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### Quantitative Analysis of Honor in the Icelandic Sagas

The Icelandic Sagas are prose narratives found in Iceland which were meant to pass on tales of virtue, mysticism, and the feats of various figures from the Norse tradition. One virtue that can be found in the Nordic tradition is honor. I've heard and read various sources, over the past few years, mentioning honor being present in the Nordic Sagas. These mentions, however, seem to give the impression that honor is present in the Sagas, but not a major theme. So, just how often is honor, and the ideas which stem from it, mentioned in the Icelandic Sagas?

To answer this, we can reform the question into a prediction. The prediction used here is that Icelandic Sagas talk about honor a lot. To define what "a lot" means, some requirements are made. First, honor must be mentioned in at least 65% of the texts, if honor is mentioned at least once in a text it counts. Second, since each Saga is quite lengthy the mentions of honor should make up a percentage of the text, this should also be true for at least 65% of all tested Sagas. This will be less the one percent of the total due to the size of most Sagas but must be greater than .05% of the text to be counted. Finally, when the combined texts are analyzed, the combined numbers must pass these requirements as well.

To calculate this a sample set of 18 Icelandic Sagas, in full English translations, were passed through a program designed to search for the string/substring "honour", since these translations are using British English, and count each occurrence. These counts are divided by the total word count of each Saga and the result is multiplied by 100 to find how much of the text is comprised of words directly related to honor. The total word counts of all Sagas and the total mentions of honor are compared to find the overall percentage of usage of the word honor. The average occurrences of the word honor is also calculated. These percentages and raw numbers are stored in a text file for analysis.

#	Name of Saga	Word Count	Honor Count	Honor/Total %
1	<i>The Story of the Banded Men</i>	13,298	19	0.143%
2	<i>The Story of Burnt Njal</i>	126,325	53	0.042%
3	<i>Egil's Saga</i>	71,898	54	0.08%
4	<i>The Saga of Erik the Red</i>	9,787	5	0.051%
5	<i>The Saga of the Ere-Dwellers</i>	42,664	5	0.012%
6	<i>The Saga of Thronð of Gate</i>	33,248	10	0.03%
7	<i>The Saga of Gisli the Outlaw</i>	28,600	10	0.035%
8	<i>Grettir's Saga</i>	78,241	19	0.024%
9	<i>The Saga of Gunnlaug the Worm-Tongue and Rafn the Skald</i>	12,344	1	0.008%
10	<i>The Story of Hen-Thorir</i>	10,190	8	0.079%
11	<i>The Story of Howard the Halt</i>	18,098	5	0.028%
12	<i>The Saga of the Heath Slayings</i>	13,575	6	0.044%
13	<i>The Story of Hrafnkell, Frey's Priest</i>	11,757	12	0.102%
14	<i>The Saga of Cormac the Skald</i>	18,084	7	0.039%
15	<i>The Laxdale Saga</i>	71,903	57	0.079%
16	<i>The Story of Thórðr Hreða</i>	18,141	9	0.05%
17	<i>The Saga of Viga-Glum</i>	25,221	21	0.083%
18	<i>The Saga of Viglund the Fair</i>	14,794	10	0.068%

After processing the Sagas, an interesting set of data is produced. Immediately all of the Sagas tested pass the first requirement of having honor occur at least once, with *The Laxdale Saga* containing the most total occurrences with 57 found and *The Saga of Gunnlaug the Worm-Tongue and Rafn the Skald* containing the least total occurrences with only one being found. In terms of percentage of words being related to honor *The Story of the Banded Men* contained the most with .0.14% of its 13,298 words being related to honor with 19 total occurrences, while *The Saga of Gunnlaug the Worm-Tongue and Rafn the Skald* still having the least with 12,344 words and an occurrence percentage of 0.008%. In total, 618,168 words were scanned across 18 Icelandic Sagas and 311 of these are related to honor, this

means that 0.05% of the total text had an occurrence of honor, and on average honor occurred 17 times across the 18 Sagas tested. The percentages are rounded, where possible, during the analysis.

So, how many of these tested Sagas met the requirements established earlier? All 18 sagas, and in turn the overall total, have been found to have at least one occurrence of honor in the text. So, everything met the first requirement. Things become a little less promising with the honor/total percentages. Out of 18 Icelandic Sagas, only nine were able to meet this criteria after rounding and only eight without rounding, so the test set is unable to pass the second requirement. The full collection of texts do meet the first two requirements, which means the third requirement is met. This means that with the approach of all requirements being required for the prediction to hold true, this means that in this test set the prediction is false. If all Icelandic Sagas were to be analyzed, then the prediction would be more definitively tested.

To wrap this up, I noticed some interesting results that I did not expect. The fact that all Sagas that were tested contained an occurrence of honor is very surprising, especially considering that each Saga is about different figures and events. The Sagas that have a percentage of over 0.1% frequently involved denouncements and praises of actions as dishonorable and honorable respectively. This was found after looking through those Sagas after seeing the high percentages.

Site used to obtain English Translations for the Icelandic Sagas

<https://sagadb.org>