

= Haakon IV of Norway =

Haakon Haakonsson (c . March / April 1204 ? 16 December 1263) (Old Norse : Hákon Hákonarson ; Norwegian : Håkon Håkonsson) , sometimes called Haakon the Old in contrast to his son with the same name , and known in modern regnal lists as Haakon IV , was the King of Norway from 1217 to 1263 . His reign lasted for 46 years , longer than any Norwegian king since Harald I. Haakon was born into the troubled civil war era in Norway , but his reign eventually managed to put an end to the internal conflicts . At the start of his reign , during his minority , his later rival Earl Skule Bårdsson served as regent . As a king of the birkebeiner faction , Haakon defeated the uprising of the final bagler royal pretender , Sigurd Ribbung , in 1227 . He put a definitive end to the civil war era when he had Skule Bårdsson killed in 1240 , a year after he had himself proclaimed king in opposition to Haakon . Haakon thereafter formally appointed his own son as his co @-@ regent .

Under Haakon 's rule , medieval Norway is considered to have reached its zenith or golden age . His reputation and formidable naval fleet allowed him to maintain friendships with both the Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor , despite their conflict . He was at different points offered the Imperial Crown by the Pope , the Irish High Kingship by a delegation of Irish kings , and the command of the French crusader fleet by the French king . He amplified the influence of European culture in Norway by importing and translating contemporary European literature into Old Norse , and by constructing monumental European @-@ style stone buildings . In conjunction with this he employed an active and aggressive foreign policy , and at the end of his rule added Iceland and the Norse Greenland community to his kingdom , leaving Norway at its territorial height . Although he for the moment managed to secure Norwegian control of the islands off the northern and western shores of Great Britain , he fell ill and died when wintering in Orkney following some military engagements with the expanding Scottish kingdom .

= = Historical sources = =

The main source of information concerning Haakon is the Saga of Haakon Haakonsson which was written in the immediate years following his death . Commissioned by his son Magnus , it was written by the Icelandic writer and politician Sturla Þórðarson (nephew of the famous historian Snorri Sturluson) . Having come into conflict with the royal representative in Iceland , Sturla came to Norway in 1263 in an attempt to reconcile with Haakon . When he arrived , he learned that Haakon was in Scotland , and that Magnus ruled Norway in his place . While Magnus initially took an unfriendly attitude towards Sturla , his talents as a story @-@ teller and skald eventually won him the favour of Magnus and his men . The saga is considered the most detailed and reliable of all sagas concerning Norwegian kings , building on both written archive material and oral information from individuals who had been close to Haakon . It is nonetheless written openly in support of the political program of the House of Sverre , and the legitimacy of Haakon 's kingship .

= = Background and childhood = =

Haakon was born in Folkenborg (now in Eidsberg) to Inga of Varteig in the summer of 1204 , probably in March or April . The father was widely regarded to have been King Haakon Sverresson , the leader of the birkebeiner faction in the ongoing civil war against the bagler , as Inga had been with Haakon in his hostel in Borg (now Sarpsborg) in late 1203 . Haakon Sverresson was dead by the time his son Haakon was born , but Inga 's claim was supported by several of Haakon Sverresson 's followers . Haakon was born in bagler @-@ controlled territory , and his mother 's claim placed them in a dangerous position . While the bagler started hunting Haakon , a group of birkebeiner warriors fled with the child in the winter of 1205 / 06 , heading for King Inge Bårdson , the new birkebeiner king in Nidaros (now Trondheim) . As the party was struck by a blizzard , two of the best birkebeiner skiers , Torstein Skevla and Skjervald Skrukka , carried on with the child over the mountain from Lillehammer to Østerdalen . They eventually managed to bring Haakon to safety with King Inge ; this particular event is commemorated in modern @-@ day Norway by the popular

annual skiing event Birkebeinerrennet . Haakon 's dramatic childhood was often paralleled with that of former king Olaf Trygvasson (who introduced Christianity to Norway) , as well as with the gospels and Child Jesus , which served as an important ideological function for his kingship .

In the saga , Haakon is described as bright and witty , and as being small for his age . When he was three years old , Haakon was captured by the bagler but refused to call the bagler king Philip Simonsson his lord (he nonetheless came from the capture unharmed) . When he learned at the age of eight that King Inge and his brother Earl Haakon the Crazy had made an agreement of the succession to the throne that excluded himself , he pointed out that the agreement was invalid due to his attorney not having been present . He subsequently identified his attorney as " God and Saint Olaf . " Haakon was notably the first Norwegian king to receive formal education at a school . From the late civil war era , the government administration relied increasingly on written communication , which in turn demanded literate leaders . When Haakon was in Bergen under the care of Haakon the Crazy , he started receiving education from the age of seven , likely at the Bergen Cathedral School . He continued his education under King Inge at the Trondheim Cathedral School after the Earl 's death in 1214 . Haakon was brought up alongside Inge 's son Guttorm , and they were treated as the same . When he was eleven , some of Haakon 's friends provoked the king by asking him to give Haakon a region to govern . When Haakon was approached by the men and was urged to take up arms against Inge , he rejected it in part because of his young age and its bad prospects , as well as because he believed it would be morally wrong to fight Inge and thus split the birkebeiner . He instead said that he prayed that God would give him his share of his father 's inheritance when the time was right .

= = Reign = =

= = Succession struggle = =

After King Inge 's death in 1217 , a dispute erupted over who was to become his successor . In addition to Haakon who gained the support of the majority of the birkebeiners including the veterans who had served under his father and grandfather , candidates included Inge 's illegitimate son Guttorm (who dropped out very soon) , Inge 's half @-@ brother Earl Skule Bårdsson who had been appointed leader of the king 's hird at Inge 's deathbed and was supported by the Archbishop of Nidaros as well as part of the birkebeiners , and Haakon the Crazy 's son Knut Haakonsson . With his widespread popular support in Trøndelag and in Western Norway , Haakon was proclaimed king at Øyrating in June 1217 . He was later the same year hailed as king at Gulating in Bergen , and at Haugating , Borgarting and local things east of Elven (Göta Älv) . While Skule 's supporters initially had attempted to cast doubt about Haakon 's royal ancestry , they eventually suspended open resistance to his candidacy . As the dispute could have threatened to split the birkebeiners in two , Skule settled on becoming regent for Haakon during his minority .

In connection with the dispute over the royal election , Haakon 's mother Inga had to prove his parentage through a trial by ordeal in Bergen in 1218 . The result of the trial strengthened the legal basis for his kingship , and improved his relationship with the church . The saga 's claim that Haakon already had been generally accepted as king in 1217 / 18 has however been contested by modern historians such as Sverre Bagge . Skule and Haakon increasingly drifted apart in their administration , and Skule focused mainly on governing Eastern Norway after 1220 , which he had gained the right to rule in 1218 as his third of the Norwegian kingdom . From 1221 to 1223 , Haakon and Skule separately issued letters as rulers of Norway , and maintained official contacts abroad . In 1223 a great meeting of bishops , clergy , secular nobles and other high @-@ ranking figures from all across the country was held in Bergen to finally decide on Haakon 's right to the throne . Other candidates to the throne were present either personally or through attorneys , but Haakon was in the end unanimously confirmed as King of Norway by the court .

The last bagler king Philip Simonsson died in 1217 . Speedy political and military manoeuvring by Skule led to a reconciliation between the birkebeiner and bagler , and thus the reunification of the

kingdom . However , some discontented elements among the bagler found a new royal pretender , Sigurd Ribbung , and launched a new rising from 1219 . The rising only gained support in parts of Eastern Norway , and were unable to gain control of Viken and Opplandene as the bagler formerly had done . In the summer of 1223 Skule eventually managed to force the Ribbungar to surrender . The great meeting in Bergen soon after however renewed the division of the Norwegian kingdom with Skule , who thereafter gained control of the northern third of the country instead of the east , in what marked a setback despite his military victory . In 1224 , Ribbung who had been in Skule 's custody escaped , and Haakon was left to fight him alone as the new ruler of Eastern Norway . Skule remained passive throughout the rest of the war , and his support for Haakon was lukewarm at best . Assuming the military lead in the fight , Haakon nevertheless defeated Ribbung through comprehensive and organisationally demanding warfare over the next years . As part of the campaign , Haakon additionally led a large army into Värmland , Sweden in 1225 in order to punish the inhabitants for their support of Ribbung . While Ribbung died in 1226 , the revolt was finally quashed in 1227 after the surrender of the last leader of the uprising , Haakon the Crazy 's son Knut Haakonsson . This left Haakon more or less uncontested monarch .

Haakon 's councillors had sought to reconcile Haakon and Skule by proposing marriage between Haakon and Skule 's daughter Margrete in 1219 . Haakon accepted the proposal (although he did not think it would change much politically) , but the marriage between Haakon and Margrete did not take place before 1225 , partly due to the conflict with Ribbung . The relationship between Haakon and Skule nevertheless deteriorated further during the 1230s , and attempts of settlements at meetings in 1233 and 1236 only distanced them more from each other . Periodically , the two nonetheless reconciled and spent a great amount of time together , only to have their friendship destroyed , according to the saga by intrigues derived from rumours and slander by men who played the two against each other . Skule was the first person ever in Norway to be titled Duke (hertug) in 1237 , but instead of control over a region gained the rights to the incomes from a third of the syssels scattered across the whole of Norway . This was part of an attempt by Haakon to limit Skule 's power . In 1239 the conflict between the two erupted into open warfare when Skule had himself proclaimed king . Although he had some support in Trøndelag , Opplandene and in eastern Viken , he could not stand up to Haakon 's forces . The rebellion ended when Skule was killed in 1240 , leaving Haakon the undisputed king of Norway . This revolt is generally taken to mark the final end of Norway 's civil war era .

= = = Recognition by the Pope = = =

While the church in Norway initially had refused to recognise Haakon as King of Norway , it had largely turned to support his claim to the throne by the 1223 meeting , although later disagreements occurred . Despite additionally having become the undisputed ruler of Norway after 1240 , Haakon had still not been approved as king by the Pope due to his illegitimate birth . He nonetheless had a strong personal desire to be approved fully as a European king . Several papal commissions were appointed to investigate the matter , and Haakon declared his legitimate son Haakon the Young his successor instead of an older living illegitimate son . Although Haakon had children with his mistress Kanga the Young prior to his marriage with Margrete , it was his children with Margrete that was designated as his successors in accordance with a papal recognition . The Catholic principle of legitimacy was thus established in the Norwegian order of succession , although Haakon 's new law still maintained that illegitimate children could be designated as successor in the absence of any legitimate children or grandchildren ? contrary to Catholic principles . While his strong position allowed him to set boundaries to the church 's political influence , he was on the other hand prepared to give the church much autonomy in internal affairs and relations with the rural society .

Haakon also attempted to strengthen his ties with the papacy by issuing a vow of crusade . In 1241 he however converted this into a vow of engaging in warfare against pagan peoples in the north in light of the Mongol invasion of Europe . When a group of Karelians (" Bjarmians ") had been forced westwards by the Mongols , Haakon allowed them to stay in Malangen and had them Christianized ? something that would please the papacy . Later , in 1248 , Louis IX of France proposed (by

Matthew Paris as messenger) to Haakon to join him for a crusade , with Haakon as commander of the fleet , but Haakon turned the offer down . While Haakon had been unsuccessful in gaining the recognition of Pope Gregory IX , he quickly gained the support from Pope Innocent IV who sought alliances in his struggle with Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II . Haakon finally achieved royal recognition by Pope Innocent in 1246 , and Cardinal William of Sabina was sent to Bergen and crowned Haakon in 1247 .

= = = Cultural influence and legal reforms = = =

After consolidating his position in 1240 , Haakon focused on displaying the supremacy of the kingship , influenced by the increasingly closer contact with European culture . He started constructing several monumental royal buildings , primarily in the royal estate in Bergen where he built a European @-@ style stone palace . He used a grand fleet with stately royal ships when meeting with other Scandinavian rulers , and actively sent letters and gifts to other European rulers ; his most far @-@ reaching contact was achieved when he sent gyrfalcons with an embassy to the Sultan of Tunis .

The royal court in Bergen also started importing and translating the first true European literature that became available to a wider Norwegian audience . The literature which was popular then was heroic @-@ romantic literature derived from the French and in turn English courts , notably chansons de geste around Charlemagne (the Matter of France) and tales of King Arthur (the Matter of Britain) . The first work that was translated into Old Norse was reportedly the Arthurian romantic story Tristan and Iseult , which was finished in 1226 after orders from the young and newly @-@ wed Haakon . Hákon 's programme seems to have been the spark for the emergence of a new Norse genre of chivalric sagas .

Haakon also had the popular religious text Visio Thugdali translated into Old Norse as Duggals leiðsla . The literature also appealed to women , and both Haakon 's wife Margrete and his daughter Kristina owned richly illustrated psalters .

Haakon also initiated legal reforms which were crucial for the development of justice in Norway . Haakon 's " New Law " written around 1260 was a breakthrough for both the idea and practice of public justice , as opposed to the traditional Norwegian customs for feuds and revenge . The influence of the reforms is also apparent in Haakon 's King 's Mirror (Konungs skuggsjá) , an educational text intended for his son Magnus , which was probably written in cooperation with the royal court in the mid @-@ 1250s .

= = = Involvements abroad = = =

Relations were hostile with both Sweden and Denmark from the start . During his rivalry with Earl Skule , Skule attempted to gain the support of Valdemar II of Denmark , but any aid was made impossible after Valdemar 's capture by one of his vassals . Since the Danes wanted overlordship of Norway and supported the Guelphs (those supporting the Pope over the Holy Roman Emperor) , Haakon in turn sought closer ties with the Ghibelline Emperor Frederick II , who sent ambassadors to Norway . As Haakon had gained a powerful reputation due to the strength of his fleet , other European rulers wanted to benefit from his friendship . Despite the struggle between the Pope and the Emperor , Haakon was able to maintain friendships with both . According to an English chronicler , the Pope wanted Haakon to become Holy Roman Emperor . It has been suggested that Haakon hesitated to leave Norway due to the Mongol threat .

Haakon pursued a foreign policy that was active in all directions (although foremost to the west and south @-@ east) . In the north @-@ east , the relationship with Novgorod had been tense due to a dispute over the right to tax the Sami people , as well as raiding from both Norwegian and Karelian sides . Eventually , the Mongol threat drove Prince Alexander Nevsky to negotiations with Haakon that likely strengthened Norwegian control of Troms and Finnmark . An embassy from Novgorod one time asked for Haakon 's daughter Christina for a marriage , but Haakon refused due to the Mongol threat . Due to the Elven @-@ based Norwegian presence in the seas around the south of Sweden

and into the Baltic Sea , Norway increasingly relied on Baltic grain from Lübeck . The import was however halted in the late 1240s due to the plundering of Norwegian ships in Danish seas by ships from Lübeck . In 1250 , Haakon made a peace and trade agreement with Lübeck , which eventually also opened the city of Bergen to the Hanseatic League . During the conflict , Haakon had reportedly been offered control over the city by Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II . In any case , Haakon 's policy regarding Northern German ports largely derived from his strategy of attempting to exploit the internal turmoil that had erupted in Denmark following the death of King Valdemar II in 1241 .

In Scandinavia , Haakon regularly met with neighbouring rulers in the border @-@ area around Elven from the late 1240s through the 1250s . Using grand fleets as envoys , Haakon 's fleet at most reportedly counted over 300 ships . Haakon sought to expand his kingdom southwards of Elven into the Danish province of Halland . He thus looked for alliance with the Swedes , as well as ties with opponents of the ruling line of monarchs of Denmark . Haakon made a deal with Swedish leader Earl Birger in 1249 about a joint Swedish @-@ Norwegian invasion into Halland and Scania , but the agreement was eventually abandoned by the Swedes (see Treaty of Lödöse) . Haakon claimed Halland in 1253 , and finally invaded the province on his own in 1256 , demanding it as compensation for the looting of Norwegian ships in Danish seas . He was however forced to renounce his claims in 1257 after a peace agreement was made with Christopher I of Denmark . Haakon thereafter negotiated a marriage between his only remaining son Magnus and Ingeborg , daughter of former Danish king Eric Ploughpenny . Haakon had also reconciled with the Swedes when he had his son Haakon the Young marry a daughter of Earl Birger . Haakon 's Nordic policies initiated the build @-@ up to the later personal unions (called the Kalmar Union) , that in the end had dire consequences for Norway as it did not have the economic and military resources to persevere and maintain Haakon 's aggressive policies .

More distantly , Haakon sought an alliance with Alfonso X of Castile , a potential next Holy Roman Emperor ? chiefly as it would guarantee new supplies of grain in light of rising prices in England , and possibly giving access to Baltic grain through Norwegian control of Lübeck . Alfonso in turn sought to expand his influence in Northern Europe , as well as to gain Norwegian naval assistance for the campaign or crusade he had proposed in Morocco (seeing that the Iberian Moors received backing overseas from North Africa) . Haakon could thus potentially also fulfill his papal vow of crusade , although he likely did not intend to . He sent an embassy to Castile in 1255 , and the accompanying Castilian ambassador on the return to Norway proposed to establish the " strongest ties of friendship " with Haakon . At the request of Alfonso , Haakon gave his consent that his daughter Christina could go to Castile and marry one of Alfonso 's brothers . Christina 's death four years after the childless marriage , however , marked an effective end of the short @-@ lived " alliance " , and the proposed crusade fell into the blue .

= = = The Scottish expedition and death = = =

Haakon employed an active and aggressive foreign policy towards strengthening Norwegian ties in the west . His policy relied on friendship and trade with the English king ; the first known Norwegian trade agreements were made with England in the years 1217 ? 23 (England 's first commercial treaties were also made with Norway) , and the friendship with Henry III of England was a cornerstone in Haakon 's foreign policy . As they had become kings around the same time , Haakon wrote to Henry in 1224 that he wished they could maintain the friendship that had existed between their fathers . Haakon sought to defend the Norwegian sovereignty over the islands in the west , namely the Hebrides and Man (under the Kingdom of Mann and the Isles) , Shetland and Orkney (under the Earldom of Orkney) , and the Faroe Islands . Further , the Norse community in Greenland agreed to submit to the Norwegian king in 1261 , and in 1262 Haakon achieved one of his long @-@ standing ambitions when he managed to incorporate Iceland into his kingdom by utilising the island 's internal conflicts in his favour . The dependency on Norwegian maritime trade and their subordination to the Nidaros ecclesiastical province were some of the key reasons which allowed Haakon to assert sovereignty over the islands . The Norwegian kingdom was at the largest it has

ever been by the end of Haakon 's reign .

Norwegian control over the Faroe Islands and Shetland was strong due to the importance of Bergen as a trading centre , while Orkney , the Hebrides and Man had more natural ties with the Scottish mainland . Although traditionally having had ties with the community of Norse settlers in northern Scotland , Scottish rulers had increasingly asserted their sovereignty over the entire mainland . Haakon had at the same time gained stronger control of the Hebrides and Man than any Norwegian ruler since Magnus Barefoot . As part of a new development the Scottish king Alexander II claimed the Hebrides and requested to buy the islands from Norway , but Haakon staunchly rejected the proposals . Following Alexander II 's death , his son Alexander III continued and stepped up his father 's policy by sending an embassy to Norway in 1261 , and thereafter attacking the Hebrides .

In 1263 the dispute with the Scottish king over the Hebrides induced Haakon to undertake an expedition to the islands . Having learned in 1262 that Scottish nobles had raided the Hebrides and that Alexander III planned to conquer the islands , Haakon went on an expedition with his formidable *leidang* fleet of at least 120 ships in 1263 , having become accustomed to negotiating backed by an intimidating fleet . The fleet left Bergen in July , and reached Shetland and Orkney in August where they were joined by chieftains from the Hebrides and Man . Negotiations were started by Alexander following Norwegian landings on the Scottish mainland , but were purposely prolonged by the Scots . Having waited until September / October for weather that caused trouble for Haakon 's fleet , a clash occurred between a smaller Norwegian force and a Scottish division at the Battle of Largs . Although inconclusive and of a limited impact , Haakon withdrew to Orkney for the winter . A delegation of Irish kings invited Haakon to help them rid Ireland of English settlers as High King of Ireland , but this was apparently rejected against Haakon 's wish .

Haakon over @-@ wintered at the Bishop 's Palace in Kirkwall , Orkney , with plans to resume his campaign the next year . During his stay in Kirkwall he however fell ill , and died in the early hours of 16 December 1263 . Haakon was buried in the St Magnus Cathedral in Kirkwall for the winter , and when spring came he was exhumed and his body taken back to Norway , where he was buried in the Old Cathedral in his capital Bergen . Centuries later , in 1531 , the cathedral was demolished by the Danish feudal overlord Eske Bille for military purposes in connection with the Protestant Reformation , and the graves of Haakon and other Norwegian kings buried there were apparently destroyed in the process .

= = Views on Haakon 's reign = =

Norwegian historians have held strongly differing views on Haakon 's reign . In the 19th century , historian P. A. Munch portrayed Haakon as a mighty , almost flawless ruler , which in turn influenced Henrik Ibsen in his 1863 play *The Pretenders* . In the early 20th century , poet Hans E. Kinck countered and viewed Haakon as an insignificant king subordinated to forces outside of his control , a view which influenced historians such as Halvdan Koht and Edvard Bull , Sr . . Haakon has often been compared with Skule Bårdsson , and historians have taken sides in the old conflict . While Munch saw Skule as a traitor to the rightful Norwegian king , Koht viewed Skule as a heroic figure . On more sketchy grounds , Kinck praised Skule as representing the original and dying Norse culture , and Haakon as a superficial emulator of foreign culture . Since the 1960s , historians including Narve Bjørge , Per Sveaas Andersen , Knut Helle , Svein Haga and Kåre Lunden have in turn professed a reaction against Koht 's view . According to Sverre Bagge , modern historians tend to follow Koht when it comes to see Skule 's rebellion as a last desperate attempt to stop Haakon from encroaching his power , but lean closer to Munch 's overall evaluation of the two men .

Knut Helle interprets the saga to leave an impression of Skule as a skilled warrior and politician , while noting that the author of the saga purposely created a diffuse image of his role in the conflict with Haakon . On the other hand , Helle notes that Skule was outmaneuvered with relative ease by Haakon 's supporters in the immediate years after 1217 , and that this may suggest some limited abilities . While neither giving a clear picture of Haakon , Helle maintains that Haakon " obviously " learned to master the political game in his early years . He interprets Haakon as an independent and

willstrong ruler whom he assigns a " significant personal responsibility " for the policies pursued during his reign ? notably regarding the internal consolidation of the kingship , the orientation towards European culture and the aggressive foreign policy . In his article in Norsk biografisk leksikon , Knut Helle acknowledges that Haakon was empowered by the strong institutional position of the kingship at the end of his reign (which it should be noted that he had developed himself) , and that his policies were not always successful . It nonetheless recognises the substantial political abilities and powerful determination Haakon must have had in order to progress from the difficult position in which he started his reign .

= = Children and marriage = =

Haakon had two illegitimate children with his mistress Kanga the Young (who is only known by name) before 1225 . They were :

Sigurd (died 1252) .

Cecilia (died 1248) . Married lendumm Gregorius Andresson , a nephew of the last bagler king Philip Simonsson in 1241 . Widowed in 1246 , she married Harald Olafsson , King of Mann and the Isles in 1248 . They both drowned the same year on the return voyage to Great Britain .

Haakon married Margrete Skulesdatter on 25 May 1225 , daughter of his rival Earl Skule Bårdsson . Their children were :

Olav (born 1226) . Died in infancy .

Haakon the Young (1232 ? 1257) . Married Rikissa Birgersdotter , daughter of the Swedish statesman Earl Birger in 1251 . He was appointed king and co @-@ ruler by his father in 1240 , but predeceased his father .

Christina (1234 ? 1262) . Married Infante Philip of Castile , brother of Alfonso X of Castile in 1258 . She died childless .

Magnus VI of Norway (1238 ? 1280) . Married Ingeborg , daughter of Eric IV of Denmark in 1261 . Was appointed king and co @-@ ruler following the death of Haakon the Young . Succeeded his father as King of Norway following his father 's death .

= = Olympic Mascot = =

Håkon and Kristin are the mascots of the 1994 Winter Olympics . Håkon is named after Haakon IV of Norway and Kristin after Christina of Norway .

= = Ancestry = =