

The Saga of the Jómsvikings

A Translation with Full Introduction

Alison Finlay and Þórdís Edda Jóhannesdóttir



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by

Alison Finlay

and

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Introduction

JÓMSVÍKINGA SAGA IS AMONG the oldest Icelandic saga texts. It was most likely written early in the thirteenth century, perhaps as early as around 1200. The saga is relatively short, the narrative is brisk, and the tone is amusing. In place of a single hero, the saga features the group of legendary Danish Vikings known as the Jómsvikings (*Jómsvíkingar*). The narrative unfolds against the background of recurrent hostility between the rulers of Denmark and Norway, and the climax of the saga is the battle of Hjørungavágr where the Jómsvikings are defeated by Jarl Hákon of Norway. The heroic death of many of the Jómsvikings is followed by a melodramatic scene of execution in which the survivors articulate their creed of extreme courage and fellowship.

Like other early texts, *Jómsvíkinga saga* occupies contested generic ground between history and fiction; it contains material relevant to, and used as a source in, early historical texts, but is full of lively fictional motifs. The first section of the saga is mainly concerned with Danish kings, from their origin to the conversion of Denmark to Christianity. The second section introduces Pálnatóki, founder of the mysterious fortress Jómsborg and the leader of the Jómsvikings; it goes on to detail the forming of the fellowship among the warrior band, their involvement in the conflicts between Danes and Norwegians, and their downfall in the battle.

The saga has been preserved in four different versions from the Middle Ages, in four vellum manuscripts, all discussed in more detail later in this introduction. The saga has twice been translated into English, in a parallel-text version by Norman Blake (Nelson's Icelandic Texts, 1962) and by Lee M. Hollander (University of Texas Press, 1955). Both translations use the shortened text of Holm. Perg. 7 4to (hereafter Perg. 7). The translation in this volume is based on the version of AM 291 4to (hereafter 291), which has not been translated into English before.

Historical Background

One of the longest-running controversies concerning *Jómsvíkinga saga* is the location of Jómsborg. In the saga, its location is not described precisely enough to be pinpointed exactly. It is said to be located in Jóm, a part of the kingdom of King Búrizláfr of Vindland that he offers to Pálnatóki:

And there he quickly has built in his domain a fortress by the sea, exceedingly large and strongly built, which was called Jómsborg after that. There he also has built a harbor inside the fortress that three hundred longships could be berthed in at the same time, so that they were all shut within the fortress. It was designed with great ingenuity where the entrance to the harbor was, and it was constructed as if there were a door, with a great stone arch above it. And before the entrance there were iron gates which locked the harbor from within. And up on the stone arch a large tower was built with catapults inside it. Some parts of the fortress stood out over the sea, and structures built like that are called sea-castles, and on account of this the harbor was within the fortress. (p. 110)

The description of the fortress has, understandably, led many to wonder whether it existed in reality and, if so, where it could have been. *Vindland* is the Old Norse term for the western part of the southern coast of the Baltic, often referred to in accounts of Scandinavian activity in Slavic areas. Ongoing archaeological research since the 1930s has led to a general consensus that Wolin (German Wollin) in Poland, situated on an island in the estuary of the river Oder off the Baltic coast, is the location of Jómsborg.

The place name *Jómsborg* is found only in Icelandic sources and the Norwegian *Ágrip af Nóregskonunga sǫgum*, but names related to the first part, *Jóm-*, are found in various sources, and *Iuline*, which appears in, for instance, the *Gesta Danorum* of Saxo Grammaticus, seems to refer to the same place. In fact, as Petrulevich has argued in detail, there seem to have been several variations of the name, all apparently associated with the same place, in Scandinavian, German, and Slavic sources (Petrulevich, 2016, pp. 170–73; cf. Petrulevich, 2009, pp. 65–97, and Udolph, pp. 183–210). One such reference is found in Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, which describes the place *Iumne* in some detail. Adam locates it in *Slavia*, a large area in *Germaniae* where the *Wandalis* (Wends) live. The largest river in the area is called the Oder:

At its mouth, where it feeds the Scythian marshes, Jumne, a most noble city, affords a very widely known trading center for the barbarians and Greeks who live round about. Because great and scarcely credible things are said in praise of this city, I think it of interest to introduce a few facts that are worth relating. It is truly the largest of all the cities in Europe, and there live in it Slavs and many other peoples, Greeks and barbarians. For even alien Saxons also have the right to reside there on equal terms with others, provided only that while they sojourn there they do not openly profess Christianity. In fact, all its inhabitants still blunder about in pagan rites. Otherwise, so far as morals and hospitality are concerned, a more honorable or kindlier folk cannot be found. Rich in the wares of all the northern nations, that city lacks nothing that is either pleasing or rare. (Adam of Bremen, pp. 66–67)

Archaeological research in Wolin has revealed that the medieval town was founded at the end of the eighth century or the beginning of the ninth and was originally a small village, perhaps concerned with fishing, that grew into a commercial and manufacturing town (Duczko, pp. 144–46; Morawiec, pp. 190–95). The location was ideal for exchange between different areas of Western Europe. It seems to have been one of the largest commercial centers in the Baltic area and, in the eleventh century, one of the largest towns (Gardela, pp. 21–22; see also Morawiec, pp. 190–208, and sources cited there). Archaeological finds include objects of Scandinavian origin; at the same time, Wolin seems to have been a center for export from west to north. Numerous coins of various origins have also been found, indicating the prosperity of the town. Another important clue is a house that was constructed around 960 in a central location and made of oak, a timber rare in the area, indicating the wealth of its environment. An increase in the number and variety of found objects identifies the second half of the tenth century as the heyday of communication between Wolin and Scandinavia (Duczko, pp. 145–46).

Duczko observed that Wolin had a special status among trading places on the southern shore of the Baltic, being the only site to prosper as late as the tenth century, although other sites were well established in the early eighth century (Duczko, pp. 147–49). Burials of Norse families have been found at other sites, but not in Wolin, suggesting that Scandinavians did not settle there as they did elsewhere. Women's jewelry is also more commonly found in sites other than Wolin. Moreover, Wolin, unusually, was protected by a wall. All this does not mean, however, that Wolin was

the Jónsborg described in *Jónsvíkinga saga*, a fortress manned by an army of Vikings. Few weapons have been found there and similarly few warrior burials (Gardeła, pp. 20–22).

The Old Norse sources do not agree on the founding of Jónsborg. In all redactions of *Jónsvíkinga saga*, it is founded by Pálnatóki at Búrizláfr's request, but there are other sources that claim it was King Haraldr Gormsson who established the fortress. According to *Fagrskinna*,

Haraldr konungr Gormssonr herjaði á Vinðland ok lét þar göra borg mikla, er heitir at Jóni, ok er sú borg klluð síðan Jónsborg. Þar setti hann yfir höfðingja, ok fór sjálf heim til Danmarkar, ok var þá ófriðr lengi millum Vinða ok Dana, ok herjuðu hvártveggju í annarra lönd. En á ofanverðum dögum Haralds konungs Gormssonar setti hann yfir Jónsborg Sigvalda, son Strút-Haralds jarls, ok gaf Danakonungr Sigvalda jarlsnafn. Þá fóru margir höfðingjar af Danmörku til Jónsborgar. (*Fagrskinna*, pp. 121–22)

[King Haraldr Gormsson raided in the land of the Wends and had a great stronghold built there at a place called Jón, and since then that stronghold has been called Jónsborg. He put a commander in charge of it, and himself returned to Denmark, and for a long time then there was hostility between the Wends and the Danes, and each side made raids in the lands of the other. But late in the days of King Haraldr Gormsson he appointed Sigvaldi, son of Jarl Strút-Haraldr, to the command of Jónsborg, and the king of the Danes gave Sigvaldi the title of jarl. Then many chieftains went from Denmark to Jónsborg. (Finlay, 2004, pp. 94–95)]

It is obvious that the archaeological findings in Wolin and the preserved texts that mention Jónsborg are two separate bodies of evidence that are connected in some ways but do not entirely support each other. The Jónsborg depicted in *Jónsvíkinga saga* probably owes more to fiction than history and may be an Icelandic invention.

The second place name in *Jónsvíkinga saga* that has given rise to debate, perhaps even more than Jónsborg, is *Hjörungavágr*, the location of the Jónsvikings' final battle. The second element, *-vágr*, means 'bay' or 'creek', but the meaning of the first is less clear. The toponym is not recorded in Norway, and there are no Norwegian sources that explain directly where the place is. At the beginning of the battle, it is described like this in the 291 version:

But it is said about this that the head of Hjörungavágr faces east and the mouth to the west. Also, there stand out in the bay three rocks that are called Hjörungar, and one of them is somewhat the largest, and the bay is named after these rocks. But there is a skerry in the middle of the bay, and it is an equal distance to land from every side of the skerry, both in to the head of the bay and in both directions across from it. And there is an island at the north of the bay called Prímsigð, and Harund is at the south of the bay, and beyond it is Harundarfjörðr. (p. 140–41)

The version of AM 510 4to (hereafter 510) gives a similar description of Hjörungavágr, but adds further detail that contradicts it: “Þeir fara sidann inn með eyne, þar til er þeir koma firer innann Haud og í vikina firer eyiar-endann norður, þar sem heiter Hiorunga-vogur” (They sail then in along the island until they come within Haud (Hǫð) and into the bay at the northern tip of the island at the place called Hiorunga-vogur (Hjörungavágr); *Jómsvíkinga saga* (after Cod. Am. 510, 4to), pp. 68–69). It is impossible for a bay at the northern tip of an island to have a mouth that faces west. The debate on the location of the fjord in which the bay is placed is ongoing, especially in Norway; see, for instance, the recent book by Johan Ottesen, in which all candidates for the location are discussed. Among these are Haugsfjorden, Ulsteinfjorden, Aspevågen, Ørskogvika, and Norangsfjorden. Liavågen in Møre has traditionally been the place named as the likeliest location; in 1986, a monument was erected beside Liavågen to mark the millennium of the battle (Helle, p. 172; cf. Megaard, 1999, pp. 32–33). Nonetheless, no consensus on the location has been reached.

The location of the battle is remembered in another context in an early fourteenth-century version of *Guðmundar saga Arasonar* in which the Icelandic Bishop Guðmundr, on a journey to Norway, is said to defeat a terrible dragon at a place called Hjörungavágr by sprinkling it with holy water; the author notes this as the site of the battle: “Miðil Prándheims ok Björgynjar liggir sá sjár, er heitir Hjörungavágr, þar barðist forðum Hákon Hlaðajarl við Jómsvíkinga” (Between Trondheim and Bergen lies the sea that is called Hjörungavágr; there Jarl Hákon of Hlaðir fought once against the Jómsvikings; *Biskupa sögur* 2, p. 129). This is clearly the same dragon into which Búi is said to be transformed at the end of *Jómsvíkinga saga*, although Búi is not mentioned in *Guðmundar saga*.

The Icelandic writer Halldór Laxness is among those who have pondered where the battle took place, and he concluded that the place was

the creation of an Icelandic author and therefore impossible to locate: “Uvilkårligt får læseren lyst til at valfarte til dette sted og spørger, hvor er Hjørungavåg? Men her er vi på sagaens enemærker. Hjørungavåg er et sted som Svolder, hvor Olaf Tryggvason faldt, og som ikke blev skabt af Gud, men lavet af islændere. Ikke engang filologerne ved hvor disse steder ligger” (Involuntarily, the reader will want to make a pilgrimage to this place and will ask, where is Hjørungavág? But here we are in the realms of the saga. Hjørungavág is a place like Svölðr, where Óláfr Tryggvason fell, and which was not created by God, but made by Icelanders. Not even philologists know where these places are; Laxness, p. 179). Furthermore, as Knut Helle pointed out, the name Hjørungavág does not appear in connection with the battle until around 1200, some 200 years after the battle took place. In the skaldic poetry about the battle that was probably composed earlier, this place name is never mentioned; the only reference is to a place in *Mærr* (Møre; Helle, pp. 173–84). *Jómsvíkingadrápa* is the only poem to mention the name Hjørungavág. Helle rightly adds that the first element of the name, *Hjörung*-, probably derives from the Old Norse *hjorr* (sword). The name Hjørungavág may have come into existence as a reminiscence of the battle, perhaps a kenning (poetic circumlocution) for the location of the battle, literally meaning “bay of swords.” Icelanders retelling the story could have understood this as an actual place name, the saga’s identification of “Hjörung” as the name of three stones being a later invention. Helle’s conclusion is much in line with that of Halldór Laxness. He points out that none of the suggestions that have been put forward for the possible location of the battle conforms to the description of Hjørungavág in *Jómsvíkinga saga*, and the closest we can come to a conclusion is acknowledging that it was in the region of Møre, somewhere around Hareidlandet and Hjørundfjorden (Helle, pp. 189–90).

Frustrating though it may be to accept that Hjørungavág is probably an Icelandic invention, it is not surprising in view of the general character of *Jómsvíkinga saga*, which is discussed in detail in the following pages. The saga’s use of place names overall shows that the author was probably not very concerned with the accuracy of the setting, and had no great knowledge of local conditions. For example, Limafjörðr (Limfjorden) in Denmark is mentioned several times, prompting Ólafur Halldórsson’s comment that it was the only fjord in Denmark that the saga author could name and he made the most of it, making everybody who comes to Denmark stop by there, although he may not have known exactly where it

was (Ólafur Halldórsson, 1969, p. 25). The battle between Jarl Hákon and the Jómsvikings is most likely based on a real event that took place in the tenth century, but exactly where and how it happened remain unknown. It is clear, however, that to the thirteenth-century audience Hjørungavágr was a real place, and an important element in the story of the Jómsvikings.

Kings and Jómsvikings

The characters of *Jómsvíkinga saga* can be roughly divided into two groups: on the one hand kings and those connected to their courts, and on the other men of lower status, mainly chieftains, who are Jómsvikings or related to them. The first group is familiar from other medieval sources, but the second is not. The kings and their retinues, always more likely to feature in historical accounts than those of lower rank, are well attested in Icelandic texts from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries but also in older European sources. The Icelandic sources tend to be more detailed, as they are more discursive than chronicles. Thus, King Haraldr Gormsson, also known by his nickname *blátǫnn* (Bluetooth), appears in several sources, some contemporaneous. He probably became king close to the middle of the tenth century. The inscription on the larger of the two famous rune stones erected in Jelling in Denmark in the tenth century states that Haraldr Gormsson had it erected when his father passed away and claims that Haraldr had won all of Denmark and Norway and Christianized the Danes (Wimmer, pp. 53–56; Christensen, pp. 7–21). In Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis*, written in the eleventh century, Haraldr's role in the Christianization of Denmark is emphasized heavily, and the account in *Jómsvíkinga saga* of the battle with Emperor Ótta is consistent with Adam's story in some ways. On the other hand, the saga's version of Haraldr's death is quite different from that of Adam, in which Haraldr flees from the battle with his son to Iumne where he dies (Adam of Bremen, p. 72). The account of Haraldr's conversion is found in an even older source, *Res gestae saxonicae* by Widukind of Corey. As Widukind was born around 925, his chronicle must have been written quite close to the time of the events related. His account of Haraldr is not detailed, but he claims that Haraldr decided to accept Christianity when he witnessed Bishop Poppa walk over red-hot iron (*Quellen zur Geschichte der Sächsischen Kaiserzeit*, pp. 168–79; on Poppa, see Demidoff, pp. 39–67).

There are elements of Haraldr's story in *Jómsvíkinga saga* that contradict other sources, however. The saga's account of his death, which will

be addressed in more detail below, differs not only from Adam's history but also from an important Norman source written around 1040–42, *Encomium Emmae reginae*, which includes an account similar to Adam's. In this version, Haraldr's son, Sveinn, becomes more popular than his father, whose growing envy ends in a battle after which he dies of his wounds.

The story of Gunnhildr in *Jómsvíkinga saga* also contradicts other sources. In the saga, Haraldr Gormsson and Jarl Hákon Sigurðarson of Hlaðir in Norway deceive King Haraldr gráfeldr (Greycloak) of Norway and lure him to Denmark (chapter 4). A part of the plot is to make his mother, Gunnhildr, believe that she is to marry Haraldr. This lure is successful as Gunnhildr “has long appeared something of a man-eater” (p. 79). Gunnhildr is one of the most famous—or infamous—women in medieval Icelandic literature, and her man-eating qualities are abundantly represented in other texts, such as *Njáls saga* and *Laxdæla saga* (see Jochens, 1996, pp. 180–82). Haraldr's proposal to Gunnhildr is particularly disconcerting in the light of the statement in *Historia Norvegiæ* that Gunnhildr was Haraldr's sister (Þórdís Edda Jóhannesdóttir, 2016b, pp. 155–57). It is hard to say how this discrepancy came about and which source is more accurate. The account in *Jómsvíkinga saga* of Gunnhildr's humiliating end, drowned in a bog while ostensibly being conveyed in splendor to a royal feast, is supported by two other Norwegian sources, the Latin *Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagiensium* by the otherwise unknown monk Theodoricus, and the vernacular *Ágrip af Nóregskonunga sögum*: “var hennar fœr ger þrýðiliga til óþrúðrar, því at þegar hón kom til Danmarkar, þá var hón tekin ok sökkt í mýri einni, ok lauk svá hón sínum dögum, at því sem margir segja” (but her journey, which began in splendour, ended in disgrace, for when she arrived in Denmark she was taken and sunk in a bog, and, according to many, so ended her days; *Ágrip af Nóregskonunga sögum*, p. 15; Driscoll, 1995, p. 21).

The second prominent ruler in *Jómsvíkinga saga*, Jarl Hákon Sigurðarson of Norway, is similarly well known from an abundance of sources. He is the most powerful of the jarls of Hlaðir, a dynasty that vied with the descendants of Haraldr hárfagri for rule of Norway from the ninth to the eleventh centuries; Hákon is known, and reviled in those texts foregrounding the conversion of the North to Christianity, as the last great pagan ruler of Norway. Again, the Icelandic texts, especially *Fagrskinna*, *Heimskringla*, and *Egils saga*, are more detailed than other sources. Most sagas are unanimous in their negative treatment of Hákon. He is said to

have participated in treacherous deeds along with Gunnhildr—something that is not alluded to in *Jómsvíkinga saga*. He is explicitly referred to as evil and is infamous for his treatment of women, especially in his later days. According to *Ágrip*, he “sat með ríki miklu ok óvinsælð mikilli ok margfaldri, er á leið upp, ok með einni þeiri, er hann dró til heljar, at hann lét sér konur allar jafnt heimilar, er hann fýsti til, ok var engi kvenna munr í því gørr ok engi grein, hvers kona hver væri eða systir eða dóttir” (ruled imperiously, and, as time passed, grew more and more unpopular, particularly because—and this led to his death—he considered all women whom he desired equally available to him, making no distinction as to who was whose wife or sister or daughter; *Ágrip af Nóreghskonunga sögum*, p. 16; Driscoll, 1995, pp. 21–23).

Most of the sagas emphasize Hákon's paganism and agree with *Jómsvíkinga saga* that he was baptized while with King Haraldr in Denmark but then returned to Norway firmly committed to the pagan religion. He is seen practicing heathen rituals in several sources, and Þorgerðr Hǫrðabrúðr, his mysterious patron goddess, sometimes makes an appearance as well (on Þorgerðr, see Røthe; McKinnell, pp. 81–85). Thus *Jómsvíkinga saga* is, by and large, in accord with other sources, although it is the only source to give such a detailed account of his sacrifice of his son to the goddess. There is a sharp contrast, however, between the attitudes shown in saga narratives and the tone of the poetry that mentions Hákon or is dedicated to him. An unusually high number of poets are recorded as serving Hákon, and what survives of their eulogies suggests a sustained ideological exploitation of the potentialities of the pre-Christian religion to elevate his status as ruler. Folke Ström points out that these poems, including the *Vellekla* of Einarr skálaglamm cited in *Jómsvíkinga saga*, represent a drive to build on Hákon's military success at Hjørungavágr in order to consolidate his political power (Ström, 1981, pp. 440–58). Although this tendency may have inspired the representation of Hákon as arch-pagan in later prose texts, their demonization of him is a product of a later, Christian, era.

Hákon's last years are not attested in *Jómsvíkinga saga* as he is still alive at the end of its narrative span, and the same applies to Sveinn Haraldsson, who succeeds his father on the throne of Denmark. Known in other texts as Sveinn tjúguskegg (Forkbeard), and famous for conquering England shortly before his death in 1013, Sveinn has a somewhat mixed character in *Jómsvíkinga saga*. He is contrasted with his father and is portrayed in a more positive light than Haraldr. In his youth, the

reader's sympathy is enlisted on his behalf, as his father will not acknowledge him and he is raised and championed by Pálnatóki. *Jómsvíkinga saga* is the only source to claim that Sveinn is Haraldr's illegitimate son. The audience's attitude turns against Sveinn, however, when, however reluctantly, he gives orders for Pálnatóki's killing at Haraldr's funeral feast (chapter 12). The saga dwells on Sveinn's dilemma as he is forced to acknowledge that his duty as a son to avenge Pálnatóki's killing of his father must take precedence over his affection for the man who has been his foster-father and champion. Such conflicts between the imperatives of kinship and the obligations of friendship often arise in the sagas, exacerbated in this case because Sveinn is obliged also to fulfil his duties as a king: it is stated more than once that he will not be "a proper king" (p. 107) until he has held the funeral feast for his father, and until he has avenged his killing. In fact, Sveinn is the only king in the saga who is shown to be fulfilling his obligations as a ruler. Pálnatóki has killed his father, and society demands revenge. Sveinn needs to meet these expectations and therefore he has to have Pálnatóki killed.

Sveinn again embodies the responsibilities of kingship when he arbitrates in the dispute between Jarl Strút-Haraldr and Véseti, whose lands have been plundered by Strút-Haraldr's sons (chapters 18 and 19). The episode is placed just before Strút-Haraldr's sons Sigvaldi and Þorkell inn hávi, and Véseti's sons Búi and Sigurðr kápa, join the Jómsvíking fellowship, and their roles on opposite sides of this dispute prefigure latent divisions among members of the fraternity. More immediately, the escalation of the dispute poses a threat to the stability of the Danish kingdom, which Sveinn is able to avert:

King Sveinn . . . realizes that he will not be able to maintain his dignity if he allows them to fight there at the assembly without intervening between them, since he had placed such weight on their being reconciled there at the assembly, and now the king decides to go between them and not let them come to blows, and now in the end it comes about there through the help and authority of the king that they are both obliged to agree that the king alone should decide between them as he likes. (p. 117)

Torfi H. Tulinius has interpreted this episode as a testimony to the king's importance to society: he is a mediator who intervenes when the peace of his subjects is endangered (Tulinius, 2002, pp. 200–207). Sveinn's role as mediator is in accordance with medieval kingship ideology, reflecting the

image of the *rex iustus*. Kings must be mild and wise, be responsible for their subjects, protect them, and maintain justice and peace in society (see, for example, Bagge, pp. 146–91; Ármann Jakobsson, 2000, pp. 74–80). Sveinn acts to the benefit of his subjects; at the same time, he is conscious of the importance of maintaining his own authority, as is apparent when he realizes at the assembly in Ísseyrarþing that “he will not be able to maintain his dignity” (p. 117) unless he keeps their violent tendencies in check. Thus, the representation of Sveinn in *Jómsvíkinga saga* contradicts the common opinion that the saga is hostile towards royal power in general. On the contrary, it underlines the importance of kingship and shows that the saga was not completely untouched by ideas about the nature of royal power and the qualities essential to a true king. On the other hand, it is Sveinn who prompts the Jómsvíkings to take on their final, doomed journey, and his deviousness in having them plied with strong drink to make them commit themselves to this casts a negative light on his character.

In contrast to these prominent ruler figures, the Jómsvíkings are not well known outside the saga, and most of them are unknown in sources that originate outside Iceland. However, two Danish sources should be mentioned, *Gesta Danorum* by Saxo Grammaticus and *Compendiosa regum Danie historia* by Sven Aggesen. In *Gesta Danorum*, a man called *Toko* is a retainer of Haraldr Gormsson, and Haraldr, early in book 10, sends pirates from Iulin, led by Bo and Siualdus, to Norway to fight Jarl Hákon (Haquinus). When Hákon sees the strength of their fleet he sacrifices two sons and is rewarded with a huge storm that ensures his victory. This group from Iulin is never referred to as Jómsvíkings or Vikings, and the heavy storm is not connected to the enigmatic goddess Þorgerðr in any way (Saxo Grammaticus, 2015, pp. 690–95). Earlier, Saxo has also stated that Haraldr Gormsson conquered Iulin along with the Swedish Styrbjörn Björnsson (Sturbiornus Biornonis filius) with the help of other warriors, among whom are named Bo, Ulff, Karlshefni, and Siualdus (Saxo Grammaticus, pp. 686–87). It is likely that Saxo based his account on a legend that also lies behind *Jómsvíkinga saga*, but there is hardly any textual resemblance between the two, beyond the names corresponding to those of two of the leading Jómsvíkings, Búi and Sigvaldi. In Sven Aggesen’s *Historia*, written probably in the early thirteenth century and consequently from about the same period as *Jómsvíkinga saga*, Pálnatóki appears as one of Haraldr’s counselors and, in the course of Haraldr’s feud with his son Sveinn, Pálnatóki kidnaps Sveinn and takes him to Jómsborg, and the Danes have to pay a ransom to free him (Sven Aggesen, pp. 61–63).

This tale is certainly reminiscent of Sigvaldi's kidnapping of Sveinn in *Jómsvíkinga saga* (chapter 26), but, as is the case with *Gesta Danorum*, this looks like a glimpse of a common legend rather than showing a relationship between the texts themselves.

It should be noted too that Þorkell hávi (Thorkell the Tall) is the only Jómsviking that seems to have been widely known outside of *Jómsvíkinga saga* and was clearly a historical figure, raiding extensively in England after 1010. The *Encomium Emmae* explains that he fought with King Ethelred against King Sveinn tjuguskegg and his son Knútr when they invaded England in 1013, but then became King Knútr's retainer once he had conquered England. Þorkell is mentioned in the anonymous early eleventh-century skaldic poem *Liðsmannaflokkr*, and his activities are detailed in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. He is a much shadowier figure in *Jómsvíkinga saga*, which may suggest that a legendary persona was grafted onto this historical figure in the course of tradition, perhaps to enhance the impression of the historical status of his brother Sigvaldi and the other Jómsvikings.

There are indications in Icelandic literature that the most prominent of the Jómsvikings, Pálnatóki, Búi, Sigvaldi, and Vagn, were well known, as they are mentioned in other sources without much context. In *Eyrbyggja saga*, Björn Breiðvíkingakappi is said to have stayed with Pálnatóki in Jónsborg, without further explanation, and Sigvaldi is also mentioned in passing (*Eyrbyggja saga*, pp. 80, 176). Sigvaldi also appears briefly in *Kristni saga* and *Egils saga* and participates in the battle of Svölðr in *Heimskringla*, where he lives up to his reputation for treachery by luring Óláfr Tryggvason into ambush (*Heimskringla* 1, p. 358). These references add little to our knowledge of Sigvaldi, but indicate that he was familiar enough to be mentioned without any introduction. Búi and Vagn, however, mainly appear in Icelandic sources in contexts relating the same events as *Jómsvíkinga saga*, that is, in *Fagrskinna*, *Heimskringla*, and the sagas of King Óláfr Tryggvason, as well as the skaldic poetry discussed below. *Jómsvíkinga saga* is thus the main source for these legendary Vikings.

The Jómsvikings as they appear in *Jómsvíkinga saga* can consequently be considered a literary creation, probably more fictional than not, and quite a significant one. The depiction of the Jómsvikings as a clearly defined group living together according to their law code is unique among the Icelandic sagas. The brotherhood can be compared with the medieval chivalric conception of the orders of knighthood, strange as it may

seem at first sight to apply chivalric ideology to a band of Norse Vikings (Tulinius, 2002, pp. 209–10). The word “chivalry” has multiple applications, embracing an order of knights, a particular social status, or simply a group of men riding horses (Keen, p. 2). The concept is too complex to be explored in detail here, but a few points are worth further scrutiny in the context of Jómsborg.

Chivalry was a substantial part of medieval European culture, and various medieval sources shed light on the function of knighthood. Chivalric orders could vary from country to country but shared many basic attributes. Maurice Keen examines chivalric ideas and the role of the knight as represented in medieval treatises on chivalry as well as romances. Much of what he describes is not reflected in *Jómsvíkinga saga*. Many orders emphasized Christianity and required daily attendance at mass; the initiation process often included religious practices (Keen, pp. 7–15, 190–95). The love of a woman, whether erotic or idealized, was entwined with chivalric ideology, and there were even some orders that included women. There is no echo of this in the laws of Jómsborg, where women are not allowed, and the men cannot leave the fortress for more than three nights in a row. Granted, some of the Jómsvíkings are married, but the saga shows no interest in love or romance between men and women.

Nevertheless, the establishment of Jómsborg and its law code does correspond to some extent to the chivalric orders. A law code was fundamental to every order. Even though the laws could vary between orders, their members must abide by these laws. Some of the laws of the Jómsvíkings are similar to those common in orders of knighthood, which usually specify that knights must be loyal to their leaders and comrades. This is stated specifically in the code of the Jómsvíkings: “Each man who came there to join the fellowship must promise faithfully that each of them must avenge the other like his messmate or his brother” (p. 111). Cowardice and treason were the ultimate crimes. An initiation process was generally necessary for those who wished to join an order of knights, as is the case when Sigvaldi arrives in Jómsborg, and he and his men are put through a test that results in only half of the group being accepted by Pálnatóki. Keen points out that the aim of a knightly order was usually to protect a certain area for a king or prince (Keen, pp. 190–98). The whole purpose of the establishment of Jómsborg, according to the saga, is to protect land for King Búrizláfr of Vindland.

The narrative function of the laws in *Jómsvíkinga saga* is to act as an index of the success and strength of the fellowship of Jómsvíkings. Once

disregard of the laws sets in, and Sigvaldi as leader is guilty of cowardice, the downfall of the Jómsvikings is assured. Thus, the fall of Jómsborg is strongly linked with the chivalric ideology underlying the laws. It is interesting that Vagn, who is contrasted in many respects with the unreliable Sigvaldi, is described in pointedly chivalric terms as “skilled in all courtliness” (*riddaraskapr*; p. 124) at the point where he is accepted into the fellowship. However, the saga shows no trace of influence from romances, and so the chivalric ideas in *Jómsvíkinga saga* must derive from European chivalric culture rather than from literary models (see Larrington).

Many scenes in *Jómsvíkinga saga* reveal the Jómsvikings to be a literary creation. The saga’s entertaining set pieces take place when the Jómsvikings take the stage. Whether swearing oaths, dead drunk, at Sveinn’s feast or performing great feats during the battle of Hjörungavágr, their remarks are sometimes witty, sometimes grotesque, and sometimes both, such as Búi’s reaction when his lip has been chopped off: “It will please the Danish woman less to kiss me,” he says, “in Borgundarhólmr, if we manage to get there again after this” (p. 148). Close to the end of the saga, this vein of grotesque wit culminates in the notorious and detailed execution scene (chapters 36–38). The Jómsvikings’ carefree attitude towards death emphasizes their subordination of the individual to the group: they do not care if they die, as long as they can uphold the reputation of the Jómsvikings. In fact, their attitude is perhaps only matched in hagiographical literature, which depicts the stoicism of the martyr who trusts in a higher purpose underlying his death.

History and Fiction

Many of the characters in *Jómsvíkinga saga* are historical figures, and, as outlined here, some of its events are mentioned in several other sources. It is quite apparent to the modern reader that the saga is largely a work of fiction rather than a historical account. Nevertheless, medieval ideas of history and fiction were different from modern perceptions, and it is worth asking whether the medieval audience could have perceived the saga as a historical source, and whether the author could have seen himself as a historian.

Some of the texts that include accounts of the characters in *Jómsvíkinga saga* are generally accepted as historical sources. They include, for example, the Norwegian synoptic histories *Historia Norvegiæ*, *Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagiensium* by Theodoricus, and *Ágrip af Nóregskonungas ogum*,

as well as the Icelandic compilations *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla*. We cannot be sure how well the medieval audience of *Jómsvíkinga saga* knew the accounts that are available to modern readers, nor do we know how widely known the information given in these sources may have been. They do, however, give some idea of the extent to which characters in the saga were known beyond it and include examples of contradictions with the narrative of *Jómsvíkinga saga* that may have been known to the audience. This leads us to question what the audience's assumptions about history and fiction may have been. A brief review of the development of fiction in medieval Icelandic literature may shed light on this.

It is important to realize that, although medieval Icelandic literature is distinct in many ways from mainstream European literature, it did not spring out of nothing, without influence from the literature and ideology of the wider world. The Church played a vital part in the origins of Icelandic literature, and Christianity introduced Icelanders to written culture, initially in Latin (see, e.g., Turville-Petre, pp. 70–87). Unfortunately, when Árni Magnússon began his energetic collecting of manuscripts in Iceland in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, he paid little attention to liturgical and other church-related manuscripts in Latin as his interest was mainly in Icelandic sources (Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, p. 23). This means that our knowledge of books in Latin in Iceland in the first centuries of writing is poor. It is clear, however, that the tendency to write religious texts in the vernacular starts early, and the oldest material preserved in Icelandic manuscripts is of this kind (Hreinn Benediktsson, pp. 13–14; Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson, pp. 249–50).

Iceland does not differ from Europe in this respect. Until the twelfth century, writing was largely reserved for liturgical, educational, or administrative purposes, texts that were supposed to represent the “truth,” and consequently fictional stories were confined to oral transmission (Nykrog, pp. 593–94). In the twelfth century, however, this distinction begins to dissolve. This is often referred to as a “renaissance” period owing to the influence of widely copied classical texts, and the number of commentaries on Latin texts increases, as well as translations of those in Greek and Arabic (d’Alverny, pp. 426–57; Copeland, 1991). The classical educational techniques of *grammatica* and *rhetorica* were extremely influential. In classical times, they mainly involved principles of oratory and aimed to improve the orator’s competence. In the Middle Ages, these principles were largely transferred to writing. In the words of Copeland and Sluiter: “Whether one was to approach texts from the perspective of a poet or an

exegete, whether the texts to be considered were secular or sacred, whether one was to compose a text or teach others how to compose, an education in the principles of grammar and rhetoric was the entryway into literary thought" (Copeland and Sluiter, p. 1). This is the world that medieval authors belong to and needs to be taken into account when medieval texts are examined.¹

Icelandic authors cannot have been untouched by these currents in mainland Europe, although information on what exactly learned men in Iceland read and had access to is limited, and no extensive study of rhetorical influences in medieval Iceland has been made. There are some records preserved of books owned by monasteries in the late Middle Ages: for example, several learned books are named in a register of books in Viðey in 1397 (Sverrir Tómasson, 1988, pp. 30–32; *Diplomatarium Islandicum* 4:110). It remains unknown when these books were acquired.

The renaissance of the twelfth century entails not only classical influences on learned literature but also the rise of fiction. Fabulous fiction intended for entertainment became a part of the written culture. Moreover, historians seem to have been at liberty to spice up their accounts with fiction. Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*, written in Latin in England in the twelfth century, is one such work. Although some doubts about his accuracy are expressed by medieval writers, Geoffrey was generally accepted as a historian (Otter, pp. 93–95; Morse, p. 89). In his prologue, Geoffrey emphasizes the truth of his story and refers to his sources (Geoffrey of Monmouth, p. 1). Such references became common in the writing of both fiction and history from the twelfth century onwards. Robert W. Hanning has pointed out that Geoffrey's *Historia* is a witness to a new, emergent way of writing history, and is representative of a transformation of literature brought about in the twelfth century in England and Normandy when the idea of history was reassessed (Hanning, pp. 121–72).

Geoffrey's *Historia* was widely disseminated and may have influenced another important author, Chrétien de Troyes. Chrétien is usually considered the first known author to write fiction in the vernacular, and the rise of romance as a literary genre is traced back to him (see for example Topsfield, pp. 12–23; Haug, pp. 91–92). Chrétien wrote five romances, two of them unfinished, in the years 1170–90. All his stories spring from Arthurian legends and became both immensely popular and influential. Geoffrey's *Historia* is the first extensive story focusing on King Arthur and his court, but, around 1155, the poet Wace composed the French *Roman*

de Brut, based on Geoffrey's *Historia*, and it seems likely that Chrétien knew one or both of these texts (Lacy, p. 43).

Chrétien's writing is independent of both older sources and contemporaneous literature, and his works are significant in European literary history (Topsfield, p. 12). His influence is important not least because he found a way of writing stories that are independent of the Church and of hagiography. Chrétien himself claims at the beginning of the romance *Erec et Enide* to have created *une mout bele conjointure*, a term apparently of his own devising that refers to the art of combining material from disparate sources into a unified whole; thus, the author asserts the value of his skill in arranging his material without claiming to have invented it (Chrétien de Troyes, p. 3; O'Connor, p. 110).

Chrétien's work assigns to the reader or audience the responsibility for interpreting the text. There may be truth involved in the work's intrinsic meaning, although the story itself may be fictitious. Stories may deliver truth, but do not necessarily do so; it is up to the audience to recognize this uncertainty. This raises the question of how fiction, history, truth, and falsehood were understood.

Various medieval definitions of these concepts, doubtless also inspired by classical ideology, are known. Aristotle distinguished between historians, who related events that had actually happened, and poets, who composed stories about things that *might* happen, and fiction was consequently more philosophical than history (Aristotle, 1451b). Aristotle was not well known in the early Middle Ages because his writings were not translated into Latin until the thirteenth century, and his *Poetics* only became influential from the sixteenth century (Ryding, p. 9; Green, pp. 1–2). Plato, on the other hand, was widely read in the Middle Ages, and his ideas on truth and falsehood fit well with the writings of the most influential church fathers, such as Augustine and Isidore of Seville. Plato argues that tales such as are used in the education of children are for the most part false, while containing an element of truth; the difficulty of distinguishing truth from falsehood means that the activities of poets and storytellers must be rigidly controlled (Plato, 377c–378b). A similar idea can be detected in Augustine's writings (Sverrir Tómasson, 1988, p. 190). The third defining attitude can be found in Ovid's *Amores*, where he emphasizes the role of the reader or audience. There are no limits to the poet's freedom in fiction: it is up to the audience to realize whether it is truth or falsehood (Ovidius Naso, p. 41). Like Plato, Ovid was popular and widely read from the eleventh century onwards.

Even though these ideas are not directly reflected in Icelandic writing, these theorists were so influential that their ideas must have been recognized by learned men. This brief review of the development of ideas of fiction and history in literature shows new ideas emerging in preserved texts, and it is safe to assume that educated Icelanders were aware of these issues. Education in Iceland derived mainly from Europe, from countries such as England, Germany, and France. It is difficult to trace the appearance of these ideas in medieval Icelandic literature, but what may be deduced from the sources is widespread influence from European Christian culture (Sverrir Tómasson, 1988, pp. 18–35). It is also clear that truth and falsehood are recurrent concepts in medieval Icelandic literature, not least in sagas that relate events that the author realizes might appear unrealistic.

There are no sources available that give accounts of the reception of individual texts. However, to a certain degree, a text itself can bear witness to how it was supposed to be understood. This is particularly evident in sagas that include a prologue or epilogue where the author or redactor refers to his sources or the truth of his text. The most famous example is found in the Prologue to *Heimskringla*, where sources are mentioned:

Á bók þessi lét ek rita fornar frásagnir um höfðingja þá, er ríki hafa haft á Norðrlöndum ok á danska tungu hafa mælt, svá sem ek hefi heyrt fróða menn segja, svá ok nokkurar kynslóðir þeira eptir því, sem mér hefir kennt verit, sumt þat, er finnsk í langfæðgatali, þar er konungar eða aðrir stórættaðir menn hafa rakit kyn sitt, en sumt er ritat eptir fornum kvæðum eða söguljóðum, er menn hafa haft til skemmtanar sér. En þótt vér vitim eigi sannendi á því, þá vitum vér dæmi til, at gamlir fræðimenn hafi slíkt fyrir satt haft. (*Heimskringla* 1, pp. 3–4)

[In this book I have had written old stories about those rulers who have held power in the Northern lands and have spoken the Scandinavian language, as I have heard them told by learned men, and some of their genealogies according to what I have been taught, some of which is found in the records of paternal descent in which kings and other men of high rank have traced their ancestry, and some is written according to old poems or narrative songs which people used to use for their entertainment. And although we do not know how true they are, we know of cases where learned men of old have taken such things to be true. (Finlay and Faulkes, p. 3)]

The Prologue goes on to mention Ari inn fróði (the Learned), “the first person in this country to write down history, both ancient and recent, in the Norse language” (Finlay and Faulkes, p. 4). The Prologue specifies some of the material Ari supposedly wrote about, but in the body of *Heimskringla* the author makes hardly any use of texts known to be by Ari, and he is not explicitly cited (Sverrir Tómasson, 1988, pp. 279–90). It may be supposed, therefore, that the reference to Ari in the prologue is mainly intended to enhance the credibility of *Heimskringla* as a historical source. This method is reminiscent of that of Geoffrey of Monmouth. Including a reference to a known and respected historian may have the purpose of making the audience believe that the work is authentic and should be taken seriously.

The narrative structure of a text can also give clues to whether it is intended as history or fiction. Both in antiquity and in the Middle Ages, the order of a narrative could give an idea as to the nature of a particular text. The historian was expected to make use of natural order (*ordo naturalis*) where the course of events was chronological. Authors of fiction, however, could use unnatural order (*ordo artificialis*) where the chronology was not a priority, and the narrative could begin *in medias res* (von Moos, p. 95; Green, pp. 96–102; Ármann Jakobsson, 2014, p. 77). Authors could also mix the two methods together, and that is in fact what can be found in *Jómsvíkinga saga*.

The saga begins as a historical account in chronological order, but, at the beginning of chapter 8, the author needs to go back in time and relate events preceding those that have already been covered. Here, the author gives precedence to the setting of the story rather than following natural chronology, but he acknowledges his awareness of the break in natural order: “Now begins the second part of the saga, what had happened before this point was reached, and it is not possible to say everything at the same time from a single mouth” (p. 92). This kind of explanation is known elsewhere: for example, in *Morkinskinna*, before the battle at Hlýrskógshéiðr begins, the narrator comments: “verðr hér frásögn at hvílask fyrst, því at eigi má allt senn segja” (here the story must be suspended because not everything can be told at once; *Morkinskinna* 1, p. 55; Andersson and Gade, p. 115). Later in the same text, on the brink of the meeting between the future co-rulers Magnús inn góði and his uncle Haraldr harðráði, the narrative of Magnús’s sole reign in Norway is interrupted in order to insert retrospectively the episode of Haraldr’s adventures in Byzantium. Again, the narrator steps forward to explain: “Nú hvílisk fyrst at segja frá Magnúsi

konungi, ok skal fyrst segja frá ferðum Haralds” (We will now turn from the story of King Magnús and tell of Haraldr’s travels; *Morkinskinna* 1, p. 82; Andersson and Gade, p. 130).

This kind of interruption to natural narrative order is not necessarily a sign that the author considered himself to be writing fiction (for an account of “simultaneity” in Icelandic and other medieval texts, see Clover, pp. 109–47). On the contrary, the fact that he calls attention to it indicates his awareness that this is out of the ordinary; in the case of *Morkinskinna*, the author clearly presents himself overall as a historian (Ármann Jakobsson, 2014, p. 108). Another kind of narrative interruption, also bringing the relationship between fiction and history into focus, is particularly common in legendary sagas (*fornaldarsögur*) and romances (*riðdarasögur*). The narrator addresses the audience to acknowledge that his story may sound unbelievable. Marianne Kalinke refers to this as *apologia* (Kalinke, 2005, p. 319). A much-quoted example of the formula of *apologia* is found at the end of the legendary *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*:

Nú þótt þessi saga þykki eigi samhljóða verða öðrum sögum, þeim er at ganga þessu máli, um manna nöfn ok atburði, hvat er hverr vann eða gerði með frægð eða vizku, fjölkynngi eða svikum eða hvar höfðingjarnir ríktu, þá er þat líkligast, at þeir, er skrifat hafa ok samsett þessi tíðendi, muni eitthvert hafa fyrir sér haft, annathvart forn fræði eða fróðra manna sögn. (*Göngu-Hrólfs saga*, p. 46)

[Now even if there are discrepancies between this story and others dealing with the same events, such as names or other details, and what individual people achieved by greatness or wisdom or witchcraft or treachery, it’s still most likely that those who wrote and composed this narrative must have had something to go on, either old poems or the records of learned men. (Hermann Pálsson and Edwards, 1980, p. 125)]

These *apologiae* have usually been viewed as “playful signals of a self-consciously fictional narrative” (O’Connor, p. 102), but O’Connor has proposed that they should more appropriately be taken at face value, revealing an attitude of hostility to the concept of fiction on the part of some, if not all, audiences and authors (O’Connor, pp. 103, 130; cf. Vésteinn Ólason, 1994, p. 117, and Tulinius, 2002, p. 173). Although modern readers have no trouble in assigning the legendary and chivalric sagas to the category of fiction, the boundaries between history and fiction were less clearly defined for a medieval audience. It is also possible

that people were able to distinguish elements of history and fiction within the same saga.

Modern perceptions of the historical accuracy of medieval texts are still colored by the judgments of scholars of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who valued the sagas primarily as potential sources of historical information and were dismissive of elements that did not conform to rigid standards of accuracy. All events that we would now categorize as supernatural were dismissed as unhistorical, but it should be kept in mind that, to the medieval mind, many such events could be accepted as literally factual; where the boundary or boundaries between truth and fiction were drawn is uncertain, as medieval definitions of the supernatural do not exist (Ármann Jakobsson, 2011, pp. 30–31). It is therefore necessary to put aside modern ideas on the fantastic or supernatural when analyzing medieval literature. In the words of Paul Bibire,

an unhappy association between realism and reality has remained current to the present . . . so that texts with “fantastic” elements are still often regarded as degenerate. So a saga which contains dragons or trolls is still usually considered less meritorious than one without, dependent entirely on a modern, arbitrary and anachronistic world-view which defines what shall occur in the “real world” and in its depiction, and what can and should not. (Bibire, p. 11)

Jómsvíkinga saga should be approached with this background in mind. In fact, although the saga strikes a modern reader as clearly fictitious, it includes hardly any supernatural or fantastic elements. Some of these, such as the intervention of Þorgerðr Hǫrðabrúðr in the battle of Hjǫrungavágr or the possibility of Búi turning into a dragon after his death and haunting the spot where his chests of gold were sunk, may have been accepted as literally possible by an audience closer in time to the pagan beliefs of the pre-Christian past. In fact, the story of Bishop Guðmundr’s encounter with the dragon at Hjǫrungavágr is evidence that Búi’s transformation was taken seriously (see above, p. 5). Our sense of the saga’s fictionality is based more on passages where it contradicts other sources, or includes events not found elsewhere, told in ways that do not conform to commonsense notions of probability but seem to serve what we would think of as symbolic or artistic purposes, such as the association of the death of Haraldr Gormsson with the traditional symbolism of *níð* or the elaboration of the execution scene to embody the ideology of extreme courage and fellowship that defines the Jómsvikings.

Another index of the degree to which a text is intended to be taken seriously as a historical source is the extent to which it refers to written sources. The Perg. 7 version of *Jómsvíkinga saga*, exceptionally, mentions the otherwise unknown *Konungabók* and *Konungasögur* (see p. 51–52). The 510 version includes a reference to Sæmundr inn fróði (the Learned), but as the Latin historical work attributed to this twelfth-century Icelandic priest is now lost it is impossible to verify the authenticity of the reference—and references to Sæmundr, probably spurious, are common in Icelandic texts whose authors want to give their works an air of authenticity. Similarly, in 291, the author repeatedly refers to sources of a kind, but they are all invisible and impossible to pin down. Several of these references are to oral tradition, whether the author actually knew such traditions or was simply using a conventional formulation:

It is told that it came about . . .
 It is now said that on one occasion . . .
 From then on it is said that . . .
 And it is the report of some men who are learned that . . .
 Now was made manifest what many said . . .
 It is said about . . .
 . . . and, so it is said by most learned men . . .
 . . . and many stories are told about him in other sagas.
 But people have said . . .

All these phrases point to oral sources, allowing the narrator to relieve himself of responsibility for the accuracy of his story. At the same time, the purpose of these references must be to strengthen the impression of the saga's historicity and assure the audience that the narrator is not inventing it.

Is it possible, then, to claim that *Jómsvíkinga saga* may have been written as history? Sagas that give an impression of trustworthiness are not necessarily true. The apparent authenticity even of a text such as *Heimskringla* must be to some extent a literary construct. As Hayden White has argued in detail, however accurately a text may reflect a factual situation, it always involves an element of interpretation on the part of the historian who writes the text and shares it; the facts cannot speak for themselves (White, pp. 122–23). White also points out that early historians, not influenced by modern assumptions about realism, saw historical writing as a literary art. Awareness of the distinction between fact and fancy did not preclude the play of imagination as an element in their

histories. From the point of view of a modern historian, as Gabrielle Spiegel concludes, “medieval historiography, by all critical odds, is inauthentic, unscientific, unreliable, ahistorical, irrational, borderline illiterate, and worse yet, unprofessional” (Spiegel, p. 100).

The author of *Jómsvíkinga saga* gives no clues as to whether or not he thought his audience would recognize its fictionality. The very last words of the saga do hint at the issue:

But people have said since that Búi turned into a dragon and settled down on his chests of gold; but I think the cause of this to be that a dragon has been seen at Hjørungavágr, and it may be that some evil spirit has settled down on the treasure and has been seen there since. But I cannot say which is more likely. It may also be that neither is true, for things may appear in many different ways. (p. 159)

Although these deliberations about truthfulness are directed specifically to the claim—attributed to oral report—that Búi turned into a dragon, the last sentence can perhaps be read as an invitation to the audience to evaluate the truthfulness or otherwise of the saga as a whole.

Even texts that were undoubtedly written as history may transgress modern boundaries between fact and fiction. The title of *Historia Norvegiae* may not be a reliable guide to its original purpose, as it could have been added to the original text any time up to the date of the only surviving manuscript from ca. 1500, but the author does claim to have based his work on reliable sources without adding anything of his own invention:

For I am neither eager for praise as a historian nor fearful of the sting of censure as a liar, since concerning the course of early times I have added nothing new or unknown but in all things followed the assertions of my seniors. (Kunin, pp. 1–2; see *Historia Norvegiae*, pp. 71–72)

The narrative begins by describing various places in Norway and surrounding countries, and includes references to maidens that conceive children by drinking water and whales that look like horses and have one eye. Details that modern readers dismiss as implausible coexist with other material that we may consider accurate.

The manuscript preservation of *Jómsvíkinga saga* in Perg. 7 and *Flateyjarbók* offers further indications as to its early reception, suggesting that the picture was mixed. The manuscript Perg. 7 shows a generic tendency overall, preserving mainly sagas that are now categorized as

legendary sagas. *Flateyjarbók*, on the other hand, has a historical emphasis. The brief prologue identifies the redactors and the material for which each was responsible; it is not explicit about the purpose of the compilation, but the chronological structure is clear, and the backbone of the contents is the lives of the kings Óláfr Tryggvason and Óláfr Haraldsson (however interwoven with other material; Kolbrún Haraldsdóttir, pp. 95–96; Rowe, 2005, p. 393). It can be deduced that Jón Þórðarson, the redactor of the first part of *Flateyjarbók*, considered *Jómsvíkinga saga* an important source for the historical account of King Óláfr Tryggvason.

This suggests that *Jómsvíkinga saga* was accepted as part of medieval Icelandic historiography, but it is not necessary to assume that everybody regarded it in the same way. Moreover, it is quite possible that the audience may have believed some parts of the saga but not all of it. As Ármann Jakobsson has remarked in his consideration of the blend of historical and fictional elements in *Bárðar saga Snafellsáss*, a saga considered to be on the periphery of the genre of sagas of Icelanders: “The problem is, of course, only a problem if it is assumed that narrative is either historical or fictional” (Ármann Jakobsson, 1998, p. 54). He shows that, despite its focus on trolls and *landvettir* (land-spirits), *Bárðar saga* has a number of characteristics typical of historical narrative, such as an abundance of place names, detailed descriptions of travel routes, genealogical and narrative detail derived from *Landnámabók*, and an objective narrative voice. The author’s aim must have been to make the saga credible as a historical narrative (Ármann Jakobsson, 1998, pp. 54–60).

To summarize, there are several reasons for *Jómsvíkinga saga*’s uncertain position between fiction and history. One is the European context. Although *Jómsvíkinga saga* shows no sign of influence from works by twelfth-century authors such as Geoffrey of Monmouth or Chrétien de Troyes, it is reasonable to suppose that the idea of stories written down outside the religious context reached Iceland and taught people that history and fiction could share a literary milieu and even cohabit within one text. *Jómsvíkinga saga* may be one of the earliest examples of the development of such vernacular literature in Iceland. The saga reveals a close connection between the concepts of history and fiction. The phrases quoted above testify to the author’s intention to present his work as the product of an existing oral tradition, which does not guarantee the historicity of his material but disavows any claim that he invented it, and the *conjointure* is the work of an author. The author is undoubtedly creative, shaping and exaggerating at will, but this does not mean that he did not also use reli-

able sources. Historical events and figures are a part of the saga, but it is not restricted to historical material. It is probable that in the thirteenth century the saga was considered a valid source for the history of the tenth century. Today, it has historical value as evidence for how thirteenth-century Icelanders looked back to their past.

Manuscript Preservation

Jómsvíkinga saga survives in four medieval manuscripts as well as a seventeenth-century Latin translation by Arngrímur lærði (the Learned) Jónsson that was probably made from a lost medieval manuscript. Around twenty post-medieval copies of the saga have been preserved.

AM 291 4to is the oldest of the preserved manuscripts, written around or before 1300 (Kålund, p. 838; Hreinn Benediktsson, pp. 14–15). According to Peter Foote, who studied the linguistic features of 291, it may be a copy of an exemplar written ca. 1220–30 (Foote, 1959, pp. 28–29). Foote based his conclusions on archaic features found in the manuscript: *umb* and *of* for ‘um’, the letter ‘þ’ found in back as well as initial position, the Latin abbreviations *sed*, *vel*, and *post* used for *heldr*, *eða*, and *eptir*, and the m-rune representing the word *maðr*. All these features are rare in manuscripts from 1300 and later. The manuscript is defective: two leaves are missing, and some pages are damaged. 291 contains only *Jómsvíkinga saga*.

The origins and provenance of this manuscript are unknown, but it was definitely written in Iceland. No copies of it have been preserved. The text has been edited three times, in 1828 as a part of the *Fornmanna sögur* series in Copenhagen, again in Copenhagen in 1882 by Carl af Petersens, and in 1969 in Iceland by Ólafur Halldórsson.² In the editions and in this translation, the lacunae in 291 are supplied from *Flateyjarbók*, which has the text closest to 291.

Holm. perg. 7 4to is a vellum manuscript, probably written in Iceland in the first decades of the fourteenth century (Þórdís Edda Jóhannesdóttir, 2016a, pp. 26–27). The text represents the same redaction of the saga as 291 but has been compressed; although considerably shorter, it also includes interpolations from a lost source. The manuscript preserves other texts: the legendary sagas *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar*, *Ásmundar saga kappabana*, and *Qrvar-Odds saga*, the romance *Konráðs saga keisarasonar*, and a fragment of *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*. It was originally a larger book, a part of which now survives as AM 580 4to, which includes (in

whole or in part) further romance texts, *Elis saga ok Rósamundu*, *Bærings saga*, *Flóvents saga*, and *Mágus saga jarls*; the rest is lost (Gödel, pp. 45–46). The text of Perg. 7 was first edited in Copenhagen in 1824, although the first seven chapters were omitted from the edition. It was edited again in Sweden by Gustaf Cederschiöld in 1874 and finally, in 1962, by Norman F. Blake.

Flateyjarbók (GKS 1005 fol.) is one of the most famous medieval Icelandic manuscripts and by far the largest preserved vellum manuscript in Iceland. It is stated in the prologue to the manuscript that it was written in 1387 by Magnús Þórhallsson and Jón Þórðarson for Jón Hákonarson (*Flateyjarbók* 1; Rowe, 2005, pp. 11–13). In *Flateyjarbók*, *Jómsvíkinga saga* is incorporated into *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* in two parts. The text represents the same redaction as 291 and Perg. 7 but is slightly shorter than 291, and the text has been altered somewhat to fit the context of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*.

The youngest vellum manuscript of *Jómsvíkinga saga* is AM 510 4to, written around the middle of the sixteenth century (Jón Helgason, pp. 161–68; Karl Ó. Ólafsson, pp. 34–83; Stefán Karlsson, 2008, pp. 12–13). It contains various other sagas, including the legendary saga *Bósa saga*, and *Finnboga saga ramma* and *Víglundar saga*, both classed as sagas of Icelanders but sharing elements of romance. The redaction differs from that of the older manuscripts. The first seven chapters are missing, but the rest of the text is expanded, including details not found elsewhere. For example, some characters are described more fully, and direct speech is used more than in the other redactions. The text has been edited once by Carl af Petersens in Sweden in 1879.

The saga has some textual relations with other sagas, specifically the kings' sagas *Heimskringla*, *Fagrskinna*, and *The Greatest saga of Óláfr Tryggvason*. The textual relationships, both among *Jómsvíkinga saga* manuscripts and those with other sagas, are quite complex, and the origins and development of the text have been extensively discussed. One prominent debate has been whether or not the first part of the saga (corresponding to the first seven chapters in this translation) was included in the original *Jómsvíkinga saga*. These chapters deal with the early (legendary) history of Denmark, leading up to the dealings of King Haraldr Gormsson of Denmark and Jarl Hákon Sigurðarson, ruler of Norway. The Jómsvíkings do not appear until the beginning of chapter 8, where Pálnatóki, founder of Jómsborg, is introduced. Because of the loose connection of the first seven chapters with the rest of the saga's content, some scholars

have concluded that they were not originally included in the saga of the Jómsvikings (Petersens, 1882, p. ic; Gjessing, p. i; Finnur Jónsson, pp. 660–62). Others have argued that the first part is a logical preamble to the second, giving necessary context to the invasion of Norway by the Jómsvikings (Storm, pp. 236–37; Indrebø, pp. 56–57; Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, p. 202; Mogk, pp. 264–65).

No consensus has been established on this matter, and the same can be said of the connections between the manuscripts of the saga. Various scholars have made attempts to trace the relationships between the preserved redactions by comparing them thoroughly, putting forward hypotheses on how the texts may have developed (Jakob Benediktsson; Storm; Hempel; Indrebø; Ólafur Halldórsson, 1969; Megaard, 2000). In these analyses, a few attempts at a *stemma codicum* have been made, proposing relationships not only among versions of the saga, but also between these versions and other texts that include material on the Jómsvikings. The most thorough study of the issue can be found in an article by John Megaard from 2000, “Studier i *Jómsvíkinga sagas* stemma.” Megaard bases some of his research on an older study by Heinrich Hempel from 1923. In his stemma, Megaard includes *Heimskringla*, *Fagrskinna*, *Gesta Danorum* by the Danish historian Saxo Grammaticus, and the skaldic poem *Jómsvíkingadrápa*, as well as all five redactions of *Jómsvíkinga saga*. He presupposes that all these texts derive from a hypothetical original text.

There is reason to question this method. First, the texts that are not redactions of *Jómsvíkinga saga* should not be included in a stemma of *Jómsvíkinga saga*. *Gesta Danorum* naturally describes the Danish kings that appear in *Jómsvíkinga saga* and it certainly gives an account of the battle of Hjörungavágr that may spring from an actual battle, just as *Jómsvíkinga saga* does, but the narrative is so different that there can hardly be any textual relationship (see above; Saxo Grammaticus, pp. 687–95). The other texts in Megaard’s stemma do indeed share some of the accounts found in *Jómsvíkinga saga*, notably those of the three battles (see pp. 80–81, 85–88, and 141–49), but these accounts vary, and the phrasing does not always suggest direct textual influence from the saga. An exception is *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* by Oddr Snorrason, which was written in Latin in the twelfth century but only survives in late thirteenth-century redactions of an Icelandic translation. As Ólafur Halldórsson pointed out, the wording of one version, in AM 310 4to from ca. 1250–75, is often very close to that of 291, suggesting that the translator must have had a text similar to that to hand (Ólafur Halldórsson, 1969, p. 12; Ólafur Halldórsson, 2000).

Otherwise, it cannot be ruled out that the sagas that have some content in common with *Jómsvíkinga saga* may have used sources other than the saga itself, perhaps historical accounts of some kind that are now lost. The author of *Jómsvíkinga saga* may also have made use of such a source. It should not be assumed, therefore, that all sagas relating some of the events found in *Jómsvíkinga saga* derive from one hypothetical, original saga. It is more reasonable to suggest that *Jómsvíkinga saga* and the other sagas mentioned here represent two different traditions that survived in saga writing. On the one hand we have large-scale sagas or compilations where accounts are gathered from various sources to serve the specific purpose of each work; on the other hand *Jómsvíkinga saga*, which is specifically dedicated to the Jómsvikings, perhaps also including material from the same or similar sources, but with a different motivation.

This means that the method of constructing a stemma to describe the relationship between the redactions of *Jómsvíkinga saga*, as well as other texts, is not feasible. A stemma can successfully show the affinity between manuscripts that preserve the same version of a particular text, but, in this case, as will be discussed more fully on pp. 49–61, the differences between the versions of *Jómsvíkinga saga* are too great to be revealed by a stemma.

Scholars have also debated which version of the saga represents the oldest text and, consequently, the text closest to the original. Their conclusions are often based on the assumption that the oldest text was the best. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, Norman Blake, and Ólafur Halldórsson reached the conclusion that 291, which is the oldest manuscript, represents the oldest version (Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, p. 203; Blake, p. xix; Ólafur Halldórsson, 1969, p. 21). Finnur Jónsson and Lee M. Hollander, on the other hand, maintained that Perg. 7 was the oldest and best version, Sofus Larsen argued that AM 510 4to could be the oldest version, despite the lateness of the manuscript, and G. A. Gjessing and Gustav Storm believed the Latin translation by Arngrímur to be a good representative of the oldest version (Finnur Jónsson, pp. 655–56; Hollander, 1917, p. 210; Larsen, pp. 67–68; Gjessing, p. xvii; Storm, pp. 244–45). John Megaard, in proposing the aforementioned stemma, also assumes that the Latin translation represents the oldest version.

The variety among these conclusions reflects above all how complicated the textual tradition is, and none of these scholars' conclusions is fully convincing. Some of their remarks are purely speculative, relying on literary taste rather than anything indicated by the manuscript preservation.

An examination of the evidence at hand, through linguistic studies and comparison between manuscripts, can lead us to some more accurate, although still tentative, conclusions.

There is rarely internal evidence allowing a precise dating of a manuscript, but scholars have arrived at estimates of its dating through thorough studies of paleography and orthography. As Stefán Karlsson has pointed out, this method only allows manuscripts to be dated within a period of half a century (Stefán Karlsson, 2002, p. 833). Peter Foote's linguistic study of the dating of 291 demonstrates that, even though the manuscript itself is dated to the last quarter of the thirteenth century, there are valid indications that the exemplar was older. These arguments are decidedly the best we have for dating the saga. Another strong argument is the textual connection between the text of 291 and AM 310 4to mentioned above, which suggests that the redactor of AM 310 4to may have had *Jómsvíkinga saga* at hand in the third quarter of the thirteenth century. John Megaard based his dating of the saga on the supposed date of composition of *Jómsvíkingadrápa*, which is attributed to Bjarni Kolbeinsson, who was bishop of Orkney in 1188–1223 (Megaard, 2000, pp. 169–70). However, it is equally possible that the *drápa* existed before the saga was written, and it may even have been one of the saga's sources (see further discussion on p. 45–46).

As it cannot be ruled out that other texts including accounts of the Jómsvikings may base their narratives on sources other than the saga itself, there are strong arguments for dating the exemplar of the oldest manuscript to the early thirteenth century, probably to around 1220. Combining all arguments, we can conclude that the saga existed in the first decades of the thirteenth century, but that characters and events had already made their mark on written tradition in the twelfth century, as *Jómsvíkingadrápa* suggests. And, as AM 291 4to is the oldest preserved manuscript, that saga version must also be the best representative of the thirteenth-century form of the saga. The examination of the versions below reveals a development of the text that supports this conclusion. Most importantly however, *Jómsvíkinga saga* is undoubtedly among the oldest preserved sagas in Icelandic.

Jómsvíkinga saga and Genre

Compared with many sagas from the thirteenth century, *Jómsvíkinga saga* is not widely read and has been neglected in scholarly discussion. This lack

of interest is most likely due to a combination of factors. In Iceland, one reason is probably that, as few Icelanders appear in it, and no prestigious Icelandic author wrote it (as far as we know), it had no part to play in the campaign for Iceland's independence that dominated the Icelandic cultural milieu in the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries. The spokesmen for independence looked to the sagas for inspiration and evidence of the greatness of the Icelandic commonwealth. *Jómsvíkinga saga* neither depicts Icelanders in a heroic light, nor did it have the majestic scope and construction of a work such as *Heimskringla* that attests to the great literary achievements of Icelandic authors of the thirteenth century.

The relative neglect of *Jómsvíkinga saga* is reflected in its editions. The first editions of the saga, like those of most other Icelandic sagas, were published in Denmark and Sweden in the nineteenth century (see Bibliography). The saga was not published in Iceland until Ólafur Halldórsson edited it in 1969, by which time most sagas of Icelanders had been edited twice or more in Iceland. Ólafur's edition sold out long ago and is hard to come by. Consequently, the saga has never been well known even in Iceland. Norman Blake's 1962 English edition of the shorter Perg. 7 version of the saga is also no longer in print.

Another important reason for the critical neglect of the saga is its failure to conform to the generic classification of Icelandic literature that began to develop in the course of the nineteenth century. The sagas are classified into a few well-known and established categories: hagiography (*helgisögur*), kings' sagas (*konungasögur*), sagas of Icelanders or family sagas (*Íslendingasögur*), contemporary sagas (*samtíðarsögur*), legendary sagas (*fornaldarsögur*), and romances (*riddarasögur*). The names of these categories are modern, although indications of generic awareness can be found in some medieval manuscripts: for instance, the fourteenth-century *Möðruvallabók*, which contains only eleven sagas, all belonging to the category of sagas of Icelanders. Some of these categories cover quite a wide range of literature, can accommodate a few subcategories, and are quite diverse, as will be further discussed below.

Much has been said on the merits and demerits of categorizing literature generically, not least in the twentieth century where the debate coincided with other literary movements. In *Modern Genre Theory*, David Duff relates the history of ideas of genre from the nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries, highlighting influential twentieth-century literary scholars such as Shlovsky, Bakhtin, and Todorov (Duff, pp. 1–24). Their theories, of course, were developed in relation to modern literature, but, owing to the

prominence of genre theory in literary studies at the time, they inevitably influenced those who studied medieval literature. It is important, however, to draw a line between modern literature and medieval texts, where in many ways researchers have a different point of departure. The study of genre in medieval literature needs to be attentive to medieval sources and the ideas that can be deduced from them.

Hans Robert Jauß is probably the most influential scholar who has discussed genre in the context of medieval literature (Jauß, pp. 327–58). He approached the corpus in light of the fragmentary medieval sources available, but made use of ideas from modern literary research for his analysis. He emphasized that literary categories from antiquity, renaissance, or modern times could not be applied directly to medieval literature, and that genre in medieval texts should be studied in the context of the period they spring from. Literary genre is not an isolated phenomenon but, on the contrary, informs the literary network that prevails at any given time. The role of literary genre is to define how each work operates within a larger whole. Literary categories are not closed entities, and their combinations show the extent of the literary network of a period.

The literature Jauß discusses is not Icelandic, but it is useful to keep his analysis in mind in studying the categories of medieval Icelandic literature. Although the traditional categories are often used without a second thought, there has been some discussion of genre among scholars of medieval Icelandic literature. Most studies of the categories of medieval Icelandic literature are instigated by scholars criticizing the faults and limitations of the tradition that has been predominant over the last two centuries. In these cases, we often find attempts at new definitions of categories, ideas of new subcategories, or some adaptation of the current classification.

To name an example, Torfi H. Tulinius has suggested a new approach to this problem and proposed that a classification of the literature could be made based on five basic characteristics (Tulinius, 2000, p. 252). His approach is close to Jauß's, as he sees Icelandic literature as a historical and cultural development that found its own path in Iceland in parallel to that of mainland Europe. The five characteristics he puts forward as defining elements are genealogy, geography, religion, the supernatural, and social status. Tulinius's approach reveals resemblances between sagas that, according to the traditional system, do not belong to the same category, which may produce a fresh interpretation of those texts. The purpose of such proposals must be to put individual sagas into new contexts,

encouraging us to see them in a new light. However, the traditional system is quite deep-rooted and hard to overturn.

Another interesting approach is found in Elizabeth Ashman Rowe's article on "generic hybrids" (Rowe, 1993, pp. 539–54). She suggests that saga authors combined characteristics of sagas of Icelanders and legendary sagas to produce hybrid sagas. As an example, she analyzes *Áns saga bog-sveigis* as a "Norwegian family saga," a legendary saga written under the influence of sagas of Icelanders. Similarly, sagas such as *Grettis saga* and *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, both of which are set in Iceland but may be influenced by legendary sagas, could be called "Icelandic mythic-heroic sagas."

Rowe's approach casts an interesting light on many saga texts, but adopting the term "generic hybridity" causes many difficulties. One obvious obstacle, which becomes even clearer in subsequent discussion, is the number of sagas that could potentially be labeled hybrids. When does a saga become a hybrid? How many elements does a saga need to include from each different category to qualify for hybridity? Medieval authors probably did not conceive of themselves as combining elements from two or more different categories, but were simply under the influence of the literary fashion of their time. This debate shows primarily how versatile and diverse the sagas are, as will become more apparent in the following discussion of *Jómsvíkinga saga*.

Discussion of the genre of *Jómsvíkinga saga* generally leads to the conclusion that it bears some resemblance to kings' sagas and to legendary sagas, and to some extent to sagas of Icelanders as well (Ólafur Halldórsson, 1969, p. 51; Tulinius, 2002, pp. 191–216). Sirpa Aalto reaches a conclusion close to Rowe's generic ideas, that *Jómsvíkinga saga* is a hybrid combining elements from at least two different categories (Aalto, pp. 41–53). Alison Finlay observes that the most obvious generic link is between *Jómsvíkinga saga* and the kings' sagas, noting, however, that the saga is probably older than the most influential kings' saga text, *Heimskringla*, which helps to explain the presence of an element of fantasy that tended to be pruned by the rationalistic Snorri (Finlay, 2014, pp. 63–79). She, too, underlines the hybridity of *Jómsvíkinga saga*, which includes characteristics in common with most of the main categories of medieval Icelandic literature: heroic poems of the *Poetic Edda*, hagiography, legendary sagas, and sagas of Icelanders. She concludes that *Jómsvíkinga saga* "defies genre classification" (Finlay, 2014, p. 77).

It may seem, then, that conventional generic categories are of limited use in the analysis of *Jómsvíkinga saga*. Its author (or authors) did not

compose it with a certain generic system in mind. On the other hand, it may be assumed that the person responsible for each particular version of the saga wrote it under the influence of the culture that surrounded him. But it is important to pursue the question of how to approach *Jómsvíkinga saga* in terms of genre classification, because such categories are, despite their defects, ingrained in modern readers' understanding of saga literature. They define how certain texts can be approached and the context in which they can be understood.

Jómsvíkinga saga and Other Sagas

Single sagas commonly mentioned in comparison with *Jómsvíkinga saga* are *Yngvars saga víðförla*, *Færeyinga saga*, *Orkneyinga saga*, and *Egils saga*. All these sagas are believed to have been written in the period 1200–50, like *Jómsvíkinga saga*, and each of them is helpful in determining its generic connections.

It is perhaps not surprising that *Jómsvíkinga saga* is sometimes situated with *Færeyinga saga* and *Orkneyinga saga*. *Orkneyinga saga* is usually classified with the kings' sagas, but *Færeyinga saga* with either the sagas of Icelanders or the kings' sagas (cf. Sverrir Tómasson, 1992, pp. 389–90, and Vésteinn Ólason, 1993, pp. 82–85). Peter Foote argued that these three sagas shared certain characteristics in narrative structure, and Melissa Berman wrote an influential article placing them in a new subcategory of “political sagas” (Foote, 1993, p. 222; Berman, pp. 113–29). Furthermore, Judith Jesch has pointed out that these sagas share a certain attitude towards history, shedding light on the development from history to fiction in medieval Icelandic literature, and she emphasizes that these sagas may all have been first written in a similar period, close to around 1200 (Jesch, 1993, pp. 210–18).

Sirpa Aalto also compares these three sagas from the point of view of their attitudes towards royal power and shows that *Jómsvíkinga saga* and *Orkneyinga saga* represent chieftains challenging kings, whereas *Færeyinga saga* shows kingship in a more positive light (Aalto, pp. 41–43). But Aalto also points out the distinctiveness of each saga. *Jómsvíkinga saga* can be described as political in a sense, but this is overshadowed by its entertainment value: it has a humor and vivacity largely absent from the other two sagas.

Others besides Aalto and Berman have remarked on the saga's negative attitude towards kingship. To quote Dean A. Miller: “This epiclike

saga can best be analyzed as a Norse-Icelandic exercise in antimonarchism” (Miller, p. 38). The importance of this negative attitude is debatable, however. Certainly, no ruler in any of the kings’ sagas dies such a humiliating death as Haraldr Gormsson, although Jarl Hákon’s execution in the pigsty in *Heimskringla* comes close (*Heimskringla* 1, pp. 293–98; cf. Sverrir Tómasson, 2004, p. 189). The saga’s treatment of Haraldr Gormsson is of course quite negative throughout, and Jarl Hákon does not seem to be much admired by the author either. However, it is an overstatement to say that the saga shows a negative attitude towards kingship in general; indeed, some elements in the presentation of King Sveinn underline the social importance of the king, as outlined above (Tulinius, 2002, pp. 200–207; see pp. 9–11). The saga’s hostility is directed against individual rulers and not the power structure in general.

A negative attitude towards kingship should therefore not be a decisive factor in classifying the saga. Beyond this, Berman’s category of “political saga” is too narrow to fit *Jómsvíkinga saga*, which is unique in the corpus of medieval Icelandic literature because of its focus on the Jómsvikings as a group. The term “political saga” does not do justice to this, although perhaps it adequately describes the first part of the saga, the part that focuses on dealings between King Haraldr and Jarl Hákon before the founding of Jómsborg. Berman’s classification also implies that other sagas are somehow less political than the three sagas in this group, which is far from the truth.

The three sagas also have in common that they were interwoven in the course of textual transmission with the sagas of Óláfr Tryggvason and Óláfr helgi (the Saint) in *Flateyjarbók*. *Jómsvíkinga saga*, however, has the advantage that it is also preserved independently as a whole. The same cannot be said of *Fereyinga saga* or *Orkneyinga saga*, both of which exist, apart from *Flateyjarbók*, only in fragments (Ólafur Halldórsson, 2006, pp. vii–viii; Finnogi Guðmundsson, pp. cvii–cxxvi). Neither *Fereyinga saga* nor *Orkneyinga saga* is inserted into *Flateyjarbók* in a single place; both are dispersed throughout the two Olaf sagas. The texts of these sagas that can be read in editions are therefore reconstructed from *Flateyjarbók* by editors who assume that the redactors had at hand the independent versions that were later lost. That conclusion is actually probably correct, as there are several indications in *Flateyjarbók* that the redactors did have many sagas at hand, including a text close to the surviving version of *Jómsvíkinga saga* (291). There is also external evidence that *Fereyinga saga* and *Orkneyinga saga* existed independently (Nordal, p. 36; Finnur Jónsson, p. 646; Jesch,

2010, pp. 153–68). Nevertheless, neither of these two sagas is accessible as a complete, independent saga that can be interpreted as one redactor's work, in a medieval context, independent of decisions made by both the redactors of *Flateyjarbók* and modern editors. This makes them hard to compare to *Jómsvíkinga saga*, which is preserved in three different, independent versions outside *Flateyjarbók*, making it possible to interpret the saga as a whole. Modern editors are partly responsible for our views of *Orkneyinga saga* and *Fereyinga saga*, and this must be a consideration in tackling the genre problem, bearing in mind Jauß's arguments about the importance of context.

The grouping of these three sagas, *Jómsvíkinga saga*, *Orkneyinga saga*, and *Fereyinga saga* as a category should therefore be abandoned, not only because of the difference in their medieval preservation but also, not least, because the term “political saga” does not adequately describe their relationship.

From a different angle, Sirpa Aalto has suggested a comparison of *Jómsvíkinga saga* with *Yngvars saga víðförla* (the Explorer), a narrative about the journey of the Swedish warrior Yngvarr Eymundsson through Russia to Serkland. *Yngvars saga* has been classified with the legendary sagas, and, although its oldest manuscript is from the fifteenth century, it is believed to have been written around 1200. In an epilogue to the saga, the redactor claims to have used as a source a book by the twelfth-century monk from Þingeyrar, Oddr Snorrason, who, he says, composed it “on the authority of well-informed people whom he himself mentions in his letter to Jón Loptsson and Gizurr Hallsson” (Hermann Pálsson and Edwards, 1989, p. 68). As the manuscripts are much younger, some remain skeptical about this reference. Dietrich Hofmann argued in favor of the reliability of the epilogue, suggesting that the saga could have been translated from a Latin original, perhaps a life of Yngvarr, by Oddr (Hofmann, pp. 191–97). Hofmann's conclusion is based on archaic orthographical features in the text, among other things.

Sverrir Tómasson is of the opposite opinion and finds Hofmann's argument lacking. He detects influence from legendary sagas such as *Orvar-Odds saga* in *Yngvars saga* and regards it as a fourteenth-century work (Sverrir Tómasson, 2001, p. 31; cf. Phelpstead, pp. 337–39). Most recently, Haki Antonsson has reviewed the debate, supporting Hofmann's attribution of *Yngvars saga* to Oddr (Haki Antonsson, 2012). It is, of course, hard to confirm whether the epilogue is genuine, but we cannot rule out altogether that the saga may be as old as the epilogue suggests, or at least that it

may derive from a text that Oddr did indeed write. There is no other saga from the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries that includes a reference to Oddr, even a spurious one intended to add authority to the text, and the rarity of this example may increase the probability that the epilogue is genuine. The reference to a letter from Oddr to Jón Loptsson adds corroborative detail. Nonetheless, whatever its origins, it would be problematic to think of the saga as an early thirteenth-century text rather than as a representative of the fourteenth century because of the fluidity of medieval texts over time, *Jómsvíkinga saga* being a prime example (see further pp. 49–59). We may conclude that *Yngvars saga* probably existed as early as 1200, but that the manuscripts may well represent a different redaction.

There is only one important feature that calls for a comparison between *Yngvars saga* and *Jómsvíkinga saga*. As has already been mentioned, the portrayal of the Jómsvikings as a group or alliance is unparalleled in medieval Icelandic literature, but it is somewhat reminiscent of *Yngvars saga*, as Aalto points out (Aalto, pp. 46–50). When Yngvarr sets out on his journey east, he is accompanied by a large group of men, four of whom are mentioned by name, although only Yngvarr is characterized. On the other hand, Yngvarr's journey is adventurous, involving encounters with supernatural beings such as dragons, giants, and demons. There are no counterparts to these in *Jómsvíkinga saga*, and the Viking raids of the Jómsvikings are never described. The account of the love between Yngvarr and Queen Silkisif of Garðaríki is also quite different from the hard-headed marriages of convenience related in *Jómsvíkinga saga*.

Comparison of the content of *Yngvars saga* and that of *Jómsvíkinga saga* does not reveal much in common between the two. What is very comparable to *Jómsvíkinga saga*, however, is the uneasy classification of *Yngvars saga* as a legendary saga, although it does not entirely fit in that category. Kirsten Wolf locates it on the margin between kings' sagas and legendary sagas, with some influence from learned literature (Wolf, p. 740). What is perhaps most problematic about the classification of *Yngvars saga* is that, although it includes fabulous elements typical of the legendary sagas, it is set not in the distant past like most such sagas but in the eleventh century—not very much later than the period of the main action of *Jómsvíkinga saga*, in the late tenth century.

The fullest comparison between *Jómsvíkinga saga* and another saga is made in Bjarni Einarsson's 1975 book *Litterære forudsætninger for Egils saga*, which argues that the author of *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* must have known *Jómsvíkinga saga*. Bjarni's arguments mainly involve

comparison of content, certain narrative patterns in *Jómsvíkinga saga* being repeated in more detail in *Egils saga*. *Egils saga* and *Jómsvíkinga saga* are of course quite different in many ways, not least artistically. But, on closer examination, *Jómsvíkinga saga* has more in common with *Egils saga* than with *Orkneyinga saga*, *Færeyinga saga*, or *Yngvars saga víðförla*. Among general similarities is Egill's relationship with some of the kings that appear in the saga. Haraldr hárfagri, Eiríkr blóðøx, and Hákon Aðalsteinsfóstri are all Egill's opponents, but King Aðalsteinn (Athelstan) in England is an exception to the rule. Egill's negative attitude towards Hákon Aðalsteinsfóstri is especially interesting because most other sources agree in treating this king positively. Like *Jómsvíkinga saga*, *Egils saga* does not hesitate to paint negative pictures of individual kings, unlike other sources on the same kings. But there are smaller details that also connect the two sagas (Bjarni Einarsson, 1975, pp. 105–48).

The most important clue that Bjarni Einarsson found for his argument that the author of *Egils saga* knew *Jómsvíkinga saga* is the appearance in both texts of the skald Einarr skálaglamr. A skaldic stanza attributed to him is preserved in both sagas (verse 4, chapter 31 in *Jómsvíkinga saga*) in identical form, except for variation in the third line (Clunies Ross, pp. 75–80). The author of *Egils saga* seems to assume that the audience would recognize the context of the stanza, because Sigvaldi's name appears in it although he is not mentioned in the prose of *Egils saga*. The stanza also implies that Einarr lost favor with Jarl Hákon, which is explained in *Jómsvíkinga saga* but not in *Egils saga*.

It cannot be proved that the stanza in *Egils saga* could not derive from another source, and, if this were the only thing the two sagas had in common, that would be more likely. But Bjarni's arguments are more extensive, and, although they still do not prove the connection, his claim that *Jómsvíkinga saga* is a "source of inspiration" (*inspirationskilde*) for *Egils saga* is convincing (Bjarni Einarsson, 1975, p. 114). He mentions patterns such as "relationship between brothers," "Vagn and Egill," and "a slanderous rumor from illegitimate sons." Some of the patterns are more convincing than others. By "relationship between brothers," Bjarni means Skalla-Grímr and Þórólfr, and Egill and the younger Þórólfr in *Egils saga* on the one hand, and Haraldr and Knútr in *Jómsvíkinga saga* on the other hand. The similarity lies in their relationship as brothers rather than individuals, as in each case the older brother is heir to the farm or throne, is handsome and popular when growing up but dies young. Each younger brother is less popular and has a difficult relationship with the older

brother. The antipathy between brothers, however, is not as strong in *Egils saga* as in *Jómsvíkinga saga*, where Haraldr simply kills Knútr.³

The similarity between the sagas is clearer in the comparison between Egill and Vagn. The descriptions of them in childhood are strikingly similar. Vagn's childhood is like a miniature version of Egill's early years. Vagn is only a few years old when he is said to be a "more difficult person in his temperament than all the other men who had grown up there. All his behavior and habits were such that it hardly seemed possible to control him," (pp. 112–13), and only his uncle Búi can manage him. When Vagn is nine he has killed three men and when he is twelve "it had come to the point where people thought they could hardly tolerate his bullying and aggression. He also grew up to be so cruel that not a creature would he spare" (p. 120). The hero of *Egils saga* is only three years old when "he was as big and strong as a boy of six or seven. He became talkative at an early age and had a gift for words, but tended to be difficult to deal with in his games with other children" (*Egils saga*, p. 80; Scudder, p. 68). Famously, Egill composes his first verses at three years old and in his seventh year kills a man for the first time. Both Egill and Vagn achieve heroic stature in battles and live to old age.

Bjarni Einarsson's "slandrous rumor from illegitimate sons" refers to the infamous sons of Hildiríðr in *Egils saga* and to Fjǫlnir, half-brother of Áki and Pálnir, in *Jómsvíkinga saga*. The illegitimate Fjǫlnir receives less of the inheritance than his brothers. He joins King Haraldr's court and starts to spread the rumor that Áki might be more popular than the king, and King Haraldr has Áki killed (chapter 8). Áki is in the same position as Þórólfr Kveld-Úlfsson in *Egils saga* when the sons of Hildiríðr convince King Haraldr hárfagri that Þórólfr is a threat to his throne, and Þórólfr is killed. As a result, Áki's brother Pálnir and Skalla-Grímr face the same problem, the duty of revenge against the king.

In all the instances of similar patterns between the sagas, the narrative is more complex and detailed in *Egils saga* than in *Jómsvíkinga saga*, which supports the claim that *Jómsvíkinga saga* may have served as an inspiration. Bjarni Einarsson's comparison shows that, in terms of content, *Jómsvíkinga saga* has much more in common with *Egils saga* than with the sagas discussed earlier. Does that mean that *Jómsvíkinga saga* is somehow closer to the sagas of Icelanders than to other categories, or is *Egils saga* abnormal as a saga of Icelanders? The answer to this question is probably: both. It is interesting to note that both *Jómsvíkinga saga* and *Egils saga* have a strong relation to the kings' sagas and may be considered to occupy

the periphery of that genre. *Jómsvíkinga saga* has been categorized among the kings' sagas, and *Egils saga* shares many characteristics with kings' sagas. A large part of it takes place abroad, including the early chapters set mainly in Norway; kings and conflict at the court are prominent, both in this early section and in Egill's own dealings with kings.

The comparison of these two sagas does not show direct influence in phrasing or wording, but it shows that they share many of the same concerns and interests; they probably spring from the same cultural environment and were both most likely written in the first part of the thirteenth century. The most important difference is that *Egils saga* is much more detailed, artistic, and complex. Although *Jómsvíkinga saga* shows interest in ideas of kingship and court, these subjects are focal points in *Egils saga* (see Tulinius, 2002, pp. 238–50).

The Generic Problem of Early Sagas

The conclusion to this review of *Jómsvíkinga saga* and the sagas that scholars have compared it with must be that, in many ways, *Jómsvíkinga saga* stands alone. *Jómsvíkinga saga* is rarely considered alongside other sagas. It is interesting to note that, although the saga is generally linked to the kings' sagas, no attempt to compare it to a specific kings' saga has been made.

As a matter of fact, the category of kings' saga is not easy to define, and the sagas that belong to it are quite diverse. A kings' saga can be a synopsis such as *Ágrip af Nóregskonunga sögum*, a biography of a single king such as *Sverris saga*, or a large compilation such as *Heimskringla* or *Morkinskinna*. Ármann Jakobsson has pointed out that the oldest prose works in Iceland, apart from hagiography, are kings' sagas (Ármann Jakobsson, 2005, pp. 388–89). This is his “loose” definition:

Kings' sagas are historical and biographical works concerning Norwegian and Danish kings of what, at their time of writing, was the relatively recent past (c.850–1280). Most kings' sagas were composed in 1180–1280. A unifying feature of this saga category, which separates it from the sagas of Icelanders, if not from the legendary sagas which are for the most part concerned with a more ancient past, is the figure of the king. Kingship ideology is thus very relevant to all attempts to deal with the kings' sagas in generic terms. (Ármann Jakobsson, 2005, p. 388)

More recently, he has reviewed this definition of kings' sagas and added that an important characteristic of the genre is the king's relationship with

his subjects, and particularly with his Icelandic followers, many of whom were skalds, making a natural link between kings' sagas and those sagas of Icelanders that feature a skald as a main hero (Ármann Jakobsson, 2012, pp. 3–19). He adds that kings' sagas are often episodic, relating sequences of stories that involve particular kings rather than a chronological course of events.

Some of the attributes of kings' sagas certainly exist in *Jómsvíkinga saga*. The relationship between king and subject is apparent throughout, but particularly between Sveinn and his subjects. The narrative focuses on specific events and does not dwell on what happens in between, which also fits with Ármann's definition of kings' sagas. However, as Ármann points out, the figure of the king and the ideology of kingship are central features of kings' sagas, whereas it is hard to overlook the primacy of the Jómsvikings themselves in *Jómsvíkinga saga*. The title that foregrounds them is already found in some medieval manuscripts: in Perg. 7 (27v) the rubrication says: “her hefr upp iomfuikinga faugu,” and in *Flateyjarbók* it is called “*Jómsvíkinga þátr.*” and, even though kings are important in the saga, the Jómsvikings as a group are the protagonists. This makes the saga unique.

This discussion does not really resolve the issue of how to classify *Jómsvíkinga saga*. One possible resolution would be to abandon the genre classification of medieval Icelandic literature altogether. Several comments have been made here on the limitations of the current methods of classifying sagas. But the categories of medieval Icelandic literature are too well established for this to be realistic, although suggested modifications can prove fruitful in shedding new light on sagas. Categorizing literature makes it more accessible for readers, and the categories make it easier to examine individual sagas in the context of others.

We must be aware, however, of the role of scholars and editors in shaping the categories of medieval literature. Scholars have recently turned their attention to the shaping of the classification of legendary sagas (*fornaldarsögur*) by editors. The category officially came into existence in 1829–30 when C. C. Rafn edited *Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda eptir gömlum handritum*, choosing sagas he considered to belong to that group. His decision was not criticized or reviewed significantly in subsequent editions, and, even though his choice is by no means arbitrary, it shows the power of early editions in defining the corpus (Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir et al., pp. 275–96).

Lars Lönnroth's judgment from 1975 is still applicable: “it would be useless to prevent people from using terms like *Íslendingasaga* or *fornaldarsaga*, since it is difficult to change old habits; but at least we should

not let the terms mislead our thoughts, or we may all end up as hopeless nominalists” (Lönnroth, p. 426; cf. Harris, pp. 437–41; Andersson, pp. 427–35). It should be emphasized that the genre categories of medieval Icelandic literature are not fixed entities but wide open, and there is nothing that prevents a saga from belonging to more than one category. This needs to be acknowledged in order to avoid the neglect of sagas that do not fit neatly within the defined categories. Many of the sagas that have been compared here with *Jómsvíkinga saga* share this fate, although there is variation in the degree to which they have been treated as sagas that do not entirely belong anywhere.

Jómsvíkinga saga does not belong to any particular category but should be placed at the intersection of kings’ sagas, legendary sagas, and sagas of Icelanders. In its content it can be connected with kings’ sagas, legendary sagas, and some sagas of Icelanders, but stylistically it resembles the sagas of Icelanders more than other categories. The saga’s historical context is also more in line with the sagas of Icelanders and the kings’ sagas than with the legendary sagas, which are usually set long before Iceland was settled. This assertion can be supported with a few examples from the saga to add to those already mentioned above.

Many of the characters in *Jómsvíkinga saga* are known from other sources, specifically the kings’ sagas and the sagas of Icelanders that are set partly in Norway. *Jómsvíkinga saga* is often in accord with other sagas in its depiction of these characters. King Haraldr Gormsson is an exception: the account of his death, pierced by an arrow that transfixes his body from his anus to his mouth, is not reflected in any kings’ saga and has more in common with the grotesque and spirited narration found in legendary sagas. This example from *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* shows a taste for the crudely grotesque reminiscent of the killing of Haraldr, as well as several incidents in the battle of Hjörungavágr:

Hrólfr slæmði sverðinu á hönd Röndólfs, ok tók af í úlfliðnum ok allar tær af öðrum fæti. Röndólfr reiddi upp stöngina með annarri hendi ok laust til Hrólfs af öllu afli. Kylfan kom í jörðina ok sökk til miðs, en Hrólfr sakaði ekki. Hjó Hrólfr þá af Röndólfi aðra höndina, svá at hún fell niðr. Sneri hann þá undan. Hann veifaði stúfunum ok öskraði sem gríðungr. Í því högg Hrólfr undan honum báða þjóhnappana, svá at þeir loddu við í knésbótum. Dró hann þá slóðina eftir sér ok hljóp beljandi upp í fylking Eireks konungs, svá at allt hrökk undan. Drap hann með því margan mann. (*Göngu-Hrólfs saga*, p. 245)

[Hrólfr swung his sword at Rǫndólfr's arm, and it cut it off at the wrist and all the toes off one foot. Rǫndólfr raised up the club with the other hand and struck at Hrólfr with all his might. The club hit the ground and sank into it up to the middle, but did not hurt Hrólfr. Then Hrólfr cut off Rǫndólfr's other arm so that it fell down. Then he turned away. He waved the stumps and bellowed like a bull. At that moment Hrólfr slices both his buttocks away from him so that they hung by a shred behind his knees. Then he dragged this bundle behind him and ran bellowing into King Eiríkr's ranks so that everything gave way before him. Meanwhile he killed many a man.]

In this passage and in the account of Haraldr's death at the hands of Pálnatóki, the baroque violence is used to highlight the ideology of *níð*, a blow from the rear marking the victim as a coward.

One of the elements shared by *Jómsvíkinga saga* and the sagas of Icelanders is the way that skaldic stanzas are included in the saga. As discussed further below, the stanzas are used for decoration and entertainment rather than as sources for the narrative, as is usual in the kings' sagas. *Jómsvíkinga saga* also shares with the sagas of Icelanders stylistic features such as dialogue that favors conversation rather than monologue, and a relish for the sharp, memorable retort (Þórdís Edda Jóhannesdóttir, 2016a, pp. 119–29).

In some ways, the medieval preservation of *Jómsvíkinga saga* mirrors modern readers' uncertainty about its genre. In 291 it is preserved alone and without context, reflecting its unique position among medieval Icelandic texts. In *Flateyjarbók* it is preserved within the larger saga of a king, Óláfr Tryggvason, emphasizing its link with the kings' sagas, but in AM 510 4to and Perg. 7 the saga is preserved predominantly among legendary sagas. A number of manuscripts do show generic awareness to the extent that they group together sagas that fall within the category of *fornaldarsögur* or legendary saga defined by C. C. Rafn, who coined the term. There are few indications, however, that legendary sagas were written down in the thirteenth century. There are no legendary saga manuscripts dated to the thirteenth century, and no research has revealed that younger manuscripts were based on thirteenth-century exemplars. Thus, *Jómsvíkinga saga* in its oldest surviving version in 291 is simply too old to belong to a written legendary saga tradition.

Jómsvíkinga saga must first have been written before legendary sagas were written down, although they may have been known orally,

in whole or in part. If *Yngvars saga víðförla* is as old as its epilogue suggests, it is another example of an early thirteenth-century saga that shares features with the legendary sagas but is also at odds with the group, as it is set in a more recent time than is customary for legendary sagas. In his study of *Yngvars saga víðförla*, Helgi Skúli Kjartansson argues that, like *Jómsvíkinga saga*, it was written before clear generic distinctions appeared in medieval Icelandic literature and suggests that the motivation for writing them down may simply have been the desire to record noteworthy historical events from 150–200 years earlier (Helgi Skúli Kjartansson, 2002). To this it should be added that both these sagas show that the authors felt free to exaggerate and adapt their material as they pleased.

Although the dating of sagas is never completely certain, it seems that the early date of *Jómsvíkinga saga* is a key to the generic problem. Looking at the period 1150–1250 in a larger context, it is interesting to note scholarly debate on the genre of sagas that can certainly be dated to that period. *Ágrip af Noregskonunga sögum* is a peculiar text, classified with the kings' sagas but unlike any others. Ari's *Íslendingabók* is another text that cannot be compared with any other, and the same goes for *Snorra Edda* and the *Poetic Edda*. These are all unique literary texts and dated to before 1250.⁴ *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* by the twelfth-century monk Oddr Snorrason is a kings' saga but also uses many of the tropes of hagiography (Sverrir Tómasson, 1992, pp. 454–57; Ólafur Halldórsson, 2006, p. lxxxii). The compilation *Morkinskinna*, also a kings' saga, is believed to have been written around 1220, but its preservation and context led some to believe that it was a collection of stories rather than a unified work (Ármann Jakobsson, 2014, pp. 35–69). Ármann Jakobsson has recently refuted these ideas and argued for *Morkinskinna* as the creation of an author (Ármann Jakobsson, 2001, pp. 29–40; 2012, pp. 14–16; 2014, pp. 67–135).

The apparent generic uncertainty of all these texts may be a function of their early date. Scholars attempting to pinpoint the genre of individual sagas are often working with criteria grounded in later texts. To name an example, expectations of the characteristics of the kings' sagas are influenced by the most famous and widely copied example, *Heimskringla*, written decades later than a text such as Oddr Snorrason's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, which goes back to the late twelfth century.

To conclude, all the sagas mentioned here suggest a developing tradition of literary genre whose lines became clearer as time passed and the number of written books and sagas increased. The special status of

Jómsvíkinga saga in the medieval Icelandic literary corpus need not be surprising when it is seen in the context of the literary milieu in Iceland before ca. 1250. The fact of the matter is that genre is hard to pin down in the first 150 years of saga writing in Iceland, but, with the approach of the year 1300, the lines become sharper, and the basis for classification emerges. This is the background to the relationship of *Jómsvíkinga saga* with the three categories it shares features with, kings' sagas, sagas of Icelanders, and legendary sagas.

Poetry

References to the Jómsvikings and to some of the events that take place in *Jómsvíkinga saga* can be found in a few skaldic poems. The most detailed references are, of course, in the two poems devoted to this material, *Jómsvíkingadrápa* and *Búadrápa*, but poetry composed for Jarl Hákon Sigurðarson or his son Eiríkr also includes stanzas connected to the saga. *Vellekla* is one such poem, attributed to Einarr skálaglamm, who actually appears in *Jómsvíkinga saga* as one of Hákon's poets (edited in *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas* 1, pp. 280–329). This poem includes stanzas about the battle at *Danavirki* where Jarl Hákon fights alongside Haraldr Gormsson against Emperor Ótta (sts. 25–28; *Jómsvíkinga saga*, chapters 6–7). The poem is not detailed and neither contradicts nor contributes to the course of events as they are related in *Jómsvíkinga saga*. *Vellekla* is a problematic source, as, like most skaldic poems cited in the kings' sagas, it is not preserved anywhere in its entirety but is put together by editors assembling stanzas from different sources, including twelve from *Skáldskaparmál* where they are not identified as belonging to a poem called *Vellekla*. Two of these twelve (sts. 33–34) concern the events of Hjörungavágr, one of them naming Búi and Sigvaldi, but whether these stanzas are rightly attributed to *Vellekla* is particularly uncertain. The poem is given the title *Vellekla* in *Heimskringla*, where a large part of the poem is preserved, though not as an entity (see further Lindow, pp. 102–3).

A poem called *Hákonardrápa* is attributed to Tindr Hallkelsson who was born in Iceland in the middle of the tenth century and is listed among Jarl Hákon's skalds in the catalogue of poets called *Skáldatal*, preserved in manuscripts of *Snorra Edda*. Nine whole stanzas and two half-stanzas of *Hákonardrápa* are preserved, eight of them only in the AM 510 4to version of *Jómsvíkinga saga*, in which it is actually stated that Tindr composed this poem about the Jómsvikings, rather than Jarl Hákon:

“í flokki þeim, er hann orti um Jómsvíkinga” (*Jómsvíkinga saga* (efter *Cod. Am. 510, 4to*), p. 82; *Poetry from the Kings’ Sagas* 1, p. 336). The poem offers an important comparison to *Jómsvíkinga saga* because it seems to focus mainly on the battle of Hjörungavágr, although the poem never explicitly states where the battle it refers to takes place. Judith Jesch has characterized the poet’s point of view:

We seem in summary to have a poet who may have been present at the battle, but who had to be informed of Danish activities prior to the battle, and who composed a poem of conventional praise of Hákon directed at an audience of his followers, most likely fairly soon after the event. The focus is entirely on the Norwegian camp, from which the poem seems to derive. (Jesch, 2014, p. 88)

Hákon’s son, Eiríkr, fights alongside his father in the battle of Hjörungavágr in *Jómsvíkinga saga*. The battle appears briefly in an *Eiríksdrápa* attributed to Þórðr Kolbeinsson, who was born in Iceland in the tenth century (Carroll, p. 487). Most of the surviving seventeen stanzas of this poem are preserved in *Fagrskinna*, and only five refer to the battle between the Jómsvikings and Jarl Hákon, whereas the rest of the poem deals with other events of Eiríkr’s life (Jesch, 2014, pp. 89–90). The reference to the battle is not very detailed: the Jómsvikings are not mentioned other than as “Danir,” with Sigvaldi as their leader. No specific places are named, nor is any other person on the Danish side.

These poems are important sources for the legend of the Jómsvikings and the battle of Hjörungavágr, showing that knowledge of these events was widespread, but their lack of detail fails to make clear how developed the legend of Jómsborg and the Jómsvikings may have been. *Jómsvíkingadrápa*, of course, has a unique position among the skaldic poetry referring to the battle of Hjörungavágr. The *drápa* is quite long, forty-five stanzas including a *stefjabálkr* (central group of stanzas marked off on either side by a refrain), and makes use of the *dróttkvætt* variant *stælt* (intercalated), allowing the poet to intersperse the battle narrative with the theme of romantic love. It describes not only the battle but also the events leading up to it: the feast at which Sveinn maneuvers the Jómsvikings into drinking excessively and vowing to go to Norway to fight Hákon (Lethbridge, 2012, pp. 954–97). The poem has a narrative structure, relating events in chronological order and naming many individuals that take part in the battle. The names are consistent with those given in *Jómsvíkinga saga*. John Lindow has argued that the narrative emphasis of

Jómsvíkingadrápa shows the potentialities of skaldic poetry for storytelling, as well as showing off the skald's competence in prosody (Lindow, pp. 109–14). Bjarne Fidjestøl argued that it could be seen as an abbreviated saga and considered it likely that the poet had access to written sources when he composed it (Fidjestøl, p. 66).

Jómsvíkingadrápa is commonly attributed to Bjarni Kolbeinsson, who was a bishop in the Orkney Islands from 1188 until his death in 1223 (af Petersens, 1879, p. 122; Ólafur Halldórsson, 1969, p. 27; Lethbridge, 2012, p. 954). The bulk of the poem is preserved in the Codex Regius manuscript of *Snorra Edda* (GKS 2367 4to), which presents forty stanzas in succession, a rare instance of a skaldic poem preserved in one piece without a prose context in a medieval manuscript. The manuscript is believed to derive from the first part of the thirteenth century, but there is no mention in it of its author. Bjarni Kolbeinsson is first named as the author in the fourteenth-century *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* and in *Jómsvíkinga saga* in AM 510 4to (*Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* 1, pp. 194–200; *Jómsvíkinga saga* (efter Cod. Am. 510, 4to), p. 71). He is not mentioned in any other version of the saga. There is no way of knowing whether the *drápa* was based on a written *Jómsvíkinga saga* or pre-dates it. John Megaard believed that the saga had already been written when the *drápa* was composed and uses Bjarni Kolbeinsson's lifetime as a criterion for dating the saga (Megaard, 2000, pp. 169–70), but there is nothing to suggest that the *drápa* is based on sources, written or oral, other than the saga. Although there are details that are consistent with the saga, particularly personal names, this does not prove that the author of *Jómsvíkingadrápa* had the saga to hand, nor does the fact that the *drápa* is not cited in all versions of *Jómsvíkinga saga* rule out the possibility that the author of the saga used the *drápa* as a source.

The same can be said about the last poem to be discussed here, *Búadrápa*. Þorkell Gíslason, to whom it is attributed, is unknown, and, consequently, its date of composition is not known either (Lethbridge and Whaley, p. 941). The *drápa* is preserved in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, which also mentions the poet's name (*Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* 1, p. 180). *Búadrápa* is considerably shorter than *Jómsvíkingadrápa*, its twelve stanzas all concerned with the battle between the Jómsvikings and Jarl Hákon, and it is impossible to say whether it was originally longer; it opens with a half-stanza, which suggests that the beginning is missing and possibly the end as well (Jesch, 2014, pp. 90–91). It refers to Búi, Vagn, and Jarl Eiríkr and mentions the hailstorm during the battle, but not Þorgerðr Hǫrðabrúðr or Hákon's sacrifice to her.

All the poems discussed here should be considered as manifestations of the tradition surrounding the legend of the Jómsvikings and the battle of Hjørungavágr that were circulating in the Middle Ages, but not as part of the tradition of *Jómsvíkinga saga*. The preserved poetry gives a glimpse into a larger world than the saga alone can. Although it does not add much information to the events narrated, it shows that there was interest in the material of the last third of *Jómsvíkinga saga*, independent of the saga itself. This suggests that the battle between the Jómsvikings and Jarl Hákon was remembered as an important event, however it may have occurred, before *Jómsvíkinga saga* was written (Morawiec, p. 139). The older poems, *Vellekla*, *Hákonardrápa*, and *Eiríksdrápa*, may have been composed soon after the events they relate, although they are of little use as sources for what exactly happened in the battle or why, because of their generality and lack of detailed narrative and historical context.

From the relationship of *Jómsvíkinga saga* with the wider poetic context, we turn to discussion of the few stanzas included in the 291 version of the saga. There are seven of these distributed unevenly through the saga, two placed in chapter 7, three in chapter 31, and one each in chapters 34 and 35.

Skaldic verses in saga narratives are conventionally divided into two categories (see, for example, Bjarni Einarsson, 1974, pp. 118–25, and O'Donoghue, p. 12). Verses of the first group are presented as sources or evidence for the prose narrative, whereas those of the second group are integrated into the narrative. Bjarni Einarsson pointed out a clear distinction between kings' sagas, in which verses of the first group are more common and those of the second group rare, and sagas of Icelanders, in which the situation is reversed. In her discussion of verses in the sagas of Icelanders, Guðrún Ingólfssdóttir divides these verses into four categories depending on their function in the narrative. They can sharpen character descriptions and deliver messages, they can bring the narrative closer to the audience and support arguments, they can create suspense and slow down the narrative, or they can be purely decorative (Guðrún Ingólfssdóttir, pp. 226–40; see especially p. 227).

In light of the discussion of genre above, it is interesting to note that five of the stanzas cited in 291 conform to the type more common in sagas of Icelanders. The other two verses, the first to be cited in the saga, are presented ostensibly as sources or evidence but are also entertaining in their own right. They are found at the end of chapter 7 when Haraldr Gormsson is contemplating going to Iceland to take revenge for the *níð* (slander) the

Icelanders are said to have composed about him, which is cited in stanza 1, a scurrilous fantasy in which the king is represented as a stallion attempting (unsuccessfully) to mount his steward Birgir, who is said to take the form of a mare. The same stanza is cited in *Heimskringla*, where the fantasy is extended by the claim that the stanza is one of many, instituted by law as an act of hostility against Haraldr by the whole nation: “Þat var í lögum haft á Íslandi, at yrkja skyldi um Danakonung níðvísu fyrir nef hvert, er á var landinu” (It was made law in Iceland that an insulting verse should be composed about the king of the Danes for every nose that was in the country; *Heimskringla* 1, p. 270; Finlay and Faulkes, p. 167; see Almqvist, pp. 119–85). In both texts, however, only the one stanza is cited. A second stanza follows in 291, the only text to preserve it. It is the only stanza attributed to the Icelandic chieftain Eyjólfur Valgerðarson, recording his expectation of warfare if “the son of Gormr” comes to the “ancient mistland of Gandvík” (here apparently a term for Iceland, but this requires emendation of *af* (from) to *at* (to) in line 5; the phrase could also refer to Norway, where Haraldr has previously been raiding). The story of the prospective attack on Iceland is something of a digression from the saga, perhaps intended to bring it home more strongly to a thirteenth-century Icelandic audience. The *níð* verse in particular is a pointed indication of Haraldr Gormsson’s unpopularity in Iceland.

The five remaining stanzas are all integrated into the narrative of the battle of Hjörungavágr, giving color and immediacy to the account rather than serving as evidence in the style of verses in the kings’ sagas. Stanzas 3, 4, and 7 are all composed by Einarr skálaglamm; the first two concern his own relationship with the jarl, and the third records Jarl Eiríkr’s words at the death of Einarr’s fellow poet Þorleifr skúma. The saga’s fifth stanza, in the simpler *fornyrðislag* meter, is attributed to Þorleifr skúma himself and is framed as a reply to a question from Jarl Eiríkr about the mighty club with which Þorleifr goes on to attack Vagn Ákason in the battle. The sixth stanza in the saga, and the only one attributed to one of the Jómsvikings, is spoken by Vagn Ákason, accusing Sigvaldi of cowardice as he flees from the battle. It is interesting that it is presented as an answer to Sigvaldi’s call to Vagn and Búi to join his retreat, although the content of the stanza takes the form of a third-person report of Sigvaldi’s cowardice, contrasted with Búi’s uncompromising jump overboard.

It must be significant that six out of the seven skaldic stanzas in *Jómsvíkinga saga* are composed by Icelanders who otherwise do not play a large role in the saga; those cited in the course of the narrative of the

battle stress the poets' relationship with the jarls rather than adding detail of significant events. The role of these verses seems to be to emphasize the profile of the Icelandic skalds and make the saga more relevant to the audience by highlighting the participation of their countrymen.

Versions

As has already been outlined, each of the four medieval manuscripts of *Jómsvíkinga saga* preserves a different version of the saga, and the Latin translation counts as a fifth version. Only three of these versions, however, shed any light on the development of the text and its reception: those in 291, Perg. 7, and 510. All these versions present the saga as an independent entity, sharing essentially the same structure (except that 510 does not include the first seven chapters). This is also true of the post-medieval Latin translation, but, as Jakob Benediktsson pointed out, it is quite impossible to recognize which alterations may have been made to the saga by the translator (Jakob Benediktsson, p. 121).⁵ In *Flateyjarbók*, *Jómsvíkinga saga* has become a part of a larger context, and, even though it might be possible to extract the saga from *Flateyjarbók* and treat it independently, this would not accurately recreate the version of the saga used by the redactors of *Flateyjarbók*.

The three versions that will be scrutinized further here all show differences in style and subject matter, although the main story line is not significantly different. Comparison of these versions shows different tendencies in the development of the text. No attempt is made here to envisage how the changes may have come about or how many intermediate manuscripts may have been lost, but the texts that fortunately have been preserved are analyzed on their own merits.

The most obvious difference between the two oldest versions, 291 and Perg. 7, is that of length, and there are strong indications that the text of Perg. 7 has been shortened rather than that of 291 being expanded, as the following examples demonstrate (page references in passages from 291 are to Ólafur Halldórsson, 1969; those in passages from 291 in English to the translation in this volume. Examples of Perg. 7 are from Blake, 1962, but his parallel-text translation has been modified here to highlight the similarities with 291 and to reflect the compressed style of this version):

291 og lét síðan sveininn vatni ausa og nafn gefa og kallaði Knút.
En það var fyrir þá sök er fingurgullið hafði knýtt verið í enni

sveininum þá er hann fannst, og tók konungur þar nafn af, það er hann gaf sveininum. (62)

[and then he had the boy sprinkled with water and given a name, calling him Knútr (knot). And that was because the gold ring had been knotted to the boy's forehead when he was found, and the king took from that the name that he gave the boy. (68)]

Perg. 7 ok lét svein ausa vatni ok kalla Knút af því at gull var knýtt um enni hans. (1–2)

[and had the boy sprinkled with water and called Knútr, because a gold ring was knotted round his forehead.]

291 En þar skaltu sofa í vetrarnátt hina fyrstu og þrjár nætur í samt, og mundu glöggst ef þig dreymir nokkvað og send síðan menn á minn fund, að þeir segi mér drauma þína ef nokkorir eru, og mun eg þá að kveða fyrir þeim, hvort þú skalt fá þetta ráð eða eigi. (64)

[And you must sleep there on the first winter nights and three nights altogether, and you must remember clearly afterwards whether you dreamed something, and then send men to see me to tell me your dreams, if there are any, and then I will declare to them whether you shall make this match or not. (69)]

Perg. 7 En þar skaltu sofa í vetrarnótt hina fyrstu ok þrjár nætr í samt. Ok mun þú glöggst ef þik dreymir nokkut ok lát segja mér. Mun ek þá segja sendimönnum hvárt þú skalt vitja þessa ráðahags eða eigi. (2)

[You must sleep there on the first winter nights and three nights altogether. And remember clearly whether you dream something, and have me told. I will then tell the messengers whether you shall come to fetch me as your bride or not.]

291 Og er hún hafði heyrt draumana, þá mælti hún: “Nú skulu þér hér vera svo lengi sem þér vilið sjálfir. En þér megið svo segja konungi yðrum, að eg mun ganga með honum.” (65)

[And when she had heard the dreams, she said: “Now you shall stay here for as long as you yourselves wish. And you can tell your king that I will go to him.” (69–70)]

Perg. 7 En er hon hefir heyrt drauma, þá mælti hon at þeir segði konungi at hon mun ganga með honum. (3)

[When she has heard the dreams, she told the men they might inform the king that she would marry him.]

291 Tóki faðir þeirra hefir þá verið gamall að aldri er þetta var. Og eitt hvert haust um veturnáttaskeið, þá tók hann sótt og andaðist úr sóttinni. Eigi liðu og langar stundir áður Þórvör tók sótt og andaðist, kona Tóka. (101)

[Their father Tóki had then become old when this happened. And one autumn at the beginning of winter he took sick and died of the sickness. And not much time passed before Þórvör took sick and died, Tóki's wife. (93)]

Perg. 7 Tóki var þá gamall ok tók hann sótt ok andaðisk; litlu síðarr Þórvör, kona hans. (8)

[Tóki was old then and he fell ill and died; a little later, his wife Þórvör.]

The wording in some of these examples is so similar as to show a textual relationship between the two versions, for instance “veturnótt hina fyrstu og þrjár nætur í samt” in the second passage, which is identical in both texts. In all instances, the text of Perg. 7 is more concise but shows no great alteration in meaning. In the introduction to his edition of this version, Blake observes that, “Nouns and pronouns which the scribe thought unnecessary were done away with . . . one can see that the scribe had gone over the text carefully rearranging and rephrasing where he thought necessary” (Blake, p. xxi). The examples above are representative of the difference between 291 and Perg. 7 overall, and other alterations support the conclusion that Perg. 7 was shortened. The account found in chapters 4–7 of 291 has been almost entirely cut out. These chapters relate how King Haraldr and Jarl Hákon deceive and get rid of Gull-Haraldr, Haraldr gráfeldr, and Gunnhildr konungamóðir. In Perg. 7, this is alluded to only briefly:

During the winter King Haraldr Gormsson and Earl Hákon planned treachery against Haraldr, king of Norway, and his mother Gunnhildr. And in the spring he succumbed to their treachery at Limfjord, for he was slain there by Gull-Haraldr as is told in the Konungabók. But then Gull-Haraldr was strung up on the gallows at Earl Hákon's command. Following this Earl Hákon assumed sole control over Norway, but he had to pay tribute to the king of Denmark. (8)

It seems obvious that the redactor knew a more thorough version of this account but, for some reason, chose to refer to a different source, *Konungabók* ("Book of Kings"). That source is unknown, but could be either *Heimskringla* or *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*. It may also be some other historical source on kings, now lost. It is actually possible to find indications in Perg. 7 that the redactor had *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* to hand, as they share similar phrasing that is not found in other versions of *Jómsvíkinga saga*.⁶ The material that Perg. 7 refers to as appearing in the unknown *Konungabók* is not included in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, however, so the reference suggests that the redactor had other sources to hand as well.

There is reason to ask whether the modifications in Perg. 7 have any purpose other than simply to shorten the saga and save on expensive parchment. How can we explain the comparatively close correspondence between the two versions over the first few chapters and then again from the eighth chapter onwards? Could there be any logical, perhaps editorial, reason for this? One possible explanation is that the redactor did not find the material in the omitted chapters relevant in a saga dedicated to the Jómsvíkings, but, in this case, why did he include the first three chapters before deciding to cut out the rest?

This example demonstrates neatly that the relationship between the preserved versions of *Jómsvíkinga saga* cannot be explained with a stemma, and that analysis of the text is a more fruitful tool for capturing the differences between them. Both versions, 291 and Perg. 7, begin by relating the story of King Gormr who adopts a child found abandoned in the forest. This introduces Gormr's grandson, also named Gormr, who is King Haraldr's father. This part of the narrative therefore functions as an introduction, detailing the ancestors of Haraldr Gormsson who becomes a key figure once he is introduced. It is at this point that Perg. 7 and 291 part company for a while, however, so that in fact Perg. 7 devotes more space to Haraldr's father Gormr than to Haraldr himself. In 291 it is more obvious that Haraldr will play an important part in the saga.

Possibly the redactor of Perg. 7 believed this part of the story to be so well known that there was no need to relate these events, but it seems more likely that he was simply avoiding the narrative. If this part is compared with 291 it becomes obvious that the detailed version of the deception of Haraldr gráfeldr by Haraldr and Hákon presents them in a more negative light. Ólafur Halldórsson believed that this variation could be explained by the differing attitude of the redactors towards kings: that the

mischievous attitude found in 291 had been softened in Perg. 7 (Ólafur Halldórsson, 1969, p. 21). This observation should be considered further. The narrative in 291 portrays, not two noble rulers, but rather two men who will do what it takes to gain power. This means killing three competitors: Gull-Haraldr who is a threat to the throne of Denmark, Haraldr gráfeldr who is the king of Norway, and his mother Gunnhildr, who shared power with her sons. Another important event that is not described in Perg. 7 is the battle at *Danavirki*, which resulted in the baptism of Haraldr and Hákon and, consequently, the Christianization of Denmark. Hákon returns to paganism as soon as he is out of Haraldr's sight, however, and their friendship is finished. In 291 this part of the saga concludes with Haraldr's plan to attack Iceland and avenge the *níð* that the Icelanders had composed about the king. This is not mentioned at all in Perg. 7.

Thus, all the parts that are missing in Perg. 7 delineate Haraldr Gormsson and Jarl Hákon in more detail, and the attitude they convey is quite negative. They are both deceitful, Hákon even more than Haraldr, and in their dealings Haraldr is presented as lacking in wisdom. Perg. 7 does not convey the same impression, because it lacks this section of the narrative. This suggests that the redactor of Perg. 7 belonged to a milieu that held royal authority in higher regard than did the redactor of 291. This inference is further supported when the death of Haraldr Gormsson is analyzed.

The scene in 291 is probably one of the most memorable incidents of the saga. In his introduction Ólafur Halldórsson points out that the author generally does not describe or judge people directly, noting specifically that no abusive or negative words are used of Haraldr (Ólafur Halldórsson, 1969, p. 54). The story of his death, however, conveys a strong connotation of insult and takes the form of a graphic image that will dominate the audience's overall view of Haraldr beyond any other detail of his story. The scene is portrayed quite visually, placing Haraldr conveniently on all fours by the fire while Pálnatóki waits in hiding in the forest:

But the king, on the other hand, toasts himself by the fire and is warming his lower chest, and his clothes have been cast off under him and he is on his elbows and knees and is bending down low as he toasts himself at the fire. He also toasts his shoulders, and then the king's backside is sticking up high as he does that.

Pálnatóki clearly heard them talking, and he clearly recognizes there the speech of his father's brother, Fjölfnir.

And now he lays an arrow on the string and shoots at the king, and, so it is said by most learned men, the arrow flies straight into the king's arse and right through him and came out into his mouth, and the king at once falls lifeless to the ground, as was to be expected. But his companions see what has happened and it seems to them all to be the most extraordinary event. (104–5)

His men's reaction is noteworthy: Pálnatóki's uncle Fjǫlnir immediately decides that nobody can be allowed to learn how Haraldr's death came about, and that each and every one of them must claim that the king had been shot in the battle earlier that day. Otherwise it would bring shame upon his men if people were to find out that they had stood by and allowed this atrocity to happen. This reaction and the story they decide to tell about the king's death confirm how shameful and undignified the incident is.

In Perg. 7 the incident is described more briefly:

The king undressed and warmed himself by the fire. Pálna-Tóki saw the fire in the forest, and made a detour towards it, and recognising the men, he put an arrow in the bow and shot it through King Haraldr, who straightway fell dead. Pálna-Tóki turned back immediately to his men, and King Haraldr's companions thronged round him discussing among themselves what they should do. (Blake, p. 14)

The reference to an arrow being shot through the king avoids detailing the very specific course, "straight into the king's arse and right through him and . . . out into his mouth," described in 291 (although without contradicting it, if anyone knew the alternative version).⁷ However, it is stated that the king had undressed by the fire. The text of 291 is much more explicit about the symbolic implications of a wound received from behind, clearly intending to represent the king's death in as humiliating a way as possible.

Later on, both saga versions refer back to the killing, maintaining this difference in the way Haraldr's death has been narrated. At this point, Sveinn, now king, holds a funeral feast for his father and invites Pálnatóki. The feast is delayed for three years because Pálnatóki is unable to attend (or, it is inferred, is reluctant to face reprisals for his deed). During the feast, Fjǫlnir asks for the arrow to be passed around to see if anyone will admit to recognizing it. In AM 291 Pálnatóki does acknowledge the arrow as his own. The king asks where he has last seen the arrow, and Pálnatóki, not trying to cover up his deed, replies triumphantly that he last saw it

when he shot it into Sveinn's father's arse. The account of the humiliating killing of the king is repeated, emphasizing the act still further. In Perg. 7 the same thing happens, but, consistently with the earlier account of the killing, Pálnatóki merely states that he last saw the arrow when he shot it through the king, without further insinuation.

The king's posture is important in one version but not worth mentioning in the other. It is not hard to imagine the reason for this difference. In the one version the killing is humiliating and comic; the reticence of the other version is almost polite in comparison, supporting Ólafur Halldórsson's judgment that the hostile attitude towards kings was softened in Perg. 7. The treatment of this incident shows without a doubt that, at some point, somebody decided to smooth it to remove the undertones of the king's death. This also removed the comic potential of the scene. It is hard to imagine the scene as described in Perg. 7 evoking laughter; in fact, lacking the comic exaggeration of 291, this version of Haraldr's death could come across as cruel, casting Pálnatóki in a morally dubious light for perpetrating a killing at night, which in various texts is said to amount to murder (*náttvíg eru mordvíg*; *Egils saga*, p. 181).⁸

It is hard to believe that the manner of Pálnatóki's killing of King Haraldr in 291 has no subtext. In his study of medieval punishment Robert Mills gives examples of iconography in which sinners or sodomites are turned on a spit by a devil, in some cases skewered from the anus to the mouth (Mills, pp. 86–91). Mills refers to a number of frescoes and manuscript illuminations; the oldest of his examples dates from the first half of the thirteenth century. In all the instances he describes, the method is used for punishing sodomites and lustful sinners. Mills remarks that sodomy in general can encompass a variety of “unnatural” sexual habits, more or less every sexual activity that goes beyond the “missionary position.” In Italian inferno iconography, however, sodomy seems to be restricted to same-sex intercourse. Mills argues that, in general, medieval penal imagery shows that the punishment should fit the crime, specific torments linked to a specific crime. The skewered spit was therefore an appropriate punishment for same-sex (male) intercourse.

It is stretching the argument too far to claim that Haraldr is being depicted literally as a sodomite, although it is interesting to note that the arrow that kills him is reminiscent of the skewers that the devil has in his hands in many of the images that Mills refers to (Mills, pp. 86–88). But this is typical of the metaphorical application of the Old Norse terms *níð* and *ergi*. These terms can be translated as “libel/slander” and “cowardice,”

but carry with them a large repertoire of associations and metaphorical accusations, essentially equating cowardice with a lack of masculinity that could be expressed through accusations of behavior or attitudes perceived as female or, to a lesser extent, bestial (see, for example, Meulengracht Sørensen, 1980, 1983; Ström, 1974; Ármann Jakobsson, 2008, pp. 55–63; Bandlien, pp. 82–115). A common application of these terms is that a man has taken on the role of a female animal in sex, portrayed graphically, for instance, in the saga's stanza 1. Accusing a man of *níð* involves questioning his masculinity. Although the concept of *níð* is never mentioned in relation to Haraldr's death, it is suggestive that, at the moment of death, his posture when the arrow enters his body is that of a female, four-legged animal when penetrated by a male.

In other sources that include accounts of Haraldr Gormsson, his death is usually related in connection with the battle between him and Sveinn, and it is said that he died either in the battle or from wounds that he received in the battle.⁹ Haraldr is also widely remembered as the king who brought Christianity to Denmark. However, in 291 his death is related in a way that overshadows every other aspect of his life. But, if the motivation for this was to insinuate that Haraldr was a *níðingr* or his killing *níð*, what could be the reason?

Pálnatóki's reason for killing the king is not stated explicitly. At this point in the saga Pálnatóki has been encouraging his foster-son, Sveinn, to gain power in Denmark, which eventually results in a battle between Sveinn and Haraldr. At first it seems as if Pálnatóki's motive for going ashore alone and sneaking up on the king and his men is simply to help Sveinn win the battle. But the fact that he acts alone, at night, suggests that his motive is more personal than that. Beatrice La Farge has commented on this scene in a review of Preben Meulengracht Sørensen's *Norrønt níð* (La Farge, pp. 59–64). She asks what Pálnatóki's motive might be, beyond simply helping Sveinn win the battle. An obvious answer is revenge for his uncle Áki's death. Áki is a great chieftain: "It is said about Áki Tókason that no man was considered his equal in the Danish realm at that time, of those who had no title of nobility" (p. 93). Haraldr has Áki killed, fearing that he might become more popular than himself. His killing has not yet been avenged and is likely to be on Pálnatóki's mind. But, as La Farge points out, the sexual implication of the killing might also be read in connection with Sveinn's conception.

In the saga, King Haraldr never accepts that he is Sveinn's father. *Jómsvíkinga saga* is the only source that suggests that Sveinn is an illegiti-

mate son. According to the saga in 291 his mother is a poor farmer's daughter, and her relationship with the king is limited to one night when Haraldr seeks shelter from bad weather. Haraldr receives food and drink and then asks the farmer if he can spend the night with his daughter Æsa. The phrasing is unusually direct, and the king's intentions are obvious as he asks for Æsa's *gás* (goose), which in this context means female genitals. Her reaction is not made known, but Pálnatóki later takes her in and fosters the boy she gives birth to nine months later. A while later Haraldr attends a feast with Pálnatóki who advises Æsa to go and introduce the boy to Haraldr. Haraldr repudiates and threatens her, but Pálnatóki comes to her defense, and the king leaves the feast unhappy.

Nothing in the text explicitly links this incident to Haraldr's death, but it is noteworthy that the redactor of Perg. 7 has a different version of the relationship between Æsa and Haraldr. There, she is waiting on the king at Pálnatóki's feast, and there is no mention of her father:

Pálna-Tóki prepared a banquet to which he invited King Haraldr, and the king accepted the invitation. He spent a long time at the banquet. A woman called Æsa, who was known as Saum-Æsa, was detailed to attend the king. Although she was a poor woman she was by no means ignorant. The king left the banquet and was presented with many gifts. The following summer Saum-Æsa was pregnant. (11)

Haraldr does not ask anyone for permission to spend the night with Æsa, and it is only her pregnancy that confirms that he has done so. The statement that "she was by no means ignorant" (*vel kunnandi*) could imply that it is she who has seduced the king. In any case, it is clear that Perg. 7 reduces the degree of responsibility imputed to the king, once again showing him in a more positive light than in 291. In 291 the sexual implications both of Haraldr's treatment of Æsa and of his death are emphasized, and the text invites the reader to connect the two, but in Perg. 7 these overtones have been wiped out.

The differences between Perg. 7 and 291 discussed here all reveal contrasting attitudes towards King Haraldr. One possibility could be that the redactor of Perg. 7 was simply more prudish than the author of 291, but that does not seem likely in the light of his treatment of the execution scene at the end of the saga, which is just as grotesque and crude as that of 291. These modifications therefore seem to have been intended to soften the attitude towards the king, show him respect, and even suggest that Pálnatóki was in the wrong in killing him.

The difference between Perg. 7 and 291 becomes even clearer when 510 is included in the comparison. As previously stated, this manuscript is from the sixteenth century, and it is hard to tell how and when the text took its present form. However, it can be concluded that those who put this version together had a very different idea of how the text should be from that of the redactor of Perg. 7. Naturally, no comparison can be made with the first part of the saga, which is not included in 510, and consequently there is no information about Haraldr before Tóki and Pálnatóki are introduced. Otherwise, the text of 510 is generally longer than Perg. 7 and even more detailed than 291. The tendency to explain things that are only hinted at in 291 and Perg. 7 is noticeable. This applies specifically to King Haraldr and Fjölfnir, the illegitimate brother of Áki and Pálnir, who is aggrieved because they receive a more generous inheritance than he does. In all the saga versions it is because of Fjölfnir's slander that Haraldr has Áki killed. In 510 Fjölfnir's malicious character is more detailed, and the redactor goes so far as to call Haraldr stupid, something that cannot be gathered from Perg. 7 but that can be deduced from his actions in 291. According to 510, "En með því að kóngur var talhlýðinn og eigi djúpsær, enn Fjölfnir var bæði slægur og illgjarn, þá leggur kóngur trúnað á það, er Fjölfnir ló" (But since the king was easily swayed and not penetrating, while Fjölfnir was both cunning and spiteful, the king put trust in Fjölfnir's lies; *Jómsvíkinga saga* (after Cod. Am. 510, 4to), p. 5). A bit earlier in 510, King Haraldr is again referred to as "eigi djúpsettur" (not perceptive; *Jómsvíkinga saga* (after Cod. Am. 510, 4to), p. 4).

Fjölfnir's role is further expanded in 510, for example in a conversation between Fjölfnir and King Sveinn where Fjölfnir bluntly tells him that Pálnatóki killed his father:

Vita skulu þér þá hluti, er yður er skylt að vita, þótt með leynd hafi farið um líflát Haralds kóngrs; og hefur Pálnatóki mikla vél að yður dregið, og það gekk honum til eflingar við yður að vera í svikum við föður þinn, og er Pálnatóki sannur hans banamaður, og mun ég það með vitni segja, og máttu eigi kóngur vera, ef þú hefnir eigi föður þíns. (*Jómsvíkinga saga* (after Cod. Am. 510, 4to), p. 22)

[You shall learn the things you are obliged to know, though there has been secrecy about the death of King Haraldr; and Pálnatóki has played a great trick on you, and he gained power with you by betraying your father, and Pálnatóki is guilty of killing him, and I

will declare it before witnesses, and you cannot be king if you do not
avenge your father.]

No other version of the saga includes this conversation, although 291 and Perg. 7 hint that it took place. It is typical of the text in 510 to stage events and add conversations that are not found in other versions, with more use of direct speech.

Compared with 291 and Perg. 7, 510 shows signs of *amplificatio*, a rhetorical device popular in medieval scribal culture. William Ryding divided amplification into two kinds, rhetorical and material (Ryding, pp. 65–66). Rhetorical amplification does not affect structure or plot significantly but adds detail to descriptions, extends conversations, and generally tells the same story in more words. Material amplification on the other hand affects the structure, new material being either intertwined with the narrative or added at the beginning or end. Ryding outlines the development of amplification in the Middle Ages:

Of course, the word *amplificatio* did not, for the classical writers, have anything to do with the lengthening of a narrative. On the contrary, its application seems to have been strictly limited to the manner of presenting an idea, giving it grandeur and magnitude, exalting its importance, or heightening its effect. But the rules for amplification, originally intended to give fullness to an exposition, were ultimately applied to narrative and came to mean spinning out the story, lengthening, widening, and heightening, stuffing it out with the full complement of rhetorical devices. (Ryding, p. 66)

He adds that, “the general idea was simply to make a story longer and more effective by providing more in the way of circumstantial detail” (Ryding, p. 79). The use of such *amplificatio* in 510, compared with other versions, suggests that 510, besides being the youngest manuscript, preserves the saga in what should also be regarded as the youngest version.

This conclusion may be supported by comparison with other sagas that have been preserved in more than one version. One example is *Mágus saga jarls* or *Bragða-Mágus saga*, which is preserved in two versions, referred to as “older” and “younger.” The younger is longer and has been expanded with short narrative strands that are loosely connected with the main plot and can be considered as material amplification, but there is also variation between the versions that only affects the style (Kalinke, 1982, pp. 46–47; Driscoll, pp. xciv–xcvi). The same applies to *Sigurðar saga þogla*, which is preserved in a “long” and a “short” version, and Matthew

Driscoll has argued that the longer version is an amplified one (Driscoll, pp. xcvi–cxviii).

Gísla saga Súrssonar can also be discussed in this context. It is preserved in two versions, and a fragment of the saga shows that a third version existed (Lethbridge, 2010, pp. 127–34; Þórður Ingi Guðjónsson, pp. 107–13). Emily Lethbridge has compared the three versions and pointed out that the modifications found between the versions indicate revision of the saga by scribes and redactors:

Such conscious alterations to an exemplar might have been effected at any time by any number of individual copyists, perhaps in order to make the *Gísla saga* narrative more meaningful in its contemporary context for an audience, or to make it conform to an individual copyist's or potential audience's sense and expectations of the narrative with regard to its overall coherence, style and/or thematic interest. (Lethbridge, 2010, p. 149)

In a further discussion of versions of *Gísla saga*, Vésteinn Ólason and Þórður Ingi Guðjónsson point out that scribes may have been faced with problems similar to those of scholars today, that is, they may have known both oral and written sources that contradicted each other and had to choose what they might add to the saga or remove from it (Vésteinn Ólason and Þórður Ingi Guðjónsson, p. 108).

These comments on *Gísla saga* are included here because they can also explain the development shown by the text of 510 in *Jómsvíkinga saga*. Like Lethbridge, we may ask whether the changes occurred in response to developments in literary taste or fashion. If more medieval manuscripts of *Jómsvíkinga saga* had been preserved they would doubtless cast further light on how the text developed, perhaps gradually, as written sources, oral tradition, and scribal imagination were combined, and this evolution would explain the differences between the versions we are fortunate enough to have. Sometime in the twelfth or thirteenth century a *Jómsvíkinga saga* was written down for the first time. Whether that saga was precisely like the text in 291 we cannot know, but that is the text that marks the first visible step in the saga's history. We do not know how many more times the saga was written down, recited, and retold, but Perg. 7, *Flateyjarbók*, and 510 are the only other preserved medieval vestiges of the saga's context. The comparison of the preserved versions does, however, give a basis for interpreting the difference between them. They can be testaments to scribal ideas, as well as to the expectations of the audi-

ence. Perg. 7 suggests that the redactor and possibly the audience in his environment expected a saga that was apposite and objective; the king is respected, and stories that may humiliate the ruler are not included. The slightly older 291, however, places less value on such respect; entertainment is at more of a premium than deference to the king. By the sixteenth century, however, 291 has become the “short” version, and the text has been augmented with details, direct speech, and conversations that do not alter the course of events significantly, but create more vivid images of people and events and make explicit what older versions had hinted at more obliquely.

Note on the Translation

The text translated into English in this volume is that of AM 291 4to, the oldest manuscript of *Jómsvíkinga saga*. As has already been argued here, there are reasons for considering it the version closest to the original text of the saga. This version has never been translated into English before. A translation into Danish was published in 1978 (Degnbol and Jensen). The two earlier translators of the saga into English, Lee M. Hollander (1955) and Norman F. Blake (1962), both opted for the shortened version in Perg. 7, Blake arguing for its superiority on stylistic grounds: “The hallmark of *H* [i.e., Perg. 7] is its elliptical style. The other versions tend to be longwinded and verbose, whereas the redactor of *H* has compressed everything and has created a crisp, pithy saga style.” This is a somewhat perverse decision, given the corresponding faults that Blake himself admits: “This compression and omission often result in a rather jerky style and in a too rapid transition from one action to the next. In several cases it has been carried so far that it is impossible to understand *H* properly unless one compares it with the other texts” (Blake, p. xxi). In view of this, and the fact that, as outlined above, Perg. 7 goes so far as to omit elements of the narrative as represented in 291, the text of 291 is a more satisfactory witness to the saga.

The text has been translated as literally as possible, with much of the original sentence structure retained and the variation in tenses commonly found in Old Icelandic narrative reproduced, even where this entails switching from present to past and back again in the course of a sentence. This may make the reader work harder, but endeavors to capture some of the flavor of the original style and to register, in particular, the unevenness of style characteristic of an early Old Norse text. The text followed

is that of Ólafur Halldórsson's 1969 edition. As this edition is based on a single manuscript, textual notes are few, and even fewer of these have been reproduced in this volume; those wishing for further information should refer to Ólafur's edition or, in due course, to the volume currently in preparation for the *Íslensk fornrit* series, which will also be based on the 291 version.

The one aspect of the text that does require annotation is the fact that 291 is incomplete, the first and last leaves being illegible, and a further leaf missing. These lacunae are supplied in Ólafur's edition, and in this translation, by the corresponding passages from *Flateyjarbók*, the version closest to 291. Passages supplied from *Flateyjarbók* are marked in the translation by an **F** in the margin, with endnotes marking the precise beginning and end of each.

Place and personal names are rendered in Old Icelandic form (using normalized spelling, rather than the modern spelling of Ólafur Halldórsson's edition). The bynames (nicknames) that often accompany personal names are translated in parentheses on their first appearance in the text (if a translation is possible), after which the Old Icelandic form is used. Information on some of the people and places named can be found in the Index of Persons and Places.

The stanzas, too, are translated literally, capturing as far as possible the intricacy of the complex *dróttkvætt* meter in which all but one of them are composed. Each stanza has eight lines, linked in pairs by alliteration; each line should be limited to six syllables (almost impossible to achieve in English translation), ending in a trochee. There are further requirements for internal rhyme between syllables in each line, but this has not been reproduced in the translation. Where the riddling metaphors known as "kennings" are used, these are noted and translated alongside each stanza. Further information on skaldic poetry, the poets named in the saga, and the interpretation of the verses cited in the saga can be found in *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas*.



Figure 1 Scandinavia and the Baltic in the tenth century

Names on the map are the modern equivalents of those referred to in this volume, as follows: Bornholm = Borgundarhólmr; Fyn = Fjón; Götland = Gautland; Holstein = Hollsetuland; Limfjord = Limafjörðr; Namdal = Naumudalr; Nordmøre = Norð-Mœrr; Trøndelag = Þrándheimr; Tønsberg = Túnsberg; Stadlandet = Staðr; Sunnmøre = Sunn-Mœrr; Sjælland = Sjóland; Wendsland = Vindland

Reproduced from Norman Blake, *Jómsvíkinga saga. The Saga of the Jomsvikings* (Thomas Nelson, 1962) with the permission of the Blake family.



Figure 2 The Curmsun disc, gold, 4.5 cm in diameter, was found in 1841 in Wiejkowo (Poland), 3 km from Wollin, and seems to be associated with Harald Gormsson

The inscription reads:

+ARALD
CVRMSVN+
REXADTAN
ER+SCON+J
VMN+CIV
ALDIN+

[Harald Gormson, King of Danes, Scania, Jumne in the diocese of Aldinburg]

Photo: Thomas Sielski, image enhancement Donald Jansen, Unisats Apps.



Figure 3 Hjørungavágur
Photo: Johan Ottesen.

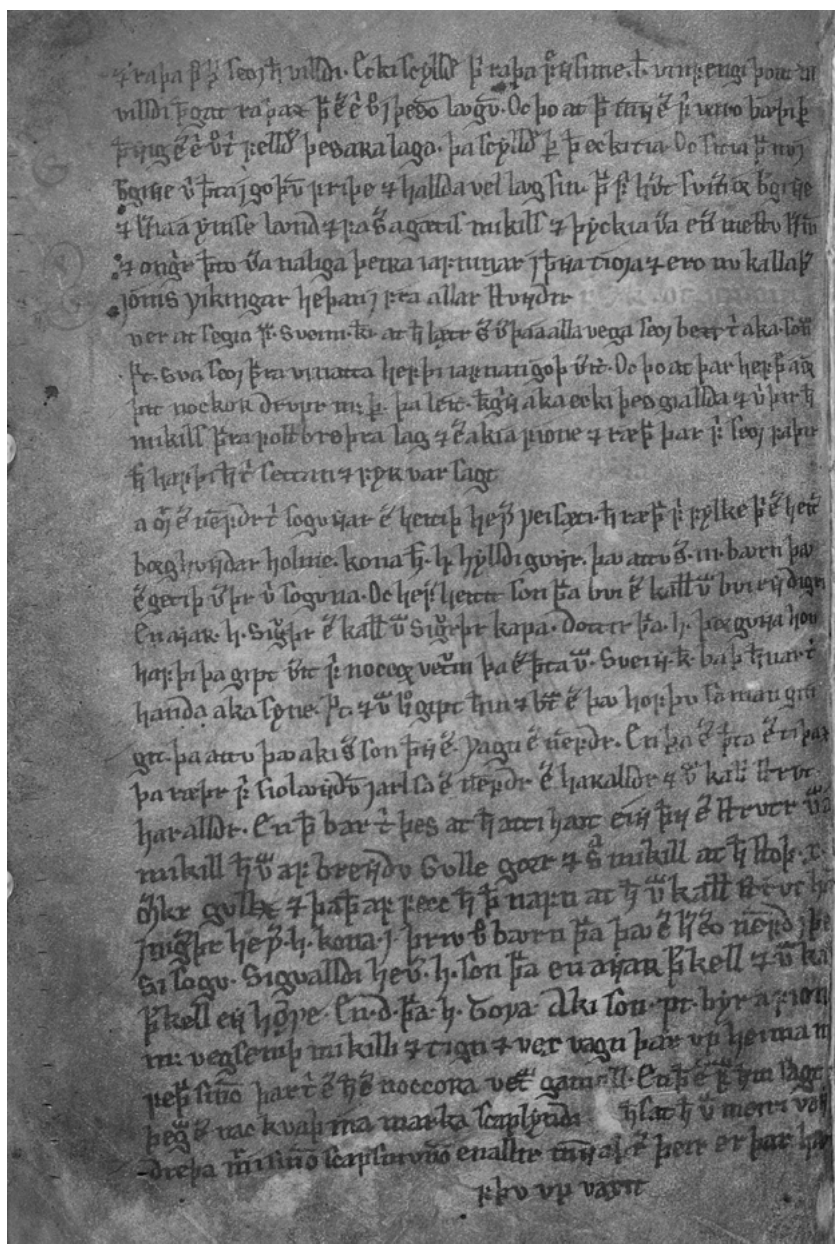


Figure 4 AM 291 4to, fol. 20v

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The Saga of the Jómsvikings

F

Chapter 1

Gormr¹⁰ was the name of a king who ruled over Denmark, who was called “the Childless”; he was a powerful king, and popular with his people. He had ruled the land for a long time when these events took place.

Two men are named who were at the king’s court; one was called Hallvarðr, the other Hávarðr.

Arnfinnr was the name of a jarl who was then in Saxland and had power under King Karlamagnús (Charlemagne). He and King Gormr were good friends; they had been together on Viking expeditions. The jarl had a beautiful sister, and so it happened that he devoted more affection to her than he should have; then she became pregnant, although it was kept very secret. He sent her away with people he trusted, and told them not to leave her before they knew what had become of the child. They did so; they arrived in the place that King Gormr ruled over, stopped by the forest called Myrkviðr, and put the child under some tree roots, and ran away into the forest and remained there.

It is told that it came about that same autumn that King Gormr went to the forest with all his court in very fine weather, and they went after wild animals, wild fruits, and birds all that day, and thus they amused themselves. But in the evening the king and all the court went home, except the two brothers Hallvarðr and Hávarðr; they stayed behind in the forest and then went widely through the woods to entertain themselves. But because of the dark, they could not find the way home, and turned in the direction of the sea, thinking they would be able to find the way home if they followed the sea shore, for the king’s castle was a short way from the sea, where the forest went all the way down to the shore.

And when they were walking along the sea shore and towards some sandbanks, they heard a child’s crying, and went towards it and had no idea what the reason for it would be. There they found a baby boy; he was

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laid under tree roots and a big knot was tied around his forehead in a silk ribbon which he had around his head. In it was a gold ring worth a third of an ounce. The child was wrapped in a finely woven cloth. They picked up the child and took it home with them and got back when the king and the court were sitting over the drinking tables, and blamed themselves¹¹ that they had not taken care to go home with the king, but the king responded and said that he would not be angry with them for that.

And now they told the king what events had happened on their way, and the king asked to see the boy and to have him brought to him. The king looked closely at the boy and said:

“This will be one of the greater men, and is better found than not,” and then he had the boy sprinkled with water and given a name, calling him Knútr (knot). And that was because the gold ring had been knotted to the boy’s forehead when he was found, and the king took from that the name that he gave the boy. He had him fostered where it was fitting and called him his son and treated him well and loved him greatly.

And now as King Gormr’s life was at an end and he had become old, he took an illness that brought about his death. And before he died he invited to see him his friends and kinsmen, wanting to see how it would go with his authority. He asked them that he should decide to whom he should make over land and subjects after his day, and he wanted to get their agreement to that, and he declared that he wanted to give to Knútr all his kingdom and all those things that would make him a greater man than before, after his own day. And now because of his popularity and because he was beloved of his men, they agreed that the king should decide, and now this was done.

And after this the king gives up his life.

Now Knútr takes over land and subjects and all the authority that Gormr had had, and is popular with his men.

Knútr fostered the son of Sigurðr ormr-í-auga (Snake-in-eye) and gave him his own name, calling him Hǫrða-Knútr. And the son of Hǫrða-Knútr was Gormr, who was called Gormr inn gamli (the Old) or inn ríki (the Great).

Chapter 2

Haraldr is the name of a jarl who ruled over Holtsetuland; he was called Klakk-Haraldr. He was a clever man. He had one daughter who was called Þyri; she was the wisest of all women and interpreted dreams better than other people. She was also beautiful.

The jarl thought all the government of the land depended on his daughter, and he allowed her to decide everything together with himself, and he loved her very greatly.

And now when Gormr was fully grown and had taken over the kingdom, he went out of the land and intended a match for himself, to ask for the daughter of Jarl Haraldr, and if he would not marry the woman to him, he thought the jarl would have to suffer war from him.

And now when Jarl Haraldr and his daughter Þyri hear of King Gormr's expedition and his intention, they send men to meet him and invite him to a splendid feast, and he accepts that, and he is sitting there at his meal with honor. And when he has explained his business to the jarl, he gave him the answer that she herself had to decide it, "because she is much wiser than I." And now when the king urges the case with her, she answers thus:

"This will not be decided on this occasion, and you must now go home on these terms with fine and honorable gifts, and if this match with me means much to you, as soon as you get home you must have a building built big enough that it is suitable for you to sleep in. The building shall be placed where no building has been built before. And you must sleep there on the first winter nights and three nights altogether, and you must remember clearly afterwards whether you dreamed something, and then send men to see me to tell me your dreams, if there are any, and then I will declare to them whether you shall make this match or not. Now, you will have no need to pursue this match if you have no dreams."

And after this exchange of theirs, Gormr stays at this feast for a short time and then goes home and was quick to put to the test this wisdom and arrangement of hers, and he now went home with great honor and valuable gifts. And when he had come home he did in every respect what she had told him to do: he now had the building made and then went into it, as has been explained. He arranged to have outside the building three hundred (360)¹² fully armed men and told them to stay awake and keep guard, for it occurred to him that it might be a trap. And now he lay down in the bed that had been put in the building and slept, and after that he dreamed. And there in the building he slept for three nights.

And now the king sends his men to see Jarl Haraldr and his daughter Þyri, and had her told his dreams. And when they came into the presence of the jarl and his daughter they were well greeted; and then they presented the king's dreams to the jarl's daughter. And when she had heard the dreams, she said:

“Now you shall stay here for as long as you yourselves wish. And you can tell your king that I will go to him.”

And when they come home they tell the king this news. At that the king becomes light-hearted and cheerful.

And soon after that the king sets out from home with a great company to claim the match and his wedding, and it goes well for him until he comes to Holtsetuland. Jarl Haraldr had learned of his journey and he had Þyri prepare a magnificent feast and a great welcome for him, and now their marriage and great love between them began. And it was used as entertainment at the feast that Gormr relates his dreams, and she interpreted them afterwards.

The king told what he had dreamed on the first winter night and the three nights when he had slept in the building. He dreamed that he thought he was standing outside looking over his whole kingdom; he saw that a sea spread out from the land so far that he could not cast his eyes over it anywhere, and the tide was so great that all the islands and fjords were dry. And after this event, he saw that three white oxen came up out of the sea and ran up onto the land near where he was and bit off all the grass close to the ground wherever they went. And after that they went away.

There was a second dream that is very similar to this, that it seems to him again that three oxen walk up from the sea; they were red in color with large horns. They also cropped all the grass from the ground, just like the earlier ones. And when they had been there for some time they went back into the sea again.

He dreamed the third dream further, and that was also like the others. The king again thought he saw three oxen walking up from the sea; they were all black in color and with enormous horns, and again stayed for a while and then left in the same way and walked back into the sea. And after that he thought he heard such a great crash that he thought it could be heard all over Denmark, and he saw that that came from the crashing of the sea as it went onto the land.

“And now I wish, Queen,” he said, “that you interpret the dreams to entertain people, and show your wisdom by it.”

She did not refuse, and interprets the dreams. And she began first to explain the dream that happened first, and said thus:

“Where the oxen walked up from the sea to the land, white in color, there will be three great winters, and such heavy snow will fall that famine will result all over Denmark. And where you thought the second three oxen walked up from the sea and they were red, there will come a second three

winters of little snow, and yet not little, since you thought the oxen bit all the grass from the ground. And where three oxen, black in color, walked up out of the sea, there will come the third three winters. They will be so bad that everyone will say that none such shall be, and that such black dearth and need will come over the land that hardly another example can be found. And the fact that you thought the oxen had large horns signifies that many men will be stripped of everything they own. And the fact that they, the oxen, all went back into the sea as they had come out of it, and that you heard a great crash as the sea broke onto the land, signifies the strife of men of importance, and they will confront each other in Denmark and have great battles and fights here. I also expect that some of these men who will be present in this conflict will be closely related to you. And if you had dreamed on the first night what was in the last dream, the conflict would have happened in your lifetime. But there will be no harm now; I would not have gone with you if your dreams had been as I supposed earlier. But I will be able to do something to oppose all these dreams you have had about the famine.”

And now after this feast, King Gormr and Queen Þyri made ready to go back to Denmark, and they had many ships laden with corn and other goods, and taken that year to Denmark, and the same every season from then on, until the time of the famine that she had predicted.

And when the famine comes they were short of nothing because of these preparations, and also those people in their vicinity in Denmark, for they shared from there many good things among their countrymen. And Þyri was considered to be the wisest woman ever to have come to Denmark, and was called the Bettering of Denmark (Danmarkarbót).

Gormr and Þyri had two sons, and the elder was called Knútr, and the younger Haraldr. They were both promising men, and Knútr was considered the wiser in their youth, and he was in advance of most people for good looks and skills and all the accomplishments that were considered important at that time. He was fair-haired and more accomplished than anyone else. He grew up with his grandfather Klakk-Haraldr, and he fostered Knútr and loved him very much. He was also popular as he grew older. Haraldr was brought up at home in his father's court. He was much the younger of the brothers, and was early fierce and vicious and difficult to get on with, and therefore he was unpopular as he grew up.

It is now said that on one occasion King Gormr sends men to see his father-in-law Jarl Haraldr with the errand of inviting him to the Yule feast. The jarl welcomed the invitation and promised to come to the feast in the winter.

And when the time came that the jarl had to leave home, he chose such companions as he wished to go to the feast. But it is not said how many men he took with him.

They go on their way until they come to Limaſſjörðr. Then they saw a tree standing there that seemed to them to be of a remarkable kind: it had small apples growing on it, and they were green and blooming, and under the tree were more apples; they were both old and large. They were very surprised, and the jarl said that he thought it a great wonder that the apples were green at that time of year, as they were there, while those that had grown over the summer lay beside the tree, "and we will turn back," said the jarl, "and go no further."

And it is now told that he now turns back with all his company and traveled till they came home, and the jarl stayed at home that year quietly with his court.

Now the king thinks it strange that the jarl did not come, and yet he supposed that some necessity had caused it.

Now it is quiet for a time, and for that summer.

And when the second winter comes, the king again sends his men to Holtsetuland to invite his father-in-law the jarl to the Yule feast, just like the last time, and now there is no need to draw out the story further than to say that the jarl again promises to come, and now the messengers go home and tell the king how it was.

And now the time comes for the jarl to set out from home with his company, and they travel till they come to Limaſſjörðr, and had embarked on their ship and intended to cross the fjord. But it is said that there were female dogs with them, and they were carrying pups. And when they had embarked in the ship, it seemed to the jarl that the whelps were barking inside the bitches, while the male dogs were silent. That seemed to the jarl, and to all of them, a great portent, and he said that he did not wish to continue the journey, and they turned back and went home and stayed at home that Yule.

Now time passed until the third winter comes. And again the king sends men to invite the jarl to the Yule feast, and he again promises to come, and the messengers go back and tell the king how it is.

Again the jarl makes ready to set out from home; and when the time comes, he sets out with his companions and they travel again till they come to Limaſſjörðr, and they had a good journey and crossed the fjord, and the day was far advanced, and they planned to stay there by the fjord overnight.

And later a vision appeared before them, which seemed to them not without importance; they saw a wave rise in the inner end of the fjord and another in the outer end, and each went against the other. And the waves were large, and this caused great turbulence; and they came together and clashed, there was a loud crash, and following that it seemed to them that the sea was made bloody by it. Then said the jarl:

“This is a great omen,” he says, “and we must now turn back, and I will not go to the feast.”

Now they do so: they go home, and the jarl stayed at home that Yule.

On the other hand, the king grew very angry that the jarl had never accepted his invitation, and he did not know what had prevented him from coming. And that winter King Gormr intended to make an attack on his father-in-law Jarl Haraldr; he thought he had greatly sullied his honorable invitation by not coming on any of the occasions that had been stipulated, and he thought the jarl had greatly disgraced him in this.

And Queen Þyri learns of this intention of King Gormr’s, and she dissuaded him from it, “and it does not befit you,” she said, “to show him hostility, for the sake of me and of your relationship, and there will be a better solution in this case.”

And now, with the persuasions of the queen, the king calms down somewhat and nothing came of the attack. Then it was decided that King Gormr sends his men to the jarl and wanted to know the reason why the jarl had not come, and the queen had given this advice, that the son- and father-in-law should first meet and discuss the matter and then see what was between them.

And now the king’s messengers come to see the jarl and raise the king’s business and the jarl responds at once and comes to see the king with an honorable company.

The king now gives his father-in-law a good and courteous reception.

After that the king and the jarl go into a meeting room, and when they had got there, the king asks the jarl:

“What was the reason,” he said, “that you never came when I invited you to me, thus insulting me and my invitation?”

The jarl answers and said that it was not to insult him that he had never come to the feasts, rather he said that other things had held him back. Then he told the king of the wonders they had seen, which have just been related. And then the jarl said that he would explain to the king if he wanted to know what he believed these great wonders signified or predicted. And the king agreed to that. The jarl said: “I will begin at the place

where we saw the tree with small green apples. But the big old apples were lying around underneath. I think that represents the change in faith that will come to this land, and that faith, with bigger blooms and miracles, is those beautiful apples. But the faith that has been practiced up to now is represented by the old apples which were lying on the ground, and will rot and turn only to dust; so will also this faith fall away when the other comes over the land, and it will then come to nothing and disappear like darkness before light.

“The second wonder was that we heard the whelps barking inside the bitches. I believe that is because those men who are younger will take words out of the mouths of the older men, and so become reckless, and it is to be expected that they will have no less influence in affairs, even though the elders are often wiser, but I think they are not yet come into the world as I speak of this, since those whelps barked that were not yet born. But the bitches themselves were silent.

“The third wonder was that we saw the waves rising against each other, one from the inner and one from the outer fjord, and they met in the middle, and each fell into the angle of the other, and the sea became bloody with the turbulence they caused. I think that stands for a conflict of important men in this land, and from that will come great battles and an age of tumult, and it is to be expected that there will be something of an offshoot of this conflict in Limafjörðr, where this vision of which I have now spoken appeared before us.”

The king understood the jarl's words well and thought him very wise. And after that he gave him peace and quarter, and now the king lost his anger against his father-in-law. But it is said that before they went in to the meeting room, the king and the jarl, King Gormr had set men in readiness to attack the jarl with weapons, since he thought that it was only because of negligence and pride that he had never come to the feast on any of the occasions when he had invited him, and he expected to be sure of this after he and his father-in-law had spoken. But now the king thought there was good cause why he had not come.

And now the king and the jarl leave the meeting, and then after that the jarl stayed with him for some time in great honor, but then the son- and father-in-law parted reconciled and good friends, and the jarl accepted fine gifts from the king before he went away, and then he traveled with his company until he got home.

And not much later Jarl Haraldr went to the south of the country and went into Saxland and accepted Christianity and never returned to

his kingdom, but gave [to his foster-son Knútr and his kinsmen all his realm, and now Knútr took over Holtsetuland and all the authority that Jarl Haraldr had had].¹³

Chapter 3

Now it is to be told about the father and son, Haraldr and King Gormr, that they were in disagreement as soon as Haraldr gained the strength of age. Then King Gormr decided to give him some ships and thus sent him away.

Haraldr spent each winter in Denmark and had asylum there at that time.

And when things had been like that for a while, it is said that Haraldr asked his father King Gormr to give him such possessions and power to own and control as his grandfather Klakk-Haraldr had given to Knútr. But he did not get what he asked for from his father.

From then on it is said that hatred developed between the brothers Knútr and Haraldr, and Haraldr thought that they had been treated very differently in every way, and he suspected that this would not happen less afterwards.

It is also mentioned that at one time, one autumn Haraldr did not come to Denmark as he was accustomed to do to spend the winter there, and he had been raiding over the summer in eastern lands. And in another account it is told that King Gormr sent men to Holtsetuland to invite his son Knútr to visit him for Yule.

And now when the time came, Knútr sets out from home with his companions, and he had three ships. And he had planned the journey so that he came into Limafjörðr on the eve of Yule late in the day.

And the same evening his brother Haraldr arrives there with nine or ten ships; he had come from the Baltic, and he had been making Viking raids there over the summer. Now Haraldr realizes that his brother Knútr was there before him with three ships, and now he remembers all the ill-feeling that has developed between the brothers. And now he bids his men put on their armor and draw their weapons, “and now,” he said, “matters must be settled between me and my brother Knútr.”

Knútr too becomes aware of the actions of his brother Haraldr and his intentions, and he means to defend himself, although they had a smaller force. They take up their weapons and prepare for the defense, and Knútr urges on his company.

Now Haraldr advances against them with all his might, and battle breaks out at once between the brothers. And it was the eve of Yule itself when they fought. But the battle ends so that Knútr falls there with all his company, or almost, for Haraldr made the most of the fact that he had a much larger force.

After this event Haraldr and his company travel until they came to King Gormr's harbor late in the evening, and they went fully armed to the king's estate. And it is the report of some men who are learned that Haraldr sought a plan and thought he did not know exactly how he should go about telling his father this news, for the reason that King Gormr had sworn an oath that he would be the death of the man who told him of the death of his son Knútr.

Haraldr now sent his foster-brother, who is named Haukr, to see his mother Pyri and take her the message that she should try to find some plan so that he could get out of this difficulty. A little later Haraldr goes himself to see his mother and tells her this news and asks her for advice. And she gave him the advice that he should go himself to see his father and tell him the news that two hawks had fought, one completely white, the other grey, and they were both valuable; but the outcome between them was that the white one was killed, which seemed a great loss.

And now, after this, Haraldr goes away to his company.

And all of a sudden he goes to his father's hall, where he was drinking inside with his retinue, and the king and the retainers were sitting at the tables. Then Haraldr goes before his father into the hall and tells him about the hawks as his mother had advised him, and finished the speech thus:

"Now the white hawk," he said, "is dead."

And when he had said that, he spoke his next words outside, and then went again to see his mother.

It is not mentioned where he spent the night, and his company.

But King Gormr did not guess the meaning, as far as people could tell, of what his son had told him. But the king drank for as long as suited him, and then went to sleep.

But the following night when men had all left the hall for sleep, Queen Pyri goes there with her men and had all the tapestries in the hall taken down. And then she had black hangings hung in their place until the hall was completely decked. She did this because it was the advice of discreet people at that time, when grievous news came to people's ears, not to speak of it in words, but to act in the way that she now had people do.

Gormr inn gamli got up afterwards that morning and went to his high seat and sat down and intended to begin drinking, and he looked at the walls of the hall and the hangings as he came in through the hall and now there to the high seat as has already been told. Þyri sat in the other high seat next to the king.

The king then began to speak and said: “You will have brought it about, Þyri,” he said, “that the hall is decorated in this way.”

“Why do you think that more likely than not, my lord?” she said.

“Because,” the king said, “you want to tell me in this way of the death of my son Knútr.”

“Now you are telling me,” said the queen.

King Gormr had been standing up in front of the high seat when they began to discuss this. But now he sat down hard and made no reply and leaned up against the wall of the hall and then gave up his life. And afterwards the king was borne away from there and taken to burial, and a mound was raised in his memory at the direction of Queen Þyri.

And now after that she sends word to her son Haraldr that he should come home with all his company and drink the memorial feast for his father. Now he did so, and the feast is both fine and honorable.

And now after this Haraldr succeeds to the land and subjects and all the power that his father had had, and afterwards he held meetings with the people of the land, and the Danes accepted him as king over all the kingdom that his father Gormr had possessed, and then he remains in peace for some years after that and governs his kingdom with honor and great fame; he is a stern and upright leader, and popular.

Chapter 4

A man is named in the saga who was called Hákon and was the son of Sigurðr Hlaðjarl; his home and also his kindred were in Norway. He thought he had the right to power in Norway to be jarl over four districts. And at that time there ruled over Norway Haraldr gráfeldr (Greycloak) and his mother Gunnhildr, who was called konungamóðir (Mother of Kings), and they would not allow Hákon to rule or have possession of all his dominions, and he would not accept anything other than to have power over it all and therefore he went out of the country with a large force, and he took ten ships out of Norway. Then he took up Viking activity and raided widely during the summer. And in the autumn he came to Denmark with his ships and his force and proposed friendship to the king of the Danes, and asked to

have free asylum there in his kingdom and to stay there over the winter. King Haraldr received this very well and invited him to visit his court with half a hundred (60) men. Hákon accepted that; he came to the king with that company, and the rest of his company stayed there in Denmark.

It is also related that Knútr Gormsson had left a son who was called Haraldr and had the byname Gull-Haraldr (Gold-Haraldr). He came not many days later to Denmark and had ten ships. He had raided widely around the lands and gained a lot of property and hoped for a lodging for himself with Haraldr Gormsson, his kinsman, and to have asylum there.

King Haraldr receives his kinsman and namesake well, invites him to stay with him with as many men as Hákon had already brought there, and Haraldr accepted this.

And Hákon and Gull-Haraldr both stayed there that winter highly honored by the king of the Danes.

And when Yule came in the winter, there was a feast more elaborate than otherwise, both in terms of drink and other provisions and attendance of those who had been invited there for Yule.

It is said about this that the question arose as ale-talk and entertainment among men whether there was any king in the northern lands whose feasts were more munificent and generous than those of Haraldr Gormsson, and all were at one that there was no such king in all the northern half of the world or wherever the Danish tongue was spoken.

But there was one man within the court who disliked this and took no part in this chatter. And that was Jarl Hákon Sigurðarson. And it is as is said, that many are a king's ears, and the king was quickly told that Hákon had not contributed to his honor when men were of one mind.

And after that, when the night has passed, Haraldr Gormsson summoned Jarl Hákon and Gull-Haraldr to talk to him, and the three of them went into conference.

And when they had come there, the king challenges Hákon to say whether he had said that he was not the greatest king in the northern lands, for so he had been told.

The jarl replied: "I did not do that, my lord," he said, "when others were being most vehement about it, and I took no part in it, and I consider myself guiltless in this."

"Then I want to know," said the king, "what reason you have for not thinking the same about this as other people."

"It is difficult for me, my lord," said the jarl, "to talk of such things; but I can never think that man greater whose tributes are under another's

control, and so it has been for a long time, and he has no need to claim power who has it.”

Then the king was silent for a while and then began to speak and said: “I have now considered that you have spoken and argued truly about this. But there is no need for you to be called the cleverest of jarls and friendliest to me if you do not find a scheme that will work against Haraldr gráfeldr Gunnhildarson, for I know you are referring to him in this.”

The jarl said: “Because your honor will only increase as a result of this invitation to me and your kinsman Gull-Haraldr if you seem to be a greater king from now on than before, and let us all together adopt the plan which seems practicable to us, and the reputations of all of us will be enhanced.”

“Put forward the plan now,” said the king, “and make the most of the fact that you are held to be a resourceful man and clever.”

Hákon said: “If it must be for me to make the plan, it is already in place,” he said. “Then men must be sent from the land in one ship, so that it is well equipped, to a meeting with Haraldr gráfeldr, and say that you are inviting him here with full honor and not with a large company to the glory of the invitation, and also have him told that the business that already stands between the two of you, you can settle yourselves when you meet. You must also have alongside the message,” he said, “that you intend to ask to marry his mother Gunnhildr, but I know her temperament in these matters, that though she is somewhat advanced in age, she will go to great lengths to urge her son to the journey if this depends on it, for she has long appeared something of a man-eater. But we will be involved in all the preparations with you, and you must propose to your kinsman Gull-Haraldr that you will grant him half of Norway, and half to me, if the two of us manage to bring about the death of Haraldr gráfeldr in such a way that you and your men are not present. But I promise you in return, and so does Gull-Haraldr, that then you shall have the tribute that I will now mention, that we will pay out if the land becomes ours; a hundred (120) marks of gold and sixty hawks. Then we will all grow in stature, if this goes according to what I have now advised.”

King Haraldr said: “This plan seems not unpromising to me, and that shall go forward, if it will happen so.”

Gull-Haraldr also said that he liked what had been arranged very much, and now they left this meeting.

And now King Haraldr had a ship prepared very quickly. It was a large warship. He arranged for sixty men to be on it. And then they went

on their way when they were ready, and it went well with them, and they met King Haraldr gráfeldr in Norway and raised with him this business as it had been laid before them, and spoke before Gunnhildr of the proposal, that King Haraldr Gormsson meant to ask to marry her. And when she heard that, it went as he had guessed, that she urged her son Haraldr to the journey, “and it is obvious,” she said, “that the journey should not be delayed, because I will have rule of the land meanwhile, and I expect all will go well at such a time. But hasten on the journey while you have the chance.”

After that Haraldr Gormsson’s messengers went back, and it went well with them, and they told the king that Haraldr gráfeldr was expected to come there.

Chapter 5

Then Hákon and Gull-Haraldr launched their ships, and Haraldr Gormsson directed them so that they had sixty ships altogether, and they lay on the water fully equipped as if for battle, and they intended to intercept Haraldr gráfeldr if he came. He did not turn out to be a breaker of engagements, and had two large ships and four hundred (480) men, and knew no reason to be afraid.

They met on Limafjörðr at the place called Háls.

Hákon said that he declared he would not engage many ships where not much was needed, “and to tell the truth, there are very great difficulties for me in opposing Haraldr gráfeldr for reasons of kinship. But I make over this victory to you very wholeheartedly.” It is also said that Haraldr allowed himself to be persuaded, and had someone more cunning to deal with where Hákon was concerned.

And after that, Gull-Haraldr advances against his namesake and let out a war-cry, and now the battle burst upon them, because they knew no reason to be afraid, and yet they defend themselves well and bravely. Jarl Hákon did not let himself or the company who had stayed behind with him be seen in the battle of the namesakes.

And when King Haraldr gráfeldr was in this mortal danger and became aware that there was no absence of betrayal, and thought he knew how the game would turn out, then he said:

“It makes me laugh now,” he says, “to see, namesake, that your victory will not last long if you bring me down, because I know that it is the plans of Jarl Hákon that are being followed now, and he will come here

after you at once, as soon as I am dead, and kill you at my feet and so avenge me.”

And now it is said that King Haraldr gráfeldr fell there in battle with the greater part of his company, and thus his life ended.

And as soon as Jarl Hákon learned this news, he makes a hard rowing attack when Gull-Haraldr and his men were least prepared for it, and he offers Haraldr’s company a choice whether they would rather fight against him or hand over Gull-Haraldr to him, and he said he wanted to avenge his kinsman Haraldr gráfeldr. They choose not to fight against Hákon, because they knew that King Haraldr Gormsson wanted Gull-Haraldr killed, and that had been discussed secretly between him and Hákon, as was now clear. Now afterwards Gull-Haraldr was taken captive and led away to the forest and hanged.

And now Jarl Hákon goes to see Haraldr Gormsson and offers him the right of judgment for the fact that he had killed his kinsman Gull-Haraldr, but that was only a trick, because that was really what they had both planned. But King Haraldr stipulates against Hákon that he must go to Denmark for the present and call out the levy throughout Norway to support Haraldr when he thought he had need of support, and always come himself when he sends him word and wanted to have his counsel. He must also pay all the tribute that was mentioned before.

And before he and Hákon part, he takes all the gold that Gull-Haraldr had owned, and from which he took the name Gull-Haraldr. He had brought that gold from southern lands. There was so much of it that there were two chests full of gold so that two men could barely carry them. And now the jarl takes all that money as booty and pays King Haraldr from that money three years’ tribute in advance, and said he would not another time have a better opportunity than now. King Haraldr accepts that gladly, and he and Hákon part now, and he goes away from Denmark until he comes to Norway. And now he comes at once to see Queen Gunnhildr konungamóðir and tells her that he had avenged her son, Haraldr gráfeldr, and killed Gull-Haraldr, and besides, he says that Haraldr Gormsson wants very much that she should leave the country with an honorable attendance, and said he wanted to travel in her company. But really they had made this plan between them before they parted, Haraldr and Hákon, and besides, that if she fell into the snare and came to Denmark, they had men placed to kill her at once.

Now was made manifest what many said, that she was something of a man-eater, and she now left the country with three ships, and there were sixty men on each. She now travels until she comes to Denmark.

And now when it is heard that Gunnhildr has come to the land, Haraldr has wagons driven to meet her and her company, and she is at once set in an imposing wagon, and people told her that a fine feast was prepared for her at the king's house.

They drove with her all day.

And in the evening when it had grown dark, they did not come to the king's hall; it was rather that a great bog appeared before them, and they laid hands on Gunnhildr and dragged her out of the wagon and behaved somewhat . . . large [to the neck] . . . [to her head, cast]¹⁴ then out into the fen and drowned her there, and so she lost her life—and that has since been called Gunnhildarmýrr (Gunnhildr's marsh). Away they went after that and went home in the evening and tell the king how it was, what has then happened.

The king said: "Then you have done well," he says; "now she has the honor I intended for her."

And now King Haraldr and Jarl Hákon remain on peaceful terms for some years, and now there is great peace between the lands Norway and Denmark, and their friendship extremely strong, and Jarl Hákon sends King Haraldr sixty hawks one season, and said that he thought it better to pay up rather in one year, but not every year.

Chapter 6

At that time there rules over Saxland and Peitulǫnd Emperor Ótta, who was called Ótta inn rauði (the Red), and his two jarls; one was called Urguþrjótr and the other Brimiskjarr.

It is mentioned that one Yule Emperor Ótta swore an oath that he would travel to Denmark three summers in a row if necessary and convert all of Denmark to Christianity if he could bring it about.

And after swearing this oath the emperor gathers an army for this expedition.

And when Haraldr Gormsson hears this and becomes aware that the emperor had a very great force of arms, he sends at once to Norway sixty men on a warship to meet Jarl Hákon, and ordered them to tell the jarl that he would never have a greater need than now to call out the levy from the whole of Norway and travel to give him support. The king's messengers traveled and arrived and tell the jarl the king's message, and then go back. Jarl Hákon reacts quickly to this affair and thinks it is necessary that that abomination should not come about that people be forced into

Christianity in Denmark or other northern lands, and not be allowed to hold to the customs and belief of their forefathers. He now gathers an army somewhat in haste, and it would have been larger if all the levies had been there and if more time had been granted.

The jarl leaves the country as soon as he has made ready, and had a hundred (120) ships. And later in the summer, three men came out of Norway with a great force to meet Jarl Hákon.

Now Jarl Hákon goes on his journey and it is accomplished quickly. And when he arrives off Denmark, King Haraldr hears of it and is extremely glad, and goes at once to meet [him and invites him to stay with] him with great hospitality and prepared a feast [in honor of him and all his company.] And now King Haraldr and Jarl Hákon take counsel together, and they decide that they will go against Emperor Ótta with as large an army as they can draw together from the whole of Denmark, and they were the highest commanders over the army, King Haraldr and Jarl Hákon.

And now they travel until they meet the emperor. They meet at sea, and a battle at once breaks out between them, and it is a very fierce attack. They fight against each other all day, and a great force falls on both sides, and yet more on the emperor's.

And when night fell, they established a truce of three days between them and put in to land and both sides made preparations.

And when the three days had passed, the divisions of Emperor Ótta and King Haraldr and Jarl Hákon engaged, and now they fight on land, and the battle goes heavily for the emperor, and much more of his company fell during the day.

And it comes to the point where he takes to flight with his army.

Emperor Ótta was on horseback during the day, and it is now said that they advance down to the ships, and the emperor rides forward to the sea and has a large spear in his hand, gold-inlaid and covered with blood; and then he stabs the spear into the sea and then calls on God Almighty in witness and then declared:

"Next time I come to Denmark it shall come about either that I succeed in making Denmark Christian, or else lose my life here."

After that Emperor Ótta and his men go on board their ships and he now sails home to Saxland. And Jarl Hákon stays behind with King Haraldr and gave him much shrewd advice.

And now they had built that monument that is widely famous, and is called the Danavirki, and that was built between Ægisdyrr and Slésmunni, across the land between the seas.

Then Jarl Hákon goes to Norway.

And before they parted, he said to the king: "As it has turned out, my lord, I find I am not in a position to make the payment of the tribute to you as I would like, because of this great work and the expenses we have had on your account. But above all I wish to pay you these dues when this eases for me."

The king answers and tells him to decide, and yet people think they perceive that the king thinks the tribute is somewhat overdue. They parted on these terms, and Hákon goes home to his land and seems now to have achieved a great victory.

And now things are quiet both in Norway and in Denmark for three years.

And in these three years Emperor Ótta had troops gathered and gets a numberless army.

And when these years had passed, he travels to Denmark with this huge army, and the two jarls, Urguþrjótr and Brimiskjarr, with him.

And when King Haraldr hears of that, he sends men to see Jarl Hákon in the same number as the last time, and sends him these words, that he thinks he has never more needed his support and numbers than then. Jarl Hákon quickly responded to King Haraldr's message and it seems to be an emergency, and he sets off as soon as he was ready, and he has now a force no smaller than the time before, and he comes to Denmark and at once goes with eleven other men to see King Haraldr, and the king was mightily pleased to see him and declared him to have responded well to his own need, "and now men must be sent to meet all your force and bring them here to a feast, and I thank every one of you."

"We two must exchange words first," said Hákon, "before that is to be done. You were entitled to have me for following and advice, and the company I now have, these twelve men, but no more company unless I wish it, because I have come before on one occasion with a levy to give you support as we had spoken of between us in the beginning."

"That is true," said King Haraldr, "as you say. But I hope you will allow this company that you have brought here to be used to my advantage for the sake of our friendship."

"I have authority over my men for this," said Hákon, "that they consider themselves obliged to follow me in defending my land and rule. But they do not consider themselves obliged to defend Denmark or the rule of another king, and lay their sides open to spear-points, and get nothing in return by way of profit or honor."

“What must I pay you,” said King Haraldr, “or your men, to come to my help now when I need it most? For I have heard for a fact that I will have to deal with overwhelming force because of the emperor’s numbers.”

The jarl replied: “There is one thing urged,” he said, “that we were agreed upon, my men and I: This thing, that if you give up all tributes from Norway that are unpaid, and you must give them up so completely that never again will Norway be tributary to you. But if you don’t want that which has now been stipulated, then all this company that has followed me here will go back, except that I myself shall stay here with these twelve men who have now come here and support you, because I must fulfil everything that we agreed upon.”

“It is true to say,” said the king, “that all men are outwitted by you in cleverness and schemes, and I am now given two difficult choices, neither of which seems good to me.”

“Consider the choice carefully,” said the jarl. “But it seems to me that tribute from Norway will be of no use to you if you lose your life here in Denmark.”

“The choice shall be made quickly,” said the king, “so that now the outcome will be that you will support me with all your troops as bravely as you can, and then you will win what you stipulate.”

And after that men were sent at once to meet all the jarl’s troops, so that they should all come to a meeting, and they made an agreement and a binding engagement on this between them, and now they accepted a splendid feast with the king of the Danes, and then they went against the emperor with all the forces they could get hold of. King Haraldr went with a naval force to Ægisdyrr. And Jarl Hákon went to Slédsdyrr on the other side of the country.

Emperor Ótta hears that Jarl Hákon has come to Denmark to fight against him. He then takes the decision to send his jarls Urguprjótr and Brimiskjarr to Norway. They had twelve cogs laden with men and weapons, with the mission to make Norway Christian while Jarl Hákon was away.

Chapter 7

Now it is first to be told about the emperor and that great army that he had, that they go ashore when they arrive off the coast of Denmark, and see the Danavirki and think it will not be easy to attack if people are defending it, and they turn away and down to their ships and go out on the ships.

And at that moment they meet, King Haraldr and Emperor Ótta, and they at once join battle there. They fight on ships, and a large number of men fall from both sides, and neither manages to defeat the other completely, and they part with that. Afterwards the emperor places his force of ships at the place called Slédyrr, and Jarl Hákon is present there with his company. There a battle at once begins between the emperor and the jarl, and a very sharp fight takes place, and then the battle falls out heavily for the emperor, and he loses a large force there. And it finishes so that he flees with his force and thinks it is difficult to win and it occurs to him that he will need to find himself a plan for how best to achieve it.

It is said that when the emperor berths his ships, they meet a group of ships, made up of five ships, and they were all large longships. The emperor asked who was the man who had command of those ships and their crews. That one answered and said he was called Óli by name. Then the emperor asked whether he was Christian or not. Óli answered and said he had adopted Christianity west in Ireland, and he offers himself as support for the emperor if he feels he needs more troops than he already has. The emperor says he accepts that gladly, and said he was very grateful to him for it, “and it looks to me as if there is good fortune in you,” says he.

Óli joined forces with him and has three hundred (360) men, and that company is very valiant, and yet he who directed the company surpasses them all.

Now after that they discussed their plan, the emperor and his men, because a difficulty had come upon them; they had run out of provisions, but on the other hand all the cattle that was on the side of the Danavirki where they were located had been completely driven away, and so they were not able to get any, and it seemed to intelligent men that there was a choice of two evils: either to turn away without further ado or to kill their own horses for food, and people thought both these alternatives bad.

Now the emperor gives this great consideration and calls on Óli for a decision and a solution in this matter and asked him to find some plan that would work.

Óli answers and declares he has confidence in his own plans and he wants anything he suggests to be accepted, and for all to be in agreement, or else he says he will not say a word.

The matter now reaches the point where everyone assented by acclamation to accept the plan that Óli put forward. Then he spoke:

“It is my advice,” says he, “that all those of us who believe in Christ go to one place and promise to almighty God, creator of all things, six

days of fasting that he may give us victory and that we may not need to kill horses for our food. Then I advise secondly," says he, "that we go today into the forests and woods that are closest to us, and each man is to cut himself a load of that wood which we think likely to burn best, and we are all to carry it to the fortification, and then we will see after that what will happen."

That advice that Óli has given seems promising to them, and now they go to where he advised them to.

The situation was, where the fortification stood, that a large ditch had been dug on the side where they were. It was ten fathoms wide and nine fathoms deep, but rather narrower where turrets rose over it. And they were set so that a turret stood each hundred fathoms up on the fortification.

The next day, after they had dragged the wood to the fortification, they began to build big bridges over the ditch so that a bridge was built opposite every turret, and they placed props under them so that the structure reached all the way to the fortification. And that same day they took all the water barrels they had and knocked out one end and then had dry planed wood-shavings placed within them and other shavings that they cut, so that the casks were full of shavings. Then they set fire to the shavings, and after that they fix the ends back on the casks and make them open downwards so that the wind blows into them.

Now also in another place they take to setting fire to the wood they had dragged to the fortification. And the weather had been such that there was a brisk wind from the south and dry weather, and it was blowing towards the fortification.

Now they take the barrels and throw them out into the ditch, and then the wind blows down into the inside of the barrels and out towards the fortification and so under the fortification. And it was in the evening when this construction was finished.

Now it is said that when night fell, the fire began to catch the water barrels and the wood, and next the fire broke out in the turrets and next in the fortification, and then they burned one after the other, for the fortification was mostly built of wood. The end of the matter was that the whole Danavirki with its turrets burned down that night so that not a trace or a fragment could be seen afterwards, and that was caused by the water barrels that carried the fire to the fortification. And when morning came, heavy rain set in so that people could hardly remember such a fall of water having come from the heavens, and it put out the fire completely, so that

then men could at once go over that great field of embers. And if that had not been put out by the rain, it would not have been possible for them to cross there so soon.

And now when King Haraldr and Jarl Hákon saw all that together, then a certain fear is struck into their minds and then they flee away to their ships. But the emperor and his men crossed over the bridges where they had built them over the ditch, for the fire had died down from there when the fortification burned, and now they walk over the field of embers, and it had all become cold and extinguished, and they had now fasted for four days in order to get help from almighty God.

And on the fifth day they advanced from the fortification to where they had been before, the king of the Danes and Jarl Hákon. And when they got there, there was no lack of animals, and they now got plenty of provisions for themselves, for the cattle had been driven there for shelter away from the emperor's warfare, and they now had ample sufficiency of provisions, and they do not much spare the Danes' cattle, and make good use of their blood-axes. Now they praise God for that fair victory, and Óli's advice seemed to the emperor to have served well, and now he asks what family Óli belonged to and from what land he came.

Óli answers: "I won't longer conceal myself from you," he says. "I am called Óláfr, and my family is from Norway, and Tryggvi was the name of my father."

It is now told that Emperor Ótta and Óláfr went after King Haraldr and Jarl Hákon. And they all had three battles with each other on the mainland, and there was a great loss of men there, and they fled away in the end, King Haraldr and Jarl Hákon. But the emperor and Óláfr went after them through the country. And wherever they went it was offered to all the men they were able to lay hands on that it should either be that each of them was killed there or else they must adopt faith and baptism, and many chose what was more fitting, to adopt faith and baptism. But those men who would not submit, those farmers did not send up much smoke from their houses in the next twelve months, for the emperor's men burned settlements and villages and thus laid waste everything belonging to those who would not accept the faith, and they always kill them themselves.

Emperor Ótta and Óláfr Tryggvason now win a great and fair victory in these twelve months, for now nothing withstands them. And they continue to flee, King Haraldr and Jarl Hákon, and now they think they find and see that their strength gets always less and less, the more and more things are Christianized in the land.

And now King Haraldr and Jarl Hákon have a meeting and make plans between them for what should happen, and the situation seems to press greatly on them; they have fled away from their property and ships and valuables and can now see that they will not be able to reach the ships, for the emperor's men have control there, and it seems wisest, matters having reached the state they have, to send men to see Emperor Ótta and Óláfr Tryggvason.

Now men are sent to see the emperor and they raise the business of the king of the Danes and Jarl Hákon. The emperor receives this well and allows them the chance of a truce if they are willing to adopt the faith, and sends them word in exchange that they should all hold an assembly together, and they now go back, the messengers of King Haraldr and Jarl Hákon, and tell them the state of affairs.

After that they all come now to the assembly, and that is the most numerously attended assembly in the realm of the king of the Danes in those days. Then goes to the assembly the bishop who was with the emperor who was named Poppa, and preaches the faith before them there at the assembly, well and fluently, and he makes a long and eloquent speech.

King Haraldr begins to speak on behalf of himself and Hákon and answers, when he had heard the speech: "It is not to be expected," says he, "that I will submit to words alone, unless along with that I see some signs that more power accompanies this rite that you preach than the faith that we had before." But yet this was the advice of Jarl Hákon, though the king put it forward, for he wanted anything other than to submit to the faith.

The bishop answers this speech in this way: "There shall be no lack," he says, "of putting this faith to the test. Now red-hot iron must be brought, and I will first sing a mass and make an offering to almighty God, and after that I will walk over red-hot iron, under the protection of the Holy Trinity, nine feet, and if God shields me from burning so that my body is whole and unburnt, then you must all accept the true faith."

And now they agree to this, King Haraldr and Jarl Hákon and all their men, that if he walks over the red-hot iron without burning, that then they would be obliged to accept the faith.

Now that goes ahead, that the bishop sings mass, and after the mass he undergoes the ordeal, strengthened by the flesh and blood of almighty God, and he was wearing all his bishop's vestments when he trod the iron. But God protected him so that there was no burnt spot anywhere on his body, and nowhere were his clothes touched.

But when the king of the Danes sees this great event he at once adopts the faith and baptism, and all his men, and the king was very impressed by this miracle; and now all the Danish army is baptized in one go.

Jarl Hákon is very reluctant to submit to the faith, and it seemed to be hard to do otherwise; and yet he decides in the end to be baptized, and after that he asks for leave to go away and means to hasten home. But it comes about in this matter that Hákon is forced to promise the emperor that he would make Norway Christian if he could, or else flee from his realm.

And after that Hákon goes away and to where his ships were, and sails after that until he gets back to Norway.

Now afterwards great friendship developed between King Haraldr and Emperor Ótta, and both now go to the same feast, that given by the king. Óláfr goes there with them too. And before they part, Emperor Ótta and King Haraldr, the king of the Danes promises that all his men must accept the faith, those that he could bring to it with words, and he fulfilled that. But Emperor Ótta goes home to Saxland to his kingdom and invited Óláfr to go with him. But Óláfr said he was eager to go raiding in the Baltic, and so he did, and there they parted, Emperor Ótta and Óláfr, in Denmark, and they remained good friends ever afterwards.

Now is to be told what happened on the journey of Jarl Hákon, when he went back to Norway, that he came off Gautland, and as soon as he comes there he raids and makes inroads. And he sends back all the clerics that the emperor had got to accompany him and to baptize people in Norway. Now Hákon does not wish them to travel with him any longer.

And now as he is raiding, he hears of a temple, the biggest there was in Gautland while it was heathen. In that temple were a hundred (120) gods, and the temple was dedicated to Þórr. Hákon takes all the money that was inside there, while the people who guarded the temple fled away, and some were killed. But Hákon went back to his ships with the money and kindles and burns everything that gets in his way there, and had got boundless wealth when he got to the ships.

And at this time, while Hákon was causing havoc around Gautland, Jarl Óttarr, who ruled over a large part of Gautland, hears of it, and he reacts to it quickly, and draws together a host from all the land to oppose Jarl Hákon and goes at him with a large force, and a battle at once breaks out there between them, and Hákon is overpowered by the force that thronged there, and it ends in such a way that he flees away with his force and goes to Norway.

After that Jarl Óttarr announces an assembly and made the decree at the assembly that Jarl Hákon should be called a “wolf in the ways,” because he declared that no one had done a worse deed than Hákon’s having destroyed the highest temple in Gautland and done much further evil, and no one knew of other such examples, and wherever he went or came he was to have that name.

And when that happens, then the jarls Urguprjótr and Brimiskjarr, who were previously mentioned in this account, learn about Hákon’s movements, and also what he had done, and it seemed that he was not acting very peaceably, and they do not wish to wait for him there. And they now flee from the land with all their ships, and they were all laden with people, and they much preferred not to meet Jarl Hákon.

And then the jarl came into the land from east in the Vík and learned at once what those jarls had been busy with in the meantime, that they had Christianized all the Vík north of Líðandisnes. And the jarl becomes very angry and enraged at that, and at once sends word around all the Vík that no one must dare to follow this faith if they were not to suffer heavy punishment from him for it.

And when that was learned, then everyone fled who wanted to follow Christianity, but some reverted to the paganism and error they had practiced before, because of the jarl’s overbearing. But Jarl Hákon cast off faith and baptism and then became the greatest apostate and heathen worshipper, so that he had never performed more sacrifice than he did then.

And Hákon now stays quietly in the land and now rules alone over all Norway and never afterwards pays dues to King Haraldr Gormsson, and their friendship is much on the decline.

King Haraldr now summons out a levy from the whole of Denmark and travels now to Norway with an overwhelming army against Jarl Hákon. And then he was come north around Líðandisnes in that dominion that had ceased to pay him tribute. And then he raids and makes fire and iron rage over the land wherever he went and lays everything waste in Norway from Sogn all the way north along the coast to Staðr, except for five farms in Læradalr. And then he learns of the gathering, where the Þrændir in Norway, the Naumdælir, Raumdælir, Háleygir, anyone who is a fighting man is come then to the same place as Jarl Hákon for the defense, and he has such a great force of arms that it is impossible to fight against it with a foreign army.

Now King Haraldr discusses the matter with his advisers; the king was lying then in Sólundir and threatened to travel out to Iceland to harry

it, and avenge the insult¹⁵ that all the people of the land had made against Haraldr because of the theft in which the steward Byrgir had taken the money of Icelanders unlawfully, and the king had not put the theft right when he was asked to do so.

The insult was framed in this way:

1. When in horse-form Haraldr,
 hailed from the south for battle,
 kicked against penis-country, *mǫrnis mór*: “land of the sword, (here)
 the killer of Vinðr turned to wax; penis,” mare’s rump.
 while wretched Byrgir, rightly
 run out of the land by spirits,
 filled the role of filly
 in front, as all could see.

And Eyjólfur Valgerðarson composed this verse when his servant had sold his axe and taken in return just one grey cloak, and then people out here had heard about the displeasure of King Haraldr.

And now Eyjólfur recited this verse:

2. His blade let no man barter;
 battle, if it can, will happen. *sverða dynr*: “din of swords,” battle.
 Hroptr’s noise we have to *Hroptrs hljóð*: “Óðinn’s noise,” battle.
 heighten, redden weapons.
 We must wait—a heavy
 weapon-storm is expected
 to gather — for Gormr’s son, to
 Gandvík’s ancient mist-land.

King Haraldr adopted the plan, as was to be expected, when many wise men were involved in it, that was most fitting; turned back now south to Denmark, and he now keeps his kingdom till the day of his death with full honor and glory. But Jarl Hákon keeps the tribute and Norway.

Chapter 8

Now begins the second part of the saga, what had happened before this point was reached, and it is not possible to say everything at the same time from a single mouth.

A man is named as Tóki; he was in Denmark in the district which is called Fjón. Þórvqr was the name of his wife. He had had three sons

who are named as part of the saga. Áki was the name of his eldest son, and Pálnir of the one who was next in age. And the youngest was called Fjølñir. [He was illegitimate.]

Their father Tóki had then become old when this happened.

And one autumn at the beginning of winter he took sick and died of the sickness. And not much time passed before Þórvör took sick and died, Tóki's wife, and all the property fell to Áki and Pálnir, for they had the right to inherit from their father and mother.

And when this had happened, Fjølñir asked his brothers what they intended his share of the property to be. They answer and declared they would make over to him a third of the moveable property but none of the lands, and yet they thought they were giving him a good deal. But he claimed a share of all the property.

It is said of Fjølñir that he was a clever man and resourceful and ill-disposed. But Fjølñir's brothers declared that he would not get more of the property than they had offered him. So Fjølñir declares himself dissatisfied with that, and at this he goes away with this share of property and goes to see King Haraldr, and becomes his retainer and counselor.

It is said about Áki Tókason that no man was considered his equal in the Danish realm at that time, of those who had no title of nobility. He passed each summer in raiding and almost always had victory wherever he made for.

Fjølñir says to King Haraldr that he would not be considered sole king over Denmark as long as his brother Áki Tókason was alive. And so he managed to persuade the king in the end that there was no safety between them, Áki and King Haraldr. But Áki had a safe haven and firm friendship with Jarl Óttarr in Gautland.

And he went there on one occasion to visit Jarl Óttarr, and had two ships; one was a large and fine dragon ship and the other a warship. He had on these ships a hundred (120) men, and they were all well equipped with armor and weapons.

It is not told that anything special happened on that trip, and Áki received fine gifts from the jarl before they parted. And then he went back to Denmark.

Now it is to be told about King Haraldr when he hears that Áki had gone on a visit. And it was for the reason that Áki was valued so highly among people of the land that no feast was held within the land to which Áki was not invited, no less than the king, and Áki received fine gifts at every feast. And so his popularity increased greatly so that he was valued

by people in general almost no less than the king himself, and he had whatever he wanted from every man's possessions.

But the main reason for the journey of Áki to Gautland was that he had asked to marry the jarl's daughter, and that suit was answered favorably.

Now the matter reaches the point where Áki was on the way home and had two ships, as was said before. And when the king becomes aware of this he has ten ships set forward, and has them manned with four hundred (480) men, and bade them go and waylay Áki's return from the feast, and take him from life and all his companions, if that could be brought about.

They went then and kept watch for Áki's movements, and that was easy, because he knew of no reason for fear.

And it is now told that when Áki comes past Sjóland in Denmark, that Áki and his men had a tent pitched on land and then have no fear for themselves. And there the king's men take them unawares with the army that was mentioned before, and at once throw weapons at them and bring down the tent over them when they were not ready to resist, and it ends between them so that Áki and all his company fall.

And after that they go back until they meet King Haraldr and tell him what had been done, that Áki was dead and all his company, and the king said he was pleased about this, and said that he expected that he would be able to be sole king over Denmark as far as Áki was concerned.

The king's men who killed Áki and his company seized all their weapons and possessions and took them with them as booty, and they brought all the goods to King Haraldr and with them the ships that Áki had owned, the dragon ship and the warship, and the king now takes possession of all those goods.

It is now said that it seemed to Áki's brother Fjólnir to have been settled extremely well, and he thought he had repaid him for the fact that he had not received the goods that he thought he should have inherited from his father.

Now this news is learned back on Fjón, and his brother Pálnir hears of it, and he is so affected by it that he takes to his bed, and that was mostly because he thought revenge was uncertain against the one who in fact was responsible, that is, the king himself.

The man comes into the saga who was called Sigurðr, foster-brother of these brothers; he was a clever and wealthy man. Pálnir sought advice from him how he should proceed. Sigurðr answers and declared he would

most advise him to ask to marry the woman who would bring him most honor if he could get her.

Pálnir answers and asked where that woman might be.

"I will go to Gautland," says Sigurðr, "and ask on your behalf for Ingibjörg, daughter of Jarl Óttarr."

"I am afraid," said he, Pálnir, "that I will not get this woman, but I certainly expect it would be the most promising cure for my grief, if I get this match."

Now the conversation ends there, and Sigurðr makes ready for this journey and has one ship and sixty men, and then travels until he comes to Gautland, and Jarl Óttarr receives him well. Sigurðr quickly reveals his business and asks for the jarl's daughter, Ingibjörg, on behalf of Pálnir Tókason and declares him to be no less prominent in any way than his brother Áki and declares there to be no shortage of property in Fjón, and said that Pálnir's death because of grief had been at stake before he left on this journey, and said that it would be the best cure for his grief if he gained this match.

The jarl responds pretty well to this speech, and yet said that it was necessary to consider carefully such matters as arranging marriages, and not rush headlong into the business, though he said he thought it likely, for the sake of Áki, his own friend and Pálnir's brother, that he would be worthy of a good match.

I am not able to say for how long they debated the matter. But it finished in such a way that it is said that Jarl Óttarr promised Pálnir his daughter Ingibjörg.

"The case is, my lord," says Sigurðr, "that Pálnir will not be fit enough to come here to you for the wedding feast because of illness and grief. But he does not lack the wealth and munificence to prepare the feast there on Fjón, and so we wish to ask you, out of necessity, that you come there for the feast with your company, as large a one as you yourself wish."

And this the jarl promises.

Then Sigurðr travels home and tells Pálnir this news.

Now he became much more cheerful at this, and they now prepare the feast completely for the jarl, and they spare nothing to make it as splendid as possible in every way.

And when it came to the appointed day when the guests were to arrive, the jarl did not break his appointment, and a great company with him. And then the wedding is magnificently celebrated, and the couple are both led to the same bed, Pálnir and Ingibjörg.

It is said that she falls asleep as soon as she goes to bed. Then she dreams, and when she awakens, she tells Pálnir her dream:

"I dreamed," she says, "that I thought I was standing here on this farm where I am now. And I thought I had a cloth in the loom, and that was a linen cloth. It was grey in color. I thought the cloth was weighted, and I was at it and weaving, and not much of the weaving had been done, as it seemed to me. And when I beat the weft, one weight fell off from the middle of the cloth at the back and I picked it up. And then I saw that those weights were nothing other than men's heads, and when I had picked up that head that had been cut off, I held onto it and thought about it and I recognized the head."¹⁶

Now Pálnir asks about which head it might be. And she answers, and said it was the head of King Haraldr Gormsson.

"Better dreamed than not," says Pálnir.

"And I think so too," says she, Ingibjörg.

They now stay at the wedding feast for as long as they thought fit.

And after that Jarl Óttarr went back to Gautland with fine and honorable gifts.

And their relations were good and pleasant with great affection, and they had been together for a short time before they had a son, and that son was given a name and called Pálnatóki. He grew up there at home on Fjón and is from very early on both clever and popular. He resembled no one in his manner more than Áki, his father's brother.

And only a short time after Pálnatóki had grown out of early childhood, his father Pálnir takes sick, and from this sickness he loses his life. And Pálnatóki takes over control of all the property there along with his mother.

It is said of him that he spends the summers in raiding, and he raids widely around lands as soon as he can because of his age.

One summer it is said that he was occupying himself again with raiding and then has twelve ships; they were well equipped. And when this is happening, there is ruling over Bretland the jarl who was called Stefnir. He had a daughter who was called Ólǫf. She was a clever and popular woman, and that was such a good match that it was remarkable.

It is said that Pálnatóki brings his ships to that land and meant to raid in the realm of Jarl Stefnir. And when that becomes known, Ólǫf decides with Björn inn brezki (the Welsh)—he was her foster-brother and was deep in her confidence—to invite Pálnatóki to a feast and to great honor, and that he should rather have a safe haven there and not raid. And Pálnatóki accepts that with all his company, and they went to the feast.

And at that feast Pálnatóki asks for the hand of the jarl's daughter, and this request is readily granted to him, and the woman is promised to him and next betrothed, and she remained betrothed no longer than until the wedding was celebrated at this same feast. And it was awarded along with that that Pálnatóki was given the rank of jarl and half of Jarl Stefnir's realm if he wanted to settle there. And he was to have it all after his time, because Ólqf was his sole heir.

Pálnatóki stays behind there in Bretland for the rest of the summer and on through the winter. But in the spring Pálnatóki makes it clear to the jarl that he is to travel back to Denmark. And before he left there in the summer, he spoke to Björn inn brezki:

"Now I wish, Björn," he says, "that you stay behind here with my father-in-law Stefnir and see to the running of the country with him on my behalf, for he is beginning to get very old now, and it is not unexpected that I will not be coming back very soon; and if there is a delay so that I do not come here, and the jarl dies, then I want you to guard the whole realm until I come back."

And after that Pálnatóki goes away from there with his wife Ólqf and he has a good journey and now comes back to Fjón in Denmark and now stays at home for a while.

And he seems now one of the greatest men in Denmark, and most powerful, and best furnished with intelligence, setting aside the king himself.

It is now related that the king goes over the land and receives feasts from his friends. Pálnatóki throws a splendid feast in honor of the king and then goes and invites him, and he accepts that and goes to the feast with a large following.

And then bad weather blows up against them, and they come in the evening to a farmer who was called Atli, and he was called Atli inn svarti (the Black). He was a poor man, and he received the king with full hospitality. His daughter waited on the company in the evening, and she was called Æsa and was named Saum-Æsa (Seam-Æsa); she was a tall woman and impressive. The king looked favorably on her and said to her father:

"It is true to say that service can hardly be better than has been offered to us here by you, farmer, and there is only one thing that you allow to be withheld from us, and that is your daughter Æsa and her hole."

But the farmer answers and said that it was not for him to lay beside him such a woman as his daughter was. But the king said there would be the chance of great friendship for him in exchange if he acted according to his will.

And this conversation and chat fetches up with King Haraldr bedding the farmer's daughter overnight.

And the following day the weather lightens, and the king makes ready early to leave Atli's. And before they part the king gives him fine gifts, and so honors him and his daughter.

And after that the king proceeds with his journey until he comes to the feast that was mentioned before. The king stayed at this feast for a long time, and Pálnatóki holds it with great magnificence. And when the king goes away from the feast Pálnatóki gives him fine and honorable gifts. The king also receives that well.

But the following winter as it drew to a close, it was discovered by people that the farmer's daughter Saum-Æsa began to grow and fatten and seemed to be pregnant. After that her father spoke to her alone and asks who would have caused her ill-health. But she says that no man was in question other than King Haraldr. "But I have not dared to tell this to anyone other than you."

"Yes," he says; "but I shall value you all the more, the more noble the man you have lain with."

And now time passes until she gives birth, and she gives birth to a boy baby, and that boy is given a name and called Sveinn, and he was named after his mother and called Saum-Æsuson.

And now it happens that the third summer after that, King Haraldr was again to attend a feast there on Fjón. And when the king comes there for the feast, Pálnatóki speaks to Æsa, for she had come there with her son, whom she attributed to King Haraldr and herself:

"Now you must," said Pálnatóki, "go before the king boldly at the moment when he is sitting over drink, and be frank with him about the matter that seems important to you. You must also lead the boy after you and afterwards speak these words to the king, that 'I am leading here after me a boy, and I declare that there is no question of any man having this boy with me other than you, King Haraldr.' And however the king answers your speech, speak boldly. But I will be placed nearby and will agree with you and support your case."

She does as he advises her, and she goes now before King Haraldr and leads the boy with her and speaks these same words that had been put in her mouth by Pálnatóki. The king answers quickly when she had spoken these words, and asks who this woman might be who had such

boldness before the king that she dared to make such a claim, and asks her name. And she declares herself to be called Æsa and to be the daughter of a farmer there in Denmark. The king says:

“You are an outrageously bold woman, and foolish,” he says, “and do not dare to say this again if you want to stay unmolested.”

Pálnatóki says then, “She must be saying this, my lord,” he says, “because she thinks great necessity leads to it, and she is not a harlot or a whore, rather she is a good woman and honest, though she is of a lowly family and origin, yet we think she is putting forward only the truth.”

The king said: “We did not expect of you, Pálnatóki, that you would pin this case on us like this, as is now shown.”

“It will also be the case,” says Pálnatóki, “that I will not bring it home to you, my lord, but I will treat the boy in all respects as if he were your own son. But now we must drop this discussion for the present.”

And quickly after that the king makes ready to leave the feast. Pálnatóki gives the king gifts, but he will not take nor accept them. But Fjølfnir was there with King Haraldr, who was mentioned earlier in the saga, who was the brother of Pálnatóki’s father; he told the king to accept these honorable gifts and not to act so openly in this case as to dishonor the most important chieftain by refusing to accept the most flattering gifts from him, when he had previously been his dearest friend. And now he manages to persuade the king to accept the gifts and take them. And yet he does not thank him, and it was easily seen that the king had been greatly offended that Pálnatóki had declared the boy to be his.

And with that they part, on very distant terms; and never did their friendship return to the same footing after that. The king went on his way home with his men, while Pálnatóki takes Sveinn Haraldsson home with him and his mother Æsa, because by then Atli inn svarti, Æsa’s father, had died and his money was almost all spent.

Now Sveinn grew up there on Fjón with Pálnatóki, and he treated the boy as well as if he were his own son and promoted his honor in all things. He also loved him greatly.

It is now told further that Pálnatóki has a son with his wife Ólǫf, and he is born shortly after the king went away from the feast; this boy was called Áki. He was brought up there at home with his father, and he and Sveinn Haraldsson were foster-brothers. And there Sveinn was brought up until he was fifteen years of age.

Chapter 9

And now, when this young man is now come of age, his foster-father Pálnatóki wishes to send him to see his father King Haraldr, and he provides him with twenty sound men and advises him that he must go into the hall before the king his father and announce himself to be his son, whether he likes it better or worse, and ask him to acknowledge kinship with him.

Now he does as he is told, and nothing is said about his journey before he comes into the hall before King Haraldr his father and speaks all the words that were put before him. And when it was finished the king answers:

“I think I can discern and make out from your way of speaking,” he says, “that there is no lying about your maternity, since it looks to me as if you are a great idiot and a fool and not unlike your mother Saum-Æsa.”

Then Sveinn replies: “If you will not acknowledge kinship with me, then I will ask you this, that you give me three ships from the land and a crew with them, and that is not too much of a contribution to me, because I know for certain that you are my father. But my foster-father Pálnatóki will certainly give me an equal troop, and also ships no smaller than you give me.”

The king replies: “I expect that what you stipulate is a price worth paying to get rid of you, and never come back into my sight again.”

It is now told that King Haraldr gives Sveinn three ships and a hundred (120) men, and both rather worthless, the ships and the crew. And after that Sveinn sets out from there and goes until he comes home to see his foster-father Pálnatóki and tells him the whole story of how the speech between father and son had gone. Pálnatóki replies:

“Such was to be expected there,” he says, “and nothing better.”

Then Pálnatóki gives Sveinn three good ships and a hundred (120) men, and that company was very able. And then he gives him advice about how he must act; and before they part, Pálnatóki says to him:

“Now you will try to undertake raiding this summer, with this company that you have now got. But I will give you this advice, that you go no further away than so that you are raiding here in Denmark in the kingdom of your father, a part which is somewhat at a distance from him, and there do as much damage as you can; harry it violently and kindle and burn as much as you can manage and make that continue all summer, and come to me in the winter and have lodging here and a lair, with your company.”

And then the foster-father and foster-son part, and Sveinn goes away with his company and does exactly as he had been advised by his foster-father, and he carries out great damage in the kingdom of his father the king, and causes no good grumbling among the farmers who were affected by his aggression and assaults, for he spares them neither fire nor iron.

Now this is soon heard of, and it comes to the king's ears, and it seems to him to have been a bad bargain that he had given him the force for such unrest and aggression, and he said he expected that he would be taking after his mother's family concerning this abomination that he had taken up.

Now that summer passes. And when winter comes, Sveinn travels homeward until he comes to Fjón to his foster-father Pálnatóki, and had gained a lot of goods over the summer.

And before they arrived home, they suffered a heavy storm and a violent gale, and all the ships were wrecked that his father had given him, and all the crew that had been on them perished. And then Sveinn sailed home to Fjón as he had been told, and he stayed there over the winter in high favor, with what remained of his company.

Chapter 10

Now it is to be told that in spring Pálnatóki comes again to speak with his foster-son and told him to go again to see his father King Haraldr and ask him to give him six ships and a crew with them so that they were fully manned, "and take care that you demand what you ask him for very rudely, and be outspoken in every way."

And now Sveinn travels and comes to see his father and demanded six ships from him and the crew with them, and spoke very rudely, as Pálnatóki had advised him. And King Haraldr says:

"Nothing but bad treatment I thought you gave the crew that I gave you last summer, and you are a remarkably impudent man to be daring to demand a crew from me again, such a bad showing as you have made before."

Sveinn says: "I will not leave here before you have given me what I demand. And if that is not forthcoming, my foster-father Pálnatóki will get me a crew, and then I will raid against your own men, and I will not hold back from treating them as badly as is in my power."

Now said the king, "Take six ships and two hundred (240) men," he says, "and never come in my sight again."

And now Sveinn goes away with that and to his foster-father Pálnatóki, and tells him everything that has passed between him and his father. And again Pálnatóki gives him as much of a crew as his father had given him. And now Pálnatóki gives him further advice, and now Sveinn has twelve ships and four hundred (480) men.

And before they part, foster-father and foster-son, Pálnatóki spoke:

“Now you must go and raid, not where you did last summer, but you must still raid against the Danes, and inflict on them now raids so much the harsher as you now have force of numbers both larger and better than then, and never stay your hand all summer long. But when winter begins come back here to Fjón and then stay here with me.”

And now foster-father and foster-son part for the present, and Sveinn with his company goes raiding widely over the land. He raids both around Sjóland and Halland, and he is so ferocious over the summer that it could be said that he raided night and day, and never leaves the realm of the king of the Danes that summer. He killed many men and burned many districts over the summer.

This news was heard far and wide, that there is great unrest in the country. And yet the king lets it go unheeded, although it was discussed before him, and lets it go on as if it is fated.

And now as it was coming on to autumn Sveinn went back to Fjón to his foster-father Pálnatóki, and now loses his second crew on the way home as the summer before. And now he stays with his foster-father over the winter, with all his company.

Chapter 11

But it happens in the spring that Pálnatóki comes to speak to his foster-son and said to him: “Now you must make ready all your ships and then go to meet your father with all your company fully equipped. You must go before him and demand that he make available to you twelve ships, and all manned, and if that is not forthcoming from him then offer him battle on the spot with the force that you have with you then, and you must never have been harsher in speech with him than now.”

Now Sveinn does as Pálnatóki advises him, and goes with all his company to where he meets his father King Haraldr, and demands what his foster-father has advised him to. And when that was finished the king replies:

"You are such a bold man," he says, "that I hardly know your equal, since you dare to come to see me, for you are both a Viking and a robber, and I believe that you are one of the worst men in whatever you are able to decide for yourself. And you need not expect that I will acknowledge you as my son, for I know very well that you are no kin of mine."

Sveinn says: "I certainly am your son," he says, "and our kinship is certain, but yet I shall not submit to you in any way, and if you do not go along with what I demand of you, we must now put it to the test between us, and we must now fight at once on the spot, and there is no way you will be able to wriggle out of it."

The king answers: "You are a trouble-maker," he says, "and you have a spirit that is somewhat as if you may have been born of not completely lowly people, and you will have to have what you are asking; and then go away out of my kingdom to other lands, and never come back here as long as I live."

Now Sveinn goes on his way with twenty-four ships. He travels until he comes back to Fjón to his foster-father Pálnatóki, and all his ships were well manned. Pálnatóki welcomed his foster-son, "and it seems to me you have well followed that counsel," he says, "that I gave you, and now the two of us must consider what seems most advisable to us. Now you must travel in the summer, and now the whole of Denmark will be open to your raiding except here in Fjón where my lands will be at peace with you. Here you shall also have asylum."

And now, when this is going on, Sveinn is eighteen years old.

Pálnatóki makes it known that he intends to leave the country in the summer and go to Bretland (Wales) to meet his father-in-law Jarl Stefnir, and said he would take twelve ships, "but you, Sveinn," says he, "carry on with all I have advised you to do, and I will join you in the course of the summer with a large force, for I suspect that now there will be an attack against you in the summer, and the king will not endure any longer your attacks on his kingdom, and then I will give you support. But take care that you don't give way if force is brought against you; put up a fight against them even if you are rather outnumbered."

Now they part, Pálnatóki and Sveinn, and each of them goes his own way, and they both leave at the same time, and Pálnatóki sets out for Bretland. But Sveinn follows the plan he had been given: he now renews his raiding on his father's kingdom night and day, and widely overruns the land, and the countrymen take to flight and go to see the king, considering themselves ill treated, and tell him their grievances and beg him to find some swift solution.

And now it seems to the king that something must be done, and he thought he had long endured from Sveinn what he would not have tolerated from others. Now after this he has made ready fifty ships, and travels himself with this force, and means to kill Sveinn and all his company.

And as the autumn passes, they meet, King Haraldr and Sveinn, late one evening off Borgundarhólmr. But it was then so late in the evening that it was not light enough to fight, and they anchor their ships.

But the following day they fight all day until night, and then ten of King Haraldr's ships are stripped, and twelve of Sveinn's, and both of them are still alive, and now Sveinn berths his ships in at the head of the bay in the evening. But King Haraldr and his men link their ships together across the outside of the bay, setting stem to stem and arranging things so that Sveinn would be trapped in the bay, and intended that he would not be able to get his ships out if he wanted to try it.

And in the morning they meant to attack them and kill every mother's son, and put an end to Sveinn's life.

And that same evening when such great events look likely to happen, Pálnatóki comes from the west from Bretland and makes landfall in Denmark that same evening with twenty-four ships. He anchors by the other side of the headland and puts canopies over his ships there. And when that was done Pálnatóki goes ashore alone from his ship and has a quiver on his back.

It happens meanwhile that King Haraldr goes ashore and his men with him. They went into the woods and made a fire there and toast themselves by it. They are all sitting together on a log, and then it has got dark, as night has fallen at this point.

Pálnatóki goes up to the forest and opposite where the king is toasting himself by the fire, and stands there for a while.

But the king, on the other hand, toasts himself by the fire and is warming his lower chest, and his clothes have been cast off under him and he is on his elbows and knees and is bending down low as he toasts himself at the fire. He also toasts his shoulders, and then the king's backside is sticking up high as he does that.

Pálnatóki clearly heard them talking, and he clearly recognizes there the speech of his father's brother, Fjólnir.

And now he lays an arrow on the string and shoots at the king, and, so it is said by most learned men, the arrow flies straight into the king's arse and right through him and came out into his mouth, and the king at once falls lifeless to the ground, as was to be expected. But his companions

see what has happened and it seems to them all to be the most extraordinary event.

Then Fjölfnir begins to speak and said that the man who had done that deed and planned it had caused a terrible mishap, “and that is a terrible shame, the manner in which the event has come about.”

“But what must we now do?” they said. And they all put it to Fjölfnir to decide, because he was the cleverest and most respected of them.

It is now said that Fjölfnir goes to where the king is lying and takes away the arrow from where it had come to rest, and he preserves it in just the condition it was in then. And the arrow was easy to recognize because it was bound with gold. Then Fjölfnir said to the men who were standing there,

“I would rather advise,” he says, “that we all keep to the same story about this event, and I think nothing else can be said than that he has been shot in the battle earlier today, and it will be a great shame and disgrace for us who were present at this event where such great wonders have taken place, to make this known to people in general.”

And then they bound themselves to this with oaths and all kept to the same story, as they had agreed among themselves.

But Pálnatóki went to his ships straight after the deed and then summoned twenty men to go with him and said he wanted to go and find his foster-son Sveinn.

And now they leave the ships and go around the headland and there they meet during the night and discuss between themselves what plan they should adopt; Pálnatóki said he had heard from King Haraldr that he was intending to launch an attack on them in the morning as soon as it was light enough for battle. “But I shall fulfil what I promised you, now that I have arrived: I must give you all the support I can, and the same fortune shall come to both of us.”

No man in the troop of Sveinn and Pálnatóki knew yet that the king had been killed except Pálnatóki himself, and he behaves as if nothing noteworthy has happened, and he tells no one the true state of affairs. Sveinn begins to speak, and said to his foster-father,

“I want to ask you, foster-father,” he says, “to think of some plan that will work for us, as things have turned out.”

Pálnatóki says: “We must not be slow in adopting a plan. We’ll go onto the ships with you and then free them from the lashings and bind an anchor in front of the prow of each ship. We must also have lanterns under the canopies, because the night is dark now. Then we must row out at the

king's fleet, as hard as possible, and I don't want King Haraldr to pen us here in the bay in the morning and kill us."

Now they take up the plan that Pálnatóki advised, and rowed as hard as possible out against the fleet. But it turned out in such a way that three longships sank there under their onslaught, and only those men who could swim were able to get to land. But Pálnatóki and Sveinn rowed out afterwards through the breach with all their ships until they reached the fleet belonging to Pálnatóki which he had brought there.

And in the morning as soon as it had grown light enough for battle, they launched an attack at the kings' men, and then they heard the news that the king was dead. Then said Pálnatóki:

"Then we will give you two choices: take whichever you like: one, to go on with the battle against us and fight, and fate will decide who gets the victory. The other choice is, that all the men who followed King Haraldr shall swear land and servants to my foster-son Sveinn, and accept him as king over all Denmark."

Now the king's men take counsel together and come unanimously to the decision to accept Sveinn as king, and not to fight. And then they go to Pálnatóki and tell him what they have chosen, and now it went ahead that all those who were present there swore land and servants to Sveinn.

Then Pálnatóki and Sveinn travel both together over all Denmark. And wherever they went Pálnatóki has meetings called, and Sveinn is accepted as king over all Denmark before they had finished. And over all the dominion of the king of the Danes.

And after Sveinn has become king, he thought he had the obligation, like all other kings, to hold a funeral feast for his father before the third night of winter. He now plans to hold this feast and not delay any longer. He first invites his foster-father Pálnatóki to the feast and the inhabitants of Fjón, his friends and kinsmen. But Pálnatóki answers in this way, that he said he would have no suitable time in the coming winter nights to come to the feast. "There has come to my ears," he says, "what I think amounts to important news, that my father-in-law Stefñir, jarl of Bretland, has died, and I am obliged by necessity to go there, for I am to inherit his dominion after his lifetime."

And as Pálnatóki thinks himself unable to come to the funeral feast, the king's plans for the feast came to nothing, because he wishes above all that his foster-father should be at the feast.

Chapter 12

About Pálnatóki

Pálnatóki now goes away out of the country in the autumn with his crew. And before he goes he establishes in his place his son Áki to administer his estates there on Fjón and everything he owned there and asked for support for him from King Sveinn before they parted, and the king promised to Pálnatóki that he would look after Áki as well as possible, and that same promise he fulfilled.

Then Pálnatóki went on his way and travels till he comes to Bretland and takes over the rule that his father-in-law Stefnir and Björn inn brezki had had, and the next year passed.

And the following summer, King Sveinn sends word to Bretland that Pálnatóki should come to his feast, and as large a following with him as he wants to bring, and the king now wants to hold his father's funeral feast. There were twelve of the king's messengers altogether, and it almost came to the point where Pálnatóki had to make ready to go there. He answers and gives thanks to the king for his invitation. "But it has now come about that some sickness has come over me, and I think I will not be strong enough as things are. Besides, I am caught up in too many obligations here to be able to travel as matters stand this year."

He refuses in every way to undertake the journey, and with that they go home, the king's men, and tell him how it is. And when they had gone away, the sickness completely left Pálnatóki.

And now the king gives up the plan for the feast for that autumn, and the winter and the summer pass.

And now it had reached the point where Sveinn could not be considered a proper king if he did not hold his father's funeral feast before the third night of winter, and now the king is certainly not willing to allow it to be neglected. He sends now the same twelve men to see his foster-father Pálnatóki to invite him again as before to the feast, and now said he will be very angry with him if he does not come. But Pálnatóki answers the king's messengers and tells them to go home and tell the king to prepare the feast in every way as splendidly as his means allow, so that it should be as magnificent as possible. And he declared he would come to the feast that autumn.

Now the king's messengers go home and tell him the result of their mission, that Pálnatóki was expected to come there, and the king makes ready for the feast, and everything that was to be got for it had to be as magnificent as possible in every way, in terms both of provisions

and number of guests, and now everything is ready for the feast and the guests have arrived. Then Pálnatóki had not come, and the day wore on to the time when people went to the drinking in the evening, and they are assigned to seats in the hall.

Then it is said that the king leaves a space on the lower high seat and for a hundred (120) men going out from it, and expected his foster-father Pálnatóki to take that space, and his companions. And when they realized there was a delay in Pálnatóki's coming people began the drinking.

But now it must be told about Pálnatóki, that he makes ready to leave home, and Björn inn brezki with him, and they take three ships out of the country and a hundred (120) men; there were half of each in that company, Danes and Bretar. They then travel until they arrive off Denmark. And that same evening they come into the harbor belonging to King Sveinn, and anchor their ships where the water seems deepest. The weather that evening was very good. They arranged their ships in such a way that they turned the prows away from land and set all the oars in the rowlocks so that they could take to them as quickly as possible if they had sudden need of them.

And then they go ashore and proceed on their way until they come to the king, and people were sitting over drink when they arrived, and that was the first evening of the feast. Now Pálnatóki walks into the hall and all the others after him. He walks further in through the hall and before the king, and greets the king well; and the king accepts his speech well and directs him to a seat, and all the others.

And now they sit drinking and are very cheerful. And when they have been drinking for a while, it is mentioned that Fjǫlnir leans towards the king and talks to him in a whisper for a while. The king changed color in response and turns red in appearance and swollen. But there was a man called Arnoddr, he was the king's candle-bearer, and is standing in front of his table. To him Fjǫlnir hands over an arrow and said that he should show it to every man who was in the hall until someone admitted to owning that same arrow. And after that Arnoddr does as Fjǫlnir instructed.

Now he walks first further in through the hall from the king's high seat and shows this arrow to everyone, and no one admits to owning it. Then it happens that he goes further out through the hall on the lower side, until he comes before Pálnatóki and asks him whether he recognizes the arrow. Pálnatóki replies:

"Why should I not recognize my arrow? Give it to me," he says, "because it is mine."

Then there is no lack of silence in the hall, and everyone was quiet as soon as there was someone who laid claim to the arrow.

And now the king begins to speak and said: "You, Pálnatóki," he says; "where did you last part company with that arrow?"

Pálnatóki answers: "I have often been obedient to you, foster-son, and if you think it does you more honor that I tell you in the presence of a large crowd rather than with few present, then I must grant you that. I parted with it from my bowstring, King," he says, "when I shot it into your father's arse and all the way through him until it came out into his mouth."

"Stand up, all of you," says the king, "and lay hands on them, Pálnatóki and his men, and kill them all, because now all the friendship between Pálnatóki and me is destroyed, and all the good feeling that has been between us."

And now all the men in the hall spring up, and it now becomes not altogether peaceful. Pálnatóki gets his sword drawn and makes sure that his first move is to strike at his kinsman Fjǫlnir, and it splits him down to the shoulders. But Pálnatóki has so many friends among the court that no one wants to bear weapons against him, and they all managed to get out of the hall except for one Welsh man from Bjørn's company. Pálnatóki spoke when they had come out and it had been reported that one of the men from Bjørn's company had been lost, and says that no less than that was to be expected, "and now we will go down to our ships at top speed, for there is nothing else to be done now."

Bjørn answers: "You wouldn't run like this from your man, and I must not either," he says. And he turns back at once into the hall, and when he comes in they throw the Welsh man over their heads, and they had nearly torn him apart, so to speak. And then Bjørn realizes this and manages to get hold of him and flings him up onto his back and runs out then.

And now they go down to their ships, and Bjørn did this mostly for his own honor, but he thought he knew that the man must be dead, and so it turned out, that the man died, and Bjørn took him with him, and they ran out onto their ships, and at once took to the oars. And it was pitch dark with no moon that night, and still, and so they get away, Pálnatóki and Bjørn, and make no stops before they get back to Bretland. But the king now goes back to the hall and all his company with him, and had not managed to do what they intended, and were very dissatisfied with that. Now after that they return to drinking the funeral feast, but after that each goes home from there to his residence.

Chapter 13

The Death of Ólǫf

It is said now that the following summer Pálnatóki's wife Ólǫf takes sick, and this illness leads to her death. But after her death Pálnatóki has no wish to stay in Bretland, and he hands over rule of it for Björn inn brezki to take charge of. But he prepares thirty ships to sail from the land and intends to set out on Viking raids. He departs from the land as soon as his journey is prepared, and he goes raiding that summer in Scotland and Ireland and gains a lot of wealth and honor in his raids.

He continues with this occupation for twelve summers altogether, and becomes well off both in money and fame. But when it was his habit to go raiding, he goes one summer to Vindland meaning to raid there, and has then captured ten ships so that he then has forty ships.

But at that time there ruled there the king who was called Búrizláfr, and he was displeased with the raiding, because he was told about Pálnatóki that he was almost always victorious where he raided, and he was the foremost of Vikings in those days, and he was considered to be cleverer than anyone and more resourceful, and most of those who opposed him got the worst of it.

And very soon after Pálnatóki comes near that land and Burizláfr has heard about him and what he intended to do, the king sends his men to meet him and invites Pálnatóki to meet him and said he wanted to keep peace and friendship with him; he also made it go along with this invitation that he offered to give him a district or domain of his land, the place called Jóm so that he could establish himself there, and he would give him that domain especially so that he should be obliged to defend the land and kingdom for the king. And Pálnatóki accepts this, and all his men, according to what is told.

And there he quickly has built in his domain a fortress by the sea, exceedingly large and strongly built, which was called Jómsborg after that. There he also has built a harbor inside the fortress that three hundred (360) longships could be berthed in at the same time, so that they were all shut within the fortress. It was designed with great ingenuity where the entrance to the harbor was, and it was constructed as if there were a door, with a great stone arch above it. And before the entrance there were iron gates which locked the harbor from within. And up on the stone arch a large tower was built with catapults inside it. Some parts of the fortress stood out over the sea, and structures built like that are called sea-castles, and on account of this the harbor was within the fortress.

Chapter 14

The Laws of the Jómsvikings

Now after this Pálnatóki establishes laws with the advice of intelligent men there in Jómsborg so that more power should be achieved there than had already been gained. No one was to come there to join Pálnatóki's company who was older than fifty years of age, and no one younger than eighteen years old; all must be between those ages.

No one at all must be there who would run away from a man as strong and well equipped as himself.

Each man who came there to join the fellowship must promise faithfully that each of them must avenge the other like his messmate or his brother.

And no one at all must stir up strife among men. Moreover, if any news was heard there, no one must be so reckless as to spread it around, for Pálnatóki must be the first to tell any news.

And anyone who is found out in what has been enumerated, and contravenes these laws, he must at once be ejected and driven out of their rule.

Also, if a man should be admitted who had killed the brother or father of a man who was already there, or someone closely bound to him in kinship, and if that were found out after he had been admitted, Pálnatóki must judge it.

Also, no one must have a woman there inside the fortress, and no one must stay away more than three nights outside the fortress except by Pálnatóki's advice and consent.

Everything they gained in raiding must be carried to the banner whether large or small, and anything of any value. And if it proved true that anyone had not done so he must leave the fortress, whether he was of greater status or lesser.

No man must speak words of fear there or be afraid, however unpromising things might look for them.

Nothing must take place among those within the fortress that Pálnatóki should not settle and decide according to what he wanted.

Nothing must be decided by kinship or friendship if people decided to make their way there who were not members of the rule. And even if people who were already there invited those who were not fit to join this rule, it would not be granted to them.

And now they stay in the fortress in this way on good terms and keep their laws properly. They leave the fortress each summer and go raiding in various lands and gain great glory, and are thought to be the

greatest of warriors, and none were thought to be anything like their equals at that time. And they are now called Jómsvikings after this for all time.

Chapter 15

About King Sveinn and Áki

Now it is to be told about King Sveinn, that he allows himself to treat Pálnatóki's son Áki as well as possible in every way, as if they had always been good friends. And although there had been some coldness between them the king did not make Áki pay for that, and he had great respect for that foster-brotherhood.

And Áki stays on Fjón and rules it as his father had appointed him to do and as was said before.

Chapter 16

About Véseti's Sons

A man comes into the saga who is called Véseti; he rules over the district that is called Borgundarhólmr. His wife was called Hildigunnr. They had three children who are mentioned in this saga. And their son has the name Búi who was known as Búi inn digri (the Stout), then the second was called Sigurðr who was known as Sigurðr kápa (Cape); their daughter was called Þórgunna; she had been married several years before this time. King Sveinn asked for her hand on behalf of Pálnatóki's son Áki, and she was married to him.

And soon after they had been married she and Áki had a son who is named Vagn.

And when this was happening, there rules over Sjólfnd the jarl who is named Haraldr and who was called Strút-Haraldr (Cone-Haraldr); the reason for that was that he had a hat which had a large cone on it. It was made of pure gold, and so large that it was worth ten marks of gold; and from that he got the name and was called Strút-Haraldr. Ingigerðr was the name of the jarl's wife. There were three of their children who are named in this saga: their son had the name Sigvaldi, and the second Þorkell who was called Þorkell inn hávi (the Tall), and their daughter was called Tófa.

Pálnatóki's son Áki lives on Fjón with great honor and respect, and Vagn grows up there with his father until he is some years old. But it is said about him, as soon as his character could be recognized somewhat, that he was a more difficult person in his temperament than all the other men who had grown up there. All his behavior and habits were such

that it hardly seemed possible to control him. And it is related that Vagn sometimes lives at home with his father as had been the case up till then, and sometimes in Borgundarhólmr with his grandfather Véseti, and the reason for that is that neither thought himself able to bring advice to bear on him or lay hands on him, he seemed so unmanageable. With Búi he gets on best of all his family, and he mostly does what Búi tells him to, because he liked him best. But he never did what his kinsmen said if he thought otherwise, whatever it might be. He was the handsomest of all men and best looking, and a man of many skills, advanced for his age in every way.

His mother's brother Búi was a man of few words, most often rather silent, and proud. He was such a strong man that no one could estimate his strength. Búi was not a handsome man, and yet he was impressive and imposing and an outstanding warrior in every respect.

His brother Sigurðr kápa was a handsome and courtly man and capable, but hot-tempered in his dealings and rather taciturn.

But of Strút-Haraldr's son Sigvaldi there is this to be said, that he is a pale man with an ugly nose; he had exceptionally fine eyes; he was tall and looked very brisk. His brother Þorkell was the tallest of all men; he was a strong and clever man, as were both of those brothers.

Chapter 17

It is now related that Sigvaldi and his brother make ready two ships to sail from the country and intend to go to Jónsborg and want to see if they will be admitted, and they ask their father Jarl Haraldr for advice, how wise he thought it was for them to join forces with the Jómsvikings. And he answers and considers it wise for them to go there and increase their fame and honor in this way, "and it is now time for you two brothers to put to the test whether you are worth anything as men." They asked him for financial help for the expedition and also provisions, but he answered and declared they must do one of two things, either leave the country on these terms, that they get provisions for themselves and anything else they needed to have, or else not go at all and keep quiet.

Now in the end they go, even though their father Jarl Haraldr would not support them. They have two ships and a hundred (120) men; they equipped this force as well as possible and then traveled until they came to Borgundarhólmr and thought they needed to get hold of provisions and money somehow. And now they decide to make raids there, and they plundered and seized one of Véseti's farms, the richest, and they robbed

him of all the property and carried it down to their ships. And now they go off on their way, and there is nothing to tell about their travels until they come to Jónsborg. They anchored outside the gates of the fortress. But Pálnatóki always walked with a large troop up to the tower that was built over the channel, and so he was accustomed to speak from there with those men who came to the fortress.

And now when he becomes aware of the arrival of Sigvaldi and his brother, Pálnatóki did again as was his habit: he goes up into the tower with a large troop and asks from there who commanded the company and ships that had come there. Sigvaldi answers him:

“In command here,” he said, “are two brothers, sons of Jarl Strút-Haraldr, and I am called Sigvaldi, and my brother is called Þorkell. And our mission here is that we wish to join your company with those men in our party who seem useful to you.”

Pálnatóki replies politely to this speech, but seeks advice from his fellows among the Jónsvikings, and declared that he was familiar with their descent and says that they are well born. But the Jónsvikings told Pálnatóki to take care of it as he thought fit and said it was for him to decide as he wishes.

And now after this Jónsborg is opened, and now Sigvaldi and his men row into the fortress. And when they had come in their company had to be put to the test according to what the law of the Jónsvikings prescribes. And now that same goes ahead, that their company is tested as to whether they are considered to have the boldness and courage to join the company of the Jónsvikings and abide by all the laws that were established there.

And the trial goes so that half of their company was accepted into the rule by the Jónsvikings, and they sent the other half back.

Now Sigvaldi and his brother Þorkell are accepted and half a hundred (60) men with them, and they are now inducted into the rule of the Jónsvikings, and none are in higher esteem with Pálnatóki than those brothers, and so matters rest for a while.

Chapter 18 About Véseti

Now the story must return to Véseti, one of whose farms, the richest, had been plundered, and this soon comes to Véseti's ears, and he decides first of all to hold back his sons from all rashness and overbearing, but he goes himself to see King Sveinn and tells him what had happened concerning

Haraldr's sons, and how they had robbed him and seized his farm, the richest of any of those he owned.

The king replies: "This is the advice I give you," he says, "that you must now leave well alone at first. But I will send word to Strút-Haraldr and find out if he is willing to pay up the money on behalf of his sons, so that you consider yourself to have got redress, and I hope that you will be satisfied with that."

Now Véseti goes home on these terms, while King Sveinn at once sends people to find Jarl Haraldr and told him to come and see him. The jarl did not put the journey on the back burner and travels until he comes to the king, and is received well by him. Now the king asks after Jarl Haraldr, how much he knows about the devastation his sons have wrought on Véseti. He said he knew little of it. The king tells him that they have attacked one of his farms, the one that was worth most, and he asked that he should compensate him for the value and be at peace afterwards. But the jarl answered and said he had not yet received this property that he was supposed to compensate for, though young people might have taken some cows or sheep to feed themselves.

The king said: "Then you must go home as things are," says the king, "and now I have told you what I wish. But now I will stipulate, though, that you settle the matter yourself with Véseti's sons and also your property, and now I will have no part in it, since you are not willing to accept what I propose to you, and are only willing to accept what suits you, and I expect this will turn out to be a bad decision."

Jarl Haraldr answers and said he himself would settle the matter, but said he would not trouble the king with it, "and I am not at all afraid of Véseti and his sons."

And now after this Jarl Haraldr sails home, and it is not reported that anything happened on his journey.

Chapter 19

About Búi digri

The next thing to be told is that Véseti and his sons hear of the discussion between Jarl Haraldr and King Sveinn, and how their talk came to an end, and also what the jarl had said at their parting before he and the king separated.

Now they consider what to do, Véseti's sons. Their decision is that they make ready three ships, all of them large, and crew them with two hundred (240) men, and equip that company as best they can; after

that they travel until they reach Sjóland and there seize the three of Jarl Haraldr's farms that were the wealthiest he owned. And after that they go home, Véseti's sons, with this great booty they had just gained.

And now the news comes quickly to Jarl Strút-Haraldr that he had been robbed, and his three wealthiest farms seized. Now it comes into his mind what the king had foretold to him. He now at once sends men to ask the king whether he will now take a part in reconciling them, and said he was now very willing for him to adjudicate. But the king now answers this, that "now Jarl Haraldr must follow his own good judgment, and now I will not interfere, because he was not willing to take my advice when we discussed this matter, and there was less to adjudicate then than there is now, and let him have it his own way now, but I will not have any part in it."

Now the jarl's messengers go back home and tell him the king's answer.

"We will have to follow our own judgment," says the jarl, "if the king means to stay silent over the matter."

Jarl Haraldr now gets hold of ten ships and equips them as well as possible with men and weapons, and then goes with all this company all the way to Borgundarhólmr, and there they race ashore and seize three of Véseti's farms, which were no worse than the ones the sons of Véseti had seized.

Jarl Haraldr now turns back to Sjóland with this property and thinks he has avenged himself well on this expedition.

It is now said that only a short time elapsed before Véseti hears of this: all the damage that had been done to his property, and he adopts the plan of going at once to see King Sveinn, and he receives him well. Then Véseti puts his case to the king and reports it in this way:

"You will have heard, my lord," he says, "that there have been heavy dealings between me and Jarl Haraldr lately, and I expect that strife will set in among the people of the country themselves if you do not intervene between us, and it may be that it will be worse later than it is now, as things stand, for we are both your men, my lord."

The king replies in this way: "I will soon be going to the assembly called Íseyrarþing, and I will summon Jarl Haraldr there, and the two of you must be reconciled there with the counsel of good men and my adjudication, and it will be best for the jarl that I settle this case as I choose, especially as I think you have pursued your case well."

And after that Véseti goes home, and now time goes on until King Sveinn and his company make ready to go to the assembly.

Jarl Haraldr did not have far to go to the assembly, and he takes no more than twenty ships. Véseti also goes to the assembly and takes only three ships. It is also said that his sons were not on the expedition with him, Búi digri and Sigurðr kápa.

And now when the king and the jarl and Véseti had arrived at the assembly, Véseti pitches his tent down by the sea next to the inlet running in to the assembly place. But Jarl Strút-Haraldr had set up his tent somewhat higher. And in between the king places his camp.

And as the evening passed they saw from the assembly site traveling from Jarl Haraldr's camp ten ships. And as they got closer men anchored their ships, then disembarked from the ships with their company. They at once headed to the assembly.

Now these men are soon recognized: Véseti's sons, Búi and Sigurðr, have arrived there. Búi inn digri was dressed very splendidly, for he was wearing clothes belonging to Jarl Haraldr. And that outfit was so valuable that it was worth twenty marks of gold. They had also seized from the jarl two chests of gold so stuffed with gold that in each chest there were ten hundred (1,200) marks of gold. The jarl's hat Búi was wearing on his head, the one that was worth ten marks of gold.

They now walk to the assembly, the brothers, fully armed and with a fully deployed and dashing company. And when they had arrived Búi begins to speak and demands a hearing. And when it grew quiet he said to Jarl Strút-Haraldr:

"I advise you, Jarl," he says, "if you recognize at all these treasures you can see shining on me now, to attack without cowardice if you dare, and if there is any courage in you, for you have long browbeaten our family. I am now very ready to fight you, if you have any stomach for battle."

King Sveinn hears Búi's words, and realizes that he will not be able to maintain his dignity if he allows them to fight there at the assembly without intervening between them, since he had placed such weight on their being reconciled there at the assembly, and now the king decides to go between them and not let them come to blows, and now in the end it comes about there through the help and authority of the king that they are both obliged to agree that the king alone should decide between them as he likes. But Búi stipulates in the settlement that he will never give up the chests of gold that he had got from the jarl, and none of his treasures, but he told the king to decide the rest as he chose.

The king answers: "You, Búi," he says, "seem audacious to me. You shall have your way about the chests of gold, but the jarl as much of the

other property as he is satisfied with. And you have to give up, Búi digri,” he says, “the jarl’s treasures that you have taken, and not do him such shame and disgrace that he does not get back his robes of state.”

The outcome is that the king’s decision prevails, and Búi takes off the robes.

Now the king insisted most that the jarl’s treasures must be given back because the jarl considered the greatest insult to him would be if he did not manage to get his treasures. And now they come to an agreement that the king should divide between them in such a way as he has decided about the treasures, and do so in the same way concerning other things so that it seems even between them.

And then the king announces the settlement and the case begins as he had already given them to understand, that Búi was at once to give up the jarl’s treasures, but was himself to keep both the chests of gold to seal the reconciliation with the jarl in full. They were also to give back the farms that had been seized from Jarl Strút-Haraldr, “but he must honor you in exchange by marrying his daughter Tófa to Sigurðr kápa, and this property shall be her dowry, and the seizing of the farms shall not be paid back in any other way than they undertake to do themselves.”

The king made the settlement in this way because he thought it was most likely that good terms would develop between them and that the settlement would last for longest if the marriage alliance took place. This is well received by father and sons, and Véseti settles on Sigurðr a third of all his property. And Sigurðr is extremely pleased with the marriage intended for him, and now they are reconciled with this and go at once to the meeting with Jarl Strút-Haraldr, and then Sigurðr’s marriage is to take place at once.

To this feast the king himself goes, and Véseti and his sons, as was to be expected. And now the wedding toast of Sigurðr and Tófa is drunk with great pomp and honor.

And after the feast the king goes home, honored with gifts, and the other wedding guests. Véseti goes home too, and his sons, to Borgundarhólmr, and Tófa goes with them on the trip, the jarl’s daughter.

And now all is calm for a while and there are good relations among all men.

Chapter 20

Búi digri Goes to the Jómsvikings

Now the brothers have been at home with their father for a short time when Búi digri makes known what his mind is dwelling on, that he means

to go to Jónsborg to seek fame and glory for himself. His brother Sigurðr also wants to go with him although he is newly married, and now the brothers make ready to leave home with two ship and a hundred (120) men, and they intend to do exactly what the sons of Strút-Haraldr had done earlier, Sigvaldi and Þorkell. They sail then until they came to Jónsborg and at once anchor outside the stone arch at the entrance to the harbor.

And when the leaders in the stronghold learn of their coming, these chiefs walk, Pálnatóki, Sigvaldi, and Þorkell hávi, forward onto the stone arch, and Sigvaldi and Þorkell recognize the men who were commanding the ships. And now Búi begins to speak and says that he wants to join the company of the Jómsvikings, and his brother, with all their company, if Pálnatóki was willing to accept them.

But Sigvaldi begins to speak: "How did you and my father Jarl Strút-Haraldr settle your differences," he says, "before you left the country?"

Búi replies: "There is a long story to be told," he says, "about our dealings. But the end of it was that King Sveinn has settled all our disagreements, and I can't sum up in a short speech all that has gone between us, but we are reconciled now."

Now Pálnatóki spoke to his companions, the Jómsvikings: "Are you willing to take the risk," he says, "whether these men are telling the truth or not? But I would be very willing to have them," he says, "because I expect there are few here present in our company such as they are."

They answer him, the Jómsvikings: "We are willing for you to take these men into the fellowship if it seems good to you. But if any matters arise later concerning their situation that we don't know about now, that like everything else must be according to your adjudication."

And now after that Jónsborg is opened, and Búi's men steer the ships into the harbor, and their company is put to the test later, and of that company eighty men were accepted, and forty sail back home to Denmark.

Now there is to be told about this that now there are together in the fortress all the leaders who were named before and those who have now come, and they were good friends. They go raiding every summer in various countries and gain both wealth and fame for themselves. And although the great deeds that they did are not related in this account, yet it is said by all that it is not clear that there have ever been greater heroes or warriors than those Jómsvikings, and we believe that their equals have hardly been seen. But they stay quietly in Jónsborg every winter.

Chapter 21

About Vagn Ákason

We have now to go back to Vagn Ákason. He grew up now at home with his father on Fjón, and sometimes with his grandfather Véseti. He is so unruly a person as he grew up that it is always said as a sign of his temperament that by the time he was nine years old he had killed three men. He now lives at home until he is twelve years old, and then it had come to the point where people thought they could hardly tolerate his bullying and aggression. He also grew up to be so cruel that not a creature would he spare.

And now his family seems not to know how to get out of this difficulty.

And now it is decided that his father Áki should give him half a hundred (60) men and a longship with them. And another troop of the same size his grandfather Véseti gives him, and another longship with them, and none of the men following him is older than twenty years of age and none younger than eighteen years old, except Vagn himself. He was twelve years old. He asks to be given no more than has just been related: a troop of a hundred (120) and two longships, and he said he had no need of more; he said he himself would get his own supplies and whatever else they needed to have.

Chapter 22

Now Vagn set out from home with that promising company, and now they at once need to get provisions, and Vagn was not short of resourcefulness, young in age though he was. He now goes plundering at once from one end of Denmark to the other, and raids the shores ruthlessly for what he needed. He stole both battle-dress and weapons, and it ends so that he has no lack of weapons, armor, or provisions before he sailed away from the Danish realm, and he makes the Danes provide such things for him. Now he has abundance of all they need to have on these two ships.

Now he sails until he comes to Jómsborg; that was early in the morning at sunrise. Vagn and his men now at once put their ships in towards the stone arch. But the chieftains of the fortress, Pálnatóki and Sigvaldi, Þorkell and Búi and Sigurðr, as soon as they become aware of the troop, they go into the tower as they were accustomed to do and then ask who had come there. Vagn asks in turn whether Pálnatóki is in the tower. He

answers and says that the man who was so called has come to speak to him, "But who are these men," he says, "who look so splendid?"

Vagn says: "I must not hide my name from you. I am called Vagn," says he, "and I am the son of Áki of Fjón, and closely related to you, and I have come here because I wanted to join your company, for I was not thought easy to get on with at home more than you'd notice, and my family would think they had had enough of me if I left there straight away."

Pálnatóki replies: "Do you think it certain, kinsman," says he, "that you will seem easy to get on with here if people at home can hardly manage you, or not at all?"

Vagn answers: "People have lied to me, kinsman," he says, "if you are not able to curb my temper so that I can take my place among brave men, and you will be wanting to show us honor now that we have come to see you."

Then Pálnatóki discusses it with the Jómsvikings: "Which do you think wiser," he says, "for us to accept my kinsman Vagn and his men or not?"

Then answers Búi digri: "My advice," he says, "and he behaves best to me of all his family, is that we never accept him and that he should never get inside the fortress here."

Then said Pálnatóki to Vagn: "Men here inside the fortress want to oppose you, kinsman," says he, "even your kinsmen who know all about you."

Vagn answers: "Are they firm about this, the men who stand beside you, that they will not accept me? But I would not expect of my kinsman Búi that he would be sure about this."

"But I am firm in this, though," says Búi, "that I do not urge that you should be accepted, and yet I want Pálnatóki to decide."

"But what do Jarl Strút-Haraldr's sons put forward?" says Vagn; "This I want to know."

"We must both say with one voice," says Sigvaldi, "that we want you never to come into our group."

Now Pálnatóki asks: "How old are you, kinsman?" he says.

"I will not lie about it," he says; "I am twelve years old," he says.

"Well," says Pálnatóki, "Then you are proposing what is against our rule, kinsman," he says, "since you are a much younger man than any we have received by law to join our company in Jónsborg, and that settles it, and for this reason you cannot join us."

Vagn answers: "I will not insist, kinsman," he says, "that you break your rule. But it will hardly be broken if I am the same as someone eighteen years old or more."

"Look here! Do not press this any further, kinsman," says Pálnatóki; "I will rather send you west to Bretland to meet Björn inn brezkki, and for the sake of our kinship I will give up to you half of the dominion of Bretland to possess and rule."

"I am well pleased with that offer, kinsman," says Vagn, "but yet I do not want what you are now offering."

"What do you want then, kinsman," says he, "since you do not want such a share as I offer you, for I think I have made a good offer?"

Now Vagn replies: "I don't want that any more than before," he says, "and yet it is a good offer and worthy of our kinship."

Pálnatóki said: "What do you mean to do, kinsman," he says, "in your pride and ambition, if you won't accept such a share?"

"You must now become aware, Jómssvikings," says Vagn, "what is on my mind. I wish to offer Sigvaldi, son of Jarl Strút-Haraldr, that he and I should have a contest with each other and fight with an equal force on either side. Let him bring two ships out of the fortress and a troop of a hundred (120), and then let us put it to the test which of us must yield to the other and which shall have the upper hand in our encounter. And that case shall be binding for us, and if it can be that they are defeated and run away, then you shall be obliged to accept us and take us into your rule in Jómsborg. But if we have the role in the event that I now intend Sigvaldi's men to have, then we must go away and then you will be free of this obligation. But I won't challenge you less daringly than this: that Sigvaldi the jarl's son will fight against me if he dares, and if he is a real man and has a man's heart, not a she-beast's."

Now answers Pálnatóki: "Listen to the outrage," he says, "of what this young man proposes, and you can hear, Sigvaldi," he says, "how hard he directed the challenge at you, although you are a jarl's son, and I think it is not at all unlikely that you will be fully tested by this kinsman of mine before you part. But as it is pressed so hard and angrily you can hardly come out of it as a worthy man if you don't contest it with them, because too much has been said for you to be able to turn aside. And it is up to you to sail at them, make the first assault on them and bring them back down to earth. But if it comes about that our kinsman Vagn is not as victorious as he is vainglorious, and he gets the worse of it, then I want to make the firm provision that no man bring weapons to bear on him, because it

will go hard with those who cause that, and it will be easy for us to see if he is hard-pressed or any harm is done to him, though attacking him is hardly child's play. And yet now I expect it will be made clear how you are, Sigvaldi, in battle, young as my kinsman may be."

Chapter 23

Now after that Sigvaldi and his men make ready two ships to take out of the fortress against Vagn. And as soon as they meet, they lay their shields together and fight. And it is told about this that Vagn and his fellows attack Sigvaldi's at once with the fiercest rain of stones so that they can do nothing more than shield themselves and save their lives, and yet they can barely manage this, so furiously do these young men fight. And as soon as the stones ran out they have no need to wait long for the hewing weapons, and they have a battle of blows and fight very boldly with swords.

But it came about later that Sigvaldi gave way and flees in onto land and tried to get stones. But Vagn and his men pursue them, and they meet now on land, and now Sigvaldi is forced to fall back whether he wants to or not, and now there is another fight between them. And that battle is much fiercer and sharper than the first.

And it is now told that that fight proved hard for Sigvaldi and his men. Pálnatóki and the others were now standing on the tower of the fortress and see from there how the contest is going for Sigvaldi's side.

Now Vagn's men attack them hard, so that Sigvaldi draws back with his fellows all the way to the fortress, but it was closed and locked, and they could not get into the fortress. They were forced to turn around and offer a defense or else give themselves up.

And now Pálnatóki sees, and the Jómsvikings, that now one of two things will happen: either Vagn will manage to overcome Sigvaldi and his company, or else they will have to open up the fortress so that he will be able to save his life, for now he is unable to flee, nor would he have wished to, such a man as he was.

It comes to this, that Pálnatóki orders the fortress to be opened, "and you, Sigvaldi," he says, "you are hardly fighting against your equal in this kinsman of ours, and it is now time to stop this contest, for your exchange has been tested to the full, and you can now tell what each of you is like. And it is my advice," says Pálnatóki, "if it suits you, that we accept this young man and his company, although he is somewhat younger than is stipulated in our rule. And my heart rejoices," he says, "to have one so young here in

our company, that not one can get hold of him, and it can clearly be expected of such men that later they allow nothing to be insurmountable.”

Now they do as Pálnatóki said, and now Jómsborg is opened, and the battle between them is stopped. And now Vagn is accepted into the rule and all his men.

In the battle between Vagn and Sigvaldi it is said that thirty men of Sigvaldi's fell and an equal number of Vagn's. And yet only Vagn of the two of them had the honors of that encounter. Many men on both sides had also been wounded in the battle.

Now Vagn stays there in Jómsborg with the will and agreement of all the chieftains, for their rule required that all must be of one accord when it came to the point, even if there had previously been some toing and froing.

It is said of Vagn that he became such a wise and well-conducted man there in Jómsborg that no one there was wiser or pleasanter than Vagn Ákason, nor more skilled in all courtliness than he. He leaves the land every summer and steers a ship and undertakes raiding, and none of the Jómsvikings was a greater warrior than he in enterprises.

So it goes on now for three summers after he joined the company of Jómsvikings, so that they set out raiding each summer and always won the day, but in the winters they stayed at home in Jómsborg. And they are now widely known throughout the world.

Chapter 24

Pálnatóki's death

It is now mentioned that in the third summer as autumn approached Pálnatóki falls sick, and Vagn is then fifteen years old when this happens. Now at once King Búrizláfr is invited to the fortress, for Pálnatóki says his feeling about this illness is that it will bring him to his death. And when the king comes to see Pálnatóki, he speaks like this:

“My foreboding is, my lord,” he says, “that I will suffer no more illnesses, and that may not seem unlikely because of my age. But it is my advice,” he says, “and my counsel to you, that another man should be put in my place, and be the leader in the fortress to arrange the matters I have seen to up to now, and let the Jómsvikings stay here in the fortress and keep up the defense of the country for you as we have done before, and it seems to me that of those available Sigvaldi is the least unfit to follow in my footsteps in decision-making and judgments of men's affairs, both because of intelligence and wisdom, and there may seem to be some

arrogance in what I will now say to you, that I guess—but I do not know—that they will all fall short somewhat of what I have been.”

The king answers then: “Often your counsels have turned out well for us,” he says, “and we will go on keeping to what you have proposed, and that will suit us all best, but it is to be feared that you and your counsels will no longer serve us, and we are all the more obliged to heed the last of them. And all the old laws that Pálnatóki established in consultation with intelligent men here in Jónsborg are to remain in force.”

It is said that Sigvaldi was not especially unwilling for this, and he takes over what was assigned to him by the agreement of King Búrizláfr and Pálnatóki.

And now after that, Pálnatóki gives his kinsman Vagn a half share in Bretland to possess and rule with Björn inn brezki, and then he asked for goodwill in every way towards his kinsman Vagn from the Jómsvikings and especially from the king, and used about that many words and wise, and in that he showed that he was very fond of his kinsman Vagn, and also that he thought it very important that they treat Vagn well.

And soon after that Pálnatóki dies, and that seems to all a great loss.

Chapter 25

Sigvaldi Takes up Control of the Laws

Now after Pálnatóki’s death, Sigvaldi takes over control of the rule of the Jómsvikings. And when he had not had that command for long it is related that there was some change in the application of the laws in the fortress, and the laws were not observed so strictly as when Pálnatóki was in charge. So it comes about quickly that there are women staying there in the fortress for two or three nights at a time. It also happens that men are absent from the fortress for longer than the law allowed. And now sometimes there are woundings among men within the fortress and occasionally killings.

Chapter 26

About Sigvaldi

And now when this is happening, Sigvaldi leaves the fortress and goes to meet King Búrizláfr. And the king had three daughters whose names come into the saga, and the eldest was called Ástríðr and was very beautiful to look on and the cleverest, and the one closest to her in age was called Gunnhildr, and Geira the youngest; she was married to Óláfr Tryggvason.

And when Sigvaldi came to see the king, he offers him two choices: he said either he would not stay in Jónsborg, or else the king should give him his daughter Ástríðr in marriage.

The king answered him: "What I had intended," he says, "was that I would marry her to a man who was nobler in his name than you are. And yet it is necessary for me that you don't leave the fortress, and we must all discuss together what seems to us most advisable to do."

Then the king met his daughter Ástríðr and asks her how she feels about the match if she were to be married to Sigvaldi, "and I want," says he, "to make the arrangement as cleverly as possible so that Sigvaldi does not leave the fortress, or the Jónsvikings, for I have great need of them for the defense of my land."

Ástríðr answers her father: "To tell you the truth, father," she says, "I would rather never marry Sigvaldi, but you must not drive him away, and yet do it in the way that I propose: to earn this marriage he must rid this country of all the tributes we have paid to the king of the Danes up to now before he comes into my arms. The alternative is that he gets Sveinn, king of the Danes, brought here so that you have power over him."

And after this the king puts to Sigvaldi the proposal they have discussed, and then they make a firm agreement between them, and it has to be achieved before the third Yule. And if Sigvaldi does not achieve what has just been stipulated among them then all their agreements will be cancelled.

Sigvaldi now goes back after this to Jónsborg.

And that same spring he puts out from there with three ships and 360 men, from Jónsborg. He sails until he reaches Sjóland and there meets and speaks to people and gets the news that King Sveinn is attending a feast a short distance inland from there. And now when he seems to have heard fully of the king's movements he moors his ships off a certain headland where there were no other ships nearby; and that was close to the estate where the king was attending the feast, drinking with six hundred (720) men.

Sigvaldi and his men turn their ships around so that the prows are facing away from land and fasten each ship to the prow of the next, and they place all the oars in the rowlocks. Then Sigvaldi sent twenty trusty men to see King Sveinn and said that they were to tell the king that he urgently wanted to meet him, and also that he was so sick that he was almost at the point of death; "you must also tell the king that it is a matter of life and death for him."

And now the messengers go to the estate and walk into the hall before the king. And the one who was their leader gave the message they had been sent with. And when the king heard this news, the king at once went down to the sea, and the six hundred men who were there at the feast with him, to meet Sigvaldi. And when Sigvaldi becomes aware that the king was on the way there, it is said that he is on the ship that was furthest from land, and now he is lying in bed and acts completely feeble. He now spoke to his men: "When thirty men have come out onto the ship that is nearest the shore, then you are to pull up the gangplank from land and out onto the ship, and tell people not to sink the ships under us and not to crowd so severely, and I guess that the king will be among the first to move. And when twenty men have come onto the middle ship, the gangplank leading onto that ship must be pulled off. [And when the king gets onto the outermost ship in a group of ten men then the gangplank between the ships must be removed.]"¹⁷

Now it is said that the king comes there with his company and asks after Sigvaldi, and he is told that he was very weak, "and he is lying on the outermost ship," and then he walks onto the ship closest to land and from one to the other until he comes onto Sigvaldi's ship. Men also walked after him, but Sigvaldi's men do everything he had ordered them to do.

And now when the king, with nine others, is come onto the ship Sigvaldi is lying on, the king asked whether he was able to speak, and he is told that he is able to speak, although his strength is at its lowest. Then the king walks to where Sigvaldi is lying and bends down over him and asks whether he can hear his speech, or what news he can tell him that made him set such store by their meeting, as Sigvaldi had sent him word about.

"Lean down to me a little, my lord," says he, Sigvaldi; "then you'll be able to hear my speech better, for my voice is soft now."

And when the king bends down to him, Sigvaldi put one arm around the king's shoulders and the other under his arm, and he is now completely powerless, and he holds him, the king, completely fast. And at that moment Sigvaldi calls to all the crew that they must all fall to the oars as quickly as possible, and so they do, and row away now as fast as they can. And those six hundred men stand behind on the shore and look on.

And now the king begins to speak and said: "What's this now, Sigvaldi?" he says. "Will you betray me now, or what is the plan? I now seem to see," he says, "that something lies behind it. But I am not able to see what this enterprise means."

Sigvaldi answers the king and speaks thus: "I will not betray you, my lord, but now you have to go to Jónsborg with us, and we shall do everything to honor you that we can, and all the men who have come with you now shall be welcome among us, and you will find out what it all means when you come to the feast that we have prepared for you there, and then you alone shall decide everything; but we must all, as we are obliged to, bow down to you and do you all the honor that we can."

"That I will now accept," says the king, "from the alternatives available."

Now they sail until they come to Jónsborg, and Sigvaldi treats the king with proper respect, and now the Jónsvikings prepare an excellent feast for him and all declare themselves to be his men. And now Sigvaldi tells the king the reason why he had brought the king out of the land, that he said he had asked for the hand of a woman on his behalf, the daughter of King Búrizláfr, "the fairest girl I know, and of the best character, and I undertook that out of friendship for you, my lord, as it seems to me, and I did not want you to miss out on this excellent match."

Sigvaldi now brought it about that all the Jónsvikings agreed with him in this. The king asked him what the girl was called. "The girl is called Gunnhildr," says Sigvaldi, "whom I have asked for on your behalf. And his other daughter, who is called Ástríðr, is betrothed to me, and yet Gunnhildr is superior to her in every way, as it ought to be. But you, King, shall stay here at the feast in Jónsborg while I go to see King Búrizláfr and arrange the marriages for us both, and you will now have to rely on me for all your affairs, and I shall make it turn out well for you."

Now after this Sigvaldi goes to see King Búrizláfr with a hundred (120) men, and a fine feast is prepared in his honor. And when he and the king spoke together Sigvaldi said he had now come to claim Ástríðr and declared he had fulfilled what had been stipulated, since King Sveinn of the Danes had now come to Jónsborg and they had the power to do what they liked with him, according to their own judgment and management, and he then told the king and Ástríðr to do as seemed best and wisest to them.

Now they discussed this and asked Sigvaldi for advice, both the king and his daughter Ástríðr, what he thought best to do in this matter concerning King Sveinn.

Sigvaldi answers: "I have thought of a plan for this matter," says he; "I want you to marry your daughter Gunnhildr to King Sveinn and do him honor in his coming here, while he shall earn the marriage by giving

up before it all the tributes that you have previously had to pay him up till now, and I will go between you in these negotiations, and I will have these terms pursued so that what I have put before you will go ahead."

Now after these discussions of theirs, Sigvaldi goes back with his company, the hundred men, so that he meets King Sveinn, and the king at once asks how the affair had gone for him.

"It is now in your hands, my lord," says he.

"How is that?" says the king.

"Like this," says Sivaldi; "if you are willing to earn it by giving up in advance the tribute from King Búrizláfr before he marries his daughter to you. You could bear in mind, too, lord," says Sigvaldi, "that it will all be yours after his death, and your honor will be greater if you have a father-in-law who is not a tributary to anyone, for those kings who pay tribute are always considered inferior to those who do not."

And now Sigvaldi uses many arguments to persuade King Sveinn that this befits him, and he was not short of either wit or fluency. It comes to the point where King Sveinn agrees to the plan that Sigvaldi proposed, and he is eager for this marriage to take place, and now the wedding feast is agreed and arranged, and both weddings are to take place at the same time.

And when this comes about, all the Jómsvikings travel to the feast, and King Sveinn goes on the journey with them, and there was held the most lavish feast in every way, so that all those who were alive then remembered that no more splendid feast had been held in Vindland than that.

It is now told that on the first evening when people were sitting at the wedding feast the brides veiled themselves so that their faces could not be seen clearly. But the next morning they are very merry and then do not wear veils.

And now King Sveinn considers closely the appearance of the sisters, for he had seen neither earlier than at the feast, and he knew nothing about them except what Sigvaldi had told him of the beauty and manners of the sisters. And it is now said that King Sveinn was much better pleased with the woman that Sigvaldi had married, and she seemed to him to be fairer and more cultured than his own wife, and he thinks that Sigvaldi, in the end, has not told him the truth. And now King Sveinn feels that friendship towards him has been greatly lacking on the part of Sigvaldi, and the king now sees, with the advice of wise men, all his scheme, and yet he keeps it under cover in public, and takes advantage of everything offering him honor and respect that there is in the feast now that the affair has

turned out like this. And now he is to inherit a third of Vindland after the time of King Búrizláfr.

Now after this the feast finishes. Now King Sveinn goes away with his wife Gunnhildr and takes away from there thirty ships and goes with a large company and many valuables. And Sigvaldi goes to Jómsborg with his wife Ástríðr.

And now their laws greatly deviate from the way they had been established in the beginning by Pálnatóki and other wise men, and the Jómssvikings realize that now, and yet they all stay together there in the fortress for a while, and they are very famous.

Chapter 27

The Jómssvikings' Swearing of Oaths¹⁸

Not long after what has just been related, important news was heard from Denmark, that Jarl Strút-Haraldr, father of Sigvaldi and Þorkell, has died, while their brother Hemingr is of a young age when this happens, and King Sveinn feels obliged to hold a memorial feast for Jarl Strút-Haraldr if his elder sons do not come, for Hemingr seemed too young then to organize the feast.

Now he sends word to Jómsborg to the brothers that Sigvaldi and Þorkell should come to the feast and meet there and all hold the feast together and make the arrangements so that it should be most magnificent, in memory of such a chieftain as their father Jarl Strút-Haraldr was. And the brothers at once sent word back to the king, declaring that they would come and said that the king should have everything prepared that was necessary for the feast, but they said they would bear the cost, and told him to take all the supplies from the property that had belonged to Strút-Haraldr.

It seemed to most people unwise for them to go there, and they suspected that the friendship of King Sveinn towards Sigvaldi was rather weak, and towards all the Jómssvikings altogether, considering what had happened in their previous dealings, though each behaved dutifully towards the other; but Sigvaldi and Þorkell hávi would have nothing other than to go as they had promised. But the Jómssvikings too were not willing to stay behind, and they all wanted to go with Sigvaldi to the feast.

And when the time comes they sail out of Jómsborg with a large company. They have 190 ships.

They sail now until they come to Sjóland where Jarl Haraldr had ruled, and King Sveinn was already there and had had the memorial feast

prepared so that everything was ready. And that was around the beginning of winter. There was a numerous crowd of people there and the best of feasts, and the Jómsvikings drink prodigiously the first evening, and they were much affected by the drink.

And now, when this has gone on for a while, King Sveinn sees that almost all of them have become dead drunk, in such a way that they become very talkative and cheerful and think little of talking about much that otherwise it was not unlikely that they would have held back from. And now when the king sees this, he began to speak and said:

“Now here there is great enjoyment and a throng,” says he, “and now I would like to propose that you start up a new game to entertain people, one that would be long remembered afterwards and would be of great significance.”

Sigvaldi answers the king and said: “We think it would be best begun,” says he, “and most promising for the success of the game, for you to begin first, my lord, for we are all bound to bow down to you, and we will all agree to what you want to be done in the game, or begun.”

The king answers: “I know what men have always done,” says he, “at fine feasts and banquets, and wherever a body of fine men has come together: men have proposed oaths for their amusement and reputation, and I am keen that we should now try this entertainment, for I think I can see, so much more prominent are you Jómsvikings throughout all the northern half of the world than all other men, that it is obvious that whatever you put forward in such an entertainment will be on a larger scale, and it will also follow along with this that you are of higher caliber than other men, and it is likely that people will keep those things in mind longer, and of course I shall not hold back from beginning the game: this oath I swear,” says the king, “that I shall have driven King Aðalráðr out of his kingdom before three years are passed, or else have killed him and so gained the kingdom.¹⁹ And now for you, Sigvaldi,” says the king, “and swear no less an oath than I have.”

Sigvaldi answers: “So it must be, my lord,” says he, “that something must be sworn. This oath I swear,” says Sigvaldi, “that I shall make a raid in Norway before three years are past with such a force as I can get for it, and shall have driven Jarl Hákon out of the land, or else killed him; or the third alternative is that I will lie dead there.”

Then spoke King Sveinn, “Now this is going well,” says he, “and this oath is well sworn if you carry it out, and that is not lowly, and lots of luck with what you have spoken, and now carry out well and bravely what you

have sworn. Now we turn to where you are, Þorkell inn hávi," says the king, "for how you want to swear, and the only thing to do is to let it be nobly done."

Þorkell answers: "I have thought of my oath, my lord," says he. "This oath I swear," says Þorkell, "that I will follow my brother Sigvaldi and not flee until I see the stern of his ship. But if he fights on land, then this oath I swear, that I shall not flee while he is in the battle ranks and while I can see his standard in front of me."

"That is well spoken," says King Sveinn, "and you will certainly carry it out, you are such a brave man. Búi digri," says the king, "now for you, and I know that you will have something magnificent to say."

"This oath I swear, then," says Búi, "that I shall follow Sigvaldi on this expedition as long as my manliness and courage last, and not flee before there are fewer standing up than have fallen, and hold out for as long as Sigvaldi wishes."

"It went as I guessed," says the king, "that a magnificent oath would be sworn on your part. And now you, Sigurðr kápa, must swear something after your brother Búi."

"My swearing is swift, my lord," says Sigurðr. "This oath I swear, that I will follow my brother Búi and not flee before he is dead, if this is fated."

"This was to be expected," says the king, "that you would wish to follow the same course as your brother. And now for you, Vagn Ákason," says the king, "and I am very interested to hear how you swear, for your ancestors are great heroes and furies."

Vagn answers and said: "This oath I swear," says Vagn, "that I shall follow Sigvaldi on this expedition and my kinsman Búi, and hold out for as long as Búi wishes, if he is alive, and I add to this," says he, "my oath that if I get to Norway I will have got into the bed of Ingibjörg, daughter of Þorkell leira (Mudflat) east in the Vík without his permission or that of all her family, before I come back home to Denmark."

"Now it went as I expected," says the king, "and you surpass most of the men that I know in all courage and courtesy."

It is said that Bjørn inn brezki was there in the company of the Jómsvikings, and he was a particular companion of Vagn Ákason, because they had both owned Bretland together since Pálnatóki died. And now the king spoke,

"What oath do you swear, Bjørn inn brezki?" says the king.

"This oath I swear," says Bjørn, "that I will follow my foster-son Vagn while I have the wit and courage for it."

And now after that their conversation closes, and people go to sleep at once, and Sigvaldi goes to bed with his wife Ástriðr, and he falls fast asleep as soon as he gets into bed. But his wife Ástriðr is wakeful, and she wakes Sigvaldi when he has been sleeping like this for a long time, and she asks if he remembers the oath he had sworn in the evening. And he answers and says he does not remember that he had sworn an oath or anything during the evening.

She said: "You will not get away with that," says Ástriðr, "according to what I suppose, and you will need both wit and counsel for this."

"What is to be done then?" says Sigvaldi. "You are always so clever, and you will now be able to come up with a good plan."

She answers: "I don't know now," says she, "what the plan is that would be any good. But something must be suggested: When you come to the drinking tomorrow, be cheerful and happy, for King Sveinn will remember your oath-swearing, according to my guess. And when the king discusses it with you, you must answer him that 'ale is another man, and I would have had much less to say for myself if I had not been drunk.' And then you must ask the king what help he will be willing to give you for making good your oath, and then respond gladly to the king and make it appear that you depend wholly on the king, for he will think that he has trapped you into this, and ask how many ships he will give you for the expedition if you refuse to go otherwise. And if he takes this well and yet does not say anything about how many ships he will give you, then you must press him hard to tell you at once what support he will give you, and say that you will need plenty, because Jarl Hákon has great strength. But the reason why you must be so quick in insisting on this and pressing the king hard," says she, "is that I think he will be least reluctant to promise you support and make ships available to you while he does not know for sure whether the expedition will happen or not. But once the expedition is settled, I guess you will get little support from him if he hasn't already promised it, for he will not spare either you or Jarl Hákon from suffering disaster, and will be best pleased if you both suffer it."

It is now related that Sigvaldi does as Ástriðr advised him.

And when they started the drinking the following day, Sigvaldi was most cheerful and added much to the entertainment. And now the king refers to the oaths they had sworn the evening before, and now the king is very well pleased with it and thinks he has caught Sigvaldi hook, line, and sinker, and all the Jómsvikings together. But Sigvaldi answers the king and spoke all such words as Ástriðr had put to him, and now asks what support the king will give him.

And it comes about that the king speaks so that he declares he intends, when Sigvaldi is ready for the expedition, to support him with twenty ships.

Sigvaldi answers: "That would be good support," says he, "from some wealthy landowner, but it is not kingly support from such a ruler as you."

Then King Sveinn replies and frowned somewhat and asked Sigvaldi, "How much do you think you need," says he, "if you were to get the force you would like?"

"I can say that quickly," says Sigvaldi; "just sixty ships, all of them to be large and well equipped. And yet I will give you in exchange no fewer ships, or more, and they will be smaller, for no one knows whether all your ships will come back, and it is more likely that they will not."

Now answers the king, "All the ships shall be ready, Sigvaldi, when you are ready to go," says the king. "Just get under way; I shall give you what you ask for."

"That is a good answer, my lord," says Sigvaldi, "and honorable, as was to be expected from you, and now let what you have promised be well fulfilled, for now we shall leave as soon as this feast we are attending is over, and you get all the ships so that there may be no delay, and I will provide the company, and both of us together."

And now the king is dumbstruck at first, and he pauses, and yet spoke unexpectedly quickly: "So it shall be, Sigvaldi," says the king, "as you propose, and yet this has happened more quickly than I thought, and I hardly expected that you would be rushing off as fast as you are."

Then spoke Sigvaldi's wife Ástríðr: "It is not to be expected of you," says she, "that you will get much of a victory over Jarl Hákon if you delay your journey until he gets wind of it and is able to prepare against it for long, so that you will be defeated. The only thing to do," says she, "is to act as quickly as possible and let no news of it go before you, and you will take the jarl by surprise."

It is now said that they have the expedition planned for as soon as the feast is finished, and they make all the arrangements for the memorial feast and make plans for the journey.

It is said that Jarl Strút-Haraldr's daughter Tófa begins to speak and said to her husband Sigurðr: "You will now go," says she, "as you have planned; but this I want to ask you," says she, "that you follow your brother Búi as best you can and leave a legacy of the best reputation, and I will wait for you so that no man shall come into my bed while I hear that you are

alive and well. But there are two men, Búi,” says she, “that I will give to you for this expedition, because you have always been good to me. One is named Hávarðr and is called Hávarðr höggvandi (the Hewer), and the other is named Áslákr and is called Áslákr hólmskalli (Island-Baldhead). And I have given you these men because I am fond of you, and it would not be insincere to say that I would much rather have been married to you than to the one I have now; but that will have to stay as it is.”

Búi receives the men from her and thanks her for this and at once gives Áslákr to his kinsman Vagn as a follower. But Hávarðr stayed with him.

Now the party is over, and they make ready their force, the Jómsvikings, to leave the feast. And when they are ready, they sail from the land and have a hundred (120) large ships. And they had brought there to the feast from Jómsborg 190, and included in that number were many small ships.

Chapter 28

About the Jómsvikings' Attack on Norway

Now they set out on their journey, and they get a fair wind and reach the Vík in Norway. They arrive late in the evening. And that same night they headed for the town of Túnsberg and came there with all the company around midnight.

There comes into the saga a man named Qgmundr hvíti (the White); he was a landed man of Jarl Hákon, young in age and much valued by Jarl Hákon. He had most power over the town of Túnsberg when these events were taking place.

And when the troops had come into the town they seized almost the whole town and killed many people there; then they took all the property they could and did not act leniently. But those who were there did not have a pleasant awakening, and many had to face up to blows and armed attack.

Qgmundr hvíti wakes too like other people to this disturbance, and those who were sleeping by him in the same room. Now he takes up the plan, and those with him, to escape up into a loft where they thought they would be able to protect themselves for longest, for there was no opportunity of getting away to the forest. And when the Jómsvikings realized this, they attack the loft and rain blows fiercely on the loft.

And now Qgmundr and his party see that they will not be able to save themselves; this attack has become much more violent and fierce.

It is said that Qgmundr hvíti decides to jump down out of the loft and onto the street and he lands on his feet. But Vagn Ákason was standing near where he came down, and at once struck at him, Qgmundr, and cut off his arm below the elbow, and Vagn holds onto the arm, while Qgmundr gets away into the forest. A gold ring came off with the arm, and Vagn picks it up and keeps it.

But Qgmundr, when he gets into the forest, he stops where he can hear them speaking, and wants to see if he can find out from their words who has come there, for he does not know that so far, and thinks it will be too ignorant if he cannot say anything about them if he meets any more people, such injury as he has received. He now realizes from their words and shouts that the Jómsvikings have come, and so he knows now who has wounded him. And now after that he goes on his way in the woods and forests, and it is now said that he stayed out in the forest for six days before he reached a settlement.

And as soon as Qgmundr finds dwellings and men he gets all the care that is needed, for many people knew him by sight, and he was a worthy and popular man. And now he goes on to where he hears that the jarl is attending a feast, and he now seeks out a meeting with him. The jarl is attending a feast at the farm that is called Skuggi, and the man who was holding the feast is named as Erlingr; he was a landed man. The jarl was there at the feast with a hundred (120) men, and his son Eiríkr was there with him.

It is said that Qgmundr hvíti comes there late in the day and at once walks into the hall and before the jarl and greets him politely. The jarl accepts his greeting and he is asked what news is going around. And he answers, Qgmundr:

“There has only been a little news so far on my travels,” says he, “but it may be that the news turns out to be not so little.”

“What, then?” says the jarl.

“This, then!” says Qgmundr; “that I can tell you fighting news, that a great army has come into the country, east in the Vík with great violence and warfare, and I expect they have it in mind to carry on in the same way.”

The jarl said: “I would like to know,” says he, “whether people in this land will ever stop telling lying stories before someone is hanged for it.”

Eiríkr answers and said: “It is not to be taken like this, father,” says he; “it is not a liar who is telling this now.”

The jarl said: “You know for certain, my son,” says he, “who this man is? That seems likely since you support his case?”

"I believe I know something about it," says Eiríkr, "no less than you, father, suppose; I believe that it is your landed man Qgmundr who has come here, and he has often welcomed us better than we are welcoming him now."

"I did not recognize him," says the jarl. "Let him come back here to talk to me."

Now Qgmundr acts as soon as the jarl's message reaches him; then he goes before him again. Then the jarl asks, "Which Qgmundr are you?" he says. And he tells him all the details by which he can be recognized.

Then speaks the jarl, "I know," he says, "that you will be telling the truth if you are this man. But tell me," says the jarl, "who commands this great army?"

"Sigvaldi is his name," says Qgmundr, "who commands the army. But I heard named among the army both Búi and Vagn, and I have a certain mark on myself that shows that I am not lying." And then he raises his arm and shows the jarl the stump.

The jarl said then: "You are harshly treated," says he, "and grievously. But do you know who did you that harm?"

"I worked out what is likely, Jarl," says he, "from what they said when he picked up the ring that came off with the arm: 'You just got richer, Vagn Ákason,' they said, and from that I could tell that it was he who had wounded me, and I realized from it," says he, "that that army must be called the Jómsvikings."

"You must certainly be right about that," says the jarl, "from the people you heard named among the company. And to tell the truth, that is the last army I would choose," says the jarl, "if I had the choice of all, and we will now need both wit and ruthlessness against them; so my mind tells me."

Chapter 29 About Jarl Hákon

Now the jarl at once sends men north to his son Sveinn to tell him news of war, and sends him word to put his effort into gathering a troop from all over Trøndelag, and to call up all the men who are of good quality and also those who are of less account, and that every ship of a certain size is to be made ready to go there.

And Guðbrandr hvíti (the White) was there with the jarl, who was very fond of him.

And now the jarl at once leaves the feast with the troop he had got there. He travels until he comes down into Raumsdalir, and then he gathers

a troop around Norð-Mœrr. But he sends Erlingr south through Rogaland to tell the news and gather troops there; the jarl had sent Erlingr there to the south at once, before he left the feast, and he sends word to all those of his friends who were in the country and all those who were of any importance that they must all come to him with whatever troops they could get. And equally the jarl sent word to those he was in dispute with that they must also come to see him, and he declared he would come to terms with every man who came to see him at this time and brought him troops.

Jarl Hákon's son Eiríkr goes north into Naumudalr to meet his brother Sveinn, and gathers troops as he can all the way through the outer islands.

It is said that when Eiríkr sails south across Hamrasund, there come towards him ships; they were warships, and that man commands the fleet who was named Þorkell and was called Þorkell miðlangr (Long-waist); he is a red Viking, and in dispute with Jarl Hákon. They take up their arms at once, the Vikings, and mean to attack Eiríkr's party. They have three ships. But when Eiríkr sees that he said to Þorkell miðlangr:

"If you want to fight with us," says he, "then we shall be ready for it. And yet I'll put forward a better plan."

"What is that?" says Þorkell.

"I think it is unnatural," says Eiríkr, "that we men of Norway should fight among ourselves, because it could now be that other wretches will be found nearer at hand. But if you want to come and join my father with your troop and are willing to give him such support as you are capable of, then you and he will be reconciled, and that will not be done reluctantly on my father's part."

But Þorkell answers: "I will accept that if you guarantee, Eiríkr, that what you say now will not slip through my fingers when I meet your father."

"I will see to that," says Eiríkr.

And now Þorkell miðlangr and his company join forces with Eiríkr.

And soon after that the brothers meet, Eiríkr and Sveinn, and they now travel to the place they had agreed between themselves, Hákon and Eiríkr, before they parted. And then father and sons all meet there, Hákon, Eiríkr, and Sveinn, in the place they had agreed between them for their meeting and where all the host were to meet and come together. And that was in Sunn-Mœrr off the island that is called Hqð, and many landed men²⁰ come there. The father and sons had altogether three hundred (360) ships, and many of them were not very large. They lie at anchor there at

the place called Hjørungavágr and make their plans together, and lie there in the bay with the whole fleet.

Chapter 30

And now it is to be told about the Jómsvikings. They now sail from the south along the coast, not peacefully; they raid and steal wherever they go. They make large cattle raids and kill many people, and wide is the area where they burn settlements to cold embers, and they went on the war-path all the way from the south along the coast. And everyone who hears of their ravaging and is able to get away flees before it.

And now the Jómsvikings sail until they come to the sound which is called Úlfasund, and then they have come to Staðr. And it is told that neither side has clear information about the other, Jarl Hákon or the Jómsvikings.

And now the Jómsvikings sail north past Staðr six sea miles and travel until they come into harbor at the place called Hereyjar, and anchor their whole fleet there in the harbor.

And when they are come there they feel they need once more to get themselves provisions, and it is said that Vagn Ákason goes on his long-ship to the island called Høð, and Vagn does not see the jarl lying there in the bay not far from the island. Vagn anchors off the island and they go ashore and mean to drive down some cattle if it comes to hand.

And now it comes about that they meet and talk to a man who is driving three cows and goats before him. Vagn asks the man his name. He answers and says he is called Úlfr. Then said Vagn to his men:

“Take the cows and goats and slaughter them and take them out to our ships, and do the same if you find any other cattle here.”

“Who is the man,” says he, Úlfr, “who commands the company on this ship?”

“He is called Vagn, and is son of Áki.”

“I would have thought now,” says he, Úlfr, “that there were bigger beasts to slaughter, and not quite as far off from you now as you Jómsvikings suppose, rather than to mow down my cows and goats.”

“Tell us if you know something about the movements of Jarl Hákon,” says Vagn; “and if you can tell us anything for sure, so that we know where he is, then you will get back both your cows and your goats; but what news is there to tell us? What do you know about Jarl Hákon?”

Úlfr replies: "He was anchored here late last night with one ship in Hjørungavágr on the shore side of the island, and you will be able to kill him at once if you want to, for he is waiting there for his men."

"Now you have bought," says Vagn, "the release of all your cattle, and now come onto the ship with us and tell us the way to the jarl."

"That is not proper," says Úlfr, "and I certainly don't want to fight against the jarl, and it does not befit me, but I will tell you the way to where you will meet him in the bay if you like. Or if I do go out on the ship with you, then I want it to be promised that I will be allowed to go in peace once you can see your way to meeting him in the bay."

Now Úlfr goes out onto the ship with them. And that was early in the day, and Vagn and his men went to the Hereyjar islands as quickly as they could and they tell Sigvaldi and all the Jómssvikings the news that Úlfr has told them.

Chapter 31

Now the Jómssvikings begin to prepare just as they would if they had to go into the harshest of battles and wanted to be ready in every way, though Úlfr made light of it. And when they are quite ready they start rowing to the bay.

It is said that Úlfr has some suspicion that they will realize there are more ships in the bay than he had told them. And as soon as they saw the ships advancing, Úlfr jumps overboard and dives straight into the sea and means to strike out for the shore, not wanting to wait for them to reward him for his work. And when Vagn sees that, he certainly wants to reward him as he deserves; he then snatches up a spear and sends it after him, and the spear catches him right in the middle and he died there.

Now they row, Sigvaldi and all the Jómssvikings, into the bay and see then that the bay was all occupied by warships as far as the eye could see. They now at once deploy all their own force. But on the other side the jarls, Hákon and his sons, saw where they had arrived, the Jómssvikings, and they at once unfasten their ships from each other and plan which of them must fight against which.

But it is said about this that the head of Hjørungavágr faces east and the mouth to the west. Also, there stand out in the bay three rocks that are called Hjørungar, and one of them is somewhat the largest, and the bay is named after these rocks. But there is a skerry in the middle of the bay, and it is an equal distance to land from every side of the skerry, both in to

the head of the bay and in both directions across from it. And there is an island at the north of the bay called *Prímsigð*, and Harund is at the south of the bay, and beyond it is *Harundarfjörðr*.

Now it is to be told that the *Jómsvikings* arrange their ships in the formation that will now be told here: *Sigvaldi* places his ship in the middle of the line, while his brother *Þorkell inn hávi* places his ship next to him. And *Búi digri* and his brother *Sigurðr kápa*, they place their ships out on one arm of the line, while *Vagn Ákason* and *Björn inn brezki* man the other arm.

But *Jarl Hákon's* side on the other hand plan which of their company is to fight against these heroes. And they arrange things in most places so that three were assigned against one of the other side. Now I will first undertake to say about their placement, that *Sveinn Hákonarson* intended to oppose *Sigvaldi*, while three men were appointed to oppose *Þorkell hávi*, *Sigvaldi's* brother, and one of them was *Yrja-Skeggi* (from *Yrjar*), the second *Sigurðr steiklingr* (descended from *Steik*), the third *Þórir* who was called *hjórttr* (Hart). Two more men were appointed with *Jarl Sveinn* to oppose *Sigvaldi*, who were not mentioned before: *Guðbrandr* of *Dalir* and *Styrkár* from *Gimsar*.

To oppose *Búi* were appointed *Þorkell miðlangr* and second *Hallsteinn kerlingabani* (Old Women's Killer) from *Fjalir*, and the third *Þorkell leira*; he was one of the jarl's landed men. But opposing *Búi's* brother *Sigurðr kápa* were the father and son *Ármóðr* from *Qnundarfjörðr* and his son *Árni*. And to oppose *Vagn Ákason* were appointed *Jarl Eiríkr Hákonarson* and second, *Erlingr* of *Skuggi*. The third, *Qgmundr hvíti*, and that same man had the severing of his arm to repay *Vagn* for, as was told earlier.

To oppose *Björn inn brezki* was appointed *Einarr litli* (the Small), second *Hávarðr uppsjá* (the Wary), third *Hallvarðr* from *Flyðrunes*, *Hávarðr's* brother. But *Hákon* himself is not to be engaged in this way, and is not appointed to oppose anyone in particular, and is to support all the divisions together and direct the army.

It is related that four Icelanders who are named were with the father and son, *Hákon* and *Eiríkr*. Among them is named *Einarr*, who was then called *Skjaldmeyjar-Einarr* (Shieldmaiden's *Einarr*); he was a poet of the jarl's and had little favor from the jarl at that time compared with what it had been in the past. *Einarr* talked a lot about how he would run away from the jarl's army and to *Sigvaldi*, and afterwards he recites a verse:

3. At an ill time, eager,
 as others were sleeping,
 I made mead of Váfuðr *veig Váfaðar*: “strong drink of Váfuðr (Óðinn),” poetry.
 on men of the ocean. *viðis virðir*: “men of the ocean,” seafarers.
 It’s seemed at no assembly
 I’ve seen that pay was better—
 each pole denies poetry *meiðr*: “tree, pole,” used in kennings for “man.”
 its payment—and worse the poet.

“So I shall certainly go to Sigvaldi,” says he; “he can’t do me less honor than the jarl does.”

He then runs in from Jarl Hákon’s ship and across the gangplank and acts as if he is very eager to get away, but does not run away headlong, and wants to see how the jarl reacted. And when he gets onto the gangplank, another verse rises to his lips and he recites it to Sigvaldi:

4. Let’s seek the jarl, who risks swelling
 with swords the wolf’s dinner; *úlfs verðr*: “the wolf’s meal,” corpses.
 let’s stack circled shields on *baugskjöldr*: “ring-shield,” shield with a
 the side of Sigvaldi’s vessel. round boss, or a painted rim.
 The lord, the wound-snake wielder, *sárlinns sveigir*: “mover of the wound-snake
 won’t shove me, when I meet him— (sword),” warrior.
 let’s bear shields out onto
 Endill’s skis—aside with his hand. *Endils andrar*: “skis of Endill (a sea-king),”
 ships.

And now Jarl Hákon realizes that Skjaldmeyjar-Einarr is on his way off, and now the jarl calls to him and asks him to come there and talk to him, and he does so. Then the jarl takes some fine scales that he owned; they were made of burnished silver and gilded all over. And with them went two weights, one of gold and one of silver. On each of the weights was worked some kind of likeness, and they were called *blótar*, but were in fact the lots that it was usual for people to carry, and a great magical power was attached to them, and for everything that seemed important to the jarl he used these lots. The jarl was accustomed to put these lots on the scales, and state what each was to represent for him, and always when the lots went well and that one rose up which he wanted, then the lot that represented what he wanted to happen would not lie still in the scales, and that lot tumbled about somewhat in the scales so that a tinkling noise came from it. And these treasures the jarl gives to Einarr, and he is pleased

and happy about this and gave up his plan to leave and does not go to join Sigvaldi.

And from this Einarr gets a name, and has since been called Einarr skálaglamm (Scale-Tinkle).

The second Icелander who was there was called Vigfúss, son of Víga-Glúmr (Battle-Glúmr); the third Þórðr who was called qrvahqnd (Arrow-Hand), the fourth Þorleifr who was called skúma (Squint); he was son of Þorkell inn auðgi (the Wealthy) from Alviðra in Dýrafjörðr in the west.

It is told about Þorleifr that he gets for himself in the forest a large club or double-headed tree root, and then goes to where the cooks have their fires and food preparation, and sings the outside of the club all over in that way, and goes to see Eiríkr Hákonarson, and Eiríkr then goes down to the ship, and on the way there with him was Einarr skálaglamm, and then Þorleifr joins them on their way. And when Eiríkr sees him he said:

“What do you want, Þorleifr,” says he, “with that great club you have in your hand?”

And Þorleifr answers him in this way:

5. I have in my hand,
honed for heads,
Búi's bone-breaker,
bane of Sigvaldi,
harm for Vikings,
Hákon's shield.
This oaken club,
while I'm living,
has to hand out
harm to Danes.

And now there are traveling on the ship with Eiríkr four Icelanders: Þorleifr skúma and Einarr skálaglamm, Vigfúss Víga-Glúmsson and Þórðr qrvahqnd.

Chapter 32

Now after this the ranks attack each other in the formation that was just reported and told. And Jarl Hákon is in the same rank as his son Sveinn to support him against Sigvaldi, and now the fiercest of battles begins

between the ranks, and the bravery and deeds of neither side can be questioned. And it is said that it was an equal fight between Sigvaldi and the jarls, so that neither side let their ships draw back.

And when it comes to that point, Jarl Hákon's men realize that Búi has made a big dent in their formation where he was fighting, on the northern flank, and those who were fighting him had let their ships fall back, and it seemed to them better to be further away from him. But he keeps going after them just the same, and deals them fierce blows and they get the worse of it from him, and he is a great danger to men in the battle. The jarl realizes that the fight between Eiríkr's men and Vagn's was equal as things were, and they were on the southern flank of the formation. And now Eiríkr advances from there in the ship that he commands himself, and his brother Sveinn on another ship, and the brothers now sail and attack Búi and fight against him and manage to straighten the formation, but no better than that. But Jarl Hákon goes on fighting with Sigvaldi meanwhile.

And when Eiríkr comes back to the southern wing of the formation, Vagn had made inroads in Eiríkr's troop and they have had to fall back, and then Eiríkr's ships have been driven apart, and Vagn's force have gone through the formation and so attacked them hard. And now Eiríkr grows furious as he sees that, and now he drives Járnbarðinn (Iron-Prow) strongly at the warship that Vagn was commanding, and now they come to close quarters and renew the fighting, and there has never been a fiercer battle than now takes place.

And it is now told that Vagn and Áslákr hólmskalli jump off their warship and onto Eiríkr's Járnbarðinn, and then advance, one on each side of the ship, and Áslákr hólmskalli strikes both left and right, as one may say, and Vagn the same. And they cleared a path around them, so that all the crew fell before them.

Eiríkr sees that these men are so unyielding and frenzied that it cannot go on in this way any longer, and it is necessary to come up with a plan as quickly as possible. Áslákr is a bald man, according to what is told, and he is wearing no helmet; he stretches out his bald pate all day. And the weather is fine, bright and warm, and many men take off their clothes because of the heat and are wearing nothing but armor. And now Eiríkr urges his men against them, and they turn on Áslákr hólmskalli and attack him with weapons, strike at his head with both swords and axes, and it seemed to them as if nothing else would be more dangerous to him, since he had a bare skull under the blows. And yet it is said that the weapons

bounce up off Áslákr's skull, whether they bring swords or axes to his head, and they did not pierce it, and bounce back from the skull with the blows. And now when they see him pressing forward hard, whatever they do, and clears everything around him equally: he strikes on both sides both hard and fast and heavily, and fells many a man.

It is now told that Vigfúss, son of Víga-Glúmr, hits on the plan of snatching up a large anvil that was lying there on the deck of Járnbardinn, and Vigfúss had earlier been riveting on it his sword-hilt, which had come loose. And then he drives the anvil into the head of Áslákr hólmskalli so that the point of it sinks right in. And for that he had not been prepared, and he falls down dead at once.

But Vagn goes down the other side and clears everything around him as fiercely as possible; he strikes on both sides and does damage to many a man. And as that is happening Þorleifr skúma rushes against Vagn and strikes at him with the club, and the blow falls on the top of his helmet, which however bursts under the blow, so heavy was the blow; he bends under it and staggers nearer to Þorleifr. And just at the moment when he staggered, he thrusts with his sword at Þorleifr, and then he leaps out off Járnbardinn and lands on his feet down in his own warship. And no one has ever been keener in battle than he was now, and all his men. And yet he and Hólmskalli had cleared Járnbardinn so thoroughly for Eiríkr that he made men move onto it from other ships until it was fully manned, and thought it was the only thing to be done.

And now again a fierce assault begins now between him and Vagn.

And next Eiríkr and his men see that his father Hákon and his division had gone ashore, and now there is a pause in the fighting.

Chapter 33

Now the father and sons all meet and have a conversation. Then said Jarl Hákon:

"I think I see," says he, "that the battle is beginning to go badly against us, and not only did I expect the worst in fighting against these men, but that has also turned out true for me, so that I think there are no other men like these, in that no one is worse to deal with than these men, and I can see nothing will work for us if no plan is sought. And you must now stay behind with the army, for it is rash for all the leaders to leave the force, in case they attack, the Jómsvikings, which is not at all unlikely. But

I am going to go inland with a few men and then we will see what will happen,” says Jarl Hákon.

Chapter 34

And now the jarl goes inland with a few men and goes north to the island *Prímsigð*, and there was a large forest there on the island. Then he walks into a clearing that was in the forest, and the jarl there goes on his knees and prays, and yet faces to the north, and now expresses himself as seemed to him most promising.

And his prayer is addressed so that he calls on his patron, *Þorgerðr Hǫrðatröll*.²¹ But she turns a deaf ear to the jarl's prayer, and he thinks he perceives that she must have become angry with him, and he now asks her to accept from him various things by way of sacrifice, and she will not accept them, and he thinks the matter is turning out hopeless.

And it comes about in the end that he offers a human sacrifice, and she is not willing to accept what he offers her as a human sacrifice.

Now the jarl thinks his situation is getting worse unless he can appease her. Now he begins to increase his offers to her, and it reached the point where he offers her any other man except himself and his sons *Eiríkr* and *Sveinn*. But the jarl had a son who was called *Erlingr* and was seven years old and promised to be a fine man. But it comes about in the end that *Þorgerðr* accepts his offer and chooses the jarl's son *Erlingr*.

And now when it seems to the jarl that his prayers and promises have been heard, it seems to him that things are improving, and then he has the boy taken and puts him in the hands of his thrall *Skofti*, and he puts the boy to death in the manner usual for Hákon and as he told him to do.

Now after this the jarl goes to his ships and now urges on his force all over again, “and I know now for sure,” says he, “that we will defeat the Jómsvikings, and go now forward more strongly, for now I have made oaths for victory to both the sisters, *Þorgerðr* and *Irpa*, and they will not fail me now any more than in the past.”

And now there has been a pause in the fighting while the jarl was away, and yet both sides had again prepared for battle as seemed most promising while this lull lasted.

Now after this the jarl goes aboard his ship, and now they attack once again. And now the jarl is opposing *Sigvaldi*, and now advances as fiercely as possible with the support of *Hǫrðabrúðr* and *Irpa*.

And now the weather begins to look ugly in the north, and dark and dim clouds gather on the horizon and soon cover the whole sky. And the time of day was then late afternoon. And now the clouds gather quickly and at once a snowstorm follows, and it seemed to them that both lightning and thunder were coming. All the Jónsvikings had to battle against the storm. But that storm was so extraordinary, and the winds that went with it, that some men were barely able to keep their footing.

And now when earlier in the day people had taken off their clothes because of the heat, now the weather was rather different, and they began to shiver. And still it was the case that they pursued the attack fearlessly.

It is said that Hávarðr hoggvandi, Búi's follower, is the first man to see Hǫrðabrúðr among Jarl Hákon's force, and many men with second sight see her, and also those without second sight, and they see as well, when the storm slackens slightly, that arrows were flying, as far as they could see, from each finger of the ogress, and they always struck a man so that he died. And now they tell Sigvaldi and their other companions.

And now Sigvaldi begins to speak and said, because Hákon's forces were pursuing the battle as hard as they could as the storm struck and while it continued:

"I don't think," says Sigvaldi, "that we have men to fight against here today, rather the worst of monsters, and it will seem to demand more of men to perform well against monsters, and yet it is clear that men must take courage as best they can."

It is now said about Jarl Hákon that when he realizes that the storm is slackening and is not as fierce as it had been before, he again called eagerly on Þorgerðr and her sister Irpa, and he points out to her and them how much he has earned by sacrificing his son for his own victory. And now the storm darkens again. And at the beginning of this storm, Hávarðr hoggvandi sees two women on Jarl Hákon's ship and they are both doing the same thing as he had seen the first one doing before.

And now Sigvaldi begins to speak and said: "Now I will flee away," he says, "and let all my men do the same, and it is now worse than when I spoke about this before, to the extent that now we are fighting against two monsters when it was one before, and so this must not go on any longer. Indeed, we have the excuse that we are not fleeing from men if we take our leave. We swore no oath to fight against monsters."

And now Sigvaldi turns his ship away and calls to Vagn and Búi that they are to flee as fast as they can.

And now at the moment when Sigvaldi had separated his ship from the fleet and he calls to Búi and Vagn, Þorkell miðlangr jumps off his own ship and onto Búi's ship, and at once strikes at Búi, and this happens all in a moment. He chops off his lips and the chin all the way down, so that it fell down at once into the ship, and Búi's teeth flew out at the blow he had suffered.

Then Búi spoke when he received the blow: "It will please the Danish woman less to kiss me," he says, "in Borgundarhólmr, if we manage to get there again after this."

Búi strikes back at Þorkell, but it was slippery on the ship where it was bloody, and Þorkell falls across the row of shields as he tried to save himself from the blow, and now the blow strikes Þorkell in the middle, and Búi cuts him apart into two pieces against the side of the ship.

And straight after that, Búi picks up his chests of gold in each hand and then jumps overboard with both chests, and neither comes up again as far as men could see, neither the chests nor he.

Some people say that when Búi stood up on the side and was meaning to jump overboard, as he later did, he spoke these words: "Overboard all Búi's men," he says, and then he at once climbs overboard.

Now to turn to where Sigvaldi is drawing away from the fleet and does not notice that Búi has gone overboard, and calls now to Vagn and Búi that they should flee like him. But Vagn answers him and spoke a verse:

6. Sigvaldi has steered us
straight into danger,
then the craven coward
decamped home to Denmark,
looks forward to feeling
fond embraces from his lady;
but over the broad gunwale
Búi went with daring.

It is said that Sigvaldi had got cold in the storm and he jumped to the oars and wanted to warm himself, while another man was sitting at the helm. And when Vagn had spoken the verse and sees Sigvaldi, he lets fly a spear at him and supposed that he was still sitting at the helm, and yet Sigvaldi was then at the oars, and the one who was steering received what was sent. And as Vagn let the spear fly from his hand he said to Sigvaldi that he must be the most wretched of men.

But Sigvaldi's brother Þorkell inn hávi leaves as soon as Sigvaldi had gone, and he had six ships, and so did Sigurðr kápa, for his brother Búi had gone overboard by then, and so there was no reason to wait for him; and now each of them, Þorkell and Sigurðr, considered himself to have fulfilled his oath, and now they all travel until they come back to Denmark, and they took with them twenty-four ships. And all those who were able to get off the ships that were left jumped up onto Vagn's warship and fought there all together very bravely until darkness fell. And then the battle finished, and there were still many men standing on Vagn's warship, and Jarl Hákon's men did not have enough daylight to search the ships for whether any were alive or likely to live, and they had a guard placed overnight so that no one could get off the ships of the Jómsvikings overnight, and they took all the oars from the ships.

And when that was done, Jarl Hákon and his men row ashore and pitch tents for themselves and consider themselves now to have a victory to boast of. Now afterwards they weigh the hailstones and so test the greatness of the sisters Þorgerðr and Irpa, and it seems to be thoroughly proven. And it is said of this that each hailstone weighed an ounce, for they weighed them in scales.

And now after this men's wounds are bound up, and they kept watch overnight, Jarl Hákon himself and Guðbrandr of Dalir.

Chapter 35

About Vagn

Now it is to be told about Vagn and Björn inn brezki that they discuss between themselves what plan they should adopt, "and there are two possibilities," says Vagn, "either to stay here on the ships until daylight and let them lay hands on us, and that is out of the question. The other choice is to steer for land and do them as much harm as we can, and then try to get away and save ourselves."

They all decide together now to take down the mast and to escape the ship on it, and there were eighty men altogether, and they escape on the mast in the dark and try to get to shore, and they land on a skerry and thought they had reached the mainland. And many of the men were in bad condition then, and ten men, those who were wounded, lost their lives overnight, but seventy survived, although many were utterly exhausted.

And now they could go no further.

They stay there for the night.

It is now said that when Sigvaldi fled, the storm and lightning and thunder all stopped, and after that the weather was calm and cold. And so it is now during the night when Vagn and the others are on the skerry, until day comes and it has grown fully light.

It is said that shortly before day, the jarl's men were still busy binding their wounds, and had been doing that all night ever since they put to shore, and the reason for that was that many men had been wounded; but by then they had nearly finished. And now after that they hear a bowstring twang out on a ship, and an arrow flies from the ship that Búi has been on and it strikes the jarl's kinsman Guðbrandr under the arm so that no more was needed to kill him at once. And the jarl and all of them thought this a terrible loss, and they begin to lay out his body as best they can, for there were no means to do more there.

It is also mentioned that one man was standing by the door of the tent. And when Eiríkr went into the tent, he asks:

"Why are you standing here?" says he, "And why are you looking as if you were at death's door? And are you wounded, Þorleifr?" says he.

"I am not sure," says he, "whether Vagn Ákason's sword-point touched me a little yesterday when I struck him the blow with the club."

The jarl said then, "Hardship your father has endured out in your country," says he, "if you must die now."

This Einarr skálaglamm heard as the jarl spoke. Then a verse came to Einarr's lips:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 7. Said the jarl to the sender, | <i>unnviggs árr</i> : "messenger of the wave-steed |
| south of the sea, of the wave-steed, | (ship)," seafarer. |
| when on the wounder of treasure | <i>seima sérir</i> : "wounder of treasure," generous man. |
| were traces of wound-fire: | <i>sárelda spor</i> : ²² "traces of wound-fires (swords)," |
| "Heavy hardship your father | wounds. |
| has endured, controller | |
| of island-ring horses, | <i>eybaugs viggja valdr</i> : "ruler of island-ring's |
| if you must die, I consider." | (sea's) horses (ships)," seafarer. |

And now Þorleifr skúma falls down dead after this.

And as soon as it had got light in the morning, the jarl and his men go to inspect the ships and come to the ship that Búi had commanded, and wanted to know especially who had fired the arrow overnight, and thought that man deserved ill. And when they come onto the ship they find one man there who was still breathing, but little more. And that was

Hávarðr hoggvandi, who had been Búi's follower. And yet he was badly wounded, for both his legs had been cut off below the knee.

But Sveinn Hákonarson and Þorkell leira go over to him; and as they get there, Hávarðr asks:

"How are things, boys?" says he, "Did something sent from here off this ship last night get to you on the shore, or not?"

They answer: "It certainly did," they say; "and was it you who sent it?"

"It is not to be concealed," says he, "that I sent it to you, and was anyone harmed when the arrow struck?"

They answer: "It killed the man," they say, "who was in its path."

"That's good, then," says he, "and who was the man in its path?"

"Guðbrandr hvíti," they say.

"Oh," says he; "what I wanted most was not fated to be. I meant it for the jarl, and yet there is reason to be pleased that someone was in its path that you were sorry to lose."

"This cannot be borne," says Þorkell leira; "let's kill this dog straight away," and then they strike at him; and at once others run up and attack him with weapons and hack at him until he is killed. They had previously asked him his name, and he told them truly who he was.

And now afterwards they go back to land when they had done this and told the jarl exactly who they had killed; they said that had been no ordinary monster, for they declared they could tell from his words that his temperament would not improve.

Now after that they see that there are many men crowded together on the skerry, and the jarl now orders men to go after them and take them all prisoner and bring them to him, and said he meant to decide whether they would live or not. Now the jarl's men got into one ship and rowed out to the skerry, and the state of the men before them was that few were able-bodied, both because of their wounds and the cold; indeed, it is not said that a single man put up any resistance. They were now all seized by the jarl's men and taken to shore to see the jarl, and there were seventy men altogether. And after that the jarl had them let up onto land, Vagn and his fellows, and now their hands are pulled behind their backs and bound each to the other with one rope, and not gently. But the jarl and his men unpack their provisions and sit down to eat, and the jarl means to execute all these men, the Jómsvikings, at his leisure in the course of the day, and they had now laid hands on them.

And before they sat down to eat, the Jómsvikings' ships were brought to land, and the property with them, and the goods were all tallied, and Jarl Hákon and his company divided all the goods between them, as well

as their weapons, and they think they have won a great victory in every way, since they have got all the property and captured the Jómssvikings, and driven some away, and yet the greatest number of them are those who have been killed. And now they are full of bragging.

And now when the jarl and his men have finished eating they go out of their camp and over to where the prisoners are. And it is said that Þorkell leira was appointed to execute them all.

First they have words with the Jómssvikings and ask them whether they were really such hard men as they were said to be. And the Jómssvikings give them no answer to this, as far as is said about it.

Chapter 36

Jómssvikings Were Killed

The next thing to be told is that now men are released from the rope, some of those who are badly wounded. And Skofti karkr and other thralls have been guarding them and holding the rope. And now that the men were untied, the thralls do this, that they twist sticks into the hair of the Jómssvikings. And now the first wounded men are led forward with this decoration, and Þorkell then walks up to them and chops the head off each of them, and spoke to his fellows afterwards, asking if they had noticed that he had reacted at all in the process, “for people say,” says he, “that all men react if they behead three men one after the other.”

But Jarl Hákon answers him: “We didn’t see you react to this,” says the jarl, “but it seemed to me you had already reacted.”

Now the fourth man is led forward from the rope, and a stick was twisted in his hair and he was led to where Þorkell was beheading them. This man too is badly wounded. And when he comes up, Þorkell speaks to him before he strikes the blow, and asked what he thought about his own death. And he answers:

“I am pleased about my death,” says he; “it will be for me as for my father, that I will die.”

And now after that Þorkell strikes off the head of this man, and so he ended his life.

Chapter 37

Now the fifth man is loosed from the rope and led up; and as he gets there, Þorkell leira says:

F

“How do you feel²³ about dying?”

He answers: "I would be forgetting the laws of the Jómsvikings if I thought ill of it or complained about death or spoke words of fear. Everyone has to die once." **F**

And now Þorkell beheads this man.

And now Jarl Hákon and Þorkell decide to ask each of them before they are beheaded what they think about death, and so make trial of the company, whether they are as hard as they were said to be, and consider it will be proved if none of them speaks words of fear when they see death face to face, for so many men were in captivity there that it seemed to them there would be few such examples of toughness, and then it would be as it was said to be. And besides they thought it would be fun to hear what they said, however it turned out.

And now the sixth man is loosed from the rope and a stick twisted in his hair and he is made ready for execution. And when it comes to that, Þorkell asks how he likes the thought of death. He answers:

"I think it good to die," says he, "with a good reputation; but yours is a life of shame, for you will live with shame and disgrace for the rest of your life."

Þorkell does not like this man's words, and he does not leave it long before chopping his head off, having no desire to listen to him speaking any longer.

Then the seventh man is led to execution, and Þorkell asks him how he liked the thought of death.

"I think it very good," said he, "and I think it will turn out well. But I would like you to grant me the favor of chopping off my head as fast as possible, while I hold on to a dagger, for we Jómsvikings have often discussed whether a man is conscious at all once the head is off, if he is beheaded as quickly as possible, and now the sign will be that I will point the knife forward if I am conscious at all, otherwise it will fall out of my hand at once. So do not fail to manage it so that you chop my head off so quickly that this can be put to the test because of it."

And now Þorkell chops so that the head flew off the trunk at once, but the knife fell down to the ground, as was to be expected.

Then the eighth man was led up, and Þorkell asks him the same question.

"I think well of it," said he.

And now they twist the stick in his hair. And when he thought there was not long to wait for the blow he said, "Ram."

Þorkell stays his hand and asked why he said this.

F “Because,” says he, “you will still not be over-supplied for those ‘ughs’ (ewes) that you jarl’s men called out to yesterday when you were hurt.”

“Miserable wretch,” said Porkell, “to talk like that,” and chops his head off at once, and he loses his life.

Now the ninth man was loosed from the rope, and Porkell asks:

“Tell the truth, fellow,” says he; “how good do you think it to die?”

“I think it good to die, like all our fellows who are losing their lives here. But I would like you to do me the favor that I should not be led to the blow like a beast, rather I wish to face it, and I want you to walk towards me from in front and strike into my face, and watch carefully to see whether I flinch at all, for we Jómssvikings have often discussed whether a man will react at all if a blow strikes him in the face.”

Porkell does as he asked. He faces it and Porkell strikes from in front into his face. It is said that they do not see him flinch, except that when death came into his eyes his eyes closed, as often can happen when men die.

And after that the tenth man was loosed from the rope and led to execution, and Porkell asks him the same again.

“I think it especially good,” says he; “but I would like you to do me the favor of allowing a delay before beheading me so that I can relieve myself first.”

“I shall grant you that,” says Porkell; “although I don’t see what difference it makes to you whether you do that, but it’s up to you.”

This man had a handsome face and a large physique.

And when he had done as he wanted he begins to speak, and he has not pulled up his breeches and is holding onto his member: “It is said, though,” says he, “that many things turn out other than a man expects, for I had intended that this fellow of mine would come close to Þóra Skagadóttir, the jarl’s wife, and she would have fostered him and taken him into bed with her,” and he shakes it about a bit as he said this, and then pulls up his breeches.

But the jarl burst into speech: “Behead this one at once,” says he, “for this man has had evil plans for a long time, and now he has made that clear himself.”

And now Porkell chops off this man’s head, and so his life ended.

Next another man was led from the rope and to execution. He was a young man with a good head of hair, so that it came down to his shoulders, golden and silky. Porkell asks again what he thought about losing his life. But he answers:

"I have lived the best of my life, and I feel there is little value in living longer than those that have just fallen, and they had no more choice than I have now. And yet I wish you to grant me the favor that thralls should not lead me to execution, and I would like someone to lead me who is not a lesser man than you, and bear in mind that it will not be difficult to find someone comparable to you," says he; "another thing is that I am so particular about my hair that I want that man to hold the hair away from my head while I am beheaded and pull the head sharply away from the trunk so that the hair doesn't get bloody, and I want you to chop off my head so quickly that it can turn out as I have intended."

And it is said that one retainer was found, the jarl's man, to hold him, and there seems no need to twist a stick in his hair as the hair was so abundant, and the retainer seizes him and twists it around his hands, and so holds him with both hands ready for the blow, while Þorkell²⁴ brandishes the sword intending to make the attack on him that he had asked for by striking him hard and fast, and he strikes at him. But this young man, when he hears the swish of the blow, jerks his head sharply so that the man who held him suffers the blow, and Þorkell chops off both the retainer's arms at the elbows. But he jumps up, the young man, and makes a joke of it and said:

"Which of the boys," says he, "has his hands in my hair?"

Jarl Hákon bursts into speech then and said: "Now outrageous things are happening," says he, "with these men who are still tied in the rope; seize him instantly and kill him, and yet he has already done us great mischief; and undoubtedly all those who are left must be killed at once, for these men are much too headstrong for us to be able to handle them, and what has been said of their daring and toughness is no exaggeration."

Eiríkr now took to speech and answers his father: "Now we want to know, father," says he, "who the men are before they are all killed; and what are you called, young man?" says Eiríkr.

"I am called by the name of Sveinn," says he.

"Whose son are you, Sveinn?" says Eiríkr, "And where is your family from?"

"My father is named Búi digri," says he, "and was the son of Véseti from Borgundarhólmr, and I am Danish by family."

"How old are you?" says Eiríkr.

"If I survive this year," says he, "I will be eighteen years old."

"And so you shall survive this year," says Eiríkr, "if I can decide it, and you shall not be killed."

F

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And now Eiríkr sets him free and allows him to join the band of himself and his following.

And when Jarl Hákon sees this he takes to speech and said:

“Now I don’t know,” says he, “what you are thinking, if you are willing to set free a man who has shamed and mocked us as much as this young man, from whom we have received the worst treatment. And yet I can’t see my way to pursuing the man you have taken charge of, and now you will have to have your way for the present.”

And now the matter rests so that Eiríkr has his way.

And now Jarl Hákon said to Þorkell leira: “Behead the rest of the men at once,” says he.

Eiríkr answers: “The men shall not be beheaded now,” says he, “before I have had speech with them, for I want to know who each of them is.”

Chapter 38 Vagn Is Given a Truce

Then another man is released from the rope at that moment, and the rope has twisted itself around his foot a bit so as to hold him somewhat. This man is large and handsome, young and very brave. Þorkell asks him how he feels about dying:

“I am happy about it,” says he, “as long as I am able to fulfil my oath first.”

Jarl Eiríkr spoke: “What is your name?” says he, “and what is this oath of yours, that you especially want to fulfil before you lose your life?”

He answers: “Vagn is my name,” says he, “and I am the son of Áki Pálnatókason from Fjón. So I have been told.”

“What oath did you swear, Vagn,” says Eiríkr, “such that you declared you would be happy to die if it were fulfilled and made good as you wanted?”

“I swore this oath,” says Vagn, “that I must get into the bed of Þorkell leira’s daughter Ingibjörg without his permission or that of all her family, if I got to Norway, and now I think I will have fallen far short of my words if I am not to achieve this before I die.”

“I shall make sure,” says Þorkell, “that you will not fulfil this oath first,” and rushes forward at Vagn and strikes at him with both hands, but Vagn’s foster-father Björn inn brezki thrust at him with his foot and kicked him hard away from him and out from under the blow, off the log and flat at Þorkell’s feet, he kicked him so hard; Þorkell’s blow goes over

him, but the sword hits the rope that Vagn was bound with and cuts it apart, so that Vagn is free and unhurt. Þorkell staggered as he missed the man and he falls, and the sword flies away out of his hands. And Vagn lies no longer although Björn had kicked him, and he springs to his feet and at once grabs the sword that Þorkell had been holding and strikes Þorkell leira a fatal blow so that he lost his life at once.

Then said Vagn: "Now I have fulfilled my other oath," he says, "and now I am much better pleased than before."

Jarl Hákon said: "Don't leave him at large any longer," says he, "but kill him at once, for he has done us great damage."

"He shall no more be killed than myself," says Eiríkr, "and I want to set him free."

Jarl Hákon said: "There is no need for me to interfere," says he, "since you mean to decide, Eiríkr, my son."

"Vagn is a good man to acquire, father," says Eiríkr, "and it seems to me a good bargain if we give Vagn the honor and respect that Þorkell leira had, and let him take his place. Þorkell should have expected what he got just now, for what is often said has now come true, that 'prophecy is the wise man's guess,' and you saw at once today that he was doomed."

And now Eiríkr takes Vagn into his charge, and he is now out of any danger.

And then Vagn said: "I only think it better to accept a truce from you, Eiríkr," says he, "if all those of our fellowship who are left are given a truce too; otherwise we fellows will all follow the same path."

Eiríkr answers, "I still wish to have speech with these fellows of yours, but I don't refuse what you ask."

Now Eiríkr walks over to Björn inn brezki and asks who he was and what he was called, and he answers and says he is called Björn. Jarl Eiríkr says:

"Are you the Björn inn brezki who returned so bravely for your companion in King Sveinn's hall?"

"I don't know," says Björn, "that I returned so bravely. But I did bring one man out of there."

"What are you attacking us for," says Eiríkr, "old man, having come here, and what drove you to this venture, balding as you are, hair white as a sea-mew? And yet it is very true that every straw wants to have stabbed us Norwegians when even you, bedridden with age, came here to fight us; now, are you willing to accept your life from me," says Eiríkr, "for you don't look to me like much of a slayer, an old man like you?"

Björn answers: "I will accept life from you, Eiríkr," says he, "on condition that my foster-son Vagn is released, and all of our men that are left."

Eiríkr said: "That shall be granted to you and to all," he says, "if I can decide as I must decide."

F And now Eiríkr²⁵ goes before his father and asks him for a truce for all the Jómsvikings that are left; and the jarl grants him that.

And now they are all set free, the Jómsvikings, and granted truce and assured of peace. And now it is arranged by Jarl Hákon and Eiríkr that Björn inn brezki should take over the estate that Hallsteinn kerlingabani had owned.

It is said that five landed men fell besides Hallsteinn.

Vagn Ákason went east to Vík on Eiríkr's advice, and Eiríkr said to Vagn before they parted that he was to act concerning the marriage to Ingibjörg Þorkelsdóttir as was his own wish. And when Vagn gets east into Vík he goes to bed with Ingibjörg, daughter of Þorkell leira, the same evening, and Vagn stays there over the winter.

But the next spring Vagn leaves and fulfilled what he had promised to Eiríkr in every respect, and Vagn goes to Denmark, back to Fjón to his estates, and ruled there for a long time afterwards and was considered to be a man of great prowess, and many important people are descended from him.

It is said that Vagn took Ingibjörg home with him, while Björn inn brezki went home to Bretland and ruled over it as long as he lived and was thought to be the boldest of heroes.

Chapter 39

Now it is to be told about Sigvaldi, that when he fled from the battle he did not stop before he came home to Denmark, and his wife Ástríðr was there when they got home, and she prepared a feast to welcome him.

They tell the news of the battle and of the whole expedition since the Jómsvikings had set out from Denmark, and people thought it very entertaining to listen as they told of those events. And it is mentioned that Ástríðr wants to welcome Sigvaldi in every way and show how his homecoming has pleased her. She has a bath prepared for him; she asks him then to get into the bath, "and I know," says Ástríðr, "so long a way as it is from Norway, that it will be time to cleanse the wounds that you got in the battle."

Then Sigvaldi gets into the bath, and Ástríðr did not entrust it to other women to tend him in the bath, and said then: F

“I guess there will have been some on the Jómsvikings’ side in the battle who bore away from it skins more riddled with holes than you have, for this one seems fittest to keep wheat-flour in.”

Sigvaldi answers: “It could yet happen in my lifetime that you have no such victory to celebrate,” said he, “and think about whether you will like that better.”

Sigvaldi ruled over Sjólfnd for some time afterwards and was considered to be a very shrewd man, and was not always as he appeared, and many stories are told about him in other sagas. But Jarl Hákon ruled Norway for a short time afterwards, and he was considered to have become most outstanding in every respect from all this, and so were his sons.

It is not told here what Sveinn Búason undertook, whether he stayed with Eiríkr or did something else, but Búi’s brother Sigurðr kápa went to Denmark and took up his inheritance from Véseti in Borgundarhólmr and lived a long life there, and was considered to be a fine hero, and many people are descended from him and Tófa, and they were on good terms ever afterwards.

Sigvaldi’s brother Þorkell inn hávi was considered a very clever man, as was shown later in many ways. But Skjaldmeyjar-Einarr (skálaglamm) went to Iceland and was drowned in Breiðafjörðr, and the place where the scales the jarl gave him were washed ashore is called Skáleyjar (Scale-Islands) after that. And Þórðr ǫrvahǫnd went home to Alviðra in Dýrafjörðr to his father Þorkell, and it is said here that Þorleifr skúma and Þórðr ǫrvahǫnd were brothers, and Þórðr lived at Alviðra after his father’s death, and many people are descended from him in the western fjords, and Einarr and the others took clear accounts of these events out to Iceland.

But people have said since that Búi turned into a dragon and settled down on his chests of gold; but I think the cause of this to be that a dragon has been seen at Hjörungavágr, and it may be that some evil spirit has settled down on the treasure and has been seen there since. But I cannot say which is more likely. It may also be that neither is true, for things may appear in many different ways.

Notes

Introduction

¹ It should be noted that when the word “author” is used in the context of medieval literature it is with the reservation that the concept of authorship has changed since the Middle Ages. The authors of most medieval Icelandic texts are unknown, so that the “author” of a particular text may not be one specific person. The copyright of texts is a modern idea, and medieval texts were constantly subject to change. For lack of a better term, “author” is used to refer to all the people that shaped the text and are responsible for the state it is preserved in. For further discussion of the concept see, for example, Mundal, 2012, and Sverrir Tómasson, 2012.

² A new edition of the text is also under way for the *Íslenzk fornrit* series.

³ In this instance it is crucial that the comparison is based on the 291 version of *Jómsvíkinga saga*, as in Perg. 7 Haraldr does not kill his brother. The brothers are leaders of a Danish army in England where Knútr is killed by their enemies.

⁴ The sole manuscript of the *Poetic Edda*, Codex Regius, is dated to the second half of the thirteenth century but was probably based on one or more older exemplars, perhaps from about 1200 (Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason, eds, *Eddukvæði*, 2014, pp. 21–23).

⁵ For a comparison between the Latin translation and other versions see Gjessing, pp. xi–xvii, and Jakob Benediktsson, pp. 121–40.

⁶ See comparison in Þórdís Edda Jóhannesdóttir, 2016a, pp. 32–33.

⁷ The versions of *Flateyjarbók* and AM 510 4to follow 291 here, but the Latin translation is more in line with Perg. 7.

⁸ See also *Óláfs saga helga* in *Heimskringla* 2, p. 202; *Magnúss saga Erlingssonar* in *Heimskringla* 3, p. 387; *Þorsteins saga Víkingssonar* in *Fornaldar sögur Norðrlanda* 2, pp. 399–400; *Brennu-Njáls saga*, p. 221.

⁹ See for example Adam of Bremen, pp. 72–73; *Heimskringla* 1, p. 272; *Fagrskinna*, p. 122; *Encomium Emmae reginae*, p. 8; Lund, p. 13.

Chapter 1

¹⁰ The first page of 291 is illegible, and the text is supplied from *Flateyjarbók*. Passages from *Flateyjarbók* are marked with **F** in the margin. Shorter substitutions from *Flateyjarbók* are placed within square brackets.

¹¹ From this point the text of 291 is followed.

Chapter 2

¹² Before the fifteenth century the “long hundred” of 120 was commonly used in Old Norse texts. In this translation, the modern equivalent of the number stated is given in parentheses.

¹³ Here, and elsewhere when 291 is unreadable, the text within brackets is from *Flateyjarbók*.

Chapter 5

¹⁴ The text at this point is difficult to read, and a line and a half is missing.

Chapter 7

¹⁵ The word *níð* refers to a symbolic insult, often in verse as here but also sometimes in graphic form, heavily punishable by law; being reported as having sex with female animals, or worse, enacting the role of a female animal in sex, metaphorically represents the cowardice and/or homosexuality that the victim is accused of (see Meulengracht Sørensen).

Chapter 8

¹⁶ The dream is reminiscent of the poem *Darraðarljóð*, of which eleven stanzas are cited in chapter 157 of *Njáls saga*, where it appears as a portent of the battle of Clontarf in 1014. In the poem, twelve Valkyries weave on a loom weighted with men's heads with a woof of human entrails, as they determine who is to die in the battle.

Chapter 26

¹⁷ This sentence is missing from 291, *Flateyjarbók*, and Perg. 7, and is supplied here from AM 310 4to, a manuscript of Oddr Snorrason's *Óláfs saga Trygvasonar* that is closely related to 291 at this point.

Chapter 27

¹⁸ For the ritual, originally pagan, of *heitstrenging* (oath-swearing), see Stefán Einarsson. This is said in various sources to have taken place at Yule or other feasts. Drink was usually involved. The person swearing the oath was committed to fulfil it.

¹⁹ This alludes to Sveinn's future campaigns against Ethelred Unræd (the Unready) of England. Sveinn did not fulfil his boast within the stipulated time, however, as it was not until 1013 that Ethelred was forced out of the kingdom and replaced as king by Sveinn.

Chapter 29

²⁰ *Lendr maðr* (landed man) was a rank of nobility roughly equivalent to "baron," for a landowner holding land and/or appointments under the king.

Chapter 34

²¹ Several prose texts refer to Þorgerðr Hqrðatröll/Hqrðabrúðr (or Hqlgabrúðr, Hqrgatroll, etc.), as do the poems *Búadrápa* and *Jómsvíkingadrápa*, but none of these sources is old enough to give authentic information about any cult involving her. She is frequently associated with Jarl Hákon, who is famous as a defender of the pagan religion. The name element *-brúðr* (bride) may suggest that she was seen as the mistress of a succession of rulers, with the variant *-tröll* (and the giant/goddess name *-gerðr*) implying a giant origin. Her sister, Irpa, is a shadowy figure only mentioned in conjunction with Þorgerðr, and it has been suggested that she represents “a ‘dark’ aspect of the goddess herself” (McKinnell, 81–85).

Chapter 35

²² *Spor* is the reading of Perg. 7, where 291 has *spior*.

Chapter 37

²³ At this point a leaf is missing from 291. The text is supplied from *Flateyjarbók*.

²⁴ At this point the last leaf of 291 begins.

Chapter 38

²⁵ 291 ends here, the last page of the manuscript having been lost. The remaining text is from *Flateyjarbók*.

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Note: The Icelandic characters þ, æ and q occur at the end of the alphabet in that order.

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