

= Bolli Bollason =

Bolli Bollason (also Bolli Bollison) was a key historical character in the Medieval Icelandic Laxdæla saga , born around 1000 . He grew up in Orlygsstadir , at Helgafell on the Snæfellsnes Peninsula in Iceland . He divided his time between Helgafell and Tunga , the home of Snorri the Goði . [Note 1] He was held in the highest regard among the contemporary Scandinavian rulers , and also in the Byzantine Empire , where he became the first known West Norseman in the Varangian Guard . [Note 2] It is believed that he had reached the rank of manglabites in the Byzantine army , and on his return to Iceland , his finery and recognition earned him the name " Bolli the Elegant " .

His importance in the literary context of the saga is his prominence as the son of Bolli Þorleiksson and Guðrún Ósvífursdóttir , the two central characters of the work . He is mentioned at the end of the Sneglu @-@ Hall þáttur (The Tale of Sarcastic Halli) , and is also the subject of his own tale , the Bollapáttur , which was later appended to the end of the manuscripts in the early 14th century .

= = Laxdæla saga = =

= = = Background = = =

The Laxdæla saga or Saga of the People of Laxardal is an Icelandic family saga written sometime between 1250 and 1270 , possibly by a woman author . " Vast in conception " , the grand sweep of the saga 's action spans well over a century from AD 890 to 1030 . Alongside Njál 's saga and Egil 's saga , the Laxdæla saga makes the strongest claim of any Icelandic saga for literary greatness . Shaped by continental literary traditions and several types of saga , the characterisation " highlights nobility , splendour and physical appearance " , although :

? in their actions the male characters tend not to live up to the grandeur and hyperbole with which they are presented . At foreign courts their stature is aristocratic , but at home in Iceland they are farmers with few outlets other than words and smart clothes for their aspirations to nobility . This is a saga in which even slaves are high @-@ born , descended from the kings of Ireland .

The saga is also a feud saga , in which " feuds escalate from trivial local squabbles into unstoppable vendettas . The male protagonists are splendid figures who die heroic deaths , while the women are strong characters who engineer much of the action " .

Many manuscripts of the Laxdæla saga have survived , although all printed versions have been based upon the Möðruvallabók (dated 1330 @-@ 1370) , the only intact vellum manuscript . Historiographically , the distinction between narrative and history did not exist at the time when the sagas were written . However , the sagas develop a " dense and plausible " historical context , with the authenticating details and precision necessary for the narrative . The world within which the local and detailed stories of the individual sagas exist can be confirmed by archaeology and comparison with histories in other languages .

= = = Account = = =

= = = = Family and early life = = = =

Bolli Bollason was one of the People of Laxárdalur , in the Western Quarter of Iceland . He was born in 1006 to Guðrún Ósvífursdóttir , the winter after the killing of his father , Bolli Þorleiksson . Guðrún had been courted by Bolli Þorleiksson and his foster @-@ brother Kjartan Ólafsson , but although she preferred Kjartan , she gave herself to Bolli Þorleiksson on the basis of a false rumour that Kjartan was engaged . The consequent hostilities between the two foster @-@ brothers ended with Bolli Þorleiksson killing Kjartan , and then he in turn being killed by Kjartan 's kinsmen . Bolli Bollason grew up with his brother Thorleik , who was four years his senior , and his mother Guðrún in Helgafell , after she exchanged homes with the renowned Snorri the Goði .

Guðrún remarried , this time to Thorkell Eyjolfsson , who became a great chieftain in his own countryside and took over the running of the household at Helgafell . This left Bolli able to spend his time both at Helgafell and with Snorri in Tunga , and Snorri became very fond of him . Thorkell was fond of both his stepsons , but Bolli was regarded as " being the foremost in all things " . Thorleik journeyed abroad to Norway , and stayed with King Olaf II for several months .

When Bolli was eighteen years old he asked for his father 's portion , as he intended to woo Thordis Snorradottir , the daughter of Snorri Goði . He set out with his stepfather and a good many followers to Tunga . Snorri welcomed them , and the wedding feast took place that summer . Bolli abode at Tunga , and love grew between him and Thordis . The next summer , Thorleik returned in a goods @-@ laden ship to White @-@ river , " and the brothers greeted each other joyfully " .

The two brothers made peace with the sons of Ólaf , Kjartan 's kinsmen , at the Thorness Thing ; it is not known how much money was exchanged in compensation as part of the agreement , but Bolli received a good sword , and after the assembly " both sides were thought to have gained in esteem from these affairs " .

= = = Travels abroad = = =

Bolli 's later travels abroad with his brother Thorleik are well documented and notable for his role in the Varangian Guard . They departed Iceland , taking " a great deal of money abroad with him " , and reached Norway in the autumn . They stayed in Throndheim for the winter , while King Olaf II was wintering in the east in Sarpsborg . Bolli soon became highly thought of in Norway , and his arrivals at the guild meeting @-@ places were noted for being better arrayed as to raiment and weapons than other townsfolk . Early in the spring the brothers prepared their ship and went east to meet the king . The king thought Bolli " a man of high mettle , " " even peerless among men " , and " the man of greatest mark that has ever come from Iceland . "

Bolli boarded a trade @-@ ship bound for Denmark , departing King Olaf in great friendship and with fine parting gifts . [Note 2] Thorleik remained behind , but Bolli wintered in Denmark and became as well regarded as he had been in Norway . Travelling next to Constantinople , he spent many years in the Varangian Guard ; " and was thought to be the most valiant in all deeds that try a man , and always went next to those in the forefront . " The saga also records the finery his followers received from the Byzantine Emperor (most likely Romanos III) , and the influence he held after his return to Iceland , some time after the death of King Olaf II :

Bolli rode from the ship with twelve men , and all his followers were dressed in scarlet , and rode on gilt saddles , and all were they a trusty band , though Bolli was peerless among them . He had on the clothes of fur which the Garth @-@ king had given him , he had over all a scarlet cape ; and he had Footbiter girt on him , the hilt of which was dight with gold , and the grip woven with gold , he had a gilded helmet on his head , and a red shield on his flank , with a knight painted on it in gold . He had a dagger in his hand , as is the custom in foreign lands ; and whenever they took quarters the women paid heed to nothing but gazing at Bolli and his grandeur , and that of his followers .

The right to bear a gold @-@ hilted sword was one of the privileges of the court rank of manglabites , and is taken as an indicator that Bolli held this rank . In Iceland , his finery and recognition earned him the name " Bolli the Elegant " . His return to Thordis was joyful , and he took over the manor of Tunga when Snorri died at 67 years of age . Bolli had two children with Thordis : Herdis Bolladottir and Ospak Bollason .

= = Tales = =

= = = Bollapáttur = = =

In Norse literature , a tale or páttur referred to a short narrative often included as an episode in a larger whole , such as part of a saga . The Bolla páttur Bollasonar , or Bolli Bollason 's Tale , is such a narrative about an episode in the life of Bolli Bollason , taken from the 14th century Möðruvallabók

which contains the Laxdæla saga .

According to the tale , a man called Thorolf Stuck @-@ up had a bull which wounded his neighbours ' farm animals , damaged haystacks and caused " a great deal of trouble " . When an upstanding local farmer named Thord saw the bull damaging the stacks of peat on his farm at Marbaeli , he lunged at the animal with a spear and struck it dead . In revenge , Thorolf killed Thord 's seven- or eight @-@ year @-@ old son Olaf , to the disgust of Thorolf 's wife and kinsmen . Thorolf fled and eventually secured the protection of Thorvald Hjaltasson , a prominent leader who lived at Hjaltadal . After Christmas , Thorvald secured for him the safekeeping and support of Starri of Guddalir , who often sheltered outlaws .

Thord 's wife Gudrun , a first cousin of Bolli , asked him to take over the prosecution of the case . Accompanied by Arnor Crone 's @-@ nose and a large company of men , Bolli attended the Hegranes Assembly . Thorvald and Starri intended to block the prosecution " by force of arms and numbers " , but when they realised they were outnumbered , they withdrew and Bolli successfully had Thorolf outlawed . Passage out of Iceland was obtained for Thorolf aboard a merchant vessel at Hrutafjord . However , Bolli believed it would have been improper if the outlawed Thorolf were to escape , and having ridden north to Hrutafjord , he drew his sword Leg @-@ biter and " struck a blow right through " Thorolf , killing him .

He earned himself a great deal of honour by this , as men thought it quite an accomplishment to have the man outlawed in another district and then venture alone into the hands of his enemies and kill him there .

= = = Sneglu @-@ Halla þátr = = =

Bolli died during the reign of Harald III of Norway , as is recorded at the end of The Tale of Sarcastic Halli . The tale makes reference to Bolli 's military prowess , in ironic contrast to the tale 's protagonist :

Harald learned of the deaths of two of his men from Iceland , Bolli the Elegant and Sarcastic Halli .

He said of Boli , " The warrior must have fallen victim to spears . "

But of Halli he said , " The poor devil must have burst eating porridge "