

= Olaf the Black =

Óláfr Guðrøðarson (IPA : [ʔoʔlaʔvr ʔʔuðruðarsson]) , commonly known in English as Olaf the Black , was a mid 13th century sea @-@ king who ruled the Isle of Man (Mann) and parts of the Hebrides . Óláfr was the son of Guðrøðr Ólafsson , King of the Isles , King of Dublin , and his wife Finnguala , granddaughter of Muirchertach Mac Lochlainn , High King of Ireland , King of Cenél nEógain . Óláfr was a younger son of his father ; his elder brother Rögnvaldr more than likely had a different mother . According to the Chronicle of Mann , Guðrøðr appointed Óláfr as heir since he had been born " in lawful wedlock " . Whether or not this is the case , on Guðrøðr 's death in 1187 the Manxmen instead appointed Rögnvaldr as king , as he was a capable adult and Óláfr was a mere child . Rögnvaldr ruled the Crovan dynasty 's island @-@ kingdom for almost 40 years , during which time the half @-@ brothers vied for the kingship .

At one point Óláfr , who had been given possession of Lewis , complained to Rögnvaldr that his lands were not enough . Rögnvaldr 's response was seize Óláfr and send him to the King of Scots , where he was imprisoned for almost seven years . Upon his release , Óláfr undertook a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela , after which the half @-@ brothers were reconciled and Rögnvaldr had Óláfr married to Lauon , the sister of his own wife . Sometime after 1217 this marriage was nullified by Reginald , Bishop of the Isles , who may have been an ally of Óláfr against Rögnvaldr . Óláfr then married Christina , a daughter of the King of Scots ' protégé Ferchar , Earl of Ross . The chronicle claims that Rögnvaldr 's bitter wife tricked their own son , Guðrøðr , into attempting to kill Óláfr ; however , Óláfr narrowly escaped with his life and fled to the protection of his father @-@ in @-@ law on the mainland . Together with a loyal follower , one Páll Bálkason , Óláfr later defeated Guðrøðr on Skye .

In the 1220s Rögnvaldr formed an alliance with Alan , Lord of Galloway , in an attempt to fend off Óláfr . Rögnvaldr married his daughter to one of Alan 's sons , and it has been theorised that this son was intended to inherit the island @-@ kingdom . Rögnvaldr 's actions enraged the Manxmen and in 1226 they deposed him in favour of Óláfr . Rögnvaldr was later killed battling Óláfr in 1229 .

In 1230 Óláfr fled to Norway to seek military assistance against Alan and members of Clann Somairle . The Norwegian king 's response was to send a fleet into the Isles under the command of Óspakr Ögmundsson , a member of Clann Somairle . Óspakr was slain early in the campaign , after which Óláfr took control of the fleet and secured himself on Mann . The island @-@ kingdom was divided between him and his mutilated nephew Guðrøðr , with the latter ruling the Hebridean portion and Óláfr ruling Mann itself . Guðrøðr was soon after killed on Lewis , and Óláfr ruled the whole Kingdom of Mann and the Isles peacefully , until his death in 1237 . Óláfr 's restoration on Mann was seen as a success by the Norwegians , and likely favourably viewed by the Scots as well ; since the internal struggle between him and his rivals had been brought to an end . Óláfr was succeeded by his son , Haraldr . In all , three of Óláfr 's sons ruled the Crovan dynasty 's island @-@ kingdom ? the last of which , Magnus Olafsson , was also the last of the dynasty to rule .

= = Background = =

Óláfr was a member of the Crovan dynasty of sea @-@ kings , a younger son of Guðrøðr Ólafsson , King of the Isles , King of Dublin (d . 1187) , and grandson of Óláfr Guðrøðarson , King of the Isles (d . 1153) . Guðrøðr inherited a vast island @-@ kingdom from his father , which encompassed the Hebrides ? situated on the western seaboard of Scotland ? and the Isle of Man (Mann) , located in the middle of the northern Irish Sea , a strategically important point approximately equidistant from the islands of Great Britain and Ireland . In the mid 12th century Guðrøðr lost control of much of the Inner Hebrides to Somairle , Lord of Argyll , and was unable to regain these islands on Somairle 's death in 1164 . Like his predecessors , Guðrøðr is sometimes anachronistically styled " King of Mann " in secondary sources . This is because Guðrøðr , his sons Rögnvaldr and Óláfr , and his father Óláfr styled themselves Rex Insularum (" King of the Isles ") ; it was not until the reigns of Guðrøðr 's grandsons (Óláfr 's sons) that the leading members of the dynasty adopted the Latin title Rex Mannie et Insularum (" King of Mann and the Isles ") .

Óláfr 's epithet " the black " , considered to refer to his hair colour , is recorded in the Orkneyinga saga and within a 13th @-@ century English document , the Close Roll .

= = Ascension of Rögnvaldr Guðrøðarson = =

According to the Chronicle of Mann Guðrøðr , in 1187 , instructed that his younger son Óláfr should succeed to the kingdom , since Óláfr had been born " in lawful wedlock " . Other contemporary sources record that two decades prior to this the papal legate , Vivian Cardinal priest of St Stephen in Celio Monte , visited Mann for a fortnight in late December 1176 , as he sailed from Scotland to Ireland . The chronicle records that during his visit the cardinal formally married Guðrøðr to Finnguala , daughter of an unnamed son of Muirchertach Mac Lochlainn , High King of Ireland (d . 1166) . Finnguala 's father was more than likely Niall Mac Lochlainn , King of Cenél nEógain (died 1176) . Since the chronicle contradicts itself in detailing Óláfr 's age , it is uncertain whether he was born during the year of his father 's marriage , or a few years before ? what is certain , however , is that Rögnvaldr was older than Óláfr .

Although the chronicle indirectly implies that Rögnvaldr was also a son of Finnguala , there is evidence that strongly suggests that he had a different mother . Within a letter from Óláfr to Henry II , King of England , Óláfr describes Rögnvaldr as a bastard . Further evidence is found within a Gaelic praise @-@ poem of Rögnvaldr , which states that he was a son of Sadb , an otherwise unknown Irishwoman who may have been an unrecorded wife or concubine of Guðrøðr . The chronicle records that because Óláfr was only a child at the time of his father 's death , the Manxmen chose Rögnvaldr to rule instead , describing him as a vigorous and hardier man . The chronicle states that Rögnvaldr began his reign the following year , in 1188 .

= = In the Outer Isles , and imprisonment = =

The Chronicle of Mann states that Rögnvaldr gave Óláfr possession of Lewis , which is described as an island ; Lewis is in fact the northern part of the island of Lewis and Harris , which is by far the largest island in Scotland . The northern part of the island is rather flat and boggy , while the southern part , Harris , is more mountainous . The chronicle seems , however , to have conflated the northern and southern parts as it describes Óláfr 's island as being mountainous and rocky , completely unsuitable for cultivation , and declares that the island 's small population lived mostly by hunting and fishing . The chronicle relates that Óláfr was unable to support himself and his followers , because of his poor land , and states that he led " a sorry life " .

Óláfr 's time in the Isles is confirmed by several Icelandic sources which recount how , in 1202 , Guðmundr Arason attempted to sail from Iceland to Norway to become consecrated as the Bishop of Hólar . These saga accounts relate how the Icelanders encountered a severe storm and were blown far off course before being forced to make landfall in the Hebrides . The island they landed upon was almost certainly Sanday , a tiny tidal island linked to its larger neighbour Canna , the westernmost of the Small Isles . According to the saga the Icelanders were pressured numerous times to pay a landing @-@ tax to a king named Óláfr . The king encountered by the Icelanders is considered to have been Óláfr , although at this point in history the Kingdom of Mann and the Isles is not known to have encompassed the Small Isles . One possibility is that Óláfr , like the Icelanders , may have been temporarily stranded on the tidal island , and that he may have taken advantage of the storm @-@ stricken churchmen to offset the poverty that is assigned to him by the chronicle .

The chronicle also relates that Óláfr went to Rögnvaldr , who was also living in the Hebrides , and asked him for more land . Rögnvaldr 's response was , according to the chronicle , to have Óláfr seized and sent to William I , King of Scots , who kept him imprisoned for almost seven years . The chronicle states that , on the seventh year , William died and that just before his death ordered the release of all his political prisoners . William is known to have died on 4 December 1214 . The chronicle relates that upon gaining his freedom , Óláfr met with Rögnvaldr on Mann , and then set out on a pilgrimage with a significant number of noblemen . Óláfr 's intended destination is considered to have been the shrine of St James at Santiago de Compostela in Spain .

= = Marriages , and nephew Guðrøðr Rögnvaldsson = =

Upon Óláfr 's return the chronicle says that Rögnvaldr welcomed him back and had him marry Lauon , the daughter of a certain nobleman from Kintyre , who was also the sister of his own wife . The precise identification of the father @-@ in @-@ law of Óláfr and Rögnvaldr is uncertain , but he may have been a member of Clann Somairle ; possibly Ragnall mac Somairle , or his son Ruaidrí , who are both styled Lord of Kintyre in documents contemporaneous to their reigns . The chronicle states that Rögnvaldr then gave Lewis back to Óláfr , where the newly @-@ weds proceeded to live until the arrival of Reginald , Bishop of the Isles (d. c . 1226) , sometime later . According to the chronicle the bishop disapproved of Óláfr 's marriage , as Óláfr had formerly had a concubine who was a cousin of Lauon . A synod was then assembled and the chronicle records that the marriage was nullified . Although at first glance the marriage appears to have been doomed , as it was deemed " as being within prohibited degree of kinship " , it may be that this was merely a convenient excuse , and that the contention between the half @-@ brothers may have played a part in its demise . It is also possible that Bishop Reginald may have released Óláfr from an arranged marriage which had been forced upon him ; the bishop and Óláfr appear to have been close , as the chronicle describes Bishop Reginald as a son of Óláfr 's sister , and notes that Óláfr was glad at his coming to Lewis . Furthermore , it was Bishop Reginald who annulled the marriage which Rögnvaldr had arranged for Óláfr . In fact , when the previous Bishop of the Isles died in 1217 , Bishop Reginald had vied with a rival candidate for the position ? a certain Nicholas ? and there is evidence to suggest that Reginald was supported by Óláfr , while Óláfr 's half @-@ brother Rögnvaldr supported the bid of Nicholas .

The chronicle states that Óláfr then married Christina , daughter of Ferchar mac an t @-@ sagairt (d. c . 1251) . Óláfr 's father @-@ in @-@ law emerges from historical obscurity in 1215 and , by the mid 1220s (about the time of , or not long after , the marriage) , Ferchar had obtained the Earldom of Ross from Alexander II , King of Scots (d . 1249) for his part in defeating the Meic Uilleim northern rebellion in 1215 . The chronicle declares that Óláfr 's separation from Lauon had enraged her sister , and Rögnvaldr 's bitter queen sought to sow discord between the half @-@ brothers . If the chronicle is to be believed , the queen secretly wrote under her husband 's name to their son Guðrøðr , ordering him to seize and kill Óláfr . The chronicle states that Guðrøðr dutifully gathered a force on Skye and proceeded to Lewis , where he laid waste to most of the island before returning to Skye ? Óláfr had narrowly escaped with a few men and fled to the protection of his father @-@ in @-@ law , on the mainland in Ross .

One of the more powerful men in the Isles at this time , according to the chronicle , was a sheriff on Skye named Páll Bálkason . Páll refused to take up arms against Óláfr and he left Skye to live in Ross with Óláfr . After several days Páll and Óláfr secretly returned to Skye , according to the chronicle , and learned that Guðrøðr was stationed on the " island of St Columba " . The location and identity of the island are unknown for certain , although Iona and various places and islands on Skye are possible . The chronicle tells how Óláfr and Páll rounded up their forces and dragged five ships from the seashore , which is described as being about two furlongs from the island , and subsequently surrounded Guðrøðr 's island . The chronicle states that Óláfr and Páll assaulted the island at about 2 ? 3 pm , and that everyone one of Guðrøðr 's followers who was captured outside of the enclosure of the church was slain . Guðrøðr was seized , blinded and castrated . The chronicle claims that Óláfr did not consent to Guðrøðr 's brutal mutilation , but was unable to prevent it due to Páll .

= = Rise of Óláfr , and fall of Rögnvaldr = =

Óláfr 's marriage to the daughter of one of Alexander the King of Scots ' most trusted northern lords , and the lord 's assistance rendered to Óláfr and Páll , may suggest that Óláfr had gained Alexander 's approval against Rögnvaldr . In the summer following the defeat of Guðrøðr on Skye , the chronicle states that Óláfr took hostages from the Hebridean portion of the kingdom and , with a

fleet of 32 ships , landed on Mann and confronted Rögnvaldr directly . It was then agreed that the kingdom would be split between the two ? with Rögnvaldr keeping Mann itself along with the title of king , and Óláfr retaining the Hebridean portions . In the 1220s Alexander began to extend Scottish royal authority into what is today the western coast Scotland , making several expeditions into Argyll . At this time Ruaidrí may have been forced from his lands in Kintyre and replaced by Alexander , installing Domnall mac Ragnaill , a more palatable member of Clann Somairle , in his place . Óláfr 's control of Lewis and Skye , bordering the domains of Clann Somairle , may have made him appear as a potentially valuable ally to Alexander 's eyes , who wished to rein in the more dangerous members of Clann Somairle .

Alexander played both sides in the struggle between Óláfr and Rögnvaldr however , and encouraged one of his most powerful lords Alan , Lord of Galloway (d . 1234) , to enter into the fray as an ally of Rögnvaldr . In 1225 , according to the chronicle , Rögnvaldr and Alan attempted to take possession of Óláfr 's Hebridean portion of the kingdom ; however , the Manxmen were unwilling to wholeheartedly aid the cause and nothing came of the expedition . A short time later the chronicle records that Rögnvaldr 's daughter was married to Alan 's son . Such a marriage , between Rögnvaldr 's daughter and Alan 's illegitimate son Thomas , gave Alan a stake in the kingship since Thomas was likely to succeed . The possibility of control over a future ruler on Mann led Alexander to lend his consent to the union . The marriage was beneficial to Rögnvaldr as well , since he could rely on Alan 's military might to fend off his troublesome half @-@ brother . Unfortunately for Rögnvaldr , the chronicle records that the Manxmen were angered by the marriage and they consequently appointed Óláfr as their king . At this point Rögnvaldr seems to have gone into exile in Galloway , at the court of his ally , Alan . The chronicle dates Óláfr 's kingship to have begun in 1226 , and that he ruled the kingdom peacefully for the next two years .

The chronicle records that in 1228 , while Óláfr and his chiefs were away from Mann , the island was attacked and devastated by Alan , his brother Thomas , Earl of Atholl (d . 1231) , and Rögnvaldr . It was only when Alan left with most of his force that Óláfr was able to regain control of the island . Rögnvaldr sailed from Galloway in the winter of the same year , landed on Mann , and burnt all the ships of Óláfr and his chiefs . The chronicle states that Rögnvaldr stayed at Ronaldsway for forty days ; and that he won over the hearts of the southern inhabitants of the island . Óláfr and his forces arrived at Tynwald on 14 February 1229 , where they attacked Rögnvaldr and his men . The chronicle claims that Rögnvaldr was treacherously killed by his own men , without the prior knowledge of Óláfr , and also notes that Óláfr never avenged his half @-@ brother 's death .

= = Norwegian intervention into the Isles = =

The Chronicle of Lanercost states that a Norwegian fleet sailed down the west coast of Scotland in 1230 with a certain Óspakr Ögmundsson (d . 1230) , who had been appointed King of the Isles by the King of Norway ; also amongst the fleet were Óláfr and Guðrøðr . The Eirspennill version of Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar , the most authoritative version of the saga , gives a much more illustrative account ; although it does not specifically state that Guðrøðr travelled with the fleet from Norway . The saga states that in the summer before the fleet left Norway , news of warring in the Isles reached the Norwegian king , Hákon Hákonarson (d . 1263) . Óláfr is described as a faithful vassal of the Norwegian king , while two Hebridean noblemen , Donnchad and Dubgall ? both sons of Dubgall mac Somairle (fl . 1175) ? are described as unfaithful . The saga relates how the Norwegian king summoned an assembly that winter , appointed Óspakr King of the Isles , and decided upon a plan to give Óspakr a military force to command in the Isles .

It is suspected that members of Clann Somairle may have been attacking parts of the Crovan dynasty 's island @-@ kingdom , possibly taking advantage of the warring between Rögnvaldr and Óláfr . It may have been that they were also lending support to Alan 's destabilising incursions into the Isles . Whatever the case , it is clear that the state of affairs in the Isles was chaotic and , because of Óláfr 's inability to control of the situation , the formidable Hákon decided to pacify the region using Óspakr . In fact , the saga notes that Óspakr was also a son of Dubgall , and it is likely that his family connections would have made him a palatable over @-@ king of the unruly Clann

Somairle . Óspakr 's kingdom was likely meant to encompass the territories of Clann Somairle , and control of the Crovan dynasty 's domain may have been retained by the dynasty .

The saga states that , with the coming of spring , Hákon ordered the preparation of Óspakr 's fleet . While preparations were under way Óláfr came to the king at Bergen , and reported the unrest in the Isles , noting that Alan had assembled a powerful army and was causing unrest in the region . When the fleet left Norway for Orkney , Óláfr accompanied it on @-@ board Páll Bálkason 's ship . When the fleet reached Orkney , several ship @-@ commanders sailed to Skye , where they defeated a certain Þórkell Þórmóðsson in a sea @-@ battle . The fleet then united at Islay , and was strengthened by Óspakr 's brothers and their followers , and swelled in size to 80 ships . The fleet then sailed south and around the Mull of Kintyre to Bute , where the force invaded the island and took the castle whilst suffering heavy casualties . The fleet then sailed to Kintyre , and Óspakr fell ill and died . The Chronicle of Mann , however , specifically states that Óspakr was struck by a stone and killed , and later buried on Iona .

The chronicle continues by stating that Óláfr then took control of the fleet whereupon he led it to Mann , where he and Guðrøðr divided the kingdom between themselves ? with Óláfr retaining Mann , and Guðrøðr controlling the Hebridean portions ; in fact , it is possible that Hákon may have originally intended for Óláfr and Guðrøðr to split the kingdom of Mann and the Isles between themselves . According to the saga the Norwegians left in the spring , sailing north to Kintyre where they encountered and battled a strong force of Scots with both sides losing many men during the ensuing battle . The saga then recounts how the fleet sailed north to Lewis and displaced a certain Þórmóðr Þórkelson , before travelling to Orkney , from where most of the fleet sailed back to Norway . Páll , however , is stated to have remained behind , and to have been slain by Guðrøðr several weeks later . The saga notes that Guðrøðr was also slain in the Isles a short time after this . The Chronicle of Mann specifically places Guðrøðr 's death on Lewis , although it does not cast any light upon the circumstances . Even so , what is certain is that it was only after Guðrøðr 's death that Óláfr 's kingship was safe from any rival claim .

The campaign is regarded to have been the gravest threat to the Scottish kingdom since John , King of England 's (d . 1216) northern campaigning and invasion in 1216 . Although Óláfr 's restoration on Mann was claimed as a success by the Norwegians , it was probably accepted gladly by the Scots as well ; considering Óláfr 's familial relationship with Alexander 's protégé Ferchar and the consolidation of the Crovan dynasty after years of chaos . Óláfr consequently ruled the Kingdom of Mann and the Isles peacefully until his death , seven years later . The chronicle states that he died on St Patrick 's Isle on 21 May 1237 and was buried at St Mary 's Abbey , Rushen . There is a possibility that a coffin @-@ lid or grave @-@ slab found at Rushen may be associated with Óláfr , or of two of his sons who are known to have been buried there (Rögnvaldr and Magnús) .

= = Family = =

Óláfr is known to have been survived by three children ; Haraldr (d . 1248) , Rögnvaldr (d . 1249) , and Magnús (d . 1265) ? all of whom ruled as kings in their own right . Although the mother of Óláfr 's children is not known for certain , she is thought to have been Christina . The Chronicle of Mann states that Óláfr 's immediate successor , Haraldr , was only fourteen years old at the time of his father 's death , which dates his birth to about the time of the marriage of Óláfr and Christina .

There is evidence to suggest that Óláfr might have had a fourth son named Guðrøðr . For example , the chronicle relates how the governor of Mann , described as a kinsman of Haraldr , fled from the king in 1238 and set sail for Wales , taking with him his foster @-@ son Guðrøðr Óláfsson . When the fleeing ship reached the Welsh coast it was wrecked and , according to the chronicle , Guðrøðr perished on board . Furthermore , amongst the names of witnesses within a quitclaim between Llywelyn ap Gruffudd (d . 1282) and Ralph de Mortimer (d . 1246) , thought to date to about 1241 , there is a certain Guðrøðr who appears in Latin as Godredo filio regis Mannie (" Guðrøðr , son of the King of Mann ") . Although the possibility has been raised that the two sources may refer to the same man , there is no further evidence to confirm it .

= = Legacy = =

The Manx Sword of State , a ceremonial sword used at the annual Tynwald Day sittings at St John 's , Isle of Man , and whenever the Tynwald sits at the Legislative Chambers in Douglas , Isle of Man , is popularly said to have belonged to Óláfr . The sword , which has a 29 in (74 cm) steel blade and 9 in (23 cm) inch hardwood hilt , is sometimes said to have been brought back from Spain when Óláfr returned from his pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela ; however , recent analysis of the sword has determined that it dates no earlier than the 15th century , and that the blade dates only to the 17th century . The current understanding is that the sword itself was made for the Tynwald meetings of 1417 or 1422 .

Several Scottish clans that were historically seated on Lewis have traditionally been ascribed a descent from Óláfr . The MacLeods claim a descent from Leod (Old Norse Ljótr) , who is popularly said to have been a son of Óláfr . Clan traditions dating to the late 18th century link Leod with Óláfr , and heraldic evidence dating to the late 17th century may be the earliest indication of such a claim ; however , recent research into the MacLeods ' traditional ancestry has determined such claims of descent from Óláfr are unsupportable . Other Lewis clans have been linked with Óláfr in various traditions , such as the Morrisons of Ness and their adversaries the Macaulays of Uig , although there is no supporting evidence that Óláfr left any descendants on the island .

= = Ancestry = =