

= Eystein I of Norway =

Eystein Magnusson (Old Norse : Eysteinn Magnússon , Norwegian : Øystein Magnusson ; c . 1088 ? 29 August 1123) was King of Norway (as Eystein I) from 1103 to 1123 together with his brothers Sigurd the Crusader and Olaf Magnusson , although since Olaf died before adulthood , only Eystein and Sigurd were effective rulers of the country .

While Sigurd gained fame as the " warrior king " (although owed almost exclusively to his three @-@ year crusade to the Holy Land) , Eystein was in contrast portrayed in the sagas as the " peace king " who stayed home in Norway and improved the country . As Eystein never engaged in warfare , considerably less information is written and known about him than about his brother Sigurd , despite his twenty @-@ year @-@ long reign , just a few years short of Sigurd . Eystein nonetheless gained the affection of his people , and was highly regarded by the saga writers for his deeds . Eystein and Sigurd 's reign became the longest joint rule in Norwegian history .

Although the later saga literature narrates stereotypical accounts about the two kings , Eystein is known to have improved the infrastructure and raised buildings and churches , particularly across the coast in Western Norway and Trøndelag , from Bergen to the fishing centre of Lofoten in the north . Eystein 's activities were especially centered in Bergen , which became an important international trade hub for fish at the time , helped by his construction projects . His activities in Bergen included moving the royal seat to a more central location in the city and building a new royal palace , as well as constructing churches and the Munkeliv Abbey .

Eystein died of illness in August 1123 , and his brother Sigurd thereby became the sole Norwegian king .

= = Background = =

Eystein was born in 1088 or 1089 as the first son of the future king Magnus Barefoot , born to an otherwise unknown mother who is only recorded to have been of " low birth " . Upon the death of his father in 1103 during one of his campaigns in Ireland , Eystein became king together with his two brothers Olaf and Sigurd , all of whom had different mothers . Sigurd was about a year younger than Eystein , while Olaf was more than ten years younger than him . Sigurd was the only son who had accompanied their father Magnus on his campaign in the West , but he returned to Norway after Magnus ' death .

Many accounts concerning Eystein in later sagas are characterized by literary motifs , and have little value as sources on his life . Snorri Sturluson , the Icelandic author of the early 13th century Heimskringla mastered this literary style particularly well , stylistically and psychologically . His stories includes a so @-@ called mannjevning (literally " comparison of men ") between Eystein and Sigurd , in which the two boast about their skills and deeds in an attempt to outdo each other . In a similar fashion , Snorri also tells a story about how Eystein managed to cure the melancholy of a friend , by agreeing to regularly clear time to talk with him about what troubled him . On his physical appearance , Snorri wrote that Eystein " was the handsomest man that could be seen . He had blue open eyes ; his hair yellow and curling ; his stature not tall , but of the middle size . " More reliable information , particularly about Eystein 's building @-@ projects , is offered in earlier sagas such as the work of Theodoric the Monk , a Norwegian chronicler who wrote in the late 12th century .

= = Reign = =

The co @-@ rule between Eystein , Sigurd and Olaf entailed a shared kingship , and the kingdom itself was not divided into fixed borders . During the early years of their reign , Eystein is nonetheless said to have stayed mostly in Western Norway and Trøndelag , while Sigurd was in Viken . In practice , only Eystein and Sigurd ever ruled as kings , as Olaf was considerably younger and died when he was only seventeen years old , and virtually nothing is known about him beyond his name . One of the earliest acts by the kings was passing a retterbot , a special law ordained by the king ,

which among other things abolished various royal taxes that originated from the Danish rule of Sweyn Knutsson and Ælfgifu (under Cnut the Great) in the early 1030s . The kings became very popular because of this . According to some sources , the main motivation for abolishing the taxes was to gain the support of the population for Sigurd 's planned crusade .

In 1107 or 1108 , after years of preparations , Sigurd sailed with a large fleet on a crusade to the Holy Land , the first European king ever to do so . Sigurd arrived back in Norway in 1111 . Eystein , on the other hand , did not engage in any warfare , and considerably less information is thus written about him than about Sigurd , although Snorri notes that he " had also effected much in the country that was useful while King Sigurd was on his journey . " While Sigurd gained fame in posterity as the " warrior king " , although mainly because of his one @-@ time crusade , Eystein was portrayed by the saga writers as the " peace king " who stayed at home and improved the country . Since Sigurd remained king for nineteen years after his crusade with little controversy , historian Claus Krag has considered that the domestic peace probably could be attributed equally to Sigurd . In order to contrast Eystein with Sigurd , Snorri tells a story that Eystein instead subdued Jämtland to the Norwegian crown peacefully through the use of gifts and diplomacy . Despite Snorri 's account , historical records indicate that Jämtland did not succumb to Norwegian rule until much later , during the reign of King Sverre in 1178 . Eystein and Sigurd are , however , known to have claimed monopoly on the trade and taxation in Finnmarken .

Fish became an increasingly important commodity during Eystein 's reign , as more cod was fished in Northern Norway and the demand for stockfish soared in Europe . As the most suitable port , Bergen became the main trade hub for exporting stockfish , including trade connections with Grimsby in England , while it also served to import much needed goods such as grain and flour . To further the trade , Eystein had fishing booths and a church built in the fishing centre at Vågan in Lofoten in Northern Norway , and he sailed north to Lofoten and Trondenes himself in 1114 . He also secured the route along the coast by constructing a port in Agdenes on the mouth of the Trondheimsfjord , as well as smaller beacons along the coast . Eystein 's port construction in Agdenes was compared by Theodoric the Monk to that of Augustus Caesar at Brundisium , an association readily reflected by Theodoric 's use of the Latinised name form " Augustinus " for Eystein . (Otherwise , Pope Callixtus II calls Eystein " Aistano " in a letter .) The existence of a now lost port in Agdenes dated to around Eystein 's reign has been supported by recent archaeological surveys in the area . Snorri also says that Eystein had several large dry @-@ docks built in Nidaros , and that he had a large ship built which " in size and shape " resembled the great ship Ormen Lange once built by King Olaf Tryggvason . Eystein also improved the shelters in the mountain passes , notably at Hjerkin in Dovre , to more comfortable houses with permanent supervision .

In Snorri 's mannjevning between Eystein and Sigurd , Eystein allegedly maintains that his own building @-@ projects in Norway were " more useful for the country , " than " you [Sigurd] killing blue men for the devil in Serkland . " Eystein was particularly active in Bergen , and his role in the development of the city was probably more important than that of King Olaf Kyrre , the founder of the city according to the sagas . He moved the royal seat in the city from Alrekstad to Holmen on the eastern shore of Vågen , in the city core , thereby rationalising the bureaucracy . At Holmen , he built a Church of the Apostles (probably a stave church) and a St. Nicholas Church , as well as a royal palace which according to Snorri Sturluson was the most imposing wooden building ever raised in Norway (although Theodoric the Monk who wrote earlier already noted it was " now almost collapsed from excessive age ") . He also built a St. Michael 's Church and founded the Benedictine abbey Munkeliv Abbey at Nordnes , and the tithe to the church was introduced during the reign of Eystein and Sigurd .

Eystein died on 29 August 1123 , not long after he was " seized with an illness " during a feast at Hustad in Fræna , Møre og Romsdal . Snorri tells that his body thereafter was taken to Nidaros , and buried in the Nidaros Cathedral . According to Snorri , it was " generally said that so many mourners never stood over any man 's grave in Norway as over King Eystein 's , " at least since the death of Magnus the Good . The reign of Eystein and Sigurd was the longest joint rule in Norwegian history . Sigurd ruled alone after Eystein 's death , until Sigurd 's own death in 1130 .

= = Family = =

Eystein married Ingebjørg Guttormsdatter , from a prominent noble family of Gudbrandsdalen . Their marriage was part of Eystein 's strategy of building alliances in Eastern Norway . They had a daughter , Maria , who became the mother of the future royal pretender Olaf Uggjæva by her marriage to the lendmann Gudbrand Skavhoggsson . Olaf was named king in 1165 , during the Norwegian civil war era , but was subsequently defeated by Magnus Erlingsson and forced to flee the country .

= = Legacy = =

Opinions on Eystein have been strongly favourable . Theodoric the Monk wrote about Eystein that he " was a paragon of honesty who governed himself no less than his subjects with moderation and wisdom . He was a king who loved peace , an assiduous manager of public affairs , and above all a fosterer of the Christian religion . " Snorri Sturluson later wrote that Eystein " was wise , intelligent , and acquainted with the laws and history . He had much knowledge of mankind , was quick in counsel , prudent in words , and very eloquent and very generous . He was very merry , yet modest ; and was liked and beloved , indeed , by all the people . " The view of Eystein as a peaceful and domestically active king has been supported by modern historians such as Claus Krag , although noting that the literary embellishments should be disregarded .

A stylized marble bust of Eystein , dated to before the middle of the 12th century , was found during excavations at Munkeliv Abbey in 1853 , and it represents the oldest known preserved portrait of a Norwegian king . The bust has the inscription " EYSTEIN REX " , and was originally probably part of a full figure statue built into the wall . The headpiece worn on the bust has been said to resemble a German Imperial crown , or to be of a Byzantine type . According to Snorri Sturluson , Eystein had " somewhat large eyes " , which seems to correspond with the bust . Since Snorri may have seen the bust in Bergen himself , it is unclear if his account represents an independent source on Eystein 's physical appearance . Today , the bust is located in the collections of Bergen Museum .

To commemorate his status as founder of the fishing town Vågan (although it had been an important centre for at least a century) , a huge statue of Eystein (Øysteinstatuen) by Arthur Gustavson was raised at Breidablikk in Vågan in 1935 , after an idea of architect Harald Sund . At Hjerkin in Dovre , a church dedicated to Eystein (Eysteinskyrkja) was constructed in 1969 according to a design by Magnus Poulsson , in commemoration of Eystein 's construction of a sælehus or shelter near the village .