corrected, of vv. 62 and 63 in the manuscript, indicating the scribe of *Codex Regius*, at any rate, knew what order was correct in the poem he was transcribing.

In the Preface, Evans is oddly dismissive of Martin-Clarke's edition of *Hávamál*, ('conceived on a modest scale,...now over sixty years old'), and he scarcely refers to it in his Commentary. Martin-Clarke's useful translation might have afforded him some help in v. 67, a verse with which various editors have struggled for decades. V. 67 makes perfect sense if read in conjunction with the rueful v. 66, where the speaker complains that he is never in the right place at the right time, for either the ale has been drunk, or it has not yet been brewed. V. 67 continues the theme, but with reference to food: some stingy people invite him home only when they know he is not in need of food, while his good friend has hams ready when he has just eaten one elsewhere and is no longer hungry. The volume is commendably free of misprints: I noted only *Holtausen* and *zcunriten* for *Holthausen* and *zaunriten* on p. 139 and some minor typographical errors on p. 144.

David Evans has produced an edition of *Hávamál* which should be welcomed both by students and teachers of Old Norse. The Introduction provides a fine summary of existing scholarship; the text is generally reliable, while the Commentary, in any case a good supplement to Sijmons-Gering, will be of inestimable value to readers who lack German. When the glossary becomes available, this edition should assure *Hávamál* of a prominent place in most syllabuses.

CAROLYNE LARRINGTON

EDDA. ÓÉSZAKI MITOLOGIKUS ÉS HÓSI ÉNEKEK. Edited by ANIKÓ N. BALOGH. Translated by DEZSÓ TANDORI. *Europa Könyvkiadó*. Budapest, 1985. 512 pp.

The Hungarians, a nation of some ten million speaking a language incomprehensible to anyone else, have always been great translators. Like the Icelanders, and other minority linguistic communities, they have always known much more of the literatures of other nations than the others have known of theirs. Translation has been a means of fostering and encouraging the literary development of the language, as well as of acquainting readers with foreign literatures. The translation of the whole of the *Poetic Edda* into Hungarian is thus not as obscure a project as it might sound. This popular translation has been produced in tandem by Anikó Balogh, of the Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest, and the poet Dezső Tandori. Dr Balogh has

introduced and annotated the collection. Like most readable translations of poetry, the text is more a Hungarian recreation of the original than a literal version of the sort students would want as a crib, and this translation is indeed readable. The rich sonority of Hungarian suits the declamatory style of the original much better than any modern language that I know. It is therefore a pity that the apparatus is not entirely satisfactory, at least by western European standards of scholarship. It is true that Hungarian academics work under conditions that make even our underfunded British universities seem ideal: there is very great pressure on people to produce some tangible work, photocopying is almost unheard of, currency and other problems make access to books and journals published in the west difficult or impossible. Mistakes and confusions in Dr Balogh's notes must be attributed to such pressures. Thus in her note on *Prymskviða* (p. 447), she asserts that the giant Prymr asks for the sun and moon *as well as* Freyja to wife, but she must have been thinking of the story of the master-builder in Snorri's *Edda* here. In the translation of this same poem, it is not clear why the obvious, refrain-like repetitions of lines are not reproduced in the Hungarian version, where needless small variations of expression are introduced. Hungary has in the last few years begun to participate much more fully and on equal terms in the western economy. We may hope that the new *glasnost* will enable much more academic and scholarly exchange, too. We in the west might share the benefits of accuracy and precision accruing from our superior facilities with them, and perhaps technical advice will help Hungarian printers to cope with Old Norse characters. But we also have much to learn from the Hungarians' enthusiasm for and openness to new and foreign cultures.

JUDITH JESCH

DUGGALS LEIDSLA. Edited by PETER CAHILL. *Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, rit 25. Stofnun Árna Magnússonar.* Reykjavík, 1983. c + 148 pp. + 6 facsimiles.

It has been more than a century since C. R. Unger published his edition of *Duggals leizla* in *Heilagra manna sögur I*, 1877, 329-62. Especially welcome, then, is the appearance of Peter Cahill's new edition, which brings up to date critical work on this text and makes available to students of Old Icelandic a text which, even in Unger's outdated edition, had become difficult to acquire. *Duggals leiðsla* (*DL*) is the only translation into Old Icelandic of the prose version of the *Visio Tnugdali*, a vision of the Other World which, according to its prologue, was rendered into Latin from 'a barbaric language' (presumably Irish, although there is no evidence that the work is dependent upon a written Irish source), around the year 1149, by a certain Marcus, a monk of the Irish Benedictine community in Regensburg. The text is an account of the vision of a thoroughly ungodly Irish nobleman, Tnugdalus/Tundalus, or Duggall, who for his sins is struck dead for three days and nights and then returned to life to describe, as a warning to others, the torments of Hell which he has seen and suffered during this period. The *Visio* was immensely popular in medieval Europe. In his recent study of the

transmission of the text and its German and Dutch translations ("Visio *Tnugdali*". *The German and Dutch translations and their circulation in the later Middle Ages*, 1982, 1, 15 ff.), Nigel Palmer notes that the Latin prose *Visio* is preserved in some 154 manuscripts written between the twelfth century and the nineteenth and survives in fifteen vernacular renderings. *Dl* is the oldest of these vernacular prose versions, as Cahill makes clear in his review of evidence pertaining to the date of the Icelandic text. He points in particular to the influence of *Dl* on Abbot Arngrímur's *Guðmundar saga*, apparently through a lost version of a life of Guðmundr Arason composed some time toward the close of the thirteenth century. The apparent influence of *Dl* upon a thirteenth-century text lends weight to the argument that the King Hákon mentioned in the prologue as the reigning Norwegian monarch when the book was translated from Latin is Hákon the Old (d. 1263) and not Hákon V Magnússon, who was not crowned King until 1st November, 1299. That *Dl* is perhaps a full century older than (although quite independent of) other vernacular prose translations of the *Visio* is a fact which is not always appreciated. Even Palmer, in his study of vernacular translations of the *Visio* mentioned above (365), inexplicably identifies 'the earliest translation' as 'the principal Dutch version, which is the work of a translator whose rendering of the *Purgatorium S. Patricii* is dated 1387', ignoring the fact that even the oldest extant manuscript of *Dl* (AM 657a 4to, an extract incorporated into *Michaels saga*) is dated c. 1350.

In his edition, Cahill presents complete diplomatic transcriptions of the five main manuscripts of *Dl* arranged one above the other, and prints the corresponding Latin parallel text at the foot of the page. This format inevitably makes for a rather busy page; but in presenting full transcriptions of the chief Icelandic manuscripts together with the complete Latin text and relevant variants from Adolf Wagner's edition (*Visio Tnugdali*, 1882), Cahill and his publishers have done their readers a double service. For they make available a useful reprint of this section of Wagner's now extremely rare collation, which supersedes the only printed text of the *Visio* available to Unger, that published by Oscar Schade in 1869. Cahill's introduction is clearly argued and informative. The study opens with an account of the provenance of all manuscripts of *Dl* and a meticulous analysis of the palaeographic and orthographic peculiarities of four of the chief manuscript witnesses. I have only a petty complaint to make about one minor detail in this section. Cahill's note that it is his practice to supply silently the enclitic definite article where appropriate when expanding abbreviations would be more helpful if included among the other comments on his methods of transcription which introduce the text (xcvii), rather than being relegated to a footnote on his treatment of abbreviations in Hand I of AM 681a 4to (xiii, n.11). Without a more prominent note, it is not immediately apparent to readers that this is the editor's practice when transcribing AM 681a 4to, but not when dealing with other manuscripts (cf., e.g., pl. 4, AM 624 4to, 138v. 20: *eigel*, rendered 46.11: *eingel <inn>*, and 56.10: *eingel <sins>*, 82.14 [AM 681b 4to]: *s(alin)*). Transcriptions in the text and introduction seem to be laudably accurate. Although I have not checked through the book

thoroughly with an eye to catching minor slips, I noticed in reading only one mistake in transcription: 41.6: *eingilsins*, read *engilsins* (cf. pl. 1, AM 681a 4to, 4r.24: *eng*), and one typographical error: xxxix, A53.3: *hfa*, read *hafa*.

The discussion of the date and provenance of *Dl* and of the style and vocabulary of the translation which forms the second part of the introduction is clearly presented and interesting to read. This section closes with a handy catalogue of words for pain and torment found in *Dl* and the *Visio*, followed by terms for the same notions in *Tristrans saga*. Cahill's note (lxxx, n. 44), that in Ernst Walter's *Lexikalisches Lehngut im Altwestnordischen* (1976) readers will find 'a study on somewhat similar lines, but much more detailed', is potentially misleading, for Walter's study treats exclusively ethical vocabulary. Nevertheless, Cahill's comparative sketch of this particular semantic field in three texts provides a sample of the sort of instructive word studies which might be made of other Old Icelandic prose translations. In his discussion of the relationship between the Latin text and the Icelandic translation, Cahill treats in some detail sample passages set against their Latin parallels 'in an attempt to characterise if possible the translator's methods' (lix). For this part of his study, Cahill organizes his examples into four categories which illustrate particular characteristics of the translation: 'additions', 'omissions', 'paraphrase', 'mistranslation' and 'other modifications' (a set of classifications used by H. Hecht in his examination of the translation technique of Wærferth of Worcester, *Bischof Wærferths von Worcester Übersetzung der Dialoge Gregors des Grossen*, 1900-07, reprint 1965, ch. 4). This is perhaps the weakest part of Cahill's study. Particularly in describing certain readings in *Dl* at odds with Wagner's Latin text as 'mistranslations', the author often seems unconvinced by his own arguments and repeatedly caution forces him to admit that such variations may well stem from different readings in the Icelandic translator's Latin exemplar, and not from his failure to understand the Latin text.

The introduction closes with an excursus on Biblical quotation which takes as its model H. J. Lawlor's study of 'The Biblical text in Tundal's Vision', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 36C (1924), 351-75. This section is a useful addition to recent studies of Biblical translation in Old Icelandic, particularly Ian Kirby's *Biblical quotation in Old Icelandic-Norwegian religious literature* (1976-80). In discussion of quotations from Psalms in *Dl*, further reference might have been made to Heiko Uecker (ed.), *Der Wiener Psalter: Cod. Vind. 2713* (1980), a text which, although relatively late, provides a unique example of the way these Biblical passages were treated by an Icelandic glossator. It is unfortunate that Cahill neglects to identify which edition of the Latin Bible he uses, but simply reproduces readings under the heading 'Vulgata'. He does not use the standard edition of the Clementine Vulgate edited by Robert Weber, *et al.* (1969); nor are his readings precisely the same as those of the widely-used Colunga-Turrado edition (*Biblioteca de autores cristianos*, 14). The laconic reference 'Vulgata' is particularly unhelpful when the author refers to Psalms, for the Psalter used by the author of the *Visio* was, as Lawlor (372) explains, an odd mix of Roman and Gallican readings with some Old Latin admixture, and it would

be instructive to have this pointed out. Less helpful still is Cahill's unfortunate policy of reproducing Lawlor's references to Psalms according to the Authorized Version enumeration rather than following the numbering of Psalms and verses in the Clementine Vulgate. Thus Cahill, lxxxv, I, cit. 2: for Ps. xxxiii.5, read 32.5; lxxxvi-vii, II, cit.4: for Ps. xiv.3, read 13.3; cit.5: for xviii.5, read 17.6; for cxvi.3, read 114.3; cit. 6: for xviii.44, read 17.45; for xxxix.2, read 38.3; cit. 7: for xxxiv.13, read 33.14; cit.8: for xxxviii.10, read 37.11; cit.9: for xxxix.2, read 38.3; cit. 10: for li.1, read 50.3; cit. 11: for lxvi.12, read 65.12; cit. 12: for lxxi.20, read 70.20; cit. 13: for lxxvii.10, read 76.11; cit. 14: for lxxviii.22, read 77.22; cit. 15: for lxxviii.39, read 77.39; cit. 16: for xci.7-8, read 90.7-8; cit. 17: for cvii.18, read 106.18; cit. 18: for cxii.9, read 111.9; cit. 19: for cxiii.2, read 112.2; cit. 20: for cxvi.7, read 114.7; cit. 21: for cxvi.12, read 115.12; cit. 22: for cxxviii.2, read 127.2; cit. 23: for cxi.3, read 139.4; xciii-iv, IV, cit. 1: for Ps. xlvi.2, read 44.3; cit. 2: for lxxxiii.9, read 72.9; cit. 3: for cvii.10, read 106.10; cit. 4: for cxii.9, read 111.9; cit. 5: for cxviii.12, read 117.12.

Cahill provides a serviceable English translation of the Icelandic text (and the final part of the *Visio* for which there is no Icelandic parallel) which will be particularly useful to students of medieval visionary literature who do not specialize in Old Icelandic. It is rather odd, then, that Cahill does not translate the Icelandic prologue, particularly since the reference to King Hákon in the prologue has a bearing on establishing *Dl* as the oldest extant vernacular prose rendering of the *Visio*. But this and the other minutiae mentioned in this review are very minor infelicities which do not detract significantly from the great value of this very fine edition.

IAN McDougall

SCANDINAVIAN LANGUAGE CONTACTS. Edited by P. STURE URELAND and IAIN CLARKSON. *Cambridge University Press*. Cambridge, London, New York, etc., 1984. xii+340 pp.

The Beatles, it will be remembered, were once smitten by the charms of an Indian guru. Ultimately disillusioned, they returned to Britain, offering 'we're human' as an excuse for their folly. The idea that it is human to err is one the editors of *Scandinavian language contacts* might well ponder, for they have not yet achieved the understanding shown by those young musicians. They are Believers, and what they believe in is 'contact linguistics'. Thus 'the essence of every language is the way in which it varies from a geographical point of view in its development through time and its social use', and 'this variation is the result of a whole series of factors of which language contact between bilingual or bilectal individuals...is the major one' (p. 1). Further: 'New horizons and new viewpoints will be the result, if all fields of Scandinavian linguistics are concentrated in a historical, synchronic, and ethnic-social approach. The goal is to solve the multifaceted problem of language change which is due to contacts between languages in specific areas during periods of known bilingualism (natural or learned). ... Only when linguists from all branches of the discipline are willing to cooperate with each

other in the new framework will it be possible to carry through this project successfully' (p. 7). It is a relief to know at last what the essence of every language is. That, after all, is a problem which has been baffling linguists for some time. But one feels a sense of unease about the fate of those who are not 'willing to cooperate with each other in the new framework'. Many will doubtless also hope that the strident style of the Introduction (here quoted) is not being presented as a model for adherents of the new orthodoxy — and the same must be said of the standard of accuracy and scholarship. Readers will be surprised to learn that 'unlike most Island Celtic languages and ... Norn ... Faroese survived as a living language and has succeeded in establishing a written norm' (p. 10). This is presumably the editors' own view, but when they tell us that it is the *Anglo-Saxon chronicle* that makes mention of the *Cwenas* (p. 10), they are simply repeating uncritically an error made by one of their contributors. Given the generally dogmatic and unscholarly nature of the Introduction, we must be thankful that *Scandinavian language contacts* is not, as the editors there imply, a unified work, written to demonstrate the great leap forward in understanding that can be gained through working 'in the new framework', but instead an extremely varied collection of essays, some of which have only the most tenuous connection with any kind of linguistics, written by an assortment of authors at diverse times for sundry purposes.

The varied nature of the contributions and their unequal quality mean that only a lengthy review can do the book justice. Nevertheless, in order not to tax the patience of the reader too greatly, I shall limit myself to stating what it covers and giving some general indication of the strengths and weaknesses of the individual essays.

There are eleven chapters in all, comprising: (1) An introduction to contact linguistics written by the two editors; (2) A general survey of *russensorsk*, the Russo-Norwegian pidgin language used in parts of northern Norway until the early years of this century, compiled by I. Broch and E. H. Jahr; (3) An investigation by O. Korhonen into the distribution of five lexical items to do with navigation, and into what they can tell us about the migrations of the Finns, Lapps and Vikings; (4) A sketch of some of the problems concerning Scandinavian involvement in the east during the Viking Age, by A. Lägreid; (5) A study by B. Panzer of two linguistic features which North Russian dialects share with Scandinavian, and a discussion of whether this is due to influence or parallel development; (6) A critical survey of the present state of research on the rise of the East Slavonic Kingdom by S. Söderlind; (7) A description by B. Hagström of the linguistic situation in the Faroes, where both Danish and Faroese are official languages; (8) A statistical investigation into language death in the multi-lingual community of Rodenäs in North Frisia by N.-E. Larsen; (9) A brief survey by B. Søndergaard of the problems of interference between German and Danish in the border region in Southern Jutland/Schleswig; (10) A detailed study of the pronunciation and spelling of 190 French loan-words in German, English, Dutch, Danish, Norwegian and Swedish by H. H. Munske; and finally (11) A lengthy contribution by P. S. Ureland on the influence of American English on American Swedish — 'a case study on the nature of interference'.

Some indication has already been given of the quality of the Introduction. It has its uses as an annotated bibliography since it surveys most previous work in the field (including 'Four Viking Conferences on *Norse-Celtic Contacts* from 1950 to 1961!' — p. 4 — but, oddly enough, with hardly a mention of any of the literature on Norn). However, if the remainder of the book is read, it is largely superfluous for this purpose. Left are then only the extravagant claims about the explanatory powers of 'contact linguistics'.

Chapter 2 on *russenorsk* is a well-documented, balanced article, based on an earlier monograph by the two authors written in Norwegian. In contrast to many of the other essays, it lives up to the title of the book and provides an account of contact between a Scandinavian and a non-Scandinavian language and its results. Some 8-9 pages are devoted to a concise introduction, which sets the historical and cultural scene and gives details of earlier descriptions of *russenorsk*. The major part of the essay (29 pages) consists of the authors' own linguistic description of this pidgin language, divided into phonology, morphology, word-formation, syntax (especially extensive), semantic expansion and lexicon, and concluding with a section on the origins, development and use of *russenorsk*. There is much of interest here, for those whose concern is with pidgin languages in general as well as for the Scandinavian specialist with an eye on language contacts in the north. Particularly fascinating is the part played by Lappish dialects in the formation of *russenorsk*, a question the authors explore carefully, although lack of surviving evidence makes it impossible for them to reach firm conclusions. Lack of evidence is a problem throughout the study, and one can well understand the reluctance of the authors to choose, for example, between five different explanations of the origin of the -*a* noun-marking suffix (p. 34), although some guidance as to which they considered more or less plausible would have been helpful.

The emphasis in chapter 3 is on cultural history. It tells us little about 'languages in contact', other than that terms spread from one language to another and sometimes undergo semantic shifts — linguistically unexciting conclusions. The main thesis, for which a reasonably plausible case is made, is that the aspen dug-out spread from the Slavonic-speaking peoples of what is now Russia via the Gulf of Finland to Satakunta and thence north. The spread was connected with the *erämark*, 'wild-life' culture and the particular ecological conditions in which this form of existence thrived. The *swyðe lylie scypa* and *swyðe leohte* which Ohthere described to King Alfred are best understood as some kind of aspen dug-out, and it was this type of boat that the *Rus* 'bought and equipped' for travelling between Constantinople and Novgorod. Korhonen is clearly more at home in Finno-Ugrian than in Scandinavian Studies. This is revealed not only by the howler that attributes Ohthere's description of the *Cwenas* to the *Anglo-Saxon chronicle* (see the opening remarks on the Introduction), but also by several other lapses, for example his use of the 1809-edition of *Egil's saga* in which he finds 'a passage which dates from the era of the farmer Ottar [= Ohthere], although the text was written several centuries later' (p. 92). This piece of information is

attributed to Björn Sigfusson's article on *Egils saga* in *Kulturhistoriskt lexikon III*, but I cannot find that Björn says anything of the sort. Reference to the introduction in the *Fornrit*-edition of *Egils saga* (pp. xxvii-xxviii) would have put Korhonen straight on this point. It must also be a manifestation of the author's scholarly orientation that A. S. C. Ross's monograph on *The Terfinnas and Beormas of Ohthere* (2nd ed., 1981) is not even mentioned in the bibliography. Whether it is due to my ignorance of Finno-Ugrian studies or to the author's elliptical style that parts of his essay are hard to follow, I am not sure. It is certainly due to linguistic interference from Scandinavian in his English that the accepted terms *Lapp* and *Lappish* have been replaced by the odd *Saami*, *Saamish*. To my knowledge neither *Lapp* nor *Lappish* have the 'pejorative connotation' (p. 92) in English that they have in Scandinavian, and the change is therefore pointless. It springs from the same kind of mentality that causes people to write *i Island* against the promptings of their linguistic intuition and regardless or in ignorance of the fact that Icelanders themselves say and write *á Íslandi*.

Chapter 4 I will say little about, save that, with the inclusion of chapter 6, it is superfluous. Since in addition the essay has nothing to do with Scandinavian language contacts, it is hard to understand why it was included. It also contains a fair spread of muddle and misinformation: for example, that *Heimskringla* (cited in the bibliography only in *nynorsk* translation) and 'the Kings' Sagas' are one and the same thing (p. 100), and that *Agrip* is 'a compilation in Old Icelandic dating from the last years of the 12th and the 13th centuries' (p. 107). It is unfortunate too that V. Thomsen's theory about the origin of the name *Rus* is rehearsed on p. 103 without a hint of criticism (and in somewhat confused shape), this in spite of the fact that some of the forms quoted in support (e.g. *rob(er)s*, *robs-maen* [sic]) seem to be non-existent or unimaginable at the time they are claimed to have existed, and that the meanings of *rober* given: 'narrow strip of sea (narrows) between islands', 'water way', 'protected sea route' enjoy no support from any dictionary I have consulted. It is in keeping with the standard of this passage that the scholar whose views are repeated with such apparent approbation is cited in the bibliography as 'Thomsen, U.'.

In chapter 5 we are back to contact linguistics. The essay opens on a weighty theoretical note: 'This article should be seen in the broader framework of the question as to whether it is possible to distinguish between loan relationships caused by language contact and internal developments which have led to identical or similar language structures in different places' (p. 111). There follows a brief discussion of the post-positional article in North Russian, and then a thorough and well-documented survey of the rise of the 'possessive perfect' (i.e. an equivalent of *have + pp* constructions) in these dialects. The material cited and the accompanying analysis show clearly the similarity of the Latin, Germanic and North Russian perfect constructions, and the comparison has considerable intrinsic interest. However, no evidence of influence following upon linguistic contact is forthcoming. The author is aware of this deficiency and his final conclusion is that 'the theoretical question of how borrowings are to be distinguished from

genuine parallel developments still remains unresolved' (p. 127). One can see that Panzer's essay has an obvious place in a volume devoted to Scandinavian language contacts, because of the possibility that Scandinavian influence is involved in the rise of these North Russian constructions, but given the total lack of evidence, apart from the similarity of the constructions themselves, that would support such a hypothesis, the topic seems ill-suited as a contribution to the general theoretical discussion delineated at the outset. On a more mundane level, one notes that Panzer, like Korhonen and Lägreid, does not seem entirely at home in Scandinavian scholarship. A mere glance at pages 122-4, which deal with the Scandinavian perfect, reveals a large number of errors. One trusts that the author's mastery of other languages and sources is better. On a purely practical level: literal + idiomatic translations of the Russian examples would have facilitated understanding considerably.

Chapter 6 seems a competent, if sometimes over-imaginative piece of work. Among other merits, it injects some sense and clarity into the *Roslagen, roper, Rus* discussion, and thus provides a valuable corrective to chapter 4. It is, however, hardly a contribution to the study of languages in contact. As far as I can see, only four lexical items are discussed. What Söderlind gives us is a critical survey of previous theories about the origin of the *Rus* and their name, interspersed with his own theory that the moving spirit in the rise of the East-Slavonic Kingdom was the Goths. *Rus*, according to him, is from common Slavonic \**rusi* 'The Red-Blond (People)', whereas Finnish *ruotsi* is from Gothic *raups* [rɔ:ps] 'The Red-Blond Man', via an earlier proto-form \**rōtsi*; the Goths were known to have light complexions and red-blond hair and to have great organisational talents — so the connection is obvious. Or is it? I suspect that some will greet Söderlind's thesis with acclaim, whereas others of a more sceptical cast of mind will see it as yet another in a long line of speculative essays about tribes and peoples of whom we have only the haziest notions. For my own part, I find it an interesting thesis, but far from proven fact (which is how it tends to be presented towards the end of the chapter). To raise but one minor objection: I am not happy with the suggestion that the *strong* masculine singular form of the adjective in Gothic could denote a people. Many readers will, I think, also find that in places the argument proceeds with breathtaking leaps (cf., for example, p. 158). All in all, however, I think Söderlind's contribution is one of those things it is better to have than not to have.

Chapter 7 differs from all the others in that the language contact under discussion is between two varieties of Scandinavian. Hagström begins by giving a very general history of Faroese (a tale told several times before and probably best by R. Djupedal, 'Litt om framvoksteren av det færøyske skriftmålet', *Skriftspråk i utvikling, Tidsskrift for Norsk språknemnd* 1952-1962, 1964, 144-86 — not cited in the bibliography). This is followed by an outline description of the linguistic situation in the Faroes in the areas of administration, church, school, journalism, films and books, and by a short section dealing with degrees of bilingualism found in the islands. There are several paragraphs outlining the influence of Danish on the Faroese lexicon

and on Faroese morphology and phonology, and a brief final section devoted to Faroese language policy (another oft-repeated tale). There is little to take exception to in Hagström's essay. It is competently written and lucid and should provide an interesting account for anyone totally unfamiliar with the linguistic situation in the Faroes. Unlike many of the other chapters in *Scandinavian language contacts*, however, it makes no attempt to present anything new, and is therefore likely to disappoint those readers with some knowledge of the subject. One wonders, for example, why nothing at all is said about the influence of Danish on Faroese syntax. It is not, as the uninitiated reader could be forgiven for thinking, because such influence is absent; on the contrary, it pervades virtually all spoken and much written Faroese. The reason for this omission is rather to be sought in the lack of interest scholars and 'language cultivators' have so far shown in this aspect of Danish-Faroese contact. In this, as in much else, Hagström faithfully reflects what we might term the 'official line' in the Faroes, which can be paraphrased, only slightly maliciously, as follows: 'Danish influence is a bad thing and should be eradicated where possible. It is most noticeable and therefore easiest to get to grips with in the lexicon, but the more obvious symptoms in the morphology and phonology should also be combatted. Syntax is a problem because it is not always easy to spot the difference between features which are Danish-inspired and those which are genuinely Faroese. The best we can do is to encourage everyone to write like Héðin Brú and in the meantime ensure that for every Danish word there is a Faroese equivalent.' It is symptomatic of his approach that Hagström offers no criticism at all of the existing Faroese-Danish and Danish-Faroese dictionaries. He notes that they are puristic, but in no way makes clear that this purism involves among other things the censoring of large numbers of the most common items of Faroese vocabulary. A totally different appraisal is given by the Faroese poet, critic and linguist, Rikard Long, in his series of articles on *Dansk-føroysk orðabók*, now collected and reprinted in H. Andreassen (ed.), *Kveikt og kannad* (1979), 208-34 — one of the most damning indictments of a dictionary I have read. It is no surprise, then, to find that Hagström concludes his essay with these stirring words: 'In the optimistic and energetic struggle for the strengthening of the Faroese language, Danish pressure has been challenged. Without the patriotism and linguistic conscience of its users, the Faroese language would certainly have been submerged and would now only remain as a substratum in the spoken Danish of the Faroe Isles' (p. 188). This is hardly the dispassionate voice of the linguist.

The four remaining chapters deal with subjects that are perhaps not of immediate relevance to *Saga-Book* readers, and since this review is already too long, I will give them only the briefest mention. Larsen's statistical investigations into language death in Rodenäs on the Danish-German border, where five varieties of Germanic are spoken (South Jutlandic, North Frisian, Low German — all three under threat — High German and standard Danish), seems to me an excellent piece of work — together with chapter 2 the best in the volume. It is entirely scholarly in tone, the research is

thorough and by and large clearly presented. I only marvel at the people of Rodenäs, who without exception — if I have understood correctly — answered the author's detailed questionnaire about their linguistic habits. This has unfortunately never been my experience with questionnaires. Søndergaard provides a very brief summary of recent research on his topic. The general situation he describes is the one already outlined in the preceding chapter and his presentation therefore involves some repetition. However, he does go on to give a number of examples of linguistic usage — even though only the most obvious and general cases of interference are included — whereas Larsen quotes not a single word from any of the languages he deals with in his essay. Munske's study, like Larsen's, is thorough, scholarly and competent. The particular problems he seeks to elucidate I am afraid held little interest for me, but his essay is valuable for the light it sheds on more general questions to do with the borrowing and integration of loanwords. In the final chapter Ureland uses the polemics between the Swedish writer, Vilhelm Moberg, and two critics of his American Swedish, Jöran Mjöberg and Einar Haugen, as the starting point of his investigation. The essay is thorough, detailed and extremely well documented, but the controversy between Moberg and his critics looms large throughout, and one continually has the feeling that the primary purpose of the investigation was to clear Moberg of the suspicion of having made up parts of his American Swedish, rather than to investigate American Swedish dispassionately with a view to learning more about the differing forms linguistic interference can take. The summary on p. 316 thus stresses only the linguistically uninteresting point that Moberg's Americanisms are plausible reconstructions of nineteenth-century American Swedish and omits to mention the main conclusion that seems to emerge from the study: that there was virtually no limit to the influence of American English on American Swedish and that theories of 'an ordered selection of lexical and grammatical items' or 'a scale of adoptability' in linguistic interference are therefore likely to be false.

I conclude with one or two comments about the book as a whole. Most of the contributions have been translated into English from other languages, and I imagine that the plodding, often clumsy and sometimes opaque style is a reflection of this. One does not mind so much that *disinterest* is confused with *lack of interest* (p. 216); one can even hazard a guess at what is meant when the Varangian Calling-in Legend in the *Primary chronicle* is referred to as 'this sage-like entry' (p. 98), but the following two quotations, not untypical of parts of the book, indicate the kind of up-hill grind that lies ahead for anyone who wishes to wrestle with the detail: 'The fact that *haapio* as a term for a boat is borrowed into all these areas and is used for "a small and light boat" — irrespective of its construction — is the reason why I consider that it was derived from an earlier term which denoted a boat which, just as the term says, was made by hollowing out an aspen trunk' (p. 75); 'As a result of taking account of this new research and of the development of new areas and methods of research in linguistics certain areas of research are now once more in the centre of current interest' (p. 98). There is in fact quite a lot to be learnt about language contact from the authors' or the translators' English prose.

Editorial control does not seem to have extended much beyond the systematisation of references. These exhibit an easy and satisfactory consistency, but in such matters as, for example, the translation of linguistic examples or foreign language quotes, transliteration of Greek words (see, e.g., pp. 104, 136), or the checking of references, it appears to have been a case of every man for himself. This allows the author of chapter 4, for example, to tell us that it was originally 'presented in German at the Conference in Oslo', yet as those of us who frequent Oslo in the summer months know to our cost, the University there hosts a great many conferences. It is presumably also lack of editorial control, coupled with careless proof-reading (to which numerous printing errors bear witness), that compels those seeking 'Bishop Liutprand' in the index to look between 'de Lucena' and 'Lund'.

MICHAEL BARNES.

L'OUBLI DE L'HOMME ET L'HONNEUR DES DIEUX ET AUTRES ESSAIS. VINGT-CINQ ESQUISSES DE MYTHOLOGIE (51-75). By GEORGES DUMÉZIL. *Bibliothèque des sciences humaines*. Éditions Gallimard. Paris, 1985. 338 pp.

Readers of *Saga-Book* will probably recall an article not many years ago by R. I. Page entitled 'Dumézil revisited'. The present volume by Georges Dumézil contains twenty-five new essays on a wide range of Indo-European mythological topics. Two of them are replies to Page, and it seems appropriate to draw attention to them in *Saga-Book*, so that interested readers can seek them out and evaluate them as replies. The details are: '73. "Dumézil revisited" (à propos de R. I. Page, *Saga-book of the Viking Society*, XX, 1-2, pp. 49-69, University College, Londres, 1978-1979)', op.cit. pp. 259-77, and '74. La malédiction du scalde Egill (à propos de R. I. Page, "Dumézil revisited", pp. 66-67)', idem pp. 278-98. No other parts of the book are on Norse topics, but the final piece deserves mention here. It is additional to the numbered essays, is headed 'Conclusion' and entitled 'Pro domo (1949) revisited (1984)', and occupies pp. 319-35. It is a reprint of an early defence of himself by Dumézil against his critics, with new footnotes.

DESMOND SLAY



## ECONOMIC REPRESENTATION AND NARRATIVE STRUCTURE IN *HŒNSA-PÓRIS SAGA*

By E. PAUL DURRENBERGER, DOROTHY DURRENBERGER AND  
ÁSTRÁÐUR EYSTEINSSON

### I: *Introduction*

IN the second half of the 13th century the chieftains of the Icelandic Commonwealth pledged their allegiance to the king of Norway, thus ending a nearly four-hundred-year long history of a stratified society without a state and initiating a dependency relationship that would not be fully sundered until 1944. The Sturlung age, the last decades of the Commonwealth, was a period of the kind of turmoil that Fried's (1967) analysis of political systems would lead us to expect. Out of this turmoil came not only a fair share of violence and betrayal, of saints and sinners, but one of the world's great literatures, the Icelandic family sagas. Writers of that tumultuous period also left a legacy of sagas about their own age, the collection of which is known as *Sturlunga Saga*.

While the historical reliability of the family sagas, sagas of places, individuals, and families of the first hundred or so years of the Commonwealth, is widely debated, *Sturlunga Saga* is accepted as largely historically accurate. From *Sturlunga Saga* we can draw a description of the events of the Sturlung age, the last epoch of the Commonwealth. One of the cultural products of that age was the family sagas, and they no doubt have as much to say about the Sturlung age as the period three hundred years earlier when the events they record happened.

The Icelandic sagas, like all literature, are cultural artifacts. As such, they are amenable to various approaches of modern scholarship, each of which has tended to develop its own appreciation of phenomena and to some extent a unique vocabulary of description, discussion, and criticism. The Durrenbergers come to the topic from the point of view of anthropology and the analysis of cultural forms in relation to institutional arrangements. Ástráður Eysteinsson approaches the topic from the vantage point of comparative literature with its more developed critical categories and insights into literary structures as such. We think that the attempt to weave the two disciplinary approaches into a single fabric of

argument enlightens both approaches and the phenomenon of the sagas as well as the time in which they were written.

One of the family sagas, *Hœnsa-Pórír saga*, describes a man who got rich by trading in Iceland, buying goods in one place to sell in another, and lending others wealth for interest, who accumulates merchant and usurer's capital. The presentation of the saga, the way the author tells the story to Hœnsa-Pórír's discredit, as well as the fates of Hœnsa-Pórír and his supporters, raise questions about the place of commerce and markets in Iceland.

In this paper we aim to show how the author manipulates the saga to put Hœnsa-Pórír in an unfavourable light, and ask how this relates to the institutional and economic structure of the thirteenth century and earlier periods in Iceland.

## II: *Economy and Social Structure in Commonwealth Iceland*

The Icelandic Commonwealth was a stratified society without a state, the last instance of this kind of society in Europe. Our access to this society is facilitated by documents such as *Hœnsa-Pórír saga* and other sagas. The sagas are not historical records in the modern sense, but they embody representations of the society which enable us to read the cultural paradigms which underlie the dramatic action and discourse their anonymous writers set down in them.

The stratified society without a state, according to Morton Fried, who does not mention its late European occurrence in Iceland, is bound to be extremely unstable, and the picture he paints of this social structure holds true for most aspects of the Icelandic Commonwealth. It may take some centuries, as it did in Iceland, but ultimately, 'the stratified society will face a magnitude of internal disputes, pressures, conflicts', and if 'there is a partially congruent kin-organized system of restraints and balances, it is doomed to increasing incidence of failure if relied on to maintain the political integration of the society' (Fried 1967, 225).

The principles of ownership of land and slaves were central from the time of the settlement of Iceland and there were local assemblies based on Norwegian models. From the beginning all heads of households that met the economic criteria for independence, control of defined productive resources, were either chieftains (*goðar*) or followers (*þingmenn*). Followers could elect to follow any chieftain.

The élite of such a society has somehow to cope with its fundamental contradiction: to maintain their privileged differential ac-

cess to basic resources without institutions to enforce or protect this axiom of social stratification. Commonwealth chieftains attempted to do this by establishing a general assembly, Alþingi, a legislative and judicial body, in 930.

The general assembly could make law and both the Alþingi and local assemblies could hear and judge cases. Verdicts were more influenced by the relative power of the two sides in the case than procedure, concepts of justice, or argument (Jones 1935, 21). Most cases were resolved by violence or arbitration (Miller 1984). The winner won the right to carry out a verdict. Neither the assemblies nor any other body had any power to enforce verdicts. Thus the influence of a verdict from an assembly was only as strong as the winner's power to carry it out. In *Hænsa-Pórís saga* the relative strengths of the parties are described and how they fared in their armed confrontations with each other, but not the bases of their arguments or procedures at the assemblies. To the author, the important dimension of the cases at the assemblies was the strength of each side, and he indicates that this determined the verdict. This is quite general, especially in the thirteenth century (Durrenberger unp.).

The Alþingi had no executive power, so that any kind of social and economic balance had to be created by those who constituted the uppermost level of the social hierarchy, the chieftains (*goðar*). The annual meetings of the Alþingi functioned as an arena for building coalitions, making, breaking, and testing the personal connections which constituted the social and economic order. Without the institutional structures to translate law into practice, from the beginning to the end of the Commonwealth, that order depended only on concentrations of force.

As the population increased and free land was no longer available, some people had insufficient land to support themselves and became available for wage work. This provided an alternative to slavery as a means for land 'owners' to appropriate the labour of the landless without having to provide year-round support for them as members of their households. Thus slavery declined and disappeared during the 12th century. To secure claims to ownership, whether based on purchase, heredity, gift, or some other ground, 'owners' had to have the armed support of a chieftain and contribute to his establishment. Chieftains had to have the support of their followers, whether they provided it willingly or not, in order to provide security for the property claims of followers and to maintain their own establishments.

While the landless became dependent on the independent householders for their livelihoods, whether through rental arrangements, wage labour, or poor relief, the farmers or independent householders were dependent on chieftains to maintain their access to lands (Gelsinger 1981). The farmers appropriated the production of their dependents, and the chieftains that of the independent farmers. At the apex of the system were the chieftains who alternately fought and allied with kinsmen and others to maintain their positions or enlarge them. The best way to maintain a chieftainly position was to enlarge it so that one could meet others with overwhelming force (Durrenberger unp.).

The system of extraction rested on concepts of property, of unequal access to resources, but there was no state to defend claims to ownership. One could maintain such claims only through coalitions of force which depended on being a member in good standing in some chieftainly entourage or developing some personal power-base for oneself by trying to head an entourage. Being a member or leader of an entourage was primarily a matter of social manœuvre, arranging good marriages or foster-relationships, holding feasts, winning important law cases at the Alþingi, and generosity to one's following. Important exchanges of wealth within Iceland, therefore, took place in this social context, not in a separately defined economic sphere.

As in other such systems of hierarchic entourage relationships, there are no egalitarian relationships. Authority rests on the assumption that the one in authority is the benefactor of the other. Authority goes to the provider of benefits in hierarchic relationships. The greater the resources one has, the more reciprocal relationships one can form, the more enduring are the relationships, and entourage heads try to cultivate as many reciprocal relations as their resources allow. Hanks's description of Thai entourages (1972, 86) fits equally well the Icelandic Commonwealth:

The poor manager fails to balance membership with resources, while the good manager gains and holds his members. But let him not be niggardly, for the man who fails to use his resources wholeheartedly for his followers may find himself as shunned as if he were bankrupt.

The two major kinds of groups were the entourages of chieftains and their followers and the coalitions the chieftains formed among themselves. Both shifted and changed membership through time. Economic exchange was a component of this socio-political system and functioned along the lines of, on the one hand, price-setting

lists established by public consensus and, on the other, a reciprocal exchange of goods which was deeply embedded in the various aspects of social interaction.

Gelsinger (1981) discusses Icelandic foreign commerce as though it were governed by market relationships, and there is little doubt that relationships of supply and demand, which varied through time with different goods, had a part in determining exchange values. At local assemblies and the Alþingi Icelanders prepared lists of various goods and their exchange values relative to one another to govern exchange either for the island as a whole or for the local assembly district for which the list was drawn up (Gelsinger 1981, 33-44). That drawing up such lists of exchange values was a matter for assemblies suggests that there was no price-setting market. Had there been a price-setting market, then such lists would not have been necessary nor would they have been tolerated (see Miller 1986).

One of the uses of tables of equivalent values would have been to reach settlements of disputes in which wealth had to be exchanged, when so many 'hundreds' were awarded to a claimant. Transfers of wealth via legal awards would have been facilitated by such equivalences. Such equivalences were not set by the invisible hand of the market, but by the public debate of assemblies, a social rather than an economic process.

It is no surprise that the rates of exchange themselves were set by the social process of negotiation at the assemblies rather than a price-setting market. The law, as it is recorded in the law code, *Grágás*, specifies maximum returns for labour, interest rates, and that when there are divisions or transfers of property, including land, a group of neighbours must set values on the property. In a society in which values are set by markets, there would have been no necessity for such provisions, or lists of exchange values of various goods against others, since they could be established by market functions. In the Icelandic Commonwealth any attempt to put exchange on such an impersonal footing as a market would be anti-social. The author of *Hænsa-Póris saga* presents Hænsa-Pórir as a vehicle of precisely such anti-social behaviour.

Exchange was largely a matter of reciprocity within entourages, involving a chieftain and his followers. The sum of reciprocal relations would be a redistributive system with the chieftain at the centre receiving wealth from one source to disburse it to another. His function as a lender, a usurer, was in the context of entourage-building and maintenance; it was not an economic function as we know it in state societies.

Chieftains were voracious enough but they relied on building followings, coalitions, alliances, and translated the power these gave them into force either at assemblies to influence legal decisions or in fighting. As an aspect of this social manœuvring to gain power, they engaged in land-renting, lending wealth and trade with Norway, both taking goods to Norway and welcoming Norwegian traders into their followings. But this was not conceived of as being the same kind of activity as peddling, lending, and manœuvring with wealth to gain wealth. Rather it was the transformation of wealth into support, support into force, and force into wealth. Investments were in people, not goods, even in the foreign trade. It was a social rather than an economic manœuvring.

Trade and usury, or even the accumulation of wealth, were not in themselves objectionable activities. In *Njáls saga*, two people who are described as influential, respected and popular engage in lending, and collect interest. Njáll and Hrútr are both held up as exemplary figures. Usury itself is not condemned, but rather usury for the anti-social purpose of wealth accumulation. Njáll and Hrútr use their wealth for social ends, to cement ties of affinity and friendship, to build followings.

There is scant mention of internal trade in the sagas, but there are clear indications, and this is true for the sagas about the 13th century as well, that people who attempted to accumulate wealth without using it for social purposes were scorned. Einar Ó. Sveinsson (1953, 47) interprets incidents from *Íslendinga saga* (in *Sturlunga saga*) to suggest that 'such men were unpopular with the common people, and the chieftains coveted their wealth and had no scruples in trying to lay their hands on it'. The most plausible reason for the rare mention of internal trade in the sagas is that it was considered a natural part of the whole sphere of social exchange and reciprocity. Wealth was accumulated and lost in social manœuvre, not through trade. *Íslendinga saga* relates many incidents of people gaining wealth by marriage and force, even by poetry, but not by trade, and especially not by the kind of internal trade that Hóensa-Pórir is trying to develop.

While the contemporary and family sagas related that travellers were lost at sea, captured into slavery, disappeared in foreign lands, or lost their wares while travelling, they do not record that such individuals lost their fortunes by trading. This is the other side of the observation that fortunes were not made by trading. In societies in which the market is the mechanism for accumulating wealth, trading is a risky venture, and there are stories of both great gains and losses at trading.

The great losses of fortune recorded in the sagas are social losses, losses incurred by inattention to maintaining a sufficiently strong following, or by other social misbehaviour or miscalculation. *Hrafnkels saga*, for instance, describes how a chieftain lost his chieftaincy through inattention to his following, and then regained it by carefully re-establishing himself as a social leader.

The Icelandic non-market economy, then, was grounded in the workings and values of reciprocity within entourages and coalitions, hierarchic reciprocity, and in socially determined exchange. The 'economy', therefore, was integral to the various aspects of social interaction, and hence to concepts of kinship, marriage, fosterage, friendship, relationships with neighbouring farmers and alliance with chieftains and other farmers. A chieftain's wealth was of no use if it could not be used to ensure popularity and a large following.

Blund-Ketill's introduction in our saga is significant: he was *manna auðgastr ok bezt at sér í fornum sið; hann átti þrjá tigu leigulanda; hann var inn vinsælasti maðr í heraðinu* (*IF III* 5). Blund-Ketill's dealings with his tenants are clearly taken to be the ideal in this reciprocal system, even though some of them fail him and cause his careful plan to flounder. All his actions are motivated by social relationships. When he hears that the Norwegian merchant, Qrn, has been banned by Tungu-Oddr, he remembers that Qrn's father had been very helpful to him on one occasion back in Norway, and it is a matter of natural social exchange for Blund-Ketill to invite the banned merchant to stay at his house, although his generosity as always causes him trouble, and eventually will cost him his life.

Blund-Ketill, therefore, can be seen as an ideal, if ill-fated, embodiment of the traditional socio-economic system of Commonwealth Iceland. The man he houses is the opposite. The very presence in Iceland of a Norwegian merchant, who operates according to the logic of the market, raises the question of how the Icelandic system could co-exist with a foreign trade with a state society, a trade which was crucial for the island.

The family sagas make many references to such trading trips, both of Icelanders to Norway and Norwegians to Iceland. There is no doubt that the trade was of great economic importance (Gelsinger 1981). Marshal Sahlins stresses the diplomatic content of long-distance trade in primitive societies. There is a 'facility of a translation from trading goods to trading blows' (1972, 302). The acquisition of foreign goods may be urgent, but with no sovereign

power, there must be some way to secure peace by extending sociable relations to foreigners. Thus, trading partners usually establish friendship or quasi-kinship relationships. Sociability requires reciprocity, and the best strategy is 'a generous return relative to what has been received, of which there can be no complaints' (Sahlins 1972, 303). There is a tendency to over-reciprocate.

If the trade with the Norwegians had involved a great deal of conflict, it would obviously have ceased early on. While the Norwegians and the Icelanders were clearly not always operating in terms of the same sets of assumptions, one might say that they operated quite well in terms of common 'misunderstandings' (see e.g. Durrenberger 1975). While the Norwegians were marketing their goods, the Icelanders were carrying on an exchange on their own terms, whereby a group of three chieftains (originally probably only one; see *ÍF* III 8, n. 4) determined the price of the goods bought by Icelandic farmers. As long as the Norwegians were satisfied with the prices, the trading would run smoothly enough. There are numerous examples in the sagas of how the Icelanders did not treat the Norwegians as mainly traders, but as individuals with whom to establish social relationships. Norwegians accommodated themselves easily to the situation in Iceland, offering support and generosity in return for local support and a place to stay.

However, there were some conflicts, and the one in *Hœnsa-Póris saga* is by no means the only one recorded in the sagas. Some are recounted in the contemporary *Sturlunga saga* collection, and one would in fact expect such conflicts to have increased in the last century of the Commonwealth, since by then there was less demand for Icelandic woollen goods, as other countries developed weaving industries based on their own domestic wool supplies, and also because there was less grain available in Norway due to worsening climate and increasing population. When the relative values of wool and grain began to shift in Norway, as Gelsinger (1981) documents, the merchants must have been put in a bad position. From their point of view, the old equivalences of grain with woollen goods were no longer validated by the economic facts of market exchange in Europe, while for the reciprocity-oriented economy of Iceland this cannot have made much sense.

Such is the context for the scene in *Íslendinga saga* ch. 15 (*Sturlunga saga* 1946, I 240) which is reminiscent of Blund-Ketill's taking of Hœnsa-Pórir's hay. Snorri Sturluson, the famous chieftain and writer, housed a skipper of a ship from the Orkneys over the

winter, although they did not get along well. Snorri had some of the skipper's meal taken and said that he would determine the price for it, although the skipper was adamant about naming his own price for it. Although he later managed to take revenge by killing one of Snorri's men, the scene illustrates the power over trade that their social positions granted Icelandic chieftains, a power that barred any kind of bargaining or mutual settlement concerning prices.

This privileged trading status of the chieftains was supposed to rest on a concept of reciprocity, and the closing chapter of *Guðmundar saga dýra* (in the *Sturlunga Saga* collection) expresses this concept forcefully and symbolically. Some Norwegian merchants cut off the hand of Skærngr, a relative of the chieftain, Guðmundr. Guðmundr stipulates that they pay thirty 'hundreds' as compensation. They find that too much, and eventually he grants them another offer:

Guðmund said: 'I will make you a different offer: I will pay you the thirty hundreds which have been valued as the fine, and I will choose a man from your number, someone who seems to me to be the equal of Skærng, and I will cut off his hand, and then you can offer him whatever miserably inadequate compensation you choose.'

This was even less to the merchants' taste and they paid the fine at once. Guðmund took Skærng away with him from the ship (McGrew and Thomas 1970-74, II 206; *Sturlunga saga* 1946, I 212).

Guðmundr offers them the ultimate and 'ideal' act of reciprocity.

### III: *Disruptions of the Commonwealth Economy*

While Guðmundr's offer to exchange a hand for a hand may illustrate the tenacity of traditional social reciprocity in Iceland, it also exemplifies the boundaries and the imminent, as well as violent, exhaustion of that paradigm. The saga was written at a time when the Commonwealth was collapsing under the strain of tensions from within and without. The family sagas were also written during that tumultuous period, and they are unlikely to be unmarked by the crucial shift of paradigm that the society was undergoing. Such moments of disruption are invaluable points of reference, since by signalling those places where paradigmatic shifts are under way, they direct our attention to crucial aspects of the social structure which is about to crumble, but which the family sagas seek to recreate or reconceptualize from their unstable and even somewhat bewildered vantage-point. The fact that the authors of the sagas did not distinguish between what we might now call

'fiction' and 'historical reality' only works to our advantage here, for what is at stake is social signification, not historical documentation in the modern sense (Durrenberger 1985). *Hœnsa-Pórir saga* is a good example of how the family sagas grow out of the clashing together of the two historical paradigms of social exchange and market exchange. Let us observe three scenes of crucial disruption in the traditional economic order.

It is obvious from the above description of the Icelandic Commonwealth that Hœnsa-Pórir's activities run counter to the traditional mode of socio-economic exchange. His wealth comes directly and exclusively from trade and he does not build any kind of reciprocal network around it. But in the absence of state apparatus, there is no institutional framework which will protect such one-sided internal trade. Nor is it upheld through kinship ties. Significantly, the saga gives us no genealogy for Hœnsa-Pórir and he appears to have no relevant kinship or affinal connections.

Wealth can be used to get support, even in the absence of a following or kinship ties. In this saga there is a symmetry between the use of wealth (market paradigm) and the use of affinal relationships (social exchange paradigm) to muster support. Both are used to create immediately useful connections. Affinal ties and money are functionally equated, and the author obviously favours the former.

Hœnsa-Pórir decides to seek a relationship with one of the chieftains of the district, Arngrímr, by offering to foster his son, Helgi. It was generally a man of lower social status or prestige who offered fosterage to another. This is the first time we see Hœnsa-Pórir appealing to the paradigm of social exchange, in which fosterage was one of the central means of establishing or strengthening reciprocal social relationships.

After Arngrímr rejects his offer, Hœnsa-Pórir offers him half of his wealth in return, and Arngrímr does not turn down such an excellent offer. Just as in Thailand and other hierarchic systems of patron-client relationships, followings and support depend on wealth. A chieftain could not overlook sources of wealth that would enhance his ability to attract followers and support. When Hœnsa-Pórir offers Arngrímr and, later, Porvaldr wealth in return for support, they do not decline. When he uses wealth to buy social support, Hœnsa-Pórir uses a model of market exchange which is alien to the model of social reciprocity, a model which would seem corrupt from the vantage-point of the older paradigm.

For Hœnsa-Pórir, the fosterage transaction does not entail the

traditional assumption that he is setting up a reciprocal relationship with Arngrímr in terms of mutual support. Rather, the fosterage becomes yet another market item for him; he basically 'buys' Helgi from Arngrímr, whereby he is of course buying Arngrímr's potential support in case he needs protection for his market endeavours. We are told that Arngrímr's support did indeed prove beneficial to him; thus his investment was worth the high price.

Here we see the ambiguity and ambivalence of the two paradigms of exchange and proper conduct. On the one hand is Hænsa-Pórir's market mentality, which aims to secure his investments by a substantial outlay of wealth which is justified in economic terms. On the other hand, and contrasting with it, is the older paradigm of exchange within a context of sociability and social relations of support.

We are clearly witnessing an attempt at marketization of the Commonwealth economy. Buying support is generally not well looked upon in the sagas. In *Njáls saga*, the opponents Kári and Flosi muster support for the crucial assembly at the Alþingi. Their means of doing so are sharply contrasted. While Kári seeks support only through friendship and social ties, Flosi offers monetary rewards to some people in order to increase his following. The contrast is again stressed in the way the two groups recruit their legal advisers. Flosi pays his. The contrast between the upright Njáll and the villainous Mörðr Valgarðsson also comes to mind. Njáll's advice to Gunnarr is given as a part of their mutual bond of friendship and support, while Mörðr sells his advice to Gunnarr's enemies. Acquiring social support through purely pecuniary means introduces a foreign element into the system, an element which unpredictably upsets the tenuous balance which is preserved through the reciprocal socio-economic system.

The second instance of economic disruption in *Hænsa-Pórís saga* occurs when Qrn, the Norwegian skipper, defies Tungu-Oddr's traditional authority to set the price of the merchants' goods. This is a potential opening of conflict, but the workings of the traditional system prevent it from escalating. Qrn is received by Blund-Ketill, whose popularity and large following prevent Tungu-Oddr from further action. But we note that the social and economic order has begun to embrace paradoxes which might prove explosive and lead to the rupturing of that order.

The third disruption is the one which sparks the feud in the saga. When Hænsa-Pórir refuses to sell hay to Blund-Ketill, even though he has plenty of hay in stock, he is ignoring the usages of the

reciprocity-oriented system and instead insisting on his right to do what he wants with his property. He obviously believes that he can pursue his personal mercantile interests without the least regard to the economic plight of his neighbours, the people who constitute the social structure which he has up to now been able to manipulate. Even Arngrímr, whose support Hœnsa-Pórir has purchased, when he realizes what had preceded Blund-Ketill's taking of the hay, refuses to help Hœnsa-Pórir in the case. Hœnsa-Pórir must again resort to buying support in order to move against Blund-Ketill.

#### IV: Power Struggle and Narrative Structure

To some the sagas may seem to be very violent narratives which reflect the nature of Commonwealth society. Any such simple reflection theories may be quickly refuted. The sagas do not provide us with a mimetic model of saga society. The sagas do not relate much of the everyday life of this rural community. The level of narrative self-consciousness is at a minimum, and anything which is taken for granted or belongs to the common stuff of these people's lives is either passed over or remains unobtrusively in the background, while moments of social conflict are emphatically foregrounded. The sagas can be seen as highlighting that which is *different*; that which threatens to rupture the given social structure.

But at the same time, social conflicts or feuds were always potentially present, for there was no legitimate force to hinder them from taking place. Ideally the reciprocal economic system outlined above would create a kind of power balance which would prevent feuds, but the other side of the coin is that the larger a following a chieftain has, the more prone he is to get involved in cases on behalf of his followers. He may even strongly wish to get involved in feuds since these could prove highly beneficial to him in terms of power and wealth, which he could then translate into an even larger following. Major formations of power in a stratified society without a state, as Fried (1967) has pointed out, ultimately lead to destabilization such as we see acted out in 13th-century Iceland. The feuds therefore bring out the essential character of this socio-economic system, its pervasive network of reciprocal social ties of support and obligation, while also illustrating its weakness: despite the mediating function of the Alþingi, the system is overwhelmingly dualistic. We find that the narrative structure of *Hœnsa-Póris saga*, as well as that of other sagas, represents,

and to a certain extent reproduces, this dualism and the world view that goes along with it. But we also believe that the narrative shows clear signs of the fracturing of this dualism, probably caused by the historical reality of the 13th century when the saga was written.

The story-telling of the family sagas is largely built on the principle of what Altman has termed 'dual-focus narrative', which he sees at work in a great deal of medieval writing (Altman 1974 and 1976). In the Icelandic sagas, this structural principle arises from the fact that any conflict will immediately create two opposing groups of people, both of which we follow in the course of events. However, the narrator does not have simultaneous overview of both 'camps'; in fact he rarely identifies with a third or outside party, and hardly ever has the elevated position or authority of the plot-weaver, and it is partly this that makes the sagas so different from traditional novels. There is no suspense in terms of anticipating *what* has happened or what is going to happen; this we may have realized from the outset — what we ask is *how* is it going to happen?

The sagas, therefore, are not woven according to a narrative structure which gradually dawns on us as we move through the text. Instead, they assume a social scene which is split into two parts, between which we move in what Altman calls 'alternating following pattern', one which involves frequent narrative shifts and sometimes character replacements. The famous 'objectivity' of saga narrative is partly created by this alternating, report-like, 'horizontal' representation of the two forces involved in the conflict. There is no forthright narrative omniscience; we are limited to the point of view of one side of the conflict at a time. This lack of elevation to create an awareness of a 'plot', i.e. of a political conflict which can be observed from the point of view of a 'higher' authority, would seem to be related to the lack of state authority in a society whose world view was holistic or totemic (in the sense of Lévi-Strauss 1966 (Durrenberger 1985)), and whose vision of social calamity was therefore inherently dualistic. Unprotected by a third authority, each individual had to create his own social alliances for any kind of potential or actual conflict.

The first three chapters of *Hœnsa-Póris saga* consist of the introduction of characters, Hœnsa-Pórir's fostering of Helgi, and the disagreement between Tungu-Oddr and Qrn. From then on, however, we are immersed in the dual-focus narrative. First we follow Blund-Ketill's problems with his tenants which eventually

lead him to taking Hœnsa-Pórir's hay. As soon as this has happened, there is a sharp narrative shift: *Nú skal segja frá, hvat Pórir hafðisk at* (ch. 6). Hœnsa-Pórir now more or less governs the narrative focus up to the point when his newly acquired, his second 'purchased' ally, Porvaldr, summons Blund-Ketill (ch. 8). There we notice how deftly the saga authors were sometimes able to wield the narrative shifts, for it seems so natural for us to follow Blund-Ketill back to his house after the summons. We are not to stay there long, however, for the indignant Norwegian visitor, Qrn, sets an arrow to his string, and shoots the narrative focus back to Hœnsa-Pórir's group with that arrow, which kills Helgi and gives Hœnsa-Pórir a reason to burn Blund-Ketill's farmstead.

Once Hœnsa-Pórir and his men have burnt everyone inside the house to death, the narrative focus shifts again, this time in a typical character replacement, to Blund-Ketill's son, Hersteinn. We follow him and the people on his side for quite a while, up to the beginning of chapter 13, when we are told of the recruiting of men on both sides. The two groups then clash twice in the same summer, the second time at the Alþingi, while Hœnsa-Pórir mysteriously disappears with a dozen men, and Hersteinn claims to be sick and stays at home from the Alþingi. While their followers are at the Alþingi, the two opponents are thus left in the district to deal with one another in a manner which remains outside the mediating sphere of the general assembly. We never actually see Hœnsa-Pórir again until Hersteinn uncovers his plan, confronts him, and cuts off his head.

The final two chapters tell us nothing more of Hersteinn; instead the dual focus is now (again through character replacements) alternately on his father-in-law, Gunnarr, and on Póroddr, son of Tungu-Oddr, who had been on Hœnsa-Pórir's side in the feud. After some exchange of narrative focus and adversary moves, they are reconciled and Póroddr marries Gunnarr's daughter.

#### V: Dualism: Narrative, Social and Historical

We noted above that the narrative dualism helps give the sagas their 'objective' flavour. Nevertheless, it is precisely this dualism which clearly collapses any kind of 'objectivity' in most sagas, not least *Hœnsa-Pórir's saga*. For the dualistic categories easily become vehicles for social values, positive and negative. This even holds true on a large scale, such as we see in *Njáls saga*, where the

religious duality of paganism and Christianity is superimposed upon the already existing dualism of the saga.

In *Hœnsa-Pórís saga*, Blund-Ketill and Hœnsa-Pórir obviously stand out as representatives of oppositional categories, and the introduction already makes clear whom we are to favour. While Blund-Ketill is described as both the richest and the best-loved man in the country-side, Hœnsa-Pórir is unpopular and detestable, and remains so even after he becomes rich. So we have an opposition of two centres of wealth, the crucial difference being in how wealth is handled. We have already discussed how Blund-Ketill is an embodiment of the traditional socio-economic order, whereas we witness Hœnsa-Pórir's disruption of this order three times, when he 'buys' Helgi from Arngrímr, when he refuses to sell Blund-Ketill the hay, and when he buys Porvaldr's support.

It is interesting how the first of these subversive acts works against Hœnsa-Pórir in the saga. For the man he 'bought', Helgi, refuses to act according to his foster-father's methods: whenever Hœnsa-Pórir tries to lie about the taking of the hay, Helgi tells the truth, much to Hœnsa-Pórir's discredit. Helgi thus forms a kind of corrective, both in terms of the social system of the saga, and for us as readers; with his honesty he confirms the villainy of Hœnsa-Pórir. This is a crucial narrative device, for our readerly sympathies have a tendency to lean toward the character we are following in the narrative, but by placing Helgi (who in his straightforwardness actually appears like a shadow of Blund-Ketill) in Hœnsa-Pórir's following, the saga makes sure that the dual-focus narrative cannot work in his favour.

The saga is structured, through its narrative as well as its descriptions, to favour Hersteinn and Blund-Ketill and to discredit Hœnsa-Pórir. While the language is objective, the saga is not. It would have been possible to tell the saga in quite a different way. One can imagine a version in which Hœnsa-Pórir was the hero of the saga: a hard working man of little means labours for wages, invests his wages wisely in merchandise and works hard moving it from place to place, and in time amasses enough wealth to help others by lending or advancing them wealth, at the same time astutely profiting, but not unfairly, from his good deeds. Some of his beneficiaries are reluctant to keep their bargains with him, so he seeks and gains the support of a powerful chieftain who aids him to get a just return. Then an overbearing aristocrat, steeped in the outmoded traditions of the past, high-handedly violates all the social relations necessary for mercantile enterprise — without

the agreement of the owner, he takes goods for his own reasons. The merchant is denied the right to decide to whom he will sell and at what price. The merchant with his chieftainly allies justly accuses the behind-the-times chieftain of theft, and one of the chieftain's followers then kills the merchant's foster-son. The merchant and his allies exact vengeance by burning the murderer and thief in their house. The villain's son then gathers enough support to kill the honest merchant and expel all his supporters from the land.

This version, which better fits modern social and legal orientations, is not the saga that Iceland of the thirteenth century has given us. Even when the narrative perspective on events is on Hœnsa-Pórir's side, it is undermined from within his own household.

Moreover, the social values of the traditional economy are again re-confirmed when the narrative focuses on Hersteinn after the burning of his father. He sets up a series of reciprocal social ties in order to take revenge for his father and uphold his rights in the district. It is striking that each of his supporters is 'tricked' into a tie of obligation before they know that it is going to involve them in a feud against Blund-Ketill's enemies. Thorkell trefill offers his support before he learns of the burning:

Porkell mælti: 'Eigi þötti mér ráðit, hvárt ek mynda svá skjótt á boð brugðizk hafa, ef ek hefða þetta vitat fyrr; en mínum ráðum vil ek nú láta fram fara . . .' (*ÍF III* 27).

He, in turn, makes Gunnarr Hlífarson assent to his daughter's marriage to Hersteinn before he tells him of the burning. Likewise, Gunnarr ensures the support of Pórðr gellir before telling him what is behind the formation of this social alliance.

The formation of these ties of obligation and support clearly follows a strict code which regulates social behaviour. These people seem to find it unthinkable to back out of their pledge of support once they are involved in such a tie of obligation. Once they have assented to support or kinship-ties, they have entered the realm of unreversed dualism; backing out would be tantamount to a declaration of enmity. Sagas such as *Hœnsa-Póríssaga* and *Njáls saga* bear witness to the fact that marriage was perhaps the primary mode of creating or cementing reciprocal ties in this stateless socio-economic system. It is no coincidence that *Hœnsa-Póríssaga*, like *Njáls saga*, is brought to a close with a marriage which eliminates the vestiges of the preceding feud. This time Gunnarr Hlífarson marries his other daughter to Póroddr, son of

Tungu-Oddr, who maintains that he has a legitimate claim to the land which is now Gunnarr's.

It is noteworthy that in both cases Gunnarr is really forced to marry his daughters off, although he is subsequently pleased with the arrangements. The two scenes remind us of the continually latent threat of force and violence in the Commonwealth society, and thus underscore the inherent instability of the system. It is a system in which any share of power can only be secured through the actual or potential use of physical force. This is something which Blund-Ketill does not seem to take carefully enough into account. The scene when Porkell trefill and Hersteinn visit Gunnarr calls to mind Blund-Ketill's visit to Hœnsa-Pórir and it is worth while to compare and contrast the two visits.

Both Gunnarr and Hœnsa-Pórir are reluctant to leave the house to meet their visitors outside. Porkell insists until Gunnarr does come out, whereas Blund-Ketill agrees to go inside to talk with Hœnsa-Pórir. The different attitudes reflected in these responses are further developed: once Gunnarr is outside, Porkell closes the door, thus isolating Gunnarr from his household, and has him sit down with people sitting so close to him *at þeir sátu á skikkjunni, er Gunnarr hafði yfir sér* (ÍF III 29). In a not-too-subtle manner they are telling him that he had better acquiesce to their wishes or else his days are numbered. Blund-Ketill, on the other hand, tries for quite a while to bring Hœnsa-Pórir to his senses, and instead of intimidating him by threats to make him accept his terms, he eventually just takes the hay and leaves.

One might say that either way he was bound to face counteraction on behalf of Hœnsa-Pórir and Hœnsa-Pórir's supporters — and this again shows the omnipresence of feuds in the society — but these two cases illustrate that in order to survive, powerful individuals had to interweave and affirm their peaceful social endeavours with aggressive outward politics. While Blund-Ketill diligently cultivates his reciprocal social ties, he fails to assert his powerful position when meeting resistance. By following the code of social reciprocity without trying to enforce it physically when it fails to work, he shows himself to be hopelessly idealistic, as we see already in his dealings with his tenants. He represents the best of the unattainable ideal of the stratified society without a state.

Hence, it is in the character of Blund-Ketill that the historical duality of the saga appears most cogently. We already noted how the family sagas are the meeting-place of two historical paradigms, that which is handed down from the Commonwealth and that

which is turbulently and victoriously emerging in the thirteenth century. In Blund-Ketill the saga-writer created the ideal of the traditional socio-economic system at a time when this system was collapsing. The burning of Blund-Ketill is therefore in a way a highly symbolic act in the context of 13th-century Iceland, and underscores the historical duality of the saga.

At the same time the saga shows how even the traditional dualism, narrative and social, fails to encompass social reality. We saw this in the way Hœnsa-Pórir's perspective is undermined from within his own household, through the counter-statements of his foster-son, and we see it even more clearly in the case of Blund-Ketill. When he houses the Norwegian skipper, Qrn, he does so on the impetus of an old social obligation: Qrn's father had helped him once in the past. But while he is thus working within the frame of conventional social exchanges, he is at the same time disrupting that system, for Qrn had defied Tungu-Oddr's traditional authority to set the price for his trade goods. This is where the inherent paradox of the Icelandic system is revealed: while acting according to the code of Commonwealth reciprocity, Blund-Ketill has literally housed an element which is foreign and hostile to it, namely the Norwegian state and market system, which ultimately can only reject the Icelandic anomaly in the by now predominating European trading system, while Iceland cannot survive without the trading connections with Europe.

Qrn's presence at the farm proves fatal for Blund-Ketill. Giving Hœnsa-Pórir the ostensible justification for the burning, he rashly shoots an arrow into the group of adversaries and ironically kills the man who resembles Blund-Ketill most and Hœnsa-Pórir least. It is highly unlikely that the sagaman actually intended Qrn to be a 'symbol' for the 13th-century Norwegian presence in Iceland. But it is bound to be significant that he represents an economic system which meets a resistance from the Icelandic socio-economic order. At the same time he finds refuge in Iceland through the workings of that same traditional social paradigm. As a participant in a native dispute his rash and uninformed act causes an internal feud to escalate. This is not such a far cry from the role of the Norwegian crown in the internal affairs of 13th-century Iceland.

## VI: Conclusion

In Commonwealth Iceland there was a system of extraction based on claims to ownership of property, on concepts of the unproblem-

atic differential access to resources in favour of a chieftainly class. The chieftains were unwilling to subordinate themselves to state institutions to protect their privileged positions. The consequence was stratification without a state, the contradiction of an economic system based on property relationships without a congruent institutional system to enforce them. Ownership was as sound as the force one could muster to defend it. There was a complex system of law, but it was all just so much labyrinthine rhetoric in the face of the stark reality that power decided. As slavery diminished, claimants to land enlarged their holdings by using wage labour and tenancy arrangements to work them. To support their claims, they had to increase their power by enlarging their entourages.

Force is a central issue. In state societies, there is a monopoly of legitimate force and institutions to develop and perpetuate the rhetoric to justify it. In stateless societies there is no monopoly of force, though in the Commonwealth there was not equal access to force. The use of force to settle disputes seems unreasonable in the logic of state systems, productive only of chaos. An assumption of stateless societies is that each bearer of force is reasonable and that the aggregate of opinion and force will result in justice and order.

A new stress was put on the old system of recruitment of support through social and economic manœuvres. The relations with Norwegian traders, who operated in terms of a market paradigm, became more and more problematic and an internal trade in Iceland began to develop. In addition to the contradiction of property without a state the paradigm of market exchange, the purchase and sale of support and social relations as though they were commodities, developed in contradiction to the paradigm of social exchange.

This was the social and economic context of 13th-century Iceland, before the chieftains bowed to the inevitabilities of their inequitable social order and subordinated themselves to the hegemonic power of Norway. *Hænsa-Póris saga* indicates a tension between the traditional chieftainly model of political economy and attempts, ever more prevalent in the 13th century, to establish an alternative.

In this stateless but stratified society, extraction of economic value depended on entourages and economic manœuvre was social manœuvre. There were no price-setting markets, and attempts to gain wealth by accumulating merchant or usurer's capital were considered anti-social. In the saga of Hænsa-Pórir we see high

value placed on entourage-building with affinal relations and nothing but scorn for Hœnsa-Pórir who, because he follows a commercial rather than a social logic, is despised. These values derive from the social and political structure of the period and shaped the saga-writer's construction of the saga, the way he handles genealogies, descriptions of character, and the narrative structure as a whole.

Hœnsa-Pórir embraces the new paradigm of market relations. When he attempts to use elements of the old system, he manipulates wealth to acquire wealth. Blund-Ketill embodies the reciprocal paradigm. For him the possession of wealth is never an issue. His purpose is to maintain social relationships. He supports Qrn to reciprocate for a deed of Qrn's father. He loses wealth to retain good social relations.

It is significant that Helgi and Qrn are introduced at the same time. Just as Hœnsa-Pórir and Blund-Ketill are the antithesis of each other, so are Helgi and Qrn. Helgi knows everything, clarifies reciprocal relations when Hœnsa-Pórir would obfuscate them. Qrn is a foreigner who represents market relations in conflict with the old system in Iceland. His action ends any possibility of compromise. Each resides in the camp which is opposite to that which they represent.

We have discussed how the narrative is manipulated in Blund-Ketill's favour: he is presented as a kind of ideal of the historical paradigm favoured by the saga, and his honesty and lack of self-centred assertion of power and 'legitimate' interests are reflected in the character of Helgi, who thus subverts Hœnsa-Pórir's strictly mercantile view of events.

But both these idealistic characters are killed half-way through the saga, and in the latter half of the saga, the traditional socio-economic values are reasserted in a more 'realistic' manner: gaining social support may involve the threat of violence, but enough support must be gained to oust the opponents through sheer physical force. But it was precisely this paradoxical co-existence of reciprocal social balance with the inherently dualistic amassing of physical force which would ultimately collapse the Commonwealth. Characteristically for the sagas, the second half of *Hœnsa-Pórir's saga* limits the serious aspects of social conflict to an *internal* feud. The foreign element from the first half of the saga is now absent, and in its absence the saga can reassert its economic and cultural values, manipulate the narrative in favour of those values and ultimately bring about a solution according to the traditional

socio-economic paradigm. The last action of the saga is a triumph of the old system. Tungu-Oddr is forced to give up his use of force by his obligation to his son. The conflict is resolved by the establishment of new social relations and obligations through marriage. Tungu-Oddr gains a degree of access to the contested property by social relationships. This was more highly valued than any wealth.

Viewed from the point of view of the 13th century, the time of its composition, the saga could be deemed to be turning a blind eye to the outside force which would inevitably engulf the stateless island community. For there really was no way out. Once stratified, societies either revert to a less differential, more egalitarian structure, or they are headed for statehood — for better or for worse. If the sagas are heroic literature, their heroic attitude is perhaps nowhere more striking than in the presentation and upholding of the ideology of the traditional socio-economic system in the face of the intrusion of a new economic and historical paradigm.

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## THE ALLEGED FAMINE IN ICELAND

BY R. C. ELLISON

'THE Alleged Famine in Iceland' was the heading chosen by both *The Times* and *The Scotsman* for letters opposing the raising of famine relief funds in 1882, as discussed by Richard L. Harris in his article 'William Morris, Eiríkur Magnússon, and the Icelandic famine relief efforts of 1882' (*Saga-Book XX*, 1978-81, 31-41). In this he uses these and other letters published in British newspapers of 1882-83 and also the private letters of William Morris and his friends, in order to show the confusions and antagonisms surrounding the relief fund and its distribution. What Harris does not concern himself with in any but the most general terms is the real condition of the country behind the claims and counter-claims of the contending parties. In my own article, 'Hallæri og hneykslismál' (*Andvari*, Nýr Flokkur XXI, 1979, 62-79), I had attempted, having covered much the same ground as Harris, to answer this fundamental question by using Icelandic sources, printed and unprinted, but without having then discovered the resources of the Pjóðskjalasafn in Reykjavík. In this paper I have therefore cited again a number of my previous sources, especially the private diaries, but have endeavoured to substantiate my case with statistical material from parish registers and censuses, which have also given me much information about my diarists' households.

Harris may have been satisfied as to the real need for famine relief by the letter published in *The Times* on 27th December 1882 and signed by more than seventy of the leading men of Iceland, which stated that

The charitable donations sent to this country . . . have been of the utmost importance to the farmers, who were indeed in great need thereof, in order to be able to preserve some of the most necessary live stock, and these kind donations have thus prevented much real distress.

But this did not silence the debate at the time and does not answer many of the specific accusations levelled against the Mansion House Committee, not only by financially interested parties such as Messrs Slimon of the Leith & Iceland Shipping Company, light-minded tourists like Charles E. Paterson or established opponents of Eiríkur Magnússon such as Guðbrandur Vigfússon, but also by

the well-informed and compassionate geographer W. G. Lock and by critics within Iceland itself. One of these was Eiríkur Briem, Alþingismaður and editor of *Ísafold*, who was a signatory of the *Times* letter yet had previously challenged the accuracy of the committee's informants:

Peir hafa án efa gjört meira úr þeim vandræðum, sem þar eiga sjer stað, heldur en ástæða er til; að t.d. nokkurstaðar á Vesturlandi sje sú hungursneyð, að fólk muni eigi geta þolað venjulegan mat, er hreint eigi satt.

(*Ísafold* 8th September 1882)

The accusations against the Committee (and by implication chiefly against Eiríkur Magnússon) range from ignorance and gullibility, through deliberate misrepresentation for emotional effect or for less honest reasons, to total incompetence in selecting and delivering the relief supplies or even to misappropriation of the funds. The most damaging of these, and the most effective in stopping contributions to the Fund, came from Guðbrandur Vigfússon in letters to *The Times* on 13th October 1882 and 3rd January 1883. While Eiríkur was able to refute the accusations of financial dishonesty by publishing detailed accounts, a degree of incompetence was hard to deny, in that almost half the funds were swallowed up by transportation costs. Early offers of free or cheap transport having been withdrawn, the Committee eventually reckoned itself grossly overcharged — Eiríkur called the shipping company

helvítis svindlarana, sem . . . eru að berjast á allar lundir við að ræna sjóðinn allt er þeir geta.

(Letter to Steingrímur Thorsteinsson, 25th February 1883, Lbs. 1706 4to)

As to the charge of sending unsuitable goods, Guðbrandur's January letter made disingenuous use of a copy of the *Lylie*'s bill of lading, acquired for him by W. G. Lock. Much play is made of the inclusion of cocoa, biscuits, rice, refined sugar and tinned meats, but Lock's copy of the manifest (Bodleian Library MS Icelandic d. 1) explicitly marks the cocoa, meat and biscuits as being not part of the relief goods but ordinary freight. The sugar and rice seem to have been donations in kind, and were left by Eiríkur in Reykjavík for distribution to the poor there, since he was as aware as anyone of their irrelevance to the main purpose of the Fund.

The central question remains, whether there was any such famine as the Committee's published appeals described, and if so whether it was where the supplies were sent. Clearly there was no famine by today's Ethiopian standards, but none such was claimed —

Morris's letter to *The Daily News* of 8th August 1882 was a model of restraint, and he made it clear that he had waited for official confirmation of earlier personal letters before backing the establishment of the Mansion House Fund. Nevertheless some of these official reports were later retracted as different areas of the country were found to be less badly affected than at first supposed when normal communications between north and south had been crippled for months by snow and pack-ice. Yet no blame can be attached to Morris and his friends for accepting the apparently authoritative reports from the Danish government of Iceland and from British diplomatic sources, let alone for accepting statistically detailed reports direct from 'famine areas' in Iceland.

The area from which the first formal appeal for help came to Eiríkur Magnússon was the Snæfellsnes peninsula and Dalasýsla. The letter of appeal, written in July 1882 by Árni Thorlacius of Stykkishólmur and Pétur Eggerz of Akureyjar, had enclosed precise figures of losses attested by the county officials. These showed that by mid-July the cattle losses from hunger and disease on Snæfellsnes amounted to 66 cows, 30 heifers, 347 horses, 4465 ewes, 549 wethers, 4005 yearlings and 4008 lambs. The figures for Dalasýsla put this into proportion by also counting surviving stock:

	Dead	Living
Cows	12	552
Horses	154	1,127
Ewes	2,989	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 4,319 \text{ in milk} \\ 4,777 \text{ dry} \end{array} \right.$
Wethers	979	2,532
Yearlings	2,697	3,908
Lambs	6,359	3,307

Notes with the figures point out the poor milk-yield of surviving stock (dairy products being normally a major item of diet) and that almost all the farmers were already deep in debt for cattle feed which had often failed to save the beasts it was bought for. (*Skuld* 2nd August 1882.)

This looks convincing, but W. G. Lock, claiming first-hand knowledge, insisted that the only stock losses and the only bad hay harvest in 1882 were in the north:

The hay harvest in the south and west of Iceland is the best that has been secured for years . . . no relief is needed in the south.

He had no hesitation in attributing the published figures from the west to gross exaggeration

doubtless by the officials — who are in Iceland, with but few exceptions, the

most dishonest race under God's sun — with a view to raise a famine fund, from which what is vulgarly known as 'a good picking' might be made.

(*The Scotsman* 23rd September 1882)

Certainly these figures led directly to a '*hallærislán*' of 10,000 krónur being made to the Snæfellsnes area from government funds. Since Eiríkur delivered no relief goods in the west, might it not be argued that he had discovered the 'famine' there to be fraudulent? Such a conclusion would be hazardous, if only because the Mansion House Fund was only part of an international relief effort: Eiríkur's awareness that the west had already received its government loan and was due for relief supplies from the Danish famine fund would be enough to make him bypass those ports for the more urgent need further north.

Moreover other records exist, not intended to persuade outsiders. Árni Thorlacius might have exaggerated the disaster in his letter to Eiríkur, but he could have no motive to falsify the notes of his hay crop which he kept every year in his almanac. For the four years spanning the 'famine' period the total returns, measured in horse-loads, were: 1880 – 1,939; 1881 – 965; 1882 – 963; 1883 – 1,619. So much for Lock's 'best hay harvest for years', at least around Stykkishólmur. The honesty of the county officials seems also to be borne out by the records of tithes paid on Snæfellsnes, which fell from 1,652 'hundreds' in 1881 to a mere 789 in 1882, representing a 52% drop in taxable income. A slight improvement to 922 'hundreds' was recorded for 1883. (Árni Halldór Hannesson, *Árbók Snæfellinga og Hnappdæla 1850-1885*, Lbs. 616 4to.) The ill-effects of the measles epidemic in this part of the country are also attested by the parish register for Helgafell and Stykkishólmur, which shows the death-rate rising from 21 in 1881 to 41 in 1882, 16 deaths being from measles. These figures are balanced against 25 live births in the parish in each of these years. It is also relevant that the number of paupers in the parish rose from 12 in 1881 to 20 in 1883; emigration figures were not kept in this parish.

Djúpivogur in Berufjörður on the east coast of Iceland was the first port at which Eiríkur Magnússon did deliver relief supplies, for an area of Suður-Múlasýsla and Austur-Skaftafelssýsla of which he believed he had reliable information that it had been especially badly affected by stock losses in the storms of April as well as (in Múlasýsla alone) by debts incurred to feed sheep which were subsequently lost. Eiríkur therefore delivered 800 sacks of grain and £150 in money (the only cash distributed by the Fund)

and promised that a private yacht called *Gladys*, which he believed to be on its way laden with food for human consumption, would also deliver it in Djúpivogur, earmarked for Skaftafelssýsla. He subsequently found that the voyage of the *Gladys* had been cancelled because of Guðbrandur's *Times* letter of 13th October. (*Pjóðólfr* 8th September 1883.)

That it cost Eiríkur Magnússon three times as much to land these goods at Djúpivogur as to unload 2,500 sacks and 698 bales of hay in Borðeyri (Accounts presented to the Mansion House Committee, 11th December 1882) was the result of the different conditions at the two ports: it is evident from William Morris (1911, 20) that steamers could not tie up in Djúpivogur but had to use small boats for unloading. Clearly this would not be an argument against landing relief supplies here if the need was real. It is notable however that this region was not one named in any of the disaster reports from Danish official sources or from Consul Paterson, nor indeed in W. G. Lock's list of suitable ports for relief supplies, which otherwise closely matches Eiríkur's itinerary (*The Scotsman* 23rd September 1882). So why was the Committee persuaded that this was an area of special need? It may be recalled that Eiríkur Magnússon was born at Berunes, across the fjord from Djúpivogur, where his father séra Magnús Bergsson was parson. In 1861 Eiríkur himself was appointed curate there to assist his father but did not take up the post, preferring to go to England to work on the British and Foreign Bible Society's new translation of the Bible into Icelandic. Nonetheless he must still have had numerous friends in the region in 1882, while his father, having moved one parish further north to Heydalir, was still active in the ministry at the age of 85. Eiríkur will thus have received detailed news of the region's condition; whether he over-reacted to the plight of his particular friends is another matter.

An independent witness is the priest who had taken over the Berunes parish from séra Magnús, séra Þorsteinn Þórarinsson. In his diaries (Lbs. 2965 4to) he not only kept day by day records but was also in the habit of making summaries at the end of a year or season. Thus on 31st December 1881 he wrote:

Nú er þetta ár á enda, sem hefur verið hart og kuldasamt ár; víkingsvetur í fyrra og mestu frostgrimmdir og hagleysa, vorið og sumarið kalt og purrvíðrasamt, grasvöxtur því lítill einkum á harðvelli, og heyföng manna með minna móti. Sumstaðar fór aldrei frost úr jörðu allt sumarið. Veikindi lítil og manndauði lítill. Verzlun ekki hagfeld landsbúum. Sumstaðar talsverður afli, en sumstaðar lítill.

Although this suggests that people had come through that year's

hardship reasonably well, séra Þorsteinn also records one farmer with his family ‘coming on the parish’ on 25th July, while on 6th August he laments the emigration to America of ten of his parishioners, including his own brother-in-law and the district midwife.

Séra Þorsteinn lost four wethers in January snows in 1882 but otherwise was able to graze his stock outdoors for much of the winter, until the storms struck at Easter (9th April) and continued without let until 5th May. Nonetheless he records no personal stock losses in the storms, and on the official first day of summer, 19th April, he was able to write merely:

Þannig er þessi vetrur á enda, sem hefur verið hér í Múlasýslum frostvægur og snjóleittur, svo sjaldan hefur orðið haglaust, en hryðjasamur og veðrasamur, og skepnur manna eru því viða magrar og farnar að falla úr veseld, og verður mikill fellir viða, einkum í Skaftafellssýslum, ef vorið verður kalt. . . Enginn hafis komið. Veikindi og manndauði lítill.

Six days later however ice-floes were sighted, and by 5th May the fjord was not only filling with ice but was experiencing one of the less obvious hazards of a visitation of Arctic floes: three polar bears were shot in Berufjörður.

The ice cleared from the fjord by 23rd May but returned a week later, trapping eight fishing vessels for at least a fortnight and not clearing completely until 1st July. It is not surprising therefore to find a note that little grass had grown by 15th June. No more snow fell after 13th June however and despite persistent fogs the weather is generally described as good throughout July and August. The fishing was particularly good in September, and the measles epidemic is never mentioned, and was indeed of little significance in this area because it had experienced an epidemic of a much milder strain twelve years earlier. (Porvaldur Thoroddsen 1958, 94.) In the southernmost three parishes of Múlasýsla only one death from measles occurred in 1882, and although the death-rate did rise from 15 in 1881 to 33 in 1882 this is almost entirely accounted for by infant mortality from whooping cough.

Yet there are signs of hardship: séra Þorsteinn lost perhaps a third of his lambs, and when he sold 16 wethers to Messrs Slimon on 5th October, several of them were two-year-olds, whereas in a normal year no one would sell a wether under three years old. On 31st December 1882 he sums up:

Petta ár er á enda, sem hefur á ymsu tilliti verið erfið; vorharðindi mikil og talsverður fjárfellir og lambadauði hinn mesti. Aflahlauð kom mikið um tíma á Einmánuði snemma; aði góður um sumarið. Grasvöxtur lítill og heyföng manna

því með minna móti. Verzlun í meðallagi. Manndauði og veikindi lítil hjer [he generally ignores infant mortality], en víða dóu margir úr mislingum, einkum á Suður- og Vestur-landi. Á þessum vetri fremur hart inn til allra dala og víða hagleysur.

Séra Þorsteinn does not mention the farmers' debts, but there was no rise in either pauperism or emigration in the area in 1882 or 1883. The picture he paints is of considerable hardship, but there is no indication that it compared with the situation in the other areas to which Eiríkur took relief supplies or even with that in Vopnafjörður, further north on the same coast, which Lock had recommended as a centre for aid and from which the Slimons' ship *Camoens* embarked 57 emigrants on 14th August 1882 (*The Scotsman* 25th August 1882).

Before assuming that Eiríkur Magnússon was unduly generous to his family and friends it should be noted that he was under considerable pressure of time both from the urgency of the need he perceived in Iceland and from the impending winter storms — the *Lylie* came close to wreck three times in its circumnavigation of the country. Although he met séra Þorsteinn (who subsequently spent three days distributing the goods) and other available officials, Eiríkur could not in 24 hours afford time to evaluate precise needs or to make contact at all with Skaftafellssýsla, nor did he allow himself time to visit his father. Moreover he was explicit that the aid left at Djúpivogur was for Austur-Skaftafellssýsla and the three southernmost parishes of Múlasýsla only, thus excluding his father's parish from benefit.

No such doubts are tenable about the remaining areas to which the Fund sent aid, despite the doubts raised at the time. In Húnavatnssýsla, the region served by Borðeyri, Lock had agreed that there was urgent need though 'but a fraction of the livestock' had been lost, whereas Charles E. Paterson claimed to have seen 'abundance of good hay', horses 'in excellent condition' and 'none of the natives exhibit[ing] anything approaching a sign of short commons' (*The Times* 28th September 1882). The condition of this area has been thoroughly researched by Bjarni Jónasson for *Spípir og Sagnir* III (1953). He records that the ground in many parts of the region remained frozen throughout the summer (p. 198) with a resultant very poor hay crop further damaged by the constant bad weather and the delays due to the measles epidemic during the harvest period. Measles are reckoned to have killed about 100 people in the area and to have cost 500,000 krónur in lost working days, at the official rate of 2.38 kr per man-day (p. 201). The

reductions of livestock recorded are also striking, although the figures for sheep include the increased numbers sold in the autumn of 1882 to meet the cost of winter supplies. Bjarni gives the figures for reductions in holdings in Húnavatnssýsla between 1881 and 1883, with comparative percentage figures for the whole country:

Cattle	371 or 23.27%, nationally	18.12%
Sheep	24,408 or 42.68%, ..	35.68%
Horses	1,135 or 24.27%, ..	20.53% (p. 202)

Plainly then, aid sent to this region was not misdirected: the only problem was that it was not enough, even when supplemented by contributions from the Danish fund, to prevent these extensive stock losses, with resultant poverty and rising emigration rates. Most of the local parsons had stopped keeping records of those entering and leaving the parish, but at Borðeyri in 1883 three babies died while their parents were waiting for an emigration ship, and the neighbouring parish of Kirkjuvammur in the same year for the first time recorded 17 emigrants to America.

The records of two parishes near Eiríkur's next port of call in Skagafjörður, Glaumbærjarsókn and Hólar í Hjaltadal, suggest an even greater degree of distress. This had been an area of growing population through both the birth-rate and movement into the parishes (despite a whooping cough epidemic which killed 8 children in 1881), but the figures for 1882-83 show a sharp rise in the death and emigration rates. Taking the two parishes together the figures are these:

	1881	1882	1883
Live births	39	39	41
Deaths	26	45 (8 of measles)	32
Entering parish	93	70	90
Leaving parish	45 (1)	50 (10)	150 (71)

Figures in brackets are those emigrating to America.

The last supplies from the Mansion House Fund were delivered in Akureyri, at the head of the long Eyjafjörður. This was totally blocked by ice for most of the summer; as late as 16th August both the *Camoens* and the Danish vessel *Valdimar* were compelled, after forcing their way through the ice for eight hours, to turn back at the island of Hrísey 20 miles north of Akureyri (*The Scotsman* 25th August 1882).

About seven miles north of Akureyri lies Möðruvellir, the school whose principal Jón A. Hjaltalín was Guðbrandur Vigfússon's chief 'no famine' witness. In *The Times* 13th October 1882 Guðbrandur vouched for 'his sterling veracity, soberness of mind and

accurate knowledge of modern Iceland' as well as his being 'on the very spot where the famine is said to be worst'; and the facts (which Guðbrandur did not mention) that they were second cousins and that Jón had been at odds with Eiríkur Magnússon on his own account for some ten years are not in themselves adequate grounds for doubting his evidence. (See letters from Jón Hjaltalín c. 1871 and 16th January 1875 in Bodleian Library MS Icelandic d. 1.) On 4th September 1882 Jón had written that

Many things have been getting scant, such as coffee and sugar. There is, however, no actual distress or famine about these parts. Although the seasons have been severe, I must admit that there is no more failure of harvest than in many other countries.

(*The Times* 13th October 1882)

Moreover he did not change his views as the year advanced, for on 8th January 1883 in a private letter to Guðbrandur (Bodleian MS Icelandic d. 1) he thanked him for exposing 'hallærисlygina' and continued:

Pér getið rétt til, að hér hefir ekkert hallæri verið og er ekki á Norðurlandi. Eg get síður sagt um hina hluta landsins, en eg fór landveg suður í Reykjavík í Júnímánuði, og sá eg þá hvorki hungur né hor á nokkrum manni nokkursstaðar. Í vetrar hafa allir nóga björg . . . Pað er satt, að hér hefir verið hart í ári, síðan eg kom hingað [1880], og menn urðu að fækka mjög skepnum sínum í haust; en í sumar var, var engin ástæða til að betla, eins og gjört var. . . Margir landar vorir kunna ágætlega við að lifa á öðrum; sómatilfinningin er engin; og það er álitin dygð, að ljúga svo miklu til, sem mönnum getur í hug dottið, ef nokkrar krónur fást fyrir.

Jón Hjaltalín's assistant master Porvaldur Thoroddssen gives a more gloomy picture of conditions in his *Ferðabók*, the record of his annual geographical expeditions to different parts of Iceland:

Sumarið 1882 var eitt hið lakasta, er verið hafði í manna minnum. Samgönguleysið, ísarnir, kuldí, þokur, rigningar og frost um hásumar drógu kjark úr mönnum. . . Ekkert er hægt að fá í kaupstöðunum og ekkert frá útlöndum, svo þá eru flestar bjargir bannaðar. . . Um morguninn 28. júní fór ég á stað frá Möðruvöllum í Hörgárdal. Fyrr var eigi hægt að fara, því nægilegt gras handa hestum var eigi sprottið, og hey var hvergi að fá, þótt gull væri í boði.

(1958, 21-22)

Porvaldur's work that summer took him away from witnessing later conditions in Eyjafjörður; moreover, like Jón Hjaltalín himself, he had a regular income independent of farming and was in no personal danger of starvation or bankruptcy.

This is less true of their parish priest at Möðruvellir, Provost Davíð Guðmundsson, since although he was better off than most of his parishioners he, like virtually all Icelandic clergy at that time, derived the greater part of his income from farming both

directly and indirectly through tithes and rents. His diaries (Lbs. 925-6 8vo) show that he was in the habit, after taking services at Möðruvellir, of visiting Jón Hjaltalín before riding back the two miles to his own farm at Hof. In the circumstances it seems unlikely that Jón did not hear from him of the difficulties of the local farmers, even if séra Davíð did not mention that throughout April and May he personally had been lending hay to a dozen neighbouring farms. Much of this was explicitly intended for sheep, which in a normal year should be foraging for themselves by April, but their needs led to a shortage for the cows, which were therefore let out to graze on 31st May despite the cold sweeping in from the ice-packed fjord.

Séra Davíð describes the bad weather with feeling but more often in connection with difficult journeys to take services than as it affected the stock, so it is not clear that he lost more than one ewe and a number of lambs. What does come over vividly is the effect on this community of the measles epidemic. On 5th July séra Davíð gave shelter for two nights to a farmer who had been to Akureyri to seek medicine for his family and was too ill to continue his journey home. Ten days later all the children at Hof were sick. Two or three of the adults kept on their feet a day or two longer to do the most essential farm tasks, but by 18th July séra Davíð, who being 48 had probably had measles in the 1846 epidemic, was the only person in the household of 22 adults and children who was not ill in bed. His time was fully taken up with nursing, with the assistance of a woman from a neighbouring farm, while two others came in to do the milking. By 21st July one of the household men was well enough to resume care of the milking ewes while another went to fetch medicine. The more demanding work of mowing which should have occupied most of the adult males by then could not be attempted until 27th July, when just one man was fit to work, and it was not until 31st that three others were able to join him. This not only shows a fortnight's total loss of work at the busiest time of the farming year, but it also invites one to imagine the condition of homes similarly afflicted and less able than the parsonage to call on neighbours for help. While all séra Davíð's household recovered, his diary entry for 27th July shows that not all in the area were so fortunate:

Helgi fór að slá fyrir mig. Aðrir gerðu ekkert. Eg allan dag í líkræðu eftir síra Andrés, það sem eg gat fyrir börnum. Fréttist lát Sigrúnar á Ásláksstöðum, Valdimars á Grund og Pórgerðar í Felli.

Séra Davíð was more conscientious than most in recording causes

of death, and though the parish register shows a rise in deaths from 16 in 1881 to 35 in 1882 it records only 5 as being from measles. On the other hand, 4 more deaths in the same period of July are attributed to 'þungt kvef og hásveiki', which may suggest that the victims died in the early stages of measles before the rash developed. (If not, deaths from heavy colds suggest something seriously wrong with the general health and resistance of the victims.) The same register shows a rise in emigration to America from 1 in 1881 to 11 in each of 1882 and 1883.

On 21st and 22nd November 1882 séra Davíð records distribution of corn from the Mansion House Fund, Eiríkur Magnússon having reached Akureyri on 14th November, but he evidently did not feel entitled to accept any for himself. The people really in need of the relief supplies, if any were, would obviously be those with no other source of income than farming and fishing. The poorer crofters lived permanently on the bread-line and the failure or emigration of a few more of that class would not suffice to prove abnormal distress. I have therefore gone to the diaries of a moderately well-to-do farmer, Jón Jónsson of Sigrunes (Lbs. 1581-2 8vo), to find the effect of the 1881 Great Frost Winter and the pack-ice and measles of 1882 on a normally self-sufficient recipient of the famine relief. (Being equidistant from Eiríkur's two delivery ports of Sauðárkrókur and Akureyri, Jón was reached by neither and had to wait for the Danish fund to bring corn to Siglufjörður in December.)

Jón was an elderly man, 72 in 1881, who headed a household of 24 people, which divided into two in 1882 when his young protégé Baldvin Jóhannesson set up as a farmer, but probably stayed under the same roof. Although Sigrunes lies in an exposed position on a northern headland, it has extensive grazing and hay meadows, some in sheltered valleys, with winter grazing on seaweed along the coastline and both peat and driftwood for fuel. Jón also had tenants at a nearby farm paying an annual rent of 5 kr and an unspecified number of wethers, and he and Baldvin between them owned three open fishing boats, although Jón himself no longer put to sea. On the other hand they shared their grazing with two other households at Sigrunes, one of 14 people headed by Porleifur Porleifsson and the other of 12 led by Guðmundur Guðmundsson. How much stock Jón normally held is unclear. Horses are mentioned only in passing, and one has to pick out references to individual animals in order to see that in good times he owned five cows and a bull. His normal sheep stock seems to have been

something over 100, and in addition many members of his household owned a few sheep each.

In the hard winter of 1880-81 Jón does not seem to have lost stock from starvation, but one cow died in calving. The main cause of loss was one which may be peculiar to Iceland. *Apodemus sylvaticus*, the English wood mouse, was accidentally introduced to Iceland in the settlement period and has adapted to the different conditions there to become the *hagamús*, living usually on a mixture of seeds and insects on the open moors. In hard years they come down in large numbers to seek food around the farms, and in the Great Frost Winter this assumed plague proportions. (Porvaldur Thoroddsen, 1958, 36, records that at a farm in the next fjord to Jón, Silfrastaðir in Skagafjörður, over 2,000 mice were caught in two months.) Since very little grain was stored at the farms, the mice turned instead to attack the sheep, closely packed at night into turf-built sheds. Burrowing under the fleece on the sheep's back where there are few nerve-endings, the mice would eat their way for days into the flesh, unresisted by the animal and often unnoticed by the shepherd until the victim was weakened past recovery. In this way Jón lost nine ewes and a wether, while others were badly injured. (Séra Davíð likewise lost one lamb 'mouse-eaten' at this time.)

In the following summer Jón harvested something over 320 horse-loads of hay, not much for the stock he owned but not so little that he was worried. It did mean however that he had to drive his sheep out to graze whenever the weather made it at all possible, and twice in December 1881 when sudden snowstorms blew up he had to dig as many as 30 ewes out of drifts. On the first occasion all survived, but on the second he and Baldwin lost a ewe each. Gales in January 1882 not only kept all stock indoors but also did extensive damage to the beached boats and the fish-drying racks.

By the end of March, after two more months of constant snowstorms, hay was getting scarce but Jón felt he had sufficient, since the weather seemed to be improving, to lend two horse-loads to his parish priest and another to his tenant at Skúta. Even more generously he lent the latter both corn and more hay on 24th April, after a fortnight of renewed storms had so set back Jón's hopes that he had had to slaughter the bull. The sheep were also suffering from privation. On 28th April a wether died, apparently from starvation, and on 4th May eight more were rescued on the verge of death from exposure.

The household was also suffering from more than the weather

at this time: from the end of March to late May all of them, especially Jón, were afflicted with scabies. This parasitic infection is not particularly associated with malnutrition, but on 2nd June Jón describes symptoms which suggest he had then developed scurvy, which results from vitamin C deficiency. Fishing too was both dangerous and unrewarding. On 9th May Jón's men came home after a night at sea with only three fish apiece, although Guðmundur's boat arrived a few hours later with 27 *i hlut*. Three days later the pack-ice which, as individual floes and icebergs, had been in the vicinity since February, began to fill the fjord so that no one could put to sea.

By 26th May Jón's hay stocks were almost exhausted and snow-storms were still forcing him to keep all the ewes and lambs indoors, so he resorted to feeding them on dried fish, but when another blizzard struck on 5th June even that resource was exhausted and the tone of the diary entries, including prayers for help, grows increasingly desperate. The ewes, if not yet actually starving, were rapidly running dry and it was plainly impossible to rear the lambs. On 6th June therefore

Var skorið undan flestum ánum, Þorleifur undan öllum sínum; jeg á 9 eftir.

Three days later Jón also lost a ewe belonging to a friend, which he felt obliged to replace. At least after this date the sheep were finding adequate grazing, but the cows were still indoors and needing fodder late in June, as the entry for 25th June shows:

Bjart veður og austan gola. Var ekki hugsað til messuferðar, því prestur lá veikur af mislingum, sem eru hér að ganga ofaná annað bág. Altaf fult með hafis og ekkert getur sleigið í jörð. Kún altaf gefið, með því valla sést nokkur gróður. Barði hefur leigið í mislingum, er nú að skána.

Unfortunately Barði, Jón's 17 year old fosterson, who had evidently brought the infection home from his schooling at the parsonage, had spread it to all the rest of the households at Sigrunes apart from the older people who had had the disease before, so that by 2nd July 'allir liggja í hrúgu í mislingunum', though all recovered. That this did not delay the haymaking as it did for séra Davíð was due solely to the far worse weather conditions at Sigrunes; there was no grass fit for mowing before the last day of July. Nor was fishing interrupted, since it was not until 28th July that the ice in the fjord broke up enough for the boats to put out, and 7th August saw the first rewarding fishing trip in three months.

Rain and even snow hampered the haymaking in August and September, and the poor quantity and condition of the hay made the prospects for the next winter grim indeed. Foreign steamers

calling in the fjord gave the opportunity both to buy corn and to sell 10 of the fitter wethers, but the impossibility of feeding the remainder and the necessity of feeding their families confronted Jón and his colleagues with harsh decisions. On 3rd October Jón slaughtered his favourite cow, though she should have calved at Christmas, and two days later his farmhands slaughtered all the sheep they owned themselves. Jón had already culled a ewe and one of his remaining lambs, but as the weather worsened with constant snow-storms in October and November he and the other farmers slaughtered more and more, until by 29th November Jón had only 20 ewes, no lambs and 20 wethers left, of which two more went before the end of winter. His desperation is indicated by the fact that at least 15 of the beasts slaughtered were yearlings, selected breeding stock already tended through one unproductive winter, which should have begun to pay for themselves the next year. Yet Jón was evidently still better off than some of his neighbours. When the famine relief corn was distributed on 7th December he and Baldvin each received only one sack, whereas Þorleifur and Guðmundur were allotted two each. But this was not enough to turn the tide: both Jón and Baldvin survived as farmers at Sigrunes, but by the time of the next year's parish census Guðmundur Guðmundsson had left the district, while Þorleifur Þorleifsson was a lodger where before he had been the farmer, and although a year later he was independent, it was only as a *tómthúsmaður*.

I think these testimonies sufficiently show that there was real and urgent distress in all the areas to which the Mansion House Fund directed its relief supplies, with the possible exception of the region around Djúpivogur, where conditions were clearly less bad than further north. Whether there was actually a famine, or whether there would have been one in 1883 without the intervention of the relief funds, remains a matter of definition and speculation. Nowhere have I found a record of anyone dying of starvation, and the role of malnutrition in the low resistance to measles and other diseases in 1882 and 1883 is nowhere recognized in the parish registers. Certainly the medical estimate of 1,600 deaths from measles (1 in 45 of the population) is enough in itself to account for the rise in the death-rate from 2,393 in 1881 (births 2,437) to 3,353 in 1882 (births 1,945). (Þorvaldur Thoroddsen 1958, 95, quoting *Eir* I, 1899, 4). The sharp fall in the birthrate can be directly blamed on the particular vulnerability to measles of pregnant women, and the deaths in that section of the population

would also explain why the birthrate in 1883 was again low — though not why the death-rate was well above average.

Curiously enough, perhaps the best piece of evidence for malnutrition as a contributory cause of death comes courtesy of those arch-opponents of the Famine Relief Fund, Messrs Slimon of the Leith & Iceland Shipping Company. *The Scotsman* for 25th August 1882 gives a detailed account of the voyage of their ship the *Camoens*, which returned to Scotland on 24th August carrying 107 steerage passengers, Icelanders from Seyðisfjörður and Vatnafjörður [*sic*, i.e. Vopnafjörður] intending to take ship from Glasgow for America. On the voyage measles had broken out among the emigrants, 11 of whom were taken to the Canongate Fever Hospital in Edinburgh, but one, an ‘adult female’, had died before the ship reached port. The death was certified by a Scottish doctor on board as being not directly from measles but ‘the result of general debility’.

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# FOREIGNERS AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN MEDIEVAL ICELAND<sup>1</sup>

By IAN McDougall

Amongst other people of the Earth, *Islanders* seeme to stand in most need of Forraine Travell, for they being cut off (as it were) from the rest of the Citizens of the World, have not those obvious accesses, and contiguity of situation, and [with] other advantages of society, to mingle with those more refined Nations, whom Learning and Knowledge did first Vrbanize and polish.

—James Howell, *Instructions for Forreine Travell* 1642

THE first foreigners to come to Iceland were the heathen settlers from Norway who, according to Ari's account in chapter 1 of *Íslendingabók*, found that they had been preceded in their journey to the new land by Irish anchorites (*ÍF I 5*):

Pá váru hér menn kristnir, þeir es Norðmenn kalla papa, en þeir fóru síðan á braut, af því at þeir vildu eigi vesa hér við heiðna menn, ok létu eptir bœkr írskar ok bjöllur ok bagla; af því mátti skilja, at þeir váru menn írskir.

This information is repeated in the first chapter of *Landnámabók*, in the *Sturlubók* redaction (*ÍF I 31-2*):

En áðr Ísland byggðisk af Nóregi, váru þar þeir menn, er Norðmenn kalla papa; þeir váru menn kristnir, ok hyggja menn, at þeir hafi verit vestan um haf, því at fundusk eptir þeim bœkr írskar, bjöllur ok baglar ok enn fleiri hlutir, þeir er þat mátti skilja, at þeir váru Vestmenn. Enn er ok þess getit á bókum enskum, at í þann tíma var farit milli landanna.

It is impossible to say to which English books the author of this passage refers. Einar Ólafur Steinsson (1948, 20) and Jón Helgason (1951, 79-80) suggest Bede, *In regum librum XXX quaestiones XXV* (CCSL 119, 317), where the movement of the sun in winter and summer in Thule is described on the authority of visitors from those parts (cf. *ÍF I 32*, n.3). It is also difficult to determine what sort of books the *írskar bœkr* mentioned in these passages may have been. As Einar Ólafur Steinsson argues (1962, 17), there is no reason to assume that the adjective *írskr* refers to the language in which the books found by the Norse settlers were written, since it is unlikely that in the ninth century any heathen Scandinavian could read Irish or any other language written in the Latin alphabet. It is more probable that these codices, like the other bits of

ecclesiastical furniture lumped together alliteratively as *bækr, bjöllur ok baglar*, were identified as Irish by their appearance — their style and decoration.

A similar reference to Irish artifacts from the settlement period is found in the account of Órlygr inn gamli Hrappson's emigration from Ireland to Iceland in *Kjalnesinga saga*. Órlygr, who was a Christian, is said to have been advised by his foster-father, a certain Bishop Patrek, to take with him to the new land three holy things — consecrated earth to be placed under the corner pillar of a new church, a *plenarium* or unabridged missal, and a consecrated church-bell (*ÍF XIV* 3-4):

Maðr hét Órlygr; hann var írskr at allri ætt. Í þann tíma var Írland kristit; þar réð fyrir Konofogor Ífrakonungr. Þessi fyrniefndr maðr varð fyrir konungus reiði. Hann fór at finna Patrek biskup, frænda sinn, en hann bað hann sigla til Íslands; — 'því at þangat er nú,' sagði hann, 'mikil sigling ríkra manna; en ek vil þat leggja til með þér, at þú hafir þrjá hluti: þat er vígð mold, at þú láttir undir hornstafi kirkjunnar, ok plenarium ok járnklukku vígða. Þú munt koma sunnan at Íslandi; þá skaltu sigla vestr fyrir, þar til er fjörðr mikill gengr vestan í landit; þú munt sjá í fjörðinn inn þrjú fjöll há ok dali í öllum; þú skalt stefna inn fyrir it synnsta fjall; þar muntu fá góða höfn, ok þar er spakr formaðr, er heitir Helgi bjóla. Hann mun við þér taka, því at hann er líttill blótmaðr, ok hann mun fá þér bústað sunnan undir því fjalli, er fyrr sagða ek þér frá; þar skaltu láta kirkju gera ok gefa inum heilaga Kolumba.'

Órlygr eventually settled at Esjuberg on Kjalarnes, where he built a church dedicated to Columba or Columcille (see Jón Jóhannesson 1974, 122). According to the saga, this church was still standing and both the bell and the missal which Órlygr brought from Ireland were still *in situ* during the episcopacy of Árni Þorláksson of Skálholt (1269-1298). By that time both of these antiquities were much the worse for wear — the bell rust-eaten and the pages of the missal coming loose from its spine. But the provenance of the book could still be identified — as the author states, 'there is Irish writing in it' (*ÍF XIV* 43-4):

Helga Þorgímsdóttir bjó at Esjubergi með börnum þeira Búa. Þá stóð enn kirkja sú at Esjubergi, er Órlygr hafði látit gera; gaf þá engi maðr gaum at henni; en með því at Búi var skírðr maðr, en blótaði aldri, þa létt Helga húsfreyja grafa hann undir kirkjuveggnum inum syðra ok leggja ekki fémætt hjá honum nema vápn hans. Sú in sama járnklukka hekk þá fyrir kirkjunni á Esjubergi, er Árni biskup réð fyrir stað, Þorláksson, ok Nikulás Pétrsson bjó at Hofi, ok var þá slitin af ryði. Árni biskup létt ok þann sama plenarium fara suðr í Skálholt ok létt búa ok líma öll blöðin í kjölinn, ok er írskt letr á.

Again, the phrase *írskt letr* here suggests that the book was written in insular script rather than in the Irish language. One can compare similar references to 'Irish' service-books in inventories of books

and church furniture owned by Icelandic religious houses in the later middle ages:

. . . dominicor a sumarmessur samsett, jrsk . . . Messobok, fra advenntu til paska samsett jrsk . . . (*DI VII* 68, *Kvennabrekukirkja í Dölmum*, 1491-1518)

. . . messobok irzk fra adventu til paska alfær . . . (*DI IX* 317, Register of the holdings of the churches of Northern Iceland compiled by Síra Sigurður Jónsson of Grenjaðarstaðir in 1525 — Möðruvallaklastr)

. . . jrskur grallari . . . commons messobok irsk . . . (*DI IX* 322, *Grenjaðarstaðir* 1525)

Here the term ‘Irish’ probably refers to liturgical peculiarities associated with the Irish ritual, although these service books may also have been written or decorated in an insular style (see Gjerløw 1980, 20). Other inventories include references, for example, to Irish (in the sense of Irish-style) crosses — for instance, at Gnúpufellskirkja in 1394 (*DI III* 527) and at Pykkvabæjarklastr in 1523 (*DI IX* 190).

Without doubt, traditions concerning the early Celtic or half-Celtic inhabitants of Iceland — the first Christian settlers of the island — held a certain fascination for Icelandic historians of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. This Christian antiquarian interest is reflected, for example, in the brief ‘saint’s life’ included in *Landnámbók* of Ásólfur alskik Konálsson who, according to *Hauksbók*, came from Ireland with twelve companions, apparently Culdee monks who travelled in groups of twelve after the manner of the apostles. According to *Sturlubók*, he eschewed the company of his heathen neighbours, like the devout *papar* who preceded him (*ÍF I* 62): *Hann var kristinn vel ok vildi ekki eiga við heiðna menn ok eigi vildi hann biggja mat at þeim.* Memories of this champion of Irish Christianity appear to have been revived among the Icelanders after their conversion, for in the eleventh century a church was built on the site of his cell at Innri-Hólmr on Akranes and dedicated to Columcille (see Jón Jóhannesson 1974, 122-3).

Most of the early Irish settlers of Iceland did not, of course, live divorced from the Norse-speaking population in this way. From about A.D. 800, Norse vikings had frequented the Irish and Scottish coasts and settled among the Gaelic population there, although for the most part the position of the Norsemen in Celtic lands remained hostile and insecure. There is evidence that a hybrid Irish-Norse dialect distinct from Irish Gaelic was spoken in western Scotland and the Hebrides during the ninth and tenth centuries. One Old Irish text entitled *Airec Menman Uraird Maic Coisse* (‘the noble mind of Erard MacCoissi [d. 990, according to the *Annals*]

*of Ulster]*; 1908, 72) includes a disdainful allusion to the ineloquent ‘gic-goc of the Gall-Gaedil’, apparently a reference to the language of the mixed Norse-Irish population of Scots Galloway intended to mimic the peculiar cadence of this creolized dialect (Marstrander 1915, 10). There is, however, no linguistic evidence which suggests that a bilingual Gall-Gaedil population of any size existed in Ireland after the middle of the ninth century. The Scottish Gall-Gaedil are not mentioned in Irish sources after 858 (see Marstrander 1915, 11, and generally 4-11; Chadwick 1975, 26; Jackson 1975, 3-11). The handful of Celtic words which found their way into Old West Norse were probably either borrowed by Norsemen in contact with Celtic-speaking peoples in Ireland, the Isle of Man, the Hebrides and the Orkneys, or were introduced into Icelandic in Iceland by Celtic immigrants.<sup>2</sup> Scholarly estimates of the proportion of early settlers of Iceland who had emigrated from the British Isles (see generally Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1962, 20) vary between roughly eleven or twelve per cent (Finnur Jónsson 1898, 188; 1921, 41), thirteen per cent (Guðmundur Hannesson 1925, 15, 235), and seventeen per cent of the total population (Melsteð 1903, 225). Guðbrandur Vigfússon’s estimate (1856, 186, 197) that Irish and Hebridean immigrants accounted for nearly one half of the total population is undoubtedly far too high.

*Landnámabók* is certainly punctuated with Celtic names, e.g. Bekan (*Becán*) á Bekansstöðum; Kaðall (*Cathal*) in Eyjafjörðr; Kalman (*Colmán*) í Kalmanstungu and his brother Kýlan (*Cuileán*); Áskell hnokkan, son of Dufþakr (*Dubhthach*) or Dofnakr (*Domnach*), son of Dufníall (*Domnall*), son of King Kjarvalr (*Cerbhall*) of Ossory; Myrún (*Muirenn*), wife of Auðun stoti of Hraunsfjörðr and daughter of an Irish king Maddaðr (*Maddadh*) or Bjaðmakr (*Blathmac*); Myrgjol (*Muirgeal*, a servant of Auðr in djúpauðga), daughter of Gljómall (perhaps = *Cathmal*) Írakonungr (*ÍF I* 64-7, 145, 81-2, 367-8, 120-1, 138; on these names see Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1957, 3-4; 1962, 21-2; Jón Jóhannesson 1974, 18; Lind 1920-1; and the footnotes in *ÍF I*). A few nicknames known or assumed to be of Celtic origin may have been given to pagan Norsemen who had received baptism, or may reflect the mixed Norse-Celtic background of the person named.<sup>3</sup> Oddly enough, however, most of the names of Irish slaves recorded in *Landnámabók* are Norse. Compare, for example, the names of slaves taken in Ireland by Hjørleifr Hróðmarsson (*ÍF I* 41-2): Hjørleifr herjaði víða um Írland ok fekk þar mikit fé; þar tók hann þræla tíu, er svá hétu: Dufþakr ok Geirrøðr, Skjaldbjörn, Halldórr ok Drafdittr; eigi eru nefndir fleiri.

Only *Dufþakr* is an Irish name (*Dubhthach*). Similarly, none of the Irish slaves whom Kétil gufa Órlygsson captured in Ireland have Irish names (*ÍF I* 166):

Ketill . . . hafði verit í vestrvíking ok haft 〈ór〉 vestrvíking þræla írska; hét einn Pormóðr, annarr Flóki, þriði Kóri, fjórði Svartr ok Skorrar tveir.

William Craigie has suggested that Norsemen ‘seldom took the trouble to learn the real names of their slaves, and gave them Norse ones instead’ (Craigie 1897b, 249, cf. 260; 1879a, 447; 1903, 179). It is, of course, equally likely that many of these inventories of slaves in *Landnámabók* are fabrications of a later date intended to explain particular place-names: Dufþaksskor in Vestmannaeyjar, Pormóðssker, Kóranes, Svartssker and Skorraeyja (= Skorrey) in Mýrasýsla, Skorradalr and Flókadalr on Borgarfjörðr, and Skorraholt in Melasveit. Perhaps a more significant indication of the assimilation of Celtic settlers is the fact that Celtic names seldom appear among the lines of their descendants. For instance, only one of the children of Erpr Meldúnsson (the Irish freedman of Auðr in djúpauðga), his son Dufnall, has a Celtic name (Irish *Domnall*) — all the other names in the line descending from him are Norse (see *ÍF I* 142). Similarly, Ávanger í Botni (who is called *írskr at kyni*) named his only son Porleifr; and all his descendants have Norse names (see *ÍF I* 58).

Many of the *Vestmenn* mentioned in *Landnámabók* must have had Irish as their mother tongue; others may have been bilingual in Norse and Gælic. One recalls, for instance, Snorri’s description of Haraldr gilli (fl. c. 1103-36), son of King Magnús berfœttr. Haraldr was raised in Ireland and the Hebrides yet could still converse in Norse — although, Snorri notes, he had great difficulty with the language and men made sport of his stammering speech (*ÍF XXVIII* 267). In any case, there is little evidence that the Irish language survived long in Iceland after the settlement period. Óláfr pá is said to have been taught to speak Irish fluently by his mother, Melkorka (*ÍF V* 57). And *Vatnsdæla saga* contains an account of how a magician named Bárðr stirfinn used an Irish incantation to dispel a supernatural rainstorm some time around the year 1000 (*ÍF VIII* 127-8):

Úlfheðinn var mikill vinr Hólmgöngu-Starra, ok þat segja menn, þá er Þórarinn illi skoraði á hann til hólmgöngu, at Úlfheðinn fór með honum til hólmstefnunnar, ok í þeiri ferð gerði at þeim veðr illt, ok ætluðu þeir vera górnингaveðr. Bárðr hét maðr ok var kallaðr stirfinn; hann fór með þeim. Peir báðu hann af taka veðrit, því at hann var margkunnigr. Hann bað þá handkrækjask ok gera hring; síðan gekk hann andscélis þrysvar ok mælti írsku; hann bað þá já við kveða. Peir gerðu svá. Síðan veifði hann gizka til fjalls, ok tók þá af veðrit.

To the author of the saga, at least, the use of the Irish language was apparently as arcane as the rest of this wizard's ritual. The incomprehensibility of Irish is also highlighted in a story (included in the *þátr* of Gísl Illugason found in the younger version of *Jóns saga helga*) of a Norseman at the court of King Myrkjartan of Connacht, who mistakenly greets the Irish monarch with a curse instead of a salutation (*Bps.* I 227):

fór hann [Gísl] með Magnúsi konungi til Írlands ok var hann formaðr fyrir gislunum, er Magnús konúngr sendi Myrkjartan Írakonungi í Kunnnóktum; en þar var einn norænn maðr í förum með þeim, kvezt kunna val írsku, ok bauðst til at kveðja konunginn, en Gisli lofaði honum. Síðan mælti hann til konúngs: 'male diarik', en þat er á vora túngu: 'bölvaðr sér þú, konúngr!' — pá svaraði einn konúngs maðr: 'herra!' segir hann, 'þessi maðr man vera þræll allra Norðmanna'. Konúngr svarar: 'olgeira ragall', þat er á vora túngu: 'ókunnig er myrk gata'.

It is interesting that the two Irish phrases in the anecdote, though garbled, are not utter gibberish. William Craigie interpreted the first, *male diarik*, as a corruption of an Irish phrase, *mallacht duit a rig*, 'Accursed be ye, O King'. Marstrander suggested that the second, *olgeira ragall*, was a distortion of Irish *olc aera[dh] ra [= la] gall*, 'ill it is to be cursed by a Norseman'. The Icelandic translation supplied in the text of the second phrase, *ókunnig er myrk gata*, makes it clear, however, that the Irish makes no sense whatsoever to the saga writer.<sup>4</sup>

The author of the *First grammatical treatise*, which was probably composed some time between 1125 and 1175, refers to the Irish habit of pronouncing Latin 'c' as 'k' in all positions — even before 'e' and 'i' (*FGT* 234):

Sa staf er her er ritinn .c. er latínv menn flestir kalla *ce* ok hafa fyrir tva stafí fyrir .t. ok .s. þa er þeir stafa hann við *e*. ęda i þott þeir stafi hann við *a*. ęda *o*. ęda *u* sem *k*. sem sva stafa skotar þann staf við alla raddar staffi i latinv ok kalla che.

However, as both Anne Holtsmark (1936, 53-62) and Hreinn Benediktsson (*FGT* 194) have pointed out, this passage hardly suggests that the author of the treatise had a first-hand knowledge of Irish. On the contrary, his use of the term *skotar*, corresponding to Latin *Scoti*, instead of *írar* suggests that this information was derived from a Latin literary source rather than from an Irish source or from personal experience.

It is hardly surprising, in light of the scanty evidence of any knowledge of Celtic tongues among Icelanders after the middle of the tenth century, to read in an entry in *Skálholts annáll* for 1337 that the language spoken by five shipwrecked 'Scottish' mariners

(presumably Gaelic) was utterly incomprehensible to the inhabitants of Hornafjörðr (*Islandske Annaler* 1888, 207):

. . . Rak feriu skip vndan Noregi til Island [sic] i eyna Vígr fyrir Horna firði ok a.v. menn skotzka. ok undir stoð engi tungu þeira nema þat litið er þeir kunnu í norænu . . .

Evidence of the presence of non-Scandinavians other than Celts in Iceland during the settlement period is extremely shadowy. In *Landnámabók* one runs across the odd foreign name (see Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1962, 20-22): the name of Friðmundr, one of the slaves of the viking Ingimundr inn gamli Þorsteinsson, is English or Frankish, that of Roðrekr, one of the slaves of Hrosskell of Ýarfell, is probably German (see *ÍF I* 218 and 230, n. 5). English or German names also occasionally appear, however, in the families of Celtic settlers. Besides Vilbaldr (probably English ‘Willebald’) Dufþaksson, brother of Áskell hnokkan mentioned above (see *ÍF I* 326), there is Arnaldr, brother of Sæmundr the Hebridean of Sæmundarhlíð, and Valpjófr, the son of Ørlygr inn gamli (*ÍF I* 220, 54). Vilborg, the wife of Pórðr skeggi of Lón, is said to be of English parentage — although in *Hauksbók* her father, Oswald, and maternal grandfather, Edmund, appear to be confused with the martyred English kings of the same names (see *ÍF I* 48-9 and n. 4). The daughter of the Hebridean Hallgeirr of Hallgeirsey has a Romance name — Mabil (from *Amabilis* — see *ÍF I* 355). Of Friðleifr í Holti it is reported that his father’s side of the family was from Gautland, but his mother Bryngerðr was Flemish (*ÍF I* 242).

Apart from some Frisian noblemen reported by Adam of Bremen to have visited Iceland in the mid-eleventh century (1978, 490) and perhaps the German Tyrkir, who is said to have accompanied Leifr inn heppni to the New World (*ÍF IV* 249, 252-3), the first non-Scandinavians to have made prolonged sojourns in Iceland after the settlement period appear to have been the missionary priests and bishops who arrived in the late tenth and eleventh centuries. Oddr Snorrasson, describing the hardships which beset the Christian mission instigated by King Óláfr Tryggvason, reflects that linguistic difficulties were not the least of the obstacles which the missionaries to Iceland had to surmount (1932, 154-5):

En eigi var þess at von. at folkit myndi verþa lyðit með síþum eða fullri tru við guð. þui at stundin var scomm en folkit hart oc styrt i utrunni. oc villdi seint lata sið frenda sinna. kenni manna fæð var oc mikil oc þo udifarfir þeir er voro.

firir sakir uvizku oc ukunnandi. at fara með danscri tungu þui at þeir varu miok firir litnir af monnum.

These men were, of course, faced with the alternatives of either learning the unbaptised tongue of those they wished to convert, or of winning to the faith individual native speakers of Norse and enlisting their aid as mouthpieces in the spreading of the Word. The latter method was adopted by the Frankish missionary Frederick (Friðrekr), who employed Þorvaldr Koðránnsson to preach on his behalf during his stay in Iceland between the years 981 and 985. According to *Kristni saga*, Þorvaldr met up with Frederick in Saxony after travelling around Europe on viking raids. He is said to have stayed with the German bishop 'for a time', and presumably acquired his knowledge of German during this period (*Kristni saga* 1905, 5-6, 8-9, 11):

Svá er sagt, er þeir biskup ok Þorvaldr fóru um Norðlendingafjórðung ok talaði Þorvaldr trú fyrir mönnum, þvíat biskup undirstóð þá eigi norrænu, en Þorvaldr flutti djarfliga guðs erendi, enn flestir menn vikuz lítt undir af orðum þeira .

Þeir Þorvaldr ok biskup fóru í Vestfirðingafjórðung at boða trú

Þorvaldr talaði þar trú fyrir mönnum . .

Peir Friðrekr biskup ok Þorvaldr fóru til þings ok bað biskup Þorvald telja trú fyrir mönnum at lögbergi svá, at hann væri hjá, en Þorvaldr talaði.

Ari refers to Frederick in *Íslendingabók* (ÍF I 18) as the only foreign bishop to have come to Iceland during heathen times, but he makes no mention of Þorvaldr's part in the mission.

Frederick's countryman and successor in Iceland, Pangbrandr, does not appear to have required the services of an interpreter. According to *Kristni saga*, at least, this *miles Christi* brandished tongue and sword with equal skill in pursuance of his mission. In this work we are told, for example, that Pangbrandr pleaded the case of Christianity so forcefully at the Alþingi that many men there accepted the faith (*Kristni saga* 1905, 22): *Pangbrandr flutti skóruliga guðs erendi á þingi, ok tóku þá margir menn við trú . . .* Pangbrandr had, of course, spent several years in Norway as *hirðprestr* to Óláfr Tryggvason and as the first priest in Mostr. The priest who accompanied Hjalti Skeggjason and Gizurr inn hvíti to Iceland after the failure of Pangbrandr's ill-starred mission, called Thermo by Theodoricus (1880, 15, 21), Þormóðr in Icelandic sources, is said to have come from the British Isles with King Óláfr; but his nationality cannot be determined. It is not recorded that he did any preaching in Iceland; rather, according to *Kristni saga* (1905, 38), the pleading of the Christian cause at the Alþingi appears to have been left to Hjalti and Gizurr.

Of the foreign bishops said by Ari and the author of *Hunrvaka* to have come to Iceland in the years following the conversion, two, Bjarnharðr Vilráðsson, 'the book-wise', and Hróðólfr, or Rúðólfr, who the author of *Hunrvaka* says was named after his place of birth, *Rúða* or Rouen (*Hunrvaka, Bps.* I 64-5; *ÍF* I 18), are probably to be identified with the Rudolf and Bernhard who, according to Adam of Bremen, accompanied Óláfr Haraldsson to Norway from England to assist him in preaching the gospel and organizing the church (1978, 296; cf. Melsted 1907-15, 824-7; Jón Jóhannesson 1974, 140, 141, 193). Bernhard spent five years in Iceland in the period around 1020, but Bishop Rudolf stayed much longer, living at Bær in Borgarfjörðr for nineteen years from 1030 to 1049. Here Rudolf founded a monastery where, according to the *Hauksbók* version of *Landnámabók* (*ÍF* I 65), three monks remained after his return to England in 1050. The monastery does not appear to have survived long after this. Rudolf died Abbot of Abingdon in Berkshire in 1052. Bishop Bernhard of Saxony, who came to Iceland from Norway because of a disagreement with Haraldr inn harðráði, stayed the same length of time as Rudolf, nineteen years, from 1048-1067. He lived at Stóra-Giljá and Sveinsstaðir in Húnavatnsþing, where he became renowned for his many consecrations of churches, wells and fishing stations. After the death of King Haraldr, however, he promptly quitted the country and spent his remaining days first at Selja and later in Bergen (see *Hunrvaka, Bps.* I 65; Jón Jóhannesson 1974, 142).

Among the other foreign missionaries of the eleventh century were an Irishman named Jóhan, who stayed only a few years and is said to have later suffered martyrdom among the Wends (*Hunrvaka, Bps.* I 64; *ÍF* I 18); a Bishop Kolr (see *Hunrvaka, Bps.* I 63) whose nationality is uncertain, but whose name, Jón Jóhannesson suggests (1974, 141, n. 50), may be an Icelandic adaptation of the German name *Colo*; and a Heinrekr biskup, also of uncertain nationality, who stayed two years and may have been the Heinricus whom Adam of Bremen reports to have died of drink in Lund shortly after 1066 (1978, 444; cf. *Hunrvaka, Bps.* I 65; *ÍF* I 18). Ari also records a visit by 'five other men who called themselves bishops — Qrnólfur and Goðiskólkur and three *ermeskir*: Petrus and Abraham and Stephanus'. The author of *Hunrvaka* observes that these bishops who arrived during the episcopacy of Ísleifr Gizurarson 'enjoyed popularity among evil men' because of the laxity of their doctrines, until Archbishop Adalbert of Bremen sent a letter to Iceland forbidding people to accept their services

(see *Bps.* I 62-3; Jón Jóhannesson 1974, 143). Part of this letter probably inspired the provision in the Christian laws of Iceland, codified in the 1120s, against foreign priests not versed in the Latin language, whether they are *ermskir* or *girzkar* (*Grágás* 1852-79, Ia 22):

Ef vt lendir prestar koma vt hingat. þeir er eigi hafa her fyr verit. oc scal eigi tipir at þeim kaupa. oc eigi scolo þeir skira born. nema sva se sívkt at ölærþir men ætti at skira. heldr scolo þeir scira enn ölærþir menn. ef eigi nair avþrvm presti. þa er rett at kavpa tipir at þeim. ef þeir hafa rit oc innsgili byskvp. oc vitni .ij. manna þeirra er hia voro vígslv hans. oc segia orð byskvp. þav at rett se mavnvm. at þigia alla þionostv at honum. Ef byskvp par koma vt hingat til landz eþa prestar. þeir er eigi erv lærþir. a latinv tungv. huartz þeir erv hermskir eþa girskir. oc er mavnnvm rett at hlyþa tibvm hans ef menn vilia. Eigi scal kavpa tipir at þeim. oc aungva þionostv at þeim þigia.

*Girzkr* here could be a variant spelling of *grikkskr*, ‘Greek’, or it could refer to a Slavic language spoken on the Baltic, in *Garðaríki*. As Magnús Már Lárusson has argued (1960, 23-38), these priests were probably churchmen from Ermland on the south-east Baltic coast, rather than from Armenia, and would have used Slavonic as their liturgical language. The names of the companions of Petrus, Abraham and Stephanus — Qrnólfr and Goðiskálkr — are Germanic, and it is not unlikely that these men acted as interpreters for the three bishops.

Some of the foreign missionaries — notably Rudolf of Bær and Bernhard the Saxon — stayed in Iceland long enough to have become fluent in Norse. (Both Rudolf and Bernhard may, of course, have acquired a working knowledge of the language in Norway.) As the famous passage on the community of language in the North before 1066 in chapter 7 of *Gunnlaugs saga* informs us, English and Old West Norse were sufficiently similar during the eleventh century to have made the linguistic difficulties facing English missionaries less serious than those facing priests from other countries.<sup>5</sup> The large number of Old English words in Old West Norse (see de Vries 1977, xxvii) — words like *biskup*, *guðspjall*, *kirkja*, *klerkr*, *kristinn*, *pistill*, *prestr*, *ræðingr*, *stafróf* etc. — make it clear, however, that English clerics in Norway and Iceland were obliged to introduce from their own language a considerable body of ecclesiastical and pedagogical vocabulary. Moreover, the translations of Ælfric’s *De falsis deis* and *De auguriis* preserved in *Hauksbók* show that English vernacular manuscripts were available in Iceland and intelligible to at least some Icelandic clerics in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.<sup>6</sup> At least two leading Icelandic churchmen of this period, Porlákr Pórhallsson and Páll

Jónsson, received part of their education in England. And references to priests with English or Anglo-Norman names are found occasionally in thirteenth-century sources: Gunnfarðr and Ljúfini in *Sturlu saga* (*Sturlunga saga* 1946, I 65, 76), and Aðalsteinn djákn Reinaldsson in *Hrafn's saga Sveinbjarnarsonar* (1987, 40; cf. note ad. loc., 86-7). In fact, the provisions in *Grágás* governing the inheritance of the property of deceased foreigners suggest that Englishmen were not unfamiliar in Iceland at this time (*Grágás* 1852-79, Ia 229; II 74-5, 98):

EN ef sa maðr andaz her er her a engi frænda alanðe. oc scal iafnt arfr fara sem vig söc ef hann væri vegin. Nu andaz hann at boanda oc scal hann virða lata fe þa er vii. vicor ero af sumre oc a hann avöxtö til þess er erfingi cōmr eptir. Nu calla frændr hins til oc er eigi scyllt at selia þeim. Nu andaz enscir menn her eða þeir er en ero o kunare hingat. oc er eigi scyllt at selia þeim. nema her hafe verit fyr sonr eða fapir eða broþir. þeirra. oc kanadiz þeir þa við . . . Nórrörnir menn oc danskir oc sönskir. eigo her arf at taca eptir frændr sina þriðia brøðra oc nanare. EN at frændsemi af öllum avðrom tungum en danscri tungo. scal engi maðr her arf taca nema fapir eða sonr eða broþir. Oc þviat eino þeir ef þeir hafðo kenz her aðr sva at menn visso deili a þui. . . Nu andaz enskir menn her. eða þeir er hingat ero en okunare. oc er eigi scyllt at selia þeim nema her hafi verit fyr sonr. eða fapir. eða broþir þeirra oc kanaðiz þeir þa við . . . Nu andaz enskir menn her. eða þeir er menn kuno eigi her male. eða tungor við. oc er eigi scyllt at lata arf þeirra ut ganga. nema her a landi hafe verit fyr fapir eða sonr eða brøþir ens davþa. oc hafe þeir þa við kanaz.

The law states that if men who speak a language other than the *dóansk tunga* die in Iceland — *Englishmen* or those still ‘more foreign’ (*úkunnari*) — then only a father or a son or a brother may claim an inheritance after them. The implication is clearly that, of those races whose language made them ‘strange’ to Icelanders, the English were, at least, the *least* foreign.<sup>7</sup>

From the eleventh century, especially after the founding of Bergen around 1075, English merchandise regularly made its way to Iceland from Norway, with which country England maintained a lively trade. Documents of the twelfth and thirteenth century show that direct trade between England and Iceland in falcons and homespun was also not uncommon. English psalters and massbooks are mentioned in Icelandic booklists from the thirteenth century through the sixteenth. One inventory in Eyjafjörðr dated 1318 (*DI* II, 453) lists eleven *Reddingabækur*, which Jón Sigurðsson suggests must be English ‘reading books’, although the word probably refers more specifically to books of ‘readings’ (i.e. ‘church lessons’), lectionaries.<sup>8</sup> The validity of this interpretation cannot, of course, be proved; but an interest in English texts was not uncommon in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Henry

Goddard Leach (1921) has argued that many of the texts of Old French romances which reached Iceland and Norway during this period probably originated in the British Isles. The second branch of *Karlasmagnús saga*, the story of Olíf and Landres, is said to have been rendered 'from English into Norse' at the instigation of Bjarni Erlingsson of Bjarkey from a text which he acquired in Scotland around 1287 (*Karlasmagnús saga* 1860, 50). And late fifteenth-century translations of parts of Robert of Brunne's *Handlyng Synne* and the English *Gesta Romanorum* are preserved in Icelandic manuscripts of the sixteenth century (see Einar G. Pétursson 1976, lxxviii-lxxx, lxxxiii-xciii).

Icelandic connections with the continent, and in the eleventh century particularly with North Germany, were still more significant than those with England. The Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen had from the beginning claimed authority over all churches in the Scandinavian countries, and the Icelandic church remained under the administrative jurisdiction of Bremen until 1104. Even after that date, when the Icelandic church became suffragan to Lund, German influences continued to reach Iceland both directly and through the new metropolitan see, whose German ties extended beyond Hamburg-Bremen to Alsace and the Rhineland. Ísleifr Gizurarson, the first Icelandic bishop and probably the first Icelander to embark upon clerical studies abroad, was educated at the famous convent-school of Herford in Westphalia, and Ísleifr in turn sent his son and successor as bishop, Gizurr, to school in *Saxland*, presumably at the same institution. Ari records that Sæmundr Sigfússon inn fróði was in *Frakkland*, presumably for the sake of his education, sometime around 1076 (see *ÍF* I 20-1; on Sæmundr and Frakkland cf. Foote 1984, 114-18, 120). *Frakkland* here need not, of course, mean France proper — the term was used generally to refer to a larger, vaguer geographical entity including both Romance and German-speaking areas in Lotharingia, Burgundy and Alsace. The priest Rikini whom Jón Ógmundarson brought to Hólar around 1066 to serve as chaplain and to teach music and rhetoric, and who is described as *franzeis* (see *Jóns saga helga*, *Bps.* I 168, 173; 239, 246), probably came from roughly the same area. He was certainly 'Frankish', but need not have been 'French'. His name is German (*Rikewin*) and appears to have been especially common in the region of Metz and in the Rhineland around Cologne (see Foote 1984, 111-112, 120).

French influence on ecclesiastical and intellectual affairs in Iceland became more significant after 1153, when the creation of

the metropolitan see of Niðaróss was followed by an influx of ideas associated with the Cluniac movement, the Cistercians and the Victorines, whose ties with Norway were becoming firmly established in the mid-twelfth century. It is not surprising to read that Þorlákr Þórhallsson spent some time studying in Paris c. 1153–1159 (see *Þorláks saga helga*, *Bps.* I 92, 267; cf. Jakob Benediktsson 1972, 341; 1976, 386; Jón Jóhannesson 1974, 180, 196–7), a period during which many leading Norwegian clerics were receiving an education in the same city, especially at the Augustinian houses of St Victor and St Geneviève. The roll of Norse *Parísklerkar* of the twelfth century includes Eiríkr Ívarsson, archbishop of Niðaróss (1189–1205), his successor Þórir Guðmundsson (fl. 1205–1214) and Bishop Þórir of Hamar (fl. 1189/90–1196). Archbishops Eskill (died 1181) and Absalon (died 1201) of Lund also had ties with St Victor. (St Þorlákr's part in the founding of the first Augustinian canons' seat in Iceland at Pykkvabær in 1168 makes it tempting to believe that he too may have studied at St Victor during his stay in Paris.)<sup>9</sup>

The learning which Scandinavians went abroad to acquire was of course, Latin learning. Functioning as the language of both Church and education for the whole of western Europe, the status of medieval Latin was quite different from that of any 'foreign language'. As Bernhard Bischoff has observed (1961, 210):

as the language of the Western church which every child admitted to an ecclesiastical school had to learn, it became for many centuries the general vehicle of spiritual culture and of practical record . . . In the mediaeval West the majority of the population were ignorant of Latin; but whoever learned it became a member of a European community; with Latin he could cross all venacular frontiers, if only he remained within the social stratum where it was understood.

This is the language in which the schoolmasters Gísli Finnsson, from Gautland, and Rikini, the Frank, gave instruction in Jón Ógmundarson's renowned school at Hólar—the language of which even the carpenter Póroddr Gamlason gained a smattering by attending, while he worked, to the lessons recited by the young scholars there.<sup>10</sup>

That Latin-speaking foreigners living in Scandinavia could get by, in clerical circles at least, without learning the Norse tongue, is illustrated by the example of Jón flæmingi, one of the Flemish companions of Laurentius Kálffson during the time he spent in Trondheim. Jón had studied law in Paris and Orléans and was fluent in Latin and French. His knowledge of Norse was, however, less than adequate (*Laurentius saga* ch. 9, *Bps.* I 799): . . . *hann*

*kunni ekki norrænu at tala, ok skildi alþýðan ekki mál hans, því at hann talaði allt á latínu, fransiku eðr flæmsku.* The sort of difficulties which a foreigner in Jón's position could run into is demonstrated in an anecdote telling how Jón asked Laurentius to teach him how to greet some Icelanders who had arrived in Trondheim. Laurentius mischievously suggested that *fagnaðarlaus, kompán* would be an appropriate greeting; and Jón, who knew enough Norse to recognize that the first part of the first word meant 'joy', assumed that the second element was the same as Latin *laus* and innocently addressed Laurentius' kinsman Klængr with this insulting salutation (*Laurentius saga* ch. 12, *Bps.* I 801-2):

Einn tíma kómu mörg Íslandsförl til Prándheims, ok voru á margir íslenzkir menn; vildi sira Laurentius þeim öllum nokkut til góða gjöra. Þar kom millum annarra sá maðr, er Klængr steypir hét, ok frændi Laurentii, ok honum heimuligr. En sem Jón flæmingi sá þat, vildi hann gjöra honum nokkut athvarf, ok talaði einn tíma við Laurentium á latínu, ok mælti: 'kennit mér at heilsa á þenna yðar kompán uppá norrænu'. Laurentio þótti mikil gaman at Jóni, ok sagði: 'heilsaðu honum svo: *fagnaðarlaus, kompán!*' — 'Ek undirstend', sagði Jón, 'at þetta mun vera fögr heilsan, því *gaudium* er fögnuðr, en *laus* er lof'; gengr síðan at Klængi steypi, klappandi honum á hans herðar, ok mælti: 'fagnaðarlaus, kompán!'. Hinn hvesti augun í móti, ok þótti heilsanin eigi vera svo fögr sem hinn ætlaði. Nú mælti Jón flæmingi við Laurentium: 'ek forstend nú, at þú hefir dárat mik, því at þessi maðr varð reiðr við mik'.

The story, which is curiously reminiscent of the tale of the inappropriate Irish greeting in *Gísls þáttr*, not only teaches us something about the correct pronunciation of the *au* diphthong in Old West Norse in the thirteenth century; it also demonstrates the limitations of even well-educated foreign clerics living *in partibus alienis* at this time.<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless, the competence in the international language of Latin (and in many cases, French) which study at a foreign university afforded, made those Scandinavians who had benefited from such an education valuable as interpreters. In *Orkneyinga saga*, for instance, we are told that Rǫgnvaldr kali invited Bishop Vilhjálmr of Orkney (who had studied in Paris in the first half of the twelfth century) to act as his interpreter on his journey to the Holy Land (*ÍF XXXIV* 204):

[Rǫgnvaldr] Jarl hafði ok Vilhjálm byskup í boði sínu of jólin ok marga góðinga sína. Þá gerði hann ok bert of ráðagörðir sínar, at hann ætlaði ór landi ok út til Jórsalaheims. Bað hann byskup til ferðar með sér. Byskup var Parísklerkr, ok vildi jarl einkum, at hann væri túlkr þeira. Byskup hét ferðinni.

But I shall return to this matter of interpreters in due course.

Among the plunder of book-learning brought home from abroad

by Icelandic scholars was much new information about tongues and peoples unknown in the North; and eventually these new ideas became incorporated into the Icelandic world-picture. In their approach to foreign languages, medieval Icelandic writers were heir to certain myths about the origin of foreign tongues which all European authors shared. Hebrew, Greek and Latin, the three sacred languages which Pilate had written on the title he placed above the cross, assumed in the medieval mind a mystical quality that made them revered above all others.<sup>12</sup>

Old Icelandic texts preserve a wide variety of explanations of the origin of the Latin language. In chapter two of *Breta sgur*, for example, it is noted that Latin owes its beginnings to King Latinus, eponymous founder of the Latini — and more particularly to his daughter, Æneas' wife Lavinia, whose name is here corrupted to Latina, for purposes of etymology, and who is said to have first discovered the Latin alphabet (*Hauksbók* 1892-6, 233):

Konvngr reð fyri Italia sa er Latinvs (het). dottir hans het Latina. hon fan fyrst latinv stafrof ok af hennar nafni heita aller Látínv menn þeir er þa tvngv kvnnv.

Most writers who favour this etymology are content to identify Latinus rather than his daughter as the eponym of the Latins and their language. This explanation is offered as early as the second century, in Hyginus' *Fabulae* (ch. 127), and at least as late as the end of the thirteenth, in the *Catholicon* of Johannes Balbus (1460, s.v. *Latinus*). According to a more popular account of this episode in linguistic history, the Latin alphabet was first discovered by the nymph Carmenta (or Carmentis) — as one reads, for example, in Hyginus (*Fabulae*, ch. 277), or in Isidore's *Etymologiae* (I, iv, 1):

Latinas litteras Carmentis nympha prima Italies tradidit. Carmentis autem dicta, quia carminibus futura canebat. Ceterum proprie vocata [est] Nicostrate.

According to another account, the natives of Italy were first taught to write by Carmenta's son Evander, Æneas' ally in the war against the Latins — as one reads, for example, in Tacitus (1937, III 270):

At in Italia Etrusci ab Corinthio Demarato. Aborigines Arcade ab Evandro didicerunt; et forma litteris Latinis quae veterissimis Graecorum.

Although, as far as I have been able to discover, Carmentis is never mentioned in Old Icelandic literature, her Arcadian equivalent Nicostrata appears at least once. The author of *Veraldar saga*, in effect, marries the aetiological tale of Nicostrata/Carmentis with that of Latinus by explaining that this 'other' discoverer of the Latin alphabet was, in fact, the king's wife (*Veraldar saga* 1944, 46):

Eneas gek at eiga Lavinea dotvr Latinvs konvngs er latinvtvnnga er við kend því at Nicostra(t)a kona hans fan latinv stafrof.

Association of the 'discovery' of Latin with Carmentis and Evander also underlies an entry for the year 1053 in *Flateyjarannáll* which describes the unearthing of the body of Evander's son Pallas in Rome. After quoting the simple Latin epitaph found with the body, the author adds the cautionary note that these lines of verse could hardly have been written at the time of Pallas's death, for when Evander's son met his end at the hands of Turnus, the Latin alphabet had just been newly discovered. This entry for 1053, complete with its long description of the miraculously uncorrupted body of this giant warrior of old, is a fairly close rendering of an article under the same year in the Chronicle of Helinand of Froidmont (fl. 1160-1229), who in turn draws his description, with some rearrangement, from William of Malmesbury's *Gesta regum Anglorum* (written around 1120).<sup>13</sup> Helinand copies William's remark that although, true enough, Evander's mother Carmentis did discover Latin script, it is more likely that the epitaph was written by some ancient poet, Ennius perhaps, than by one of Pallas's contemporaries. The Icelandic translator omits mention of the name Carmentis, but retains the notion that the first use of Latin is associated with the time and family of Evander:

A þessu ari fanz likami Pallantis sonar Euandri i murnum med þessu letri.

Filius Euandri Pallas  
que(m) lancea Turni  
Militis occidit more suo  
iacet hic.

þat trua menn at þessi vers voru  
eigi þa dictud i fystu er Pallas  
var i vegginn lagidr. þuiat þa  
var nyfundit at eins latinustafrof.  
helldr hyggia menn at þau  
hafi ger verit af einu edr nock-  
uru odru fornu skalldi.

(*Flateyjarbók* 1860-68, III 508)

Eo tempore corpus Pallantis filii Evandri Romæ integrum repertum est, cum hoc epitaphio:

Filius Evandri Pallas,  
quem lancea Turni  
Militis occidit, more suo  
iacet hic.

Quos versus non tunc factos crediderim, quamvis Carmentis litteras latinas invenisse dicatur; sed vel ab Ennio, vel ab aliquo alio antiquo poeta . . .

(PL 212, 950B).

One other odd explanation of the origin of Latin appears in an account of the history of the world in the fourteenth-century Icelandic miscellany AM 764 4to, where it is stated in a discussion of the skills of the descendants of Adam that Enoch first discovered the Latin alphabet (AM 764 4to, 2v):

. . . enok er uppuar numinn sem fyrr segir uar hinn vij af adam hann fann fysstr allra manna bokstafa setning latinu mæls

This notion is recalled in an account of the generations of Cain in another fourteenth-century miscellany, AM 194 8vo, which notes that Enoch discovered the runic alphabet (AM 194 8vo, 29r, AÍ I 46):

. . . Jarét lifdi viij h. vetra ok lx ok ij vetr. Hans son var Enok, er þessa heims var ccc ok lx vetra, hann fan fyrst rúna stafi. A hans dögum andadiz Adam

This account provides an interesting Biblical alternative to the accepted Nordic myth (recorded, for example, in *Hávamál*, verses 138-145, and *Sigrdrífumál*, verse 13) that runes were of divine origin, first mastered by Óðinn through an act of self-sacrifice (see Musset 1965, 168-9).

It is possible that Icelandic authors drew the idea that Enoch discovered some sort of alphabet from an addition to Peter Comestor's account of the generations of Adam, included in many manuscripts of the *Historia Scholastica* (cap. xxx, PL 198, 1080C-1081A):

Repetit de generatione Adæ, ut integrum ordinem genealogiarum prosequatur. Unde quidam incipiunt ab Adam primam ætatem; alii a Seth . . . Iste genuit Enos, qui Cainam, qui Malaheel, qui Jaret, qui Henoch, qui Mathusalem, qui Lamech, qui Noe. Sicut ergo in generatione Cain, septimus, scilicet Lamech, fuit pessimus, ita in generatione Seth, septimus, scilicet Henoch, fuit optimus. Et transtulit illum Deus in paradisum voluptatis ad tempus, ut in fine temporum, cum Elia convertat corda patrum in filios. [Additio. Henoch quasdam litteras invenit, et quasdam libros scripsit sub quo Adam intelligitur mortuus.]

The story may be traced back to the apocryphal *Book of Jubilees*, which recounts that Enoch was the first man to learn the art of writing.<sup>14</sup>

According to the most common tradition, the Greek alphabet was first brought to the uncivilized Greek peoples from Phoenicia by Cadmus, the founder of Thebes, who had adapted the letters from Egyptian pictograms. The story was widely known from accounts by, for example, Tacitus (*Annales* XI, xiv), Pliny (*Naturalis historia* VII, lvi, 192), Hyginus (*Fabulae*, cap. 277), Isidore (*Etymologiae* I, iii, 5-6), and Vincent of Beauvais (1624, II 85). A brief Latin tract in the Icelandic manuscript AM 732 b 4to (thought to have been written at the beginning of the fourteenth century) recounts the same story of Cadmus's importation of the Greek alphabet (AM 732 b 4to, 2v):

Litteras grecas in primis chatmus agenoris filius a fenice ueniens non nullas ad tollit. postquam aliquantas alii adiecerunt que ad numeros facientes habitabiles habentur. Earumque litterarum quibus scribi potest summa ad .xxiiij. peruenit cetere caracteres adiuncte ut millenarum numerum perficere possint.

The same story is included in chapter four of *Trójumanna saga* (1963, 4):

Convngr h(et) Agenor a Girklandi rikr ok fiolmennr. hann atti .íj. born Kaðmvs h(et) svn hans en Evrópa dottir allra kvenna friðvz. Kaðmvs var spekingr mikill. hann fann stafrof Girkia.

Cadmus is again mentioned as the discoverer of the Greek alphabet in chapter three of *Alexanders saga* (1925, 48), in the discussion of Tyre, the city founded by Cadmus's father, Agenor:

Agénor konungr er reisa let Tirvm sem sagt var. var faðer Cathmi er fyrt fann stafrof agriczco oc erv storar sognor fra þeim þær er finnaz mono iþeire boc er heitir Ovidius magnus.

It is interesting to note that in the same passage it is stated that it was in the same city of Tyre that, at least according to the ancient poets, the Hebrew alphabet was first discovered and taught:

. . . oc þar kemr at su en ageta borg Tirus. er Agénor konungr hafðe reisa latet ifyrsto brennr vpp oll I þesse borg hefir fyrt funniz oc kent veret stafrof áebrescu ef því ma trua er fornscalldin hava sagt. eda frettir hafa fra faret.

The reference to Cadmus is drawn from one of the *scholia* to Book III, lines 330-334 of Walter of Châtillon's *Alexandreis*. It appears, for example, in the earliest extant manuscript of the poem, Codex Genevensis lat. 98 (from the second half of the twelfth century), but this gloss makes no mention of the discovery of Hebrew.<sup>15</sup> Still, hardly a thirteenth-century manuscript of the *Alexandreis* may be found which lacks glosses, and the reference to Hebrew in *Alexanders saga* may well have been drawn from some other commentary. At any rate, it is not surprising to find both these myths of origin presented together in *Alexanders saga*. Where these alphabets are dealt with at all in Icelandic texts, samples of Hebrew and Greek are not infrequently discussed side by side — logically enough, as they were generally regarded as the two principal ancestors of the Latin alphabet.

The author of the *First Grammatical Treatise*, considering which letters might properly be used in Icelandic orthography, demonstrates his erudition by including in his discussion references to various foreign languages including the Greek distinction between short *epsilon* and long *eta*, short *omicron* and long *omega* (*FGT* 218):

. . . þa er þo gott að [v]ita þat að er grein enn aa raddar stofvm . . . grein sv er mali skiptir hvart stafur er langr ðóða skammr sem grikkir rita i qðrv likneski langan staf enn i qðrv skamman. Sva rita þeir e skaman. e en sva langan sem sia stafur er H [.]. þann veg o skamman. [o] Enn þann veg langan ω [.]

and further remarks on the Greek letters *kappa* (*FGT* 234-36):

Enn fyrir því at .c. hefir enn sama voxt hvart sem hann er hofvð stafr ritínn éða ægí . . . ok þa rít ek fyrir hans hofvð staf þenna staf .k. fyrir því at þa hefr hann sinn voxt þot nakkvat lægiz við. er ok ægí all fiartekit til þess vaxtar honvm allz sa stafr stendr í gríkskv ok heitir *kappa* . . .

and *ypsilon* (*FGT* 238):

y hann er gríckskr stafr ok heitir þar *ui* enn latinv menn hafa hann fyrir *i* ok i gríkskv orðvm ad æfns þo ef skynsamliga er ritað ok þarf hann af því ægí her i væra tvngv nema maðr vilí setia hann fyrir *u* þa er hann verðr stafaðr við annan raddar stafr ok hafðr fyrir samhlíðanda.

The author remarks further on the Hebrew letters *daleth* and *ṣade*, from which two characters, he explains, we derive our letter *z* (*FGT* 238):

*z* hann er samsettr af *deleth* ebreskvm staf svá ritnvム [ . . . ] ok settir er fyrir *d* ok af þeim oðrvム er heitir *sade* ok er sva ritenn. [ . . . ] ok er fyrir *es* i latinv settir allz hann sialfr er ebreskr stafr er þo se hann i latinv stafrófi ok hafðr. þviat ebresk orð vaða opt i latinvnni. [The forms of the two Hebrew letters given in the MS are greatly distorted.]

It must not be assumed, however, that these references demonstrate that the Icelandic grammarian had any first-hand knowledge of Greek or Hebrew. His notes on the long and short vowels in Greek are taken over from some version of either Priscian's *Institutiones grammaticae* or Remigius of Auxerre's commentary on Donatus's *Ars Maior*.<sup>16</sup> Anne Holtsmark (1936, 35-7) has demonstrated that the author of the treatise would have been familiar with the Greek letter *kappa* from Book I of Priscian's *Institutiones (De Littera)* and points out that the same unusual form of the letter found in *FGT* appears, for example, in a twelfth-century copy of Priscian's text, preserved in the Royal Library in Copenhagen as MS. Gks. 1988 4to, 3v-10v (cf. Hreinn Benedikts-son's remarks, *FGT* 194-5). The author's comments on *ypsilon* are found in almost every commentary. The name used in the Icelandic treatise, *ui*, suggests a connection with the English name ('wy'); and representation of Greek 'v/y' as forms of 'ui' or 'wi' finds its way into discussions of the Greek alphabet in many texts written before the end of the twelfth century.<sup>17</sup> No source has been discovered, however, for the Icelandic author's remarks on the Hebrew origin of *z*, which are, of course, completely erroneous. The Latin grammarians regard *z* as a Greek letter. In the Hebrew alphabet, *z* is in fact represented by *zayin*. No combination of the Hebrew characters *ṣade* and *daleth* will form either *z* or *zayin*, and in any event the Hebrew characters in the Icelandic text are grossly distorted. Anne Holtsmark points out, however, that the forms of the letters are sufficiently reminiscent of old Hebrew script,

particularly as it appears on coins and jewellery, to suggest that it is possible that the author of the source for the Icelandic passage may have had at least a passing acquaintance with the Hebrew alphabet.<sup>18</sup>

It is worth noting, at any rate, that the names of the complete Hebrew alphabet were known in medieval Iceland. A detailed discussion of the spiritual significance of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet is preserved in AM 732 b 4to. The passage (headed *de rationale*) represents a re-arrangement of Jerome's interpretation of the Hebrew alphabet in his thirtieth Epistle to St Paula of Rome, concerning the verses on the Hebrew letters in Psalm 118. After explaining the meaning of each character, Jerome supplies a list of *connexiones* to demonstrate that when these 'etymologies' are written out in the natural order of the Hebrew alphabet, they form a succession of seven separate phrases suitable for contemplation. Compare the text of AM 732 b 4to, 6v:

hier standa ebreskir stafir sem Aleph . Beth . et cetera de rationale.  
Notandum est quod aleph interpretatur doctrina. beth domus. Gimel plenitudo.  
deleth tabularum seu scripturarum. hec siquidem est prima connexio litterarum  
ipsarum ubi dicitur quod doctrina ecclesie que est domus dei est in plenitudine  
scripturarum. He ista. Vau. et Zay. hec. heth uita. hec est secunda connexio  
ubi dicitur. quod ista et hec doctrina quam predicimus est uita qua uiuimus. //  
Teth bonum ioth principium. hec est tercia connexio. ubi dicitur quod bonum  
est principium per scripturas quasi per speculum saltim in enigmate agnoscere  
dominum // Caph manus Lameth cor uel disciplina. hec est quarta connexio.  
ubi dicitur. quod in utero cordis disciplina exigitur quia nihil facere possumus  
nisi que facienda erunt agnouerimus Men ex ipsis. nun. sempiternum. samech.  
adiutorium. hec est quinta connexio ubi dicitur quod ex ipsis scripturis est nobis  
sempiternum auxilium // Aym oculus phe errauit. sadeth iusticia. uel consolatio.  
hec est sexta connexio. ubi dicitur quod sepe dicta scriptura est oculus errantibus  
et consolatio // Coph. aspice res capud. syn super uulnus. thau signum uel  
consummatio. hec est. septima connexio ubi etiam in numero fit mysticus  
intellectus. ubi dicitur. aspice in scriptura contineri capud nostrum a quo habemus  
medelam super uulnra et consequamur consummacionem. id est uitam et-  
ernam.//

[The Icelandic heading is written in a different hand from the rest of the entry]

and Jerome 1949-61, II 33-4:

- 5. ALEPH interpretatur 'doctrina', BETH 'domus' GIMEL 'plenitudo', DE-  
LETH 'tabularum', HE 'ista', VAV 'et', ZAI 'haec', HETH 'uita', TETH  
'bonum', IOD 'principium', CAPH 'manus', LAMED 'disciplinae' siue  
'cordis', MEM 'ex ipsis', NUN 'sempiternum', SAMECH 'adiutorium', AIN  
'fons' siue 'oculus', PHE 'os' — ab ore non ab osse intellege, ne litterarum  
ambiguitate fallaris —, SADE 'iustitiae', COPH 'uocatio', RES 'capitis',  
SEN 'dentium', TAU 'signa'.
- 6. Post interpretationem elementorum intellegentiae ordo dicendus est. Prima  
conexio est 'doctrina domus plenitudo tabularum ista', quo uidelicet doctrina

- ecclesiae, quae domus Dei est, in librorum repperiatur plenitudine diuinorum.
7. Secunda conexio est 'et haec uita'. Quae enim alia potest esse uita sine scientia scripturarum, per quas etiam ipse Christus agnoscitur qui est uita credentium?
  8. Tertia conexio habet 'bonum principium', quia, quamuis nunc sciamus uniuersa quae scripta sunt, tamen 'ex parte cognoscimus et ex parte prophetamus', et 'nunc per speculum uidemus in aenigmate'; cum autem meruerimus esse cum Christo et similes angelis fuerimus, tunc librorum doctrina cessabit.
  9. Quarta conexio est 'manus cordis' sive 'disciplinae'. Manus intelleguntur in opere, cor et disciplina interpretantur in sensu quia nihil facere possumus nisi prius quae facienda sunt scierimus.
  10. Quinta conexio est 'ex ipsis aeternum adiutorium'. Hoc explanatione non indiget, et omni luce manifestius est ex scripturis aeterna subsidia ministrari.
  11. Sexta conexio habet 'fons', sive 'oculus oris iustitiae', secundum illud quod in tertio numero exposuimus.
  12. Septima conexio est quae et extrema, quo et in ipso quoque septenario numero sit mysticus intellectus, 'uocatio capitinis dentium signa'. Per dentes articulata uox promitur, et his signis ad caput omnium qui Christus est peruenitur.

together with his *Connexiones* (from Thiel 1969, 86):

1. Aleph, Beth, Gimel, Deleth = doctrina domus plentitudo tabularum
2. He, Vau, Zai, Heth = ista et haec vita
3. Tet, Jod = bonum principium
4. Chaph, Lamed = manus disciplinae sive cordis
5. Mem, Nun, Samech = ex ipsis semipernum iudicium
6. Ain, Phe, Sade = fons sive oculus oris iustitiae
7. Coph, Res, Sen, Thau = vox capitinis dentium signa

Such explanations of Hebrew characters were extremely popular in the middle ages. Matthias Thiel has made a detailed study of these lists and distinguishes ten different types preserved in whole or in part in works written between the fourth and the fourteenth centuries and reproduced in scores of medieval manuscripts. It appears, for example, in commentaries on Psalm 118 by Jerome, Ambrose, Alcuin, Bruno of Wurzburg (*fl. c. 1034-45*), Bruno the Carthusian (*c. 1032-1101*) and Anselm of Laon (*c. 1050-1117*); in the *Vespasian Psalter* and another eighth-century manuscript of the Roman Psalter preserved in the Vatican library, Reginensis lat. 11; in an Irish mnemonic verse of the ninth century (*MGH Poetae III* 698-9); in commentaries on the first book of Lamentations by Rabanus Maurus (*c. 784-856*) and Paschasius Radbertus (*c. 790-865*); and glosses on Lamentations in twelfth- and fourteenth-century manuscripts in Cambridge and Paris (see the comparative table in Thiel 1969, 90-93). The rendering in AM 732 b 4to is closest to the earliest form of the list in Jerome's thirtieth

epistle, although the Icelandic version takes many variant readings from a text dependent at times on the commentary of Ambrose, at times on that of Bruno the Carthusian (cf. variant readings in Thiel 1969, 90-96).

The earliest Icelandic attempt at complete transcription of the Greek and Hebrew alphabets which I have been able to find is preserved in the miscellany manuscript AM 685 d 4to, written in the fifteenth century, 30v-31r (reproduced on pp. 202-3<sup>19</sup>) — but even here many of the characters are malformed and their names confused. In any event, one must be careful not to attach too much importance to this sort of garbled alphabet as evidence of knowledge of a foreign language. Bernhard Bischoff is quick to point out (1961, 213):

. these lists and enumerations in general cannot be regarded as a result of, or as an attempt at genuine language study. They might rather be regarded as a symptom of a naive curiosity which manifests itself in the collecting of foreign and strange alphabets which can be observed in manuscripts from the eighth century on and continued to post-mediaeval times. The collections often include real as well as invented alphabets without discrimination, amongst them, e.g., the alleged alphabet of the kingdom of Prester John. Quite often they were used for cypher, and Greek and runes most frequently of all.

Of the three sacred languages, Hebrew had the significant distinction of being generally regarded as the original language of mankind. According to Genesis 11:1-9, the generations of Adam had a single common language. At least from the Hellenistic period, this tongue was commonly said to be Hebrew, an ancient Judaic idea which Christian writers may have drawn from the apocryphal *Book of Jubilees*, 12:25-26, in which an angel of God teaches Abraham the first language of man, forgotten since the time of Babel and here identified as ‘Hebrew . . . the tongue of the Creation’ (Charles 1913, 32). Accordingly, Ambrosiaster (died c. 393) discusses the common assumption that Hebrew was the language first given to Adam.<sup>20</sup> Isidore (*Etymologiae* I, iii, 4) speaks of Hebrew as ‘the mother of all languages and letters’. Likewise Bede notes that the language in which Adam gave names to all things in creation seems to have been Hebrew, since all the names which appear in the Book of Genesis up to Babel are taken from that language (*In Genesim* I, ii, 19, CCSL 118A, 55-6):

. . . Constat Adam in ea lingua, qua totum genus humanum usque ad constructionem turris, in qua linguae diuisae sunt, loquebatur, animantibus terrae et uolatilibus caeli nomen imposuisse. . . Primam autem linguam fuisse generi humano Hebreum uidetur, ex eo quod nomina cuncta quae usque ad diuisionem linguarum in Genesi legimus, illius constat esse loquelae.



num sonach eis se fadz roph uof sim

**S**IXI VI OF 3: PR VI OF 3: TH  
in dia regia tesseru panta ea quia omni non debet devenia de  
modia decimta decimto secundum decimam decimam optima decim  
octa decimam. Da eis. Tunc sexta panta ex ante ap  
erita ostenta eminencia. Etiam dicimus inuenimus et ceterum  
pentecostem exaratum episcopum occidimus maculam. illa di  
chille trichille rectihille pentachille exanthille epactihille  
octochille macchille dicitur.

**N**unq; duos trios quartos quinque sive septem octo novem decim unde  
cum duodecim tredecim quindecim quindecim sexdecim et ceterum. sep  
tendit: 1. octodecim. 18. novemdecim. 19. viginti. 20.  
primogenita. Et quinquaginta. Et sexagesima. Et septuagesima. Et  
octoginta. Et nonagesima. 90. centum. 100. ducenti. 200. trecenti.  
300. quingentis. 400. quoniam. 500. sexcenti. Et septem  
centi. 1000. octocentri. 800. nouemcenti. 900. nulla. 1000.

**V**o sive mago mōrāt hāmīn se uaxiū s̄ ej,  
et suo s̄ p̄tura n̄ ut u agit et alioz elipiss hāmīn  
et 80 māl. In agit fluvium et lepte nōest alioz  
no hāmīn ut ej. Et nōest alioz hāmīn et uotn nōest lepte et 80  
et uotn. Et regi et coetate latke jāfim hōp hāmīn. Jādī et oh  
x̄itō et lepte et uotn et alioz syngt et ualle u podi. Et  
lepte sinet et jādī sive syngt et sol et tūgl et stām p̄i u agit  
uag et pau erden p̄a 1000 si et s̄p̄nt et pau mynd et pau lempinge  
et spēncl et sinet lepte et jādī. Jādī et lepte s̄mua et 80 bān  
syngt et spēncl et bān. Si et bāllid lepte et bāllid pau et hāmīn et  
et jādī et tūgl et alioz lepte et et bāllid mīz hāmīn tūgl et syngt  
mepris et pau et off sole et pau lepte. Tu et plūg et s̄mua et  
et ggi et hāmīn hāmīn hāmīn hāmīn et am uir et hāmīn  
et hāmīn hāmīn hāmīn hāmīn hāmīn hāmīn et am uir et hāmīn  
et hāmīn hāmīn hāmīn hāmīn hāmīn hāmīn et am uir et hāmīn

Peter Comestor makes the same observation in the *Historia Scholastica* (PL 198, 1070A):

Et imposuit eis nomina Adam lingua Hebræa, quæ sola fuit ab initio. Quod inde perpenditur, quia nomina quæ leguntur usque ad divisionem linguarum Hebræa sunt,

and this is duly included in the treatment of Genesis in *Stjórn* (1862, 33):

. þat er huers kuikendis nafn allt til þessa dags sem Adam gaf þi. talandi upp aa ebreska tungu. þiat hon ein uar fra upphafi allt til tungna skiptis.

Over the centuries, other theories regarding the language of Adam were occasionally proposed. The oldest preserved text of the *Ioca Monachorum* (thought to have been composed in the sixth century) records that the first words which Adam spoke were *Deo gratias* — as if man's first language was Latin.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, Norman Cohn recalls that certain sixteenth-century German millenarian mystics argued that Adam spoke German, in order to underpin their own position that the Teutons were God's chosen people.<sup>22</sup> Just as extravagant, as late as the seventeenth century, Johannes Bureus took exception to the suggestion of the Dutch scholar Johannes Goropius Becanus that Adam spoke Dutch, and used the common medieval etymology of Adam's name, from the points of the Greek compass (*Anatole*, *Dysis*, *Arktos*, *Mesembria*), translated into modified Swedish equivalents (*Söder*, *Väster*, *Euster*, *Norr*), to transform Adam's name into *SVEN* and lend support to his own theory that the original language of mankind was Swedish (see Schück 1932, 97–8; Marchand 1976, 117, n. 2).<sup>23</sup>

But such suggestions remained, to say the least, anomalies, and the theory that Hebrew was mankind's first language was rarely challenged. The notion finds further support in the most common medieval etymology of 'Hebrew', found for example in Isidore's *Etymologiae* (V, xxxix, 6; VII, vi, 23; IX, ii, 5, 38, 51) and Balbus's *Catholicon* (1460, s.v. *Heber*), that the word is derived from the name of Heber, son of Beria, whose household was the only one of the generations of Noah to retain the original language of mankind, which is now called *Hebrew* after him. The same account of Heber is included in the Icelandic miscellany manuscript AM 194 8vo, 30r (*AÍ I 48*):

Heber . lifdi cccc ok lxiij. I hans husi hélst enn sama tunga sem adr var, af honum er kólluth Ebrea tunga su er Gydingar mæla.

The popular myth that Hebrew was man's first language is incorporated into most Old West Norse accounts of the confusion of

languages after the construction of the Tower of Babel. Consider, for example, *Veraldar saga* (1944, 14):

En er mannfiolde ox i heiminum af nyiv þa oxx osidir i heiminum en sem fyrr bæði i hordomi ok i ofmetnaði. þa vrðv þav tiltæki navckvra manna at þeir gerþv kastala ok þat mannvirki at þeir hvgðoz mvndo ganga i himin vp því at þeir spvrðo til þes at gvð hafdi drect ollvm heimi i Noafloði er folkit var illa síðat ok hvgdvz mvndv getta sin við flodinv en etluðu ser ecki bella mega. En gvð hnækði sva því ofmetnaþar verki at engi þeirra matti skilia hvat annarr mælti ok stvckv þeir i brvt af þessvm bysnvm a sins vegar hverr ok gerþoz þaðan af sva margar tvngvr i heim*(i)*num sem þeir varo en þat erv. .ii ok .lxx. En adr *(var)* Ebreatvnga ein. þessir varo langfed*(g)*ar i odrvm alldri heims ok patriarche. Noi ok Sem Arfaxat ok Cainan Sal*(e)* ok Heber er Hebrei erv fra komnir. i hysi Heber hellz in sama tvnga sem adr hafði mælt verit. Af hans nafni hetir ebresca sv tvnga er a Gyþingalandi er mælt.

*Stjórn* 1862, 66-7:

Sua segir Josephus. at Ebrei eru kalladir af nafni Heber. þiat i hans husi at eins hellz ebresk tunga eptir tungnaskiptit. enn syrr uar hon ecki kaullut ebresk tunga. helldr mannligh tunga einfalldliga sua sem uán uar. þa er menn hófdu ongar fleiri tungur at tala medr. *speculum historiale*. Sun Heber tok nafn af tungnaskipti ok þiodanna. piat Phalech þydir sundrskipting. fyrr þann skylld at aa hans dogum skiptiz iðrín medr þiodunum. piat fyrr nefndir hertogar Nemroth Jethan ok Suphene ok margir adrir risar medr þeim færdu sina bygd austan eptir Asia . . . Toku þeir þa at reisa einn mikinn staupul af tigli ok þi limi sem likaz uar biki medr griotmol gjort. Af þessum staupli segir Josephus. at hans uiðleiki uar sua sterklegr. at þeim er nærrí uaru syndiz hans hæd ok lengd litils uerd. Gud drottinn geymdi at huat er þeir gordu. sua sem hugsandi þeim þar fyrir hegnd ok pinu. ok sa þa borg ok turn sem þeir smiðaðu. ok sagdi sua til sinna heilagra engla. Ein tunga gengr medr ollu þessu folki. er paleidis er talat sem einn samlendr lydr. Hófu þeir ok sua upp þessa sina gerd ok fyrirætan. at þeir munu ecki sealfkrafi af henni letta. þar til er þeir hafa hana medr uerkum fyllt ok frammkomit. Nidrum þa ok neisum þeirra tungur. sua at engin þeirra skili annars tal. Ok þegar i stad uard sua. at engin þeirra feck annars tal ne tungu undirstadit. þiat ef nockurr bad faa ser steina. þa baru þeir til hans uatn edr eitthuert annat. Braut þat ok annarr nidr sem annarr gjördi upp. Vurdu þeir sua af at lata uppteknu uerki. þiat .ii. ok .lxx. uuðu þa maalsgreinir ok tungnaskipti. eptir þi sem i skiluisum bokum finnz skrifat.

AM 764 4to (fourteenth century), 3r:

Nefrod. het. einn risi hann gaf ser fystr manna konungs nafn hann uar xxx alna hær hann fylldiz þess ofmetnadars upp at gera stopulinn babel i babilonia hann smiduþu lxx risa ok ij þeir ætludu at smida hann allt upp til himinsins ok er hann uar smiðaþr sva at hann uar at hæd quatuor milia passuum. ij passus gera fadm. þa leit gud dirf þeira ok tælmadi smidina sva at þa uard tungna skipti taladi þa eingi þeira hinni somu tungu ero æ. sidan lxx ok ij tungur þa lamdiz stopulsmidin sva segir ieronimus prestr at ein tunga gengi um ij fystu heimsalldra til abrahams [ok uar þat ebreska] en sidan hafa þær dreifz um allan heim . . . [the four words in brackets added in the same hand in right-hand margin]

All these accounts repeat the commonplace that the number

of languages spawned from the confusion of Babel was 72 (cf. *Hauksbók* 1892-6, 153). This figure represents the number of nations determined by a count of the descendants of Adam in the Vulgate — an idea suggested by Augustine in *De Civitate Dei* XVI, vi and quoted again with a fuller explanation of the notion by Isidore (*Etymologiae* IX, ii, 2):

Gentes autem a quibus divisa est terra, quindecim sunt de Iaphet, triginta et una de Cham, viginti et septem de Sem, quae fiunt septuaginta tres, vel potius, ut ratio declarat, septuaginta duae; totidemque linguae per terras esse coeperunt, quaeque crescendo provincias et insulas inpleverunt.<sup>24</sup>

This count of languages is repeated in most medieval discussions of the origin of nations. Authors often went so far as to draw up catalogues which identified each of these languages by name.<sup>25</sup> The 72 languages are neatly distributed among the peoples descended from the three sons of Noah, who divided the traditional tripartite map of the world among them. Thus according to most accounts, Europe, peopled by the house of Japheth, had fifteen languages; Africa, from Cham, had thirty; and Asia, from Sem, had twenty-seven. This tally of tongues and nations of the world is included in, for example, the introduction to the geographical treatise which the author of *Stjórn* (1862, 64) translates from Vincent of Beauvais (1624, IV 24A: . . . *Texuntur autem ex tribus filiis Noe generationes 72. scilicet 15. de Iaphet, 30. de Cham, 27. de Sem. . . Filij Sem obtinuisse referuntur Asiam: Cham Africam: Iaphet vero Europam . . .*):

*Speculum historiale.* Ættleggir af .iii. sunum Noa eru taldir .ii. ok .lxx. piat .xv. varu af Japhet .xxx. af Cham. en .xxvii. af Sém. Sua segiz at Noe sealfr hafi sua skipt heiminum medr sunum sinum. at Sém ok hans afkuemi fengi Asiam ser til bygðar. enn Cham ok hans kynsmenn Africam. enn Europam Japhet ok hans kynsmenn. Kom þat þo einkannliga mest framm eptir tungnaskipti i Babilone.

It may be noted that the geographical treatises in the fourteenth-century miscellany AM 194 8vo record a different division of languages: 27 Asian, 22 African and 23 European, spoken by one account in 1,000 different countries (AM 194 8vo, 8v-9v, *AÍ I* 7-8), by another, in 901 (AM 194 8vo, 28r, *AÍ I* 45). A very similar account of the division of the world in *Hauksbók* (1892-96, 164-5) records that from the line of Sem come 27 languages spoken in 406 Asian countries; from Iafeth, 23 languages in 250 European countries; and from Kam, 22 languages in 394 African countries — the same division of 72 languages which, according to the author of this account, are again spread through 1,000 countries (although his obviously somewhat garbled figures add up to 1,050). It would

appear that these figures are drawn from sections twenty-six to twenty-eight of Bede's Chronicle of the Six Ages of the World, in which human speech is also divided into 27 Semitic, 22 Hamitic and 23 Japhetic languages, a total of 72 tongues spoken in 1,000 different countries (see Bede, *De Temporvm Ratione*, lxvi, 26-8, CCSL 123B, 468-9).

Most medieval Scandinavian discussions of the customs of foreign nations tend to concentrate on the peoples who inhabit the most exotic and unknown corners of the globe — usually identified with the other two-thirds of the world, Asia and Africa. And here Scandinavian authors tend to follow the European practice of regarding the inhabitants of these regions as outlandish barbarians. In the *Third grammatical treatise*, Óláfr Pórðarson, drawing on the most common account of the term *barbarismus* offered by the Latin grammarians, observes that to the Graeco-Roman mind the barbarian not only spoke a corrupt and vulgar tongue; he was in all his habits uncultivated, ignorant, rude, unpolished, given over to cruel brutishness and bestiality. Accordingly, Óláfr adds to his account the common derivation of *barbarus* from *barba* and *rus* to complete this traditional picture of the foreigner — a hairy, untamed savage at home in woods and caves in mountain wilderness (1884, 61-2):<sup>26</sup>

Barbarismvs ær kallaðr einn lasta fvllr lvtr malsgreinar i alþyðligri reðv, ænn sa ær i skalldskap kallaðr metaplasmus. Barbarismvs fekk af því nafn, at þa ær romverskir hofðingiar hofðv naliga vnnit alla verølldina vndir sina tign, tokv þeir vnga menn af ɔllvm þioðvm ok flttv þa i romam ok kennv þeim at tala romverska tvngv. Pa drogv margir vnemir menn latinvna eptir sinv eiginligy mali ok spilltv sva tvngvnni, kolvðv romveriar þann mals læst barbarismvm, þviat þeir nefndv allar þioðir barbaros næma girkí ok latinvmenn. barbari varv kallaðar fyrt af lóngv skeggi ok liótvm bvnaði þær þioðir, ær bygðv a háfvm fióllvm ok i þykevm skogvm, þviat sva sám asiona þeirra ok bvnaði var ofægiligr hia hæverskv ok hirðbvnaði romveria, slikt sama var ok orðtak þeirra otogit hia malsgreinvm latinv snillinga.

It must be noted, however, that by the middle ages the inroads which Germanic culture had made on what remained of the old Roman empire had blurred the ancient meaning of *barbarismus* and the word took on a new moral censure. The classical contrast between Greek and Roman civilization and barbarism had been taken over into a new distinction between the barbarian and the Christian. This transformation of the 'ancient barbarian' is discussed at length by W. R. Jones (1971, 405):

The dissolution of the Roman state and its civilization in the West as a result of internal decay and Germanic attack eroded the old distinction, so long cherished

by Latin *literati*, between *Romanitas* and various kinds of barbarism and substituted for it a new distinction based upon religion. By the end of the seventh century, if not a bit earlier, the 'barbarian' had become the pagan or Arian heretic in contrast to the trinitarian Christian. The diminution of the Latin character of European culture and the mingling of German and Romanized provincial populations promoted the adoption of the purely religious meaning of the word 'barbarian' and the identification of civilization itself with Christian orthodoxy. The closing of the civilized *oecumene* through the conversion of heathen and heretic peoples of the European heartland pushed barbarism back to the frontiers where its old competition with civilization continued to be fought out.

In keeping with this universal Christian image of the barbarian, the word *barbarus* is commonly rendered in Old Norse as *heiðinn*. Consider, for example, AM 677 4to, 1r (*Leifar* 1878, 1): . . . *par er engi gydingr ne girczr mabr heipin ne vtlenndr prell ne frelsingr . . . helldr er Cristr sva sem aller hlutir i ollom . . .*, cf. Pseudo-Augustine, *De Duodecim Abusionum Gradibus* (PL 40, 1088), *Ubi non est Judæus et Græcus . . . servus et liber, Barbarus et Scytha; sed omnia in omnibus Christus*; AM 677 4to, 26v (*Heilagra manna sǫgur* 1877, I 224): . . . *evdisc borgarlvþrinn sva mioc af sottom oc af hepinna manna her . . .*, cf. Gregory the Great 1978-80, II 286,

*ita cuncti habitatores ciuitatis illius et barbarorum gladiis et pestilentiae inmanitate uastati sunt . . .*; AM 619 4to, 113 (*Gamal Norsk Homiliebok* 1931, 114): . . . *Siðan veittu þær á-ræðe þæim hæiðnum hundum af mycclu cappe er þeir sá þann hælgan mann í liði ok fultingi með sér. ok fell þar þa fyrir þæim fa-liðum flester aller þær hæiðnu menn . . .*, cf. *Passio et Miracula Beati Olaui* 1881, 77, *Immanes barbaros, quibus paulo ante multus et fortis resistere non ualebat excercitus, auxilio martiris munita persequitur acies non grandis*; *Stjórn* 1862 59: *Josephus segir. at iafnuel hafi þeir menn minz ok getit flodsins ok arkarinnar i sinum frasognum. sem heidinna manna sǫgur samsettu ok skrifadu . . .*, cf. Peter Comestor, *Historia Scholastica*, cap. xxxiv (PL 198, 1085A), *Hujus diluvii, et arcæ, ut ait Josephus, memoriam faciunt, etiam qui barbarorum historias conscripserunt.*

Not infrequently, the new Christian conception of the barbarian turned, as the Græco-Roman definition had, on matters of language. Homer had referred to the non-Greek races as *barbarophonoi* (*Iliad* 2.867) — people whose speech was simply an unintelligible 'bar bar' to Greek ears, and Pliny had characterized several races as monstrous either because they lacked human speech or spoke in a tongue which was incomprehensible to civilized men (see Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* V, viii, 45; VI, xxxv, 187-188; VII, ii, 23, 25; cf. Friedman 1981, 29). Augustine, likewise, is of the opinion

that the diversity of languages so separates foreign peoples from the society of civilized men that 'a man would rather have his dog for company than a foreigner'.<sup>27</sup> Those peoples who remained outside the Christian fold were regarded, in keeping with the Græco-Roman image of the barbarian, as decidedly less than human. As W. R. Jones remarks (1971, 382), Augustine, like many Christian writers of the middle ages, remained

typically Roman in his attitude toward the barbarian . . . Although his faith was broad enough to encompass such monstrosities as pygmies, Sciopodes, and Cynocephalae within the family of Adam, he viewed the barbarian in the old way — through the narrow prism of Roman pride.

Christian disdain for the heathen was paralleled by a more general contempt for the foreigner; it is not unusual, in fact, to find Scandinavians held up to scorn. Adam of Bremen reports that the pagan northern reaches of Norway and Sweden are inhabited by bearded women and wildmen who 'in speaking to one another are said to gnash their teeth rather than utter words, so that they can hardly be understood by the peoples nearest to them'.<sup>28</sup> Even Christian Greenland is said to be inhabited by people who are green.<sup>29</sup> In 1031, more than a century after the conversion of Rollo's army in France, the Cluniac monk William of Volpiano wrote a diatribe against Normandy's 'barbarous dukes'. Similarly, in his sermon delivered at the Council of Clermont in 1095, long after the conversion of most of Scandinavia, Pope Urban II contrasted the relative extent of Christian and infidel dominions throughout the world and observed of Europe, 'How small is the part of it inhabited by Christians! for who will give the name of Christians to those barbarians who live in the remote islands and seek their living on the frozen ocean as if they were whales?'<sup>30</sup> Urban's contemptuous aside is repeated by William of Malmesbury (1887-9, II 395) without comment.

Such ethnocentrism was certainly not confined to the Christian world. The Saracen, confident in his own cultural superiority, despised the customs and language of the northern peoples in precisely the same way. Thus, as late as the fourteenth century, the Arabic writer al-Watwāt reports that Norway is inhabited by brutish savages without any necks who sleep in trees and live on acorns; still worse, the islands nearby are overrun with horned mermen who survive on nothing but fish, plants and salt water (see Birkeland 1954, 112). One of al-Watwāt's contemporaries, the Syrian writer ad-Dimašqī (d. 1327), records that the shores of the great frozen sea far in the north are peopled by various tribes of

tall, white-haired, blue-eyed half-brutes, among them a nation called *Warank* (apparently a rendering of Old Norse *væringi*, ‘Varangian’). Some of these barbarians, he remarks, ‘understand virtually no language whatsoever’ (see Birkeland 1954, 112-15).

Medieval Icelandic and Norwegian writers, for their part, show a certain fascination with (and routinely paint a monstrous portrait of) the Finns and Wends and other strange nations who inhabit *Svíþjóð* in *mikla*, a country which appears to take in much of Eastern Europe and parts of Asia and which shows definite affinities with greater Scythia and even parts of Africa — in short, the frontiers of ‘barbary’. Accounts of this vast and mysterious region in, for instance, *Stjórn* (1862, 78-9), *Hauksbók* (1892-96, 165-7) and the geographical treatise in AM 194 8vo (22r-v, AÍ 136) concur in populating these lands with giants of all description, man-eaters, blood-drinkers, cyclopes, headless mouthless monsters with one leg or sometimes none at all, amazons, hermaphrodites, satyrs, centaurs, troglodites, horned men and dwarves. Snorri Sturluson’s description of this *terra incognita* in the first chapter of *Ynglinga saga* is typical. In summing up the exotic nature of the region, he describes it as a land of ‘marvelous races of many kinds’ (*ÍF XXVI* 9-10):

Svíþjóð ina miklu kalla sumir menn eigi minni en Serkland it mikla, sumir jafna henni við Bláland it mikla. Inn nørðri hlutr Svíþjóðar liggr óbyggðr af frosti ok kulða, svá sem inn syðri hlutr Blálands er auðr af sólarbruna. Í Svíþjóð eru stórheruð morg . . . Par eru risar, ok þar eru dvergar, þar eru blámenn, ok þar eru margs konar undarligar þjóðir. Par eru ok dýr ok drekar furðuliga stórir.

Not unnaturally, several descriptions of the many nations of such barbarous regions also remark on the many languages which these monstrous peoples speak. The depiction of distant climes as a menagerie of unintelligible foreigners is a conventional backdrop for romance tales. It is not surprising, therefore, that a good grounding in foreign tongues is presented as part of the standard equipment of the heroes of such stories (see Kalinke 1983; Amory 1984, 521). Mastery of languages, either in preparation for or after many years of travel in foreign lands, is mentioned among the heroic attributes of, for instance, Sigurðr in *Völsungasaga* (1965, 23):

Reginn hét fóstri Sigurðar ok var Hreiðmars sonr. Hann kenndi honum íþróttir, tafl ok rúnar ok tungur margar at mæla, sem þá var tift konungasonum, ok marga hluti aðra,

in *Yngvars saga* (1912, 12), of Yngvarr:

Litlu sidar sigldi Ynguar ur Suipiod med xxx skipa, ok logdu eigi fyrr seglin, enn þeir kuomu j Gardariki; ok toc Jarizleifur kongur uid honum med micilli sæmd.  
Par uar Ynguar iij uetur ok nam þar margar tungur at tala,

his wife Silkisif (*Yngvars saga* 1912, 15):

Hun spurdí, huerir þeir væri, edur huert þeir giorditz. En Ynguar suarar aungu, þuiat hann uilldi freista, ef hun kynni fleire tungr at tala; ok suo reynditz, at hon kunní at tala romuersku, þyuersku, donsku ok girszsku ok margar adrarr, er gengu um austurueg,

and their son Sveinn (*Yngvars saga* 1912, 31-2):

Hann uar sterkr madur ok hinn likazti fodur sinum. Hann reizt j hernat ok uilldi reyna sic fyst; og er nockurer uetur uoru lidner, kom hann med myclu lidi j Garda austur ok sat þar um ueturinn. En er sagt, at þann uetur geck Sueinn j þann skóla, at hann nam margar tungr at tala, þær er menn uißsu um austurueg ganga.

The same prodigious linguistic proficiency is attributed to Herbrandr in *Piðriks saga* (1905-11, 252-3), to Valdimar in *Valdimars saga* (Loth 1962-65, I 53), to Hector in *Hectors saga* (Loth 1962-65, I 83), to Oddr in *Orvar-Odds saga* (1892, 13), to Eirekr forvitni in *Pjalar-Jóns saga* (1939, 1), to Tristram in *Tristrams saga* (1878, 16-17; cf. Gottfried von Strassburg 1949, 2060-63), to *hinn halftiti maðr* in *Mágus saga jarls* (*Fornsögur suðrlanda* 1884, 35), and to Ermén in *Karlamagnus saga* (1860, 378). The list could be extended.

Quite unlike the heroes of romance, however, European pilgrims and crusaders travelling to the Mediterranean and the East often had considerable difficulty with the languages of the strange countries they visited. In medieval pilgrim guidebooks language is often cited as one of the principal barriers to travel. Jonathan Sumption has summarized the problem (1975, 193):

Few mediaeval men, however cultivated they were, understood more than a few words of any language but their own or Latin. Travelling through regions such as eastern Europe or Egypt, where pilgrims were rare and Latin unknown, was a difficult and dangerous undertaking. Lietbert, bishop of Cambrai, who passed through the Danube valley on the way to Jerusalem in 1054, listed 'the strange and foreign language of the Huns' amongst the perils which he had encountered, together with mountains, swamps and impenetrable forests.

The anonymous author of one late twelfth-century *itinerarium* preserved in the Heiligenkreuz manuscript no. 88 (see Neumann 1866, 259, trans. Sumption 1975, 193) refers to the Greeks as:

cunning men who do not bear arms and who err from the true faith . They also use leaven bread in the Eucharist and do other strange things. They even have an alphabet of their own (*et propriam literam habent*).

Similarly, Jacques de Vitry complains that the Jacobite and Ar-

menian Christians, ‘barbarous nations who differ from both Greeks and Latins . . . use a peculiar language understood only by the learned’ (1611, 1092; 1896, 76; cited Sumption 1975, 193). And the author of the French ‘Pilgrim’s guide’ to Santiago de Compostella (included in the *Liber Calixtinus* from about 1139) compares the odious and unfathomable language of the Basques to the barking of dogs.<sup>31</sup>

The oldest preserved Scandinavian guide book to the Holy Land, an itinerary apparently based on the *Leiðarvísir* written between 1154 and 1159 by Abbot Nikulás Bergsson (in some sources Bergþórsson or Hallbjarnarson) of Þverá, devotes little space to discussion of problems of communication. It does, however, include one interesting remark on the subject, for in its description of the northern part of the route, between the towns of Minden (*Mundioborg*) and Paderborn (*Pøddu-brunnar [!]*) in Saxony, this guide notes: *nu skiptaſt tungur* ‘now the languages change’ (AM 194 8vo, 11r, AÍ I 13). The passage is problematic, for between Minden and Paderborn there is no change of dialect — both towns are situated, just as they were in the twelfth century, in a Low German region. Kristian Kålund has puzzled over this crux and proposed that this observation about languages appears where it does in the itinerary only as a result of some garbled re-arrangement of the original text. The remark should, he argues, have appeared a few sentences earlier, where it would make a suitable introduction to the description of Saxony in general; for in crossing the Saxon border the Scandinavian pilgrim would have encountered a change of speech between his own language and German (see Kålund 1913, 66).

To alleviate the inconvenience of prolonged contact with foreigners and their incomprehensible languages en route to the Holy Land, at least two Danish kings generously established hostels for pilgrims who spoke *danska tungu* — the common language of Scandinavians. According to *Fagrskinna* and *Knýtinga saga*, Knútr the Great founded several hospices for Scandinavians along the road to Rome during his journey through Italy in 1027. Compare the accounts in *Fagrskinna* (ÍF XXIX 204-5):

Knútr konungr góði ferð sína af Englandi suðr um sjá, tók þar staf ok skreppu ok allir hans menn, þeir er þar váru, gekk til Rúms suðr, ok kom í móti hónum keisarinn sjálfr, ok fylgði hónum allt til Rúmaborgar. Knútr konungr setti allt spítala á veginum, ok gaf fé til staða, ok svá er sagt, at hann föddi alla þá menn, er fé þyrftu á Rúmaveg, svá at engi þyrfti biðja, er þann veg fór suðr ok sunnan.

and *Knýtinga saga* (ÍF XXXV 123):

Meðan Knútr konungr var á Rómavegi, þá þyrfti engi maðr sér matar at biðja, sá er hans fundi mátti ná, svá gaf hann öllum nóga skotpenninga . . . Knútr konungr setti spítala þann, er alla menn skyldi fœða um nótta, þá er þar kæmi af danskri tungu. Víða gaf hann ok til stórfé, þar sem váru klastr eða aðrir stórir staðir.

It is also noted in chapter 74 of *Knýtinga saga* that after his visit to Pope Pascal II in 1099, King Eiríkr Sveinsson the Good set up another hostel for Nordic pilgrims eight miles south of Piacenza (on the road to Borgo San Donnino) and that at Lucca he set aside sufficient money to provide visitors to the aforesaid hostel with lodging and as much wine as they cared for (*ÍF XXXV* 220):

Síðan skildu þeir, páfinn ok Eiríkr konungr, með vináttu ok kærleikum, ok snøri Eiríkr konungr þaðan til heimferðar. En er hann kom til borgar þeirar, er Plácencia heitir, þá setti hann spítala skammt frá borginni. En er hann kom norðr til borgar þeirar, er Lúka heitir, þá gaf hann þar fé til þess, at allir pílagrímarr, þeir er danska tungu mælti, skyldi ókeypis nógt vín drekka ok heimila gisting eiga at þeim spítala, er hann hafði settan ok áðr var frá sagt.

The same information is included in the *itinerarium* in AM 194 8vo, 12r, 14v-15r (*AÍ I* 15-16, 21):

Sudr fra Plazinzo er dagfor til Domna-borgar, þar er Eiriks spitali á milli . . . I Kipr er borg, *(er)* Beffa [MS Bessa; i.e. Baffo] heitir, þar er Væringia seta, þar andadiz Eiríkr Dana konungr Sveins son brodir Knutz ens helga. Hann lagdi fe til i Luku, ath hvern madr skyldi drecka vin okeypis ath ærnu af danskri tungu, ok hann lét gera spital viij milum sudr fra Plazinzoborg, þar er hvern madr fæddr.

As has been mentioned, no other allusions to possible linguistic barriers are included in this pilgrim's guide, and one is left to ponder how Icelanders travelling south would have made themselves understood in situations where for one reason or another they were unable to use Latin or French, which in the twelfth and especially in the thirteenth century had gained a certain degree of international currency (see, e.g., Bischoff 1961, 210-11; Sumption 1975, 193). Here one might refer to the episode in *Orkneyinga saga* in which Guðifreyr, the widely-travelled and multilingual commander of a Galician castle besieged by Rognvaldr Kali, steals into Rognvaldr's camp disguised as a beggar in order to discover what he can of the earl's plan of attack. He decides to address the Norsemen in French, since that is the foreign language which they would be most likely to understand (*ÍF XXXIV* 214):

Sá hófðingi hétt Guðifreyr, er kastalann byggði; hann var vitr maðr ok hniginn nökkut á aldr; hann var klerkr góðr ok hafði farit víða ok kunni margar tungur . . . Ok er Guðifreyr kom til Rognvalds jarls, ok sagðisk vera stafkarl einn ok mælti á vólsku; þat skilðu þeir helzt.

Bernard Bischoff points out that beyond the sphere or below the

social stratum in which one of the medieval 'world' languages was recognized, the demands of sheer self-preservation required that the foreign traveller take special steps to make himself understood in the vernacular.<sup>32</sup>

The phrase-book offered one way round the language problem. As early as the ninth century, a group of 'Old High German Conversations' (*Altdeutsche Gespräche*), consisting of orders to servants, requests for information, simple demands such as 'I want a drink', were drawn up for the use of Romanic-speaking Franks travelling in Germany (see Bischoff 1961, 217; Sumption 1975, 194-5; Bostock 1976, 101-3). Various other manuals of this sort, written between the tenth century and the close of the middle ages, survive to this day. Most of these were clearly intended for the use of pilgrims to the Holy Land and provide translations of useful words and phrases from, for example, Greek, Hebrew, Arabic and even Basque, into Latin, French, Italian or German. Almost certainly the most comprehensive medieval collection of foreign alphabets, words and phrases compiled for the use of travellers is that composed by Arnold von Harff, a gentleman of Cologne, after his tour of the great Christian shrines of Europe and the East between 1496 and 1499. He accumulated in his travels many alphabets (Greek and several oriental ones, some of them indecipherable) and vocabularies of Croatian, Albanian, Greek, Arabic, Hebrew, Turkish, Hungarian, Basque and Breton, all set out in the same practical arrangement: the numerals, a few useful words (e.g. 'Yes, no; good, bad; God, Devil; bread, wine, water, bed, horse, oats, hay'), and such handy phrases as, 'Good morning', 'Good night', 'Where is the inn?', 'Wash my shirt', 'Pretty lady, shall I sleep with you?', 'Lady, I am already in your bed', and 'I do not understand' (see Arnold von Harff 1860; 1946; Bischoff 1961, 219-20; Sumption 1975, 195-6). It is a mark of the growing popularity of the phrase-book as the ultimate solution to language difficulties that at least towards the end of the middle ages when the prosperous merchants of southern Germany had established themselves in Venice so that a knowledge of German became desirable for Italians, there circulated in several editions a 'Most useful manual for understanding Germans attempting to speak the Italian language'.<sup>33</sup> It is, of course, impossible to prove that any such phrase-books also came into the hands of Icelanders, for no reference to such a traveller's companion is preserved in any medieval Icelandic source, unless, though it seems unlikely, a list of the names of the months of the year and the days of the week

in a mixture of Turkish and Arabic preserved in an Icelandic florilegium, compiled 1635-69, AM 124 8vo, 30r line 26 to 31r line 4, is descended from a medieval guidebook:<sup>34</sup>

De Æconomicis: Umm Buande Folk og þeira Sidveniu J tyrkia Rijkenú

...

Arenú skiptta þeir j tolf mänude, þeir byriast //  
30v þá túngl kueykest, enn endast þá túngled end= ar, og heyta þeir so á þeira túngú: — 1. Mecher= en:- þad er Iánúarius:- 2. Sepher:- þad er februarius:- 3. Rebúel evel:- þad er Marti= ús:- 4. Rebuel achir:- þad er Aprilis:- 5. Zúmasiel: Evel:- þad er Maiús:- 6. Zúmasi= el achir:- þad er Iúniús: 7. Režeb:- þad er Iúlius:- 8. Schavan:- þad er Aúgústús:- 9. Rámasan:- þad er September:- 10. Scää= 10 Val: þad er October:- 11. Ciclade:- þad er November:- 12. Silchiže:- þad er Decem= ber:- Tungled og Stiørnúrnar vyrda þeir meir og til bidia, helldúr enn Sölena, þess vegna, ad þeir erú veykare og verr til passa á dagenn  
15 þá sölenn skyn, helldúr enn á nætúrnar, þá tungled lýser:- þeira áratala er med túentt slag:- 1. Heginos:- þá þeir telia frä fæding Machometz:- Annad kalla þeir Mä= chometricos:- þá þeir telia frä hanz vppstign= 20 ing til hymna:- J húorre vykú hafa þeir siø daga, so sem vier, og heyta þeir súo, á þeyrra túngú:- 1 Básar júni þad er Súnnúdagúr:- 2. Basar ertisi: þad er. mänudagur:- 3. Salle:- þad er þridiúdagúr:- 4. Sarscham= 25 tia: þad er:- midkúdagúr:- 5. Pescemba:- þad er fymtúdagúr:- 6. Júmar: þad er // 31r föstúdagúr: húorn þeir hallda helgann:- 7:- súma ertis:- þad er Laúgardagúr:- Og hier med endast sidvenia þeira tykianna, So mýk= ed sem eg hefe heyrtt og lesed:

But if this sort of aid was not available to the travelling Icelander, what other means of communication might have been at his disposal? It appears that some pilgrims who could not make themselves understood in their native tongue, nor master the complexities of Latin, managed to muddle through with a sort of 'pidgin Latin'; although those who learned to communicate effectively in this way must have been few and their ability to do so regarded as nothing less than a gift from God. In his autobiography, Giraldus Cambrensis recalls meeting a Welsh hermit, Wecheleu, near the River Wye in 1193, who while journeying

to Jerusalem had miraculously acquired an odd sort of Latin, in which infinitives replace conjugated verbs. Wecheleu explains that the Lord had blessed him with this linguistic gift ‘not by way of grammar and cases, but only that I might be understood and understand others’ (Giraldus 1937, 126; cf. Clanchy 1979, 153). In his account of his meeting with Wecheleu, Giraldus provides a long sample of this *ersatz* Latin, which is in fact quite easy to understand once one becomes accustomed to it (1861, 89–91):

In hoc itaque proposito firmiter constitutus, ad amicum suum anachoritam de Locheis apud Elevein in archidiaconatu suo non procul a Vagæ fluvio, cui nomen Wecheleu, virum bonum et sanctum, licentiam ac benedictionem suam accepturus, accessit. Quem cum inter cætera rogaret attentius, ut oraret pro ipso, quatinus Sacram Scripturam, cui indulgere volebat, scire salubriter et intelligere posset; respondit vir sanctus, manum archidiaconi manu sua tenens et stringens: ‘Och, och, noli dicere scire sed custodire: vana, vana est scire nisi custodire’. Talis enim erat ei loquendi modus semper per infinitivum nec casus servabat; et tamen satis intelligi poterat. Requirenti vero archidiacono unde ei verba Latina, cum non didicerit, respondit in hunc modum. Sua enim ipsius verba ponam: sicut ea libenter archidiaconus et frequenter retractare et recitare consuerat: ‘Ego’, inquit, ‘ire Hierosolimam et visitare sepulchrum Domini mei; et quando redire, ego ponere me in hoc carcere pro amore Domini mei qui mori pro me. Et multum ego dolere, quod non posse intelligere Latinum neque missam nec evangelium; et multotiens flere et rogare Dominum dare mihi Latinum intelligere. Tandem vero cum uno die hora comedendi vocare ad fenestram servientem meum semel et iterum et pluries, et non venire; propter tedium simul et famen ego dormire et quando vigilare, ego videre super altare meum panem jacere. Et accedens benedicere panem et comedere; et statim ad vesperas ego intelligere versus et verba Latina quæ dicere sacerdos, et mane similiter ad missam sicut mihi videbatur. Et post missam ego vocare presbyterum ad fenestram cum missali, et rogare ipsum legere evangelium illius diei. Et ipse legere, et ego exponere; et dicere sacerdos quod recte; et postea loqui cum presbytero Latinum, et ipse tecum. Et ab illo die ego sic loqui; et Dominus meus, qui dedit mihi Latinam linguam, non dedit eam mihi per grammaticam aut per casus, sed tantum ut intelligi possem et alios intelligere.’

If all else failed, the Icelandic pilgrim may have followed the example of many other Europeans in his position and had recourse to sign language as a means of communication — a last expedient to which, according to the twelfth-century chronicler Guibert de Nogent, more than a few medieval travellers resorted. Thus crusaders, by making the sign of the cross, could at least demonstrate which side they were fighting on to allies with whom they shared no common language (*Gesta Dei per Francos* I, i, PL 156, 686B–C):

Testor Deum me audisse nescio cujus barbarae gentis homines ad nostri portum maris appulsos, quorum sermo adeo habebatur incognitus ut, lingua vacante,

digitorum super digitos transversione crucis signa praetenderent, hisque indicis, quod nequibant vocibus, se fidei causa proficiisci monstrarent.

(For other examples of sign language used to overcome linguistic barriers encountered by medieval travellers, particularly by clerics visiting religious houses dedicated to maintaining a rule of silence, see Sanford 1928, 591-2; Gougaud 1930, 21; Van Rijnberk 1953, 7-10.)

Of course, for those in a position to employ them, interpreters provided another way round any linguistic barriers. The author of the Icelandic geographical treatise in AM 194 8vo notes, for instance, that a Norwegian priest and merchants who travelled to Finnmark in the days of King Hákon VI Magnússon (1355-1380) were forced to communicate with the Finns through *túlkar* ('interpreters') because their barbarous language was so different from Norse (AM 194 8vo, 35r, *AÍ I* 57):

Sa athburdur gerdizt æ dogum virdulighs herra herra Hakonar med guds næd Noregs konungs ok Olafs erkibyskups i Nidarosi, ath einn prestur af Haloghalandi rikur ath audæfum red sik i skip med kaupmonnum þeim, sem sigldu kaupferd nordr æ Finnmark, ok hann for med þeim sakir erennda sinna. Tokzt þeim vel ok skiopt sin siglingh, ok toku med skipi sinu æskiligha höfn, i hverium stad margir Finnar komu til þeira til kaupstefnu, svo sem sidur ær til, ok haufdu hvorertveggiur ser tulka, þvíath Finnar þeir, sem eru æ enda Finnmarkar allt nordur vidr Gandvik, eru allir alheidnir ok hafva adra tungu en ver Nordmenn.

As has already been mentioned, Earl Røgnvaldr Kali took Bishop Vilhjálmr of Orkney with him to the Holy Land to act as *túlkr* because he had been educated in Paris and would therefore be skilled in the international languages, Latin and French. In chapter 11 of *Magnúss saga blinda ok Haralds gilla* in *Heimskringla* it is said that during the attack on Konungahella the Christian defenders were able to discover the plans of the Wendish attackers through an interpreter who managed to overhear the Wendish chieftain Úniburr's address to his troops (*ÍF XXVIII* 293):

Pá létu heiðingjar illliga enn sem fyrr, ýldu ok gnístu. Gekk þá allt fólk til konungs. Pótti kristnum mónum þá sem væri til ráðs, at þeir mundi undan leita. Pá skildi túlkr, sá er skildi vinðesku, hvat höfðingi sá mælti, er Úniburr er nefndr. Hann mælti svá: 'Petta fólk er atalt ok illt viðskiptis, ok þótt vér tækim allt þat fé, er í þessum stað er, þá mættim vér gefa til annat fé jafnmikit, at vér hefðim eigi komit hér, svá höfum vér mikit lið látit ok marga höfðingja. Ok fyrst í dag, er vér tókum at berjask við kastala, þá höfðu þeir til varnar skot ok spjót, því næst børðu þeir oss með grjóti, ok nú berja þeir oss með keflivöllum sem hunda. Sé ek fyrir því, at þeira fong þverra til varnar, ok skulum vér enn gera þeim harða hríð ok freistum þeira.'

After the battle is lost and the Christians are removed from the city, the Wendish king Réttiburr has an interpreter ask the priest

Andréás to explain the great terror which grips his men when the priest boards the Wendish ship with a cross (*ÍF XXVIII* 295):

Þá fóru þeir Andréás prestr á konungsskipit ok með krossinn helga. Þá kom ótti yfir heiðingja af þeiri bending, er yfir konungsskipit kom hiti svá mikill, at allir þeir þóttusk nær brenna. Konungr bað túlkinn spryja prest, hví svá varð. Hann sagði, at almáttigr guð, sá er kristnir menn trúðu á, sendi þeim mark reiði sinnar, er þeir dirfðusk þess at hafa með höndum hans þíslarmark, þeir er eigi vilja trú á skapara sinn. ‘Ok svá mikill kraptr fylgir krossinum, at opt hafa orðit fyrr þvílíkar jartegnir yfir heiðnum mönnum, þá er þeir hofðu hann með höndum, ok sumar enn berari.’

It is interesting to note that the word *túlkr* is itself a foreign borrowing (apparently from Old Slavonic *tlükü*: ‘interpretation’), suggesting perhaps that the interpreter’s function was usually performed by a foreigner rather than a polyglot Scandinavian.<sup>35</sup>

There are, of course, references to outstanding Scandinavians who demonstrate an exceptional proficiency in speaking one or several obscure foreign tongues. King Óláfr Tryggvason, for instance, impresses his men with his knowledge of Wendish (Oddr Snorrason 1932, 209):

Oc ípenna tima sia menn at skip rendi akafliga mikinn at lyptingunni a O(rminum) langa. oc rendi af suðrætt. þat var sextansessa. oc geck maðr or stafninum oc talaði við Olaf konung. með ukunnre tungu. Oc sua mælti oc konungr imoti. at Norðmenn skilðu eigi.    Oc er þeir varu ibrottu spurðu menn konungs huerir þeir menn veri. er við hann hafðu talat. Hann sagði at þeir veri ukunnir menn oc komnir af Vinðlandi.

Similarly, during his visit to the court of King Kirialax in Constantinople, Sigurðr Jórsalafari is said to have made an eloquent speech in Greek (*Morkinskinna* 1932, 349):

. . . Nv foro þeir menn oc como fyr S(igurþ) konvng oc s(ogþo) at keisari sendi honom þetta fe. S(igurþr) konvngr stop þa vpp oc toc hringana oc dro ahond ser. Siþan talapí hann ørendi a grisco oc þaccapi keisara með fogrom orþom sina storlyndi. toc nv oc scripti þesso fe meþ sinom monnom meþ bliþo. oc fecc af þeso micla virþing af keisara.

Likewise, the author of *Knýtinga saga* remarks that King Eiríkr Sveinsson of Denmark was skilled in a great many languages and supports this observation by citing a *dróttkvætt* stanza supposedly composed by Markús Skeggjason (*ÍF XXXV* 216-7):

Eiríkr konungr var vitr maðr ok klerkr góðr ok kunni margar tungur tala. Hann var allra manna minnigasta ok snjallr í máli. Svá segir Markús:

.Alla hafði qðlingr snilli.

Ungr nam hann á margar tungur.

With these passages one might also compare the description in *Hungrvaka* of Hallr Teitsson’s remarkable ability to speak the language of every country he visited as if he had lived there since

childhood (although one should allow for a considerable degree of hagiographic hyperbole in such an account).<sup>36</sup> Although all of these men were sufficiently widely travelled to have acquired some knowledge of foreign languages, nevertheless such allusions to prodigious linguistic proficiency are far too reminiscent of this commonplace skill among the heroes of romance to be confidently regarded as historically accurate.

This is certainly not to suggest that Scandinavian travellers to the East learned nothing whatsoever of the languages they encountered there. It is reasonable to assume that some of those who spent long periods in a particular area abroad would acquire some degree of functional competence in the local vernaculars. The fact that certain loan-words have come into Old West Norse from Old Russian, for example, would suggest that the Varangians who made their way to Byzantium from Russia learned at least a little local vocabulary through contact with the many Russian-speaking soldiers in their regiment. Thus, for instance, A. Stender-Petersen has argued that the Varangian practice of plundering the coffers of a Byzantine emperor immediately after his death — called *pólutasvarf* in *Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar* in *Heimskringla* (ÍF XXVIII 90) — does not, as Snorri's discussion of the practice might suggest, take its name from a word *pólútir* meaning 'palaces', but is a Varangian slang word for a tax-gathering expedition derived from the Old Russian term for such expeditions, *pol'udije* (see Stender-Petersen 1953, 151-64, esp. 161-2; Blöndal 1978, 78-87; de Vries 1977, 427). Similarly, the Old West Norse word *stólkunungr* — the customary title for the East Roman emperors in Norse sources — appears to be formed by folk-etymology from Old Russian *stol'nyj kn'az'* ('prince of the capital'), the term normally used in Russian sources to refer to the rulers of Kiev and Novgorod (see Stender-Petersen 1953, 233; Blöndal 1978, 3, 177; de Vries 1977, 551).

In the last analysis, however, it must be admitted that a few loan words carried into Old West Norse do not constitute proof of more than a merely superficial understanding of a foreign tongue.<sup>37</sup> A certain amount of linguistic confusion is found to have beset Norsemen in Byzantium — a point made clear in chapter 88 of *Orkneyinga saga*. Here it is said that on their way to Constantinople, Rognvaldr Kali's crew tarried a long time in a town called 'Imbólum' (perhaps Neochori, the harbour of Amphipolis).<sup>38</sup> One night one of the Norsemen, Erlingr skakki Kyrpunga-Ormsson, was making his way back to ship after a bout of heavy drinking

when he was met by a group of local townsmen approaching him along the pier shouting as they came: *miðhæfi*, *miðhæfi* — according to the author of the saga, a common local expression used when people met in a narrow street and one party wished the other to give way. Thus the word may represent a garbled Norse version of Greek μετάβηθι, ‘turn around’, ‘out of the way’, as Guðbrandur Vigfússon suggests (Cleasby and Vigfússon 1957, s.v.; noted by Finnbogi Guðmundsson, *ÍF XXXIV* 233-4n.); or perhaps, as R. M. Dawkins proposes, a corruption of μὴ διαβή ‘don’t cross’ (Dawkins 1936, 35-7, noted *ÍF XXXIV* 234n.). Whatever the case, Erlingr pays no heed to the warning, with the result that when he meets the oncoming Greeks, he tumbles head first into the mud below (*ÍF XXXIV* 233-4). Admittedly, it is stated that Erlingr ignores the Greek warning because he is drunk, but it seems less likely that he pays no heed because, out of drunken belligerence, he wishes a confrontation which will land him in the mud; rather, his mind is too clouded to attend to a snatch of a foreign language in which he is far from fluent. Whatever the Varangians’ knowledge of Greek, there is at least little evidence to support the suggestion of Henry Goddard Leach (1921, 285-6) that the ‘translations from Greek’ referred to in the introduction to *Viktors saga ok Blávus* (1964, 3) may have been produced by Norse soldiers in Byzantium.<sup>39</sup> In fact, we need hardly give more credence to this statement than to the assurance given in the introduction to *Vilhjálms saga sjóðs* that the work was originally written by Homer and inscribed on a wall in Babylon!<sup>40</sup>

Having said this, it would probably be equally unwise to accept as wholly reliable the image of Nordic travellers presented, for instance, in the ‘Norwegian merchants’ episode in *Tristrams saga*. The author of this work seems to suggest that it goes without saying that Norwegian traders, peddling their wares abroad, would be able to understand ‘neither Breton nor French, nor any other languages’ (*Tristrams saga ok Ísondar* 1878, 17-18):

Fóru þeir þá til skips allir; þeir létu sýna Tristram fuglana; en kaupmenn váru norrœnar ok skildu hvártíki brezku né vólsku né aðrar tungur, at fóra saman kaup sín. Tristram var þá fræddr nökkrum tungum, ok gørði hann kaup við þá um VII fugla.

Cf. Gottfried von Strassburg 1949, 2230-37:

‘ei’ sprach er [Tristan] ‘edelen koufman,  
sô helfe iu got! und kunnet ir  
schachzabelspil? daz saget mir!’  
und sprach daz in ir zungen.

nu sahen sî den jungen  
aber noch vlezclicher an,  
dô er ir sprache reden began,  
die lutzel ieman kunde da.

On the other hand, it is reasonable to believe that few Scandinavian merchants managed to live up to the ideal, set forth by the author of *Konungs skuggsjá*, of mastering all tongues, and Latin and French in particular:

En þo at ec rœða nu flæst um logmal þa værðr ængi maðr til fulz vitr nema hann kunne góða skilning oc góðan hatt a ollum síðum. þar sœm hann værðr staddir oc æf þu villt værða fullkomenn í froðleic. þa næmðu allar mallyzkur en alra hælzt latinu oc valsku. þvíat þær tungur ganga viðazt. En þo tynþu ægí at hældr pinni tungo.<sup>41</sup>

It is interesting that in the same breath the author appeals to his reader not to neglect his own language. One might compare this concern expressed by the author of *Konungs skuggsjá* for the welfare of the Norse tongue in the face of influence from the international languages of Latin and French with remarks made some three hundred and fifty years later by Arngrímur Jónsson concerning the preservation of the purity of Icelandic. Arngrímur states in *Crymogaea* (1609) that the language of Iceland had not changed since his country was first settled by Scandinavians and that it had remained uncorrupted by foreign influences largely due to two special circumstances: continued keen interest in the native literature preserved in manuscripts and a general absence of contact with foreigners (1951, 30):

Porrò eā lingvâ, olim Danica et Norvegica dicta, solos Islandos uti integrâ dicebam, si primam et fatalem seu necessariam illam mutationis lingvarum causam excipias: quæ est, ut idem Bodinus ait, in ipso decursu temporum, quibus non modò lingvæ, sed etiam res omnes mutantur, ac tota rerum natura senescit. . . Sic videmus paulatim omnium populorum linguas aliter atque aliter mutari, ait Bodinus. Id quod etiam nostræ lingvæ ex parte aliqua accidere posse non imus inficias: sed nequaquam tanto discrimine aut tam paucorum annorum intervallo. Ad cujus puritatem retinendam potissimum duo sunt subsidia. Unum in libris manuscriptis, veteris puritatis ac elegantiae refertissimis. Alterum in commerciorum extraneorum paucitate. Vellem his tertium à modernis nostris adjungi: Ne scilicet sribentes aut loquentes vernaculè Danizarent aut Germanizarent, sed ad lingvæ patriæ, per se satis copiosæ et elegantis, copiam et elegantiam anniterentur, eamque sapienter et doctè affectarent; minus profectò in posterum mutationis periculum metuendum foret. Alioqui ad corrumpendam lingvam non opus erit exterorum commerciis.

It would be incorrect, however, to assume that the author of *Konungs skuggsjá* gives voice to the same anxiety when he urges his reader to cultivate an interest in his own language. Medieval writers in Iceland and Norway do not seem to have felt the concern

over contamination of their language by foreign influence often voiced by Icelanders of a later period (see Knutsson 1980). When, for instance, in the prologue to *Heimskringla*, Snorri states that he has compiled a record of the lives of specifically all those Norse kings and noblemen who have spoken *á danska tungu*, the statement is hardly an expression of isolationism; rather, it is a recognition of the common cultural identity of the Scandinavian nations.<sup>42</sup> Medieval Icelandic writers are not averse to including treatments of foreign places and material from foreign literature in stories and histories written in their own tongue — and in doing so they manifest the growing confidence in their own language and culture which is one of the hallmarks of the great European vernacular literatures of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> An earlier draft of this paper was read at Ursula Dronke's Scandinavian seminar in Oxford in May 1984 and a somewhat revised version, under the rather less comprehensive title 'Foreign languages in medieval Iceland' was presented at the Sixth International Saga Conference in Helsingør, 28 July-2 August 1985, which I was able to attend with the aid of a grant provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. I am grateful to Marianne Kalinke for drawing to my attention her thorough treatment of the matter of foreign languages in Icelandic romances (Kalinké 1983) which I had not read before completion of the version of this essay presented in Helsingør. I am indebted to Peter Foote, Jonna Louis-Jensen and Richard Perkins for helpful suggestions about various points in the paper.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, the selection of Irish loans presented in Craigie 1897a, 439-54; Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1957, 5; Jón Jóhannesson 1974, 123-4; de Vries 1977, xxi.

<sup>3</sup> For example, the nicknames of Helgi *bjóla* = *bjólan* (*ÍF* I 50, V 3; Lind 1920-1, 24-5; cf. Irish *Beóllán*, related to *bél* 'lips, mouth'); of Óláfr/Óleifr *feilan* Þorsteinsson (*ÍF* I 136; Lind 1920-1, 78; cf. Irish *fáelán* 'wolf cub' — interestingly, an element in the clan name Mac Gill'Fhaolain = MacClellan; see Black 1946, 470); and of Áskell *hnokkan* Dufþaksson (*ÍF* I 367; Lind 1920-1, 150; perhaps from Irish *cnoccán* 'little lump, hillock', although cf. Icelandic *hnokkinn* 'bowed, curved'). For interpretation of these and other apparently Irish names in *Landnámabók* see generally Craigie 1897a, 444-50; Finnur Jónsson 1921, 17-54.

<sup>4</sup> For interpretation of these two phrases, see Craigie 1897a, 443; Marstrander 1915, 69, n. 2; Helgi Guðmundsson 1967, 104-5. Jonna Louis-Jensen (1977, 119) notes that the second word in the second 'Irish' phrase in the story reads *lagall* in AM 392 4to (17th cent. — the chief manuscript of the 'C-redaction' of *Jóns saga helga*), and that the manuscript form interpreted as *ragall* in *Bps* I actually reads *iagall* in Stockholm perg. fol. nr. 5 (c. 1360 — the chief manuscript of the 'B-redaction'). The 'C' reading provides the form of the Irish preposition *la* ('with, by, with regard to'). The emended reading in *Bps* I substitutes the distinct Middle Irish preposition *ra, re* (= Old Irish *fri*) which was often confused in meaning with

*la* (see *Dictionary of the Irish Language* IV 413, *fri*). I am grateful to Anne Dooley and Harry Roe of the University of Toronto for helping to clarify some of the complexities of these two Irish prepositions.

The last word in King Myrkjartan's response in this story is written *gata* ('road, way') in *Bps* I, but *gáta* ('riddle') makes more sense (see Cleasby and Vigfússon 1957, s.v. *gáta*; Jonna Louis-Jensen 1977, 119, n. 35). With this response one might compare the introductory formula commonly used in Latin riddle-collections: *Obscurus sermo quasi mirandus sit enigma* (see Walther 1963-9, II 19637).

<sup>5</sup> *Pá réð fyrir Englandi Aðalráðr konungr Játgeirsson ok var góðr hofðingi. Hann sat þenna vetr í Lundúnaborg. Ein var þá tunga á Englandi sem í Noregi ok í Danmörku. En þá skiptusk tungur í Englandi, er Vilhjálmr bastarðr vann England; gekk þaðan af í Englandi valska, er hann var þaðan ættaðr.* (ÍF III 70). Cf. also FGT 208, and the story in *Fagrskinna* (ÍF XXIX 289) of the conversation between Styrkárr stallari and the English *vagnkarl* after the Battle of Stamford Bridge.

Otto Jespersen suggests that the English, on the other hand, may not have regarded the Norse language as one with their own. He supports this assumption by noting that Wulfstan describes the Scandinavian invaders to his English audience as 'people who do not know your language' (Jespersen 1972, 60). In fact, the homily to which Jespersen refers, an Old English version of the apocryphal *Carta Dominica*, a letter purportedly written by Jesus commanding all men to observe the Sabbath faithfully or incur divine wrath, includes among the many punishments reserved for those who fail to keep Sunday holy the warning that God will send upon them a marauding race of foreigners 'whose language you do not understand' (Napier 1967, 295-6 [MS. Lambeth Palace London 489, 28r]): . . . and ic sende ofer eow þa beode eow to hergjanne and eower land to awestenne, þe ge heora spræca ne cunnan, forþan be ge ne healdad sunnandæges freols, and forþan be ge me forseod and mine beboda noldon healdan. (Cf. another version of the homily in the Cambridge MS. Corpus Christi College 162, p. 47, printed Napier 1901, 359.) Because Jespersen accepts the attribution of the Old English homily to Wulfstan, he assumes that the foreign-speaking invaders referred to here would naturally be the Norsemen. Although it has been demonstrated that Wulfstan was probably not the author of either version of this homily (see Jost 1950, 228-30, 232-3; and K. Ostheeren's note in Napier 1967, 361-2), one might assume that Jespersen's argument is nevertheless supported by the fact that both versions of the homily are preserved in manuscripts of the early eleventh century, when England suffered new attacks from Scandinavia. Interestingly, an early eighth-century Irish rendering of the Sunday letter of Jesus, preserved in the first part of the *Cáin Domnaig* ('Sunday rule'), was once dated to the ninth century simply because of the same identification of these 'foreign invaders' as vikings. Martin McNamara notes, however (1975, 62-3), that this detail is also found in Latin versions of the letter from as early as the sixth century. It seems likely that the authors of the Irish letter and the Old English homilies on Sunday observance are simply following some version of the original *Epistola Iesu* which, McNamara points out (1975, 63), 'says that those who violate Sunday rest will have sent on them by God "the Ishmaelite people to enslave them".' Given the evidence available, it is impossible to prove (and it is implausible) that an eleventh-century English audience would have associated a reference to foreign-speaking invaders in this context specifically with Norsemen or any other contemporary foreign enemies.

<sup>6</sup> See *Hauksbók* 1892-6, cxviii-cxx, 156-64. For a convenient survey of studies of English influence on Icelandic literature, see Einar G. Pétursson 1976, lxxii-lxxxii, cvii-cviii.

<sup>7</sup> This point is taken from the interesting discussion of records of non-Scandinavian foreigners in Iceland by Bogi Th. Melsteð 1907-15, 882-3. On these foreign visitors in general, cf. 716-22, 821-32, 879-83.

<sup>8</sup> See note *ad loc.*, *DI* II, 995; cf. Einar G. Pétursson 1976, lxxiii. With this Icelandic term cf. *OED* s.v. *reading* vbl. sb., 10b(a); Bosworth and Toller 1898, s.v. *rædingbōc*. On the semantic obscurity of the Old English word cf. Gneuss 1985a, 111-13, 116; 1985b, 120-1.

<sup>9</sup> On Norwegian and Icelandic connections with French centres of learning during the middle ages, see Jørgensen 1914-15, esp. 338 ff.; Johnsen 1939; 1943-6; 1951; 1972; Berulfsen 1948, 74-5; Bekker-Nielsen 1968; Jakob Benediktsson 1972; Jón Jóhannesson 1974, 180, 196-7).

<sup>10</sup> See both the older and younger versions of *Jóns saga helga*, *Bps.* I, 163, 235. Cf. the very rudimentary Latin response of Bishop Guðmundr Arason's emissary Ketill when addressed by a representative of the Papal *curia* in Rome in *Saga Guðmundar Arasonar eptir Arngrím ábóta*, *Bps.* II 123-4.

<sup>11</sup> I know no medieval parallels to these two anecdotes about inappropriate greetings, but for a charming Norwegian-American analogue from the early part of this century (in which a Norwegian immigrant is told that the most impressive way to address an American woman in her own language is to tip one's hat and say 'Hello, pie face'), see Per Rosendahl's cartoon *Naar en kan snakke Yeinki*, reproduced in Haugen 1986, 112.

<sup>12</sup> On Hebrew, Greek and Latin as the three 'sacred languages' see Bischoff 1961, 215; Borst 1957-63, II 396, 454, 468, 634; McNally 1958. Consider, for example, Isidore's remarks on the subject, *Etymologiae* IX, i, 3: *Tres sunt autem linguae sacrae: Hebraea, Graeca, Latina, quae toto orbe maxime excellunt. His enim tribus linguis super crucem Domini a Pilato fuit causa eius scripta. Vnde et propter obscuritatem sanctorum Scripturarum harum trium linguarum cognitio necessaria est, ut ad alteram recurratur dum siquam dubitationem nominis vel interpretationis sermo unius linguae adtulerit.*

<sup>13</sup> See William of Malmesbury 1887-9, 258-9. Another account of the discovery of Pallas's body, complete with an Icelandic translation of his epitaph, is included in *Breta sögur, Hauksbók* 1892-6, 236-7; but no mention is made of the date of the verses.

<sup>14</sup> See Jubilees 4:16-18 in Charles 1913, 18: 'Enoch . . . was the first among men that are born on earth who learnt writing and knowledge and wisdom and who wrote down the signs of heaven according to the order of their months in a book, that men might know the seasons of the years according to the order of their separate months.'

<sup>15</sup> See gloss in Walter of Châtillon 1978, 400: *SI PRECLARA DICTA VATVM scilicet Lucani, qui Tyriis ascribit inuenctionem litterarum dicens 'Phenices primi, fame si creditur, ausi mansuras rudibus uocis signare figuras.'* Item Theodolus 'Grecorum primus hec uestigat gramata Cadmus.' *A quo Cadmo filio Agenoris, in Grecis litteris peritissimo, Tyrii Grecas litteras primo addidicerunt, unde Cadmus dicitur eas inuenisse, et ita gracia Cadmi Tyro attribuit inuenctionem litterarum.* There is likewise no mention of the origin of the Hebrew alphabet in R. T. Prichard's recent annotated translation of the *Alexandreis* (Walter of Châtillon 1986, 88, 96, n. 23).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Donatus, *Ars grammatica*, 'De littera', in Keil 1857-80, IV 367; Remigius, *In artem Donati minorem commentum*, 'De littera', in Hagen 1870, 224. Both passages are reproduced in *FGT* 80, n. 1. Cf. remarks on these Latin parallels by Holtsmark 1936, 89-90.

<sup>17</sup> For example, in Gregory of Tours (540-94; 1967, I 364); in Rabanus Maurus (780-856), *De inventione linguarum* (*PL* 112, 1579-80), where both Greek ν and Latin γ are called ογ; in the ninth-century Irish grammatical primer *Auraicept na n-éces* (1917, 86-7); and in the English *Ormulum*, written c. 1200 (1878, II 361, note to line 4320). See Hreinn Benediktsson, *FGT* 96-7; Holtsmark 1936, 68-70.

<sup>18</sup> See Holtsmark 1936, 72. Hreinn Benediktsson maintains, nevertheless (*FGT* 194), that it is more likely that the author of *FGT* derived his information about Hebrew characters from some Latin work than that he had first-hand knowledge of Hebrew.

<sup>19</sup> I am grateful to Peter Springborg and Arne Mann Nielsen of the Arnamagnæan Institute in Copenhagen for providing me with photographs of this manuscript and for granting me permission to reproduce them here.

<sup>20</sup> See *Psevdo-Avgvstini Qvaestiones veteris et novi testamenti CXXVII* (now identified as the work of Ambrosiaster), cviii, 6 (CSEL 50, 251, 255): *De lingua Habrea, ex quo nomen acceperit . . . Haec ergo lingua est, quam dicimus primitus datam Adae et ceteris, quam propter praesumptionem turris aedificatae credimus in multas dispersam et confusam, ut non iam haec, sed multae ex hac inmutatione habita quorundam dictorum existent, ut non haberet speciem nec tamen deperiret, sed tota confusa esset ceteris linguis.*

<sup>21</sup> See Schlettstadt Stadtbibliothek MS. 1093 (c. 700), 72v, printed Förster 1910, 344: *Primum uerbum qualem dixit Adam? — Primum uerbum 'Deo gratias' dixit.* Cf. Borst 1957-63, II 434 and 435, n. 83.

<sup>22</sup> See the summary of the 'Book of a hundred chapters' (written by an anonymous 'revolutionary of the Upper Rhine' soon after 1500) in Cohn 1957, 119.

<sup>23</sup> Among various arguments put forward to demonstrate that the first language of mankind was *lingua Cimbrica* or Teutonic, Goropius Becanus (*Origines Antwerpianae* 1569, V 539-40) proposed that Adam's name was a compound of two words, *Hat* and *Dam* (since, he pointed out, Adam was a 'dam' against a diabolical sea of 'hatred'). Bureus objected that this was no proof that Adam spoke *niderländskan*, since *Hat och Dam . . . äré så reen svenska som hållenska* (cited in Schück 1932, 97-8).

<sup>24</sup> James Cross and Thomas Hill (1982, 75) remark that the discrepancy between 73 and 72 languages in this calculation may be explained 'by the presence of the Cainan (recorded in Luke 3:36 within the list of the generations of Christ) who . . . does not appear in the Hebrew (and Vulgate) at Genesis 11:12, but only in the Septuagint/Old Latin as the father of Sale and Son of Arphaxad'. Bede draws attention to this superfluous Cainan in his commentary *In Lucam I*, iii, 35-6 (CCSL 120, 90). A convenient summary of the commonplace of the 72 languages is presented by Hans Sauer (1983).

<sup>25</sup> Arno Borst, author of the foremost study of the 'history of ideas regarding the origin and number of languages and peoples', prints a sample of seven such lists composed between the third century and the seventeenth and copied repeatedly throughout this period (1957-63, II 931-52). The existence of Icelandic is not recognized in these inventories until the seventeenth century, when it is included as language number 37 in a list drawn up by Johann-Heinrich Alsted of Herborn (see Borst 1957-63, II 952).

<sup>26</sup> This folk-etymology is recorded for example by Cassiodorus (c. 485-c. 580), *Expositio Psalmorum: in Ps. 113*, CCSL 98, 1029; by Balbus (1460, s.v. *barbarus*) and by Huguccio of Pisa (died c. 1210), *Magnae derivationes*, s.v. *barbarus*, Munich Stadtbibliothek, MS. clm. 14056 (14th cent.), 11r.

<sup>27</sup> W. C. Green's translation, cited in Friedman 1981, 216, n. 10. See Augustine

1957-72, VI 148: *In quo primum linguarum diversitas hominem alienat ab homine. Nam si duo sibimet invicem fiant obviam neque praeterire, sed simul esse aliqua necessitate cogantur, quorum neuter linguam novit alterius, facilius sibi muta animalia, etiam diversi generis, quam illi, cum sint homines ambo, sociantur. Quando enim quae sentiunt inter se communicare non possunt, propter solam diversitatem linguae nihil prodest ad consociandos homines tanta similitudo naturae, ita ut libentius homo sit cum cane suo quam cum homine alieno.*

<sup>28</sup> I quote from the translation by F. J. Tschan (Adam of Bremen 1959, 212-13); cf. Adam of Bremen 1978, 478: *qui . . . loquentes ad invicem frendere magis quam verba proferre dicuntur, ita ut vix a proximis intelligi queant populis.* Teeth-grinding in lieu of civilized human utterance appears to have been regarded as characteristic of heathen speech. Gregory the Great, for example, marvels that the heathen language of the Britons 'which once only knew to gnash its barbarous teeth' should be transformed through Christianity into a tongue fit for singing 'the praises of God with the Alleluia of the Hebrews' (*Moralia XXVII*, xi, 21, CCSL 143B, 1346). Bede duly repeats these remarks in his *Ecclesiastical History* (1969, 130).

<sup>29</sup> See Adam of Bremen 1978, 488: *Sunt autem plures aliae in oceano insulae, quarum non minima [est] Gronland. . . Homines ibi a salo cerulei, unde et regio illa nomen accepit.*

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in Jones 1971, 395 and Southern 1967, 69. The translation presented here borrows from both Jones and Southern. I prefer Southern's rendering of Urban's phrase, *more belluino*, as more appropriate to Northern climes, rather than Jones's doubtless more accurate translation, 'in the manner of brutes'.

<sup>31</sup> See *Le Guide du pèlerin de Saint-Jacques de Compostelle* 1969, 28; cited in Sumption 1975, 192; cf. Bischoff 1961, 218. This particular uncomplimentary comparison is common in medieval descriptions of barbarous tongues. For example, in the Middle English *Kyng Alisaunder* (1952-7, I 109), it is noted that people descended from Cain bark like dogs:

. . . He was of Kaymes kynrede —  
His men ne coupen speke ne grede,  
Bot als houndes grenne and berken,  
So vs siggen þise clerken.

G. V. Smithers compares *Chanson de Roland* 3526-7 (cited *Kyng Alisaunder* 1952-7, II 94):

Cil d'Ociant i braient e henissent  
Et cil d'Argoillie come chien i glatisseint.

In the same way, the Arabic writer al-Qazwīnī (1203-83) includes in his geographical treatise a report by a tenth-century informant, ˓at-˓Arṭūšī, that the songs of the people of Schleswig are more discordant than the howling of dogs (see Birkeland 1954, 104; I am grateful to Richard Perkins of University College London for this reference). The commonplace appears to go back to stories of the mythical race of *cynocephali*. Cf. the accounts (usually attributed to Megasthenes, c. 350-290 B.C.) of the speech of the dog-headed men of India in Pliny (*Naturalis historia* VII, ii, 23), Aulus Gellius (*Noctes Atticae* IX, iv, 9), Solinus (*Collectanea rerum memorabilium* lii, 27) and Augustine (1957-72, V 42).

<sup>32</sup> See Bischoff 1961, 216. Bischoff translates a verse by the thirteenth-century German didactic poet Hugo von Trimberg (*Der Renner*, 3633 ff.) which, although referring to the predicament of the poor forced to take up service abroad, describes equally well the plight of the medieval pilgrim: 'Parrots and magpies are taught to speak by means of hunger . . . Many people whose purse, hand and stomach are empty, are forced to learn Czech, Italian or Hungarian.'

<sup>33</sup> *Questo sie uno libro utilissimo a chi se dileta de intendere Todescho dechiarando in lingua Taliana*, Venice 1498-1500; noted in Bischoff 1961, 211. This remarkable book finds its modern counterpart in the very popular volume, *An Irishman's difficulties with the Dutch language* by 'Cuey-na-Gael' (pseudonym of the Revd Dr John Irwin Brown), which went through eight editions between 1908 and 1928. See Russell Ash and Brian Lake, *Bizarre books* (1985), 132.

<sup>34</sup> 30v lines 2-12 record a Turkish phonetic approximation of the names of the month in the Islamic (Arabic) lunar calendar (presented in the correct order, but arbitrarily associated with the fixed twelve months of the Christian calendar). 30v line 22 to 31r line 2 presents a faithful rendering of the Turkish names of the week. I am grateful to Professor E. Birnbaum of the University of Toronto and Vit Bubenik of Memorial University of Newfoundland for advice about this mixture of Turkish and Arabic. On this little tract, see Overgaard 1979, 288.

<sup>35</sup> See Falk and Torp 1960, 1269, *tolk*; cf. de Vries 1977, 600, *tulk*; Alexander Jóhannesson 1956, 1211, *túlkr*. The same relationship is evident in the origin of German *Dolmetsch*, apparently derived from Turkish *tilmač*, *tilmadž* 'middleman' (cf. Old Slavonic *tlūmač*; see Kluge and Mitzka 1975, 137); in the origin of English 'dragoman', through medieval Greek δραγόμανος from early Arabic *tarġumān* (see Onions 1966, 287; Kluge and Mitzka 1975, 137); and in the derivation of Middle Welsh *gwalstod/gwalstawd* from Old English *wealhstod* (see Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru XXV, 1567; Kluge and Mitzka 1975, 137). Cf. the interesting articles by Fix 1984, 553-57; Gravier 1986, 159-66.

<sup>36</sup> The polyglot Hallr died in Utrecht in 1150 before he could be consecrated Bishop of Skálholt. Hallr's skill with languages is described as follows (*Bps.* I 80): *Eptir andlát Magnús biskups, hit næsta sumar, varð at kjósa man til biskups, ok fór utan Hallr Teitsson, ok mælti allstaðar þeirra málí, sem hann væri allstaðar þar barnfæddr, sem þá kom hann. Hallr andaðist í Trekt, þá þeir fóru aprí, ok var eigi vígðr til biskups.* It should be noted, however, that precisely this miraculous gift of tongues is a hagiographic commonplace. Like the apostles at Pentecost, many saints are reported to have been able, particularly when preaching, to communicate with people from many lands in their own native idiom. For instance, St Pachomius (c. 290-346), the Welsh Saints Cadoc (died c. 575) and David (died c. 601), St Antony of Padua (1195-1231), St Vincent Ferrer (1350-1419) and St Bernardino of Siena (1380-1444) are all reported to have been blessed with this gift. Intriguingly reminiscent of the description of Hallr Teitsson's polyglot skills is part of Cardinal de Monte's testimony presented to Gregory XV at the canonization of Francis Xavier, Jan. 19, 1622: *De Dono Lingvarvm. Diuersarum namque gentium linguis, quas non didicerat, cum eas Euangelij causa adiret, ita eleganter, & expedite loquebatur, ac si ibi natus, & educatus esset: & contigit non raro, vt eum concionantem diuersarum nationum homines, sua quisque plane, & polite loquentem audiuerit (Relatio facta . . . coram S.D.N. Gregorio Papa XV a. . Card. A. Monte Die XIX Ian. MDCXXII super Vita, Sanctitate . . & miraculis Beati Francisci Xavier [Rome 1622], 31).* With these accounts one might compare Gregory the Great's story of the squire Armentarius, who miraculously acquires the ability to answer questions put to him in any language, however barbarous, 'as if he had been born in that same nation' (see Gregory the Great 1978-80, III 94). Although Hallr may well have been proficient in several languages, the enthusiastic account of his linguistic proficiency in *Hungrvaka* may simply be intended to emphasize the saintly character of the deceased Bishop-elect. For these and many other examples of the gift of tongues as a hagiographic *topos* see Brewer 1884, I 154-5; Loomis 1948, 71-2. Linguistic aptitude was, of course, included in the 'gifts of men'

commonplace reflected in I Cor. 12:7-10: . . . *unicuique autem datur manifestatio Spiritus ad utilitatem, alii quidem per Spiritum datur sermo sapientiae . . . alii genera linguarum, alii interpretatio sermonum.* Compare the rendering of this passage in the Old Icelandic translation of Gregory the Great's Ascension Day homily, no. 29 (AM 677 4to [13th cent.], 17r, printed *Leifar* 1878, 27): . . . *hann sendi anda si n ofan. oc veitti sumom mēlisco . . . en sumom at mēla a margar tun(g) or en sumom bōcspeci*, or in the translation of Gregory's Whitsun homily, no. 30 (AM 677 4to, 20r, *Leifar* 1878, 33): *Sumom gefsc speci mál fyr h(eilagan) a(nd)a en . . . sumom sciln(g) tun(g)na. sumom mála þýbin(g).*

<sup>37</sup> For some examples of snatches of Greek vocabulary in twelfth-century *pulur*, see Amory 1984, 514n.

<sup>38</sup> Various interpretations of *Imbólum* have been proposed. Alexander Bugge regarded the word as a corruption of Amphipolis; Dasent suggested that it referred to the Isle of Imbros in the Dardanelles. It seems most likely that the place described in the story is Neochori, the harbour of Amphipolis; and in keeping with this assumption, Guðbrandur Vigfússon suggested that the name *Imbólum* grew out of ἔμπολις ('belonging to the city') by analogy with Istanbul (< εἰς τὴν πόλιν 'to the city'). Rudolf Meissner, however, argued that the word was not a place-name at all, but a rendering of ἔμβολος (Latin *embolum*), a name applied in Byzantium to a street situated by an archway, in particular a mercantile district or bazaar. See Meissner 1925, 183-4; Finnbogi Guðmundsson in *ÍF XXXIV* 233, n. 2; Blöndal 1978, 155-6.

<sup>39</sup> For a *caveat* against overzealous attempts to draw conclusions about Scandinavian knowledge of Greek from details in the *riddarasqgur*, see Amory 1984.

<sup>40</sup> See Loth 1962-5, IV 3: *pessi saga var tekin af steinuegginum j Babillon hjnni miklu. og meistari Humerus hefer samsett hana.*

<sup>41</sup> *Konungs skuggsíá* 1983, 5. For a useful survey of evidence of Scandinavian knowledge of French during the middle ages, see Laugesen 1951, esp. 46-58. It is interesting to note, in this regard, that Marianne Kalinke (1983, 852) draws attention to a letter (*DN* I 19, no. 24, dated 8 July, 1241) from Pope Gregory IX to the Norwegian king Hákon Hákonarson in which the Pope excuses the King from organizing a crusade (suggesting instead that he serve the Christian cause by attacking his heathen neighbours) on the grounds that a crusade would be too onerous for the Norwegians, who would be handicapped not only by their poverty and the great distances they would have to travel but also by their ignorance of the languages of the countries through which they would pass en route to the Holy Land (*ignorantia linguarum interiacentium*). Whether or not Hákon himself had broached the subject of his countrymen's 'ignorance of foreign languages', it is clear enough from Gregory's response that the Pope was quite prepared to regard Norwegians as sufficiently cut off from civilization to be incapable of communicating with their fellow-Christians in Europe.

<sup>42</sup> *ÍF XXVI* 3: 'Á bók pessi lét ek rita fornar frásagnir um hofðingja þá, er ríki hafa haft á Norðrlöndum ok á danska tungu hafa mælt, svá sem ek hefi heyrt fróða menn segja'. I have faintheartedly side-stepped the question of when Icelanders, and for that matter Norwegians, Swedes and Danes, began to regard the languages of their fellow-Scandinavians as definitely 'foreign'. For informed discussion of this thorny subject, see Melberg 1949-51, esp. 77-88; Seip 1954, esp. 7-13; 1955, esp. 31, 59-60, 83-4, 213-17, 336-40; Skautrup 1957; and Karker 1977.

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## MOTIVATION IN *LOKASENNNA*

By JOHN McKINNELL

THE main question I wish to pose in this paper is a very simple one: what is the reason for the argument in *Lokasenna*? Most verbal contests in Eddic poetry are not motiveless, but have some practical intention and result. In *Vafþrúðnismál* the loser of the riddle contest will lose his life; in *Alvíssmál* the dwarf wants a wife and Pórr wants to keep him talking until the sun turns him to stone; in *Hárbarðsljóð*, Pórr wants to be ferried across an arm of the sea and Óðinn wants to assert the superiority of his own cult to that of Pórr; in *Skírnismál*, Skírnir wants to gain Gerðr's love for Freyr, which she is reluctant to give. Outside the Codex Regius of the Poetic Edda, the deadly riddle contest reappears, in a slightly mutilated form, in the verse of *Hervarar saga* ch. 10 (1956, 36-51) and the Pórr-Óðinn contest in *Gautreks saga* ch. 7 (*Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda* 1943-4, III 25-6), though in this instance the underlying verse has not survived. In each case, the argument has some practical cause and the upshot is some real change in the circumstances of those involved. It would therefore be surprising if there were no practical motivation for Loki's intrusion into Ægir's feast other than the uttering of comic abuse. We know that Loki will not be killed in this contest, because we know his future up to Ragnarök (and if we didn't st. 49 reminds us of it); so we must find some other explanation of why Loki chooses to intrude where he is so clearly not wanted.

### I

My second question, which can be answered at once, is whether the accusations which Loki hurls at the gods should be regarded as true (as argued for example by Turville-Petre, *MRN* 131) or as a mixture of truth, half-truth and comically outrageous lies (as suggested by Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1962, 320-1 and Anne Holtsmark 1965, 678-80).

If some of Loki's accusations were false, the force of his attack would be greatly reduced, quite apart from the danger of confusion between the supposedly true and false accusations. Besides, a god

who was thought of as falsely accused could simply retort by calling Loki a liar — yet only one of them does so (Bragi in st. 14). The accusation he is reacting against is a general one of cowardice, the sort of thing which, because it does not allude to a particular myth, is hard to establish as either true or false. In this stanza Bragi uses the excuse of being in Ægir's hall as a way of avoiding a fight while asserting in ferocious terms what he would do to Loki if he were outside, and in the following one, Loki coolly calls his bluff and quite accurately says that Bragi won't do what he has threatened. Bragi's hot denial is therefore part of a passage which demonstrates clearly that the accusation of cowardice is well-founded.

Freyja also tries to suggest that Loki's accusation is false, when she asserts that he has a deceitful tongue (st. 31:1, possibly echoing and implying the threat in *Hávamál* 29:4-6). Again, the charge she is replying to is general rather than relating to one specific incident; it is that each of the Æsir and elves present has been her lover. And of course this accusation is also true in general substance; Freyja is a goddess of sexuality, and her promiscuity is only to be expected. To take one instance of it, *Sqrla þátr* opens with two chapters in which she sleeps with each of four dwarf smiths and is then visited while asleep in her private bower by a provocative fly whom we know to be Loki in one of his many forms (*Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda* 1943-4, II 97-9). It seems, therefore, that the poet only allows characters to deny Loki's accusations when there is no danger at all of our believing them to be innocent.

Quite a number of gods, on the other hand, overtly or implicitly admit that Loki's accusations are well-founded. The clearest examples of this are in st. 33, where Njörðr admits Freyja's promiscuity; st. 35, where he admits having been a hostage; and st. 39, where Týr admits the loss of his hand. But another repeated tactic is for the deity accused to repeat the accusation with the preface *Veiztu ef*. . — 'You know if . . .', followed by a counter-accusation. As Heinrichs notes, this is a really primitive tactic of argument (1970, 53), popular though it remains with modern politicians. It is used by Óðinn in st. 23, Frigg in st. 27 and Skaði in st. 51. The point here, however, is that it amounts to an admission that the accusation is true.

One ought here to pause for a moment over what we mean when we say that an accusation is 'true'. It certainly does not mean that Loki is being fair — he can put his own hostile interpretations on the actions of the gods, and sometimes they are not the obvious interpretations. But the accusation must either be based on some

existing tradition, or at least it must be in character with some existing tradition of what the accused deity is like. This constraint may explain the fact that some of the accusations do not seem at first sight to be very serious. That against Heimdallr (st. 48), which rails against his position as watchman of the gods, is an example of this; if Loki were free to make up lies, he would surely have alleged something more serious against his most deadly enemy. (On this particular enmity see Heinrichs 1970, 44-5 and *MRN* 147.)

There is, though, one other test that must be applied. If we are meant to regard Loki's accusations as accurate (if sometimes biased), there must not be any which are in clear contradiction with all other tradition. One of Loki's statements (and only one) does seem to run counter to what we learn elsewhere; this is his assertion in st. 58 that Pórr will not dare to rage as he is doing now when he has to fight the wolf at Ragnarök. Now everybody knows that a schematic view of Ragnarök makes Viðarr kill the Wolf after the latter has swallowed Óðinn and matches Pórr against the World Serpent (see e.g. *Völuspá* 1984, 106-9, stanzas 55-6; Snorri Sturluson 1982, 50-51, *Gylfaginning* ch. 51), so it looks as if Loki has made a mistake. Magnus Olsen (1960, II 51-2) suggests that the author is influenced by a *lausavísa* by Hildr Hrólfssdóttir about Góngu-Hrólfr (see Kock 1949, I 17) and thinking of the proverb *illt's við úlf at ylfask*, 'it's bad to rage (literally "make a wolf of oneself") against a wolf'; but that is no solution, since it supplies no literal interpretation of what Loki means. There is no getting away from the clear literal meaning of what he says.

There are, I think, three possible ways of answering this problem. One is to say that this is a mistake on Loki's part, inserted deliberately by the author to show that he is less successful in abusing Pórr than he has been against the other gods. But in this case it seems odd that the mistake occurs at the beginning of the confrontation with Pórr and is followed by some shrewd hits about Pórr's encounter with Skrýmir (stanzas 60, 62).

Another possible explanation is that traditions about Ragnarök were not unanimous, but included one in which Pórr did fight the Wolf. In *Hymiskviða* 11 he is called *Hróðrs andskoti*, 'Hróðr's opponent', which seems to imply this. Klingenberg (1983, 143, 161) suggests that Pórr and Fenrir are, in both *Hymiskviða* and *Lokasenna*, apocalyptically significant of the opposing sides at Ragnarök as a whole, but I find this symbolic mode of thinking unconvincing for this usually literal and specific poem. The traditions behind *Hymiskviða* are peculiar in a number of ways, but

the considerable confusion in the text of *Völuspá* 55-6, which the *Lokasenna* poet may have been using here, also suggests variable traditions. It would be easy to conclude from the *Hauksbók* text of *Völuspá* 55:5-8 that Pórr will fight against the Wolf:

Mun Óðins sonr eitri mæta,  
vargs at dauða Víðars niðia.

(Óðinn's son will meet the venom of the monster [or 'wolf'] after the death of Víðarr's kinsman.)

(For the emendation *eitri* for MS *ormi*, see *Völuspá* 1984, 106.) But as this stanza also mentions Víðarr, who exists in myth only as the slayer of the Wolf, a reader who misunderstood it in this way would also have to conclude that Pórr will not be able to kill Fenrir. Such a belief could easily produce both the *heiti* in *Hymiskviða* 11 and the allegation in *Lokasenna* 58. A different confusion of the same two mythical motifs may perhaps appear on the Gosforth Cross, where a Víðarr-like figure can be seen forcing the jaws of a monster apart with a spear, but the monster seems to be a serpent rather than a wolf (see Bailey 1980, 126-8).

A third possibility is that Loki is simply being unfair. It was the normal duty of a son to avenge the killing of his father, but it is Víðarr, not Pórr, who will exact vengeance from Fenrir for the killing of Óðinn, and Loki may be suggesting that Pórr will avoid this duty out of cowardice. This last explanation has the virtue of not conflicting with known tradition, but is also more obviously and completely unjust than any of Loki's other allegations, and thus runs the risk of undermining the force of what he says; it is a possibility, though not, perhaps, a very attractive one.

The second and third of these explanations are both perfectly possible, and it cannot, therefore, be shown that Loki's accusations run clearly counter to existing traditions at any point. Many of the gods he attacks effectively admit the truth of what he says, and the two who accuse him of falsehood are themselves demonstrably lying. It looks, therefore, as if we are meant to take it that the accusations are basically true throughout, although they may be couched in a deliberately biased form.

## II

Two other points now call for attention. The poem contains a number of allusions to what will happen at Ragnarök: in st. 10 Óðinn calls on Víðarr to offer a seat to the 'Wolf's father', and

this is a covert allusion to the struggle between Víðarr and Fenrir at Ragnarök; in st. 39 Týr mentions the bound Wolf awaiting Ragnarök; in st. 41 Freyr refers to the downfall of the gods — the Wolf is bound *unz riúfaz regin*, ‘until the gods are destroyed’; in st. 42 Loki notes that Freyr will feel the loss of his sword at Ragnarök; in st. 58 Loki mentions Pórr’s alleged fight with the Wolf at Ragnarök. The persistence of these references is such as to justify Klingenberg’s view (1983, 152-3) that the end of the world is the overriding idea of *Lokasenna*, though I disagree with his view of Loki’s motivation (see below).

Secondly, there are two occasions when goddesses are defended, apparently quite irrelevantly, by the statement that they understand Fate. Óðinn says this of Gefjun in st. 21:

Œrr ertu, Loki, oc ørviti,  
er þú fær þér Gefion at gremi,  
þvíat aldar ørlög hygg ec at hon qll um viti  
iafnorla sem ec.

(You are mad, Loki, and out of your wits, when you set out to vex Gefjun, for I think she knows the whole fate of the world as clearly as I.)

— and Freyja makes a similar defence of Frigg in st. 29. Magnus Olsen (1960, II 16-17) has explained this as a threat: it is dangerous to anger a goddess who knows Fate. But this hardly makes much sense; if Fate is Fate, then it cannot be fundamentally changed either by a malignant goddess or by a favourable one. One could argue that those who know Fate can act in a way that will either hasten or delay it, but in fact, many of Loki’s opponents seem very anxious to avoid open confrontation (e.g. Iðunn, Gefjun, Sif). So if the allusion to a goddess knowing Fate is a threat, it is one which the gods are apparently very reluctant to put into actual effect.

I shall now return to my first question: what is the reason for the argument? In st. 21 Óðinn says that Loki is mad to try to annoy Gefjun because she understands the whole fate of the world as clearly as Óðinn does himself. That implies that Loki’s motive for trying to annoy Gefjun (and hence the other gods as well) should be understood in terms of Fate. I would suggest the view that he is motivated by the desire to hurry Fate along by provoking a final breach between himself and the gods. Such a breach must happen before the gods will bind him, and that must take place before Ragnarök can follow, and with it the final destruction of the gods. It is thus within the power of the gods to delay Ragnarök unless Loki can provoke them into a final breach with him. Loki himself certainly knows what the future holds; we see this from stanzas

42, 58, 62. He even knows about his own binding, which he admits in st. 50, using the same phrase, *Veiztu, ef . . .* as his opponents do when they admit the substantial truth of an accusation. This foreknowledge seems to me to render unlikely Klingenberg's suggestion (1983, 152) that Loki's motive is to try to discover what punishment lies in store for him as a result of the murder of Baldr.

His task of provoking the gods is made more difficult by the fact that many of them also know why he is there. The list of those who know what is to come, and who presumably realise what he is doing, includes those who refer to or are said to possess the knowledge of Fate (Gefjun, Óðinn, Frigg and Freyja), and those who refer to what will happen at or before Ragnarök (Týr, Freyr and Skaði). There are five characters of whom we never discover whether they know Fate or not (Iðunn, Njorðr, Heimdallr, Sif and Beyla), though the tactics adopted may suggest that at least Iðunn and Heimdallr know what is to come, while Beyla probably does not. A few of the gods are either ignorant of Fate or allow themselves to forget about it in the anger of the moment, since they make bombastic claims about the future which are in direct conflict with Fate. Bragi is the first of these — if he knows Fate, his announcement that he would carry Loki's head in his hand if he were outside (st. 14) becomes pointless, since Loki is not destined to die in that way — and in any case, one who announces that the Æsir will never offer Loki a seat (st. 8) just before Óðinn does exactly that (st. 10) is clearly no great expert at telling the future. Byggvir seems to think (st. 43) that it is within Freyr's power to grind Loki into tiny pieces, and his miniature bellicosity is simply ridiculous. It is possible that we should add Beyla to this list, depending on what we take her to mean when she says (st. 55) that Pórr will bring them peace from Loki. If she means that Pórr will kill Loki, she is clearly ignorant of Fate. If she means he will drive Loki out, she cannot understand Loki's strategy (if I have identified it rightly); but she may only mean that Pórr will awe Loki into silence, so we cannot be sure of her ignorance of Fate. But all these are the most minor deities present, the ones we might expect to be ignorant. The only surprising addition to their number is Pórr, whose repeated threats to destroy Loki with his hammer (stanzas 57, 59, 61, 63) are in blatant conflict with Loki's role in Fate. I shall come back to this point when looking at the conclusion of the poem.

This explanation gives a reason for Loki's intrusion into the hall, for the references to Fate and to Ragnarök, and for the fact that

many of the gods are reluctant to behave towards Loki with the hostility they actually feel against him (which Eldir has underlined for us in st. 2, before Loki ever enters the hall). I shall now offer a reading of the major part of the poem in the light of this interpretation, looking at the kind of accusation Loki makes and the motives which bring individual gods into the argument.

## III

When Loki first enters the hall and demands a drink (st. 6) there is what looks like a deliberate echo of *Vafþrúðnismál* 8, where Óðinn does exactly the same in the hall of the giant Vafþrúðnir:

Pyrstr ec kom þessar hallar til,  
Loptr, um langan veg. (Lokasenna 6:1-3)

(Thirsty, I, Loptr, came to this hall on the lengthy way.)

Gagnráðr ec heiti; nú emc af góngo kominn  
þyrstr til þinna sala. (Vafþrúðnismál 8:1-3)

(I am called Gagnráðr; now I have come from the path, thirsty to your halls.)

It creates an unsettling reversal for Loki, the ally of giants, to be the ‘Óðinn’ figure in the presence of the gods themselves, and at the same time introduces the theme of verbal contest and suggests that this time the gods may not be victorious. (Further on the criteria for assessing borrowings from other Eddic poems, see Söderberg 1986.)

Bragi is the first figure to respond. Magnus Olsen (1960, II 53-5) suggests that he has the position of official court orator, and points out some interesting resemblances between him and Unferð, who holds the same position at King Hroðgar’s court in *Beowulf*. If this is right, Bragi stands accused of professional incompetence before he even speaks, because Loki has had time (st. 7) to comment on the shocked silence with which his entry has been received. He has neither been offered a seat nor turned away, so the court *pulr* or orator has been slow in doing his job. As soon as he does open his mouth, we can add lack of discretion to his qualities, for his words are unnecessarily extreme: the Æsir will never offer Loki a seat (st. 8). Loki ignores him and reminds Óðinn how in the old days the two of them had become foster-brothers (st. 9); Óðinn must either order that Loki be given a place at the feast or else he must break his oath. He gives way — but in the most ironic manner possible, telling Víðarr to let the Wolf’s father

have a seat (st. 10). This answers Loki's appeal to an ancient friendship with a reminder of future enmity; at Ragnarök Óðinn will be swallowed by the Wolf, who will in turn be killed by Viðarr. This reluctant invitation gives Loki the chance for an ironic toast in honour of the Æsir and Ásynjur, in the course of which he can taunt Bragi again (st. 11), and of course the latter does not know when to keep quiet. This time, however, he offers Loki a horse and a sword as an inducement to peace (st. 12) — another parallel with Unferð in *Beowulf* (see *Beowulf* 1455-71) — and it undermines both of them in the same way. To begin with defiance and follow it by offering gifts conveys a suggestion of cowardice, which is what Loki promptly accuses him of (st. 13, probably echoing *Hávamál* 16). He also mocks him by pretending to misunderstand the figurative legal phrase Bragi has used: *ok bætir þér svá baugi Bragi*, 'and thus Bragi will make a legal payment to you'. By pretending to regard this as a literal offer of a ring, he contrives to draw attention to Bragi's splendid appearance and suggest that he is himself like a piece of jewellery, a *bekkskrautuðr* (cf. 15:3) — nice to look at in the hall but of no practical use; Pórr's fierce reaction to the same phrase in *Hárbarðsljóð* 42-3 suggests that an obscene sense may also be present. Bragi responds with ferocious bluster, which Loki promptly exposes: if Bragi wants to fight, no one is stopping him (15:4-6). Bragi is then further humiliated by needing the intervention of his wife to save him. He has been shown up as a coward and as incompetent in his special field of responsibility. Oratory is seen as mere bluster to protect the braggart.

Iðunn saves Bragi by pretending to scold him for lack of tact (st. 16). The aim of this is to conceal his cowardice, but the effect is to emphasise it by making him look like a henpecked husband. Her ostensible argument seems to be that Loki must not be abused lest it undermine the position of all those who are merely *óskmegir*, 'adoptive relatives' of the Æsir; this presumably uses the oath of foster-brotherhood mentioned by Loki in st. 9 to suggest that he is not really one of the Æsir.

Loki's insulting reply is overtly about Iðunn's lust (st. 17), but more relevantly, its real subject is lack of concern for proper family relationships, and this exposes Iðunn's hypocrisy. Being friendly to adoptive kinsmen is all very well, but making one's brother's killer into one of them by having sex with him is carrying it a bit too far. It is not known who Iðunn's *bróðurbani* was, but Magnus Olsen (1960, II 54) points out that Unferð in *Beowulf* is also the

slayer of his brothers (*Beowulf* 587), so it is likely to have been Bragi himself; but if it was anyone else, we must add cuckoldry to the insulting associations attached to him.

Iðunn's attempt in the next stanza (st. 18) to use soft words to turn away wrath is a mask. When she says she doesn't want Bragi and Loki to get enraged and fight, she is still trying to conceal Bragi's cowardice — actually, for all her elaborate anxiety, there is no danger of any such thing. Despite her concern for Bragi (which may be motivated by concern for her own social position as hs wife), Iðunn thus stands accused of family treachery motivated by lust, and we have seen that she is also a hypocrite.

Gefjun is the next figure to take the stage. It is not at first clear why she intervenes, but her opening phrase neatly undermines Iðunn's elaborate argument. She calls Bragi and Loki *íþ AEsir tveir*, 'you two AEsir' (19:1), despite the fact that Iðunn has just pretended that Loki is not really one of the AEsir. Magnus Olsen (1960, II 15-16) and Maria Elena Ruggerini (1979, 27, 56) take the second half of st. 19 to mean 'Loki does not know that Bragi is joking, and that everyone loves him (i.e. because of his playfulness)'. If this is right, it contradicts Iðunn again, for if Bragi had really been joking (which of course he had not), there would be no possibility of the enraged fight Iðunn professed to fear; so Gefjun's defence of Bragi neatly contradicts Iðunn's. Söderberg (1985, 73-4) would translate either: 'It is not Loki's fault that Bragi is quarrelsome, so all the gods exonerate Loki' — a rather weak repetition of what Iðunn has just said — or: 'It does not worry Loki that Bragi is quarrelsome and that all the gods excuse him for being so' — again contradicting Iðunn's professed fear of a fight.

Loki's reply again concerns sexuality, but this time it is about prostitution: he alleges that a certain *sveinn inn hvítí*, 'the pale lad', gave her a jewel, in return for which she laid her thigh over him (st. 20). This reference cannot now be substantiated from any other source, and it is quite likely that the poet made it up; but if he did, it is in character, because the only other story that survives about Gefjun, that of her relationship with Gylfi embedded in Bragi's *Ragnarsdrápa* 13 (Kock 1946-9, I 2) and explained in ch. 1 of *Gylfaginning* (Snorri Sturluson 1982, 7), is also about prostitution, since it tells how she obtained Zealand from him in return for her sexual favours. If the poet made up this allegation it follows that he expected his audience to understand what he meant with no more information than we now have (unless a stanza in which Loki replied to Iðunn is lost between stanzas 18 and 19, but while this

is possible, such a stanza would probably have contained more abuse of Iðunn and could hardly be expected to tell us much about Gefjun). For this reason, Magnus Olsen's suggestion that the *sveinn inn hvíti* is 'a made-up figure, perhaps a young smith' (1960, II 16) seems to me to be motiveless and feeble. *Hvíti* in this context is probably a derogatory word, implying cowardice or effeminacy (see Ruggerini 1979, 56), and in Bragi we have a splendid candidate to hand for that description — one, moreover, who has already been associated with jewellery (compare stanzas 13, 15). If this association is correct, Gefjun is intervening in defence of her paramour, and we have the comic but not very edifying spectacle of wife and mistress contradicting one another in a scramble to defend a worthless coward to whom they are both sexually attached in different but equally disgraceful ways.

Óðinn intervenes at this point because Loki's closing phrase about Gefjun:

oc þú lagðir lær yfir

(*Lokasenna* 20:6)

(and you laid your thigh over him)

is also a coarse parody of one of his own amatory exploits, distorted from *Hávamál* 108, which describes his seduction of Gunnlǫð:

þeirar er lögðomc arm yfir.

(*Hávamál* 108:6)

(who laid her arm over me.)

That story also involves prostitution, though this time by the male partner, since Óðinn sleeps with Gunnlǫð only in order to obtain the mead of poetry. It is an 'unmanly' thing to have done, and it introduces a theme of *ergi*, 'unmanliness', in Óðinn. He avoids this covert attack on himself, and pretends only to defend Gefjun (st. 21), by saying that she also knows Fate.

At first, the diversion appears to have been successful, and Loki leaves the theme of unmanliness to take up that of Fate (st. 22). Óðinn, as chooser of the slain in battle, is an agent of Fate, and Loki's charge against him is that he is systematically unjust in this specialist field of patronage. Because his purpose is to select the *einherjar* in preparation for the climax of Ragnarök (still unmentioned, though both of them have it in mind), he is as a matter of course likely to kill the most valiant and consequently give victory to those who do not deserve it. *Opt* (22:4) should be taken as referring to what usually happens.

At the beginning of st. 23 Óðinn implicitly admits that this is quite true; but the implication of sexually unworthy behaviour still rankles, and he now makes the mistake of attacking Loki with the

accusation of having changed sex, and furthermore, of having been a woman of low enough status to milk subterranean cows for eight years (st. 23). Preben Meulengracht Sørensen (1980, 28; 1983, 24) suggests that this also implies Loki's subjection to the gross sexual tastes of giants, and this seems very probable. Such stories (and worse) about Loki are of course common, and do not worry him a bit; one remembers the slightly indecent haste with which he volunteers in *Prymskviða* 20, without anyone else suggesting it, to go to Jötunheimar as Pórr's 'maidservant'. But it gives Loki the chance to return to this theme, on which accusations matter more to Óðinn than they do to himself. Óðinn has been a woman too, and one of even lower status — not even a milkmaid, but a travelling witch, an outcast from decent society (st. 24). We must assume that this was not done for sexual enjoyment, but rather to learn more magic, yet such magic was disreputable in itself, at least by the human standards employed in this poem. (On the usual social attitudes towards this kind of magic, which was called *seiðr*, see Dag Strömbäck 1970, 76-9.) Óðinn is thus seen as systematically unjust in his own special field and capable of sinking to any disgraceful behaviour in order to obtain magic wisdom of a discreditable kind.

We need not see Frigg's intervention at this point as motivated purely by conjugal love for Óðinn. The status of a woman in Norse society depended to quite a large extent on her marriage, and in extreme cases the removal of manhood was enough to annul the social and political effects of a marriage; for example, Preben Meulengracht Sørensen has pointed out that in *Íslendinga saga* ch. 115, the motive for the partial castration of Órækja Snorrason is to annul the political effect of his marriage to Arnbjørg Arnórsdóttir (1980, 103-4; 1983, 83-4; *Sturlunga saga* 1946, I 395), and the effect is both to annul the marriage and to send Órækja into exile. Therefore the attack on Óðinn's manhood amounts to an attack on the social position of Frigg herself (a motive which may also explain Iðunn's concern to ward off the accusation of cowardice against Bragi). In st. 25, Frigg picks up the theme of Fate again and pretends that it refers only to the past, and that it has compelled both Loki and Óðinn into their past unmanly exploits. The effects of this dubious piece of reasoning are to make Óðinn and Loki into equals (she uses the same phrase, *íþ Aesir tveir* (25:4), as Gefjun has done about Loki and Bragi in 19:1), and to defend Loki against her own husband's attack on him.

She gets no thanks. Loki's response is to remind her that she too

has an unsavoury past to hide, in her semi-incestuous adultery with her husband's two brothers, Vili and Vé (see the same story in *Ynglinga saga* ch. 3, Snorri Sturluson 1941, 12), and there may also be a continuing suggestion of Óðinn's unmanliness. At all events, Loki points out that she is not quite the loyal wife she is pretending to be (st. 26). Her response is the angry assertion that he would pay for that remark if she had a son like Baldr here (st. 27). This is a familiar female tactic, though one no self-respecting feminist would use; its purpose is to suggest that the man who has made the offending remark is a coward who would never dare to say such things to another man. But on this occasion it backfires. In the first half of st. 28, Loki portrays himself as provoked into saying more in order to defend himself: the reason why Baldr is not here is that Loki himself has already contrived his death. This adds a second injury; not only is Loki attacking Frigg's position as a wife, but even more seriously, he has destroyed her position as a mother, and even the vengeance for that deed is carried out by a son of Óðinn who is not also the son of Frigg (see *Baldrs draumar* 10-11).

It is possible that the reminder of Baldr's death and how Loki planned it may contain an even more hurtful implication. If the first audience of the poem knew the story in a form like the one told in *Gylfaginning* ch. 49 (Snorri Sturluson 1982, 45) they would know that the vital information Loki needed in order to contrive the killing of Baldr was given him by Frigg herself. Unfortunately, the poem on which Snorri apparently based this chapter is lost apart from the single stanza he quotes, so it is not certain that this detail was known before Snorri's time. If it was, as seems probable, it suggests that Frigg's self-indulgence has involved unwitting treachery to her son as well as semi-incestuous betrayal of her husband.

It is hard to see why Freyja interposes at this point to defend Frigg (st. 29). Heinrichs (1970, 54) suggests that she is shocked by the effrontery with which Loki casts his responsibility for the son's death in the face of the mother, but in view of the self-serving motives for so many of the other interventions, such a motivation seems improbably altruistic. I can only suggest one theory, and in the absence of poetic sources, it has to be a suppositious one. If we accept that Snorri was following an older tradition in making Frigg betray to Loki the fact that Baldr could be killed by the mistletoe, the question arises why she should be so casual in betraying such a vital secret to an unknown woman. Perhaps we

should see Loki, like Óðinn on Sámsey in st. 24, as transformed into a travelling *spákona* or prophetess, and the conversation between Frigg and the disguised Loki as an exchange of magic, occult information. In that case, Baldr's death was partly caused by Frigg's love of *seiðr*, the evil art which according to *Ynglinga saga* ch. 4 was introduced to the Æsir by Freyja (Snorri Sturluson 1941, 13), so that she also has her conscience stung by mention of the death of Baldr. Freyja's resort to Frigg's knowledge of Fate would then carry two meanings, both 'Frigg (and I, Freyja) can see why you're trying to annoy her', and 'Frigg (and I, Freyja) are guiltless of the death of Baldr, because it was all due to Fate'. But this must remain uncertain, although it may receive support from st. 32 (see below).

Loki's attack on Freyja concentrates on her well-known promiscuity; he suggests that she has little right to presume to defend Frigg, because she is herself even worse. Where Frigg has committed adultery with two men, to whom she is related by marriage only, Freyja has done so with every male character present. The end of st. 32 has usually been taken to assert that Freyja committed incest with her brother Freyr, and that the gods mocked this by sewing them together (see e.g. Olsen 1960, II 22-3, and cf. the story of the binding of Mars and Venus in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Book IV, and Bömer 1969-80, II 68-9); but Söderberg (1985, 78) tentatively renders it: 'when for your brother's benefit you seduced the good gods with magic'. This is philologically persuasive, makes it unnecessary to suppose a lost myth, and if correct, makes explicit the guilty motive for Freyja's intervention which I have suggested above.

Njørðr is now forced to intervene for the honour of his family, and his counter-attack on Loki is simple and repetitive, answering one allegation of sexual perversion with another and repeating Óðinn's charge that Loki is *ragr* and has borne children. It is a stupid attack, for there is no reason to think it will have any more effect now than when Óðinn used it, but it gives Loki the chance of an almost equally humiliating counter-charge against Njørðr himself. He alleges not only that Njørðr was sent 'east from here' to the gods as a hostage (i.e. east from Ægir's hall, imagined as being somewhere far out in the north Atlantic), but also that Hymir's daughters (i.e. giantesses) used him as a chamberpot and pissed in his mouth. Magnus Olsen is probably right to interpret Hymir's daughters as the Norwegian rivers, which discharge into the sea, of which Njørðr is patron (see Olsen 1960, II 28-30; *MRN* 163).

Njørðr's defensive response is that he may have been sent as a hostage to the gods, but he is still a man rather than a woman, for he has begotten a heroic son in Freyr:

oc þiccir sá ása iaðarr. (35:6)

(and he is thought to be protector of the Æsir.)

(It is interesting that one is constantly tempted, in discussing this poem, to refer to the gods as men and women. That is indeed how they are regarded in the argument, so that it is, for example, no defence of Freyja to say that as a goddess of fertility she has to be promiscuous; here she is judged as if she were a promiscuous woman.) In the same way, Njørðr's claim to be a moral defender of his two children is demolished when Loki reminds him that he is guilty of exactly the same form of incest himself (st. 36).

The argument has been turning into an escalating row between Loki and the Vanir, and at this point the one-handed Týr steps in, in an attempt to reconcile or arbitrate. In view of the final sentence about Týr and Fenrir in *Gylfaginning* ch. 25, this has caused some surprise:

En þá er Æsir vildu eigi leysa hann þá beit hann hǫndina af þar er nú heitir úlfliðr, ok er hann einhendr ok ekki kallaðr sættir manna.

(Snorri Sturluson 1982, 25)

(But when the Æsir refused to release him, he bit off the hand at the point which is now called the 'wolf joint' [the wrist], and he is one-handed and not said to be a reconciler of men.)

Critics have tended to agree with Loki when he retorts that Týr has never known how to *bera tilt með tveim* (38:3) — 'to reconcile two parties in a dispute', even if one may suspect a cruel pun here whereby Loki also means that Týr cannot 'carry (anything) steadily with two (hands)'. But in fact, there is nothing apart from the folk-etymological explanation of *úlfliðr* ('wrist') in this sentence of *Gylfaginning* which is not also in *Lokasenna* 38; it seems peculiar for Snorri to describe a god in terms of what he is not (even if we allow for rhetorical understatement) unless he had a source for doing so. So it seems likely that this sentence in *Gylfaginning* is based on the *Lokasenna* stanza and cannot be used as independent corroboration of it. Whether or not Týr is a competent arbitrator, that appears to be the role he is trying to play here; and as there is no other clear motive for him to intervene, I would suggest the possibility that he has an official function as arbitrator, just as Bragi is the official orator and Sif may be the official hostess (both suggested by Magnus Olsen 1960, II 47, 53, 55).

Opinions of Týr have varied. Magnus Olsen (1960, II 31) calls him open and chivalrous for his defence of Freyr, the god of peace who is his own opposite — a contrast which I would rather see as ironic. Heinrichs, on the other hand, calls him a militarist (1970, 58). The only writer I know of who has tried to explain why Týr is incapable as an arbitrator is Ruggerini (1979, 64), who says that being one-handed, he lacks the physical capacity to separate fighting men. I would suggest rather that Týr's incapacity, as seen by Loki, is a moral one. From his point of view as the Wolf's father, the binding of Fenrir is an act, not of courage on Týr's part, but of treachery. Mutilation as an outward sign of a man's treachery can also be seen in Egill's partial blinding of Ármóðr in *Egils saga* ch. 72 (1933, 228). To Loki, Týr's lost hand is the sign of a broken oath, and how can one trust an arbitrator who is himself an oath-breaker? No wonder Loki accuses him of not being 'even handed'.

Seen in this light, Týr's reply is pure cynicism (st. 39); it amounts to saying: 'Well, we may have tricked the Wolf and I lost my hand as you say, but it worked'. Loki's response to this looks at first like irrelevant and crude abuse: he alleges that Týr's wife has had a child by Loki himself, and that Týr has never had any compensation for this (st. 40). Týr's wife is otherwise completely unknown, and Magnus Olsen is probably right to suggest (1960, II 33-4) that she is made up for the occasion. But it is unlike this poet to make up such charges without any justification. Olsen also notes the irony that Týr, the patron of brave men undertaking duels, is unable to challenge Loki to a *hólmganga* to defend his own right. But that, I think, is the point: the only sort of arbitration that is appropriate for a warlike god like Týr is the *hólmganga*, the arbitration of force; and the basic injustice of this has just been exemplified by Týr himself when he sought to justify a broken oath by saying that the deception was successful. The allegation about Týr's wife functions as a moral supposition, to show the inherent injustice of the *hólmganga*, in this casual assumption that whoever succeeds must be justified. What about the one-handed man? Is he not entitled to justice? Týr's argument has in effect been that might is right, and it has been shown up as morally bankrupt in a way that makes him appear disgraced and ridiculous himself. Týr is thus another example of the god who is seen as unworthy in his special field of patronage, besides being an oath-breaker.

Once the attempted reconciliation has collapsed, Freyr is forced to intervene. The underlying dispute has been about him ever since the allegation of his incest with Freyja in st. 32; Njorðr's self-

defence has hinged on Freyr's worth (st. 35), and Týr has also stressed his good qualities (st. 37). His method is to try to threaten Loki into silence by referring to his binding — he will be bound next unless he keeps quiet (st. 41). But Loki, too, knows what Fate has in store, and this first explicit allusion by one of the gods to the final breach between him and them merely shows him that he is winning. So he presses on, reminding Freyr that he is not only lustful and incestuous, but that his lust will be fatal to him and the gods at Ragnarök, for in his passion for Gerðr he gave his sword away to her, and hence to the giants (st. 42). And this story is certainly not made up by this poet; it is alluded to in *Völuspá* st. 52 (1984, 102-4) as well as by Snorri Sturluson (1982, 31; *Gylfaginning* ch. 37). The story in *Skírnismál* 23-25, where Skírnir threatens Gerðr with a sword immediately after offering her gifts, may be a distorted variant of it.

Byggvir, the next god to intervene, does so in a way which is both ridiculous and, for the gods, dangerous. His motive is clearly to back up his master Freyr, but his threats about grinding Loki to pieces (st. 43) show that he lacks Freyr's knowledge of Fate, and his threats are comically like what happens to the barley of which he is patron:

Veiztu, ef ec øðli ættac sem Inguna-Freyr,  
oc svá sællict setr,  
mergi smæra mylða ec þá meinkráco  
oc lemða alla í liðo.

(You know, if I had an estate like Inguna-Freyr and so lovely a dwelling, I would grind that malicious crow smaller than marrow, and lame him in every limb.)

The point is quickly made by a comparison with the British ballad *John Barleycorn*, whose hero may be a descendant of Byggvir:

They wasted, o'er a scorching flame  
The marrow of his bones;  
But a miller us'd him worst of all,  
For he crush'd him between two stones.

(Burns 1928, 389)

(This ballad, of course, exists in a large number of versions and is certainly not by Robert Burns in the usual sense in which a poet claims to have composed a poem; however, the modern versions, for some of which see Sharp 1974, II 171-9, are generally more remote from *Lokasenna* than Burns' admittedly slightly 'polished' or artificial text).

Loki begins his reply by asking what this little thing is that has

just spoken — the rather petty technique of pretending not to recognise someone in order to diminish them. Magnus Olsen argues (1960, II 37-9) that the opening *Hvat er þat it litla, er . . .*, ‘What is that little thing, which . . .’, is meant as the opening of a riddle, to which the answer is ‘hen’ — an interpretation suggesting petty chattering and *ergi* (cowardice and passive homosexuality). But *Hvat er . . .* is not uncommon in Eddic verse as a way of asking the name of a new arrival; Ruggerini (1979, 69) gives five other examples (see *Vafþrúðnismál* 7, *Alvíssmál* 2, 5, *Reginsmál* 1, *Baldrs draumar* 5, and one might add *Fjólsvinnsmál* 1, 3, for which see SG I, 200-201), none of which is a riddle. And the adjective *litli* may have been conventionally associated with Byggvir when he was being praised for courage and strength, as it sometimes is with John Barleycorn (see the set phrase ‘little Sir John’, Sharp 1974, II 178, and the early seventeenth-century broadside ‘The Little Barly-Corne’, *The Roxburghe Ballads* II 1874, 28-33). But the image of a hen clucking around the quern looking for loose grains is certainly present in st. 44 even if there is no riddle, and it prompts Byggvir into praise of his own status as patron of strong drink. He is ‘inspiring bold John Barleycorn’ — bold perhaps, but oblivious to the real significance of what is going on.

Loki’s second stanza against him (st. 46) attacks him on the two grounds of injustice and cowardice. The patron of barley is responsible for bread as well as drink, and he distributes it unjustly among men, giving some more than their share while subjecting others to famine. And as patron of drink, he is nowhere to be found in the straw on the floor when men fight in the hall. Drink seems here to be seen as the cause of fights, and I would suggest that the image is of the ale being spilt when men fight and running away into the straw, not to be found again. So John Barleycorn is in a way a coward after all; more important, he is another who is incompetent and unjust in his special sphere of patronage, unfair in distributing food and a strife-causing coward as patron of drink.

Heimdallr now sees a chance of averting the irreconcilable quarrel. The mention of Byggvir’s role as patron of strong drink gives the context for the claim that Loki is only abusing the gods because he is drunk (st. 47). That is something Loki could accept without much disgrace, especially since Heimdallr goes out of his way to point up the parallel with the drunkenness of Óðinn:

Qlr ertu, Loki, svá at þú er ørviti,  
hví né lezcaðu, Loki?  
þvíat ofdryccia veldr alda hveim,  
er sína mælgí né manað.

(You are drunk, Loki, as well as out of your wits; why don't you stop, Loki? Because too much drink causes every man to forget his own tendency to talk.)

The first half of this stanza echoes Óðinn's words in st. 21:

Œrr ertu, Loki, oc ørviti,  
er þú fær þér Gefion at gremi, (Lokasenna 21:1-3)

(You are mad, Loki, and out of your wits, when you set out to vex Gefjun.)

and the second half contains some reminiscences, both in phrase and sentiment, of *Hávamál* 11-14, where Óðinn advises against excessive drinking and recalls how drunk he became when he visited Gunnloð and obtained the mead of poetry from her:

Vegnest verra vegra hann velli at,  
enn sé ofdryccia ols.

Era svá gott, sem gott qveða  
ql alda sona;  
þvíat færa veit, er fleira dreccr,  
síns til geðs gumi. (Hávamál 11:4-6, 12)

(There are no worse provisions that one can travel with on the earth than too deep a draught of beer.

Ale is not as good as the sons of men claim it to be, for the more a man drinks, the less he knows of his own mind.)

This reminiscence diminishes Óðinn somewhat in order to offer Loki a moderately honourable escape from the quarrel if he wants to take it.

But why is it Heimdallr who intervenes at this point? He has not been attacked, nor has anything just been said to give him a guilty conscience. It is true that he is Loki's archetypal opponent, both at Ragnarök and in the early days of the gods (see Heinrichs 1970, 44; *MRN* 147), but that does not explain why he intervenes here rather than at any other moment, nor why his speech is relatively conciliatory. I have only a tentative suggestion to make about this. The end of the stanza before Heimdallr speaks is concerned with Byggvir's cowardice when men are fighting in the hall; perhaps we should imagine Loki looking round for someone to attack in order to demonstrate his point. The only god against whom he ever fights physically is Heimdallr, so he is the obvious choice, and as Loki grabs Heimdallr we should imagine Byggvir diving for the straw just as Loki says he does. Heimdallr is then forced to respond in physical self-defence, but he knows what Loki is trying to achieve by provoking him, so he merely replies that Loki is fighting drunk. The drawback about this theory is that it would take quite a gifted

performer to make it clear to the audience what is going on, though a lighthearted experiment with students at Durham has suggested that it would be perfectly possible if there were more than one performer. It is alternatively possible that the reason why Heimdallr is brought in at this point is simply that the poet must consider him at some point and has not yet done so; but in view of the careful motivation of the interventions of most of the other gods, this does not seem very likely.

The other problem in this section concerns the implication of Loki's reply in st. 48. It is difficult to see why he should taunt Heimdallr with the mere fact of his role as watchman of the gods, though he could be suggesting that it is a demeaning life because it ties Heimdallr to one place. That would certainly explain Skaði's reference to Loki's own impending loss of liberty in the next stanza, so it is probably part of the meaning. But it leaves unexplained the strange statement '*aurgo baki þú munt æ vera*', which has been interpreted in a number of ways. Bugge (1867, 401) suggested that *aurgo* is equivalent to *orgu*, 'stiff', in which case Loki would be taunting Heimdallr with the discomfort of his extreme physical (and moral) uprightness. But as all Loki's other taunts are about what the gods themselves would consider their vices, this sneer against virtue seems unlikely. Magnus Olsen (1960, II 44) tentatively suggests that *aurgo* may come from *argr*, 'homosexual' or 'cowardly', but it is difficult to get good sense out of that either in this context, and an accusation that Heimdallr is *argr* would be out of keeping with every other tradition about him, and therefore not the sort of original invention that the poet makes elsewhere. So I fall back on the translation 'with a wet or muddy back' (for which see e.g. Jan de Vries 1956-7, II 241). One might suggest that Loki is pointing out the evidence that Heimdallr has been sleeping on the job, or at any rate lying down. We could then imagine Heimdallr, not as the trusty watchman standing listening at the window, as Magnus Olsen does (1960, II 44), but rather as sprawling on the turf wall of the *tún*, just as Einarr is found sprawling on the wall of the sheepfold at Grjótteigssel when Hrafnkell comes to exact vengeance from him in ch. 3 of *Hrafnkels saga* (1950, 104; 1957, 64). But this interpretation has the serious drawback that no other source suggests that Heimdallr is a lazy watchman, or that he has a character consistent with this view (see *MRN* 149, 154).

There is, however, another and more interesting way in which Heimdallr might come to have a muddy back. The adjective *aurugr* occurs in only one other context in Old Norse verse; this is in

*Völuspá* 27, where it refers to the muddy waterfall in the river which flows from Óðinn's pledge (i.e. his eye in Urðarbrunnr). That stanza also mentions Heimdallr and how his hearing lies pledged under Yggdrasill (see *Völuspá* 1984, 56-7; *MRN* 149-50), the tree which is described as:

hár baðmr, ausinn hvít auri.

(*Völuspá* 19:3-4)

(A lofty tree, sprinkled with white mud.)

Perhaps Heimdallr should be seen as having acquired the mud on his back as he walked away from the tree after depositing his hearing under it. In that case, he is being mocked as the assiduous watchman who has undermined his own effectiveness by rendering himself wholly or partially deaf, and this is then another instance of a god being seen as incompetent in his special area of responsibility. Such an interpretation depends on the word *hljóð* in *Völuspá* 27:1 being interpreted as 'hearing': but even if one were to revive the old alternative explanation that what Heimdallr pledged under the tree was not his hearing but his horn, the implication for the context in *Lokasenna* would not be greatly altered, for a watchman with no horn on which to sound the alarm would hardly be any more effective than a deaf one.

It is also possible that *aurgo* here carries giant associations, for the majority of compounds with *aur-* as first element noted in *LP* 24 are connected with giants. There are five giant-names (*Aurboða*, *Aurekr*, *Aurgelmir*, *Aurgrímnir*, *Aurnir*), one giant kenning (*aurmýils Narfi*) and two names connected with dwarves, which may be related to the giant-names (*Aurvangar*, *Aurvandr*); against these, there are only three compounds which definitely have no giant associations (*aurborð*, *aurglasir*, *aurriði*). One might very tentatively suggest that Loki is implying that muddy giants may get into Ásgarð behind the muddy back of the deaf watchman; it is at least possible that Skaði, who speaks next, understands him to mean this.

This brings us to the question why it is Skaði who intervenes next. For this poet, as for Snorri Sturluson in *Skáldskaparmál* ch. 1 (1900, 70), she is primarily the daughter of Pjazi, and therefore a giantess who has come among the gods. The suggestion that Heimdallr is an incompetent watchman against giants may include an implication, whether intended by Loki or inferred by Skaði herself, that she ought not to have been admitted to Ásgarð. Such an implication would of course be unfair, at least if the tradition used by the poet of *Lokasenna* made it clear, as Snorri does, that

the *Æsir* let Skaði in while discussing with her the compensation to be paid to her for the killing of her father Pjazi. But Loki's slurs do not have to be fair, and this one is given sufficient pretext by the mere fact of her presence among the gods.

Her attack on Loki sweeps away Heimdallr's attempt to reconcile the dispute as a piece of drunken argument, best ignored. She reminds Loki, in her blunt, coarse giantess fashion, of the most painful and unpleasant details of the binding that awaits him, presumably in an attempt to frighten him into delaying it. But Loki, intent on hastening a Fate he already foresees, has of course thought of that already, and responds by taunting her with his own prominent role in the death of her father Pjazi (st. 50). This cruel mockery resembles the way he cast his responsibility for the death of Baldr in the face of Frigg (st. 28), and again it has a further sting in the tail, though this time that sting is delayed until Skaði has sworn eternal enmity towards him (st. 51). He mildly remarks (st. 52) that she was gentler in her words when she invited him to her bed. No other source mentions this liaison, and it is possible that the poet invented it, though it seems more likely that something like the obscene horseplay of *Skáldskaparmál* lies behind it; here, Loki deliberately falls into Skaði's lap (or onto her knee) after tying his testicles to the beard of a goat:

Pat hafði hon ok í sættargörð sinni, at Æsir skyldu þat gera, er hon hugði, at þeir skyldu eigi mega, at hlögja hana. Pá gerði Loki þat, at hann batt um skegg geitar nökkurrar ok qðrum enda um hreðjar sér, ok létu þau ýmsi eptir ok skrækði hvárt tveggja hátt; pá lét Loki fallask í kné Skaða, ok þá hló hon; var þá góð sett af Ásanna hendi við hana.

(Snorri Sturluson 1900, 70)

(She also made it a condition of her settlement that the *Æsir* should do what she thought they would be unable to perform: to make her laugh. Then Loki tied [a rope] to the beard of a goat and the other end round his testicles, and they pulled in opposite directions and each squawked loudly; then Loki allowed himself to fall into Skaði's lap, and she laughed. And so the *Æsir*'s settlement with her was completed.)

Similarly suggestive connotations are attached to a sexually significant object (Pórr's hammer) in the lap or on the knee of a supposed woman in *Prymskviða* 30. Like the poet's other inventions, it is in keeping with Skaði's known behaviour, and it also makes a moral point. Skaði came among the gods seeking honourable vengeance, but she was fobbed off with the offer of a marriage and amusement, things Loki can portray as sexual self-gratification. To allege that she has invited him to sleep with her may be to spring a surprise in the sense that the audience has not heard about

it before, but it merely dramatises what they know she is like. She has betrayed her duty to her father and then changed sides just as Loki himself is doing in the opposite direction.

Sif now comes forward with the last and perhaps the most brazen attempt at a peace settlement (st. 53). Probably in her capacity as mistress of the feast (Olsen 1960, II 47), she formally offers Loki a foaming cup of mead and, referring to herself in the third person, says that Loki must declare her at least to be without fault. She does not seem to be compelled to speak at this point, and her intervention looks simply like hubris. Her husband, at least, is no compromiser with giants, and Loki's claim to responsibility for the death of Þjazi has reminded us of Pórr's rather odd claim in *Hárbarðsljóð* 19 that he struck Þjazi and then threw his eyes into heaven to become stars:

Ec drap Þjaza, inn þrúðmóðga iqtun,  
upp ec varp augom Allvalda sonar  
á þann inn heiða himin;  
þau ero merki mest minna verca,  
þau er allir menn síðan um sé.

(I killed Þjazi, the furious giant; I threw up the eyes of the son of Allvaldi into that bright sky. They are a very great sign of my deeds which all men can see ever afterwards.)

And we know that the poet of *Lokasenna* had *Hárbarðsljóð* in mind here, for he actually makes Pórr echo this stanza, with the addition of a contrasting negative, in *Lokasenna* 59:4-6:

Upp ec þér verp oc á austrvega,  
síðan þic mangi sér.

(I shall throw you up and onto the ways to the east, and no one will see you afterwards.)

Any reference to Þjazi is likely to stir up enmity between Skaði and those deities who feel she should not be among them, and Sif is the obvious representative of these, whether because of Pórr having struck Þjazi or out of jealousy of Skaði when Pórr was subsequently kind to her. So it is no surprise that she should try to score a point at Skaði's expense. It is less obvious why she thinks she will get away with it, especially as the first half of her stanza is a close echo of the first half of *Skírnismál* 37, the stanza in which Gerðr promises sexual submission to Freyr:

(Welcome now, Loki, and take a foaming cup full of old mead.)

Heill verðu nú heldr, sveinn, oc tac við hrímkálki,  
fullom fornsmiaðar!  
þó hafða ec þat ætlað, at myndac aldregi  
unna vaningia vel. (Skírnismál 37)

(Welcome now, lad, and take a foaming cup full of old mead! And yet I had intended that I should never love well a descendant of the Vanir.)

Perhaps we should see her as so full of female vanity that she thinks all Loki's abuse of the others has been designed to flatter her by contrast. If so, she receives the disappointment she deserves, and this time the poet is probably not inventing anything, for Sif's lover is also known to *Hárbarðsljóð* (st. 48). Like so many others, hers is a portrait of absurd pretension and sexual treachery.

There have been many disputes about the meaning and significance of Beyla, who seems to be a servant to Sif in much the same way as Byggvir is to Freyr. The three modern interpretations of her name known to me are as 'bean', from P.Gmc. \**baun-ilō* (Sievers 1894, 584), as a personification of mead made from honey, from P.Gmc. \**biu-ilō*, 'little bee' (Dumézil 1973, 102-5), and as connected with *baula*, 'cow' (Olsen 1960, II 36). The last of these interpretations seems to me to be the most probable. It is the only one which does not raise serious philological difficulties; it explains why Beyla should be the wife of Byggvir, for farming divides naturally into crop growing and animal husbandry, with the latter often seen as a female activity (see Nils Lid 1928, 147), and barley and cow are natural symbols for each of these in the Norse context; and it explains why the poet of *Lokasenna* calls Beyla a milkmaid or dairywoman (*deigia*, 56:6). The only specific accusation Loki makes against her is that she is unclean, being spattered with dung. As any farming community would know, the essential requirement of a dairymaid is that she must be clean; even at this lowly level, therefore, the specialist deity is being accused of incompetence, and like Byggvir, she tends to parody and undermine the pretensions of the deity she serves.

The entry of Pórr ought to be the poem's climax, and opinions have varied about the poet's view of him. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson thinks that he is to be admired (1962, 317-21) and Klingenberg sees him as successful in supplanting Loki as the final member of a 'bench' of thirteen judges, the one for whom Loki himself

has so far acted as self-appointed substitute (1983, 152); but the majority of critics have taken a more severe view (see e.g. Heinrichs 1970, 60-62, Jan de Vries 1967, 121-3). If my interpretation of Loki's purpose is correct, Pórr is quite simply a fool. He makes no attempt to delay the final breach with Loki, but charges straight in with violent threats which we know are in contradiction of Fate and therefore cannot be carried out. Each of his stanzas has the same threatening first half:

Pegi þú, rög vætr!   þér scal minn þrúðhamarr,  
Miðlñir, mál fyrnema. (*Lokasenna* 57:1-3, cf. also stanzas 59, 61, 63)

(Be quiet, vile creature! My glorious hammer Mjöllnir shall deprive you of words.)

This creates an impression of poverty of imagination — he cannot think of any other opening. His threats, to knock Loki's head off (st. 57), to throw him far to the east (i.e. into the realm of giants, st. 59), to break every bone in his body (st. 61), to send him down to Hel (st. 63), sound like empty bombast. Loki's replies, by contrast, are all different and all hit the mark. He reminds Pórr of his supposed fight with the Wolf at Ragnarök (st. 58, see above), his cowering in Skrýmir's glove (st. 60) and his inability even to untie Skrýmir's meal bag (st. 62; for the story which includes both these details, see Snorri Sturluson 1982, 37-9, *Gylfaginning* ch. 45). All of these suggest that Pórr is incompetent in his special role of defending the gods against the giants. This time, of course, the failing will be fatal to the gods.

The end of the poem is sometimes interpreted as Loki venting his fury at having been defeated by Pórr in being driven out of the hall. But if Loki's aim was to hasten Ragnarök, Pórr is merely stupid. It is not even heroic stupidity, for Loki unerringly points out the occasions when Pórr was or will be afraid, and Magnus Olsen (1960, I 40-43) shows brilliantly how the word *einheri* (60:5) puns on the otherwise non-existent singular of the commonplace mythological *einherjar*, the warrior defenders of Valhöll, and the less flattering sense 'solitary hare' — an animal traditionally associated with cowardice. To emphasise the accusation of cowardice, *Hárbarðsljóð* is echoed for the second time in two stanzas:

oc þóttisca þú þá Pórr vera.   (*Lokasenna* 60:6, *Hárbarðsljóð* 26:5)

(and you didn't think then that you were Pórr.)

Olsen takes it that *Hárbarðsljóð* is the borrower here because the line is more pointed in *Lokasenna*, where it forms the end of the stanza. But that is merely to say that the poet of *Lokasenna* is

more accomplished than the poet of *Hárbarðsljóð*, and since two stanzas from different parts of *Hárbarðsljóð* are paralleled in *Lokasenna* 59-60, the first with an ironic reversal (with *Lokasenna* 59 compare *Hárbarðsljóð* 19 and see above), it would seem more likely that *Lokasenna* is the borrower.

Admirers of Pórr can, up to this point, console themselves with the thought that he is at least a god with integrity, unlike all the others, but in Loki's parting shot to him, even that illusion is removed:

enn fyr þér einom mun ec út ganga,  
þvíat ec veit, at bú vegr. (Lokasenna 64:4-6)

(But for you alone I will go out, because I know you do strike.)

How, we may ask, does Loki know that Pórr strikes? The answer is that the poet (and his audience) remembers *Voluspá* 26:

Pórr einn þar vá,  
hann sialdan sitr,  
á genguz eiðar,  
mál oll meginlig  
þprunginn móði,  
er hann slíct um fregn;  
ord oc særí,  
er á meðal fóro.

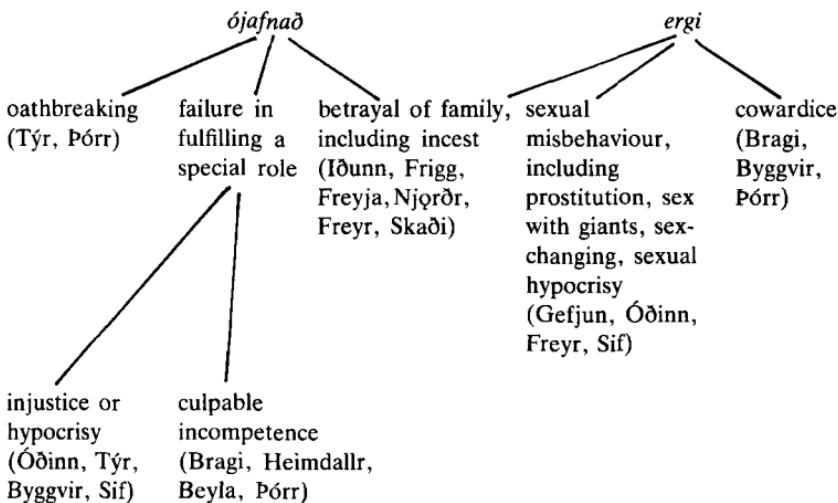
(Pórr alone struck there, swollen with rage; he seldom sits still when he hears of such a thing. Oaths were trodden underfoot, words and swearing, all the mighty speeches which had passed between them.)

Pórr is an oathbreaker as well as a fool, and even his pathetically repetitive threats ultimately remind us of this. The conclusion must be that all or nearly all the gods who intervene do so for self-serving motives, and are rightly humiliated.

IV

If Loki's intention all long has been to provoke a final breach with the gods, and thus to hasten Ragnarök, his driving out represents his ultimate success. Until then, the gods have it in their power to delay Ragnarök indefinitely; after they have driven Loki out and subsequently bound him, the initiative passes out of their hands. The taunts which finally push Pórr into committing the irredeemable act on their behalf are successful only because they are true, and the faults of the gods are therefore in a real if indirect sense the cause of their own fall — a situation very like that of *Völuspá*. In *Völuspá* 39 the crucial offences, for which men are condemned to wade in Vaðgelmir, are oathbreaking, murder and adultery. In *Lokasenna* the faults are not quite the same ones, but they are similarly systematic, and can be summarised under the

general headings of *ójafnað* ('injustice') and *ergi* (both 'sexually disgraceful behaviour' and 'cowardice'), as follows:



Loki himself, of course, shares many of these faults, and unlike the others makes no attempt to hide them. He, too, is a betrayer of family, for he is related, actually or as foster-brother, to both gods and giants. (For his obligation to the gods, see his oath of foster-brotherhood with Óðinn in st. 9; and he is related to the giants through his traditional father, Farbauti, on whom see *Haustlóng* 5, Kock 1946-9, I 10; Snorri Sturluson 1982, 26, *Gylfaginning* ch. 33; and *MRN* 127). Yet he has betrayed both Baldr and Þjazi to their deaths (stanzas 28, 50). He is also an oathbreaker, for his whole attack on the gods is a breach of his oath of foster-brotherhood with Óðinn. He is a sex-changer (see stanzas 23, 33) and has also, it is implied, had sex with the giantess Skaði (st. 52). His cowardice may be implied in the references to the story of Þjazi (with stanzas 50-51 compare *Haustlóng*, Kock 1946-9, I 9-12, and Snorri Sturluson 1900, 69-70, *Skáldskaparmál* ch. 1), although in general the determination of his attack on the gods shows considerable courage. Only in the competent fulfilment of his specialist role is he above reproach — but unfortunately, that special role is as traitor.

The comparison with *Völuspá* is not casual, for these are, it seems to me, the only two mythological poems in the Poetic Edda which show a concern with the whole progress of the gods from ancient times to Ragnarök, and the only two which see a moral causality in that progress. There are, however, two great differences between them. The first is that *Lokasenna* has a surface of

comic mockery. It is indeed a highly entertaining poem, especially when performed aloud, and some critics (e.g. Anne Holtsmark 1965, 678-80) have seen comic entertainment as its sole purpose. But that is to mistake the surface for the substance. This is not the comedy of the absurd, but rather resembles the outrageous truth-telling which is permitted only to the fool and the rascal. To take an analogous example, when Folie in Sir David Lindsay's *Satire of the Thrie Estaitis*, preaching on the text *Stultorum numerus infinitus*, looks at the religious wars raging in sixteenth-century Europe and comments:

I think it folie, be God's mother,  
Ilk Christian Prince to ding doun uther,

(ll. 4621-2, Lindsay 1979, 614)

he is telling no more than truth, a truth which the official view imposed by those in power forbids all others but the fool from mentioning. Thersites in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* is another bitter, truth-telling fool in the same mould. But Loki is not in the end an 'allowed fool' of this kind, although he may seem like one at first. He also has the menace of the truth-telling devil about him, and reminds us, in his gloating fashion, that wickedness and folly will ultimately have to be paid for. In this, he more closely resembles the devils in the Wakefield *Judgment*:

Bot sir, I tell you before, had domysday oghit tarid  
We must have biggid hell more, the warld is so warid.

(ll. 179-80, *The Towneley Plays* 1897, 372)

[biggid = built; warid = cursed (with wickedness)]

As soon as this note is introduced, the underlying import of the poem must be regarded as serious and menacing, however entertaining the surface may be. Klingenberg's demonstration (1983, 149-50) that one function of Ægir's feast is to act as a solemn trial also underlines the fundamental seriousness of the poem.

The second major difference between *Völuspá* and *Lokasenna* is that the latter gives no hint of anything after Ragnarök. One might suggest a number of explanations for this, but most of them would involve some assumption about whether the poet himself was heathen or Christian, and I would like to reserve judgement on that question. One may note in passing, however, the apparent echoes in *Lokasenna* of stanzas from *Völuspá*, *Hávamál*, *Vafþrúðnismál*, *Skírnismál* and *Hárbarðsljóð*, which suggest that all of those poems may in some form be earlier than *Lokasenna*. The ironic slant given to most of these echoes suggests that *Loka-*

*senna* is the borrower in each case, and that makes a relatively late date for it seem likely, and thus increases the possibility of Christian influence.

One purely literary explanation for the absence of any mention of a world after Ragnarök might be that the poem is presented largely from Loki's viewpoint, and that he himself has no perception of such a world. If he had, he would hardly be so anxious to hurry it on. There may, as suggested elsewhere (*Völuspá* 65 [1984, 118-121]; *Vafþrúðnismál* 51; *Hyndluljóð* 44) be one or more who will come after, but as *Hyndluljóð* puts it:

Fáir sjá nú fram um lengra  
enn Óðinn man úlfí mœta. (44:5-8)

(Few now see further into the future than that Óðinn must meet with the wolf.)  
And in a world of treacherous fools who must pay for their deeds,  
perhaps the last of them is Loki himself.

#### Note

Some of the ideas in this paper originate from a discussion of *Lokasenna* with Mr. G. Daniel in 1978, while he was an M.A. student at Durham, and I am grateful for his help. An earlier version of it was delivered to the Scandinavian Studies Postgraduate Seminar at University College London in November 1985, and I should like to express my thanks for the helpful suggestions made by several of those present on that occasion. I am myself responsible for whatever errors or follies remain.

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# ON THE SALLUST TRANSLATION IN RÓMVERJA SAGA

BY PORBJÖRG HELGADÓTTIR

**R**ómverja saga (R) comprises a translation of Sallust's *Jugurtha* (J) and *Catiline* (C) and a paraphrase of Lucan's *Pharsalia*. The saga is preserved in two versions, conventionally called the older and the younger. The older version is extant in two fourteenth-century manuscripts, the younger version in a number of manuscripts, the oldest from the late fourteenth century, the youngest from the eighteenth.

## *The older version of R*

The older version is preserved in fuller form in AM 595 a-b 4to. It starts some way on in the *Jugurtha* (J 31,18), in the middle of a speech delivered by C. Memmius, tribune of the people, in 111 b.c. The translation then follows the Latin quite closely almost to the end of the history (J 110,4), but after fol. 21v a leaf appears to have been lost. Fol. 22r begins with a brief description of Jugurtha's death, goes on to an account of the conflict between Marius and Sulla, and ends with the introduction of the four great men in Rome after their day, G. Pompeius Magnus, G. Julius Caesar, M. Licinius Crassus and M. Porcius Cato, which carries on to fol. 23r15. This section makes a bridge to the *Catiline* translation, beginning fol. 23r16.

The opening of this corresponds to C 5,1, Sallust's description of Catiline. From C 5,7 the translation jumps to C 14,1, after which it follows the Latin to the middle of C 16,4. This takes us to the end of fol. 23v, after which there is a lacuna of three leaves (Jakob Benediktsson 1980, 8). The first, damaged words of fol. 24r read '... eð plaucia laug', answering to C 31,4, where Sallust refers to the Lex Plautia. The translation on fols. 24 and 25, which are both in very poor condition, appears to follow the Latin without a break, as it continues to do on fol. 26, whose text ends in C 47,1. There is then another lacuna of three leaves (Jakob Benediktsson 1980, 8-9). Fol. 27r begins in C 52,29, in the middle of Cato's speech to the Senate. The translation then continues without omission until it ends with C 61,4.

*The younger version of R*

Although this redaction generally represents a rewriting of the Sallust and Lucan translations, it occasionally offers a text closer to the Latin than that of the older version. Since it does not suffer from the lacunas of that earlier version, it also gives us a more precise idea of the extent of the translation on which this revision was based. It is preserved, apparently complete, in AM 226 fol., AM 225 fol., and AM 541 4to; fragmentarily in other manuscripts. The text begins at J 5,1 and follows the *Jugurtha* more or less faithfully to its end. Then comes the account of Jugurtha's death and of the war between Sulla and Marius, followed by the *Catiline*, beginning at C 5,1. In general, the *Catiline* translation is paraphrased and abridged throughout.

*The Sallust texts as represented in the versions of R*

The matter of the older AM 595 version and of the younger AM 226 version can be apportioned between the *Jugurtha* (114 chapters) and the *Catiline* (61 chapters) as follows:

AM 595. Fols. 1-21	: J 31,18-110,4
(22-23r15)	: (Transitional section on Jugurtha's death and war between Marius and Sulla)
23r16-23v	: C 5,1-5,7; 14,1-16,4
24-26	: C 31,4-47,1
27-29v3	: C 52,29-61,4
AM 226. Fols. 110-129r	: J 5,1-114,4; (transitional section on Jugurtha's death and war between Marius and Sulla); C 5,1-61,9).

From this it appears that, apart from the introduction, J 1,1-4,9, the whole of the *Jugurtha* was translated. The original translator then included a note on Jugurtha's death and concocted a passage on Marius and Sulla to lead into the translation of the *Catiline*. In this he omitted the introduction, C 1,1-4,5, and the passage in which Sallust laments the degeneracy of Rome, C 5,9-13,5. In both the *Jugurtha* and the *Catiline*, however, the translator readily omitted more general and philosophic passages of this kind. He was interested in Sallust's narrative, not in his moral reflections.

*The Latin source followed in R: the present enquiry*

No manuscript remains of any kind exist to show us what Sallust texts in their original Latin may have been known in Iceland in the early Middle Ages. An attempt to identify the type of source used by the translator of R can only be made by an examination of his divergences from the *textus receptus*. He may then be seen to reproduce tell-tale vagaries from a given class or classes of the known Latin manuscripts.

Meissner (1910, 152-6) briefly discusses the Latin source. He thinks the closeness of the Sallust translation would make it possible to identify the Sallust recension followed but, since it would have no significance for the textual history of the Latin works, 'würde die Arbeit die Mühe nicht lohnen'. He contents himself therefore with a list of the readings which suggest variants in the Latin source in comparison with the texts as edited by Dietsch (1859), but without indicating which Latin manuscripts, if any, have readings to match those deduced from the Icelandic.

Dietsch (1859), the edition available to Meissner, does not in fact have a variant apparatus adequate for a full analysis, and I have consequently re-examined the R translation in the light of more recent work on the textual history of the *Jugurtha* and *Catiline*. I have considered every reading in the Icelandic which seemed to me to constitute a clear departure from the Latin *textus receptus*, and tried to decide in each case whether the divergence is due to some fault on the part of the translator or whether it more probably depends on a pre-existing Latin variant.

I cite Meissner (1910) but naturally pay special attention to the corrections and additions he introduced in his transcript of AM 595. My comparisons are based on the most recent editions of Sallust by Kurfess (1972) and Ernout (1974), but I have also referred to Dietsch (1859), chiefly because this was Meissner's point of departure. Two other important authorities are Ahlberg (1910-11), whose book on the survival of Sallust texts offers an exhaustive examination of manuscript relations, and Zimmermann (1929), who discusses citation of Sallust by ancient writers and its relation to the medieval transmission of Sallust's works. It is obviously this medieval transmission which is primarily relevant to an enquiry concerning the Latin source followed in R.

*Medieval manuscripts of the Jugurtha and Catiline*

These fall into two main groups:

Group (1) comprises the so-called *codices mutili*, which all have

the same lacuna, from J 103,2 (*quinque . . .*) to J 112,3 (. . . *et ratam*). (Most of these manuscripts have in fact had the missing section supplied by later hands, and these are often called *codices suppleti* in consequence.) The two oldest *mutili* are of ninth-century French provenance (Zimmermann 1929, 148-51; Ernout 1974, 37, n.1), and Ahlberg (1910-11) supposed that the archetype belonged somewhere in France. Copies then found their way to Switzerland and Germany, where most of the *mutili* are preserved. In addition to the two oldest, there are ten manuscripts in this group, from the tenth, eleventh and twelfth century.

Group (2) is made up of the so-called *codices integri*, which do not have the large lacuna in the *Jugurtha* and, unlike the *suppleti*, have had no secondary scribe at work in them. The five oldest are from the eleventh century.

Ahlberg (1910-11) found good grounds for distinguishing two classes, X and Y, in Group (1). A sub-class of Y is also distinguished, known as  $\Gamma$  and represented by five manuscripts of German provenance: Cod. Monacensis 4559 (M), Cod. Turicensis (T), Cod. Parisinus 10195 (D), Cod. Hauniensis (F), and Cod. Monacensis 19472 (19472). Readings in manuscripts of the different classes of Group (1) and the five oldest *codices integri* of Group (2) show numerous variants from the *textus receptus*. Among such variants I have found 55 which can be seen to agree with R. There are twice as many instances of agreement between R and Y manuscripts (44 in all) as there are between R and X manuscripts (21 instances); and of the 44 Y parallels 22 are exclusive to the  $\Gamma$  sub-class. Of the individual  $\Gamma$  manuscripts D agrees with R notably more often than the rest: while D has 39 instances, the figures for the others are 28 (T), 27 (F), 22 (19472), and 21 (M).

D has thus most variants in common with R, and in rare instances it appears to be the only known Latin manuscript which accords with the Icelandic translation. On the other hand, a copy derived from D cannot have been the source of the translation, for D has some 30 variants from the *textus receptus* which, though for the most part relatively trivial, could be expected to show up in the Icelandic text if it had been based on an offspring of D. R's source must thus have been in the same line of descent as D, some kind of 'sister' or 'cousin'.

A few examples from the *Jugurtha* text may illustrate the kind of evidence to be considered and serve to confirm the association of R with the  $\Gamma$  sub-class and with D in particular.

(i) J 43,5 has: *Itaque ex sententia omnibus rebus paratis conpositisque, in Numidiam proficiscitur.* The *ex sententia* here relates to the ablative absolute which follows it, whose logical subject is Metellus (named in J 43,1): when everything was ready to his satisfaction, he set off for Numidia.

R 7,5 has: *ok fór Metellus að ráði aulldunganna ok ⟨er⟩ allt var þetta búið í Numidia.* The translator has modified the sense by adding the word *aulldunganna*: Metellus goes to Numidia on the advice or decision of the senators.

With three other Γ manuscripts D reads *ex uoto ex sententia*, but D further has an independent addition, *sc. senatus*, written above this phrase by the scribe. It is a reading which may readily account for *að ráði aulldunganna* in R.

(ii) J 73,7 has: *Sed paulo . . . decreuerat: ea res frustra fuit.* Early editors or scribes made various attempts to fill this lacuna, and Heurgon (1938) divides Sallust manuscripts into three groups according to the readings supplied. His first group includes manuscripts of the X class and some others, in which *senatus* was added and *paulo* replaced by *parum*; they thus read *sed parum senatus decreuerat*. His second group includes a number of manuscripts, of later date than the first group, which have a marginal entry: *sed senatus paulo ante Numidiam Metello decreuerat*. His third group includes the Γ manuscripts and the eleventh-century Y manuscript, Cod. Berolinensis 205. The readings of most of these differ slightly in word-order but not in content: *sed senatus paulo decio decreuerat* (. . . *decio paulo decreuerat*, . . . *paulo decreuerat decio*, . . . *paulo decio decreuerat senatus*); but another eleventh-century Y manuscript, Cod. Palatinus 889, has *senatus decio pro*; and among the Γ manuscripts D is unique in having *decio sc. senatus bellum*. Heurgon concludes that the sentence originally began with *sed paulo decio* and ended with *decreuerat*. A copyist jumped from *dec(io)* to *dec(reuerat)* and so wrote simply *sed paulo decreuerat*. Believing his third group to be anchored in the original Sallust text, he offered the conjectural restoration: *sed P. Decio pro praetore senatus id bellum decreuerat*.

R 19,7 has: *en litlu áðr hafði sá til orrostó ætlaðr verið af haufðingium er hét Paulus Decius ok var það ósyniu.* Working from this, Meissner (1910, 154) suggested that the Latin exemplar had a text on these lines: *sed paulo ante Paulo Decio decreverat nobilitas.* This is not confirmed by any Sallust manuscript, and Meissner overlooks the phrase *til orrostó*. This must however

answer to *bellum*, a word which appears only in D (and Heurgon's reconstruction). Meissner's *nobilitas*, corresponding to *af haufðingium*, is attested in the Sallust material but only in a single Paris codex of later date. Since the translator used the indeterminate *haufðingiar* in a variety of contexts, it could here equally well represent the *senatus* of D and other texts.

The translator's Latin exemplar must have had a reading like D, but presumably with both *paulo ante(a)* (= *litlu áðr*) and *paulo decio* (= *Paulus Decius*), as Meissner suggested. (The addition of *ante(a)* is attested in some twelfth-century Sallust manuscripts.)

(iii) J 89,5 has: *Nam praeter oppido propinqua, alia omnia uasta, inculta, egentia aquae, infesta serpentibus . . .*

R 26,10 has: *fyrir útan borgina var viðt auðir staðir ok gat æigi vatn, en kykt allt fyrir ormum . . .* *Fyrir útan borgina* can mean either 'outside the town' or 'except for the town' and it answers to *praeter oppido propinqua; alia omnia uasta* appears to be freely rendered *var viðt auðir staðir* and *inculta* not separately translated. The translator may have failed to grasp the construction, *praeter + acc. propinqua + dat. oppido*, 'except in the neighbourhood of the town'; but it could also be that he found *praeter oppidum* in his source and so took *propinqua* with the following *alia omnia uasta*. The reading *oppidum* is inserted by the scribe of D as a superscript alternative; and it occurs in another (thirteenth-century) Paris codex.

(iv) J 104,1 begins: *Marius, postquam confecto quo intenderat negotio Cirtam redit et de aduentu legatorum certior factus est, illosque et Sullam <ab Utica> uenire iubet.*

R 35,1 has: *Marius kemr aptr í Cirta ok hefir vel sýslað. hann spyrr til sendimanna ok sendir orð í Utica, að Sulla ok sendimenn komi til hans.*

The Icelandic makes some changes in the sentence structure. Among other things, the translator uses *sendir orð* for *iubet + acc.* and *inf.*, and he attaches *í Utica* to this, unlike the Latin which has *ab Utica* attached to the verb *uenire*. The translator is usually precise in rendering description of movement and one may wonder what accounts for this apparent revision. A probable explanation is that his exemplar in fact had *ad Uticam*, which is the reading of D — elsewhere it occurs only as a correction in T and in one codex *integer*. (In this instance, as in *Cirta* in the first clause, the acc. case-ending of the place-name has not been retained, but it was not the translator's invariable practice to keep such endings, though he very often does so; cf. Meissner 1910, 177-81.)

(v) J 106,4 has: *Ceterum ab eodem monitus uti noctu proficiscerentur, consilium adprobat, ac statim milites cenatos esse, in castris ignis quam creberrimos fieri, dein prima uigilia silentio egredi iubet.*

R 36,3-4 has: *enn biðr Volux, að þærir fari brott um nótina. þetta ráð piggr Sulla ok biðr riddara mataz ok giora marga ellda. 'vér skolum búin vera að fara aundverða nót.'*

The Icelandic *biðr mataz* (*statim* is omitted) does not fully render the perfective aspect of *cenatos esse . . . iubet* in the *textus receptus* or of *cenaturos esse . . . iubet*, which is a reading peculiar to D, so either expression might have been in its source. The translation does agree with D and other Y and Γ manuscripts in simply having *marga (ellda)*, answering to their (*ignis*) *creberrimos*. Similar omission of *quam* is otherwise found in one X manuscript and one *codex integer*.

#### D — Codex Parisinus 10195

As noted above, the number and nature of the variants in R point to the identification of D as its closest relative among the surviving Latin sources. This text was first described by Bonnet (1879) and its readings were critically discussed by Ahlberg (1910–11). It was not known to Dietsch; and Meissner makes no reference to it in his edition of R.

'Codex sancti Wilibrordi' appears as a heading on fol. 1r in D. The book thus belonged to the abbey of Echternach, founded by St Willibord c. 700: he died there in 739 and there his shrine remains.

In the codex the *Catiline* and *Jugurtha* are preceded by Macrobius on Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*, along with the *Somnium* itself, and followed by Chalcidius's translation of and commentary on Plato's *Timaeus*.

Bonnet (1879) noted the similarities of D to other manuscripts which are allotted to the Γ sub-class (M, T and F). He also thought D came from a line of transmission represented by the X group manuscript, Cod. Parisinus 5748 written in the eleventh century, which in turn is closely related to the ninth-century Cod. Parisinus 16025, one of the two oldest *codices mutili*. It may be noted that D has German glosses in an eleventh- or twelfth-century hand, along with some further annotation by the same writer. These show that, even if D was not originally written in Echternach, it was brought there from not far afield.

*The Latin source in the North*

A manuscript closely related to D clearly found its way to Iceland. Can we build a bridge between Iceland and St Willibrord's abbey? Not certainly, but we can undertake some tentative pile-driving.

We know that young Norwegians and Icelanders were educated at continental centres, some in the eleventh century, more in the twelfth. They were not all poor clerics, and some of them could certainly buy or commission copies of works that interested them, if they were not in a position to take copies themselves. Scandinavian pilgrimage to major shrines in Compostela, Rome and the Holy Land also became relatively common in the early middle ages. Abbot Nikulás of Munkaþverá (d. 1159) has left us a guide-book for the road to Rome (Kålund 1908, 12-19). Icelanders normally went by way of Norway, crossing from there to Jutland and continuing by land to Schleswig and over the Eider to Itzehoe and Stade. From there they went on to Verden, Nienburg and Minden, and so by way of Paderborn to Mainz. A more easterly route from Stade to Mainz went by way of Harsefeld, Walsrode, Hannover, Hildesheim and a monastery in Arnsburg. People also took ship from Norway or elsewhere to Deventer or Utrecht and came to Mainz from the northwest, by way of Köln. All the main routes thus converged on Mainz; from there pilgrims took the road south to the St Bernard and Lombardy.

Time spent on a pilgrimage must have constantly varied with circumstances. Some travellers never reached their goal while others were *vagantes*, more like tourists, without particular vows to accomplish. Pilgrims would turn aside to visit other shrines off their main route, and they customarily made use of lodgings provided by monasteries. Clerics and *studiosi* who were among such travellers might have the means and recommendations to ensure a longer stay and access to the libraries and scriptoria of the establishments they stayed at.

Between the ninth century and the thirteenth the monks of Reichenau, near Konstanz, kept a fraternity book, *Libellus Societatum Augiensium*, to record the names of visitors, *amici viventes*. Over 600 Scandinavian names occur in it; at the end, and partly in the margin, are found the names of thirteen (or possibly thirty-nine) Icelandic men and women (Finnur Jónsson and Ellen Jørgensen 1923).

Abbot Nikulás did not refer to Reichenau in his little guide-

book — it was on a route farther east than any he mentions — and pilgrims from the North undoubtedly found many more stopping-places than those he names. That Echternach had its share of visitors is perfectly possible. St Willibrord was not totally unknown in the North: he appears for example in a late twelfth-century Icelandic calendar, partly based on a German (probably Westphalian) source (Gjerløw 1980, 206-7); and Alcuin's account of the saint's missionary visit to King Ongendus in Denmark might well have inspired interest (Alcuin 1920, 123-4). It is more significant still that Echternach lies only 20 km west of Trier, *Treverisborg, Roma secunda*, a great centre of the wine-trade on the Mosel, its church founded by disciples of St Peter himself, birthplace of St Ambrose, visited by St Martin and the scene of some of his miracles, famous for its cathedral, Roman remains, monasteries and relics, not least those of St Matthias, 'discovered' there in 1128, the only apostle's tomb north of the Alps and Pyrenees. The Icelandic *Mathias saga postola* is derived from a Trier source written before the middle of the twelfth century (Collings 1973). The recension of the *Gesta Treverorum* made soon after 1132 identifies Archbishop Poppo of Trier (d. 1047) with the Bishop Poppe whose ordeal brought about the conversion of King Haraldr Gormsson in the 960s; and Danes were apparently readily persuaded that the shrine of the apostle of their kingdom was in Trier (Olrik 1891-2; Demidoff 1973, 47). It may be noted that the same version of the *Gesta* gives St Ansgar's feast day as 9 September, the date found in *Necrologium Lundense* (from the 1120s), while other Scandinavian calendars have its accepted Roman celebration on 3 February (*Gesta Treverorum* 1848, 173; *KL VIII* 114, 123). It may also be more than coincidence that the copy of the Marbach *consuetudines* adapted for use in Lund just after 1120 and found in the *Necrologium* codex shared an archetype with a manuscript preserved in Trier (though the provenance of the twelfth-century exemplar from which the latter was derived is naturally uncertain) (Buus 1978, 40, 211).

Missionary bishops came to Iceland in the eleventh century from both England and Germany, but North German ecclesiastical influence must have predominated in the process of establishing the Icelandic church. Ísleifr and Gizurr, the first two native bishops, were educated in Westphalia, Ísleifr was ordained there and both were consecrated by German archbishops. Hamburg-Bremen had metropolitan responsibility for the Northern countries, and the Icelanders showed no sign of trying to avoid that German authority

in the way the Norwegians did in the course of the eleventh century. In 1104 Lund became the primatial see of the North, and it was there two years later that Jón Ógmundarson was consecrated as first bishop of Hólar. He had been educated by Bishop Ísleifr, so he was in the 'Saxon' tradition, but his new attachment to Lund would serve only to strengthen his German links. Danish church and monastic ties with Germany were at that time very close, though for the most part the Danes preferred to look beyond Hamburg-Bremen, which represented both political and ecclesiastical opposition, to the archdioceses of Köln and Mainz, with that of Trier butting on both. Ricwal, a canon of Paderborn, had for example been bishop of Lund 1073-89. In the 1130s Lund had a prominent cleric called Hermann, whose father was the founder of the monastery of Klosterrath outside Aachen (Foote 1984, 108-9).

Jón Ógmundarson is said to have brought two foreign clerics to teach at Hólar (*Bps.* I, 163, 168), and it is reasonable to assume that they were recommended to him in Lund. One was Gísli Finnason 'af Gautlandi' (probably Västergötland), who taught grammar, i.e. Latin, and was schoolmaster at Hólar for many years. The other was Rikini, the bishop's *erkiprestr*, who taught liturgical singing and *versagerð*, the necessary elements of Latin prosody. Rikini is described as *franzeis*, which could mean 'Frankish' or 'French', but since Rikini is a well-known German name, the former seems more likely. What evidence exists for the spread of the name 'points to the southern part of the archdiocese of Mainz and, even more, to the Moselle and the Rhineland around Köln' (Foote 1984, 111). It appears likely that Rikini was a talented cleric, of Rhenish or Lotharingian origin, who found himself in Lund at a time when he could be introduced to Bishop Jón. It is said that the new bishop was in a position to offer good remuneration to his schoolmaster (*Bps.* I, 163), and presumably his 'arch-priest' was no worse off. Foreign teachers of this kind would naturally own some books over and above the essential liturgical texts and they were not likely to sail to Iceland without them.

It was of course equally possible for Icelanders visiting Scandinavia to take or procure copies of texts they found in cathedral and monastic libraries there. Although the strength of Icelandic ties with Denmark was reduced when the Icelandic bishops became suffragans of the new metropolitan see of Niðaróss soon after 1150, Saxo's references to Icelandic sources of information c. 1200 and the career of Óláfr hvítaskáld (d. 1259) make it clear that they did

not disappear altogether. Archbishop Absalon of Lund (1177-1201) and his successor, Anders Sunesen (d. 1228), were great book-collectors and the cathedral library grew to impressive size (Weibull 1901). Saxo knew Sallust's works, the *Catiline* almost certainly at first hand and not through extracts (Boserup 1975, 45). In the same generation we meet Theodricus monachus in Norway. He wrote his *Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagiensium* about 1180, most probably in Trondheim, and in this he refers to and quotes from a good many classical authors: Plato, Chrysippus, Pliny, Sallust, Lucan, Statius, Horace, Vergil and Ovid. Only a single Sallust quotation, from the *Catiline*, has been identified in his little book (Johnsen 1940, 35), not enough to show that he knew the whole work. It may be noted however that fragments of a manuscript that contained the *Jugurtha* are extant in the Norwegian Riksarkiv. This 'Cod. Nidarosiensis' was written at some time between about 1150 and 1250 but probably not in Norway. The *Jugurtha* text in it is related to that found in Paris manuscripts of the twelfth and thirteenth century (Undset 1877-8; Marstrander 1907).

Benedictine monasticism was the first form of communal religious life to take firm root in Scandinavia, in the late eleventh century in Denmark, about 1100 in Norway, and in the second quarter of the twelfth century in Iceland (Pingeyrar 1133, Munkaþverá 1155, both in the Hólar diocese). The first colonisations must all have brought in monks from abroad, and fraternal links with foreign houses must have existed from the start, though for the most part we lack the sources to trace such connections in detail. Study, copying and teaching were a normal part of Benedictine life, and in the work of the brothers of Pingeyrar, Karl Jónsson, Oddr Snorrason and Gunnlaugr Leifsson, at the end of the twelfth century, there is telling witness of the standards achieved in Iceland.

A point to note in associating the *Rómverja saga* translation with D in particular among the Γ manuscripts is that both Macrobius on the *Somnium Scipionis* and Chalcidius's version of the *Timaeus* were known in Iceland (Lehmann 1936-7, II 12, 14; Paasche 1934, 137-9). Where Sallust speaks of the friendship between Publius Scipio Africanus and the Numidian king, Masinissa (J 5,4), the younger version of R says: *Meðr persum Masinissa var þá staddir Publius Scipio er hann dreymdi draum þann sem síðarr er skrifðar í Macrobio ok mikil speki var í* (Konráð Gíslason 1860, 109,9-11). This part of the saga is not in AM 595, so we cannot tell whether

the same comment was in the older version of R or not. But it appears more likely that it was the translator, rather than a later scribe, who inserted this reference; and he would have had all the more reason to be prompted to do so if his Sallust codex resembled D and actually contained Macrobius on the *Somnium*. Macrobius was of course extremely popular in the middle ages and, like Sallust and Chalcidius, figured among school-authors (Glauche 1970, 69 and n.25). Even so, this cross-reference to the *Somnium* might add its scruple to the scale in favour of the conclusion that a manuscript closely related to the Echternach volume existed in Iceland.

### *Conclusion*

What little we know of Sallust's work in twelfth-century Denmark and Norway furnishes no evidence of any link with the Γ class of Sallust manuscripts and with D in particular. It appears perfectly possible however that a twelfth-century Icelander, visiting continental shrines and centres of learning, obtained a text of Sallust, possibly even with Macrobius and Chalcidius thrown in, a text moreover so closely related to D that it is not unnatural to think that it originated in or near the abbey of Echternach, in Trier or its environs.

The introduction of such a manuscript into Iceland might be plausibly associated with Bishop Jón Qgmundarson and his circle in the first decades of the twelfth century. In that case Lund was probably the junction point between Iceland and the Mosel and Rhine: possibly Rikini was not the only teacher from those parts recruited to the school at Hólar.

The name of another well-educated and well-travelled Icelander, from later in the twelfth century, is also bound to come to mind. Gizurr Hallsson (c. 1125-1206) was the son of Hallr Teitsson, who died in Utrecht in 1150 as bishop-elect of Skálholt; Hallr was said to be remarkably proficient in foreign languages. At the time of his father's death, Gizurr himself appears to have been on an extended tour abroad, which took him as far as the shrine of St Nicholas in Bari (*Bps.* I, 80-81). He returned to Iceland and wrote a lost *Flos peregrinationis* on his travels (*Sturl.* I, 60). Gizurr was also associated in some way with the composition of *Veraldar saga* (Jakob Benediktsson 1944, liii-lv). As Hofmann (1986) has shown, the author of this work made use of *Rómverja saga* in a number of

places. His knowledge of its existence and extent is also suggested by the fact that he more or less skips the republican period in Roman history. After telling of Romulus and Remus and the first kings, he merely mentions the rule of consuls for 444 years and then goes straight on to the first triumvirate. *Rómverja saga* offers much to fill his republican gap, with Sallust's histories belonging to the period and Lucan's poem giving a detailed account of its end. (No source has been positively identified for the brief account of Jugurtha's death in the transitional passage between the *Jugurtha* and *Catiline* translation in R (cf. pp. 263-4 above). Hofmann (1986, 146) speculates that it might represent a report current in Rome and brought unwritten from there to Iceland by some early traveller.)

Gizurr Hallsson's connections were particularly close with Skálholt, but it is unlikely that a manuscript of an author like Sallust, who was usually read as part of a curriculum, would long remain the sole exemplar once it had been introduced in a cathedral school. It would certainly be copied, sometimes complete, sometimes in excerpts. Possibly the omissions evident in the R translation had already been made in such a copy of a Latin original. That translation seems to have been known in both the southern and northern dioceses in Iceland: the use made of it by the author of *Veraldar saga* indicates the former, the provenance of AM 595 the latter.

We can see from R itself that the translator was well trained in Latin and that his method was very much in line with common medieval practice in combining paraphrase and verbatim transfer along with explanation of individual words and occasional elucidatory comment (cf. e.g. Jacobsen 1958, 88-94). He often keeps a specific gloss for a given Latin term but, like many other medieval translators, he may also render the same Latin word in a variety of ways, either to bring out a nuance or to find an expression appropriate to the context. When he encounters problems of vocabulary or comprehension, he embarks on a clarification.

The conceptual worlds of medieval Icelander and classical Roman were of course so different that the linguistic resources of the one were inevitably not always able to match the utterance of the other. The translator then had either to create new terms or to give a new meaning to an existing expression. An example of the first procedure is the word *alþyðuréttir*, the translator's most frequent gloss (alongside *alþyðuhagr* and *alþyðulutr*) for *res publica*. An example of the second is *meistaradómr*, which in early texts is used of a teacher's status or activity but which the translator

uses to render *magistratus* in its classical administrative sense. On the other hand, the translator also retains a number of Latin terms, especially technical words for office-bearers like *dictator*, *praetor*, *quaestor*. Sometimes he employs a Latin and native term side by side, *consul* and *hertogi*, for example. It is evident that he was not translating for a totally ignorant audience.

The translator must have been at work in the twelfth century, at a time when most vernacular writings were of a religious kind. He uses many expressions familiar to us from such early didactic and homiletic works. There was a certain amount of later imperial history in the lives of the apostles and of well-known saints like Ambrose and Martin, which were certainly put early into Norse, but the author of *Rómverja saga* was a pioneer in giving native form to works dealing with the earlier republican period of Roman history.

The translator had obviously had a good standard clerical education but we cannot tell whether he was in orders or had taken vows, whether he was a layman *bene literatus* or a cathedral schoolmaster. He certainly belonged to the élite of Iceland's men of learning in the twelfth century.

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## NOTES

### PRYMSKVIÐA, STANZA 20, AND A PASSAGE FROM VÍGLUNDAR SAGA

BY RICHARD PERKINS

IN AN OBITUARY in *Saga-Book*, vol. XX, 1978, pp. 4–5, R. I. Page writes of Professor Bruce Dickins, that ‘his genius lay in worrying at details.’ One of the details Dickins worried at (in *Leeds studies in English and kindred languages*, 4, 1935, pp. 79–80), was stanza 20 of the Eddic poem *Prymskviða*. Readers will be familiar with the context of the stanza, but some rehearsal and commentary will not here be out of place. (References are to *Edda*, ed. Gustav Neckel, 4th ed., revised by Hans Kuhn, 1962).

Prymr has stolen Pórr’s hammer and has demanded the hand of Freyja for its return. Loki delivers this message to Pórr and the two go to seek out Freyja (st. 12):

Ganga þeir fagra      Freyio at hitta,  
oc hann þat orða      allz fyrst um qvað:  
‘Bittu þic, Freyia,      brúðar líni!  
við scolom aca tvau      í iqunheima.’

I shall return to the question of who speaks these last four lines in a moment. At all events Freyja reacts angrily and will have no part of it (st. 13): to give herself to a giant would be thoroughly *vergjorn*, to be *þorg*, an out-and-out nymphomaniac (cf. *Kulturhistoriskt lexikon*, 1956–78 (= *Kl*), s. v. *Ergi* and refs.). The gods go into council and deliberate this grave matter (st. 14). Then the prescient Heimdallr suggests this ploy (stanzas 15–16):

‘Bindo vér Pór þá      brúðar líni,  
hafi hann íþ micla      men Brísinga!  
Látom und hánom      hrynia lucla  
oc qvennváðir      um kné falla,  
enn á briósti      breiða steina,  
oc hagliga      um hoþuð typpom!’

Pórr’s outraged response to this (st. 17) matches Freyja’s in stanza 13: the gods will consider him *argr* if he turns transvestite, allows himself to be used as a woman (see again *Kl*, loc. cit.). To don the bridal veil is demeaning enough; so too to have skirts to the

ankle; but the final and, as it were, the crowning insult would be to let himself be *hagliga um hofuð typpðr*. We may dwell a little on this last detail and note, for example, Hugo Gering's comment on it (see *Kommentar zu den liedern der Edda. Erste hälfte: götterlieder*, ed. B. Sijmons, 1927, 319). As Gering rightly remarks, the verb *typpa* must be derived from *topr*, 'spitze, spitz zulaufender gegenstand'; it must mean: 'etwas mit einer spitze versehen, etwas zuspitzen, hoch aufrichten'. And Gering is also doubtless right in arguing that 'als obj. ist ein subst. zu ergänzen, wahrscheinlich *faldr*, der charakteristische kopfputz, der zur festtracht der isländischen frauen noch heute gehört und in eine nach vorn gebogene krumme spitze ausläuft' (cf. also Richard Cleasby and Gudbrand Vigfusson, *An Icelandic-English dictionary*, 1874, s.v. *faldr*; Finnur Jónsson (ed.), *De gamle eddadigte*, 1932, 117: '*typpum*: sætte vi top på, giver hende [sic] en topdannet hovedpynt, ɔ: en faldr der rager höjt op'). The finishing touch to Pórr's bridal outfit is, then, to be a *faldr* of the type so common amongst Icelandic women up to the eighteenth century and not infrequently referred to in medieval sources (see Illus.; Cleasby and Vigfusson, loc. cit.; *Kl.* III, col. 279). It was very much a female garment. And there was, it seems, something particularly shameful in disguising oneself as a woman by wearing a *faldr*. Thus when the idea is suggested to Helgi Njálsson in burning Bergþórshváll, he demurs (although he eventually agrees; see *Brennu-Njáls saga*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 1954 (*Íslensk fornrit*, 1933- (= *If*), XII), 329). And Grágás (ed. Vilhjálmur Finsen, 1852, II, 47) states that *ef maðr feldr sér til vélar við konu, ok varðar þat fjorbaugsgarð*. Pórr, then, angrily disdains the disguise itself, as well as the very womanish garments to be used to effect it. His protestations count for little. Loki shuts him up with an abrupt '*Pegi þú, Pórr, þeira orða!*' and a reminder of the threat the giants will pose to Ásgarð if Mjöllnir is not recovered. So, then, in words which *mutatis mutandis* are more or less the same as stanzas 15 (ll. 5-8) and 16, we are told how Pórr is decked out in bridal attire. On goes the bridal veil and the Brísing's necklace. He is given long skirts and keys at his belt. More womanish jewelry is added for good measure. And finally, to top it all, he is carefully crowned with an elaborate *faldr*, that most feminine item of clothing. There he stands, then, the most

*En fornem Jomfrue**En Jomfrue i Bryllup Drast*

Icelandic women wearing *faldar*, 'a young woman of rank' and 'a woman in bridal attire' (from Eggert Olafsen and Biarne Povelsen, *Reise igjennem Island*, 1772, plates VII and V). The conspicuous difference between the dress of the two women is the elaborate decoration of the bride's *faldr* (cf. *Prymskviða*, st. 19: *oc hagliga um hofuð tyþo*). Note the keys at the waist of the first woman. By permission of the British Library.

masculine of the gods, arrayed in typical woman's weeds. The amused Æsir stand around him; his embarrassment is acute. It is now the moment for the mocking Loki to add insult to injury (in stanza 20):

Pá kvað Loki, Laufeyiar sonr:  
 'Mun ec oc með þér ambót vera,  
 við scolom aca tvau í jötunheimi.'

Now as Dickins suggests, ever since at least the 1860s (first, as far as I know, in C.R. Unger's *Oldnorsk Læsebog*, 1863, 104), various editors have adopted the emendation in stanza 20 of *tvau* to *tvær*, apparently 'on the assumption that the feminine pl[ural] *tvær* is more appropriate than the neuter since both Thor and Loki will be disguised as women when they set out for *Jötunheimar*'. Sophus Bugge, for example, in *Norræn fornkvæði* (1867, 126) thinks that *tvau* is an error introduced under the influence of stanza 12. But as Dickins argues, 'actually the emendation robs the line of half its sting. We know that Thor is already in disguise and feeling extremely uncomfortable. But Loki is still *in propria persona* and, being the mischief-maker of the Æsir, he deliberately uses the offensive neuter plural (which refers to persons of different sexes) to accentuate Thor's humiliation.' Certainly Dickins is correct in his arguments here (cf. for example, E.V. Gordon, *An introduction to Old Norse*, 2nd ed. revised by A.R. Taylor, 1957, 243). But in this context, a passage from *Víglundar saga*, ch. 14 (= *Íf*, XIV, 88–9), has (again, as far as I know) been overlooked. This tells of a game of *knattleikr* on a frozen pond not far from Ingjaldshváll on Snæfellsnes. The Fossverjar (Jökull and Einarr, sons of Hólmkell) play against their enemies, the sons of Porgímr, Víglundr and Trausti:

Pat var einn tíma, at Víglundr sló út knöttinn fyrir Jökli. Jökull reiddist þá ok tók knöttinn, er hann náði, ok setti framan í andlit Víglundi, svá at ofan hljóp brúnin. Trausti reist af skyrtu sinni ok batt upp brúnina á brðður sínum; en þá er þat var gert, váru Fossverjar heim farnir. Peir bræðr fóru heim [to Ingjaldshváll], ok er þeir kómu í stofu, sat Porgímr á palli ok mælti: 'Bæði þit heil, systkin.' 'Hvárn okkar kvenkennir þú, faðir?' segir Trausti. 'Mér þykir,' segir Porgímr, 'sem þat muni kona vera, sem faldinn hefir.' 'Eigi er ek kona,' segir Víglundr, 'en vera má, at skammt sé frá.' 'Hví hefndir þú þín eigi á Jökli, er hann barði þik?' 'Farnir váru þeir,' segir Trausti, 'þá er ek hafða bundit um andlit Víglundar.' Fell þar þetta skraf fyrst at sinni.

In another bout of *knattleikr* the following day, Víglundr is quick to avenge his injury: he sets about Jökull so roughly that he has to be carried back home to Foss on an improvised stretcher.

The implications of Þorgrímr's words here are clear and need not be laboured unduly: as noted, the *faldr* was very much a female garment; Víglundr's head is swathed in a *faldr*-like bandage; Þorgrímr takes advantage of this situation to use a neuter grammatical form of the two brothers with the implication of a feminine grammatical form to Víglundr; in this way, he imputes effeminacy to Víglundr. He then reminds him of the unavenged injury he has suffered. His taunt is to good effect. Now there is, of course, nothing in this which necessarily speaks against an emendation of *tvaū* to *tvær* in stanza 20 of *Prymskiða*: the passage from *Víglundar saga* suggests that the wearing of women's clothes or merely a *faldr* by a man more or less justified the application of grammatically feminine forms to that man; if both Pórr and Loki are to be disguised as women when they go to Jötunheimar, then the feminine plural *tvær* would not be out of place. But in the context, the use of the neuter form by Loki is, as Dickins suggests, far more appropriate. By it, Loki may be regarded as first and foremost wishing to mock and humiliate Pórr (cf. *Lokasenna*, stanzas 58, 60, 62). While Pórr is already *hagliga faldinn* and in full bridal array, he himself is still in male attire. Only at this moment can he take advantage of Pórr's wretched plight. But it is also possible that by his taunts he wishes to spur Pórr on to the recovery of his hammer and vengeance. If so, he is, like Þorgrímr in *Víglundar saga*, not disappointed: Pórr pockets Loki's taunts, suppresses his wrath, bides his time; but in stanzas 31 and 32 he takes his revenge, recovers his hammer and smashes (*lamði*) Prymr and the race of giants. I would agree, then, with Dickins that when Loki uses the neuter plural *tvaū* in stanza 20 of *Prymskiða*, he does so advisedly. It is only at this juncture that he can use the neuter plural which, by its implied contrast with his, as yet, still masculine self, emphasizes the demeaningly female role which Pórr finds himself forced to play. And *tvaū* is what the manuscript has (cf. Gordon, op. cit., plate facing, p. lxiv).

To return to lines 5–8 of stanza 12. At least some scholars think that these are spoken by Loki. Hugo Gering (op. cit., p.

316), for example, agrees with Finnur Jónsson (cf. *De gamle eddadigte*, 1932, 116) that they are the ‘worte des neckenden Loke, nicht Pórs’. I am less certain. Elsewhere in *Prymskviða* (stanzas 2, 3 and 9), the words *oc hann þat orða allz fyrst um qvað* (stanza 12, lines 3–4) are used of Pórr, not Loki. When the speaker of the lines in question proposes that he and Freyja should *aka* to Jötunheimar, this is more Qku-Pórr’s way of travelling than Loki’s (cf. e.g. stanza 21). The words in question in stanza 12 are probably best construed as those of an imperious, insensitive Pórr and use the neuter plural in its conventional sense. These words Loki slyly and cheaply throws back at him in stanza 20, giving *tvau* a mocking, taunting twist.

## SNEGLU-HALLI, 2:11: DRÓTTINSERÐR

BY MICHAEL MINKOV

*SNEGLU-HALLA PÁTTR* is one of the most interesting of the *Íslendinga þættir*. Unfortunately some of its verses contain words that are difficult to explain. One of them is the *hapax legomenon*: *dróttinserðr*. It occurs in the final *helmingr* of the *páttir*:

Sýr er ávalt,  
hefir saurugt alt,  
hestr Þjóðólfs erðr;  
hann er dróttinserðr.

Finnur Jónsson's *Lexicon poeticum* (p. 88) gives the following interpretation of the word *dróttinserðr*: 'dróttinserðr, adj, som herren (hestens ejer) har drevet utugt med, hann (hestr) es d. SnH 2, 11'. The most recent edition of the *páttir* (*Íslendinga sögur og þættir*, 1986, vol. 2, p. 22–31) agrees with *Lexicon poeticum*: 'dróttinserðr: sorðin af eigandanum'. Further quotations are not necessary. As far as I know, all authorities are agreed that the word has a passive meaning. This, however, can hardly be the case. *Dróttinserðr* does not refer to a horse sodomized by its old master (*Þjóðólfr*) but to one that sodomizes or will sodomize its new master, the king. Three different arguments can be put forward to support this view:

(1) In chapter 18 of *Gylfaginning* (ed. A. Holtsmark and J. Helgason, 1976) a giant called *Hræsvelgr* is mentioned. The same name appears in *Vafþrúðnismál* 37. The second element—*svelgr*—closely resembles *serðr*: it derives from the verb *svelga* which is from the same class (class III) of strong verbs as *serða*. *Hræsvelgr* means of course 'a swallower of corpses', certainly not 'one who is swallowed by a corpse'. *Dróttinserðr*, which is identical in structure, must have an active meaning, too. Other examples of similarly structured compounds—based on strong verbs of various classes and with an active meaning—are (quoted from *Lexicon poeticum*):

hvélsvelgr, m, 'hjul-sluger', h. himins, himlens hjulsluger, solens sluger, den ulv, der sluger solen, trold, Anon (X) II B 6.

húsbrjótr, m, 'hus-bryder', vind, Pul IV oo 2; hringbrjótr, hørgbrjótr, menbrjótr, seimbrjótr, qrbrjótr.

*hlymbjóðr, m, 'larm-byder', h. hjørva, sværdenes larm (= kamp) tilbyder, kriger, Anon (XII) B 14; gnýbjóðr, hreggbjóðr, hringbjóðr. broddrjóðr, m, som rødfarver pile, spyd, kriger, ESk 6, 20; fleinrjóðr, malmrjóðr, sverðrjóðr.*

*folkvaldr, m, 'kampskarens styrer,' Olaf d. hellige, ESk 6, 14; dómvaldr, geirvaldr, ógnvaldr.*

(2) The author of the *pátrr* tells us why Halli composed the *helmingr*: 'Halli var þar hjá er hestrinn hafði úti sinina. Halli kvað þá ...' This hardly needs any comment.

(3) The king, who understands the actual meaning of *dróttinserðr*, reacts quickly: 'Tví, tví—segir konungr—hann kemr aldrei í mína eigu at þessu'. He would not have appeared so concerned if, in his understanding, *dróttinserðr* referred to what the horse had experienced in the past.

This new interpretation changes the effect not only of the *helmingr* but also of the whole episode.

## THE BLOOD-EAGLE AGAIN

BY ROBERTA FRANK

IN A RECENT NOTE ('De Normannorum atrocitate, or on the execution of royalty by the aquiline method', *Saga-Book* 22, 1986, 79–82), Bjarni Einarsson takes polite exception 'as a native speaker of Icelandic' to my reading of two skaldic stanzas ('Viking atrocity and skaldic verse: the rite of the blood-eagle', *English historical review* 99, 1984, 332–43). His criticism of my handling of Kormakr's *lausavísa* 4 has already elicited a response (Klaus von See, 'At halsi Hagbarðs', *Skandinavistik* 7, 1987, 55–7). His objections to what I do to the first half-stanza of Sighvatr Þórðarson's *Knútsdrápa* also deserve to be answered.

The verse in question is cryptic, knotty and allusive. When translated word for word into English the result is as follows:

Ok Ellu bak,  
at, lét hinn's sat,  
Ívarr, ara,  
Íorvík, skorit.

And Ella's back,  
at, had the one who dwelt,  
Ívarr, with eagle,  
York, cut.

The syntax, in addition to being skewed, is ambiguous. Yet a chain of authors from the end of the twelfth century to the present agrees that these twelve words document a viking method of execution known as the blood-eagle sacrifice, a peculiar ceremony that gets more inventive and sensational as time goes on. My article affirmed that, although Ella's back might just possibly have been incised with the picture of an eagle ('And Ívarr, who dwelt at York, had Ella's back cut with an eagle'), it was far more likely to have been lacerated by a real one ('Ívarr had Ella's back cut by an eagle'). Viking-age skalds were not reluctant to see men falling under the eagle's talons; the ellipsis in Sighvatr's verse—the skald's omission of claws—reflected, I argued, the demands of his terse metre (called *tøglag*), a speciality of Cnut's Anglo-Scandinavian court. Too optimistically, perhaps, I concluded that 'an experienced reader of skaldic poetry, looking at Sighvatr's stanza in isolation from its saga context, would have trouble seeing it as anything but a conventional utterance, an allusion to the eagle as carrion beast, the pale bird with red claws perched on and slashing the backs of the slain'.

But Bjarni, and his word carries weight, now tells us that ‘no experienced Icelandic reader of skaldic poetry could possibly agree’. His chief reason for rejecting my interpretation is that in Icelandic, both early and late, the use of the verb *skera*, ‘cut’, to refer to carrion beasts ripping into bodies ‘by claw, tooth and neb’ is ‘inconceivable’.

Bjarni will have to have a word with the author of *Stjórn* (ca 1310), who seems unaware of this prohibition. Indeed, this anonymous writer uses *skera* three times to describe the cutting action of claws. Panthers, he explains, give birth only once, because the cubs’ claws tear their mother’s womb, making it unfit for future conceptions: [they] ‘*skera* sva ok slita allan hennar kvið meðr sinum klóm ok allan getnaðarliminn’ (‘thus they cut and slash all her womb and genitalia with their claws’; *Stjórn*, ed. C.R. Unger, 1862, 80/11, cited J. Fritzner, *Ordbog over det gamle norske Sprog*, 1883–96, III, p. 311; the words in italics translate Isidore’s *unguis lacerant*, *Etym.* XII, i, ii). The author of *Stjórn* does not hesitate to call the panther’s damaged parts *skornir* (80/16) and he cites Pliny as authority for the fact that animals with sharp claws cannot have babies frequently because their insides are cut and damaged by their offspring (*skerast* ok *skemmast*, 80/19). Present-day Icelanders may not be able to say *hræfugl skar ná*, but their brothers in Norway still can and do; and, as far as semantics is concerned, modern Norwegian is not necessarily more distant from Old Norse than modern Icelandic is.

It is, of course, an undeniable advantage to have Icelandic as mother tongue. Even native speakers, however, must recognize that the very process of ‘education’—in its etymological sense—is one of separation from their matrix, of each generation making sense of things anew. If you ask speakers of contemporary American English what Juliet wanted to know when she murmured ‘O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?’ they will tell you she was inquiring into Romeo’s whereabouts, rather than pondering ‘Why are you Romeo and not Peter, or Michael, or Richard?’ Bjarni, using his *Oxford English dictionary* as I wield my Fritzner, would, of course, never make this mistake, for he did not first hear this line in early childhood

and—forced to make sense of an archaic or poetic locution—decide that Juliet is asking Romeo to reveal where he is hiding.

The distortion of language in skaldic verse brings out, in a similar way, the meaning-maker in man. It is precisely because *skera* usually means ‘to cut’ (with knife, sword, or ship’s prow) that generations of Icelandic commentators, inspired by Sighvatr’s allusiveness and metaphoric shorthand, detected a half-veiled hint of atrocity in his verse. But the eleventh-century skald no more intended to execute Ella by the ‘aquiline method’ than Shakespeare meant young Romeo to play hide-and-seek. I persist in the belief, which is not mine alone, that the conventions and workings of the earlier verse were not always perfectly understood, not even by the Icelandic saga-authors who quarried it for historical information. The conclusion of my article, limited and hedged around with doubts, still stands: ‘Deprived of its skaldic stanza, the rite of the blood-eagle has no viking-age support.’

## REVIEWS

GYLFAGINNING. BY SNORRI STURLUSON. Edited, translated and annotated by GOTTFRIED LORENZ. *Texte zur Forschung, Band 48. Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.* Darmstadt, 1984. xiv + 669 pp.

EDDA. BY SNORRI STURLUSON. Translated from the Icelandic and introduced by ANTHONY FAULKES. *Everyman's Library. Dent.* London and Melbourne, 1987. xx + 252 pp.

SKÁLDSKAPARMÁL. SNORRI STURLUSON'S *ARS POETICA* AND MEDIEVAL THEORIES OF LANGUAGE. BY MARGARET CLUNIES ROSS. *The Viking collection. Studies in Northern civilization, volume 4. Odense University Press.* Odense, 1987. 210 pp.

Like Faulkes's translation of the entire prose *Edda*, also reviewed here, Gottfried Lorenz's edition of the Prologue and *Gylfaginning* mainly follows the text of the Codex Regius (GkS 2367, 4to); in the case of *Gylfaginning* it has the same chapter-numbering as Faulkes's translation. After the Prologue and each chapter Lorenz gives first a German translation, and then a commentary arranged in numbered paragraphs corresponding to references in the Icelandic text. The commentary is often extensive, dealing where relevant with the historical origins of names and key concepts, and bringing together in summarized form the major findings of research on religious and mythological questions. Nor is the editor insensitive to literary questions, as appears, for example, in his discussion of the structure of *Gylfaginning* on p. 454, and in his commentary on the story of Baldr's death, pp. 553–80. It is, however, noteworthy that, in discussing Snorri's life in the introduction, Lorenz (pp. 7–8) differs from Preben Meulengracht Sørensen (see the latter's *Saga og samfund*, 1977, p. 150) in attaching no particular importance, for the subsequent development of Icelandic saga literature, to Snorri's move from Oddi to Borgarfjörður at the turn of the twelfth to the thirteenth century, and it is true that the prose *Edda*'s relationship to other forms of Old Icelandic prose literature is not, in general, a preoccupation of this edition. Lorenz does not appear to have used Meulengracht Sørensen's book, which is perhaps more surprising than some of the other omissions from his bibliography, since his work on the edition was apparently completed in 1980 (see p. ix). His discussion (pp. 9–12) of how far, if at all, Snorri believed in the gods he was describing could profitably have taken account of Kurt Schier's article ('Zur Mythologie der Snorra *Edda*; einige Quellenprobleme') in *Speculum norroenum: Norse studies in memory of Gabriel Turville-Petre*, ed. Ursula Dronke et al., 1981, pp. 405–20, which stresses the reactive emphasis on paganism in certain of Snorri's sources dating from the early days of Scandinavian Christianity. It is interesting in the present context to learn of Wilken's description, referred to by Lorenz on p. 15, of the prose *Edda* as encyclopædic, since it appears to anticipate the view advanced by Margaret Clunies Ross in the final chapter of her book, reviewed below. Lorenz seems to suggest, though with some hesitation, to judge from his footnote (no. 188) on pp. 36–37, that a view of the Æsir which

separates them into two distinct groups—the human *Æsir* who relate the myths to Gylfi, and the divine ones who figure in the myths—does not allow them to be interpreted euhemeristically, a suggestion which seems at variance with Anthony Faulkes's treatment of the subject in, among other places, his article ('Pagan sympathy: attitudes to heathendom in the prologue to *Snorra Edda*') in Robert J. Glendinning and Haraldur Bessason, eds., *Edda: a collection of essays* (1983), pp. 283–314, see pp. 301–5. Lorenz seems to leave room for further discussion and clarification, not only of the term euhemerism, but also of the similarities and differences between the *Æsir* of the framing story and those of the myths. It is possible that a narratological approach of the kind I have attempted (in 'The treatment of the supernatural in saga-narrative', *Proceedings of the Seventh Biennial Conference of Teachers of Scandinavian Studies in Great Britain and Northern Ireland*, ed. R.D.S. Allan and M.P. Barnes, 1987, pp. 191–206) might prove helpful here; cf. also Margaret Clunies Ross's paper ('Voice and voices in Eddaic poetry') in *The Seventh International Saga Conference, Spoleto, 4–10 September, 1988. Poetry in the Scandinavian Middle Ages. Preprints* (1988), pp. 43–53. Lorenz inevitably refers in this connection to Baetke, Beyschlag and Breiteig, among others, and attaches considerable importance, in the introduction as well as in the commentary, to Anne Holtsmark's *Studier i Snorres mytologi* (1964; reviewed in *Saga-Book* 16, 1965, pp. 372–74), fastening in particular on Holtsmark's view that Snorri presents Old Norse mythology, through Gylfi's informants, as a point-by-point perversion of biblical truth, so that, by an 'association through contrast' (see Lorenz, p. 88) of paganism with Christianity, skalds may be convinced of the essentially pagan nature of the material from which so much of their imagery derives. Thus Gylfi's three interlocutors, Hár, Jafnhár, and Þriði, reflect the Trinity (see p. 82), the viceroys of Óðinn with their twelve thrones reflect the twelve apostles (p. 213), and so on. This view of Holtsmark's may itself be compared and contrasted with Robert Graves's view of the works of Sir Thomas Malory (see Robert Graves, *The crowning privilege*, 1959, pp. 235–41). A different view altogether is represented by Georges Dumézil, to whose work Lorenz gives particular prominence in commenting on the chapters dealing with the gods individually (from no. 20 onwards). Dumézil's high, if qualified, respect for the prose *Edda* as a source for ancient Indo-European religion and his classification of Old Norse gods (among others) in terms of what he sees as the tripartite structure of Indo-European society, have been called into question by R.I. Page ('Dumézil revisited', *Saga-Book* 20, 1978–9, pp. 49–69), in an article which Lorenz also seems to have missed (though for references to replies to Page, see now Desmond Slay in *Saga-Book* 22, 1987, p. 141).

Misprints are infuriatingly frequent in this book, and not all its bibliographical omissions have the excuse that the works in question have appeared since just before 1980. To take a few examples, Edgar C. Polomé's article ('Some comments on *Vþlusþá*, stanzas 17–18') in the symposium edited by him (*Old Norse literature and mythology*, 1969, pp. 265–90) is relevant to the discussion of the word *lá* on p. 170, where it could usefully

have been mentioned; some reference to Haugen's criticisms of Dumézil ('The mythological structure of the ancient Scandinavians: some thoughts on reading Dumézil') in *To honor Roman Jakobson II (Janua linguarum, series maior 32, 1967)*, pp. 855–68, would have been welcome and appropriate in the discussion of Óðinn and Týr on p. 351; and John Stanley Martin's *Ragnarök: an investigation into Old Norse concepts of the fate of the gods* (1972) perhaps deserved a mention somewhere in the commentary on chapters 49–54. Fortunately, however, Lorenz's bibliography can now be supplemented and to a large extent updated by John Lindow's admirable *Scandinavian mythology: an annotated bibliography* (1988), though it should be noted that the latter bibliography does not reach with confidence of thorough coverage beyond 1982. Certain of Lorenz's omissions seem, in any case, wise enough. I mean no disrespect to Axel Olrik's various writings on the laws of oral narrative (cf. my article "Cynewulf and Cyneheard" and the Icelandic sagas', *Leeds studies in English*, new series 12, 1981, pp. 81–127, esp. p. 101; and Carol J. Clover, *The medieval saga*, 1982, p. 61, n. 1) when I say that, in investigating an instance of the number three, for example, in a medieval text, there is a danger of hastening to explain it in terms of the 'law of threes' characteristic of oral narrative without considering other possibilities, such as those I have indicated here in connection with Holtsmark and Dumézil; and it is to Lorenz's credit that in this sort of case he has not needed to resort to those particular writings of Olrik, and only occasionally refers—in connection with the binding of Fenrir, the hammering of Skýrmið and the capturing of Loki (pp. 426, 532, 588)—to what he calls the "Dreischritt" des Märchens'. Even more commendable is his refusal to fall back on M.I. Stablin-Kamenskij's notion, derived from Lévy-Bruhl, of 'primitive thought' (see Stablin-Kamensky's *Myth*, 1982, p. 39; cf. p. 47), in seeking to make sense of Old Norse mythological geography. On the other hand, there is no doubt that he could have benefited from a reading of Eleazar Meletinskij's article on 'Scandinavian mythology as a system' (*The journal of symbolic anthropology*, 1–2, 1973–4, pp. 43–58, 57–78), in trying to choose between a 'vertical' and a 'horizontal' view of the physical position of the earth in relation to Niflheimr and Muspell, as he does on p. 116.

While I have occasionally wished that the editor had been freer with his own conclusions than with those of other scholars, I have found this a fascinating book: a mine of information and an unfailing source of stimulus. As one (of two) who wishes to argue that the Old Norse word *beinlauss*, which it has been suggested means 'legless' rather than 'boneless' (Nora K. Chadwick, 'The monsters and Beowulf', in *The Anglo-Saxons*, ed. Peter Clemoes, 1959, pp. 186–7), was applied as a nickname to a Viking because of his reputed ability to battle with the wind by taking on certain of its characteristics, I have found the idea of the eight-legged horse Sleipnir as a wind-figure (referred to by Lorenz on p. 239; cf. also pp. 143 and 501) a little disorientating. I have also had to recognize, however, that in testing the validity of the proposed argument it can only be an advantage to be aware of this idea, which is typical of the kind of information supplied by Lorenz on almost every page of his commentary.

Anthony Faulkes's translation is a pioneer work; the first English translation of the entire prose *Edda* (cf. Donald K. Fry, *Norse sagas translated into English: a bibliography*, 1980, pp. 12–14). In reviewing it as a translation I shall concentrate on *Háttatal*, the part of the *Edda* in which Faulkes, as a translator, breaks newest ground. First, however, I would point out that, for the Prologue, *Gylfaginning* and *Skáldskaparmál*, Faulkes's chapter-numbering, given at the top of each page, follows that of the old Arnamagnæan edition (*Edda Snorra Sturlusonar I*, 1848) rather than that of Finnur Jónsson (*Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*, 1931), the one to which Margaret Clunies Ross mainly refers in her book reviewed below; this should be noted by, among others, those who wish to use Faulkes's translation in conjunction with her book. For *Háttatal*, Faulkes gives the numbers of the verses at the top of each page. I would also refer to the only other review of the translation I have seen at the time of writing: Diana Whaley's in *Scandinavica* 27 (1988), pp. 86–8.

If I have been more attentive to details of translation in *Háttatal* than elsewhere, this is doubtless because Faulkes, recognizing that in *Háttatal* the wording and spelling of the verses are particularly important for Snorri's argument, here precedes his prose translation of each verse-passage with the text of the verse in the original, printed with certain spelling modifications (explained on p. xviii) to which the specialist's eye soon becomes accustomed and which will not bother the non-specialist at all. The prose translations of verse-passages are here indented, as they also are in *Gylfaginning* and *Skáldskaparmál*, where, however, they are not accompanied by quotations from the original. In *Háttatal*, then, where instant comparison with the original is possible, I have noticed a slight tendency on the translator's part towards the singular where the original seems to require the plural, for example 'prince's' for *buðlunga* on pp. 176–7 (perhaps a typing or a printing error?); 'ice' for *lsa* on p. 201 (I admit that 'ices' would not be a satisfactory alternative, but 'ice-blades' might); and 'world' for *heimar* on p. 218. The tendency is in this direction rather than the other way round, and it would be unfair to take 'stay-at-homes' (for the accusative *heimdrega*) on p. 219, where the original could be either singular or plural, as an example of inaccuracy. It is arguable, however, that the singular would be preferable in this case, so that the parallelism of *heimdrega* with *auðspörud* (acc. sg. m.) in the verse in question (no. 98) could be recognized not only as syntactical and metrical, but also as fully grammatical. I have also noticed in the translator a slight weakness for the present tense where the original has the past; for example, 'gets rid of' for *hrauð* (past tense of *hrjóða*) on p. 189, and 'makes virtues evident' for *manndýrðir vann skýrðar* on p. 192. Only once, on the other hand, have I caught him erring in the opposite direction, in the case of 'was able to receive' for *piggja kná* on p. 216. On p. 204 there is an awkward use of the passive ('be run over by') where there seems no objection to reproducing in the translation the active voice of the original (*rendi* past tense of the weak transitive verb *renna*). There are also, finally, one or two cases of ambiguity, notably on p. 185, where the phrase 'most valuable treasures' leaves doubt as to whether 'most' is being used as an adverb qualifying

'valuable' or as an adjective qualifying 'treasures' (the former alternative is actually nearer the mark than the latter, as 'most' is here translating the first element in the compound adjective *margdýrar*, the meaning of which is in all probability 'excellent in many—or all—respects'); and on p. 193, where the positioning of the phrase 'being offered', translating the adjective *falr*, makes it uncertain to what precisely the phrase refers (it refers in fact to the gold designated by the kenning *Fenju ... meldr*, 'Fenja's meal').

If these are weaknesses in the translation, they are very minor ones and it could even be argued that they have a certain advantage in compelling the reader who knows or is learning Old Icelandic to look closely at the original. The same advantage might also be claimed for Faulkes's not wholly consistent treatment of the more technical of Snorri's terms, some of which he simply translates without reference to the original, others of which he gives in their original as well as their translated forms—witness his Index, on p. 252, of the Icelandic forms of the specifically metrical terms used in *Háttatal*. However, while I admit that there are difficulties about quoting the original in a translation (as the more one does so, the less point there seems to be in the translation) and also about what precisely constitutes a technical term, I tend to agree with Diana Whaley (as referred to above) that it would have been helpful to have more terms that might be so described quoted as well as translated in Faulkes's text, not only in cases where the translations are potentially controversial (as with 'allegory' for *nýgervingar*, see pp. 124, 153, 167, 170), but also where the same, or nearly the same, term in English is used to translate different terms in Icelandic, as with 'proverbial statements' and 'proverb-form', which on pp. 176 and 183 are used to translate, respectively, *forn minni* and *orðskviðuháttir*, only the latter of which is reproduced in the text and the Index. Faulkes does not provide a commentary as such, but his Annotated Index of Names (pp. 221–51) is particularly informative on the various poets referred to in *Skáldskaparmál*, as well as being admirably concise. In his Introduction (pp. vii–xix), itself a model of much said in a short space, Faulkes takes more account than Lorenz does of the prose *Edda*'s relationship to contemporary forms of Old Icelandic literature, and discusses its four parts in reverse order (i.e. *Háttatal*, *Skáldskaparmál*, *Gylfaginning* and the Prologue), implying (though by no means insisting) that that was the order in which they were composed. Clunies Ross, on the other hand (see p. 138 of her book, reviewed here), inclines if anything to the view that *Skáldskaparmál* was composed after *Gylfaginning*. Also in his Introduction, Faulkes repeats from his article ('Edda') in *Gripla* 2 (1977), pp. 32–9 (though apparently without referring to it), his view that the word *edda* derives from the Latin verb *edo*, meaning, among other things, 'I compose'. Here at last is the opportunity, for readers of English, of speedy, relaxed and, it may be added, inexpensive access to the entire prose *Edda*; the paperback edition at present costs £4.95. Faulkes's translation is obviously greatly to be welcomed.

Margaret Clunies Ross's argument, as I have understood it, is as follows. On the whole, Snorri does not approve of metaphor and does not regard the metaphorical character of the kenning as its primary distinguishing

feature (Clunies Ross, p. 44). His preference is for the non-oppositional type of kenning (cf. pp. 67–68, 98, 108), in which the base-word, determinant and referent do not contradict each other in sense. Linked with this preference is his rating (in *Háttatal*) of *nýgervingar* as superior to *nykrat* (p. 76); both, it is true, are types of extended metaphor, but the former is in his view preferable to the latter with its semantically consistent use of metaphorical images. On the other hand, not only are many of Snorri's examples of kennings apparently metaphorical, but in saying (as quoted on pp. 39 and 43) that the way to produce a kenning for one god is to call him by another god's name and to designate him by his own deeds, or possessions, or kin—as in the case of *hang-a-Týr* ('hanged men's Týr') as a kenning for Óðinn—Snorri seems to be suggesting that metaphor is a defining characteristic of this type of kenning at least (unless he means that in such a case *Týr* is functioning as a common noun meaning 'god', a possibility considered on pp. 99–102). Clunies Ross suggests two main reasons for this apparent inconsistency on Snorri's part. One is that Snorri has been led to include a number of metaphorical kennings among his examples by his view that such kennings often resulted from the use of homonyms as base-words in kennings, since a word replacing a homonym as a base-word would in some cases share, of the homonym's two meanings, only the one which was in all probability not originally intended, but had come to be understood as metaphorical. Thus *reynir*, meaning both 'one who tries' and 'rowan-tree', gave rise to the use of many different words meaning 'tree' as base-words in kennings for men and women (Clunies Ross's remarks on this subject, and her footnote on p. 109, should now be seen in relation to Carlo Alberto Mastrelli's article, 'Reflections of Germanic cosmogony in the "kenningar" for "man/woman"', in the Spoleto volume referred to above, pp. 241–50). The other reason is that Snorri was sufficiently secure in his own Christianity to accord a measure of respect to pre-Christian Scandinavian mythology and hence to advocate the use of poetic expressions which in terms of that mythology, as he understood it, were literally true, but which a twentieth-century reader cannot fail to regard as metaphorical. This was in line with his belief—which is at its most explicit in the Prologue to the prose *Edda* and which, as Clunies Ross agrees with Ursula and Peter Dronke, probably derived from twelfth-century humanism ('The prologue of the Prose Edda: explorations of a Latin background', *Sjöttu ritgerðir helgaðar Jakobi Benediktssyni*, ed. Einar G. Pétursson and Jónas Kristjánsson, 1977, pp. 153–76)—that post-lapsarian, pre-Christian man, as exemplified by the human Æsir who according to the Prologue came to Scandinavia from Troy, took an animistic, personifying view of the universe which partly anticipated the Christian idea of a personal god. Thus Snorri with his preference for non-oppositional kennings was not disturbed by cases of poets applying to inanimate beings or abstractions kennings that could be interpreted in terms of animate beings with proper names; and he shows, indeed, as Clunies Ross demonstrates (pp. 80–150), an especial fondness for this 'animate principle' of interpretation throughout his discussion of kennings in *Skáldskaparmál*, for all that the structure of that discussion, as Clunies Ross also argues, implies a distinction between the animate and the inanimate

among the beings to which kennings may refer. According to this distinction, the animate group includes not only gods and human beings, but also poetry (understood, through the myth of Kvasir, as deriving from the body-fluids of deities and thus of animate origin) and natural phenomena (which kennings often present as members of mythological families, as in the case of *Ægis dætr*, 'Ægir's daughters', for 'waves'); while the inanimate group, for which Snorri takes gold as especially representative, also includes battle, weapons, armour and ships. So fond is Snorri, however, of kennings which describe members of both groups in terms of the body parts, kin, or possessions of gods, that the gods themselves, for whom Snorri's examples of kennings are in fact most often non-oppositional (see p. 98), are in danger of being excluded altogether from the 'animate principle' as Snorri tends to apply it, since how can they, being gods with names, be referred to in its terms? The answer is, by the names of other gods; and this explains the use of Týr's name in the kenning for Óðinn referred to above. According to Clunies Ross (pp. 138–50), Snorri draws attention to his animate/inanimate distinction by, among other things, the chapter in which he answers the question of why gold is called Ægir's fire, and she finds it significant in this connection that in that chapter Snorri re-activates *Skáldskaparmál*'s framing narrative about Ægir and the Æsir, which is by no means as consistently maintained as the framing narrative about Gylfi and the Æsir in *Gylfaginning*. She also argues for an identification of the *lysigull* (the 'shining gold' used by Ægir in that chapter to illuminate his hall), as a chrysoprase rather than a carbuncle. Finally, in a chapter which has appeared before as one of the *Workshop papers* (I, Copenhagen, 1985, pp. 177–206) of the Sixth International Saga Conference, held in Helsingør, 1985, Clunies Ross argues (pp. 151–73) for the formative influence of the medieval encyclopædia on Snorri's *Edda*. Other aspects of her book are discussed by Sverrir Tómasson in his review in *Skírnir* 162 (1988), pp. 183–4.

Although Lorenz and Clunies Ross are dealing with different parts of the prose *Edda* and approaching it from different angles, they both seem to want to tidy up as far as possible the 'inconsistencies and illogicalities' which, as Faulkes notes in his Introduction (p. xv), the work undoubtedly has. Faulkes's own tendency, on the other hand—which is partly reflected in the fact that he gives no commentary—is simply to let these features of the prose *Edda* be recognized for what they are. A question hardly touched on by any of the three (though Lorenz, p. 20, and Clunies Ross, p. 13, with their references to Yngve Ågren's article, 'Virrighetens apoteos', *Edda* 61, 1961, pp. 13–38, come near to raising it) is how far, if at all, these inconsistencies were part of Snorri's intention, a question which future studies of the prose *Edda* might pursue. Here it might be instructive to compare the prose *Edda* with Chaucer's *Canterbury tales*, a work which it resembles in having an unfinished, imperfectly structured quality that is especially apparent in its inconsistent handling of a framing narrative. In his *The world and the book* (1971), pp. 52–99, Gabriel Josipovici has suggested that Chaucer intended the not infrequent inappropriateness of tale to teller in the *Canterbury tales* to raise questions about the nature of the relationship between literature and

reality; while Donald R. Howard, in his *The idea of the Canterbury tales* (1976, see esp. pp. 159–73), has argued that Chaucer intended the imperfect structure of his work to reflect the imperfect nature of the fallen world about which he was writing. Whether or not Snorri had any such intentions, it is true that the prose *Edda*, like the *Canterbury tales*, is, among other things, an examination of certain forms of medieval literature, and that the opening lines of Snorri's Prologue (as opposed to Chaucer's) bear witness to a preoccupation with the fallen nature of man. As well as being of great general value to students of the prose *Edda*, the three books under review may help to decide whether this comparison is worth pursuing and, if it is pursued, to ensure that it is not carried out irresponsibly.

RORY MCTURK

STRUCTURE AND MEANING IN OLD NORSE LITERATURE: NEW APPROACHES TO TEXTUAL ANALYSIS AND LITERARY CRITICISM. Edited by JOHN LINDOW, LARS LÖNNROTH and GERD WOLFGANG WEBER. *The Viking collection. Studies in Northern civilization, volume 3*. Odense University Press. Odense, 1986. 454 pp.

In recent years a disarmingly simple set of literary-critical propositions and perceptions, for the most part newly focused rather than newly formed, has led to significant advances in understanding of medieval romance, ballad and fairy tale. These propositions include the idea that story exists independent of any fixed form of verbal realisation; that there is an identifiable grammar of traditional story, with its own deep structures and predictable patterns of surface realisation; and that the contemplation of that grammar and those transformations need not result in banal reductionism, but can serve strikingly to illuminate the processes of displacement, rationalisation and realignment which occur as myth moves towards mimesis, as emergent neoclassicism and new science scowl disapprovingly at the traditional world of 'fayerye', and as *Cinderella* makes haste to turn into *King Lear* and *Mansfield Park* before midnight strikes.

Old Icelandic poetry and prose have long seemed likely to yield worthwhile insights to scholars engaged by the related complexities of deep pattern and surface realisation in narrative, notwithstanding the attention-seeking asperity of tone in which it was thought appropriate to couch some critical responses to pioneering efforts in this area. Worthwhile insights there certainly are in many of the seventeen essays in the volume under review, with its three sections devoted to Old Norse poetry and mythology, family sagas, and Old Norse translations of saints' lives, romances and related genres.

Much modern literary theory derives from linguistic models and it is therefore proper that the volume should include at the outset two essays which deal not with scene and story, but with word and phrase: more particularly, which address the point at which the formal characteristics of traditional word- and phrase-stock are compromised by the independent

creative ambition of the self-conscious literary artist. Eleazar Meletinsky examines the process of 'defolklorization', especially marked in the diction of heroic rather than mythological Eddic verse, whereby stereotypical word groups are distorted by the disruption of parallelisms and the emergence of elegant variation. In its English translation, the essay, fully and interestingly documented, appears densely urged to a fault—perhaps the English translation of the author's booklength treatment of similar issues will allow his observations a rather less constricted analytic framework. There are no such problems with Elena Gurevič's revealing discussion of the formulaic pair in Eddic verse, in particular its transformation into a compositional device. A striking contrast is drawn between, on the one hand, opposed formulaic systems, limited in number and fixed in form, which embody a similarly unchanging and primeval conceptual framework, and, on the other hand, complementary pairs, unstable and productive in form and potentially limitless in number, which in turn reflect a more dynamic and fluid sense of life as process rather than as fixture.

The world-view embodied within another central feature of Old Norse poetic diction is treated in Roberta Frank's subtle analysis of the weapon-kennings of Eilifr Goðrúnarson's *Pórsdrápa*. Onto the coexistent and timeless cosmological, anthropomorphic, mineralogical and agrarian implications of the Pórr/Geirrøðr confrontation, the poet may well have sought to graft contemporary political reference—myth becomes humanised and legitimisation is implied for the political acts and attitudes of a latter-day Pórr (Earl Hákon of Lade) in his dealings with the Geirrøðian forces from Hordaland, Rogaland and, not least, from England. Snorri Sturluson's account of the same story is given a Propcean reading in the paper by Margaret Clunies Ross and B. K. Martin and the results are predictably illuminating, both in respect of what is present and what is missing—many another prose Eddic tale would repay similar examination. The writers consider the significance attached to poetry within the wondertale format of the story as told by Snorri: embedded Eddic verse, perceived as the direct utterance of Pórr, reveals the divine potency of jaggedly artful language to control or at least influence the hostile world of giants; whilst accompanying skaldic verse, the verbal art of man, may be seen by analogy and association as endorsing the role of the human poet as articulate truth-teller. There has perhaps been too eager a willingness to discern in medieval narrative generally a self-reflexive concern on the part of the literary artist with the processes of literary creation—born no doubt of an age in which most television drama is about the agony of being a television dramatist. Raising such questions in relation to so practical a man of letters as Snorri needs no apology, however.

Whilst the articles by Roberta Frank and by Margaret Clunies Ross and B. K. Martin each treat a single and different version of one story, Lars Lönnroth's well-organised and persuasive paper addresses three different realisations of the same narrative material, the death of King Dómaldi. The paper seeks to trace a generic transition from riddling *senna* through nature myth (there is a fascinating discussion of *Ynglinga saga*, chapter 14) and on to

Christian exemplary narrative, as the King becomes in succession a figure of ridicule, a mythic figure whose death is the means of life, and a cautionary figure destroyed by the paganism of his people. The reader is assured, mercifully at the end of the paper, that such diversity of implication renders the texts 'ideal objects of poststructuralist "deconstruction"'. Ritual obeisance to the sacral and frequently obfuscatory metalanguage of the New Criticism is a sporadic feature of several essays in this collection: here a syntagm, there an intertextual layer, and everywhere a discourse, though we are at least spared the self-parodic spectre of writers agonising about the openness of their closures. There will be many whose enthusiastic engagement with the ideas in this volume is achieved in spite of rather than because of these unlovely, unnecessary and inevitably marginalising locutions, the critical *lingua franca* of the small world of Morris Zapp.

There is considerable diversity of approach in the volume's second section, devoted to family sagas. Joseph Harris, in a lively and wide-ranging piece, finds several telling parallels between the historicism of *pátr* and saga and that of, for example, 'the author of *Waverley*'. These include ambiguity of attitude towards the periods of historical transition; the idea that the past may serve to explain the present rather than merely acting as its mirror image; and the idea that the private may distil the public, acting metonymically, as it were—as perhaps with Sigmundr Brestisson and Edward Waverley, for instance. Kirsten Hastrup examines the tradition of popular responses to the eponymous hero of *Grettis saga*—Grettir as outlaw, as exorcist, as jester, as displaced Pórr-figure, Auden's 'doomed tough' kept witty by disaster. Over the centuries Grettir's popularity was protected by reinterpretation, as medieval *útilegumaðr* grew into sixteenth-century *vár samlandi* and modern *bjargvættur*, whilst, one might add, a starving tallow-chewing resident of early nineteenth-century Reykjavík could be forgiven for believing that the key to permanent sources of sustenance might lie in tracking down the teeming acres of Pórísdalur rather than ploughing through the earnest pages of Magnús Stephensen's enlightened musings on agrarian improvement. The status of Grettir's fateful opponent Glámr is considered by John Lindow in a paper which attempts to account for the apparent verisimilitude of the supernatural in Icelandic saga narrative in terms other than the linguistic indications as to whether something 'was', 'was seen', 'was said to be seen', 'was thought to be said to be seen' and so on. As in several other papers in the collection, Lindow finds assistance in deep narrative structure—in this case the archetypal constituent elements, identified by folklorists, of encounters with the supernatural. Such encounters in saga follow the contours of the folkloristic pattern quite closely and, by so doing, Lindow argues, achieve credibility by association. The analysis of *Porsteins pátr skelks* is intriguing: the identified pattern and the undertow of its suggested influence seems less compelling. There is no doubting the pattern identified in Joaquín Martínez Pizarro's discussion of the repeated meal scenes in *Heiðarvíga saga* and, for once, pattern is very much surface structure, a literary convenience, an organising formula with no subliminal *sentence*. The parallel is perhaps with Gurevič's account of the compositional value of formulaic pairs. Pattern,

too, finds a place in Preben Meulengracht Sørensen's reading of Þorgrímur's murder in *Gísla saga*. Making full use of both redactions of the saga, and accepting the case of M as a truncated, ideologically simpler and later form of S, the author argues that the narrative priorities of the saga are dictated by a central conceptual pattern—the theme of kinship conflict played out amidst the claustrophobic cluster of siblings, spouses and in-laws assembled during that turbulent winter in Haukadalur, as the competing strengths of the bonds of sworn brotherhood are tested against those of relationship by marriage. Gestr's prophecy of dissension and doom was not misty-eyed fatalism—it was rather a clear-sighted recognition of the inherent and explosive tensions and irreconcilabilities within such kinship systems. Sørensen offers an ingenious reading of the 'cold hand on the breast' motif in the murder scene. It is not to be explained in terms of Gísli's sexual jealousy, still less in terms of some sublimated incest element—it should be seen instead as a symbolic dissolution of the sexual privileges earlier granted to Þorgrímur by marriage. Gísli's cold hand deliberately creates a situation in which Þorgrímur, no longer acceptable to Gísli as a brother-in-law, seeks to claim the sexual privileges which, in Gísli's eyes, he has now forfeited. He has become an illicit lover and is dealt with by Gísli accordingly. At the very least the reader is made to feel the leaden-footedness of his or her initial scepticism at such an explanation.

The final section of the volume, on Old Norse translations, ranges from saints' lives to *riddarasögur* and *fornaldarsögur*. In recent medieval scholarship, devotees of feminist approaches to criticism have been much drawn to the works of the medieval women mystics, along with works which offer variations on the image of 'patient Griselda', sacred and secular. The results of these re-examinations of often neglected works have, for some readers, exhibited a degree of monochrome predictability as the ideologically converted are preached to in an increasingly private language. Birte Carlé's essay on saints' sagas is made, for the most part, of sterner stuff. There are two parallel themes, neither of them oppressively insisted upon: first, that by asserting their femininity [sic] holy women offended the 'socio-sexual' system underpinning these man-made texts; second, that holy men were variously defined in terms of their place and comportment within social and spiritual hierarchies. The kinds of stereotypical patterns discerned in relation to holy women represent in a sense the sacred equivalents to the Brynhildr typology identified by Heinrichs. T. M. Andersson argues convincingly for a late twelfth-century German source for *Piðreks saga*, and finds an organising thematic shape—the rise and fall of a great society—which recalls the span of the Arthurian cycle. The absence of a widespread Arthurian cult in medieval Scandinavia is explained by Hermann Reichert in terms of the failure of Scandinavian kings after Sigurðr Jórsalafari to participate in the crusades, where they would most readily have come into contact with the latest Arthurian fads and fancies. It was, however, perhaps just as well that Arthurian-style jousting was not *de rigueur* in the court of King Hákon Hákonarson: after an eight day drinking spree at his coronation, it is not clear that any of the potential jousters would have been able to keep a straight

lance. Sverrir Tómasson produces an important variant on a familiar theme within the volume with his analysis of the effects on a reading of *Adonias saga* of a clerical preface (extant in only a single manuscript) which seems to invest an apparently non-politicised story of diversion and entertainment with a didactic element, censuring the concentrations and abuses of power within the late medieval Icelandic community. The implication of the final (lengthy and complex) paper, by Gerd Wolfgang Weber, is that such politicisation of Icelandic romance, either by its appearing to legitimise or question existing modes of authority, or perhaps by its expressing the aspirations of upward mobility in order either to encourage or neutralise them, is likely to be very much the exception rather than the rule. Certainly the spiritual values of inherited romance sources rarely survive unscathed in the hands of the Norse translators. Uncomfortable with the ingrained symbolism of the grail stories, for example, translators tended relentlessly to de-mythologise the material in order to re-mythologise it in a more familiar (to them) frame of reference—Perceval thus becomes a *kolbitr* figure within the realm of picaresque wondertale. The gravitational pull of native figure and form proved hard to resist. By the end of this third section one was left with a feeling of some surprise that the obvious, to this reviewer, applicability to medieval Icelandic romance of the approach of Bruno Bettelheim, *The uses of enchantment* (1976), perhaps as filtered through Derek Brewer's stimulating *Symbolic stories* (1980) remains unexploited—notably the notion that apparently autonomous characters can, within the underlying logic of a story, function merely as 'splits' of a troubled central protagonist. The insights from such an approach need not be confined to tracing the psychological *rites de passage* of an individual—communities within sagas often seem to function very similarly.

A few generally trivial inconsistencies of name citation, eccentricities of expression and spelling slips survived the initial editorial and proofing stages of the volume—more culpably, perhaps, a handful of such errors even avoided detection in the preparation of the subsequent *errata* slip. Yet the lasting impression of this enterprising collection of essays is of much lively thought, broad horizons and learned ingenuity. Some readers may feel that its spirit represents a welcome critical antidote to the familiar and easy sagacities of world-weary scepticism.

ANDREW WAHN

OM DEN ISLÄNDSKA SLÄKTSAGANS UPPBYGGNAD. BY TOMMY DANIELSSON. *Skrifter utgivna av Litteraturvetenskapliga institutionen vid Uppsala universitet*, 22. Almqvist & Wiksell International. Stockholm, 1986. 97 pp.

This Uppsala dissertation ('On the construction of the Old Icelandic Family Saga') is a somewhat strange piece of work, and it is not easy to state

with any precision just what it is about. The author (I translate his Swedish) tells us on the first page that it 'does not present or seek to prove any thesis' and a little later (p. 23) adds that by the end of the volume he will be in no position to provide any general conclusions: only when *all* the Family Sagas have been analysed 'can the time be thought ripe for a more comprehensive argumentation.' All he is doing now is proposing 'a method' for analysis, applied for exemplary purposes to four texts: *Ljósvetninga saga*, *Hænsa-Pórís saga*, *Kjalnesinga saga* and *Vatnsdæla saga*. No reason for selecting just these, on the whole rather second-rank, works is offered, beyond the vague observation (p. 15) that they differ among themselves, *Vatnsdæla* being 'one of the most unified' of the Family Sagas, *Ljósvetninga* 'one of the least', *Hænsa-Pórís* being 'quite short' and *Kjalnesinga* 'essentially a biography'.

After this come four chapters, the heart of Dr Danielsson's study, in which these sagas are successively subjected to his 'method'. The method consists in a highly detailed unravelling of the 'strands' (*strängar*) of the plot, executed twice over: on the one hand in words and on the other hand in diagrams. The verbal analyses, extremely lengthy and, it must be said, pretty heavy going, are very different from, say, the simplified plot-summaries of T. M. Andersson's 1967 study *The Icelandic Family Saga: an analytic reading* (a work criticised by Danielsson for its Procrustean tendencies); still, they are lucidity itself when set beside the diagrammatic representations. These (which take up a very substantial share of the space, about one part diagram to two parts text) strike me as a total disaster. The names of the actors are enfolded in a complex structure of boxes, horizontal and vertical lines (sometimes broken, sometimes not), arrows (now single, now double) pointing left, right, up and down, and these baffling charts are interwoven with codes, as F F I P (I) K S, where F is *förhistoria*, 'prehistory', that which precedes I, *incitament*, the insult, killing or whatever it may be that causes trouble; P is *förförhandling*, 'negotiations', K is *konfrontation*, 'armed conflict' and S is *spänning*, 'tension'. (This is a very abbreviated example; the code-sequences are in fact too involved for reproduction here.) Technical-sounding phraseology adds a dimension of its own: a small arrow pointing downwards, for instance, symbolises *motkatalys*, 'counter-catalysis', the author's word for 'conciliatory moves', and this then generates a verb: on p. 58 Porkell silfri is *motkatalyserad* by his wife, which means that she tries to calm him down.

But what purpose does all this serve? To encapsulate a plot in the form of codes and diagrams, even if comprehensible, is not an end in itself; it only has a function if one can draw inferences from it. Each of the chapters devoted to Dr Danielsson's four sagas does indeed conclude with general remarks (fairly brief but mostly sensible enough), yet it is hard to see that these owe anything to the preceding analyses; rather, they are miscellaneous impressions derived from reading the saga itself. The final paragraph on *Ljósvetninga saga* gives the game away: it is, Dr Danielsson writes, 'in many ways unique' among the Family Sagas; 'one cannot find any text with a similar construction.' *How does he know?* For he has, as yet, analysed only four of the forty-nine sagas in this group. What he has innocently let slip is that, like

the rest of us, he *really* forms his notion of a saga's structure, not by charting horizontal and vertical lines, but intuitively, by reading it.

The last portion of this study, filling a good quarter of the work, is devoted to an analysis, on similar lines, and likewise enriched by diagrams, of eighteen *pættir* from the Kings' Sagas, describing the adventures of Icelanders in Norway during the reigns of Magnús góði and Haraldr hardráði. What has this got to do with the construction of the Family Sagas? The only explanation offered, so far as I can see, is a sentence on p. 15: 'Because of the affinity with regard to subject-matter (*överensstämmelsen vad gäller stoffet*) I have chosen to treat *Íslendingapættir* together with the Family Sagas.' What affinity? These *pættir* are of course very brief, often extending to only two or three pages of print, they are not set in Iceland, and they depict dealings between an Icelandic visitor and the Norwegian king. Indeed, Danielsson recognises this, for he goes on to classify these 'short stories' into four groups ('constellation-types') depending on what turn the dealings between visitor and king take. The relation between this discussion and the rest of the book remains obscure.

Dr Danielsson is by no means an imperceptive critic, and a number of level-headed observations about the sagas appear sporadically throughout his study. But they are made, so to speak, in the cracks and crevices of his exposition, when he can momentarily forget the dreadful machinery he has lumbered himself with.

D. A. H. EVANS

VIGA-GLUMS SAGA: WITH THE TALES OF ÓGMUND BASH AND THORVALD CHATTERBOX. Translated by JOHN MCKINNELL. *The New Saga Library. Canongate*. Edinburgh, 1987. 160 pp.

MAGNUS' SAGA: THE LIFE OF ST MAGNUS EARL OF ORKNEY 1075–1116. Translated and with an introduction by HERMANN PÁLSSON and PAUL EDWARDS. *The Perpetua Press*. Oxford, 1987. 52 pp.

KNYTLINGA SAGA: THE HISTORY OF THE KINGS OF DENMARK. Translated by HERMANN PÁLSSON and PAUL EDWARDS. *Odense University Press*. Odense, 1986. 197 pp.

Profound upheavals in university syllabuses are demanding radically new approaches to the teaching of Old Icelandic literature. Specialists in the subject, themselves becoming scarcer, are crossing traditional discipline boundaries to contribute to courses whose mainsprings are history, archaeology, mythology or comparative literature—and which are likely to be offered in translation. Even within the traditional structure of a degree in English, fewer students begin with the solid grounding in Old English assumed by old-fashioned textbooks; these students, too, may have interests more literary than philological, thanks to a change in emphasis in English studies deriving from the schools' abandonment of formal language teaching, in both English grammar and the classical languages. These developments

are not all negative. Old Norse literature, long an oddity within an English degree, can gain a wider audience; approaching it from new angles, we can overcome the restrictions set by the linguistic shortcomings of beginners and (still narrower) the availability of accessible editions. The future of Old Icelandic proper may lie in graduate study, to which students of literature in translation progress with the awareness that translations are no substitute for the real thing. This awareness must be fostered by translations preserving the greatest possible respect for the text, while serving the needs of a newly diverse readership by providing wide-ranging commentary. If the old-fashioned language class has had its day, so too has the crib. Even to students following traditional courses, encouraged to read widely in the literature, such translations must be a boon, and certainly more morale-boosting than the available editions. It must be remembered that a translation with reasonably full introduction may be the only source of critical commentary available to an English-speaking undergraduate. The general reader's interest in Norse literature and its links with the European heritage is also best fostered by translations that are not only readable but explanatory.

Those convinced by these arguments will welcome the translations reviewed here, and applaud the contribution to them all of Hermann Pálsson, as translator and as editor of the regenerated New Saga Library. John McKinnell's version of *Víga-Glúms saga* in this series is particularly admirable, setting the saga in the context of its time and genre, and keeping a consciousness of the original constantly but not oppressively in the reader's mind. The footnotes are lavish, giving the detail of manuscript variations and obscurities, and explanation of necessary departures from the text, which we are entitled to expect from a translator but seldom get. This spaciousness prompts appreciation of the verbal play essential to this saga in particular. The boundaries of the individual text are transcended by cross-reference to other sagas and explanations of the connotations of such familiar saga details as the wearing of *blár* clothes. The unusually full introduction also enriches understanding of the whole genre through an illuminating account of the functions of genealogy, law and skaldic verse in saga narrative. In case the concern expressed here for the interests of the monolingual reader seems parochial, it should be added that there is also a lucid discussion of relevant criticism, referring to Scandinavian scholarship and even to a French translation of the saga. The price of such excellence is a touch of pedantry in the translation—a fault perhaps inherent in the translator's scrupulousness. Formality collides with colloquialism in the description of someone said to be 'a good chap and of great worth' (p. 45), and the retention of the narrative present on p. 62—but not elsewhere—seems arbitrary. The rendering of the verses is disappointing. McKinnell aims to emphasize the images, which 'only stand out clearly in the order in which the poet has placed them. I have therefore tried to retain this order as far as possible, even at the cost of a loss of brevity' (p. 27). But it is retained at the cost of sense, which McKinnell tries to re-impose through repetition—hence a slackness, aggravated by the failure to represent metre or alliteration. This nullifies the verse's impact even where its sense is not obscured. But translating skaldic verse is always

an exercise in loss-cutting, and which elements are most expendable is a question of taste. Other apparatus includes the usual maps and genealogies, the New Saga Library's traditional list of characters in family groups—less useful than the conventional index of names with page references—and a guide to translations of Icelandic texts into English (or failing that, German), in which Anthony Faulkes's translation of *Snorra Edda*, published in the same year (and reviewed above, pp. 290–7), should have been included. All in all, this is a model for translators—and for publishers, who are not always as accommodating of detailed introductions and notes as the New Saga Library has been.

The other translations under review are of sagas not previously available in English, and will perhaps be particularly welcome as northern contributions to the saint's life genre. A general account of the northern breed of saints is somewhat anecdotally presented in the introduction to *Magnus' saga*. More substantial information is banished to an apologetic note on 'Texts and sources' at the end of the book—misguidedly, since it is helpful to read this before encountering the extensive quotation from *Orkneyinga saga* and *Magnúss saga lengri* in the introduction. The vague references to 'the realistic tradition of the sagas' (p. 10), 'the best traditions of the great sagas' (p. 18), are of little help in suggesting what is specifically northern about these saints' lives, nor is it explained how they come to be found only in Icelandic texts. The translation is handsomely presented in large type and embellished with woodcuts, though the binding is rather rickety.

Civic pride as well as piety has prompted the same translators' *Knytlinga saga*, produced by the City of Odense to mark the 900th anniversary of the death of St Knút, whose life forms the centrepiece of the saga. It must be of interest to historians and hagiographers, as well as students of Icelandic literature who tend to neglect the Danish point of view. But again, where it is more needed, they are given less support than John McKinnell offers. The brief introduction proposes the triptych as structural model to account for the centrality of St Knút, but tails off into summary of the anti-climactic though increasingly complex politics of the latter part of the saga. There is virtually no textual commentary, and closer examination of the saga's relationship to *Heimskringla*, frequently referred to in the text itself, would be welcome. The only two footnotes provided in a long saga are by no means vital to comprehension, while such obscurities as 'arrow-summons' (p. 79), 'court-earl' (p. 111) and 'the Padreim games' (p. 121) go unexplained. So do more crucial issues such as the 'ancient law' determining succession to the throne. Such scanty commentary is not unusual in saga translations, but is perhaps least acceptable in a work of such historical emphasis. The translation itself is fluent and readable, though, with only occasional lapses into bathos: 'It's a bad habit you've picked up,' comments Knut, primly, on Blood-Egil's plundering propensities (p. 65); 'I am that,' affirms Earl Ulf (p. 32), perhaps adopting the appropriate idiom for addressing a Northumbrian. The verses, too, are sharp and comprehensible. Having gone to the trouble of preserving alliteration (though the *stef* wanders erratically up and down its

line) and metre—including variations such as Arnórr's *Hrynhenda*—it is a pity that the translators did not include an account of these techniques, along with a note on diction which would elucidate mysteries such as 'the wolf's jaw knows it well' (p. 36). The omission of any consideration of the status of the verses as sources is more serious. The only other fault in a pleasingly presented volume is an irritating sprinkling of misprints.

ALISON FINLAY

**KNUDS-BOGEN 1986. STUDIER OVER KNUD DEN HELLIGE.** Edited by TORE NYBERG, HANS BEKKER-NIELSEN and NIELS OXENVAD. *Fynske studier XV. Odense Bys Museer. Odense*, 1986. 191 pp.

This handsome volume is a festschrift to the last Danish Viking ruler Knud, king and martyr, who met his bloody end in 1086 in the Odense church of St Alban at the hands of his own subjects, in a revolt following the last Danish attempt to conquer England: effectively the end of the Viking Age there, but also, with his canonization soon afterwards, heralding the beginning of the Middle Ages. In twelve articles, thirteen scholars drawn from the fields of history (the chronicler Ælnoth here making a fourteenth), philology, art history, archaeology and anthropology examine various aspects of Knud in his lifetime and in posterity, such as his role in contemporary and later politics, the growth of his legend in literature, ballads and iconography, and the popularity and influence of his cult throughout Denmark. The work is splendidly produced and copiously illustrated and is furnished with an extensive bibliography. Not only does it contain much of interest on its unfortunate, but influential subject, but it would also make a most graceful addition to any academic coffee table.

KIRSTEN WILLIAMS

**THE CHRISTIANIZATION OF SCANDINAVIA. REPORT OF A SYMPOSIUM HELD AT KUNGÄLV, SWEDEN 4–9 AUGUST 1985.** Edited by BIRGIT SAWYER, PETER SAWYER and IAN WOOD. *Viktoria Bokförlag. Alingsås*, 1987. xiv + 130 pp.

The editors lament the absence from the symposium of specialists in runology, place- and personal-names, religious psychology, social anthropology and liturgiology. Undaunted by these lacunae they intended to gather recent studies and new investigations into the Scandinavian mission. Nonetheless, Birgit Sawyer concludes at the end of her essay here that the only way forward is to call upon other disciplines, to avoid reliance on tendentious written sources.

The first part of the book summarises the discussions, among them the meaning of conversion, missionary methods and pre-Christian beliefs and rites. There follow comments and additional notes from the discussion leaders. Pirkko-Liisa Lehtosalo-Hilander then surveys—and regrets—the conversion of the Finns in Western Finland. The editors each contribute an

essay. Ian Wood warns against ransacking the *Vita Anskarii* without reflecting on Rimbert's intentions. Peter Sawyer discusses 'the process of Scandinavian Christianization in the tenth and eleventh centuries': diocesan organisation was complete by about 1150 but many pagan practices remained. Birgit Sawyer outlines the prejudices of Adam and Saxo, and finds the background to the Sigfrid Legend in Linköping's fight against upstart Växjö diocese. Though lucidly made the case argued is hardly a new one; and one might legitimately argue that historical accounts need not be dismissed simply because we know why they were written.

The discussions rehash standard questions but are more interesting when comparing the Scandinavian mission with those in other times and places. To give a specific example, Willibrord's haul of thirty young Danes is compared with the Australian practice of lodging young Aborigines in dormitories and schooling them there. Definitions are also hazarded of key words such as 'conversion', 'mission', 'mentalité' and, of course, 'Christianization'. The latter refers to 'general religious changes' (p. 21) as in society, while 'conversion' is a personal, even ascetic phenomenon. Unfortunately some of the definitions are too obvious to be useful or simply beg questions. 'Christian mission' is glossed as 'the conscious extension of Christianity through the calculated actions of Christian agents', p. 24. Not many would disagree with that. The gloss is supposed to exclude *Gelegenheitsmission*, or the winning of odd converts as a side-effect of other policies. Yet how much is Óláfr Tryggvason's a *Gelegenheitsmission*, with Christianity a mere pretext for power-grabbing? Lars Lönnroth's speculations on 'mentalité' or the unconscious way one relates to time, honour, kin, etc., are suggestive, but his colleagues apparently stopped him dead in his tracks.

'The Christianization of Scandinavia' is an agenda for future discussion. It raises many important issues, but far too briefly. I hope the follow-up symposium will come sooner than 'a few years' time' (p. viii) and that all required specialists will be present.

There are very few printing errors. There is a useful and up-to-date bibliography. The only demerit is the distressingly gaudy cover.

CHRISTOPHER JACKSON

BIBLE TRANSLATION IN OLD NORSE. By IAN J. KIRBY. *Université de Lausanne. Publications de la Faculté des Lettres, XXVII. Librairie Droz.* Geneva, 1986. xiii + 213 pp. + 8 facsimiles.

Ian Kirby's new book, the logical corollary to his earlier volumes on biblical quotation in Old Icelandic-Norwegian literature (*Biblical quotation in Old Icelandic-Norwegian religious literature, vol. I: Text; vol. II: Introduction*, 1976–80), addresses itself to the question of whether there was a Norse translation of the entire Bible in the medieval period. Given the absence of such a translation as a unified text, Kirby approaches the problem from two sides: (1) comparison of the Norse situation with that in other

countries in the Middle Ages, taking particular account of those which influenced the North, i.e. England, Germany and France; (2) examination of passages and quotations from various parts of the Bible in the extant texts to determine if similarities among them suggest derivation from a more complete translation.

Kirby's first chapter presents a brief overview of the history of Bible translation in western Europe up through the medieval period, noting that a complete translation of the Bible did not make its appearance in France before the end of the 13th century, in Germany before 1300, while England, as a result of the linguistic upheavals brought about by the Norman Conquest, had to wait until 1400 for an equivalent work. Nevertheless, adaptations (Gospel harmonies), verse renderings and translations of individual (historical) books from both the Old and the New Testament did exist well before the later Middle Ages (England, Germany, France), as did translations of the psalms, both in verse and as interlinear prose. As Kirby remarks (p. 15), the exigencies of missionary activity make it probable that the gospel story was translated into the vernacular at a very early period, even if there is no trace of such a text, just as the extant texts reflect pragmatic evangelistic and liturgical purposes (p. 16). In the second chapter Kirby turns his attention to Norway and Iceland, and traces the various religious influences on the two countries in the missionary period and thereafter, paying particular heed to writings (such as a *plenárium*, p. 27) mentioned in the sources and indicating other kinds of literature which could reasonably be thought to have been in existence (glosses, p. 27), but of which there is no evidence, before proceeding to a documentation of the extant religious literature. In his analysis of the primary sources (*Biskupa sögur*) for information about the early Icelandic church (such as the mention in an early life of Bishop Jón Ógmundarson that the Swedish clerk, Gisli, preached using an open book) and in conjunction with the earliest remnants of written literature (e.g. AM 237a fol.), Kirby comes to the conclusion that certain kinds of texts (*passiones* of the saints, homilies) represented or presupposed by the extant fragments were translated before 1150, perhaps even as early as the 11th century. The existence of such texts of a secondary nature makes it likely, in Kirby's opinion, that biblical materials, being primary, were also available in the vernacular (p. 35).

The consideration of *Stjórn* in chapter 3 provides Kirby with an opportunity to demonstrate how a particular text was re-worked over the course of more than a century. *Stjórn* is a felicitous example, in that various parts of the composite work illustrate the three stages through which other biblical texts may have passed as well (cf. chapter 4 on the *Book of Maccabees*, and Appendices A and B), and can serve as points of reference. Thus *Stjórn II* (*Exodus* 19—death of Moses), as a straightforward translation with a minimum of extraneous matter (p. 52), represents the first and oldest stage of the text, and no doubt originally included not only the entire Pentateuch (and thus the material extant in *Stjórn I*, i.e. *Genesis*—*Exodus* 18), but also the period covered by *Stjórn III* (*Joshua*—the Exile). Paleographical evidence suggests that *Stjórn II* (as extant in AM 226 fol.)

stems from considerably before the end of the 12th century. Such material as *Stjórn II* shares with Comestor may be the addition of the copier or derive from a common source for both Comestor and *Stjórn II* (pp. 58–9). *Stjórn III* represents the second stage, in which the ‘*Stjórn II*-type narrative’ was expanded to include material from Comestor (perhaps already in a Norse translation, p. 61), *Speculum ecclesiae* and Richard of St Victor’s *Liber exceptionum* (pp. 61–62). This text, as extant in *Stjórn III*, must also originally have embraced the Pentateuch as well, as the similarity between it and the fragment of such a Pentateuchal narrative as is found on the first page of AM 238 fol. XIX would indicate (p. 64). The *terminus post quem* for *Stjórn III* is 1215, when *Historia scholastica* received papal approval (p. 64). This puts it well within the range of possibility that *Stjórn III* influenced *Konungs skuggsjá* and thus supports the traditional view of the relationship between the two works (p. 64). This question, as well as Brandr Jónsson’s possible authorship of *Stjórn III*, is touched upon in this chapter and receives further attention in Appendix F. The third and final stage of the *Stjórn* text appears in *Stjórn I*, which, Kirby contends, is not a re-working of the *Stjórn III*-type Pentateuch but rather only made use of one, being primarily based on the Vulgate (p. 55). The last sections of the chapter (and Appendix D) are devoted to three fragments associated with the various types of narrative found in *Stjórn*. They are reproduced in facsimile and transcribed in Appendix C. After a brief chapter (5) on the Icelandic glosses entered in the 13th-century Vienna psalter (Cod. Vind. 2713) in the 16th century, which are not an *ad hoc* translation of the psalter but rather, as Uecker has suggested (*Der Wiener Psalter*, 1980), a revision of an earlier (15th-century) Icelandic version of the psalms based on the Vulgate and perhaps dependent on a text of the *Stjórn II* kind, Kirby launches into a long chapter (6) with illustrative material in Appendices A and E on the question of whether other books of the Bible in addition to those dealt with in the preceding chapters existed in Norse translation. While there is no evidence of such texts in the manuscript collections, biblical materials are incorporated into other texts, albeit not necessarily directly from the Bible, but rather from such intermediaries as extant saints’ lives, one of Gregory’s homilies or the liturgy. Even New Testament narratives appear to derive from one of apparently several current Gospel harmonies and/or from Comestor (p. 95). Nevertheless, the close parallels between Oddur Gottskálksson’s New Testament (1540) and Grímr Hólmsteinnsson’s life of John the Baptist allow one to draw the conclusion that, in addition to the harmonies, there must indeed have been a Norse translation of the New Testament by the last quarter of the 13th century (p. 101). Furthermore, while the life of Paul found in *Postola sögur* can be shown to be merely based on Acts rather than a translation of it, the similarity of quotations from Acts in Gregory’s *Dialogues*, the Icelandic book of homilies and *Postola sögur* makes it appear likely that a verbatim Norse translation of the entire book existed by 1200 (p. 95) and that it was later variously revised in a manner similar to *Stjórn* (p. 96). Comparison of the treatment of Old Testament material in *Barlaams ok Josaphats saga*, *Veraldar saga*, the Norwegian book of homilies and Gregory’s *Dialogues* with *Stjórn*

suggests that the similarities among them stem from common usage of an early (before 1200) translation of the corresponding parts of the Old Testament, represented by *Stjórn II*. This is corroborated by the resemblances between this material and the post-Reformation *Guðbrandsbiblía* (p. 99). The final section of the chapter is devoted to Norse materials derived from intermediate sources, perhaps including the (common) source (in Norse translation) of Comestor's narrative of both Testaments (p. 106).

The only remaining kind of evidence for the existence of a medieval Norse translation of the Bible—statements and references in early writers and medieval booklists from Norway and Iceland—is the subject of chapter 7. Here Kirby understands (p. 110) the prescription in *Messuskýringar* that a priest 'skal kvnna þyding gudspialla suo at hann kunne þadann af <kenna> kenningar ok omfluir Gregorij' to indicate that the Gospels existed in translation, as Gregory's homilies did. The claim of Erich Brochhus (c. 1567) to have seen a 300-year-old Icelandic translation of the entire Bible may however (p. 110) refer to *Stjórn III*, while the ascription of an Icelandic Bible to Bishop Guðbrandur Þorláksson in a work which postdates the appearance of the *Guðbrandsbiblía* by nearly 100 years is regarded as unreliable. Interpretation of medieval book inventories is hampered by the fact that separate lists of Latin and Norse books are the exception to the rule. The appearance of a book in a list which includes books likely to be Norse ones, while it may indicate a Norse version of the Bible or part of it, does not always permit one to draw definitive conclusions. In one case, a book referred to as 'jslendzk biblia' (*Dipl. Isl.* XI, 618) is described in a later entry as 'Nauckut af bibliu j Jslenzku' (*Dipl. Isl.* XI, 652), and hence probably means *Stjórn*. Since possession of the entire Bible, even in Latin, was a rarity in the medieval period and since (as noted at the outset of Kirby's study and again on p. 114), translations of the entire Bible appeared relatively late in other European countries, the scales are weighted against the existence of such a work in the Norse (ch. 8).

A concluding remark should be made about Kirby's excursus on the relationship between *Stjórn* and *Konungs skuggsjá*. While his suggestion that Brandr Jónsson was both the author of *Stjórn III* and the revisor of an ur-*Konungs skuggsjá* may be rejected by some critics, he has used the new theories put forward by Hofmann and Bagge on a reversed relationship between the two works as an occasion to refine the traditional view of both texts and to take into account the complexities of their connection. This willingness to consider the possibility of a more complicated line of development in the history of a text than hitherto envisioned is a hallmark of Kirby's treatment of his subject matter.

BEATRICE LAFARGE

HJEMSTED—EN GRAVPLADS FRA 4. OG 5. ÅRH. E. KR. By PER ETHELBERG. With contributions by Stig Jensen, Lise Bender Jørgensen and

Torsten Madsen. *Skrifter fra Museumsrådet for Sønderjyllands Amt*, 2. Haderslev, 1986. 201 pp.

A monograph on a Danish archaeological site of the 4th and 5th centuries A.D. might appear at best marginal to the interests of readers of *Saga-Book* but this book and most emphatically the field to which it belongs merit serious attention. Fifth-century Jutland is the well-attested earliest source of a Scandinavian element within the population and culture of England, through the settlement of Kent and perhaps the Isle of Wight. This settlement was one act within a dynamic and expansive phase of Germanic cultural history, the Migration Period, a historical phase which emerges in later literature as the Germanic Heroic Age. It may be argued (although not, in full detail, here) that it was social and political developments which marked the end of the Migration Period which fixed certain boundaries upon the body of heroic legendary material, but still it is the situation on either side of this watershed, and thus the nature of the change, that is of central importance in understanding how this literature was formed.

Historically, the Migration Period/Heroic Age is a crucial passage in the struggle to develop and consolidate the Scandinavian kingdoms. The archaeology of southern Scandinavia and adjacent areas of northern Germany as far back as the late 2nd century A.D. is increasingly being probed—with interesting if not always entirely convincing results—for evidence of the emergence of the Danes as a political unit. There is little historical evidence to illuminate this field, certainly none that is new, but archaeology continually develops, with new material and fresh studies as well as its sometimes less luminant new theories. An ability to understand and evaluate the contribution of archaeology is essential if our understanding of issues such as how one period produces later written records, historical or legendary, or the recurrence of cultural patterns in the Migration and Viking Periods, is to develop and increase in substance rather than simply to go through intermittent metamorphoses to fit the prevailing intellectual character of the time.

The book under review, of course, is no more than one brick in the footings of what is as yet mostly a castle in the air. The title tells us what it offers: the publication of a 4th- and 5th-century cemetery site in the southwestern corner of Jutland. Few Jutish cemeteries of any real size of this period are known, and none so well published as this. Besides the full, illustrated catalogue of the material, Ethelberg's contribution to the book comprises some 80 pages (in unusually big print) of discussion focused selectively on aspects of the material. The 4th- and 5th-century cemetery is only one phase and covers only a part of an extensive multi-period site, some idea of the extent of which is briefly given. In familiar style, attention is soon devoted to the artefacts which appear as grave goods, again quite unevenly. Quite validly Ethelberg concentrates his most extensive efforts upon the dating of the pottery in the graves. Pottery studies have formed the most useful recent developments in Danish late Roman Iron-age chronology. It has emerged that sequences have to be accumulated region by region, and the results of Ethelberg's work, which are shown to hold for other cemeteries

within south-western Jutland, are a valuable complement to Ulla Lund Hansen and Stig Jensen's pioneering works in other regions, mostly published in the later 1970s. From the English viewpoint it is rather unexpectedly reassuring to find that much of the Hjemsted pottery is very similar to what we liberally identify as 'early Jutish' pottery in Britain, and from any viewpoint it is important to recognize that at Hjemsted we have a site representing the local Jutish culture, not the Anglian culture or the mixed *Nordseeküstegruppe*.

The chronological differentiation of the pottery is produced via a process of mathematical manipulation and analysis of data concerning variable elements of form and style which, we are given adequate hints to believe, is both complicated and sophisticated. A relatively long appendix by Torsten Madsen on the relevant computer analyses falls disappointingly between two stools in apparently setting out to explain the process to the interested but uninitiated reader and then gliding over essential steps with unclear terms and references to other publications, not always widely available. In particular the steps in the construction of a Correspondence Analysis, and thus the generation of the crucial figures 38 and 39 (pp. 56–61 and 105–6 in the book), are passed through too smoothly and rapidly. It is ironic that with a study that is so assertive of the virtues of methodological purity and the reliability of the results of such approaches the great majority of readers—not all of whom are as gauche mathematically as the authors expect—will have, finally, to evaluate the methods intuitively on the basis of the results produced rather than evaluating the results on the basis of the methods that produced them.

There are both strong and weak points in matters of more particular detail within the book. The discussion of the metalwork recurrently stumbles as a result of a rather off-hand approach. As the author of a substantial study of wrist-clasps published in 1984, I found it a little painful to read that they 'har hidtil ikke været ofret megen opmærksomhed i litteraturen'—especially as I visited Haderslev Museum in 1982 and all of the Hjemsted clasps were included in my own work. Most significantly, reference to this work would have obviated Ethelberg's speculative proposition, not substantiated by the mass of the material, that the number of turns in the spiral ends of Class A clasps (*hægter og maller*) is chronologically diagnostic. The discussion of cruciform brooches is unimpressively casual, particularly in the complete dismissal of Reichstein's relative chronology—despite the admitted defects of his study—merely with a reference to the author's own unpublished *hovedfag* dissertation for further details of the case and the brief notice of the dubiously significant stratigraphic relationship between two cruciform-brooch types here. On the other hand the observations on the apparent chronological distribution of amber beads of different shapes are interesting and potentially very useful, and Lise Bender Jørgensen's study of the textile remains in light of European parallels is most illuminating.

Ethelberg's book will be of value in the field of studies outlined above for its full presentation of basic data and for the clear and productive study of the dating of pottery-types. The greatest value of any such refinement or

regional extension of fine dating means is that it allows us to trace more widely, more finely and more confidently the development of forms of social organization—or indeed any other important cultural process which may be correlated in some way with particular patterns in the material record. Unquestionably Ethelberg could have gone further in exploring these larger issues between the covers of a book on a given cemetery site, and this would have been done had he simply treated the data of the site more evenhandedly. Commentary on the social structure reflected in the cemetery is kept to a minimum: the cemetery gives the impression of a community with some relatively wealthy individuals, but interestingly there are no weapons in any men's graves. Speculation on the possible civil context of such a community on pp. 79–80 is so brief as to have been scarcely worth writing. Ranking grave finds by value is a disputed process, but an essay along these lines would at least have given us something useful to think about, especially with regard to the noted division of the cemetery into two clusters of graves. It is also strange that the provision of coffins in some 60% of the graves should be noted with so little comment. The text of the discussion is markedly short. Of course, Ethelberg has his declared *problemstilling*, which directed him to concentrate on the valuable study of pottery chronology. A *problemstilling* has become an essential buttress for much recent Scandinavian archaeological research. I suspect in this case that a methodologically less modern, inductive approach to the site might have made yet more of the material in this book.

JOHN HINES

STUDIES IN HONOUR OF KENNETH CAMERON. Edited by THORLAC TURVILLE-PETRE and MARGARET GELLING. *Leeds studies in English, new series XVIII. School of English, University of Leeds*. Leeds, 1987. [viii] + 272 pp.

This festschrift for Kenneth Cameron, a past President of the Viking Society, contains twenty-one papers dealing mostly with name studies both toponymic and anthroponymic, but also with aspects of later medieval and 'neo-medieval' literature from *Sir Gawain and the green knight* to Tennyson's *Idylls of the king*. Such a range reflects the warm regard in which Professor Cameron is held by members of his former Department of English Studies in the University of Nottingham and by philologists throughout Europe. A festschrift by its very nature usually contains studies which are safe and short. This example conforms in part to the pattern but a goodly number of its articles are exciting and timely. This review will only mention a selection of those of particular interest to subscribers to *Saga-Book*.

Karl Inge Sandred's 'Ingham in East Anglia: a new interpretation' takes us to Sweden, Denmark and North Germany of the pre-Viking period. He argues convincingly that *Ing-* in the several Ingham place-names in areas of early Anglo-Saxon settlement in eastern England represents a marker of ancient Anglian royal centres, relating *Ing-* to the Inguiones (Tacitus's *Ingaeuones*) whose name also appears in that of the Swedish royal dynasty,

the Ynglingar, and in the Denmark of *Beowulf* where Hroðgar is called *frēa Ingwina* 'the lord of Ing's friends' from a probable earlier *frēa \*Ingwena* 'the lord of the Inguiones'. *Ing* in folk- and in place-names is to be considered as an emblem of ancient Germanic royalty. Sandred's evidence gives strong support to the antiquity of names in *-hām* in eastern England, marrying most effectively with that of such place-names as Swaffham 'the hām of the Swabians' appearing in both Norfolk and Cambridgeshire. The Suebi, famous for an unique style of dressing their hair, are like the Inguiones also recorded by Tacitus in *Germania*. That an example of Ingham appears in Watlington parish in south-eastern Oxfordshire does not invalidate Sandred's argument. Watlington is on the Icknield Way, the old ridgeway connecting East Anglia with the upper Thames Valley: there are archaeological parallels between the artefacts of early settlers in this area and those in Cambridgeshire.

Professor Cameron's studies of Scandinavian settlement in the East Midlands published over the past two decades have raised important questions concerning the extent of Viking colonisation of the area. Scholarly opinion is still sharply divided about the numbers of such settlers. Field-names are of especial importance as evidence in this debate as studies by Hald, Fellows-Jensen and Cameron himself show. David Mills's 'Some alternative analyses of medieval field-names' in this festschrift is a timely reminder that more care should be taken in the presentation of field-name evidence in the county volumes of the English Place-Name Survey. His study, while making a strong case for the greater consideration of personal names and surnames as the first themes in compounded medieval field-names (where the temptation is always to seek for significant words), points to the fact that as presented in the county volumes, field-names have little space available for discussion of alternative interpretations and that editors are liable to be more positive than their better judgement allows in opting for a particular meaning than they are when discussing the major place-names. Thus the collections of field-name elements in the analyses of the volumes are significantly prone to distortion of evidence. Professor Cameron in his 1959 survey of Derbyshire place-names wisely separated the collection of elements in field-names from those in major place-names. No editor before or since has done this. Despite Cameron's example, elements from place-names have been collated with those from field-names in all county surveys appearing in the past twenty-five years. In view of Mills's strictures, future editors should follow Cameron's example. This will be of particular importance in the county surveys for Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, Rutland and Norfolk which are still in preparation, where the handling of the evidence in our search for the truth of the extent and weight of Scandinavian settlement in the Danelaw will need fine tuning.

A gem of an article is Margaret Gelling's 'Anglo-Saxon eagles'. In an aside on the scavengers of the battlefield of Brunanburh, the poet speaks of 'the grey-coated eagle, white-tailed' which fed on the Norwegian dead. This was the fish- or sea-eagle, a species once more prevalent inland than it is today. This eagle is represented archaeologically by bones excavated in a

fifth-century Anglo-Saxon context at the Barton Court Farm site in Abingdon. In a typically astute manner, Gelling's paper draws attention to the wealth of information to be gleaned from place-names concerning the ancient fauna of this country. One wonders about her observation that place-names compounded of animal name plus Old English *hēafod* 'head' imply that the shapes of the hills were reminiscent to the Anglo-Saxons of particular animal heads. Why so many place-names in Swineshead (with OE *swin* 'pig')? Such names as Gateshead (with OE *gāt* 'goat') and Shepshed (with OE *scēap* 'sheep'), even with the prototheme in the genitive singular, are perhaps better explained with *hēafod* as 'headland' and such names rather to be interpreted as 'headland on which x-animal is pastured (or seen) frequently'. However, the piece is typical of Margaret Gelling's eye for what is unexplored in any systematic way and rewarding to archaeologists and historians.

Gillian Fellows-Jensen's 'York' re-examines in detail the development of the name of the principal stronghold of the Norwegian Vikings in the north of England, from its Celtic origins through its Old English and Scandinavian reflexes to its possible exportation to Iceland and to the New World. This is an erudite, thorough piece which provides some intriguing asides, such as the mention of four examples of the name Jórvík in Iceland, all of which seem to represent transferences of the place-name from England as fond remembrances of things past, or the Yorick of *Hamlet* fame (a surname or a personal name?). With so much that is worthy in the study, it is a pity that the piece is expressed in such an arcane way: phrases such as 'epexegetic suffix', 'Icelandic exonym' and 'eponymic base' are random examples of those abounding. *Sancta simplicitas*.

Brief mention of three more articles must suffice. John Insley's 'Some aspects of regional variation in early Middle English personal nomenclature' discusses the anthroponymic pattern of the northern borderland of Anglo-Saxon England towards the end of the Old English period. This is a region of Gaelic-Scandinavian impact of Vikings arriving possibly from Galloway or the Western Isles. He draws attention to the pressing need for systematic study of the different personal name zones operative within the English-speaking area in the early medieval period. Raymond Page's 'Yet another note on Alfred's *æstel*' is a meticulous examination of the nature of the glosses to Corpus Christi College Cambridge MS 12 and Bodleian MS Hatton 20 by the Worcester Glossator of the 'tremulous hand'. Page clears away the specious arguments of earlier commentators and provides authoritative confirmation for the accuracy of *æstel: indicatorium* and also a 'fair chance' for *æstel: festuca*. Is the Alfred Jewel indeed from one of the *æstelas* provided with each copy of the king's translation of *Cura pastoralis* made in his drive for educational reform of the clergy following the Viking depredations of his earlier years? Finally, Christine Fell's 'Modern English *Viking*' provides an amusing and scholarly exploration of the development of the concept 'Viking' from the sixteenth century to the present day. In all, this is a splendid festschrift, worthy of its recipient.

THE ICELAND JOURNAL OF HENRY HOLLAND, 1810. Edited by ANDREW WAWN. *The Hakluyt Society*. London, 1987. xvii + 342 pp.

One of the most important early expeditions to Iceland was that led by Sir George Mackenzie in 1810. Mackenzie's account, first published in 1811, and reappearing in later editions in 1812 and 1842, has long been known as a classic of exploration. What is less well-known is the indebtedness Mackenzie stood in to Henry Holland, one of the men who accompanied him. Holland kept a very full and descriptive journal of the travels undertaken by the expedition. Stylistically and in content it is much superior to Mackenzie's account—and yet for a century and a half it remained unpublished, in manuscript. In 1960, it was published in an Icelandic translation by Steindór Steindórrsson; and now it is available in the original.

It was an exciting time for an expedition to Iceland. In the late eighteenth century, the interest had begun in Old Norse literature. Then from 1807 to 1814, Britain was at war with Denmark, as a result of the Napoleonic upheavals. Probably through the intervention of a previous Icelandic explorer, Sir Joseph Banks, the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland were excluded from Anglo-Danish hostilities by an Order in Council published on 7 February 1810. Ships wishing to take cargoes simply had to call in at London or Leith for licences, which would keep them free from arrest by British naval vessels or by privateers. It was a time also of great scientific dispute, a dispute in which volcanic Iceland played an important part. A great controversy was in progress about geological theory. The German Werner had postulated that all strata had been laid down by the action of water, bringing about either chemical or mechanical precipitation. The Scottish scientist Hutton, on the contrary, emphasised the action of terrestrial pressure and heat. The Wernerians were, indeed, sometimes jocularly referred to as the Neptunians, and Hutton's followers were nicknamed the Plutonians. A key to the argument was the origin of basalt, and expeditions to the volcanic north were an essential for coming to a decision. The only way of testing the Wernerian position, that basalt had been laid down by the action of water, was to go and have a look. There was an incredible degree of animosity between the two schools of thought, probably because Wernerian theory accorded better with the words of the biblical account of creation, as then understood. Even the name of the science of earth formation was affected—the Werner school tended to call their science geognosy, the Huttonians favouring the term geology. Mackenzie was a Huttonian, and his expedition to Iceland was stimulated by the prospect that in Iceland he would be able to collect rock samples which would establish Huttonian geology beyond any doubt. In February 1810, Mackenzie invited Henry Holland to join his expedition to Iceland. Another important companion of Mackenzie's was Richard Bright, after whom Bright's disease was later named. Holland, too, had had a medical training, and in later life achieved the highest distinction in the medical profession.

The expedition was based in Reykjavík, and from there made three journeys, which Holland's journal describes in detail. The first was along the Reykjanes peninsula, calling at the sulphur springs of Krísuvík on the way.

The travellers went as far as Keflavík, then a small village, before returning to Reykjavík. The second journey was westward, to Snæfellsjökull. The expedition made the ascent before returning to Reykjavík. The third journey was a more complex one, inland from Reykjavík to Þingvellir and its lake, then eastwards to Skálholt, the Great Geysir, and Mount Hekla. The expedition also went to the east of Hekla, a further half-day's journey, to investigate an obsidian deposit. The major part of the journal is scientific, but far from all. Besides science, Holland was interested in literature, education, the state of the church, population and commerce. The text includes six of Holland's appendices on such subjects.

The book starts with a 62-page introduction by the editor, who gives the reader plenty of information about Anglo-Icelandic relations, about the geological controversy, about the expedition, and about Henry Holland himself. There has been hard editorial work on every aspect of the book, and both the introduction and the bibliography are excellent.

The editing of this text must have involved Mr Wawn in following the expedition's routes in Iceland. The editorial footnotes are excellent. Almost every Icelander the expedition met is identified, and the modern spelling of every geographical location is given. Henry Holland's notes are sometimes given as footnotes, but these are identified so that the reader is not left in any doubt.

The text is generally good, but there are a number of misprints that should have been cleared up. Only one is of significance—when on page 145 we are given the impression that in 1810 Whitsunday fell on a Tuesday. On the other hand, where the manuscript is doubtful, the editor is careful enough to give us alternative readings. I have only one dispute with the editor. In a footnote on page 106, he says, 'Little is known of the shadowy "Baron Hompesch".' Certainly, Hompesch was never in Iceland, and that may account for Mr Wawn finding him shadowy. But he was present in the Faroe Islands, and a full account of his life and his movements as a privateer will be found in my book, *Faroe—the emergence of a nation*. He was the real owner of the *Salamine*, but when on board, he sailed as chaplain. He was not awarded either his Faroese or his Icelandic takings as lawful prize, although his activities preceded the Order in Council giving Denmark's north Atlantic dependencies the status of friendly neutrals.

I read this book with enormous pleasure. Indeed, I can think of few books which have given me as much pleasure. In part, this is due to the vividness and accuracy of description displayed by Henry Holland, in part to the learned editorship of Andrew Wawn. Henry Holland was an explorer of importance and his life in general is well worth knowing about. The Hakluyt Society has put us much in debt by publishing this work.





# THE VIKINGS IN BRITTANY

by  
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VIKING SOCIETY FOR NORTHERN RESEARCH  
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

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**For Sabrina Rampersad**

## INTRODUCTION

WHEN a selection of the objects from the great Viking ship burial on the Ile de Groix, off the south coast of Brittany, was displayed at Caen in 1987, the accompanying text lamented the fact that the most interesting Scandinavian finds in France came from a region where the Vikings played only *un rôle passager*. That the Viking impact on Brittany should be considered fleeting is principally the result of a lack of detailed study coupled with a dearth of excavated remains.

The first problem encountered by the student is that of nomenclature (cf. Page 1984-5, 308-9). It seems reasonable to use the term 'Vikings' to refer to the large numbers of Scandinavians who descended on Europe in the ninth and tenth centuries in search of loot and plunder, sustaining themselves by means of a life of itinerant violence. It is to this category, which includes the Great Army, that the majority of Scandinavians operating in Brittany belong, hence the title of this paper. Wherever possible, national terms (Norwegians, Danes, etc.) will be employed to describe these people, and a clear distinction will be drawn between Viking raiders and those who chose to settle in the lands they had conquered. Part of the problem is the almost universal use in the French sources of the term *Normands* to refer to Scandinavians; to translate this as 'Normans' is misleading (the word has been used in translating an annal written as early as 866, in Sawyer 1971, 128). In this paper the term refers only to the inhabitants of the region of modern Normandy after the succession of William Longsword c. 925.

Similarly, the geographical and chronological range needs to be clarified. Before the ninth century, early medieval Brittany proper was the area west of the linguistic boundary dividing places with Breton and Frankish names (i.e. the Franko-Breton March), broadly corresponding to the course of the river Vilaine. After that date, and certainly in a Viking context, Brittany extended to roughly its modern borders, incorporating the counties of Rennes and Nantes. It must also be remembered that at times Breton influence extended far into Neustria and Aquitaine. Turning to chronology, the first real Viking contact with Brittany comes in the early ninth century and the major impact is over by 950. Nevertheless, sporadic raiding continued late into the tenth century

and Brittany was subject to a degree of Scandinavian influence via the Duchy of Normandy well into the eleventh century. Such then is the general chronological scope of this paper, though reference will occasionally be made to relevant events at earlier and later dates as appropriate.

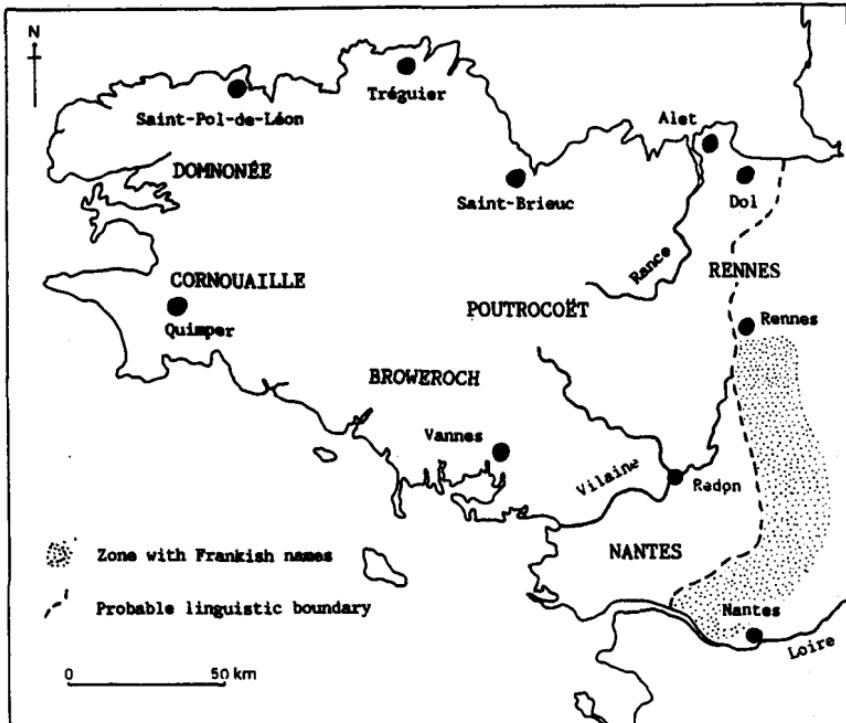


Fig. 1. Early Medieval Brittany (after Davies 1988)

Only two summaries of the subject have appeared in English in recent years, both of which concentrate on the Carolingian Empire and deal with the Vikings secondarily (McKitterick 1983; Smith 1985, by far the most detailed study to date). Furthermore, the activities of the Vikings in Brittany have never been studied from the viewpoint of the invaders themselves; instead the Breton reaction has been stressed.

This paper attempts to redress the balance, examining different aspects of the evidence in turn, in an effort to shine some light on this neglected area of Viking studies. Firstly, the relevant documentary material is reviewed and the manuscripts' relative merits and accuracy discussed. In each case any political propaganda bias and possible scribal preoccupations are considered, along with the effect of the Viking incursions on the Breton scriptoria.

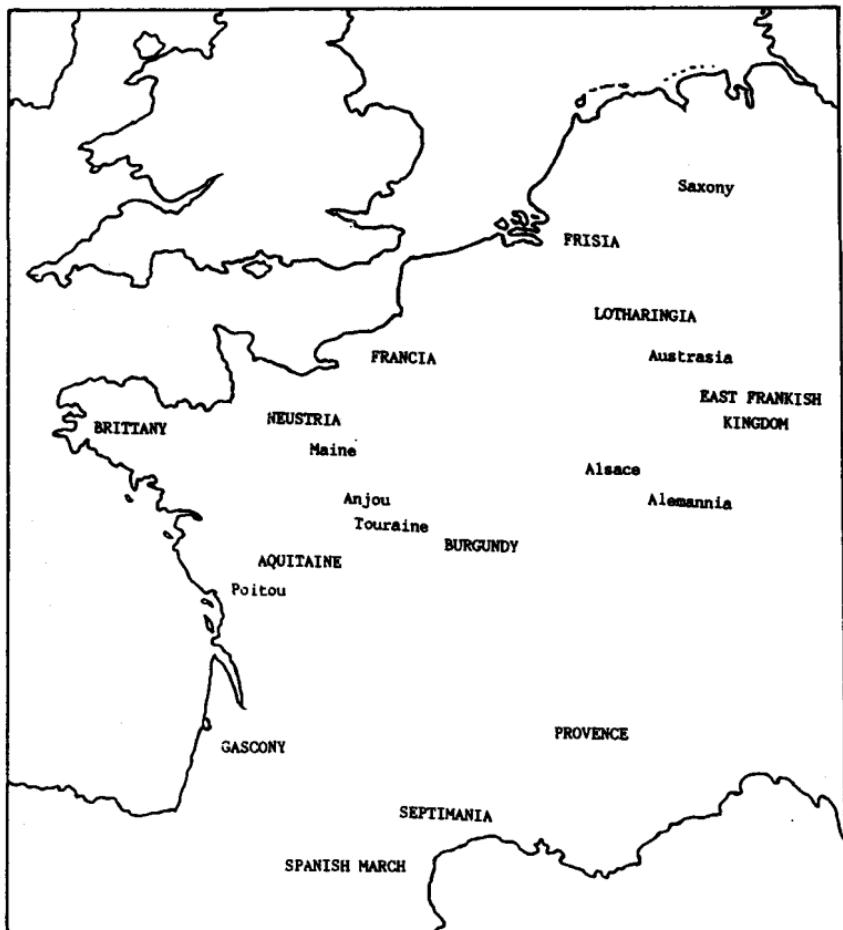


Fig. 2. The territories of the later Carolingian Empire

Using the information from these documentary sources, the Vikings in Brittany are studied against the historical background of French ninth- to eleventh-century power politics. Such factors as the growth of Breton independence and the great complexity of the relationships between the different interests are also taken into account: the opportunistic civil warfare that the Scandinavians exploited at every level as the various factions formed alliances with different Viking mercenary fleets, each with its own leaders and motives. Only by unravelling this tangled situation can the Scandinavian impact on the Breton church and state be assessed.

In the third chapter the archaeological material is examined: the corpus of Scandinavian sites and finds in Brittany, including fortifications, burials and destruction levels at monasteries and secular sites recorded as targets of Viking attacks. Along with

weaponry dredged from the great arterial rivers of France, Neustrian towns and early Norman settlements are additionally studied as possible analogues for gaps in the Breton archaeology. The place-name evidence is also reviewed.

The evidence is then drawn together in a conclusion which presents a new model for the Scandinavian involvement in Brittany, setting the area in its context of the wider Viking world through comparison with contemporary Scandinavian operations in England and the Celtic West. Particular emphasis is placed on Wales, with which Brittany has interesting parallels, especially regarding the action of the Vikings as catalysts for political unity (albeit sometimes temporary) but with little archaeological impact. Issues such as the dispersal of the last Viking mercenary armies, the development of the Duchy of Normandy and the Bretons' rôle in European politics are also considered. Finally, two appendices provide a gazetteer of Scandinavian sites and finds in Brittany and Normandy and lists of contemporary rulers.

## 1. DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

I HAVE grouped the documentary sources for early medieval Scandinavian activity in France into four broad categories: material from Scandinavia itself, Carolingian and Breton sources, early Norman manuscripts and insular sources (Anglo-Saxon, Irish and Welsh). These are discussed in turn below and their relevance to the Breton situation assessed. While lack of space precludes a detailed analysis of each work it is nevertheless possible to outline briefly any reservations that should be borne in mind concerning their objectivity and accuracy. Of necessity, some of the more peripheral references are discussed in later sections as they arise.

### *Scandinavian sources*

Among the contemporary written sources from Scandinavia (runic inscriptions on memorial stones, pieces of bone and fragments of wood) there are several references to 'the land of the Franks', usually as the scene of past battles, but no specific mentions of Brittany. We must therefore look to the later medieval sources, in particular the corpus of Icelandic sagas.

Any search for saga references is frustrated by problems of terminology. Several sagas mention *Bretland* but it is uncertain whether this refers to Brittany, Wales or even sometimes the small kingdom of Strathclyde: the inhabitants of all these areas may have been regarded as 'Welsh' by the Scandinavians, and it is entirely possible that the saga-writers themselves, reliant on earlier material, were not clear on the matter either. This problem is compounded by the usual uncertainties of saga information due to its Christian context and late date.

*Brennu-Njáls saga*, written in the late thirteenth century by an unknown author, mentions raids in *Bretland* by Kári and the Njálssons (1954, chapter 89). Both incidents occur in the late tenth century, though the internal chronology of the saga is inconsistent. Several references to *Bretland* in *Orkneyinga saga*, c. 1200 (1965, chapter 8, 15, 39, 40 and 78) are almost certainly concerned with Wales (see also *Magnúss saga skemMRI* 1965, chapter 3 and 4 and *Magnúss saga lengri* 1965, chapter 9 and 10). *Jómsvíkinga saga* is more useful, though cryptic. Tenth-century Vikings are described

as successively ruling and apportioning *Bretland*, and a man called *Björn inn brezki* is mentioned (*Jómsvíkinga saga* 1969, chapter 13; see also Ashdown 1930, 184). While *Bretland* may simply be a convenient faraway place in the context of the saga, it does at least indicate that a *Bretland* colony was not thought unrealistic by medieval Scandinavians. Similarly, in *Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld's* dirge for Óláfr Tryggvason, Óláfr is given the epithet of *Breta stríðir* (*Óláfssdrápa* 11); again, this may refer to the Welsh, since Snorri Sturluson mentions Óláfr raiding in Wales (Snorri Sturluson 1941-51, *Óláfssaga Tryggvasonar* chapter 30). *Heimskringla* contains several other references to raids on *Bretland* (Snorri Sturluson 1941-51, *Haralds saga ins hárfagra* chapter 32 and 33; *Óláfssaga ins helga* chapter 98 and *Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar* chapter 76) including one led by Eiríkr blóðøx (Snorri Sturluson 1941-51, *Hákónar saga góða* chapter 4).<sup>1</sup>

By far the most detailed reference is contained in Sighvatr Pórðarson's *Víkingarvísur*, written in the first half of the eleventh century and the main source for the early life of St. Óláfr, before he became king. The place-name forms and syntax suggest that the version of the poem that we have is an early one, and thus a contemporary source. Óláfr is described as fighting a battle in *Hringsfjørðr*, an unidentified place on the Breton coast, before raiding a stronghold held by Vikings at *Hól*, thought to be Dol (Sighvatr Pórðarson 1981, 118-19; Fell 1981).

Although all these sources make only brief mention of Brittany (and it is worth stressing that none of them is unequivocal) they are none the less important contributions if an attempt is to be made to recover the Scandinavian point of view. The relative value of these sources has been discussed further by d'Haenens (1969, 244-5).

### *Carolingian and Breton sources*

The bulk of the historical information is to be found in this category of source material. The documents may be divided into contemporary and non-contemporary records and consist of annals, chronicles, hagiographies, religious texts (sermons and liturgical documents), poems, diplomas, edicts, letters, monastic cartularies and ecclesiastical agreements. The earlier Breton genealogies (Fleuriot 1976) are not relevant in this context.

The viewpoint of the Imperial rulers is presented in the *Annales*

*Regni Francorum*, compiled as a court product following Charlemagne's move to Aachen in 794. Based on oral reports or occasionally personal experience, the *Annales* highlight the problems of accurate long-distance communications within the Empire (Nelson 1981, 15-36). Notwithstanding their obvious bias towards the Carolingian throne, the *Annales* are a vital source for ninth-century Europe and even provide information about Scandinavia, such as one of the earliest records of Danish kingship. Following on directly are the *Annales Bertiniani* (the name simply refers to the origins of a later copy), written by Prudentius from 835 to 861 and continued by Hincmar until 882. These annals are fully discussed by Janet Nelson (1981, especially 18-24) who reviews their limitations and rejects the suggestion that Hincmar may have used them to set out guidelines for royal behaviour. Suffice to say here that they are written objectively with no attempt to place events in any order of importance, and in measured language giving precise detail. We may be sure that exact distinctions are intended when the *Annales* record that the Vikings raided, sacked or burned a settlement (Wallace-Hadrill 1975b, 221). The growing preoccupation with Scandinavian attacks throughout the ninth century would seem to reflect the worsening situation accurately, and it must be remembered that Hincmar's first-hand experience of such a raid in 882, which might be expected to prejudice his account, occurs at the end of his time as annalist. The *Annales Bertiniani* may be regarded as one of our chief sources.

One of the major sources not only for the Vikings but for Brittany in general is the *Cartulary of the Abbey of Redon*. This contemporary document survives in an eleventh-century manuscript (discussed in detail in de Courson's 1863 translation, i-vi) and gives a wealth of reliable information as to the legal system, social hierarchy, land organisation and partition of early medieval Brittany in its records of 'the sales, mortgages, grants and disputes that affected . . . properties before they were absorbed by [the monastery of] Redon' (Davies 1988, 1). It is the primary source for the complex administrative system and multi-tiered power structure of this area of France (cf. Davies 1981; 1983 and 1988; de la Borderie 1898, 171-209).

The *Chronicle of Nantes* also contains much relevant information for the later phases of Viking involvement in Brittany, but its usefulness is limited by its non-contemporaneity. Composed c. 1050-1059, probably by a canon at Nantes cathedral drawing on earlier annals now lost, the *Chronicle* has a clear ecclesiastical

bias and favours the community at Nantes; this is tempered by a lucid, concise style free of literary pretensions. In spite of its drawbacks, single events and secondary data may be sifted from the *Chronicle* with little difficulty provided that caution is exercised with regard to statistics that could profit from exaggeration, such as the size of Scandinavian fleets. The *Chronicle of Nantes* is particularly rich in references to secular fortifications and the state of Breton defences in the face of Viking attack (cf. Privat 1971, 81-93; Jones 1981, 151-3).

The *Annales* and *Historia Remensis Ecclesiae* of Flodoard, a canon of Rheims who lived 893-966, are almost the only contemporary sources for the Viking occupation of Nantes and Brittany in the early tenth century (see below), and as such are perhaps the most important of all. Although an understandable abhorrence of the Scandinavians is present in Flodoard's work, he records dispassionately and credits Viking victories without hesitation or apparent exaggeration in favour of the Bretons. He is the sole source for much vital information about the Nantes Vikings, including the names of their leaders (when later chronicles mention them, they are ultimately derived from Flodoard). His account of this period differs notably from that of Dudo of Saint-Quentin (see below), but a convincing case for Flodoard's accuracy has been made by de la Borderie (1898, 373, 378-9) based on a detailed study of terminology.

A particularly important contribution comes from hagiography and other religious works. The later Breton saints' lives usually follow the pattern of the *Life of Saint Samson* (Davies 1982a, 148), probably dating to the later seventh century though Poulin (1978) has suggested an early ninth-century date. Many saints' lives preserve contemporary accounts of the Vikings' depredations, such as Bili's *Life of Saint-Malo* and Uurmonoc's heartfelt prayer, written in 884, for the deliverance of Landévennec from the 'continual incursions . . . of these barbarians' (*Uurmonoc* XXI). However, the use of the saints' lives as vehicles for political propaganda should be considered (cf. Poulin 1977, 14-18), especially during the reigns of Nominoe and Salomon in the context of the archbishopric of Dol and its implications for Breton independence (Smith 1982). Scandinavian raids are also the subject of some of the miracles associated with saints' relics, as in the *Miracula Sancti Bertini* which contain heavily embroidered accounts from which details of Viking movements in Brittany must be extracted. Although these texts emphasise the plight of Christianity and the

destruction of monasteries, some, such as Ermentarius's records of the translation of Saint Philibert's remains from Noirmoutier, preserve a degree of objectivity and use distinctive terms to describe the actions of the Vikings in the same way as the *Annales Bertiniani* (Wallace-Hadrill 1975b, 222).

Cartularies from the abbeys at Landévennec, Saint-Bertin, Saint-Croix de Quimperlé and the cathedral at Angers together with the *Gesta Conwoionis Abbatis Rotonensis* also contain intermittent references to the Vikings, but have a rather narrow outlook, being preoccupied with their own foundations.

Among the lesser, but still valuable, sources are the *Annales Fuldenses*, *Annales Vedastini* and *Annales Xantenses*. All are primarily concerned with the Empire itself rather than with Brittany; indeed following the siege of Paris the *Annales Vedastini* are the primary source for Carolingian affairs until 900. Despite each manuscript having its own localised bias (especially the latter pair), insights into the complex political alliances engineered by the Vikings and the Carolingians may still be obtained, together with details of the resulting campaigns. The *Annales Engolismenses* preserve similar information, particularly for the earlier raids and Scandinavian activity along the Empire's coasts in the ninth century. Regino of Prüm's *Chronicon* also records contemporary Viking attacks, but the facts need to be sieved from a slightly dramatised description of events. Hugh of Fleury occasionally mentions Brittany in his chronicle of the Frankish kings, as does Gregory of Tours much earlier (a useful background to Franko-Breton relations at the start of the Viking Age), but both confine themselves to brief references to secular politics.

### *Norman sources*

The only Norman source that directly concerns us is Dudo of Saint-Quentin's *Historia Normannorum*, written in the period 1015-1026 and heavily criticised by most modern scholars. His account is a history of the early dukes of Normandy and their activities, written for the court and stressing the legitimacy of their claim to power. Obviously the accuracy of any work composed for such a purpose is open to question, but it has been recently argued that Dudo did not intend to record facts but instead to write a 'lineage history', in effect a Norman 'saga' incorporating identifiable literary motifs (Searle 1984, 121-2, 134). This may then be used to give us

the Normans' view of themselves, 'the pattern of their present polity and of their destiny' (Searle 1984, 137). While this is undoubtedly of great value it does not assist the student of the earlier period that Dudo writes about. He gives a description of the Viking occupation of Brittany and its end, discussed fully in chapter 2, which is completely at odds with that of Flodoard and stresses the intervention of the Norman duke. Dudo's chronology and interpretation have been examined in some detail by de la Borderie (1898, 373-80) and demonstrated to be false. His account is not complete fiction however, simply a distortion of reality, and his history contains many important items of information. A further insight into the nature of his work and the atmosphere of the Norman court can be gained from a study of his contemporary, the poet Garnier of Rouen (cf. Musset 1954b, 247-8). Thus while Dudo's records may be used, great care must be taken.

#### *Anglo-Saxon, Irish and Welsh sources*

Considering English sources first, a wealth of information about the Vikings may be obtained from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Although essentially an 'official' history of the Wessex dynasty, the *Chronicle* gives plausible details about the campaigns of the Great Army in the late ninth century: its wars with the English and its movements on the Continent. The *Chronicle*'s treatment of the size and logistics of the Viking threat has been analysed at length in recent years (notably by Sawyer 1971, 123-32 and Brooks 1979) and is of great importance for the understanding of the Scandinavian impact on Brittany in the ninth century, since the army concerned is the same but seen from a different perspective. While the same reservations apply to Asser's *Life of King Ælfred*, this is less concerned with the Scandinavians and instead offers insights into the relationship of Brittany to England, examined in chapter 2.

Relevant source material is also found in Celtic Britain and Ireland with both direct and indirect references. The various Irish annals, especially those of Ulster, Clonmacnoise and the Four Masters, frequently place their emphasis on Scandinavian activities outside Ireland (cf. MacNiocaill 1975). Particularly close links existed between the Norse and Danish colonies of Dublin and York, and the politics of the Irish Sea certainly affected those Vikings travelling to or occupying Brittany (though with less harm-

ful long-term consequences than the Dubliners' preoccupation with external affairs; cf. Ó Corráin 1972, 104). Among the more vexing problems is that of Ragnarr loðbrók, the great Viking chieftain whose very existence is questionable and whose 'sons' are recorded as leading elements of the Great Army in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and elsewhere. Although the Viking forces with which Ragnarr and his 'sons' are associated are central to any study of Scandinavian contact with Brittany, detailed debate as to their involvement or existence is regrettably beyond the scope of this paper (for the main arguments see Smyth 1975; 1977; 1979; Ó Corráin 1977-8; McTurk 1976). Interesting parallels exist between the situations in early medieval Ireland and Brittany, for in both regions the animosity felt towards the Scandinavian invaders by the indigenous people simply confused the existing state of civil hostility, as reflected in the frequent use made of the Vikings as mercenaries by the natives in their power struggles. It is noticeable that the Irish sources do not employ defamatory epithets when describing Scandinavian forces as frequently as do contemporary European documents. Comparisons have also been made between the Irish social structure based on the *rí* and *túath* and the Icelandic social system built around the *goðar*, while there is a remarkable similarity between the complex Irish law codes and the Icelandic laws, especially those governing killing (Sawyer 1982b). As with Ireland, the main Scandinavian influence on Brittany came from Norway – thus the nature of Hiberno-Norse relations is of particular importance.

As mentioned above, Wales has particularly interesting parallels with Brittany. Links between the two regions will be explored in later chapters using evidence from the saints' lives and charters (cf. Davies 1982b), such as those from Llandaff (Davies 1982a, 192). Apart from the *Annales Cambriae*, no continuous chronicle survives for early Welsh history such as does for example in Wessex, so we must rely on contemporary Irish and Anglo-Saxon sources together with later Welsh authors like Giraldus Cambrensis who must be used with great care. An exception is the *Armes Prydein*, the 'Prophecy of Britain', a poem which describes a looked-for alliance of all the Celtic realms and the Dublin Norse who will rise up against Anglo-Saxon rule. Its date is disputed but it is generally agreed to be mid-to-late ninth century, the problem being its relationship to Æthelstan's Brunanburh campaign of 937 and the later wars with Eiríkr blóðøx in the 950s. These issues are discussed in chapter 2, since the poem's references to Brittany are illuminating in a Viking context.

The final primary source to consider is not a document at all, but is nevertheless appropriate to this chapter: the Bayeux Tapestry. Embroidered shortly after the conquest of England, the Tapestry depicts in its earlier sections Duke William's campaign against Conan II of Brittany and shows several Breton towns and fortifications at Dinan, Dol and Rennes. These pictures obviously provide useful references for the earlier period too, and some of the artefacts illustrated have been cited as parallels for items in the Breton archaeological assemblages (cf. Wilson 1985, 175, discussed below). In addition, while the objectivity of the Tapestry is open to question in view of its nature as a celebration and confirmation of Norman power, the contemporary scenes of daily life and military exercises are unimpeachable.

In conclusion, a few words should be said about the effect of the Scandinavian raids on the Breton scriptoria. Before the Viking attacks began, Brittany had a tradition of fine illumination (cf. Wormald 1977; Morey, Rand and Kraeling 1931) and was a centre of book production with recorded transmissions of manuscripts to Wales and possibly England (Davies 1982a, 215). Foci of learning and culture existed at Léhon, Redon and Dol (cf. Périn and Feffer 1985, 449; Riché 1985), while neighbouring Neustria also enjoyed far-reaching fame for the quality of its book decoration (Mütherich 1985) and literary invention (Fontaine 1985), with twenty scriptoria divided among the bishoprics and monasteries (Vezin 1985). Following the initial impact of the ninth-century raids, however, book production dwindled and eventually ceased as the monasteries were sacked and burned. The saints' relics and shrines, once thought to be protection enough against attack as at Paris in 886 (a notion reinforced by rewritten saints' lives), were given priority for evacuation in the face of an onslaught thought by some to be an instrument of divine judgement (Riché 1969, 709). By 882 books were eagerly sought as the raids escalated in the late ninth century, an escalation reflected in the great exodus of church possessions and clergy (discussed in chapter 2, but see Chédeville and Guillotel 1984, 379-89; Wallace-Hadrill 1975b, 222-6). Many relics and manuscripts came to southern England where there is evidence of several Breton saints' cults. A similar situation existed in Neustria, where no monasteries at all remained by the time of Rollo (Gongu-Hrólfr) (c. 911-925); the relationship of the Breton and Neustrian churches during this decline is discussed by le Patourel (1944, 137). The resulting dearth of late ninth- and tenth-century Breton records has been noted above, and did not begin to be reversed

until Alain Barbetorte's restoration of the monasteries after 939, when a new cultural lead was taken from the Frankish and Latin traditions.

## 2. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: FRANCE IN THE VIKING AGE

Although the existing documentary record has been subject both to intentional and accidental distortion by contemporary scribes, and to the arbitrary bias of manuscript survival, it is still possible to construct a fairly coherent, if broad, scheme of events and raids over the ninth and tenth centuries in France; this may then be compared with the archaeological evidence reviewed in chapter 3. In trying to avoid a relentless chronological narrative I have divided the period from the beginning of the ninth century to the end of the eleventh into five phases. Though each phase characterises a different general aspect of Scandinavian operations in France, with a specific reference to Brittany, it is important to realise that this is an imposition of artificial divisions on to a continuous historical sequence. The activities of the dozens of Scandinavian fleets and commanders present in France during this period, considered individually below, were obviously not restricted by any such chronological distinctions. Indeed, the need to consider separately the movements, objectives, composition and leadership of the various Scandinavian groups usually classified collectively as 'Vikings' is not only the central theme of this paper but is also vital if we are to understand the complex relationship of Brittany to the Frankish and Scandinavian worlds.<sup>2</sup>

### *The first raids: 799–856*

The eve of the ninth century saw the culmination of a series of Carolingian campaigns against Brittany, dating back to the sack of Vannes by Pippin III in 753, possibly an attempt to pacify the Bretons after a failed invasion in 748. (The date of Pippin's campaign is disputed; see Smith 1986 for a full discussion.) After a Frankish army led by the hero Roland had been sent into Brittany in 778, Franko-Breton hostility had intensified, with another invasion in 786 by Audulf (*ARF* 786). In 799, this resulted in the conquest of the whole region by Wido 'as had never been done

before' (*ARF* 799). In the early years of the ninth century the Franks launched several further consolidatory campaigns, notably in 811 by one of four Carolingian armies in the field that year (Verbruggen 1967, 428), and by Louis the Pious in 818. Following the rebellion of the Breton leaders Morvan and Wilhomar, Louis ordered additional expeditions against Brittany from Vannes and Rennes in 822, 824 and 825 (McKitterick 1983, 242). The friction between the Franks and Bretons, and the numerous Carolingian interventions in the area, had several causes. In part, the Carolingians were suppressing raids into Frankish territory, but more importantly perhaps, in doing so they were reviving earlier Merovingian claims to the region and extending the power of the Empire. Military gains along the Breton march had been consolidated by the granting of monastic estates there, which acted as both a buffer to Breton aggression and a convenient excuse for further Frankish campaigns to protect them. The rôle of the Frankish church in the attempted subjugation of Brittany was matched by aristocratic involvement, fostered through family connections (for example, from 813 to 822 the count of Vannes appears to have been the brother of Lambert of Anjou; see Davies 1981).

799, the year of Wido's initial conquest of Brittany, was a doubly significant one in that it also saw the first recorded Viking raid on Gaul, in the Vendée region, and thus the introduction of a new, extra-systemic factor into the politics of the Empire.<sup>3</sup> Following the first Scandinavian attacks, Charlemagne reacted by ordering the defence of Aquitaine in 800, and built a fleet to protect the Elbe eight years later. Until the 830s raids on France were scarce, although in 820 a small fleet of thirteen ships attacked Flanders and the Seine estuary before moving on to the Vendée coast (*ARF* 820; Hill 1981, 33), possibly using an island near Noirmoutier as a temporary base as they had done in 819 (Davies 1988, 22). The island of Noirmoutier itself became one of the major Viking sea-bases in France by the mid ninth century, and by 830/831 the monks of the monastery there had been forced to construct a *castrum* to defend themselves against the Scandinavians (Chédeville and Guillotel 1984, 253).

At about this time, a Breton called Nominoe was appointed as imperial representative in Brittany by Louis the Pious and appears to have been accepted by the populace as well as remaining loyal to the emperor. During the early years of Nominoe's office Viking attacks on Noirmoutier became so severe that between 834 and 836 the whole monastic community evacuated the island, taking

with them the relics of Saint Philibert (*AE* 836; see *Ermentarius* for an account of their journey). It is, however, worth stressing that the only records of Scandinavian raids on Brittany itself prior to 843 come from the eleventh-century *Chronicle of Nantes*. Until 838, Frisia had been the focus of Viking activity in western Europe, coming under constant attack by a large Danish fleet. Efforts to fortify the coasts against them had failed in 835, as had an abortive siege of the Vikings' base on Walcheren Island (*AB* 837); the trading centre of Dorestad was burned four times and the whole region laid waste (*AF* 835-7; *AB* 834-7; the Vikings in Frisia are discussed by Braat 1954). In 838, this same Danish fleet, probably composed of exiles from the Danish power struggles with Horik (cf. *AB* 836; papers by Olsen, Lebecq and Sawyer given at the 1987 Société d'Archéologie Médiévale conference at Caen), was wrecked by a storm off the Frisian coast (*AB* 838).

In 840, Louis the Pious died, an event with great repercussions for Brittany and the Carolingian Empire. The following year a massive Viking fleet sailed up the Seine, burning Rouen, Jumièges and several monasteries, and taking many captives (*AB* 841). They then sailed to the Loire estuary to meet with heavy resistance from Count Renaud, after the new emperor, Charles the Bald, had ordered the nobles of the Loire to organise their defences (Chédeville and Guillotel 1984, 258). Coinciding with this phase of Viking aggression (in 842 a second fleet destroyed the northern coastal emporium of Quentovic in collaboration with Frankish traitors (*AB* 842)) the strained military capacity of the Empire made it possible for Nominoe to lead the Bretons in revolt against Carolingian rule. Count Reynald of Nantes was killed by Nominoe's son, Erispoe, and Bretons fought alongside Saxons and Gascons at the battle of Worms (Verbruggen 1967, 425; for a discussion of Breton military tactics see Nicolle 1984, 16).

In June 843, Nantes was attacked on the festival of Saint John the Baptist by a Viking fleet operating in alliance with the rebellious Count Lambert (*AB* 843). The cathedral was stormed and Bishop Gunhard slain with all his clergy and many of the citizens. The fleet then continued up the Loire to sack the monasteries at Indres and Vertou (see de la Borderie 1898, 310-14), northern Poitou and back down along the coast of Aquitaine, wintering on an island, perhaps Noirmoutier. The next year, 844, saw further raiding by this same fleet, severe enough to bring Nominoe back from Le Mans, where he was campaigning against the Franks, in order to fight the invaders (*AB* 844). The fleet withdrew, sailing

up the Garonne destroying everything as far as Toulouse. They then turned south to Galicia, where they were driven back by missile-throwing war machines (*AB* 844), wintering on the coastal islands off Poitou.

The depredations of this fleet acted as a severe drain on Carolingian military resources, taxing Charles the Bald's ability to respond to such a mobile threat. In 845, the Scandinavian fleet which had first appeared on the Seine four years earlier sent 120 ships upriver to Paris, exacting a Danegeld payment of 7000 pounds of silver from the emperor. Taking advantage of Charles's weakness, Nominoe defeated a large Carolingian army at Ballon later in the year (*AB* 845). The following year, 846, Charles, faced with raiding all along the northern and western coasts of France, had no option but to make peace with the Bretons. A growing threat was also appearing in the far north, as the Danes consolidated their hold on Frisia after Horik of Denmark had sent a massive raiding force (the sources claim 600 ships, almost certainly a gross exaggeration) up the Elbe against Louis the previous year, destroying Hamburg after three battles (*AF* 845; *AB* 845-6).

In 847, Brittany suffered its worst raiding up to that time, as the fleet of Vikings based on the coastal islands near the mouth of the Loire launched a major offensive. Nominoe and the Breton army resisted, fighting three battles, but eventually the Scandinavians were victorious (*AB* 847). Nominoe himself was forced to flee for a short time, but managed to buy the Vikings off — one of only two occasions on which the Bretons paid Danegeld (Smith 1985). The fleet then ravaged the coast of Aquitaine.

It is apparent that after 841 there were two main Scandinavian fleets raiding in France, broadly based on the Seine and Loire rivers, though they recognised no fixed boundaries (for example, the Seine Vikings fought on the Loire in 841). Those operating on the Seine are usually referred to as *Dani* 'Danes' in the *Annales Bertiniani*, in preference to the more common term *Nordmanni* 'Norsemen' used for Scandinavians in general. This fleet did not winter in France until 851, instead returning to Denmark. It was probably not a cohesive unit as such, rather a loose affiliation of looters and pirates returning regularly to an area known to be a worthwhile target. The Loire fleet was very different, wintering off the coast of Poitou and Aquitaine for three years after 843. Only a few estimates of size are given in the sources for its early activities, but between 67 and 80 vessels is likely (see Brooks 1979 for a comparison of Viking fleet sizes). Nothing is known of the

change in composition of this fleet, if any, over these three years but it seems probable that it acted as an effective, combined force presumably under a nominal leadership and with at least a basic command structure (the infrastructure of peripatetic Scandinavian forces is discussed briefly below in relation to the Great Army and the mercenary fleets of the 880s and 890s, and in more depth in Price, forthcoming). As to the fleet's origins, the *Annales Engolismenses* call them *Wesfaldingi*, 'Westfoldings'(?), in 843, a statement supported by recent scholars (McKitterick 1983, 232). These two armies, Danish and Norwegian, are henceforth referred to as the Seine and Loire Vikings respectively. A third fleet, mentioned above and operating along the Somme and in Frisia, also formed an important factor in the mid ninth-century Frankish political situation, acting as a constant threat and drain on resources though never active on the west coast or in Brittany.

During this first phase of raiding, Nominoe had made strenuous efforts to further Breton independence from Carolingian influence, particularly that of the Frankish church. The details of this are the subject of much debate. The establishment of the Redon community in 832 during the reign of Louis the Pious may have been a deliberate element in this policy; the expulsion of four Frankish bishops in 848 over the question of the Rule of Saint Benedict of Aniane, and their replacement with Breton clerics seems unequivocal (*CN* 848; Bernier 1982, 109–11). Nominoe apparently set up an archbishopric at Dol in an attempt to foster an independent Breton church, though the see was not ratified by Rome for several centuries, but there are still too many source problems to be certain (see Smith 1982; for a discussion of Breton religious institutions, see de la Borderie 1898, 246–75). In addition to his efforts to achieve ecclesiastical autonomy, Nominoe also expanded Brittany's borders, gaining Rennes and Nantes from the Franks in 846, and raiding far into Anjou, the Vendômois and the Bessin.

In 848 Charles managed to drive off a small fleet of Danes who had been besieging Bordeaux (*AB* 848), but no further Viking activity is recorded until 850. In that year the *Annales Bertiniani* report that the Scandinavians began to fight amongst themselves. The arrival of a new Danish leader in Frisia, Roric, the brother of the Haraldr who commanded the fleet raiding there in the 830s, seems to have disrupted the balance of power among the Frisian Vikings with a significant effect on north-western France. Having previously served as a mercenary under both Louis and Lothar,

Roric began to ravage along the Rhine and Waal in 850; in response, Lothar ceded Dorestad to him on the condition that he took over the administration and resisted further Danish attacks, thus granting the Scandinavians a major power-base in the north. In the same year, Haraldr's son Godfred moved into the Seine and formed an alliance with Charles the Bald (*AF* 850; *AB* 850).

The following year, 851, Nominoe died and was succeeded by his son Erispoe. Charles the Bald attempted a hasty invasion but was defeated by Erispoe at the Battle of Jengland. As a result, Rennes and Nantes were again ceded to the Bretons along with the Pays de Retz. This may also have been an attempt to buy Breton aid against the Viking threat from Noirmoutier, since in the same year Charles had already had to drive back a Danish force which had moved south from Frisia to sack Rouen, before marching on foot to Beauvais (*AB* 851). To complicate the situation still further, Charles also began actively to support Erispoe's cousin, Salomon, against him. In 852, Charles went so far as to grant Salomon a third of Brittany.

The same year Haraldr was killed fighting in Frisia, and Godfred's fleet (recorded as 252 ships) was bribed to leave the region. Ignoring this agreement, Godfred raided along the Scheldt and attacked settlements in Frisia before sailing down to the Seine. His fleet was met by a combined Frankish army under Charles and Lothar, and besieged (*AB* 852). It proved only a temporary halt to Godfred's Vikings however, since the siege was lifted when Charles was forced to leave in 853. The Danes sailed out into the open sea and round the Breton peninsula into the Loire estuary, where they sacked Nantes and Saint-Florent (*AB* 853; it is interesting that an entry written in 1054 in the *Annals of Saint-Florent* attributes the destruction to Nominoe, see Chédeville and Guillotel 1984, 230). Tours was also burned, though the monks of Saint-Martin's had time to remove relics to Corméry (*AB* 853).

Godfred's fleet encamped on the Ile de Bièce in the Loire at Nantes. At this time, another Viking fleet (itself perhaps a subdivision of a larger force) under the command of Sidroc had arrived at the mouth of the Loire. In desperation the Bretons agreed an alliance with Sidroc's Vikings, the terms of which are not recorded, and in 854 Sidroc and Erispoe attacked Godfred's camp with 105 ships. The Bretons suffered heavy casualties and were driven back (Smith 1985). The following day Sidroc betrayed the Bretons and allowed Godfred to sail up the Vilaine with 130 ships towards an unprotected Redon. Sidroc led his fleet round the coast into the

Seine. Redon was saved by a sudden storm which wrecked some of Godfred's ships, but the remainder of the fleet disembarked to loot elsewhere in Brittany (*CR* 369, 21–2), taking many captives including the bishop of Vannes.

In 855, Godfred withdrew to join his uncle Roric in Dorestad. The previous year civil war had broken out in earnest in Denmark, causing many Danes to return home from Frisia (*AF* 854). The resulting carnage wiped out almost the entire Danish ruling family, including Horik himself (*AB* 854; for the Frisian politics see Sawyer 1982a, 87–8, 91, 98). Sidroc's Loire Vikings returned from the Seine to attack Bordeaux, and were driven back to Nantes after an abortive assault on Poitiers (*AB* 855).

The career of Godfred provides a convenient link with which to conclude this discussion of the first phase of raiding in France. The

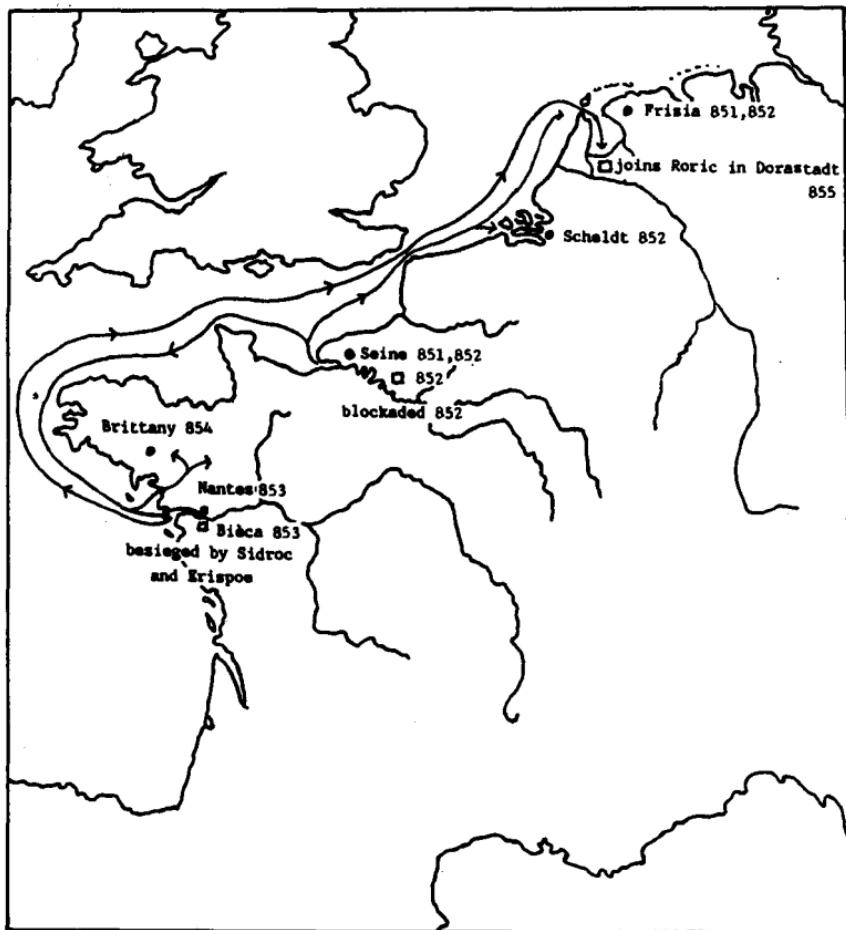


Fig. 3. The campaigns of Godfred, son of Haraldr, 851–855

only Viking commander known to have fought in Frisia, on the Seine and on the Loire, which can be considered the three foci for Scandinavian operations in ninth-century western Europe, Godfred is an excellent example of a pirate chieftain of this period. Like many of the Viking leaders, often described as 'kings' (*reges* or *regii*) in Frankish sources, he was an exiled renegade from Scandinavia's constant struggles for power, taking the opportunity provided by foreign raiding to gain wealth and a following in a way not possible before (earlier exiles had gone to Sweden or Finland). Godfred's activities embody the rôle played by Scandinavians in France up to 856: peripatetic raiding over a large area with a medium-sized fleet, with occasional over-wintering and occupation of Frankish settlements, involvement in Scandinavian politics, and shifting alliances with and against the Carolingians, Bretons and other Viking fleets. The mid ninth century saw a dramatic change in the Viking attitude to Europe.

### *The assault on France: 856-892*

856 saw the beginning of one of the most intense periods of Scandinavian activity abroad in the ninth century. The simple piratical operations carried out before were replaced by a carefully planned attack on the centres of wealth, settlement and trade, taking into account local topography and religious festivals when the targets would be unprepared for defence: the 'Great Invasion' of 856-862 (McKitterick 1983, 234-5). This period particularly highlights the extent to which the Vikings were involved in Frankish politics, and the rivalries between Charles the Bald, the sons of Louis the Pious, the disaffected Neustrian and Aquitanian nobles and the Bretons.

In July 856, Charles the Bald was occupied fighting renegade counts in Aquitaine and an alliance of the Loire Vikings and Pippin II when news reached him of a combined Viking attack on Paris. Sidroc had sailed up the Seine and joined forces with a second Scandinavian fleet commanded by Björn at Pîtres; continuing up-river to Paris, everything had been burned except for the churches of Saints Germain-des-Prés, Denis, Stephen and Vincent which had paid bribes to be spared. Charles reacted in October, launching an offensive with Adalhard, Rudolf, Welf and Counts Ricois, Augier and Bérengar. The Vikings were driven back to their winter base on Oselles island (*AB* 857 [856]). In addition to defending

Aquitaine and the Seine, Charles was faced with attacks from the west. Orléans was sacked by a Danish host and Charles was forced to cede Maine to the Bretons in return for a temporary alliance against the Vikings. The Carolingian position was so threatened that Charles even attempted to gain English help against the Scandinavians by marrying his daughter Judith to Aethelwulf of Wessex (a similar policy had been promoted by Charlemagne, see Wallace-Hadrill 1967, 691-4; Hodges, 1981a, 224).

The following year, 857, Charles's support of Salomon in Brittany grew to fruition when Erispoe was assassinated in a church. Although Salomon immediately seized control of Brittany, however, ostensibly as a Frankish vassal, he at once began to ally with anyone who would oppose Charles; notably Louis the Stammerer and Robert the Strong of Neustria. Charles was unable to deal successfully with a major raid on Tours and the surrounding districts by the Loire Vikings, being simultaneously faced with a Danish attack on Chartres during which Bishop Frotbald was killed (*AB* 857). In response to Charles's inability to defend the Seine and Loire, not surprising in the circumstances, Robert the Strong and his supporters rebelled in 858. Charles the Bald formed an alliance at Verberie with Bjørn, one of the Seine Viking commanders who had fought at Paris two years earlier (*AB* 858). The outcome of this alliance is not known, but Charles besieged the remaining Seine Vikings on Oscelles in July, after paying a massive ransom to Sidroc for the abbot of Saint-Denis who had been captured at Paris. Although joined by his nephew Lothar II after tense negotiations, Charles was once again obliged to raise the siege in September to quell a rebellion of Neustrian counts. The revolt had been backed by Salomon in alliance with Louis the German (*AB* 858).

In 859, the Seine Vikings continued to raid widely, destroying Noyon and Beauvais, killing bishop Immo and forcing the monks to flee with the relics of Denis, Eleutherius and Rusticus. In this year too, a new threat to the Empire appeared in the north, as a new Danish army arrived on the Somme under the command of Weland. (Although Roric had sailed to Denmark in 857, Danes had continued to raid in Frisia, attacking the Scheldt basin and Saxony from their bases at Dorestad and Batavia.) Weland's fleet laid waste Amiens and Saint-Valéry-sur-Somme and wintered at the mouth of the river (*AB* 859). The following year, 860, this Somme fleet campaigned in England but Weland offered to return and fight the Seine Vikings for Charles, provided he was paid 3000

pounds of silver and supplied with food and wine. Charles agreed, raising the money by levying a tax on church land (*AB* 860; Davies 1988, 57-8, 213). In the same year, another Danish fleet raided along the Rhône.

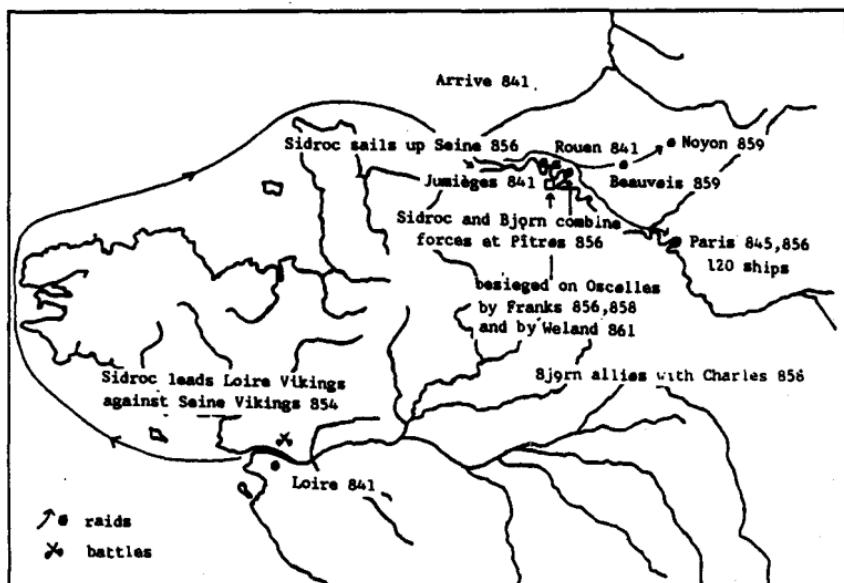


Fig. 4. Seine Viking activity 841-861, and the movements of Sidroc and Björn

Weland returned from England with 200 ships in 861 and besieged the Seine Vikings on Oscelles, being joined later in the blockade by reinforcements of 60 ships which had sailed up the Seine and Epte. After a payment of 6000 pounds of silver, however, Weland allowed the Seine Vikings to sail away and winter elsewhere on the river while his own Somme fleet made camp at Saint-Meur-des-Fossés (*AB* 861). Paris was burned again by a Danish fleet which also ravaged the Thérouanne district.

In early 862 Charles the Bald changed his response to the Viking raids from a reactive to a preventative basis (cf. Sawyer 1982a, 88-91), initiating a programme of river fortifications to restrict access for the Scandinavian fleets. The Marne was blockaded at several points, trapping Weland's ships at Trilbardon Bridge and forcing them into Jumièges for repairs. In February, Weland formally submitted to Charles (*AB* 862), who then ordered the construction of fortifications on the Seine. The remainder of Weland's vessels split from his command and joined a small force of Vikings on the Loire, which had hitherto been raiding in Spain. This combined fleet was hired for a reported 6000 pounds of silver by Robert

the Strong who was now campaigning against Salomon, 'before Salomon could ally with them against him' (*AB* 862), a salutary reminder of the changeability of Viking loyalties. Salomon responded by hiring 12 ships of Loire Vikings who had been troubling southern Brittany (*CR* 121, 269-70).

After 862 the pressure of raids on France eased for a short time. Weland, since 859 the principal Viking commander in France, was killed in a duel in 863. Salomon made peace with Charles in the same year, acknowledging his power and receiving land grants between the Mayenne and the Sarthe in return, as well as being made lay abbot of Saint-Aubin of Angers. The Viking threat was concentrated in the north, in Frisia, as Dorestad was sacked again and a Danish fleet sailed up the Rhine to a base near Neuss; they were contained and driven back by Lothar and a Saxon army (*AB* 863). Limited raiding still continued in France, however, as at Poitiers in 863.

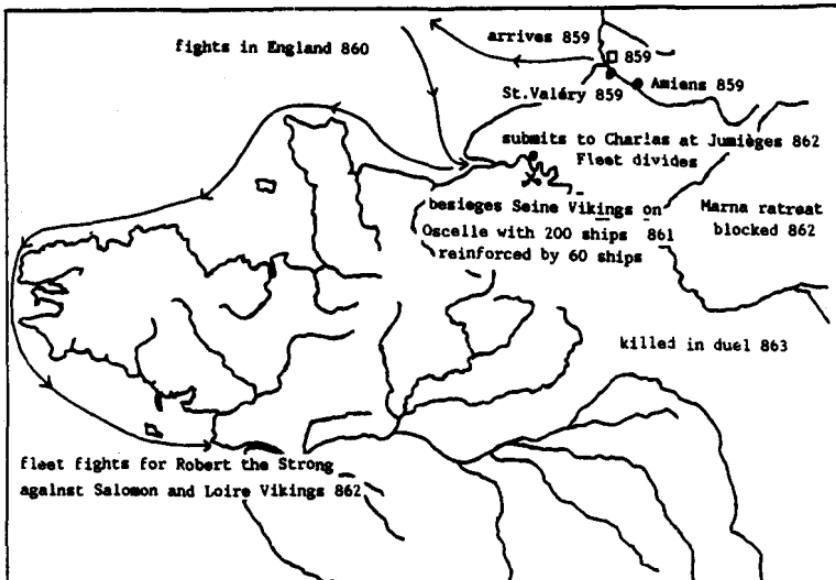


Fig. 5. Weland's campaigns in north-western France, 859-863

Several of the Frankish defensive works set up in the early 860s seem to have been almost immediately dismantled, with royal sanction, and the stone re-used in ecclesiastical buildings, perhaps an indication of the value of cathedrals as refuges (McKitterick 1983, 233). At the assembly of Pîtres in 864 Charles requested that these fortifications be rebuilt. Local defences were proving an inadequate containment to the Viking threat; in the same year the

citizens of Aquitaine took up arms against the Seine Vikings but were unable to prevent them sacking Clermont and reaching their ships, Robert of Anjou defeated one group of Loire Vikings but was beaten back by a second, and Pippin II of Aquitaine had actually joined the Danes and renounced Christianity (*AB* 864). The dynasty of Haraldr was still causing trouble in the north, as his son Rodulf was able to extort a Danegeld payment from Lothar, who was fighting Vikings in Flanders and on the Rhine.

Through a combination of mismanagement and civil dissension Charles was unable to employ his fortification system to good effect. In 865, 50 ship-loads of Seine Vikings escaped a blockade at Pîtres, bypassing fortified bridges at Auvers and Charenton after a raid on the Parisian vineyards, while the Loire Vikings were able to raid upriver as far as Fleury and burn Orléans before returning to their base. A second Loire force was defeated at Poitiers by Count Robert (*AB* 865 mentions five hundred casualties and a great haul of 'banners and weapons') and in Aquitaine the local militia fought with a Scandinavian host from the Charente under the command of Sigefrid. Later in the year Salomon again allied with Vikings for a joint raid on Le Mans.

866 saw a dramatic victory for the Seine Vikings: after defeating Robert and Odo at Melun a large host forced Charles the Bald to pay not only a tribute of 4000 pounds of silver and *wergild* for dead Vikings, but also to agree to release all Scandinavian prisoners. An abortive attempt to block the Seine at Pîtres failed in June and by July the Seine host had reached the open sea (*AB* 866). The Franks did have some success, however, confining the Loire Vikings to their base after repulsing them from Neustria. Their permanent camp in the Loire estuary made the surrounding area so hazardous that Bishop Actard of Nantes was forced to request translation to a safer see (*CR* 264), which was granted to him by the Pope two years later.

The period 866-873 was one of escalating Viking activity in Brittany, as often in alliance with the Bretons as in opposition to them, while Salomon's political manoeuvres grew more intricate and sophisticated. The year after the Le Mans raid of 865, Salomon made contact with Hæsten (Hásteinn), one of the main commanders of the Great Army, and a joint Breton-Danish force attacked Poitou, Anjou, Maine and Touraine. Le Mans was sacked again and a Frankish army was defeated at Brissarthe, a battle in which Counts Robert and Ranulf were killed (*AB* 866; *Regino* records the battle under his 867 annal, describing a night attack

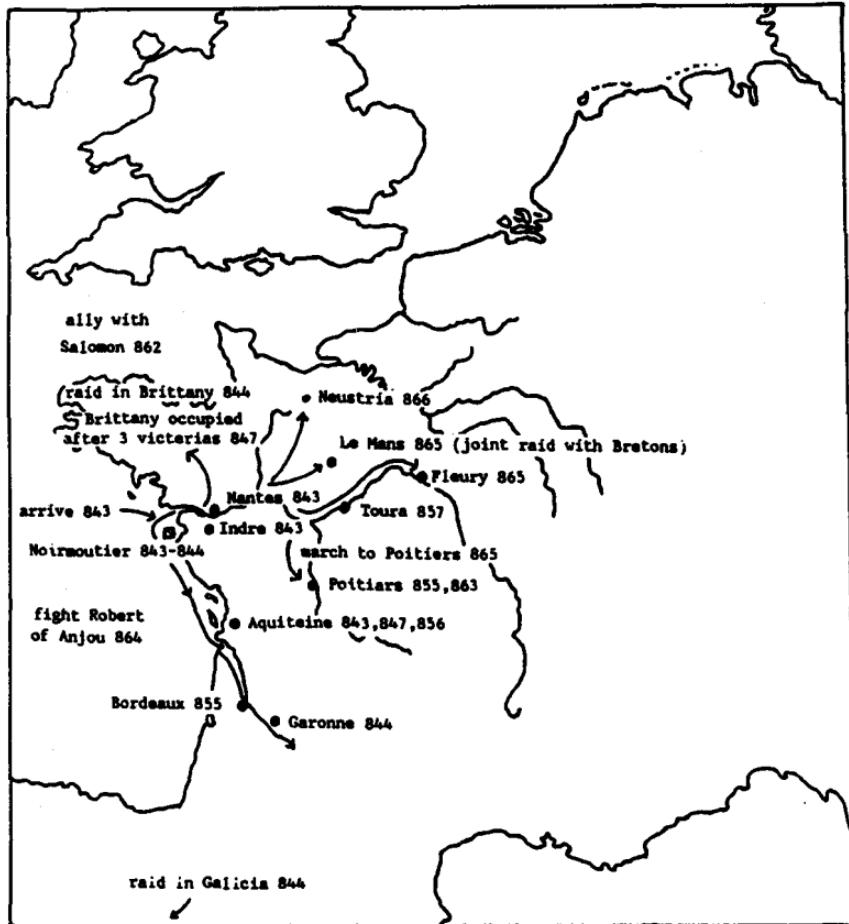


Fig. 6. The Loire Vikings, 843-866

on a fortified church). As a result, Salomon was granted the abbeys, *villae* and fiscs in Coutances and thereafter styled himself *rex* (though it would be inappropriate to lay too much stress on this title; Wendy Davies, pers. comm.). It is important to note that Salomon was an ally, not a vassal, of Charles and ruled a very much independent Brittany (see Davies 1981). The first contemporary reference to the Dol archbishopric occurs at this time, and it is possible that ecclesiastical estrangement from the Empire was more pronounced under Salomon than Nominoe. Through his complex web of mutually exclusive alliances, Salomon nevertheless sought to make himself and Brittany vital to the protection of north-west Francia, where he may have held equal power to Charles (Davies 1981, 91).

By 868 Salomon had agreed to lead a campaign against the Loire

Vikings with Carolingian aid, perhaps in return for a grant of land (Davies 1988, 20), but instead found himself defending south-eastern Brittany after the promised Frankish army ignored the Scandinavians and ravaged Neustria itself. It was left to the levies at Poitiers to drive off the Vikings (*AB* 868). In April 869 Salomon confirmed the monks of Redon in the sanctuary at Plélan, to which they had fled earlier, and the relics of Saint-Maxent were brought there (*CR* 189-92; Privat 1971, 84-5; Davies 1988, 23). By May, Håsteinn had assumed command of a group of Loire Vikings and attacked the Vilaine region. They were met in battle by 'Salomon and all the Bretons' (*CR* 242) and the *princeps* Guorhwant, who had halted in Avessac before proceeding towards Nantes (Davies 1988, 171); a peace treaty was concluded by exchanges of hostages, livestock and food, with the Bretons also gaining part of the Anjou wine harvest as part of the agreement since their access to it had been blocked by the Vikings (*AB* 869; *Regino* 869). Despite the treaty, Abbot Hugh and Gauzfrid attacked the Vikings later in the year and killed a monk who had become apostate (*AB* 869); Charles the Bald ordered the fortification of Le Mans and Tours. The early 870s saw further Viking activity in Brittany, sufficient to cause the Breton nobles to prevent Salomon's intended pilgrimage to Rome so that he could lead the Breton defence (*CR* 247), but no details are recorded of the raids (though *Bili* mentions a raid on Alet before 872: II, 15-16). In 873 Håsteinn's army was besieged at Angers by the Franks who had trapped the Scandinavians by diverting the course of the river there (de la Borderie 1898, 94).

In 874 Brittany's internal politics were thrown into turmoil when Salomon was murdered by a rival. The resulting surge of Viking attacks made possible by the power vacuum was narrowly held at bay by a hasty Breton-Frankish alliance between Alain of Vannes and Bérengar of Rennes (de la Borderie 1898, 334; see also Musset 1965). The civil warfare intensified the following year when Pascwethen, Salomon's son-in-law, made an alliance with the Loire Vikings, probably under Håsteinn, and attacked Erispoe's son-in-law Guorhwant at Rennes, having sacked the monastery of Saint-Melaine en route. From this power struggle Pascwethen's brother Alain and Guorhwant's son Judicael emerged as joint rulers of Brittany, cooperating well until 877, when the Vikings began to exploit their growing dissension.

In the late 870s the Scandinavian raids intensified as the deaths of both Charles the Bald and Louis the Stammerer gave the Vikings virtual immunity from retaliation (Chédeville and Guillotel 1984,

361). Widespread devastation in Neustria forced the monks of Evreux, Lisieux, Bayeux and Avranches to flee. The inability of Charles the Bald to fight the Vikings successfully had led to the promotion of those who could, such as Baldwin II of Flanders. However, this caused a preoccupation with more localised and opportunistic resistance since many of these men frequently made alliances with Vikings for their own ends, despite being charged with the defence of the Empire (cf. Flodoard *HRE* III, 23). From 880 to 882 the imperial frontiers were overrun by Vikings, with raiding all along the Rhine, in Frisia and in the area north-east of the Seine; no attacks are recorded in Britanny during this period. The main Viking commanders are recorded as Godafrid, Sigifrid, Vurm and Hals, and are sometimes said to have fought in mounted units. The dislocating effect on the Franks was considerable, with numerous key noblemen and clerics slain and many towns and monasteries destroyed; to this was added a financial drain as enough Danegeld was paid to fill 200 ships. (The details of these raids are not relevant to the Breton issue; they are discussed in Price 1988, 31-6 and visually summarised in Hill 1981, 42. The main primary sources are the *Annales Fuldaenses*, 880-82, which are severely critical of the Frankish response to the Vikings.)

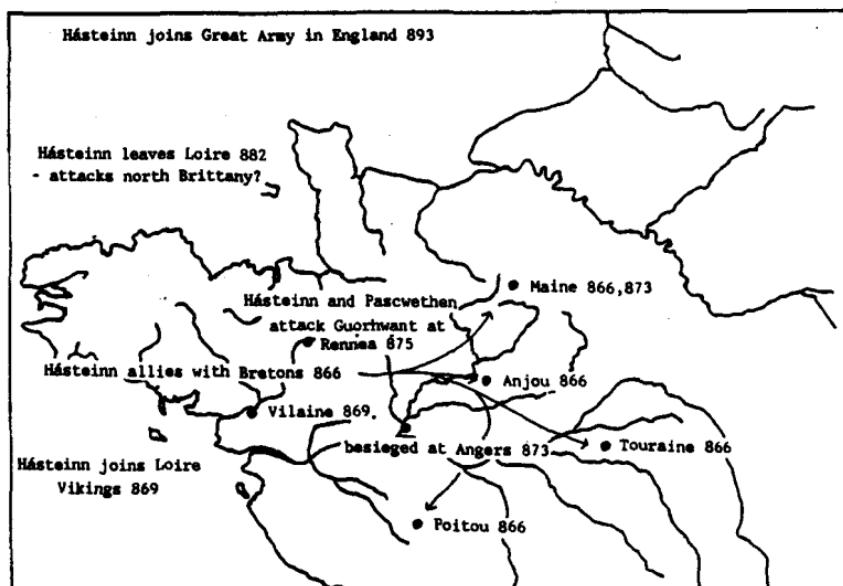


Fig. 7. The Loire Vikings 866-882, and the campaigns of Hasteinn

During 883 and 884 the Carolingians began to recover, rebuilding and fortifying the Rhineland settlements and driving the Vikings

back to the frontiers. Count Heimrich freed the Rhine and the Frisians won a great victory at Norden; peace was strengthened by the marriage of Godafrid to Lothar's step-daughter (*AF* 883-4). Brittany had suffered least from the five-year assault: in 882 Håsteinn had left the Loire Vikings under the terms of his agreement with Louis III and may have begun raiding northern Brittany (de la Borderie 1898, 326-8; Smith 1985), and in 884 *Uurmonoc* (XXI) records a raid on the Ile Lavret monastery.

The Frankish recovery continued through 885, as Paris withstood the siege of Sigifrid's Danes. Heimrich killed Godafrid who had broken his oath and attacked the Rhineland, and a Viking army in Frisia was wiped out (*AF* 885). Despite these victories the tide began to turn against the Franks with startling speed. Scandinavians had now been in Francia continuously for over six years, and in one of the worst years of raiding in the ninth century the whole eastern Empire was inundated by Vikings. In 886 the Franks were defeated near Paris and Abbots Hugh and Gozelin were killed. In July of the same year, Heimrich, the defender of the eastern frontiers, was slain in battle by Sigifrid; the emperor decided to pay a tribute and retreat.

Brittany found itself the target of renewed raiding in 886, and in the latter part of the year the county of Nantes was overrun and the city captured. Alain of Broweroch was able to maintain only a guerrilla force to fight them (de la Borderie 1898, 329). By 888 the power-struggle between Alain of Vannes and Judicael had intensified to such a degree that no resistance was offered to the Scandinavians, and the Loire Vikings were able to occupy western Brittany completely (*Regino* 890). The death of Judicael in battle with the invaders left Alain in command of the Breton forces, and he led a united army to a great victory at Questembert, driving the Vikings back to the mouth of the Loire (see de la Borderie 1898, 494-5 for a discussion of the battle).

In 889 the Vikings in Frisia and their Slav allies concluded a peace treaty with the Empire (*AF* 889), leaving the Carolingians able to push the Seine fleet eastwards. Some Frankish settlements seem to have drawn up their own truce agreements with Vikings in their area, such as that made by the citizens of Meaux (McKittrick 1983, 232). Over 889-90 the Seine Vikings moved into Brittany, hard on the heels of the Loire fleet that Alain had successfully driven out (this latter force had broken up into several small flotillas and sailed west). Alain again joined forces with Bérengar of Rennes and led two Breton armies into the field. Finding their

retreat down the Marne blocked, the Vikings hauled their ships overland to the Vire and besieged Saint-Lô, where the Bretons virtually annihilated the fleet (*Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* 890; Smith 1985). A second force was also defeated on the river Couesnon. Alain won two more victories against the Seine Vikings the following year (*Regino* 891), which consolidated his hard-won peace.

As Alain finally cleared Brittany of Vikings, the Scandinavian stranglehold on the Empire was also coming to an end. King Arnulf destroyed the great army encamped at Louvain, killing Sigfrid and capturing sixteen Viking standards (*AF* 891), and attacks also lessened in Flanders after the strengthening of city walls. By the end of 892 the Great Army had left mainland Europe and sailed for England (*Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* 893), shifting the focus of Viking activity in the West firmly on to the kingdom of Wessex.

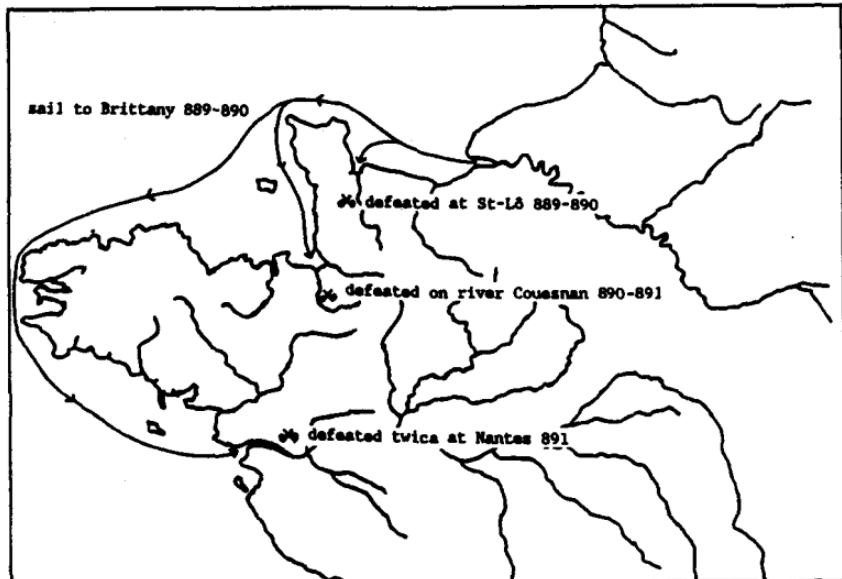


Fig. 8. Seine Viking campaigns in Brittany, 889-891

#### *The peace of Alain the Great: 892-907*

Alain's success in battle heralded a few years of peace for Brittany, and there are few raids recorded before his death in 907 (though the Loire Vikings sacked Tours in 903; see also *AV* 898 and Smith 1985). Instead, he made an attempt to rebuild the Breton church after its decline as a result of the Viking disruptions.

For several years after 899 there is no recorded activity by the Seine and Somme Vikings. It has been suggested that they congregated in the lower Seine area and began to settle (McKitterick 1983, 236), though this has not been proved.

Although severe, the Viking threat had been withstood up until 907 through a combination of military endeavour, judicious alliances and payment of tribute. Just as the Frankish response was marked by local defence rather than organised national resistance, in the ninth century the Viking attacks tended towards piecemeal raids rather than concentrated invasions (the apparent emphasis on the Scheldt basin may be due to an annalistic preoccupation). Before the early tenth century the Scandinavians showed no clear inclination to settle, but instead specialised in carefully planned attacks in ecclesiastical and market centres. Although the economic losses seem immense (and Danegeld payments certainly led to increased financial demands on the populace) it is possible that Charles the Bald had inherited an empire with already declining trade networks (Hodges 1981a, 228; though see Wallace-Hadrill 1975b, 228 for an alternative view).

There are no references to widespread agrarian devastation in Brittany (see Wallace-Hadrill 1975b, 229-32), but it has been argued that the Vikings may have deliberately avoided this and allowed agricultural production to be maintained, to provide themselves with a food supply to be exacted as part of tribute payments (Davies 1988, 55; *AB* 869). Viking supply routes and logistics are discussed in Chapter 4 below. In Brittany the raids seem to have been largely a problem for the aristocracy, with the peasants fighting only in personal defence, though it must be stressed that the details of Breton military organisation at a local level are obscure (Davies 1988, 23, 170). Certainly the capacity for armed resistance in Brittany may have been affected by dislocations in the chain of command from the ruler to the *machtierns*, the local hereditary officers upon whom the civil administration depended (see Davies 1981, especially 99; de la Borderie 1898, 124-64).

The dismemberment of Carolingian power, notably the division of the Empire in 888, was partly a result of the Vikings' drain on Frankish resources. This loss of coordinated regional control, together with the many gaps in the local power structures caused by the deaths of officials during raids, was a contributory factor to the establishment of small states such as Flanders and Normandy (Bates 1982, 5; see also Yver 1969, 302-6).

*The conquest and occupation of Brittany: 907–939*

Following the death of Alain the Great in 907, Brittany was left without a strong leader (it has been suggested that Breton resistance up to that time was chiefly dependent on the personal leadership in battle of Salomon and Alain, see Smith 1985). Although the sources are unclear, Viking attacks seem to have escalated dramatically during the reign of Gurmhailon, the count of Cornouaille, who succeeded Alain.

Far more significant for Brittany's future was a battle fought at Chartres in 911 between Charles III (the Simple) and the commander of the Seine Vikings, Rollo (usually identified with Gøngu-Hrólfr); as a result of this battle Hrólfr was granted the *pagi* of Talon, Caux, Roumois and parts of the Vexin and Evrecin in the 'Treaty of Saint-Clair-sur-Epte'. This agreement has been much discussed, and the statement by Dudo of Saint-Quentin that the cession included Brittany as well should be dismissed. The entire treaty may be an invention of Dudo, but a charter of 918 confirming a grant of land to the monastery of Saint-Germain-des-Prés says that land has been granted *Nottmannis Sequanensis videlicet Rolloni suisque comitibus* 'to the Northmen of the Seine, namely Rollo [Hrólfr] and his followers', *pro tutela regni* 'for the defence of the kingdom' (McKitterick 1983, 237; Lauer 1940–49, no. 92).

Hrólfr seems to have been made a count with responsibilities for defence and judicial administration, on similar terms to Salomon's receipt of the Cotentin but with the inclusion of bishoprics. Although Hrólfr was probably a Norwegian, the son of Earl Rognvaldr Mœrajarl, his army is likely to have been a conglomerate of Scandinavians including many Danes who had been with the Great Army in England. The valleys of the Orne, Dives and Risle were settled sporadically by different groups of Vikings over the following years. They seem to have ruled the Frankish population, which may not have been large, and to have rapidly absorbed Frankish customs and culture at a rate accelerated by intermarriage and conversion (see Musset 1975b, 42). The various Viking groups were by no means mutually friendly (see Douglas 1947, 107–8), and the constant civil strife recorded led to instability in the early year of Normandy's creation. Though there is no evidence of widespread repopulation, place-name research suggests settlers from Scandinavia, England, Ireland and possibly Orkney (see Fellows-Jensen 1988; Davis 1976, 21–5; Bates 1982, 16–19; Adigard des Gautries' definitive studies 1951–9 and Guinet 1980; the Celtic names may point more closely to the Hebrides — Gillian Fellows-Jensen, pers. comm.). There may have been a particularly strong

element of militant paganism in western Neustria, where place-names show that Scandinavian settlement was densest (see Bates 1982, 13–14).<sup>4</sup>

With the settlement of Hrólfr's Seine army, the character of Scandinavian involvement in France changes. 'Vikings' no longer, the invaders pursue definite land-taking objectives, linked to the fortunes of their fellow Scandinavians in England and Ireland. The attacks of the early tenth century in Brittany, however, represent the last phase of the 'First Viking Age', the period of raiding and devastation, and it has been suggested that the heaviest attacks on Brittany occur when Viking activity elsewhere eases off (Smith 1985), a theory discussed below. It is certainly clear that the 911 settlements around the Seine reduced raiding in that area and that only Brittany and Ireland were then subject to serious assault, something doubtless welcomed by the Franks.

For Brittany, the most dramatic consequence of Hrólfr's agreement with the Franks was that the most aggressive and ambitious of the Seine Vikings split off from the main group and sailed round the coast to the Loire. From this time onwards, Brittany was the focus of Viking raiding activity in France.

In 912 the raids continued with unparalleled ferocity. The monastery of Saint-Guenolé at Landévennec was destroyed by Vikings from the Loire in 913, and the monks fled to Château-du-Loir with the saint's relics (in 926 they moved again to Montreuil-sur-Mer). The impact of this phase of attacks can be seen particularly clearly in such evacuations, recorded at many monasteries, though it is not always apparent whether it is the whole community that leaves or just an escort for the monastic treasure and relics. Léhon was used as an assembly point for clerical fugitives as the attacks worsened, organised by Salvator of Alet who had fled there earlier with the relics of Saint Machutus (de la Borderie 1898, 364–5).

The effect on the church was already considerable by the early tenth century. After leaving Noirmoutier in 836, the community there travelled through Saint-Philibert-de-Grand-Lieu, on to Cunnauld in Anjou, Messay in Poitou, finally reaching Tournus in Bourgogne by May 875 (Chédeville and Guillotel 1984, 379–89). The monks of Saint-Martin-de-Vertou had left in 843 to go to Saint-Jouin-de-Marnes in Poitou (de la Borderie 1898, 310–14) and the clergy of Saint-Florent-le-Vieil at Mont Glonne departed for Berry in 866 (Chédeville and Guillotel 1984, 379–89). The Quimper community also went to Montreuil-sur-Mer, and Saint-Guenael's sent many monks first to Coucouronne and then to

Corbeil (de la Borderie 1898, 336). The relics of Saint Samson were moved from Dol to Avranches and Orléans (de la Borderie 1898, 367–8), and those of Saint-Paul-de-Léon were taken to Fleury (McKitterick 1983, 245). Saint-Méen removed its relics to safety in 919, Redon did the same in 924 and Saints Maxentius, Gildas, Melenius and Paternus of Vannes were among many others whose remains were evacuated between 917 and 927. Not all the major saints were removed, however, and some, such as Marcellinus, Hypothemius and Conwoion, remained in their churches. Hugh the Great made considerable efforts to settle the fleeing clergy, notably those from Dol and Bayeux (see Guillotel 1982).<sup>5</sup>

Many of the Breton saints' relics, monks and cult practice found their way to Æthelstan's England, where they became established bastions of the church, notably Samson's remains at Milton Abbas (*William of Malmesbury* 399–460); the English lists of saints' resting-places provide many more examples (Rollason 1978; Gougaud 1919–21).

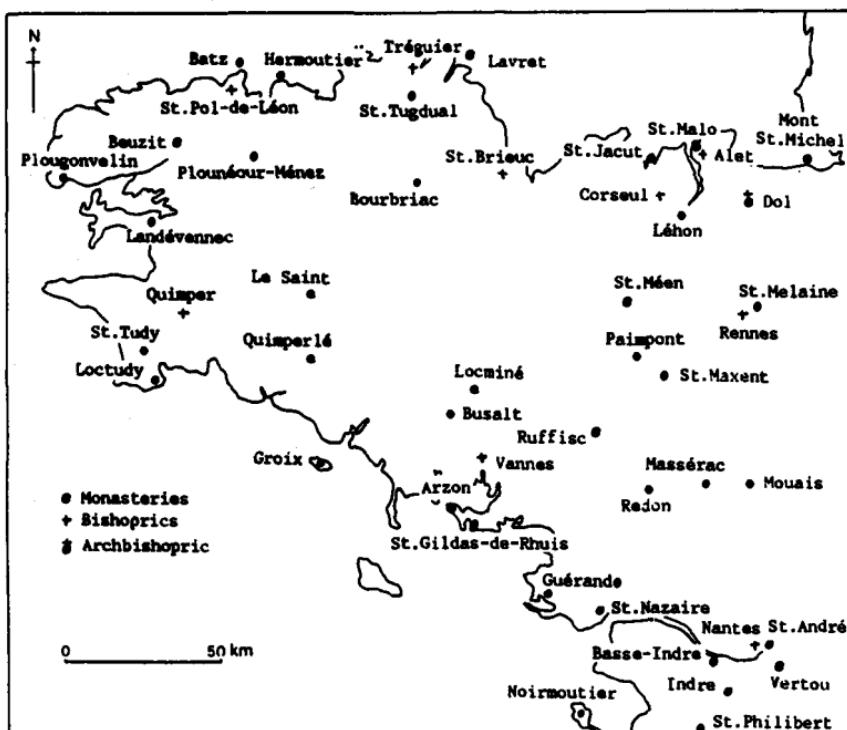


Fig. 9 The Church in Brittany from the eighth to tenth centuries

The movement of relics and monks has been seen by Wallace-Hadrill (1975b, 222–32) as reflecting the contemporary perception

of the Vikings as a real threat to Christianity itself, perhaps still felt as late as the eleventh century (cf. Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*). He draws attention to the emphasis placed on conversion as a condition in treaties (e.g. *AB* 873) and argues that perhaps the Scandinavians sometimes demanded apostasy as a similar indication of loyalty, as with Pippin II of Aquitaine (*AB* 864; also discussed by Brooks 1979, 12–16). Certainly, the desecration of churches was a widespread phenomenon (Wallace-Hadrill 1975b, 223–5) and possibly even blood sacrifices, as at the siege of Paris. But in Brittany itself there is no evidence either in the archaeology or place-names to suggest specific pagan cult activity (Olaf Olsen, pers. comm.).

In 914 Brittany suffered its worst raiding to date. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* records that a large fleet of Danes led by Ohter (Óttarr) and Hroald/Hraold (Haraldr?) sailed south from the Severn estuary to attack Brittany. It is possible that these Vikings were kept informed about the political situation both in Brittany and Frankia through connections with their countrymen in Normandy, and were thus able rapidly to take advantage of the disorganised and divided Bretons (Chédeville and Guillotel 1984, 337). The Danes campaigned in Brittany for nearly four years before moving north again to ravage England and Wales: during this time the Breton church, aristocracy and general popular morale were further eroded.

The end came in 919. A massive fleet of Loire Vikings sailed for Brittany under the command of a Norwegian, Rognvaldr, and landed at Nantes. It is possible that the incentive for the invasion came from reports of Ottarr's and Haraldr's success reaching the Scandinavian homelands, though there is no proof of this (de la Borderie 1898, 355). The picture we get is one of total devastation:

Nortmanni omnem Britanniam in Cornu-Galliae, in ora scilicet maritima, sitam depopulantur, proterunt atque delent, abductis, venditis, ceterisque cunctis eiectis Brittonibus.

Flodoard *Ann.* 919

Although the initial target seems to have been Nantes, a wealthy city excellently placed for controlling the mouth of the Loire and access to further targets upstream, there is no evidence that the effects of the invasion were confined to the south-east. The impact is particularly evident in the flight of refugees. Mathedoi of Poher and his son Alain Barbetorte (grandson of Alain the Great) together with many other counts, clerics and *machierns* fled to England. Others went into Bourgogne and Aquitaine (*CN* 81–3);

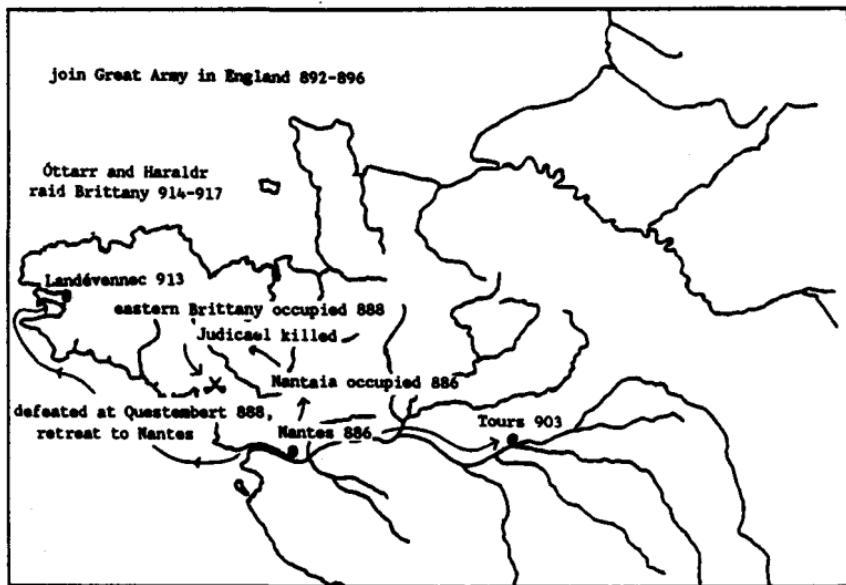


Fig. 10 The Loire Vikings, 886-917

Breton resistance appears to have been small, followed quickly by abandonment. This is not to imply a completely empty land (as Chédéville and Guillotel state, 1984, 397), since several monasteries obviously remained occupied at least until the 920s; Abbot Radbod of Dol was certainly present there in 926 when he sent a letter to *Æthelstan* requesting aid against the Scandinavians. The surviving Bretons may have been led by Judicael Bérengar, who seems to have stayed in Brittany throughout the invasion (*Hugh of Fleury* 4). It is nevertheless apparent that the scale of the invasion was unparalleled; the thoroughness of Rognvaldr's army in eliminating all opposition certainly implies that they intended to stay for a long time. The mention of slave-raiding by Flooard is probably a mistake, as there is no evidence of an increase in slavery in Scandinavia or elsewhere at this time (though see Wallace-Hadrill 1975b, 232), and any such prisoners would most likely have stayed in Brittany. It should be emphasised that only the Loire Vikings occupied Brittany in 919, not a combined force involving the Scandinavians from the Seine too as stated by Dudo of Saint-Quentin (see chapter 1 and de la Borderie 1898, 373, 776).

By 920, Rognvaldr had gained complete political control of Brittany, which was confirmed in 921 when Nantes was ceded to him by Robert of Neustria after an unsuccessful five-month siege during which the Vikings dug fortifications around the estuary to protect their fleet; as part of the agreement the Vikings nominally

'received the faith of Christ' (Flodoard *Ann.* 921). From this point onwards there is an almost total absence of documentary references to Brittany until the return of Alain Barbetorte in 937; sources from other areas may illuminate the picture slightly, however. In 923 and 924 Hrólfr's Scandinavians raided widely along the Seine in alliance with Rognvaldr's Nantes army, destroying Beauvais in 923 (Flodoard *Ann.* 923–4). It is possible that Rognvaldr aided Charles the Simple in his struggles with Herbert of Vermandois, and Flodoard believed that Rognvaldr was seeking land for settlement (*Ann.* 925); this will most likely remain obscure since the precise details of the 921 agreement are unknown. In 923 Rognvaldr devastated Aquitaine and the Auvergne, and then sailed up the Oise to the Ile de France, only returning after land concessions on the Seine (Flodoard *Ann.* 923). The following year the Breton Vikings and some of Hrólfr's forces again raided in France, striking down into Bourgogne; despite this, Hrólfr was granted Le Mans, Bayeux, l'Huernin and the Bessin, thus consolidating his hold on Neustria. From late 924 to early 925 Rognvaldr was driven back to Nantes after a major battle against the combined armies of Raoul I, Hugh the Great and Herbert of Vermandois, though many of the Neustrian aristocracy were killed. Having broken free of their siege, Rognvaldr was forced to fight a retreat through heavily forested country in order to reach Brittany, though he accepted a payment of silver to do so (Flodoard *Ann.* 925). This is the last reliable record that survives of this Viking leader; his impact on popular consciousness may be seen in the fictionalised account of his death in the second book of the *Miracles of Saint-Benoit* (see Chédeville and Guillotel 1984, 379) written in the early eleventh century by Aimoin, which tells of gaudy pyrotechnics, moving stones and apparitions accompanying the passing of one of the last Viking sea-kings.

In 927 the Loire Vikings were attacked again in a five-week siege by Hugh the Great and Herbert of Vermandois. A truce was drawn up, and in return for peace elsewhere in France the Scandinavians were ceded Nantes again, though Brittany itself is not mentioned (unlike in the 921 treaty), probably because it was not under nominal Frankish control in the first place (Flodoard *Ann.* 927). A new agreement may have been thought necessary following Rognvaldr's attacks after 921. Despite the terms of the 927 cession, the Loire Vikings raided Limousin in 930 but were driven out by twelve cavalry squadrons led by Raoul I (Flodoard *Ann.* 930).

Throughout the Carolingian period Brittany had been vulner-

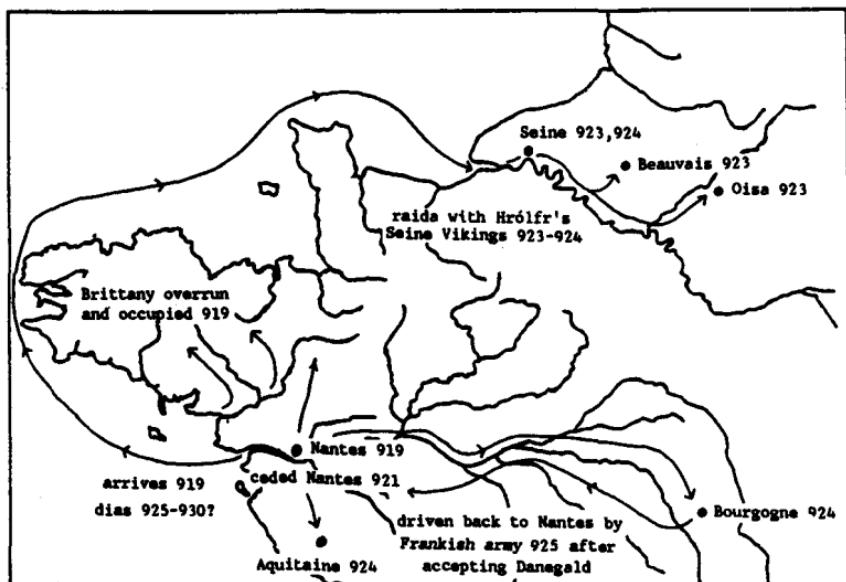


Fig. 11 The career of Rognvaldr and the occupation of Brittany, 919–925

able to attack from the neighbouring regions of France, especially at times of civil strife, and the Loire Vikings now seem to have experienced similar difficulties. In 931, Scandinavians from all over Brittany assembled in a great army on the Loire, poised for an attack on the Franks. The Bretons seized their chance and rebelled, an indication that at least some of their leaders had stayed behind in 919. The Vikings appear to have been taken completely by surprise and many were killed in a series of small battles throughout the region, including one Felekan, 'their duke' (Flodoard *Ann.* 931; *Cartulary of Quimperlé* 931). A counter-attack was rapidly mounted by the Loire army mentioned above, under their chieftain Incon, and Brittany was reconquered (Flodoard *Ann.* 931).

The 931 rebellion gives us an important insight into the nature of the Viking occupation, through studies of the names of the two commanders mentioned by Flodoard. Unlike *Rognvaldr*, a common Norwegian name, *Felekan* and *Incon* are not Scandinavian names. Initial research suggested an Irish origin for *Felekan*. The *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae* (O'Brien 1976) yielded several possible parallels and Musset (1978, 108) claimed that the name was well attested in twelfth-century Irish sources.<sup>6</sup> Given the context, however, the name is more likely to come from the Breton/Cornish *Felec*, with an added *-an* diminutive ending

(Gillian Fellows-Jensen, pers. comm.; cf. Olson and Padel 1986, 48). The only parallel for *Incon* is a name from the *Chrestomathie Bretonne* (Loth 1890), *Inconnarc*. Since the only close parallels for these chieftains' names are Breton, this raises the interesting possibility that the Loire Vikings may have been commanded by Bretons after the death of Rognvaldr (presumably sometime between 926 and 930/31). Close integration with the indigenous population is a marked feature of other Scandinavian colonies, and it is possible that some parties in the Breton civil power struggles actively joined the Vikings to further their own causes or to prevent widespread disruption within Brittany. This would certainly explain the 931 rebellion as the action of disaffected Breton political factions. It must however be emphasised that this deduction is by no means conclusive and the names as preserved by Flooard are probably corrupt. It is unlikely that Felekan was Rognvaldr's sole successor since he would surely have been with the Loire host; perhaps he and Incon were joint-rulers or leaders of separate groups of Vikings. Whatever the truth of the matter, Incon became the ruler of Brittany after the 931 rebellion.

The rôle of the Normans in quelling the revolt should be considered. Hrólfr's son William Longsword had assumed power c. 925 (Hrólfr actually died in 932), and had nominally submitted to Ralph in 928. Flooard records that in 933 William was given by the Franks 'the territory of the Bretons at the edge of the sea' (*Ann. 933*), which has been interpreted as meaning the Franko-Breton March, thus implying a deliberate attempt on the part of the Franks to foster conflict between the Loire Vikings and the Normans of the Seine. This is further confused by Dudo of Saint-Quentin's assertion that William put down the Breton revolt himself, a fiction designed to support retrospectively the Normans' claim to Britanny (see de la Borderie 1898, 379-80; Fellows-Jensen 1988, 115-16). A detailed examination of Flooard's terminology, however, shows that only the Cotentin and Avranchin were ceded to William, territory earlier acquired by Salomon in 867, and that Incon still held the whole of the Breton peninsula. In 935 William Longsword made an alliance with Hugh the Great, thus effectively ruling out any further assistance for the Loire Vikings in the case of war (Chédeville and Guillotel 1984, 400). By early 936, the Vikings in Brittany were completely isolated and without allies.

During the years of Scandinavian occupation in Brittany, Alain Barbetorte had grown up at Æthelstan's court in England, raised as the king's foster-son (Breton links with England dated from at

least Ælfred's time; see *Asser* 76, 102). Abbot John of Landévennec, who seems to have remained in Brittany, had maintained contacts with the exiled Bretons and in 936 asked Alain to return, perhaps sensing the Vikings' vulnerability. With the help of a fleet and some troops given by the English king, Alain landed at Dol with an army of Bretons (Flodoard *Ann.* 936). Brief references to the situation in Brittany as Alain found it on his return help towards the reconstruction of a picture of the area under Scandinavian rule. As in 931, the Vikings were unprepared and Alain quickly defeated a contingent of them who were reveling in the monastery at Dol. He then met a second small force at Saint-Brieuc and was obliged to retreat, sailing along the coast to Plourivo where he fought another Viking host and erected a victory cross, an action which perhaps indicates that the Scandinavians were pagans (Flodoard *Ann.* 936; de la Borderie 1898, 388-90). Given that within a few days Alain had encountered three separate groups of Scandinavians in the north of Brittany, none of whom had apparently gone there to oppose him, we can hardly conclude that Viking settlement was restricted to the Nantes area. Instead it seems that they had dispersed throughout Brittany, occupying settlements and looting at will, and only banding together when concerted action was required, as with the assembly of the Loire army in 931. The following year Alain renewed his march; his army probably growing as he passed through the country. Flodoard records that he fought many battles, gradually driving the Scandinavians back until the whole occupying force was concentrated in Nantes. No Viking leaders are referred to at this time; perhaps Incon had died and the Scandinavians were divided by internal feuds (common enough in Viking colonies), though this is pure conjecture.

The Scandinavians built a great camp at Saint-Aignan in the angle of the Loire and the Erdre, just outside Nantes. Alain had been declared duke by the surviving Bretons on his return, and now led them in a charge against the ramparts, only to be beaten back. After forcing a Viking sortie to retreat in disorder the Bretons rested and attacked again. In a battle lasting the whole day in stifling weather, Alain's army eventually stormed the fortress; the Viking force was badly mauled and the survivors retreated down the Loire in their remaining ships, leaving Alain in possession of the field (the siege is described, perhaps somewhat fancifully, in the *Chronicle of Nantes*, 90-92).

We are given a vivid picture of Nantes as it was when Alain

entered it: his army walked through weed-covered streets past ruined buildings, and Duke Alain was forced to cut his way through thick brambles to reach the basilica of Saint Felix, empty and disused for nineteen years (*CN* 92; although the *Chronicle of Nantes* is a later, untrustworthy source, it is quite likely to derive from an earlier chronicle, now lost). Nantes was established as Alain's capital and he immediately set about ordering its defences and built a great rampart around the cathedral.

By 939 many of the exiles had returned to Brittany and Duke Alain II had established his rule over the area. The previous year the scattered remnants of the Nantes Vikings had re-formed and moved north-east into the county of Rennes, where they had built a large fortification at Trans. In 939 they resumed raiding in the vicinity of Rennes, opposed by Judicael Bérengar. In August he was reinforced by an army under the joint leadership of Alain and Hugh the Great; after a brief siege, a combined assault on the Viking camp finally removed the last of the Scandinavians who had occupied Brittany for so long (Flodoard *Ann.* 939).

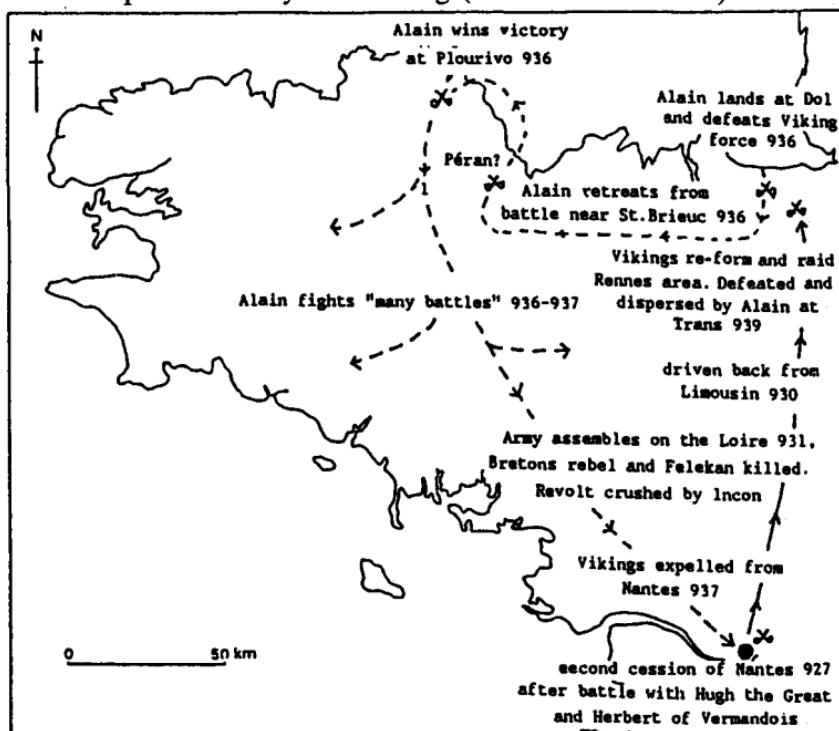


Fig. 12. The return of Alain Barbetorte and the dispersal of the Loire Vikings, 930-939

Interesting light is thrown on the last years of the Viking colony

by a Welsh poem, the *Armes Prydein* or 'Prophecy of Britain', which describes an alliance of the Celtic kingdoms, the Hiberno-Norse and the Vikings of the Northern Isles against Æthelstan. Amidst bitter complaints about Anglo-Saxon rule there is a cryptic reference to Brittany:

From Llydaw [Brittany] will come a splendid army,  
Warriors on war-steeds who spare not their foe.

*Armes Prydein* 153-4 (tr. Clancy 1970, 111)

The poem is of problematic date (see chapter 1), but if it does refer to the 'Great Battle' of Brunanburh in 937 rather than to the campaigns against Eiríkr blóðøx in the 950s then the Breton reference is particularly important. Even if the poem is an 'appeal to history', a reference to a myth of Celtic unity from which Brittany could not be excluded (Roberts 1976, 36), the unlikelihood of Bretons joining such a coalition does not detract from the absurdity of such a request given the close links between Æthelstan's court and the descendants of Alain the Great, even assuming the presence of disaffected Breton nobles in the homeland. The reference makes much more sense if it is interpreted as an appeal to the Nantes Vikings, which would be ironic considering the dire straits in which they found themselves in 937 (cf. Dumville 1983, 151-2).



Fig. 13. Memorial crosses erected on the sites of two Breton victories over the Scandinavians, at Plourivo in 936 (left) and Questembert in 888 (right).

From de la Borderie 1898

With the Scandinavian defeat at Trans in 939 the period of major Viking involvement with Brittany came to an end. Before considering later contact with raiding fleets and campaigning armies, it is appropriate to review the Scandinavian occupation, the

motives of the invaders and why they were ultimately beaten so rapidly. The ninth-century raids have already been shown to have been typical looting expeditions of the period, Brittany perhaps being in an unfortunate position on the route between the Continent and the Irish Sea. Apart from convenient islands for coastal bases, Brittany had little to offer the prospective land-taker when compared with the richer prizes of England, Ireland and the Northern Isles. As mentioned above, however, the options and openings for Vikings who wished to settle down had become severely restricted by the start of the tenth century, due more to political considerations than to lack of space (there is no real evidence of population pressure in Scandinavia at this time). By c. 900 the complex power struggles of York and Dublin were already well advanced, extending to Man, Scotland and Orkney; Scandinavia itself was riven by political strife resulting in numerous exiled pretenders with their retinues. Many of these must have joined the Great Army, but the majority who wished to do so would surely have been able to settle in the Danelaw unless prevented by personal or political differences.

The Vikings operating on the Seine under Hrólfr's general command appear to have been just such a polyglot army as might be expected (cf. Fellows-Jensen 1988, 129-33): the severe divisions within it have already been noted. The settlement of northern Neustria and the rise of Normandy, although taking place towards the end of the settlement period, still unfolded within the periphery of the Viking world. With the baptism of Hrólfr and William Longsword Normandy became at least nominally integrated into Christian Europe (Musset 1975b, 42), and after an initially pronounced Scandinavian cultural impact the settlement began to assume a Frankish character. The perceived threat to paganism has already been discussed; is it not possible that towards the second decade of the tenth century there were increasing numbers of true 'Vikings' left stranded in and around north-western France, hard-core mercenaries who had no wish to settle down and farm the land? The choices open to such men would have been limited indeed, and Brittany may have seemed a natural target, in fact the only one remaining.

It would be foolish to suggest that Rognvaldr's Loire army was entirely composed of such renegades, or read too much from such meagre evidence, but there are a number of singular features of the Viking occupation that are inescapable. Firstly, there are no references anywhere to actual Scandinavian settlement, only to

military occupation. The only Scandinavian place-names in Brittany cluster around Mont-Saint-Michel and Dol, and probably represent settlers coming from the Cotentin in the later tenth century; indeed it would be unusual to observe a significant impact on place-names after only nineteen years of occupation. There is no mention of agriculture or stock-rearing (the nearest equivalents are raids on the vineyards of Anjou), only random and senseless violence very different from the precisely planned assaults of the ninth century; even the later raids into the Frankish heartland seem to serve little practical purpose. Similarly, the signs of occupation seen by Alain II and his troops as described in the *Chronicle of Nantes* do not present an image of ordered settlement: deserted, overgrown streets lined with ruined, empty buildings. The very devastation apparent in Brittany is uncharacteristic of Viking colonies; the shock in Flooard's 919 annal is evident and surprising considering the long years of raiding that France had seen.

Everything points to occupied Brittany as an anachronism, isolated politically and militarily. The fact that Alain was able to succeed in the liberation of a vast area of land, starting from a seaborne invasion and landing launched from another country, a very rare occurrence in the early medieval period, testifies to the Viking colony's weakness. Long-term settlement would in any event have been impossible without the maintenance of Brittany's trade networks. York had extensive mercantile contacts in the tenth century, with links to Scandinavia, western Europe and beyond; a prosperity unmatched elsewhere in the Danelaw (see MacGregor 1978). Dublin looked to the Irish Sea and the Celtic kingdoms. Normandy itself had considerable trading connections, not only with the Viking homelands (see Breese 1977, 54-7), but also with the local markets of the Franks (Musset 1975b, 43-4). Without comparable trade Brittany could not be maintained as a viable state. There is no evidence that the Loire Vikings made any attempt to introduce an administrative system of their own, or to maintain and absorb Breton institutions (see Davies 1988, 52-60). What is surprising in fact is that the occupation lasted for nearly twenty years, a testament to the capabilities of Rognvaldr who managed to hold his army together for so long and also perhaps an indication of Frankish relief at being presented with a Viking threat that was both containable and centred in the lands of their old enemies, the Bretons.

*The last of the Vikings: 939-1076*

Between 941 and 947, the already strained relationship between the Bretons and Normans gave rise to some of the last Scandinavian activity in Brittany. In 941 or 942 William Longsword allowed a Danish exile, Aigrold, to settle in the Cotentin with his followers (Aigrold has been identified with Haraldr Gormsson of Denmark (Gillian Fellows-Jensen, pers. comm.); cf. Albrechtsen 1979, 123 note 27). Based at Bayeux, for a time Aigrold maintained an uneasy peace with the Bretons. In 942 however, William was murdered, an event that sparked off a wave of civil warfare for control of Normandy. William's son Richard, in alliance with Aigrold and Louis IV of Outremer, fought with Hugh the Great in a series of internecine struggles involving considerable treachery and several broken agreements. Late in the year Sigfrid Sigtryggs-son arrived in the Seine with warriors from York and a Viking called Tormod; the latter led a pagan revolt in Normandy and together with Sigfrid joined forces with Hugh. Both Vikings were killed in battle at Rouen by Louis IV (*Richer of Rheims* IV, 57; see also de la Borderie 1898, 413 and Bates 1982, 13-14).

In Brittany, while the warring Norman factions sought to extend their control by force, Judicael Bérengar rebelled against the authority of Duke Alain. This left Dol unprotected and Aigrold led a raid against the town in 944. The citizens took refuge in the cathedral and the Scandinavians were driven off by a Breton relief force (de la Borderie 1898, 413). By 947, Richard had emerged the victor of the Norman disputes (see Bates 1982, 12-15) and ruled an autonomous Normandy as duke. After marrying the daughter of Hugh the Great he revived his father's claims to Breton overlordship, as celebrated by Dudo of Saint-Quentin.

In 952 Alain II died, having kept Brittany free from Viking attack since his victory in 939. He had slowly restored all the Breton monasteries except for Indres and had consolidated his ducal authority, exercising power far in excess of that once wielded by Nominoe. Alain was succeeded by his son Drogo, still a child, precipitating renewed civil conflict in Brittany. Drogo's mother, the sister of the count of Blois and Chartres, married again, to Fulk the Good of Anjou who was a rival of her brother. In the fighting that followed, Conan I of Rennes eventually became duke, having made an alliance with the count of Blois and defeated Judicael Bérengar. In order to rid himself of influence from Blois, Conan then signed a pact with Richard I of Normandy and thus established firm Breton-Norman links for the first time (see de la Borderie 1898, 246-8).

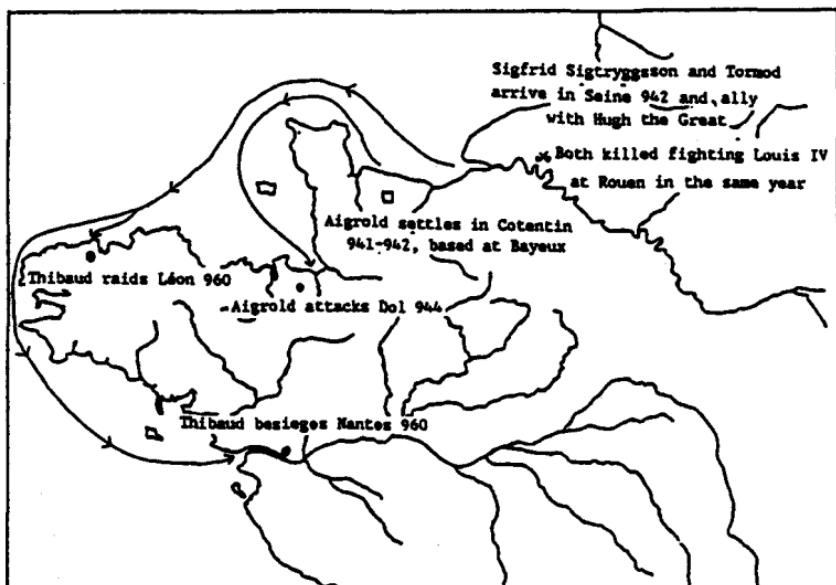


Fig. 14. Viking raids from Normandy, 941-960

In 960 a renegade Norman, Thibaud, attacked the monasteries around Léon with a small fleet and went on to besiege Nantes; he was defeated after a short battle (*CN* 111-12). Between 961 and 965 Normandy was again wracked by internal warfare following raids made from the Seine against Chartres and the Breton March (Breese 1977, 53; Douglas 1947, 107-8). As the tenth century wore on the Neustrians and Normans rapidly fused into a single people, encouraged by growing prosperity and urban expansion. The Normans, however, did not lose their Scandinavian links. Richard II (996-1026) received from Sveinn Forkbeard of Denmark a share of the plunder from his invasion of England (Bates 1982, 7), and Norman mercenaries may have fought alongside Vikings at Clontarf in 1014. That year also saw the last recorded raid on Brittany, when Dol was burned by a Viking fleet (Chédeville and Guillotel 1984, 400).

Breton dependency on the Normans grew (in 1030 Alain III paid homage to Duke Robert) and by the reign of William the Conqueror, Brittany was feudally dependent on Normandy after the duke had reasserted the old claims to overlordship (see de Boüard 1984, 222-7). William seems to have played the Bretons against each other; the Bayeux Tapestry shows him besieging Conan II at Dol with the help of Harold Godwineson (though Conan was in fact probably besieging it himself). Although he

supported Riwallon of Dol against Conan, William later released Conan after his defeat, and the latter promptly imprisoned Riwallon. Having demonstrated his power, William had gained an ally and while a Breton contingent fought at Hastings in 1066, Conan attacked Anjou rather than taking advantage of William's absence from Normandy (Wilson 1985, 178-81), though it is interesting to note that it was the Bretons of all his army who failed him in the battle.

After the Conquest, several notable Bretons, among them Judhael of Totnes, Alan of Richmond, Eudo of Tattershall and Alfred of Lincoln, received lands in England from which they took their names; a small Breton colony was established in Richmondshire (Stenton 1971, 628-30). The problems caused by the imposition of feudalism on Breton society made them always something of an anachronism among William's subjects (they actually mounted a brief rebellion at Dol in 1076, see Stenton 1971, 608; feudal elements in earlier Breton society are considered by de la Borderie 1898, 210-44). Within decades of the Conquest they found themselves without an independent homeland and with no direction for development or expansion; this was especially true for those in England, 'alien among the invaders of an alien land' (Stenton 1961, 28). It is surely ironic that after more than a century of struggle for self-assertion and freedom from Scandinavian oppression, culminating in Alain's great victory of 939, within a hundred and fifty years the Bretons were reduced to second-rate vassals of a fifth-generation Viking.

### 3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Having reviewed the historical background we can now turn to the archaeological material as an independent record, comparing it with the theories put forward in the previous section. Of particular importance is the period 919-939, the duration of the Scandinavian occupation, and it is to this that archaeology can make the biggest contribution. Although meagre by comparison with the archaeology of Danelaw towns such as York, the material impact of the Scandinavians in Brittany is considerable and certainly more pronounced than in Wales or Cornwall. This is surprising considering both the relatively short period of known occupation and also the limited nature of Breton medieval archaeological investigation to date (see Sanquer 1976).

The Breton evidence falls into four categories, fortifications, place-names, burials and weapons, with additional study of indigenous monasteries, rural settlements and commerce. The excavated material from Normandy will be briefly reviewed and finally mention will be made of Frankish artefacts found in Scandinavia.

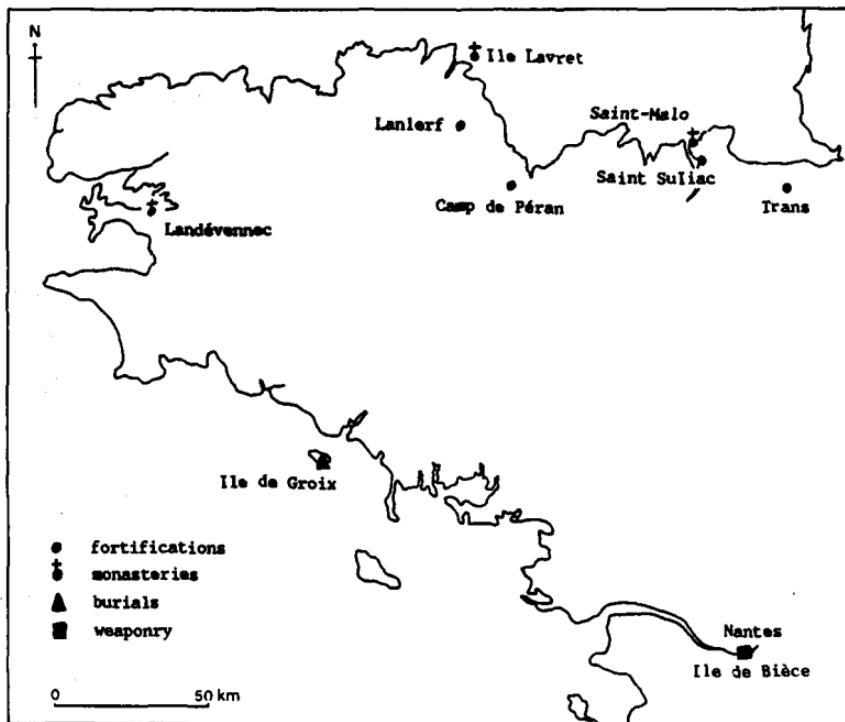


Fig. 15. Scandinavian sites and finds in Brittany

### *Fortifications*

The most impressive Scandinavian remains in Brittany are fortifications. Two of these have now been confirmed as dating to the Viking period, and more particularly to the early tenth-century occupation. The first is the Camp de Péran, near Plédran and Saint-Brieuc in northern Brittany. The site comprises an irregularly circular earth-work with a single 3m high rampart and 4m wide ditch, dominating the valleys of the Urne and Gonet (the appearance of a double ditch is due to the removal of earth from the main ditch; see Nicolardot 1984, 3-4). Originally assigned to the Iron Age, the site has been redated following excavations which have been carried out there since 1983 and are still continuing. Sections

across the ramparts have revealed a composition of large stone blocks resting on a clay bank, with timber bracing on a vertical and horizontal lattice; the rampart has been preserved by vitrification as a result of a fire which has been found to have engulfed the whole site. This vitrification effect stops a metre from the base of the rampart which has been interpreted by the director as showing two phases of construction, though this has been disputed on the grounds of the intensity of the heat required to fuse the entire rampart (Anne Nissen-Jaubert, pers. comm.; see also Nicolardot, Nissen-Jaubert and Wimmers 1987, 230-31). The rampart is estimated to have been originally nearly 4m high and 5m thick. Although only a few trial trenches have been dug in the interior to date, some remarkable finds have been made. The most significant is a coin of Saint Peter minted at York c. 905-925, found in the burnt layers beneath the collapsed rampart in area 2 (see excavation plan, Fig. 16); nearby was found a small fragment of metal believed to be from a helmet; in area 3 the ferrule of a lance has been uncovered. Further dating is provided by considerable quantities of tenth-century pottery and a series of radiocarbon dates which cluster around 865-1045. While on current evidence it is perhaps premature to suggest that the site 'presents the typological characteristics appropriate to Viking fortified sites' (Nicolardot 1984, 10, comparing it with the Danish Trelleborg-type enclosures), the find of the York coin, although so far unique, does lend weight to the theory that the Camp de Péran was either constructed, reoccupied or attacked by Vikings in the early tenth century, a period when it was certainly in use. This hypothesis is further strengthened by the record of Alain Barbetorte's landing at Dol in 936 and subsequent battle with a Viking force near Saint-Brieuc (Flodoard *Ann.* 936; *CN* 89); this would certainly fit the picture of the destruction at Péran. Future excavations at the site over the coming years are sure to expand considerably our knowledge of the Viking occupation (the main published reports are Nicolardot 1984-7; Nicolardot, Nissen-Jaubert and Wimmers 1987, with additional notes in Chédeville and Tonnere 1987, 183).

The second major fortification relating to the Scandinavian occupation is at Trans, Ille et Vilaine, where two earthworks lie 500m apart. The first, known as Vieux M'Na, is an 80m by 90m trapezoid with double banks and multiple, very wide ditches. The enclosure is divided in two by a bank of granite blocks of exceptional size. Although unexcavated, the site has parallels in shape at Saint Suliac near La Rance and Lanlerf near Saint-Brieuc (where de la

CAMP de PÉRAN

Plédran, Côtes-du-Nord

Plan of Excavations

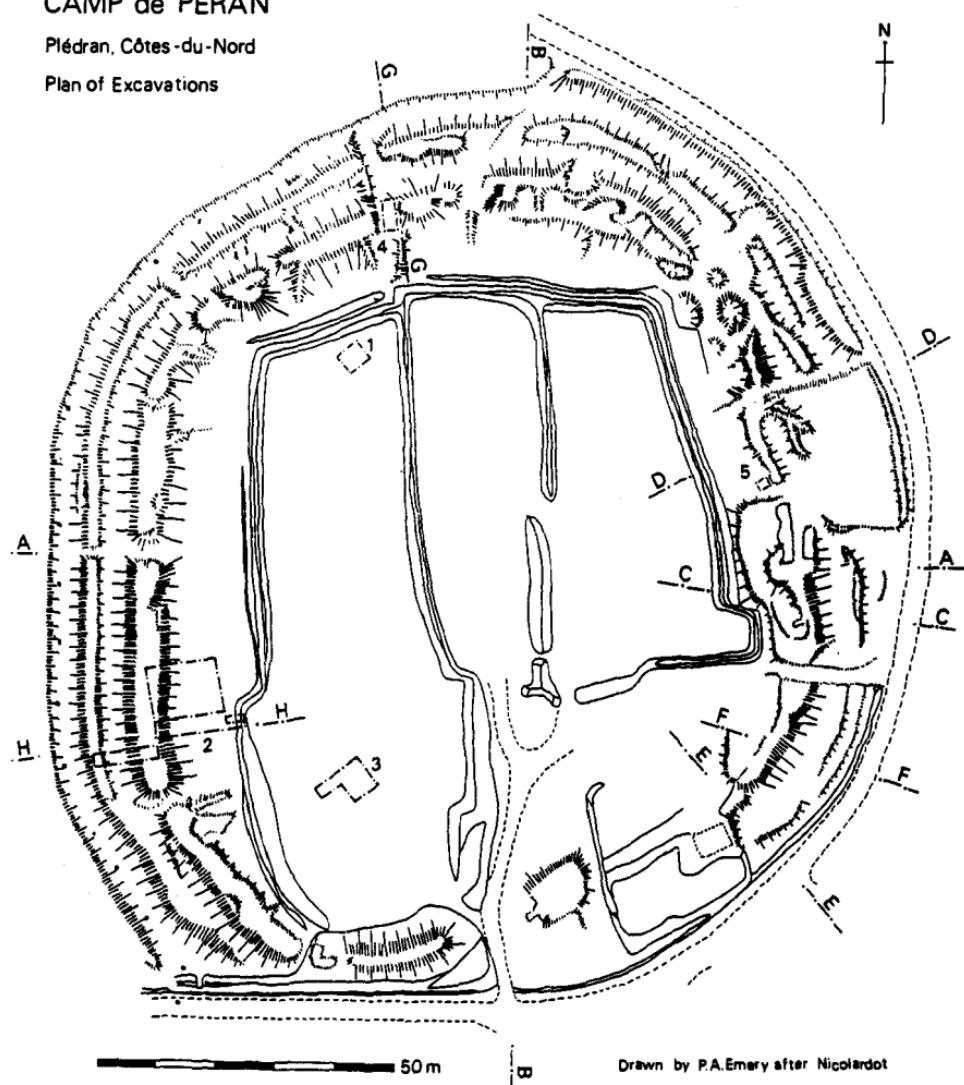


Fig. 16.

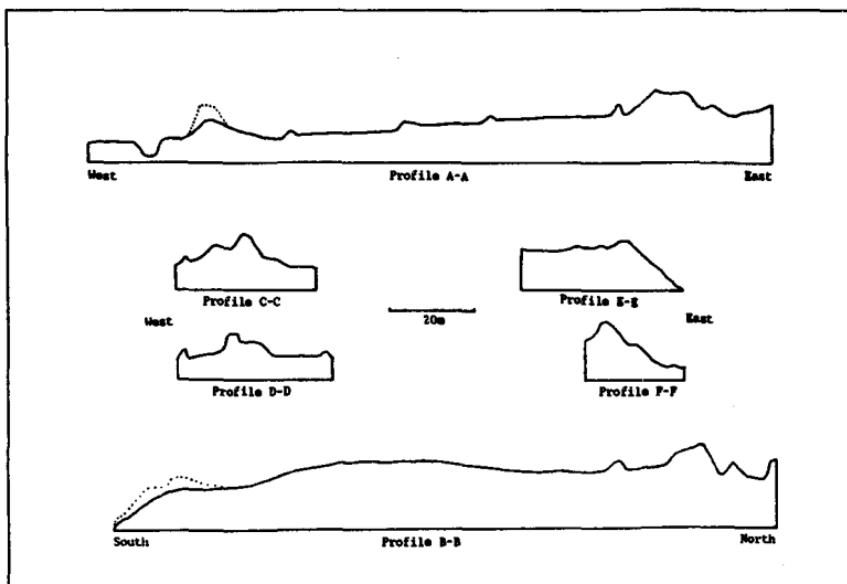


Fig. 17. Profiles across the ramparts of the Camp de Péran – see main plan for locations (after Raboron in Nicolardot 1984).

Borderie 1898, 388 placed the 936 battle). Half a kilometre away on the crest of a hill is the Camp des Haies, a circular double-ditched enclosure which was excavated in 1979. Pottery found in the nineteenth century provides a firm date of 920-980 for the occupation, and the excavations showed the rock-cut ditches to be very rough and irregular; this is interpreted by the excavators as an indication of hasty construction. A few ephemeral traces of interior structures were observed, and finds of iron nails and a knife were made. It has been suggested that the enclosure at Vieux M'Na is that constructed by the Loire Vikings in 939 after their retreat from Nantes, and that the Camp des Haies is Alain Barbetorte's siege camp built shortly before the battle of Trans that year. While this interpretation does fit the pattern of the battle as described in the documentary sources, and the earthworks are certainly in the right location, the lack of evidence from Vieux M'Na means that any firm conclusion will have to wait until this site is excavated. (The excavations are published as Hamel-Simon, Langouet, Nourry-Denayer and Mouton 1979, from which the above interpretations are taken, with additional references in Guigou 1987a, 228 and Chédeville and Tonnere 1987, 184).

By way of brief comparison with the fortifications at Péran and Trans, mention should be made of the 150m diameter circular earthwork at Oost-Souburg in Zeeland. Generally dated to the

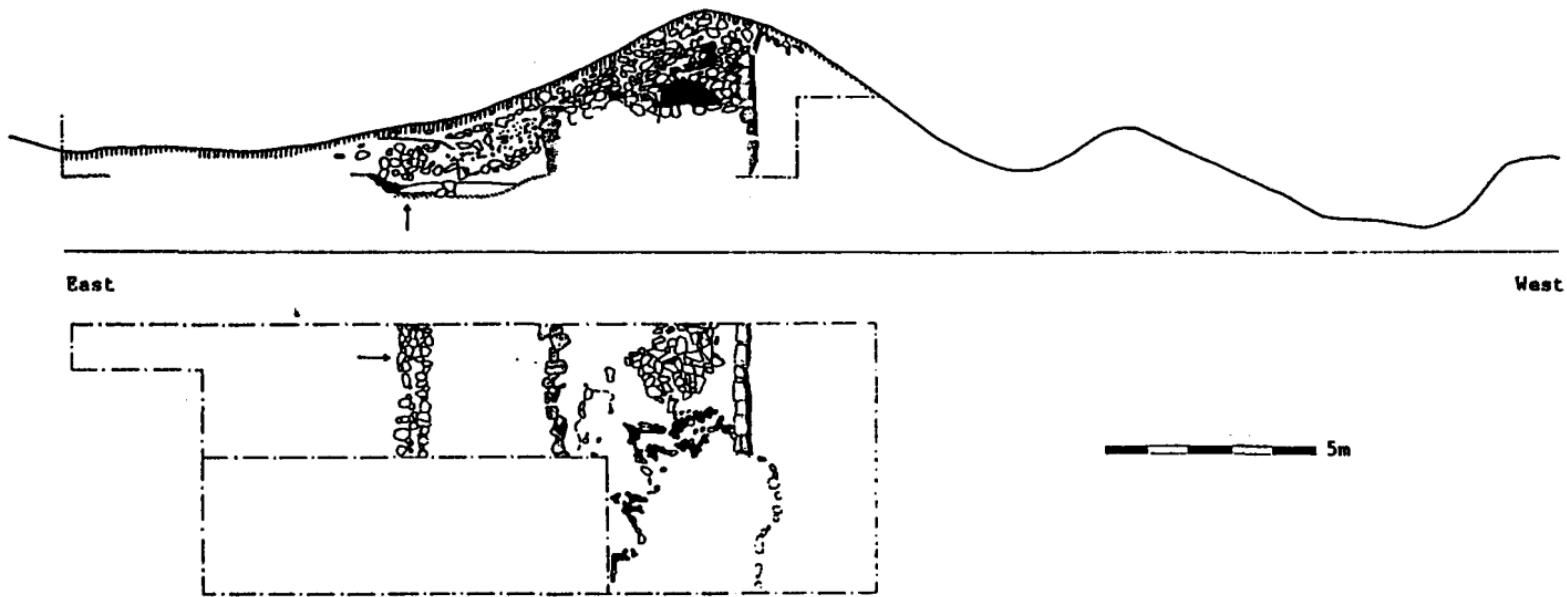


Fig. 18. Section H-H through the rampart and ditch at the Camp de Péran, with plan of excavated area.  
Position of St. Peter's coin from York indicated by arrow  
(P. A. Emery after Nicolardot and Tostivint in Nicolardot 1984).

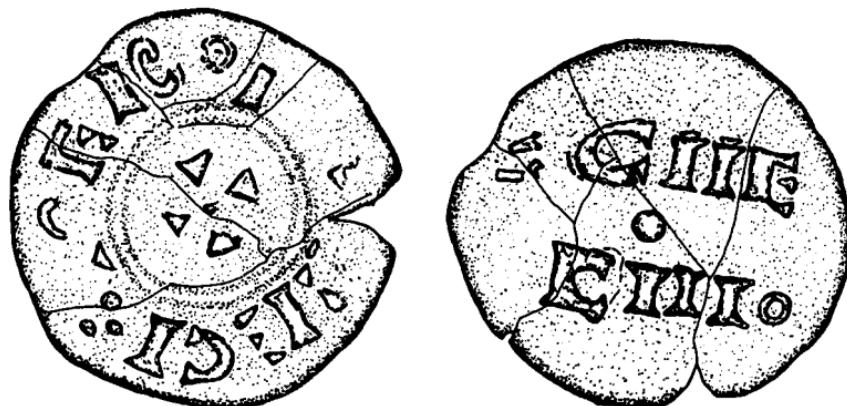


Fig. 19. Coin of St. Peter minted at York c. 905-925, found at the Camp de Péran. Legend reads EBORACE CI (heavily worn) and a corruption of SCI PETRINO. Diameter 2cm. (P. A. Emery after Nicolardot 1984).

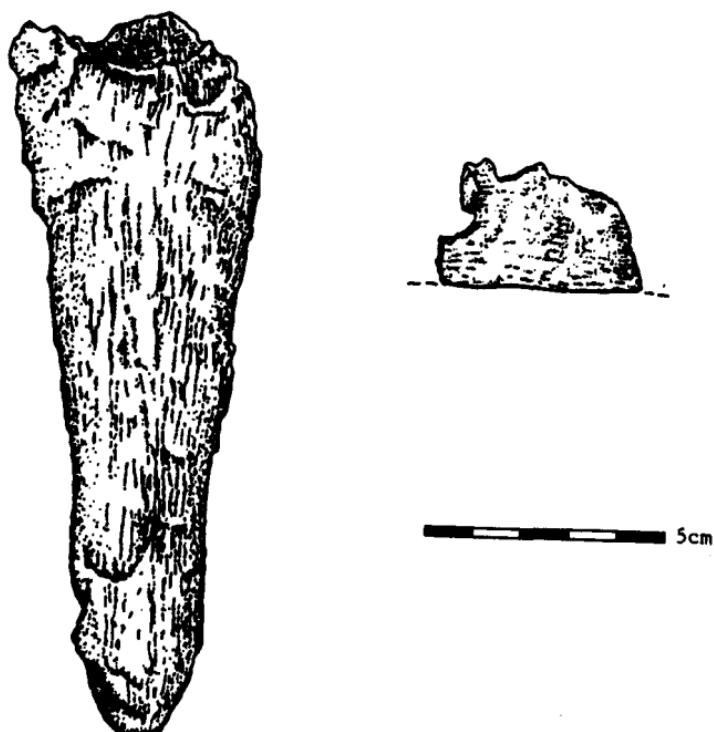


Fig. 20 Lance ferrule and possible helmet fragment found at the Camp de Péran. (P. A. Emery after Nicolardot 1984).

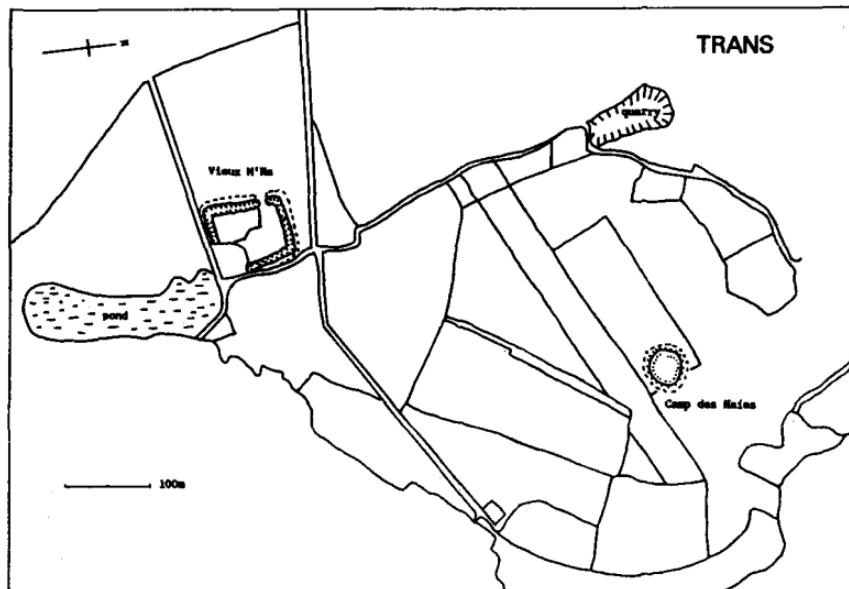


Fig. 21. Location plan of the earthworks at Trans (after Hamel-Simon et al 1979).

late ninth/early tenth centuries, though precise dating is as yet impossible, the site has been interpreted as one of the chain of forts built to defend Flanders against Viking attack (Sawyer 1982a, 82, 87), but might equally well be a Scandinavian base (Trimpe Burger 1973). It is possible that any Viking fortifications in Brittany were constructed under the influence of forts such as these or the burhs of Ælfred's Wessex, which may have also provided the idea for the Trelleborg-type enclosures of Denmark.

There are many other fortifications in Brittany dated to the Carolingian period; indeed Breton medieval archaeology has tended to concentrate on them (Sanquer 1976, 16-18). None, however, shows definite Scandinavian activity and they may well be Breton defences against Viking or Frankish attack. Documentary sources show a period of construction of fortifications around personal residences and at strategic sites like bridges by the Breton and Frankish aristocracy from c. 864 to 879, with a second period of fortification by royal command after 887 (Hodges 1981a, 224). Terminology is a problem with these sources; Alain the Great's residences at Rieux and Plessé are described as *castella* (Smith 1985) and the late twelfth-century *Song of Aiquin* uses similar terms to describe a fortification at Dorlet with a ditch, moat and high rampart occupied by Aiquin's Vikings in the reign of Charlemagne (Guigon 1987a, 228). The civil defences constructed during the aristocratic power struggles around Rennes and Nantes

are also referred to in several documents (see Chédeville and Tonnere 1987, 184).

Any attempt to take an overview of fortification types in Brittany, in order to put sites like Péran and Trans into context, is frustrated by problems with the dating of these features and their arrangement in a relative chronological sequence. Mottes are found in the tenth century in Brittany, but exist concurrently with circular camps as late as 1050 (cf. the excavations at Lou-du-Lac (Guigon 1987a, 228) and Lamber en Ploumoguer (Sanquer 1976, 18); see also Chédeville and Tonnere 1987, 184). Attempts have been made by de Boüard and Fournier (1977) to set the fortifications in a landscape context using documentary references, and Breton fortifications are now chronologically classified by *département* (see Chédeville and Tonnere 1987, 181-2). To confuse the issue, Iron Age earthworks are known to have been re-occupied in the eleventh century and there are also problems of recognition; several excavators have mistaken windmill mounds and even tumuli for mottes (Chédeville and Tonnere 1987, 181).

Carolingian earthworks excavated in Brittany include the ramparts and chapel sequence at Lezkelen en Plabennec (Irien 1976 and 1982), the tenth-century enclosure at Goarum ar Salud (Guigon 1987b) and the circular fortifications at Botalec and Kermestre en Baud (Chédeville and Tonnere 1987, 183). A particularly spectacular example is the promontory fort at Castel-Cran en Plélauff, 130m above the confluence of the Blavet and Cavern rivers in Côtes-du-Nord. Though the presently visible walls date to the eleventh century, finds show that a ninth-century enclosure preceded them (Chédeville and Tonnere 1987, 185). The site was deserted in the early tenth century on coin evidence and has been tentatively interpreted as a *machtierm*'s residence (Jones 1981, 156). Breton defences seem to have relied extensively on inaccessibility and the local topography of marshes or rocky slopes.

The major towns allowed their walls to decay in the early ninth century, which is surprising when one considers the obvious strategic importance of the urban settlements evident in the Franks' Breton campaigns. Urban defence may have centred on cathedrals and ecclesiastical sites as refuges; several are known to have had fortifications, as at Nantes in 937 and possibly Saint-Paul-de-Léon (Smith 1985). Alain Barbetorte's wall at Nantes was excavated in 1913 and was found to have been largely built of re-used materials, including Roman tiles and Merovingian sarcophagi, its hasty construction an indication of the perceived threat from the Vikings

even after their 937 defeat (Guigou 1984, 36 and 1987a, 228; a similar contemporary wall, known as the Norman Gate, still stands in Perigueux). It is possible that the walls of Rennes and Vannes were re-fortified in the tenth century after the return of Alain II (Jones 1981, 153; see also Musset 1974 for urban growth in this period), but this rests on very tenuous source evidence (Wendy Davies, pers. comm.). The appearance of later fortifications may be recovered in part for Dinan, Dol and Rennes from the Bayeux Tapestry (Wilson 1985, though note his reservations 178-81).

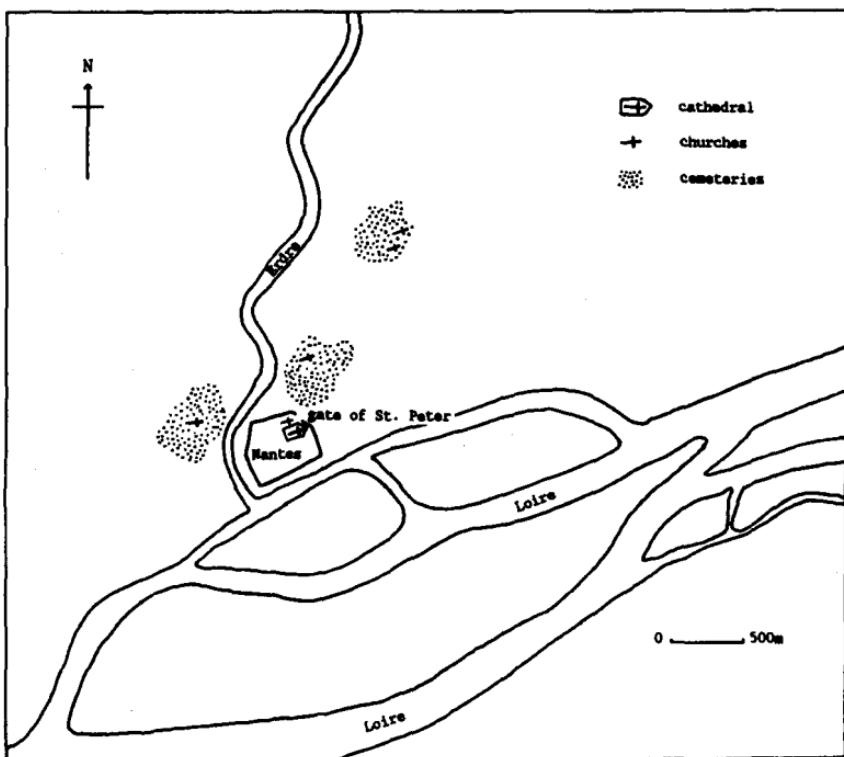


Fig. 22. The topography of early medieval Nantes (after Barral i Altet 1984).

### Place-names

Place-name studies neatly illustrate the problems associated with fortifications in Brittany: the *motte*, *roche* and *plessis* names cluster thickly on the borders of Neustria, Maine and Anjou, and are very numerous: 115 in Loire Atlantique, 251 in Ille et Vilaine, 44 in Côtes-du-Nord, 37 in Morbihan and 17 in Finistère (Jones 1981, 157). Even the names do not always reflect the true situation, as graphically demonstrated by the known presence of 166 mottes

of all periods in Finistère alone, the majority of which are thought to have ninth- and tenth-century origins (Jones 1981, 156). Difficulties associated with Breton place-name studies are highlighted by Musset (1975a, 190-200), part of the problem being the low level of French place-name research compared to the intensity of investigation of, for example, Danelaw names (Fellows-Jensen 1988, 113).

The only place-names in Brittany which may have a Scandinavian origin are those containing the element *la Guerche*, from Old Norse *virki* or Frankish *werki*, meaning a fortification. Askeberg (1944, 181-5) found three examples in Brittany, near Vitré, Vannes and Saint-Brieuc (the latter offering another candidate for the location of Alain Barbetorte's 936 battle), in addition to twenty-nine others elsewhere in France. However, Quentel (1962) has located many more *la Guerche* names, not only in Brittany but with a widespread distribution all over France, thus strengthening the suggestion that the names may in fact be of Frankish origin. A valuable exercise regrettably beyond the scope of this paper would be to compare the Scandinavian personal-name elements cited by Adigard des Gautries (1954a) with the Breton names listed by Loth (1890), in the hope of revealing Scandinavian influence on the population itself (I am grateful to John Dodgson for this suggestion). The Breton place-names themselves are discussed in de Courson's introduction to the *Cartulaire de Redon* (1863, xc-xciv).

### *Burials*

In contrast to the other categories of archaeological material, the evidence for Scandinavian burials in Brittany is not only unequivocal but also without parallel in the whole of France. In 1906, two amateur archaeologists, du Chatellier and le Pontois, excavated a partially eroded mound on a cliff edge near Locmaria on the Ile de Groix, 6km from the southern Breton coast. The mound overlooked a small, sandy bay, the only suitable landing spot in that part of the island, and was easily visible from a great distance. Upon excavation, the mound was found to cover an extensive cremation deposit, recognised as the burnt remains of a longship. From the excavators' reports and Müller-Wille's 1978 publication of the finds it is possible to build up a sequence of events on the site.

First, the ship was dragged up to the headland: a vessel between

11m and 13m long, possibly with a smaller ship's boat as in the Gokstad burial (800 rivets survive but more than 1000 are mentioned; Müller-Wille 1978, 68 argues for a second boat on this basis). An area 17m in diameter was marked out by four vertical stone slabs and further slabs were arranged in a line leading off to the south-west (see plan, Fig. 24). These may have marked out the path by which the ship was brought up, or the route of a funeral procession. The mound seems to have been prepared before the ship was burnt judging by the condition of the turfs of which it was composed (du Chatellier and le Pontois 1908-9, 129).

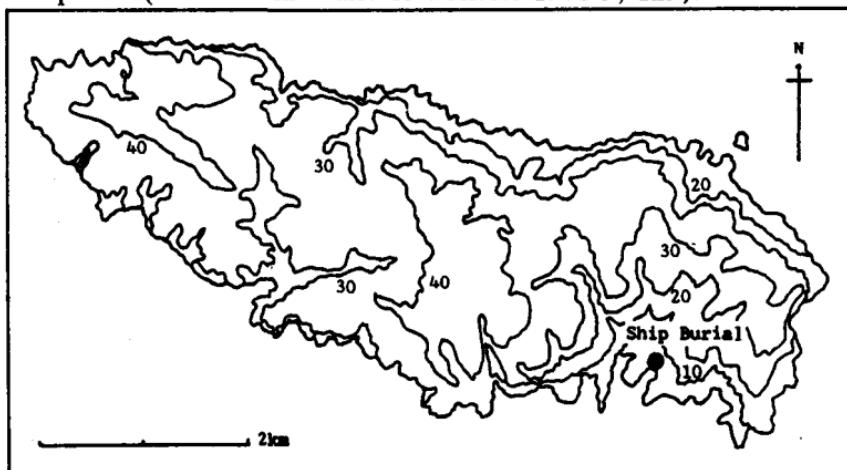
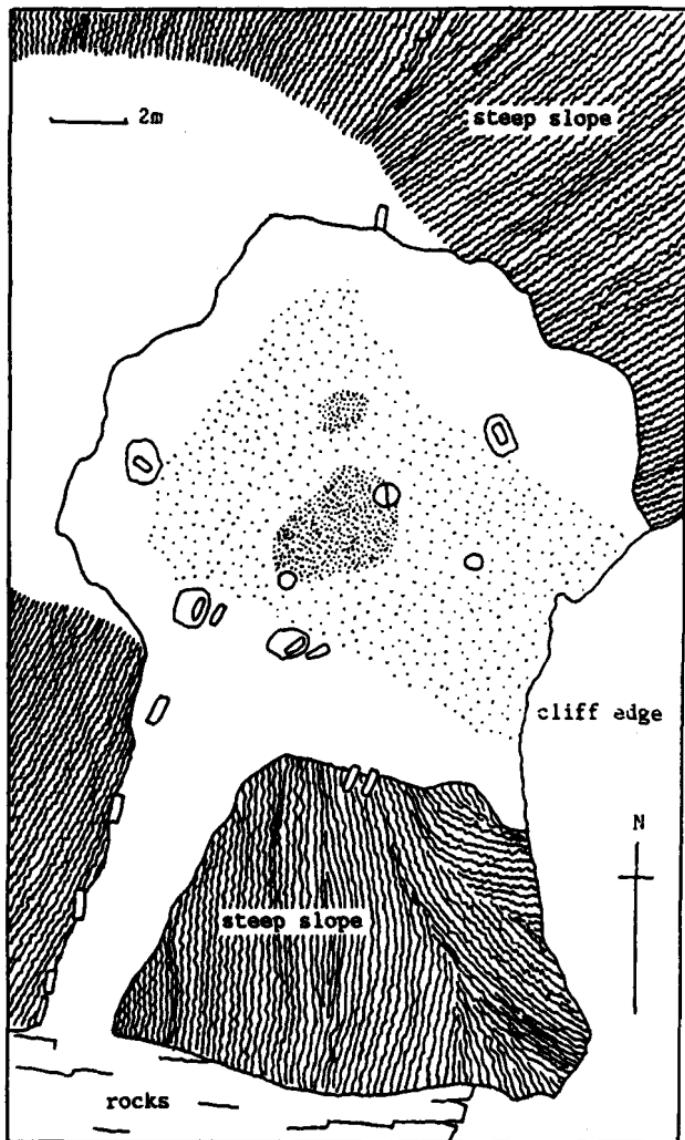


Fig. 23. The Ile de Groix, showing contours and location of the barrow (after Müller-Wille 1978).

The ship contained the remains of two people, one mature and one adolescent (possibly a weapon-bearer or slave, as at Balladoole and Ballateare on the Isle of Man, see Bersu and Wilson 1966), along with dogs and birds. Among the objects found in the 15cm thick burnt deposit, more than 6m × 5m in area, were weapons, riding gear, jewellery, tools, vessels, gaming pieces and agricultural implements (for full descriptions of the objects see Müller-Wille 1978, 51-8; a list is given in Appendix 1 below). After being burnt, the ship was closed in the mound after the area outside the vertical stones had been carefully swept. The barrow was composed of shingle, clay and sand, and raised over 5m high and 20m in diameter.

As to the date of the burial, Müller-Wille suggests the second half of the tenth century on the basis of the Mammen style decoration on one of the swords, though he does allow a 'Spielraum' (Müller-Wille 1978, 68). However, much of the material dates to the late ninth/early tenth century; sufficient perhaps to give a more



- limits of mound
- standing stones
- standing stones on horizontal slabs
- burnt area
- concentrations of objects
- iron cauldron
- bronze vessels

Fig. 24. Plan of the Ile de Groix ship burial (after du Chatellier and le Pontois 1908-9, scale added).

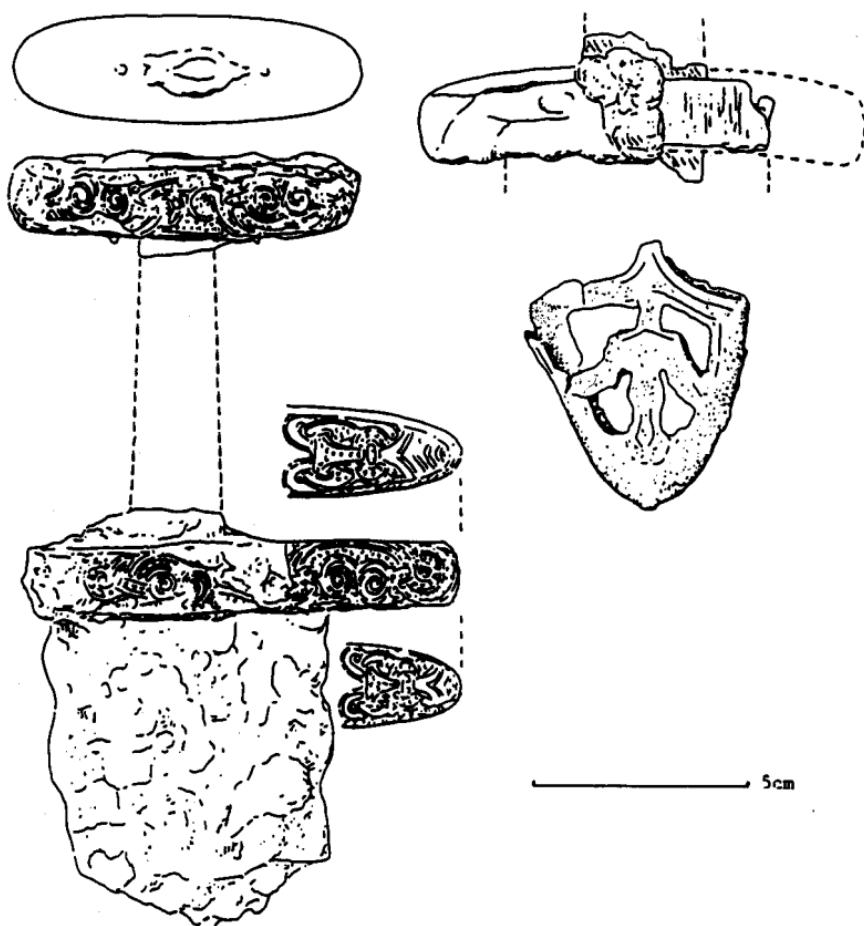


Fig. 25. The swords and scabbard chape from the Ile de Groix ship burial (P. A. Emery after Müller-Wille 1978).

general date for the cremation of 900-1000. (A detailed discussion of the dating is beyond the scope of this paper, but see the comprehensive listing of parallels with Arbman and Nilsson 1966-8, 184-92 in Müller-Wille 1978, 58-70. A date of c. 900 is favoured by Brøndsted 1965, 83 and Breese 1977, 48.) Overall, the burial has a Norwegian cultural background in a rather older tradition (see Fell 1980), but the artefact assemblages indicate links with France and perhaps also Ireland (Müller-Wille 1978, 68-9; Arbman and Nilsson 1966-8, 192). In general, its closest parallel is to mounds one and three at Myklebost in Norway; its Norwegian affinities have been supported by Musset (1965, 124).

Is the Groix tomb that of a later sea raider, well after the period of occupation in the early tenth century (Sawyer 1982a, 98), or is

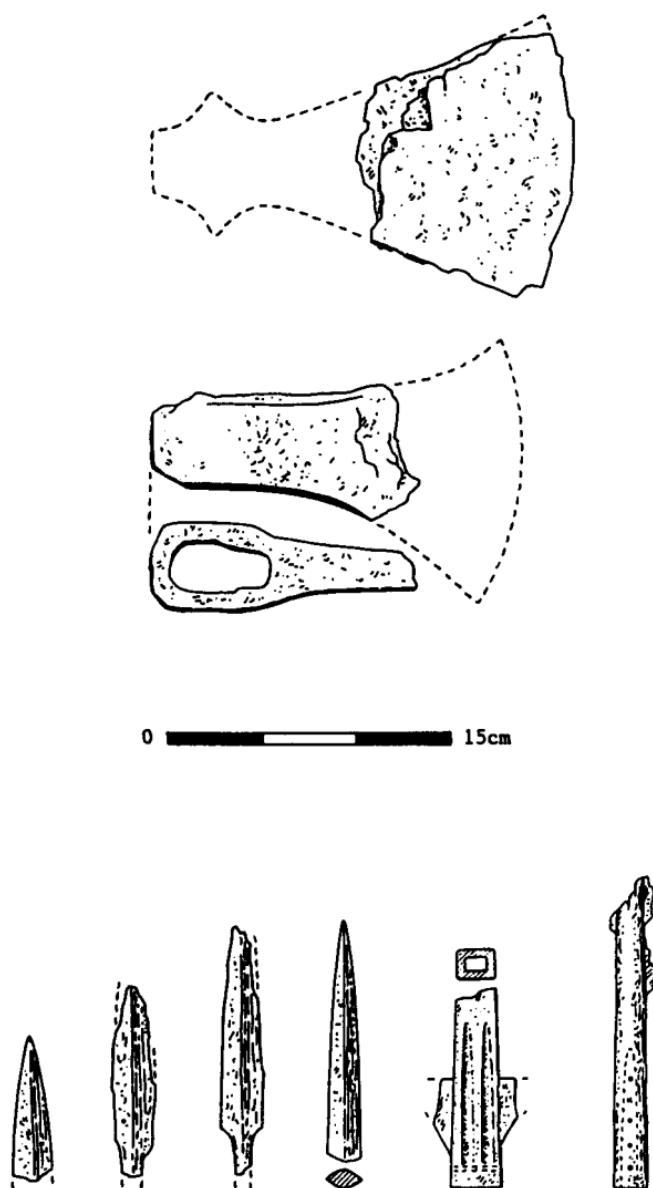
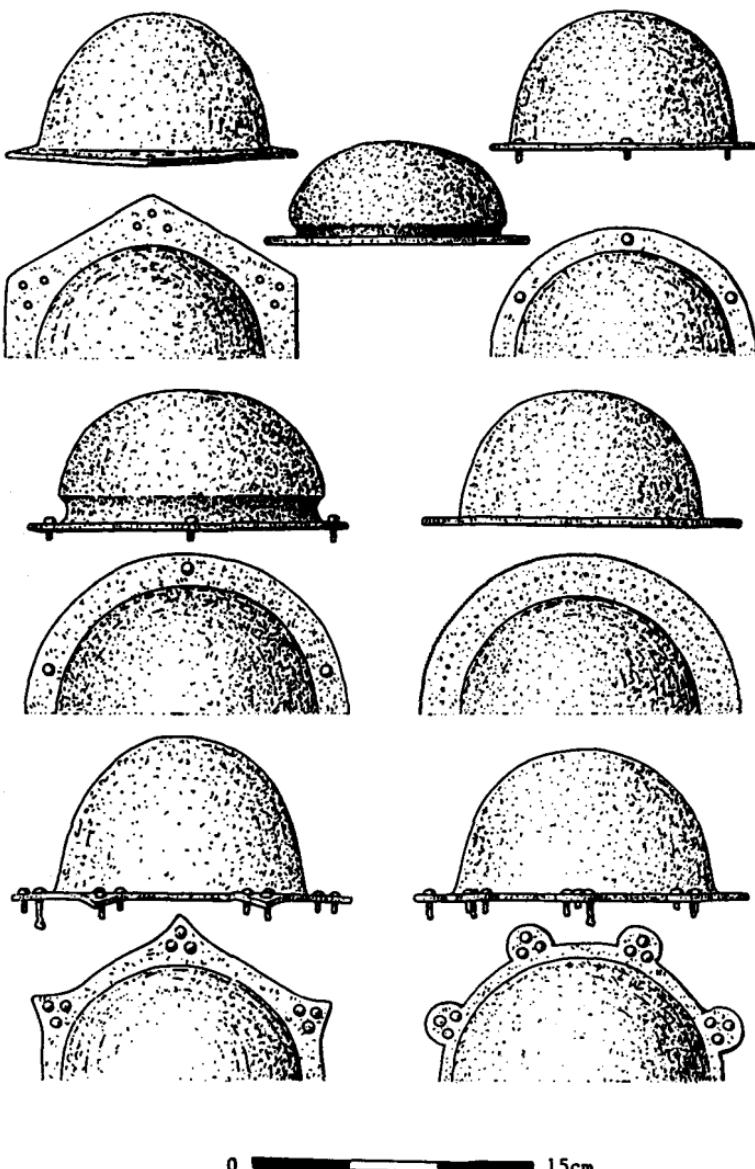


Fig. 26. Axes, arrowheads and lanceheads from the Ile de Groix ship burial (from Müller-Wille 1978; reprinted by kind permission).



0 ————— 15cm

Fig. 27. A selection of shield bosses from the Ile de Groix ship burial (from Müller-Wille 1978; reprinted by kind permission).

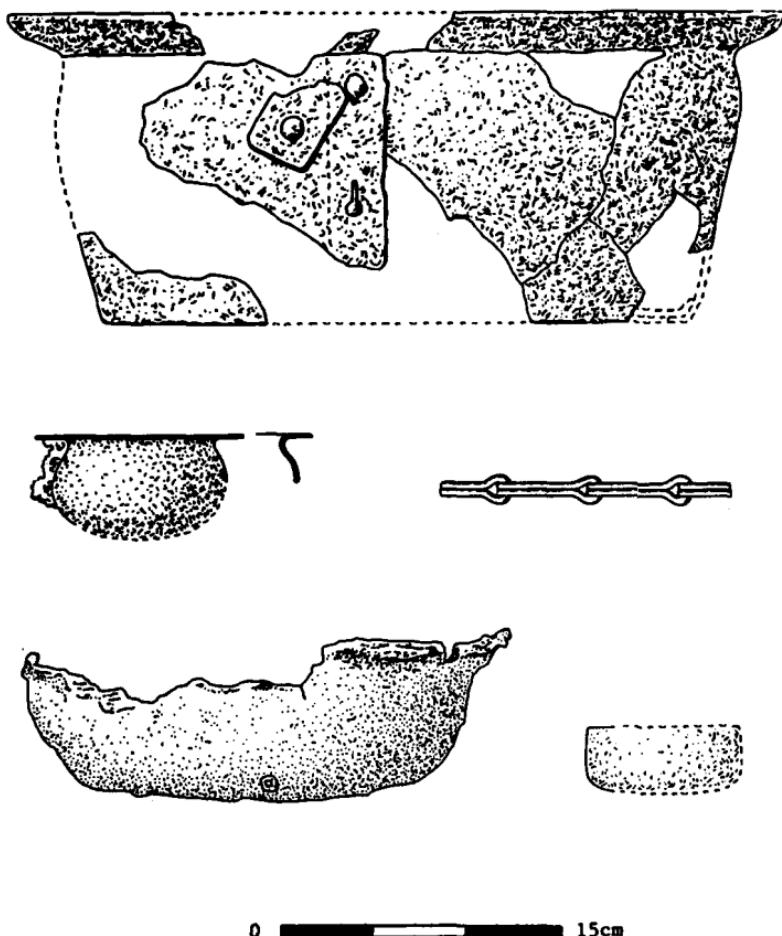


Fig. 28. Iron cauldron, bronze vessels and chain from the Ile de Groix ship burial (from Müller-Wille 1978; reprinted by kind permission).

it contemporary with the 919-937 invasion? There is no way to obtain a definite solution, but I would argue for contemporaneity for several reasons. Firstly, the Norwegian background, especially its militantly old-fashioned paganism, seems to fit well with the picture of the invaders as anachronistic Viking warriors at the time of settlement and conversion elsewhere as discussed in chapter 2. Secondly, the parallels with the Westfold ship burials are particularly striking given the probable origin of Rognvaldr and his followers; and finally the burial ritual seems far too elaborate to be the work of peripatetic sea raiders. The Groix burial is totally isolated in Europe; it is the only known Viking cremation outside Scandinavia (Foote and Wilson 1970, 407), with the possible exception of Ingleby. It is tempting to suggest that a burial of such

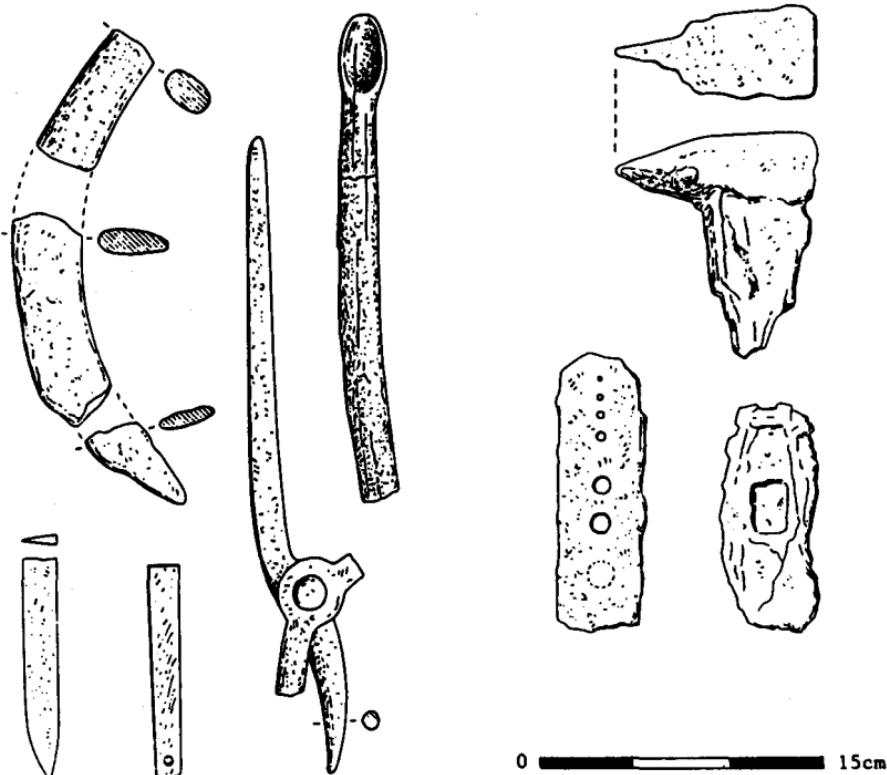


Fig. 29. Tools from the Ile de Groix ship burial (from Müller-Wille 1978; reprinted by kind permission).

magnificence could only have been for a chieftain of pre-eminent status. Is it possible that Groix was the last resting place of one of the Nantes leaders mentioned by Flodoard? Possible, but unfortunately not provable. One last point that could link the burial to the Nantes Vikings is Arbman and Nilsson's suggestion (1966-8, 191) that the unusual star-shaped shield bosses, with no known parallels, are in fact products of the Loire. It would certainly be natural for a mobile fighting force to maintain and manufacture its own weapons, and perhaps even unavoidable for the isolated Scandinavians in Brittany. Once again, this must remain hypothesis until further evidence is uncovered.

Two of the objects deserve special mention. The burial provided the only known example of a stern ornament from a Viking ship (several prow vanes have survived): a 60cm diameter circular band of metal with leaves and movable rings around its edge, probably a 'dragon's tail' like that depicted on a runestone from Smiss, Stenkyrka, on Gotland (see Arbman 1961, 82-4, pl. 21). The other unusual artefact was regarded as an object of unknown function



Fig. 30. Jewellery, fittings, belt equipment, gaming pieces and a clench nail from the Ile de Groix ship burial (from Müller-Wille 1978; reprinted by kind permission).

by the original excavators, but identified as a bent lancehead by Müller-Wille (1978, 53) and Arbman and Nilsson (1966-8, 188-9). Wilson has recently cited a parallel on the Bayeux Tapestry, where a man standing in the water next to a ship is depicted holding a curved rod (1985, 175). It is most likely however, that what the tapestry shows is a type of angled chisel used for working grooves on ship timbers (illustrated in McGrail 1980, 53).

### *Weapons*

The only other specifically Scandinavian objects from Brittany are weapons, found by chance. Two swords have been discovered

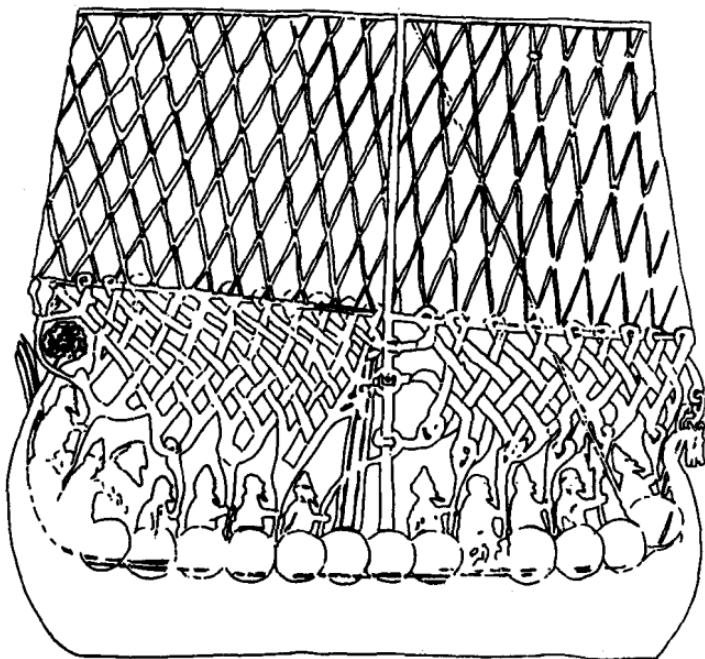
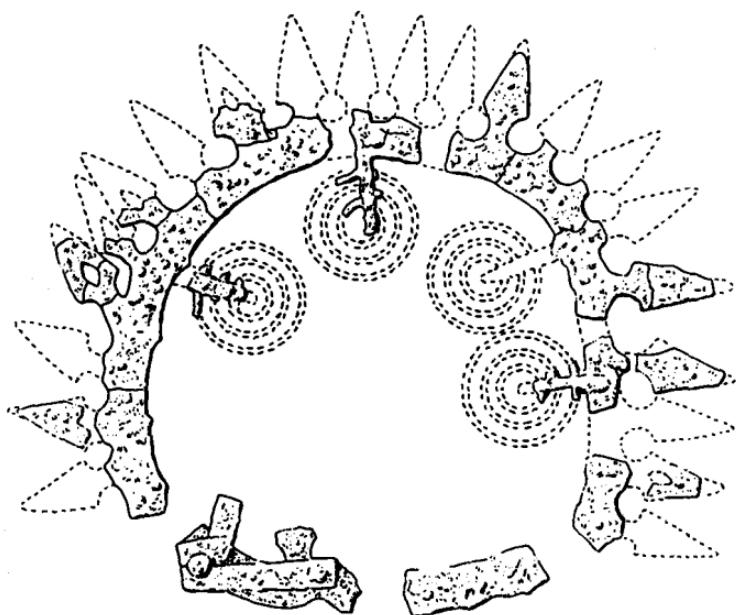


Fig. 31. The stern ornament from the Ile de Groix ship (above), diameter 60cm (from Müller-Wille 1978) and (below) the ship depicted on the stone from Smiss, Stenkyrka, on Gotland (P. A. Emery after photo in Arbman 1961).

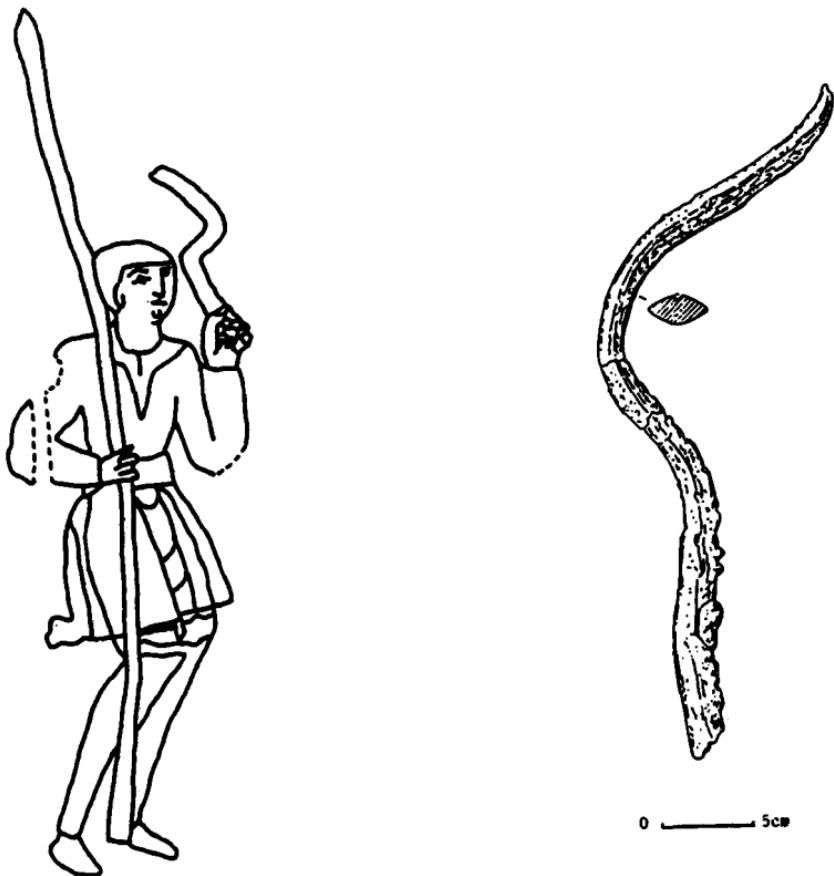


Fig. 32. Above: the controversial lance-head from the Ile de Groix ship burial (from Müller-Wille 1978; reprinted by kind permission). Top left: the figure from the Bayeux Tapestry holding an angular object which Wilson (1985, 175) has compared to the Ile de Groix lance-head. The Tapestry probably depicts a type of angled wood-working chisel used in shipbuilding and shown bottom left (from McGrail 1980).

on the Ile de Bièce where Godfred's Danes were besieged by Sidroc's fleet in alliance with Erispoe in 854, two more of type H have been found in the Sens and at the confluence of the Loire and Chezine, and another type H sword was reported from Nantes in the nineteenth century (all these weapons are described by Arbman and Nilsson 1966-8, 166-71). Considering the amount of Viking activity around the Loire, so few finds are surprising, but it is likely that many of the Frankish weapons that have been discovered were in fact used by Scandinavians (Arbman and Nilsson 1966-8, 192).

### *Monasteries, rural settlements and commerce*

Despite the dearth of recognisably Scandinavian finds in Brittany, the archaeological reflection of the Breton reaction to the raids is also of value. Of particular interest are the results of excavations at ecclesiastical centres. At Landévennec work has revealed the reconstruction of the church after it was destroyed by the Vikings in 913, including a superb tile floor, c. 950 on archaeomagnetic dating (Bardel, Barral i Altet and Caziot 1984, 81-2). Wooden remains from the late ninth-century church have been located below the burnt levels of the Scandinavian attack, as have re-used pieces of worked stone from the church built into the later tenth-century structure. Carolingian coins of the early tenth century have also been found (for the latest reports see Bardel 1985-7). Viking destruction debris has been excavated at Saint-Malo (Langouet 1976 and 1979) and at the monastery on the Ile Lavret, attacked in 884, along with finds of Carolingian pottery and jewellery (Giot 1983-5; 1987).

Several more monasteries and churches occupied at the time of the Scandinavian raids have been located, such as the crypt and relics found at Lanmeur along with gold pendants datable to the early tenth century (Guigou 1986). The Breton clergy favoured isolated hermitages as well as churches, following the example of Saint Samson. Some were attacked by the Vikings, including Locoal (CR 326); this site has not been excavated but it probably followed the Irish model as found elsewhere in Brittany, at Saint-Hervé-en-Lanrivoaré (Cleac'h and Letissier 1976) and Saint-Saturnin-en-Plomeur, where several oratories have been recorded (Giot 1975 and 1976; Giot and Monnier 1978). A contemporary cemetery with ninth-century burials at Salle des Fêtes, Corseul has

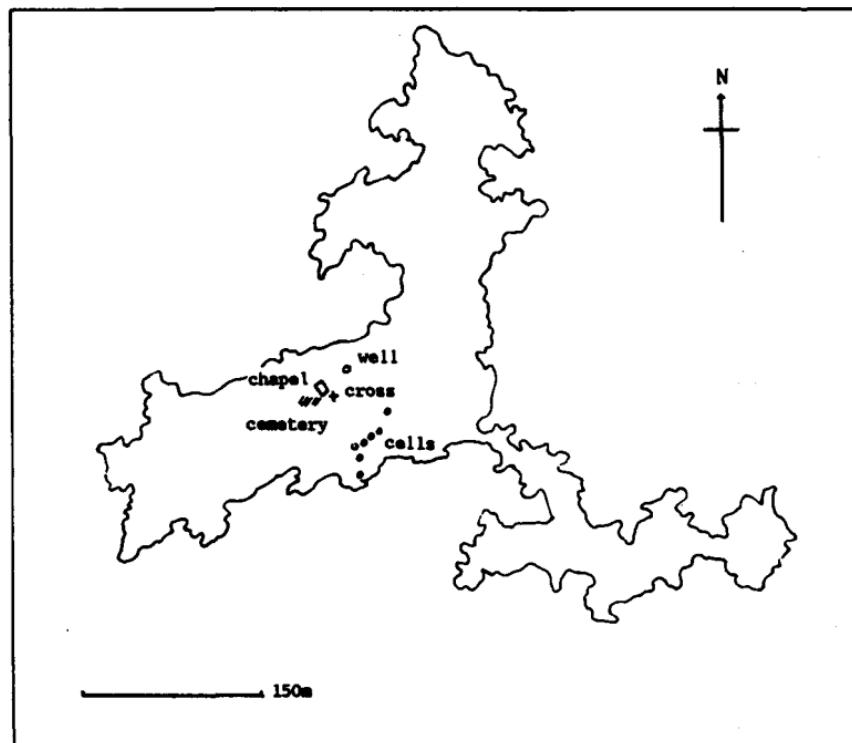


Fig. 33. The excavated remains of the monastery on the Ile Lavret raided by the Vikings in 884 (after Privat 1971).

also been excavated (Fichet de Clairfontaine 1986); the Breton cemetery evidence is reviewed by Guigou, Bardel and Batt (1987). Several coin hoards have been found as well, which may indicate attempts to hide wealth from Viking attack; notable examples are the hoard of c. 920-923 excavated at the church of Saint-Melaine at Rennes (Chédeville and Guillotel 1984, 384) and the Priziac hoard of more than 2000 coins (Davies 1988, 56).

Little is known about the rural settlements of this period, but they may have been similar to the eleventh-century village uncovered at Lann-Gouh Melrand, with its cluster of rectangular stone houses (André 1982; compare with Meirion-Jones 1982, chapter 8). The study of rural life in Brittany and its landscape context will be considerably advanced with the publication of the Oust-Vilaine watershed surveys that have been carried out by Astill and Davies since 1982 (see their 1982 and 1985 reports).

The nature of Breton commerce has been briefly referred to in chapter 2 but the archaeological evidence can add a little to the picture. The pottery industry appears to have been quite advanced,

with distinctive forms produced at Meudon, near Vannes (André, Barrère, Batt and Clément 1984 and Triste 1985-7) and Trans (Hodges 1981b, 74-5), examples of which have been found at Pledeliac, dated 920-980 (Henry 1983, 313). A possible additional kiln has been identified at Guipel (Lanos 1983). It is not possible to say at present whether these industries were maintained during the Scandinavian occupation, but no pottery has been found in definite association with Viking artefacts at the Camp de Péran. Full ceramic chronologies have not yet been developed for this period (see Hodges 1981b, 74-5) which would enable a definite statement to be made. As to other industries, the presence of quern quarries in eastern Brittany has been suggested (Hodges 1982, 124), and some local production of linen smoothers is likely, as the examples from Treguennec show (see Hodges 1982, 122 and Haevernick 1963, 130-8).

Before turning to the Norman material, which may be used to fill gaps in the archaeology of Brittany, the Breton evidence should be briefly reviewed. The finds at the Camp de Péran would seem to support the argument made in chapter 2 for Scandinavian occupation outside the Nantes area, and together with the Trans excavations serve to confirm aspects of the historical record of Alain Barbetorte's return. The scattered pattern of fortifications throughout the Breton countryside emphasises the preoccupation with local defence rather than organised resistance, and it is not hard to see how such a system would collapse under pressure from a large military force. Finds of Scandinavian weapons also corroborate the documentary sources, as do the destruction levels at the monasteries. The Ile de Groix burial remains slightly problematic due to its ambiguous date, but it does not contradict the ideas set out in chapter 2 and can considerably support them if it is interpreted as a territorial statement, like the Manx examples. Only the commercial evidence remains a serious problem; while the Vikings do not seem to have had recognisable mercantile interests in Brittany, much more work is required before we can be sure.

### *Normandy*

Given Normandy's origins of Viking settlement it is not surprising that the region has produced more Scandinavian artefacts than Brittany; what is remarkable is the relative lack of material

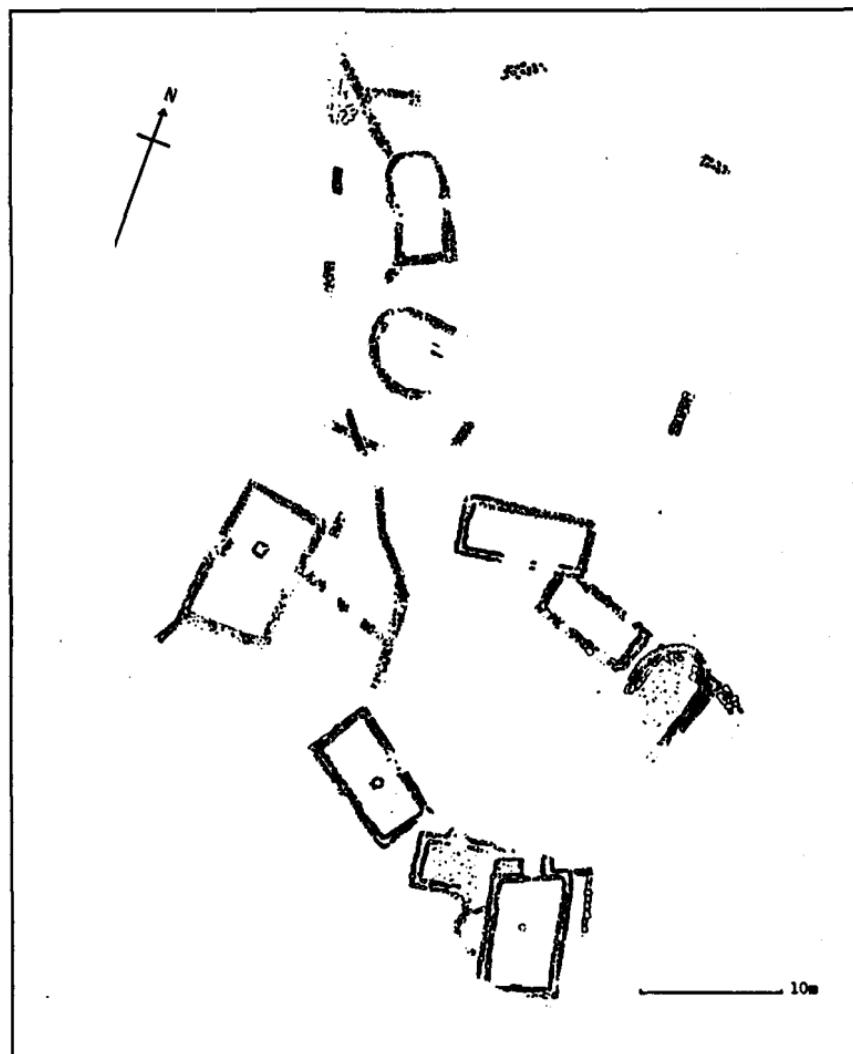


Fig. 34. Part of the eleventh-century Breton village at Lann-Gouh Melrand (after Mauny in André 1982).

compared to areas like the Danelaw. As in Brittany, the most impressive remains are fortifications. At La Hague, at the tip of the Cherbourg peninsula, a great dyke encloses more than five square miles of land including two deep-water bays and the only natural harbour on this stretch of coast. Originally thought to date to 900-800 B.C., the earthwork has been shown by excavation to be a two-phase construction, with the prehistoric ramparts being refortified in the ninth or tenth century (de Boüard 1964b). It seems likely that the defences were elaborated to protect the natural landing stage and that the dyke was of Viking construction

(the name La Hague is of Scandinavian origin, one of only three *pagi* names to change to a Norse word; see Fellows-Jensen 1988, 119-20). The Scandinavians may have needed protection against Breton raids (the Cotentin had been ceded to Brittany in the mid-ninth century) and it is possible that during the early years of the 919-937 occupation the La Hague occupants were allied to the Breton Vikings; it is certainly recorded that the Scandinavians of this area were hostile to the Seine Vikings. Local tradition tells of a Viking called Moeren operating from La Hague around 960, folklore which may contain some truth (see de Boüard 1953 and Arbman's 1953 excavation report). Gillian Fellows-Jensen has suggested that the name may indicate a man from Mæren in Norway (pers. comm.), an interesting possibility considering that the name as we have it is almost certainly corrupt. Scandinavian burials are reported to have been found in the vicinity of the dyke (Bates 1982, 19).

A female Scandinavian grave has been excavated at Pîtres, with grave goods of pottery and two type P41 oval brooches. Their late ninth-century date implies that the woman was a camp follower of the Great Army on its rampages around Rouen (the find is published by Elmquist 1966-8, who discusses the dating and parallels 209-23). The most enigmatic burials in Normandy may not be Scandinavian at all; at Réville, on the Cotentin coast, slab-constructed graves of several types were exposed by shifting sand in the early 1960s. Hasty excavation recorded stone settings in the shape of ship outlines, low cairns and rectangular lintel graves. The cairns contained decomposed vegetal matter and cremated bone, while the ship settings, 3·65m to 2·15m at the beam, preserved a few crumbling bone fragments covered by peat and flint. The lintels contained skeletons with carefully placed stone slabs covering them, with a crude quartz-tempered pot in one grave. All the graves were at the same level, the rectangular lintels oriented E/W or NW/SE and the ships broadly E/W. No dating processes have been applied to the bones, so all dating must rely on the typology of the only artefact, the pot. This has close parallels with the vessels found in graves 24 and 151 at Birka (Arbman 1940-43, 9, 66; see Fig. 36), and de Boüard argues for a parallel with a pot from Jarlshof (1964a; Hamilton 1956, 82 number 2); the Jarlshof example does not seem sufficiently close but the Réville pot shows definite affinities with the Slav-inspired flat-bottomed vessels of Sjælland and Øresund, as found at Trelleborg (Helen Clarke, pers. comm.; the pottery is illustrated by Roesdahl 1982, 122-3).

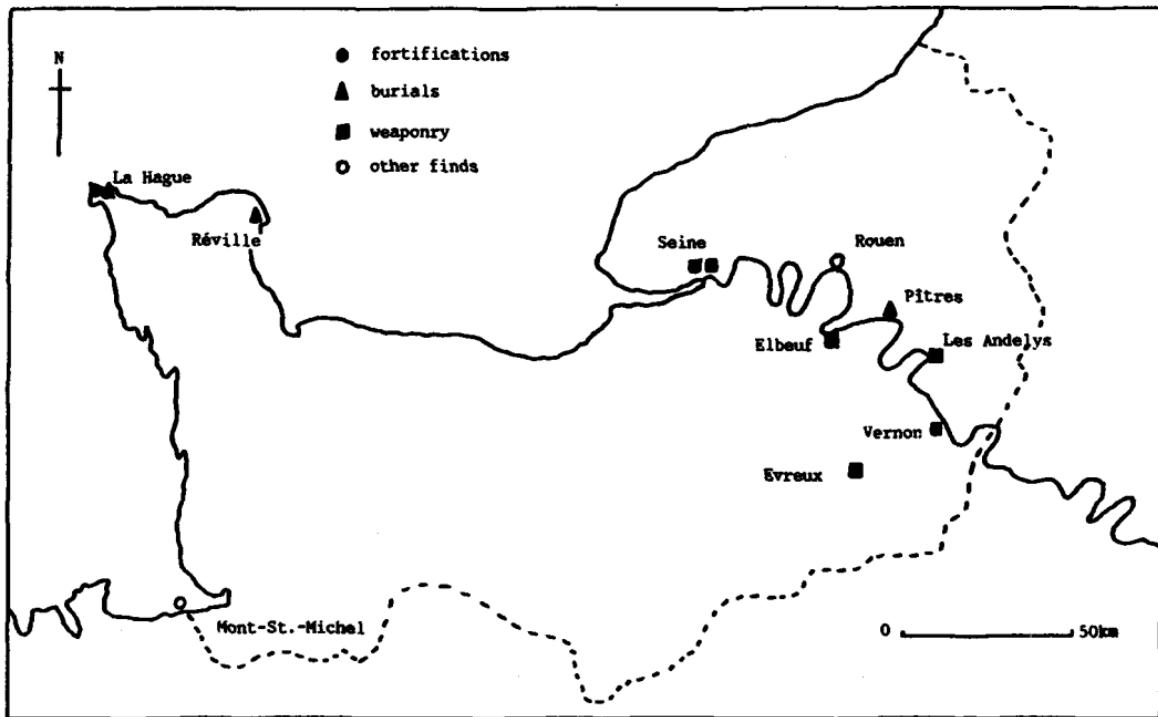
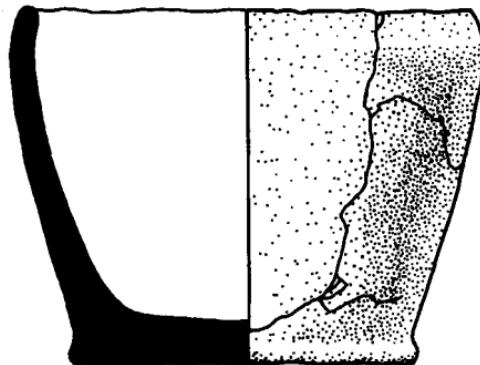


Fig. 35. Scandinavian sites and finds in Normandy.

While the burials seem initially like Scandinavian ship settings (as found at Lindholm Høje) superimposed on Frankish lintel graves, the lack of inter-cutting features and the pseudo-Scandinavian pot in a lintel grave make the hypothesis tenuous; in addition, we have insufficient knowledge of prehistoric burial types in this area to rule out an earlier date. The Réville graves must remain problematic until either the bones are dated or further comparative work is done.



— 5cm —

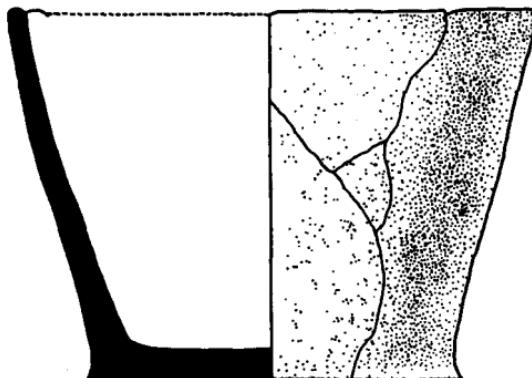


Fig. 36. Pots from Birka graves 24 (below) and 151 (above), comparable to the vessel from the Réville burial (P. A. Emery after Arbman 1940-43).

Scandinavian place-names can provide much information as to the settlement patterns in early Normandy, but only the data

relating to Brittany will be discussed here (for place-name studies in general, see the references in the second section of this chapter above). Fellows-Jensen (1988, 115-16) has noted that the *Bretteville* names on the Normandy coast may signify ninth-century settlement of Bretons as a deliberate policy of the Frankish kings to provide a buffer against Viking attack, but could equally relate to Bretons who came with the Scandinavian settlers in the tenth century. In Bessin and Maine, the lack of Scandinavian place-names may indicate that the cession of 924 recorded by Flooard may have failed as a colony and was exposed to more limited Scandinavian influence (Fellows-Jensen 1988, 115). This latter point could well affect our perception of Rognvaldr's career during his campaigns with Hrólfr's army after the 919 occupation of Brittany, as discussed in chapter 2 at the end of the 4th section (but see Bates 1982, 9-10).

Turning to the finds of Scandinavian weaponry discovered accidentally over the years, we find a picture similar to that in Brittany. Many weapons must have been lost during the Viking raids of the ninth century and the Norman power struggles of the tenth; Neustria saw the most concentrated fighting of the entire Viking Age in France (see Werner 1985). Swords have been found at Vernon and Elbeuf, and a type G axe has been dredged from the Seine at les Andelys. The Seine has also produced swords of types M and Y. The only other Scandinavian weapon known from Normandy is a type H lance-head found at Evreux (see Arbman and Nilsson 1966-8, 163-75 for descriptions of all these weapons). In addition a horse bit of a type found in Scandinavian tenth-century graves was discovered in the vicinity of Rouen (Arbman 1961, 201).

Normandy has also produced two major coin hoards. In 1963, the largest hoard ever found in France was uncovered within the *castrum* area at Fécamp, dated 970-990 and containing 4400 pieces (see de Boüard 1963; Yver 1969, 341). However, from the Breton viewpoint the most important hoard is that found at Mont-Saint-Michel (Dolley and Yvon 1971). Among its contents was a coin bearing in corrupt form the legend VVILEIM DU(X?) BRI. Does this mean that William Longsword was issuing coins as Duke of the Bretons? If so, the substance of Dudo of Saint-Quentin's claims for Norman rule in Brittany may not be complete fiction (Bates 1982, 9; Dolley and Yvon 1971, 7-11).

By studying the late Neustrian and early Norman settlements we may find a reflection of a similar pattern in Brittany where the

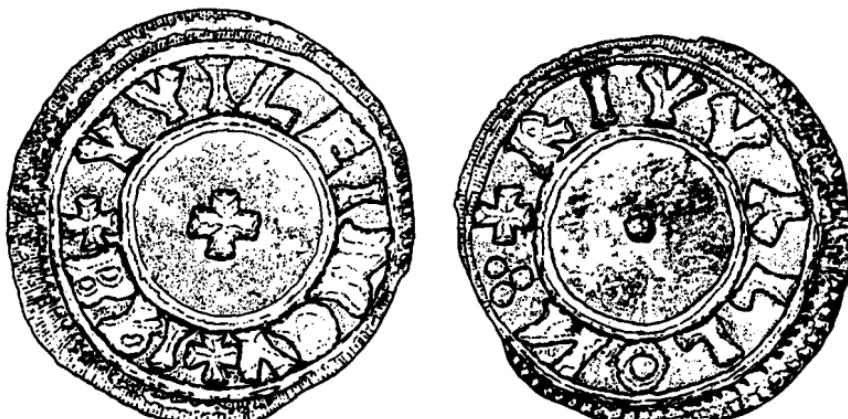


Fig. 37 Coin of William Longsword (reigned c. 925-942) found in the Mont-Saint-Michel hoard. Legend reads: Obverse: + VVILEIM D(reversed)VX (or +) IRB(reversed) for VVILEIM DUX BRI(TONUM) Reverse: + RIVVALLON (probably the name of the moneyer). Diameter 2 cm (P. A. Emery after photo by Pilet-Lemière).

archaeology is lacking. For fortified residences, le Maho (1980) has published several studies of early earthworks at Saint-Lô, Radicatel, Beaubec-la-Rosière and Quettehon along with his work on earlier timber structures in Normandy (Halbout and le Maho 1984). The excavations at Mirville show the range of buildings constructed in the eleventh century, with a complex of longhouse, stables and outbuildings which has remarkable pictorial parallels on the Bayeux Tapestry (Halbout and le Maho 1984, 57-61). These may be applied to slightly earlier settlements in eastern Brittany. More relevant still are the late ninth-century houses found at Saint-Martin de Mondeville, with finds of pottery, jewellery and carved memorial stones (Lorren 1985), and the Carolingian domestic buildings at Les Rues-des-Vignes and Brebières (Florin 1985). A complete landscape study has been carried out at Plessis Grimoult, with a survey of all known place-names, settlements, parish records and archaeology in the region of a fortified enclosure which was then excavated to reveal the internal structures (see Zadora-Rio 1974 for the full report).

Turning to higher-status sites, a massive contrast with the Breton material is seen. Annie Renoux's long-running excavations at Fécamp have produced an occupation sequence at the château site dating back to the eighth century. An eighth- to ninth-century monastery with two successive chapels developed into a luxury residence in the late ninth century with finds of fine-quality metal-work, coins and pottery (see Renoux 1987, 15-20). By the early

tenth century the structures had been abandoned and the land converted to agricultural use by a small farming community. Very little effect of the Viking raids is apparent, an observation echoed on many other sites (Renoux 1987, 14). Between 927 and 932 William Longsword built his first residence at Fécamp, a modest building but well-placed for access to water and trade routes. From then on the site was developed with more elaborate ducal palaces and a castle, ultimately becoming a fortified abbey in the thirteenth century (see Renoux 1975; 1979; 1985; and 1987 for full reports). Similar residences that might have been expected in Brittany have not appeared; even considering the limited nature of Breton medieval archaeology to date, the contrast seems to reinforce the conclusions of chapter 2 about the tendency to isolationism in the area.

Finally, we must seek a parallel for the Viking capital at Nantes. Almost nothing is known about the city in the early medieval period (the archaeology is reviewed by Barral i Altet 1984, and see Verhulst 1985, 336), but a rough comparison may be made with Tours. Both cities contained similar numbers of churches, suffered equally at Viking hands and experienced much the same expansionist boom after the removal of the Scandinavian threat (Galinié 1978; see Audin 1987 for the Touraine region). However, Galinié's excavations in Tours have demonstrated that the dislocation in occupation was not nearly as great as might have been expected from the documentary sources. At Saint-Martin's, for example, despite the recorded removal of relics in 853, the community obviously continued to function (Galinié 1978, 44). Part of the reason may be the sheer difficulty involved in evacuation; for a farming community such a move would mean economic suicide. Perhaps the total invasion of Brittany provided an exception to this, unforeseen circumstances which really did result in devastation. While the picture of Brittany laid waste is not significantly altered, in the light of Galinié's work we must have reservations about the actual conditions in early tenth-century Nantes until more excavations have been completed.

#### *Frankish finds in Scandinavia*

Turning lastly to Frankish artefacts found in Scandinavia, we see that the ninth-century raiding is certainly reflected in Carolingian loot (though not so much in hoarded coinage; see Musset

1954a, 33 for his theory that the Danegeld payments were melted down). A full discussion is obviously beyond the range of this paper, but if we take Birka and Hedeby as representative of the grave goods material, fibulae and mounts of Carolingian workmanship have been found in many burials (the finest are graves 507, 526, 550 and 649 at Birka and 269 at Hedeby; for full lists of Carolingian material in Scandinavian graves see Arbmänn 1937; Callmer 1977, 12–32, 230; Wamers 1985; the earlier Merovingian evidence is discussed in Bendixen 1974). Even allowing for the presence of some Frankish merchants in Scandinavia, the amount of Carolingian wealth that was taken back to the Viking homelands was obviously considerable.

As to future archaeological strategy in Brittany, a problem-orientation approach would clearly serve best for extending our understanding of the Viking occupation. While most excavation obviously relies primarily on opportunity and finance, investigation of more rural settlements and monasteries needs to be carried out to examine the effects of dislocation resulting from the occupation.<sup>8</sup> An extensive open-area excavation in a large fortress would surely illuminate the nature of the Scandinavian presence itself, with the Camp de Péran being ideally suited for a research programme. Above all, excavations are needed in Nantes, the heart of Scandinavian Brittany, as it is in this city that the answers to our questions lie.

#### 4. CONCLUSION: BRITTANY IN THE VIKING WORLD

In the two preceding chapters the historical and archaeological evidence for the Scandinavians in early medieval Brittany has been assessed against the general background of western European politics. It has become apparent that after the raiding of the ninth century Brittany underwent a profound change from the Scandinavian viewpoint, a familiar pattern echoed elsewhere and similarly reflected in the excavated material. In order to understand this more fully, in addition to reviewing the Bretons' changing relationships with the Carolingians and Anglo-Saxons, we must compare the history of Scandinavian contact with Brittany with that in the other Scandinavian settlements and areas of operations in the west. Such a comparison is particularly valuable for assessing

the importance of trading networks and the growth of Breton independence.

First, it is helpful to examine briefly the composition and logistics of the raiding forces themselves, for which the records of the Great Army's campaigns in Wessex preserved in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* are of great value since they give a much fuller account of its movements and actions than the Continental sources. Given that the various ravages, winter bases and marches of the Great Army of Danes and its predecessors have been mapped and discussed by Hill (1981, maps 46-64 and annotations), the present treatment will be confined to what the English sources tell us of the army itself.<sup>9</sup>

It is obvious that the Great Army was no mere raiding force or loose assembly of opportunists. From the precision of its movements and base locations in the 880s and 890s in England it must have had a cohesive command structure with powers of delegation and intact lines of communication and supply. To suggest that such a host simply moved about the countryside supporting itself from the land, without fairly advanced reconnaissance and prior knowledge, would certainly be unjustified.

Some indication of the magnitude of the army's influence is surely contained in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* entry for 893, when the Danes marched to Boulogne after campaigning in France *ond þær wurdon gescipode* 'and were there provided with ships', a fleet estimated later in the annal as at least 250 vessels. This may perhaps have involved a coercive or cooperative arrangement with a local town or an area sympathetic to the Danes, as is indicated too in the *Chronicle* entry for 866 when the East Anglians provided the army with horses. The Great Army may have operated as coordinated royal bands, surviving continual re-formation and division, as in 879, absorbing reinforcements as necessary to replace losses sustained in battle or resulting from elements of the army choosing to settle (Brooks 1979, though see chapter 2 above for the looseness of the term 'kings' at this period; Christopherson 1981-2 discusses the intricate structure and loyalty of the royal retinues in Scandinavia, together with conditions of service and reward).

The size of Viking armies at this time is also open to question, with considerable differences of opinion. Sawyer has argued that the hosts numbered only a few hundred men and that the sources tend to exaggerate (1971, 123-32), but Brooks (1979) has put forward a convincing refutation of this by comparing a wide variety

of sources from all over Europe, and finding a broad uniformity of estimates for fleet sizes. While some references are more likely to be gross distortions (such as the 600-ship raid on Hamburg in 845), Brooks notes that major armies are usually described as comprising 50-250 ships, with 100-200 not uncommon. The tactics of the Vikings seem to vary in accordance with the size of their armies, as do the corresponding defensive measures taken against them; compare the situations in Belgium (d'Haenens 1967) and Frisia (Braat 1954, especially 225; Trimpe Burger 1973) with the burh system (Brooks 1979). The effect of the Viking occupation on the surrounding areas during these campaigns has been examined by Brooks and Graham-Campbell 1986, 108 by comparing dated hoard depositions with the location of Great Army winter bases.

The Loire army operating in Brittany seems to have been smaller, possibly a force from Westfold in Norway, numbering 70-80 ships. Though a separate force, its leaders may have connections with the Great Army via Ragnarr *lōðbrók* and his 'sons', together with Hásteinn (discussed by Brooks 1979, but see Smyth 1977, 17-35; the dispute about Smyth's work was mentioned in chapter 1).

### *The kingdom of York*

York, more than any other of the Scandinavian colonies, provides a particularly clear contrast to the Viking occupation of Brittany. Although only 0.025% of the estimated area of the Viking Age city has been excavated so far, the work of the York Archaeological Trust has revealed a bustling commercial centre with trading connections spreading throughout the Viking world. Commanding the vital north-south land route along the Vale of York and situated at the confluence of the Ouse and Foss rivers, York occupied a similar strategic position to Nantes with its control over the mouth of the Loire. The city was taken by the Vikings in 866 and 867, but full settlement did not begin until 876. The situation remained turbulent until the early 920s, with a series of Scandinavian rulers governing the city, issuing coinage from c. 900 which shows considerable affinities with Carolingian examples (see Dolley 1978 for a review of the Viking coinage; and Pirie 1986 for the excavated evidence, especially p. 54 and plate IV for comparison with the Péran coin). The early tenth century saw a contest for power in the city between the Danes and the Norse from

Dublin, with a Hiberno-Norse victory at Tettenhall in 910. Ragnall of Dublin took command in 914, to be followed by more Irish Vikings until Æthelstan's conquest of the city in 927, after which it remained in English hands until 939. From that year York was ruled by Scandinavians until the death of Eiríkr blóðóx in 954, when it was absorbed into the Anglo-Saxon kingdom. (A brief guide to York's history may be found in Hall 1984, 43-66; see also Smyth 1978 and Sawyer 1978.)

Under Scandinavian rule York's economy flourished as a result of the new commercial contacts brought by the invaders (the relationship of Jorvik to its Anglian predecessor Eoforwic is still uncertain). Evidence of the city's prosperity was unearthed in abundance at 16-22 Coppergate, and in 1989 at the Queen's Hotel site in Micklegate, where a series of craftsmen's tenements was excavated, excellently preserved in the waterlogged soil. In the buildings and backyards, crowded along a street frontage, evidence was found of woodworking, shoemaking, leather-working, jewellery manufacture in several precious metals, needle and comb manufacture and coin minting, along with pottery and a full environmental record (see Hall 1981).<sup>10</sup> York's prosperity as a trading centre led to a flourishing of Anglo-Scandinavian stone sculpture with distinctive regional styles (see Lang 1978 and 1984).

The contrast between the booming commerce of Jorvik, with its links to Scandinavia, the Continent and the East, and Viking-occupied Nantes is obvious and striking. However, Brittany certainly offered potential for trade of this kind; the extensive Breton commercial network has been mentioned above, and mints are known from Rennes and Nantes (McKitterick 1983, 244). None of this mercantile apparatus seems to have been maintained by the Loire Vikings. York has numerous documentary references to its economic functions in addition to archaeological confirmation, Nantes has none at all. Despite the damage done to the Carolingian empire by the Scandinavian raids, in view of their past record of advantageous alliances it seems likely that the Franks would have been willing to set up at least a basic trading system with Viking Brittany in the early tenth century, if one had been offered. Close commercial ties and a degree of economic interdependence would also have lessened the Scandinavian threat to Frankia. In later tenth-century York, although it was then under nominal Anglo-Saxon control, there coexisted definite English and Scandinavian communities which traded freely. On this evidence, the conclusion that the occupation of Brittany was never intended to establish an

independent commercial state like York is inescapable. While it is unlikely that any such commercial drive existed as a deliberate policy of the first Scandinavians who settled in northern England and Normandy, in these areas the newcomers very soon began to establish themselves as traders with an eye to the markets, as in towns like Hedeby. On present evidence this development is entirely absent from Brittany.

### *Celtic Britain: Wales, Cornwall and Scotland*

If we turn to the Celtic regions in the west of Britain, a different picture again emerges. In Wales it is not yet clear whether the Viking impact consisted simply of a succession of raids and continual small wars, or involved a definite crisis and confrontation as in Wessex. In discussing such events in relation to the source material, we must remember that from the viewpoint of a contemporary Anglo-Saxon or Welsh chronicler the Viking situation can rarely have seemed anything but bleak and hopeless.

The Welsh political background seems to have consisted of a pattern of allegiance to small groups and individuals, but organised into rudimentary territorial units and kingdoms such as Gwynedd. Wales shows a history of alternately hostile and interactive relationships with England like that we see between Brittany and the Carolingian Empire, and also a similar pattern of Viking raiding except that in Wales the attacks continue until c. 954. Like Brittany, Wales offered poor prospects for conquest in the ninth century, owing to a mixture of geographical factors and perhaps the relative poverty of the Welsh compared with the targets in England. From the 850s, raiding was initially confined to the north and south coasts but in the later ninth century there were probing attacks through the lowlands, linked to the assault on Wessex. Gwynedd also had a strong leader in Rhodri Mawr until 878, just as did the Bretons in leaders like Nominoe and Salomon.

The raids persisted into the mid tenth century, with the emphasis shifting to the exiled Dublin Norse after 902. By this time Wales had achieved a measure of unstable cohesion and independence similar to that in Brittany, under the direction of Hywel Dda who fought the Vikings in alliance with the Anglo-Saxons, which parallels the Franko-Breton campaigns in France. In Wales too, the Scandinavians became part of the existing political scene, which added an extra factor to the civil power struggles. The extent of

Anglo-Welsh connections under Hywel is shown by the Welsh absence from Brunanburh (see the discussions of the *Armes Prydein* in chapters 1 and 2 above, and the references to the *Vínheiðr* campaign in *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* 1933, chs. 51-5; further accounts of this period are given in Loyn 1976 and 1977, 35-62 and Davies 1982a, chapter 4). The lack of serious Viking assault at this time was also due to the peripheral position of Wales in relation to the main colonies in Ireland and the Danelaw.

With the deaths of Hywel Dda (c. 950) and Eiríkr blóðøx (954) the Scandinavian impetus against Wales increased. Although this was still generally limited to raiding, concentration on the Bristol Channel and the Chester region is evident from the place-names, which show possible settlement around Milford and perhaps the establishment of basic trading posts in Pembrokeshire (see Davies 1982a, 116-20 and Loyn 1976); Anglesey may also have been occupied for a time. These settlements seem to have been temporary and the majority of the Scandinavian place-names are navigation points. There were certainly no substantial fortified centres like those in Ireland. The meagre documentary sources and the archaeology (limited to eight hoards and a few problematic pieces of sculpture, see Davies 1982a, 117-9 and Boon 1986, appendix) reinforce this picture.

The northern and southern colonies, if such they were, seem to have been maintained into the early eleventh century as a result of their proximity to the Danelaw and Man in the north, and Bristol's links with the southern kingdom of Knútr and Sveinn (the Bristol slave-trade may be referred to by Wulfstan in 1014). It is Wales's connections with areas of major Scandinavian interests which Brittany lacked, and which make the Vikings' failure to exploit the great centre at Nantes so unusual. But despite the close involvement of Wales in the political and military upheavals of the Irish Sea and the Danelaw, the ultimate Scandinavian impact there remains comparable with that in Brittany; in each case it had little linguistic or institutional effect, but was a significant factor in the development of independence and opposition to the Anglo-Saxons and Franks respectively.

The documentary evidence for Scandinavian influence in Cornwall is even more scarce than that for Wales. There is one ninth-century reference to a Cornish-Danish alliance against Ecgbryht of Wessex in 838, and there were Danish campaigns in the south-west in 981, 982, 988, 997 and 1001 (the sources are reviewed by Wakelin 1976-7). The Vikings seem to have fought as

mercenaries in the Cornish struggles for autonomy, as in Wales and Brittany, but generally appear to have restricted their activities to raiding. Lydford, Tavistock and Bodmin or Padstow are known to have been sacked, but the Cornish put up a spirited defence in 988 and 1001, repulsing the Scandinavians from Exeter on the latter occasion. Wakelin lists all the place-names and loan words of Scandinavian origin (1976-7, 46-7), all of which concern the sea and topography except for three which incorporate personal names; together with a few interlace crosses in the Anglo-Scandinavian styles of the Danelaw and three hogbacks (see Laing 1975, 140), these are the only indications of settlement. With such indirect and insubstantial evidence, no adequate model of Scandinavian activity in Cornwall can really be suggested, but it is interesting to note the familiar pattern of Viking raiding and simultaneous involvement in civil politics.

The Scottish material is peripheral to the subject of the Vikings in Brittany, representing as it does the complete and lasting take-over of an area by the Scandinavians; Orkney and Shetland remained under autonomous Scandinavian control well into the medieval period. Scotland and the Northern Isles belong as much to the North Atlantic sphere of Scandinavian operations as they do to the Irish Sea, and as such the points of contact with Brittany are slight.<sup>11</sup>

### *Ireland*

York has already been discussed as an example of a booming trading centre in an area of basically English culture which was settled and influenced by Scandinavians. In Ireland we see a similar situation, but in a Celtic land and thus of great relevance to Brittany. After initial raids in the late eighth century, the Vikings established a *longphort* on the site of Dublin at the Liffey mouth in 841, which grew into a small settlement (of this early Dublin settlement, only the cemetery has been located archaeologically, at Islandbridge; see Wallace 1985, 103-5). Until 876 the Scandinavians' interests lay mainly in Scotland and the Hebrides, but they became progressively more involved in the struggles for power in York. The Irish managed to expel the Dublin Norse in 902, as mentioned above, and they did not return until 917, although they are known to have remained on a few coastal islands. During their exile the Norse established closer links with York and set up a

dynasty there after their return to Ireland. By 919, the Vikings had founded towns at Wexford, Waterford, Limerick and Cork. Throughout the 920s and 930s the Hiberno-Norse were key figures in the wars with *Æthelstan*, but after the Brunanburh disaster of 937 their interests were increasingly confined to Ireland. Their rôle in Irish politics, similar to that in Wales and Brittany, grew less influential as the tenth century advanced, with serious setbacks in the 970s and 980s. By 1014 and the Battle of Clontarf, the zenith of Scandinavian power in Ireland was already long past.

Scandinavian activity in Ireland focused on the urban centres more than on any other kind of settlement. The towns came to occupy a position of considerable importance in the Irish civil strife of the tenth and eleventh centuries; as new foundations, their influence and monopoly of luxury imports and long-distance trade led to a gradual shift in emphasis from prehistoric cult sites like Tara and Cashel to the urban centres as symbols of power and royal authority.

As a result of large-scale redevelopment, archaeologists in Dublin have been fortunate enough to uncover the remains of more than 200 structures of the early medieval period. Grouped into four types, the buildings can be reconstructed as the homes and workshops of metalworkers, jewellery manufacturers, weavers, leather-workers and many other craftsmen; particularly fine wood-carvings have been preserved by waterlogging. Dublin's trading connections, seen in the imported goods, stretched mainly northwards to Scandinavia and Scotland but contact is also evident with England (an Anglo-Irish element may have played a significant rôle in Dublin, see Wallace 1986) and the Carolingian Empire.<sup>12</sup> Between them, the commercial centres of Dublin and York dominated the Scandinavian mercantile operations in the British Isles and north-western Europe.

In spite of the dearth of archaeological evidence and the ambiguous nature of much of the documentary material, it has been possible to construct a remarkably coherent picture of the Scandinavian impact on Brittany. Against the background of the dispersal and settlement of the great Viking armies that had been characteristic of the ninth century, and seen in the context of the establishment of the Duchy of Normandy, Brittany emerges as a final target for the raiders and looters. Although small Viking raids on England continued up to and even after the Norman Conquest, it is only in Brittany that we see true Viking activity on such an

ambitious scale in the tenth century. As to its long-term effect on Brittany, most scholars have argued for a minimal impact (cf. Smith 1985 and Davies 1988, 24, 213). This is true to the extent that there is nothing in the social organisation and institutions of Brittany after 939 that is specifically due to Scandinavian influence. To take this line, however, is to ignore the massive impact of the Vikings as a catalyst for political coalition and the formation of an independent Brittany. Without the deleterious effect of the Viking raids on the Carolingian empire, it is arguable whether Brittany would have developed the degree of autonomy that it enjoyed in the mid to late tenth century.

In this paper I have tried to do no more than present a summary of the evidence for the Vikings in Brittany and an assessment of its significance. Much research remains to be done, especially on the French sources; future archaeological work may radically alter our perception of this most enigmatic of Scandinavian colonies. It is to be hoped that this paper can at least provide a basis for a fuller understanding of the Vikings in Brittany.

## APPENDIX ONE

### GAZETTEER OF SCANDINAVIAN SITES AND FINDS IN BRITTANY AND NORMANDY

As a supplement to chapter 3, a gazetteer has been compiled detailing all sites and finds of Scandinavian character known to the present author which have been recorded in Brittany and Normandy. In one or two instances native Breton sites have been included where evidence relating to Scandinavian activity has been found (for example, the early tenth-century destruction levels at Landévennec), but only in cases where the attribution is reasonably certain.

The gazetteer has been arranged alphabetically by site name and is divided into two parts covering Brittany and Normandy respectively, with a subsidiary section for unprovenanced finds from the area. For site location, in addition to the relevant département, references have been given to the Institut Géographique National standard 1:25 000 maps of France; this method of location has been chosen in preference to the far more precise cadastral survey of the nineteenth century (see Astill and Davies 1985, 103) for ease of reference for English readers.

## BRITTANY

<i>Site name or Find spot</i>	<i>Département, Map reference</i>	<i>Evidence</i>	<i>Method of discovery/ Investigation</i>	<i>Remarks</i>	<i>References</i>
Ile de Bièce	Loire-Atlantique 1223/E	Type H sword	Chance find from river Loire	Site of battle between Seine and Loire Vikings in 854	Arbman and Nilsson 1966-8, 169-70
Ile de Bièce	Loire-Atlantique 1223/E	Sword with curved guard (Petersen 1919, fig. 77, unclassified)	Chance find from river Loire	See above	Arbman and Nilsson 1966-8, 171
Ile de Groix	Morbihan 0721/N	Ship cremation in mound with surrounding stone setting. Mound contents: 800-1000 rivets, 200 nails (11m-13m longship and possible ship's boat) Remains of one adult and one adolescent, dogs and birds 2 swords, types O/R and H Bronze scabbard chape 8 arrowheads, Wegraeus' type A; 3 or 4 lance heads	Excavation	Site was repeatedly robbed at night during excavation, and excavators did not recover all bone and iron finds – the existing finds are therefore only a portion of the original grave goods	du Chatellier and le Pontois 1908-9; Müller-Wille 1978; Arbman and Nilsson 1966-8, 184-92

BRITTANY (*continued*)

<i>Site name or Find spot</i>	<i>Département, Map reference</i>	<i>Evidence</i>	<i>Method of discovery/ Investigation</i>	<i>Remarks</i>	<i>References</i>
Île de Groix ( <i>continued</i> )		15-24 shield bosses 2 axe heads, type G 6 iron buckles 2 iron spur-fragments 3 perforated bronze mounts Bronze buckle and strap 2 silver hooked tags Gold and silver clothing appliqués Gold and bronze finger rings 2 bronze bowls Iron cauldron with chain 2 iron buckets Bronze animal-head mount Bronze rivetted mount Circular iron mount 5 iron casket mounts Iron and bronze strip mount Padlock			

BRITTANY (*continued*)

<i>Site name or Find spot</i>	<i>Département, Map reference</i>	<i>Evidence</i>	<i>Method of discovery/ Investigation</i>	<i>Remarks</i>	<i>References</i>
Île de Groix (continued)		19 bone gaming pieces 2 bone dice Anvil Nail size gauge Hammer Pliers 2 drill fragments Iron socket Sickle Slate whetstone Iron knife 2 iron bodkins Scissors Iron stern-ornament			
Landévennec	Finistère 0517/0	9th/10th-century monastery with destruction levels attributable to 913 Viking attack	Excavation		Bardel 1985-7; Bardel, Barral i Altet and Caziot 1984

BRITTANY (*continued*)

<i>Site name or Find spot</i>	<i>Département, Map reference</i>	<i>Evidence</i>	<i>Method of discovery/ Investigation</i>	<i>Remarks</i>	<i>References</i>
Lanlerf	Côtes-du-Nord 0815/0	Trapezoid earthwork	Unexcavated	Possible Viking camp	de la Borderie 1898, 388; Hamel-Simon, Langouet, Nourry- Denayer and Mouton 1979, 47
Île Lavret	Côtes-du-Nord 0814/E	9th-century monastery with destruction levels attributable to 884 Viking attack	Excavation		Giot 1983-5; 1987; Privat 1971, 88
Nantes, confluence of the Loire and Chezine	Loire-Atlantique 1223/E	Type E sword	Chance find from river Loire		Arbman and Nilsson 1966-8, 166-8
Nantes	Loire-Atlantique 1223/E	Type H sword	Chance find from river Loire		Arbman and Nilsson 1966-8, 169-70
Camp de Péran	Côtes-du-Nord 0916/0	Vitrified circular earthwork, with finds of York coin, c. 905- 925, helmet fragment and lance ferrule	Excavation	Possible site of battle between Alain Barbetorte and Vikings, 936	Nicolardot 1984-7; Nicolardot, Nissen- Jaubert and Wimmers 1987; Chéderville and Tonnere 1987, 183

BRITTANY (*continued*)

<i>Site name or Find spot</i>	<i>Département, Map reference</i>	<i>Evidence</i>	<i>Method of discovery/ Investigation</i>	<i>Remarks</i>	<i>References</i>
Saint-Malo	Ille-et-Vilaine 1115/0	Monastery with destruction levels attributable to Viking attack	Excavation		Langouet 1976 and 1979
Saint Suliac	Ille-et-Vilaine 1115/0	Trapezoid earthwork	Unexcavated	Possible Viking camp	Hamel-Simon, Langouet, Nourry- Denayer and Mouton 1979, 47
Trans, Camp des Haies	Ille-et-Vilaine 1216/E	Circular earthwork with tenth-century finds	Excavation	Possible siege camp of Alain Barbetorte at battle of Trans, 939	Hamel-Simon, Langouet, Nourry- Denayer and Mouton 1979; Guigon 1987a, 228; Chédeville and Tonnere 1987, 184
Trans, Vieux M'Na	Ille-et-Vilaine 1216/E	Trapezoid earthwork	Surveyed but not excavated	Possible Viking camp at battle of Trans	As above

## NORMANDY

<i>Site name or Find spot</i>	<i>Département, Map reference</i>	<i>Evidence</i>	<i>Method of discovery/ Investigation</i>	<i>Remarks</i>	<i>References</i>
Les Andelys	Eure 2012/E	Type G axe	Chance find from river Seine		Arbman and Nilsson 1966–8, 175
Elbeuf	Seine-Maritime 1912/E	Sword with curved guard (Petersen 1919, fig. 77, unclassified)	Chance find during railway construction		Arbman and Nilsson 1966–8, 175
Evreux	Eure 2013/0	Type H lance head	Chance find		Arbman and Nilsson 1966–8, 172
La Hague	Manche 1110/E	Linear earthwork enclosing 5 sq. miles of headland. Viking period C14 dates. Burials reported in the vicinity	Excavation	Possible base of western Seine Vikings	de Boüard 1953 and 1964b; Arbman 1953; Bates 1982, 9
Mont-Saint-Michel	Manche 1215/E	Hoard containing coin issued by William Longsword as duke of Brittany	Chance find		Dolley and Yvon 1971; Bates 1982, 9
Pitres	Eure 2012/E	Female burial with grave goods of 2 P41 oval brooches and pottery	Excavation		Elmqvist 1966–8

NORMANDY (*continued*)

<i>Site name or Find spot</i>	<i>Département, Map reference</i>	<i>Evidence</i>	<i>Method of discovery/ Investigation</i>	<i>Remarks</i>	<i>References</i>
Réville	Manche 1310/0	Burials with stone ship settings, cairns and rectangular lintel graves	Excavation	Ship settings may be Scandinavian burials	de Boüard 1964a
Rouen	Seine-Maritime 2011/0	10th-century horse-bit	Chance find		Arbman 1961, 201
Seine river	—	Type M sword	Chance find		Arbman and Nilsson 1966–8, 163–5
Seine river	—	Type Y sword	Chance find		Arbman and Nilsson 1966–8, 165
Vernon	Eure 2113/0	Sword (unclassified)	Chance find from river Seine during bridge construction		Arbman and Nilsson 1966–8, 172

## UNPROVENANCED FINDS

Probably from the river Seine	—	Type V sword Type A, G and M axes	—	Arbman and Nilsson 1966–8, 165–6, 172
Probably from the river Loire at Nantes	—	Type I lance head Bronze sword pommel	—	Arbman and Nilsson 1966–8, 171

## APPENDIX TWO REGNAL LISTS AND TABLES

While researching the Vikings in Brittany I found it helpful to compile brief lists of the successive rulers of the period in Brittany and Normandy, together with a table summarising the activities of the main Scandinavian commanders operating in France. I reproduce these here in the hope that they may provide an additional point of reference for the text. (It should be noted that all the dates given in the lists refer only to the length of reign, not to birth and death).

A guide to the complexities of Carolingian politics, the various territorial partitions of the Empire, and the distinctions and rivalries between emperors, kings and noble factions is essential; I found the best visual summary to be the excellent set of genealogical tables and maps drawn up by Rosamond McKitterick (1983, 349–92), to which I refer the reader.

### *Rulers of Brittany from Nominoe to Alain II, 830–952*

Nominoe	830/831 – 851
Erispoe	851 – 857
Salomon	857 – 874
Pascwethen and Guorhwant (joint rule)	874 – 875
Judicael and Alain I 'the Great' (joint rule)	875 – 888
Alain I 'the Great'	888 – 907
Gurmhailon	907 – c. 914
Viking invasion and occupation: Óttarr, Haraldr, Rognvaldr, Felekan and Incon	c. 914 – 936
Alain II 'Barbetorte (Twisted-Beard)'	936 – 952

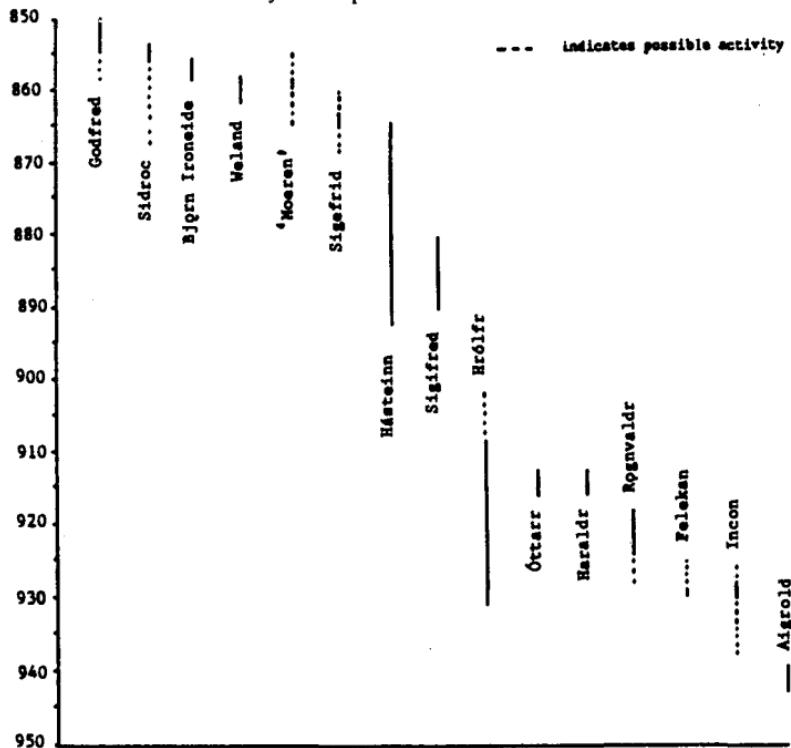
*Rulers of Normandy from Hrólfr to William II, c. 911–1087*

Göngu-Hrólfr (Rollo)	c. 911 – c. 925
William I 'Longsword'	c. 925 – 942
Richard I	942 – 996
Richard II	996 – 1026
Richard III	1026 – 1027
Robert I 'the Magnificent'	1027 – 1035
William II 'the Bastard', 'the Conqueror'	1035 – 1087

Note: the title *Dux* 'Duke' is first mentioned in connection with Richard II in 1006; there is no reliable evidence that the title was in use before this date (cf. Bates 1982, chapter 4).

*The principal Viking commanders operating in France, 850-950*

Note: only time spent in France is indicated.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> A complete listing of saga references to *Bretland* can be found in Metzenthin 1941, 14–15.

<sup>2</sup> A more detailed discussion of this theme will be found in a forthcoming paper by the present author (Price, forthcoming).

<sup>3</sup> It is possible that there may have been some earlier Scandinavian contact with Gaul, as in Spain from c. 795.

<sup>4</sup> The question of the assumption of power in Neustria by the Seine Vikings and the development of Normandy is of great relevance to Brittany, but available space permits only the briefest treatment. In general see Bates 1982; Davis 1976 and Searle 1984 give insights into the Normans' self-perception; for the transitional settlement phase see Musset 1985, de Boüard 1955 and Douglas 1947; Hrólfr is discussed by Douglas 1942, and the Scandinavian influences in Breese 1977, Yver 1969, 319–23, Musset 1975b and Stenton 1945; for political development and institutions see Yver 1969, 316–19, as well as Musset, Bouvris and Maillefer 1985; Douglas 1958 discusses the bishoprics and le Patourel 1944 considers their development; Musset 1954a deals with trade and the army is covered by Nicolle 1987 and Wilson 1985.

<sup>5</sup> The subject of relic translation has attracted a vast literature: for general accounts in addition to Guillotel's 1982 summary, see Musset 1965, 218–22; de la Borderie 1898, 302–25, 362–71, 507–18; Lot 1899. Specific monasteries and relics are covered by Gasnault 1961 and Mabille 1868 (Saint-Martin), Riché 1976 (Saint-Malo), Guillotel 1979 (Alet), de la Motte-Collas 1957 (Saint-Germain-des-Prés), Merlet 1930 (Tréguier) and Oheix 1905 (Montreuil-sur-Mer). For the comparable situation in Normandy see McKitterick 1983, 239.

<sup>6</sup> Gillian Fellows-Jensen has noted the following names which might conceivably lie behind *Felekan*: *Fallach*, *Feochán*, *Fédléán*, *Fer-caille*, *Fiaccán*, *Fiannacán*, *Finnacán*, *Finnechán*, *Fóelleán* and *Folachtán* (pers. comm.).

<sup>7</sup> Since initially going to press, James Graham-Campbell (pers. comm.) has suggested that the knot patterns on the upper and lower faces of the guard of the more complete sword (Fig. 25) are related to the earlier Borre-style 'ring-chain' motif and that the overall decoration is to be paralleled, for instance, by that on certain 'ball-type' brooches of his sub-group C, dated by him to the first half of the tenth century (Graham-Campbell 1984, 32 and 1987, 242). It therefore seems more reasonable to suggest a date range for the cremation of c. 900–950, placing it squarely within the period of the Viking occupation.

<sup>8</sup> An excellent example for future excavators of early medieval settlements has now been set by Groenman-van Waateringe and van Wijngaarden-Bakker (1987), with their reconstruction of the changing economy of Kootwijk, a tenth-century Carolingian village in the Netherlands.

<sup>9</sup> Hill's forthcoming companion volume to *An Atlas of Anglo-Saxon England*, covering the Continental material, should provide a valuable source for the Vikings in Brittany.

<sup>10</sup> Most of the finds from Coppergate are to be published shortly but in the interim see Hall 1984 for a general account, Radley 1971 for the economy (pre-Coppergate), MacGregor 1982 and Tweddle 1986 for finds from related sites, Holdsworth 1978, 5–10 and 18–24 for the pottery (pre-Coppergate), Hall, Kenward, Williams and Greig 1983 for the environment and Moulden and Tweddle 1986 for settlement south-west of the Ouse. Finds from the other Danelaw towns are briefly reviewed in Hall 1981, 100–39.

<sup>11</sup> It is impossible to summarise the Scottish political picture in small space; the

most recent discussions of the complex interactions between the Dal Riadans, Picts and Vikings are to be found in Smyth 1984 and Crawford 1987, who also reviews the Manx material and is particularly strong on the archaeological evidence. The recent Pictish work is covered in Ralston and Inglis 1984, Friell and Watson 1984 and Small 1987. All these works have extensive bibliographies to provide further reading.

<sup>12</sup> A programme of full publication of the Dublin excavations is currently under way, but in the interim see Ó Riordáin 1971 and 1976, de Paor 1976, Murray 1981, Bradley 1984, Wallace 1985 and 1988a and c, Mitchell 1987, Lang 1988 and Wallace and Ó Floinn 1988. A full Dublin bibliography will be found in Wallace 1988b. Excavations in Waterford and Wexford are currently adding to our knowledge of Viking towns in Ireland, but as yet no reports are available. Irish social structure in the early medieval period is discussed in Byrne 1973.

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*AE* = *Annales Engolismenses*.

*AF* = *Annales Fuldenses*.

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## EIRÍKUR BENEDIKZ, 1907–1988

**E**IRÍKUR BENEDIKZ died on 1st August, 1988, in his eighty-second year. He was a son of Dr Benedikt S. Þórarinsson, business man and bibliophile. Most Icelanders love books; Eiríkur and his father loved them more than most. Benedikt's noble collection went to the Library of the University of Iceland, and Eiríkur was never quite sure whether he, as son and heir, saw them go with regret or relief. Eiríkur was also an adept at the Icelandic national sport of genealogy and the anecdote that goes with it.

After leaving Menntaskóli in Reykjavík, Eiríkur studied English in Copenhagen, 1925–28, had a brief stay in Cambridge and then a longer stay in more congenial Leeds, 1928–30. There he made many lasting friendships and met and married Margaret Simcock from Staithes, whose interests and abilities matched his own. The English Department in Leeds was a lively place in those days, with E.V. Gordon and Lascelles Abercrombie as two of its best-known representatives. During the time Eiríkur spent there the Brotherton Library's acquisition of Bogi Melsteð's books was negotiated, and in later years Eiríkur was to prove a staunch and influential friend of the notable Melsteð Collection. The University of Leeds recognised his contribution by making him an honorary Master of Arts in 1961.

From 1931 Eiríkur taught English at the Gagnfraðaskóli and the Verzlunarskóli in Reykjavík and gave a highly successful English course on the wireless. He published text-books and was an active translator and interpreter. He became British pro-consul in Reykjavík in 1938 and in 1942 joined the newly established Icelandic Legation in London. There he stayed for the rest of his career, retiring as Minister-Counsellor in 1978. His command of English, English at every level, was impeccable; he was a shrewd, humorous observer, a precise, elegant writer, and a highly competent and clearheaded organiser. In alliance with his immense reserves of discretion and calm common sense, these qualities made him an ideal diplomat. Usually with great patience and always with great skill, he was the unobtrusive mentor and guide of a series of ministers and ambassadors, some of them with limited previous experience of foreign affairs. His beneficent role

in smoothing the difficulties that arose in the regrettable Cod War period has been firmly acknowledged by authorities and journalists on both sides. He was appointed Knight of the Falcon in 1954, Commander in 1963.

Eiríkur had long been a friend of Gabriel Turville-Petre and other stalwarts of the Viking Society, and when the Society returned to full activity after the war it was natural that he should take an interest in its affairs and in the Society's library in University College London, especially after Snæbjörn Jónsson's collection came to the college in 1953. It was not least through the Society that younger scholars and enthusiasts got to know him and learnt to profit from his bibliographical erudition and his kind and ready advice on any and every matter to do with Iceland. Eiríkur was duly elected an Honorary Member of the Society and he served as President from 1959 to 1962.

In the last twenty-five years or so of his life he devoted himself to realising an old ambition: to prepare an Icelandic-English dictionary far more comprehensive, accurate and up-to-date than any collection hitherto available. If he had a model, it was probably the admirable *Dansk-engelsk Ordbog* of Winterberg and Bodelsen (the latter had been his teacher in Copenhagen). This was spare-time work to begin with, but in his final years at the Embassy he had official leave to spend half the working week on his lexicography—if he could be spared from the office, and that was by no means always possible. Eiríkur had begun to contribute to Modern Icelandic teaching in University College in 1951, and he was appointed Honorary Lecturer in the Department of Scandinavian Studies there in 1954. It was hoped that the Department could give assistance with his dictionary work, but in the event lack of resources allowed disappointingly little active help, and the Department could do little more than provide him with a room furnished for his use and his thousands of slips. He laboured on and had the satisfaction of completing the task he had set himself but not that of seeing his work in print. The materials are now with a publishing house in Reykjavík. How exactly they will be edited and processed there remains to be seen, but whatever form it takes, the dictionary will be an enduring monument to Eiríkur's learning, skill and perseverance, and to his patient love of two languages.

Arnold Taylor, President of the Society 1952–54 and well known as a mainstay of Icelandic studies in the kingdom, taught in the English Department at 'Leeds for many years. From his retirement he writes: 'Eiríkur was a scholar, a diplomat, and one of my greatest friends. Indeed, I shall never forget that it was he who introduced me to Modern Icelandic, and who made it possible for me later to pass on that knowledge—though my knowledge of Icelandic never reached his of English. There will be few among our members who forget him, and I shall always remember him with the greatest affection.'

Eiríkur had many friends who learnt from him, formally and informally, who were encouraged by him, and who could now write with similar warmth, glad at heart to have known the man.

P.G.F.

## NOTES

### RE-READING THE SCULPTURE OF ANGLO-SAXON CUMBRIA

BY JOHN HINES

IT IS A PLEASURE to welcome the second volume of the British Academy's *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon stone sculpture*. This volume (by Richard N. Bailey and Rosemary Cramp) covers Cumberland, Westmorland and Lancashire North-of-the-Sands—since 1974 a single county which those with less conservative dispositions can simply call Cumbria. The publication of this volume in 1988 will have seemed a long time coming for those with appetites whetted or at least expectations raised by Richard Bailey's book, *Viking Age sculpture in northern England*, of 1980, or by volume I of the British Academy *Corpus* covering County Durham and Northumberland, published in 1984. One could feel that in 1980 Bailey hinted at more to come in his volume of this corpus than has in fact been delivered: *Viking Age sculpture* was described as a 'general introduction', with apologies for the brevity of treatment of several issues and the lack of comprehensive descriptions within this format, and references to 'work now in progress' and specifically the *Corpus* implying that more should be found there. As far as analysis and discussion of the data go, however, both books contain pretty much the same observations; the most substantial difference in this respect is an improved presentation of 'schools' of sculpture in Viking-Age Cumbria in the more recent volume. The *Corpus* in fact does not supersede *Viking Age sculpture* even though it does duplicate a considerable amount of the material in the earlier book.

What we nevertheless have in volume II of the *Corpus* is a solid reference book of great academic value. The committee responsible for the whole corpus and the authors of this particular volume have set themselves unpretentious targets of assembling and presenting fully and as clearly as possible the factual data of the sculptural remains in question, targets which are satisfactorily met. As in volume I the General Introduction to the *Corpus* precedes the pages of volume II itself within the covers of the

book, and the decision to reproduce it with all volumes is to be applauded. The inevitably high cost of the volumes makes selective buying of the series by both individuals and institutions equally inevitable. The value of the General Introduction is that it establishes a standardized basic terminology for the classification of the gross form and ornament of pieces of sculpture and for 'techniques' (which might be better called 'styles') of carving. The survey of types of interlace ornament relies heavily on an unpublished Durham M.Phil. thesis of 1974 by Gwenda Adcock. The apparent value of Adcock's study leads one to wonder whether it is necessarily too late for this to be published in its own right. Certainly there are points, such as the discussion of 'the development of interlace' (p. xxviii) and the relationship of patterns included or excluded from certain 'pattern lists', where the summary is too concentrated for the reader's comfort.

Volume II itself begins with thirteen very concise chapters, covering the relevant topics of historical and geological context, and offering overviews which highlight selected features of the Anglian and Viking Periods by Rosemary Cramp and Richard Bailey respectively. The heart of the book is an extensive catalogue of all separable items or fragments of sculpture assignable to these two periods. Each entry in the catalogue follows a prudent and informative format including the known history of the item, its classification and its material, followed, optionally, by a discussion and finally by a dating of the piece. Dispersed throughout the text in this book are notes on data relevant to certain significant issues which in *Viking Age sculpture* Bailey discussed *per se*, for instance the relationship between Cumbria and the Isle of Man in respect of Viking-Period sculpture, and the mechanical aids employed by the sculptors. An extensive index at the end of the book should allow the individual researcher who wishes to pursue such topics to assemble the relevant data with adequate ease, but in practical terms a familiarity with chapter 10 of *Viking Age sculpture* is an indispensable preliminary to reassembling the data concerning the sculptor at work.

Volume II ends with 693 illustrations, of which the great majority are of catalogued Cumbrian sculpture while a few are of

comparative material. This is the aspect of the presentation of the corpus which is most justly open to adverse criticism. The unexplained decision to illustrate the whole corpus by photographs alone (a very few of them reproductions of antiquarian drawings) is regrettable. Major details referred to in the text are sometimes virtually invisible—certainly unassessable—in the photographs, such as the unique Mammen-style animal on Workington 3 or the reported parallels between the Gosforth 4 and Lowther 4 hogbacks (see further below). The matt prints in the book are rarely pin-sharp and there are occasions where an apparent lack of selective focusing together with a thrifty trimming of the print in layout frames the stones with an unhelpfully obtrusive background. It is informative to see the stones as monuments within present as well as ancient contexts and drawings are inevitably interpretative to a degree. But so too can photographs be and at worst these fail to sustain the name of illustrations. The absence of new drawings of major monuments such as most of the Gosforth sculptures and the Bewcastle Cross, and of those stones whose details are judged significant enough to be picked out in the text, is a disappointment and can at the least be counted a missed opportunity. The supervising committee might reconsider this policy with regard to future volumes.

Concise though the wider discussion of the sculpture in this book is, it still leaves a strong impression of the value of this body of material as a reflection of and upon what is otherwise—as far as published work goes at least—a very obscure region in this period. The distribution of Anglo-Saxon sculpture looks plausibly indicative of at least some aspects of a structured human topography within (?)seventh- to ninth-century Cumbria, with a now familiar early medieval re-use of Roman foundations as *foci*, as at Bewcastle and Carlisle, and evidence for a particular concentration of activity and influence in an area of a few miles around Penrith including Dacre, Lowther and Addingham. The author's belief in the almost exclusively monastic character of Anglo-Saxon sculpture, particularly because of its literacy and iconography, is one about which some doubts might be retained pending a full review of relevant evidence, but it is a fundamentally reasonable proposition and not overstated in this

work. Ninth-century sculpture at Irton and Waberthwaite on either side of the natural harbour at Ravenglass draws attention to the possible importance of communications and trade between Northumbria and other lands around the Irish Sea and Atlantic seaboard. Glimpses of contact and exchange between the Anglo-Saxon east and the Celtic west which might run through such channels from as early as the late sixth century have emerged in the archaeological record, such as the zoomorphic interlace on metalwork produced at the Mote of Mark and details of the mysterious hanging-bowl phenomenon.<sup>1</sup> The topic should be subjected to alert scrutiny in future research, particularly in the context of Viking Period studies with a view to seeing what pre-existing economic structures the Scandinavians may have built upon in founding Dublin and exploiting communications between Ireland and Northumbria.

Scandinavian settlement in the north-west of England generally seems to be a phenomenon of the early tenth century and seems mostly to have involved a secondary wave of colonization by a population from the west of the British Isles within whose culture Norse and Hibernian elements had to some degree mixed, rather than primarily colonization from Scandinavia. Bailey insists, rather more conspicuously here than in *Viking Age sculpture*, that these newcomers met a 'lively and varied' native sculptural tradition when they settled in Cumbria, and is inclined to stress that the Scandinavian contribution to the features of tenth- and eleventh-century sculpture in Cumbria is relatively limited compared to the extensive range of features which represent local continuity. The vitality and dynamism of the pre-existing tradition of sculpture is strongly conveyed to the reader by the number and diversity of parallels cited to aspects of Cumbrian sculpture from around England. Round-shaft derivative crosses, for instance, seem to spring up again in the Peak District and Cumbria in the Viking Period like the heads of some irradicable plant.

But it is surely a greater achievement for the newcomers to have made their mark upon a flourishing tradition than upon a moribund one. Viking-Period sculpture is different, is indeed readily distinguishable from that of the Anglian Period. Some of the distinctive features of Viking-Period sculpture are not of

specifically Scandinavian origin or character but are apparently imported in this period from the Hibernian areas of the west. Most prominent among these is the ring-head cross; others include the occasional hunting scene or 'hart-and-hound' motif. In light of Bailey's previous eagerness<sup>2</sup> to put the case for influence from the present area of Scotland rather than Ireland as the source of these aspects his brief discussion of the origins of the ring-head cross here looks quite evasive. In my opinion he is wisely back-pedalling on the issue of Scottish influence, properly adapting his views, one suspects, to take account of a stone 'plaque' from Penrith (Penrith 11), evidently modelled on Irish metalwork as Bailey has shown, which has only recently come to scholarly attention. However he does not yet seem ready to recant!<sup>3</sup> It is incidentally not easy to understand why he does not consider the possibility—one might say the likelihood—of the parallel Gosforth crucifixions being modelled on the Penrith plaque rather than separately derived from an equivalent Irish metalwork model.

As in the Anglian Period, the distribution of Viking-Period sculpture is taken in the large view as diagnostic of the location of power and status in Scandinavian-settled Cumbria at this time. There is a distinct shift in concentration from the northern coastal plain to the west coast. An important point about the Gosforth 'master', assumed to be a master craftsman working for a patron, being retained to work at Gosforth alone should not be missed. A possible connection between the shift in concentration away from the Carlisle plain and the historically inferred annexation of this area to the kingdom of Strathclyde in the tenth century is noted by Bailey, although this sits a little awkwardly alongside the identification of Rockcliffe and Stanwix, two sites here which do produce tenth-century Viking-phase sculpture, as sites of strategic importance between Carlisle and the Solway Firth on the River Eden.

While the assignation of substantial pieces of sculpture to the Anglian or Scandinavian phases presents no great problems in most cases, reaching closer datings is distinctly difficult. The datings offered in the catalogue are consequently often broad and are expressed in terms of centuries, occasionally half-centuries. On the major monuments, which naturally attract attention in this

respect, understanding the dates finally offered is another aspect where the user of the book has to work actively, but reasons are usually to be found. The final date offered for the Bewcastle Cross, 'first half of the eighth century', is initially quite puzzling because the first discussion of this monument (pp. 19–22) seems to show, in a welcome manner, the continuing strength of a case for a late seventh-century date, while in terms of appropriate historical context the decade after 750 is also specifically cited. Ultimately, artistic parallels with the Durham 'Cassiodorus' manuscript seem to tip the balance—for Rosemary Cramp—to the eighth century, but one cannot help feeling that the dating as expressed represents an indifferent compromise between the historical poles of Ecgfrith's and Eadberht's reigns which have been cited. Rightly or wrongly the suspicion of a casual treatment is reinforced by the failure to fill in a reference to a point of detail elsewhere within the text, left as '(p. 00)', on the opposite page. This slip is repeated elsewhere.

Curiously, Richard Bailey inverts this procedure of restrictive interpolation. He initially states that it is unlikely that the impact of Scandinavian-derived art on sculpture in Cumbria can pre-date *circa* 920—which surely gives too much force to the scrappy historical evidence available for the settlements around this area—but subsequently gives a broader 'first half of the tenth century' as his date for the Gosforth Cross. No explicit case is made for the probability of a dating falling off sharply rather than gently after *circa* 950, although elsewhere Bailey authoritatively offers the relevant suggestion that in the 'Saint's Tomb' the Gosforth sculptor formed a regional prototype for the hogback tombstone. At the lower end of the phase, the evidence for dating a *terminus ad quem* for the Scandinavian phase—in the form, one would expect, of the supersession of a new phase—receives very short treatment.

Conspicuous features of the style of this book—the reluctance of the authors to be expansive or committal and the reliance on photographic illustration—particularly weaken the discussion of the iconography, or more broadly the *symbolism*, of the Viking-Period carvings. This subject has an essential place in studies of the Viking Period in England. The hogbacks Gosforth 4 and Lowther 4 and 5 are introduced to the reader as carrying

'mythological' scenes (p. 25)—unspecified except for a claim that they include Miðgarðsormr—the fixed character of which is supported by reference to parallels on Gotlandic picture-stones. The legibility of all of these stones in the illustrations is limited, Gosforth 4 because it is photographed at an angle and the Lowther stones because they are so worn. No illustration is provided of the Gotlandic parallels. Granted one can make something from the drawings and figures in *Viking Age sculpture*: it is the presentation here that is immediately at fault. A few pages later (p. 30) we have a vague discussion of the alternative possibilities of these scenes being 'pagan' or 'secular', with both terms as ill-defined as 'mythological' before. Whether or not one gives credence in one's own judgement to the weight Bailey attaches to these parallels, he does himself little justice in his presentation of the material here, and leaves this 'interpretation' looking no better than a dubious hunch.

The policy of restraint is most strikingly in evidence in the discussion of the Gosforth Cross (pp. 100–103) (see fig.). Point by point this offers a slightly expanded version of the interpretation published in *Viking Age sculpture*, although there is still much more that can be noted without raising any necessary controversy: for instance the symbolism that places the most specific and complex iconography on the significantly aligned east and west faces, along with the faces of the cross-head, or, by reference to the Dearham 1 cross, the intimation of a tree by the multiple ring-chain around the round shaft and of the Trinity by the triquetra knots on the crosshead. Throughout this volume of the *Corpus* in fact Christian symbolism and iconography are discussed in a selective and thus inconsistent manner. The discussion of the Gosforth Cross is certainly far from fluent, picking up points in a staccato manner. At the bottom of the west face is a depiction of Loki bound as a punishment for the death of Baldr. The reader is first told only 'what is significant about him for present purposes is that he is described in *Völuspá* as leading the forces of evil on the day of Ragnarök'. Later—in this book without explanation of the link between this scene and the concept of 'earthquake'—it is noted that earthquakes are associated with the apocalypse in both Christian and Scandinavian pagan mythology. There seems to be an attempt to prioritize

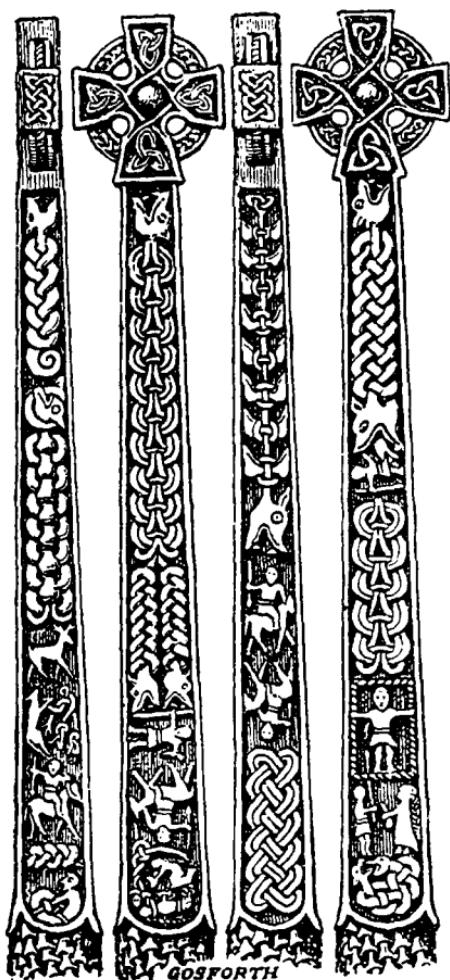


Fig. The Gosforth Cross. Illustration published by W.G. Collingwood in *Northumbrian crosses of the pre-Norman Age*, 1927. (Reduced.)

interpretations between the supposedly 'factual' and the more imaginative, but the result is reductive, and rather than simply liberating the reader to form his own judgement can confuse the reader—certainly, one would expect, the non-expert—as to what judgement the author may be implying on certain interpretations:

Christ lived on after the Crucifixion; is it coincidence that Viðar, who is shown on the same cross-face, also survived the holocaust? Is it not also significant that Mary Magdalene, depicted with pigtailed hair, holds a curved alabastron whilst Sigyn, with her pigtailed hair, holds a curved bowl?

These questions contain the most expansive points at the end of Bailey's interpretation. It is hard to tell whether they are put in this form as a rhetorical climax or speculatively and defensively. At risk of being obtuse I would welcome clarification of the particular significance hinted at in the second question.

What the discussion here fundamentally lacks is a consideration of appropriate procedure for interpretation: if we are not simply to hurl questions off the page like this how are we to answer them? One part (but not the whole) of what we may usefully treat as the 'meaning' of the monument is the composer's conscious design, which can be defined in closer terms of probability than the discussion shows. As a simple example let us take the question of whether Viðarr is a type of Christ and His resurrection. Bailey's minimal hypothesis is that the vignette of Viðarr slaying Fenrir (above the crucifixion on the east face of the cross) merely represents Ragnarök—the passing of the world of the Norse pagan gods juxtaposed with Christ's triumph on the cross and the inception of the New Covenant. We may then ask what other scenes unmistakably representing Ragnarök might have been picked out by the artist from a stock of which we know that which is preserved in *Vafþrúðnismál*, *Voluspá* and *Gylfaginning*. Problems of date and transmission of sources notwithstanding it is clear that many of the images associable with Ragnarök—images of slaughter and battle, tempests and cataclysms, roaming giants and monsters, the gods at the *þing* or a ship on the waves—are not on their own exclusively indicative of this particular myth. What is left can be enumerated: a wolf swallowing the sun and moon (which might be hinted at by the beasts attacking the cross-faces at the head of the east and west

faces of the shaft),<sup>4</sup> Heimdallr raising Gjallarhorn (which is on the west face), Óðinn consulting Mímir, and an extended series of gods—with portrayable individual attributes—in single combat with monsters. Including Snorri as a source these include Óðinn, Pórr, Víðarr, Freyr and Týr. Of these all but Víðarr fall: the wolf swallowing Óðinn would be a particularly striking statement of the death of the old gods, and is recognizable in a carving from Kirk Andreas, I.o.M. The possibility of Víðarr having been randomly selected from this list is not negligible but obviously limited. The integration of Norse myth with Christian revelation indeed seems already to be under way.

The Víðarr-Fenrir vignette is unambiguous, so peculiar are its details, and so is the scene of Loki bound. Where however details are less peculiar the identification of particular depictions with particular episodes cannot be closed like this unless we are to postulate an interpretative tradition, presumably verbal, extrinsic to the cross *per se*, descending from the artist. This is not an entirely far-fetched possibility, but any such tradition would be mutable and perishable in a way that the monument itself is not. Obviously peculiarities may reside in context as well as in internal detail, so that the identification of the figure with the horn can reasonably be closed down to Heimdallr within the Ragnarök story, although also allegorizing the Last Trump. Peculiarities may also be unrecognizable to us: the four horsemen on the north, south and west faces, riding in apparently ritual or stylized manner in a ring with spears unusually pointed downwards, form a motif that is peculiar enough, but the best corresponding episode I can find is the riding of the four horsemen of the apocalypse, one of whom according to the text should be holding a pair of balances.<sup>5</sup>

If extrinsic controls upon understanding are so unstable that they can be lost to viewers of the cross then they cannot contain the historically actualized readings of the cross from conception to the present day. The range of meanings of the monument lies within the range of potential readings by a reflective viewer of the cross. To say as much is not to go to the possible extreme of validating every view and response which some modern artistic and literary theory has flirted with. The monument can be misread: one may justifiably appeal to points of detail to argue

that identifications of Óðinn and Mímir at the base of the south face and Ecclesia below the crucifixion are ill-founded though self-evidently possible. If our field is Viking studies then we may look first to identify realistically possible readings within the first century or so of the cross's existence. If we accept that they were possible, or better still probable, at that time, then we accept that they may have been within the artist's consciousness, either in preconceived design or as the monument took shape. A straightforward example is the identification of Mary Magdalene below the crucifixion. Besides context, Bailey's identification here depends a little implausibly upon the ability to recognize an alabastron when you see one. The case is surely a little better made by noting that long hair and a vessel are regular iconographic attributes of Mary Magdalene and that the former occurs already on the nearby Ruthwell Cross. A more subjective example is the portrayal of Christ crucified. Bailey's explanation of many of the details of this is entirely technical: the posture of the figure, and the hands crossing the frame, are derived from a model in Irish openwork metal plaques, where crossing the frame with the hands gives a stronger casting. Despite the flow of blood from His side, Christ on the Gosforth Cross is the living Christ—triumphant not suffering, facing forward—and the posture is very reasonably reminiscent of the resurrected Christ emerging from the tomb. What we might label (anachronistically?) an anagogical sense of the picture is that God cannot be contained by any frame. However mundane the initial practical reason for the detail, the more imaginative readings of it would be no less meanings of the artwork if they occurred secondarily to an artist or craftsman at any stage in its transmission, or if they occurred to someone else, who may or may not have shared them with others. There is no valid order of precedence in authenticity between simple and complex readings.

Hints of this approach are given in Bailey's comments on the decoration of the Dearham 1 and Great Clifton crosses although he is unable to give his explicit backing and to use it to liberate the richness of the Gosforth Cross. But the meaning of the Gosforth Cross extends beyond its complex iconography. The Gosforth Cross is a monument, a symbolic artefact with a durability to keep it present in posterity, and in this case also with a reference back

to tradition in many aspects of its form, which embody its character as a gift, a deposit of the community that produced it into a dimension of both past and future time. Within itself the monument represents change, most consciously in the integration of Norse mythology with Christian teaching. But rather than being seen as a simple lineal progress from darkness to light, this particular change may quite plausibly have been and be conceived of as a re-integration of essentially whole lore which had split, diverged and distorted through the accidents of time and place. Thus the Gosforth Cross may fall into that archaeological class of monuments in the raising of which a claim of conceptual timelessness can be substantiated.<sup>6</sup> Consciously or not the community out of whom the immediate producers of the monument arose asserted their hold upon eternal reality through the cross. It is now part of the present past, part of the historical environment within which contemporary Man lives and with which he may consider his relationship. Modern terms of understanding such a monument cannot be excluded as anachronistic.

In such modern terms the union of pagan mythology with Christianity which has attracted so much attention to the Gosforth Cross can be seen as one manifestation of a systemically deeper integration of Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon culture to produce distinct Anglo-Scandinavian culture in the tenth century. To extend a simile which Bailey uses for referring to elements of the decorative 'vocabulary' of the sculpture, the *parole* of individual acts of culture implies an abstract system or *langue* of the culture, never itself exhaustively actualized in the sum of the *parole*. Paradoxically the Gosforth Cross is both typical and unique because it so far outstrips contemporary and related sculpture in revealing the potential scope of Anglo-Scandinavian culture, with, for example, the formal harmony of the Irish (or Scottish) ring-head cross, hart-and-hound and crucifixion model, the Anglian round-shaft derivative form and proportions of the cross, and the Scandinavian abstract Borre-style ornament and graphic stereotype of a woman, conjoined with the intellectual harmonizing of Norse paganism and Christianity. The reality of the cultural system implied by the Gosforth Cross is the reality of the normative force it applied upon those who articulated it.

Here we can see clearly how that normative force could be expansive, setting targets to be worked towards, not restrictive.

Richard Bailey and Rosemary Cramp however avoid obtrusive indulgence in creative criticism and as writers strive to produce a transparent text through which the artists' work can be seen with maximum clarity. But the scholar for whom the exercise is undertaken cannot merely read: he or she must take on the role of critic, analysing and evaluating the products and their origins and representing them in terms of contemporary, but one hopes lasting, relevance. With what looks like a Freudian slip in his Preface, Sir David Wilson hails this book: 'our academic thirst can be slaked'—

O for a draught of vintage! that hath been  
 Cooled a long age in the deep-delvèd earth..  
 Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrène.  
 With beaded bubbles winking at the brim..

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> See L. Laing, 'The Mote of Mark and the origins of Celtic interlace', *Antiquity*, 49, 1975, 98–108, and his debate with J. Graham-Campbell in *Antiquity*, 50, 1976, 48–53. At the time of writing the publication of a corpus of hanging-bowls by Rupert Bruce-Mitford is awaited. Otherwise on the problem see D. Longley, *Hanging-bowls, penannular brooches and the Anglo-Saxon connexion*, 1975; L. Laing, *The Archaeology of Late Celtic Britain and Ireland*, 1975, 353–5; and R.L.S. Bruce-Mitford, *The Sutton Hoo ship-burial*, vol.3, 263–95. A recently completed Ph.D. thesis (University of London), which unfortunately I have not yet had the opportunity to consult, is J. Brenan, *Hanging bowls and their contexts: an archaeological study of their socio-economic significance from the 5th to 7th century A.D.*, 1988.

<sup>2</sup> *Viking Age sculpture*, pp. 222–31.

<sup>3</sup> See also R.N. Bailey, 'A Crucifixion Plaque from Cumbria', in J. Higgit (ed.), *Early medieval sculpture in North Britain and Ireland*, 1986, 5–21.

<sup>4</sup> In the light of the use of the sun and moon as symbols of the Alpha and Omega, the eternity of God, on insular sculpture (Fr. Henry, *Irish Art during the Viking invasions 800–1020 A.D.*, 1967, 162 and refs.) to present them as actually swallowing the sun and moon might be impermissible.

<sup>5</sup> *Revelations VI*, 1–8.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. R. Bailey, 'Consumption, change and the archaeological record,' *University of Edinburgh Occasional Papers*, 13, 1984.

## A MEMOIR OF ALFRED JOHNSTON BY HIS NEPHEW WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES By J.A.B. TOWNSEND

WHILE WORKING THROUGH the Johnston papers in the Orkney Archives in October, 1988, I came across a memoir (D 15/4/7) of Alfred Wintle Johnston, founder of the Viking Society, written by his nephew, James Halcro Johnston of Orphir House, Orphir, Orkney. This was originally composed at the suggestion of Peter Foote and myself, during the Orkney Impignoration Conference of 1968, and it seems very suitable for these reminiscences to be published now as the Society prepares to celebrate its centenary in 1992.

The original typescript is dated 8th December, 1968 and, in transcribing it, I have left it in the author's own language and punctuation, but have silently corrected a few obvious misprints. I have added some notes at the end to fill out the narrative and have indicated my sources for these notes. An appreciation of Johnston, by Dorothy Whitelock, appeared in *Saga-Book*, 12 (1937–45), p. 207–08, together with portraits of Johnston taken in 1902 and 1942.

I am grateful to Hugh Halcro Johnston, the author's son, for his ready permission to reproduce this memoir and to Alison Fraser, Orkney Archivist, both for giving me access to the original document and for acting as my intermediary in obtaining the required permission. My thanks also to Hon. Editors, Judith Jesch and Richard Perkins, for their advice, some of which I have taken. In conclusion, I would like to say that, in publishing this memoir, I would wish it to stand not only as a recollection of our founder but also as a remembrance of its author, James Halcro Johnston, a most kindly and courteous man, who gave me a great deal of help during the early years of my work on the history of the Society.

### Alfred Wintle Johnston

My uncle, Alfred Wintle Johnston, was born in Orphir House, Orkney on 25th September 1859 and died in Welwyn Garden City on 19th February 1947, aged 87 years. His father, James Johnston,<sup>1</sup> a landed proprietor, had served as a midshipman in the Royal Navy during the Napoleonic war. He was a pioneer in farming and interested in land surveying. His mother, Margaret Omand Robertson,<sup>2</sup> was a daughter of Lieut. Robertson, R.N.,<sup>3</sup> who started life in the mercantile marine and during a period of shore leave in Stromness had been 'pressed' into the navy.

His name-father, General Alfred Wintle,<sup>4</sup> was in 1859 serving with the army in Meerut, India. He had visited Orkney and appeared to have had Orkney connections but I cannot discover what the connection was.

Alfred, like his brothers, started his education with a tutor at home. At the age of 13 he attended a day school in Edinburgh<sup>5</sup> for a year while staying with his aunt, Mrs Couper.<sup>6</sup> In 1873 he followed his brother, Henry, at Dollar Academy, Clackmannan, and remained there for three years. He writes regularly to both father and mother telling them about his teachers, his lessons and his walks. It is cold in the winter with his bedroom temperature, 40°F. He left Dollar in 1876 with excellent marks in History, French and German.

His future career was unsettled and was influenced largely by those of his brothers. Henry is studying medicine but the family purse will not allow of a second university education. His brother, William, offers to help. He is working with a travelling firm in Leith. To qualify for the university where he is to study for an engineering degree Alfred goes to the Edinburgh College School in the mornings and helps his brother in the office in the afternoons. But William's firm gets into financial difficulty and he has to leave to join another firm in Burma. Alfred is offered and accepts a post with Orkney W.S.,<sup>7</sup> Mr Traill, on £20 a year. It was work which he enjoyed at first, an introduction to legal documents and the Register House. But in May 1878 he found he 'was not meant for a lawyer' and shortly afterwards started a four-year apprenticeship with Kinnear and Peddie, architects in Edinburgh on a salary of £10 for the first year. On finishing this apprenticeship in July 1882 he left Edinburgh for good.

His life in Edinburgh had been one of many interests: a regular member of the church he attended meetings and talks on religious subjects. He studied art at the Art College. He was a member of the Natural History Club; he played rugger and tennis. Encouraged by his sister, Anne, he enjoyed music and played the piano. He read Carlyle and Ruskin as well as books on architecture. He studied and often made copies of parts of the sagas and old documents. His yearly leave was spent in Orkney, where he walked or rode to visit anyone who could help in the search. He collected old bismers, pundler stones, querns and other Orkney measures and implements. His diary is of these visits only and often contains sketches of historical interest.

In 1882 the prospects for an architect were not good and my uncle was advised to move to London but his general health and

his eyesight in particular were giving trouble. He spent about a year at home helping his eldest brother, James, my father, with the home farm. His sister, Maria, writing from Australia advised him to give up architecture and study medicine; but the necessary funds were not forthcoming. In May 1883 he proceeded to London to look for a job but this was no easy matter; there was no demand for assistant architects. After walking many miles and visiting many offices he got a temporary job with an Edinburgh firm of builders, W. and D. McGregor, who had a contract for the Princes Theatre and Hotel but shortly afterwards he accepted an offer of 25/- a week from Mr Somers Clarke,<sup>8</sup> an architect whose work was mostly of churches. The change to London resulted in a great improvement in his general health and eyesight, due, he thought, to the many miles he had to walk daily.

He now had an opportunity to continue his researches. Following the lead of David Balfour<sup>9</sup> who had published in 1860 his memorial for Orkney, *Odal Rights and Feudal Wrongs* my uncle started a campaign to recover some of the rights which Orkney and Shetland had lost in 1468. This at first took the form of correspondence and articles in the *Orkney Herald* and *Shetland Times* but soon called for the forming of a suitable society. Writing to his father in May 1886 he says 'we have already started the idea of an Orkney and Shetland Society or Association (Literary)' and in August of the same year he writes: 'I am now to start a Reform League of Orkney and Shetland'. This afterwards became the Udal League<sup>10</sup> the council of which held its first meeting on 4th Feb. 1887. In 1891 he refers to the tings of the Fokelore Society a society which, no doubt, became in 1892 the Orkney, Shetland and Northern Society and later the Viking Society,<sup>11</sup> of which in 1902 he was Chairman of Council, Hon. Treasurer and Librarian, and Miss Amy Leslie, his future wife, was Hon Convener. In November of that year he writes to his mother that he is 'very much engaged with the Viking Club which as you may see from the *Scotsman* is turning out such a success'. As Secretary of the Udal League he was also kept busy. He had a lot of correspondence with a 'greedy old dame' in Sandwick, Orkney, who wanted him to take up her claim against her landlord because, as she explained to her neighbours, my uncle was 'commissioned by the queen to put all wrongs right at a

remunerating allowance of three or four thousand a year'.

In 1888 Mr Clarke's business had declined to such an extent that Alfred had to look for another post. After walking the streets for some weeks and a temporary job with an architect in Marlborough he became assistant on a salary of £2. 5. 0 a week to Mr G.H. Fellowes Prynne,<sup>12</sup> who afterwards became President of the Architectural Association. The work was again the design of ecclesiastical buildings and there was always plenty of work.

Music appears to have been a feature of and an asset to the new Viking Club.<sup>13</sup> In December 1893 he writes 'am getting on well with Viking Club arrangements. Inaugural meeting on 12th January and concert on 9th February. 22 lady patrons'<sup>14</sup> and a year later: 'dreadfully busy ... with Viking Club work and getting up a concert which has brought £15 profit'. His great friend at this time was E. Home Popham, a professional pianist and his name appears as a pianist on what appears to have been an ordinary meeting of the Club in April 1898.<sup>15</sup>

My uncle was always a favourite with children and my first memories of him are being taken to fish for trout in the burn or listening while he played the piano and sang popular songs. About 1899 we watched him excavating at the Round Church in Orphir and sometimes helped him with his measurements. It was at this time that he discovered the south wall of the Viking Palace mentioned in the saga.<sup>16</sup>

Towards the end of the South African war he thought seriously of emigrating to that country as he thought there would be plenty of work rebuilding the damage caused by the war. The post of assistant architect was not a lucrative one and he was always short of money. Writing to his mother he aptly compares himself to Mr Micawber forever hoping for something to 'turn up'. He had many friends in London and lived a very sociable life, enjoying concerts, dancing and tennis. When the bicycle appeared he at once bought one. In all investigations he took great pains to discover the truth.

In September 1905 he married Miss Amy Leslie<sup>17</sup> who had been connected with the Viking Club since 1901 or before. She died in 1925 and in 1928 he married Kathleen Ivy Dodds,<sup>18</sup> who survived him. He was F.S.A. Scot. and a F.S. North A. For his work on northern research, he was awarded a civil list pension by

King George V and he received the 1st Class Order of St Olav (Norway) and the Order of the Falcon (Iceland).

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> For a portrait of James Johnston (1798–1887), see *Old-lore miscellany* 8 (1915), facing p. 130.

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Robertson (1819–1903) was the sixth child of Lieutenant Robertson, R.N. She married James Johnston in 1841.

<sup>3</sup> For a portrait of Lieutenant James Robertson, R.N. (1780–1860), see *Old-lore miscellany* 2 (1909), facing p. 39—a picture taken without his knowledge, he having ‘religious scruples in the matter’. For a genealogy of the Robertsons of Newbigging, see p. 42–43 of the same volume.

<sup>4</sup> Major-General Alfred Wintle (1822–78) was educated at Rugby and served with the Royal (Bengal) Horse Artillery, rising to the rank of major-general in 1872. I have not been able to trace his Orkney connection yet either.

<sup>5</sup> Doctor Begbie’s private classes. (Letter from Alfred Johnston to Dorothy Whitelock dated 9th September, 1942.)

<sup>6</sup> Mrs Couper (née Jane Robertson, 1828–91) was the ninth child of Lieutenant Robertson, R.N., and married William Petrie Couper of Douglasmuir in 1849.

<sup>7</sup> Writer to the Signet.

<sup>8</sup> Somers Clarke (1841–1926), architect and antiquary. He became an architect ‘after five years unwilling servitude in the law’. For health reasons, he spent much of the year in Egypt, where he assisted in the repair of many ancient temples. At home, he specialised in the restoration of old churches.

<sup>9</sup> Colonel David Balfour of Balfour and Trenaby (1811–87) built Balfour Castle and revolutionised farming in Shapinsay. He was the author also of *Oppressions of the 16th century in the islands of Orkney and Shetland* (1859) and *Ancient Orkney melodies* (1885). For his relations with Johnston at the time of the Udal League, see the article by W.P.L. Thomson cited in the next note.

<sup>10</sup> Further information about the Udal League may be found in an article by W.P.L. Thomson in *The Orkney view*, 2 (October 1985), p. 15–17.

<sup>11</sup> It became the Viking Society for Northern Research in 1912.

<sup>12</sup> George Halford Fellowes Prynne (1853–1927) was another who became an architect after abandoning an earlier career, this time, farming. He worked mainly in church building and restoration. He was President of the Architectural Association in 1889 and 1890.

<sup>13</sup> Music was a regular feature of the Annual Dinner until the 1930s, but there have been no regular concerts since 1895.

<sup>14</sup> The meeting on 12th January, 1894 was the ‘First Al-Thing of the Thing-Mote of 1894’ when Frederick York Powell gave the inaugural address on ‘Some literary and historical aspects of Old Northern literature’. On 9th February that year, an ‘Auld Yule Foy’ was held in the King’s Weigh House Rooms, Thomas Street, Grosvenor Square (where the Society met until 1911 when it moved to King’s College)—‘Admission by ticket only, price 1s. and 2s., which may be had from the Skatt-Taker’.

<sup>15</sup> The meeting was the ‘Great Althing (Annual General Meeting)’ of 22nd April, 1898,

when E. Home Popham sang a selection of Orkney folk songs at the piano as an accompaniment to Alfred Johnston's lantern-slide lecture on Orkney.

<sup>16</sup> The earl's *bū*. See *Saga-Book* 3 (1902–04), p. 174–216, for Alfred Johnston's own account of his discoveries.

<sup>17</sup> Amy Leslie joined the Society in 1894. She was Hon. Convener, 1901–04; Hon. Secretary, 1904–24; Hon. Editor of *Saga-Book* and *Year book*, 1914–25; and Joint Hon. Editor of *Old-lore series*, 1907–25.

<sup>18</sup> Kathleen Dodds joined the Society in 1927. She was Joint Hon. Secretary, 1928–30 and an Hon. Editor of *Saga-Book*.

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## REVIEWS

SCANDINAVIAN SCOTLAND. BY BARBARA E. CRAWFORD. *Studies in the early history of Britain. Scotland in the early Middle Ages*, 2. Leicester University Press. Leicester, 1987. xiv + 274 pp.

The reviewer's task is not made any easier by his not knowing what the title of this volume is, or how he should cite it in future scholarly use. *Scandinavian Scotland*, a sensible title, appears on the spine and is therefore used here. But 'Scotland in the Early Middle Ages. 2' appears above it on both covers and on the title-page, and we are promised a companion volume by Dr Anna Ritchie (presumably *Scotland in the early Middle Ages, I*); that is supposed to bear the absurd and tautologous title *Pictish and Scottish Scotland*. Plainly there has been some very muddled thinking somewhere: one hopes that there is still time for reconsideration of Dr Ritchie's title, which should presumably be *Pictish and Gaelic Scotland* or even (however perilous a suggestion) *Pictish and Irish Scotland*.

It is a relief to confront a volume which might have been called *Viking Scotland* and is not. Bravo, Dr Crawford! There has not been a book on the subject for a very long time, and this one will revolutionise the life of its teachers and students alike. It is a bonus that the history of the Isle of Man has been deemed to fall within its purview. This book is also unusual in that it is written by an author who has been trained both as a historian and as an archaeologist. One approaches the volume, therefore, with the highest of hopes.

The book is constructed in nine chapters: 'Introduction: sources and evidence' (pp. 1–10); 1, 'The geographical framework' (pp. 11–38); 2–3, 'The chronological framework' (pp. 39–91); 4, 'The linguistic framework' (pp. 92–115); 5–6, 'The archaeological framework' (pp. 116–90); 7, 'The literary framework: Norse society in the settlements' (pp. 191–218); 'Epilogue' (pp. 219–22). A full and useful bibliography, followed by an index, completes the work. By and large this is a sensible and straightforward format for the work, for which the 'Introduction' serves as a clear guide and summary.

*Scandinavian Scotland* is securely rooted in its chapters 1 and 4–6. The geographical basis for so much of what follows is effectively presented in chapter 1. Although Dr Crawford is not a philologist, her survey of the largely toponymic evidence offered in chapter 4 is usefully and thoughtfully presented. There is an occasional hint of confusion, but the theories and methods of Scottish place-name work, especially that of W.F.H. Nicolaisen, are sensibly questioned and in some respects found wanting. Perhaps some of the 1960s-style toponymic enthusiasm (reflected in the Introduction, pp. 5–6) has worn off—and no bad thing!—but much of use has been extracted, refined for the purpose in hand, and presented undogmatically. It is clear, however, that the study of Scottish place-names still lacks a formal organisational structure which would help it to move along more efficiently. One expository point emerges from this chapter—and from the book as a

whole—which is of wider concern. Generally the author uses ‘Norse’ interchangeably with ‘Scandinavian’. But occasionally she employs it to mean ‘Norwegian’ and even contrasts it with ‘Danish’ (p. 221). This leads to great confusion on the part of the reader, especially one who is being given his introduction to Scandinavian or viking matters via this book, as many Scots may henceforth. The word would, one thinks, be best avoided wherever possible.

Dr Crawford is clearly most at home in the archaeological matter which provides the basis for chapters 5 and 6. Here she is robust in the conclusions which she draws. ‘The Viking raids... and the Norse settlements... must have meant the collapse of a Christian literary culture and the dispersal of an educated priesthood...’ (p. 159). She comes down on the side of the removal of the native population from the Birsay sites and generally against ‘considerable integration’ of Scandinavian and native (p. 148). In the Northern Isles in particular, she finds no hope for the theory of amiable co-existence of these populations (p. 149), but stresses heavily the need for work on the Western Isles. This picture is qualified somewhat, however. Dr Crawford allows for vikings’ tolerance of the *papar*, largely because of the toponymic evidence, but notes their eventual inability to sustain their communities in a comprehensively different social environment (pp. 164–8). In view of the reasons given by literary sources as to why the *papar* abandoned Iceland and the Faroes, however, there seems little reason to credit them with a much greater survival in Scotland. And, given vikings’ attacks on Iona, it is not clear why more northerly communities should have been spared. Secondly, Dr Crawford thinks of the effective early obliteration of Pictish culture (and perhaps population) in Orkney but not in Shetland (p. 171): this may be so, but it is difficult to see how such a pattern would be explained. And in the Western Isles she thinks in terms of a ‘stronger Scandinavian imprint in the Outer Hebrides than in the Inner’ (p. 167)—no doubt correctly so.

One of the major themes of any work on this subject must inevitably be the extent of survival of the native populations of the areas settled or dominated by Scandinavians and the degree to which (if at all) the two populations became assimilated to one another. In spite of what has been said above about the robustness of her conclusions, there is some evidence for a troublesome confusion in Dr Crawford’s mind on this subject. In general, she seems to have been struggling all the time between a desire to see nice, sweet reasonableness everywhere and a recognition nonetheless of the harsh facts of Viking-Age realities. With respect to two settlement-areas the confusion is more specific. In the Northern Isles (and the mainland opposite) and in Man the Scandinavian invaders would have found P-Celtic-speaking peoples, the one Pictish, the other Brittonic. Both were overwhelmed, leaving no trace other than that of the physical remains of a lost culture. We have no evidence for the creation of a hybrid society. (It is just possible, but on the whole unlikely, that in the Outer Hebrides gaelicisation of a formerly Pictish region had not proceeded far by the early ninth century.) On the other hand, in the Western Isles and on the mainland opposite, the

Scandinavians met a Gaelic society installed in what had been the Dalriadic heartlands. We have significant evidence for the creation of a hybrid population there and the subsequent expansion southwards (in a tertiary phase of 'viking' settlement) of its hybrid culture into Man, Galloway, and what is now Cumbria. But Dr Crawford quotes the use of Gaelic personal names (p. 215)—one must remark that, in this book, wherever a Gaelic word or name can be mangled, it is mangled—as evidence for the existence of a hybrid Norse-Gaelic society in Orkney (if such existed, it was as a result of Orcadian contact with the Western Isles and Ireland). She speaks too of the late mediaeval re-gaelicisation of the Western Isles (p. 221) as though they had been wholly Scandinavianised: if that had been the result of the ninth-century conquests, it would make nonsense of our perceptions of much subsequent Irish-Sea history in the Viking Age, which relies on the existence by ca 900 of a hybrid Gaelic-Scandinavian culture emanating from the Hebrides.

This whole book is a study concentrated very much on the Northern Isles and especially on Orkney. In this it reflects both the greater density of scholarly activity in Orkney and Shetland and the author's own particular research-interests. The Hebrides and the Scottish mainland do rather less well. (The Isle of Man, on the other hand, is quite well served here, and generally in the scholarly literature.) It is perhaps inevitable, therefore, that the book's biases should derive from the Orcadian situation: this is at once a strength and a weakness. The focus on Orkney and its earldom has a further result. *Orkneyinga saga* (here renamed '*Jarls' Saga*', except on p. 111) looms large throughout the book. We are told that it was written in Iceland (pp. 7, 202); but we are left to deduce that this occurred in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century (p. 201), that there are sections or layers of different date (p. 212), and that there is more than one version (p. 212) as well as an unspecified translation made in the sixteenth century (p. 213). *Orkneyinga saga* is here required to serve as a major source for the roughly three-century period which is Dr Crawford's brief—for chronology, for political history, and for social history. In chapter 7 this, with further sagas and other non-contemporary sources, is made the foundation of a study of Scandinavian colonial society in Scotland. This procedure is not necessarily as disreputable as it might sound, provided that one essential pre-condition can be met. One would have to show that the writers of the Old Norse sagas, principally in thirteenth-century Iceland, enjoyed—like the purveyors of traditional literatures in some other societies—a clear sense of anachronism (for some discussion of this general question see *Traditio*, 37, 1981, 132–7): that is, that their inherited literary tradition handed down to them a picture of a past society whose artefacts and social mores were different from their own, against which their literary imagination could then provide characterisation, narrative plots, dialogue, and so forth. There is no sign that Dr Crawford has ever asked herself this question. Yet she is able to go on and on about 'tradition(s)' without once explaining what she means. Indeed, there are alarming signs of naïveté and confusion in this respect: she refers repeatedly to sagas being 'written down' (for example, pp. 201, 214) as though they

proceeded simply and directly from oral to written transmission; on the other hand we hear of 'Torf-Einar's own [skaldic] verses *written* on the occasion' of the death of Halfdan Long-legs, *ca* 895 (p. 196, my italics)! Nonetheless, much of interest is to be found in chapter 7, even if one must say that its intellectual foundations are inadequate. But it is a pleasing irony that in a discussion of 'The status of women' in colonial Scotland the author should reject saga-evidence as literary and anachronistic (p. 218).

Harsher words must, however, be reserved for chapters 2–3, providing the so-called 'Chronological framework' or narrative history. In terms of method, we seem to be carried into the last century. One is left with the impression that Dr Crawford has steeped herself so thoroughly in archaeology that she has lost sight of the historian's primary duty. With Snorri, she is naive about skalds (p. 8); she is staggeringly credulous in her attitude to the sagas (p. 9) and in particular she fudges the evidential problem posed by *Orkneyinga saga* (p. 7). In summary, she refers to the Norse sources for Scandinavian Scotland as 'impartial evidence' (p. 9)! In view of all this, it is astonishing to find her saying that 'too much has been expected of the sagas as historical sources' (p. 70). An example of the confusion which can result from a loose attitude to the sagas' evidence occurs on p. 201: referring to an event which occurred *ca* 1137 and is remembered in *Orkneyinga saga*, Dr Crawford writes that 'as this was not long before the saga was written down, the incident is certainly likely to have been accurately remembered'; yet, when she comes to give an account of the event, her version is quite different from that of the saga.

In general, in chapters 2–3, the contemporary sources have been quite submerged in a sea of fantasy issuing from eclectic use (which there has been no attempt to justify) of late literature. The result is that a great opportunity to do for the historical sources what Dr Crawford seems successfully to have done for the linguistic and the archaeological evidence has been missed: all this part of her work will have to be done again, and that is a tragedy. These chapters caused this reviewer more than once to put down the book in utter exasperation; in their mindlessly selective dependence on Old Norse sagas they deprive themselves of any value as historical analysis and narrative.

There is confusion, too, in her descriptions of source-categories: on the one hand, she can use the words 'document' and 'documentary' quite precisely (as, for example, on pp. 3, 202); on the other hand she can lapse into the loose language of the archaeologist and describe any written text as a documentary source (p. 5 *et passim*), an ambivalence very confusing for the beginner in particular. And in general it must be said that the language of this book is unacceptably demotic at many points.

A further problem resides in the citation of evidence. It is very striking that Dr Crawford tends not to cite primary sources directly, but through secondary works and ones which themselves may provide no source-reference: for example, Dícuill is cited by reference to G.J. Marcus and A.P. Smyth (p. 164; p. 245, n. 32); the life of Bishop Guðmundr of Hólar from Megaw and Megaw, 'Norse heritage' (p. 135; p. 240, n. 88); the Old Norwegian laws from Andersen, *Vikings of the West* (p. 194; p. 248, n. 24);

Charles the Simple's grant to Rollo (precise source not stated) via Gwyn Jones and F.D. Logan (p. 214; p. 250, n. 143). This is not merely infuriating for the critical reader but how error is perpetuated and enlarged in historical writing. And where references to primary sources are given, texts are cited via translations. There is in these procedures more than a hint of significant weakness, whether of equipment or method or both.

The full bibliography is very helpful, though containing too high a level of error. Given its comprehensiveness, one is surprised by the omission of O.J. Padel's Edinburgh dissertation on Pictish ogoms; J.N. Radner's edition of the *Fragmentary annals of Ireland* (1978); P.H. Sawyer's article on Harold Fair-hair; and A.P. Smyth's paper on Black and White Gentiles (*Saga-Book*, 19, 1974–7, 101–17). Bertha Phillpotts's still useful book, *Kindred and clan* (1913), might have been cited, especially in the discussion on p. 204.

A number of historical issues raised by this book may be briefly considered. Dr Crawford helpfully regards the Viking Age in Scotland as that of a failed thalassocracy (p. 11) but one which nonetheless 'made the oceanic fringes of Scotland [the vikings'] own domain' (p. 221). In discussing the Scandinavian kingdom of Dublin and York she seems, sensibly, to accept Dr Alfred Smyth's view of the importance of the Forth-Clyde route (p. 62) and has an interesting discussion of isthmuses and portages (pp. 14, 24–5). But she accepts, too, Smyth's bizarre idea of an alliance between these vikings and Dál Riata (against the Picts) in the time of Cinaed mac Alpín (pp. 49, 220) which she would not do if she had stuck to contemporary sources or even simply paid attention to the internal contradictions of An Dubhaltach Mac Firbhisigh's 'Fragmentary annals of Ireland'. She notes that in the long run the Scottish kingdom was very successful in defending itself against Scandinavian attack (p. 45); for the late ninth century, the critical period, a useful point of Celtic comparison would be the newly emergent kingdom of Brittany. Particularly in the Scottish and more generally Celtic-influenced context she is perhaps too ready to talk of 'monarchy' rather than 'kingship'; on the other hand, when speaking of Scandinavian leaders she writes (p. 191) that 'any male member of the family had the right to claim the title' of *konungr*. In other words, *konungr* may mean 'king' but more generally it means 'prince'. One often finds Scandinavianists taking this position, but I do not think that I have seen a justification: what exactly is the evidence? Dr Crawford proceeds to make the same point about the jarl and continues the semantic dissipation thus: 'In Viking-Age Norway there appears to have been little difference between those families who held the title of king and those who were earls.' It is not quite clear whether it is logical then to observe (p. 192) that 'The title of "king" in the Hebrides seems likely to have been adopted through close contact with the Irish situation'. Many other issues are raised interestingly by Dr Crawford, both directly and in passing.

Those who like scholarly text and illustration forcibly integrated will enjoy the format of this book. Those who, like this reviewer, do not will nonetheless readily admit the intelligent and sometimes amusing contribution made by the visual displays. Particularly agreeable are the unexpected manuscript-page in fig. 18 (p. 44) and the delightful map (fig. 15, p. 36),

'Frequency of coastal fog in Scotland'. Illustrations are numerous—80 figures of various sorts are disposed generously. All in all, this book is pleasingly designed and the necessarily glossy paper is not too offensively shiny. There is one respect in which this series is offensive, however, and Dr Crawford is the latest author to suffer from it. For whatever reason, the Leicester University Press thinks that an academic book can do without footnotes on the page. Nowadays, unlike 15 or 20 years ago, cost cannot be a realistic justification of this policy. One hopes that someone can prevail upon Leicester University Press to acknowledge that the citation of evidence is not something to be shuffled off as it were to a backroom, unfit to be allowed into polite company. 'Studies in the early history of Britain' has all the makings of a distinguished series: like reviewers of its previous volumes, I hope that the publishers will not continue thus to deny it its ultimate scholarly respectability.

DAVID N. DUMVILLE

Gaelic influence in Iceland. Historical and literary contacts. A survey of research. By GÍSLI SIGURÐSSON. *Studia islandica*, 46. Bókaútgáfa Menningarsjóðs. Reykjavík, 1988. 172 pp.

Gísli Sigurðsson's book will be a welcome addition to the reference shelves of students who are interested in the problem of Celtic influence on Old Norse-Icelandic literature but do not have the resources to survey all the relevant scholarship. It was written out of the conviction that a Celtic substratum is needed to explain 'the strength of Icelandic literary tradition in comparison with that in Norway' (p. 119). Less explicit is the premise (for which Gísli Sigurðsson has the authority of Einar Ól. Sveinsson among others) that such a substratum was present in Icelandic culture from the time of original settlement; this premise nevertheless explains the arrangement of the book, which begins with a chapter on 'Viking contacts with the Irish in the British Isles before 1014' but thereafter concentrates on cultural traffic moving in a northerly direction. By this means the author is able to impose a convenient limitation on the scope of his work, for the extensive literature on Nordic influence in the Irish Sea area becomes irrelevant to him unless it illustrates the background of those settlers who migrated to Iceland via the Western Isles. He does not, for that matter, need to take into account the evidence for Celtic interaction with the rest of the West Norse area, for example the Gaelic loanwords in Faroese.

The second chapter briefly summarizes the documentary, onomastic and archaeological evidence for Gaelic participation in the settlement of Iceland. The supporting evidence of physical anthropology is adduced in a third chapter which to my mind is the best in the whole work. Here are summaries of recent genetic studies that would otherwise remain a closed book to folklorists and philologists; they support an estimate of anywhere between 14 and 40% for the Gaelic component in the original population. It would have been interesting to see how Finnur Jónsson, to whom the notion of a

significant Gaelic impact on Icelandic culture was abhorrent, would have dealt with this testimony from the hard sciences!

The organization of the remaining chapters is somewhat arbitrary. From the Age of Settlement we proceed to what are awkwardly termed 'Later contacts between Iceland and the Gaelic world on the Orkneys'; this turns out not to be a historical analysis, but a review of specific literary analogues which Anne Holtsmark, Bo Almqvist and other writers including myself have sought to interpret in terms of the role played by the Northern Isles as a staging-post between Iceland and the Celtic West. Gísli Sigurðsson is not convinced that Orkney had much to do with the matter, on the grounds that Norway was equally open to Orcadian influence but did not in fact develop a saga literature comparable to that of Iceland (p. 47). This doubtless explains why he gives short shrift to studies dealing with *Orkneyinga saga* and the fragmentarily preserved *Brjáns saga*. The following three chapters also discuss literary analogues but adopt a generic rather than a chronological principle: first Celtic parallels to motifs in the *fornaldarsögur* are considered, then parallels to motifs in Norse mythological sources, and finally parallels to motifs in the Family Sagas. Before setting forth his general conclusions the author lends a sympathetic ear to the arguments of G. Turville-Petre and others for a Gaelic formative influence on the poetry of the skalds.

This book originated as an M.A. thesis and should therefore not be faulted for overlooking contributions in obscure places, for example Per Thorson's discussion in *Fram daa, frendar*, 6, 1959, 29–40 of the linguistic evidence for pre-Viking Scandinavian settlement in Scotland (cf. p. 14 and n. 2), or Heinz Hungerland's review article in *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 21, 1905, 386–92, where the figure of Bárðr Snæfellsáss is considered against the background of Irish fairy belief and the ancestor cult (cf. p. 61 and n. 56; p. 95). Ancestor worship is indeed not this author's strong point: the name of Guðbrandur Vigfússon does not appear in the entire book, and the voluminous writings of Sophus and Alexander Bugge are disposed of in relatively few words. More surprising in view of Gísli Sigurðsson's affiliation with University College Dublin is his neglect of work on more recent folk tradition. I searched in vain for comments on the Gaelic provenance assumed by Reidar Th. Christiansen for certain legends and folktale ecotypes recorded in Norway as well as Iceland (see *inter alia* Christiansen's article on mermaid and merman traditions in *Maal og minne*, 1935, 1–25, and his reference in *Arv*, 8, 1952, 40 to an Irish-Norwegian ectype of Aarne-Thompson 303; both of the traditions in question have left traces in the Icelandic *fornaldarsögur*). This folklore evidence would of course tend to undermine the proposition that the settlement of Iceland provided a unique framework for productive cultural interchange between the Celtic and Norse worlds (see above).

The discussions of motif parallels show sound critical judgment. Two possible exceptions are the author's disagreement with Axel Olrik concerning the heroic eccentricities of Cú Chulainn and Starkaðr (pp. 64–5), and his apparent deference to Anna Birgitta Rooth in her strained comparison between *Táin bó Frlach* and the myth of Thor's expedition against Geirrøðr (pp. 75–7). Since the book will doubtless be read by sceptics as well as

believers, it would have been appropriate to devote some space to alternative explanatory models, for instance the efforts of Jan de Vries (beginning with an article in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur*, 75, 1953, 229–47) to derive certain Irish-Norse parallels from the period of Celtic-Germanic relations on the European continent, or Winfred P. Lehmann's reasoned case for the indigenous Norse character of skaldic verse (in *The development of Germanic verse form*, 1956).

I shall not complain about occasional stylistic lapses by an Icelander who does his international colleagues the courtesy of writing in English, but I do think that the book could have been more carefully prepared for the press. I stopped counting misprints after noting the first fifteen in a running text of only 110 pages; and while I was relieved that my own name was misspelled a mere once out of five occurrences on the same page (43), I cannot so readily forgive the consistent misrepresentation of the surname of the Swedish folklorist Mai Fossenius (pp. 79, 135, 158). The system of reference falls between two stools, replacing titles with dates of publication but relegating the latter to footnotes at the bottom of the page. This wastes most of the space that the modern style of reference is supposed to save, and often makes it more inconvenient to consult the bibliography because the date (in the footnote) is separated from the author's name (in the main text). A further inconvenience is the division of the bibliography into three separate sequences ('Primary sources', 'Secondary sources' and 'Further reading'); the last of these—presumably the *membra disiecta* of the author's reading for his thesis—could just as well have been omitted. There are some technical inconsistencies in the bibliography, as when a monograph by Alexander Bugge, included in the Humanities class of the Norwegian Academy's publications for 1904, is assigned to the year of its actual appearance (1905): on the same principle an essay by Winifred Faraday and a book by Reidar Th. Christiansen should have been dated 1900 and 1931, not 1899 and 1930, respectively (pp. 133–5). I also noticed an alphabetization error in the bibliography, where the name Andersson precedes Almqvist (p. 131). All of these blemishes could have been removed by a competent copy editor, but the Bókmenntafræðistofnun of the University of Iceland, which sponsors *Studia islandica*, and Bókaútgáfa Menningarsjóðs, which publishes it, evidently do not think that the services of such a person are worth the expense. This is all the more provocative to readers who actually have to buy the series, which has never been a thing of beauty by the standards of Icelandic book production but has become downright ugly since the introduction of computer typesetting and cheap offset paper.

MICHAEL CHESNUTT

RUNOR OCH RUNINSKRIFTER. FÖREDRAG VID RIKSANTIKVARIEÄMBETETS  
OCH VITTERHETSAKADEMIENS SYMPOSIUM 8–11 SEPTEMBER 1985. *Kungl.  
Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien. Konferenser, 15. Almqvist &  
Wiksell International*. Stockholm, 1987. 330 pp.

THE BRYGGEN PAPERS. SUPPLEMENTARY SERIES, NO. 2. *Norwegian University Press*. Oslo, 1988. viii + 72 pp.

PROPERTY AND INHERITANCE IN VIKING SCANDINAVIA. THE RUNIC EVIDENCE. BY BIRGIT SAWYER. *Occasional papers on medieval topics*, 2. *Viktoria Bokförlag*. Alingsås, 1988. iv + 58 pp.

So far as I can see, no editors claim the credit for producing a published collection of papers from the 'Second International Symposium on Runes and Runic Inscriptions', which was held in Sigtuna in September 1985. These papers form *Runor och runinskrifter*. Assuming that at least one editor was responsible for the book, for it is simply inconceivable that any academic field exists in which 22 individual academics could be relied upon to supply papers for a book which in effect assembles itself, his/her modesty does him especial credit. This is a well-produced book, whose contents are wide-ranging, informative and interesting. One of the few adverse criticisms that can be levelled at the anonymous editor(s) is merely that the decision to arrange the papers in alphabetical order of author produces a very strange sequence; not least with Elmer H. Antonsen and Marie Stoklund attacking the same runic inscriptions, and to some extent one another, at opposite ends of the book. Since no one other than a reviewer is ever likely to try to read this book in order from beginning to end, this is perhaps not such a serious complaint. Who then is likely to read this book, or should be encouraged to do so? The papers are clearly written for other specialists or initiates in the subject, not for beginners, as they contain a considerable quantity of allusive reference and assume much prior knowledge on the reader's part. Nonetheless it is a book that can be warmly recommended for extending the knowledge of relative newcomers to the subject, if used, of course, in conjunction with the wide range of other published material referred to page by page. Nearly all of the contributors deserve commendation for the clarity with which they write, be it in English, German or Swedish, all of which are languages which readily take on obscure and convoluted forms in academic use. One has little doubt that this clarity of style is that which readily proceeds from relative clarity of perception and good sense in argument: the sort of disarming lucidity which leads one contributor to say of the subject of his paper that 'die Inschrift als solche recht uninteressant ist'.

The papers in this collection cover a wide geographical and chronological range, much extended, inevitably, by the inclusion of a paper on the irrepressible Kensington inscription. Information on a number of inscriptions from what is now the U.S.S.R. is particularly interesting. The majority of contributors to this volume find plenty to say while working within the traditional, essentially philological range of problems facing runology: questions of reading the inscriptions (largely involving phonological and semantic problems), classifying the inscriptions within branches of the Germanic language family-tree, and chronological issues of various interrelated forms such as dating individual inscriptions and dating general linguistic and runographical developments. Reading the papers together

gives one a satisfying feeling of steady progress being made on a variety of well-defined fronts. One wonders, however, how much of what is proposed here will be reversed in due course. With the exception of a frustratingly brief and very allusive summary of an article earlier published in Italian on the Eggja (Eggjum) stone by GianGabriella Buti, it is only the Swedish scholars who venture outside the traditional philological range of topics into the wider cultural context of the inscriptions. In practice this is exclusively a matter of moving from runic monuments to social-historical context. Given the contents of so many of the Viking-Age and early medieval Swedish runic inscriptions it is surely difficult with such material to fail to take a step in this direction. Buti's paper does however indicate other directions in which runic studies could be extended, with her 'functionalist approach', which identifies the Eggja inscription as a charm, with implications respecting the use of writing within the ideological culture of the time and the community that produced it.

Inevitably there are imbalances in the material covered by this collection, the most striking gap being the absence of any study of—or even, I think, any reference to—the large amount of medieval runic material from several Norwegian urban excavations of the last two decades. For an agreeable sample of this material from Bergen, however, one can turn to another newly published collection, lurking under the unrevealing title *The Bryggen papers. supplementary series no. 2*. This booklet contains four papers, three of them devoted to runic material. Again, the arrangement of the papers is bizarre, *addenda* to Liestøl's edition of the Latin inscriptions from Bryggen (*Norges innskrifter med de yngre runer VI,1*:1980) coming first, followed by a clear but relatively elementary 'Review of the runic material' from Bryggen by Karin Fjellhammer Seim, followed in turn by her detailed summary of *Norges innskrifter med de yngre runer VI,1*. The latter at least may serve to inform those such as myself whose attention has hitherto failed to extend to these medieval inscriptions of some remarkable instances of the copying and use of Latin and Norse verse texts, besides more predictable religious mottoes; one wonders however how many of those truly concerned with this material require a summary of Liestøl's work. The general review by Karin Fjellhammer Seim should provide a good starting point for beginners in this field. Overall the booklet gives a strong impression of the potential in the Norwegian urban, or at least the Bergen, runic material for studies of literacy and literary art in a social context that should prove to be a substantial supplement to the long established manuscript studies. But it is to be hoped that the production of this booklet has not diverted much in the way of resources from the publication and study of more of the primary data.

Birgit Sawyer's monograph is at least three times as long as any of the original papers in either of these collections and attempts a far more comprehensive use of runic evidence from Scandinavia to reconstruct practices of property inheritance. Philological discussion in the monograph is minimal; in other words the inscriptions are taken largely as read. It is unlikely that future modifications of readings will bear any serious consequences in a study based on so large a body of data. Compared with the

social-historical studies in *Runor och runinskrifter*, which are focused on small groups of stones, Birgit Sawyer seems to get very much more in terms of social history from the comprehensive survey. In particular she regularly interprets the inscriptions as inheritance/ownership claims, producing very persuasive explanations of both the choice and the ordering of elements in several quoted inscriptions. A mildly feminist direction is hinted at from the start: 'My starting-point was a wish to know something about women's economic rights' (p. 1), but it is doubtful that this is of any essential relevance to the study produced rather than merely a contingent fact of research history. Inheritance by women is evidently less frequent than inheritance by men. If it is, as Birgit Sawyer convincingly shows, determined by rule, then presumably it happens in less frequent and probably more complicated circumstances than are normal when property is inherited. It becomes therefore a necessary focus of attention for anyone seeking to assess the ability or adaptability of law/custom to deal with such complications.

Birgit Sawyer appears to have unnecessarily cast her net rather too wide for this quite brief monograph. Her identification of 'regional differences' in the underlying reasons and circumstances for raising such stones is in many cases unconvincing, particularly when she compares the presence or absence of features in samples varying in size from about 50 to 1,000. One notes expressions such as 'significant regional variations' (p. 8) and that *x* 'seems to support the assumption that it was not chance that decided' *y* (p. 14). These are expressions that are appropriate to statistically tested data, and in both these cases it would appear that such testing could have been carried out but that it has not been done. On pp. 15–17 'Germanic law' is treated very sweepingly and without sufficient detailed reference. The result is that generally one has to work against a degree of distraction and obfuscation—what might now be called 'noise' in the text—interfering with the truly informative study that is at the heart of the monograph. A further example is an excursus on Christianity and bridge-building towards the end of the text. A short monograph like this should be more concentrated—e.g. on the Swedish *landskap* from Småland to Gästrikland—and more thorough and detailed. One feels an editor might have stepped in here.

JOHN HINES

SLAVERY AND SOCIETY IN MEDIEVAL SCANDINAVIA. BY RUTH MAZO KARRAS. *Yale University Press*. New Haven and London, 1988. x + 309 pp.

This book is a brave attempt to write a satisfactory book on an unsatisfactory subject. Information about slavery in early Scandinavia is scattered, discrepant and tantalising. Much of it is necessarily sought in sources of dubious and controversial status: saga literature, half or more than half imaginative, and the laws of the Icelandic commonwealth and of the law-provinces of the mainland Scandinavian countries. These throw some light on slavery as a fact of individual existence and a fact of social life but are

inadequate for a sound reconstruction of slavery as an institution. Dr Karras's book is inevitably peppered with 'perhaps' and 'possibly', 'may be' and 'might be'. She may occasionally sound naive or hypercritical, but when speculation is unavoidable, as it often is, she is generally judicious and perceptive in offering a variety of conceivable explanations; on the other hand, she does not always tell us which of them she thinks more likely or less. Her discussion, 170 pages odd, is in five chapters and a conclusion, treating slavery and servitude in medieval European society, the identity of the slave in Scandinavia, the slave in the Scandinavian economies, the legal construction of the slave, and slavery and freedom. These last two chapters are especially valuable in exploring and clarifying the status of the slave in terms not of function but concept and relationship, though her final discussion of 'social differentiation among the free and the end of slavery' (pp. 160–63) will probably leave us wondering how she would apply her conclusions to what we think we know about early Iceland, the Nordic country where slaves were first to disappear. These chapters are backed by an appendix on the use of sources, with reference to the laws and to Norse literature, some 70 pages of notes, and 40 pages of useful and wide-ranging bibliography. Altogether, the author's intellectual energy and industry are impressive, but there are some signs of haste in the approach to Icelandic texts and occasional misunderstandings of the language. Slips of one kind or another are of course to be expected in dealing with such a mass of material, and they can be harmless enough as long as conclusions are not built on them. Dr Karras will occasionally, though not often as far as I can see, mislead the innocent or puzzle the knowledgeable. She has problems, for instance, with the neuter singular *man*, which as a collective may once have referred to household members in general but which in the Norse we know always refers to the unfree members of a household. Though etymologically related to *maðr*, it is not the same word, and *mansmaðr* is not a 'man's man' (p. 44; cf. p. 157) but a person belonging to the unfree household group; and the phrase *selja mansali* is not to sell 'at a man-sale' (p. 99) but to sell by slave-sale, i.e., as a slave or into slavery. In *Leifar fornra kristinna fræða íslenzkra* (ed. Þorvaldur Bjarnarson, 1878, 1/20–22), there is a translation of Galatians 3:28, not from the epistle itself but from an intermediate text with an addition. Dr Karras (n. 70, p. 207) misreads this passage to make a false connection between slave and foreigner. Normalised it runs: *Par er engi gyðingr né girzkr maðr, heiðinn né útlendr, þræll né frelsingr, karl né kona*, where *útlendr* clearly does not qualify *þræll*, as she would have it. Dr Karras concludes a discussion of Snorri's account of Erlingr Skjálgsson's slave-keeping and economically prudent slave-freeing (*Óláfs saga helga*, ch. 23 in *Heimskringla*, ch. 31 in the 'Separate saga') by saying, 'The mere fact that Snorri thought his farm organization worthy of mention, though his slaves play no later part in the story, points to its being unusual' (p. 78; cf. p. 146). In her note (48, p. 217) she recognises ch. 46 of the 'Legendary saga' as Snorri's 'probable source', and it is certainly the nearest we can get to it. If Dr Karras had gone on to ch. 47 there, or on to ch. 117 in the *Óláfs saga in Heimskringla* (ch. 104 in the 'Separate saga'), she would have seen that, though the slaves and freedmen of

Erlingr play no active part later in the story, their ample stores of corn are an essential element in the momentous Ásbjörn Selsbani episode: Ásbjörn, Erlingr's nephew, is supplied with grain from those stores in defiance of the king's orders. In considering the 'theory' of slavery in early Norway, at least as seen by the author of the 'Legendary saga' and Snorri, it would have been appropriate to discuss the argument put into the mouth of Erlingr as a legalistic justification for his action. He maintains in effect that his slaves and freedmen exist only in relation to him; they do not exist in relation to the king, so they are outside the royal ban. In her note on the use of Norse literature as a source, Dr Karras reasonably concludes that in the last resort Icelandic sagas can only tell us what thirteenth-century authors thought (or imagined) about slaves. But respect for literary chronology should also temper such a generalisation, and the author is not consistently strict in following her own principles. In a sober study of Scandinavian slavery it is disturbing, for example, to find (pp. 49, 118) even speculative consideration of elements in a narrative like *Porsteins þátr uxafóts*, a fourteenth-century fable found only in *Flateyjarbók*. Not that Dr Karras has read this text carefully: Ívarr Þjómi, for instance, is certainly the father of Porsteinn and finally acknowledges it himself, and the writer reports only that 'some men say' that Porsteinn's mother was married to the freed slave, Freysteinn. Defects of the kind noted here, however, by no means outweigh the merits of this learned and thought-provoking book.

PETER FOOTE

MEDIEVAL ICELAND. SOCIETY, SAGAS, AND POWER. BY JESSE L. BYOCK. *University of California Press*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1988. xii + 264 pp.

Jesse Byock in this book is being peculiarly ambitious: he offers a full-scale, comprehensive reinterpretation of pre-1262 Icelandic society, in a form apparently aimed at students and non-experts, in only 220 small-format pages. The book sets out to describe how Icelandic society really worked, and begins with the principle that family sagas (together with the 'Sturlunga' narratives) tell us more about this than traditional scholars, most notably the bookprose school, have recognised. Byock has been arguing this for several years now, and has published a book and several articles along these lines; here he generalises his analyses and makes them accessible to wider readers. To my mind, looking at Icelandic society with the eyes of a continental European historian, his basic presuppositions are fully convincing. I am not sure, however, that I would have been convinced by this book if I had not already been persuaded of the sociological value of saga narratives and if I had not already read some of his other works; the summariness inevitable in a short book has removed some of the more detailed justification of his method. Byock begins with a discussion of sources; then he describes the origins of and changes in the political and legal systems of Iceland between the late ninth century and the mid-thirteenth; then he has a substantial section

on the sources of the wealth of *goðar* and the nature of social bonds. There follows an analysis of the insertion of the church into Icelandic society; and, finally, three chapters on the aggression of *goðar* against the free and the limits of that aggression. Byock wants to show that Iceland was by no means egalitarian, and that *goðar* were rather more grasping than is often suggested, though unable (before, say, the late twelfth century) to consolidate their power in a continental, territorial way, thanks to the ability of freemen to build their own independent alliances. His problematic is one that is highly recognisable to a continental historian, and broadly acceptable. It is not, perhaps, totally novel; here, Byock's particular novelty is essentially his demonstration of how much *goðar* gained from controlling the legal system, and his stress that the narratives give us more idea of the checks on their power than the law code does. He is very good indeed on law and violence, on political balances, on the structures of alliances, and his old expertise, the logic of feud. I would have liked more criticism of the law code text as a genre with its own problems (all that emphasis on outlawry, for example, which could be very socially unhelpful, as *Grettis saga* makes clear); more recalling for the innocent reader that narratives are not necessarily 'true' (he knows this and says it often, but forgets it sometimes in his detailed analyses of texts); and, following this point a little further, more analysis of the problem of counterposing eleventh- and thirteenth-century conditions when all our texts date from the latter period—the old problem, which must inevitably recur whenever bookprose theory is abandoned. I would, too, have liked more discussion of tenancy and formal ties of dependence. But these points do not detract from the power of Byock's argument, which focuses us squarely on the issue of the power-relations between *goðar* and freemen. All I would say here is that he could have gone further than he did in analysing the limits on *goði* power. *Goðar* did not only take; they had to give, too, to maintain their position. The need to give, very widely, on its own kept even the most influential *goðar* at the economic level of little more than a rich peasant elsewhere in Europe. And the personal, transactional, nature of that power made it very difficult to inherit and build on across generations—not many of Snorri *goði*'s descendants had his particular cunning, and for that reason if for no other they seldom matched the national influence he had. This is indeed one of the major reasons why sagas are interested in personality in the first place: the literatures of more stable political systems are much more schematic. To develop these sorts of points adequately, though, needs more space than Byock gave himself (and more space in particular for the thirteenth century). If he can bear to go over the ground again, I hope he does it in a rather bigger book. In the meantime, however, this book is very stimulating, and will indeed be excellent for students.

CHRIS WICKHAM

LEXIKON DER ALTNORDISCHEN LITERATUR. By RUDOLF SIMEK and HERMANN PÁLSSON. *Alfred Körner Verlag*. Stuttgart, 1987. xii + 400 pp.

Simek and Pálsson's *Lexikon der altnordischen Literatur* is an exceptionally useful reference book. Its stated aims are to provide the scholar with a handy *aide-memoire*, to help students who are just beginning in the field, and to present for the layman a comprehensive view of the most important texts and issues. It succeeds on all these counts. The *Lexikon* has over 1,700 short entries, each giving succinct information about the subject—an author, text, *genre* or technical term. In the case of texts the entry is followed by essential manuscript information and a list of editions; almost all entries include a useful up-to-date bibliography. Brief plot resumés are given for sagas and narrative poems. *Genre* definitions are especially good, being challenging and quotable, if not uncontroversial, and there are strong, straightforward entries on topics such as the old 'book-prose'—'free-prose' debate, and oral transmission.

Although Old Norse literature is conventionally defined as literature composed in Iceland and Norway from the ninth to the fifteenth century, the range of the *Lexikon* strains at these boundaries, and the overwhelming impression given is of a literature firmly set in the context of the European Middle Ages and continuing its traditions long into the modern period. The *Lexikon* is crammed with entries on translations of Latin hagiography and continental romance; there are entries on Ovid, and Isidore of Seville, on the Breton *lai* and the *fabliau*. Since recent scholarship in the field has increasingly stressed the continental dimension, it is extremely helpful to have material which may be unfamiliar to some set out in a convenient way. But the continental dimension in the *Lexikon* seems to function throughout as a persuasive and insistent subtext. Entries stress continental influence wherever possible or plausible; in brief notes the likelihood of such influence cannot of course be fully argued out. The poems of the *Edda* are consistently dated as late as possible, and when, as is so often the case, dating is uncertain, speculation is expressed so as to suggest youth or deny age: verbal correspondences between *Baldur's draumar* and *Völuspá* 'can tell us very little about date'; other poems 'can hardly be earlier than . . .' relatively late dates; *Vafþrúðnismál* is 'probably' young because its dialogue form is borrowed from the Latin; 'at least most' of the didactic poems in the *Edda* were written a good while after the Christianization of Scandinavia. The authenticity of skaldic verses in sagas is invariably called into question if it is mentioned at all, and often with the same sort of grudging speculation. Again, and unavoidably in a volume such as this, there is no space for a detailed analysis of the question. In short, one has the impression that behind the factual, apparently objective, encyclopaedic form of the *Lexikon*, there is a critical argument being put forward, rigorously and sternly addressing itself to the old romantics who want everything to be early, authentic and historical. To read right through the *Lexikon* is to feel that one has been presented with a combative, though barely supported, critical challenge. It is worrying that some omissions in the *Lexikon* seem to be associated with this critical

standpoint. Thus the entry on *goðar* makes no mention of their priestly function. The *Kormáks saga* bibliography cites Bjarni Einarsson's article claiming troubadour influence on Kormákr's poetry, but not T.M. Andersson's reply to Bjarni's first article on the subject, published in the same journal a few years earlier. A one-sentence entry on Hólmgöngu-Bersi dismissing the authenticity of his verses describes him as an 'ostensible' tenth-century Icelander in *Kormáks saga*, but fails to mention his role (and his verse) in *Laxdæla saga*, or the mention of him in *Landnámabók*—would his verse be less easy to dismiss as a passing fiction if he were more substantial? It is also odd that none of the entries on the heroic poems in the *Edda* includes a reference to Ursula Dronke's edition of them—an edition which illuminates their Germanic context. The cross-referencing in the book is in general excellent (it occasionally breaks down when a long poem is ascribed to an un-cross-referenced but entered poet), and the *Lexikon* is a treasure trove of analogies and fruitful suggestions for comparison. Works are constantly viewed in stimulating relation to one another. It is a problem with the dictionary format that such information is not readily accessible; the suggestion that *Alexanders saga* may have influenced *Hrafnkels saga* is to be found only in the *Alexanders saga* entry. But as with all good dictionaries, the *Lexikon* is as compelling to browse in as it is convenient for reference.

HEATHER O' DONOGHUE

SAGAS OF ICELANDERS. A BOOK OF ESSAYS. Edited by JOHN TUCKER. *Garland Publishing, Inc.* New York and London, 1989. x + 383 pp.

In collecting fifteen essays on various saga topics, twelve previously published, Tucker's stated intention is to provide a textbook for students reading sagas for the first time, in translation. A general introduction precedes four general essays and eleven on specific sagas, arranged according to their numerical order in *Íslensk fornrit*. In the interest of balanced debate a thematic arrangement would have been more desirable. Thus the articles by Andersson, Byock and Miller, evaluating the heroic ethic and the feud, are placed second, eighth and fifteenth respectively; they belong together.

Tucker's introduction is general and uncontroversial. His view of the central importance of feud as a feature of the genre reflects Andersson and Byock. The *Buchprosa-Freiprosa* debate is assigned to the footnote in which it belongs, while prominence is given to more recent, more moderate views on oral influence such as those of Harris and Kellogg (D. Hofmann is not mentioned). The weakest point is the concluding guide to modern and reconstructed Icelandic pronunciation, which fails to warn the uninitiated, whom it is intended to serve, of any changes between Egill's verses and the prose of *Grettis saga*, thus giving the impression that 'Old Icelandic' pronunciation was static for nearly four hundred years. The guide to Modern Icelandic does not give the enthusiastic student visitor to Reykjavík enough information even to pronounce *Pingvellir*, probably his first objective, while Bergþórshváll would have him completely stumped. Hermann Pálsson's

'Early Icelandic imaginative literature' forms an apt opening, concerned as it is to break down artificial barriers of genre, and to establish the wider context of the more popular sagas as part of a continuum ranging from the purely didactic to the purely entertaining. It is complemented by the cross-genre studies of Preben Meulengracht Sørensen ('*Starkaðr, Loki and Egill Skallagrímsson*', a study of the concept of alienity) and John Lindow ('A mythic model in *Bandamanna saga* and its significance'), sixth and eleventh in the collection. Theodore Andersson's 'The displacement of the heroic ideal in the Family Sagas' then opens a debate on the portrayal of conflict that spans the whole volume. His contribution is designed to rebut the view that the sagas convey a heroic ethic similar to that apparently propounded by *Hávamál* 76, a stanza that Andersson suggests is open to much less idealistic interpretations: 'the *Hávamál* stanzas tell us less about Germanic morality than about our own susceptibility to monumental phrases out of context' (p. 67). In doing so he argues against Lars Lönnroth, who refers in the following essay ('Rhetorical persuasion in the sagas') to 'the very core of heroic ethics as we know it from *Hávamál*'. This is one of the few happy juxtapositions in the volume. From Jenny Jochens ('The medieval Icelandic heroine') and Margaret Clunies Ross ('The art of poetry and the figure of the poet in *Egil's saga*') we have examinations of the 'heroic figure'. Clunies Ross draws on the whole range of mediaeval learned literature to provide a study of the problems facing the Icelandic scholar of the thirteenth century determined to ensure a place for the pagan heritage of his country by re-evaluating it as part of a European mainstream. Jochens reappraises the 'heroic female'. Her conclusion, that the apparently liberated woman we observe in the sagas is a purely male construct, is weakened by the trust it places on the objectivity of *Sturlunga saga* as a control, a trust that Úlfar Bragason (diss., Berkeley, 1986) has shown to be misplaced. Finally, Byock and Miller both examine aspects of the feud, Byock ('Inheritance and ambition in *Eyrbyggja saga*') concentrating on the alternatives to feud, Miller ('The central feud in *Njáls saga*') examining the mechanics. The positioning of this pair of essays is particularly unfortunate. Miller's closing remark, 'the bloodfeud [was] the very stuff of politics in early Iceland', becomes the volume's final statement. But what, after all, was 'early Iceland'? The remark certainly applies to the Sturlung Age, and possibly to the period prior to the establishment of Christian values, but the two are separated by some 150 years of peaceful politics. Byock's essay, were it placed immediately following, would provide the necessary counterweight, and form a balanced conclusion to a 'conflict group'. Byock deals not so much with feud as with litigation, convincingly explaining why such an apparently unheroic figure as Snorri goði could interest a saga-audience. He does well to draw attention to the influence of topography on aspects of the saga, though his editor has done him a disservice in not allowing him to employ a cartographer. The essay presents a detailed study of the workings of the *goði* system based on a relatively short text and thus provides useful background to the study of any of the major sagas.

Whether the same could be said of Ursula Dronke's 'Narrative insight in *Laxdæla saga*', is another matter. The *textimmanent* approach of this essay, couched preponderantly in the conditional and subjunctive, is not a method to be recommended to the young and inexperienced, while were undergraduates to give quotations with 'as one critic has put it' (cf. p. 223) as sole bibliographical support they would be risking fire and brimstone. The original article is accessible enough; reprinted in a propaedeutic volume such as this it is misplaced. Robert Cook's 'Reading for character in *Grettis saga*', on the other hand, is eminently suitable for the collection. The use of *Rezeptionsästhetik* is reminiscent of his *Saga-Book* article of 1985 (vol. XXI, pp. 133–54), the novice reader being postulated as the *Rezipient* and being assisted to respond in accordance with the demands of the *genre*. The author intends to provide 'not... an outline of a definitive interpretation of Grettir but... an illustration of how to go about making one's own interpretation' (p. 240). He has succeeded admirably. Two further essays deal with apparent digressions, both referring to *Njála*. Constance Heatt ('Hrútr's voyage to Norway and the structure of *Njála*') propounds the view that 'what appear to be "digressive elements" are often vital clues to the design and meaning of the whole' (p. 279), whereas Carol Clover ('Open composition: the Atlantic interlude in *Njáls saga*') regards digressions as examples of what she elsewhere calls 'stranding' and here 'interlacing'. Her 'system of coherence' (p. 288) is basically that propounded by Jacqueline Simpson (*Saga-Book*, XV, 1958–61, pp. 327–45) to which reference could profitably have been made. The value of both essays to the novice lies in the attention they draw to the possibly overlooked significance of minor episodes. A similar function is performed by Russell Poole's 'Verses and prose in *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*', on behalf of *lausavísur* which, as the author fears (p. 161), are often overlooked deliberately. The article's conclusion, that verse is used for the conveyance of emotion, for the 'high points', prose for 'actions and behaviour' (p. 174), forms a useful starting-point for a discussion of narrative technique in the sagas. One could however have wished for more accuracy in the use of the term 'bardic' (p. 162); it was after all the *filid* who were most noted for satire, not the *baird*. This might seem trivial, but misunderstanding of the social regulation of insular Celtic poets (cf. L. Breatnach, *Uraicecht na riar*, 1987, p. 87) leads Poole to misinterpret the reaction of King Sigrtrygr of Dublin. It is not because he is 'unused to itinerant poets' (p. 165) that he offers an unrealistically high reward, but because, accustomed to a system in which each Irish metre has its due price (Breatnach, 1987, p. 16), he is unable to assign Gunnlaugr's metre to a specific legal category. Óskar Halldórsson's article 'The origin and themes of *Hrafnkels saga*', like Cook's, earns its place not so much for its conclusion as for its paradigmatic value. After giving a compact review of the historicity debate, avoiding the temptation of portraying it in terms of a simple *Freiprosa-Buchprosa* polarity, he seeks to draw attention to those fundamental historical verities which are in no way invalidated by the many errors of individual historical fact revealed in Nordal's analysis, and to demonstrate the saga as an accurate portrayal of *Zeitgeist*.

Attractiveness of format and infrequency of typographical errors tend not to be the hallmarks of desktop publishing; Tucker's technical staff are to be complimented on the overall appearance of the volume. Nevertheless, Lars Lönnroth will hardly be pleased to find that the omission of two sentences on p. 86 has led to his explaining that the *gæfumaðr* is generally 'pictured as a scoundrel', however grateful the rest of us might be for a chance to demonstrate the effects of homoeoteleuton. The diagram on p. 284 is hardly legible in my copy, and could profitably have been enlarged; it is bad enough to make reader turn the book 90 degrees to decipher it, without sending him searching for a magnifying glass. It may be gratifying to some of us that the abbreviation 'C.U.L.' is deemed to require no expansion; at least it is thus spared the vagaries of italicization that characterize the List of Abbreviations. The book is clearly aimed at an English-speaking audience; symptomatically, comparisons with English literature, especially *Beowulf*, are legion; *Das Nibelungenlied* is mentioned, cursorily, twice. It does not fill the need for an English handbook of the stature and format of Kurt Schier's *Sagaliteratur*, but as a starting-point for discussion of the sagas it should prove to be of value.

STEPHEN N. TRANTER

EDDAS AND SAGAS. ICELAND'S MEDIEVAL LITERATURE. By JÓNAS KRISTJÁNSSON. Translated by Peter Foote. *Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag*. Reykjavík, 1988. 446 pp.

This work, a comprehensive account of early Norse and Old Icelandic literature down to the Reformation, is a translation of the chapters on this topic which Professor Jónas Kristjánsson contributed to the second and third volumes, published in 1975 and 1978, of *Saga Íslands*, a collaborative history of Iceland by native scholars, still in progress. Some small adjustments and bibliographical updatings have been made by both author and translator, but essentially the work remains what it was from the start: a complete Old Icelandic literary history written by an Icelander living in Iceland for a native Icelandic readership. It is curious that this is the first work of which this is true: de Vries was a Dutchman writing in German, Mogk was a German, Paasche was a Norwegian, Finnur Jónsson, like Jón Helgason after him, lived abroad and wrote in Danish, Stefán Einarsson had lived in America for many years and published his history initially in English, and Einar Ól. Sveinsson, who might have anticipated Jónas, began his very large-scale survey too late in life and never got past the first volume. Jónas is unapologetic at now presenting to foreigners a work originally designed for his fellow-countrymen; occasionally, he concedes, it perhaps presupposes knowledge which a non-native may not possess, but this is outweighed, he believes, by the advantages of being born to the Icelandic language and living within the physical setting of the greatest achievements of the Icelandic literary genius. 'None but Icelanders can fully participate in this unique national literature,' he adds, in a sentence whose chauvinistic tone possibly springs from a pardonable irritation at the extravagances and fantasies, not always unmixed with

linguistic errors, that have been known to proceed from transatlantic and Continental pens.

Jónas's Preface draws attention to another distinctive feature of his book: a good three-quarters of it is devoted to prose works. Little of the poetry is of much literary merit, he thinks; indeed for scaldic poetry, or at any rate for scaldic praise-poems, he has some very cold words: 'not many works of this kind appeal to modern readers... more like puzzles than poems. The content is thin and the poets not deeply engaged... chiefly valuable as monuments of history and philology.' This feature of the book also, I suspect, reflects an Icelandic bent: aside from Finnur Jónsson, who wrote about everything, and whose literary tastes appear to have been unsubtle, eddaic and scaldic studies have on the whole been more pursued by foreigners than by natives. On the sagas, on the other hand, the great bulk of scholarship of importance and distinction is the work of Icelanders, not least of Jónas himself, and it is the hundred pages which he devotes to the Family Sagas that constitute the heart of the volume. (Incidentally, *Sagas of Icelanders* is the term preferred here, on the ground that 'contemporary' sagas and kings' sagas are just as much about families as are the *Íslendinga sögur*; but then the contemporary sagas are all about Icelanders too. An analogous objection can be made to 'heroic sagas', used here, as often elsewhere, for *fornaldarsögur*.)

Where does Jónas stand on the continuing controversies about the nature and origin of the Family Sagas: oral or literary, factual or imaginative, native or foreign, secular or clerical? 'The number of early copies of saints' lives shows that translation of such texts was in full swing in the latter part of the twelfth century,' he points out (p. 149), which means that vernacular hagiography certainly antedated saga-composition on native subjects and 'doubtless' (p. 136) served as a stimulus and a model for the Family Sagas. At the same time, Jónas brings out more emphatically than some scholars have chosen to do the profound differences between the saints' lives and the sagas: the former crude, monotonous, derivative, with pasteboard actors either utterly base or utterly pure, the latter at their best capturing the subtleties, ambivalences and moral complexities of human life. Turville-Petre put it neatly, in a sentence quoted with approval on p. 150: 'In a word, the learned literature did not teach the Icelanders what to think or what to say, but it taught them how to say it.' It is in the nature of things that 'oral reports of events in the comparatively recent past' are less apprehensible for us some seven centuries later than Christian writings still extant, but they must have played a part no less crucial to the creation of the sagas; as Jónas points out, 'The language of the *Íslendinga sögur* is as much akin to natural Icelandic speech as it is different from the imported learned style' (p. 212), and he goes on to remark how small are the differences between a chapter in *Njáls saga* and 'any well-told tale recorded directly from a story-teller today.' We must not equate oral tradition with historicity; the literal truth of such traditions must inevitably decrease in the course of time, and yet for the older Family Sagas at least it would be going too far to reject them entirely as historical sources (p. 205–06). As will be apparent, Jónas is writing very much in the spirit of the 'Icelandic school'; a cynic might say he was hedging his bets, but

others, including this reviewer, will rather see this approach as reasonable and well-balanced, hostile only to facile speculations and simplistic dogmas.

Few individuals points raise queries. In the verse quoted on p. 66 (from *Atlakviða*, though curiously this is not stated) I am surprised that *darráða* has been rendered 'javelins' despite Anne Holtsmark's cogent argument for 'banners' (*Maal og minne*, 1939). It certainly ought to be true that 'all agree' that *Hamðismál* is 'a poem of great antiquity' (p. 71), but in fact it is not, for Klaus von See describes it as 'sehr junges' (*Edda, Saga, Skaldendichtung*, 1981, p. 251). The bibliographical references make a somewhat hit-and-miss impression (several articles listed on *Gísla saga*, nothing on *Laxdæla* or *Egils saga*); in the excellent discussion of *Hrafnkels saga* allusion is made to Nordal's monograph and to papers by E. V. Gordon and by Knut Liestøl, but it is nowhere stated that Nordal's fundamental but fairly rare study is available in an English translation (marred, it is true, by some bad errors, but surely better than nothing for the many likely students who lack access to Nordal and cannot read modern Icelandic anyway); the journal reference for Liestøl's (Norwegian) paper is given, but not that for Gordon, who wrote in English.

Peter Foote's translation reads excellently: in over four hundred pages I noted only two points. I do not quite know what is meant by saying that a saga has a 'lumping' character (p. 241; if this is a misprint, it is the only one I have found); and the phrase 'at malicious random' (p. 350) strikes my ear as not quite natural. The book is beautifully produced and, while there may be divided views about the modern drawings in the text (including one by Aubrey Beardsley), the splendid colour plates of manuscripts and landscape will be admired by all.

D.A.H. EVANS

MANNFRÆDI HRAFNKELS SÓGU OG FRUMPÆTTIR. By HERMANN PÁLSSON. *Íslensk ritskýring*, 3. *Bókaútgáfa Menningarsjóðs*. Reykjavík, 1988. 127 pp.

The format of Hermann Pálsson's latest *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða* volume is that established in his earlier contributions (on *Njála* and *Laxdæla*) to the *Íslensk ritskýring* series, designed, one imagines, for experienced readers of major sagas at *há-* rather than *mennta-skóli* level. At the heart of each volume is a lengthy section in which key words and themes—*sundurleitir frumpættir* ranging alphabetically, in the case of *Hrafnkatala*, from *ágirnd* to *virðing*—receive the kind of detailed contextual commentary to which few editions could devote the space and to which few editors could bring Hermann's formidable range of reading and reflection. Whatever refocusings and clarifications Hermann's view of *Hrafnkatala* may have undergone since his earlier extended discussions (most recently his 1981 *Hrafnkels saga og klassískar bókmenntir*) of the saga, the overall perspective remains familiar. The saga is to be seen primarily as a *dæmisaga* tracing and explaining what Chaucer's Monk (cited at one point by Hermann) might have called the *prosperite-wretchednesse-prosperite* life-cycle of a resourceful *einvaldur*; the

narrative is judged to be as much interested in ethical absolutes and states of mind as it is in the stirring deeds of *afrekasögur*; it seeks not so much to be a *spiegilmund af islenskum höfðingja á tiunda öld eða öðrum tilma stðar* (p. 27) but rather to *glæða skilning á mannlegum vandamálum yfirleitt* (p. 15). Two features underpin Hermann's discussion. Firstly, there is an unshaken belief in the importance of European literary parallels and sources. Auden's Iceland was a 'fortunate' island 'where Europe is absent'; Hermann's *Hrafnkatla* is a saga in which Europe (in the form of its classical and medieval literary tradition) is constantly present. Secondly, and perhaps ironically, there is an apparent reluctance to draw the attention of Icelandic readers to contemporary foreign *fræðimennska* on *Hrafnkatla*; Hermann's views are defined primarily against those of Sigrður Nordal and his influential Icelandic adherents. Thus, for example, Einarr, judged by Nordal to have been, throughout the summer, like any country boy, *ad brenna í skinninu* to ride Freyfaxi, is judged by Hermann to have had no such inclinations prior to the loss of the sheep; Porkell, judged by Nordal also to have been anxious and eager to rouse his excessively stolid elder [sic] brother to action against Hrafnkell, is judged by Hermann to have had no such attitude towards one who was not even his *elder* brother; Nordal's influential emendation, attributing to Þorgeirr and not to Porkell the warning that Sámr should not allow Hrafnkell to escape with his life, is persuasively challenged by Hermann.

In at least two respects Hermann's book breaks new ground and identifies fruitful new directions for study. Firstly, prior to 1986, all editions and hence most discussion of *Hrafnkatla* were based on the shorter of the saga's two versions. Hermann has had access to, and made telling use of, the text of Peter Springborg's forthcoming edition of the saga's longer version. The insights from use of this longer version are striking: the longer version sharpens the icy wittiness of Sámr's short version response to the killing of his cousin; the longer version alone indicates that Hrafnkell was *ekki gamall maðr* when he died in his bed, thus making clear just how *skömm er óhófs ævi*; the longer version expresses Hrafnkell's choice of life *ef kostur er* by a laconically impersonal construction rather than by the shorter version's *ég kjósa*; the longer version prefacing the killing of Einarr not as in the shorter version by the narrator's indication of the importance of keeping sworn oaths, but rather by Hrafnkell's own explanation—*vér hófum pann átrúnað ad ekki verði af þeim mönnum er heitstrengingar fella á sig*. Understanding of the early chapters of *Gísla saga Súrssonar* has certainly developed recently in the wake of such analysis of the longer and shorter versions; similar detailed analysis of *Hrafnkatla* now beckons. Secondly, since his 1981 book, Hermann's further consideration of both Icelandic and continental European texts has inevitably thrown up further parallels to, echoes of, and correspondences with particular locutions in the saga. Happily, the book's format comfortably accommodates such *aperçus* as brief individual items: no stretching of each brief *aperçu* to article or conference-paper length here. Not all Hermann's readers, whether in Iceland or further afield, have shared or will share his inclination to judge many of these features *munu vafalaust*.

*vera af lærðum rótum runnar* (p. 82) but the constant play of light, however refracted, from unfamiliar texts over a familiar saga, from the traditionally European over the (apparently) quintessentially Icelandic, from the pagan over the Christian, from the sacred over the secular, from the poetic over the prosaic, from the gnomic over the narrative, is intriguing and stimulating. Indeed, many readers will feel that the strength of this volume lies in the potency of its individual insights, in the fascination of the detail, rather than in the broader and more lightly urged notions of *mannfræði* identified in the book's title and discussed fleetingly in the opening chapters. The principal drawback of the volume's format is a probably unavoidable but (at times) tiresome repetitiousness between sections, and the need to have Hermann's other *Hrafntafla* publications at one's elbow in order to cope with frequent references back. One tiny problem which could have been avoided is the failure of the bibliography to identify 'HP 1977', several times referred to in the text—a ghost, a misprint?

ANDREW WAWN

FORMÁLAR ÍSLENSKRA SAGNARITARA Á MIDÓLDUM. RANNSÓKN BÓKMENNTAHEFDAR. By SVERRIR TÓMASSON. *Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, rit 33.* Stofnun Árna Magnússonar. Reykjavík, 1988. xvi + 462 pp.

This book contains a very detailed discussion of the prefaces to a wide range of medieval Icelandic narrative writings, and of the topoi to be found in them. The prefaces to 43 works are discussed, and these include saints' lives, bishops' sagas, kings' sagas, sagas of contemporaries, *fornaldarsögur*, *riddarasögur* and chronicles (such as *Íslendingabók* and *Veraldar saga*)—it is claimed that prefaces are found in all genres of prose writings except the *Íslendinga sögur*. The reasons for the latter thus and in other ways differing from all other medieval Icelandic prose genres are discussed, but without a clear explanation being offered. But the author takes the view that all Icelandic writers, including the authors of the sagas, were well versed in medieval European literary methods and procedures. He gives a lengthy account of the intellectual background of medieval Icelandic writers and of the knowledge and availability of Latin rhetorical devices and attitudes, concluding that Icelandic prefaces show that the writers were well acquainted with normal medieval European forms of expression, and that their conception of genre too was derived from medieval Latin writings. The various topoi used are discussed and exemplified in great detail—the approach is largely based on that of E.R. Curtius—and an attempt made to distinguish the statements in the prefaces which are to be taken as mere commonplaces from those that can be taken as giving genuine information about the author and his work. Particularly interesting is the discussion of the various purposes of writing, though the evidence for patronage in medieval Iceland is disappointingly thin. Sometimes one might take issue with the author's interpretation of individual phrases in his sources: it is clear that

medieval Icelandic writers took for granted the usual European formulation of the purpose of writing as edification with entertainment, but I am doubtful whether the phrase *gōð skemmtun* is used in a moral sense (pp. 130–40). *Skemmtun* means something to make the time seem short, and if it is good it is effective and not tedious, and also presumably healthy, but not necessarily edificatory. The discussion of genre is also helpful, as is that of history and fiction; Steblin-Kamenskij is properly criticised, and the question raised whether Icelandic writers were not aware of the possibility of 'higher' kinds of truth than the factual. The conclusion is that they were. It remains nevertheless strange that so little allegory was used in the medieval period in Iceland. Attitudes to sources are also dealt with, as well as attitudes to the activity of writing. It is pointed out that the verb *gera* is sometimes used of it, and that the same term is also sometimes used of God creating heaven and earth, and is then a synonym of *skapa* and *smiða*; however, it might also have been added that the verbs *skapa* and *smiða* are nevertheless not used in Icelandic of literary activity. It remains somewhat doubtful whether it can really be claimed that writing was seen as an act of creation, and that this referred both to the physical action and the creative act of composition. When *gera* is used of writing it is presumably only understood as the equivalent of the Greek *ποιεῖν*, Latin *facere*. Another odd thing is that the idea of inspiration (whether from God or elsewhere) is so little touched on in Icelandic sources. These are all interesting topics and the evidence to be gleaned from Icelandic writers writing about themselves and their works in their prefaces is fully dealt with. One is left in no doubt of the close parallels between literary activity and attitudes in Iceland and those in Europe in the Middle Ages.

The second part of the book contains detailed analyses of three prefaces in relation to the works they are attached to—Oddr's preface to his *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, Snorri's preface to *Heimskringla*, and the preface to *Adonías saga*, which, with its emphasis on moral issues and inclusion of two of Æsop's fables, gives a clear indication of how under some circumstances stories could be taken to have a clear moral message. In an appendix the manuscript preservation of the extant prefaces is detailed with discussion of authorship and the relationship of the prefaces to the works they accompany. The book has an index and a lengthy bibliography that includes, as well as the Icelandic sources and discussions of them, many medieval Latin writings and discussions of them too; there is also a detailed English summary (covering 15 pages).

The relationship of medieval Icelandic writing to contemporary European writing is of continuing interest and importance, as is the question of how the reader ought to understand the significance of conventional statements or formulae in literature. Sverrir's book is a substantial contribution to these two topics.

ANTHONY FAULKES

MÖDRUVALLABÓK, AM 132 FOL. Edited by ANDREA VAN ARKEL-DE LEEUW VAN WEELEN. *E.J. Brill*. Leiden, New York, København and Köln, 1987. Volume one: index and concordance, xlvi + 226 pp. and 34 microfiches; volume two: text, iv + 374 pp.

These volumes present a complete transcription of the nearly two hundred double-column closely written leaves of *Mödruvallabók* (AM 132 fol.) and an index to every word found in the transcription. This index gives the frequency counts of every word and the reference for every occurrence of all except the most common words; it is supplemented by a microfiche which gives all the references for the common words omitted from the index. A further 33 microfiches contain a complete concordance of the whole transcription, equivalent to over six thousand printed pages; pages vii and xiii of volume I promise further publication on the orthography and morphology of the manuscript. Also, the introduction to volume I outlines computer techniques developed by van Arkel and used to facilitate a work of such ambition. *Mödruvallabók* is certainly worth this effort; it is the most important single resource we have for the text of the great family sagas. The *Íslensk fornrit* editors chose *Mödruvallabók* as their base for eight of the eleven sagas contained in the manuscript; of the other three sagas, Gering and Magerøy both chose *Mödruvallabók* as the base for their editions of *Finnboga saga* and *Bandamanna saga* respectively, and *Fóstbræðra saga* is fragmentary. Included in the eight is *Njáls saga*; this is found complete in other vellum manuscripts, but *Mödruvallabók* preserves the most complete versions of *Egils saga*, *Laxdæla saga*, *Kormáks saga*, *Víga-Glúms saga* and *Droplaugarsona saga* to be found in vellum manuscripts; only in *Mödruvallabók* is *Hallfreðar saga* preserved as a separate work; without *Mödruvallabók* *Ölkofra þátr* would have been lost altogether, as has the saga of Gaukr Trandilsson, apparently meant to follow *Njáls saga* in the manuscript. The manuscript is also of great potential philological interest. It is almost all the work of a single highly competent scribe, whose work can be dated and placed with reasonable certainty: in the first half of the fourteenth century in Eyjafjörður. Yet up until now no transcription of the manuscript has been published and there exist piecemeal detailed discussions only of those parts of *Mödruvallabók* containing individual sagas in various editions. Scholars without access to *Mödruvallabók* itself have been able to study it as a whole only in the facsimile edition printed as volume V of the *Corpus codicum Islandicorum medii aevi* (1933). This is a splendid book, with a valuable introduction by Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, but few copies were printed and there will be many libraries which—like the Bodleian in Oxford—do not possess a copy.

The transcription presented in van Arkel's volume II is therefore likely to be of the greatest immediate interest. This transcription gives a closer representation of the manuscript than (for example) the diplomatics published in the *Editiones Arnamagnæanæ* series. Abbreviations are not expanded out and great care is taken to represent something of the whole range of devices by which the scribe signals abbreviation: the title,

superscripted *r*, *i* and other characters, hooks and circles, horizontal strokes for contraction and abbreviation, points before and after letters indicating suspension, special signs for common words (e.g. *ok*, *hann*, *hans*, *pess*), and more. Several letter forms themselves are closer to the manuscript than is usual in printed editions: /f/ is represented by a sign resembling the insular f used throughout *Möðruvallabók*; the long form of /s/ (a straight vertical ascender, curling over and down to the right at the top), is kept apart from both *s* and *S* in the transcription as it is in the manuscript; round *d* is distinguished both from the forms with a diagonal bar through the ascender (conventional  $\delta$ ) and the forms with a horizontal bar through the ascender. Indeed, the transcription is so faithful that van Arkel might have taken it further: *r* rotunda and *r* are not distinguished in the transcription, as they clearly are in the manuscript; accents over *y*, frequent in the manuscript (if of dubious meaning) are not transcribed; bar accents which extend over two letters in the manuscript are usually transcribed over one letter only. Nevertheless, to read this transcription is to read something very close to the manuscript, with all its inconsistencies, difficulties and potential ambiguities. To the many scholars without access to either the facsimile or the manuscript this closeness to the manuscript will be welcome. Van Arkel is also to be congratulated on the accuracy of the transcription. I compared five columns of the transcription, chosen at random, with the facsimile, and found only one material error: in 103rb33 (fol. 103 recto, column b, line 33) *h* tittle = *hér* is transcribed *h* bar = *hann*. On the evidence of this sample, one may use the transcription with confidence. The utility of the transcription is greatly enhanced by the addition of the chapter numbering as given in the *Íslensk fornrit* editions in the margins: because the transcription follows the lineation, column-division and pagination of the manuscript exactly, the reader may navigate between modern edition, transcript and facsimile with ease. Without making a systematic search, I have found several points where the transcript—and the manuscript—give a different reading to that found in the *Íslensk fornrit* edition. So the conversation between Hallgerðr and the farandkonur in ch. 44 of *Njáls saga*, transcription 16ra40–42, differs in wording from that given in the *Íslensk fornrit* edition and there are other examples in 15rb38 and 38va20. In none of these does the *Íslensk fornrit* edition indicate the variant reading in *Möðruvallabók*. If only as a medium for such comparison of modern text with original manuscript, the transcription would justify itself. In summary: the transcription is accurate; it is easier to read and use than the facsimile (in which several pages of manuscript are indecipherable, e.g. 18r and 21r); it presents the manuscript in unusually close detail. One regrets the lack of even minimal palaeographic footnotes (indicating for example the various discontinuities in the manuscript), the levelling of certain characteristic forms noted above, and the divergences from the manuscript listed in volume I, pp. xliv–v. But for most uses the convenience and clarity of the transcription will outweigh these defects.

Volume I presents an index of the transcription. According to the preface, this is modelled on Larsson's *Ordförrådet i de älsta isländska handskrifterna* (1891). As in Larsson, every occurrence of every word is indexed; the index is completely lemmatized, so that all the forms of *sjá* as pronouns are drawn together into a single entry and distinguished from forms of *sjá* as verb; within each entry, the forms are sorted and labelled so that every instance of (for example) the first person singular present indicative of *vera* is referenced. Information about the more common words is summarized with full references to these given on the accompanying microfiche. Van Arkel goes beyond Larsson in that this index presents each word-form exactly as it appears in the transcription, which in turn very closely reproduces the manuscript. As with the transcription, the index represents meticulous and immense effort. Every word in the whole manuscript had to be tagged with its lemma, its part of speech and grammatical function. According to the introduction, the computer did much of this, but clearly much was left to be done by the author herself. As with the transcription, a check of a sample showed that this index is exceptionally accurate. Every reference was correct, and I found only one error in the grammatical tagging: in *Laxdæla saga*, ch. 82, 196ra3 of the transcript, *hann* in the phrase *hann hugsar* must be nominative, and cannot be either nominative or accusative as p. 72 of the index suggests. In its accuracy, its organization and its close representation of the orthography, this index is a philological treasure-house. One may calculate the relative frequency of *-lld-/ld-* across the whole manuscript, or in individual sagas; one may deduce that the title and not superscript *r* may represent the nominative plural inflection in *allir* etc., while superscript *r* and not the title may represent /ar/ in *þar* and *var*; and so on. According to the introduction p. xxix, the whole index is held in database form: access to this would permit quick testing of the most elaborate hypothesis. One looks forward to the promised survey of the orthography and morphology of the manuscript to see the use van Arkel makes of this wealth of material. As with the transcription, the index is superbly printed, with a rational and compact system of reference giving quick and easy access from the index to the transcription (and hence the manuscript). Again, there are matters one would wish altered. It is surprising to see middle-voice verb forms grouped with the indicative; Holtsmark distinguishes them in her *Ordförrådet i de eldste norske handskrifter til ca 1250* (1955) though Larsson does not. What must be clear emendations are characterized as (apparently) alternative spellings: *gmr* in *Hallfredar saga*, ch. 6, 153ra26, cannot be a spelling of *grípr*, nor can the symbol (like a reversed E) used throughout the manuscript for *ok* be any sort of spelling for *at* in *Njáls saga* ch. 106, 38va20. These are scribal errors and should be marked as such. One feels haunted by the decision not to distinguish *r* and *r* rotunda: distribution of such spellings might be a vital clue to differences between the orthographies of individual sagas. Also, a fragment of computer code has crept into the tenth line from the top of the second column of p. 107. But, again, the great merits of the whole index outweigh these perceived defects.

One cannot be enthusiastic about the third part of this enterprise, the concordance contained on the microfiches enclosed in a wallet in the endpapers of volume I. Once a text has been put into machine readable form, computers may generate a concordance with such ease that the impulse to produce one appears irresistible. There are times it should be resisted. Besides basic accuracy (with computers, no longer a problem, given a correctly transcribed text), one might expect three things of a concordance: firstly, it should be readable; secondly it should in every case give enough context for reasonable scholarly purposes; thirdly it should be so organized as to allow its users to find efficiently just what they want. Too many entries in the *Möðruvallabók* concordance fail on all three counts. Firstly, many lines are not readable; van Arkel has chosen to base the concordance on the transcription as printed in volume II, that is the text without expansion of abbreviations. One might tolerate this, except that she has substituted arcane symbols for the special manuscript forms so carefully represented in the transcription: the abbreviation for *hans* is represented by *X*, superscript letters by enclosure in round brackets, the /ur/ sign by 8, the /us/ sign by 9, and so on. The reader who readily deciphers *huat "S" þu nu Z. e" þ" pik* as *Hvat sér þú nú pess er þér pykkir* (15rb38) may use this happily. One fears that scholars will balk at having to master a script even more esoteric than that of the scribe. Furthermore, one looks in vain in the introduction for an unambiguous, clearly presented statement of just what sign in the concordance represents what in the manuscript. Pages xliii–iv purport to give such an account, but this is poorly presented, and so compressed as to be incomprehensible: for example, it directs the reader to 'Figure 1' for explanation of the coding of double superscript letters, but when the reader has found this figure (on p. xxiv) it fails to explain this coding. It is not that van Arkel had no choice but to present the concordance in this unreadable form. Two articles by her ('Automatic expansion of abbreviations: an experiment with Old Icelandic' *Computers and the humanities*, 16 (1982), pp. 157–64 and 'The computer in Old Norse textual editing' *Association for literary and linguistic computing bulletin*, 10 (1982), pp. 48–54) described an apparently successful system by which the computer automatically expanded the abbreviations: a concordance of such an expanded text would have been far more readable and useful. After all, the primary function of a concordance is the provision of semantic and grammatical information and not exploration of the orthography. In any case, van Arkel's assertion that 'the microfiche process does not offer the same flexibility and choice of characters as typesetting' (p. xliv) is misleading: the technology has long been available to permit her microfiche to appear much more like the manuscript than it does. Secondly, in many cases the concordance does not give enough context. One finds lines such as *s. R* and *s. b* and *s. J* and *en ss. X* standing as complete entries. The combination of abbreviation and unexpected letter forms makes it unlikely that one will decipher the first and last examples as respectively *segir Hrútr* and *en synir hans*; the lack of context makes the entries of little use when one does. The fault for this lack of context appears to lie with van Arkel's decision to place end-of-sentence markers liberally

through the text. From the specimen of her transcription of part of *Droplaugarsona saga*, ch. 1, printed on p. 54 of her 1982 article, she divides the first words of Arneiðr so: "Gakk til skips. Ok seg Katli, at hann komi til míni, því at mér er krankt". Hon gerði svá. Ok gekk Ketill einn saman. . . . Because of van Arkel's decision to limit the context in the concordance to the sentences she defines, *Gakk til skips* and *Hon gerði svá* duly appear without the following *ok*-clause in the concordance. The scholar searching for uses of verbs of motion with *ok* to indicate purpose, or instances of *ok* as a coordinating conjunction, will be frustrated. No doubt this free use of end-of-sentence markers made it considerably easier for the computer to identify the grammatical function of each word, but the scholar struggling with the concordance will not feel this is a virtue. Thirdly, the arrangement of the concordance means that users will spend too much time looking for material rather than using it. This is not just the fault of the inconvenient microfiche format. The alphabetization of the whole concordance is not transparent; van Arkel's assertion on p. xliii that 'the order is the normal alphabetical order', with the symbols for *p*, *æ*, *hans* (=X), *bess* (=Z), *ok* and *konungs* (=£) following, is not borne out by the concordance, which has it thus: *v* (=u) *p* *x* *y* *Z* (=bess) *æ* *ok* *X* (=hans) *£* (=konungs). A yet different order is used for alphabetization within letters, but one must be able to understand the concordance program printed on p. xxvii to determine this. Every fiche is labelled only with the first word found on the first page of the fiche; specifying the last word on the last page as well would have helped the user materially. Above all: the concordance was created simply by sorting together all identical spellings in the transcription: thus homographs with very different lexical and grammatical functions are agglomerated, and the different forms of a single lemma are scattered under its variant spellings. One finds the two instances of the past tense of *aka* spelt *ok* buried among 585 instances of *ok* in the concordance; the single letter *v* alone represents at least eleven different lemmata, and many more forms of those lemmata; the various forms of *sjá* verb and pronoun so carefully distinguished in the index are here jumbled together; one has to look from fiche to fiche to trace the different forms of a single lemma (e.g. *ek*, *mér*, *mik*). Of course, one can use the index to find the various spellings of any one word, and then (after translating the spelling) find them in the concordance, but this is defeating the purpose. None of this is to deny that some scholars may still find parts of the concordance of considerable value, but many more are likely to be annoyed and frustrated. It could have been very much better. A concordance based not simply on the spelling of the transcription, but ordered and arranged by lemma, word-class, grammatical function, etc., along the lines of Gering's great *Vollständiges wörterbuch zu den liedern der Edda* (1903) or R. Kellogg's *A concordance to Eddic poetry* (1988), would have been far more useful. Generation of such a concordance from the database that lies behind the index, using one of the programming languages built in to many databases, would have been quite feasible: one hopes that further such enterprises might explore this possibility. Finally, fiche no. 22 in my review copy was defective.

The problems with this concordance are at least buried in the microfiche; the defects in the introduction are all too visible. There are so many errors in it that the reader might be pardoned for concluding, quite unfairly, that the scholar who passed it for the press could not be trusted to transcribe a manuscript. Possessive apostrophe *s* is missing from 'Helgason's' and 'Bartholin's' pp. xii-iii; italicization of names of sagas is inconsistent, and even more erratic in scholarly references (compare the three references to Stefán Karlsson on pp. xii-iii); the umlaut is missing from the abbreviation for *Ölkofra pátr* on p. xiii; an accent has crept onto the third C of CONCORDANCE on p. xiv; a stop appears between 'cross-stroke' and 'seems' on p. xvi; volume 4 of Fritzner is referred to variously as Fritzner vol4 and Fritzner 4 in the one sentence on p. xxx, with similar indecision in footnote 37 on p. xl; 'infinitive infinitive verb forms' are discussed on p. xxxi (compare 'suffixed article', p. xlivi); the subjunctive is called the conjunctive (cf. Dutch *conjunctief*) on p. xlivi; the table of abbreviations used in the index on p. xlivi omits the underlining used to indicate that a letter is a large initial (e.g. Aller p. 5); the last and third last sentences of the first paragraph of the introduction (p. xi) are incomprehensible. The failings are not just of detail. The introduction claims to be a 'user's guide' (p. xi), but as I note above, it fails to give a clear guide even to the letter-forms used on microfiche. Most of the introduction is, in any case, a 'project report' (p. xi): a historical account of how and when the work was done, down even to the exact date van Arkel finished checking the plotted text against the manuscript (p. xxiv). Van Arkel justifies the inclusion of this information by the assertion that 'explaining the features requires a rather detailed knowledge of the working-methods followed. So a history of the project had to be included....' (p. xi). Scholars have been using transcriptions, indexes and concordances for generations; if the work is well done there is no need for explanation. The worst effect of the introduction is that it might lead the reader to suspect (quite wrongly) that the work has not been well done, and that the two real achievements of these volumes, the transcription and the index, are grievously flawed. Concerning the transcription: van Arkel states that it is 'essentially a copy of the transcription employed in the project' (p. xliv); it is 'the machine-readable text as used in the project' (p. xiv); p. xliv implies that the transcription has only been supplied because 'references in the INDEX and CONCORDANCE refer to it'; from p. xii it appears that van Arkel first intended only to publish the index, and hence the surprising organization of these volumes, with the index in volume I and the transcription in volume II. The scholar seeking reassurance that van Arkel's first priority was accurate transcription of the manuscript will not be reassured by these statements, nor impressed by the assertion on p. xii that the transcription 'gives all users access to the MS text'. What does 'text' mean here? A record of its exact orthography? Or (as appears to be the case) some sort of abstraction of the orthography? And he is likely to be puzzled by van Arkel's apparent need to apologize for having the transcription appear so like the manuscript ('At first glance the TEXT may suggest a level of transcription that was never aimed at' p. xliv; similarly p. xxv 'This is done not so much to imitate the MS....').

Concerning the index: van Arkel's account of her preparation of this (pp. xxviii-xxxix) dwells at such length on the computing difficulties it presented that one might suspect these difficulties rendered the whole index invalid. Yet, careful reading of this section shows that van Arkel went to immense effort to correct every point where the computer failed. The excellence of the index is testimony to her success. Of course, in pure computing terms, and perhaps in terms of the original aims of her project, she might be held to have failed (cf. p. xxxvi: 'The use of programs which are less than perfect may seem objectionable to some....'). But that will not concern the user of the index, who wants assurance only that the index is reliably usable (as it certainly is). Indeed, the whole emphasis on computing methods in the introduction appears misjudged. The non-technically inclined will be baffled by much of it. More seriously, the constraints of space mean that the explanation of (for example) the lemmatization programs on pp. xxxiv-xxxviii is so abbreviated as likely to be obscure even to the adept. It would have been far better to have removed all this to a specialist journal. Also, there is too much discussion of particular computer hardware in the introduction: the references to the Burroughs 7700 (p. xiv) and the Micro Bee 2 (p. xxii) already look dated.

Overall, the tone of the introduction is unnecessarily defensive (e.g. the 'allegations to the role time—or rather the lack of it—has played', p. xi). The excellence of the work on the transcription and the index needs no defence. Van Arkel has, in these, transformed *Möðruvallabók* from the least available of the great Icelandic manuscripts to one of the most richly supplied with scholarly resources. One regrets the time van Arkel spent on the flawed concordance: time that would have been better spent on adding the necessary palaeographic annotation to the transcription so that it would be a more satisfactory substitute for the manuscript, or on polishing the index, or—especially—on making the introduction worthy of these volumes. As a pioneer, she has not only had to make her own tools but also to set her own aims. The transcription and the index may stand on their own great merit, the rest should be passed over lightly.

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