

# Saints and their Legacies in Medieval Iceland

## Saints and their Legacies in Medieval Iceland

Edited by Bullitta and Wolf



Icelanders venerated numerous saints, both indigenous and from overseas, in the Middle Ages. However, although its literary elite was well acquainted with contemporary Continental currents in hagiographic compositions, theological discussions, and worship practices, much of the history of the learned European networks through which the Icelandic cult of the saints developed and partially survived the Lutheran Reformation remains obscure.

The essays collected in this volume address this lacuna by exploring the legacies of the cult of some of the most prominent saints and holy men in medieval Iceland (the Virgin Mary along with SS Agnes of Rome, Benedict of Nursia, Catherine of Alexandria, Dominic of Caleruega, Michael the Archangel, Jón of Hólar, Þorlákr of Skálholt, Lárentíus of Hólar, and Guðmundr the Good), using evidence drawn from Old Norse-Icelandic and Latin hagiographic literature, homilies, prayers, diplomas, sacred art, place-names, and church dedications. By placing the medieval Icelandic cult of the saints within its wider European context, the contributions trace new historical routes of cultural transmission and define the creative processes of the accommodation and adaptation of foreign hagiographic sources and models in medieval and early modern Iceland. They provide a clear picture of an Icelandic hagiographic literature and culture that celebrates the splendour of the saints; they also show how an engaging literary genre, which became immensely popular on the island throughout the Middle Ages and beyond, was created.

DARIO BULLITTA is Assistant Professor in Germanic Philology in the Department of Humanities at the University of Turin; KIRSTEN WOLF is the Birgit Baldwin Professor in the Department of German, Nordic, and Slavic at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

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Cover image: The coronation of the Virgin by the Holy Trinity (left) and John the Evangelist (right), details from the English alabaster triptych of the Mōðruvellir church in Eyjafjörður (Nottinghamshire, c. 1450–60), previously at the Akureyri Museum. Photo by Ívar Brynjólfsson. Published with permission. Cover design by Greg Jorss.

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SAINTS AND THEIR LEGACIES  
IN MEDIEVAL ICELAND

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*Saints and their Legacies  
in Medieval Iceland*

Edited by  
*Dario Bullitta and Kirsten Wolf*

D. S. BREWER

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### Contributors

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Dario Bullitta is responsible for the structure, introduction, bibliography, illustrations and headings for the general and manuscripts' indices of the volume, as well as the preparation of the first and third edits and the final proofs of the essays. Kirsten Wolf prepared the second edits. The structure, content, editing, and reediting of the volume evolved and improved through close correspondence and in-person meetings of the editors and benefited from their delightful collaboration.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

- AM Den Arnamagnæanske Samling/Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum
- BHL *Bibliotheca hagiographica Latina antiquae et mediae aetatis*, Subsidia hagiographica 6 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1898–1899; reprint, 1992). *Supplementum*, Subsidia hagiographica 12 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1911). *Novum Supplementum*, Subsidia hagiographica 70 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1986).
- BnF Bibliothèque nationale de France archives et manuscrits online <https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/>
- CCSA Corpus Christianorum Series Apocryphorum, 21 vols (Turnhout: Brepols, 1983–2019).
- DI *Diplomatarium Islandicum: Íslenzkt fornbréfasafn*, ed. Jón Sigurðsson et al., 35 vols (Copenhagen: S.L. Möllers/Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmentafélag, 1857–1952).
- DN *Diplomatarium Norvegicum: Oldbreve til kundskab om Norges indre og ydre forhold, sprog, slægter, sæder, lovgivning og rettergang i middelalderen*, ed. Christian C.A. Lange and Carl R. Unger, 22 vols (Christiania [Oslo: P.T. Mallings], 1847–1995).
- Handrit Database of Nordic Manuscripts online <https://handrit.is/>
- ÍÆ *Íslenzkar æviskrár frá landnámstímum til ársloka 1940 (1948–1976)*, ed. Páll Eggert Ólason, Jón Guðnason, and Ólafur Þ. Kristjánsson, 6 vols (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélags, 1948–1976).
- KLNM *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk Middelalder fra Vikingetid til Reformationstid*, ed. Lis Jacobsen and John Danstrup, 22 vols (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1956–1978).
- Manus Censimento dei manoscritti delle biblioteche italiane online <https://manus.iccu.sbn.it/>
- ONP *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog: A Dictionary of Old Norse Prose* online <http://onp.ku.dk/onp/onp.php>.

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*Abbreviations*

- PG* *Patrologiae cursus completus: Series Graeca*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne et al., 161 vols (Paris: Migne, 1856–1866).
- PL* *Patrologiae cursus completus: Series Latina*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne et al., 221 vols (Paris: Migne, 1844–1864).

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# Introduction: The Splendor of the Saints<sup>1</sup>

Dario Bullitta

Biblical precedents are a critical milestone in the construction of sanctity. It is in the interpretation and imitation of a wide range of biblical events, which exemplify the often-ungraspable relationship between the Creator and the created, that the investigation of the miraculous has its origin. While the Old Testament narratives contain a wealth of wondrous examples that move from those showcasing God's majesty on earth to acts performed by divinely inspired people serving as his agents, the New Testament miracles provide excellent paradigms of spiritual preaching as well as physical and mental healing that served as models for aspiring saints throughout the history of Christianity.<sup>2</sup> From the early days of the Church, Scriptural images and examples were recalled and deployed to mold hagiographic narratives, while biblical tropes studded preaching on saints and their miracles. Accordingly, saints' lives are by their very nature permeated with God's grace and holiness, and the miracles related in them were logically seen as manifestations of God's glory and power. Expressions of wonder by the spectators and recipients of miracles were necessary prerequisites for the credibility and validation of a saint's sanctity. Consequently, such emotional features of awe and surprise became particularly prominent in medieval hagiographic literature, where both the faithful and the unfaithful marveled at the heavenly

<sup>1</sup> For the sake of consistency, medieval names and titles of works produced before the Icelandic Reformation are provided in normalized Old Norse according to the ONP editorial conventions, which reconstructs a stage of the language from around 1200–1250. Here and in the following, all Icelandic place-names are given in their modern Icelandic forms.

<sup>2</sup> See most recently, Erkki Koskeniemi, *The Old Testament Miracle-workers in Early Judaism*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe 206 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005) and Stefan Alkier and Annette Weissenrieder, eds, *Miracles Revisited: New Testament Miracle Stories and their Concepts of Reality*. Studies of the Bible and Its Reception 2 (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2013).

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performance of holy men and women and sang in unison the praises of the Lord. The adoption and accommodation of such paradigms, established through centuries of Christian literature, strongly influenced the religious and secular lore of even more peripheral areas of the Latin West. Iceland in particular benefited enormously from the creative interplay between translated and native saints' lives and secular literature.<sup>3</sup>

The *locus classicus* for such models of awe and astonishment during public manifestations of the saintly miraculous appears early on in Icelandic hagiographic literature. The older redaction of *Jóns saga Helga* (S-text)<sup>4</sup> relates that during a banquet at the Danish court of King Sveinn II (c. 1019–1076), Jón Ögmundarson (1052–1121) – a quick-witted Icelander soon-to-be elected first bishop of Hólar (northern Iceland) and locally translated in 1200 – recounts a dream vision of a magnificent cathedral in which he saw Christ sitting on the bishop's seat with King David playing the harp at his feet, the fairest harmony resonating throughout the church. With the king's consent, Jón is given a harp, which he tunes and plays with such mastery, recalling and reproducing David's melody so closely, that the king and the royal retinue marveled at his heavenly performance. Everyone who subsequently heard of the prodigious event 'took it so much at heart and praised the Almighty God, *who deigns to reveal the splendor of the saints*',<sup>5</sup> a passage echoing Gregory of Tours' (c. 538–594) words in the *Vita sancti Aridii abbatis*,

<sup>3</sup> See the excellent discussion in Siân E. Grønlie, *The Saint and the Saga Hero: Hagiography and Early Icelandic Literature*. Studies in Old Norse Literature 2 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2017).

<sup>4</sup> The text has been dated to around 1200, after the translation of Jón's relics at Hólar. Gunnlaugr ultimately alludes to God's *splendor sanctorum* of Psalm 110 (109):3: 'Tecum principium in die virtutis tuae in splendoribus sanctorum: ex utero ante luciferum genui te' ('With thee is the principality in the day of thy strength: in the brightness [i.e. splendor] of the saints: from the womb before the day star I begot thee'). For a discussion of Jón's exemplum, see also the articles below by Haki Antonsson and Ásdís Egilsdóttir below, respectively at pp. 143–49 and 190. The S-redaction of the saga has been translated by Margaret Cormack, 'Saga of Bishop Jón of Hólar', in *Medieval Hagiography: An Anthology*, ed. Thomas Head. Garland Library of Medieval Literature (New York/London, Garland: 2000; Routledge: 2001), pp. 595–626. Unless otherwise stated, the text of the Latin Vulgate is taken from *Biblia sacra iuxta Vulgatam versionem*, ed. Robert Weber, Boniface Fischer, Jean Gribmont, H.F.D. Sparks, and Walter Thiele (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1969; 5th ed. rev. Roger Gryson. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2007). All English translations are from the Douay-Rheims Bible, last accessed October 29 2020, available at <http://drbo.org>.

<sup>5</sup> 'Avllum þotti mikils vm vert þenna atbvrð þeim er fra var sagtt ok lofvð allir almaktan gvð þann er ser lætr soma at birta dyrð heilagra manna sinna'. *Jóns saga Hólabyskups ens helga*, ed. Peter Foote. Editiones Arnarnagnæanæ, Ser. A, vol. 14 (Copenhagen: Reitzel, 2003), p. 9/16–18 (my italics).

*Introduction: The Splendor of the Saints*

where St Aredius (c. 510–591), bishop of Limoges and personal friend of Gregory, is said to be assisted by ‘the Almighty God, who (through him) *deigned to reveal many (divine) signs and wonders*’.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, the *heilagra manna dýrð* (‘splendor of the saints’) referred to by Gunnlaugr Leifsson, abbot of Þingeyrar (d. 1218/1219), which inspired the title of this section, should be interpreted as the numerous heavenly *signa* (‘signs’), *mirabilia* (‘wonders’), *portenta* (‘portents’), and *miracula* (‘miracles’) performed through divine assistance by saints and holy men and women *ante* and *post mortem* and testifies to the enormous popularity of hagiographical literature throughout the Icelandic Middle Ages and beyond.

The twelve essays collected in this volume deal with various aspects of the ‘fate’ of local and imported saints and the literature inspired by them in medieval Iceland. They approach the topic from a variety of angles and are based on an array of documentary materials, including Old Norse, Icelandic, Low German, Latin hagiographical literature, and historical records ranging from eleventh-century fragmentary skaldic stanzas to post-Reformation poems invoking the saints. The investigations are all historical and/or philological in nature. They explore in detail both the legacy of the cult of the saints in medieval Iceland on the basis of selected examples of Old Norse and Latin hagiographical texts and the evidence provided by Icelandic homilies, prayers, diplomas, sacred art, place-names, and churches dedicated to specific saints.

The book is divided into four main sections: 1) a comprehensive overview of critical editions and scholarship on Icelandic hagiography (Kirsten Wolf), and two case studies devoted to new identification of the Latin sources underlying two Icelandic texts dealing with hagiographical matters, namely, a sermon on All Saints’ Day and a translation of the Old Icelandic narrative of Mary’s apocryphal transit into heaven (Stephen Pelle, Dario Bullitta); 2) three surveys of original Icelandic and Latin texts centered on the lives of three bishops of Iceland, St Jón of Hólar (d. April 23 1121, canonized at Hólar March 3 1200), St Þorlákr of Skálholt (d. 1193, canonized at Skálholt July 20 1198),<sup>7</sup> and Lárentíus of Hólar (d. 1324), presented as saintly by his biographer (Gottskálf Jensson, Haki Antonsson, Fulvio Ferrari), and an overview of hagiography and memorialization in medieval Iceland (Ásdís Egilsdóttir); 3) two essays on the Icelandic lives of Benedict of Nursia and Dominic of Caleruega,

<sup>6</sup> ‘Omnipotens Deus multa signa et mirabilia declarare dignatus est’. Gregory of Tours, *Vita sancti Aridii abbatis*, in *PL* 71, cols 1119A–1150B, at col. 1124B.

<sup>7</sup> Contrary to popular misconception, the Alþingi or Icelandic National Assembly had no part in the process of either declaring these men to be saints or establishing their feast-days. It did subsequently adopt those feast days as holy days of obligation for Iceland; they might otherwise have been local feasts in the appropriate diocese. I am grateful to Margaret Cormack for discussing this matter with me.

translated from Latin and Middle Low German material, respectively (Mauro Camiz, Simonetta Battista) and a survey of the Icelandic cult of Michael the Archangel (Margaret Cormack); 4) two examinations of the Icelandic place-names and poetical texts invoking, respectively, the virgin martyrs Catherine of Alexandria and Agnes of Rome (Helgi Þorláksson, Natalie M. Van Deusen).

The first section, '*Rannsóknun heilagra bóka: The Search for Holy Books*', provides a general context for the cult of saints in medieval Iceland and Icelandic hagiographical texts translated from Latin, as well as the search for and selection of their manuscript sources on the Continent. In the opening essay, 'Medieval Icelandic Hagiography: The State of the Art', Kirsten Wolf provides an overview of scholarship on the lives of the saints in Iceland and identifies three distinct phases of scholarly interest. She identifies the first phase as the late nineteenth century, represented primarily by the enormous work of Carl R. Unger, the first large-scale editor of Old Norse-Icelandic saints lives. The second phase is assigned to the mid-twentieth century and is represented by the editorial efforts of Ole Widding, Hans Bekker-Nielsen, Peter Foote, Stefán Karlsson, and Agnete Loth. It is characterized by the production of a first index of saints' lives and several authoritative editions of hagiographical texts. It is argued that the third phase begins in the late 1980s when scholars such as Kirsten Wolf, Margaret Cormack, Ásdís Egilsdóttir, Marianne E. Kalinke, and Sverrir Tómasson began to pay closer attention to the cult, commemoration, and veneration of the saints of Iceland. Wolf concludes her essay by celebrating the enormous amount of work achieved within the field of medieval Icelandic hagiography and highlights future scholarly desiderata, such as new critical editions, a closer examination of the legends of the apostles, and an investigation of the enormous number of post-Reformation hagiographical poems. In 'An Old Norse Adaptation of an All Saints Sermon by Maurice de Sully', Stephen Pelle surveys a nearly forgotten vernacular sermon on the significance and observance of All Saints' and All Souls' Days (November 1 and 2) extant in Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 671 4to (c. 1300–1350), a theological miscellany containing both Latin and Old Norse items. Through a comparison of the Old Norse adaptation to other Latin homilies for All Saints' Day, Pelle demonstrates how the Icelandic author made use of a sermon composed by the twelfth-century bishop of Paris Maurice de Sully (d. 1196). The Norse sermon appears to represent the first Scandinavian vernacularization of Maurice's influential collection, which circulated widely in Middle French and was at least partially translated into Middle English. Pelle argues that the parallel use of Maurice de Sully's sermons in France, England, and Iceland provides tangible evidence of the participation of the Icelandic Church in contemporary European developments in terms of preaching and theology. Moreover,

the identification of sections of the profession of faith that emanated from the Second Council of Lyon (1274) allows Pelle to provide a suitable *post quem* date for the composition of the final section of the Norse sermon. In the following essay, 'The Tuscan Provenance of *Framfjor Mariu*', I trace the paths of transmission of *Framfjor Mariu*, an Icelandic translation of the most recent Latin redaction of the apocryphal *Transitus Mariae* – a twelfth-century Italian text attributed to Joseph of Arimathea describing the Apostle Thomas' late arrival at Mary's burial. The study explores the provenance and circulation of the Norse translation in Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 232 fol. (c. 1300–1450) and argues that the presence in *Framfjor Mariu* of variant readings typical of a newly identified 'Tuscan redaction' indicates that its lost manuscript source was a Latin codex circulating in Florence during the second quarter of the fifteenth century. It concludes that the lost Latin volume was likely acquired in Florence by the English Bishop of Hólar Jón Vilhjálmsson Craxton (d. 1440) during his visit to Pope Eugene IV (1383–1447) in the years 1433–1436, and that before his death Jón himself may have sent it to Hólar on an English ship, which must have had in his cargo also other manuscripts of English provenance. Finally, evidence is provided of the knowledge of the Pseudo-Joseph's *Transitus* in the visual arts through a discussion of two previously unnoticed Assumption scenes in the alabaster altarpieces of Hítardalur (Mýrasýsla) and Möðruvellir (Eyjafjörður) that were also imported from England around 1450.

The second section, 'Heilagir byskupar: Holy Bishops', which focuses on indigenous hagiographic and semi-hagiographic literature composed about three acclaimed bishops of Iceland, Jón, Þorlákr, and Lárentíus, is the lengthiest section of the volume. In the opening essay 'Latin Oratory at the Edge of the World: The Fragments of Gizurr Hallsson's \**Gesta Scalotensis ecclesie presulum* and the \**Vita sancti Thorlaci*', which follows naturally the discussion on imported Latin literature by Pelle and Bullitta, Gottskálk Jensson discusses the now-lost \**Gesta Scalotensis ecclesie presulum* and the surviving sections of \**Vita sancti Thorlaci* preserved in Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, AM 386 I, II, and III 4to. Gottskálk points out that *Þorláks saga helga* appears to be a vernacular rendition of the \**Vita sancti Thorlaci* and argues that the Norse fragments seem to ultimately derive from the Latin text of the \**Gesta* of the first five bishops of Skálholt (c. 1193) composed by the lawspeaker Gizurr Hallsson (d. 1206), and that this text was conflated with the *vita* of St Þorlákr (c. 1199) by Gunnlaugr Leifsson (d. 1218/1219). In agreement with the editor of the first printed edition of *Hungrvaka* (1778), Gottskálk concludes that the first redactor of the Norse texts was Magnús Gizurarson (c. 1175–1237), son of Gizurr Hallsson and the eighth bishop of Skálholt, who held the bishopric during the years 1216–1237. In 'Three Scenes from *Jóns saga helga*: A Typological Mode of Thought in Early Icelandic Hagiography', Haki Antonsson examines

three topical scenes in *Jóns saga helga* – the *vita* of Jón Ógmundarson, first bishop of Hólar (1052–1122) and Iceland’s second canonized saint – which has been attributed to Gunnlaugr Leifsson. Haki stresses how, with the help of oral, written, and visual source material, Gunnlaugr was able to construct narratives of considerable originality in terms of form and content. Haki explores the narrative possibilities of a typological mode of thinking based on similarities and oppositions and stresses the emphasis of the marked bifocal quality of the three scenes, which may have their origin in the combined use of traditional and new learning in these early stages of saga writing. The following essay by Fulvio Ferrari, ‘*Lárentíus saga byskups* between History and Historiography’, focuses on another episcopal biography, *Lárentíus saga byskups*, possibly the youngest of the extant *byskupa sogur*, which deals with the life of Lárentíus Kálfsson (1267–1324), the eleventh bishop of Hólar. The saga was composed by Lárentíus’ friend Einarr Hafliðason (1307–1393) during the third quarter of the fourteenth century. It demonstrates how narrative, style, and structural elements pertaining to the hagiographical and historical genres of saga literature are highly interwoven. Ferrari also notes how Lárentíus, who was never canonized, is presented by Einarr as a righteous man and a saintly model, who would appeal to both the Icelandic clergy and laity. In Ferrari’s view, *Lárentíus saga* is the product of a masterful combination and harmonization of secular and hagiographical motifs, and the result is a highly edifying and very humorous literary piece. The last essay, ‘Remembering Saints and Bishops in Medieval Iceland’ by Ásdís Egilsdóttir, serves as a conclusion to the section in that it provides an overview of the cult and lives of the saints and bishops discussed in the previous chapters from the perspective of memory studies. She comments on the manner in which both original and imported Icelandic *vitae* appear to contain numerous references and allusions to memory and knowledge. As examples of mnemonic aid, Ásdís mentions the first half of the preface to *Stjórn*, in which knowledge is compared to parts of a room, and the well-known *Stave Church Dedication Homily* in the *Icelandic Homily Book* (c. 1200), where the individual parts of a typical Norwegian stave church construction serve as a memory aid for religious instruction. She concludes her essay with an example from *Jóns saga helga* and demonstrates that the variety of Biblical quotations in narratives and manuscripts indicates that the Norse hagiographers quoted from memory. Drawing on excerpts from both prose and poetry, she emphasizes the importance of memory in the composition of hagiographical texts and the significance of a continuous interplay between *memoria naturalis* (‘natural memory’) and *memoria artificialis* (‘artificial memory’).

The third section, ‘*Heilagir karlar ok englar*: Holy Men and Angels’ is devoted to the Icelandic lives of Benedict of Nursia (c. 480–c. 547) and Dominic of Caleruega (1170–1221), founding fathers of the Benedictine and Dominican religious orders, and that of St Michael, who customarily

occupies a special place among the saints because of his Christ-like functions as psychopomp and opponent of Satan. In 'Dat vóro lavg munka: A Reading of *Benedikts saga* in Light of the *Regula sancti Benedicti*', Mauro Camiz examines *Benedikts saga*, a translation of the *Vita sancti Benedicti*. He highlights how the vernacular account shows precise connections with specific recommendations from and prescriptions of the *Regula sancti Benedicti* and stresses how several verbal interactions between Benedict and his monks that do not appear in the Latin original may be considered a Norse dramatization of the source text. He also draws attention to the fact that in the vernacular version, inappropriate behavior is more easily stigmatized than in the Latin original and that, accordingly, the path to redemption is made clearer to the Icelandic audience. In 'The Lore of St Dominic in Medieval Iceland and Norway', Simonetta Battista reviews the legacy of St Dominic in medieval Iceland and Norway. In contrast to Denmark and Sweden, the cult of St Dominic appears to have been virtually non-existent in medieval Iceland, where no monastery and only one church (at Kolbeinsstaðir) was dedicated to him. Battista examines *Dóminíkuss saga* in *Reykjahólabók* (c. 1530–1540) – a well-known late medieval legendary based mainly on a now-lost version of the Low German *Der Heiligen Leben* and the only manuscript preserving the legend – and a few relevant episodes in *Mariu saga*. She draws attention to the fact that in comparison to the surviving Latin sources, both the Low German and the Icelandic versions of Dominic's legend appear to center on the major themes of the saints' biography, including his ardent fight against heresy and the founding of the Order of Preachers. Looking at translated and indigenous literature, homilies, prayers, diplomas, church dedications, and the visual arts, the third essay entitled 'The Veneration of St Michael in Medieval Iceland' by Margaret Cormack surveys the reception of the cult of the archangel in medieval Iceland from the eleventh-century skaldic stanza by Arnórr jarlaskáld (c. 1020–c. 1070) to the angelic invocations found in Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, AM 426 12mo (c. 1650–1700).

The fourth section, '*Heilagar meyjar*: Holy Maidens', is concerned with two examples of the cult of holy virgins in medieval Iceland. In 'Katrínarhólar: St Catherine's Hills, Milk, and Mount Sinai', Helgi Þorláksson discusses the possibility that seven Icelandic hillocks called Katrínarhólar ('Catherine's hillocks') were named after St Catherine of Alexandria (c. 287–c. 305), possibly because such small hills were considered reminiscent of Mount Sinai in Egypt, where the celebrated monastery is dedicated to the saint. Helgi notes that another possible explanation for the seven Katrínarhólar place-names is their logical association with the milking of ewes and cows. He suggests that both explanations might be applicable to several hillocks where Icelanders engaged especially in grazing activities. In 'St Agnes of Rome in Late



Medieval and Early Modern Icelandic Verse', Natalie M. Van Deusen analyzes four representative Icelandic poems dedicated to St Agnes of Rome. The essay sheds new light on the transmission, dissemination, and treatment of the primitive hagiographical legend through an examination of the late medieval *Agnesardiktur* (c. 1300–1550), the early seventeenth-century *Agnesarrímur* by the Reverend Eiríkur Hallson í Höfða (1614–1698), the *Agnesarkvæði* composed by Þorvaldur Magnússon (1670–1747) around 1725, and a hitherto unknown and unedited nineteenth-century stanza entitled *Agnesarvísa*. It is shown that Agnes' *vita* and exempla proved malleable to various literary contexts and paradigmatic purposes according to the expectations of the audience.

While these studies all shed valuable light on their respective themes and subjects, they also collectively illuminate the genesis, developments, and idiosyncrasies of medieval Icelandic hagiography. One very important conclusion to be drawn from these essays when read in unison is that the composition and celebration of saints' lives in medieval Iceland was firmly embedded in the European context. Textual, cultic, linguistic, and iconographic evidence confirms unequivocally that the literary elite of medieval Iceland was well aware of contemporary Continental currents in hagiographic literature, theological discussions, and worship practices. The following chapters trace, on the one hand, the learned European networks from which medieval Icelandic hagiography sprouted, developed, and partially survived the Reformation. On the other hand, such precise identifications allow the authors of the volume to isolate and inspect the creative processes of accommodation and adaptation of foreign sources and models. These two approaches combine in the volume to form a clear picture of an Icelandic hagiographic literature and culture that celebrate the splendor of foreign and local saints through the creation of a highly captivating literary genre that became immensely popular throughout the Icelandic Middle Ages and beyond.

Dario Bullitta,  
Turin, Sollemnitas Omnium Sanctorum, 2020

*RANNSÖKUN HEILAGRA BÓKA*

THE SEARCH FOR HOLY BOOKS

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# Medieval Icelandic Hagiography: The State of the Art

Kirsten Wolf

In each and every field or discipline, it is advisable now and then to pause and take stock, and this is the purpose of this article. More specifically, the aim is to survey and assess published research within the field of medieval Icelandic hagiography. The goal is two-fold: on the one hand, it seeks to celebrate the work that has been done, and on the other, it seeks to draw attention to the work that remains to be done.

## The first editorial phase

Interest in and scholarship on hagiography within the field of Old Norse and early modern Icelandic may be divided broadly into three phases. The first phase comprises the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. The beginning is associated primarily with the impressive scholarly output of Carl Richard Unger (1817–1897), lecturer (1851–1862) and later professor (1862–1897) of Germanic and Romance Philology at the University of Christiania (Oslo). Prior to his appointment at the University of Christiania, Unger did research in Copenhagen, Paris, and London. In the course of his long career, Unger published numerous editions of Old Norse-Icelandic literary works. Mention may be made of, for example, *Alexanders saga* (1848),<sup>1</sup> *Karlamagnúss saga* (1860),<sup>2</sup> *Stjórn*

<sup>1</sup> *Alexanders saga: Norsk bearbeidelse fra trettende Aarhundrede af Philip Gautiers latinske digt Alexandreis*, ed. Carl R. Unger (Christiania [Oslo]: Feilberg & Landmark, 1848).

<sup>2</sup> *Karlamagnus saga ok kappu hans: Fortællinger om Keiser Karl Magnus og hans jævninger. I norsk bearbeidelse fra det trettende Aarhundrede*, ed. Carl R. Unger (Christiania [Oslo]: Jensen, 1860).

(1862),<sup>3</sup> *Morkinskinna* (1867),<sup>4</sup> and *Heimskringla* (1868).<sup>5</sup> He collaborated with Alex C. Drolsum (1846–1927) on *Codex Frisianus* (1871),<sup>6</sup> with Rudolf Keyser (1803–1864) on *Óláfs saga helga* (1849)<sup>7</sup> and *Barlaams saga ok Jósafats* (1851),<sup>8</sup> with Keyser and Peter Andreas Munch (1810–1863) on *Konungs skuggsjá* (1848),<sup>9</sup> and with Guðbrandur Vigfússon on (1827–1889) *Flateyjarbók* (1860–1868).<sup>10</sup>

Towards the end of his career, Unger turned to Old Norse-Icelandic hagiography and published single-handedly and in rapid succession an edition of *Thómass saga erkibyskups*, the legend of St Thomas Becket (1869);<sup>11</sup> an edition of *Mariu saga ok jarteignir*, the life and miracles of the Virgin Mary (1871);<sup>12</sup> an edition of *Postula sögur*, a collection of various recensions of the legends about the Apostles (1874);<sup>13</sup> and a two-volume edition of *Heilagra manna sögur*, a collection of more than three dozen

<sup>3</sup> *Stjórn: Gammelnorsk Bibelhistorie fra verdens skabelse til det babyloniske fangenskab*, ed. Carl R. Unger (Christiania [Oslo]: Feilberg & Landmark, 1862).

<sup>4</sup> *Morkinskinna: Pergamentsbog fra første Halvdel af det trettende Aarhundrede indeholdende en af de ældste Optegnelser af norske Kongesagaer*, ed. Carl R. Unger (Christiania [Oslo]: Bentzen, 1867).

<sup>5</sup> *Heimskringla eller Norges Kongesagaer af Snorre Sturlassøn*, ed. Carl R. Unger (Christiania [Oslo]: Brøgger & Christie, 1868).

<sup>6</sup> *Codex Frisianus: En Samling af norske Konge-Sagaer*, ed. Carl R. Unger and Alex C. Drolsum. Norske historiske kildeskriftfonds skrifter 9 (Christiania [Oslo]: Mallings, 1871).

<sup>7</sup> *Óláfs saga hins Helga: En kort saga om kong Olaf den Hellige fra anden halvdeel af det tolfte Aarhundrede*, ed. Carl R. Unger and Rudolf Keyser (Christiania [Oslo]: Feilberg & Landmark, 1849).

<sup>8</sup> *Barlaams ok Josaphats saga: En religiös romantisk fortælling om Barlaam og Josaphat, oprindelig forfattet paa græsk i det 8de aarhundrede, senere oversat paa latin, og herfra i fri bearbejdelse ved aar 1200 overført paa Norsk*, ed. Carl R. Unger and Rudolf Keyser (Christiania [Oslo]: Feilberg & Landmark, 1851).

<sup>9</sup> *Speculum regale: Konungs-skuggsjá. Konge-Speilet. Et filosofisk-didaktisk skrift, forfattet i Norge mod slutningen af det tolfte Aarhundrede*, ed. Carl R. Unger, Rudolf Keyser, and Peter Andreas Munch (Christiania [Oslo]: C.C. Werner & Comp., 1848).

<sup>10</sup> *Flateyjarbok: En Samling af Norske Konge-Sagaer med indskudte mindre Fortællinger om Begivenheder i og udenfor Norge samt Annaler*, ed. Carl R. Unger and Guðbrandur Vigfússon, 3 vols (Christiania [Oslo]: Mallings, 1860–1868).

<sup>11</sup> *Thomas saga erkibyskups: Fortælling om Thomas Becket erkebiskop af Canterbury*, ed. Carl R. Unger (Christiania [Oslo]: Bentzen, 1869). Shortly after the publication of this edition, Eiríkr Magnússon (1833–1913) published an edition and a translation of the legend of St Thomas entitled *Thómas saga erkibyskups: A Life of Archbishop Thomas Becket in Icelandic*. 2 vols. Rolls Series 65/2 (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1875–1883).

<sup>12</sup> *Mariu saga: Legender om Jomfru Maria og hendes jertegn*, ed. Carl R. Unger (Christiania [Oslo]: Brøgger & Christie, 1871).

<sup>13</sup> *Postula sögur: Legendariske fortællinger om apostlernes liv, deres kamp for kristendommens udbredelse samt deres martyrdød*, ed. Carl R. Unger (Christiania [Oslo]: Bentzen, 1874).

legends and lives of the saints (1877).<sup>14</sup> With the exception of *Hallvarðs saga*, the legend of St Hallvard Vebjørnsson (c. 1020–1043), and *Óláfs saga helga in sérstaka*, a short separate legend of St Óláfr of Norway (c. 995–1030) from Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 235 fol. (c. 1374–1425), the last-mentioned edition contains only legends of non-Nordic saints. This is presumably because *Magnúss saga Eyjajarls*, the legend of St Magnus of Orkney based on *Flateyjarbók* (Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, GkS 1005 fol. [c. 1387–1394]) had already been edited by Unger and Guðbrandur Vigfússon,<sup>15</sup> and because the Old Norse-Icelandic legends of the Icelandic bishops Þórlákr Þorhallsson (1133–1193), Jón Ögmundarson (1052–1121), and Guðmundr Arason (1161–1237) had already been edited or were in the process of being edited by Jón Sigurðsson and Guðbrandur Vigfússon in their edition of the Icelandic *Byskupa sögur* (1858–1878).<sup>16</sup> Unger's *Postola sögur* and *Heilagra manna sögur* were later supplemented by Ludvig Larsson's (1860–1933) edition of Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 645 4to (c. 1200–1220), containing *Andréss saga postula*, *Barthólómeuss saga postula*, *Klements saga*, *Jakobs saga postula hins eldra*, *Matheuss saga postula*, *Péturs saga postula*, and the *Jarteinabók Þorláks biskups in forna*;<sup>17</sup> Gustav Morgenstern's (1867–1947) edition of the legends of *Basilíuss saga*, *Eramsuss saga*, *Nikuláss saga erkibyskups*, *Silvesters saga*, and *Díalógar Gregors páfa* on the basis of Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 655 4to III–VIII (c. 1200–1225), AM 238 fol. II (c. 1300–1350), and AM 921 4to IV 1 (c. 1250–1275);<sup>18</sup> Finnur Jónsson's (1858–1934) edition of Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 623 4to (c. 1325) containing *Niðrstigningar saga*, *Sjau sofanda saga*, *XL riddara saga*, *Jóns*

<sup>14</sup> *Heilagra manna sögur: Fortællinger og legender om hellige mænd og kvinder*, ed. Carl R. Unger. 2 vols (Christiania [Oslo]: Bentzen, 1877).

<sup>15</sup> *Flateyjarbók: En Samling af norske Konge-Sagaer med indskudte mindre Fortællinger om Begivenheder i og udenfor Norge samt Annaler*, ed. Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Carl R. Unger. 3 vols (Christiania [Oslo]: Malling, 1860–1868). Considering his collaboration with Guðbrandur Vigfússon, Unger would likely have been aware also of a work that at this time must have been in progress: *Icelandic Sagas and Other Historical Documents Relating to the Settlements and Descents of the Northmen on the British Isles*, ed. and trans. Gudbrand Vigfússon and George W. Dasent. 4 vols, Rolls Series 88 (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1887–1894). Volume I contains an edition *Magnúss saga Eyjajarls*, and volume III contains a translation.

<sup>16</sup> *Biskupa sögur*, ed. Jón Sigurðsson and Guðbrandur Vigfússon. 2 vols (Copenhagen: Møller, 1858–1878).

<sup>17</sup> *Isländska handskriften No 645 4o i Den Arnamagnæanske Samlingen på Universitetsbiblioteket i København i diplomatariskt aftryck utgifven: I. Handskriftens äldre del*, ed. Ludvig Larsson (Lund: Gleerup, 1885).

<sup>18</sup> *Arnemagnæanische Fragmente (Cod. AM. 655 4to III–VII, 238 fol. II, 921 4to IV 1.2): Ein Supplement zu den Heilagra manna sögur nach den Handschriften*, ed. Gustav Morgenstern (Leipzig and Copenhagen: Møller, 1893).

*saga postula*, *Alexiss saga*, and *Basiliuss saga*;<sup>19</sup> and Oscar Albert Johnsen's (1876–1954) edition of the so-called *Helgisaga Óláfs konungs Haraldssonar*, also known as the *Legendary saga*.<sup>20</sup>

Also belonging to this first phase of interest in Icelandic hagiography are the first editions of poetic renditions of saints' lives. In 1888, Jón Þorkelsson (1859–1924) published an inventory with commentary of poetic texts composed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The volume is divided into three parts, in which he treats first pre-Reformation religious poetry, next *rímur* and popular poetry, and then poetry by named authors.<sup>21</sup> His work continues to be a useful guide to the subject. Some twenty years later he produced an edition of a number of poems or, more often, just the incipit of poems, in which he included poems about saints.<sup>22</sup> Editions of several of these poems are not otherwise available. In the meantime, Hugo Rydberg (unknown b. and d.) published in 1907 an edition of religious poems preserved in Reykjavík, *Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum*, AM 757 a 4to (c. 1400) transmitting *Gyðingsvísur*, *Harmsól*, *Líknarbraut*, and *Máriudrápa*,<sup>23</sup> while Hans Sperber (1885–1963) published in 1911 editions of *Drápa af Máriugrát*, *Kátrínardrápa*, *Máriuvísur I–III*, and *Vitnisvísur af Máriu*.<sup>24</sup> Finally, Finnur Jónsson (1858–1934), professor of Nordic Philology at the University of Copenhagen, published in 1912–1915 his edition of *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning*, in which he included diplomatic and normalized editions along with a Danish translation of virtually all of the medieval skaldic poems about the saints.<sup>25</sup> A critique of some of Finnur Jónsson's textual

<sup>19</sup> AM 623 40: *Helgensagaer*, ed. Finnur Jónsson. Samfund til Udgivelse af gammel nordisk Litteratur 52 (Copenhagen: Jørgensen, 1927).

<sup>20</sup> *Óláfs saga hins helga: Efter pergamenthaandskrift i Uppsala Universitetsbibliotek, Delagardieske Samling nr. 8II*, ed. Oscar Albert Johnson. Det norske historiske kildeskriftfonds skrifter 47 (Christiania [Oslo]: Dybwad, 1922). A translation into German and a new edition is provided in *Olafs saga hins helga: Die 'Legendarische Saga' über Olaf den Heiligen (Hs. Delagard. Saml. Nr. 8II)*, ed. and trans. Anne Heinrichs, Doris Janshen, Elke Radicke, and Harmut Röhn (Heidelberg: Winter, 1982).

<sup>21</sup> Jón Þorkelsson, *Om Digtningen på Island i det 15. og 16. Århundrede* (Copenhagen: Høst, 1888).

<sup>22</sup> *Kvæðasafn eptir nafngreinda íslenzka menn frá miðöld*, ed. Jón Þorkelsson (Reykjavík: Ísafold, 1922–1927).

<sup>23</sup> *Die geistlichen Drápur und Dróttkvættfragmente des Cod. AM 757 4to*, ed. Hugo Rydberg. Dissertation die zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde bei der Philosophischen Fakultät der Universität zu Lund; Am 7, Dezember 1907 Um 10 Uhr Vormittags im Horsaale Nr. Vi (Copenhagen: Møller, 1907).

<sup>24</sup> *Sexis isländische Gedichte legendarischen Inhalts*, ed. Hans Sperber. Uppsala Universitets årsskrift, filosofi, språkvetenskap och historiska vetenskaper 2 (Uppsala: Akademische Buchdruckerei Edv. Berling, 1911).

<sup>25</sup> *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning*, AI–II (tekst efter håndskrifterne) and BI–II (rettet tekst), ed. Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1912–1915).

interpretations was published in *Notationes Norræna* (1923–1944) by the Swedish linguist Ernst Albin Kock (1864–1943), who also produced a revised version of Finnur Jónsson's normalized edition of the skaldic poems, which was published posthumously.<sup>26</sup>

With the exception of the edition of two fascicles of late medieval poetic legends and devotional poetry in 1936 and 1938 by the Icelandic philologist Jón Helgason (1899–1986), professor of Icelandic at the University of Copenhagen (1929–1970),<sup>27</sup> and the facsimile editions of Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 645 4to (c. 1220–1250), and Stockholm, Kungliga biblioteket, Holm perg 5 fol (c. 1350–1365) published by Anne Holtsmark (1896–1974) and Jón Helgason, respectively, scholars paid relatively little attention to Icelandic hagiography for a couple of decades.<sup>28</sup> Common to this first phase of interest in Icelandic hagiography is that scholars were concerned almost exclusively with producing editions. Some of these editions do not live up to modern standards of Textual Criticism and several have been re-edited; for their time, however, they are quite remarkable, and in restituting these texts, these scholars laid the foundation for much of the ensuing research on hagiographic literature.

## The second editorial phase

The second phase should probably be assigned to shortly after the mid-twentieth century, when Ole Widding (1907–1992) and Hans Bekker-Nielsen (1933–2007) greatly invigorated interest in Icelandic hagiography with their many publications on the topic. From 1939 to 1977 Widding served as the general editor of *The Arnamagnæan Dictionary: A Dictionary of Old Norse Prose*, and from 1957 to 1968, Hans Bekker-Nielsen worked as a lexicographer for the *Dictionary*.<sup>29</sup> One of Bekker-Nielsen's duties on

<sup>26</sup> Ernst Albin Kock, *Notationes Norræna: Anteckningar till Edda och skaldediktning*. Lunds Universitets årsskrift. New series, sec. 1 (Lund: Gleerup, 1923–1944); *Den norsk-isländska skaldediktningen*, ed. Ernst Albin Kock, 2 vols (Lund: Gleerup, 1946–1950).

<sup>27</sup> *Íslenzk miðaldakvæði: Íslandske digte fra senmiddelalderen 1/2*, ed. Jón Helgason (Copenhagen: Levin and Munksgaard, 1936); *Íslenzk miðaldakvæði: Íslandske digte fra senmiddelalderen 2*, ed. Jón Helgason (Copenhagen: Levin and Munksgaard, 1938).

<sup>28</sup> *A Book of Miracles: MS No. 645 40 of the Arnamagnæan Collection in the University Library of Copenhagen*, ed. Anne Holtsmark. Corpus codicum Islandicorum medii aevi 12 (Copenhagen: Einar Munksgaard, 1938); *Byskupa sögur: MS Perg. fol. No. 5 in the Royal Library of Stockholm*, ed. Jón Helgason. Corpus codicum Islandicorum medii aevi 19 (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1950).

<sup>29</sup> Following an appointment as a temporary lecturer at Odense University and a position as visiting professor at the University of Washington (Seattle) he was in 1974 appointed professor of Nordic languages at Odense University. Jørgen Højgaard Jørgensen, 'Hans Bekker-Nielsen's Sixtieth Birthday', in



at the *Dictionary* was to identify the underlying sources of Old Norse-Icelandic homilies, prayers, liturgical texts, and saints' lives. Widding's and Bekker-Nielsen's shared interest in Old Norse-Icelandic religious literature led to numerous articles on the topic, some single-authored and others co-authored. In fact, an entire issue of *Opuscula* is comprised of articles by Widding and Bekker-Nielsen, in which they provide editions, source identifications, or discussions of a number of hitherto neglected religious works.<sup>30</sup> Together with Thorkil Damsgaard Olsen, they wrote *Norrøn Fortællekunst*, in which Bekker-Nielsen and Widding paid due respect to Icelandic hagiography – more so than authors of several previous literary histories had done.<sup>31</sup> In collaboration with Laurence K. Shook (1909–1993) of the Pontifical Institute at the University of Toronto, they compiled what was for a long time an invaluable resource for scholars working on Old Norse-Icelandic saints' legends. This is the index, 'The Lives of the Saints in Old Norse Prose: A Handlist', which was published in *Mediaeval Studies* in 1963.<sup>32</sup> Finally, in 1980, Bekker-Nielsen and the Center for the Study of Vernacular Literature in the Middle Ages at Odense University hosted a symposium on hagiography and medieval literature at Odense University, which attracted scholars from several countries.<sup>33</sup>

To this second phase belong also Christine Fell's (1938–1998) edition of *Dúnstanuss saga*; Hreinn Benediktsson's (1928–2005) edition of *Díalógar Gregors páfa*; Mariane Overgaard's edition of *Kross saga* (*Inventio and Origo Crucis*); and Agnete Loth's (1921–1990) edition of *Reykjahólabók*, Stockholm, Kungliga biblioteket, Holm perg 3 fol (c. 1530–1540) which – in terms of the number of leaves – is the largest legendary preserved from medieval Iceland.<sup>34</sup> Although Loth provided little in terms of a discussion

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*Twenty-eight Papers Presented to Hans Bekker-Nielsen on the Occasion of His Sixtieth Birthday 28 April 1993*. NOWELE 21–22 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1993), p. vii.

<sup>30</sup> *Opuscula* 2/1, Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana 25/1 (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1977).

<sup>31</sup> Hans Bekker-Nielsen, Thorkil Damsgaard Olsen, and Ole Widding. *Norrøn Fortællekunst: Kapitler af den norsk-islandske middelalderlitteraturs historie* (Copenhagen: Akademisk forlag, 1965).

<sup>32</sup> The handlist and the corpus of Old Norse-Icelandic saints' lives in general are described by Hans Bekker-Nielsen in 'On a Handlist of Saints' Lives in Old Norse', *Mediaeval Studies* 24 (1962), pp. 323–34.

<sup>33</sup> Articles from this symposium are published in *Hagiography and Medieval Literature: A Symposium*, ed. Hans Bekker-Nielsen, Peter Foote, Jørgen Højgaard Jørgensen, and Tore Nyberg (Odense: Odense University Press, 1981).

<sup>34</sup> *Dunstanus saga*, ed. Christine E. Fell. Editiones Arnamagnæanæ, Ser. B, vol. 5 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1963); *The Life of St. Gregory and His Dialogues: Fragments of an Icelandic Manuscript from the 13th Century*, ed. Hreinn Benediktsson. Editiones Arnamagnæanæ, Ser. B, vol. 4 (Copenhagen:

of the legends included in *Reykjahólabók*, she made available a reliable edition of a codex, which with its German-inspired language had intrigued scholars for quite some time. Finally, mention should be made of five important facsimile editions. One is Anne Holtsmark's edition of Uppsala, Universitetsbibliotek, DG 8 fol (c. 1225–1250), which contains the so-called *Helgisaga Óláfs konungs Haraldssonar* or *Legendary Saga of Saint Óláfr*.<sup>35</sup> Another is Desmond Slay's (1927–2004) edition of the *Codex Scardensis* or *Skarðsbók* sagas of the Apostles, Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, 1 fol. (c. 1350–1375), the most complete medieval Icelandic collection of the legends of the Apostles.<sup>36</sup> The third is Peter Foote's (1924–2009) edition of Stockholm, Kungliga biblioteket, Holm perg 2 fol (c. 1425–1445), which – in terms of the number of legends included – is the largest collection of saints' lives from medieval Iceland.<sup>37</sup> In his extensive and influential introduction to the edition, Foote identified many of the Latin sources for the legends in the codex and offered critical comments on the various redactions and their interrelationship of a particular saints' life thereby saving future editors much time and work. The fourth is Agnete Loth's edition of *Tómasskinna*, Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliotek, GKS 1008 fol (c. 1400).<sup>38</sup> And the fifth is Stefán Karlsson's (1928–2006) edition of *Byskupa sögur*, which includes facsimile editions (in full or extracts only) of the legend of *Ágústínuss saga*, *Guðmundar saga A* and *D*, *Jóns saga helga S* and *L*, the longer redaction of the legend of *Magnúss saga Eyjajarls*, *Maríu jarteignir*, the *Jarteinabók Þorláks biskups in forna*, and *Þorláks saga biskups B*.<sup>39</sup>

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Munksgaard, 1963); *The History of the Cross-Tree Down to Christ's Passion: Icelandic Legend Versions*, ed. Mariane Overgaard. Editiones Arnarnagæanæ, Ser. B, vol. 26 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1968); *Reykjahólabók: Islandske helgenlegender*, ed. Agnete Loth, 2 vols, Editiones Arnarnagæanæ, Ser. A, vols 15–16 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1969–1970).

<sup>35</sup> *Legendarisk Olaussaga etter Uppsala Universitetsbiblioteks Delagardieska Samlingen nr. 8 II*, ed. Anne Holtsmark. Corpus Codicum Norvegicorum Medii Aevi, Quarto serie 2 (Oslo: Dreyer, 1956).

<sup>36</sup> *Codex Scardensis*, ed. Desmond Slay. Early Icelandic Manuscripts in Facsimile 2 (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde & Bagger, 1960).

<sup>37</sup> *Lives of Saints: Perg. fol. no. 2 in the Royal Library, Stockholm*, ed. Peter Foote. Early Icelandic Manuscripts in Facsimile 4 (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde & Bagger, 1962).

<sup>38</sup> *Thomasskinna: Gl. kgl. Saml. 1008 fol. in The Royal Library, Copenhagen*, ed. Agnete Loth. Early Icelandic Manuscripts in Facsimile 6 (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde & Bagger, 1964).

<sup>39</sup> *Sagas of Icelandic Bishops Fragments of Eight Manuscripts*, ed. Stefán Karlsson. Early Icelandic Manuscripts in Facsimile 7 (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde & Bagger, 1967).

## The third editorial phase

The third phase began in the last decades of the twentieth century. The interest in Icelandic hagiography was likely sparked by what seems to have been a general interest in hagiography within the field of Medieval Studies. At this time, the legends of the saints enjoyed what may almost be called a renaissance. In the 1990s and well into this century, historians have delved into the legends for what they reveal about the social, political, and spiritual cultures that produced them; literary critics have examined the theological and didactic agendas of their authors; and philologists have focused on the identification of sources for individual legends and provided new, scholarly editions of these texts.

The Sixth International Saga Conference, which was arranged by The Arnamagnæan Institute at the University of Copenhagen in 1985, probably did much to draw attention to the legends of the saints in Old Norse-Icelandic and may have precipitated the fascination with hagiography by a number of scholars of Old Norse and early modern Icelandic. The two themes of the conference were 'Christianity and West Norse Literature' and 'Transmission and Editing of Texts'. Of the sixty-eight papers in the two-volume workshop papers of the conference, nineteen focus on saints' lives.<sup>40</sup> The themes of the conference may well have been influenced by the then-recent publications of the facsimile edition of *Helgastaðabók*, Stockholm, Kungliga biblioteket, Holm perg 16 4to (c. 1375–1400), and Stefán Karlsson's edition of the A-redaction of *Guðmundar saga byskups*.<sup>41</sup> Unfortunately Stefán Karlsson did not live long enough to complete and witness the publication of the three remaining redactions of the legend of *Guðmundar saga byskups*. However, Magnús Hauksson, one of Stefán Karlsson's former students, took upon himself to bring the B-redaction to completion.<sup>42</sup> As far as the C- and D-redactions of the legend of *Guðmundar saga byskups* are concerned, Magnús Hauksson will continue to work on the C-redaction, and Gottskálf Jensson, who has positive evidence to solve the question of the lost Latin *vita*, will likely take on the introduction to the D-redaction, since the Icelandic texts themselves were established by Stefán Karlsson and his assistants many

<sup>40</sup> *The Sixth International Saga Conference 28.7.–2.8.1985: Workshop Papers*, 2 vols (University of Copenhagen: Det Arnamagnæanske Institut, 1985).

<sup>41</sup> *Helgastaðabók: Nikulás saga. Perg. 4to nr. 16 Konungsbókhöfu í Stokkhólmi*, intr. Selma Jónsdóttir, Stefán Karlsson, and Sverrir Tómasson. Íslensk miðaldahandrit: Manuscripta Islandica medii ævi 2 (Reykjavík: Lögberg 1982); *Guðmundar sögur biskups I, Ævi Guðmundar biskups, Guðmundar saga A*, ed. Stefán Karlsson. Editiones Arnamagnæanæ, Ser. B, vol. 6 (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde & Bagger, 1983).

<sup>42</sup> *Guðmundar sögur biskups II*, ed. Stefán Karlsson and Magnús Hauksson. Editiones Arnamagnæanæ, Ser. B, vol. 17 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2018).

years ago.<sup>43</sup> These two redactions will also be published in the *Editiones Arnamagnæanæ* series.

In 1994, the Center for Medieval Studies at Odense University hosted a symposium on saints and sagas at Odense University. In the introduction to the proceedings of the symposium, Hans Bekker-Nielsen and Birte Carlé note that:<sup>44</sup>

The topic chosen for the symposium reflected both the significance of the holy legend in the verbal culture of the later Middle Ages and the rapidly accelerating recognition of that significance among medievalists, not least, at last, here in Scandinavia in the shadow of the Icelandic saga.

It may be that this symposium was a catalyst for the preparation and publication of quite a number of editions of saints' lives in the 1990s and around the turn of the century. These comprise – in book form – *Péturs saga postula* (1990),<sup>45</sup> *Mattheuss saga postula* (1994),<sup>46</sup> *Dórótheu saga* (1997),<sup>47</sup> *Plácíðuss saga* (1998),<sup>48</sup> *Barbøru saga* (2000),<sup>49</sup> *Önnu saga* (2001),<sup>50</sup> *Jóns saga helga* (2003),<sup>51</sup> and *Klements saga* (2005).<sup>52</sup> In addition, mention

<sup>43</sup> See especially Gottskálf Jenson, 'The Remains of a Latin \**Vita Godemundi boni* in the D-Redaction of *Guðmundar saga byskups*', in *Sainthood, Scriptoria, and Secular Erudition in Medieval and Early Modern Scandinavia: Essays in Honor of Kirsten Wolf*, ed. Dario Bullitta and Natalie M. Van Deusen. *Acta Scandinavica*. Aberdeen Studies in the Scandinavian World (Turnhout: Brepols, forthcoming).

<sup>44</sup> Proceedings from the symposium were published in *Saints and Sagas: A Symposium*, ed. Hans Bekker-Nielsen and Birte Carlé (Odense: Odense University Press, 1994), p. 7.

<sup>45</sup> *A Saga of St Peter the Apostle. Perg 4:0 nr 19 in the Royal Library, Stockholm*, ed. Peter Foote. *Early Icelandic Manuscripts in Facsimile 19* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1990).

<sup>46</sup> *Mattheus saga postula*, ed. Ólafur Halldórsson. *Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum*. Rit 41 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 1994).

<sup>47</sup> *The Icelandic Legend of Saint Dorothy*, ed. Kirsten Wolf. *Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies. Studies and Texts 130* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1997).

<sup>48</sup> *Plácíðus saga. With an Edition of Plácitus drápa by Jonna Louis-Jensen*, ed. John Tucker. *Editiones Arnamagnæanæ*, Ser. B, vol. 31 (Copenhagen: Reitzel, 1998).

<sup>49</sup> *The Old Norse-Icelandic Legend of Saint Barbara*, ed. Kirsten Wolf. *Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Studies and Texts 134* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2000).

<sup>50</sup> *Saga heilagrar Önnu*, ed. Kirsten Wolf. *Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum*, Rit 52 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 2001).

<sup>51</sup> *Jóns saga Hólabyskups ens helga*, ed. Peter Foote. *Editiones Arnamagnæanæ*, Ser. A, vol. 14 (Copenhagen: Reitzel, 2003).

<sup>52</sup> *Clemens saga: The Life of St Clement of Rome*, ed. Helen Carron. *Viking Society for Northern Research, Text Series 17* (London: University College London, Viking Society for Northern Research, 2005).

should be made of the fact that shortly after the turn of the century, the general editors of the Íslenzk fornrit series took the initiative to publish also the bishops' sagas. So far, editions of the legends of the various redactions of *Jóns saga helga* and *Þorláks saga helga* have been published.<sup>53</sup> Having been provided with Stefán Karlsson's normalized texts, Gunnar F. Guðmundsson and Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir are currently working on an edition of the four redactions of *Guðmundar saga byskups*.<sup>54</sup>

Although the prose legends seem to have taken pride of place, the poetic legends were not ignored. In 2001, Kellinde Wrightson published an edition and English translation of five poems about the Virgin Mary, *Drápa af Máriugrát, Máriuvisur I–III, and Vitisvisur af Máriu*,<sup>55</sup> and in 2005, Martin Chase published an edition and English translation of Einarr Skúlason's (c. 1100–1165) *Geisli*.<sup>56</sup> Along with other medieval skaldic poems on Christian subjects, these six poems were published and translated again in 2007 as part of the impressive project *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, which devotes two volumes to poems on Christian subjects.<sup>57</sup>

At the same time, efforts were made to popularize Icelandic hagiography in the form of translations or modern Icelandic editions in order to make them available to a wider public. In 1995, Else Mundal provided a Norwegian translation of some of the saints' lives: *Agnesar saga, Agotu saga, Benedikts saga, Blasiuss saga, Cecilíu saga, Nikuláss saga erkibyskup, Ólafs saga helga, Plácíðus saga, and Sunnifu saga*,<sup>58</sup> in 1996, Ásdís Egilsdóttir, Gunnar Harðarson, and Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir published *Mariukver*, a modern

<sup>53</sup> *Biskupa sögur I: Kristni saga, Kristni þættir, Þorvalds þáttur víðförla I, Þorvalds þáttur víðförla II, Stefnis þáttur Þorgilssonar, Af Þangbrandi, Af Þiðranda ok dísunum, Kristniþóð Þangbrands, Þrír þættir, Kristnitakan, Jóns saga ins helga, Gísls þáttur Illugasonar, Sæmundar þáttur*, vol. 1: *Fræði*, vol. 2: *Sögutextar*, ed. Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Peter Foote. Íslenzk fornrit 15 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 2003); *Biskupa sögur II: Hungroaka, Þorláks saga byskups in elzta, Jarleinabók Þorláks byskups in forna, Þorláks saga byskups yngri, Jarleinabók Þorláks byskups önnur, Þorláks saga byskups C, Þorláks saga byskups E, Páls saga byskups, Ísleifs þáttur byskups, Latinubrot um Þorlák byskups*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir. Íslenzk fornrit 16 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 2002).

<sup>54</sup> Gottskálk Jensson, personal communication April 4 2018.

<sup>55</sup> *Fourteenth-Century Icelandic Verse on the Virgin Mary*, ed. and trans. Kellinde Wrightson. Viking Society for Northern Research, Text Series 14 (London: University College London, Viking Society for Northern Research, 2001).

<sup>56</sup> *Einarr Skúlason's Geisli: A Critical Edition*, ed. and trans. Martin Chase. Toronto Old Norse and Icelandic Series 1 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005).

<sup>57</sup> *Poetry on Christian Subjects*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, 2 vols, *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 7* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007).

<sup>58</sup> *Legender frå mellomalderen: soger om heilage kvinner og menn*, trans. Else Mundal (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 1995).

Icelandic edition of tales and poems about the Virgin Mary;<sup>59</sup> in 2002, Philip G. Roughton completed a doctoral dissertation which included English translations of a number of hagiographical works from AM 645 4to and Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 652/630 4to (c. 1250–1300 and c. 1650–1700), especially the legends of the Apostles;<sup>60</sup> in 2003, I published a modern Icelandic anthology of some of the legends of female saints, including *Agnesar saga*, *Agötu saga*, *Dórótheu saga*, *Mariu saga egipzku*, *Marínu saga*, *Margrétar saga*, *Mörtu saga ok Mariu Magðalenu*, *Fídesar saga*, *Spesar ok Karítasar*, *Cecilíu saga*, *Katrínar saga*, *Barbøru saga*, and *Lúcíu saga*.<sup>61</sup> In 2007, it was followed by a companion volume edited by Sverrir Tómasson, Bragi Halldórsson, and Einar Sigurbjörnsson on a selection of legends of male saints: *Nikuláss saga erkibyskups*, *Stefáns saga*, *Silvesters saga*, *Máruss saga*, *Páls saga eremíta*, *Vituss saga*, *Alexíss saga*, *Óláfs saga helga*, *Rókuss saga*, *Ágústínuss saga*, *Marteins saga byskups*, and *Gregors saga byskups*.<sup>62</sup> The following year, Marianne Kalinke published a modern Icelandic edition and an English translation of the legend of *Ósvalds saga*.<sup>63</sup> Mauro Camiz's recent edition and translation into Italian of *Benedikts saga* is a testimony to the fact that scholars are making an effort to reach a broader audience.<sup>64</sup> So, too, is Margaret Cormack's forthcoming translation of *Jóns saga helga*.<sup>65</sup> The book is in two parts: the first part is by Cormack, who provides a general introduction and translation of the so-called H-version of the legend preserved in Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, AM 392 4to (c. 1600–1700) and Stockholm, Kungliga biblioteket, Holm papp 4 4to (c. 1600–1650) with material from the other versions either included in the text (but indicated by italics) or included in one of several appendices. The second part is

<sup>59</sup> *Mariukver: Sögur og kvæði af heilagri guðsmóður frá fyrri tíð*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, Gunnar Harðarson, and Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1996).

<sup>60</sup> Philip G. Roughton, 'AM 645 4to and AM 652/630 4to: Study and Translation of Two Thirteenth-century Icelandic Collections of Apostles' and Saints' Lives' (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Colorado, 2001).

<sup>61</sup> *Heilagra meyja sögur*, ed. Kirsten Wolf. Íslensk trúarrit 1 (Reykjavík: Bókmenntafræðistofnun Háskóla Íslands, 2001).

<sup>62</sup> *Heilagra karla sögur*, ed. Sverrir Tómasson, Bragi Halldórsson, and Einar Sigurbjörnsson. Íslensk trúarrit 3 (Reykjavík: Reykjavík: Bókmenntafræðistofnun Háskóla Íslands 2007).

<sup>63</sup> Marianne E. Kalinke, *St. Oswald of Northumbria: Continental Metamorphoses, with an Edition and Translation of Ósvalds saga and Van sunte Oswaldo deme Konninghe*. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 297 (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005).

<sup>64</sup> *La saga islandese di san Benedetto*, ed. and trans. Mauro Camiz. Saggi – Ricerche – Edizioni 4 (Rome: Edizioni Kappa, 2017).

<sup>65</sup> *The Saga of St. Jón of Hólar*, trans. Margaret Cormack and Peter Foote. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 297 (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 2020).

Peter Foote's original English text of the introduction to the Íslenzk fornrit edition, which was translated into Icelandic.<sup>66</sup> Finally, mention should be made of Marianne Kalinke's modern Icelandic edition and translation of the legend of St John Chrysostom,<sup>67</sup> and Joyce Scholz and Paul Schach's translation of the *Helgisaga Óláfs konungs Haraldssonar*, which includes also translation of fragments from the so-called *Oldest saga*.<sup>68</sup>

## Research on Old Norse-Icelandic hagiography

So far, I have focused mainly on editions. Influential books, articles, book chapters, and dissertations have been written as well. In the early- and mid-1980s, Birte Carlé published two books dealing with the lives of female saints and should probably be credited with the honor of having instigated the extraordinary interest within the field of Old Norse-Icelandic in female saints.<sup>69</sup> This interest gave rise not only to some of the above-mentioned editions, but also to the 2011 edition of *Kirkjubæjarbók*, Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 429 12mo (c. 1500), a female legendary,<sup>70</sup> and Natalie M. Van Deusen's 2012 doctoral dissertation, an edition of *Mortu saga ok Maríu Magðalenu*,<sup>71</sup> recently revised and published in the text series of the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies.<sup>72</sup>

In the mid-1990s, Margaret Cormack published *The Saints in Iceland*, in which she examines, among other things, feast days recorded, personal names, church dedications, and the inventories of churches and

<sup>66</sup> The preface appeared in volume I of *Biskupa sögur* (see note 53).

<sup>67</sup> Marianne E. Kalinke, 'Jóhannes saga gullmunds: The Icelandic Legend of the Hairy Anchorite', in *Beatus Vir: Studies in Early English and Norse Manuscripts in Memory of Phillip Pulsiano*, ed. A.N. Doane and Kirsten Wolf. *Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies* 39 (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2006), pp. 175–227.

<sup>68</sup> *The Legendary Saga of King Olaf Haraldsson*, trans. Joyce Scholz and Paul Schach, ed. Susanne M. Arthur and Kirsten Wolf. *Wisconsin Introductions to Scandinavia* 2/14 (Madison: University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2014).

<sup>69</sup> Birte Carlé, *Skøger og jomfruer i den kristne fortællekunst*. *Odense University Studies in Scandinavian Languages and Literatures* 20 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1981); *Jomfru-fortællingen: Et bidrag til genrehistorien* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1985).

<sup>70</sup> *A Female Legendary from Iceland: 'Kirkjubæjarbók' (AM 429 12mo) in the Arnamagnæan Collection, Copenhagen*, ed. Kirsten Wolf. *Manuscripta Nordica: Early Nordic Manuscripts in Digital Facsimile* 3 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2011).

<sup>71</sup> Natalie M. Van Deusen, 'The Old Norse-Icelandic Legend of Saints Mary Magdalen and Martha' (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2012).

<sup>72</sup> *The Saga of the Sister Saints*, ed. Natalie M. Van Deusen. *Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Studies and Texts* 214 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2019).

monasteries. This book has been extremely helpful and has been cited again and again especially by scholars working on the cult of the saints.<sup>73</sup> Around the same time, Marianne Kalinke undertook an analysis of *Reykjahólabók*, which brought interesting results.<sup>74</sup> Widding and Bekker-Nielsen had posited the Low German *Passionael* as the most likely source of the legends in the codex, but through a comparison of the translated legends in *Reykjahólabók* with extant Low and High German redactions, she demonstrated that what Widding and Bekker-Nielsen considered the work of a creative translator actually represents matter that must have existed in the Low German redactions available to the Icelandic compiler. Her conclusion is that:

*Reykjahólabók* thus permits us to infer the existence at one time of Low German legends that for the most part transmitted the lives of the saints, both historical and apocryphal, in versions much longer than and at times quite different from the abbreviated redactions popularized by *Der Heiligen Leben* and *Dat Passionael*.<sup>75</sup>

Mention should also be made of *Íslensk bókmenntasaga*, an Icelandic literary history in five volumes, where in Volumes I and II Sverrir Tómasson and Vésteinn Ólason devote lengthy chapters to an overview of the lives of saints in both prose and poetry.<sup>76</sup> Similarly, in her *Old Icelandic Literature and Society*, Margaret Clunies Ross included a chapter on ‘Sagas and Saints’ written by Margaret Cormack;<sup>77</sup> and in his edited volume of chapters dealing with Old Norse–Icelandic literature and culture, Rory McTurk devoted two chapters – written by Cormack and Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir – to religious literature.<sup>78</sup> Finally, mention should be made of *The Routledge Research Companion to the Medieval Icelandic Saga*, edited by Ármann Jakobsson and Sverrir Jakobsson, which has a chapter entitled

<sup>73</sup> Margaret Cormack, *The Saints in Iceland: Their Veneration from the Conversion to 1400*, pref. Peter Foote. *Subsidia Hagiographica* 78 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1994).

<sup>74</sup> Marianne E. Kalinke, *The Book of Reykjahólar: The Last of the Great Medieval Legendaries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

<sup>75</sup> Kalinke, *The Book of Reykjahólar*, p. 77.

<sup>76</sup> Guðrún Nordal, Sverrir Tómasson, and Vésteinn Ólason, eds, *Íslensk bókmenntasaga* I (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 1992); Böðvar Guðmundsson, Sverrir Tómasson, Torfi H. Tulinius, and Vésteinn Ólason, eds, *Íslensk bókmenntasaga* II (Reykjavík: Mál og menning 1993).

<sup>77</sup> Margaret Clunies Ross, ed., *Old Icelandic Literature and Society*. *Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature* 42 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>78</sup> Rory McTurk, ed., *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*. *Blackwell Companion to Literature and Culture* 31 (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005).



'Ecclesiastical Literature and Hagiography' by Jonas Wellendorf.<sup>79</sup> This is in stark contrast to the literary history edited by Carol Clover and John Lindow in 1985, which ignored medieval Icelandic Christian literature and focused solely on Snorri's *Edda*, eddic and skaldic poetry, the kings' sagas, the Sagas of Icelanders, and the romances.<sup>80</sup> Finally, within the last couple of decades, important anthologies of articles dealing with the lives of the saints have been published. One was edited by Thomas A. DuBois. It is a somewhat eclectic volume with a focus primarily on native saints along with sample translations into English from their legends.<sup>81</sup> Another was edited by Inger Ekrem, Lars Boje Mortensen, and Karen Skovgaard-Petersen. It is concerned exclusively with the legend of St Óláfr.<sup>82</sup> A third was edited by Haki Antonsson and Ildar H. Garipzanov and has a somewhat broader focus in that it considers also the veneration of the saints in eastern Europe.<sup>83</sup> A fourth anthology – *Sainthood, Scriptoria, and Secular Erudition in Medieval and Early Modern Scandinavia* edited by Dario Bullitta and Natalie M. Van Deusen – is forthcoming; it contains a number of articles dealing not only with hagiographic literature in prose and poetry, but also pictorial representations of saints.<sup>84</sup> Other than these anthologies, there are very few monographs dealing specifically with Old Norse and early modern Icelandic hagiography. Accordingly, Siân E. Grønlie's 2017 investigation of the relationship between the saint's life and the *Íslendinga sögur* is a welcome contribution.<sup>85</sup> In this book, Grønlie examines the influence the lives of the saints had on these sagas and demonstrates that these lives introduced the sagas to notions

<sup>79</sup> Ármann Jakobsson and Sverrir Jakobsson, eds, *The Routledge Research Companion to the Medieval Icelandic Saga* (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis, 2017).

<sup>80</sup> Carol J. Clover and John Lindow, eds, *Old Norse-Icelandic Literature*. *Islandica* 45 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985). Yet in his influential book *Origins of Icelandic Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), written three decades earlier, Gabriel Turville-Petre devoted several chapters to a discussion of Christian or hagiographic literature.

<sup>81</sup> Thomas A. DuBois, ed., *Sanctity in the North: Saints, Lives, and Cults in Medieval Scandinavia*. Toronto Old Norse and Icelandic Series 3 (Toronto: University Press, 2008).

<sup>82</sup> Inger Ekrem, Lars Boje Mortensen, and Karen Skovgaard-Petersen, eds, *Olavslegenden og den latinske historieskrivning i 1100-tallets Norge* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2000).

<sup>83</sup> Haki Antonsson and Ildar H. Garipzanov, eds, *Saints and Their Lives on the Periphery: Veneration of Saints in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe (c. 1000–1200)*. *Cursor mundi* 9 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010).

<sup>84</sup> Dario Bullitta and Natalie M. Van Deusen, eds, *Sainthood, Scriptoria, and Secular Erudition in Medieval and Early Modern Scandinavia: Essays in Honor of Kirsten Wolf*. *Acta Scandinavica*. Aberdeen Studies in the Scandinavian World (Turnhout: Brepols, forthcoming).

<sup>85</sup> Siân E. Grønlie, *The Saint and the Saga Hero: Hagiography and Early Icelandic Literature*. *Studies in Old Norse Literature* 2 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2017).

of suffering, patience, and feminine nurture. The recently established Norse Hagiography Network will no doubt serve to further communication among scholars within the field and lead to interesting new research projects on the saints in Old Norse-Icelandic literature.<sup>86</sup>

### Scholarly desiderata

When in 2013 I provided an update of Bekker-Nielsen, Widding, and Shook's 'Handlist', I marveled at the amount of fine work that has been done within the field of Icelandic hagiography.<sup>87</sup> At the same time, however, I realized that there is still quite a bit of work to be done. For one thing, a new, critical edition of the various legends of St Nicholas is needed. In addition to two epitomes (Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 764 4to [c. 1376–1386] and AM 672 4to [c. 1400–1500]),<sup>88</sup> there are no fewer than four versions of the legend. One is extant in Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 642a 4to II (c. 1400), AM 655 4to III (c. 1200), and AM 921 4to V (c. 1400); another is extant in Stockholm, Kungliga biblioteket, Holm perg 2 fol; a third is extant in Oslo, Riksarkivet, NRA 69 (c. 1330); and the fourth, Abbot Bergr Sökkason's (d. c. 1370) compilation, is extant in Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 638 4to (c. 1700–1725), AM 640 4to (c. 1450–1500), AM 641 4to (c. 1430–1500), AM 642a 4to I α (c. 1350–1400), AM 642a 4to I β (c. 1375–1425), AM 642a 4to I γ (c. 1340–1390), AM 642a 4to I δ (c. 1330–1370), AM 642a 4to II (c. 1400), AM 642b 4to (c. 1375–1425), AM 643 4to (c. 1400–1500), AM 644 4to (c. 1700–1800), Copenhagen, Den Nye Kongelige Samling, NKS 1222 fol (c. 1700–1800), NKS 1789 4to 1 (c. 1700–1800), and *Helgastaðabók*, Stockholm, Kungliga biblioteket, Holm perg 16 4to (c. 1375–1400). The sources for the four versions have not been established, and, considering the large number of manuscripts in which *Nikuláss saga erkibyskups* is preserved, the task of preparing an edition is formidable, though Sverrir Tómasson is making good progress.<sup>89</sup>

Similarly, it would be wonderful to have a new, critical edition of the various versions of *Thómass saga erkibyskups*. As in the case of St Nicholas, there are four legend versions or redactions and numerous manuscripts

<sup>86</sup> See <https://www.norsehagiography.org>, last accessed November 2 2020.

<sup>87</sup> Kirsten Wolf, *The Legends of the Saints in Old Norse-Icelandic Prose*. Toronto Old Norse and Icelandic Series 6 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

<sup>88</sup> My edition of AM 672 4to, *The Priest's Eye: AM 672 4to in The Arnamagnæan Collection*, is forthcoming in the Manuscripta Nordica series. The epitome in AM 672 4to is edited in Kirsten Wolf, 'A Little Tale about Santa Claus from Medieval Iceland', in *Deutsche-isländische Beziehungen: Philologische Studien anlässlich des 70. Geburtstag von Hubert Seelow*, ed. Lena Rohrbach and Sebastian Kürschner. Berliner Beiträge zur Skandinavistik 24 (Berlin: Nordeuropa Institut, 2018), pp. 127–33.

<sup>89</sup> Sverrir Tómasson, personal communication April 13 2018.

to deal with, but in contrast, the sources for each version have been more or less identified. One is the somewhat free translation possibly by the priest Jón Holt (d. 1312) of the so-called *Quadrilogius prior* and extant in Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 662b 4to (c. 1350–1400), Oslo, Riksarkivet, NRA 66 (c. 1300), and Stockholm, Kungliga biblioteket, Holm perg 17 4to (c. 1300). The second is a composite text composed possibly by Abbot Arngrím Brandsson (d. 1361/1362) or Bergr Sökkason. It is based on the *Quadrilogius* translation, Vincent of Beauvais' (1235–1264) *Speculum historiale*, a translation by Abbot Bergr Gunnsteinsson (d. 1211) of a lost Latin life of Saint Thomas by Robert of Cricklade (c. 1100–1174/1179), and other sources. This version is preserved in Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 223 fol. (c. 1700), AM 224 fol. (c. 1700), AM 662a 4to I–III (c. 1400), London, British Library, Additional Manuscripts, BLAdd 5311 (c. 1750–1800), Copenhagen, Den Gamle Kongelige Samling, GkS 1008 fol. (*Tómasskinna*), and Dublin, Trinity College, L.3 19–20 (c. 1775–1800). The third is based on the translation by Bergr Gunnsteinsson and joined with material perhaps from John of Salisbury's *vita* (d. 1180) and Benedict of Peterborough's (d. 1193) *Miracula*. It is extant in Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 234 fol. (c. 1340), London, British Library, Additional Manuscripts BLAdd 11.242 (c. 1540–1590), and Oslo, Riksarkivet, NRA 67 (c. 1300–1325). The fourth is a redaction that approximates the translation of Robert Cricklade's work more closely than the second and third redactions. It is preserved in Holm perg 2 fol.

Another desideratum is a critical edition of *Mariu saga ok jarteignir*. With his 1993 doctoral dissertation, Wilhelm Heizmann laid the foundations for a new edition of the legend.<sup>90</sup> While editing the legend of the Virgin would seem manageable considering the manuscript transmission, the task of editing the miracles is truly daunting, since more than four dozen manuscripts would have to be consulted.

Moreover, the legends of the Apostles need closer scrutiny. With the exception of the editions of *Matheuss saga postula*,<sup>91</sup> *Pétrs saga postula*,<sup>92</sup> and *Thómass saga postula*,<sup>93</sup> the Apostles have received very little attention, and this is despite Lucy Grace Colling's remarkable 1969 doctoral dissertation, in which she identified many of the Latin sources of the legends

<sup>90</sup> Wilhelm Heizmann, 'Das altisländische Marienleben. 1. Historisch-philologische Studien; 2. Edition der drei Redaktionen nach den Handschriften AM 234 fol., Holm 11 4to und Holm 1 4to' (Ph.D. dissertation, Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, 1993).

<sup>91</sup> *Matheus saga postula*, ed. Olafur Halldórsson.

<sup>92</sup> *Saga of St Peter the Apostle. Perg 4:0 nr 19 in the Royal Library, Stockholm*, ed. Peter Foote.

<sup>93</sup> *Frá Sýrlandi til Íslands: Arfur Tómasar postula, Tómasarguðspjall, Tómasarkver, Tómas saga postula*, ed. Jón M. Ásgeirsson and Þórður Ingi Guðjónsson (Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan, 2007).

of the Apostles contained in the *Codex Scardensis*.<sup>94</sup> It has been heartening to see Astrid Marner's 2013 doctoral dissertation, in which she examines the sources of the priest Grímr Hólmsteinsson's (d. 1298) *Jóns saga baptista*.<sup>95</sup> Not only has she identified the sources (twenty-seven Latin texts by twenty-three late antique and medieval authors), but she also explains how they were used and how Grímr's work was conditioned by sociopolitical circumstances. It is to be hoped that she will continue her work on this particular genre. Dario Bullitta, who has demonstrated his skills in terms of identifying sources for Old Norse hagiographical and apocryphal literature in a number of publications, notably in his editions of *Niðrstigningar saga* and *Páls leizla*, would be a terrific candidate as well for work on the legends of the Apostles.<sup>96</sup>

More than anything else, however, the late medieval and early modern Icelandic poems about saints need to be examined and edited. Jón Helgason did the field a huge favor with his edition of the two fascicles of *Íslenzk miðaldakvæði*. However, the planned project was a three-volume edition, but because of World War II, volumes I.1 and III never materialized. In his 2014 anthology of articles on Old Norse-Icelandic poetry, Martin Chase included an article on devotional poetry at the end of the Middle Ages, in which he draws attention to the extensive body of Icelandic devotional poetry from the period preceding and immediately following the Reformation in Iceland and calls for editions and studies of these important texts.<sup>97</sup> In the words of Chase: 'There is much to be done with these poems: texts to be edited, manuscripts to be contextualized, poetic diction to be analyzed, and language that is neither Old Norse nor Modern Icelandic to be codified'.<sup>98</sup> He concludes his article with the hope that 'the rising generation of medievalists will take up this challenge'.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>94</sup> Lucy Grace Collings, 'The Codex Scardensis: Studies in Icelandic Hagiography' (Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, 1969).

<sup>95</sup> Astrid Maria Katharina Marner, 'Väterzitate und Politik in der *Jóns saga baptista des Grímr Hólmsteinsson*' (Ph.D. dissertation, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, 2013).

<sup>96</sup> *Niðrstigningar saga: Sources, Transmission, and Theology of the Old Norse 'Descent into Hell'*, ed. and trans. Dario Bullitta. Toronto Old Norse and Icelandic Series 11 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017); *Páls leizla: The Vision of St Paul*, ed. and trans. Dario Bullitta. Viking Society Texts (London: University College London, Viking Society for Northern Research, 2017).

<sup>97</sup> Martin Chase, 'Devotional Poetry at the End of the Middle Ages in Iceland', in *Eddic, Skaldic, and Beyond: Poetic Variety in Medieval Iceland and Norway*, ed. Martin Chase. Fordham Series in Medieval Studies (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), pp. 136–49.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

It was not until Natalie M. Van Deusen and I started compiling the index of the saints in Old Norse and early modern Icelandic poetry that we realized just how many poems there are about the saints.<sup>100</sup> Admittedly, considerably fewer saints are treated in poetry than in prose, but the number of manuscripts containing poems about the saints is considerably larger and extend well into the twentieth century. With the exception of Hans Schottmann's 1973 examination of the Icelandic Marian poetry, these poems have received very little attention.<sup>101</sup> It is a consolation that the new generation of medievalists is paying attention to the corpus of late medieval and early modern Icelandic hagiographic poetry. In fact, in 2013, Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir and Anna Guðmundsdóttir published a volume of articles of which many dealt with early modern Icelandic poetry,<sup>102</sup> and Van Deusen is making inroads in this field, among other things, with her recent edition of the poem *Sprundahrós*, a late eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century poem, in praise of virtuous women, especially Mary Magdalen, from the Bible and history, attributed alternatively to Jón Jónsson at Kvíabekkur (1739–1785) and Ingjaldur Jónsson at Múli (1739–1832).<sup>103</sup> Finally, and in conjunction with scholarship on the lives of the saints dating from before and after the Reformation in Iceland, a companion volume to Cormack's *The Saints in Iceland: Their Veneration from the Conversion to 1400* would be extraordinarily beneficial to the study of late Icelandic hagiography.

<sup>100</sup> Kirsten Wolf and Natalie M. Van Deusen, *The Saints in Old Norse and Early Modern Icelandic Poetry*. Toronto Old Norse and Icelandic Series 10 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017).

<sup>101</sup> Hans Schottmann, *Die isländische Mariendichtung: Untersuchungen zur volkssprachigen Mariendichtung des Mittelalters*. Münchner Germanistische Beiträge 9 (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1973).

<sup>102</sup> Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir and Anna Guðmundsdóttir, eds, *Til heiðurs og hugbótar: Greinar um trúarkveðskap fyrri alda*, Snorrastofa, Rit 1 (Reykholt: Snorrastofa, 2003).

<sup>103</sup> Natalie M. Van Deusen, 'In Praise of Women: An Edition of "Sprundahrós"', *Gripla* 28 (2017), pp. 197–225.

## An Old Norse Adaptation of an All Saints Sermon by Maurice de Sully

Stephen Pelle

My contribution to this volume may seem out of place, since it deals more with developments in Icelandic preaching than with hagiography in the strict sense. Nevertheless, much of what medieval laypeople knew about the saints must have been learned from the pulpit, and there is ample codicological evidence from the medieval North that saints' lives and sermons were recognized as cognate genres.<sup>1</sup> The two most important collections of Old West Norse preaching texts, usually called the Icelandic and Norwegian Homily Books, both include material from saints' lives,<sup>2</sup> and there exist several slightly earlier Old English manuscripts of mixed

- <sup>1</sup> The term 'sermon' is used more frequently than 'homily' below, since most of the texts discussed do not fall into the strict definition of a homily as a 'systematic exposition of a biblical pericope'; see Thomas N. Hall, 'Old Norse-Icelandic Sermons', in *The Sermon*, ed. Beverly Mayne Kienzle. *Typologie des sources du Moyen Âge occidental* 81–83 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), pp. 666–67.
- <sup>2</sup> On a passage in the *Icelandic Homily Book*, Stockholm, Kungliga biblioteket, Holm Perg 15 4to (c. 1200), that derives from the Pseudo-Ambrosian *Acta Sebastiani*, see *The Icelandic Homily Book: Perg. 15 4° in the Royal Library, Stockholm*, ed. Andrea de Leeuw van Weenen. *Icelandic Manuscripts Series in Quarto* 3 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, 1993), p. 13. See also Catherine Saliou, 'Du légendier au sermonnaire: avatars de la *Passio Sebastiani*', *Revue des études augustiniennes et patristiques* 36 (1990), pp. 285–97; Stefán Karlsson, 'Om himmel og helvede på gammelnorsk: AM 238 XXVIII fol.', in *Festskrift til Ludvig Holm-Olsen på hans 70-årsdag den 9. juni 1984*, ed. Bjarne Fidjestøl, Eyvind Fjeld Halvorsen, Finn Hødnebo, Alfred Jakobsen, Hallvard Magerøy, and Magnus Rindal (Øvre Ervik: Alvheim & Eide, 1984), pp. 185–96. The *Norwegian Homily Book*, AM 619 4to (c. 1200–1225) contains a sermon and a collection of miracle stories about King Óláfr Haraldsson; *Gamal Norsk homiliebok: Cod. AM 619 4°*, ed. Gustav Indrebø (Oslo: Dybwad, 1931), pp. 108–29.

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hagiographic and homiletic content.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the sermons for All Saints' Day that I discuss below are relevant to the volume's theme in that they reflect – and, in some cases, perhaps helped shape – both traditional classifications of saints and popular ideas about the ranks and relative merits of these different classes.

## Old Norse sermons for All Saints' Day and their European context

Extant manuscripts bear witness to at least four Old West Norse sermons for All Saints' Day (November 1). The best-attested of these survives in related versions in the Icelandic and Norwegian Homily Books, as well as in a fragment in AM 655 XVIII 4to (c. 1250–1300).<sup>4</sup> Oddmund Hjelde has examined the composition of this sermon in detail and shown that the Old Norse text's most important source was a (probably) ninth-century Latin All Saints sermon generally known by its incipit *Legimus in ecclesiasticis historiis* (henceforth *Legimus* [= BHL 6332d]).<sup>5</sup> The longest and most influential version of this sermon recounts the Christian rededication of the Pantheon by Pope Boniface IV (c. 550–615), explains the reasons for

- <sup>3</sup> Manuscripts include: Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 303 (c. 1150), which contains anonymous lives of SS Nicholas and Giles alongside Ælfrician and anonymous homilies; London, British Library, Cotton Vespasian D. xiv (c. 1150), a primarily Ælfrician miscellany that also includes anonymous lives of SS James the Greater and Neot; and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 343 (c. 1150–1200), a large collection of Ælfrician, Wulfstanian, and anonymous homilies that contains several texts from Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*. See N.R. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1957), pp. 99–105, 271–77, and 368–75; see also the manuscript descriptions on the website of the e-book project *The Production and Use of English Manuscripts 1060 to 1220*, ed. Orietta da Rold, Takako Kato, Mary Swan, and Elaine Treharne (Leicester: University of Leicester, 2010), <http://www.le.ac.uk/english/em1060to1220/catalogue/mss.htm>, accessed October 2 2020.
- <sup>4</sup> *Icelandic Homily Book*, fols 18v–22r; *Gamla Norsk homiliebok*, pp. 143–47; *Ummfrum-parta íslenskrar túngu í fornöld*, ed. Konráð Gíslason (Copenhagen: Trier, 1846), pp. lxxx–lxxxii.
- <sup>5</sup> Oddmund Hjelde, *Norsk preken i det 12. århundre: studier i Gammel Norsk homiliebok* (Oslo: O. Hjelde, 1990), pp. 367–75; see also Christopher Abram, 'Anglo-Saxon Homilies in Their Scandinavian Context', in *The Old English Homily: Precedent, Practice, and Appropriation*, ed. Aaron J Kleist. Studies in the Early Middle Ages 17 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 431–36; *Icelandic Homily Book*, p. 9; and Hall, 'Old Norse-Icelandic Sermons', pp. 680 and 699. The relevant version of the Latin sermon was edited by James E. Cross, "'Legimus in ecclesiasticis historiis': A Sermon for All Saints, and Its Use in Old English Prose", *Traditio* 33 (1977), pp. 101–35. Parts of the discussion of *Legimus* here are based on my earlier treatment of the text in Stephen Pelle, 'A Latin Model for an Old English Homiletic Fragment', *Philological Quarterly* 91 (2013), pp. 495–508.

the celebration of All Saints' Day, and finally lists and describes the various kinds of saints, beginning with the angels and then moving in roughly chronological order through the different classes of human saints: patriarchs, prophets, John the Baptist, apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins (foremost among whom is the Virgin Mary), and hermits. The sermon is divided into numbered lessons in most surviving manuscript copies.<sup>6</sup> Medieval and earlier modern sources often attributed *Legimus* to Bede (c. 673–735); more recent scholarship has uncovered evidence pointing to Helisachar of Saint-Riquier (d. c. 833/840) as a possible author, although other candidates, such as Ambrosius Autpertus (d. 784), have also been suggested.<sup>7</sup>

Whoever wrote it, *Legimus* enjoyed a wide circulation thanks to its inclusion in the *Homiliary of Paul the Deacon* and the *Homiliary of Saint-Père de Chartres* and its use as a series of lessons for All Saints' Day in medieval and early modern breviaries, including the Niðaróss Breviary of 1519.<sup>8</sup> The sermon formed the basis of a long poem on the saints by the tenth-century Anglo-Saxon writer Wulfstan Cantor (b. c. 960)<sup>9</sup> and was popular enough in the thirteenth century that Jacobus da Voragine (c. 1230–1298), quoting from *Legimus* in a section of the *Legenda aurea* dealing with All Saints' Day, referred to it simply as 'the sermon that is delivered in churches on this day'.<sup>10</sup> The importance of *Legimus* for early Germanic preaching, whether as a direct textual source or as a looser structural model, is difficult to

<sup>6</sup> Verio Santoro, 'La versione in sassone antico della prima *lectio* del sermone *In festiuitate omnium sanctorum*', *Romanobarbarica* 12 (1992–1993), pp. 232–33.

<sup>7</sup> See Cross, "'Legimus'", pp. 127–28; Santoro, 'La versione', pp. 233–34; Tette Hofstra, 'Vui lesed: Zur volkssprachlichen Allerheiligenhomilie', in *Speculum Saxonum: Studien zu den kleineren altsächsischen Sprachdenkmälern*, ed. Arend Quak. Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik 52 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), pp. 106–08; Christine Rauer, 'Female Hagiography in the *Old English Martyrology*', in *Writing Women Saints in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Paul Szarmach. Toronto Anglo-Saxon Series 14 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), pp. 24–25.

<sup>8</sup> In addition to Cross, "'Legimus'", see Hall, 'Old Norse-Icelandic Sermons', p. 680. For further references, see Pelle, 'A Latin Model', p. 504, note 13.

<sup>9</sup> François Dolbeau, 'Le *Breuioliquium de omnibus sanctis*: un poème inconnu de Wulfstan, chantre de Winchester', *Analecta Bollandiana* 106 (1988), pp. 35–98.

<sup>10</sup> *Legenda aurea, con le miniature del codice ambrosiano C 240 inf.*, ed. Giovanni Paolo Maggioni. 2 vols (Tavarnuzze: SISMELE Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2007), II, p. 1240: 'in sermone qui hac die per ecclesias recitatur'. All translations in this essay are mine unless otherwise noted. Maggioni (II, p. 1685) is mistaken in considering this a citation of Jacobus's own sermon for All Saints' Day; rather, Jacobus cited the same passage of *Legimus* in both the *Legenda* and his sermon, where the source text is attributed to Hrabanus Maurus (c. 780–856). To judge from Riising's summary of it, a Latin sermon by the fifteenth-century Danish cleric Peder Madsen (fl. 1400–1450) drew heavily on Jacobus's treatment of All Saints' Day. See Anne Riising, *Danmarks middelalderlige prædiken* (Copenhagen: Gad, 1969), p. 379. I have been unable to find references to any All Saints sermons written in Old Danish or Old Swedish.



overstate: in addition to the Old Norse sermons discussed here, at least seven Old English texts (mostly homilies) were influenced to some degree by this sermon; the sole surviving Old Saxon sermon is a translation of the first part of *Legimus*; and several early Middle High German sermons contain clear thematic and verbal parallels.<sup>11</sup> A twelfth-century Provençal sermon and a thirteenth- or fourteenth-century French sermon also include material that derives ultimately from *Legimus*.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to the sermon shared by the *Icelandic and Norwegian Homily Books* and attested as a fragment in AM 655 XVIII 4to, three other Old Norse All Saints sermons are known to survive, each in a single copy only. All three of these also owe something to *Legimus*. The *Icelandic Homily Book* contains a second sermon for All Saints' Day that is somewhat more loosely based on the Latin text than the sermon discussed above.<sup>13</sup> Long digressions on Job and Antichrist interrupt the text's flow, but the familiar structure of *Legimus* – a brief account of the history of the Feast of All Saints and its significance, followed by discussions of the various classes of saints and their merits – can still be clearly discerned, and occasional verbal parallels occur.<sup>14</sup> A fragment of another sermon almost certainly intended for All Saints' Day survives in AM 655 XXVII 4to (c. 1300). Only a few sentences of this text's conclusion are extant; however, a statement encouraging Christians to see All Saints' Day as an opportunity to make up for whatever was lacking in their observance of the saints' individual feast days throughout the year is verbally close enough to a similar statement in *Legimus* that the latter can be posited as an ultimate source.<sup>15</sup> The fourth

<sup>11</sup> On the Old English texts, see Cross, "'Legimus'", pp. 128–34 and Pelle, 'A Latin Model', pp. 498–502. On the Old Saxon sermon, see Santoro, 'La versione' and Hofstra, 'Vui lesed'. Early Middle High German All Saints sermons are enumerated and discussed by Regina D. Schiewer, *Die deutsche Predigt um 1200: Ein Handbuch* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), pp. 629–37. The Latin sources of many of these texts have not been examined in much detail, but sections of at least five sermons (nos 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11 in Schiewer's list) seem to have *Legimus* as an ultimate source.

<sup>12</sup> Michel Zink, *La prédication en langue romane avant 1300*. Nouvelle Bibliothèque du Moyen Âge 4 (Paris: Champion, 1982), p. 500, no. 263 and p. 517, no. 562. The Provençal sermon can be found in Antoine Thomas, 'Homélie provençales tirées d'un manuscrit de Tortosa', *Annales du Midi* 9 (1897), pp. 414–16; the French sermon has not been edited, but images of the manuscript, Metz, Bibliothèque municipale, 262 (c. 1200–1400), at fol. 108r, are available through the *Bibliothèque virtuelle des manuscrits médiévaux*, <http://bvmm.irht.cnrs.fr>, last accessed October 2 2020.

<sup>13</sup> *The Icelandic Homily Book*, ed. Andrea de Leeuw van Weenen, fols 69v–74r.

<sup>14</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 13; Karel Vrátný, 'Enthält das Stockholmer Homilienbuch durchweg Übersetzungen?', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 32 (1916), p. 41; and David McDougall, 'Studies in the Prose Style of the Old Icelandic and Old Norwegian Homily Books' (Ph.D. dissertation, University College of London, 1983), p. 74.

<sup>15</sup> The manuscript has been edited and discussed by Hallgrímur J. Ámundason,

and probably youngest surviving Old Norse All Saints sermon, in terms of both the date of its manuscript and its likely date of composition, is found in Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, AM 671 4to. It is this text with which I am concerned here.

## Manuscript, script, and language

Jón Vídalín (1666–1720) gave AM 671 4to to Árni Magnússon (1663–1730) in 1699, shortly after becoming bishop of Skálholt.<sup>16</sup> The manuscript is

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<sup>16</sup> ‘AM 655 XXVII 4to: Útgáfa, stafagerð, stafsetning’ (B.A. thesis, University of Iceland, 1994). The Latin and Old Norse passages are discussed in Pelle, ‘A Latin Model’, p. 497. Gottskálk Jensson has shared with me his observation that this rationale for the celebration of All Saints’ Day may perhaps be relevant to an episode contained in *Guðmundar saga D*, written sometime after 1343 by Arngrímur Brandsson (d. 1361/1362). See Kirsten Wolf, *The Legends of the Saints in Old Norse-Icelandic Prose*. Toronto Old Norse and Icelandic Series 6 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), pp. 142–48. While in Norway, Guðmundr is denied permission by the archbishop of Niðaróss to celebrate a mass for the feast of the Icelandic bishop St Þorlákr, since, while Þorlákr’s feast was customarily observed in Iceland, it was not recognized by the archiepiscopal see. Guðmundr finds a way around this problem by instead singing the mass for All Saints’ Day. When informed of this, the archbishop praises Guðmundr’s wisdom and remarks ‘mun þat herra Guðmundr ætla, at Þorlákr skuli fá sinn hlut úskerðan í tíðagjörð þessi’ (‘Lord Guðmundr supposes that Þorlákr shall receive his share undiminished in the celebration of this service’). *Biskupa sögur*, ed. Jón Sigurðsson and Guðbrandur Vigfússon, 2 vols (Copenhagen: Møller, 1858–1878), II, p. 94. On this episode, see also Erika Sigurdson, *The Church in Fourteenth-Century Iceland: The Formation of an Elite Clerical Identity*. The Northern World 72 (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 150–51.

<sup>16</sup> This brief description of the manuscript is drawn from the following sources: Joel Anderson, ‘Disseminating and Dispensing Canon Law in Medieval Iceland’, *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 128 (2013), especially pp. 79–80; Hall, ‘Old Norse-Icelandic Sermons’, pp. 700–01; Kristian Kálund, *Katalog over den Arnamagnæanske håndskriftsamling*. 2 vols (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1889–1894), II/1, pp. 87–89; Kommissionen for det Arnamagnæanske Legat, ed., *Arne Magnussens i AM. 435 A–B, 4to indeholdte håndskriftfortegnelser, med to tillæg* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1909), p. 50; Jonna Louis-Jensen, ‘Fra skriptoriet i Vatnsfjörður i Eiríkr Sveinbjarnarsons tid’, in *Con amore: En artikelsamling udgivet på 70-årsdagen den 21. oktober 2006*, ed. Michael Chesnutt and Florian Grammel (Copenhagen: Reitzel, 2006), especially pp. 321–23; Már Jónsson, *Arnas Magnæus Philologus (1663–1730)*. The Viking Collection 20 (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2012), pp. 120–21; *Guðmundar sögur biskups I, Ævi Guðmundar biskups, Guðmundar saga A*, ed. Stefán Karlsson. Editiones Arnamagnæanæ, Ser. B, vol. 6 (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde & Bagger, 1983), pp. xxxix–xlii; Ole Widding, ‘Håndskriftanalyser’, *Opuscula* 1 (1960), pp. 81–82; Ole Widding and Hans Bekker-Nielsen, ‘Et brev fra Bernhard af Clairvaux i uddrag i AM 671 4°’, *Opuscula* 2 (1961), pp. 59–62; Kristoffer Vadum, ‘Use of Canonistic Texts in Medieval Iceland – The Case of AM 671 4°

composite and includes theological, homiletic, and canonistic texts in both Latin and Old Norse. The quire containing the All Saints sermon is dated by the ONP to around 1320–40. The sermon was copied by two scribes, the work of one of whom has also been found in several other manuscripts; some of these were localized by Stefán Karlsson to Barðastrandarsýsla (Westfjords), where AM 671 4to may therefore also have originated. Both scribal hands were analyzed in some detail by Ole Widding, who later collaborated with Hans Bekker-Nielsen in editing another text from the same quire, an Old Norse translation of a letter (*Epistola* 7) of Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153).<sup>17</sup> The All Saints sermon itself was edited in 1878 in Þorvaldur Bjarnarson's *Leifar*, but little research has ever been conducted on the text's content.<sup>18</sup>

While scholars agree that AM 671 4to was written in Iceland, Widding called attention to the fact that the scribes who copied the All Saints sermon seem to have been influenced by Norwegian scribal practices, one to a greater extent than the other.<sup>19</sup> Linguistic and orthographic features often considered Norwegianisms that are found in the text include the loss of initial *h* before *l* ('lyða' [A], 'lute' [A, Q], although *h* is preserved before *r* in words of the *hrein*- group [C, D, M, O, P]); a preference for the spelling *u*- rather than *o*- for the privative prefix ('vsynelega' [C], 'vhreinna' [D]; 'udauðlegan', 'vtalegr' [J]; 'vvrçðilegan' [O] vs. 'osamvirðelega' [B]); the form *þí* for the dative singular of the neuter demonstrative pronoun ('fyrir þí' [J] vs. usual 'þui'); frequent *ea* for *ia* in words like 'séalf' ([E]; also 'sealfum', 'flytea' [A]; 'séa', 'séalfan' [G]); and *gh* for *g* after or between vowels ('likamlegha' [G]; 'ymisleghum' [H]; 'likamleghum', 'stundlegha' [J]; 'einkannlegh', 'dagh' [L]).<sup>20</sup> The significance of such

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fol. 40r–63v', in *'Ecclesia Nidrosiensis' and 'Noregs veldi': The Role of the Church in the Making of Norwegian Domination in the Norse World*, ed. Steinar Imsen. 'Norgesveldet' Occasional Papers 3 (Trondheim: Akademika, 2012), especially pp. 284–86.

<sup>17</sup> Widding and Bekker-Nielsen, 'Et brev fra Bernhard af Clairvaux', pp. 59–62.

<sup>18</sup> *Leifar fornra kristinna fræða islenzkra*, ed. Þorvaldur Bjarnarson (Copenhagen: Hagerup, 1878), pp. 172–75.

<sup>19</sup> Widding, 'Håndskriftanalyser', p. 82: 'hånd A følger et norsk eller stærkt norskpræget skrivemønster, hvorimod hånd B følger et islandsk skrivemønster, men ikke uden indflydelse fra norsk skriveskik' ('Hand A follows a Norwegian scribal model, or one of a strongly Norwegian character, while hand B follows an Icelandic one, though not without some influence from Norwegian scribal practices').

<sup>20</sup> Letters refer to sections in the transcript below. For discussions of these phenomena, see Michael Schulte, 'The Phonological Systems of Old Nordic I: Old Icelandic and Old Norwegian', in *The Nordic Languages: An International Handbook of the History of the North Germanic Languages*, ed. Oskar Bandle, Kurt Braunmüller, Ernst Häkon Jahr, Allan Karker, Hans-Peter Naumann, and Ulf Teleman, with Lennart Elmevik and Gun Widmark. 2 vols (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002–2005), I, p. 889 (no. 6); Adolf Noreen, *Altisländische und*

forms for the question of the sermon's origin is difficult to assess because of the presence – and in some cases preponderance – of counter-examples that reflect the usual Icelandic developments. While it is not impossible that the AM 671 4to All Saints sermon was originally written in Norway or under some Norwegian influence, one must bear in mind Michael Schulte's warning that 'Norwegianisms in Icelandic manuscripts do not provide evidence of a Norwegian source. The most likely interpretation is that they embody individual (though interdependent) scribal practices'.<sup>21</sup>

## Structure and Sources

The sermon on folios 24r–25r of AM 671 4to actually deals with both All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day (November 2), though much more attention is given to the former.<sup>22</sup> The structure of the All Saints section of the sermon superficially resembles that of *Legimus*, and, to some extent, other popular Latin All Saints sermons, such as that of Honorius Augustodunensis (*fl. c. 1097–1150*).<sup>23</sup> Though the Old Norse text lacks an account of the Christianization of the Pantheon, it runs basically parallel to the rest of *Legimus*. Both sermons explain that the feast is an opportunity to make up for any defects in our observance of the saints' individual feast-days; they then stress that we ought to begin by glorifying God as the creator of all the saints, and finally list and discuss the various classes

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*altnorwegische Grammatik (Laut- und Flexionslehre), unter Berücksichtigung des Urnordischen*, 4th rev. ed. Sammlung kurzer Grammatiken germanischer Dialekte 4 (Halle [Saale]: Niemeyer, 1923), §§ 112/1, 133b/2, 289; Jan Ragnar Hagland, 'Gammalíslandsk og gammalnorsk språk', in *Handbok i norrøn filologi*, ed. Odd Einar Haugen (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2004), pp. 386, 392–93; Didrik Arup Seip and Laurits Saltveit, *Norwegische Sprachgeschichte* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971), pp. 88–9, 114, 164, 186, 307; Didrik Arup Seip, *Palaeografi B: Norge og Island*. Nordisk kultur 28b (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1954), p. 9 (on spellings with *gh*).

<sup>21</sup> Michael Schulte, 'Old Nordic II: Grammatical System, Lexicon, Texts', in *The Nordic Languages: An International Handbook of the History of the North Germanic Languages*, ed. Oskar Bandle, Kurt Braunmüller, Ernst Håkon Jahr, Allan Karker, Hans-Peter Naumann, and Ulf Teleman, with Lennart Elmevik and Gun Widmark. 2 vols (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2002–2005), I, p. 876.

<sup>22</sup> About 800 of the sermon's approximately 1100 words deal with All Saints' Day. Compare the Provençal All Saints sermon mentioned above (see note 12), which also contains some concluding sentences on All Souls' Day.

<sup>23</sup> PL 172, cols 1013D–1022B. Hjelde posits Honorius' sermon as a possible influence on the All Saints sermon in the *Icelandic and Norwegian Homily Books*, but his evidence is not entirely convincing. If there was any such influence, Abram is correct in observing that 'the correspondences [...] are generally thematic rather than textually precise'. See the discussions in Hjelde, *Norsk preken*, pp. 367–75 and Abram, 'Anglo-Saxon Homilies', p. 432, respectively.

of angelic and human saints in roughly the same order.<sup>24</sup> I hope, therefore, that I can be forgiven for rushing to judgment in an article that I wrote several years ago, in which I stated that *Legimus* was probably the source for the AM 671 4to sermon.<sup>25</sup> While this was true in a sense – the scheme of *Legimus* did ultimately give rise to that of the AM 671 4to sermon – I did not sufficiently investigate the possibility of an intermediate text between the two sermons that could have served as the direct source for the Norse author. However, certain discrepancies between *Legimus* and the AM 671 4to All Saints sermon (most importantly the lack of the Pantheon account in the latter) eventually led me to suspect that a more proximate source might exist, and I can say with some confidence that I have now identified this source: a Latin All Saints' Day sermon by Maurice de Sully (d. 1196), bishop of Paris from 1160 until his death.<sup>26</sup>

Maurice de Sully was the author of a popular series of model sermons that circulated extensively in both Latin and French. Mid-thirteenth-century English translations of five of the French texts also survive and are usually called the *Kentish Sermons*.<sup>27</sup> The question of whether Maurice's collection was originally composed in Latin and later translated into French or vice-versa has been the subject of debate for well over a century, but recent examinations of the sermons have tended to assign priority to the Latin texts.<sup>28</sup> The French versions of the sermons, edited

<sup>24</sup> The main discrepancy is that the AM 671 4to sermon elevates Mary to a position immediately following God (section C below), while in *Legimus* she is treated together with the other virgins towards the end of the text (Cross, "Legimus", p. 117). Some variant texts of *Legimus*, however, place Mary closer to the beginning of the list; see Cross, "Legimus", pp. 121–22.

<sup>25</sup> Pelle, 'A Latin Model', pp. 497 and 505, note 18.

<sup>26</sup> For general treatments of Maurice's life and work, see Jean Longère, 'Maurice de Sully: l'évêque de Paris (1160–1196), le prédicateur', in *Notre-Dame de Paris: Un manifeste chrétien (1160–1230)*, ed. Michel Lemoine. Rencontres Médiévales Européennes 4 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), pp. 27–70; Andrew Reeves, *Religious Education in Thirteenth-Century England: The Creed and Articles of Faith*. Education and Society in the Middle Ages and Renaissance 50 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 74–88; and the introductory chapters of *Maurice de Sully and the Medieval Vernacular Homily, with the Text of Maurice's French Homilies from a Sens Cathedral Chapter MS.*, ed. Charles A. Robson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1952).

<sup>27</sup> The best edition remains that of Joseph Hall in *Selections from Early Middle English, 1130–1250*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1920), I, pp. 214–22 and II, pp. 657–75. For a recent study of the sermons, see Sylvain Gatelais and Fabienne Toupin, 'The Kentish Sermons as Evidence of Thirteenth-Century English and Translation Practice', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 113 (2012), pp. 191–218.

<sup>28</sup> See especially Zink, *La prédication*, pp. 32–36; Longère, 'Maurice', pp. 48–49; Beata Spieralska, 'Les sermons *ad populum* de Maurice de Sully et leur adaptation française', *Przegląd Tomistyczny* 13 (2007), pp. 9–19; Beata Spieralska, 'Entre latin et ancien français: deux versions des sermons de Maurice de Sully', in *Traduire de vernaculaire en latin au Moyen Âge et à la*

most recently by Charles A. Robson in 1952, have long been recognized as important specimens of early French prose, but the Latin texts remain largely unedited and unstudied.<sup>29</sup> This is the case with the Latin version of Maurice's All Saints sermon, edited here for the first time.

Jean Longère identified twenty-seven manuscripts containing Maurice's Latin All Saints sermon, most of which date to the thirteenth century.<sup>30</sup> The majority of the manuscripts are French, but copies can also be found in Oxford, Leipzig, Munich, Trier, and Einsiedeln. The most important source for the sermon, as Robson recognized, appears to have been *Legimus*.<sup>31</sup> Maurice himself states that he found his material in the lessons of the office for All Saints' Day ('sicut in hodierno legitur obsequio' [as it reads in today's office]), which, as I noted above, were commonly adapted from *Legimus*. Occasional verbal correspondences confirm the relationship,<sup>32</sup> for example:

<i>Legimus in ecclesiasticis historiis</i>	Maurice de Sully <i>All Saints' Day sermon</i>
nobis ... nominare, <b>laudare et glorificare condecet eum qui cunctos condidit sanctos</b> <sup>33</sup>	[I.B] debemus <b>laudare et glorificare eum qui cunctos condidit sanctos</b>
[It befits us (...) to name, praise, and glorify him who created all the saints.]	[We ought to praise and glorify him who created all the saints.]

*Renaissance: méthodes et finalités*, ed. Françoise Fery-Hue. Études et rencontres de l'École des Chartes 42 (Paris: École des Chartes, 2013), pp. 21–22 and 36; Beata Spieralska-Kasprzyk, 'Prêcher sur la prêche: la réflexion de Maurice de Sully sur l'importance et la nature de la prédication', *Medieval Sermon Studies* 61 (2017), p. 73.

<sup>29</sup> A preliminary study of the Latin manuscript tradition has been conducted by Jean Longère, *Les sermons latins de Maurice de Sully, évêque de Paris († 1196): contribution à l'histoire de la tradition manuscrite*. Instrumenta Patristica 16 (Steenbrugge: Abbatia S. Petri, 1988). Several Latin sermons have recently been transcribed by Spieralska, 'Les sermons', pp. 77–109.

<sup>30</sup> Longère, *Les sermons*, pp. 378–79; the sermon is no. 67 in the list of Maurice's works in Johannes Baptist-Schneyer, *Repertorium der lateinischen Sermones des Mittelalters für die Zeit von 1150–1350*. 11 vols, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters 43 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1969–1990), IV (1972), p. 174.

<sup>31</sup> *Maurice de Sully and the Medieval Vernacular Homily*, p. 205, notes under no. 59.

<sup>32</sup> These correspondences, incidentally, provide additional support for the hypothesis that the French versions of Maurice's sermons were translated from the Latin. Such parallels could not have been produced by someone translating an originally French text into Latin, unless he were drawing independently on *Legimus*.

<sup>33</sup> Cross, "'Legimus'", p. 106, lines 18–19.

While the Middle English *Kentish Sermons* were translated from the French texts, the Old Norse All Saints sermon in AM 671 4to must have been based on Maurice's Latin. It includes material found in the Latin but missing in the French, lacks material present in the French but absent from the Latin, and, where the Latin and French texts contain the same material, its wording is closer to the Latin. Compare the sections on angels in the three texts:

Latin sermon	French sermon	Norse sermon
[I.D] Cēlestes quoque debemus deinde spiritus laudare, qui in hoc mundo diuina mandata complent et iuditia exercent et demones a nobis cohercendi potestatem diuinitus habent. Qui nobis uoluntatem dei frequenter insinuant et contra aduersarios demones pugnant nobiscum.	Après li si est ceste [feste] a[s]beneois esperis as angeles qui sont el ciel devant Nostre Segnor, qui voient le face a lor Creator, e cantent la soie loenge sens fin, e portent de jors e de nuis ses messages e ses commandemens a cels qu'il aime.*	[D.] Vër skolum ok uirðulega uegsama a þessum dyrðardege. alla himínrikis engla er guðe þíona. an aflate. ok hans boð fylla ok fremia i heíme þessom. ok ueíta oss með Guðs styrk. verndír ok uarðueizlu moti illzku ok umsatum vhreinna anda.
[Next we must also praise the heavenly spirits, who fulfill divine commands in this world and carry out judgments, and who have power from God to keep demons away from us. They often make known to us the will of God and fight with us against hostile demons.]	[Next this feast is for the holy angelic spirits who are in heaven in the presence of our Lord, who see the face of their creator and sing his praise without end, and who carry his messages and commands day and night to those whom he loves.]	[We also ought worthily to honor on this feast day all the angels of heaven, who serve God without ceasing and fulfill and perform his commands in this world, and who, with God's strength, provide us with defense and protection against the malice and snares of unclean spirits.]

\* *Maurice de Sully and the Medieval Vernacular Homily*, p. 184, lines 16–20.

Here, the Latin and Old Norse texts convey essentially the same information – that the angels fulfill God's commands 'in this world' ('in hoc mundo' / 'i heíme þessom') and help protect us from demons – while the French rendition alone includes the details that the angels see the Lord's face in heaven and ceaselessly sing his praises. This collation also shows that, while the Old Norse translation rarely strays far from Maurice's Latin – except in the sermon's concluding sections, which are drawn from a different source – it is by no means slavish. The author of the sermon in

AM 671 4to frequently abbreviates material from his source, combining, for instance, Maurice's two statements about angelic aid against evil spirits ('demones a nobis [...] habent'; 'contra [...] nobiscum') into one clause ('ok ueíta oss [...] vhrefinna anda'). Single words or phrases in the source are often rendered with alliterative doublets, a stylistic element frequently found in Old Norse religious prose:<sup>34</sup> 'complent' ≈ 'fylla ok fremia'; 'cohercendi potestatem' ≈ 'verndír ok uarðueizlu'; 'aduersarios (demones)' ≈ 'illzku ok umsatum (vhreinna anda)'. Alliterative phrases consisting of a verb and an adverb or a noun and an adjective also occur ('uirðulega uegsama'; see also 'helgazsta hatiðarhalld' [A], 'likamleghum lystingum' [J], etc.), as do instances of extended alliterative composition spanning multiple syntactic elements (e.g., 'sua sem sialfir spamenninnir settu j sínar bókr' [F]). Examples of rhyme not resulting solely from shared inflectional endings include 'féðe ok kléðe' and 'fleira ok meira' (both in B).

A few departures from Maurice's Latin text in the AM 671 4to sermon call for special comment. Most striking among these is the Norse author's citation of 'Pope Leo', presumably Leo I (r. 440–461), as a source. This occurs where, in the corresponding Latin text, Maurice mentions the lessons drawn from *Legimus* in the office for All Saints' Day:

Latin sermon	Norse sermon
[I.B.] Et primum quidem <b>sicut in hodierno legitur obsequio</b> debemus laudare et glorificare eum qui cunctos condidit sanctos	[B.] Nu <b>sva sem heilagr papa leo segír i lestínne</b> . þa skolom vér i upphafe þan lofa. ok dyrka er alla heilaga. hefir skapat
[And first indeed, as it says in today's office, we ought to praise and glorify him who created all the saints.]	[Now, as the holy Pope Leo says in the lesson, we ought first to praise and glorify the one who has created all the saints.]

It is surprising to find an unprecedented attribution of the sermon's source to Pope Leo in a text that otherwise follows closely the tenor, if not the wording, of Maurice's Latin. One explanation that might be advanced to account for this discrepancy is that the author of the Old Norse sermon was independently familiar with *Legimus* and remembered seeing it attributed to Leo in a manuscript.<sup>35</sup> This is not impossible, but I suggest

<sup>34</sup> See Porleifur Hauksson and Þórir Óskarsson, *Íslensk stílfræði* (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 1994), pp. 192, 201, 208, 231; Reidar Astås, *An Old Norse Biblical Compilation: Studies in Stjórn*. American University Studies, Series 7, 109 (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), pp. 111–12. For a list of such pairs in the *Icelandic and Norwegian Homily Books*, see McDougall, 'Studies', pp. 98–127.

<sup>35</sup> On the many names attached to *Legimus*, see Cross, "'Legimus'", p. 128, note 48: 'Such names as Boniface, Hrabanus (Maurus), Maximus (of Turin), and



that the origin of the problem may instead be paleographical or scribal in nature. Of the eight manuscripts of Maurice's Latin sermon I have examined, three contain significant variants of the phrase 'in hodierno legitur obsequio':

<i>Pa</i> <sup>136</sup>	<i>Pa</i> <sup>145</sup>	<i>Re</i>
legi in hodierno obsequio	in hodierno legitur euangelio	in hodierna (?) euangelio legitur

If, as these variants suggest, the phrase was frequently altered or corrupted in the Latin sermon's transmission history, the author of the Old Norse sermon may well have had before him a copy of the text that, in some way or another, attributed or seemed to attribute the text to Leo. Such an error could have been caused by paleographical confusion and miscopying of the letter *g* in an abbreviated form of *legitur*, commonly written 'leg<sup>9</sup>' or 'leg<sup>7</sup>' from the twelfth century onward.<sup>36</sup>

A rare example of a sentence in the AM 671 4to sermon that has no parallel at all in Maurice's Latin is found in the text's praise of virgins: 'Vtalegr fiólðe meyianna for ok með sigrí pislarvóttissins af þessu stundlegha lífi til eilífra ok ⟨u⟩umræðiligra fagnaða' (J) ('An innumerable multitude of virgins has also gone from this worldly life to everlasting and indescribable joy with the victory of martyrdom'). The Latin sermon gives no special consideration to the virgin martyrs. The torments and martyrdoms of several virgin saints are described by Honorius Augustodunensis, whose All Saints sermon has been suggested as a possible influence on the Old Norse All Saints sermon in the *Icelandic and Norwegian Homily Books*, but this text has no verbal parallels in AM 671 4to.<sup>37</sup> I would suggest – very tentatively – that this sentence may have been inspired by an Old English All Saints sermon from the First Series of Ælfric of Eynsham's (c. 955–c. 1010) *Catholic Homilies*. Here, Ælfric remarks that the virgins of the early church were so devoted to Christ that 'heora forwel manige for mægðhade martyrdom geþrowodon. 7 swa mid twyfealdum sige to heofonlicum eardungstowum wuldorfulle becomon'<sup>38</sup> ('A very great many of them suffered martyrdom for the sake of virginity, and thus with a double victory they went gloriously to their

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Fulbert of Chartres occur, and the homily is found in a collection ascribed to Bede.' See also Santoro, 'La versione', p. 233.

<sup>36</sup> See Adriano Cappelli, *Lexicon abbreviatarum*, 6th rev. ed. (Milan: Hoepli, 1967), pp. 201–02. The abbreviation 'leg<sup>9</sup>' is used here in *Pa*<sup>145</sup> (fol. 1011ra).

<sup>37</sup> *PL* 172, col. 1017C–D.

<sup>38</sup> *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series: Text*, ed. Peter Clemoes. Early English Text Society supplementary series 17 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 490, lines 134–36.

heavenly mansions'). While only 'sigri' ('victory') in the Old Norse has a notable lexical parallel in the Old English 'sige' ('victory'), the two statements on virgin martyrs are similar in content and are used in the same way in both sermons, as conclusions to sections praising virgin saints. Reliance on a common Latin source could explain these similarities, but, as Malcolm Godden has noted, '[Ælfric's] reference to those who were martyred in defence of their virginity [...] does not have a parallel in any of the manuscripts of the *Legimus* sermon [Ælfric's major source] so far analysed'.<sup>39</sup> If this elaboration is indeed Ælfric's own, the appearance of similar material in the AM 671 4to sermon may be another piece of evidence for the influence of Ælfric's works, and of Old English homilies in general, on Old Norse preaching.<sup>40</sup>

The lengthiest departure from Maurice's Latin in the AM 671 4to sermon is its completely different concluding portion, which discusses All Souls' Day and provides a synopsis of Catholic eschatology. Nearly all of this section is adapted from the Latin profession of faith submitted by Byzantine emperor Michael VIII Palaeologus (1223–1282) to the Second Council of Lyons in 1274, as part of a short-lived attempt to reunite the Latin and Greek churches and end the Great Schism.<sup>41</sup> A detailed account of the motivations behind this process and its ultimate failure is neither possible nor necessary here; it suffices to say that the emperor's document was taken nearly verbatim from a letter sent to him by Pope Clement IV (1190–1268) in 1267, and that, as a condition for the union, the Greeks were expected to assent to certain Latin teachings about the double procession of the Holy Spirit, purgatory, the sacraments, and the primacy of the Roman Church.<sup>42</sup> The section of the emperor's profession

<sup>39</sup> Malcolm Godden, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: Introduction, Commentary and Glossary*. Early English Text Society supplementary series 18 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 304.

<sup>40</sup> The most thorough treatment of the subject is now John Frankis, *From Old English to Old Norse: A Study of Old English Texts Translated into Old Norse with an Edition of the English and Norse Versions of Ælfric's De falsis diis*. Medium Ævum Monographs 33 (Oxford: Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature, 2016); but see also Abram, 'Anglo-Saxon Homilies'; Christopher Abram, 'Anglo-Saxon Influence in the Old Norwegian Homily Book', *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 14 (2004), pp. 1–35; and Aidan K. Conti, 'The Old Norwegian Homily Book and English Contemporaries', in *Medieval Nordic Literature in Its European Context*, ed. Else Mundal (Oslo: Dreyer, 2015), pp. 152–74.

<sup>41</sup> The text of the profession used here is that of *Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, ed. Heinrich Denzinger, Peter Hünemann, Helmut Hoping, Robert Fastiggi, and Anne Englund Nash, 43rd rev. ed. (with English translation) (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2012), §§ 850–61.

<sup>42</sup> See Deno Geanakoplos, 'Michael VIII Palaeologus and the Union of Lyons (1274)', *Harvard Theological Review* 46 (1953), pp. 79–89; Kenneth Meyer Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant: 1204–1571*, 4 vols (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1976–1984), I, pp. 85–139.

dealing with the purgatorial punishments of the dead and the ability of the living to alleviate them through prayer and almsgiving is the source of the conclusion of the Old Norse sermon in AM 671 4to.

The identification of Michael Palaeologus' profession of faith as the source for the last part of the Old Norse sermon allows us to date the text (at least in its surviving form) to within fairly precise limits. An absolute *terminus a quo* can be set at 1267, when Clement IV wrote the letter that served as the model for the emperor's profession. However, it seems more likely that this profession would have reached Scandinavia in the context of conciliar *acta* than that the Norse author should have come across a copy of Clement's correspondence with the Byzantine emperor, so the early limit can probably be set at 1274, when the Second Council of Lyon took place. The Old Norse sermon was therefore written between 1274 and around 1340 – the later end of the range to which the relevant quire of AM 671 4to has been dated. The possibility that the All Saints portion of the text was written earlier in the thirteenth century and only later augmented with the All Souls material cannot be dismissed outright, but this seems unlikely. There are no signs that the composition of the Old Norse sermon took place in multiple stages or involved more than one author. On the contrary, there is an effective transition (L) between the parts of the text drawn from Maurice de Sully's Latin All Saints sermon and Michael Palaeologus' profession of faith, so that the Old Norse sermon's conclusion does not at all feel like some kind of appendix. The use of the same or similar phrases in the two parts of the text provides further evidence of common authorship (e.g., 'andligra fêðra ... kristninnar' [A] / 'kennefeðr kristnennar' [M]; 'til eilífra ok <u>umræðiligra fagnaða' [J] / 'í eilífan ok vvmrðilegan fagnat' [O]; 'af þessu stundlegða lifí' [J] / 'et stundlega lif' [M]).

## Conclusion

The All Saints sermon in AM 671 4to, which represents the first secure evidence of the circulation of Maurice de Sully's sermons in medieval Scandinavia, is significant to scholarship on both Maurice and Old Norse preaching. The presence in Iceland of a vernacular version of one of Maurice's sermons, which were also translated into Old French and partially into Middle English, is yet another sign that Icelandic preaching was not, as has often been asserted, a kind of isolated, antiquarian genre that never seriously participated in wider European theological developments.<sup>43</sup> The fact that Maurice de Sully was bishop of Paris and drew heavily on Victorine authors, including Richard of Saint-Victor (d. 1173),

<sup>43</sup> For information about the history of such claims and for further evidence of their inaccuracy, see Stephen Pelle, 'Twelfth-Century Sources for Old Norse Homilies: New Evidence from AM 655 XXVII 4to', *Gripla* 24 (2013), pp. 45–75.

is especially significant.<sup>44</sup> The twelfth-century Parisian masters, particularly those associated with the Abbey of Saint-Victor, are known to have exercised considerable influence on several other genres of Old Norse religious prose, and the AM 671 4to sermon provides important evidence for a Parisian/Victorine influence on Old Norse preaching.<sup>45</sup>

Research on unedited fragments of medieval Icelandic sermons may well uncover more evidence of the influence of Maurice de Sully on Old Norse preaching. One promising subject of further study is a damaged Icelandic sermon for the first Sunday of Advent in AM 696 XXX 4to (c. 1400–1500),<sup>46</sup> which also seems to depend on a text contained in Maurice's Latin collection. Only the beginning of the sermon (fol. 1r) is easily legible, but most of the material is verbally similar to Maurice's sermon for the eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost.<sup>47</sup> It is more difficult in this case to be confident that the author of the Old Norse text was working from Maurice's collection itself, because, like several of his other Latin texts, Maurice's sermon for this occasion was borrowed from either the *Liber exceptionum* or *Sermones centum* of Richard of Saint-Victor (d. 1173).<sup>48</sup> A detailed comparison of AM 696 XXX 4to with

<sup>44</sup> See *Maurice de Sully and the Medieval Vernacular Homily*, pp. 6–9, 14–17, and *passim*; Longère, 'Maurice', pp. 46–47, 49, 55, 64; *Liber exceptionum: texte critique avec introduction, notes et tables*, ed. Jean Châtillon. Textes philosophiques du Moyen Âge 5 (Paris: J. Vrin, 1958), pp. 85–86.

<sup>45</sup> For another Victorine source for an Old Norse sermon, see Pelle, 'Twelfth-Century', pp. 58–67. For more general discussions of Victorine influence on Old Norse texts, see Hans Bekker-Nielsen, 'The Victorines and Their Influence on Old Norse Literature', in *The Fifth Viking Congress: Tórshavn, July 1965*, ed. Bjarni Niclasen (Tórshavn: Føroya Landsstýri, 1968), pp. 31–36; Hans Bekker-Nielsen, 'The French Influence on Ecclesiastical Literature in Old Norse', in *Les relations littéraires franco-scandinaves au Moyen Âge: Actes du Colloque de Liège, avril 1972*. Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de l'Université de Liège 208 (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1975), p. 144; and, especially, *Littérature et spiritualité en Scandinavie médiévale: la traduction norroise du De arrha animae de Hugues de Saint-Victor*, ed. Gunnar Harðarson. Bibliotheca Victorina 5 (Paris and Turnhout: Brepols, 1995), pp. 9–37.

<sup>46</sup> Kålund, *Katalog*, II.1 (1892), p. 115.

<sup>47</sup> Inc.: 'Diliges Dominum deum tuum ex toto corde tuo (Matthew 22:36). Postquam homo creatorem per culpam primordiam deseruit'; see Schneyer, *Repertorium*, IV, p. 173, no. 47; Longère, *Les sermons*, pp. 361–62. ('You will love the Lord your God with your whole heart. After man abandoned his Creator through the ancient sin.') The sermon was translated into French along with the rest of the texts in Maurice's collection, but the wording of the Old Norse is again closer to the Latin. See *Maurice de Sully and the Medieval Vernacular Homily*, pp. 160–61.

<sup>48</sup> Jean Châtillon, 'Le contenu, l'authenticité et la date du *Liber exceptionum* et des *Sermones centum* de Richard de Saint-Victor', *Revue du Moyen Âge Latin* 4 (1948), p. 346; *Liber exceptionum*, pp. 85–86; Schneyer, *Repertorium*, IV (1972), 173, note under no. 47. For the edited text see *Liber exceptionum*, pp. 252–53.

manuscript copies of Maurice de Sully's sermon collection and the works of Richard of Saint-Victor might shed some light on whether the Norse author found his source among Maurice's works or Richard's. In either case, AM 696 XXX 4to can, like the AM 671 4to All Saints sermon, be seen as another example of the influence of the Paris schools, and especially the Victorines and their associates, on Old Norse preaching from the thirteenth century onward.

While I hope that my contribution to this volume has succeeded in shedding a little light on the composition of vernacular sermons in medieval Iceland, a truly accurate picture of the influences on and methods of Old Norse preaching can only be attained if scholars turn their attention to the great number of other unedited and unstudied preaching texts. Since, like the sermon in AM 671 4to, many of these texts deal with various saints or were at least meant to be delivered on their feast days,<sup>49</sup> new research on Old Norse preaching should be considered a key component of scholarly work on the cult of saints in medieval Iceland.

<sup>49</sup> See, for instance, the Marian sermons derived from *Mariu saga* edited in Hallgrímur J. Ámundason, 'AM 655 XXVII 4to'. Some discussion of these texts may be found in Dario Bullitta, 'The Story of Joseph of Arimathea in AM 655 XXVII 4to', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 131 (2016), pp. 47–74.

## Appendix

### *The All Saints Sermon in AM 671 4to and its Latin Sources*

The transcription of the Old Norse sermon below is based on the text of Þorvaldur Bjarnarson, corrected against the manuscript.<sup>1</sup> Discrepancies that are not trivial are noted in the apparatus. Words canceled or marked for deletion in the manuscript are struck through; square brackets indicate words not marked for deletion but which appear to have been written in error. Angle brackets surround added or emended letters. Supralinear slashes enclose letters or words added in the margins or above the line. Expanded abbreviations are italicized and manuscript punctuation is preserved, but I have divided the text into sections to facilitate comparison with its sources.

I have been able to consult facsimiles of eight of the twenty-seven known manuscripts of Maurice de Sully's All Saints sermon. The sigla used below are those of Jean Longère's *Les sermons latins de Maurice de Sully*, the manuscript descriptions in which I have also utilized:

#### MANUSCRIPTS OF MAURICE DE SULLY'S LATIN ALL SAINTS SERMON USED FOR THE EDITION BELOW

- Pa*<sup>147</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France,  
lat. 14937, fols 63rb–64ra (Saint-Victor?, c. 1200 [base manuscript])
- Pa*<sup>2</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France,  
lat. 2949, fols 99v–100v (c. 1200)
- Pa*<sup>136</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France,  
lat. 13659, fols 89v–90r (c. 1200–1300)
- Pa*<sup>145</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France,  
lat. 14925, fol. 101ra–101va (c. 1200–1300)
- Pa*<sup>16</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France,  
lat. 16463, fol. 195rb–195va (c. 1200)
- Re* Reims, Bibliothèque municipale,  
582, fol. 58ra–58va (c. 1200–1300)
- Tr* Trier, Stadtbibliothek und Stadtarchiv,  
222, fol. 41rb–41vb (c. 1300)
- Ty* Troyes, Bibliothèque municipale,  
1100, fol. 164ra–164va (Clairvaux, c. 1200–1300)

<sup>1</sup> Images of AM 671 4to are available through Handrit at <https://handrit.is/en/manuscript/view/da/AM04-0671>, accessed October 20 2020.

*Stephen Pelle*

The orthography of the base manuscript is preserved, but punctuation and capitalization are editorial. Abbreviations are expanded silently. All substantive variants from the manuscripts examined are recorded in the apparatus. The text of Michael Palaeologus' profession of faith is taken from Denzinger's *Enchiridion*. Section numbers and letters have been added to both Latin texts for ease of reference.

Translations of the Old Norse sermon and Maurice's Latin All Saints sermon are my own; the translation of the profession of faith of Michael VIII Palaeologus is taken from the 2017 Latin-English edition of Denzinger's *Enchiridion*.

## EDITED TEXTS

*Old Norse Sermon for All Saints' and All Souls' Days*  
(AM 671 4to, fols 24r–25r)

[no title]

(A.) Vær hollðum i dag hínir kærastu bróðr hatíð allzualldanda<sup>a</sup> guðs ok allra hans heilagra undir ein<sup>ve</sup> ok sameiginlegre dyrkan. Eigv ver með hin<sup>ne</sup> meste<sup>b</sup> vanduirkt ok goðfyse. geyma. at þetta it helgasta hatíðarhallð métté honum sealfum. ok ællum hans astuinum. þéjllíkt verða. c með þui at nu skyllðumz vér eptir skipan andligra féðra. ok forstiora kristnínna. þa lute at b et<sup>d</sup> i dyrkan. þessarar hatíðar sem aðr hefir afatt uerit *vm* var helgehöld. e i afbríggðum boðorða *cuðs*. eða min<sup>ne</sup> uanduirkt. varar skyllðu e(n)<sup>1</sup> vera étte. <sup>5</sup> Ok fyrir þui skólom vér nu með san<sup>ne</sup>re guðs ast ok einkanniligre astundan. hallða oss fra motgerðum við guð. En fremia goð verk honum til dyrðar ok allre hímna<sup>hi</sup>ð. Sékja fiolmennt til heilagrar kir<sup>ki</sup>v. Lyða tíðum með miklum athuga. ok með san<sup>num</sup> elskhuga til almattigs guðs Bénir fram at flytea. Iofa hann ok dyrka af øllum hug með sinum helgum.

*Maurice de Sully, Sermon for All Saints' Day*  
(Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 14937, fols 63rb–64ra)

<sup>a</sup> *In festiuitate omnium sanctorum*<sup>a</sup>

(I.A.) Hodie, karissimi, sollempnitatem dei et omnium sanctorum eius sub {fol. 63va} una celebritate colimus, ut quod in aliis festiuitatibus anni minus egimus in hac sacra die deo et omnibus sanctis eius<sup>b</sup> dicata<sup>c</sup> plenarie persoluamus.<sup>d</sup> Videte ergo quanta diligentia, quanta deuotione hanc sacratissimam festiuitatem debeamus<sup>e</sup> celebrare, in qua<sup>f</sup> quod<sup>g</sup> in aliis uel male uel minus bene<sup>h</sup> egimus perfecte debemus emendare. Debemus igitur<sup>i</sup> solito sublimius, solito deuotius non solum ab opere seruili uerum etiam ab opere peccati cessare et nos ab utroque<sup>k</sup> diligentius obseruare et ad ecclesiam conuenire,<sup>k</sup> deuotas preces fundere, diuinum obsequium intentius audire, et deum eiusque<sup>m</sup> sanctos dignis in quantum possumus laudibus exaltare.



(A.) (We observe today, dearest brethren, the feast of almighty God and all his saints in a single and common celebration. We ought to take care, with the greatest solicitude and good will, that our observance of this most holy feast may be acceptable to God himself and to all his dear friends, because we should now, according to the teachings of the spiritual fathers and overseers of the Christian faith, compensate in the celebration of this feast for anything that was lacking in our observances of other feasts on account of our violations of the commandments of God, or for anything that was done with less care than it should have been through our fault. And therefore we should now, with true love for God and special diligence, keep ourselves from offenses against God and perform good works for his honor and that of the whole company of heaven. We should gather together in the holy church, listen with great attentiveness to the divine services, and recite prayers to almighty God with sincere love and praise and honor him with all our heart together with his saints.)

(I.A.) (Today, dearest people, we observe the solemnity of God and all his saints in a single celebration, so that, on this day dedicated to God and all his saints, we may make full recompense for what we performed less fully during the other feasts of the year. See, therefore, with what great attentiveness, with what great devotion we should celebrate this most sacred feast, in which we ought completely to atone for what we performed either poorly or less well on the others. We ought, therefore, with more excellence and devotion than usual refrain not only from servile work but also from the work of sin and keep ourselves from both of these with greater diligence, and come to church, pour out devout prayers, listen more attentively to the holy liturgy, and praise God and all his saints to the best of our ability.)

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(B.) Nu sva sem heilagr *papa* leo segir i *lestínni*. Þá *skolom* vér i *upphafe* þan *lofa*. ok *dyrka* er alla *heilaga*. *hefir* skapat. ok allan *heimín* *hefir* i *sinne* *stiorn* ok *uallde*. Sa *hín* same skapaðe oss með *sínni* *almétte*. sva sem alla *skepnu*. *bède* *h* *synelega* ok *vsynelega*. ok *siðan* er vér *høfðum* *fallit* i *eilifa* *fyrðémíng*. vm *glép* *ennia* *fyrstu* *manna*. Þá *endrbétte* *hann* oss *miskunnisamlega*. með *sinum* *dreyra* ok *ðaða*. *hann* ueitir þeinn líf ok heilso *varom* *líkømmum* ok *varðueitir*. han ler oss *féðe* ok *kléðe*. ok aðra *næðsynlega* *lute* *líkamans*. En þo at *hann* hafe oss ueitt *mart* ok *míkit*. þa er þat *osamvirðelegra* *fleira* ok *meira*. er *hann* sialfr *heitr* oss *fyrir*. ef uér *lífum* *retfliga*. ok *þionum* *hønum* *goðfusliga*!

(B.) (Now, as the holy Pope Leo says in the lesson, we ought first to praise and glorify the one who has created all the saints and holds all the world in his command and power. The same one created us with his omnipotence, just as he fashioned all creatures, both visible and invisible. And after we had fallen into eternal condemnation through the transgression of the first humans, he mercifully restored us with his blood and death. He provides life and health to our bodies and preserves them. He gives us food and clothing and other bodily necessities. And although he has already given us many great things, he himself promises us incomparably more and greater things if we live uprightly and serve him with good will.)

(I.B.) Et primum quidem<sup>n</sup> sicut<sup>o</sup> in hodierno legitur obsequio<sup>o</sup> debemus laudare<sup>p</sup> et glorificare<sup>p</sup> eum qui cunctos condidit sanctos, qui cælum sua circui<sup>d</sup> sapientia ac profundum abyssi sua penetrat uirtute, qui nos cum non<sup>r</sup> essemus de nichilo potenter<sup>s</sup> creauit et cum<sup>i</sup> per culpam in dampnationem lapsi fuissetus<sup>u</sup> misericorditer restaurauit, qui nobis<sup>y</sup> nostro corpori necessaria dat, qui sanitatem<sup>w</sup> membrorum<sup>w</sup> et uitam<sup>w</sup> conseruat, qui denique multa iam nobis dedit et adhuc plura<sup>x</sup> si recte uiuimus repromittit.<sup>y</sup>

(I.B.) (And first indeed, as it says in today's office, we ought to praise and glorify him who created all the saints, who encompasses heaven with his wisdom and pierces the depths of the abyss with his power, who with his might created us from nothing when we did not exist and, when we had fallen into damnation through sin, mercifully restored us, who gives us those things necessary for our bodies, who preserves our life and the health of our limbs, who, in conclusion, has already given us many things and promises still more if we live rightly.)

(C.) Þar nęst <sup>k</sup> skolom vęr [skulum vęr]<sup>k</sup> lofa ok tigna. sęla<sup>1</sup> guęs moęur mariam. er relliga<sup>m</sup> kallaz guęs mustere. ok herberge heilags anda. þui at af henriar hreino hollde tok eingetn guęs sunr. hin helgazsta sin likama. En leyste allt mannikyn. fra eilifum dęða. þolande likamsdęða. a hinum heilęga krosse. ok þui haleitęre dęrę. sem hon hefir ęđlaz i eilifo riki. meę sinum syne. en allir ađrir guęs helgir. þar sem hon er upp hafit yfir ęll englafylke. rikiande eiliflega i hasęte meę sinvm christi. þeim mun ma hon oss meire miskun þicia af allzualldanda guęde meę sinu ęrnađaroręde.

(C.) ('Next we ought to praise and honor Mary, the Blessed Mother of God, who is rightly called the temple of God and the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, because from her pure flesh the only-begotten Son of God took his most holy body and freed all mankind from eternal death, suffering bodily death on the holy cross. And to the extent that she has won a more sublime glory with her Son in the eternal kingdom than all God's other saints, where she is exalted above all the angelic hosts, reigning eternally on the throne with her Christ, by this same measure she is able to obtain for us greater mercy from almighty God with her intercession.')

(I.C.) Deinde debemus laudibus attollere beatam <sup>z</sup>Mariam uirginem <sup>z</sup>genetricem dei, que est templum dei, sacrarium spiritus sancti, in qua <sup>aa</sup> deus omnipotens illam mundissimam <sup>bb</sup> et sacrosanctam carnem <sup>cc</sup> assumpsit, in qua moriendo <sup>cc</sup> effigens humanum de ęterna morte redemit. Quam tanto <sup>cc</sup> effigatius apud deum pro nobis credimus <sup>cc</sup> posse intercedere quanto sublimius super omnes angelos <sup>dd</sup> eam credimus <sup>dd</sup> cum ipso regnare.

(I.C.) ('Then we ought to extol with praise the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, who is the temple of God, the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit, in whom God almighty assumed his most pure and holy flesh, in which, through his death, he redeemed the human race from eternal death. We believe that she can intercede for us with God all the more effectively to the extent that we believe that she reigns with him more gloriously above all the angels.')

(D.) *Vér skólum ok uirðulega uegsama a þessum dyrðardege. alla himinríkis engla er guð<sup>n</sup> þíona. an aflate. ok hærns boð fylla ok fremja i heime þessom. ok ueíta oss með guðs styrk. verndir ok uarðueizlu moti illzku ok umsatum vheimna anda.*

(D.) ('We also ought worthily to honor on this feast day all the angels of heaven, who serve God without ceasing and fulfill and perform his commands in this world, and who, with God's strength, provide us with defense and protection against the malice and snares of unclean spirits.')

(E.) *Sva skólom vēr a þessom dege dyrka heilaga hefðuðeðr. er uēr uitum verit hafa. cuði kęra fra upphafe heims (fol. 24) bygðar. ok ham sealfir sagðe þeim sinn vilía fyrir embætti sinna engla.*

(E.) ('Likewise on this day we should honor the holy patriarchs, who we know were pleasing to God since the beginning of the world, and to whom he himself made known his will through the ministry of his angels.')

(I.D.) *Cęlestres quoque [fol. 63vb] <sup>ec</sup> debemus deinde <sup>fr</sup> spiritus laudare, <sup>ec</sup> qui in hoc mundo diuina <sup>ss</sup> mandata complent et iuditia exercent et demones a nobis coercenti potestatem diuinitus habent. Qui nobis uoluntatem dei frequenter insinuant et contra aduersarios demones pugnant nobiscum.*

(I.D.) ('Next we must also praise the heavenly spirits, who fulfill divine commands in this world and carry out judgments, and who have power from God to keep demons away from us. They often make known to us the will of God and fight with us against hostile demons.')

(I.E.) *Deinde sanctos patriarchas, id est illos sanctos <sup>hh</sup> glorificare debemus quos post creationem <sup>ii</sup> mundi in primordiāli seculo fuisse cognoscimus, <sup>jj</sup> cum quibus deum per suos angelos locutum fuisse et eos illi placuisse <sup>kk</sup> non ignoramus.*

(I.E.) ('Next we ought to glorify the patriarchs, that is, those saints whom we know to have existed after the creation of the world in the earliest age. We are not unaware that God spoke to them through his angels and that they were pleasing to him.')

(F.) Her næst eigum *ver* at lofa guðs spameni. *huertum* er *ham* sialfr uirðiz at ueita sua mikinni fagnað at *ham* sagði þeim fyrir ok syndi hín æztu sín stormerki af hollðgan ok hingatburðe sunar síns. vars *hera* iesu *christi*. ok lausn mannkynsins. sua sem sialfir spamerinnir settu j sínar bókr.

(F.) (Next we must praise the prophets of God, to whom he himself saw fit to make known such great joy by foretelling and showing to them the most glorious wonders of the incarnation and birth of his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the redemption of mankind, just as the prophets themselves related in their books.)

(G.) Meðr þessum eigum *ver* eínkannilega `at` vegsama guðs *postola* ok *hans* heilaga guðspiallameri ok lærisueina er naðu at séa séalfan lausnara varn iesum *christum* líkamlegha. ok `heyruð` hina hialpsamligstu hans læring ok predíkan. af sialfs *hans* munni. sem þeir ok þeirra eptirkomendr kenndu síðan j verollidinni eptir *hans* boðorði.

(G.) (Along with these we must give particular honor to the Apostles of God and his holy evangelists and disciples, who merited to see our Redeemer Jesus Christ himself in the flesh, and they heard from his own mouth his most salutary teaching and preaching, which they and their successors afterwards made known in the world according to his command.)

(I.F.) Deinde sanctos prophetas debemus post eos<sup>ll</sup> laudare, quibus omnipotens pater de incarnatione filii sui et redemptione<sup>mm</sup> generis humani consilium<sup>mm</sup> suum dignatus est reuelare.

(I.F.) (Next after these we ought to praise the holy prophets, to whom the almighty Father saw fit to reveal his plan regarding the incarnation of his Son and the redemption of the human race.)

(I.G.) Post ipsos uero sancti apostoli et euuangeliste laudibus glorificandi sunt, qui dominum<sup>mm</sup> saluatorem<sup>oo</sup> in carne uidere et salutarem eius doctrinam ab eius ore suscipere et<sup>pp</sup> mundo tradere meruerunt.<sup>qq</sup>

(I.G.) (And after these the holy Apostles and evangelists are to be glorified with praise, they who merited to see the Lord and Savior in the flesh and to hear his saving teaching from his own mouth and pass it on to the world.)

(H.) Her með skýldumz ver vírðuliga at tigna heilaga pinúgavatta kristz. þa er sinu bloði hafa ut steyptr fyrir ast vars herra ok hialpara iesu *christi*. ok til truar styrkingar heilagri kristni. Sumir af þessum voru halshögnir. sumir flegnir kuikir. sumir gryttir. sumum söktr j sío. eða j vötn. Sumir voru brendir ok bælldir. ok með ymisleghum píslum drepnir ok deyddir. ok öðluðuz sva himneska fagnaði.<sup>o</sup>

(H.) (With them we should give due honor to the holy martyrs of Christ, who have poured out their blood for the love of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and for the strengthening of the holy Christian church. Some of them were beheaded, others flayed alive, others stoned, others drowned in the sea or in other bodies of water; others were burned and consumed by fire and killed and slain with various tortures, and in this way they won the joy of heaven.)

(I.) Þessum fylgja bæði at tíma ok verðleik sælir ok heilagir guðs iatarar. þeir sem nu hafa eilífa ömbun j himinriki fyrir sinu helgan línat. ok hinar rettaztu kenningar er þeir fluttu fram j kristinní.

(I.) (These are followed both in time and in merit by the blessed and holy confessors of God, who now have an eternal reward in heaven for their holy way of life and the most righteous teachings which they made known among Christians.)

(I.H.) Deinde sancti martyres in hac sacra sollempnitate honorandi sunt, qui suum sanguinem pro fide et dilectione saluatoris effuderunt. Quorum alii decollati sunt, alii excoriati, alii lapidati, alii aquis submersi, alii assati, alii cruciatibus necati et mortificati sunt et sic superna polorum<sup>iv</sup> gaudia<sup>vv</sup> percipere meruerunt.<sup>wv</sup>

(I.H.) (Next the holy martyrs are to be honored on this holy solemnity, who poured out their blood for the faith and for love of the Savior. Some of them were beheaded, others flayed, others stoned, others drowned in water, others roasted, others killed and slain through tortures, and thus they merited to receive the exalted joys of heaven.)

(I.I.) Post<sup>xx</sup> eos beati confessores non solum tempore sed et<sup>vy</sup> merito secuntur, qui pro<sup>zz</sup> sua sanctissima uita et rectissima doctrina in superna patria eterno premio numerantur<sup>aaa</sup> et ditantur.<sup>bbb</sup>

(I.I.) (The holy confessors come after these not only in time but also in merit. For their most holy life and most sound teaching they are counted [*or* rewarded? *see note aaa to the Latin text*] and made rich with an eternal reward in the heavenly homeland.)

(I.) Heilagar meýjar eru her næst dyrkandi með hatíðarhallði þessa dags. Þær sem fyrir þí hafa eignaz udaoðlegan bruðguma a hímnum at þær villdu fyrir *hæris sakir* engan elska dauðlegan bruðguma a íarðíkí. at hófnaðum ok fyriríitnum líkamleghum lýstingum. Vtalegr fiolðe meýjanna for ok með þíæt sigri þislarvóttissins<sup>p</sup> at þessu stundlegha lífi til eilífra ok (u)umræðiliígra<sup>a</sup> fagnaða.

(I.) (Next to be honored in the celebration of this day are the holy virgins of Christ, those who have earned an immortal Spouse in heaven because they wished for his sake to love no mortal spouse on earth, forsaking and despising the desires of the flesh. An innumerable multitude of virgins has also gone from this worldly life to everlasting and indescribable joy with the victory of martyrdom.)

(K.) Þessum öllum guðs heilögum sem nu voru greindir. skyldumz *ver* at hallða þessa hatíð með hímni mestu virðingu eptir varu megni. Þess vóntandi ok af öllum hug æskíandi at fyrir þeirra bóni ok verðleika. megin *ver* koma til eilífrar asynar allzualldanda guðs.

(K.) (For the sake of all the saints of God who have now been enumerated we ought to observe this feast with the greatest honor according to our means, hoping and wishing with all our heart that through their prayers and merits we may come to the eternal vision of almighty God.)

(I.J.) Ipsis in sacra ueneratione hodiernę festiuitatis adiunguntur uirgines, que idcirco sponsum immortalē habent in cęlis quia spreta<sup>ecc</sup> carnis delectatione sponsum mortalem<sup>ddd</sup> habere noluerunt in terris.

(I.J.) (To these are joined in the holy adoration of today's feast also the virgins, who have an immortal Spouse in heaven because, despising the pleasure of the flesh, they did not wish to have a mortal spouse on earth.)

(I.K.) Quibus omnibus {fol. 64ra} uidelicet sanctis debitam hodie secundum<sup>eee</sup> nostram possibilitatem<sup>eee</sup> exhibebimus uenerationem, ut eorum<sup>fff</sup> meritis et precibus<sup>fff</sup> ad ęternę diuinitatis uisionem peruenire mereamur.<sup>sss</sup>

(I.K.) (To all these saints we show due veneration today according to our means, so that we may be made worthy through their merits and prayers to arrive at the vision of the eternal Godhead.)

[no corresponding material in AM 671 4to]

(I.L.) Ad quam perueniendi omnes pariter sue sanctitatis exempla nobis reliquerunt, qui et ipsi homines <sup>h<sup>h</sup></sup>similes nobis <sup>h<sup>h</sup></sup>passibiles extiterunt. Ipsos ergo <sup>iii</sup>non tantum <sup>jj</sup>laudibus venerari sed et <sup>k<sup>kk</sup></sup>dignis conuersationibus <sup>lll</sup>eos studeamus <sup>lll</sup>imitari. <sup>m<sup>mmm</sup></sup>Pauperes hodie largius solito nostris epulis reficiamus, <sup>nnn</sup>sitientibus potum tribuamus, <sup>ooo</sup>nudos uestiamus, <sup>ooo</sup>peregrinos hospitio recipiamus, infirmos et in uinculis positos, si quos scimus, uisitantes <sup>ppp</sup>eis officia caritatis exhibeamus. Et super hec <sup>qqq</sup>omnia nosmetipsos <sup>rrr</sup>ab hoc seculo mundos <sup>rrr</sup>custodiamus. Hęc est uia iusticię per quam itur et peruenitur <sup>sss</sup>ad palmam glorię, <sup>ttt</sup>quam nobis prestare dignetur Iesus Christus dominus noster, qui est deus benedictus in secula seculorum. Amen. <sup>ttt</sup>

(I.L.) (All of these saints, who were themselves mortal people like us, have also left us examples of their sanctity to show how we might arrive at this vision. Let us strive, therefore, not only to venerate them with praise but also to imitate them through a worthy way of life. Let us more generously than usual refresh the poor with our food, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, receive travelers with hospitality, visit the sick and the imprisoned, if we know any, and render to them the services of charity. And above all, let us keep ourselves pure from this world. This is the way of justice, by which one travels to and arrives at the palm of glory. May our Lord Jesus Christ see fit to grant us this, who is God, blessed forever. Amen.)



[no known Latin source]

(L.) Harða fogr ok hálpsamlig er þessi skipan heilagrar kristní. staðfest af hínum hæstum heinnar forstiorum. at til dyrðar hímna<sup>konung</sup>í. ok hans astvínum se hallðin a hueriú aare. eínkanvlegh hatið allri hímna<sup>hirð</sup>. ok hinni næsta dagh eptir góriz tíðir j heilagri kirkju fyrir salum allra þeirra manna sem retti{fol. 25}truande hafa framfariit. af þessare verollido. ok bēna þurfo.

(L.) (Very fitting and salutary is this practice of the holy Christian church, which has been established by her highest leaders, that every year in honor of the King of heaven and his dear friends a special feast for the whole company of heaven should be observed, and that on the following day the liturgy should be performed in the holy church for the souls of all people who have departed this world with the true faith and are in need of prayers.)

*Profession of Faith of Michael Palaeologus,  
Second Council of Lyons (1274)*  
[Text and translation from Denzinger, *Enchiridion  
symbolorum*, §§ 854–859]

(II.A.) Credimus [...] eos, qui post baptismum in peccata labuntur [...] per veram paenitentiam suorum consequi veniam peccatorum. Quod si vere paenitentes in caritate decesserint, antequam dignis paenitentiae fructibus de commissis satisfacerint et omissis: eorum animas poenis purgatoriis seu catharteriis [...] post mortem purgari:

(M.) Enn þat er rettruat af salum framfarinna manna. eptir þui sem vattar heilog ritning ok kennefeðr kristnenrar hafa skyrt. at allir þeir menn sem með sanvre iðran synda sinna. ok með Guðs elsku hafa viðskiliz þetta et stundlega<sup>8</sup> lif fyr enn þeir hafe fullkomlega lukt skriptum sinum. ok yfirbotum sinna afbrigða. þa þola þér salur stundligar þínur til hreinsanar eptir dæðanr.

(M.) ('Regarding the souls of the departed, it is the orthodox belief according to the testimony of holy scripture and the interpretation of the teachers of the Christian church that the souls of all those people who have left this temporal life with true repentance of their sins and love of God before they have completely finished their confessions and the penances for their transgressions suffer temporal punishments after death for the sake of purification.')  
BO  
REVIEWER

(N.) *ok þeirra þess hattar pinur. mego lettaz ok skiotara lyctaz fyrir messosongva. ok bēnahald. ølmosogerðir. ok oll ønnur milldeverk. þaz sem geraz af rettkristnum monnum eptir retrvi skipan heilagrar kirkju. fyrir þeirra manna salum sem rettkristnir hafu viðskiliz heimni.*

(N.) ('And punishments of this kind can be remitted and brought to an end more quickly through the singing of masses, the recitation of prayers, the giving of alms, and all other works of charity that are done by orthodox Christians in accordance with the just ordinances of the holy church for the souls of those people who have departed this world with the true Christian faith.')  
BO  
REVIEWER

(II.A.) ('We believe [that] [...] those who after baptism lapse into sin [...] must obtain pardon for their sins through true penance. If, being truly repentant, they die in charity before having satisfied by worthy fruits of penance for their sins of commission and omission, their souls are cleansed after death by purgatorial and purifying penalties.')  
BO  
REVIEWER

(II.B.) *et ad poenas huiusmodi relevandas prodesse eis fidelium vivorum suffragia, Missarum scilicet sacrificia, orationes et eleemosynas et alia pietatis officia, quae a fidelibus pro aliis fidelibus fieri consueverunt secundum Ecclesiae instituta.*

(II.B) ('and to alleviate such penalties the acts of intercession of the living faithful benefit them, namely, the sacrifices of the Mass, prayers, alms, and other works of piety that the faithful are wont to do for the other faithful according to the Church's institutions.')  
BO  
REVIEWER

(O.) EN þeirra manna salur sem eigi sarguðuz i nockorum syndafleckum eptir tekna heilaga skirm ok sva hinna. sem eptir framða misverka hafa fullkomlega hreinsaz með skriptum ok yfirbotum við guð meðan þeir lifðu her i likama eða ella hafa þeir stundlega pinu þolat eptir sitt liflat til algerar hreinsanar. sva sem fyr var sagt. þa skolo þeir þegar fara. i eilifan ok vmmrðilegan fagnat himinríkis.

(O.) (But the souls of those people who were never polluted by any stains of sin after having received holy baptism, and likewise those who, after having sinned, have been perfectly reconciled with God through confession and penance while they lived here in their bodies or else have been perfectly purified by suffering temporal punishments after the end of their lives, as was mentioned earlier – these people shall go immediately into the eternal and indescribable joy of the kingdom of heaven.)

(P.) EN hinna salur. sem i nockorre dæðlegre synd hafða daít iðranarlæsir. þa fara þegar i heluite eptir líkamsdæðanni. sva sem ok þeirra salur sem eigi hreinsuðuz vmi heilaga skirm. af hinne gæmlo synd ok hafa þeir þo eigi iafnar pinur.

(P.) (But the souls of those who have died unrepentant in some mortal sin will go immediately into hell after the death of their bodies, and likewise the souls of those people that have not been cleansed of original sin through holy baptism, although they will not suffer the same punishments.)

(II.C.) Illorum autem animas, qui post sacrum baptisma susceptum nullam omnino peccati maculam incurrerunt, illas etiam, quae post contractam peccati maculam, vel in suis manentes corporibus, vel eisdem exutae, prout superius dictum est, sunt purgatae, mox in caelum recipi.

(II.C.) (As for the souls of those who, after having received holy baptism, have incurred no stain of sin whatever and those souls who, after having contracted the stain of sin, have been cleansed, either while remaining still in their bodies or after having been divested of them as stated above, they are received immediately into heaven.)

(II.D.) Illorum autem animas, qui in mortali peccato vel cum solo originali decedunt, mox in infernum descendere, poenis tamen disparibus puniendas.

(II.D.) (As for the souls of those who die in mortal sin or with original sin only, they go down immediately into hell, to be punished, however, with different punishments.)

(Q.) Þessa lute sem nu voro sagðir skolom ver fastliga trua vtan allt ef. ok sva þat at allir menn skulo með hinum samom likomum. upp rísa a domsdege. ok koma fyrir domstol vars herra iesu christi. ok giallda þa guðe skynsemd af ollum sinum verkum.

(Q.) ('We ought to believe these things that have now been said firmly and without any doubt, and also that all people shall arise with their same bodies on Doomsday and come before the judgment seat of our Lord Jesus Christ and render to God an account of all their deeds.')

(R.) Skulu þa uandir menn fara með eilífri fyrðeming' i endalæsa þínu. Enn retlátir menn i líf eilíft. ok fullkomín fagnat með guðe ok helgum monnum.

(R.) ('Wicked people shall then go with eternal condemnation into endless punishment, while the righteous will go to eternal life and perfect joy with God and the saints.')

(II.E.) Eadem sacrosancta Ecclesia Romana firmiter credit et firmiter asseverat, quod nihilominus in die iudicii omnes homines ante tribunal Christi cum suis corporibus comparebunt, redditori de propriis factis rationem.

(II.E.) ('The same most Holy Roman Church firmly believes and firmly asserts that nevertheless on the Day of Judgment all human persons will appear with their bodies before the judgment seat of Christ to render an account of their own deeds.')

[no corresponding material]

CRITICAL APPARATUS

Old Norse sermon

**a** allsvalldanda *DB* **b** final letter difficult to distinguish from *ø* **c** or *föðra?*; *feðra* *DB* **d** added letters difficult to interpret; read as *böta* by *DB* **e** *hellgi hölld* *DB* **f** *emend.* *DB*, *er* *MS* **g** *étti* *DB* **h** *béði* *DB* **i** *DB*: ‘*i hdr. strykað undir það; á því að líkum að sleppa því*’ **j** in right margin: Quod oculus non uidit **k-k** *DB* prints only *skulum vér* with footnote: ‘*tvítekið i hdr.*’ **l** *sæla* *DB* **m** *rétfliga* *DB* **n** *guði* *DB* **o** *sagnaði* *DB* (presumably a misprint) **p** *pislarvöttisins* *DB* **q** *umræðiligra* *MS*, silently emended by *DB* **r** *bóna* *DB* **s** *stundlega* *DB* (presumably a misprint) **t** *messo songva* *DB* **u** *við* *DB* **v** *sic*, *fýrdéming* *DB*

Latin sermon

**a-a** in festiuitate \*\*\*\*\* *Pa*<sup>16</sup>, sermo omnium sanctorum *Re*, *om.* *Pa*<sup>136</sup>*Pa*<sup>145</sup>*Tr*  
**b** *om.* *Pa*<sup>145</sup> **c** *dedicata* *Pa*<sup>2</sup>*Re* **d** *soluamus* *Tr* **e** *debemus* *Tr*, *om.* *Pa*<sup>16</sup> **f** *quam* *Pa*<sup>2</sup> **g** *cum* *Re* **h-h** *male minus uel bene* *Pa*<sup>2</sup> **i** *itaque* *Pa*<sup>2</sup> **j-j** *a. u. nobis* *Pa*<sup>2</sup> **k** *uenire* *Pa*<sup>2</sup> **l** *attencius* *Tr* **m** *et eius* *Pa*<sup>2</sup>, *eius* *Tr* **n** *siquidem* *Tr* **o-o** *legi in hodierno obsequio* *Pa*<sup>136</sup>, *in hodierna (?) euangelio legitur* *Re*, *in hodierno legitur euangelio* *Pa*<sup>145</sup> **p-p** *om.* *Pa*<sup>2</sup>*Re* **q** *condidit* *Tr* **r** *om.* *Pa*<sup>2</sup> **s** *cuncta* *Pa*<sup>2</sup> **t** *dum* *Pa*<sup>145</sup> **u** *essemus* *Pa*<sup>145</sup> **v** *om.* *Pa*<sup>2</sup> **w-w** *om.* *Pa*<sup>16</sup> **x** *om.* *Pa*<sup>136</sup>  
**y** *repromisit* *Pa*<sup>2</sup>, *promittit* *Re* **z-z** *u. M.* *Pa*<sup>2</sup> **aa** *quam* *Pa*<sup>136</sup>*Pa*<sup>145</sup> **bb-bb** *carnem et sacratissimam* *Pa*<sup>2</sup> **cc-cc** *a. d. c. p. n. e.* *Pa*<sup>145</sup> **dd-dd** *c. e.* *Pa*<sup>2</sup> **ee-ee** *deinde laudare debemus* *Pa*<sup>2</sup> **ff** *demum* *Pa*<sup>136</sup>*Pa*<sup>145</sup>*Pa*<sup>16</sup>*Tr* **gg** *om.* *Pa*<sup>2</sup>*Pa*<sup>16</sup>  
**hh** *om.* *Pa*<sup>136</sup> **ii** *canonem* *Pa*<sup>16</sup> **jj** *cognouimus* *Pa*<sup>2</sup>*Tr* **kk** *om.* *Pa*<sup>136</sup> **ll** *illos* *Pa*<sup>2</sup>  
**mm-mm** *humani generis et filium* *Pa*<sup>16</sup> **nn** *deum* *Pa*<sup>2</sup>*Tr* **oo** *om.* *Pa*<sup>16</sup> **pp** *om.* *Pa*<sup>16</sup> **qq** *uoluerunt* *Pa*<sup>16</sup> **rr** *ac* *Pa*<sup>2</sup> **ss** *om.* *Pa*<sup>2</sup>*Pa*<sup>16</sup>*Tr* **tt** *alii aliis* *Pa*<sup>2</sup>*Tr* **uu** *ad add.* *Re* **vv** *celorum* *Pa*<sup>2</sup> **ww-ww** *peruenire (?) meruerunt* *Re*, *promeruerunt* *Pa*<sup>2</sup> **xx** *prius* *Pa*<sup>136</sup> **yy** *etiam* *Pa*<sup>2</sup>*Re* **zz** *om.* *Pa*<sup>2</sup> **aaa** *munerantur* *Tr* *and perhaps* *Pa*<sup>136</sup>*Pa*<sup>16</sup> (*this seems to be the preferable reading*); *om.* *Re* **bbb** *om.* *Re* **ccc** *sumpta (!)* *Pa*<sup>2</sup> **ddd** *om.* *Pa*<sup>2</sup> **eee-eee** *p. n.* *Pa*<sup>2</sup> **fff-fff** *p. et m.* *Pa*<sup>2</sup> **ggg** *ualeamus* *Pa*<sup>136</sup> **hhh-hhh** *n. s.* *Pa*<sup>2</sup> **iii** *quoque* *Pa*<sup>2</sup> **jjj** *tam* *ReTy* **kkk** *etiam* *Pa*<sup>2</sup> **lll-lll** *s. e.* *Pa*<sup>2</sup> **mmm** *imatari* *Pa*<sup>136</sup> **nnn-nnn** *and* **ooo-ooo** *transposed* *Re* **ppp** *infirmantes* *Pa*<sup>2</sup> **qqq** *illis* *Pa*<sup>2</sup> **rrr-rrr** *om.* *Pa*<sup>16</sup> **sss** *uenitur* *Pa*<sup>16</sup> **ttt-ttt** *final doxology variously abbreviated in the MSS*

## The Tuscan Provenance of *Framfjor Maríu*

Dario Bullitta

hverr er þesse sva miklo dyrlegre en adrar      Ct 6:9  
er vppsteig sva sem vprisande dags brvn      Ct 6:3  
fogr sem tungl valið sem sol  
ogorlig sem skipot fylking hermanna

*Vespers antiphon for the Feast of the Assumption (August 15)*<sup>1</sup>

Untouched by original sin, Mary of Nazareth attained unrivaled popularity in the history of Christianity with a cult that is exceeded only by that of Christ himself. Mary is still the most honored and venerated saint in the Roman Catholic Church, a highly privileged status testified to by her eminent degree of worship<sup>2</sup> and by her countless poetic epithets, tutelary titles, scriptural typologies, and honorific salutations.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The verses are embedded in a fragmentary Assumption homily extant as item 3 of Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 655 XXVII 4to (c. 1300), folio 5v/15–8 ('Who is she so much more glorious than any other [saint] that ascends as the rising dawn, fair as the moon, elect as the sun, terrible as an army set in array.') The antiphon conflates the Song of Songs 6:9 and 6:3, traditionally depicting the rising of the bride in the desert, which in Marian exegesis have been interpreted as a prefiguration of the ascent of the Virgin. On the Assumption fragment, see especially Dario Bullitta, 'The Story of Joseph of Arimathea in AM 655 XXVII 4to', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 131 (2016), pp. 47–74, p. 52, and Stephen Pelle's essay in the present volume, p.44, footnote 49. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own.

<sup>2</sup> This is theologically defined as *cultus hyperduliae* ('cult of highermost veneration'), one that greatly exceeds the regular *cultus duliae* ('cult of veneration') the worship of all other saints and angels; it is second only to the *cultus latrariae* ('cult of worship'), the adoration of God in his Trinitarian form. See, for instance, the discussion in Leo Scheffczyk, *Maria: Mutter und Gefährtin Christi* (Augsburg: Sankt Ulrich Verlag, 2003), pp. 201–13.

<sup>3</sup> A first atlas of Mary's epithets is available in Nicholas Joseph Santoro, *Mary in Our Life: Atlas of the Names and Titles of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and Their Place in Marian Devotion* (Missouri: Bloomington, 2001).

More than fifty formal and informal Marian titles are collected in the petitions of the *Litaniae Lauretanae*, the most widely disseminated praises and supplications to the Virgin that officially became part of the rosary ritual from the last quarter of the sixteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Among these, four invocations have a profound rhetorical and theological poignancy, since they profess the great Marian dogmas of divine motherhood, perpetual virginity, immaculate conception, and glorious Assumption. They were proclaimed as truth by four ecclesiastical decrees: 'Sancta Dei Genetrix' ('Holy Bearer of God') [≈ 'Deipara' ('Bearer of God') Council of Ephesus, AD 431]; 'Maria Semper Virgo' ('Mary Ever Virgin') [≈ 'Semper Virgo' ('Ever Virgin') Lateran Synod, AD 649]; 'Regina sine labe concepta' ('Queen conceived without sin') [≈ 'In primo instanti suae conceptionis [...] ab omni originalis culpae labe praeservatam immunem' ('In the first instance of her conception [...] she was preserved free from all stain of original sin') *Infallibilis Deus*, 1854]; and 'Regina in caelum assumpta' ('Queen assumed into heaven') [≈ 'Corpore et anima ad supernam Caeli gloriam eveheretur, ubi Regina refulgeret ad eiusdem sui Filii dexteram, immortalis saeculorum Regis' ('She might be taken up body and soul to the glory of heaven, where as Queen she sits in splendor at the right hand of her Son, the immortal King of the Ages') *Munificentissimus Deus*, 1950].<sup>5</sup>

Despite the late date of *Munificentissimus Deus*, attempts to promote Mary's bodily assumption date back as far as Late Antiquity, when an impressive number of hymns, sermons, and apocryphal narratives describing Mary's death and departure into Paradise were first composed. The *Clavis Apocryphorum* counts sixty-four surviving apocrypha written in Syriac, Greek, Coptic, Arabic, Ethiopic, Latin, Georgian, Armenian, and Irish which, at least in the early stages, seem to make no specific distinction between the words *dormitio* ('dormition'), *ascensio* ('ascension'), and *transitus* ('transit').<sup>6</sup> Although they differ considerably in terms of style, tone, and literary motifs, they all share the same fundamental conviction:

<sup>4</sup> The litanies came to be known as 'Lauretan', since they were first associated with the Basilica of the Holy House in Loreto (Marche), a shrine on the Adriatic Coast of Italy, the walls of which are believed to be identical to those of the Holy House in Nazareth, where the Virgin grew up and received the angelic announcement. The Marian titles were added to the litanies both before and after the official approval of the text on the part of Pope Sixus V (1521–1590) in 1587. For a philological and historical survey, see, for instance, Angelo De Santi, *Le Litanie Lauretane: studio storico critico*, 2nd rev. ed. (Rome: La civiltà cattolica, 1897).

<sup>5</sup> The texts of the four councils are available in the *Enchiridion symbolorum. Compendium der Glaubensbekenntnisse und kirchlichen Lehrentscheidungen*, ed. and trans. Heinrich Denzinger and Peter Hünermann, 45th rev. ed. (Freiburg: EDB, 2017), §§ 250, 427, 2803, and 3902, respectively.

<sup>6</sup> Maurice Geerard, *Clavis Apocryphorum Novi Testamenti*, CCSA (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992), pp. 74–95.

as the immaculate Ark of the New Covenant and the purest Vessel that had once contained the Word of God made flesh (Exodus 25:11–21), Mary's body could not suffer the death and decay of any other ordinary body.<sup>7</sup> Among the New Testament apocrypha concerning Mary's death and Assumption, a pseudo-epigraphical narrative entitled *Transitus Mariae* and attributed to Joseph of Arimathea has been the subject of major disagreements among scholars, who have searched for specific evidence that could throw light on its date, provenance, and underlying sources.<sup>8</sup>

This essay traces the provenance and circulation of the Old Norse translation of Pseudo-Joseph's *Transitus Mariae*. It is argued that the presence of variant readings typical of a newly identified 'Tuscan redaction' in that text indicates that its lost manuscript source was a Latin codex circulating in Florence during the second quarter of the fifteenth century. The lost volume might have been acquired by the English Bishop of Hólar Jón Vilhjálmsón Craxton (d. 1440) during his visit to Pope Eugene IV (1383–1447) in Florence in the years 1433–1436 and later sent by him to Iceland with other codices of English provenance in order to settle part of his debts contracted with the Hólar diocese. Finally, two previously unnoticed scenes depicting the *Transitus Mariae* as related by the Pseudo-Joseph of Arimathea are identified in coeval English alabaster altarpieces from the churches of Hítardalur (Mýrasýsla) and Möðruvellir (Eyjafjörður).

### The *Transitus Mariae* of Pseudo-Joseph of Arimathea

The standard text of Pseudo-Joseph's *Transitus* opens with a short preface reporting that sometime before Christ's Passion, the Virgin asked her son about her own death and begged him to be informed of it three days in advance.<sup>9</sup> While in prayer in Jerusalem during the second year after Christ's ascension, Mary is visited by an unnamed angel, who salutes her with a palm and foretells her death. Mary informs Joseph of Arimathea and her relatives of the angelic visit and subsequently washes herself and dresses in queenly robes, while attended by three

<sup>7</sup> On Mary as the new Ark of the Covenant, see, for instance, John Seward, *Redeemer in the Womb: Jesus Living in Mary* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), especially pp. 27–31 and 125–27.

<sup>8</sup> As noted in *The Apocryphal Gospels of Mary in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. and trans. Mary Clayton. Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England 26 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 99.

<sup>9</sup> The following is a synopsis of the text available *Apocalypses Apocryphae: Mosis, Esdrae, Pauli, Iohannis, item Mariae dormitio, additis Evangeliorum et actuum Apocryphorum supplementis*, ed. Konstantin von Tischendorf (Leipzig: Mendelssohn, 1866, repr. Hildesheim: George Olms, 1966), pp. 113–23. It is based on Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 4363, fols 24r–54r (Italy, c. 1200–1300) with variant readings from Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, O 35 sup., fols 99r–103r (Italy, c. 1300–1325).



virgins named Sepphora, Abigea, and Zaël. The following day, John the Evangelist is transported from the city of Ephesus to the Queen's chamber amid rain and thunder, and so are all other disciples except Thomas Didymus.<sup>10</sup> Mary reveals to them the reason for their unexpected rapture, and they sit at her deathbed with great vigil fires, singing psalms and canticles. The following day at the third hour (the same time when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles), Christ descends with a host of angels, and the soul of Mary is elevated in a flood of light, while the entire earth shakes and the city of Jerusalem witnesses the event. Concurrently, Satan enters the bodies of some Jerusalemites and forces them to burn Mary's body; however, the culprits are immediately struck blind and begin to bang their heads against the walls and clash with each other. In fear, the Apostles transfer Mary's body from Mount Zion to the Valley of Josaphat. Midway, a certain Jew named Ruben attempts to overturn Mary's bier, and to everyone's alarm his hands wither all the way to the elbow. He implores the Apostles to spare him and make him Christian. At the Apostles' intercessional prayer, Ruben is instantly healed and baptized and immediately leaves the scene proclaiming Christ. While Mary's body is lying in the tomb, a great light shines over the Apostles, who fall with their faces on the ground without realizing that a group of angels has already taken Mary's body to heaven. At this point, Thomas is brought to the Mount of Olives from India, where he had begun his apostolic mission. He alone is able to witness with astonishment Mary's bodily departure into heaven, and when he prays that she grant him blessings, the girdle used by the Apostles to gird her robe on her deathbed comes down from above. When Thomas arrives at the Valley of Josaphat, Peter rebukes him again for acting like a misbeliever, but after they have rolled away a heavy stone, they all realize that Mary's sepulcher is empty. Subsequently, Thomas relates his wondrous encounter with the Virgin on the Mount of Olives and reveals Mary's girdle to the Apostles as evidence of his truthfulness. Finally, peace is restored among the Apostles, who are brought back to their lands on clouds while glorifying the name of the Lord. The narrative ends with an epilogue in which Joseph of Arimathea states his authorship and his role as a first-hand witness of the aforementioned wonders.

Several scholars have attempted to propose suitable sources that might indicate the date and provenance of the Latin text. Perhaps because of

<sup>10</sup> Sixteen of them are mentioned: John the Evangelist and his brother James the Greater, Peter and Paul, Andrew, Philip, Luke, Barnabas, Bartholomew and Matthew, Matthias surnamed Justus, Simon the Canaanite, Jude and his brother (either James the Just or Joseph), Nicodemus, and Maximianus (presumably Maximinus of Aix [1st century], one of the legendary seventy-two disciples of Christ, who arrived in Marseilles with Lazarus, Mary Magdalene, and Martha). See *ibid.*, p. 116.

its indisputable oriental themes and echoes, Konstantin von Tischendorf considered the Latin text of Pseudo-Joseph older than the widely disseminated Latin *Transitus* by Pseudo-Melito of Sardis and consequently edited the texts as *Transitus A* and *Transitus B*.<sup>11</sup> Martin Jugie proposed two Greek texts as possible sources: the *Liber de Dormitione Mariae* by Pseudo-John the Theologian (that is, the Apostle)<sup>12</sup> and the seventh-century *Homily on the Dormition* by John of Thessalonica (d. c. AD 630).<sup>13</sup> He highlighted parallels with what he believed to be a coeval text, the early eighth-century *Letter IX to Titus* (Paul's companion and bishop of Crete) of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (c. AD 650–725), which survives only in an Armenian translation.<sup>14</sup> Montague A. James was the first scholar to associate Pseudo-Joseph's *Transitus* with the so-called *Sacra Cintola* (Mary's alleged 'Holy Girdle'), the twelfth-century relic preserved in the homonymous chapel of the Prato Cathedral, and suggested that Pseudo-Joseph's *Transitus* must be a late Italian work of fiction written no earlier than the thirteenth century.<sup>15</sup> Simon Claude Mimouni advanced the theory that the Latin compiler consulted either the Greek *Liber de Dormitione Mariae* by Pseudo-John or the sixth-century Syriac or Arabic apocryphon known as *Six Books*, and that he might have had access to the latter through John of Thessalonica's *Homily on the Dormition*.<sup>16</sup> Most

<sup>11</sup> See discussion *ibid.*, pp. xxxiv–xlvi. *Transitus A* and *Transitus B* are edited on pp. 113–23 and 124–36, respectively. Pseudo-Melito's text is now universally recognized as being the earliest text among the Latin Dormition narratives and is commonly dated to the fifth century, since it locates Mary's house on the Mount of Olives, a topographical dissimilarity with the later tradition, which places her house on Mount Zion. See especially the discussion in Stephen J. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption*. Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 35–36 and references there. The Latin text is available in *Ein neuer "Transitus Mariae" des Pseudo-Melito. Textkritische Ausgabe und Darlegung der Bedeutung dieser ursprünglicheren Fassung für Apokryphenforschung und lateinische und deutsche Dichtung des Mittelalters*, ed. Monika Haibach-Reinische. Bibliotheca Assumptionis B. Virginis Mariae 5 (Rome: Pontificia Academia Mariana Internationalis, 1962).

<sup>12</sup> The text is edited *ibid.*, pp. 95–112.

<sup>13</sup> The text is available in *Homéliez Mariales byzantines: Textes grecs édités et traduits en latin*, ed. Martin Jugie, 2 vols, *Patrologia Orientalis* 16/3; 19/3 (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1921–1925, repr. Turnhout: Brepols, 1990) II (1990), pp. 375–405.

<sup>14</sup> Most evidently, both texts identify Mary's burial place in Gethsemane. A German translation of the text is available in Paul Vetter, 'Das apokryphe Schreiben Dionysius des Areopagiten an Titus über Aufnahme Mariä aus dem Armenischen Übersetzt', *Theologische Quartalschrift* 69 (1887), pp. 133–38. See the discussion in Martin Jugie, *La mort et l'assomption de la Sainte Vierge: Étude historico-doctrinale*. Studi e Testi 114 (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1944), pp. 156–57.

<sup>15</sup> *The Apocryphal New Testament*, trans. Montague R. James (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 209 and 218.

<sup>16</sup> The *Six Books* are the oldest narrative among the 'Bethlehem' Dormition

importantly, Mimouni stresses how no mention of Mary's girdle can be traced to before the seventh century and argues that the identification of Mary's tomb in the Valley of Josaphat is typical of Coptic texts and traditions. He also maintains that at the end of the twelfth century, Pseudo-Joseph's *Transitus* would have been consciously used to justify the presence of the notable relic in Prato.<sup>17</sup> More recently, Stephen J. Shoemaker has dated the text to between the middle of the sixth and the middle of the eighth century and classified it as part of the 'Late Apostle' tradition, according to which one of the Apostles is delayed in his journey to Mary's burial but sees her body rising to heaven as he approaches Jerusalem. In some versions, Mary gives the Apostle her girdle, while other traditions describe it as her burial robe. According to Shoemaker, the 'Late Apostle' tradition developed in order to defend the finding of the Marian burial relics.<sup>18</sup> Finally, on account of certain monastic elements like indulgence, prayers, forgiveness of sins, and the unusual mention of the legendary first bishop of Aix-en-Provence Maximinus among the disciples who attended Mary's Dormition, Bogusław Kochaniewicz argued that the text might have been composed in a French Cistercian monastery toward the end of the twelfth century.<sup>19</sup> Whereas certain topoi and topographical details might be ascribed to specific oriental or, less convincingly, French traditions, it is demonstrated below that the provenance of the Latin manuscripts, the complete absence of ancient Greek translations, and the lack of any vernacular redaction prior to the early fourteenth century corroborate James' hypothesis that in its present textual form this version of the Latin *Transitus* was produced in early thirteenth-century Italy.

### *Framfǫr Maríu*

The most detailed account describing Mary's bodily Assumption in Iceland is found in the Old Norse translation of Pseudo-Joseph's *Transitus* edited under the title *Framfǫr Maríu*.<sup>20</sup> The vernacular

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traditions. The text is available with facing English translation in, *Apocrypha Syriaca*, ed. and trans. Agnes Smith-Lewis. *Studia sinaitica* 11 (London: C. J. Clay, 1902), pp. 12–69. A new critical edition of the Syriac text is currently being prepared by Stephen J. Shoemaker for the CCSA. See also the discussion in Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, p. 146.

<sup>17</sup> See the discussion in Simon Claude Mimouni, *Dormition et assumption de Marie: Histoire des traditions anciennes*. *Théologie historique* 98 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1995), pp. 289–93.

<sup>18</sup> See Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, pp. 67–68.

<sup>19</sup> Bogusław Kochaniewicz, 'Il *Transitus Mariae* dello Pseudo-Giuseppe da Arimatea – un apocrifo di origine italiana?', *Angelicum* 82 (2005), pp. 99–121, at p. 120.

<sup>20</sup> As recently demonstrated by Najork, prior to the fifteenth century, learned

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text survives in codex unicus as the most recent item included in Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 232 fol., a miscellaneous and composite codex consisting of 121 double-column parchment leaves written and assembled in Iceland in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The first codicological unit was written around 1300 and preserves a defective text of *Barlaams saga ok Jósafats* (fols 1ra/1–54rb/37).<sup>21</sup> The second codicological unit was copied around 1350 and transmits the older redaction of *Mariu saga* expanded with a collection of miracles (fols 55ra/1–83rb/39)<sup>22</sup> and the second redaction of *Jóns saga baptista* (fols 86ra/1–107vb/34).<sup>23</sup> A third section dated to around 1370 preserves a deficient text of the sole redaction of *Heilagra feðra áfi* or *Vitae Patrum* (fols 108ra/1–121va/12).<sup>24</sup> A fourth unit consisting of two leaves transmitting *Framfǫr Maríu* (fols 84r/1–85b/34) was added sometime in the fifteenth century to serve as an appendix to

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Icelanders appear to have expressed two distinct theological views on the bodily Assumption of the Virgin. A first approach was one of cautious skepticism, as testified to by an excerpt of Paschasius Radbertus' (AD 785–865) *Cogites me* that is shared by the second homily in the *Icelandic Homily Book* (c. 1200), the thirty-first homily in the *Norwegian Homily Book* (c. 1200), *Mariu saga I* (c. 1325–1715), and *Mariu saga II* (c. 1300–1450). See Daniel Najork, 'Translating Marian Doctrine into the Vernacular: The Bodily Assumption in Middle English and Old Norse-Icelandic Literature' (Ph.D. dissertation, Arizona State University, 2014), pp. 120–50. To his list, a hitherto unpublished homily on the Assumption extant in Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 655 XXVII 4to [fol. 5r/15–5v/19 (c. 1300)], the text of which is probably derived from *Mariu saga I*, should be added. See the discussion in Bullitta, 'The Story of Joseph', p. 52. A second favorable Icelandic view dates to the middle of the fourteenth century, when some exponents of the 'Northern Icelandic Benedictine School' evoked sections of Elisabeth of Schönau's *Visio de resurrectione Beate Virginis Marie* in *Guðmundar saga byskups C*, *Guðmundar saga byskups D*, and in the universal chronicle extant in Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 764 4to (c. 1376–1386). See Najork, 'Translating Marian Doctrine', pp. 151–79.

<sup>21</sup> See the discussion in *Barlaams ok Josaphats saga*, ed. Magnus Rindal. *Norrøne tekster 4* (Oslo: Norsk historisk kjeldeskrift-institutt, 1981), pp. 24–25. The text in AM 232 fol. is edited *ibid.*, pp. 214–33; its readings are indicated in the apparatus with the siglum B.

<sup>22</sup> See *Mariu saga: Legender om Jomfru Maria og hendes jertegn*, ed. Carl R. Unger (Christiania [Oslo]: Brøgger & Christie, 1871), I, pp. 65/4–152. Variants of AM 232 fol. are indicated with the siglum B.

<sup>23</sup> The text of *Jóns saga baptista* in AM 232 fol. is edited in *Postola sögur: Legendariske fortællinger om apostlernes liv, deres kamp for kristendommens udbredelse samt deres martyrdød*, ed. Carl R. Unger (Christiania [Oslo]: Bentzen, 1874), pp. 850/20–931.

<sup>24</sup> Variant readings of *Heilagra feðra áfi* in AM 232 fol. (designated B) are available *ibid.*, pp. 335–671.

*Mariu saga*.<sup>25</sup> In addition, the verso page (fol. 54v/1–5) originally left blank after the transcription of *Barlaams saga ok Jósafats* is now occupied by a *Skuldareikningr*, an inventory of the outstanding debts contracted by Jón Ketilsson (1380–1432), *sveinn* ('attendant') of the English Bishop of Hólar Jón Vilhjálmsson Craxton (d. 1440).<sup>26</sup> The inventory does not provide a specific date but must have been compiled shortly after the bishop's death in 1440.<sup>27</sup> The most reliable information we have on AM 232 fol. is provided by Árni Magnússon (1663–1730) in his own catalogue, where he records its acquisition in 1689 from Magnús Jónsson from Leirá (1679–1733). Magnús, who later became rector of Skálholt, was at that time a student of theology at the University of Copenhagen.<sup>28</sup> In turn, Magnús had obtained the codex from Sveinn Torfason (c. 1662–1725) *klausturhaldari* ('proprietor') of the Benedictine Abbey of Munkaþverá.<sup>29</sup> Sveinn informed Árni that he had found the codex in one of the chests of the monastery, and subsequently Guðbrandur Björnsson (1657–1733) informed Árni that the volume had once belonged to his father Björn Magnússon (1626–1697), *sýslumaður* ('magistrate') of Munkaþverá until the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>30</sup>

Bokin er in folio, komin til min 1698. fra Magnufe Jonsfyne fra Leyrä. enn til hans fra Sveine Torfafyne. hefr til forna vered i eigu Biorns Magnusonar ä Munkaþverä. *id certum est*, og lærde þä Gudbrandur Biornsson ä henne ad lesa. Baarlams Sogu etc. folio feck eg af Magnuse Jonssyne. þä hann var Studiosus i Kaupenhafn. Magnus hafdi feinged hana af Sveine Torfasyne. Sveinn sagde mier sidan, ad hun hefdi fundist burt kostud i Klaustur husunum ä Munkaþverä. Eg spurdi Gudbrand Biorns son um þessa Barlaams Sogu. Sagde hann, ad nefnd Saga in folio hefdi fyrrum vered ä Munka þverä i eigu fedr sins, og gat til, ad Sveinn Torfason mundi bokina funded hafa þar i hirdslum einhverium. Ber þessu so ollu saman.

- <sup>25</sup> Ole Widding and Hans Bekker-Nielsen, 'An Old Norse Translation of the *Transitus Mariae*', *Mediaeval Studies* 23 (1961), pp. 329–33. A modern English translation of the text is available in Najork, 'Translating Marian Doctrine', pp. 245–52.
- <sup>26</sup> On October 8 1429, Jón Vilhjálmsson Craxton granted Jón Ketilsson occupancy of the church farm of Nes in Aðaldalur, Suður-Þingeyjarsýsla, for a year. See *DI* 4, p. 432. Jón was the son of Ketill Pálsson (1350–1398) and nephew of Björn Þorleifsson at Hof (d. 1395). See the discussion in *DI* 5, p. 826.
- <sup>27</sup> The text of the *Skuldareikningr* is available in *DI* 4, no. 661.
- <sup>28</sup> Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 435 a 4to, fols 9v–10r.
- <sup>29</sup> Along with Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 291 4to containing *Jómsvíkinga saga*. See the discussion in Peter G. Foote, 'Notes on Some Linguistic Features in AM 291 4to', *Íslenzk tunga – Lingua Islandica* 1 (1959), pp. 26–46, at p. 29.
- <sup>30</sup> See Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 435 a 4to (fols 9v–10r) at Handrit, <https://handrit.is/da/manuscript/view/da/AM02-232>, last accessed October 5 2020.

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[The book is in folio (format). It came into my possession in 1698 (when it was given to me) by Magnús Jónsson from Lejrá and to him by Sveinn Torfason. It had previously been in the possession of Björn Magnússon at Munkaþverá. *This is certain.* There Guðbrandur Björnsson learned to read from it *Barlaams saga (ok Jósafats)* etc. I received this folio (manuscript) from Magnús Jónsson when he was a student in Copenhagen. Magnús had received it from Sveinn Torfason. Sveinn later told me that it was cast away in the cloister house at Munkaþverá. I asked Guðbrandur Björnsson about this *Barlaams saga* (manuscript). He said that the aforementioned saga in folio (format) had previously been in Munkaþverá in the possession of his father and observed that Sveinn Torfason might have found the book there in some chest. So this (gathered information) is all in agreement.]

Four of the sixteenth-century pen trials and signatures – Björn, Benedikt, Sigurður Jónsson, and Jón prestr – that occupy the right column, the upper, and lower margin of the last leaf containing the *Framfór Maríu* (fol. 85v) may be identified by considering Björn Magnússon's paternal ancestry. Björn's grandfather, Björn Benediktsson (1561–1617), who was magistrate of Munkaþverá, might have inherited AM 232 fol. from his father and grandfather, Benedikt ríki Halldórsson (1534–1604) and Halldór Benediktsson (1510–1582), respectively. In the second half of the sixteenth century, Benedikt and Halldór were proprietors of Möðruvellir (Hörgárdalur), the former Augustinian house of canons, and their possessions included landed properties, subsidiary farms, and naturally its manuscript holdings. If this identification is correct, Sigurður Jónsson might be identical with Sigurður Jónsson nicknamed Pórirsson (b. 1510), the first proprietor of Möðruvellir after the Reformation, and Jón prestr might be Sigurður's father, Jón Finnbogason (1480–1546), the last Catholic prior of the Augustinian house, who served as a priest in Múli in Aðaldalur until 1524.<sup>31</sup>

In this connection, it should be noted that despite its small size, Möðruvellir boasted an impressively assorted library, and that in the middle of the fifteenth century Mary's miracles were prominent hagiographical texts. The well-known 1461 inventory of the monastery lists eighty-six volumes written in Latin and Old Norse (see examples in Table 1). Although the Latin list first mentions the *Constitutiones canonicorum regularium* and Augustine's *De consensu Evangelistarum*, clearly reflecting the scriptural, doctrinal, and ethical concerns of an Augustinian house of canons, the very first volume among the vernacular holdings is a collection of Marian miracles, only followed by a codex transmitting *Agústínuss saga*.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> See Ragnar Ólafsson, 'Bogi Benediktsson, Fræðimaður og ættfræðingur Staðarfelli, Fellströnd, Dalasýslu', *Fréttabréf Ættfræðifélagsins* 27/4 (2009), pp. 15–23, at p. 22.

<sup>32</sup> See *DI* 5, pp. 288–90.

## FIRST VOLUMES IN THE MÖÐRUVELLIR INVENTORY (1461)

<i>Latin volumes</i>	<i>Norse volumes</i>
Petta j latinbókum.	Þessar norrænv bækur.
institutiones ordinis canonicorum	miraculum bok vorar frv.
regularium j þrimur bókum.	augustinus saga.
augustinus de consensu iijor	postula saugur.
ewangelistarum.	martinus saga
Grecissimus (sic!).	vincencius saga.
Racionale divinatorum officiorum.	þfabiani oc sebastiani. <sup>34</sup>
Casus quinque librorum decre-	
talivm. <sup>33</sup>	

The canons' interest in miracles ascribed to Mary – which in the specific case of AM 232 fol. also included Pseudo-Joseph's *Transitus* as the final miracle performed by the Virgin – was evidently a result of the dedication of their church. According to the same inventory, the church at Möðruvellir monastery was consecrated by Bishop Jörundur Þorsteinsson (d. 1313) of Hólar on August 16, the day after the Solemnity of Mary's Assumption.<sup>35</sup>

It should also be noted that whereas the Benedictine monasteries of Munkaþverá and Þingeyrar were governed by abbots and enjoyed a certain degree of freedom from the bishop, the canons regular at Möðruvellir were closely associated with the cathedral and were formally more reliant on the bishop of Hólar.<sup>36</sup> The northern bishopric seems to have cultivated economic interest in the small house of canons mostly because of its vicinity to the nearby Gásir, the most important international trading

<sup>33</sup> ('This [much] in Latin books: *Constitutiones Canonicorum regularium Ordinis Sancti Augustini* in three books; Augustine's *De consensu Evangelistarum libri quattuor*; [Eberhard of Béthune's] *Graecismus*; [Guillaume Durand's] *Rationale divinatorum officiorum*; [Gregory IX's] *Decretales*.)

<sup>34</sup> ('These Norse books: *Mariú saga ok jarteignir*; *Ágústínuss saga*; *Postula sögur*; *Marteins saga byskups*; *Vincentíuss saga*; *Fabíanuss ok Sebastiánuss saga* [not extant].)

<sup>35</sup> 'Dedicacio Ecclesie a modrvuollum j horgardal næsta dag epter assumcionem beate marie uirginis' (*DI* 5, p. 290 ('The dedication of the Church [of the monastery] at Möðruvellir in Hörgárdalur [falls] on the day following the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.') Moreover, within the properties of the cloister, a bushy area in farm Áss bore the name *Mariuhrís* ('Mary's brushwood.') It is said to be located between two woodlands named Auðbrekkuskógur and Vindheimaskógur. See *DI* 5, p. 290.

<sup>36</sup> See, for instance, Elín Ósk Hreiðarsdóttir and Þóra Pétursdóttir, *Fornleifaskráning í Arnarneshreppi* (Reykjavík: Fornleifastofnun Íslands, 2008), I, p. 15, and Orri Vésteinsson, *Möðruvellir í Hörgárdal: Fornleifakönnun* (Reykjavík: Fornleifastofnun Íslands, 2001), p. 11.

post in northern Iceland in the Middle Ages.<sup>37</sup> Such tight connections with the cathedral would naturally result in more frequent visits and a more attentive control over the scriptorium on the part of the bishop of Hólar.

In his catalogue, Árni Magnússon noted affinities between AM 232 fol. and Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 635 4to, a voluminous post-medieval paper manuscript containing *Maríu saga* II and some 230 Marian miracles. The codex was written by the minister and prolific scribe Eyjólfur Björnsson in Árnessýsla (1666–1746) during the first quarter of the eighteenth century and is most likely a copy of a now-lost medieval antigraph transcribed in Fljótisdalshreppur (eastern Iceland).<sup>38</sup> Árni describes it as follows: ‘*Mariu Saga* in 4to. Komin fra Valþjófsftadar kirkiu i Fliotsdals herade 1705. Er álíka og fu sem er aptanvid Barlaams Sogu komna ur förum Biorns Magnusfonar’<sup>39</sup> (*‘Maríu saga* in 4to [format]. It came [into my possession] in 1705 from the Valþjófsstaðir Church in the Fljótisdalur district. It is similar to that [manuscript] transmitting *Barlaams saga*, which came [into my possession] from the possessions of Björn Magnússon.’) Árni’s connection of AM 635 4to with AM 232 fol. is further confirmed by a previously unnoticed Latin rubric to a Marian miracle, number 175 in the codex (fols 176v–178r, paginated 352–355), which reads: ‘*de hijs que facta sunt in transitu Marie*’ (*‘About those things that have occurred in the *Transitus Mariae*’*) (See Fig. 3.1).<sup>40</sup>

Miracle 175 is one of the translated Latin exempla included in Hélinand of Froidmont’s (1160–1229) *Chronicon*, a world-history, which includes an adventurous pilgrimage undertaken by the canons of Laon in 1113. The Laon clerics escaped from their city because of a popular insurrection against the bishop and traveled through northern France and southern England with the shrine of the Virgin, which until then had been preserved in the Laon cathedral, and toured with it in order to raise funds to rebuild their church. While sailing through the Channel, their ship was attacked by pirates, who tried to steal Mary’s ‘feretro’ (‘shrine’). As the pirates drew near, a Laon priest named Boso (*fl. c.* 1080–1120) ascended the highest point of the stern, raised the reliquary, and called upon Christ and the Virgin. Suddenly, a furious wind struck the pirate ship and broke the mast, which fell and killed one of the

<sup>37</sup> See the discussion in Ramona Harrison, ‘Connecting the Land and the Sea at Gásir: International Exchange and Long-Term Eyjafjörður Ecodynamics in Medieval Iceland’, in *Human Ecodynamics in the North Atlantic: A Collaborative Model of Humans and Nature through Space and Time*, ed. Ramona Harrison and Ruth A. Maher (London: Lexington Books, 2014), pp. 131–32.

<sup>38</sup> See Handrit, at <https://handrit.is/en/manuscript/view/AM04-0635>, last accessed October 5 2020.

<sup>39</sup> See AM 435 a 4to, fol. 12.

<sup>40</sup> The Norse miracle is edited in *Mariu saga*, ed. Unger, II, pp. 645–46. The readings of AM 635 4to are indicated in the apparatus with the siglum D.



miokk ciluie mod' heilags kemigy. Heyz  
þu sagdi þu þin miltazta mod' myrkuu' sak  
va ek ep þu vttid' þa myrkuu' ga m3 m. at s  
þu þin helgi montan' þeck sina syn. gep' þu  
m' z fios muina augna. s at ek maetti en au.  
an tta þia þitt sk'u þ' sm ek smidadi. Sm þu  
þez þitta sagt m3 gt. bid' þu at þ' vatn e' hel.  
g' domu' v' þuegn' z. vi boz' en þs augu. en e' þ'  
v' gt. Dck' þu ap vatninnu. z vak' atla uotina  
en bæm þ' helgu' domu'. vni m'gimiu þk þu syn  
sina. Wid klost' heilags audomari. vð heif  
þu m3k þu m3 þ' v' þædd at auun' þu hð v'  
visin.

De þys q fea s intusitu gariē.  
a Hatid' degi mci ewe. kuou þz t' huit  
sands. z stigu þ' en skip. z m3 þin m'g.  
kaupm e' þ' t' engidz at kaupm vll. z hopdu  
m3 s. meir en ccc. mka þkæxt selþ. væntdi  
at

FIGURE 3.1 Rubric to Marian miracle 175. Copenhagen, Den  
Arnarnagnæanske Samling, AM 635 4to folio 176v (p. 352).  
© Den Arnarnagnæanske Samling. Photo by permission of Den  
Arnarnagnæanske Samling.

pirates. Subsequently, the Laon ship made it to shore.<sup>41</sup> The medieval scribe at Valþjófsstaðir (or one of his predecessors) seems to have made a logical connection between Ruben's attempt to steal Mary's shrine when it was brought by the Apostles from Mount Zion to the Valley of Josaphat and the pirates' attempt to steal the Laon reliquary in 1133.

On the basis of the evidence provided by the manuscript material, knowledge in Iceland of the *Transitus* story as recounted by Pseudo-Joseph of Arimathea does not seem to pre-date 1440 and the transcription of the *Framfǫr Mariú* in AM 232 fol. This is clear from both the absence of the above-mentioned rubric in Stockholm, Kungliga biblioteket, Holm perg 1 4to (c. 1450–1500) – the only other manuscript to transmit miracle 175 – where the exemplum is simply rubricated as 'Af Koldistano' ('About Coldistanus' [fl. c. 1080–1120]) after the helmsman of the vessel.<sup>42</sup>

### The Lombard and Tuscan redactions

When the two fifteenth-century leaves (fols 84r–85v) preserving *Framfǫr Mariú* were first edited by Ole Widding and Hans Bekker-Nielsen,<sup>43</sup> the Latin text of Pseudo-Joseph's *Transitus Mariae* was at that time only available in Tischendorf's outdated 1866 edition.<sup>44</sup> Tischendorf made use of three Italian manuscripts: A = Vaticanus latinus 4363; B = Ambrosianus O 35; C = what he generically names Laurentianus, a manuscript today known as Gaddi 208.<sup>45</sup> Widding and Bekker-Nielsen recognized Tischendorf's Laurentianus as the closest version to the Norse text but also expressed doubts about the adequacy of his transcription. While Tischendorf's work has been fundamental for the early knowledge of New Testament Apocrypha in

<sup>41</sup> The Latin text is discussed in J.S.P. Tatlock, 'The English Journey of the Laon Canons', *Speculum* 8 (1933), pp. 454–65. The Norse text corresponds to PL 212, cols 1013A–1014A. Both Icelandic manuscripts are surveyed in Gabriel Turville-Petre, 'Legends of England in Icelandic Manuscripts', in *Nine Norse Studies*. Viking Society for Northern Research 5 (London: University College of London, Viking Society for Northern Research, 1971), pp. 64–71. However, he erroneously identifies the Latin author as Hermann of Tournai (1095–1147). See discussion *ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>42</sup> Holm perg 1 4to was used by Unger as the main text of his edition, where it is indicated with the siglum E. See *Mariu saga*, ed. Unger, II, pp. 645–46.

<sup>43</sup> Widding and Bekker-Nielsen, 'An Old Norse Translation of the *Transitus Mariae*'.

<sup>44</sup> *Apocalypses Apocryphae*, ed. von Tischendorf, pp. 113–23.

<sup>45</sup> A codex that he consulted for his edition of a later version of the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* (B-text). See *Evangelia Apocrypha: Adhibitis plurimis codicibus graecis et latinis maximam partem nunc primum consultis atque ineditorum copia insignibus*, ed. Konstantin von Tischendorf, 2nd rev ed. (Lipsiae [Leipzig]: Hermann Mendelssohn, 1876), pp. 54–112 and the discussion below, p. 77 note 53.

both Greek and Latin, his texts are often eclectic or inconsistent with the manuscript sources, and his outline of the tradition is far from complete.

I have since then worked on a new census of Pseudo-Joseph's *Transitus* and have identified eight more manuscripts. Upon closer inspection, the Latin tradition could be better divided into two main sub-families, characterized by shared scenes and literary motifs that were read and transcribed in two distinct geographical areas: one that spread throughout northern Italy and partially France, and another that circulated exclusively in central Italy. A first unembellished 'Lombard Redaction' preserves an older and more fluid text and typically starts with the incipit 'In illo tempore antequam Dominus ad Passionem veniret' ('At that time, before our Lord came to the Passion'). It includes eight manuscripts dating from the beginning of the thirteenth to the end of the fourteenth century. The oldest of them, Milan 430, was copied in Lombardy and pre-dates Vatican 4363, Tischendorf's A codex, by about a century.

#### LATIN MANUSCRIPTS OF THE LOMBARD REDACTION

Milan 430	Milan, Archivio storico civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana, Triv. 430, fols 57v–70v (northern Italy, c. 1200–1250)
Chantilly 733	Chantilly, Bibliothèque et archives du Musée Condé, 733 [olim 1080], fols 46v–48r (France, c. 1200–1330)
Brescia C VII 17	Brescia, Biblioteca civica Queriniana, Manoscritti C.VII.17, fols 59v–65v (Brescia, c. 1275–1300)
Vatican 4363	Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana Vat. lat. 4363, fols 24r–54r. Tisch A (Italy, c. 1300–1400)
Florence 15 12	Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana Plut.15. dext.12, fols 20v–21v. Epitome (Florence, c. 1200–1300)
Milan O 35	Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana O 35 sup., 99r–103r. Tisch B (Italy, c. 1300–1325)
Rome 1728	Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense, Manoscritti 1728, fols 11r–14r (Italy, c. 1300–1400)
Bern 271	Bern, Burgerbibliothek 271, fols 41r–42v and 44r–45r (Metz, c. 1300–1400)

A second, substantially amplified Tuscan Redaction, named after the place of production of its earliest codex, Gaddi 208, opens with a slightly different wording: 'Tempore illo quo Dominus ad Passionem suam venire debet' ('At that time, when the Lord had to come to his Passion.') It is preserved in three manuscripts copied somewhere between Florence and Rome during the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries.

*The Tuscan Provenance of Framfōr Mariú*

LATIN MANUSCRIPTS OF THE TUSCAN REDACTION

- Gaddi 208 Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana  
Gaddi 208, fols 57v–61v. Tisch C (Florence, c. 1300–1400)
- Chase 105 Chicago, Newberry Library  
Chase 105, fols 13r–16v (Rome/Florence, c. 1450–1500)
- Paris 1192 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France  
Latin 1192, fols 96v–104v (St Peter, Vatican City, c. 1475–1500)

A further testimony to the circulation of Pseudo-Joseph's *Transitus* is its indirect medieval transmission in the vernaculars of Europe. The Lombard redaction is represented by an Old Veronese translation known as *Transito della Vergine*, transmitted in a manuscript from the beginning of the fourteenth century;<sup>46</sup> a translation in the Tuscan vernacular of the first section of the so-called *Historia cinguli gloriose Virginis Mariae*, a Latin narrative describing the arrival of holy relic in Prato, which is preserved in five manuscripts from the middle of the fifteenth century;<sup>47</sup> the *Vera Relazione della Cintola* in the Florentine vernacular, also describing the arrival of the relic in Prato; and a text first printed by the Dominican monk Serafino Razzi (1531–1613) in Florence in 1593.<sup>48</sup> Outside of Italy, I have been able to identify only

<sup>46</sup> Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, It. Z 13 (olim 4744). Its affiliation with the Lombard redaction can be deduced from its incipit: 'In quel tempo, inanci che l' Segnor ala pasion vegneso, et intre molte parole le quale la mare al filioli domandaso dela soa morto, començà a pregar con cotal dolceça de parlar' ('In that time, before the Lord came to the Passion, among many words asked by the mother to her Son about her death, she started praying with such sweetness of speech.') See Anna Cornagliotti, 'Un volgarizzamento del *Transitus Pseudo-Josephi de Arimathea* in dialetto veronese', in *Atti dell' Accademia delle scienze di Torino. Classe di scienze fisiche, matematiche e naturali* 113 (1979), pp. 197–217, p. 199

<sup>47</sup> Prato, Biblioteca Roncioniana, 84, Q.II.2 (c. 1428); Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Magliabechiano XXXVII, 323 (c. 1350); Melun, Bibliothèque municipale, 20 (c. 1450); Florence, Biblioteca Moreniana, Moreni 144, (c. 1600–1700); Prato, Biblioteca Roncioniana, 125, Q-III-33 (c. 1745). The text is available in *Historia cinguli gloriose virginis Marie: una storia del XIII secolo*, ed. and trans. Marco Pratesi, Quaderni di Hagiographica 15 (Florence: SIMSEL Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2018). The incipit of Latin text in Prato 84 Q.II.2 on folio 2r reads: 'Igitur antequam Dominum (*sic!*) Jhesus Christus ad passionem venire rogauit eum humiliter mater sua' ('Therefore, before the Lord Jesus Christ came to (his) Passion, his mother asked him humbly.') A translation of the same text in Tuscan vernacular is available in the same manuscript on folios 17v–29v, as may be gathered by its title on folio 17v 'Eadem historia vulgariçata' ('That same story vulgarized.') See the description of the manuscript in Manus at <https://manus.iccu.sbn.it/>, last accessed October 5 2020.

<sup>48</sup> The *Vera Relazione* is reportedly translated from a medieval Latin manuscript

two vernacular renditions preserved as *codices unici* directly indebted to the Tuscan redaction. These are *Framfȝor Mariu*, composed around the middle of the fifteenth century, and a Middle English text extant in Oxford, All Souls College, 26 (fols 1r–5v), which consists of five paper leaves translated into English at Westminster Abbey in 1485 that has only recently been made available in a first critical edition.<sup>49</sup>

The visual arts are also part of the indirect tradition of Pseudo-Joseph's *Transitus* and can be regarded as tangible evidence of the circulation of the two redactions. The most eminent example of the knowledge of the Lombard text is represented by the *Assunzione della Vergine*, an oil on canvas in the Cartolari-Nichesola Chapel of the Verona Cathedral, completed by Titian (c. 1488–1576) around 1535.<sup>50</sup> In the altarpiece, Mary is depicted ascending to heaven supported by clouds and encircled by cherubim with hands folded in prayer. Thomas is represented among the Apostles holding the fallen girdle in his left hand. The miracle takes place in solemn silence, and there is hardly any

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once preserved in the Prato Cathedral, which might be one of the ancestors of Prato Q.II.2 [84]. Its readings are also of the Lombard type, as may be gathered from the crucial passage in which Thomas receives the Holy Girdle: 'Et essendo, in quell'ora il beatissimo Apostolo San Tommaso, miracolosamente stato trasferito dall'India nel Monte Oliveto: Et veggendo la Madre di Dio quindi andarsene verso il cielo, incominciò dopo di lei a gridare, quasi un'altro Eliseo dopo Elia, Madre mia Santa, Madre immacolata, Madre benedetta, se io hò trovato grazia nel cospetto vostro, rallegratemi per la vostra santa misericordia, dandomi qualche segno della vostra sacra assunzione in cielo, acciò che io possa ai fratelli miei coaposoli dimostrarlo' ('And, at that time, the most blessed Apostle Saint Thomas having been miraculously transferred from India to the Mount of Olives, and seeing the Mother of God departing towards heaven, he started screaming, almost like another Eliseus after Elijah: "My Holy Mother, Immaculate Mother, Blessed Mother, if I have found grace in your sight, delight me by your holy mercy, by giving me some sign of your sacred Assumption into heaven, so that I may demonstrate it to my brothers [and] co-apostles."') Giovanni Bensi, *La cintura della Madonna* (Prato: Società Pratese di Storia Patria, 2017), pp. 55–6. The same story in the Tuscan vernacular is also extant in Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Magliabechiano XXXV.236, a sixteenth-century copy of a manuscript from Lucca, as evident from Manus <https://manus.iccu.sbn.it/>, last accessed October 5 2020.

<sup>49</sup> The Latin text was translated by an otherwise unidentified scribe, as stated in the rubric 'Laten in to Englyssh by Ro. Sukare þe yere of grace 1485 in Westmynstre' ('Translated into English by Ro. Sukare [fl. c. 1450–1500] [in] the year of grace 1485 at Westminster.') See Daniel Najork, 'The Middle English Translation of the *Transitus Mariae* Attributed to Joseph of Arimathea: An Edition of Oxford, All Souls College, MS 26', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 117/4 (2018), pp. 478–504.

<sup>50</sup> See, for instance, Hans Tietze, *Titian: The Paintings and Drawings with Three Hundred Illustrations* (London: Phaidon, 1950), pp. 35–37.

link between the Apostles standing in the foreground and the Virgin portrayed in ascensional motion.

Conversely, the most renowned depiction of the Tuscan *Transitus* is that included in a series of frescos known as *Le Storie della Vergine e della Cintola* in the Sacro Cingolo Chapel of the Prato Cathedral, which portray well-known apocryphal scenes of the Virgin including her birth, infancy, dormition, and transit, as well as the legendary arrival of the holy girdle in Prato from Jerusalem.<sup>51</sup> The frescos were executed in the years 1392–1395 by Agnolo Gaddi (1350–1396), one of the most accomplished Florentine painters of his time. In Gaddi's fresco, Mary is clearly represented in the Tuscan fashion with a benevolent face, mercifully delivering her girdle to Thomas, who has just climbed the Mount of Olives all by himself and is the only Apostle occupying the foreground scene.

It is very likely that Agnolo consulted the oldest surviving copy of the Tuscan *Transitus* before painting the chapel. As evident from its call number, Gaddi 208, which contains the oldest surviving *Transitus* text of the Tuscan type and is preceded by an expanded version of the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*,<sup>52</sup> the dominant source for pictorial cycles of the life of Mary in the Late Middle Ages<sup>53</sup> was owned by Agnolo's nephew, Angelo di Zenobio Gaddi (1398–1474), who was Prior of Florence in the first half of the fifteenth century.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>51</sup> See most recently Isabella Lapi Ballerini, *Agnolo Gaddi e la Cappella della Cintola: La storia, l'arte, il restauro* (Florence: Polistampa, 2009).

<sup>52</sup> Edited by Tischendorf as B text and here interpolated with sections of the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*. See *Evangelia Apocrypha*, ed. von Tischendorf, pp. 54–112.

<sup>53</sup> The codex, consisting of sixty-six leaves, contains only three items. It begins with excerpts of Giles of Rome's (1243–1316) *Capitula fidei Christiane*, a brief theological compendium concerning the creation of angels, heaven, hell, planets, the ages of the world, and so forth (fols 1r–28v); it continues with the *Liber de ortu beatae Mariae et infantia Salvatoris* contaminated with *Evangelium Thomae de infantia Salvatoris* (fols 29r–57r); and it ends with the Tuscan redaction of the *Transitus Mariae Virginis* by Pseudo-Joseph of Arimathea (57v–61v). Item 1 was previously unidentified. On item 2, see especially *Libri de natiuitate Mariae: Pseudo-Matthaei Evangelium Textus et Commentarius*, ed. Jan Gijssels. CCSA 9 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), pp. 183–84, where it is named R<sup>2</sup>b2.

<sup>54</sup> The ownership is provided by the note 'liber Angeli zenobii de gaddis cciij' on fol. 62r (upper margin) ('The Book of Angelo di Zenobio Gaddi CCIII.') Angelo inherited an impressive number of codices from his family. His library, later enriched by the possessions of his heirs in the eighteenth century, reached the impressive number of over 1400 volumes, when the entire collection was acquired by the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana. See the entry 'Angelo Gaddi' in *Enciclopedia Treccani*, at <http://www.treccani.it/>, last accessed 5 October 2020. For a useful historical overview of the Gaddi family, see the entry 'Gaddi di Firenze' in Demostene Tiribilli-Giuliani, *Sommario storico delle famiglie celebri toscane compilato da Demostene*

## Textual features of the Tuscan redaction

*Framfǫr Maríu* represents the oldest surviving adaptation of the Tuscan redaction into any vernacular of Europe and preserves all of its typical expansions and distinguishing features. Most notably, it includes the Tuscan prologue, in which it is specified that when Christ was brought to his passion, the Virgin prayed to him daily that he might inform her of her impending death.

<i>The Lombard Redaction</i>	<i>The Tuscan Redaction</i>	<i>Framfǫr Maríu</i>
In tempore illo antequam Dominus ad passionem veniret et inter multa verba quae mater filio inquisivit de suo transitu inter- rogare coepit eum tali affamine. <sup>55</sup>	Tempore illo quo Dominus ad passionem suam uenire debebat inter multa uerba de quibus eius gloriosa mater ipsum cotidie deprecabatur de suo transitu cepit eum rogare tunc tali modo. <sup>56</sup>	I þann sama tíma sem Drottin vor herra Jesús Christus kom til sínar píslar. Ok jmílle anarra órða beidde hans dyrdligazta moder hann ath segja seir [!] af sinne framfǫr ok byrriar sua sína bæn. <sup>57</sup>

In chapter 5, the Tuscan text and *Framfǫr Maríu* specify that before Mary's death, Joseph of Arimathea hosted the Virgin in his own house, serving her and watching over her day and night, and Joseph's kinsmen are mentioned among the people immediately informed by Joseph of her death.

*Tiribilli-Giuliani di Pisa riveduto dal cav. Luigi Passerini*, 2 vols (Florence: Diligenti, 1862), II. For the sake of consistency, in the following collations, I have limited the punctuation and capitalized *nomina sacra*, Marian appellations, place-names, and titles of texts according to modern practice.

<sup>55</sup> ('At that time, before our Lord came to the Passion, among the many words that the mother asked (her) son, she began to question Him about her [own] transit with such address.') Vatican 4363 112/1-3. The readings Vatican 4363 are taken from Tischendorf's edition.

<sup>56</sup> ('At that time, when the Lord had to come to his passion, among the many words about which his glorious mother begged daily, she then began to enquire of Him about her transit in this way.') Gaddi 208 57v/1-4.

<sup>57</sup> ('At that same time, when Our Lord Jesús Christ came to his passion, among other words, His most glorious mother begged Him to tell her about her transit and her prayer begins thus.') AM 232 329/22-25.

The Tuscan Provenance of Framfǫr Mariú

<i>The Lombard Redaction</i>	<i>The Tuscan Redaction</i>	<i>Framfǫr Mariú</i>
Tunc vocavit Ioseph de Arimathia civitate et alios discipulos Domini quibus congregatis et propinquis et notis nuntiavit transitum suum omnibus illic astantibus. <sup>58</sup>	Tunc Ioseph ab Arimathia ciuitate qui ipsam gloriosam Virginem Mariam die ac nocte semper in domo sua serviebat et custodiebat omnibus suis notis ac propinquis et parentibus et omnibus astantibus transitum beate Virginis Marie denuntiauit. <sup>59</sup>	Enn þann man er Ioseph heit [!] af þeim stad er aramattia heiter. geymde j sinum husum nött ok dag jumfrv Mariam. ok þionade henne kungiorde ollum sinum vinum kyningium ok navngum. ok ollum þar saman komnum framfaur heilagrar Marie. <sup>60</sup>

Thomas' miraculous acquisition of the holy girdle, the climax of the narrative recounted in chapter 17, is also substantially different. The Lombard redaction briefly describes Thomas being transported instantaneously onto the Mount of Olives, assisting with astonishment in Mary's transit, and asking her to mercifully give him joy.

Subsequently, Mary's girdle is said to have been dropped from above. In the Tuscan redaction and in *Framfǫr Mariú*, this passage is thoroughly reformulated with the addition of graphic details that produce a more dramatic effect. Thomas is said to have intentionally gone to assist Mary's transit by climbing the Mount of Olives, and while witnessing the miracle he beseeches Mary with a great voice not to dismiss him, as he had come a long way to see her. It is related that the Virgin Mary mercifully granted Thomas his wish and personally handed him her girdle.

<sup>58</sup> ('Then [Mary] called Joseph from the city of Arimathea and other disciples of the Lord, who had gathered with relatives and acquaintances [and] announced her transit to all those who were standing there.') Vatican 4363 115/4-7.

<sup>59</sup> ('Then Joseph from the city of Arimathea, who served and guarded that glorious Virgin Mary day and night in his house, announced the transit of the blessed Virgin Mary to all his acquaintances, relatives, and parents, and all those standing [there.']) Gaddi 208 58r/14-17.

<sup>60</sup> ('And that man who is called Joseph, from that place which is called Arimathea, guarded and served the Virgin Mary night and day in his house, announced the transit of the holy Mary to all his friends, relatives, and neighbors, and all those who had gathered there together.') AM 232 330/15-18.



<i>The Lombard Redaction</i>	<i>The Tuscan Redaction</i>	<i>Framfōr Mariu</i>
<p>Tunc beatissimus Thomas subito ductus est ad Montem Oliveti et vidit beatissimum corpus petere celum coepitque clamare et dicere. O Mater Sancta Mater Benedicta Mater Immaculata. Si inveni gratiam modo quia video te laetificata servum tuum per tuam misericordiam quia ad celum pergis. Tunc zona qua apostoli corpus sanctissimum praecinxerant beato Thomae de celo iacta est.<sup>61</sup></p>	<p>Tunc beatus Thomas cum ascenderet in Montem Oliueti uidit corpus sancte Dei genitricis celum petere cepit clamare flendo uoce magna. Mater Sancta Mater Immaculata Mater Benedicta. Uenio te uidere quomodo me dimictis quia uideo te in celum ascendere. Per tuam sanctam miseri- cordiam letifica me filium tuum. Tunc illa gloriosa Virgo Maria exaudiuit eum et misit sibi de celo zonam de qua sancti apostoli precinxerant eam quia accipiens et obsculans et magnas gratias Deo referens uenit in Valle Josaphat.<sup>62</sup></p>	<p>Þann tid er heilagur Thomas kom afialled Oleueti þa sa hann likama heilagrar Guds Modr fram fara efter veginum. Þa tok hann ath grata. ok kalla harri ravst. Heyr þu blezud moder eg kem til þin ath sia þic. Þui firilætur þu mic. Þvi eg sie firi þina miskun þic vpphafna til himin- Rikis. gled þu mic þinn þrael. Þa heyrde hin Heilaga Maria hann ok sende honum linda sinn. med huerium postolarner hauf(du) gyrt hana. Huern hann medtok ok kyste ok gerde Gudi þacker.<sup>63</sup></p>

<sup>61</sup> ('Then the most blessed Thomas is immediately transported unto the Mount of Olives, and he saw the most blessed body heading for the sky. And [he] began to cry out, saying: "O holy mother, blessed mother, immaculate mother! If now I have found [your] grace, since I see you, give joy to your servant by your mercy, as you proceed towards the sky". Then the belt with which the Apostles had girt the most holy body was cast from the sky unto the blessed Thomas.') Vatican 4363 119/17–22.

<sup>62</sup> ('Then as the blessed Thomas was ascending unto the Mount of Olives, he saw the body of the holy bearer of God heading for the sky, he began to cry out weeping with a great voice: "Holy mother, immaculate mother, blessed mother. [If] I have come to see you, why do you dismiss me, since I can see you ascending into the sky? By your mercy, delight me, your son!" Then that glorious Virgin Mary heard him [and] from the sky she divested herself of the belt with which the Apostles had girt her, and having received it, he kissed it and giving thanks to the Lord he arrived to the Valley of Josaphat.'] Gaddi 60r/4–11.

<sup>63</sup> ('At that time, when St Thomas came to the Mount of Olives, he saw the body of the holy mother of God transiting along the way. Then he began to cry and called out with great voice: "Listen, blessed mother, I come to you to see you. Why do you despise me since by your grace I see you raised up into heaven? Gladden me your servant!" Then the holy mother heard him and sent him her

*The Tuscan Provenance of Framfǫr Maríu*

A fourth substantial divergence is found at the very end of the text. After the epilogue, in which Joseph of Arimathea claims authorship of the text, the Lombard redaction ends the narrative with a few exhortatory lines in which the readers and the audience are invited to pray to the Virgin, so that she may be mindful of them in the sight of Christ. The Tuscan redaction expands this invocation by assigning to the text of the *Transitus* and the physical manuscript containing it, an apotropaic (evil-averting) property. It is said that whoever keeps or owns the work, either him/himself or her/herself or in his/her house – be he a cleric, a layman, or a woman – shall not be harmed by the devil, nor shall his/her son be a lunatic, possessed, deaf, or blind, and no one in his/her house will suffer great poverty or sudden death.

<i>The Lombard Redaction</i>	<i>The Tuscan Redaction</i>	<i>Framfǫr Maríu</i>
Cuius assumptio hodie per universum mundum veneratur et colitur ipsam precemur assidue ut sit memor nostri ante piissimum suum Filium in celo cui laus est et gloria per infinita secula saeculorum. Amen. <sup>64</sup>	Et sciat unusquisque Christianus quod ille qui hoc scriptum secum habuerit uel in domo sua siue sit clericus uel laicus uel femina diabolus non nocebit ei. Eius filius non erit lunaticus nec demoniacus nec surdus nec cecus. In domo eius non (erit) magna inopia nec morte subitanea non peribit. De quacumque tribulacione clamauerit ad eam exaudietur in die obitus sui cum suis sanctis et uirginibus in suo auditorio eam habebit. Deprecor ego assidue ut ipsa piissima ac misericordissima regina semper sit (memor) mei et omnium in se credencium ac sperancium ante	Pui hefer vor Herra Jesus Christus þa nad til gefid ath huer sa sem þetta skrif hefer jsinum husum. klerkr eda leikmadr eda kuinna ath dioful skal honum eigi granda. ok huer er skrifar eda skrifa lætur. less eda heyrrer. less eda lætur læsa hann skal audlazit jngaungu himinrikis. Ok j hueriu husi sem jnne er framfarar skrift himinrikis drottningar Marie. ef þar fædizt barn skal þat eigi vera dauft. ne blint. ok eigi tungla mein hafa. eigi dioful ott. ne mallaust verda eigi bradum dauda deyia. ok j þess manz hus(i) skal eigi micil fataekt vera. Ok jhuerre naud er þeir kalla til hennar reittvisliga. mun hon þeim vidhialp veita. Suo ok sinne dauda stund mvn hon med

girdle with which the Apostles had girt her, which he received, kissed, and gave thanks to the Lord.) AM 232 331/41–47.

<sup>64</sup> ('Whose Assumption is venerated and honored today through the entire world. Let us pray her assiduously so that she may be mindful of us before her

*The Tuscan Redaction*  
[continued]

piissimum Filium suum Dominum  
Nostrum Ihesum Christum  
qui cum Patre a Spiritu Sancto  
uiuít et regnat Deus per infinita  
secula seculorum. Amen.  
Explicit Transitus Beate Mariae  
Virginis. Sit pax legenti sit gratia  
digna petenti. Qui legent hunc  
sermonem saluetur.<sup>65</sup>

*Framfjor Maríu*  
[continued]

Guds einglum ok himinrikis  
hirdsueitvm naleg vera þeim til  
hialpar. Þui bidium vær þa enu  
millduztv drotting himins ok jardar ath  
se vor minnileg. ok allra sig truandum  
ok treystvndum firi sinum blezada  
syni j ollum vorum naudsynium. Ok  
þvi er oss megi mestv verda bædi firi  
lif ok sal. þann sama faugnaud vir dizt  
oss ath veita almattigur Gud med sine  
haleitre modr. huer er lifer ok riker.  
einn gud j þreningu. vm allar verallder  
verallda. amen.<sup>66</sup>

most pious son in heaven. To whom be praise and glory throughout endless ages. Amen.) Vatican 4363 123/1–4.

<sup>65</sup> ('And may every Christian know that whoever will have this writing with himself, be he a cleric, a layman or a woman, the devil will not harm him. His son will neither be a lunatic nor possessed, deaf or blind. In his house there will be no great indigence and he will not die of a sudden death. In any tribulation he will invoke her and will be heard, and in the day of his death, she will welcome him under her protection with her saints and virgins. I pray assiduously that the most pious and merciful Virgin may always be mindful of me and of all those who believe and have hope [in her] before her most gracious son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with the Father and with the Holy Spirit throughout endless ages. Amen. [Here] ends the *Transitus Beate Mariae Virginis*. May peace be with the readers and grace with those who are seeking worthy things. May those who read this sermon be saved.') Gaddi 61v/6–24.

<sup>66</sup> ('Thus our Lord Jesus Christ has granted by the grace that anyone who has this writing in his house, [be he] a cleric, a layman, or a woman, the devil shall not hurt him. And whoever writes or commissions the writing, reads or hears, reads or commissions its reading, he shall win the entrance into the kingdom of heaven. And in each house that contains the account of the *Transitus* of the queen of heaven Mary, if there a child is born, he shall not be a deaf nor blind, nor shall he suffer lunacy and possession, or become mute or die suddenly. And in this man's house there shall be no great poverty. And in every distress, in which they invoke her justly, she will show them assistance. Thus, also in the moment of their death, she will be near them with God's angels and the hosts of heaven to help. Thus we beseech the mildest queen of heaven and earth to be mindful of us and of all of those who believe and have hope [in her] before her blessed son in all our needs. And this may be to us the best value for both [our] life and [our] soul. Together with his sublime mother, may almighty God see fit to grant us that same joy, who lives and reigns, one God in Trinity, throughout endless ages. Amen.') AM 232 333/1–15.

*The Tuscan Provenance of Framfōr Maríu*

In their edition of *Framfōr Maríu*, Widding and Bekker-Nielsen relied exclusively on Tischendorf's transcription of the Laurentianus. Although they were unaware that his codex was in fact Gaddi 208, they noted – through a search in the slips of the *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose* – a significant disagreement in chapter 2 and argued that the dative construction 'med himinrikis krauptum' ('with the virtues of heaven') must have translated the Latin 'cum virtutibus' ('with virtues') rather than 'cum virginibus' ('with virgins') as in Tischendorf's text.<sup>67</sup> Their conjecture is correct, since the text in Gaddi 208 reads 'cum virtutibus.'

<i>Tisch Laurentianus</i>	<i>Gaddi 208</i>	<i>Framfōr Maríu</i>
<b>cum</b> meis discipulis atque angelis et archangelis atque <b>virginibus</b> . <sup>68</sup>	<b>cum</b> meis discipulis atque angelis et archangelis atque <b>virtutibus</b> . <sup>69</sup>	med minum lærisueinum. einglum. haufudeinglum ok <b>med himinrikis krauptum</b> . <sup>70</sup>

This represents a typical idiosyncrasy of the Tuscan redaction that might have arisen in the Tuscan text during the fourteenth century through a simple paleographical confusion of letters. Tischendorf's 'virginibus' is, in fact, the correct primitive reading of the Lombard redaction, which frequently influenced his transcription of Gaddi 208, since he made use of the Lombard readings of Vatican 4363 as a base text for his collations. I have counted at least thirty-three inconsistencies between Tischendorf's transcription of the Laurentianus and the *Transitus* text transmitted in Gaddi 208, and while some are certainly silent emendations, mostly of grammatical nature,<sup>71</sup> others are his own genuine misreadings.<sup>72</sup> However,

<sup>67</sup> Widding and Bekker-Nielsen, 'An Old Norse Translation of the *Transitus Mariae*', p. 328.

<sup>68</sup> ('With my disciples, angels, archangels, and virgins.') Vatican 4363 114/11.

<sup>69</sup> ('With my disciples, angels, archangels, and virtues.') Gaddi 208 57v/21.

<sup>70</sup> ('With my disciples, angels, archangels, and the virtues of Heaven.') AM 232 329/40.

<sup>71</sup> Gaddi 208 'propter'/TischLaur 'propterea' (chapter 2); Gaddi 208 'in celum ascendam'/TischLaur 'in celo ascendam' (chapter 2); Gaddi 208 'et semper'/TischLaur 'atque' (chapter 2); Gaddi 208 'deferente'/TischLaur 'deferens' (chapter 4); Gaddi 208 'pluuia'/TischLaur 'pluiiam' (chapter 5); Gaddi 208 'quibus'/TischLaur 'qui' (chapter 8); Gaddi 208 'ceperunt'/TischLaur 'cepit' (chapter 9); Gaddi 208 'suam'/TischLaur 'suas' (chapter 11); Gaddi 208 'Domino'/TischLaur 'Domini' (chapter 13); Gaddi 208 'in valle'/TischLaur 'vallem' (chapter 14); Gaddi 208 'cadentes'/TischLaur 'cadens' (chapter 16); Gaddi 208 'zona'/TischLaur 'zonam' (chapter 17); Gaddi 208 'tetigisti'/TischLaur 'tetigisses' (chapter 19).

<sup>72</sup> Gaddi 208 'Tunc fili dilecte'/TischLaur *om.* (chapter 1); Gaddi 208 'Quomodo te deseram'/TischLaur 'quoniam' (chapter 2); Gaddi 208 'angelus'/TischLaur 'angelus meus' (chapter 2); Gaddi 208 'custodiet'/TischLaur 'custodiuit' (chapter

the possibility cannot be excluded that Tischendorf worked on another, still unidentified, Florentine manuscript from the Laurentian Library.

In either case, Gaddi 208 remains the most authoritative, the best representative codex of the Tuscan redaction, and the most adequate Latin text for the collations of the Norse readings, since Chase 105 is characterized by numerous innovations and Paris 1192 by several omissions or abbreviations of the original readings. There is a certain degree of separation, however, between Gaddi 208 and the remaining manuscripts of the Tuscan family. Since Gaddi 208's disagreements with the rest of the Tuscan family are, in fact, agreements with the older Lombard text, it is highly likely that these represent later fifteenth-century developments within the Tuscan tradition (see examples in Appendix). Most notable among them is an expansion of the last hortative lines of the epilogue, in which scribes, readers, listeners, and commissioners of the copying and reading of the *Transitus* are said to be worthy to enter the kingdom of heaven.

(24) Gaddi 208	Chase 105	Paris 1192	Oxford 26	AM 232
Et sciat	Vt sciat	Et sciat	And y wol	Þui hefer
unusquisque	unusquisque	unusquisque	þat ye be	vor herra
Christianus	Christianus	Christianus	sekir without	jesus christus
que ille qui	que ille qui	quod ille	dout þat	þa nad til
hoc scriptum	hoc scriptum	qui habuerit	who so euyr	gefid ath
secum	secum	hanc scrip-	crysten man	huer sa sem
habuerit uel	habuerit uel	turas secum	or woman be	þetta skrif
in domo	in domo sua	uel ipsam in	he clerke or	hefer jsinum
sua siue	siue clericus	domo sua	layman, þe	husum. klerkr
sit clericus	siue laycus	tenerunt siue	whych hath	eda leikmadr
uel laicus	uel femina eis	clericus sit	þis wrytyng	eda kuinna
uel femina	non nocebit	uel laycus	vp on hym or	ath dioful skal
diabolus non	diabolus et	et homo uel	in his hous,	honum eigi
nocebit. <sup>73</sup>	qui scripserit	femina	þe wycked	granda. ok

2); Gaddi 208 'atque virtutibus'/TischLaur 'atque virginibus' (chapter 2); Gaddi 208 'separabit'/TischLaur 'separabitur' (chapter 2); Gaddi 208 'dando sibi'/TischLaur 'dando' (chapter 6); Gaddi 208 'ostium talami'/TischLaur 'ostium' (chapter 7); Gaddi 208 'Phylippus'/TischLaur 'Paulus' (chapter 8); Gaddi 208 'vos homines'/TischLaur 'vos omnes' (chapter 9); Gaddi 208 'a corpore meo'/TischLaur 'a corpore' (chapter 10); Gaddi 208 'cum'/TischLaur 'quando' (chapter 11); Gaddi 208 'rapere'/TischLaur 'capere' (chapter 13); Gaddi 208 'uexabatur'/TischLaur 'versare' (chapter 13); Gaddi 208 'sancte'/TischLaur 'sanctissime' (chapter 14); Gaddi 208 'poterat'/TischLaur 'volebat' (chapter 14); Gaddi 208 'pectora'/TischLaur 'corpora' (chapter 18); Gaddi 208 'suppositus'/TischLaur 'superpositus' (chapter 19); Gaddi 208 'uacuum non manna'/TischLaur 'uacuum' (chapter 19); Gaddi 208 'retinui'/TischLaur 'continui' (chapter 24).

<sup>73</sup> ('And may every Christian know that whoever will have this writing with him, or in his house, be he a cleric, a layman, or a woman, the devil will not harm him.') Gaddi 208 61r/6–9.

The Tuscan Provenance of Framfōr Mariú

uel scribi	dyabolus ei	spirite	huer er skrifar
fecerit aut	nocere non	enmy of al	eda skrifa
qui legerit	poterit et qui	mankynde	lætur. less
uel audierit	eam scripserit	shal neuyr	eda heyrer.
legere in	uel scribi	noye hym.	less eda lætur
Dei regnum	fecerit uel	And who so	læsa hann
introyre	legerit uel	writeth it or	skal audlazit
merebitur	legi fecerit	do it wryte,	jngaungu
et in	merebitur	redyth it or do	himinrikis.
quacumque	intrare	it to be redde,	Ok j hueriu
domo in qua	regnum Dei.	or heryth it	husi sem jnne
fuerit lectus	Et nascetur in	redde, shal	er, framfarar
transitus	ea filius. <sup>75</sup>	in þe mene	skrift
beate Marie		seson and	himinrikis
Uirginis et		tyme deserue	drottningar
nascetur ibi. <sup>74</sup>		þe kyndhom	marie. ef þar
		of heuyn. <sup>76</sup>	fædzit barn. <sup>77</sup>

There are only two instances in which *Framfōr Mariú* preserves older and more correct readings that are in agreement with Gaddi 208 against subsequent corruptions of the Tuscan redaction.

<sup>74</sup> ('And may every Christian know that whoever will have this writing with him or in his house, be he a cleric, a layman, or a woman, the devil will not harm him. And whoever will write or commission the writing, whoever will read it or will hear it read will deserve to enter the kingdom of God. In whatever house in which the *Transitus Beatae Mariae Virginis* will be read and there will be born.') Chase 105 16r/27–16v/3.

<sup>75</sup> ('And may every Christian know that whoever will have these writings with him or will keep them in his house, be he a cleric, a layman, a man, or a woman, the devil will not be able to harm him [or her]. And whoever will write or commission the writing, whoever will read it or will have it read will deserve to enter the kingdom of God. And if a son will be born.') Paris 1192 104r/2–11.

<sup>76</sup> ('And I want you to be certain without doubt that whosoever, [be this person] a Christian man or a woman, be he a cleric or a layman, that [person] who has this writing with him or in his house, the wicked spirit, enemy of all mankind, will never hurt him. And whoever writes it or has it written, reads it, or has it read, or hears it read, shall in the main season and time deserve the kingdom of heaven.') Oxford 26 504/13–19.

<sup>77</sup> ('For this reason Our Lord Jesus Christ has granted this mercy that anyone who has this writing in his house, [be he] a cleric, a layman, or a woman, the devil shall not hurt him. And whoever writes or commissions the writing, reads or hears, reads or commissions the reading, he shall win the entrance into the kingdom of heaven. And in each house wherein there is this *Transitus* writing of the queen of heaven Mary, if there is born a child.') AM 232 333/1–6.

(8) Gaddi 208	Chase 105	Paris 1192	Oxford 26	AM 232
Judas. <sup>78</sup>	Lucas. <sup>79</sup>	Luchas. <sup>80</sup>	sen Luce. <sup>81</sup>	Judas thaddeus. <sup>82</sup>
(8) Gaddi 208	Chase 105	Paris 1192	Oxford 26	AM 232
et alij multi quos nominare non possum. <sup>83</sup>	et alij multi qui ad hec conuenerat. <sup>84</sup>	et omnes alij discipuli Domini. <sup>85</sup>	om.	ok adrer sua marger at vier faum alldri nofnum talit. <sup>86</sup>

### Tuscan provenance

With respect to the provenance of the Latin source text, Widding and Bekker-Nielsen suggested that a codex containing Pseudo-Joseph's *Transitus* might have been brought back to Iceland from Italy by a pilgrim on his return from Rome.<sup>87</sup> Although this is one of the most probable circumstances for the acquisition of numerous other Latin texts, considering the limited circulation of the Tuscan redaction, it seems more likely that the individual who acquired this version of the *Transitus* was either a high dignitary or a bishop. Corroborating evidence is provided by the provenance and ownership of the four surviving manuscripts outside of Iceland. Gaddi 208 belongs to the aforementioned family of priors and acclaimed painters in Florence and later cardinals in Rome. Chase 105 bears the arms of the Orsini, a Roman family that counts numerous cardinals and three popes among its offspring,<sup>88</sup> as well as that of the Pagni Bordoni, a patrician family from Pescia (near Pistoia, Tuscany), which had among its family members ambassadors and notaries in both

<sup>78</sup> ('Jude.') Gaddi 208 58v/17.

<sup>79</sup> ('Luke.') Chase 105 14r/14.

<sup>80</sup> ('Luke.') Paris 1192 99r/16.

<sup>81</sup> ('St Luke.') Oxford 26 500/1.

<sup>82</sup> ('Jude Thaddeus.') AM 232 330/36.

<sup>83</sup> ('And many others, whom I cannot name.') Gaddi 208 58v/19.

<sup>84</sup> ('And many others, who had convened for this purpose.') Chase 105 14r/14–15.

<sup>85</sup> ('And all the other disciples of the Lord.') Paris 1192 99r/15–16.

<sup>86</sup> ('And others, so many that we would be never able to enumerate their names.') AM 232 330/37–38.

<sup>87</sup> Widding and Bekker-Nielsen, 'An Old Norse Translation of the *Transitus Mariae*', p. 329.

<sup>88</sup> See the description in Paul Saenger, *A Catalogue of the Pre-1500 Western Manuscript Books at the Newberry Library* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), no. 105, p. 221a. For information about the Orsini family, see, for instance, George L. William, *Papal Genealogy: The Families and Descendants of the Popes* (London: McFarland, 1998), pp. 36–37 and 126–27.

Florence and Rome.<sup>89</sup> Additionally, Oxford 26 was copied at Westminster Abbey and Paris 1192 at St Peter's Basilica.<sup>90</sup> Such elite circles and prestigious centers of production of manuscripts would not have been easily accessible to any ordinary Icelandic pilgrim traveling to Rome.

The first half of the fifteenth century was a period of great turmoil in church history. Four controversial ecumenical councils – dealing mostly with ecclesiastical issues concerning conciliarism and Papal supremacy – were summoned in less than four decades, and three of them took place partially in Tuscany. In 1409, the Council of Pisa first attempted to resolve the Western Schism by deposing Benedict XIII (1328–1403), Antipope in Avignon, and Gregory XII (1335–1417), the Pope of Rome.<sup>91</sup> The Schism ended only with the following Council of Constance held in 1414–1418, when the resignation of the remaining papal claimants was accepted and Pope Martin V (1369–1431) was elected.<sup>92</sup> Subsequently, the Council of Pavia-Siena, which took place in 1423–24, represented an inconclusive stage in the Conciliar movement; although it did not qualify as an ecumenical council, it published four antihetical decrees, especially against the Hussites and the Wyclifites.<sup>93</sup> Finally, the Council of Basel-Ferrara-Florence, which began in Basel in 1431 and ended in Rome in 1445, was appointed by Pope Martin V to address Church reform. In Florence and Rome in particular, decrees of union with the Eastern Churches of Greece, Armenia, Egypt, Bosnia, Syria, and Cyprus were approved. All decisions taken during this council were in the form of bulls, since the subsequent Pope, Eugene IV (1383–1447) – who at that time was in exile

<sup>89</sup> For information about the Pagni Bordoni family, see, for instance, Louis A. Waldman, 'Patronage, Lineage, and Self-Promotion in Maso da San Friano's Naples "Double Portrait"', *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* (2005), pp. 149–72, at pp. 153–56 and the voice 'Pagni, Lorenzo' in the Enciclopedia Treccani, at <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia>, last accessed October 5, 2020, and references there.

<sup>90</sup> On Paris 1192, see Abbé V. Leroquais, *Les livres d'Heures manuscrits de la Bibliothèque nationale*, 3 vols (Paris: Protat Frères, 1927), I, no. 56, p. 141, and the BnF archive description at <https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/>, last accessed October 5 2020.

<sup>91</sup> For information about the validity of Pisa as a general council, see the discussion in Aldo Landi, *Il papa deposto (Pisa 1409): L'idea conciliare nel Grande Scisma* (Turin: Claudiana, 1985).

<sup>92</sup> The measures adopted at Constance are discussed and edited in Philip Stump, *The Reforms of the Council of Constance (1414–1418)*. Studies in the History of Christian Thought 53 (Leiden: Brill, 1994).

<sup>93</sup> A detailed history of the council, along with a collection of letters, decrees, and reports are available in Walter Brandmüller, *Das Konzil von Pavia-Siena, 1432–1424*, 2 vols. Vorreformationsgeschichtliche Forschungen 16 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1974). A useful overview is available in Thomas Ferguson, 'The Council of Pavia-Siena and Medieval Conciliarism', *Journal of Religious History* 25/1 (2001), pp. 1–19.



in Florence as a result of his struggle with the Council of Basel (where he remained for about ten years) – presided over the sessions in person.<sup>94</sup> The council was attended by Byzantine and Roman delegations, and the Catholic Church was represented by a great number of cardinals, bishops, abbots, priors, generals of religious orders, doctors of theology, and doctors of canon law, who had gathered from all over Europe.

While the Scandinavian presence in Basel was limited – the council was attended only by the Swedish Bishop Nils Ragvaldsson of Växjö (c. 1380–1448) and the Danish Ulrik Stygge of Aarhus (d. 1449), since Eric of Pomerania (1382–1459) did not nominate any representatives from Norway, Iceland, or Greenland – Nordic delegations in Ferrara were non-existent.<sup>95</sup> Interestingly, the situation was different in Florence, where the former Atlantic colonies of Norway were represented by at least two bishops. In 1433, Eugene IV, who at that time was in exile in Florence, appointed a Dominican friar called Bartolomeus de S. Ypolito (*fl.* c. 1400–1450) as nominal bishop of the see of Garðar in Greenland; he seems to have remained in Florence to serve the Pope at least until 1435.<sup>96</sup> In those years, the aforementioned English Bishop of Hólar, Jón Vilhjálmsson Craxton, arrived in Florence to persuade Eugene IV to promote him to the vacant see of Skálholt and to suggest a Carmelite monk and fellow Englishman, Jón Bloxwich (d. 1440), as his possible successor at Hólar. Jón's mission was successful, as both Englishmen were appointed to the proposed Icelandic bishoprics on January 5 and 10 1435, respectively.<sup>97</sup> In the spring of 1436, Jón Vilhjálmsson Craxton returned to England only to prepare to leave again for Iceland in order to assume his new office at Skálholt. However, in 1437, the Dano-Norwegian authorities appointed the Dutch Gozewijn Comhaer (1375–1447), son of a goldsmith at the court of Eric of Pomerania, bishop of Skálholt.<sup>98</sup> Jón was in England and had

<sup>94</sup> The secondary literature on the Council of Basel is vast. See most recently the collection of essays in Michiel Decaluwe, Thomas M. Izbicki, and Gerald Christianson, eds, *A Companion to the Council of Basel*. Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 74 (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

<sup>95</sup> See the discussion in Kirsten A. Seaver, *Maps, Myths, and Men: The Story of the Vinland Map* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp. 135–39 and references there. For information about the Scandinavian presence at the four councils, see especially Beata Losman, *Norden och Reformkonsilierna, 1408–1449*. Studia Historica Gothoburgensia 11 (Gothenborg: Akademisk avhandling, 1970).

<sup>96</sup> After the death of Michael, Bartholomeus was appointed bishop of Garðar. The document is dated September 24 1433, and it is available in *Afgifter fra den norske kirkeprovins til det Apostoliske kammer og Kardinalkollegiet 1311-1523 efter optegnelser i de pavelige arkiver*, ed. Gustav Storm (Christiania [Oslo], Kommission hos H. Aschehoug & Co., 1897), pp. 86–87.

<sup>97</sup> Both letters were written in Florence and are edited in *DI* 8, nos 26 and 27, respectively.

<sup>98</sup> See Gryt Anne Piebenga, 'Gozewijn Comhaer – Carthusian and Modern

numerous debts to pay back to the Hólar cathedral. Three nearly identical letters, written at Westminster and Windsor Castle between 1436 and 1438 and signed by King Henry VI of England (1421–1471), allowed Jón to send four ships to Iceland ‘cum victualibus ac aliis bonis et rebus’ (‘with victuals and other goods and things’) to relinquish part of his financial woe.<sup>99</sup> However, in 1440, Jón died at St Thomas’ Hospital in the London Borough of Southwark and thus did not return to Iceland.<sup>100</sup> It is highly likely that among the goods and documents sent in these English ships to the Hólar bishopric there were volumes of English provenance, both in Latin and English, as well as Latin codices collected by Jón in Florence during his recent visit to Eugene IV. In fact, there is evidence that the lost Latin and Middle English manuscript sources underlying two coeval texts produced in the Hólar scriptorium, *Páls leizla* and the collection of anecdotes and exempla known as *Miðaldaævintýri*, were Latin and Middle English codices copied in the Midlands during the first three decades of the fifteenth century.<sup>101</sup> Circumstantial evidence is also provided by the Icelandic acquisition of sacred art from England. Among the fourteen surviving alabaster triptychs of English provenance, the four altarpieces depicting the Joys of the Virgin – Annunciation, Nativity, Resurrection, Ascension of the Lord/ Assumption of the Virgin, Coronation of the Virgin – from the churches of Munkaþverá (Danmarks Nationalmuseet, no. 20504 [c. 1420–1440]),

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Devout’, in *Wessel Gansfort (1419–1489), and Northern Humanism*, ed. Fokke Akkerman, Gerda C. Huisman, and Arie Johan Vanderjagt. Brill’s Studies in Intellectual History 40 (Leiden: Brill, 1993), pp. 187–90.

<sup>99</sup> One ship on November 22 1436 (letter signed at Westminster), another on January 29 1438 (letter signed at Windsor), and two ships on February 18 1438 (letter signed at Westminster). The diplomas are edited in *DI* 4, nos 602, 613, and 614. The diploma is also available in *Foedera, conventiones, literæ, et cujuscunque generis acta publica, inter reges Angliæ et alios quosvis imperatores, reges, pontifices, principes, vel communitates, ab ineunte sæculo duodecimo, viz. ab anno 1101, ad nostra usque tempore habita aut tractata; ex autographis, infra secretiores Archivorum regiorum thesaurarias, per multa sæcula reconditis, fideliter exscripta*, ed. Thomas Rymer, 20 vols (London: J. Tonson, 1739–1745), X, p. 682. Online version at <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/rymer-foedera/vol10/pp682-695>, accessed October 5 2020.

<sup>100</sup> ‘And the seide Bisshope [...] was taken in of Almus into saint Thomas Spittel in Suthwerk and yere died’ (‘And the said bishop was taken in of alms into the St Thomas’ Hospital of Southwark and there he died.’) See *DI* 16, no. 149, at p. 361/7–12. For information about Jón Craxton’s death, see Eleanora M. Carus-Wilson, ‘The Iceland Trade’, in *Studies in English Trade in the 15th Century*, ed. Elieen Power and Michael M. Postan (London: Routledge, 1933, repr. London: Routledge, 2010), p. 170.

<sup>101</sup> The two source texts might have been produced in the Midlands. See the discussion in *Páls leizla: The Vision of St Paul*, ed. and trans. Dario Bullitta. Viking Society Texts (London: University College London, Viking Society for Northern Research, 2017), pp. xliii–xlvi, and *The Story of Jonatas in Iceland*, ed. Peter A. Jorgensen. Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, Rit 45 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, 1997), p. xciv, note 56.



FIGURE 3.2 Assumption of the Virgin. Detail from the English alabaster triptych of the Möðruvellir Church in Eyjafjörður (Nottinghamshire c. 1450–1460) previously at the Minjasafnið á Akureyri. Photo by Ívar Brynjólfsson. Published with permission.

Hítardalur in Mýrasýsla (Þjóðminjasafn Íslands, Þjms. 3617–3622 [c. 1450–1460]), Kirkjubær (Þjóðminjasafn Íslands, Þjms. 4635 [c. 1450–1470]), and Möðruvellir in Eyjafjörður (previously at the Minjasafnið á Akureyri, now restored at church in Möðruvellir in Eyjafjörður [c. 1450–1460]),<sup>102</sup> are all coeval with the now-lost manuscript sources of English provenance and were all produced in the same region: the Midlands, more specifically Nottinghamshire.<sup>103</sup> Such a route of cultural transmission was naturally

<sup>102</sup> A detail of the Coronation of the Virgin of the Möðruvellir altarpiece is displayed in the cover image.

<sup>103</sup> The altarpieces are surveyed in Bera Nordal, 'Skrá um enskar alabastursmyndir frá miðöldum sem varðveist hafa á Íslandi', *Árbók hins íslenska fornleifafélags* 85 (1986), pp. 85–128 and Francis Cheetham, *English Medieval Alabasters with a Catalogue of the Collection in the Victoria and Albert Museum* (Oxford: Phaidon and Christie's Limited; 1984, repr. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005), pp. 57–58.

### *The Tuscan Provenance of Framfǫr Maríu*

avored by the intense trade of stockfish with the East Anglian ports, most notably King's Lynn and Yarmouth (Norfolk).<sup>104</sup> Interestingly, while the four altarpieces all include the coronation of the Virgin, only the Hítardalur and Möðruvellir (see Fig. 3.2) triptychs represent Mary's assumption into heaven with details that are typical of the Pseudo-Joseph's story. On the bottom left side of the panel, Thomas is dressed in episcopal vestments and is holding onto Mary's girdle, whereas on the right side the Jew Ruben is wearing the trousers of a layman while holding Mary's robe with his right hand and imploring her with his left. The Möðruvellir altarpiece – which unlike Hítardalur tryptic still preserves all of its original colors – depicts the holy girdle in green in conformity with the *Sacra cintola* relic preserved in the Prato Cathedral. Such previously unnoticed details confirm that towards the middle of the fifteenth century, there was an interest in Mary's assumption and the holy girdle story among Icelandic clergy and laypeople. The altarpiece at Möðruvellir is probably the one donated to that church by Margrét Vigfúsdóttir (c. 1406–1486), whose family is commemorated at Canterbury Cathedral.<sup>105</sup>

### Conclusion

Based on the above discussion, conclusions may be drawn with regard to the features of the source text underlying *Framfǫr Maríu*. The Latin exemplar was most certainly a typical text of the Tuscan type produced in Florence or its surroundings in the first half of the fifteenth century; that is, after the production of Gaddi 208 but before the completion of Chase 105, Paris 1192, and Oxford 26, since their readings preserve an even later stage of corruption. The Council of Basel-Ferrara-Florence in 1431 might have facilitated the acquisition of this secondary version of Pseudo-Joseph's *Transitus* by English and Icelandic bishops, who were in search of a rare text that included all the graphic details typical of the Tuscan frescos and paintings of that time. The English bishop of Hólar, Jón Vilhjálmsson Craxton, seems to be the most plausible candidate, both because he was in Florence during the Council and because *Framfǫr Maríu* coexists in AM 232 fol. with a list of debts – the *Skuldareikningr* preserved as item 2 of the codex – contracted by his attendant, Jón Ketilsson, during

<sup>104</sup> See most recently the discussion in Anna Agnarsdóttir, 'Iceland's "English Century" and East Anglia's North Sea World', in *East Anglia and Its North Sea World in the Middle Ages*, ed. David Bates and Robert Liddiard (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2013), pp. 204–17.

<sup>105</sup> The Hítardalur altarpiece (Djms. 3617–3622) is mentioned in *DI* 5, pp. 406–08, which places its acquisition between 1463 and 1469. Margrét's donation of the altarpiece can be dated from the Möðruvellir *máldagi* ('church register') to 1461, namely during the sixteen years since the visitation of the Norwegian Bishop Gottskálk Kæneksson of Hólar (r. 1442–1447). See *DI* 5, pp. 307–08.

Craxton's episcopate. Accordingly, Jón's return from Florence in 1437 might be taken as a reasonable *post quem* date for the composition of the Norse translation.

In the years immediately following 1440, that is, after Craxton's death, AM 232 fol. must have been in the Hólar scriptorium where the *Skuldareikningr* was housed. In the following decades, the codex may have been brought to Möðruvellir by one of the later bishops of Hólar, presumably the Norwegian Óláfr Rognvaldsson who held the northern diocese in the years 1450–1495, primarily because the canons regular had a specific interest in Marian miracles and Assumption texts and artifacts on account of the dedication of their church, which was on August 16, the day following the Feast for the Assumption of the Virgin.<sup>106</sup> At Möðruvellir, AM 232 fol. appears to have been read, scribbled on, and signed several times. Subsequently, in the second half of the sixteenth century and after the Reformation, the volume may have been deposited at Munkaþverá by one of the ancestors of its seventeenth-century proprietor Björn Magnússon (1626–1697). At Munkaþverá, the leaves of AM 232 fol. seem to have remained unread and nearly forgotten in one of the chests of the monastery for well over a century.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>106</sup> On Óláfr's eventful episcopacy, see most recently *Páls leizla*, ed. and trans. Bullitta, pp. xlv–xlvii.

<sup>107</sup> I wish to thank to Gabriele Cocco, Margaret Cormack, Carla Falluomini, Daniel Najork, Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, Stephen Pelle, Kirsten Wolf, and Charles D. Wright for reading over earlier drafts of this chapter. I am most grateful to Fabrizio D. Raschella for accompanying me on a most illuminating and pleasant study trip to the Prato Cathedral and the Palazzo Pretorio Museum in Prato (Tuscany). I dedicate this study to him.

## Appendix

### *Major Readings of the Tuscan Redaction*

<i>(1) Gaddi 208</i>	<i>Chase 105</i>	<i>Paris 1192</i>	<i>Oxford 26</i>	<i>Französi Mariu</i>
O fili carissime. (‘O dearest Son.’)	O fili dulcissime. (‘O sweetest Son.’)	O fili dulcissime. (‘O sweetest Son.’)	O þu swettest flour. (‘O sweetest flower.’)	Heyr þu minn sætazte son. (‘Listen, my sweetest Son.’)
cum tuis angelis. (‘With your angels.’)	cum tuis sanctis angelis et archangelis. (‘With your holy angels and archangels.’)	cum tuis sanctis angelis et archangelis. (‘With your holy angels and archangels.’)	with þin holy angelis and archangelis. (‘With your holy angels and archangels.’)	med þinum einglum ok haufudeinglum. (‘With your angels and archangels.’)
O aula templi Dei vivi. (‘O court of the temple of the living God.’)	Ora templum Dei vivi. (‘Pray the temple of the living God.’)	Quia templum Dei vivi. (‘Because the temple of the living God.’)	O þu holy temple of god. (‘O you holy temple of God.’)	Heyr þu mustere eilifs guds. (‘Listen, temple of eternal God.’)

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(1) <i>Gaddi</i> 208	<i>Chase</i> 105	<i>Paris</i> 1192	<i>Oxford</i> 26	<i>Framfór Mariu</i>
per eum angelum. (‘Through him, [the] angel.’)	per meum angelum. (‘Through my angel.’)	om. (‘By my angel.’)	by myn angelis. (‘For the arrival of my angel.’)	firi tilkuomv eingils mins. (‘He said to his brethren.’)
dixit fratribus suis. (‘He said to his brethren.’)	dixit eis. (‘He said to them.’)	Dixit. (‘He said.’)	said to þem. (‘He said to them.’)	talade sua til þeirra sem komner vorv. (‘He talked thus to those who had come there.’)
uolebant eius Santissimum corpus destruere atque conburere. (‘They wanted to destroy and burn her most holy body.’)	uolebant eius corpus Santissimum deferre atque conburere. (‘They wanted to bring down and burn her most holy body.’)	uolebant Santissimum corpus detinere atque conburere. (‘They wanted to retain and burn her most holy body.’)	wold atake þe holy body of our lady and acast it in þe fire. (‘They wanted take the holy body of Our Lady and cast it into the fire.’)	þvi þeir villdu lifsgjarna hennar líkama fordrifa ok vppbrenna. (‘Since they eagerly wanted to destroy and burn up her body.’)

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(1) <i>Gaddi 208</i>	<i>Chase 105</i>	<i>Paris 1192</i>	<i>Oxford 26</i>	<i>Framför Mariu</i>
Sanctissimus corpus in terra iacere.	Sanctissimus corpus in terra iactare.	Sanctissimus corpus tangere.	wold apulled and cast adoun þe holy body of our lady to þe ground.	villdi kasta hennar líkama niðr ajord.
(‘Throw to the ground that most holy body.’)	(‘Cast to the ground that most holy body.’)	(‘Touch that most holy body.’)	(‘They wanted to pull and cast the most holy body of Our Lady to the ground.’)	(‘They wanted cast down her body to the ground.’)
illa turbam. (‘That multitude.’)	aliam turbam. (‘Another multitude.’)	aliam turbam. (‘Another multitude.’)	and many mo. (‘And many more.’)	ok anan lyd micin. (‘And another great multitude.’)

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*HEILAGIR BYSKUPAR*

HOLY BISHOPS

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Latin Oratory at the Edge of the World:  
The Fragments of Gizurr Hallsson's  
\**Gesta Scalotensis ecclesie presulum*  
and the \**Vita sancti Thorlaci*

Gottskálf Jenson

On the second day of Christmas in 1193, as the burial ceremony of Bishop Þorlákr Þórhallsson (1133–1193) was coming to an end, the aged lawspeaker of Iceland Gizurr Hallsson (c. 1116–1206) gave a long and elaborate funeral speech in the graveyard of Skálholt Cathedral. In his speech, he summarized the history of the Skálholt diocese and concluded with a short account of the life of the soon-to-be holy man. The best source for the contents of this oration is the B-redaction of *Þorláks saga helga*, which includes an excerpt from the speech itself, in which Gizurr reputedly said:<sup>1</sup>

Ek hefi hér verit nokkurum sinnum staddr þá er þau tíðendi hafa gorkt er þessum eru lík. Fimm byskupar hafa hér verit niðr settir at mér hjáveranda. Fyrst Þorlákr byskup Runólfsson, þá Ketill byskup, en síðan Magnús byskup, eftir þat Kloengr byskup, en nú Þorlákr byskup. Ek hefi ok talat hér nokkur orð, þá (er) þessir atburðir hafa gorkt, sem siðvenja er til í qðrum lönðum yfir tiginna manna grepti. En málaefni hafa verit jafnan stórliga góð, því at þeir hafa allir verit inir mestu merkismenn í sínum byskupsdómi. Ok er gott á þat at minnast at varri grein ok at soðn varra forellra, um þá byskupa er hér hafa verit fyrir vára daga ok á várum dögum, at sá þykkir hverjum beztr sem kunnast er. En svá dýrligir menn sem þeir hafa verit allir þá er þat þó eitt sér hversu Þorlákr hefir sik til búit biskupstignar, langt frá því sem allir aðrir.

<sup>1</sup> *Biskupa sögur II: Hungroaka, Þorláks saga byskups in elzta, Jarleinabók Þorláks byskups in forna, Þorláks saga byskups yngri, Jarleinabók Þorláks byskups önnur, Þorláks saga byskups C, Þorláks saga byskups E, Páls saga byskups, Ísleifs þáttr byskups, Latínubrot um Þorlák byskups*, ed. Ásdis Egilsdóttir. Íslenzk fornrit 16 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 2002), pp. 190–91.

[Several times before I have found myself here in this place, when events have transpired that were similar to the present occasion. Five bishops have been buried here in my presence. First Bishop Þorlákr, son of Runólfr, then Bishop Ketill, later Bishop Magnús, after that Bishop Kloengr, and now Bishop Þorlákr. I have also spoken a few words here, when these events took place, as is customary in other countries at the burial of noble men. The subject-matter has always been outstanding, because these men have all proven excellent in the office of bishop. And it is good to be able to state, based on my own observation and on what my ancestors have told concerning the bishops who have been here (in Skálholt) before and during our time, that each likes most the one he knew best. But even though these men have all been illustrious, nevertheless the manner in which Þorlákr prepared himself for the dignity of a bishop is unique, far exceeding all the others.]

The excerpt continues with an appraisal of Bishop Þorlákr and a survey of his career within the Church, somewhat reminiscent of the beginning of the Latin lessons about him preserved in the *Breviarium Nidrosiense*.<sup>2</sup> This citation, which is introduced by the saga narrator as being related from memory – ‘vil ek geta nokkurra orða, segir sá er söguna setti, þeira er hann talaði ok mér ganga sízt ór minni’ (‘I wish to mention some words he spoke, says he who composed the saga, that have particularly stuck in my memory’) – contains only the basic elements of Gizurr’s funerary speech, which was ‘langt ørendi ok fagrt um þau tíðendi er gørsk hōfðu’ (‘a long and beautiful speech about those events that had transpired’). Enough, however, is said for the reader to recognize the form of this oration as a celebration of the lives of the first bishops of Skálholt, who reputedly were all excellent in their office, culminating with an account of Bishop Þorlákr of Skálholt, who outshone them all in glory.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Breviarium Nidrosiense*, ed. Hans Buvarp and Baltzer M. Børsum, 2 vols (Oslo: Børsums forlag og antikvariat, 1964), I, fols v/r–vi/r.

<sup>3</sup> Gizurr speaks of five bishops, at whose funerals he has given orations in Skálholt. Only four of these were bishops of Skálholt, the fifth being Bishop Ketill Þorsteinsson (1075–1145) of Hólar, who died in Skálholt. *Biskupa sögur II*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, pp. 30–31. In chapter 89 of *Guðmundar saga A*, it is mentioned in passing that Gizurr gave a speech at the burial of the ‘nun’ Ketilbjörg (d. c. 1201), who was a resident at Skálholt, presumably as an anchoress. *Guðmundar sögur biskups I, Ævi Guðmundar biskups, Guðmundar saga A*, ed. Stefán Karlsson. Editiones Arnarnagnæanæ, Ser. B, vol. 6 (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde & Bagger, 1983), p. 117. This is the sixth funeral speech held in Skálholt by Gizurr, of which there is mention in our sources.

In his oration, the lawspeaker, who at the time lived in Skálholt probably as caretaker of the estate, his ancestor's donation, expresses himself as an authoritative patron of the diocese by giving an assessment of the history of the see and its bishops. The vast time span and astonishing longevity of the orator, who has outlived so many bishops, enhances his authority, as does the aim of his oration to uphold an international Christian standard within the diocese ('I have [...] spoken a few words [...] as is customary in other countries at the burial of noble men').<sup>4</sup> In this essay, I argue that Gizurr's funeral speech may well have been given in Latin, since it constituted the prototype of a text in that language about the first five bishops of Skálholt, a work that could be entitled *\*Gesta Scalotensis ecclesie presulum* (the spelling of the adjective *Scalotensis*, instead of *Scalholtensis*, is original to the text itself). A contemporary fragment of this text is still extant, while its contents seem to be preserved in their entirety in the vernacular text of *Hungrvaka* – the history of the see of Skálholt to the death of Bishop Kloengr – although not everything in the Icelandic text, which was likely expanded with other material, is necessarily taken from the Latin source text.

This claim is not as novel as it may seem, because the writer of *Hungrvaka* states at the beginning of his work that it is based mainly on what he 'heyrða af þessu máli segja inn fróða mann Gizur Hallson' ('heard the knowledgeable man, Gizur Hallson say about this subject'),<sup>5</sup> while the manuscript collector Árni Magnússon (1663–1730) reported as early as 1704 his discovery of a Latin *Hungrvaka*. Additionally, it will be argued here that this Latin text functioned as a sort of prelude to the *\*Vita sancti Thorlaci*, which was written specifically as a means of disseminating knowledge about the canonization of Þorlákr following the successful translation of his relics on July 20 1198. This proposition, too, is originally the unpublished hypothesis of Árni Magnússon.

*Þorláks saga helga* is demonstrably a vernacular adaptation of the *Vita sancti Thorlaci*, of which substantial fragments are still extant.<sup>6</sup> The

<sup>4</sup> In *Sverris saga*, King Sverrir, in his funerary oration over Earl Erlingr in 1179, is made to refer in similar language to the custom of speaking at the grave of noble men in Norway: 'Ok er konungr hafði þetta talat þá veik hann sinni ræðu til þeirar siðvenju sem þar er tíð, at mæla yfir gofugra manna grefti' ('And when the king had spoken this, he turned his speech to the custom which is frequent there, to give speeches at the funerals of noble men'). *Sverris saga*, ed. Þorleifur Hauksson. Íslenzk fornrit 30 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 2007), p. 63. *Sverris saga* was originally written by an abbot of Þingeyrar Abbey in the north of Iceland.

<sup>5</sup> *Biskupa sögur II*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> In the longest fragment from the *Vita sancti Thorlaci* the author cites a famous dictum of Sallust about Cato Uticensis [AM 386 II 4to, 2r (*Cat.* 54.6): 'quod olim de quodam probo homine dictum est: esse quam uideri bonus malebat' ('that which once was spoken about a certain morally upright man: he preferred to be good rather than seem good'). The passage is also found in

vernacular rendering and reworking of the *vita* and proto-*Hungrvaka* was presumably made when Gizurr Hallsson's youngest son, Magnús, was bishop of Skálholt. As was suggested by the editors of the *editio princeps* of *Hungrvaka*, first published in Copenhagen in 1778, Bishop Magnús Gizurarson (c. 1165–1237) should be considered the most likely author/compiler of the text,<sup>7</sup> being the caretaker of, and highest religious authority in Skálholt during the years 1216–1237. It is from this time that we have the oldest remains of a vernacular saga about St Þorlákr, which survives as a fragment at the defective beginning of Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 645 4to (c. 1220).<sup>8</sup> This earliest fragment of the vernacular *Þorláks saga helga* preserves only the miracles from the end of the saga. It is often referred to as *Jarteinabók Þorláks byskups in forna* ('The First Miracle Collection of St Þorlákr'), because at the end of the miracles it says that Bishop Páll had Þorlákr's miracles read aloud at the Alþingi of 1199: 'At this same assembly, Bishop Páll, by popular request, had the miracles of blessed Bishop Þorlákr read aloud, those that are written here in this book' ('Á alþingi þessu enu sama lét Páll byskup ráða upp at þœn manna jarteinir ens sæla Þorláks byskups, þær er hér eru skrifaðar á þessi bók').<sup>9</sup> But the sense of this passage is not that this particular manuscript was used, which did not exist at the time, but that the miracles at the end of *Þorláks saga helga* were read aloud, most likely in

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the three main redactions of *Þorláks saga helga* (A, B, and C), but the Icelandic text does not recognize the dictum as such. Sallust's style is laconic and the saga writer translates paraphrastically, adding explanatory tags ('kostgæfði hann en meir at vera afbragð *annara manna. j sinni gæzku. en synaz sua fyrir augum skynlitilla manna*' ['he strove more to surpass other men in goodness rather than to appear so in the eyes of those of little discernment']; additions in italics). The Latin text could clearly not have come about as a translation of the Icelandic text, hence the Latin text is original and the Icelandic one a translation. Moreover, the saga writer's failure to recognize Sallust's dictum may be taken as proof that he is not identical with the author of the Latin *vita*, and that he was probably not even working in the same scribal community. We can therefore assume a time lapse between the composition of the Latin text and the making of the translation. Gottskálk Jensson, 'The Lost Latin Literature of Medieval Iceland. The Fragments of the *Vita Sancti Thorlaci* and Other Evidence', *Symbolae Osloenses* 79 (2004), pp. 150–70, and 'Revelaciones Thorlaci episcopi – enn eitt glatað latínurit eftir Gunnlaug Leifsson munk á Þingeyrum', *Gripla* 23 (2012), pp. 133–75.

<sup>7</sup> *Hungrvaka, Pals biskups saga, ok Þattr af Thorvalldi vídförla*, ed. Jón Ólafsson, Hannes Finnsson, Guðmundur Magnússon, and Grímur Thorkelín (Copenhagen: The Arnamagnæan Commission, 1778), fols a/6v–7v.

<sup>8</sup> The first part of AM 645 4to is dated by Hreinn Benediktsson, *Early Icelandic Script as Illustrated in Vernacular Texts from the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*. Icelandic Manuscripts, Series in Folio 2 (Reykjavík: Manuscript Institute of Iceland, 1965), p. 20. At folio 43r, a somewhat younger codicological unit begins, dated to 1225–1250.

<sup>9</sup> *Biskupa sögur II*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, p. 135.

the original Latin, since they seem first to have been translated later with the rest of the Latin *Vita*. Árni Magnússon, who lists the first text of AM 645 4to as 'Miracula nonnulla S. Thorlaci, aftan af Þorlaks Sógû' ('Some miracles of St Þorlákur, from the end of *Þorláks saga*') in a handwritten list of the contents preserved with the manuscript itself, realized that the text was not an independent miracle collection. In fact, at one point in the miracles a reference is made to an earlier part of the saga, now lost, which contained the narrative of the *translatio* 'þann vetr eptir er heilagr dómr ens sæla byskups hafði verit upp tekinn ór jörðu áðr (of) sumarit ok nú hefir áðr verit mjök mart frá sagt' ('the winter after the holy relics of the blessed bishop had been taken from the ground in the summer, and about which much has been related above').<sup>10</sup>

Both *Hungrvaka* and *Þorláks saga helga* were evidently compiled from pre-existing Latin hagiographical texts. By focusing on the language and form of the oldest original works of hagiography produced in Iceland, I hope to improve our understanding of hagiographical discourse on the island towards the end of the twelfth century.

As the Norwegian historian Sverre Bagge has argued, in the early medieval period Iceland and Denmark were the most advanced of the Nordic countries with respect to clerical education.<sup>11</sup> The flourishing vernacularism of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in Iceland (not of course a phenomenon exclusive to medieval Iceland) should therefore not be interpreted as a sign that the advanced literacy of the Icelanders was radically different from that practiced on the European continent; rather it should be seen as a logical consequence of the strong foothold Latin literacy had gained in early medieval Iceland. Without a good grasp of the clerical arts, there would not have been the requisite knowledge of Latin script(s) and bookmaking, a *conditio sine qua non* for literary composition in the vernacular to develop.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128. Given that the defective *Þorláks saga helga* in AM 645 4to, when still complete, contained a narrative of the *translatio* as well as the miracles during and after those of the surviving text, it is probable that it also contained the miracles that had occurred at the Alþingi of 1198, before the *translatio*. We know that the *Revelaciones* of Brother Gunnlaugr Leifsson of Þingeyrar had already been written, so the only thing missing was the narrative of Þorlákur's *vita*, which was obviously the most important part. The scribe/translator of AM 645 4to, who was working around 1220, clearly had access to this and is unlikely to have omitted it in a manuscript which was otherwise largely dedicated to collecting the lives of saints and Apostles. See Gottskálk Jensson, 'Revelaciones Thorlaci episcopi'. See also the discussion by Ásdís Egilsdóttir below, at pp. 192–93.

<sup>11</sup> Sverre Bagge, 'Nordic Students at Foreign Universities until 1660', *Scandinavian Journal of History* 9 (1984), p. 4.



## Gizurr the lawspeaker, the greatest cleric of Iceland

At the funerals of distinguished Icelanders, it may have been customary for Gizurr, descendant of the founders of the diocese, to give orations in Latin, the medium of authoritative speech in the Roman Catholic Church. To make his choice of language more palatable in the traditionally vernacular context of Old Norse-Icelandic studies, it may be useful to look at the identities of the men being inhumed as well as that of the orator. Even a cursory survey of the prosopography shows that the auditory experience of ecclesiastical Latin was anything but rare in twelfth-century Iceland.

Certainly, Bishop Þorlákr Þórhallsson was no stranger to the use of Latin discourse. In his *vita*, it is said that he learned the Psalter as a boy, as was widespread practice in the Middle Ages, in order to master the core chants of the Mass and Divine Office, and to acquire reading and writing skills in Scriptural Latin.<sup>12</sup> Young Þorlákr was a perceptive student who later spent six years in Paris and Lincoln (c. 1153–1159), where he most likely lived as a canon regular under the rule of St Augustine, while reading theology and canon law. As bishop of Skálholt – in addition to a daily routine of singing the Divine Office and Mass every day, as his saga assures us, he sang fifty psalms, a third of the whole, and many additional hymns and prayers<sup>13</sup> – Þorlákr often arranged for the reading of Latin texts for his own edification and that of others: ‘Þorlákr byskup lét optliga lesa sér bóksögur, því at hann sá þat, þó at eigi yrði vel hlýtt stundum, þá dvalði þat þó ónýtar iðnir fyrir mǫrgum’ (Bishop Þorlákr often had Latin texts read aloud, because as he realized, even if comprehension was sometimes lacking, this practice at least restrained many from idle activities).<sup>14</sup> According to his saga, Bishop Þorlákr himself often

<sup>12</sup> On the educational use of the Psalter in Iceland, see Ryder Patzuk-Russell, ‘The Development of Education and Grammatica in Medieval Iceland’ (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Birmingham, 2016), pp. 58, 87–88, 125–27, with bibliography.

<sup>13</sup> *Biskupa sögur II*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, p. 78.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183. The word ‘bóksögur’ (‘book-histories’), which I translate as ‘Latin texts’, is a *hapax legomenon*, although it is not difficult to decode; see the ONP entry for ‘bóksaga’. ONP also lists a marginal note from Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, AM 122 b fol, 2r (c. 1400), ‘vel lestu jon gudenason bok savgona’ (‘you read the *bóksaga* well, Jón Guðnason’), but here the word occurs without a context to explain what *saga* is being referred to. The A-redaction of *Þorláks saga* has a text that is slightly different from the B-redaction: ‘Þorlákr lét opt kenna kenningar, af því at hann sá þat þótt eigi yrði opt hlýtt svá skynsamliga sem skyldi bóksögum, at þó dvalði þat þá ónýtar gerðir fyrir mǫrgum mǫnnum’ (‘Þorlákr often had teachings expounded, because he saw that even if the comprehension of Latin literature was often not as keen as it should be, this practice at least restrained many men from useless activities’). *Biskupa sögur II*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, p. 76.

read aloud sacred works, which presumably included hagiography, and taught young boys and clerics to read and write Latin. He was also industrious in copying sacred texts.<sup>15</sup>

Naturally, not everyone in Skálholt had the extensive training of Bishop Þorlákr in understanding performed Latin texts, hence the remark about the occasional lack of comprehension among the audience in Skálholt. Had these histories been vernacular translations rather than ‘bóksögur’, listening to them would hardly have posed a challenge in Skálholt, where the average listener must have been well-versed in Christian literature. Latin, on the other hand, was never an easy language to grasp. Implicit in the description of such textual performances is a clerical awareness of Roman Christianity as a demanding religion, requiring linguistic accomplishments from its specialists that not everyone could muster.<sup>16</sup>

In the *Haukdæla þáttur* of *Sturlunga saga*,<sup>17</sup> Lawspeaker Gizurr obtains a prominent place as the head of the people of Haukadalur in his lifetime; he had inherited the estate of Haukadalur after the death of his father, Hallr Teitsson (c. 1090–1150), in the middle of the twelfth century and held it for well over half a century. Gizurr is described as ‘bæði vitr ok málsnjallr’ (‘both wise and a good speaker’). At some point, he was appointed ‘stallari’ (‘marshall’) at the court of King Sigurðr Haraldsson (1133–1155), who reigned with his brothers from 1136 to 1155 (see below).

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In the A-redaction, the word is provided with the synonym ‘kenningar’, which is regularly used in Old Norse-Icelandic to translate such terms as ‘doctrina’, ‘disciplina’ and ‘dogmata’ (see the ONP, entry for ‘kenning’). Another synonym for ‘bóksaga’ is ‘bóksögn’, which occurs towards the end of the prologue to *Stjórn*, the Old Testament translation and commentary; here the reference is to the untranslated text of the *Genesis*: ‘Byriar hann (3: Moyses) i þeirri samu bok sina bóksögn af heimsins skapan [skipan, B] medr þeima hætti ok medr þilikum ordum upp i uárt máál at segia sem her fylgir’ (‘He [Moses] begins in this same book his Latin account of the creation of the world in the same manner and with such words, translated into our language as follows’). *Stjórn: Gammelnorsk Bibelhistorie fra verdens skabelse til det babyloniske fangenskab*, ed. Carl R. Unger (Christiania [Oslo]: Feilberg & Landmark, 1862), p. 6. A parallel compound, ‘bókmál’, means ‘ecclesiastical Latin’, as explained by Fritzner, Johan, *Ordbog over Det gamle norske Sprog*, 3 vols, 2nd rev. ed. (Christiania [Oslo]: Den norske Forlagsforening, 1883–1896 [1867]), I (1883), p. 164.

<sup>15</sup> *Biskupa sögur II*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, p. 161.

<sup>16</sup> Every Christian was however required to know the *Pater Noster*, *Credo* and *Ave Maria*, while some laymen even participated in Latin song. See Gunnar F. Guðmundsson, ‘Latínusöngur leikra á miðöldum’, in *Til heiðurs og hugbótar: greinar um trúarkveðskap fyrri alda*, ed. Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir and Anna Guðmundsdóttir (Reykholzt: Snorrastofa, 2003), pp. 93–112.

<sup>17</sup> The following citations are extracted from *Sturlunga saga*, ed. Jón Jóhannesson, Magnús Finnbogason, and Kristján Eldjárn, 2 vols (Reykjavík: Sturlunguútgáfan, 1946), I, p. 60.

In the *Haukdæla þáttr*, Gizurr is said to have been ‘inn bezt klerkr, þeira er hér á landi hafa verit’ (‘the best cleric of those who have lived in this land’), which refers not to his secular offices of lawspeaker and *stallari* but to his knowledge of Latin and Christian doctrine. As a measure of Gizurr’s clerical expertise, the Benedictine Gunnlaugur Leifsson (c. 1155–1218/1219) of Þingeyrar Abbey, who in the D-redaction of *Guðmundar saga* is ‘kallaðr best skiljandi til bækur á öllu Íslandi’ (‘said to be the man who understood [Latin] books best in the whole of Iceland’), sent him a draft of his great *\*Historia Olavi regis filii Tryggva*, ‘ok hafði sagður Gizurr hjá sér þá bók um tvö ár. En síðan hún kom aftur til bróður Gunnlaugs emenderaði hann hana sjálfur þar sem Gizuri þókti þess við þurfa’ (‘and had the said Gizurr that book with him for two years, and when it came back to Brother Gunnlaugr, he emended it himself where Gizurr thought it was needed’). Although our knowledge of this work is very incomplete, Brother Gunnlaugr’s *\*Historia Olavi regis filii Tryggva* was probably among the most ambitious works of Latin historiography in the Nordic countries.

It is further stated about Gizurr that ‘[o]pt fór hann af landi brott ok var betr metinn í Róma en nökkurr íslenzkr maðr fyrr honum af mennt sinni ok framkvæmð’ (‘he often traveled abroad, and he was held in high esteem in Rome, more so than any other Icelander before him, on account of his education and achievement’). This statement complements his words in the funeral oration about upholding an international standard in Skálholt. He was evidently an ambitious reformer of Icelandic ecclesiastical customs and an importer of tastes and customs from the Mediterranean. For instance, he had a prominent role in the first canonization in Iceland, that of St Þorlákr, according to the vernacular *Þorláks saga helga*. We are told that Gizurr was familiar with the ‘southern lands’ (‘suðrloðnin’) and that he wrote a book about his travels in the area entitled *\*Flos peregrinationis* (‘Honum varð víða kunnugt um suðrloðnin, ok þar af gerði hann bók þá, er heitir *\*Flos peregrinationis*’).<sup>18</sup> Like almost

<sup>18</sup> Although it may have been an anthology or *florilegium* (Latin *flos* + *legere* [‘flower + to pick’]; a calque from the Greek ἀνθολογία (‘picked flowers’, a ‘bouquet’)), it was, according to *Haukdæla þáttr*, also in some sense an *itinerarium*, implying a topographical account of Gizurr’s own extensive travels. Helgi Guðmundsson, *Um haf innan: Vestrænir menn og íslensk menning á miðöldum* (Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan, 1997), pp. 234–35, relates the title to the Icelandic word ‘fararblómi’ (‘flower of travel’), which Johan Fritzner, *Ordbog over Det gamle norske Sprog*, I, p. 388, explains thus: ‘hvad der tjener til at forherlige ens Reise, give den Glans og Anseelse’ (‘what serves to glorify one’s peregrination, to give it luster and honour’). In its occurrences in the oldest texts, ‘fararblómi’ appears to refer to foreign valuables, jewellery, arms and clothing brought back from one’s travels. In Gizurr’s title, as in *Þorláks saga helga*, its meaning must be figurative, not referring to material goods but rather to Christian topics, perhaps telling of holy sites worthy of a visit by pilgrims.

the entire Latin literature of medieval Iceland, this work is lost; not even its contents seem to have been preserved anywhere in translation, which is otherwise the case for most of the attested Icelandic-Latin texts.

Although the work takes its name from the estate of Haukadalur, Gizurr's family was even more closely associated with nearby Skálholt. The first native bishop of Iceland, Ísleifr Gizurason (1006–1080), who studied at Herford with the erudite nuns of Saxony, was the great-grandfather of Gizurr the lawspeaker, while the second bishop, also named Gizurr (1042–1118), was his grand-uncle. The third bishop of Skálholt, Þorlákr Runólfsson (1086–1133), got his clerical training in Haukadalur. It was by him that young Gizurr, the future lawspeaker, was educated. In the middle of the twelfth century, Gizurr's father, Hallr, was elected bishop of Skálholt. Indeed, the Haukdælir provided the Roman Church in Iceland not only with the first bishops but also with the episcopal see of Skálholt, which had been donated by Bishop Gizurr Ísleifsson, though, according to Icelandic practice, the family still appears to have retained control over its donation. Both Gizurr the lawspeaker and his son Bishop Magnús Gizurason seem to have functioned as economic custodians of Skálholt, a state of affairs which no doubt continued until 1237, when Bishop Magnús died and was succeeded by an unrelated Norwegian. This may explain the authoritative tone of Gizurr's funeral speech at the grave of Bishop Þorlákr in 1193, because by telling about the first bishops of Skálholt he is also relating the history of his own lineage, elucidating its achievements and eminent status in Icelandic society. The Haukdælir were central to the establishment and expansion of Roman Christianity in Iceland for almost a quarter of a millennium.<sup>19</sup> In light of this, Gizurr the lawspeaker and his kinsmen's dedication to Latin and the clerical arts is not difficult to understand.

Gizurr's funeral speech at the grave of Þorlákr provides a frame for the speaker's own career, when he states that he has given funeral speeches at the gravesite of five bishops, four of Skálholt and one of Hólar, beginning with the aforementioned Þorlákr Runólfsson, who was bishop of Skálholt in 1118–1133. The year of Gizurr's birth remains unknown, but he cannot have been much younger than seventeen in 1133, when he gave his first oration at the funeral of a bishop. In other words, he was at least ninety years old when he died in 1206. The text of *Hungrvaka* also provides important details about Gizurr's long life.

<sup>19</sup> After Gizurr the lawspeaker's death, his family continued to exert great influence on the Church and in worldly offices. Besides his son Magnús, who became bishop of Skálholt in 1216, his son Hallr became lawspeaker after him and later abbot, first at the important Augustinian Abbey of Helgafell and then at Þykkvibær. Finally, the grandson of Lawspeaker Gizurr, Gizurr Þorvaldsson (1208–1268), became the first earl of Iceland, when the country came under the Norwegian Crown.

Indeed, in the account of Bishop Þorlákr the Elder we read the following account of his fosterage and education:<sup>20</sup>

Hann tók marga menn til læringar, ok urðu þeir síðan góðir kennimenn [...] Þorlákr byskup bauð barnfóstr Halli Teitssyni í Haukadal, ok fór þá Gizurr, sonr Halls, í Skálholt, ok var byskup við hann svá ástúðligr sem hann væri hans sonr, ok spáði honum þat er síðarr gekk eptir, at slíkr merkismaðr myndi trautt finnask á Íslandi sem hann var, og varð á því raun síðan. Þorláki þjónaði inn sami prestr ávallt meðan hann lifði ok hann var byskup, er Tjörvi hét ok var Bøðvarsson, mikill dýrðarmaðr, ok hann hafði áðr verit með Gizuri byskupi, ok mátti af slíku sjá ok öðrum hans dagligum háttum prýðiligum hversu jafnlyndr hann var at góðu í sínu lífi. Hann sǫng hvern dag þriðjung psaltara seint ok skynsamliga, en þess á millum kenndi hann ok ritaði eða las yfir helgar ritningar.

[He [Bishop Þorlákr the Elder] accepted many young men as students who later became good clerics [...] He offered Hallr Teitsson of Haukadalur to foster his son Gizurr, who went to Skálholt where the bishop treated him with the same affection as if he had been his own son, and foresaw for him what later would be fulfilled, namely that he would become so illustrious that he hardly had his peer in Iceland, which came true later. A priest by the name of Tjörvi, son of Bøðvarr, always assisted Þorlákr, a very illustrious man, who had before served with Bishop Gizurr, from which it could be seen how steadfast he was in his good conduct of life, as was also apparent from his splendid daily habits. Tjörvi sang every day a third of the Psalter, slowly and thoughtfully, and in between he would teach and write and read holy Scripture.]

It is reasonable to assume that the successor of Gizurr Ísleifsson, Bishop Þorlákr, offered the magnate of Haukadalur, Hallr Teitsson, fosterage for his son in direct recognition of the Haukdælir's importance for Skálholt and his own education at Haukadalur. This arrangement may have been realized soon after Þorlákr the Elder took office in 1118. From the description of the priest Tjörvi, he is likely to have been the man responsible for young Gizurr's education, which would explain why he is introduced in *Hungrvaka* immediately after the seemingly autobiographical statement about Gizurr's fosterage in Skálholt.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> *Biskupa sögur II*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, pp. 24–25.

<sup>21</sup> It has been suggested that Tjörvi might be the 'Tiure', who was registered among a group of Icelandic pilgrims in Reichenau in the twelfth century. *Das Verbrüderungsbuch der Abtei Reichenau*, ed. Johanne Autenrieth, Dieter Geuenich, and Karl Schmidt. *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Libri Memoriales et Necrologia, Nova Series 1* (Hannover: Hahn, 1979), p. 159. See *Biskupa sögur II*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, p. 25, note 3. This is possible since Icelandic clerics traveled widely in this period. However, there is

There is a striking parallel between the roles played by the priest Tjörvi and Gizurr the lawspeaker in Skálholt. Gizurr Hallsson is said in *Þorláks saga helga* to have comforted St Þorlákr on his deathbed ‘í fagrligum dæmisögum (frá helgum mönnum) er sín meinlæti báru drengiliga fyrir Guðs sakir’ (‘with beautiful examples of holy men who bore their suffering bravely for the sake of God’),<sup>22</sup> while someone, most likely his learned priest Tjörvi, is said in *Hungrvaka* to have consoled Þorlákr the Elder Runólfsson on his deathbed, reading to him Gregory the Great’s *Cura Pastoralis* (also known as *Liber Regulae Pastoralis*), an authoritative description of life and doctrine for bishops of the Roman Church. This work from around 590 is no light reading: it covers more than 200 pages in normal print size and could occupy a trained Latinist quite some time. As deathbed reading, it sets a standard attainable only by those with an advanced knowledge of the language.

The priest Tjörvi lived fifteen years after the death of Bishop Þorlákr the Elder, and it is not unlikely that Gizurr stayed in Skálholt with his successor, Bishop Magnús Einarsson (1092–1148), who likely ordained Gizurr as deacon. In any case, fifteen years later Gizurr gave a funerary speech at the grave of Bishop Magnús, who lost his life along with Tjörvi and at least seventy others in the great fire of Hítardalur in the fall of 1148. Three years earlier, according to his own account, Gizurr had given a funeral speech in Skálholt, when Bishop Ketill Þorsteinsson of Hólar (1122–1145) died, on July 7 1145, when bathing in a hot spring in the vicinity of Skálholt, after a lavish wedding feast.<sup>23</sup>

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considerable uncertainty about the dates and identities of the Icelandic pilgrims named in the registry. In any case, Tjörvi cannot have been in the retinue of the bishop-elect Hallr Teitsson, when he traveled to Rome in 1149–1150, because *Hungrvaka* informs us that he died together with Bishop Magnús Einarsson and many others in the fire of Hítardalur on September 30 1148. Regardless of whether this Icelandic ‘Tiure’ is our priest, someone like Tjörvi with an advanced knowledge of Latin is not unlikely to have sojourned on the Continent for a longer period of time for educational purposes. For Scandinavian entries in the registry at Reichenau, see Finnur Jónsson and Ellen Jørgensen, ‘Nordiske Pilegrimsnavne i Broderskabsbogen fra Reichenau’, *Aarbøger for nordisk oldkyndighed og historie* 13 (1923), pp. 1–36. For more on Icelandic pilgrim routes and the Icelandic work *Leiðarvísan*, a sort of travelguide for pilgrims, see Joyce Hill, ‘From Rome to Jerusalem: An Icelandic Itinerary of the Mid-Twelfth Century’, *Harvard Theological Review* 76/2 (1983), pp. 175–203.

<sup>22</sup> *Biskupa sögur II*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, pp. 80, cf. 185 with partly expanded phrasing.

<sup>23</sup> *Biskupa sögur II*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, pp. 30–31. The wedding feast celebrated at Skálholt may have been a dedication feast, namely the wedding of Bishop Magnús and his cathedral at Skálholt. See Jón Helgason ‘Et sted i Hungrvaka’, *Opuscula* 1. Bibliotheca Arnemagnæana 20 (Copenhagen: The Arnemagnæan Commission, 1960), pp. 352–53, and Jonas Wellendorf, ‘Whetting the Appetite

Gizurr accompanied his father when the latter, who had been chosen bishop, traveled to Rome for his consecration. But in 1150, apparently on his way back from Rome, his father died in Utrecht. *Hungrvaka* describes the father as an exceptionally brilliant linguist, who ‘spoke the language of every country where he came with the fluency of a native’ ([‘mælti alls staðar þeira máli sem hann væri ávallt alls staðar þar barnfœddr sem þá kom hann’]).<sup>24</sup> The source of this great admiration for Hallr must be Gizurr himself, the author of *\*Gesta Scalotensis ecclesie presulum*, and/or Bishop Magnús, the likely author of *Hungrvaka*, and it shows not only the respect they had for a father and a grandfather, but also what these distinguished Icelanders regarded as the most important pursuits of their lives, linguistic accomplishment.

Presumably, Gizurr also gave a funeral speech at the grave of his father, ‘as is customary in other countries at the burial of noble men’. Hallr may have been buried in Utrecht, where he died. It is likely that after his untimely death, his son Gizurr stayed with King Sigurðr Haraldsson in Norway, whose *stallari* he was appointed at some time. King Sigurðr would have been around seventeen years old at the time of the appointment. He was killed in 1155, at the age of twenty-two. This King Sigurðr allegedly fathered the illegitimate King Sverrir of Norway (c. 1148–1202), who grew up in the Faroe Islands, where he received clerical education at the episcopal see of Kirkjubær, and whose reign in Norway corresponds roughly to the period when Gizurr was lawspeaker of Iceland. It may not be fully warranted to assume that Gizurr represented King Sigurðr and his son in Iceland, but indications support the assumption that in the fierce conflict of these years between Eysteinn Erlendsson (c. 1120–1188) and Eiríkr Ívarsson (d. 1213), Archbishops of Niðaróss, and King Sverrir, Gizurr sided with and aided the king.<sup>25</sup>

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for a Vernacular Literature: The Icelandic *Hungrvaka*’, in *Historical Narratives and Christian Identity on a European Periphery: Early History Writing in Northern, East-Central, and Eastern Europe (c. 1070–1200)*, ed. Ildar Garipzanov. *Medieval Texts and Northern Culture* 26 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), p. 132. The death of Ketill interrupted the feast and caused great sorrow in Skálholt, we are told, until the bishop’s funeral was taken care of: ‘En með fortölum Magnúss byskups ok drykk þeim inum ágæta er menn áttu þar at drekka, þá urðu menn nokkut afhuga skjótara en elligar myndi’ (‘But through the persuasions of Bishop Magnús, as well as the excellent beverage they had for drinking, men recovered from their grief sooner than they otherwise would have’). The humor of this passage may be an example of what earned Gizurr Hallsson the reputation of being ‘hrókr alls fagnaðar, hvargi er hann var staddr’ (‘the life of every party, wherever he was present’). *Biskupa sögur II*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, p. 314.

<sup>24</sup> *Biskupa sögur II*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, p. 34. He has long been considered the most likely author of the *First Grammatical Treatise*, ed. and trans. Hreinn Benediktsson. *Publications in Linguistics* 1 (Reykjavík: Institute of Nordic Linguistics, 1972), pp. 202–03.

<sup>25</sup> Given Gizurr’s close ties with the community at Þingeyrar, he might have had a hand in Abbot Karl Jónsson’s (c. 1135–1212/1213) voyage to Norway in 1185 to

In any case, it seems that Gizurr was in Norway in the summer of 1152, when the Cardinal Bishop of Albano, Nicholas Breakspear (c. 1100–1159), arrived in Bergen as a pontifical legate with two new *pallia* to establish archbishoprics in Norway and Sweden by splitting into three the former archdiocese of Lund.<sup>26</sup> Considering the fact that Gizurr had been in Rome only two years earlier, it is probable that he knew of the ambitious plans of Pope Eugene III (c. 1080–1153) to restructure the Roman Catholic Church in Scandinavia; indeed, he and his father may very well have contributed information about Scandinavian affairs to the cardinals who were preparing these reforms. This would explain the otherwise rather surprising respect that this exotic visitor from the remote North reportedly enjoyed in Rome. Pope Eugene III's interest in the Nordic countries during these years was out of the ordinary. Scandinavia was, like never before, on the top of the list of international liasons in Rome around the time of Hallr and Gizurr's visit.

Furthermore, *Hungrvaka* informs us that when the new bishop of Skálholt, Klængur Þorsteinsson (1102–1176), returned to Iceland after his consecration in Lund by Archbishop Áskell (c. 1100–1181/1182) on April 6 1152, Gizurr Hallsson returned to Iceland with the new bishop. The way in which this is formulated in the vernacular text, Gizurr was returning not just from Scandinavia but all the way from Rome and Bari (an important shrine of St Nicholas) on the Italian peninsula:<sup>27</sup>

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write *Sverris saga*, in collaboration with King Sverrir himself, who 'réð fyrir hvað rita skyldi' ('decided what was written'). *Sverris saga*, ed. Þorleifur Hauksson, p. 3. Later the saga was revised by the priest Styrmir Kárason (c. 1170–1245), according to its expanded prologue in the manuscript *Flateyjarbók* (Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, GKS 1005 fol.). At least two monks at Þingeyrar wrote their historical works in Latin in this period, and the name of Sverrir's fosterfather, Unas, seems to be a Latinized form of the Faroese name Uni, which long ago led Peter Andreas Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie III* (Oslo: Tønsbergs Forlag, 1857), p. 51, to suggest the possibility that Abbot Karl might have written the original draft of *Sverris saga* in Latin, which the priest Styrmir subsequently rewrote in Icelandic. The similarity of wording in King Sverrir's reference to the custom of funerary orations in Norway, mentioned above, relates the saga to *Þorláks saga helga* and Gizurr himself to King Sverrir. As is shown by his revision of Gunnlaugr Leifsson's Latin work on King Óláfr Tryggvason, a work that may also have been written indirectly in support of King Sverrir's struggle against the Church (see Gottskálk Jensson, "Íslenskar klausturreglur og *libertas ecclesie* á ofanverðri 12. öld", in *Íslensk klausturmenning á miðöldum*, ed. Haraldur Bernharðsson (Reykjavík: Miðaldastofa Háskóla Íslands, 2016), pp. 47–53), Gizurr seems to have served as a patron for the Latin authors at Þingeyrar Abbey.

<sup>26</sup> Anders Bergquist, 'The Papal Legate: Nicholas Breakspear's Scandinavian Mission', in *Adrian IV, the English Pope, 1154–1159: Studies and Texts*, ed. Brenda Bolton and Anne J. Duggan (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 41–48.

<sup>27</sup> *Biskupa sögur II*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, p. 35.



Ok it sama sumar eptir fór hann [Klængur byskup] til Íslands. Ok var þá kominn frá Róm sunnan ok allt útan ór Bár Gizurr Hallsson ok fór út með honum, ok áttu þá menn at fagna tveim senn inum mestum manngersemum á Íslandi.

[Later in the same summer he [Bishop Klængur] returned to Iceland. At that time Gizurr Hallsson had returned from the south, all the way from Rome and Bari, and he sailed with him to Iceland, which provided men with the happy occasion of celebrating the arrival of the two most precious sons of Iceland.]

In fact, it looks as if Gizurr Hallsson arrived in Scandinavia at the same time as the Cardinal of Albano and soon-to-be first 'English' Pope, Hadrian IV.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps Gizurr had returned to Rome to inform the papal see of his father's death. He was apparently quite the traveler, and we are told that 'Oft fór hann af landi brott [...] Honum varð víða kunnugt um Suðrlöndin' ('he often left Iceland [...] He traveled widely in continental Europe').<sup>29</sup> Gizurr Hallsson may even have been in the retinue of the Cardinal Bishop of Albano, when he made his famous journey to Scandinavia. The reputation that Gizurr enjoyed in Rome, according to *Haukdæla þáttr*, and the unusual and important connections between Rome and Scandinavia during this time, are hardly coincidental.

According to *Hungrovaða*, Gizurr the lawspeaker was throughout his life the closest friend and ally of Bishop Klængur of Skálholt, together with Jón Loptsson (1124–1197), the head of the Oddaverjar clan and the grandson of Sæmundr Sigfússon (1056–1133), the first historian of the Nordic countries, who wrote a now-lost \**Chronicon regum Norwegie*. With this work the Norwegian and Icelandic past was for the first time put into context within the history and chronology of Christian Europe at large.<sup>30</sup> When Gizurr Hallsson and Bishop Klængur returned to Iceland,

<sup>28</sup> The timing of the Scandinavian mission is discussed in Bergquist, 'The Papal Legate', p. 42.

<sup>29</sup> *Sturlunga saga*, I, p. 60.

<sup>30</sup> Sæmundr, who wrote his work at least partly as a service to King Sigurðr Jórsalafari Magnússon (1090–1130), whose sister his son Loptr married, was educated in 'Frakkland' (*Francia*, although not necessarily modern France), according to a contemporary source, *Íslendingabók*, though where exactly is not specified. *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson. Íslenzk fornrit 1 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenszka fornritafélag, 1968), pp. 20–21. Much interesting speculation has been published as to Sæmundr's place of study, but the one hypothesis which takes as its point of departure the probable contents of Sæmundr's work, although it cannot be proven, places him in the monastery of St Nicholas in Angers. On Sæmundr and his writings, see Helgi Guðmundsson, *Um haf innan*, pp. 328–33, and in general Gunnar Harðarson and Sverrir Tómasson, eds, *I garði Sæmundar fróða: Fyrirlestrar frá ráðstefnu í Þjóðminjasafni 20. Maí 2006* (Reykjavík: Hugvísindastofnun Háskóla Íslands, 2008).

presumably in the late summer of 1152, the bishop is said to have brought with him on two ships wood for building a new cathedral in Skálholt. Since the *staðr* in Skálholt concerned Gizurr Hallsson even more than the new bishop, who was from northern Iceland and apparently not a member of any powerful family, we may suspect Gizurr's hand in the Skálholt building project. Indeed, furnishing the wood was probably possible through the influence of the head of the Haukdælir at the royal court in Norway. Bishop Klængr was an exceptional cleric and a great Latinist, and this seems to have been the main reason for his election as bishop after the death of Hallr Teitsson in Utrecht. Klængr was educated at Hólar in the time of Bishop Jón Ögmundarson (1052–1121) and continued to be associated with the cathedral school there, perhaps as a teacher, or a priest. An anecdote is told about him in *Jóns saga helga*, a text originally composed in Latin (*\*Vita sancti Johannis*) by Gunnlaugr Leifsson of Þingeyrar Abbey. As a young man Klængr was caught reading Ovid's *Ars amatoria* – or *Heroides*, depending on the various redactions of the saga – upon which Bishop Jón reminded him not to stimulate his already excitable carnal appetites by reading erotic poetry.<sup>31</sup> As if to back up the veracity of this anecdote, a copy of Ovid's *De arte amandi* existed in the library of the Hólar Cathedral as late as 1525, according to a preserved inventory.<sup>32</sup> Accordingly, it would not at all have been inappropriate for Gizurr to speak Latin at Klængr's funeral in 1176.

### Árni Magnússon's Latin *Hungrvaka*

The surviving Latin fragments about the life and miracles of St Þorlákr bear witness to the earliest attempts to promote the cult of a native Icelandic saint through the creation of written documents conforming to the conventions of Roman Catholic hagiography. Indeed, the beginning of Bishop Þorlákr's cultic veneration can be traced to the public disclosure of the briefs (Latin *brevia*) of Bishop Brandr of Hólar (1120–1201), a

<sup>31</sup> *Biskupa sögur I: Kristni saga, Kristni þættir, Þorvalds þátr víðförla I, Þorvalds þátr víðförla II, Stefnis þátr Þorgilssonar, Af Þangbrandi, Af Þiðranda ok disunum, Kristniþóð Þangbrands, Þrír þættir, Kristnitakan, Jóns saga ins helga, Gísls þátr Illugasonar, Sæmundar þátr*, vol. 1: *Fræði*, vol. 2: *Sögutextar*, ed. Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Peter Foote. Íslenzk fornrit 15 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 2003), II, pp. 211–12.

<sup>32</sup> See *DI* 9, p. 298. Whether true or not, the anecdote may in Gunnlaugr's time have been a joke at the expense of Skálholt see, offering a humorous explanation of Bishop Klængr's libidinousness, which around 1173 became a scandal for the southern diocese, possibly leading to the bishop's resignation. See Gottskálk Jensson, 'Latin Hagiography in Medieval Iceland', in *Corpus Christianorum, Hagiographies: Histoire internationale de la littérature hagiographique latine et vernaculaire en Occident*, vol. 7, ed. Guy Philippart and Monique Goulet (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), pp. 918–19.

member of the Oddaverjar clan, at the Alþingi ('alþing[i]') in 1198, which led to Bishop Páll Jónsson's (1155–1211) decision to have Þorlákr's earthly remains translated from the grave and enshrined in Skálholt Cathedral a few weeks later. The ceremony, which is described in great detail in the Latin fragments, was performed on July 20 1198, according to the ritual procedures appropriate to a liturgical event of such importance. The following winter, a proper *\*Vita sancti Thorlaci* was presumably composed, and on this work a liturgy for the new saint was presumably based. The former was likely written in close collaboration with the monks at Þingeyrar Abbey in northern Iceland and a select few members of the Skálholt clergy. The new *vita* included a detailed documentation of the miraculous occurrences observed at the Alþingi and around the time of the translation in the summer of 1198, which Bishop Páll of Skálholt apparently made sure was properly penned in ecclesiastical Latin, as is evident from contemporary fragments.<sup>33</sup>

Copies of the *\*Vita sancti Thorlaci* survived for centuries in Iceland, certainly in a few of the parish churches of Skálholt diocese, which were dedicated to St Þorlákr, as is revealed by Icelandic church inventories.<sup>34</sup> Vernacular sagas were subsequently prepared on the basis of the Latin text, and these were probably more useful in parish churches than the Latin texts, since they could be read on the feast-days of the saint (December 23, and later, July 20) to the full congregation. Some liturgical texts, such as the lessons and the office, were never translated into the vernacular. With the Lutheran Reformation, almost all Latin texts about saints were anathemized. As a matter of fact, one and a half centuries later they had all vanished, with the exception of a few surviving scraps which were rescued by Árni Magnússon on his extensive travels around Iceland at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Most of the leaves he found came from the bindings of books, since they show traces of having been reused for book covers. Although he acquired some for his collection, others were merely transcribed by him, and we do not know what became of the originals. The last find of this kind, a part of the third fragment (LatIII), happened as late as the 1960s, when a scrap of parchment was removed from a binding in the National Archive of Iceland.<sup>35</sup> The only Latin text about St Þorlákr which Árni Magnússon acquired from a whole manuscript came from the

<sup>33</sup> In AM 386 I 4to, folio 2r, the recipient of the fragmentary miracle, 'ea que circa se gesta erant cum magno gaudio Paulo episcopo et multis aliis qui tunc aderant retulit' ('with great joy reports what has happened in his life to Bishop Páll and the many others who were present at the time.')

<sup>34</sup> See, for instance, *DI* 4, p. 105 ('forna þollaks sögu með Legendu' in the church at Hólmur on Rosmhvalanes), and p. 193 ('Þollaks saga á latínu' in the church at Melar in Melasveit).

<sup>35</sup> See Jakob Benediktsson, 'Brot úr Þorlákslesi', in *Afmælisrit Jóns Helgasonar 30. júní 1969*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, Jón Samsonarson, Jónas Kristjánsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Stefán Karlsson (Reykjavík: Heimskringla, 1969), pp. 98–108.

back of a legendary from Vallanes in Fljótsdalshérað in the eastern part of Iceland – ‘Aptan af Legendario frá Vallanesi i Flíotzdals herade’ – as he wrote on an accompanying slip (Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, AM 386 II 4to).

A substantial number of later vernacular texts transmitted in manuscripts dating from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century provide additional information about the original documents. The vernacular *Þorláks saga helga* is preserved in seventeenth-century manuscripts along with the aforementioned succinct early history of Skálholt before Bishop Þorlákr’s time, constructed in the form of five biographies of the earliest bishops – Ísleifr Gizurarson, Gizurr Ísleifsson, Þorlákr Runólfsson, Magnús Einarsson and Klængur Þorsteinsson – in addition to a prologue and an epilogue. This is the text known as *Hungrvaka*. As the author explains in his prologue, the work aims to stimulate an interest in the reader to know much more about the subject-matter, the lives of the first bishops of Skálholt.<sup>36</sup>

Bækling þenna kalla ek Hungrvöku, af því at svá mun mörgum mönnum ófróðum ok þó óvitrum gefit vera, þeim er hann hafa yfir farit, at miklu myndu gørr vilja vita upprás ok ævi þeira merkismanna er hér verðr fátt frá sagt á þessi skrá.

[I call this little book *Hungrvaka* because many men, unlearned and also unwise, will be so disposed, when they have gone through it, that they would wish to know much more fully the origin and lifetime of those remarkable men, of whom there is but a brief account in this volume.]

Soon after their acquisition, Árni Magnússon conducted a preliminary investigation of the Latin fragments, which lead him to formulate a hypothesis about the fragment Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, AM 386 I 4to. According to him, AM 386 I 4to represents an otherwise lost Latin work that corresponds to the combined texts of the vernacular *Hungrvaka* and *Þorláks saga helga*. He also tried to understand the nature of the original versions of the vernacular texts, not only by collecting the best textual witnesses, but also by making important observations about their likely age, contents, and textual filiation. Árni Magnússon’s most important notes are collected in Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, AM 207 b fol., and Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 670 e 4to, both of which were edited by Finnur Jónsson in 1930.<sup>37</sup>

The early work of this trailblazer of Old Norse-Icelandic studies has not been fully appreciated, perhaps because earlier scholars have labored under the double bias of a Protestant rejection of Latin hagiography and

<sup>36</sup> *Biskupa sögur II*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, p. 3.

<sup>37</sup> *Árni Magnússon's leaved og skrifter*, ed. Finnur Jónsson, 2 vols (Copenhagen: The Arnamagnæan Commission, 1930), II, pp. 142–48, 182.

a nationalist purism targeting foreign literary influences, in this case ecclesiastical Latin. In a letter to his friend Þormóður Torfason (1636–1719), also known as Torfæus, written at the estate Kirkjubæjarklaustur on September 25/26 1704, Árni Magnússon announced the discovery of two leaves he had acquired in Iceland of an ‘old Latin *Hungrvaka*’, in addition to the two fragments he already had in Copenhagen (‘2 blöd ur latinskre Hungurvöku gamalli hefi eg öðlast, og tvö á eg i Kaupenhafn.’)<sup>38</sup> Today, the leaves are three, not four, two of which form a *bifolium* (AM 386 I 4to, 2r–3v). One of the leaves might thus appear to have gone missing, but this is unlikely to be the case. In the aforementioned AM 670 e 4to, on folio 15r, we find a transcription of the very same leaves that now exist, in the hand of Árni Magnússon, preceded by the following note:

Dette indlagde fragment er accuratè udskrevet efter .3. pergaments blade i 4to minori eller stor octavo, som ere mine, og ieg alle tre haver bekommet i Island. Ere med gammel og meget god skrift. De .2. blade som hænge til sammen fick ieg 1703. og det ene bladet hafde ieg længe til forn bekommet. Dette fragmentum er ex vita Sancti Thorlaci Latine Scriptâ, og haver været duobus libris. I den første bog haver været de Antecessoribus illius Episcopis Scalholtensibus og synes at author der udi haver fuldt Hungurvöku. Visseligen in anno emortuali Clongi Episcopi. Den anden bog haver været de Vita & Miraculis Sancti Thorlaci. Author ignoratur, quod malè est.

[The inserted fragment is accurately transcribed (by me) from three parchment leaves in small 4to or large 8vo (format), which are mine, and all three of which I procured in Iceland. They are written with an old and very good script. I acquired the two leaves which hang together (that is the *bifolium*, fl. 2r–3v) in 1703, while I had the single leaf (fl. 1r–1v) from long before. This fragment is from the *Vita sancti Thorlaci* written in Latin and was divided into two books. The first book was about the bishops of Skálholt who preceded Þorlákr, and here the author seems to have followed *Hungrvaka*. Certainly regarding Bishop Kloengr’s year of death. The second book included the *Vita et miracula sancti Thorlaci*. The author is unknown, which is unfortunate.]

Jón Helgason, the editor of *Hungrvaka*,<sup>39</sup> makes use of the first half of the note to determine that no leaves are missing from AM 386 I 4to, while Ásdís Egilsdóttir, the most recent editor of the work, seems unaware of Árni Magnússon’s note, although it would have lent support to her

<sup>38</sup> *Arne Magnussons brevveksling med Torfæus (Þormóður Torfason)*, ed. Kristian Kålund (Copenhagen: Nordisk forlag, 1916), p. 390.

<sup>39</sup> *Byskupa sögur*, ed. Jón Helgason, 2 vols, Editiones Arnarnæanæ, Ser. A, 13 (Copenhagen: The Arnarnæan Commission, 1938–1978), I, pp. 25–115.

arguments for the existence of a Latin *Hungrvaka*.<sup>40</sup> The note and the transcript extant in AM 670 e 4to were left behind in Copenhagen in 1985, when AM 386 I 4to was returned to Iceland.

Writing to Torfæus in 1704, Árni Magnússon must have expressed himself inaccurately, when he claimed that he had two leaves of a Latin *Hungrvaka* in Copenhagen in addition to the two leaves he had just found in Iceland. This is perhaps understandable, considering the fact that each side of the one leaf he had in Copenhagen represents a different book of the same work and could thus, in a sense, be counted as two fragments. Árni Magnússon must have 'længe til forn' ('long before') prior to 1704, presumably as soon as he acquired the first leaf, begun to suspect that it represented the remains of a Latin *Hungrvaka* and a *Vita sancti Thorlaci* combined into a single work, a work to which he also refers in its entirety as *Vita sancti Thorlaci*. There is otherwise nothing in the text of the *bifolium* (AM 386 I 4to, fols 2r–3v), which he acquired in Iceland in 1703, that could explain his identification of it as belonging to a Latin *Hungrvaka*.<sup>41</sup> In reconstructing the sequence of events, we may catch Árni Magnússon at work, as it were, comparing a fragment he had in front of him to a fragment he had left behind in Copenhagen and only had access to in his recollection.

In AM 207 b fol., we find more detailed notes on the vernacular *Hungrvaka* and how it might relate to *Þorláks saga*. In sum, Árni Magnússon believed:

- 1 that the original *Hungrvaka* was written between 1193 and 1200–1201, that is, after the death of Þorlákr and before Jón of Hólar was considered a holy man (the text does not recognize other native Icelandic saints than Þorlákr);
- 2 that a *Vita sancti Thorlaci* followed at the end of *Hungrvaka* and was a more extensive biography than those of the five bishops of *Hungrvaka*;
- 3 that the preserved vernacular *Þorláks saga helga* was written much later than the originally combined text;
- 4 that the vernacular *Þorláks saga helga* was derived from the original Life of Þorlákr appended to *Hungrvaka*, and that the former 'absorbed' the latter ('hefði absorberað hina Þorlaks Söguna'), so to speak, and made it obsolete;

<sup>40</sup> *Biskupa sögur II*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, pp. cx–cxv.

<sup>41</sup> In AM 207 b fol., fol. 34r, Árni Magnússon apparently refers to the same fragment as being 'þvi fragmento Latino ur vita Sancti Thorlaci, sem eg á in membranâ' ('from the Latin fragment of the *Vita sancti Thorlaci*, which I own in parchment.') *Árni Magnússons levned og skrifter*, ed. Finnur Jónsson, II, p. 147.

- 5 that the *Þorláks saga* miracles, which open defectively the first section of AM 645 4to (c. 1220) on fols 1r–11v, do not represent an independent vernacular *Jarteinabók Þorláks byskups in forna*, but rather what is left of an early vernacular redaction of *Þorláks saga helga*;
- 6 that the lost folios at the beginning of AM 645 4to probably contained a version of *Hungrvaka* introducing *Þorláks saga helga* and possibly also Ari Þorgilsson's *Íslendingabók* before that;<sup>42</sup>
- 7 that the contents of the lost work represented by the Latin fragment, AM 386 I 4to, were organized along the same lines as the combined *Hungrvaka/Þorláks saga* we find in seventeenth-century manuscripts;<sup>43</sup>

Without going into too much detail, I claim here that all of these conclusions, with the exception of statement 6, have been corroborated by recent research on the Latin fragments. Árni Magnússon does not, however, seem to have considered the possibility that both *Hungrvaka* and *Þorláks saga* originated from the Latin work(s) represented by AM 386 I 4to, that is, that the Latin text was translated into the vernacular and rewritten to create these two vernacular texts. And yet this would seem to be a necessary conclusion to draw, considering the respective age of the manuscript remnants of the Latin fragments *vis-à-vis* the vernacular texts, especially if one also believes with Árni Magnússon that most of the text of the *Þorláks saga helga* we now possess in the vernacular represents a late redaction. Indeed, like most scholars within the field of Old Norse-Icelandic literature after his time, Árni Magnússon simply does not seem to have considered the possibility of an indigenous Latin period in the formation of early Icelandic literature.

There is now an emerging consensus among scholars that there was a substantial phase in twelfth-century Icelandic literature, where native writers of Iceland used Latin as their medium for quasi-hagiographical and hagiographical works.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Árni Magnússon had never seen the original of *Íslendingabók*, which was lost already in the seventeenth century, but he reconstructed the appearance of the script/language on the basis of the two exact copies that he believed Brynjólfur Sveinsson (1605–1675) commissioned, namely Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, AM 113 a fol and AM 113 b fol, both of which were in his possession.

<sup>43</sup> The last medieval manuscripts of the combined *Hungrvaka* and *Þorláks saga helga* were probably lost in the fire of Skálholt in 1630. See *Byskupa sögur*, ed. Jón Helgason, I, p. 39.

<sup>44</sup> Jonas Wellendorf, 'Ecclesiastical Literature and Hagiography', in *The Routledge Research Companion to the Medieval Icelandic Sagas*, ed. Ármann Jakobsson and Sverrir Jakobsson (London: Routledge, 2017), p. 54.

We begin to see more clearly the contours of a dynamic early phase in the history of Icelandic prose literature in which the Latin hagiographical and ecclesiastical literature is cast in a vernacular mould and leaves a clear mark on native vernacular literature in the process. *At the same time, local tradition is first presented in Latin and subsequently reconstructed in the vernacular from Latin models* (my emphasis).

Jonas Wellendorf, the author of this passage, reaches his conclusion after surveying recent work on early Icelandic literature. He also refers to studies drawing on comparative material from Irish, English, German, and French medieval literature, where a similar ‘dynamic model for a formative dialogue between Latin and vernacular literature’ can be delineated, illustrating a process of vernacularization in other countries of the Latin West during the Middle Ages, which is fully comparable to what occurred in Iceland in the same period.<sup>45</sup>

The writer of *Hungrvaka*, in fact, provides an apt example of someone reconstructing a local tradition originally presented in Latin by translating and adapting it into the vernacular. In the prologue, he gives his reason for using the vernacular:<sup>46</sup>

Þat berr ok annat til þessa rits at teygja til þess unga menn at kynnsk vart mál at ráða, þat er á norrœnu er ritat, lög eða sögur eða mannfroedi. Set ek af því heldr þetta á skrá en annan fróðleik, þann er áðr er á skrá settr, at mér sýnsk mínum börnum eða öðrum ungmennum vera í skyldasta lagi at vita þat eða forvitnask, hvernig eða með hverjum hætti at hér hefir magnask kristnin ok byskupsstólar settir verit hér á Íslandi, ok vita síðan hverir merkismenn þeir hafa verit byskuparnir er hér hafa verit ok ek ætla nú frá at segja.

[Another purpose of this work is to entice young men to become able to read our language, that which is written in Old Norse, laws or sagas or genealogical lore. This is why I chose to put the present matter in a book rather than other informative material, which has already been put in writing, because it seems to me that it is most appropriate for my children and other young men to know or inquire into, how and in what way Christianity was made strong here and [how] the episcopal sees were established in Iceland, and then to get to know what illustrious men have served as bishops here, of whom I shall now tell.]

The most straight-forward way to read this passage is to regard it as the *Hungrvaka*-author’s acknowledgment of the novelty of his writing

<sup>45</sup> Wellendorf, see footnote above, refers specifically to Lars Boje Mortensen, ‘Den formative dialog mellem latinsk og folkesproglig litteratur ca 600–1250: Udkast til en dynamisk model’, in *Reykholt som makt- og lærdomssenter: I den islandske og nordiske kontekst*, ed. Else Mundal (Reykholt: Snorrastofa, 2006), pp. 229–71.

<sup>46</sup> *Biskupa sögur II*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, pp. 3–4.



in the vernacular Old Norse ('norroena'). He also, unequivocally, tells the reader that he is adapting knowledge which was already found in books ('fróðleik, þann er áðr er á skrá settr'). Unless those books were originally written in Latin, there is no novelty to rewriting them in Old Norse. Besides, to corroborate this interpretation and to remove all doubt as to the source language of *Hungrvaka*, one need only point to the extant fragments of the \**Gesta Scalotensis ecclesie presulum* in AM 386 I 4to, fol. 1r/v, dated to around 1200, while there is no evidence to back up the common belief that an Old Norse *Hungrvaka* existed at such an early date.

Already in the 1950s and 1960s scholars had commented on the absurdity of the current concept of vernacular or lay canonization. As pointed out by Jakob Benediktsson in 1969,<sup>47</sup> there is a compelling institutional necessity for a Latin *vita* when canonizing saints of the Roman Catholic Church. These scholars understood that the unspoken assumption in Old Norse-Icelandic studies, that the medieval Icelandic Church was as thoroughly a vernacular Church as the modern Dano-Lutheran State Church, so familiar in their own time, needed to be redressed. They recognized the evidence, ubiquitous in medieval Scandinavian and Icelandic sources, that nothing in the history of the Roman Catholic Church in Iceland indicated that Christianity at the edge of the world was practiced in a radically different manner from elsewhere in Western and Central Europe.

In 1980, Lilli Gjerløw presented a groundbreaking survey of Icelandic liturgical fragments, *Liturgica Islandica*, including pieces of manuals and missals from the Icelandic Middle Ages that demonstrate beyond doubt that, notwithstanding the Icelandic 'nationality' of the saint, the cult of St Þorlákr was, from its very foundation at the turn of the thirteenth century until the end of the Middle Ages, based on a Latin liturgy.<sup>48</sup> A tale

<sup>47</sup> 'Að semja ævisögu (vita) dýrlingsins á latínu [...] var beint skilyrði þess að hann yrði tekinn í heilagra manna tölu. Úr þeim texta hafa síðan verið gerðir latneskir textar til lítúrgískra nota á messudögum Þorláks, sem og var skilyrðislaus nauðsyn jafnskjótt og messuhald dýrlingsins var upp tekið' ('To compose a life [vita] for the saint in Latin [...] was a direct requirement for his assumption into the ranks of holy men. On the basis of that text Latin texts were made for liturgical use on Þorlákr's Feast Days, which was also an indisputable necessity as soon as the celebration of the saint commenced.') Jakob Benediktsson, 'Brot úr Þorlákslesi', p. 106. See also Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, 'Bemerkninger om de eldste bispesagaer', *Studia Islandica* 17 (1958), pp. 35–37. The exceptionalism of early scholarship is likewise rejected by the editor Ásdís Egilsdóttir, who accepts the primacy of the Latin texts on Þorlákr over the vernacular texts on the same general grounds. *Biskupa sögur II*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, p. cx.

<sup>48</sup> *Liturgica Islandica*, ed. Lilli Gjerløw, 2 vols, Bibliotheca Arnarnagænana 35–36 (Copenhagen: The Arnarnagæan Commission, 1980), I, pp. 69–74. See more recently Astrid Marnar, 'Forgotten Preaching: A Latin Sermon on Saint Þorlákr in Uppsala UB C 301', *Gripla* 27 (2016), pp. 235–61.

included in *Hungrvaka* relates that when Bishop Þorlákr the Elder died in 1133, a priest in the north of Iceland heard a Latin chant coming from the heavens: 'Sic animam claris celorum reddidit astris' ('Thus, he rendered his soul to the bright stars of heaven').<sup>49</sup> As for Þorlákr the Younger of Skálholt, in what is believed to be the remains of the oldest vernacular *Þorláks saga helga*,<sup>50</sup> Gizurr Hallsson is actually depicted as speaking Latin in his honor. In the description of miracles in AM 645 4to, before the translation (in fact before vows were officially permitted at the Alþingi in 1198), Gizurr the lawspeaker made a vow for his sick horse, promising to sing daily for the rest of his life 'Misericordiam tuam quesumus, Domine' ('Lord, we beg for your mercy'), a collect for the mass of a confessor, in honor of Bishop Þorlákr. After Bishop Þorlákr's translation, Gizurr's son, the priest Hallr (c. 1160–1230), when seeking aid for a sore throat, prays to his former patron thus: 'Sancte Thorlace, ora pro nobis' ('Saint Þorlákr, pray for us'). It goes without saying that the language used was Latin, and it is assumed that the reader, as well as Gizurr and his son, recognized the prayers in that language.

Anyone is free to doubt that Gizurr Hallsson held his funerary oration over Bishop Þorlákr in Latin, since this cannot be proven. We know only that what Gizurr wrote on the basis of his funerary oration was in Latin, given that we still possess a fragment from the *\*Gesta Scalotensis ecclesie presulum* in AM 386 I 4to. But whether he held it in Latin is really not the point. The point is rather that there is no basis for doubting that he could very well have held his oration in Latin, and that if he did, this would not have struck anyone present as extraordinary. In twelfth-century Iceland all religious people, and that included everyone, were used to hearing Latin spoken and chanted during ecclesiastical events as well as in private prayer, they were accustomed to worshipping God and addressing His saints not in the vernacular but in the language of the Roman Church.

## The Latin fragments

The fragments of the Latin legend of St Þorlákr were critically edited in 1978 by Jón Helgason (1899–1986), at the University of Copenhagen, who designated four groups of texts: LatI, LatII, LatIII and LatIV, but otherwise he did not analyze the fragments.<sup>51</sup> LatI, which is of primary

<sup>49</sup> *Biskupa sögur II*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, p. 27.

<sup>50</sup> See pp. 102–03 above.

<sup>51</sup> *Byskupa sögur*, ed. Jón Helgason, II, pp. 159–74. Jón Helgason died before he could write the introductory volume to accompany the edition. Nevertheless he stated his view of the main Latin fragments (LatI and LatII) in an entry he wrote around the same time in a standard reference work: 'Der findes to lat. fragmenter (...), hvoraf det førstnævnte er fra c. 1200. Det ser da ud til at man omtrent samtidig med at sagaen om Þ. blev udarbejdet har tænkt på også at

interest in this study, is the fragment AM 386 I 4to, now at The Árni Magnússon Institute in Reykjavík (BHL 8274). This is the *bifolium* found by Árni Magnússon in Iceland 1703 in addition to the single leaf discovered earlier. Paleographical evidence led Kristian Kålund and Hreinn Benediktsson to date these leaves to around 1200, very close in time to the translation of Þorlákr's relics.<sup>52</sup> The scribal hand of AM 386 I 4to may be compared to at least four contemporary Latin fragments:<sup>53</sup>

- 1 Reykjavík, Landsbókasafn Íslands – Háskólabókasafn, Lbs fragm 58; two leaves from Vellir (in Svarfaðardalur) preserving small sections of The Gospel of John;
- 2 Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 98 I 8vo; twenty-two leaves preserving an Icelandic Missal with musical notations;
- 3 Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 678 4to; a voluminous Icelandic Missal of some forty-nine leaves;

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udbrede hans ry blandt ikke-isl. læsere, men nærmere viden herom har man ikke' ('We have two Latin fragments [...], of which the former dates to around 1200. It appears, then, that about the same time as the saga of Þorlákr was worked out, people were also interested in spreading his reputation among non-Icelandic readers, but we have no further knowledge about this'). *KLNM* 20, cols 388–91. An English translation of the Latin fragments is available in Kirsten Wolf, 'A Translation of the Latin Fragments Containing the Life and Miracles of St Þorlákr along with Collections of *Lectiones* for Recitation on his Feast-Days', *Proceedings of the PMR Conference* 14 (1989), pp. 261–76. My own modern Icelandic translation is printed in *Biskupa sögur II*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, pp. 339–64, together with the Latin fragments.

<sup>52</sup> Kristian Kålund, *Katalog over Den Arnamagnæanske Håndskriftsamling*, 2 vols (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1889–1894), II (1892–1894), pp. 389–90. Hreinn Benediktsson, *Early Icelandic Script*, p. 14. Digital images of AM 386 I 4to are available online at Handrit, <https://handrit.is/en/manuscript/imaging/is/AM04-0386-I> in colour and as high quality black and white images, taken with ultraviolet lighting at <http://digitalesamlinger.hum.ku.dk/Home/Samlingerne/4122>.

<sup>53</sup> The paleographical dating of Icelandic-Latin fragments can also be based on Icelandic writing examples, since the differences in the letter forms are minimal. At least seven scribal hands have been identified in fragments of Latin psalters and liturgical books, evenly spread throughout the Middle Ages, which have also written texts in Old Norse-Icelandic manuscripts. These mainly anonymous professional scribes (only one name is known) are predominantly Icelandic, and they are credited with writing some of the most important Old Norse-Icelandic manuscripts, such as the two *Heimskringla*-codices, the *Kringla* and the *Codex Frisianus*, one *Stjórn* manuscript, and the *Norwegian Homily Book*. Such palaeographical findings have revealed the bilingualism of Icelandic scribal culture. See Gottskálf Jensson, 'Latin Hagiography in Medieval Iceland', pp. 882–83, with bibliography.

- 4 Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, AM 241 b V fol.; a single leaf once part of another Icelandic Missal, which has been dated by Lilli Gjerløw to the first quarter of the thirteenth century, may also be of relevance as comparative material. It contains the mass of St Þorlákr's *dies natalis* (December 23) and represents the oldest surviving witness to his cult in service books.<sup>54</sup>

Unfortunately, no data is available that would allow us to reconstruct the history of AM 386 I 4to in early modern times or determine where in Iceland Árni Magnússon acquired it. While my own investigation on the marginalia transmitted on folio 1 might seem to point to Skagafjörður in northern Iceland, it is ultimately inconclusive.<sup>55</sup> It is *a priori* more likely that Árni Magnússon found these fragments in the diocese of Skálholt,

<sup>54</sup> These fragments are discussed and dated in *Liturgica Islandica*, ed. Lilli Gjerløw, I, pp. 27–47, 62–74. See also the corresponding facsimiles in II, pp. 12–30; 42–47. According to an online report, AM 98 I 8vo was discussed at a paleographical workshop in Bergen in 2005, where the possibility of an English provenance was discussed and rejected. Gjerløw's detailed arguments for an Icelandic origin of AM 98 I 8vo are not mentioned in the report. See Åslaug Ommundsen, ed., *The Beginnings of Nordic Scribal Culture, ca 1050–1300: Report from a Workshop on Parchment Fragments, Bergen 28–30 October 2005* (Bergen: Centre of Medieval Studies, 2006), p. 38. There is a brief discussion of AM 98 I 8vo in Jón Þórarinnsson and Njáll Sigurðsson, *Íslensk tónlistarsaga 1000–1800* (Reykjavík: Tónlistarsafn Íslands, 2012), pp. 125–26; the authors claim that St Magnus is not mentioned in the manuscript, which he is, and they seem unaware of Gjerløw's important study.

<sup>55</sup> The following marginalia and pen trials are found on the first leaf, on folio 1r: 'Halldora Þorkeldsdóttir'; 1v: 'gudz nad og fridur tilsendist ydur minn gode vin' ('God's grace and peace be visited upon you, my good friend'); 'helga minn þacka eg þier fyrer skriptinna a Greter Sogu firer broder minn Sigurd Jon son' ('Helga, my dear, thank you for the copying of *Grettis saga* for my brother, Sigurður Jónsson'); 'mier þicke nu godur penne ef eg fer' ('to me it seems a good pen if I go'); 'Þu Hefur So miklar o þarfa skrifter' ('You have so much unnecessary writing'); 'gesti(?) þurijdur' ('guest (?) Þuríður [a woman's name]). A woman by the name of Halldóra Þorkeldsdóttir (fl. c. 1650–1710) lived at Ytra-Vatn, Lýtingsstaðahreppur, in Skagafjörður, at the time of the 1703-census, according to a search in the *National Archive of Iceland Census Database* (Reykjavík: The National Archive of Iceland, 2009), but Árni Magnússon was not in this area in 1703, although he travelled widely in the west and southwest of Iceland during that year. See Már Jónsson, *Árni Magnússon: Ævisaga* (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 1998), especially the map on p. 205. Árni Magnússon rode through or close by Lýtingsstaðahreppur in the summer of 1702, on his way south from Hólar, but his acquisition of the *bifolium* at that time would contradict his statement that he found it in 1703. Although the census of 1703 was made in connection with the land description of Árni Magnússon and Páll Vídalín, the actual registration was not carried out by them but by the administrators of each *hreppur* ('shire, county, commune'),

as he traveled there widely in 1703, and since the cult of St Þorlákr was especially prominent in this diocese; moreover, indications in charters about both Latin and vernacular texts of St Þorlákr are largely confined to this area. This tells more, however, about the medieval origins of such manuscripts than their fate after the Reformation, when books from the monastic libraries and hagiographical texts from churches were widely dispersed and destroyed.<sup>56</sup>

A possible place of origin for AM 386 I 4to is Skálholt itself or one of its affiliated abbeys, for instance the Augustinian houses of canons regular at Þykkvibær and Helgafell, founded in the twelfth century, both of which must have possessed Latin books. Helgafell Abbey certainly had a relatively large library, according to medieval standards, with close to 150 Latin books, about twenty-five of which were liturgical, in addition to thirty-five volumes in Icelandic, as testified by an inventory compiled in 1397.<sup>57</sup> Presumably, the library at Þykkvibær was similarly endowed, although inventories from this monastery have not survived. Both Þykkvibær and Helgafell were founded around the same time during the episcopate of Bishop Klængr Þorsteinsson, no doubt at the initiative of Archbishop Eysteinn Erlendsson who had close ties to Augustinian communities in Paris and worked towards promoting the order in Norway. Bishop Þorlákr himself in his early career became the first prior and abbot at Þykkvibær.<sup>58</sup> The Augustinian house on the island of Viðey just outside of Reykjavík, which was founded during the first quarter of the thirteenth century, had a library consisting primarily

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the *hrepptjóri* ('head of the commune'). It therefore remains unknown whether Árni Magnússon ever met the woman Halldóra Þorkeldsdóttir.

<sup>56</sup> See Margaret Cormack, *The Saints in Iceland: Their Veneration from the Conversion to 1400*. Subsidia hagiographica 78 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1994), pp. 159–65. In 1703, Árni Magnússon acquired Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, AM 382 4to, virtually the sole text witness to the B-redaction of *Þorláks saga helga*, at Hlíðarendi, in the vicinity of Skálholt. It has been estimated that about 99% of the Latin texts that were to be found in medieval Scandinavia by the time of the Reformation are now lost. See the discussion in Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson, 'Latin Fragments Related to Iceland', in *Nordic Latin Manuscript Fragments: The Destruction and Reconstruction of Medieval Books*, ed. Áslaug Ommundsen and Tuomas Heikkilä (London: Routledge, 2017), p. 175; and Áslaug Ommundsen and Tuomas Heikkilä, 'Piecing together the past: The accidental manuscript collections of the North', in *Nordic Latin Manuscript Fragments*, p. 4.

<sup>57</sup> See *DI* 4, pp. 170–71.

<sup>58</sup> As bishop of Skálholt, Þorlákr in 1186 founded the first Benedictine convent in Iceland at Kirkjubær at Síða, where he himself had dwelt for six years prior to starting up the community at Þykkvibær. There must, of course, have been a book collection at Kirkjubær, too, although no documentation for this has survived.

of Latin books.<sup>59</sup> All Augustinians in Scandinavia at this time looked to Paris as their spiritual center, and the canons in the Icelandic houses were not necessarily native Icelanders or trained in Iceland. The rule of St Augustine was new to Iceland and could not have been established at Þykkvibær or Helgafell any more than in Norway or elsewhere at this time without the help of other establishments of the same rule, as is confirmed by the vernacular accounts of the A- and B-redactions of *Þorláks saga helga*.<sup>60</sup>

### Analysis of AM 386 I 4to

As mentioned above, Árni Magnússon noted that the work of which AM 386 I 4to is a fragment was divided into two Latin *libri* or books apparently of different but related contents, with the former book ending on the *recto* side of the first leaf, and the latter beginning on the *verso* side. Considering how little is preserved of this work, it is quite fortuitous that this particular leaf should have survived, because it provides much data if properly analyzed. Árni Magnússon reconstructed the contents of the two Latin *libri* by comparing the fragment with two preserved vernacular works: *Hungrvaka*, about the first five bishops of Skálholt, and *Þorláks saga helga*, about the sixth bishop of Skálholt, whose relics were translated in 1198.

Folio 1r of LatI relates Bishop Kloengr's harsh penance in his old age and his death, dated in a manner comparable to the end of the vernacular *Hungrvaka*:

<sup>59</sup> See *DI* 4, pp. 110–11.

<sup>60</sup> 'Menn fóru til kanokasetrs Þorláks ábóta ór ǫðrum munklífum eða reglustoðum, bæði samlendir ok útlendir' ('Men went to Abbot Þorlák's canons' seat [i.e. Þykkvibær] from other monasteries or houses, where the Rule was observed, both his own countrymen and foreigners'). *Byskupa sögur II*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, p. 60 (A-redaction), p. 152 (B-redaction, with slightly different text). In Norway, after the crowning of King Magnús Erlingsson in 1164, three Augustinian houses were founded on the island Klosterøya (north of Stavanger), on Halsnøya (Hordaland), and Kastle (by Konghelle). These Norwegian houses, especially Kastle, had close ties to the Augustinian foundations in Denmark, which were staffed by canons from St Victor in Paris, who arrived in Denmark in 1165 together with their French leader, William, later abbot of Æbelholt (c. 1125–1203). Around the same time another house under the rule of Augustine seems to have been founded in Vestervig (Jutland). On the early monastic foundations, see Tore Nyberg, *Monasticism in North-Western Europe, 800–1200* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), and 'De benediktinske klostergrundlæggelser i Norden', in *Tidlige klostre i Norden før 1200*, ed. Lars Bisgaard and Tore Nyberg (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2006), pp. 13–30. See also the article 'Klostre' in *KLNM* 8, cols 527–46, and Gottskálk Jenson, 'Íslenskar klausturreglur', pp. 20–24. The abbeys at Þykkvibær and Helgafell should be seen in the context of the Scandinavian houses that were founded at the same time.

Carnem suam castigare et seruituti subicere, indefessus diuine legis executor sine intermissione satagebat. Tandem senio et longa egritudine fatigatus, sicut supra dictum est, sui sacerdotii sanctum Thorlacum successorem elegit dignissimum. Igitur Kloingus episcopus sue etatis anno septuagesimo primo, cum iam Scaloten[si] ecclesie prefuisset annis uiginti quatuor, die tertia kalendarum martii anno ab incarnatione Domini millesimo centesimo sexagesimo nono migravit a seculo.

[(Klœngr) the untiring executor of divine law bustled about without respite to punish and subdue his flesh. Finally, worn down with old age and tired of his protracted bad health, as was mentioned above, he chose St Þorlákr as the individual most worthy of becoming his successor in the office of bishop. Klœngr was in his seventy-first year (of life), and had now for twenty-four years presided over the Church of Skálholt, when he departed from this world on the third Kalends of March in the year 1169 from the incarnation of Our Lord.]

Klœngr was the fifth bishop of Skálholt and he is the last one treated in *Hungrvaka*. The fragment opens with a comment, said to be ‘sicut supra dictum est’ (‘as was stated above’), on his old age and protracted bad health, which is provided as the reason for his decision to resign from the episcopacy while still alive and chose St Þorlákr as his successor. Then Klœngr’s age (seventy-one) is mentioned along with his years in office (twenty-four) and the date of his death (February 28 1169). As in *Hungrvaka*, the year of Klœngr’s death is given as 1169, because the author of the Latin text is following the *Computus Gerlandi*, which dated the birth of Christ seven years later than the *era vulgaris*.<sup>61</sup> A comparable passage at the end of *Hungrvaka* reads as follows:

<sup>61</sup> So-called after the author Gerlandus Computista (c. 1045–1100), a teacher and mathematician from Lorraine (north-eastern France), from where manuscripts with the work spread in two directions to present day south-Germany and south-England. A survey of the thirty-seven manuscripts of *Computus Gerlandi* shows that the work was primarily used and copied within monastic houses and major ecclesiastical centers in the twelfth century, and a large part of the textual witnesses has a particular association with the Cistercian order, to which Archbishop Eskil of Lund (1137–1177) had an especially close connection. See *Der Computus Gerlandi: Edition, Übersetzung und Erläuterungen*, ed. Alfred Lohr. Wissenschaftsgeschichte Sudhoffs Archiv 61 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2013), pp. 14–15, 35. On the use of Gerland in Iceland, see Jón Jóhannesson, ‘Tímatál Gerlands í íslenskum ritum frá þjóðveldisöld’, *Skirnir* 126 (1952), pp. 76–93, and Ellen Zirkle, ‘Gerlandus as the Source for the Icelandic Medieval Computus (Rím I)’, *Opuscula* 4. Bibliotheca Arnarnagæana 30 (1970), pp. 339–46. Other Icelandic works using the *Computus Gerlandi* are *Rímbebla*, *Sverris saga*, *Þorláks saga helga*, *Páls saga*, *Jóns saga helga* (and presumably also *Vita sancti Johannis*, on which it is based), the *Prestssaga* of Bishop Guðmundr Arason, and probably *Thómas saga erkibiskups*.

En er Kløengr tók at eldast þá sótti at honum vanheilsa mikil, ok tóku í fyrstu fœtr hans at opnast af kulða ok meinlætum ok óhœgendum þeim er hann hafði haft. En er hann tók at mœða bæði elli ok vanheilsa þá sendi hann útan bréf sín Eysteini erkibyskupi ok bað hann leyfis [...] at taka annan til byskups í staðinn [...] En hann kaus Þorlák Þórhallsson. Kløengr var vígðr til byskups á dögum Eugenii páfa af Áskatli erkibyskupi [...] Hann hafði þá sjau vetr ins fimta tigar, ok hann var byskup tuttugu ok fjóra vetr. Hann andaðisk þrimr nóttum eptir Matthíasmessu [...] Þá var liðit frá hingatburði Christi at áratáli einum vetri miðr en sjau tigr ins tólfta hundraðs.

[When Kløengr became old, he was troubled by very bad health, which began with his feet opening from cold and from (acts of) penitence and the discomfort he had suffered. But when old age and bad health began to wear him down he sent his written request to Archbishop Eysteinn in Norway and asked him permission (...) to take another man as bishop in his place (...) and he chose Þorlákr Þórhallsson. Kløengr was consecrated as bishop by Archbishop Ásketil [Eskil of Lund] in the days of Pope Eugene III (...) at that point he had seven winters of the fifth decade (of his life): he was bishop for twenty-four winters ( $47+24 = 71$ ). He died three nights after the Feast of St Matthew (...) when one year was missing from the full count of seventy winters into the twelfth century from the incarnation of Christ.]

Based on what remains of the Latin text, it seems to have been more concise than the transmitted text of *Hungrvaka*. Most of the same narrative elements – Kløengr’s old age, bad health, penance, the selection of his successor while he was still alive, his choice of Þorlákr, the dating of his career and death, both their order and their logical unwinding, seem to confirm Árni Magnússon’s identification of the Latin text as the prototype of *Hungrvaka*, the writer of which appears to have amplified and reworked the material, as, for instance, in the count of years.

At the bottom of folio 1r, there is a rubric for the text on the *verso* side, which is now difficult to decipher (See Fig. 4.1). It reads: ‘De sancto Thorlaco episcopo et aliis episcopis nostris’ (‘About St Þorlákr the bishop and our other bishops’). On the *verso* side, a new book begins, as is evident from the reference ‘in superiore huius operis libro’ (‘in the previous book of this work’). In retrospect, the earlier book is said to have contained a sufficiently detailed account (‘sufficienter expressimus’) of St Þorlákr’s promotion (‘qualiter [...] promotus sit’) to the highest sacerdotal rank (‘ad summum sacerdotii gradum’). These words cannot refer only to the very brief mention of Þorlákr’s episcopal election on the *recto* side of the leaf, but must also point to a more detailed account of his election in an earlier, now-lost section. This suggests that late in Kløengr’s *vita*, and then again at the very end, the election of a new bishop was related. In the following, the contents of the first book are referred to retrospectively:



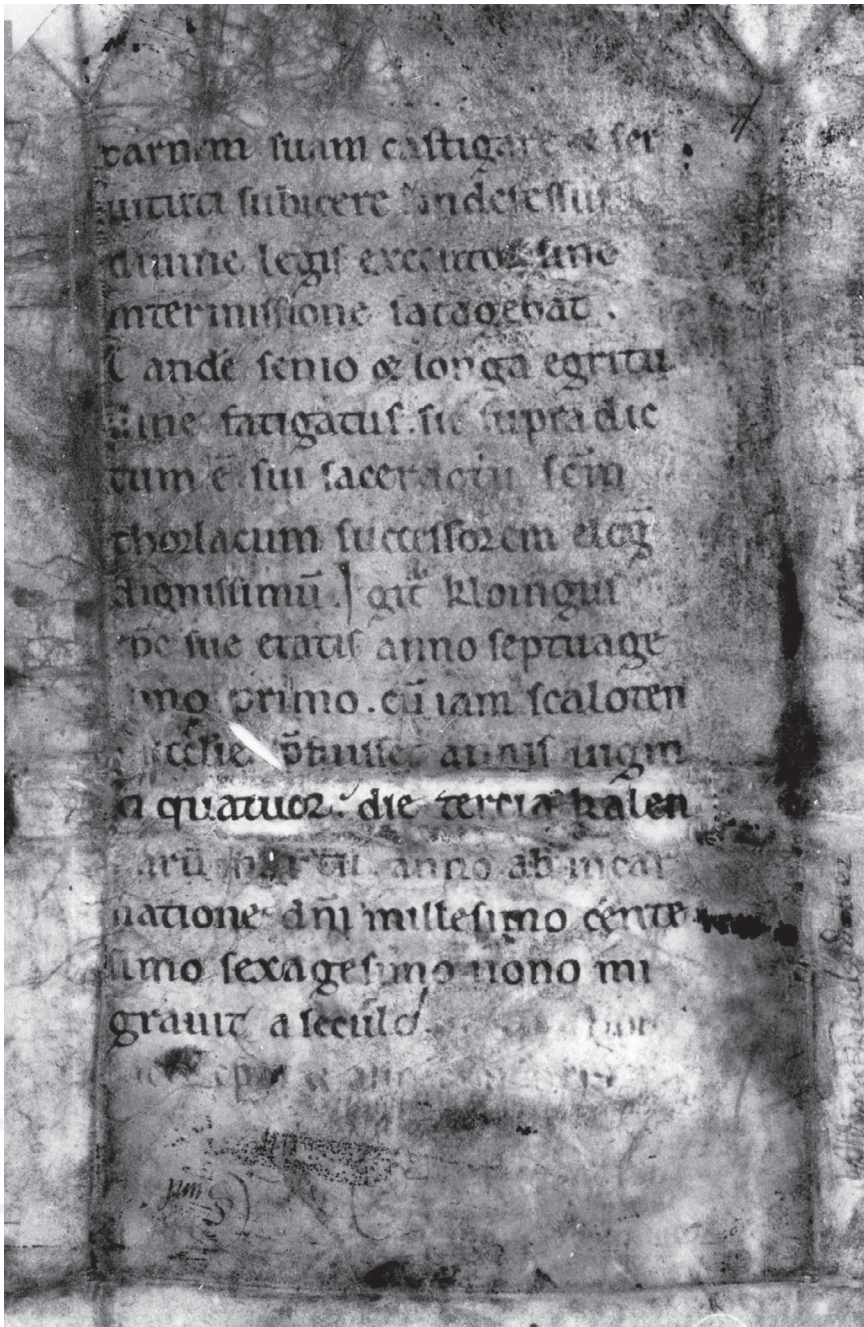


FIGURE 4.1 Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, AM 386 I 4to, folio 1r. Photo by permission of Den Arnamagnæanske Samling.

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*Latin Oratory at the Edge of the World*

His igitur presulibus et eximiis plebis sibi commisse rectoribus Scalotensis ecclesia uiguit: et usque ad sancti Thorlaci tempora, sicut modo comprobatur, magis ac magis in suo statu amplificata et dignanter confirmata conualuit. Isti sunt precipui gregis dominici pastores et uerissimi patres patrie qui sue et suorum subditorum utilitati bene prouidentes suos sequaces crebris ammonitionibus et bonorum operum ex[emplis exhortantes].

[Thus the Church of Skálholt prospered under these bishops, who were excellent leaders of the people that had been entrusted to their charge, and up to St Þorlákr's time, as has just been shown, it grew stronger and stronger, amplified in its state and worthily reinforced. These are the principal shepherds of the Lord's flock and the truest fathers of their fatherland, who cared well for their own and their subjects' need, [beseeching] their followers with frequent admonitions and [examples] of their good deeds.]

As in the vernacular *Hungrvaka*, the overarching focus is on the history of the see of Skálholt until the time of St Þorlákr. The function of this retrospective summary at the beginning of a new book is that of preparing the readers for a shift of focus from the previous bishops to St Þorlákr just as is done at the end of the vernacular *Hungrvaka*, which fuses with and is followed by *Þorláks saga* in the preserved seventeenth-century manuscripts.

The second and third leaves, which did not follow immediately after the first leaf in the lost manuscript, and are not consecutive, preserve further fragments from the second book of the work, pieces of text from four miracles, which can be dated to before and around the time of St Þorlákr's translation on July 20 1198. All of these miracles correspond to miracles known from *Þorláks saga helga*. Thus, a comparison with the two vernacular works reveals that LatI contains fragments from a combined text, datable to around 1200, of the same contents and structure.

The death of Bishop Klœngr is also mentioned in LatII (BHL 8273). This fragment consists of five leaves and one damaged strip dated by Hreinn Benediktsson to the first half of the thirteenth century.<sup>62</sup> The text on folios 1r–3v presents a continuous Latin narrative about the election of St Þorlákr at the Alþingi in 1174, arranged by Bishop Klœngr, who 'protulit' ('pulled out') a letter from Archbishop Eysteinn Erlendsson of Niðaróss, addressed to himself and the Icelandic magnates, among them Gizurr Hallsson and Jón Loptsson.<sup>63</sup> In LatII, it is told that the bishop-elect Þorlákr was so reluctant to take office that he stayed at Þykkvibær Abbey for nine months, where he was abbot, and finally arrived in

<sup>62</sup> Hreinn Benediktsson, *Early Icelandic Script*, p. 14, no. 1.

<sup>63</sup> The letter is preserved in an Icelandic translation and edited in *DI* 1, pp. 218–23.

Skálholt escorted by the magnate Jón Loftsson ('comitante secum preclarissimo huius patrie principe Iohanne'). The fragment then tells of Bishop Klængr's death, Þorlákr's own voyage to Niðaróss to be consecrated by Archbishop Eysteinn, his approval by King Magnús Erlingsson (1156–1184) and his father Erlingr skakki Ormsson (1115–1179) ('consenciente rege Magno & patre duce Erlingo qui tunc in Norwegia ius regium optinebant'), and finally his return to Iceland as bishop of Skálholt, all of which corresponds more or less to chapters 9–12, in the A-redaction, and 10–14, in the B-redaction, of *Þorláks saga helga*.<sup>64</sup>

Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson wondered why both LatI and LatII, folios 2v–3r, related the death of Bishop Klængr, since both were supposedly fragments from the same text, the otherwise lost *Vita sancti Thorlaci*. From this he concluded that the two fragments had to represent two different texts. However, a comparison of the two Latin texts reveals a parallel phraseology in LatI and LatII, which shows that LatII must be based on LatI or at least on a text closely related to LatI:

<i>LatI</i>	<i>LatII</i>
Senio et longa egritudine fatigatus [...] Kloingus episcopus	Kloingus episcopus senio et graui infirmirate fatigatus [...]
[Tired from old age and protracted bad health (...) Bishop Klængr]	[Bishop Klængr tired from old age and grave weakness (...)]

The dating of Bishop Klængr's death in both fragments is therefore not proof of two independent texts but appears to be caused by the intertwining of the two episcopal lives, that of Klængr at the end of *\*Gesta Scalotensis ecclesie presulum* and that of Þorlákr at the beginning of the *\*Vita sancti Thorlaci*. In a unique way, the careers of these two men overlap among the lives of the first six bishops of Skálholt, because of the permission given by Archbishop Eysteinn in the above-mentioned letter, that a new bishop of Skálholt be elected while Klængr was still in office.<sup>65</sup> Accordingly, the same events, Þorlákr's election and Klængr's death, would naturally be told in the lives of both bishops and are therefore mentioned twice in the Latin fragments of the combined text, as is the

<sup>64</sup> *Biskupa sögur II*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, pp. 61–69, 153–59.

<sup>65</sup> Bishop Gizurr Ísleifsson also sought similar permission, but the archbishop of Lund, Qzurr Sveinsson (c. 1055–1137), was reluctant to grant the request, because he 'talðisk eigi kunna á hofuð á hofuð ofan' ('meant that he could not place one head on top of another'); accordingly he consecrated the successor as bishop of Reykholt instead. *Biskupa sögur II*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, p. 23. In any case, Gizurr died before his successor arrived in Iceland to take office. In *Hungrvaka*, Gizurr's death is mentioned both in his own *vita* and that of the successor, Þorlákr Runólfsson, but dated only in the first instance. *Ibid.*, pp. 20, 24.

case in *Hungroaka* and *Þorláks saga helga*, with certain words repeated each time.<sup>66</sup> Compared to the B version of the saga, the Latin text of *\*Vita sancti Thorlaci* in LatII, folios 1r–3v, is in places more detailed: it plays down the historical conflict between Bishop Þorlákr and Jón Loftsson, it does not name the two other contenders to the office of bishop in Skálholt, who are named in the saga, and unlike the saga it refers to men only by their baptismal names, omitting Old Norse-Icelandic patronymics.<sup>67</sup>

Leaves 3v–5r of LatII, though written in the same hand, present another discontinuous text, which is closely related to the first three lessons of the *Breviarium Nidrosiense*, which comprises the fourth fragment, LatIV. *Lectio* numbers have been added in the margin in LatII in a more recent hand, which recognizes the nature of this text as liturgical lessons and indicates that the fragment was used for recitation, most likely on the feast-day of St Þorlákr in the winter, that is, on the day of his death, December 23. The lessons in LatII seem not to be complete; another hand takes over at the bottom of 4v, but ends on 5r after only eight lines.

Leaves 5v–6r (only a narrow strip of leaf 6 survives) contain legendary fragments about St Edmund the Martyr and St Pantaleon. LatII originally belonged to a church in Eastern Iceland, as evident from a note written by Árni Magnússon, which accompanies the fragment: ‘Aptan af Legendario frá Vallanesi í Fljótalds herade’ [‘From the back of a legendary from Vallanes in Fljótaldshérað’].

I do not here discuss LatIII, which consists of three sets (LatIII 1, 2, 3) of overlapping liturgical fragments with *lectiones* for recitation on the Mass of St Þorlákr in the summer (the day of his translation), which was established as a holy day in 1237. As mentioned above, the last part of this fragment was discovered in the 1960s in the binding of a book housed in The National Archives of Iceland. Together, LatIII 1–3 preserve a continuous text with two lacunae, though the lessons are numbered and divided differently. The whole of Lat III describes the ceremonious *translatio* on July 20 1198, and documents four miracles (although only one survives in its entirety), which took place around the same time. There are close similarities between the Latin text and the Icelandic saga, especially the B- and C-redactions, the A-redaction of *Þorláks saga helga* containing no description of the *translatio*-ceremony. The correspondences suggest that an exemplar common to B and C was translated from a Latin text similar to the one on which the

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., pp. 40–41, 64, 155. See my earlier and less successful discussion of the problem in Gottskálk Jensson, ‘Nokkrar athugasemdir um latínubrotin úr *Vita sancti Thorlaci episcopi et confessoris*’, in *Pulvis Olympicus: Afmælisrit tileinkað Sigurði Péturssyni*, ed. Jón Ma. Ásgeirsson, Kristinn Ólason and Svavar Hrafn Svavarsson (Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan, 2009), pp. 105–07.

<sup>67</sup> Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, ‘Bemerkninger om de eldste bispesagaer’, pp. 29–32. *Biskupa sögur II*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, pp. cxvii–cxxi. Gottskálk Jensson, ‘Latin Hagiography in Medieval Iceland’, pp. 905, 911.

lessons are based. Although derived from the text of *Vita sancti Thorlaci*, the first arrangement of these lessons could well date to the summer of 1237, when Bishop Magnús Gissurarson made the day of St Þorlákr's translation an obligatory feast-day. A likely provenance of LatIII 1 and 2 is an Icelandic bookbinding, though Árni Magnússon does not provide information about where he acquired the fragments.

LatIV consists of printed lessons in the *Breviarium Nidrosiense*.<sup>68</sup> The title of these lessons is: *In festo sancti Thorlaci episcopi et confessoris etc.*, and they are preceded by a short *commune sanctorum* prayer. The text of these lessons is clearly related to the lessons of LatII on folios 3v–5r, indicating that they are from the early thirteenth century. There are here six *lectiones* for recitation on Þorlákr's feast-day in winter, and they give a brief survey of St Þorlákr's *vita* from beginning to end.

## Conclusions

From the evidence discussed, it appears that a full *Vita sancti Thorlaci* existed already by the time of the Alþingi in 1199, when St Þorlákr's feast-day (December 23) was added to the church calendar of the entire country as an obligatory feast-day. Þorlákr's *vita et miracula*, which was found primarily in *liber secundus* of the combined work, which began with the *\*Gesta Scalotensis ecclesie presulum* as *liber primus*, may have started with his youth (as in the vernacular saga) and the brief overview of his life in the six lessons of the *Breviarium Nidrosiense*. It included an account of his education, his introduction of the Augustinian rule to Iceland as prior and then abbot of Þykkvibær, his episcopal election, his voyage to Niðaróss to be consecrated, an account of his period in office as bishop of Skálholt, his character and daily routines, and his death. The *post mortem* account began with dreams and revelations about his sanctity; this part was based on Brother Gunnlaugr's *\*Revelaciones (de sanctitate) Thorlaci episcopi*. Then came the miracles having to do with the Alþingi in 1198, where Bishop Páll Jónsson allowed vows to be made, and subsequently the *translatio* in Skálholt three weeks after the Alþingi, along with a collection of *miracula* that occurred on and after that occasion until the Alþingi of 1199. At the latter assembly, the *miracula* were read aloud.

Bishop Þorlákr's sanctity was soon embraced by the entire diocese of Skálholt, but to a lesser degree beyond it, since most of the churches that named him as patron (fifty-one out of fifty-six), were located within three quarters of Iceland: the southern, the western, and the eastern quarters, all subject to Skálholt. Just as his medieval veneration was primarily associated with the Skálholt see, so the first redaction of his

<sup>68</sup> *Breviarium Nidrosiense*, I, fols v/r–vi/r.

*vita* was combined with a history of Skálholt in the form of a series of five biographies of the first bishops. The writing of this \**Gesta Scalotensis ecclesie presulum* involved Gizurr Hallsson the lawspeaker, on whose funeral oration it was built, and whose ancestors had donated Skálholt to the Church in Iceland and still controlled it to some degree at the time of writing. The aged lawspeaker is likely to have collaborated on the project with Brother Gunnlaugr Leifsson of Þingeyrar, to whom the honor of writing the majority of *Vita sancti Thorlaci* probably belongs, given that he was recognized as the most accomplished Latinist in Iceland, while his initial \**Revelaciones* had served to legitimize the process of canonization and were partly incorporated into the final *vita*, as may be gleaned from the sagas.<sup>69</sup>

The first editors of *Hungrvaka* surmised that the writing of this vernacular text was carried out in Skálholt by Bishop Magnús Gizurarson.<sup>70</sup> Magnús became involved in managing Skálholt soon after Bishop Páll's death and was himself consecrated bishop there in 1216. The creator of the vernacular *Hungrvaka* was a person who felt responsible for Skálholt and, as many scholars have pointed out, his preoccupation with the finances of the see runs through the text. This concern was no doubt already present in the prototype \**Gesta Scalotensis ecclesie presulum*. Magnús was the son of Gizurr Hallsson, he was fostered by St Þorlákr, and he succeeded Páll Jónsson. Like his father, he was a leading member of the Haukdælir, descended from the first Icelandic bishops, Ísleifr and Gizurr, whose ancestral estate was Skálholt. Not surprisingly, given the identity of these men, the ideology of the Haukdælir and their pride in the episcopal see and its history permeates *Hungrvaka*, as it clearly did the \**Gesta Scalotensis ecclesie presulum*, according to the fragment. Bishop Magnús Gizurarson undertook the second translation of St Þorlákr's remains in 1229. In 1237, just before he died in August, he made the anniversary of St Þorlákr's first translation a Holy Day of Obligation.<sup>71</sup> By this time, St Þorlákr was as much an embodiment of Skálholt as St Óláfr was of the archbishopric of Niðaróss.

<sup>69</sup> Chapters 19–22 in the A-redaction and 37–42 in the B-redaction. *Biskupa sögur II*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, pp. 83–86, 192–95.

<sup>70</sup> *Hungrvaka, Pals biskups saga, ok þattr af Thorvalldi vídförla*, ed. Jón Ólafsson, Hannes Finnsson, Guðmundur Magnússon, and Grímur Thorkelin, pp. a7/v–8/v.

<sup>71</sup> Cormack, *The Saints in Iceland*, p. 164.

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## Three Scenes from *Jóns saga helga*: A Typological Mode of Thought in Early Icelandic Hagiography

Haki Antonsson

The bow (*βίος*) is called life (*βίος*), but its work is death  
Heraclitus, *Fragment 48*

Around the time of the translation of Bishop Jón Ógmundarson's (1056–1121) remains at Hólar Cathedral in 1200, Brother Gunnlaugr Leifsson was assigned the task of writing a *vita* of Iceland's new saint. The choice of the Þingeyrar monk to serve as Jón's hagiographer is not surprising. Gunnlaugr composed a Latin history of King Óláfr Tryggvason and likely a *vita* of St Ambrose of Milan (c. 340–397). He also rendered Geoffrey of Monmouth's (c. 1100–1155) *Prophetiae Merlini* into Old Norse verse.<sup>1</sup> It is unknown whether Gunnlaugr completed these texts prior to composing his Latin life of Jón. It is possible to date more precisely Gunnlaugr's contribution to the early hagiographic corpus on St Þorlákr Þórhallsson. The so-called *Jarteinabók Þorláks byskups önnur* ('The Second Miracle Collection of St Þorlákr') of the Skálholt saint relates that Guðmundr Arason compiled Gunnlaugr's 'vitranir' ('visions') associated with St Þorlákr. Gunnlaugr was tasked with 'dikta' ('composing') older material into items of greater quality and relevance.<sup>2</sup> This occurred before Guðmundr Arason's consecration

<sup>1</sup> On Gunnlaugr's likely authorship of *Ambrósíus saga*, see Katrín Axelsdóttir, 'Gunnlaugur Leifsson og *Ambrósíus saga*', *Skírnir* 179/2 (2005), pp. 337–49.

<sup>2</sup> 'Vitranir þær [i.e. St Þorlákr's] er Guðmundr prestur er síðan var byskup sendi Gunnlaugi múnk at hann skyldi dikta, mun ek skyndlilega yfir fara'. *Biskupa sögur II: Hungroaka, Þorláks saga byskups in elzta, Jarteinabók Þorláks byskups in forna, Þorláks saga byskups yngri, Jarteinabók Þorláks byskups önnur, Þorláks saga byskups C, Þorláks saga byskups E, Páls saga byskups, Ísleifs þáttur byskups, Latínubrot um Þorlák byskups*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir. Íslenzk fornrit 16 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 2002), p. 243.



to the diocese of Hólar in 1207. Gunnlaugr may also have written \**Revelaciones (de sanctitate) Thorlaci episcopi*.<sup>3</sup>

Guðmundr's request suggests an appreciation of Gunnlaugr's literary skills. These skills are certainly in evidence in two nocturnal visions, in which the otherwise obscure Brestr (fl. c. 1100–1140) is shown Þorlákr Runólfsson's (1086–1133) heavenward ascent at the time of death of this Skálholt bishop in 1133.<sup>4</sup> The symmetrical and symbolic nature of this narrative testifies to Gunnlaugr's craftsmanship and learning. Elsewhere, I have highlighted similar qualities in an episode that probably featured in Gunnlaugr's Latin saga of Óláfr Tryggvason (c. 963/964–1000).<sup>5</sup> He would have composed this account not long after the Benedictine monk of Þingeyrar, Oddr Snorrason (fl. c. 1150–1200), had written a Latin biography about the same king.<sup>6</sup>

Regarding the complex preservation of *Jóns saga helga* I follow Peter Foote's introduction to his edition of the text.<sup>7</sup> *Jóns saga helga* appears in three Old Norse-Icelandic redactions (S, L, and H) which rely on a thirteenth-century exemplar.<sup>8</sup> The core of this 'frumgerð' ('original version') is a translation of Gunnlaugr's Latin *vita* and other supplementary material.<sup>9</sup> Gunnlaugr's authorship of a \**Vita sancti Johannis*

<sup>3</sup> See the discussion above by Gottskálk Jenson at pp. 132–33, and Gottskálk Jenson, 'Latin Hagiography in Medieval Iceland', in *Corpus Christianorum, Hagiographies: Histoire internationale de la littérature hagiographique latine et vernaculaire en Occident*, vol. 7, ed. Guy Philippart and Monique Goulet (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), p. 924.

<sup>4</sup> Gottskálk Jenson, '\**Revelaciones Thorlaci Episcopi*', pp. 133–75. This study argues that the vision attests to the heavenly honor accorded to another but more famous Skálholt bishop, namely St Þorlákr.

<sup>5</sup> Haki Antonsson, 'Salvation and Early Saga Writing in Iceland: Aspects of the Works of the Þingeyrar Monks and Their Associates', *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 8 (2012), pp. 95–103.

<sup>6</sup> On these early sagas about Óláfr Tryggvason, see Sveinbjörn Rafnsson, *Ólafs sögur Tryggvasonar: Um gerðir þeirra, heimildir og höfunda* (Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan, 2005).

<sup>7</sup> *Biskupa sögur I: Kristni saga, Kristni þættir, Þorvalds þáttur víðförla I, Þorvalds þáttur víðförla II, Stefnis þáttur Þorgilssonar, Af Þangbrandi, Af Þíðranda ok dísunum, Kristniþóð Þangbrands, Þrír þættir, Kristnitakan, Jóns saga ins helga, Gísls þáttur Illugasonar, Sæmundar þáttur*, vol. 1: *Fræði*, vol. 2: *Sögutextar*, ed. Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Peter Foote. Íslenzk fornrit 15 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 2003), I, pp. ccxiii–cccxi.

<sup>8</sup> The versions are published separately in a diplomatic text edition in *Jóns saga Hólabyskups ens helga*, ed. Peter Foote. Editiones Arnarnæmæ, Ser. A, vol. 14 (Copenhagen: Reitzel, 2003). A new English translation is offered in *The Saga of St. Jón of Hólar*, trans. Margaret Cormack and Peter Foote. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 297 (Tempe, Arizona: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 297, 2020).

<sup>9</sup> For example, Gunnlaugr's text did not include material from *Íslendingabók* and *Ísleifs þáttur*; these were incorporated into *Jóns saga helga* at a later date.

### Three Scenes from *Jóns saga helga*

is attested in the fourteenth-century L-version, which refers to him four times. Most notably, the preface to this version states that Bishop Guðmundr encouraged Gunnlaugr to compose a *vita*.<sup>10</sup> As the Þingeyrar monks fell out with Bishop Guðmundr in 1210, it seems that Gunnlaugr wrote the text, or at least began to work on it, sometime between 1207 and 1210.<sup>11</sup> This study focuses on three episodes in *Jóns saga helga*. One is directly attributed to Gunnlaugr, whereas the others likely also featured in his Latin *vita*. I recognize that there may be no certainty in this matter, and this lack of certainty should be considered when I refer to Gunnlaugr's authorship of the two unattributed episodes.

The earliest hagiography on SS Jón and Þorlákr was composed around the beginning of the thirteenth century.<sup>12</sup> The creation of each corpus entailed its own unique challenges. Only a few years separated Þorlákr's death and his *translatio* in 1198. Accordingly, the bishop's personality and deeds were likely fresh in the minds of contemporaries. Þorlákr's episcopacy may have been sensitive in some quarters. According to the B-redaction of *Þorláks saga helga*, Þorlákr quarrelled with Jón Loptsson, the powerful chieftain of the Oddaverjar, whom he allegedly threatened with excommunication.<sup>13</sup> Jón Loptson was the father of Páll Jónsson, bishop of Skálholt (r. 1195–1211) who presided over Þorlákr's canonization and, not surprisingly, the earliest Old Norse *vita*, the A-redaction of *Þorláks saga helga*, is taciturn about this conflict.

<sup>10</sup> *Biskupa sögur I*, ed. Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Peter Foote, I, pp. ccxxi–ccxxii. See also the reference to Gunnlaugr's authorship of Jón's *vita* in Arngrímur Brandsson's (d. 1361) in the D-redaction of *Guðmundar saga Arasonar*. *Byskupa sögur*, ed. Guðni Jónsson, 3 vols (Reykjavík: Íslendingasagnautgáfan, 1953–1962), III, p. 197, and the discussion above by Gottskálk Jensson, at p. 106.

<sup>11</sup> According to *Íslendinga saga*, Gunnlaugr offered advice and support to the priests, who in 1210 noted Bishop Guðmundr's ban on all church services in the diocese of Hólar. See *Sturlunga saga*, ed. Jón Jóhannesson, Magnús Finnbogason and Kristján Eldjárn, 2 vols (Reykjavík: Sturlunguútgáfan, 1946) I, pp. 254–55.

<sup>12</sup> Ásdís Egilsdóttir, 'St Þorlákr in Iceland: The Emergence of a Cult', *The Haskins Society Journal* 12 (2003), pp. 121–33 and 'The Beginning of Local Hagiography in Iceland: The Lives of Bishop Þorlákr and Jón', in *The Making of Christian Myths in the Periphery of Latin Christendom (c. 1000–1300)*, ed. Lars Boje Mortensen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2006), pp. 121–32. See also the discussion below by Ásdís Egilsdóttir at pp. 182–85.

<sup>13</sup> See *Biskupa sögur II*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, p. 167. See also Kirsten Wolf, 'Pride and Politics in Late-Twelfth-Century Iceland: The Sanctity of Bishop Þorlákr Þórhallsson', in *Sanctity in the North: Saints, Lives, and Cults in Medieval Scandinavia*, ed. Thomas A. DuBois. Toronto Old Norse and Icelandic Series 3 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), pp. 241–70.

In comparison to Þorlákr, Jón was an uncontroversial figure.<sup>14</sup> In fact, there is little to indicate that the bishop was of particular interest to Icelanders in the period between his death in 1121 and *translatio* in 1200 (March 3). Whatever memory there was of Jón related primarily to his status as the venerable ‘founding father’ of the Hólar bishopric. The arresting and vivid episodes in *Jóns saga helga* may therefore seem somewhat paradoxical. It is probable, however, that both the absence of a political dimension and the dearth of sources inspired the earliest hagiographer – Gunnlaugr – to a higher level of creativity. One aim of this study is to highlight the essence of the inventiveness involved.

One aspect that sets *Jóns saga helga* apart from the A-redaction of *Þorláks saga helga* is the centrality of Hólar Cathedral and its community. *Jóns saga* depicts Hólar as a centre of religious activity hosting a thriving school and resident anchorites. The Hólar connection of *Jóns saga* suggests an imprint of a cloister tended by Jón, who is represented as a monastic bishop in the mould of St Martin of Tours (316–397): a holy man attentive to his flock’s pastoral needs.<sup>15</sup> This aspect of Jón’s image is emphasized, for instance, in his scolding of the young Kloengr Þorsteinsson (1102–1176), who became the fifth bishop of Skálholt (1152–1176), for reading Ovid’s *Ars Amatoria*, as well as his patronage of Hildir, a resident anchoress at Hólar, which is discussed below.<sup>16</sup> This communal, cloistered dimension featured in Gunnlaugr’s *vita* resonates with the author’s monastic background.

Nonetheless, the focus of this essay is neither *Jóns saga helga*’s representation of Jón’s sanctity nor its broader ideological context. Rather, my concern is with the use in Gunnlaugr’s *vita* of three types of source material – oral, written, and visual – in as many episodes. These will hereafter be designated as *Episodes* I, II, and III. Attention will be drawn to the deeper narrative structure of these accounts. More specifically, I show how similar patterns appear in episodes that may initially seem to have little in common other than illustrating Jón’s sanctity. These patterns may then illuminate a hitherto under-explored stylistic dimension that is of broader relevance to the Old Norse-Icelandic corpus.

<sup>14</sup> Bishop Jón’s marriage may, however, have been an issue. See Stephan G. Kuttner, ‘St. Jón of Hólar: Canon Law and Hagiography in Medieval Iceland’, *Analecta Cracoviensia* 7 (1975), pp. 367–75.

<sup>15</sup> Jón is associated with a relic of St Martin of Tours in *Jóns saga helga*. See *Biskupa sögur I*, ed. Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Peter Foote, II, pp. 222–23. St Martin as a saintly exemplar is even more pronounced in relation to Þorlákr, as attested in his earliest *vita*. See *Biskupa sögur II*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, p. 79.

<sup>16</sup> *Biskupa sögur I*, ed. Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Peter Foote, II, pp. 211–12.

## Episode I

*Episode I* occurs sometime during Jón's episcopacy.<sup>17</sup> One night, Jón dreams that he is praying before a large crucifix in his cathedral. Christ tilts his head towards Jón and whispers a few words which we are not made privy to ('vitum vér eigi hver þau váru').<sup>18</sup> Jón relates his experience to Ríkini (*fl. c. 1100–1150*), his Franconian (German or possibly French) chaplain and friend, but they are unable to decipher its meaning. The following day, the bishop is visited by a group of men who have recently arrived in Iceland. These are presumably foreigners, although this is not made explicit.<sup>19</sup> The visitors present St Jón with a text, which includes a story of Jews desecrating Christ's image. The L-version of *Jóns saga helga* identifies the place as 'Bericho' or Beirut. Having beaten, spat at, and mock-crucified the image, the Jews speared Christ's side, at which point a miraculous and extraordinary event occurred ('Þá varð dásimligr atburður ok fáheyrður').<sup>20</sup> Water and blood flowed from the Savior's side, and this liquid healed many of their ailments. Experiencing this marvel, the Jews repented their sins and converted to Christianity. *Episode I* concludes with Jón and Ríkini reading this tale with the latter smiling and uttering the following words: "'Sé hér nú, faðr, draum þann er Dróttinn sýndi þér í nótt.' Síðan lofuðu báðir Dróttin Jesum Christum" ('Here, father, you may see the dream which God showed you tonight'. Then both praised Lord Jesus Christ.')<sup>21</sup>

The story of the Jews in *Jóns saga helga* is a summarized version of a well-known tale set in Beirut. It first appears in the 770s in a Greek theological anthology, which was spuriously attributed to Athanasius of Alexandria (AD 295–373). From the ninth century onwards, the 'Christ in Beirut' story features in various versions in Latin chronicles and *miracula*, including Sigebert of Gembloux's (*c. 1030–1112*) *Chronicon*.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 233–34. For a different approach to this episode, see Þóra Kristjánsdóttir, 'A Nocturnal Wake at Hólar: The Judgement Day Panel as a Possible Explanation for a Miracle Legend?', in *The Nordic Apocalypse: Approaches to Völuspá and Nordic Days of Judgement*, ed. Terry Gunnell and Annette Lassen. Acta Scandinavica. Aberdeen Studies in the Scandinavian World 2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), pp. 221–29.

<sup>18</sup> *Biskupa sögur I*, ed. Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Peter Foote, II, p. 233.

<sup>19</sup> On Ríkini, see also the discussion below by Ásdís Egilsdóttir, at pp. 192.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 233.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 234.

<sup>22</sup> For the historical and literary context, see Katherine Aron-Beller, 'Fictional Tales and Their Narrative Transformations. Accusations of Image Desecration Against Jews in 12th and 13th Century Europe', *Antisemitism Studies* 1/1 (2017), pp. 54–63. For a detailed study of the development of the story, see Michele Bacci, "'Quel bello miracolo onde si fa la festa del santo Salvatore": studio sulla

The tale also appears in two Icelandic manuscripts from around 1400 and 1425–1445 as *Kross saga: 'Flagellatio Crucis'*, an abridged version of BHL 4230.<sup>23</sup>

*Episode I* includes two seemingly quite different action scenes. In the first, there is Bishop Jón (and his chaplain) at Hólar, whereas the other features Jewish activity in a faraway location. The two scenarios are separated in time and space, and on the surface they may appear wholly unrelated. Yet, on closer inspection, their common qualities emerge precisely from their difference. Whereas Jón dreams of himself praying alone and paying reverence to the crucifix, the Jews cruelly treat a similar object with contempt and, from a Christian perspective, in a grossly blasphemous manner. In both instances, Christ engages with the characters in question. The Jews' ill-treatment of the icon elicits the flowing of the miraculous fluids which turns them to the true religion, whilst Jón's prayer prompts Christ to address him in a striking manner. Although the religious sentiment of the principal players could hardly be more different, the narratives manifestly share common narrative features.

Jón's brief dream-vision merits further examination. The praying bishop sees 'ok þótti honum líkneskit á krossinum hneigjask at sér ok mæla nokkur orð í eyra sér' ('as though the image on the cross bowed towards him and speaks a few words in his ears').<sup>24</sup> Christ does not merely tilt his head towards Jón but, more dramatically, leans forward to address the bishop. The bowing gesture and the whispering in his ear indicate that an extraordinary grace is bestowed upon the Hólar bishop. Visions of this nature appear in religious literature of the period. For instance, in the 1170s, Cistercians related how a crucifix appeared before St Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153) as he prayed at the altar. The bloodied Christ bowed down from the Cross and embraced the saintly abbot.<sup>25</sup>

The morphology of such medieval visions features a combination of the bloodied Christ bowing, embracing, kissing, and addressing the object of his attention.<sup>26</sup> Although *Episode I* is a somewhat less tactile

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metamorfosi di una leggenda', in *Santa Croce e Santo Volto: Contributi allo studio dell'origine e della fortuna del culto del Salvatore (secoli IX-XV)*, ed. Gabriella Rossetti (Pisa: Gisem-ETS, 2002), pp.1–86. For a list of medieval references and retellings of the 'Christ in Beirut' story see *Ibid.*, pp. 47–86 (the Icelandic version is not included).

<sup>23</sup> See Kirsten Wolf, *The Legends of the Saints in Old Norse-Icelandic Prose*. Toronto Old Norse and Icelandic Series 6 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), pp. 85–86.

<sup>24</sup> *Biskupa sögur I*, ed. Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Peter Foote, II, p. 233.

<sup>25</sup> Sheryl Frances Chen, 'Bernard's Prayer before the Crucifix that Embraced Him: Cistercians and Devotion to the Wounds of Christ', *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 29 (1994), pp. 24–54.

<sup>26</sup> See the fourteen examples collected and analyzed by Sara Lipton, "'The

*Three Scenes from Jóns saga helga*

example of this genre – there is no blood, kissing, or hugging – there is the bowing of the crucified Christ and his intimate whispering to St Jón. A vision of a similar type appears to have been recorded by Oddr Snorrason, who may have been Gunnlaugr’s contemporary at Þingeyrar. As noted, Oddr wrote a Latin biography about King Óláfr Tryggvason of Norway. This work survives in three Old Norse redactions, one of which features the following vision involving Oddr Snorrason himself:<sup>27</sup>

Ok segja menn at fyrir hann hafi borit[t dýr]ligar sýnir. Ok hann sá Ólaf konung at sýn, at sagn vitra manna, ok því framar, at menn segja at hann sæ[i Krist] sjálfan, þá er hann var í óynði ok vildi á braut ór munklífinu. Ok er hann kom í kirkjuna sá hann [Krist] breiða frá sér hendrnar ok hneigja höfuðit ok mælti áhyggjusamliga: ‘Hér máttu nú sljá hvat] ek hefi þolat fyrir yðrar sakar, ok muntu vilja bera freistin fyrir mínu nafni’. Ok síðan [kom] hann eigi í slíka freistni sem áðr, ok lét hann Guði þakkir gervar.

[And people say that he had experienced glorious visions. And according to wise men, he had a vision of King Óláfr, and even more importantly, he saw Christ himself when he was unhappy and wished to leave the monastic life. When he entered the church, he saw [Christ] opening his arms, bowing his head, and speaking with concern: ‘Here you now may see what I have had to endure for your sake, and on account of my name you will overcome the temptation’. And thereafter he was not tempted as before, and he had thanks given to God.]

Oddr seems struck by something akin to *acedia* (‘sloth’) – a form of melancholia and restlessness that reputedly afflicted medieval monks – which entices him to enter the outside world.<sup>28</sup> Although it is not specified whether Oddr saw a cross or a crucifix, the image is manifestly of Christ’s Passion. The vision places Oddr’s desires in their proper perspective as he beholds Christ’s torments and suffering. Christ had, after all, suffered his Passion, so that those like Oddr might attain

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Sweet Lean of His Head”: Writing about Looking at the Crucifix in the High Middle Ages’, *Speculum* 80/4 (2005), pp. 1172–208. See also such animation of the crucified Christ, which appears in texts and visual art from the twelfth century onwards. Kamil Kopania, *Animated Sculptures of the Crucified Christ in the Religious Culture of the Latin Middle Ages* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Neriton, 2010).

<sup>27</sup> *Færeyinga saga - Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar eptir Odd munk Snorrason*, ed. Ólafur Halldórsson. Íslensk fornrit 25 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 2006), p. 358.

<sup>28</sup> Haki Antonsson, ‘Salvation and Early Saga Writing’, pp. 128–29. For an overview and historical contextualization of this condition, see Siegfried Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth: Acedia in Medieval Thought and Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960).

salvation. Note here the extending of the arms (which are presumably gashed and bloody) and the bowing of the head: the verb in its reflexive form 'hneigjask' ('to bow oneself') appears in both *Jóns saga helga* and the passage from Oddr's text, perhaps representing the same Latin term, most likely *inclinare* + personal pronoun ('to bend or bow oneself'). These brief Icelandic visions reflect, of course, the contemporary trend of highlighting the individual's intimate engagement with the suffering Christ.<sup>29</sup> This is only to be expected, considering the authors' learned monastic background.

*Episode* I is composed of two contrasting yet thematically kindred scenes that centre on Christ's Passion of which one clearly derives from a written source. But the inclusion of the 'Christ in Beirut' tale would have been random without Jón's dream-vision. As Gunnlaugr constructed the vision to complement and counterpart the Jewish scene, he obviously intuited this potential thematic echo. Further, this intuition is essentially written into *Episode* I. Jón of Hólar and Ríkini make the same discovery as they connect Jón's vision of the crucified Christ with the Jews' mockery of Christ's statue.

The construction of *Episode* I relies on a typological mode of thought. The story of the Jews mocking, humiliating, and beating the Crucifix, only to be shown God's grace, exists independently of Jón's dream-vision. The bishop's dream-vision then both corresponds to and contrasts with this (alleged) historical event. In this sense, Jón's dream-vision amplifies, and, in a sense, fulfils the premise of the Jews of Beirut story. A miracle focused on Christ's Passion leads to the conversion of non-Christians; a wonder emerging from Christ's Passion leads to a confirmation of Jón's sanctity. The nature of this typological mode of thought will be further addressed in the analyses of *Episodes* II and III.

<sup>29</sup> Kindred imagery was associated with the Final Judgement. *In die omnium sanctorum sermo*, a sermon for the feast of All Saints in the *Icelandic Homily Book*, a collection of translated homilies from around 1200, explains how everyone would behold the bloodied, beaten, and spat-upon crucified Christ. The purpose of this vision aligns with Christ's appearance in Odd Snorrason's narrative: 'Han sýner þar huer meinlæte hann tók a sér øss til hiálpar og miscunar. þat verþr þa auglióst fyr þeiri alþýþo es þar er þa komin hvesso hvergi vár hever honom þa miskun launaþa' ('There he shows the suffering he took upon himself for our salvation and mercy. To the people there gathered it became apparent that in no way have we repaid him for his mercy.') *Homiliu Bók: Isländska Homilier efter en handskrift från tolfte århundradet*, ed. Theodor Wisén (Lund: Gleerup, 1872), p. 45. See also *The Icelandic Homily Book: Perg. 15 40 in the Royal Library, Stockholm*, ed. Andrea de Leeuw van Weenen. Icelandic Manuscripts Series in Quarto 3 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, 1993), v/21.

## Episode II

I have examined *Episode II* in another context.<sup>30</sup> There I aimed to illustrate the creative adaptation of a foreign source – in this case visual – in the early period of Icelandic saga writing. Although this is still my argument, I now pursue a line of investigation which at that time escaped my notice.

In *Jóns saga helga*, Jón's excellent voice plays a notable role in the pre-episcopal period. Jón, a deacon, travels to Norway and then to Denmark before visiting Rome and returning to Denmark, where he appears at the court of King Sveinn Úlfsson (or Ástriðarson) (1019–1076) on Palm Sunday. As Jón enters an unspecified Danish church, he finds a priest stuttering through the sermon on the Passion as he is observed by a mocking audience. Jón takes the book out of the priest's hand and proceeds to read the Passion in a manner that impresses everyone. King Sveinn is so impressed with this performance that he invites Jón to stay at his court.

*Episode II* takes place during this stay. In King Sveinn's presence, Jón relates a vision which he had experienced the previous night.<sup>31</sup> He relates that he found himself in the choir of an unidentified cathedral of splendor. In the bishop's seat, he saw Christ and on a footstool by his feet King David who 'sló hǫrpu sína með ágætligri íþrótt ok fagrligri hljóðun' ('struck his harp with rare skill and beautiful and delightful sounds').<sup>32</sup> Jón informs the king that he can remember and repeat the sounds he had heard. He requests a harp, on which he performs so well that the king and those present 'lofuðu allir almáttkan Guð, þann er sér lætr sóma at birta dýrð heilagra manna sinna' ('praised the all-powerful God, who is to reveal the glory of his holy men.')<sup>33</sup>

As Peter Foote noted, the scene may have been inspired by an image of David playing the harp, such as the one in the fourteenth-century Icelandic manuscript Copenhagen, Den Arnamanæanske Samling, AM 226 fol, on folio 88ra (See Fig. 5.1). As Foote also observed, David is in medieval art occasionally depicted playing the lyre to a Christ in Majesty who is clad in a priestly garb.<sup>34</sup> This image captures the essence of the medieval Christian view of the Psalms, where David's songs are fused

<sup>30</sup> *Biskupa sögur I*, ed. Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Peter Foote, II, pp. 185–87. Haki Antonsson, 'The Construction of Auðunar þáttir Vestfirzka': A Case of Typological Thinking in Early Old Norse Prose', *Scandinavian Studies* 90/4 (2018), pp. 484–508, at pp. 488–92.

<sup>31</sup> On Jón's dream, see also the discussion by Bullitta above at pp. 2–3 and Ásdís Egilsdóttir below at p. 190.

<sup>32</sup> *Biskupa sögur I*, ed. Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Peter Foote, I, p. 186.

<sup>33</sup> 446 *Ibid.*, p. 186.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186, note 2.





FIGURE 5.1 King David Playing the Harp. Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 226 fol, folio 88ra. © Den Arnamagnæanske Samling. Photo by permission of Den Arnamagnæanske Samling.

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FIGURE 5.2 King David Playing the Harp. Würzburger Psalter. Los Angeles, Getty Museum, Ludwig VIII 2, folio 11v. Digital Image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program.

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with Christ's essence.<sup>35</sup> Depictions of this kind are constructed from two separate sections. The lower plane section shows the lyre-playing David, whereas the seated Christ occupies the higher one. In one sense, David plays for Christ in Majesty, yet in another sense David and Christ inhabit conceptually distinct spaces.

On folio 11v of the so-called Würzburger Psalter, now Los Angeles, Getty Museum, Ludwig VIII 2, from the mid-thirteenth century, we see a seated Christ – gesturing a blessing and holding a book – within the lower oval shape of the first letter of the first words shared by Psalms 1 and 112: 'Beatus [Vir]'. Below and confined within an identical shape, there is the crowned David playing the harp (See Fig. 5.2). Visually, the Old Testament king appears to perform in Christ's presence, yet the two parts signify two separate stages, namely the Old and the New dispensation respectively. Typologically, however, this partition is essential for the image's overall meaning. King David prefigures Christ, and the Psalms prefigure Christ's message, which is likely represented by the book he upholds. The figurative link between the two sections is made explicit in a historiated initial in a twelfth-century English glossed psalter with canticles, London, British Library, Additional 17392, folio 1r. In the opening letter, David and Christ, attended by other characters and creatures, feature in the lower and upper loop, respectively. David plays the harp accompanied by another man (probably one of the prophets), and he points upwards to a seated Christ who, crushing a dragon beneath his feet, holds a book in his left hand (see Fig. 5.3).<sup>36</sup> David literally points out the fulfilment of his type: Christ triumphing over the devil which is prefigured in David's defeat of Goliath. A key component of *Episode I*'s structure is the arrival of a foreign manuscript. It is, therefore, easy to envisage a manuscript image underlying another episode that illustrates Jón's sanctity. In both episodes, Christ appears to Jón, although in *Episode II* this is Christ in Majesty rather than the suffering, crucified one. Furthermore, in both cases an exemplar – one drawn from literature of religious instruction and the other from visual art – elicits a thematically related complementary scene.

Whereas in *Episode I* Christ engages with Jón in a dream vision, in *Episode II* the future bishop is the neutral observer of a remarkable scene. Jón's achievement is to memorize and re-enact the notes emanating from David's harp in the king's presence. Such feats of memorization

<sup>35</sup> The literature on this subject is copious, but see, for instance, Marcia L. Colish, 'Psalterium Scholasticorum: Peter Lombard and the Emergence of Scholastic Psalms Exegesis', *Speculum* 67/3 (1992), pp. 531–48.

<sup>36</sup> Howard Helsinger, 'Images on the Beatus Page of Some Medieval Psalters', *The Art Bulletin* 5/2 (1971), pp. 161–76; for the image and the relevant discussion, see p. 176.

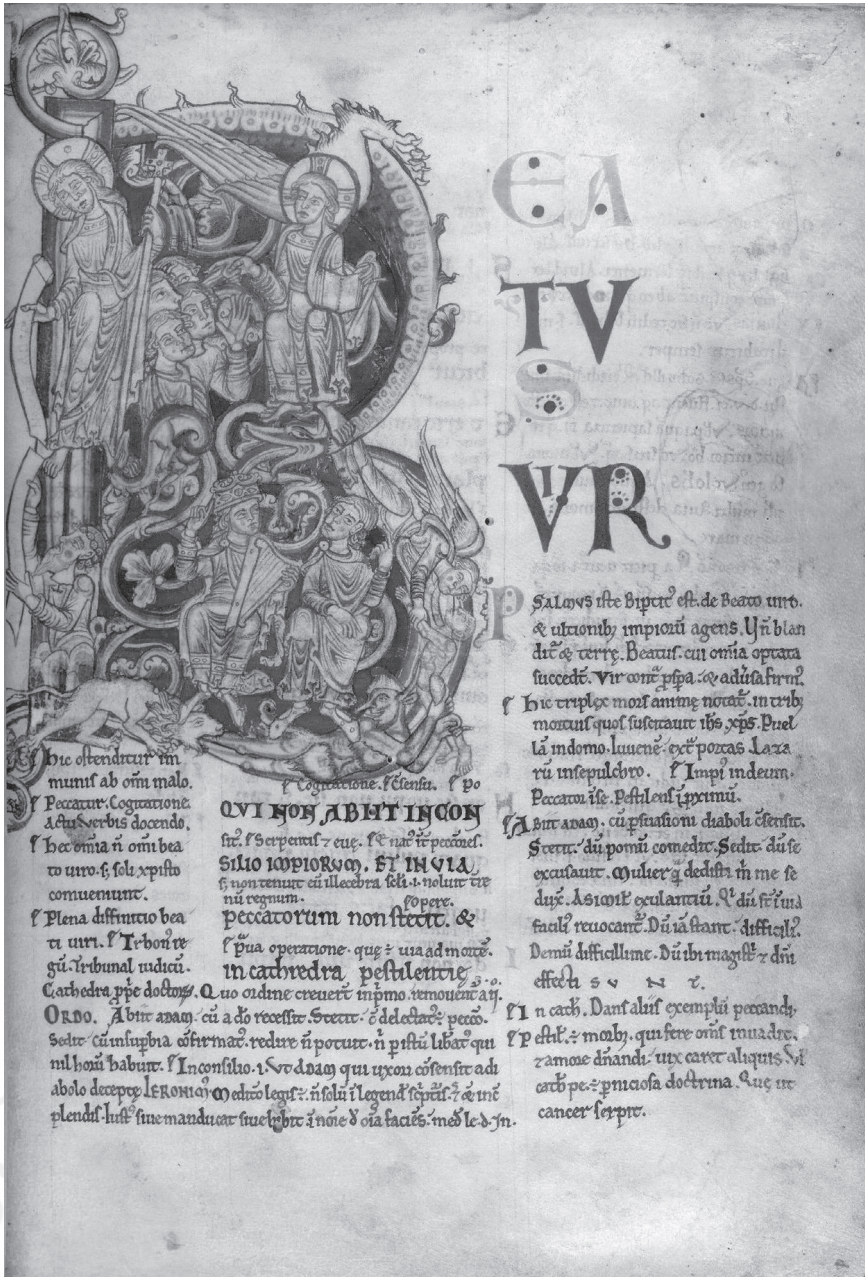


FIGURE 5.3 King David Playing the Harp. London, British Library, Additional 17392, folio 1r. © The British Library Board.

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are associated with Old Norse-Icelandic poetry.<sup>37</sup> But in *Jóns saga helga* the intent is not simply to solicit admiration for Jón's skills in musical recollection, however impressive these may be. David's music is divinely inspired and, moreover, it contains the intangible essence which connects the type (King David) with the antitype (Christ). By comprehending this divine harmony, Jón attests to his holiness which, as with all saints, is but a reflection of Christ's divinity.

*Episode II* should also be interpreted within the context of two other scenes in *Jóns saga helga*. The first relates how Jón's parents brought him as a child to Sveinn Úlfsson's court. At the dining table, Jón's mother slapped the boy's hands as he grasped for food, only for herself to be rebuked by the Danish king's mother: 'Ljóstu eigi á hendr þessar, því at þetta eru byskups hendr' ('Do not slap those hands for they are hands of a bishop').<sup>38</sup> Here Jón's episcopal career is discerned, albeit not his sanctity. In the previously mentioned scene, in which Jón recites Christ's Passion in Sveinn's presence, the king further comprehends the Icelander's qualities. Jón's impressive voice prepares, indeed prefigures, *Episode II* which culminates in a series of encounters with King Sveinn. This is the last of the series, in which Jón is granted direct engagement with Christ and his Passion.

*Episode I* and *Episode II* are characterized by their binary nature or, more accurately, by a dynamic juxtaposition of their two constituent scenes. In the former, the similarities and differences involve Christ's Passion. Likewise, *Episode II* invites us to compare its two scenes: King David playing the lyre to Christ in Majesty and St Jón playing the same instrument to King Sveinn Úlfsson. In the first scene, the typologically-charged image of David playing the lyre before Christ in Majesty is transposed to a cathedral, where the seating of the latter in the bishop's place prefigures Jón's episcopacy.

The intent of the scene is not to liken King Sveinn to Christ, for this comparison would manifestly be most problematic. Rather, the image of David performing for Christ is translated into a different cultural context, namely that of the Icelandic skald who exhibits his skills to the king and his court. As in *Episode II*, we observe a dynamic set of similarities and

<sup>37</sup> For instance, in *Bergbúa þátr*, for instance, the two protagonists are advised to memorize *Hallmundarkviða*, which is then recited by a mountain-dwelling giant. The figure who succeeds in this feat lives, whereas the one who fails in the task dies shortly thereafter. See *Harðar saga*, *Bárðar saga*, *Þorskfirðinga saga*, *Flóamanna saga*, *Þorsteins þátr uxafóts*, *Egils þátr Síðu-Hallssonar*, *Orms þátr Stórolfssonar*, *Þorsteins þátr tjaldstæðings*, *Þorsteins þátr forvitna*, *Bergbúa þátr*, *Kumbúa þátr*, *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*, ed. Þórhallur Vilmundarson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson. Íslenzk fornrit 13 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1991), pp. 441–50.

<sup>38</sup> *Biskupa sögur I*, ed. Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Peter Foote, II, p. 179.

contrasts from the first scene to the second. Christ enthroned is a common antitype of King David: the former fulfils and surpasses the latter. This is the core meaning of the very Psalter image that appears to have inspired *Episode II* in the first place. Christ is also the archetype to all saints and, due to the apostolic succession, all bishops.

The typological triptych therefore includes David – Christ – St Jón, with the king and the bishop reflecting each in their own way the glory of the Savior. Although one medieval author likened Sveinn to King David, here the Danish king's presence is incongruous as he stands isolated from this typological web of associations.<sup>39</sup> The episode's irony is that Sveinn inhabits altogether different sections of meaning, and he evokes a quite different association: that of the kingly patron who honors a visiting Icelander and so accrues honor for himself, yet in reality his single role is to reveal the inherent qualities of his guest.

### Episode III

*Episode III* takes place during the episcopacy of Jón's successor, Ketill Þorsteinsson (1122–1145).<sup>40</sup> Here Guðrún kirkjukerling (*fl. c. 1100–1150*) ('old woman of the church'), an eccentric though fervently religious woman, held vigils over corpses kept in Hólar Cathedral prior to burial. Near its main entrance, Guðrún had placed a platform 'svá sem altari' ('like an altar') from which she continuously exclaimed 'Tak þú mig, Kristr, ok skjótt. Tak þú mig. Eigi er þegar nema þegar sé' ('Take me, Christ, take me quickly, it happens never, unless it happens at once'). One night, the single cadaver lying in state arose which led the terrified Guðrún to seek refuge at the altar. This commotion awoke a young nun at Hólar named Hildr (*fl. c. 1100–1160*) who, with Bishop Jón's blessing, had had a special chamber constructed for her use.<sup>41</sup> The chamber was outfitted with a hatched window that allowed Hildr a view of the altar. Peering out, Hildr thought that 'Henni sýndisk kirkjan öll full af draugum hræðiligum ok skuggum, ok sóttu allar þessar sjónhverfingar at Guðrúnu' ('The whole church was full of horrible corpses and shadows, and all these illusions were attacking Guðrún').<sup>42</sup> Unable to divert her

<sup>39</sup> Namely in Ælnoth of Canterbury's (*fl. c. 1085–1122*) poem to his *Gesta Swenomagni regis et filiorum eius passio gloriasissimi Canuti regis et martyris* (*c. 1110*). See *Vitae Sanctorum Danorum*, ed. Martin Clarentius Gertz (Copenhagen: Gad, 1908–1912), p. 88.

<sup>40</sup> *Biskupa sögur I*, ed. Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Peter Foote, II, pp. 249–52.

<sup>41</sup> On Hildr's story, see also the discussion by Ásdís Egilsdóttir below, at pp. 188–89.

<sup>42</sup> *Biskupa sögur I*, ed. Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Peter Foote, II, p. 251.

gaze from this spectacle, Hildr called on St Jón, who appeared from the vestry clad in his episcopal vestments and carrying a crozier.

*Episode III* is notably symmetrical and binary in nature. There is the contrast between the pious and dutiful Hildr and the eccentric and misguided Guðrún. Both stay in the cathedral overnight, and both are linked with additions made to its sacred space. Bishop Jón had consecrated Hildr as a nun and allowed the construction of her special chamber. Conversely, Guðrún had erected without permission a kind of ersatz altar near the cathedral's main entrance. This spatial opposition delineates the distance between the accepted practices of Hildr and the heterodox activities of Guðrún. Hildr lives a life of self-abnegation in the service of God, whereas Guðrún uses her mock-altar to beseech Christ to conclude her own life. A profound matter is at stake: one woman seeks to negate the self to attain salvation, while the other does the opposite. The spatially set arrangement is symmetrical. At the one end of the cathedral, there is the reliquary with remains of the saints or, at least, objects associated with their earthly existence. The practical role of relics is to aid those visitors who pray before them. By the entrance, however, is Guðrún's improvised altar and the newly dead whose fate in the afterlife is unknown. There, the corporal remains may be possessed by demonic forces hostile to the living.

The animation or restlessness of unburied corpses is a familiar theme in the *Íslendinga sögur*.<sup>43</sup> Before proper burial, the person is vulnerable to demonic influences as he/she inhabits a liminal state between heaven and hell.<sup>44</sup> The spectacle of the unidentified dead man in the cathedral is, however, of a different nature. *Jóns saga helga* refers to what Guðrún experiences as a 'sjónhverfing' ('visual illusion'). The underlying Latin term is likely *fantasma*, which can signify 'a simulacrum of reality conjured by the devil'.<sup>45</sup> God allows the devil to feign an illusion for specific purposes, in this instance to give fright and punish Guðrún. This

<sup>43</sup> See, for example, Kirsi Kanerva, 'From Powerful Agents to Subordinate Objects? The Restless Dead in Thirteenth- and Fourteenth-century Iceland', in *Death in Medieval Europe: Death Scripted and Death Choreographed*, ed. Joëlle Rollo-Koster (London: Routledge, 2017), pp. 40–70.

<sup>44</sup> For instance, the early fourteenth-century *Arna saga biskups* relates how in 1279 the bones of Oddr Þórarinsson (1230–1255), a chieftain who had been killed some twenty years earlier, became restless as Bishop Árni transported them for burial at Skálholt. Oddr had died in a state of excommunication and been interred at the edge of a cemetery. See *Biskupa sögur III: Arna saga biskups, Lárentius saga biskups, Sögubáttir Jóns Halldórssonar biskups, Biskupa ættir*, ed. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir. Íslensk fornrit 17 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 2003), pp. 74–75.

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, C.S. Watkins, *History and the Supernatural in Medieval England*. Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, Fourth Series 66 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 65–66.

### Three Scenes from *Jóns saga helga*

explains the surprising scenario of the devil apparently dominating, albeit briefly, the sacred space of Hólar Cathedral. Guðrún's case inverts the normal relations between the living and the holy. A prayer or a pleading before relics is supposed to solicit the saints to intercede with God. Guðrún, however, directly addresses Christ, and for this transgression she elicits a very different reaction from the 'earthly relics' of the cadaver: demonic illusion which, like the actions of the saints, is prompted by divine blessing. Ironically therefore, Guðrún finally abandons her ersatz altar and seeks aid at a proper reliquary at the other end of the cathedral.

The narrative perspective abruptly shifts to Hildir in her specially constructed space. We are now informed about what Guðrún *believes* she sees and what Hildir is forced to witness through the hatch: 'En er Hildir sér þetta, þá vildi hon skjótt frá líta, en þess var eigi kostur því at þá var andlit hennar svá stírt ok áfast þilinu at hon mátti hvárki hræra hálsinn né hofuðit' ('And when Hildir saw that, she wanted to turn away at once, but was unable to do so because her face was so rigid, as if glued to the panel, that she was unable to move her neck or head.')

<sup>46</sup> Waiving the crozier at the choir steps, St Jón makes the 'vánd sveit' ('evil troop') disappear below the cathedral floor and evaporate in smoke over the choir. Hildir is subsequently released from her forced viewing, while Guðrún huddles behind the altar until morning.

The pastoral lesson of this story is clear. Guðrún, although pious and well-meaning in her eccentricity, operates outside the patriarchal power structure at Hólar Cathedral. Guðrún's actions are heterodox: she essentially mimics, or rather irreverently distorts, the role of a priest by erecting an altar of a sort from which she begs Christ that she may join the dead. This is a serious transgression in that the old woman attempts to influence the natural life-cycle; moreover, she does so outside the regular channels of the Church hierarchy. In contrast, Hildir's religious activities have been acknowledged and blessed by St Jón and supported by his episcopal successor. Their relations with the physical space of Hólar Cathedral reflect this difference.

The oral provenance of *Episode III* is mentioned, with some minor verbal variations, in one of its three *Jóns saga helga* versions:

En þenna atburð sagði hon fám monnum, því at Hildir vildi vera fráskila allri fjölmælgri þat er hon hafði í einsetu gengit. En kirkjukerling var fjölmálg, ok fyrir því var þat í flestra manna vitorði sem henni bar til handa, en Hildir nunna sagði sem fæstum frá. Oddnýju Knútsdóttur sagði hon frá, en Oddný sagði frá Guðlaugi munk Leifssyni er þessa sögu hefir saman sett.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>46</sup> *Biskupa sögur I*, ed. Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Peter Foote, II, p. 251.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 252.



[Hildir told few people of this event, because, after she became an anchoress, she wanted to avoid unnecessary talk. But Guðrún was talkative, and for that reason most people knew what had happened to her, whereas Hildir told few. She told only Oddný Knútsdóttir (fl. c. 1100–1150), who then told the Gunnlaugr Leifsson, who composed this saga.]

By the twelfth century, the attestation of the veracity of miracles had become a general concern, and this is reflected in *Episode III*.<sup>48</sup> The pious and obedient Hildir is a reliable witness, whereas the garrulous Guðrún is manifestly less so. *Jóns saga helga* has us believe that Gunnlaugr Leifsson essentially followed Hildir's oral account as relayed by (the otherwise unknown) Oddný Knútsdóttir. However, as demonstrated above, *Episode III* is not a straight-forward miracle story recounted by a single person. Instead, the perspective shifts between Guðrún, Hildir and the 'omniscient author', which counters the sense of a single underlying testimony. *Jóns saga helga* confronts this problem by leaving open the existence of a parallel and complementary oral tradition which originates with Guðrún rather than Hildir. Only this could explain the episode's vivid details which Hildir would have been unlikely to convey on account of her taciturn character.

*Episode III* is the one miracle in *Jóns saga helga* which offers an oral lineage from the purported source to its recorder. This kind of 'oral genealogy' may be likened to the oral witnesses to which Ari Þorgilsson (1067–1148) refers in *Íslendingabók*. A more relevant comparison, however, is with the uses of 'oral genealogy' in texts by Gunnlaugr and Oddr, namely in their sagas or biographies of Óláfr Tryggvason (963–1000) and Yngvarr víðförla, respectively.<sup>49</sup> In both cases, the inclusion of such a list adds a sheen of authenticity to episodes or sagas that are moulded by the authors involved.<sup>50</sup>

What, if anything, Guðrún and Hildir reported about their nocturnal experience in Hólar Cathedral is unknowable and is not my concern in this context. My interest is in how *Episode III* is shaped by characters that are radically different yet share obvious commonalities. Both are religious women who seek salvation in Hólar Cathedral within their specially fitted space. In other ways, as already highlighted, Guðrún and Hildir could hardly be less alike. The differences between the two are brought

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, Michael Goodich, *Miracles and Wonders: The Development of the Concept of Miracle, 1150-1350*. Church, Faith and Culture in the Medieval West (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 69–86.

<sup>49</sup> *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, ed. Ólafur Halldórsson, 3 vols (Copenhagen: The Arnamagnæan Commission, 1958–2000), III, pp. 342–48. *Yngvars saga víðförla, jämte ett bihang om ingvarsinskrifterna*, ed. Emil Olson. Samfund til Udgivelse af Gammel Nordisk Litteratur 39 (Copenhagen: Møller, 1912), pp. 48–49.

<sup>50</sup> Haki Antonsson, 'Salvation and Saga Writing', pp. 108–09.

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to the fore by the appearance of similarly contrasting supernatural agents: the hostile, ghostly demons and the rescuing St Jón of Hólar. *Episode III* builds on the dynamic potential of these sets of similarities and opposites.

### Conclusion

The three episodes may seem to have little in common apart from illustrating Jón's sanctity. Further examination, however, reveals a common structural pattern. Essential here is the presence of contrasting elements that yet incorporate common aspects.

<i>Episode I</i>	<i>Episode II</i>	<i>Episode III</i>
1. St Jón's vision of the Crucifix	1. David playing for Christ in Majesty	1. Hildr
2. The Jews mocking Christ's image	2. St Jón playing for King Sveinn Úlfsson	2. Guðrún kirkjukerling

As mentioned earlier, I have explored the narrative possibilities of the similarities/opposites paradigm in another context.<sup>51</sup> This method, in its medieval incarnation, has its origin in Christian typology or *figura* in which two Biblical characters, concepts, and events are linked on account of their similarity *and* dissimilarity. For instance, in Paul's writings (1 Corinthians 15:45–49), Christ is presented as the second Adam because God created both to herald the New and Old Dispensation, respectively. The two determined humankind's direction, although they did so in a contrasting way. Whereas Adam's disobedience resulted in human exit from Paradise, Christ's deference paved the way for a return to his/her heavenly homeland.<sup>52</sup> Christ completes what Adam had commenced and accordingly represents a fulfilment from the type (Adam) to the antetype (Christ). Although the 'contrast element' may not always be as prominent as in this example, some level of difference is essential for a meaningful and convincing typological association between the two poles of reference.

This typological mode may involve characters, concepts, and events that are unrelated to the Old and New Testament. Most relevant for our purpose is the appearance of such 'extra-biblical' typology in French and German romances.<sup>53</sup> In these works of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries,

<sup>51</sup> Haki Antonsson, 'The Construction of *Auðunar þáttir Vestfirzka*'.

<sup>52</sup> *Gamal Norsk homiliebok: Cod. AM 619 4<sup>o</sup>*, ed. Gustav Indrebø (Oslo: Dybwad, 1931), p. 72. John Van Maaren, 'The Adam-Christ Typology in Paul and Its Development in the Early Church Fathers', *Tyndale Bulletin* 64/2 (2013), pp. 275–97.

<sup>53</sup> This term was developed by Friedrich Ohly. See, for example, his 'Halbbiblische und außerbiblische Typologie', in Friedrich Ohly, ed., *Schriften*

the 'extra-biblical' *figura* may involve two referents with no relation to Scripture or, for that matter, religious texts. One such example may be drawn from Gottfried von Strassburg's (d. c. 1210) *Tristan*, the Middle High German adaption of the widely circulated Arthurian romance. In this work, the lovers Riwalin, Tristan's father, and Blancheflur stand in a figurative relation to the later lovers Tristan and Iseult.<sup>54</sup> The details and subtleties of the textual echoing between the two pairs does not concern us here. It suffices to note that the connection between them rests on the 'similarity through contrast' mode with the added dimension of 'fulfilment' or 'augmentation': the love between Tristan and Iseult exceeds the love between Riwalin and Blancheflur. It is worth underlining how the dynamic relation does not rely on an external example or point of reference. Rather, it relies on similarities/opposites within the same original composition.

I argue that a comparable typological mode of thought was present from an early stage in Icelandic historical and hagiographical literature.<sup>55</sup> At issue is a mode of thinking that originates in a deep familiarity with the outlined typological approach. This familiarity, moreover, facilitated the composition of original scenes and episodes of the kind examined in this study. What is striking about the early Icelandic examples is the plasticity and inventiveness with which the early authors applied this mode of thought to their diverse tasks. In *Jóns saga helga*, we find the mode applied to text, imagery, and (purportedly) an oral account. In an earlier study, I observed a striking correspondence between a scene in *Yngvars saga* which, as noted, is attributed to Oddr Snorrason, and an episode that likely featured in Gunnlaugr's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, it appears as if elements from one text has been consciously inverted in the other. At the time, I could not account for the intellectual premise underlying this curious set of inverted elements. Closer study, however, has allowed a plausible contextualization by considering the typological mode of thought illustrated above.

This typological context may, for instance, also illuminate the odd structure of *Yngvars saga*, which is divided into two halves: the journey of Yngvarr víðforli and the journey of his son Sveinn Yngvarsson (*fl. c.*

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zur mittelalterlichen Bedeutungsforschung (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1977), pp. 361–400.

<sup>54</sup> Lucy C. Collings, 'Structural Prefiguration in Gottfried's *Tristan*', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 72/3 (1973), pp. 378–89. Dennis H. Green, *The Beginnings of Medieval Romance: Fact and Fiction, 1150–1220*. Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 47 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 80–121.

<sup>55</sup> Since we not dealing with typology (or *figura*) in the familiar sense of the expression, 'mode of thought' seems appropriate.

<sup>56</sup> Haki Antonsson, 'Salvation and Saga Writing', pp. 95–106.

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1000–1050).<sup>57</sup> There are manifestly similarities between father and son – not least their wish to travel to unknown lands – but the latter completes of the journey by killing the great dragon, marrying the queen, converting the ‘pagan’ realm to Christianity and, of course, becoming king. It hardly needs noting that Oddr Snorrason begins his biographical saga on Óláfr Tryggvason with an explicit typological connection between his subject and his saintly namesake: Óláfr Haraldsson completes his task – Norway’s conversion – for which Óláfr Tryggvason had laid the groundwork.<sup>58</sup> One only needs a slight change of perspective to envisage Gunnlaugr applying a similar mode of thought in constructing *Episode III* with its similarity/contrast dimension represented by Hildir and Guðrún.

The similarity/contrast – fulfilment/augmentation – pattern features in a small corpus of episodes that relates an encounter between Óláfr Tryggvason/Óláfr Haraldsson and a prophetic hermit. Both dispatch a retainer to test the hermit’s power, who sees through the ruse and asks the kings to appear in person. In the presence of the kings, the hermit then foretells the future glory of the missionary kings. The story-pattern appears in *Helgisaga Óláfs konungs Haraldssonar*, *Ágrip af Nóregskonungasögum*, and *Heimskringla*.<sup>59</sup> Ultimately, the episodes are modeled on a famous account in the *Dialogi* of Gregory the Great (540–604), that is, St Benedict’s (c. 480–c. 547) encounter with Totila (d. 552), last king of the Ostrogoths.<sup>60</sup> These are the elements of similarities and contrasts:

<sup>57</sup> Haki Antonsson, *Damnation and Salvation in Old Norse Literature*. Studies in Old Norse Literature 3 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2018), pp. 107–08.

<sup>58</sup> Julia Zernack, ‘Vorläufer und Vollender. Olaf Tryggvason und Olaf der Heilige im Geschichtsdenken des Oddr Snorrason Munkr’, *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 113 (1998), pp. 77–95. Jonas Wellendorf, ‘Forerunners and Fulfillers: Structuring the Past in Old Norse Historiography’, in *La typologie biblique comme forme de pensée dans l’historiographie médiévale*, ed. Marek Thue Kretschmer. Fédération Internationale des Instituts d’Études Médiévales, Textes et Études du Moyen Âge 75 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), pp. 179–98.

<sup>59</sup> *Ágrip af Nóregskonunga sögum: Fagrskinna – Nóregs konunga tal*, ed. Bjarni Einarsson. Íslenzk fornrit 29 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1984), p. 84. *Olafs saga hins helga: Die “Legendarische Saga” über Olaf den Heiligen* (Hs. Delagard. saml. nr. 8 II), ed. Anne Heinrichs (Heidelberg: Winter, 1982), pp. 546–57. *Heimskringla*, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, 3 vols, Íslenzk fornrit 26–28: (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1941–1951), vol. 2, pp. 64–65.

<sup>60</sup> *Gregory the Great, Dialogues*, ed. Adalbert de Vogüé, trans. Paul Antin, 3 vols, Sources Chrétiennes 251, 260, 265 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1978–1980), II, pp. 142–44. On Benedict’s *vita* and *Dialogi* in medieval Iceland, see especially the essay by Camiz below, at pp. 201–23.

*Similarities*

- 1 A king (or a future king) wishes to test the prophetic power of a hermit;
- 2 The kings send a retainer dressed in royal garb;
- 3 The hermit is not followed and asks the king to visit in person;
- 4 A hermit utters a prophecy of the king's future which comes to pass.

*Differences*

- 1 King Totila is a cruel enemy of the Church and Christianity, while Óláfr Tryggvason and Óláfr Haraldsson are, according to saga tradition, the founders of Christianity in Norway and the Norse isles of the North Atlantic;
- 2 King Totila is at the end of his career, whereas the two Norwegian kings are at beginning of theirs.

St Benedict's prophecy relates the downfall, and Totila who, although becoming less cruel following the meeting, dies shortly thereafter bereft of his kingdom. The hermit prophesizes Óláfr Tryggvason's victory over his enemies and his reign in Norway (and prompts his conversion to Christianity). He foretells Óláfr Haraldsson's glorious reign in Norway and, more importantly, his sanctity.

The Old Norse episodes do not copy the Latin exemplar with a simple change of characters. Rather their re-contextualized meaning is generated through the similarity/contrast mode evident in the three *Jóns saga helga* episodes. The 'augmentation/fulfilment' dimension is also present. Óláfr Haraldsson's predicted sanctity exceeds the prophecy about Óláfr Tryggvason's kingship and conversion. Whether or not the Totila story became first attached to St Óláfr and subsequently to his namesake or vice-versa is not an issue in this context.<sup>61</sup> The main point is that the story-pattern could be associated with either king precisely on account of their latent typological affinity.

So far, we have seen the identified narrative mode of thought appear in early Icelandic texts about saints (Óláfr and Jón) and secular figures of religious relevance (Óláfr Tryggvason and Yngvarr víðförlí). The mode appears in the rhetorical arsenal of later saga writers.<sup>62</sup> In the 'classical'

<sup>61</sup> For instance, Lars Lönnroth argues that stories about Óláfr Haraldsson became attached to Óláfr Tryggvason. See his 'Studier i Olaf Tryggvasons saga', *Samlaren* 84 (1963), pp. 54-94.

<sup>62</sup> In the complementary piece to this study, I examine an application of it in the thirteenth-century *Auðunar þáttur vestfirska*, where the author draws on both *Jóns*

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Íslendinga sögur, its appearance appears restricted to the use of a single Latin source as a point of departure, namely the *Dialogi* of Gregory the Great. In addition to the Totila episode, this involves scenes from *Eyrbyggja saga*, *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, and *Njáls saga*. The preponderance of the *Dialogi* in this context surely reflects the popularity and prestige of this text. I suspect, however, that other saga scenes, yet to be identified, were constructed according to the same premise. A comparable mode has been identified in Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*. This is in reference to Anne Holtsmark's formulation of 'assosiasjon ved kontrast' ['association through contrast'] where, in one instance, Óðinn's hanging sacrifice in *Hávamál* (stanzas 138–41) represents both a similarity and inversion of Christ's Crucifixion.<sup>63</sup> The similarity resides (among other things) in the sacrifice on a tree/wood, whereas Óðinn, as type of the devil in Christian thought, stands in contrast to Christ. Although Holtsmark did not link her formulation directly to a typological way of thinking, the proposition of such a connection seems justified.

Lastly, I wish to briefly posit a connection between the identified typological mode of thought and skaldic poetics. Associating typology with creative thinking and, by extension, poetry is not a novel thought.<sup>64</sup> In the context of skaldic poetry, one is inevitably drawn to the construction of striking metaphors, which feature familiar and different features of a given concept or object. One simple example will suffice. A kenning for 'sword' is 'icicle'. Accordingly, in a twelfth-century poem, a sword becomes 'ljósa sárisa' ('bright wound-icicles').<sup>65</sup> The shape and gleaming

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*saga helga* and *Hungrova*. See Haki Antonsson, 'The Construction of *Auðunar þátr Vestfirzka*', pp. 65–66. For the other examples, see *Eyrbyggja saga*, *Brands þátr örva*, *Eiríks saga rauða*, *Grænlandinga saga*, *Grænlandinga þátr*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson and Matthías Þórðarsson. Íslenzk fornrit 4 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1935), pp. 50–54. *Brennu-Njáls saga*, ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson. Íslenzk fornrit 12 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1954), pp. 346–48.

<sup>63</sup> Anne Holtsmark, *Studier i Snorres mytologi*. Skrifter utgitt av Det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi i Oslo 11, Hist.-Filos. Klasse, Ny Serie, No 4. (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1964), pp. 62–64. Annette Lassen, 'The God on the Tree', in *Greppaminni: Rit til heiðurs Vésteini Ólasyni sjötugum*, ed. Árni Sigurjónsson, Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, Guðrún Nordal, Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson, Margrét Eggertsdóttir (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 2009), pp. 231–46. Mikael Males, 'Allegory in Old Norse Secular Literature: Theoretical and Methodological Challenges', *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 9 (2013), pp. 106–12.

<sup>64</sup> See, for instance, Friedrich Ohly, 'Synagoge und Ecclesia: Typologisches im Mittelalterlichen Dichtung', in Friedrich Ohly, *Schriften zur mittelalterlichen Bedeutungsforschung*, 2nd ed. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983), pp. 312–27.

<sup>65</sup> This is Kolli inn prúði's *Ingadrápa*. See *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 2: From c. 1035-c. 1300*, ed. Kari Ellen Gade. Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), pp. 530–31.

texture of the icicle establishes a logical association with a sword, whereas the contrast between the weapon's hardness and endurance and the icicle's brittleness and ephemerality make the metaphor memorable. Thus the 'likeness in the context of kennings is only valued if it is surrounded by tensions or clashes of elements that represent contrastive categories or semantic frames'.<sup>66</sup> Perhaps early Icelandic writers like Gunnlaugr Leifsson were especially open to creative use of the figurative similarity/contrast method precisely because it aligned with a similar mode of thought in Old Norse-Icelandic poetics.

<sup>66</sup> Bergsveinn Birgisson, 'Skaldic Blends Out of Joint: Blending Theory and Aesthetic Conventions', *Metaphor and Symbol* 27/4 (2012), p. 289.

## *Lárentíuss saga byskups:* Between History and Historiography

Fulvio Ferrari

The division of the Old Norse-Icelandic corpus into genres and subgenres is commonplace in literary histories and handbooks. Scholars have long discussed whether or not the Old Norse-Icelandic sagas should be classified according to specific genres, and the feasibility and heuristic usefulness of such classification have been questioned on numerous occasions.<sup>1</sup> The task of identifying certain criteria of distinction and classification is particularly difficult when texts or groups of texts make use of similar *topoi* and patterns, although they narrate the stories of different social actors. There are several cases in saga literature of authors following conventional hagiographical narrative patterns in their descriptions and glorifications of the life of a political or religious leader.<sup>2</sup> However, the social status shared by the protagonists, such as kings, chieftains, and bishops, of a specific group of sagas does not necessarily imply that consistent use of the same narrative patterns are made in the descriptions of them.

<sup>1</sup> For a recent review of the discussion on this topic, see Massimiliano Bampi, 'Genre', in *A Critical Companion to Old Norse Literary Genre*, ed. Massimiliano Bampi, Carolyne Larrington, and Sif Rikharðsdóttir. *Studies in Old Norse Literature* 5 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2020), pp. 15–30.

<sup>2</sup> On the use of hagiographical patterns in Oddr's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, for example, see Siân E. Grønlie, *The Saint and the Saga Hero: Hagiography and Early Icelandic Literature*. *Studies in Old Norse Literature* 2 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2017), pp. 39–77, and Carl Phelpstead, 'Fantasy and History: The Limits of Plausibility in Oddr Snorrason's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*', *Saga-Book* 36 (2012), pp. 27–42. A strong connection between *byskupa sögur* and *konunga sögur* is postulated in Jónas Kristjánsson, *Eddas and Sagas: Iceland's Medieval Literature*, trans. Peter Foote (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1988), p. 180. A clear-cut generic distinction between *konunga sögur*, *byskupa sögur*, and *heilagra manna sögur* is brought into question also by Margaret Cormack on the basis of the collections of texts contained in several medieval manuscripts; see Margaret Cormack, 'Christian Biography', in *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature*, ed. Rory McTurk. *Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture* 31 (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), pp. 27–42.



In light of these considerations, it is evident that the *byskupa sögur* do not constitute a homogeneous corpus, and it is hard to argue that they form a specific literary genre or subgenre *per se* within the field of Old Norse-Icelandic literature. As a matter of fact, they do not seem to form a literary genre or subgenre of Old Norse-Icelandic literature. While the *byskupa sögur* differ significantly from each other in terms of style and the organization of the plot, they often make use of the same stylistic traits and narrative devices that are typical of works belonging to different saga genres or subgenres, such as *heilagra manna sögur*, *konunga sögur*, and *Sturlunga saga*. As demonstrated below, the liminal position and heterogeneity of the *byskupa sögur* corpus are a result of the diverse social and cultural standing of the protagonists and the divergent narrative strategies adopted by the authors to recount their biographies.

As religious and political leaders, the bishops exercised great influence on different areas of society. Consequently, their lives could be narrated according to equally diverse agendas and ideological frameworks. Moreover, although only three of them – Jón Ögmundarson, Þorlákur Þórhallsson, and Guðmundr Arason – were formally recognized as saints by the Roman Catholic Church, the authors of the *byskupa sögur* were inspired also by those bishops who were not canonized but were nonetheless portrayed as living examples of Christian virtues through the use of hagiographical motifs and patterns.

In the following, I provide an analysis of combined and intertwined discourses within the same saga in order to identify and assess the position of the vernacular text within Icelandic literary genres and examine its intended readership and its cultural and ideological purpose. Indeed, if we consider a literary genre as ‘a communication strategy employing a varying combination of rhetorical and literary instruments to address a certain public’<sup>3</sup> the analysis of the different and sometimes contradictory generic markers in the text, as well as of the use of narrative schemes, which usually belong to a different genre, provides us with interesting clues not only about the position of the text within the literary system, but also its intended audience. Through textual analysis, we can obtain relevant information about the literary taste, as well as the concerns and the culture of the intended readership.

In this context, *Lárentíuss saga byskups*, the youngest attested *byskupa saga*, is of particular interest.<sup>4</sup> The protagonist of the saga, Lárentíus Kálfsson (1267–1331), held the see of Hólar for seven years, from 1324 until

<sup>3</sup> Bampi, ‘Genre’, p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> Jørgen Højgaard Jørgensen, ‘Indledning’, in *Historien om biskop Laurentius på Holar*, trans. Jørgen Højgaard Jørgensen (Odense: Odense Universitetsforlag, 1982), p. 18: ‘Historien om biskop Laurentius på Holar er [...] den sidste bispesaga, der biograferer en mand, som ikke i forvejen var litterært behandlet’ (‘The Story of Bishop Laurentius of Holar is [...] the last

his death. Old Norse-Icelandic scholars date his saga to the middle of the fourteenth century, even though its two most authoritative manuscript witnesses have been dated to the first decades of the sixteenth century.<sup>5</sup> There is also consensus among scholars with regard to the authorship of the saga. In 1772, Finnur Jónsson suggested the learned and influential priest Einarr Hafliðason (1307–1393), who was a younger friend and a follower of Lárentíus<sup>6</sup> and had access to the diocesan archives at Hólar. These facts are consistent with the information given by the author at the very beginning of the text:<sup>7</sup>

Sá sem þessa sögu hefir saman sett var áminntr af honum sjálfum í minni halda hverja hluti hann sjálf fram sagði, hverju fram hafði farit um hans æfi áðr hann varð biskup á Hólum. En síðan var þeim kunnigt er nálíga vóru í hans þjónustu og herbergi nátt ok dag meðan hann var biskup á Íslandi þar til hann andaðiz.

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bishop saga that tells the biography of a man, whose life was not previously transposed into literature.)

<sup>5</sup> *Lárentíuss saga byskups* is extant in two main vellum manuscripts: Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, AM 406 a I 4to (fols 1r–29v), from around 1530, and Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 180 b fol. (fols 36r–52v), from around 1500. Both are incomplete and represent two separate redactions: AM 180 b fol., known as the B-redaction, is considerably shorter than the text in AM 406 a I 4to, which is referred to as the A-text. Due to the incomplete preservation of both texts, an important role is played by Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, AM 404 4to (1r–51r), designated with the letter P, a copy of B with interpolations from A: a paper manuscript composed when both vellum manuscripts were in a somewhat more complete state. The A- and B- texts are edited in *Biskupa sögur III: Árna saga biskups, Lárentíus saga biskups, Sögupátr Jóns Halldórssonar biskups, Biskupa ættir*, ed. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir. Íslenzk fornrit 17 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 2003), pp. 213–441. For a discussion of the manuscript tradition of *Lárentíus saga byskups*, see especially *ibid.*, pp. lviii–lx and Jørgen Højgaard Jørgensen, *Bispesagaer – Laurentius saga: studier i Laurentius saga biskups, indledt af overvejelser omkring biskupa søgur som litterær genre specialeafhandling*. Udgivelsesudvalgets samling af studenterafhandling 12 (Odense: Centerboghandelen, 1978), pp. 27–28.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Einn tryggasti stuðningsmaður Lárentíusar Kálfssonar’ (‘Lárentíus Kálfsson’s most faithful supporter’) in the words of the most recent editor of the saga. See *Biskupa sögur III*, ed. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, p. lxix. On the authorship of the saga, see also Erika Sigurdson, *The Church in Fourteenth-Century Iceland: The Formation of an Elite Clerical Identity*. The Northern World 72 (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp 32–35.

<sup>7</sup> *Biskupa sögur III*, ed. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, p. 216. All translations from *Lárentíus saga* are my own, though I have profited from consulting *The Life of Laurence Bishop of Hólar in Iceland (Laurentius saga)*, trans. Oliver Elton (London: Rivingtons, 1890). Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from the saga are from the longer A-redaction.

[The one who compiled this saga was reminded by (Lárentíus) himself to keep in mind everything that he himself had (once) announced, (namely) what occurred in his (Lárentíus') life before he became bishop of Hólar. And later it became known to those who were close (to him) in his service and room day and night while he was bishop in Iceland and until he died.]

Moreover, Einarr was the author of a section of the *Logmannsannáll*, and the frequent insertions of excerpts from the annals is one of the most interesting features of *Lárentíuss saga*. In continuation of the above quotation, the author explains the reason for such insertions, and in doing so, he provides important clues to the meaning, function, and readership of his saga.<sup>8</sup>

Eru hér ok margir hlutir saman settir af ýmissum atburðum sem fram hafa farit á ýmsum löndum eftir því sem annálar til vísa hverir mestan fróðleik sýna, svá ok eru margir hlutir inn settir af byskupum ok öðrum veraldar höfðingjum sem samtíða hafa verið þessi frásögn. Ok þó at þat verði nokkot ónytsamlig[t star]f saman at setja þvílíka hluti sem birtaz ok auðsýnaz má í þessu máli, er þó verra at heyra ok gaman henda at sögum heiðinna manna.

[Many facts are also compiled here from the various events that occurred in various countries as indicated by the annals, which show the most knowledge. Many facts are also inserted about bishops and other secular chieftains contemporaneous with this story. And although it may be a somewhat wasted effort to compile the facts that may be revealed and shown in this narrative, it is nevertheless worse listening to and enjoying the stories of heathen men.]

According to the author, the annalistic notes are therefore quite useless. Nonetheless, they capture the attention of the saga's readers or listeners and divert them from stories and traditions about the pagan heroes of the past. The particular interest of the author in annalistic information may well be that Einarr Hafliðason himself was an author of annals.<sup>9</sup> It is quite possible that the explicitly declared purpose to substitute the reading of stories about pagan heroes with readings of texts more suitable for a Christian readership – a purpose which is a reformulation in new terms of Horace's classic motto 'utile dulci miscere' ('to mix the pleasurable with the useful') – explains both the annalistic insertions and the structure of the saga.<sup>10</sup> Intertextual references are found throughout the text, and the

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 216.

<sup>9</sup> For information about the reference to the annals in *Lárentíuss saga*, see Cormack, 'Christian Biography', p. 37.

<sup>10</sup> It is worth noticing that in the prologue to *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, Oddr Snorrason argues that his own text is a better and more entertaining substitute

transposition of motifs and patterns typical of different saga genres – *byskupa sögur* and *konunga sögur* in particular – into a religious and specifically ecclesiastical discourse is a common feature. This combination of secular narrative motifs and religious edification makes the saga enjoyable for a relatively broad readership.

Although the storyline follows with chronological accuracy Lárentíus' biography, the structure of the narrative adheres closely to that of a legal dispute in that it presents a sequence of legal conflicts. Already before his first journey to Norway, Lárentíus was involved in a quarrel with his own bishop, Jörundr Þorsteinsson (d. 1313). In Norway, he sided with Archbishop Jörundr of Niðaróss (d. 1309) against the cathedral chapter and thus entered a long conflict that eventually caused him to be imprisoned temporarily. Upon his return to Iceland, he was faced with a number of antagonists: the Dominican friar Björn (fl. c. 1260–1320), Auðunn rauði Þorbergsson (c. 1250–1322), the successor of Jörundr Þorsteinsson at Hólar; the priest Snjólfur Sumarliðason (fl. c. 1250–1320); the monastic communities of Munkaþverá and of Möðruvellir; and, finally, another Dominican friar, the Norwegian bishop of Skálholt, Jón Halldórsson (c. 1275–1339).

Legal disputes constitute the main structural pattern of such famous classic *Íslendinga sögur* as *Njáls saga* or *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða*. In these sagas, the instigators of the conflicts are typically landowners with varying degrees of power, and it is precisely power – along with wealth and reputation – that is at stake in these texts. The focus is therefore on the protagonists' ability to interpret the law to their own advantage as well as on the constant shifting of alliances and counter-alliances.

*Lárentíuss saga* maintains the same focus on juridical and political interplay, although the involved parties are dignitaries and institutions of the Catholic Church. The law in question is no longer the traditional Scandinavian legislation administered by the *logsögumenn*, but – in addition to prestige and power – canon law, though the correct interpretation of God's will is also at stake. This strategy of imitation and substitution produces a highly entertaining narrative, which may compete in popularity with texts belonging to other saga genres. It is perhaps worth noting here that, although the period of composition of the classical *Íslendinga sögur* had begun to cease by the middle of the fourteenth century, they were still transcribed in the following centuries and at the time of the composition of *Lárentíuss saga*. While the depiction of internal conflicts within the Icelandic Church may be gripping, it may also undermine the readership's trust in the ecclesiastical institutions. The dangers of this strategy of composition did not escape the author's attention, so in order to avoid taking this risk, he presented

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for folk tales. See Grønlie, *The Saint and the Saga Hero*, pp. 34–35, and Phelpstead, 'Fantasy and History', p. 37.

the conflicts either as fatherly actions of correction or as confrontations between equally good-minded ecclesiastical authorities. About the conflict between Lárentíus Kálfsson and Jón Halldórson, for example, Einarr writes:<sup>11</sup>

Er þat í sannleik súa umtala at hváirtveggju byskupanna hafi mikit til síns máls, hvárr fyrir sik. Herra Jón byskup vildi at lögin heldiz, því at þat mun lög ok regla hins heilaga Augustini at bræðr hafi völd svá utan klaustrs yfir veraldligu valdi sem innan klaustrs yfir siðum ok reglu, ok þat er ósæiligt at þeir sé haldnir sem ölmosumenn veralda(r) manna sem herra Jón byskup váttaði sjálfr á Möðruvöllum ok fyrr segir í sögunni, en Laurentius byskup vildi standa á því efni sem Jörundr byskup funderaði í fyrstu klaustrit. En því skulu þeir sem heyra þessa frásögn (hvárigan) fyrrsagðra byskupa lasta eða lýta í þessu efni, því at hvárrtveggi þeira munu þykkjaz fylgt hafa réttu máli.

[It is truly the talk that each of the bishops had much support of their own case, each for himself. Lord Bishop Jón wanted the law to be respected, because it was the law and Rule of St Augustine that the brethren had as much authority over the secular power outside the monastery as they had inside the monastery over conduct and rules, and it is therefore unseemly that they are kept as almsmen of secular people, as Lord Bishop Jón witnessed himself at Möðruvellir and as is mentioned above in the saga, but Bishop Lárentíus wanted to comply with the precepts by which Bishop Jörundr had founded the first monastery. But because of this those who hear the story of the aforementioned bishops, should not blame nor condemn either of the two bishops in this matter, because each thought they were arguing for a good cause.]

However, the adaptation of the conventions of secular narrative to religious discourse involves not only the overall structure of the text, but it also affects the choice of singular motifs and *topoi*. I have singled out three such adaptations, even though not all of them may be equally representative examples of such manipulation.

As Erika Sigurdson already pointed out,<sup>12</sup> the episode in which Lárentíus gains the respect and the admiration of King Eiríkr Magnússon of Norway (1268–1299) because of his scribal abilities reflects and rearranges the widespread motif of the journey of a young Icelandic skald to Norway and his unexpected success at the royal court. As noted by Margaret Clunies Ross, the motif of a young Icelandic man venturing out to visit other countries (Norway in particular) is common in the *Íslendinga sögur*, and it is a standard plot in numerous *þættir*. As a rule, Icelandic men are described as more intelligent or more gifted than Norwegian

<sup>11</sup> *Biskupa sögur III*, ed. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, p. 425.

<sup>12</sup> Sigurdson, *The Church in Fourteenth-Century Iceland*, p. 167.

men, except for the Norwegian king, against whom they frequently measure themselves.<sup>13</sup> Lárentíus is introduced to the king's court by the Norwegian nobleman Pétr af Eiði (*fl. c. 1260–1320*), who also brings Lárentíus' skills as a scribe to the king's attention:<sup>14</sup>

Næsta dag eftir sýndi hann [Lárentíus] herra Pétri bréfit skrifat ok diktat. Gekk herra Pétr þá til konungsins með bréfit ok sýndi honum; konungrinn lofaði mjök letr ok diktan bréfsins, eftir spyrjandi hverr gjört hefði. Hann svarar honum at íslenzkr prestr einn hafði gjört, hvern hann flutti af Íslandi. Konungrinn bað hann segja honum, prestinum, at hann væri í boði hans um daginn; gjörði ok Laurentius svá.

[The next day, he (Lárentíus) showed Lord Pétr the letter composed in Latin and transcribed. Then Lord Pétr went to the king with the letter and showed it to him; the king greatly praised the handwriting and the composition of the letter and subsequently asked who had made it. He (Pétr) answered him that a certain Icelandic priest had made it, whom he had brought from Iceland. The king asked him to tell him, the priest, that he would be his guest that day; and Lárentíus accepted.]

Like the skalds described in numerous sagas and *þættir*, Lárentíus attains status and prestige in Norway by means of his cultural capital, which in his case no longer consists of traditional verse composition but rather of his administrative skills required to occupy a high position within the Church and in the new monarchical state.

A second reference to Icelandic secular literature – and even to pre-Christian lore – may be recognized in a passage of the B-redaction of *Lárentíuss saga byskups*, in which Lárentíus' extraordinary ability to compose Latin verses is described as follows: 'Svá gjördiz hann þá framr í klerkdómi at dikta ok versa at hann gjörði svá skjótt vers sem maðr talaði skjótast latínu'<sup>15</sup> ('Then he became so prominent in clerical learning, [that is] at writing in Latin and composing verses, that he composed verses as fast as others spoke Latin.') These words are reminiscent of Snorri's illustration of Óðinn's wondrous ability to speak in verses:<sup>16</sup>

Qnnur [íþrótt] var sú, at hann talaði svá snjallt ok slétt, at qllum, er á heyrðu, þótti þat eina satt. Mælti hann allt hendingum, svá sem nú er þat kveðit, er skáldskapr heitir. Hann ok hofgoðar hans heita ljóðasmiðir, því at sú íþrótt hófsk af þeim í Norðrlöndum.

<sup>13</sup> Margaret Clunies Ross, 'From Iceland to Norway: Essential Rites of Passage for an Early Icelandic Skald', *Alvismál* 9 (1999), pp. 56–57.

<sup>14</sup> *Biskupa sögur III*, ed. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, p. 237.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 229.

<sup>16</sup> *Heimskringla*, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson. Íslenzk fornrit 26–28, 3 vols (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1941–1951), I, p. 17. *Heimskringla: History of the Kings of Norway*, trans. Lee M. Hollander (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991), p. 10.

[Another (skill) was that he spoke so well and so smoothly that all who listened believed it was all true. He spoke everything in rhymes, as is now the case in what is called poetry. He and his temple priests are called songsmiths, because that skill began with them in the northern lands.]

Lárentíus, only twenty-two years old, turned out to have such a talent for versification that it made him equal to the most famous and powerful poet in Old Norse-Icelandic tradition: the god – or here rather the divinized powerful king – Óðinn. His ability as a poet, however, is not put to the service of a mundane world, but rather to the convenience of the Holy Catholic Church, a circumstance that makes him even greater than the acclaimed heroes of the pre-Christian past.

A third, relevant echo from a well-known secular saga might, in my view, be recognized in the episode describing Lárentíus' appointment as bishop of Hólar. In order to manifest God's approval of and benevolence toward the new bishop, the author of *Lárentíuss saga* narrates that during the spring of 1322, shortly before Lárentíus' return to Iceland, a rorqual (a large whale) stranded at Brimnes (Seyðisfjörður) in the eastern part of Iceland, which at that time was under the Hólar jurisdiction.<sup>17</sup>

Þá hafði Guð sýnt þat um várit áðr at honum líkaði vel tilkváma Laurenti; rak upp reyði á land staðarins á Hólum er í Brimnesi heitir, var sú reyðr bæði góð ok mikil svá at á var framarliga á fjórða hundraði vætta, svá at menn mundu eigi nokkot rekald betra hafa á land komit þá nýliga.

[Then the previous spring God had already shown that he was well pleased with Lárentíus' arrival. A rorqual was beached at the land of the church at Hólar that is called Brimnes. This rorqual was both so tasty and large that it weighed more than twenty tonnes, so that people did not have any better wreckage driven ashore in recent times.]

The beaching of the rorqual in this context is a clear manifestation of God's blessing and a good omen for the future of the Hólar bishopric.

That the beaching of a cetacean may represent a highly beneficial and providential event unfolded through divine grace and intervention is confirmed by the catalogue of miracles contained in the A-redaction of *Þorláks saga helga* in which two poor and starving farmers receive a stranded whale through the miraculous intercession of St Þorlákr:<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *Biskupa sögur III*, ed. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, p. 354.

<sup>18</sup> *Biskupa sögur II*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, p. 96. *The Saga of Bishop Thorlak*, trans. Ármann Jakobsson and David Clark. Viking Society for Northern Research, Text Series 21 (London: University College London, Viking Society for Northern Research, 2013), p. 30.

Bóndi einn gestrisinn fekk eigi matarverð sakir hallæris. Hann hét á Þorlák byskup til órráða, ok litlu síðarr kom hvalr á reka hans þar er margir men áttu í með honum. [...] Fátækr bóndi hét á Þorlák byskup til matar í því hallæri. Hann fór í fjöru ok lagði niðr vað um kveldit. En um morgininn var þar við fastr hvalr jafn langr vaðnum.

[One hospitable farmer could not get a meal on account of the famine. He called upon Bishop Þorlák for help and a little later a whale came to him as shore-drift where many men had ownership along with him (...) A poor farmer called upon Bishop Þorlák for food in the famine. He went to the beach and laid down a fishing-line during the evening. And in the morning a whale as long as the fishing-line had been caught there.]

Both as a literary motif and as a symbolic complex, the rorqual-episode of *Lárentíuss saga* echoes an event in *Eiríks saga rauða* and stands in contrast to it. Its eighth chapter narrates how, during an expedition to Vínland, Karlsefni and his men spent the winter in Straumfjörður. The weather was inclement, and towards the end of the season Karlsefni and his companions were starving. Since prayers to the Christian God seemed to be ineffective, the pagan Þórhallr invoked Þórr, and in response to his prayer a whale got stranded. Þórr, however, is here depicted as a malignant, devilish entity, and despite Þórhallr's praise of the god, the meat of the whale turned out to be poisonous:<sup>19</sup>

Þá hvarf brott Þórhallr veiðimaðr. Þeir höfðu áðr heitit á guð til matar, ok varð eigi við svá skjótt, sem þeir þóttusk þurfa. Þeir leituðu Þórhalls um þrjú dægr ok fundu hann á hamagnípu einni; hann lá þar ok horfði í lopt upp ok gapði bæði munní ok nösúm ok þulði nökkut [...] Litlu síðar kom þar hvalr, ok fóru þeir til ok skáru, ok kenndi engi maðr, hvat hvala var; ok er matsveinar suðu, þá átu þeir, ok varð öllum illt af.

[Then Thorhall the Hunter disappeared. Before this they had prayed to God for food, but their prayers were not answered as quickly as their needs craved. They were looking for Thorhall three whole days, and found him where he was lying on the peak of a crag, staring up at the sky with his mouth and nostrils both agape, and reciting something (...) A little later a whale came in. They went to it and cut it up, yet never a man of them knew what kind of a whale it was. Once the cooks had boiled it they ate it, and they were all taken ill of it.]

<sup>19</sup> *Eyrbyggja saga*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson and Matthías Þórðarson, p. 224. *Eirik the Red and Other Icelandic Sagas*, trans. Gwyn Jones. Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 148. The motif of poisonous food provided by a pagan God, in this case by Óðinn, is also found in Oddr Snorrason's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*. See especially Phelpstead, 'Fantasy and History', p. 34.



In both *Þorláks saga helga* and *Eiríks saga rauða*, the motif of the beached cetacean is propaganda. However, while in *Eiríks saga rauða* the whale is an instrument of devilish powers – a fairly paradoxical instrument, since it proves to be destructive and reinforces the faith of the Christians in the true God – *Lárentíuss saga byskups* selects the same imagery but concurrently modifies its meaning by using it as an instrument to legitimize Lárentíus' episcopal dignity.

It is clear that such a network of references might appeal to a readership well-acquainted with and appreciative of secular saga tradition. An additional clue to the fact that the author of *Lárentíus saga* used entertaining stories in an attempt to engage his readers or listeners are at least two episodes, in which he tried to introduce humor. In the B-redaction of the saga, it is told that before his first journey to Norway, Lárentíus asked his friend Pétur what a man suffering from seasickness looked like: 'Einn tíma spurði Laurentius herra Pétur hversu þeir menn væri í vexti eða yfirbragði sem illr væri sjór'<sup>20</sup> ('One day Lárentíus asked Lord Pétur how men suffering from seasickness were in stature and appearance.') Pétur answered evasively, but some time later while travelling to Norway, Lárentíus suffered terribly from seasickness, and Pétur did not miss the opportunity to mock him: 'Þú, prestr, spurðir mik í vetr á Hólum hversu þeir menn væri í skapan sem illr væri sjórinn; nú mun ek ór leysa þinni spurningu. Sá er gráleitr ok þunnleitr sem þú ert, síra Lafranz'.<sup>21</sup> ('You, priest, asked me this winter at Hólar how were in shape those men who were seasick; now I will solve your question. He [who is seasick] is pallid and thin-faced just like you, Sir Lafranz.')

In an episode related in the Þ-manuscript of *Lárentíus saga*, it is Lárentíus who played a practical joke on his friend Jón flæmingi (fl. c. 1260–1320). Jón was a learned Flemish priest who studied canon law in Paris and Orléans and was at this point in the service of Bishop Jorundur in Niðaróss. Besides Flemish, his mother tongue, Jón was fluent in both Latin and French, but he did not master Norse. This provided Lárentíus with an opportunity to mock him, so when a group of Icelanders arrived in Niðaróss, Jón asked his friend how to correctly greet them all, in particular Kloengr, Lárentíus' relative: 'Kennið mér at heilsa yðar kompán upp á norrænu'<sup>22</sup> ('Teach me [how] to greet your fellow in Norse.')

Lárentíus suggested a greeting which was, in fact, some sort of curse and which must have been perceived as an insult: "Laurentio þótti mikit gaman at Jóni ok sagði: 'Heilsaðu honum svá: Fagnaðarlaus kompán!'"<sup>23</sup> ('Lárentíus had fun at Jón's expense and said: "Greet him this way: Damn

<sup>20</sup> *Biskupa sögur III*, ed. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, p. 235.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 236.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 244.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 244. On the meaning of the adjective *fagnaðarlaus*, see note 1 at p. 244 of the quoted edition.

[lit. Joyless] fellow!”) It was precisely Jón’s erudition that betrayed him, since he believed he recognized some Latin words in the formula: ‘Ek undirstend – sagði Jón – at þetta mun vera fögr heilsan, því gaudium er fögnuðr, en laus er lof’<sup>24</sup> (“I understand”, said Jón, “that this must be a fair greeting, because *fögnuðr* means *gaudium* and *laus* means praise.”) As expected, Klængr’s reaction was anything but friendly: ‘Hinn hvessti augun í móti ok þótti heilsuninn ei vera svá fögr sem hinn ætlaði’ (‘He gave him a piercing glance and did not seem to consider that greeting as fair as the other intended.’)<sup>25</sup>

The humorous wordplay assumes some knowledge of Latin on the part of the readers or listeners, because otherwise the joke would not be understood. Accordingly, it may be concluded that the saga was composed primarily for members of the clergy, who were likely also familiar with the secular genres of sagas.<sup>26</sup>

The entertaining element cannot be considered an end in and of itself; rather, it is employed as a learning tool. *Lárentíuss saga* is first and foremost a biography of an exemplary leader of the Icelandic Church, and as such it provides its readership with a model of righteous behavior. This explains the diverse hagiographical motifs and patterns, which – although they have already been identified by Jørgen Højgaard Jørgensen – still deserve a somewhat more thorough analysis.<sup>27</sup> However, I confine myself to some brief remarks.

Lárentíus’ destiny is revealed to his mother in a dream before his birth. The birth is difficult, and the child appears to be stillborn. His father’s uncle, the priest Þórarinn (*fl. c. 1220–1280*), prays for the baby and entrusts him to care of St Laurence. Prophetic dreams about the glorious future of an unborn child are not restricted to saints or religious leaders but are found also in stories about political and military leaders.<sup>28</sup> Of relevance

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 244.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 244.

<sup>26</sup> On the relevance of this joke from a historical-linguistic perspective, see Alaric Hall, ‘Jón the Fleming: Low German in Thirteenth-Century Norway and Fourteenth-Century Iceland’, *Leeds Working Papers in Linguistics and Phonetics* 18 (2013), pp. 1–33.

<sup>27</sup> Jørgen Højgaard Jørgensen regards the following elements in *Lárentíuss saga byskups* as typically hagiographic: 1) the prophetic dream of Lárentíus’ mother; 2) the intervention of St Laurence to save his life immediately after his birth; 3) the intercession of the Holy Virgin in order to spare him punishment while still a child; 4) the supernatural punishments of the Dominican friar Björn, of the priest Snjólfur, and of Lárentíus’ own son Árni. Because of these elements, Højgaard Jørgensen hypothesizes that Einarr Hafliðason composed *Lárentíuss saga byskups* in order to promote the canonization of Lárentíus. See Jørgensen, *Bispeþagaer– Laurentius saga*, pp. 92–94.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Lars Lönnroth, ‘Dreams in the Sagas’, *Scandinavian Studies* 74 (2002), pp. 455–63.

here is the connection with a patron saint – and, by extension, the sphere of religiosity – which was established at the moment of Lárentíus’ birth. Lárentíus owes his life to the saint, to whom – as well as God and the holy Church – he consequently devoted his life.

The story of the second miracle involving Lárentíus – if one considers the first one his actual return to life through St Laurence’s intercession – has a more anecdotal and even humorous character. As a child, Lárentíus damaged a statue of the Virgin Mary while playing ball with his friends. His great-uncle Þórarinn threatened to punish him, and the young Lárentíus prayed to the Virgin for her intercession. The next morning, Þórarinn called his pupil and told him about his dream:<sup>29</sup>

Um morgininn eftir kallar Þórarinn prestur Laurentium frænda sinn, spyrjandi hvárt hann hefði nokkoru heitit at hann skyldi eigi vera barðr. Hann sagðiz heitit hafa á Máriu dróttningu. ‘Þat grunar mik’, sagði síra Þórarinn, ‘því at mér var svá vitrat í natt at vár frú vildi at ek berði þér ekki hér fyrir, en ek skyldi láta bæta þat sem þú hefir brotit.’

[The next morning, the priest Þórarinn calls his relative Lárentíus, asking him if he had invoked anyone so that he should not be beaten. He said that he had invoked Queen Mary. ‘I suspect that’, said Lord Þórarinn, ‘because last night it was revealed to me that Our Lady did not want me to beat you for what you have done, and that I should have someone repair what you have broken.’]

It is recognized that the episode has nothing to do with the hagiographic topos of the *puer senex* – the depiction of a perfect saint entirely devoted to the worship of God already during the first years of his life – or with the topos of the young sinner, who only later embraces a saintly life.<sup>30</sup> Consequently, it contributes to the complexity of the original portrait of Lárentíus.

The parallelism between two ‘miracles of punishment’ described in chapters 18 and 45 of the A-redaction of the saga is also quite interesting. In the first, the Dominican friar Björn speaks disrespectfully of St Þorlákr in that he denies his sanctity and claims that he is considered a saint only in Iceland and that the archbishop in Niðaróss does not remember him. Moreover, he expresses his intention to forbid Þorlákr’s cult in Iceland until the archbishop of Niðaróss and all the bishops of the archdiocese give their formal consent. Lárentíus admonished and warned the sceptical friar:

<sup>29</sup> *Biskupa sögur III*, ed. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, p. 227.

<sup>30</sup> On the hagiographical topoi regarding the saints’ childhood and youth, see Dieter von der Nahmer, *Die lateinische Heiligenvita: Eine Einführung in die lateinische Hagiographie* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1994), pp. 156–61.

‘Hætt þú, hættú,’ sagði Laurentius, ‘ok lát eigi ofar koma þessa fólksku, því at þat vita allir hér á þessu landi ok svá víða annars staðar at hinn heilagi Þorlákr byskup er sannheilagr maðr, ok hann gjörði margar ágætar jartegnir ok gjörir, ok hann mun hefna þér ef þú bætir eigi við Guð ok þann blezaða byskup’.<sup>31</sup>

[‘Stop, stop,’ said Lárentíus. ‘Enough of this foolishness, because everyone knows here in this country and so widely elsewhere that St Bishop Þorlákr is a truly holy man, and he performed many great miracles and still does, and he may take revenge on you if you do not atone before God and the blessed bishop.’]

Because of his irreverent words, Björn fell ill and recovered only after he had repented and promised to testify to Þorlákr’s power and glory.

On another occasion, Lárentíus was more directly involved. The priest Snjólfur Sumarliðason (*fl. c. 1250–1320*), who had always been one of his most tenacious opponents, finally reconciled with him after Lárentíus’ consecration as bishop of Hólar. Yet, Snjólfur never ceased to show hostility toward Lárentíus, and during a dinner at the Benedictine monastery of Munkaþverá, he uttered disrespectful words about him. During the following night, Snjólfur fell ill and became terribly swollen:

Bólgnaði hann þá svá upp at búit var við váða. Var hann þá gyrðr með línúki. Þótti þeim sem hjá vóru staddir syrgiligt upp á sjá hans harmkvæli. Bað hann þá herra Laurentium byskup at koma til sín hvat hann gerði; bað hann síra Snjólfur þá fyrirlátningar fyrir þau orð sem hann hafði talat um kveldit, en hann sagðiz þat feginn vilja.<sup>32</sup>

[Then he swelled up so much that he was in danger. He was then girded with a linen band. It was sorrowful for those who were present to see his pain. He then asked the Lord Bishop Lárentíus to come to him, which he did; Then the priest Snjólfur asked him to express forgiveness for the words he had uttered that evening, and he answered that he would do so with pleasure.]

It was not until after Snjólfur repented and Lárentíus had granted forgiveness that he began to feel better and finally recovered.

Clearly, the two episodes share the same narrative pattern: when a cleric does not show due respect to a holy man, he is punished by illness and pain. But when he understands his mistake and asks forgiveness, he recovers. What is particularly interesting here is that the composer of the saga puts the saintly Bishop Þorlákr – one of the most venerated and

<sup>31</sup> *Biskupa sögur III*, ed. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, p. 270.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 389.

popular saints in fourteenth-century Iceland – and Bishop Lárentíus on equal footing.<sup>33</sup>

Moreover, shortly before his death, Lárentíus made a vow that resulted in the healing of his son Árne.<sup>34</sup> In this particular case, however, Árne Lárentíusson had been punished by God – not because of lack of respect for his father, but because of his conduct, which was inappropriate for a man of the cloth.<sup>35</sup>

The organization of the text, the selection of biographical elements, and the strategy of presentation reveal the intent of the author to construct an edifying narrative which is still able to attract and entertain a readership accustomed to the vivacity of secular sagas. Accordingly, the author of *Lárentíus saga* manipulates Lárentíus' biographical and historical data in order to educate and edify the audience through entertainment. Nevertheless, the narrative of the saga is not pure fiction: the strict chronological arrangement, the insertion of annalistic material, and the references to both witnesses and documents demonstrate that the aim of the author was to compose what Højgaard Jørgensen calls *biografisk historieskrivning* ('biographical historiography'.)<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> In Kirsten Wolf's words: 'By the end of the fourteenth century, Þorlákr was the fourth most popular saint judging from the number of churches of which he was patron or in which he was represented by an image, or relic.' Wolf, 'Pride and Politics in Late-Twelfth-Century Iceland', p. 247. See also Margaret Cormack, *The Saints in Iceland: Their Veneration from the Conversion to 1400*, pref. Peter Foote. Subsidia Hagiographica 78 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1994), pp. 159–65.

<sup>34</sup> *Biskupa sögur III*, ed. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, pp. 433–34.

<sup>35</sup> It is perhaps worth noting that, even though the rule of celibacy was well established in the archdiocese of Niðaróss already in the thirteenth century, it was still tolerated throughout the fourteenth century for priests and bishops to have concubines and children. Einarr Hafliðason – the presumed author of *Lárentíus saga* – was himself the son of a priest. See Orri Vésteinsson, *The Christianization of Iceland: Priests, Power, and Social Change 1000–1300* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 234–37, and Gunnar F. Guðmundsson, *Íslenskt samfélag og Rómakirkja. Kristni á Íslandi 2* (Reykjavík: Alþingi, 2000), pp. 206–11. While sexual intercourse of priests and bishops was somehow tolerated, it was never formally approved. As noted by Margaret Cormack: 'What is condemned, in no uncertain terms, is illicit sexuality, in the form of extra-marital relations or marriage within the prohibited degrees.' It is hence quite surprising that the author of *Lárentíus saga* shows no reticence at all in speaking about Lárentíus' concubine, Þuríðr Árnadóttir (who later on had a child also from the future bishop of Oslo, Salomon Þóroddsson), and their child Árne. Margaret Cormack, 'Sagas of Saints', in *Old Icelandic Literature and Society*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross. Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 42 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 315. See *Biskupa sögur III*, ed. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, pp. 258–59.

<sup>36</sup> Jørgensen, *Bispesagaer – Laurentius saga*, p. 53.

From a strictly historiographical perspective, what is particularly interesting about the text is perhaps not what was in the first place relevant to the author and his intended readership. Lárentíus' biography and his difficult path towards episcopal dignity are fascinating subjects, but what really strikes the modern reader here is the vivid description of a cultural and political milieu in a period of fast transition. The scene that unfolds before our eyes is that of a dynamic and cultural Icelandic and Norwegian elite. The court of the Norwegian king is a cosmopolitan one; to quote the words of the saga: 'Vóru þá með konungi Eiríki margir mikilsháttar menn af ýmissum löndum þeir sem margs vóru kunnandi'<sup>37</sup> ('At that time there were with King Eiríkr many distinguished men, who came from various countries and were knowledgeable about numerous matters'.) Moreover, the saga does not confine itself to general statements, but strives to depict some interesting and colorful characters and episodes, such as, for example, the naïve polyglot Jón flæmingi. Shortly before telling of Jón, the text introduces another remarkable Fleming: Þrándr fisiler (*fl.* c. 1260–1320), ('fusilier'?) who became a good friend of Lárentíus. Apparently, Þrándr had some scientific knowledge, and over Christmas he entertained and scared the court by causing terrible explosions, the secret of which he then revealed to Lárentíus.<sup>38</sup> The erudition and the cosmopolitanism of secular intellectuals and leaders is emphasized in the episode that relates how the new king of Norway, Hákon Magnússon (1270–1319), intervened in the conflict between the archbishop and the chapter. The king arrived in Niðaróss in the company of the highly-educated *meistari* ('master') Áki (*fl.* c. 1260–1320), who had studied abroad and was also able to express himself fluently in Latin as well as in Norse.<sup>39</sup>

The saga also provides interesting information about the social composition and everyday life of the clergy in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Iceland. It is, for example, interesting to notice how, during a visitation journey to the south and west of Iceland, Lárentíus realized that a great number of the lower clergy had such a poor knowledge of Latin that the priests were not able to correctly perform the liturgy.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, it is interesting to learn that after his consecration, Lárentíus strongly opposed the adoption of polyphony by his bishopric, claiming that this new musical style was nothing but *leikaraskapr* ('theatricality').<sup>41</sup> Other information scattered in the text provides a good idea of the social life at the bishop's see at Hólar. Among other things, the saga tells that Lárentíus forbade the priests to dance during the evening in their lodgings, which

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 237.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 237–38.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 253–55.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 273–75.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 375–76.

suggests that this was a well-established habit.<sup>42</sup> However, it is known that feasts were a common occurrence at Hólar, and that the cellar of the see was abundantly and regularly stocked.<sup>43</sup>

Finally, it should be noted that the saga provides quite realistic information about Lárentíus' political strategies to strengthen and enrich his bishopric. In the beginning of chapter 46, for example, Einarr writes:<sup>44</sup>

Allir mestháttar men á Íslandi, þann tíma sem herra Laurentius var, áttu góða vináttu við hann, svá leikir sem lærdir. Tóku þeir vörulán af staðnum á þann máta at byskupinn vildi at þeir legði í pant gull eðr brennt silfr; en ef eigi kæmi vara fram skyldi staðrinn eignaz þat sem niðr var lagt. Komz byskupinn svá með eign at mörgum dýrgripum at þeir gátu eigi leyst pantinn.

[All the most remarkable men in Iceland during the time of Lord Laurentius, had a good friendship with him, both laymen and priests. They borrowed goods from that place (the bishopric) in such a way that the bishop wanted them to pledge gold or refined silver; but if the goods were not returned, the bishop's see could keep the deposit. In this way the bishop took possession of many precious things, since they did not redeem their pledges.]

When Einarr Hafliðason composed the saga about the life of his friend and master Lárentíus Kálfsson, his aim was to present him as a holy and righteous man, a model not only for the clergy, but also for the entire Icelandic society. In order to achieve his purpose, Einarr wrote a text that is both edifying and entertaining and in which secular and hagiographical motifs are intertwined and harmonized.

While the pragmatic aim of the text requires manipulation of the biographical and historical testimonies, the saga itself provides its readers with precious and abundant information about the cultural and political life in fourteenth-century Iceland and Norway. Concurrently, it also provides a lively and detailed portrait of everyday life in some social groups, first and foremost those of the clergy.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 380.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 378–79.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 389–90.

## Remembering Saints and Bishops in Medieval Iceland

Ásdís Egilsdóttir

There was probably no fear that saints would be forgotten in the Middle Ages. Saints were assigned specific feast-days and liturgical calendars served as an aid to commemorate them. Various forms of commemoration in creating and transforming cultural memory, such as devotional and liturgical practices, and material aspects in the form of relics, devotional objects and manuscripts.<sup>1</sup> People who attended masses and divine offices would have known about the saints and could therefore have retold stories of their lives and passions from memory. It is also likely that stories of the national Icelandic saints were kept in people's memory, associated with the places where they had dwelled and visited. Medievalists have studied memory in association with orality for a long time. In this chapter, I focus mainly, but not exclusively, on 'learned memory' (*memoria artificialis*) as opposed to 'natural memory' (*memoria naturalis*). Natural memory is the natural ability to remember, yet memory that could be trained and improved with special methods is understood as learned memory.<sup>2</sup> Scholars such as Mary Carruthers and Brian Stock have drawn attention to the interplay between the written

<sup>1</sup> See Agnes S. Arnórsdóttir, 'Cultural Memory and Gender in Iceland from the Medieval to Early Modern Times', *Scandinavian Studies* 85/3 (2015), p. 389.

<sup>2</sup> See Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric and the Making of Images*. Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 34 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Mary Carruthers and Jan M. Ziolkowski, eds, *The Medieval Craft of Memory: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002). See also Margarete Hubrath, *Schreiben und Erinnern: Zur "memoria" im Liber Specialis gratiae Mechthilds von Hakeborn* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1996) and Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966).



and the spoken, between the book and memory, rather than seeing the written and oral as two separate cultures.<sup>3</sup>

Christianity brought to Iceland books and the art of reading and writing in the Roman alphabet, while the new faith introduced and fostered an imported textual culture, which often relied on the oral transmission of illiterate informants, who constantly memorized, kept, and recalled highly valuable knowledge. In his *Íslendingabók*, composed in the years 1122–1133, Ari Þorgilsson mentions several informants, the oldest being Hallr Þórarinsson (995–1089). Besides, he refers to wise people and general knowledge and remarks that his informants are endowed with good memory. About his paternal uncle Þorkell Gellisson (c. 1030–1074) he writes that he ‘es langt munði fram’ (‘remembered a long way back.’) Hallr Þórarinsson, an important informant about the Conversion, is said to have had ‘minnigr ok ólyginn ok munði sjalfr þat es hann vas skírðr, at Þangbrandr skírði hann þrevetran, en þat vas vetri fyrr en kristni væri hér í lög tekin’ (‘a reliable memory and was truthful, and remembered himself when he was being baptized, [and] told us that Þangbrandr had baptized him when he was three years old, and that was one year before Christianity was made law here’).<sup>4</sup> Collective or cultural memory continued to shape narratives about the Conversion, channelled through oral narrative, writing, re-telling, and rewriting. One saint, the English King and martyr Edmund (c. 841–869/870), is mentioned in Chapter 1 of *Íslendingabók* with a reference to his lost saga. This is the only written source referred to in *Íslendingabók*. Ari mentions it as a source for King Edmund’s year of death. The written source that provides the year of the king’s death may have been *De miraculis sancti Edmundi* by Herman the Archdeacon (c. 1040/1050–1100), a monk at Bury St Edmunds, which dates from around 1100.<sup>5</sup>

Mary Carruthers and other scholars have argued that memory training continued long after the introduction of writing and book production.<sup>6</sup> As a matter of fact, the book did not replace memory but supported it. The opening words of *Fyrsta málfræðiritgerðin*, better known as *The First*

<sup>3</sup> See especially Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 16; Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the 11th and 12th Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 30–87; Brian Stock, *Listening for the Text: On the Uses of the Past* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), pp. 1–15.

<sup>4</sup> See *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson. Íslenzk fornrit 1 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1968), pp. 4 and 21; *Íslendingabók. Kristni saga: The Book of the Icelanders. The Story of the Conversion*, trans. Siân Grønlie. Viking Society, Text Series 18 (London: University College London, Viking Society for Northern Research, 2006), pp. 3 and 11.

<sup>5</sup> *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, pp. xxii–xxiii.

<sup>6</sup> See Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 8; Hubrath, *Schreiben und Erinnern*, pp. 25–30.

*Grammatical Treatise*, dated to the latter half of the twelfth century, tell that events worth remembering are put down in writing: 'Í flestum löndum setja menn á bækur annat tveggja þann fróðleik er þar innan lands hefir giorz eðs þann annan er *minnissamligastr* þykkir þó at annars staðar (hafi) helldr giorz' (my emphasis) ('In most countries men record in books either the [historical] lore [relating to events] that seems *most memorable*, even though it [relates to events that] have taken place elsewhere.')

Books preserve memories and transmit them to younger generations. In the preface to the thirteenth-century chronicle *Hungrvaka*, its author writes that his aim is to put in writing what wise men have told him about the history of Christianity and the bishops of Iceland, so that they will not be forgotten.<sup>8</sup>

Bækling þenna kalla ek Hungrvöku, af því at svá mun mörgum mönnum ófróðum ok þó óvitrum gefit vera, þeim er hann hafa yfir farit, at miklu myndu gørr vilja vita upprás ok ævi þeira merkismanna er hér verðr fátt frá sagt á þessi skrá. En ek hefi þó nálíga öllu við slegit, at rita þat sem ek hefi í minni fest. Hefi ek af því þenna bækling saman settan, at eigi falli mér með öllu ór minni þat er ek heyrða af þessu máli segja inn fróða mann Gizur Hallsson, ok enn nøkkura menn aðra merkiliga hafa í frásögn fært.

[I call this little book *Hungrvaka*, because many unlearned and unknowledgeable men, who have read through it, will want to know even more about the origins and lives of these notable men of whom only little is said in this writing. I have given my full attention to in writing that I have fixed in my memory. Therefore I have set this little book together, so that that which I heard the learned man Gizurr Hallsson say on this subject and which a number of other distinguished men besides have conveyed in narratives, may not completely drop out.]

Oddr Snorrason, a Benedictine monk active in the twelfth century at the monastery of Þingeyrar, composed a Latin life of Óláfr Tryggvason, the missionary king of Iceland. Oddr's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* has been dated to around 1190, and the now-lost original Latin version survives in its indirect transmission, as testified by two separate redactions derived

<sup>7</sup> *Fyrsta málfræðiritgerðin: The First Grammatical Treatise*, ed. and trans. Hreinn Benediktsson. University of Iceland Publications in Linguistics 1 (Reykjavík, 1972), p. 206.

<sup>8</sup> *Biskupa sögur II: Hungrvaka, Þorláks saga byskups in elzta, Jarleinabók Þorláks byskups in forna, Þorláks saga byskups yngri, Jarleinabók Þorláks byskups önnur, Þorláks saga byskups C, Þorláks saga byskups E, Páls saga byskups, Ísleifs þátr byskups, Latínubrot um Þorlák byskups*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir. Íslensk fornrit 16 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 2002), p. 3. See 'Hungrvaka', trans. Camilla Basset (M.A. dissertation, University of Iceland, 2013), p. 44, available at <http://hdl.handle.net/1946/15914>, last accessed October 14 2019.

from a common Old Norse translation of the Latin text.<sup>9</sup> Although Óláfr Tryggvason never became a saint, he seems to have been highly popular among Icelanders. Gunnlaugr Leifsson, another Benedictine monk at Þingeyrar, also composed a Latin life of the Norwegian king, which, too, has been lost and survives only fragmentarily in vernacular translations.<sup>10</sup> The purpose of their sagas may have been to promote the sanctity of the king.<sup>11</sup> The S-, A-, and U-redactions of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* mention Oddr Snorrason as the author of the saga. Moreover, the A- and the U-redactions emphasize that Oddr wrote the saga 'til minnis' ('as a memorial'). The thirteenth-century Norwegian manuscript Uppsala, Universitetsbiblioteket, DG 4-7, folio 2r (c. 1270) ends the U-redaction of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* with the following statement:<sup>12</sup>

Hér lýkr nú sögu Óláfs konungs er at réttu má kallast postoli Norðmanna. Þessa sögu ritaði ok setti Oddr munkr til dýrðar þessum hinum ágæta konungi ok til minnis þeim monnum er síðar eru ok til fróðleiks þeim monnum er vita vilja slík stórmerki, þó at eigi sé sagan saman sett með mikilli málsnilld (my emphasis).

[This is now the end of the story of King Óláfr, who may rightly be called the apostle of the Norwegians. Oddr the monk wrote and recorded this story for the glory of this distinguished king, and as a memorial for future men and for the instruction of those men who wish to know of such great deeds even if the saga is not composed with great linguistic skill.]

A prerequisite for the application and usage of 'learned memory' is mastering specific memorization techniques. The method of *loci* ('places'), the use of spatial memory to recall information, was a well-known mnemonic device in medieval memory training. This method had its roots in ancient Roman and Greek rhetorical treatises, such as the

<sup>9</sup> *Færeyinga saga - Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar eptir Odd munk Snorrason*, ed. Ólafur Halldórsson. Íslenzk fornrit 25 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 2006), pp. clii-clxx. See also note 12 below; *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, ed. Ólafur Halldórsson, 3 vols, Editiones Arnarnagnæanæ, Ser. A, 3 (Copenhagen: The Arnarnagnæan Commission, 1958-2000), III, p. 64.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, III, pp. 57-58, 64, and 65.

<sup>11</sup> Dietrich Hofmann, 'Die *Yngvars saga víðfjrla* und Oddr munkr inn fróðí' in *Speculum Norroenum: Norse Studies in Memory of Gabriel Turville-Petre*, ed. Ursula Dronke, Guðrún P. Helgadóttir, Gerd Wolfgang Weber, and Hans Bekker-Nielsen (Odense: Odense University Press, 1981), pp. 188-222, p. 217; see also Margaret Cormack, 'Sagas of Saints', in *Old Icelandic Literature and Society*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross. Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 42 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 306-07.

<sup>12</sup> *Færeyinga saga - Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, ed. Ólafur Halldórsson, pp. 358 and 374. *Saga of Olaf Tryggvason. Oddr Snorrason*, trans. Theodore M. Andersson. *Islandica* 52 (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 149.

anonymous *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (c. 75–80 BC).<sup>13</sup> In the well-known *Kirkjudagsprédikun* or *Stave Church Dedication Homily* of the *Icelandic Homily Book*, Stockholm, Kungliga biblioteket, Holm perg 15 4to, fols 45r–46v (c. 1200), parts of a stave church building serve as a memory aid and tool for religious instruction.<sup>14</sup> In addition, a common medieval allegory is that of life as a voyage, often extended into a metaphor of the ship sailing through rough seas to safe haven. The ship also became the symbol of the Church.<sup>15</sup>

In the *Physiologus* manuscript Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, AM 673a 4to, fols 8–9 (c. 1200), the allegory of a ship and its parts appears in sermon form.<sup>16</sup> It could have been used in a similarly instructive/mnemonic fashion. The first half of the preface to *Stjórn*, which is a loose translation of the preface to Peter Comestor's (1100–1178) *Historia scholastica* (c. 1220–50), describes three ways of interpreting and understanding the Scriptures.<sup>17</sup> The preface shows how knowledge is organized in parts of a room, floor, walls, and ceiling:<sup>18</sup>

Þetta sama herbergi, heilög guðs ritning, hefir þernar greinir eða hálfur: Þat er grundvöllr, vegg ok þekju. Sagan sjálf er grundvöllr þessa heimuliga guðs húss ok herbergis. Sú skýring af heilagri skript sem segir hvat er hvert verkit í sögunni hefir at merkja, er hinn hærri vegggrinn. En sú þýðing er þekjan sem oss skýrir þann skilning af þeim gerðum ok verkum er sagan hefir í sér, sem oss er til kennidóms, hvat er oss hæfir af þeira framferðum ok eptirdæmum at gera eðr fram fara sem þá hefir frá verit sagt.

- 13 On *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, see especially Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, pp. 154–72.
- 14 *The Icelandic Homily Book: Perg. 15 40 in the Royal Library, Stockholm*, ed. Andrea de Leeuw van Weenen. Icelandic Manuscripts Series in Quarto 3 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, 1993), fols 45r–46r; see also Ásdís Egilsdóttir, 'From Orality to Literacy: Remembering the Past and the Present in *Jóns saga helga*', in *Reykholt som makt og lærdomssenter i den islandske og nordiske kontekst*, ed. Else Mundal (Reykholt: Snorrastofa, Menningar- og Miðaldasetur, 2006), pp. 215–16.
- 15 Mircea Eliade, 'Ship Symbolism', in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade, 16 vols (New York: MacMillan, 1987), II, pp. pp. 260–62.
- 16 See James W. Marchand, 'Two Notes on the Old Icelandic Physiologus Manuscript', *Modern Language Notes* 91 (1976), pp. 501–05, and 'The Ship Allegory in the 'Ezzolied' and in Old Icelandic', *Neophilologus* 60 (1976), pp. 238–50.
- 17 Sverrir Tómasson, *Formálar íslenskra sagnaritara á miðöldum: rannsókn bökmenn-tahefðar*. Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, Rit 33 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, 1988), p. 115.
- 18 *Stjórn: Gammelnorsk Bibelhistorie fra verdens skabelse til det babyloniske fangenskab*, ed. Carl R. Unger (Christiania [Oslo]: Feilberg & Landmark, 1862), pp. 1–2. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own.

[This very room, God's Holy Scriptures, has three branches or parts: that is foundation, walls, and roof. History is the foundation of this house and home proper to God. The interpretation of the Holy Scriptures that tell us the meaning of what occurs in history is the higher wall. But the roof interprets to us the meaning of the deeds and events that history has kept in itself and from which we should learn what is fit for us, to follow the examples or imitate the conduct of those that we have been told of.]

*Mariu saga*, compiled and translated from various sources in the thirteenth century, contains the life of the Virgin Mary and her miracles. The narratives are interspersed with didactic material and theological discussion. The chapter on the gradual songs of praise entitled *Um palla lofsongva* is a charming account of the Presentation of the three-year-old Mary in the Temple, as reported in the apocryphal *Gospel of the Nativity of Mary*. It describes how she walked unsupported the fifteen steps leading to the Temple, with each step representing a Judaic-Christian deed.<sup>19</sup> The steps correspond to Psalms 119–133 in the following manner: the first step represents 'heims hofnun' ('rejection of the world'); the second 'guðlict skiól' ('divine shelter'); the third 'fagnat himneskan' ('heavenly joy'); the fourth 'guðlict traust' ('trust in God'); the fifth 'þacklæti' ('gratitude'); the sixth 'jafnlyndi' ('temperance'); the seventh 'huggan' ('comfort'); the eighth 'fagnat' ('happiness'); the ninth 'hræðslu dróttins' ('fear of God'); the tenth 'þolinmæði' ('patience'); the eleventh 'mjúklæti' ('meekness'); the twelfth 'lítillæti' ('humbleness'); the thirteenth 'Memento domine David' ('to remember to sing in memory of the temple'); the fourteenth 'samþykki' ('agreement'); the fifteenth 'eilífa ást' ('eternal love').<sup>20</sup> It seems likely that mentally walking up the steps could help keeping the Psalms and their interpretation in memory. As a matter of fact, imaginary storeys of a building or steps were commonly used to help memorizing.<sup>21</sup>

That the ability to remember was highly esteemed can be seen from numerous examples in translated saints' lives that show that learned men were admired for their good memory. Unsurprisingly, in *Agústínuss saga*, it is told of Augustine that he had read many books authored by wise men and also kept in his memory what he read: 'En því at Augustinus hafði lesið margar bækr spekinga ok helt þaðan af

<sup>19</sup> Hans Bekker-Nielsen and Ole Widding, 'The Fifteen Steps of the Temple: A Problem in *Mariu saga*', *Opuscula* 2/1. Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana 25/1 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1961), pp. 80–91.

<sup>20</sup> *Mariu saga: Legender om Jomfru Maria og hendes jertegn*, ed. Carl R. Unger (Christiania [Oslo]: Brøgger & Christie, 1871), I, pp. 7–9.

<sup>21</sup> See Carruthers and Ziolkowski, *The Medieval Craft of Memory*, pp. 4–6. On Jacob's ladder as a mnemonic trope, see Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, pp. 27, 160, and 343.

i minni marga hluti, þá bar hann samt slíkt sem hann hafði lesit, við orð ok kenning þessa villumanns [...] ok skilði, at háðulig var hans kenning ok villa ok utan alla skynsemð' ('But since Augustine had read many books by wise men and kept much from them in his memory, he compared, however, what he had read with the words and thoughts of this heretic [...] and understood that his thoughts and heresy was ridiculous and beyond reason.') Thomas Becket (1118–1170), a popular saint in medieval Iceland, is portrayed as an ideally learned man in *Thómass saga erkibyskups* I:<sup>23</sup>

Svá var hann ok furðuliga minnigr, at hvat er hann heyrði af ritningum ok lagadómum var honum tiltækt á hverri tíð, er hann vildi frammi hafa [...] Hann byrjar nú þann hátt heimkominn á föðgarð, sem þeim er venjuligt er fyrir litlu hafa í skóla verit, þat er at studera sína bók ok staðfesta (þat) upp í sjálfs síns minni, sem fyrr heyrði hann af meistara munni. Er þat ok alsíða midil þess háttar manna, ef þeir hafa til tæripeninga, at þann tíma sem þeir búaz í sitt fóstrland heim venda, kaupa þeir gjarna skólabæk, at þeir megi halda með fullu þat gott, er þeir skildu.

[Of such wondrously strong memory was he, that whatsoever he had heard of scripture and law-awards, he could cite it at any time he chose to give it forth (...) And now that he hath come back home to his father's abode, he shapeth himself according to the want of those who have lately come back from school, in that he studied his books, and fasteneth in his own memory what aforetime he had heard from the mouth of his master. Such too, is a right common custom among this kind of folk, at the time they make ready to wend their way homeward to their native land, that if they happen to have spare money about them, they purchase school-books in order that they may preserve fully the knowledge of the good things which once they understood.]

*Heilagra feðra æfi (Vitae patrum)* II, translated in the thirteenth century, contains several anecdotes associated with memory. One of them tells of a monk selling a valuable book and giving its worth to the poor, and, while doing so, recalling the words of the Savior: 'Sel hluti þá er þú átt ok gef fátaekum mǫnnum' ('Sell your possessions and give to the poor') as found in Luke 12:33, Luke 18:22, and Matthew 19:21. He is said to have constantly repeated that verse: 'Hafði brodirinn ok jafnan þetta heilræði i ordstefi'.<sup>24</sup> *Ordstef* means 'a saying', but it may also signify 'something repeatedly recited to be impressed upon one's memory'. Accordingly, the

<sup>22</sup> *Heilagra manna sögur: Fortællinger og legender om hellige mænd og kvinder*, ed. Carl R. Unger, 2 vols (Christiania [Oslo] Bentzen, 1877), I, pp. 125–26.

<sup>23</sup> *Thómas saga erkibyskups: A Life of Archbishop Thomas Becket in Icelandic*, 2 vols, Rolls Series 65/2 (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1875–1883), ed. and trans. Eiríkur Magnússon, I, pp. 28 and 80.

<sup>24</sup> *Heilagra manna sögur*, ed. Unger, II, p. 569.

anecdote seems to contain both an *imitatio Christi* image and the notion that the monk was able to remember by heart the biblical references, even after he had sold his book.

Saints' lives were not merely narratives written by a single author and then enjoyed by readers and listeners. Their purpose was to edify and teach the audience to imitate behaviors that were considered exemplary by the community. Naturally, the paradigm was drawn from the Gospels and other saints' lives. As models, Icelandic hagiographers could have used other saints' lives in either Latin, Low German, or Norse translations. Hagiographers had access to oral stories, and also letters, and other documents, which were kept at cathedrals and other religious institutions. In order to be able to shape their material according to hagiographic tradition, the writers needed a combined knowledge of the Scriptures and hagiographic literature. An educated individual in the medieval sense kept in his memory a stock of citations to use in his compositions, and used his knowledge and writing skills to transmit ideas to others, either directly from a book or relying on his memory of a text he had read. A literate person could also transmit a text by relying on his memory during times and in a society where books were scarce and not readily available. Reading generally meant reading aloud with the implication that an individual who read to an audience covered the role of both reader and transmitter of a texts. Although the skills of reading and writing belonged to the upper strata of the society in Iceland as elsewhere, illiterate people also participated in the textual community. Book-learned individuals translated and composed legends of saints as the illiterate members of the audience listened and perhaps retold the stories in their own words. The audience knew the structure and motifs of a saint's life, knew what to expect, and were able to understand it according to its tradition. Memorizing and re-telling the narratives likely helped the transmission of the didactic message they carried.

Three Icelandic saints, all bishops and confessors, were venerated from 1200 until the Reformation in the middle of the sixteenth century.<sup>25</sup> Þorlákr Þórhallsson, bishop of Skálholt (1133–1193), was for several years abbot of the first Icelandic Augustinian monastery of Kirkjubær until he was consecrated bishop in 1178. He died on December 23 1193. His successor, Bishop Páll Jónsson, declared at the Alþingi in 1198 that

<sup>25</sup> See *Biskupa sögur II*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, pp. 47–285; *Biskupa sögur I: Kristni saga, Kristni þættir, Þorvalds þáttur víðförla I, Þorvalds þáttur víðförla II, Stefnis þáttur Þorgilssonar, Af Þangbrandi, Af Þiðranda ok dísunum, Kristniþóð Þangbrands, Þrír þættir, Kristnitakan, Jóns saga ins helga, Gísls þáttur Illugasonar, Sæmundar þáttur*, vol. 1: *Fræði*, vol. 2: *Sögutextar*, ed. Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Peter Foote. Íslenzk fornrit 15 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 2003), II, pp. 170–375; See *Biskupa sögur*, ed. Jón Sigurðsson and Guðbrandur Vigfússon, I, pp. 405–618, II, p. 220.

it should be allowed to invoke Bishop Þorlákr and sing services to him on the day of his death. Later that year, on July 20, his relics were translated.<sup>26</sup> The second Icelandic saint, Bishop Jón Ögmundarson, was consecrated as the first bishop of Hólar in 1106. In 1200, his relics were enshrined at Hólar, and his cult was officially recognized.<sup>27</sup> Guðmundr Arason (1161–1237), the fifth bishop of Hólar, was also regarded as a saint. His relics were exhumed in 1315, and his cult is mainly a product of the fourteenth century.<sup>28</sup>

As already noted, *Þorláks saga helga* and *Jóns saga helga* were originally composed in Latin.<sup>29</sup> Sources indicate that a Latin life of St Jón did exist but it is now lost.<sup>30</sup> A *\*Vita Godemundi boni* about Guðmundr Arason, presumably written at the request of the Norwegian bishop of Hólar Ormr Ásláksson (r. 1342–1356), is now lost.<sup>31</sup> The oldest vernacular version of *Þorláks saga* was written shortly after 1200 and rewritten in the thirteenth century. *Jóns saga helga* survives in three redactions: an early thirteenth-century version and two redactions from the fourteenth century. Four surviving vernacular biographies (A-, B-, C, and D-redactions) of Guðmundr Arason, known as *Guðmundar sögur byskups*, were written in the fourteenth century. The youngest of the four, the D-redaction, was composed by – or more likely adapted from a Latin *vita* composed by (as convincingly argued by Gottskálk Jensson in this volume) – Abbot Arngrímr Brandsson, around 1340–1350.<sup>32</sup> In this essay, I focus on the lives of Þorlákr and Jón, since their cult arose approximately at the same time. The aforementioned D-redaction of *Guðmundar saga byskups* is one of the finest examples of Icelandic hagiography. It is a product of a

<sup>26</sup> *Biskupa sögur II*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, pp. 86, 195–96, 203–04, 253–54, 307–09.

<sup>27</sup> *Biskupa sögur I*, ed. Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Peter Foote, II, pp. 255–56. See the discussion by Haki Antonsson above at pp. 135–38.

<sup>28</sup> The only preserved source is *Laurentíus saga byskups*. See *Biskupa sögur III*, ed. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, pp. 322–25.

<sup>29</sup> See the discussion by Gottskálk Jensson and Haki Antonsson above at pp. 99–113 and 136–37.

<sup>30</sup> See *Biskupa sögur I*, ed. Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Peter Foote, II, p. ccxv.

<sup>31</sup> See especially Gottskálk Jensson, 'The Remains of a Latin *\*Vita Godemundi boni* in the D-Redaction of *Guðmundar saga byskups*', in *Sainthood, Scriptoria, and Secular Erudition in Medieval and Early Modern Scandinavia: Essays in Honor of Kirsten Wolf*, ed. Dario Bullitta and Natalie M. Van Deusen. Acta Scandinavica. Aberdeen Studies in the Scandinavian World (Turnhout: Brepols, forthcoming).

<sup>32</sup> Stefán Karlsson, 'Guðmundar sögur byskups: Authorial Viewpoints and Methods', in *Stafkrókar: Ritgerðir eftir Stefán Karlsson gefnar út í tilefni af sjötugsafmæli hans, 2. desember 1998*. Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, Rit 49 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, 2000), pp. 153–71.



well-established textual community, with numerous references to other saints' lives, letters, and documents. Its author also appears also to be memory-conscious. He writes:<sup>33</sup>

Svá stendr skrifat í bókum, at í þessari síðustu utanferð vann herra Guðmundr svá mæta hluti ok mjök ágæta, bæði með virðulegum verkum ok spásögum, at ei gleymist með norrænum mönnum heldr lifir þar hans minning án afláti, þótt sakir fáfræði kunnim vér eigi letrliga setning þeirra tákna utan þat eina þrennt, sem hér stendr næst.

[It is written in books, that on his last journey abroad, Guðmundr did some excellent and splendid things, with honorable deeds and prophecies, that they would not be forgotten among northern people, his memory will rather be alive there forever, although because of our ignorance we do not know of those signs in writing, apart from the three things that follow.]

Arngrímur, however, represents the culmination of a long hagiographic tradition in both Latin and Norse. In the following, I concentrate on the sagas of St Þorlákr and St Jón whose cults, and whose first *vitae* and sagas developed in the thirteenth century. It is necessary to remember that from the dawn of Icelandic Christianity, clerics needed to be educated in the skills of reading and writing, and memory was an essential tool of education as elsewhere in medieval Europe. Handbooks and *florilegia* served as memory aids, and their material was organized in small units to ease memorization.<sup>34</sup> Short segments of longer works were divided into segments and numbered for the same purpose, a practice which, according to Mary Carruthers, was behind the chapter and verse numbering of the Scriptures.<sup>35</sup> Medieval methods of dividing biblical narrative must not, however, be confused with modern divisions into chapters. Although traced back to Stephen Langton, archbishop of Canterbury (c. 1150–1228), a complete Bible divided in this way was not produced until 1555. During the Middle Ages, there was no single scheme of divisions and numbers, and the length of chapters varied from one manuscript to another.<sup>36</sup> Educating lay people meant teaching basic knowledge, such as the *Pater Noster* and *Credo*, which people learnt by heart and memorized. Medieval writers may not have known many

<sup>33</sup> *Biskupa sögur*, ed. Jón Sigurðsson and Guðbrandur Vigfússon, 2 vols (Copenhagen: Møller, 1858–1878), II, p. 129.

<sup>34</sup> Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, pp. 174–85.

<sup>35</sup> Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, pp. 4–5.

<sup>36</sup> See, for instance, Richard Marsden, 'Wrestling with the Bible: Textual Problems for the Scholar and Student', in *The Christian Tradition in Anglo-Saxon England: Approaches to Current Scholarship and Teaching*, ed. Paul Cavill. Christianity and Culture: Issues in Teaching and Research 1 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004), p. 74.

texts but the ones they knew, they knew well and the Bible was unquestionably one of the most important books. The Bible was usually not preserved as one unit, but parts of it existed in numerous manuscripts and, as can be expected in a manuscript culture, there was much variation among manuscripts.<sup>37</sup> Many biblical quotations are preserved in Old Norse religious literature, as demonstrated by Ian J. Kirby's monumental edition and study.<sup>38</sup> There is considerable difference in how the quotations are translated and presented, and quotation from memory could be one of the reasons for the resulting variation. Educated people in the Middle Ages learned biblical verses by heart and memorized them.<sup>39</sup> In *Þorláks saga helga*, the Bible is quoted extensively in order to show that Þorlákr was endowed with God's grace and represented a legitimate follower of Christ. *Þorláks saga* contains about about forty biblical quotations, more than any other Icelandic life of bishops or saints. Of course, monks and nuns were supposed to know the Psalms by heart and monks are credited with early hagiography. In his treatise *De tribus maximis circumstantiis gestorum*, Hugh of St Victor (c. 1096–1141) teaches students practical methods for learning the Psalms and points out that it is easier to cite them from memory than turning the pages of a book.<sup>40</sup> It is likely that the hagiographer of *Þorláks saga* knew the Psalms by heart, and he is certainly aware of their importance. *Þorláks saga* contains twelve quotations from them. There are only two direct biblical quotations in the S-version of *Jóns saga helga*, but five in the L/H-versions. The D-redaction of *Guðmundar saga byskups* by Arngrímur Brandsson contains about thirty biblical references, but many of them are paraphrased, and some are quoted in Latin.<sup>41</sup> In *Þorláks saga*, the quotations point out the highlights of Þorlákr's life and personality.

<sup>37</sup> See Marsden, 'Wrestling with the Bible', pp. 69–70.

<sup>38</sup> Ian J. Kirby, *Biblical Quotation in Old Icelandic-Norwegian Religious Literature*. Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, Rit 9–10, 2 vols (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 1976–1980), II, pp. 79–81.

<sup>39</sup> Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, pp. 82, 96 and 157–74.

<sup>40</sup> 'An putas eos, quociens aliquem psalmorum numero designare volebant, paginas replicasse, ut tibi a principio comptum ordientes scire possent quotus esset quisque psalmorum? Nimis magnus fuisset labor iste in negatio tali. Habeant ergo in corde potius noticiam, et memoria retinebat, sicut didicerant numerum et ordinem singulorum.' ('For surely, you don't think that those who wish to cite some one of the Psalms have turned over the manuscript pages, so that starting their count from the beginning they could figure out what number in the series of Psalms each might have? Too great would be the labor in such a task. Therefore they have in their heart a powerful mental device, and they have retained in their memory, for they have learned the number and the order of each single item in the series.') Hugh of St Victor, 'De Tribus Maximis Circumstantiis Gestorum', ed. William Green, *Speculum* 18 (1943). Mary Carruthers, in *The Book of Memory*, at p. 263 (Appendix).

<sup>41</sup> Kirby, *Biblical Quotation in Old Icelandic*, II, pp. 79–81.

Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 677 4to (c. 1200) is one of the oldest manuscripts preserved in Iceland.<sup>42</sup> It contains the following items: *Heims ósómar*, a fragmentary list of twelve vices (fol. 1r); *Spakmæli Prospers Epigrammata*, a translation of passages from *Prosperi Aquitani liber sententiarum excerptarum e scriptis Augustini* and *Sancti Prosperi Aquitani ex Sententiis Sancti Augustini Epigrammatum liber unus* (fol. 1r–6v); *Homíliur Gregors páfa* (7r–24v) and *Dialógar Gregors páfa*, respectively a collection of homilies by Gregory the Great (c. 549–604) and his *Dialogi* (25r–41v).<sup>43</sup> The epigrams were widely used as educational texts in medieval schools.<sup>44</sup> They were attributed to Prosper of Aquitaine (c. 390–c. 490) and contain short excerpts from the works of Augustine.<sup>45</sup> The numbering of the vices and the segmentary nature of the text indicates that AM 677 4to could have been a handbook written for mnemonic purposes. As a matter of fact, several passages in *Þorláks saga helga* echo Prosper’s *sententiae*.<sup>46</sup> The passages show similarities on a verbal and conceptual level, as illustrated below:

<i>Spakmæli Prospers</i> (AM 677 4to)	<i>Þorláks saga helga</i> (A-redaction)
En þat at mæla vel ok lifa illa þá er þat ekki annat en at fyrðæma sjálfan sik með sinni röddu. En þó sé verra bæði ok illa at gera. (Prosp. VI. <i>De vera Dei laudatione</i> ) <sup>47</sup>	er Isidorus byskup mælir, spakr ok heilagur, at bæði er nytsamligt at nema mart ok lifa réttlíga, en ef eigi má bæði senn verða, þá er enn dýrligra at lifa vel. <sup>48</sup>
[He who speaks well but lives unrighteously condemns himself with his own voice. However, it is worse to do both things badly.]	[What the wise and holy Bishop Isidore says, that it is useful to learn much and to live rightly, but if both cannot be achieved, then it is more glorious to live well.]

<sup>42</sup> The texts are available in *Leifar fornra kristinna fræða íslenzkra*, ed. Þorvaldur Bjarnarson (Copenhagen: Hagerup, 1878), pp. 2–16.

<sup>43</sup> AM 677 4to is fully accessible at <https://handrit.is/en/manuscript/view/en/AM04-0677>, last accessed October 15 2020.

<sup>44</sup> See Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, p. 35.

<sup>45</sup> *Leifar fornra kristinna fræða íslenzkra*, ed. Þorvaldur Bjarnarson, pp. iii–iv.

<sup>46</sup> Ásdís Egilsdóttir, ‘Study, Memorize, Compose’, in *Studi Anglo-Norreni in onore di John S. McKinnell: ‘He hafað sundorgecynd’*, ed. Maria Elena Ruggerini and Veronka Szöke (Cagliari: Cooperativa Universitaria Editrice Cagliariitana, 2009), pp. 378–86.

<sup>47</sup> *Leifar fornra kristinna fræða íslenzkra*, ed. Þorvaldur Bjarnarson, p. 3.

<sup>48</sup> See *Biskupa sögur II*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, p. 50, and *The Saga of Bishop Thorlak*, trans. Ármann Jakobsson and David Clark. Viking Society for Northern Research, Text Series 21 (London: University College London, Viking Society for Northern Research, 2013), p. 3.

Remembering Saints and Bishops in Medieval Iceland

*Spakmæli Prospers* (AM 677 4to)

Rangt er at vanda of hvergi óhœgindi er guð leggr á hendr monnum en hitt er rétt at ganga léttliga undir þat allt ok at heldr at sá skrifar þat allt fyri synðir órar eða til dýrða oss ef betr mætti er umb oss skal dœma harðan dóm ef vér rom ranglátir, en miskunnar dóm ef vér rom réttlátir (Prosp. XXXV. *De toleranda varietate mundana*).<sup>49</sup>

[It is wrong to bemoan every discomfort that God gives unto men, but it is right to bear it all lightly, for he who writes down all our sins or good deeds will judge us harshly if we do wrong, but with mercy if we are righteous.]

*Þorláks saga helga* (A-redaction)

Sýndi þetta inn sæli Þorlákr byskup öllum þeim er iðrask vildu sinna andmarka, ok ef þeir vildu hans ráðum fylgja varð hann þeim feginn ok líknaði þeim linliga með léttbærum skript- um, eptir því sem sagði spámaðr Guðs, at á hverju dægri, er maðr vildi til Guðs snúask, at hann myndi þá lifa góðu lífi, en deyja eigi illum dauða.<sup>50</sup>

[The blessed Bishop Þorlákr showed this to all of those who wished to repent of their faults, and if they wanted to follow his advice he rejoiced for them and gently helped them with light penances, according to what God's prophet said: Whenever a man wished to turn to God, he would then live the good life and not die an evil death.]

*Spakmæli Prospers* (AM 685 c 4to)

Sætta þá er sundrþykkir eru.<sup>51</sup>

[To reconcile those who were discordant.]

*Þorláks saga helga* (A-redaction)

Þorlákr byskup samþykkði þá ok sætti er áðr váru reiðir ok sundrþykkir.<sup>52</sup>

[Bishop Þorlákr reconciled and brought into agreement those who had been wrathful and discordant.]

The redactor of *Spakmæli Prospers* in AM 677 c 4to in all probability prepared a collection of material to be studied and memorized and adapted into a new context and arranged it to his liking. The hagiographer of *Þorláks saga* depicts the holy bishop as a learned saint, who reads religious books and biblical texts to keep in his memory as advised in the prologue to Revelation:<sup>53</sup>

<sup>49</sup> *Leifar fornra kristinna fræða íslenzkra*, ed. Þorvaldur Bjarnarson, p. 9.

<sup>50</sup> See *Biskupa sögur II*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, II, p. 72, and *The Saga of Bishop Þorlák*, trans. Ármann Jakobsson and David Clark, p. 15.

<sup>51</sup> *Leifar fornra kristinna fræða íslenzkra*, ed. Þorvaldur Bjarnarson, p. 17.

<sup>52</sup> See *Biskupa sögur II*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, II, p. 70 and Ármann Jakobsson and Clark, *The Saga of Bishop Þorlák*, p. 13.

<sup>53</sup> See *Biskupa sögur II*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, p. 70, and Ármann Jakobsson and

Porlákr byskup sá opt á helgar bœkr ok las yfir helgar ritningar, af því at hann gleymði eigi því er Jón postoli mælir í sinni bók: ‘*Sæll er sá er les ok heyrir orð þessar bœkr ok varðveitir þá hluti er á henni eru ritaðir*’ (Revelation 1:3).

[Bishop Porlákr often looked into holy books and read over the Holy Scriptures for he never forgot what the Apostle John says in his book: *Blessed is the one who sees and hears the words of this book and guards those things which are written in it* (Revelation 1:3)].

The oldest redaction of *Jóns saga helga* was written about eighty years after the bishop’s death. The hagiographer had access to orally transmitted material, which his informants had remembered, and supplemented it with matter drawn from hagiographic literature. Local lore is likely to have formed a collective memory tradition to which the hagiographers belonged since several local informants are referred to and mentioned by name in *Jóns saga helga*. It appears that both women and men are among the informants, and their words and memories seem to be equally valued.

The story of a young nun at Hólar named Hildir recounted in *Jóns saga helga* closely resembles the stories of saintly virgins.<sup>54</sup> She is said to have been beautiful, pure, pious, and to have chosen to live as a recluse. One night, as she woke up, she saw the cathedral haunted by ghosts, and she could neither move her head nor close her eyes to avoid this dreadful sight. She then invoked Bishop Jón, who immediately appeared in full episcopal vestments and drove the evil spirits away. It is written that Hildir had told few people about the frightening night in the cathedral, but she did tell Oddný Knútsdóttir (fl. c. 1100–1150) about it, and subsequently Oddný told Gunnlaugr Leifsson.<sup>55</sup> Hildir’s episode testifies to the

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Clark, *The Saga of Bishop Thorlak*, p. 14.

<sup>54</sup> Ásdís Egilsdóttir, ‘Skjaldmær drottins: Frásögnin af Hildi einsetukonu í Jóns sögu helga’, *Studia Theologica Islandica* 31 (2010), pp. 29–42. On Hildir’ story, see also the discussion by Haki Antonsson above, at pp. 149–53.

<sup>55</sup> ‘Ok er hon var svá fast haldin í þessari hræðilegri sýn, þá tók hon með mikilli áhyggju at kalla á Jón byskup, fóstura sinn, at hann dygði henni ok frelsti hana af þeiri fíandans freistni, svá sem hann hafði áðr gort [...] en Hildir nunna sagði sem fæstum frá. Oddnýju Knútsdóttur sagði hon frá, en Oddný sagði frá Guðlaugi munk Leifssyni er þessa sögu hefir saman sett’ (‘And as she was held fast by this terrible vision, she began, with great apprehension, to invoke Bishop Jón, her mentor, so that he would come to her rescue and free her from the temptations of the devil, as he had done before [...] The nun Hildir told very few people about this. She told Oddný Knútsdóttir, and Oddný told the monk Gunnlaugr Leifsson, who composed this saga.’) See *Biskupa sögur I: Kristni saga, Kristni þættir, Þorvalds þáttur víðförla I, Þorvalds þáttur víðförla II, Stefnis þáttur Þorgilssonar, Af Þangbrandi, Af Þiðranda ok disunnum, Kristniboð Þangbrands, Þrír þættir, Kristnitakan, Jóns saga ins helga, Gísls þáttur Illugasonar, Sæmundar þáttur*, vol. 1: *Fræði*, vol. 2: *Sögutextar*, ed. Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Peter Foote. Íslenzk fornrit 15 (Reykjavík: Hið

fact that women living at Hólar were intrigued by her personality and supported her. Consequently, they are likely to have kept the memory of her and transmitted stories of her to Gunnlaugr Leifsson, who infused her description with typical hagiographic traits.

The hagiographer of *Jóns saga helga* appears to be interested in memory, not only as a source but also as a tool for learning. In the chapters of the L-redaction of *Jóns saga helga*, which has been attributed to Bergr Sökkason and dated to the fourteenth century, education and learning are given special emphasis with *memoria* imagery and metaphors based on mnemonic technique, with its ingenious visual and pictorial methods.<sup>56</sup> Things to be remembered are kept in the heart. The image of the memorial storehouse, in various forms, is frequent in pre-modern mnemonic practice. The storehouse, containers or boxes of different sizes where things are neatly kept in order, appears in several forms, such as 'thesaurus' ('treasure-house'), 'cella' ('store-room, a monk's cell'), 'cellula' ('small store-room'), 'arca' ('store-room, box') or 'scrinium' ('shrine, casket'). Bees and beehives are also frequent images. Bees collect honey and keep it in the compartments of the beehives. A common metaphor for study and stored information is that of a bee collecting nectar with which she makes honey to pack her *cella* or the *thesaurus* with wisdom. *Cella* means 'store-room', but *cellae* are also 'small rooms or huts for people', as in monastic use. The compartments made by bees for their honey were also called *cellae*. When describing the cathedral school at Hólar, where people read, wrote, studied, taught, and certainly also memorized texts, the hagiographer adorns his text with a specific *memoria* imagery:

Hér mátti sjá um ǫll hús biskupsstólsins mikla iðn ok athöfn: sumir lásu heilagar ritningar, sumir rituðu, sumir námu, sumir kenndu. Engi var ǫfund þeira í millum eða sundrþykki, engi ágangr eða þrætni. Hverr vildi annan sér meira háttar; hlýðni hélt þar hverr vit annan, ok þegar signum var til tíða gort, skunduðu allir þegar ór sínum *smákofum* til kirkjunnar, *sætlegan seim sem þrifit býflygi til býstokks heilagrar kirkju meðr sér berandi*, hvert þeir höfðu *saman borit ór lystuligum vínkjallara heilagra ritninga* (my emphasis).<sup>57</sup>

([All the houses roundabout the bishop's residence there was great activity. Some read the Scriptures, some sang, some studied, while others taught. There was no envy between them, nor discord, no arguments or squabbling and none would put himself above the other. Docility was their yoke and, when the sign was given for divine service, they hastened from their small huts to church, like industrious bees

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íslenzka fornritafélag, 2003), I, pp. 251–52. A new English translation is offered in *The Saga of St. Jón of Hólar*, trans. Margaret Cormack and Peter Foote.

<sup>56</sup> Ásdís Egilsdóttir, 'From Orality to Literacy', pp. 219–28.

<sup>57</sup> *Jóns saga Hólabyskups ens helga*, ed. Peter Foote. Editiones Arnarnagnæanæ, Ser. A, vol. 14 (Copenhagen: Reitzel, 2003), p. 87.

carrying sweet honeycomb with them to the hive of holy chapel, that which they collected from the delightful wine cellar of sacred writings].)

Various forms of *cellae* in are represented the passage cited above, the small huts and the compartments to keep the honey. The wine cellar where the wisdom is kept is also an image of a storehouse. Books, knowledge and memory were also compared to meadows and flowers. Flowers were picked and collected, the corn, the food which the meadows produced, was digested. The young Jón is a model student:<sup>58</sup>

Sem herra Ísleifr byskup undirstóð hversu vel Jón fóstri hans færði sér til nytsemðar þá góða hluti sem hann kenndi honum ok hversu vel þat sáðkorn fagrliga plantaðiz í hjartans akri sem hann hafði nógliga í sáð meðr sínum ágætum kenningum ok fagrligum dæmum (my emphasis).

[As Lord Bishop Ísleifr perceived how well his foster-son Jón made use of the good things which he taught him and how well that seed corn planted itself beautifully in the field of the heart, which he had carefully sown with his excellent teachings and fair example.]

In this passage, *hjarta* 'heart' and *akr* 'field' are intertwined as *memoria* images. Throughout the Middle Ages, to keep something in the heart was synonym for memorizing.<sup>59</sup> A famous exemplum in the same text illustrates this concept. It is said that when King David appeared to Bishop Jón in a dream, playing a harp, the bishop said: 'Af því bjóð, herra konungr, at mér sé nokkur harpa færð at ek prófi í yðru augliti hvárt nokkur partr þessa himneska hörpuslags hefir í mínu hjarta eptir dvalst' ('Please, my Lord, have a harp brought to me so that I can prove before you if any part of this heavenly harp music has remained in my heart.')

<sup>60</sup> Writing in the heart is also a common biblical metaphor.<sup>61</sup> Priests and laymen alike gather wisdom with *minnissjóðr* ('memory-purse') as the equivalent of the *sacculus*, a *memoria* metaphor, whose original meaning is that of 'a bag used to carry books as well as coins'.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>59</sup> See especially Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, pp. 48–49. Interestingly, Hugh of St Victor's *De tribus maximis circumstantiis gestorum* begins with the words 'Fili, sapientia thesaurus est et cordium arca', ed. William M. Green, p. 488. 'Children, knowledge is a treasury and your heart is its strongbox'. See Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 262.

<sup>60</sup> On Jón's dream, see discussion by Bullitta and Haki Antonsson above, at pp. 2–3 and 143–49.

<sup>61</sup> See, for instance, Jeremiah 31:31–34; Hebrews 8:10–12 and 10:16; Psalms 119:11; 2 Corinthians 3:1–18; Romans 2: 14–16; Proverbs 3:3, 7:1–3; Luke 2:19. See Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, pp. 34–35, and Hubrath, *Schreiben und Erinnern*, pp. 25–26.

<sup>62</sup> *Jóns saga Hólabyskups ens helga*, ed. Foote, p. 88.

*Jóns saga helga* illustrates and emphasizes Bishop Jón's piety and educational zeal. According to the text, Jón engaged two foreign teachers to teach in the cathedral school of Hólar, Gísli *inn gauzki* (fl. c. 1100–1130), from Gothland, Sweden, to provide instruction in Latin and *grammatica* and the priest Ríkini (probably from Alsace-Lorraine) to teach music and *versificatio*. The humble young priest and teacher, Gísli, is said not to have relied on his memory while preaching.<sup>63</sup> The more experienced Ríkini, on the other hand 'minnigr at hann kunni utanbókar allan sǫng á tólfmánuðum, bæði í dagtíðum ok óttu meðr ǫruggrí tónasetning ok hljóðagrein' ('knew by heart everything that should be sung the whole year round for both Dawn prayer and Evening prayer, and how to put it rightly in tune.')<sup>64</sup> According to *Jóns saga helga*, students were not the only individuals to benefit from the teaching of the cathedral school: a churchbuilder is said to have learned *grammatica* by listening to students being taught and to have become the most accomplished man in grammar:<sup>65</sup>

Valdi hann þar til smið þann er hagrastr var í þann tíma á Íslandi er Þóroddr hét ok var Gamlason. Þat er sagt frá þessum manni at hann var svá næmr, þá er hann var í smíðinni, þá heyrði hann til er prestlingum var kennd íþrótt sú er *grammatica* heitir, en svá loddi honum þat vel í eyrum af miklum næmleik ok athuga at hann gerðisk inn mesti íþróttarmaðr í þess konar námi.

[He chose the most accomplished builder in Iceland named Þóroddr Gamlason (fl. c. 1100–1150). It is told that he was so quick at learning that, when he was at his work, he listened to the priestlings being taught the accomplishment which is called *grammatica*, and it stuck so well in his ears, by reasons of his great quickness in learning and attention, that he became the most accomplished man in his kind of learning.]

By listening and remembering he gained knowledge of Latin as if he had been among the students of the school. The hagiographer continues to make use of *memoria* imagery when describing the teaching of the Swedish and French masters:<sup>66</sup>

Ok því réðusk margra góðra manna börn undir hönd þessum tveim meistarum, sumir at nema latínu en aðrir sǫng eða hvárutveggja, kostgæfandi hverr eptir sínu næmi at fylla vandlaupa síns hjarta af þeim molum viskubrauðs er þeirra kennifeðr brutu þeim til andligrar fæðu,

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86. On Ríkini, see also the discussion by Haki Antonsson above, at p. 142.

<sup>65</sup> *Biskupa sögur I*, ed. Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Peter Foote, I, p. 204.

<sup>66</sup> *Jóns saga Hólabyskups ens helga*, ed. Peter Foote, p. 86.



af hverjum (vér) sáum blómberanligan akr guðligrar miskunnar með  
fögurum ilmi víða upp runninn.

[Therefore, the children of many worthy men were entrusted to these two teachers, some to learn Latin and others singing, or both, each striving according to his capacity to fill the wicker-basket of his heart with the crumbled bread of wisdom, which their fatherly instructors broke up as spiritual food for them, as a result of which we saw the blossoming field of divine mercy sending up sweet savours far and wide.]

The many examples found in the L-redaction of *Jóns saga helga* are proof that Icelandic hagiographers were familiar with mnemonic techniques and imagery drawn from them.

The oldest collection of Icelandic miracles, a miracle-book originally from 1199, containing forty-six miracles and known as *Jarteinabók Þorláks byskups in forna* is preserved in Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 645 4to (c. 1220–1250), the first section of which has been dated to around 1220.<sup>67</sup> The beginning, the end, and several miracles contained in the middle of the manuscript are now lost. Parts of it were read aloud at the Alþingi in 1198, when it was officially permitted to make vows and invoke Bishop Þorlákr as a saint. The preserved manuscript contains miracles that occurred shortly after the bishop's relics were exhumed on July 20 1198 until March 1200.<sup>68</sup> A collection of the miracles of Jón Ögmundarson corresponding to Þorlákr's *Jarteinabók in forna*, has not been preserved. It is possible, however, that a collection of Jón's miracles was read aloud at the Alþingi before his sanctity was declared.<sup>69</sup> Guðmundr Arason was believed to have worked miracles already in his priesthood, and a substantial number of these were performed through the use of consecrated water. The B-redaction of *Guðmundar saga byskups* was probably written shortly after 1320, five years after his relics had been exhumed. A miracle-book follows this version. A chapter containing sixteen *post mortem* miracles follows the D-redaction of *Guðmundar saga byskups* by Arngrímur Brandsson. The last recorded miracle occurred in 1343. Miracles played an important part in keeping the memory of the saint alive. The miracles tell of men and women, who related their miraculous experiences to priests or bishops.

<sup>67</sup> Ásdís Egilsdóttir, *Biskupa sögur II*, pp. 100–40. See especially the discussion by Gottskálk Jensson above, at pp. 102–03.

<sup>68</sup> For information about AM 645 4to and the miracle-books of St Þorlákr, see especially *Niðrstigningar saga: Sources, Transmission, and Theology of the Old Norse 'Descent into Hell'*, ed. and trans. Dario Bullitta. Toronto Old Norse and Icelandic Series 11 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), pp. 21 and 88–92.

<sup>69</sup> *Biskupa sögur I*, ed. Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Peter Foote, I, p. 288, note 3.

After a first oral transmission, their narratives were written down and restructured by ecclesiastical scribes, after which they became important documents to confirm the saint's sanctity.<sup>70</sup> Most miracles are probably originally told by the people who experienced them. They recounted their experiences in their own words, probably also with gestures showing or trying to prove that the miracle had taken place. They are stories that are likely to have been told and spread orally even after they had been written down by clerical authorities. Accordingly, those who heard miracle stories were likely to relate to them and keep them in their memories. In *Þorláks saga helga*, miracles are most frequently orally transmitted to Bishop Páll Jónsson.<sup>71</sup> The epilogue of the *Jarteinabók Þorlaks byskups 9nnur* preserved in Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, AM 379 4to, a manuscript containing both *Hungrvaka* and the C-redaction of *Þorláks saga helga*, contains a discussion of memory and commemoration.<sup>72</sup> In his epilogue, the hagiographer writes that many of Þorlákr's miracles have not been written down 'fyrir fáfræðis sakir ok óminnis' ('due to ignorance and forgetfulness.') Moreover, he reminds the reader that miracles were recorded and read aloud from the beginning of Þorlákr's cult, and that new ones were subsequently added. But as the number of the miracles grew progressively, it became impossible to recall all of them. But then, the hagiographer remarks, love for the saintly the bishop was kindled again when new miracles occurred.<sup>73</sup>

Poetry, with its rhyme and alliteration is in itself a memory aid. In *Jóns saga postula* IV, better known as *Litla-Jóns saga*, the hagiographer refers to and includes a poem by Abbot Nikulás Bergsson of Munkaþverá (b. unknown–d. 1159). The poem has been included, the hagiographer writes, because it contains three items to be remembered ('ok þar af lystir til minnis inn leiða eina þrjá puncta.') The parts to be remembered are numbered, perhaps to ease memorization.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>70</sup> See Ronald C. Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England* (London: J.M. Dent, 1995), pp. 100–12.

<sup>71</sup> Ásdís Egilsdóttir, *Biskupa sögur II*, pp. ciii, 263–64.

<sup>72</sup> See *Biskupa sögur II*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, pp. 247–50. *Þorláks saga* is preserved on folios 14r–77r.

<sup>73</sup> 'Ok er þat var at svá mikill fjöldi gjörðisk at um jarteinir ins sæla Þorláks byskups at mönnum varð um afl í minni at hafa en þær váru margar at hver var annari lík, þá dofnaði hugur manna' ('And when it happened that there were so many miracles of the blessed bishop Þorlákr that people had difficulties keeping them in memory, and they did resemble each other, then people's minds became indifferent.') *Biskupa sögur II*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, p. 247. For further analysis of the epilogue, see *Niðrstigningar saga*, ed. and trans. Bullitta, pp. 90–92. See also the discussion by Gottskálf Jenson above, at pp. 102–03.

<sup>74</sup> *Postola sögur: Legendariske fortællinger om apostlernes liv, deres kamp for*

Saints' and bishops' lives and other religious texts offer numerous insights into medieval mnemonic culture. Although we usually link Christian culture with books, learning by heart and memorization was inevitable, for learned and lay people alike. Saints needed to be remembered via writing, reading, and through oral transmissions. Memory was held in high regard and many saints, the ideal human beings, had good memory and used it well. Hagiography is not only a text committed to parchment by a learned individual, but also an interaction between the hagiographer and his audience/environment, and an interplay between oral and written material, which intertwines with the hagiographer's own booklearning and memory.<sup>75</sup>

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*kristendommens udbredelse samt deres martyrdød*, ed. Carl R. Unger (Christiania [Oslo]: Bentzen, 1874), pp. 509–10.

<sup>75</sup> I wish to thank Margaret Cormack for her useful comments and for polishing my English.

*HEILAGIR KARLAR OK ENGLAR*

HOLY MEN AND ANGELS

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*Þat vóro laug munkna:*  
 A Reading of *Benedikts saga* in Light  
 of the *Regula sancti Benedicti*

Mauro Camiz

In addition to providing general evidence for the existence of a cult of St Benedict in medieval Iceland, this essay discusses the textual relations between *Benedikts saga* – the most complete Old Norse-Icelandic version of the widely circulated *Vita beati Benedicti abbatis* (BHL 1102), which forms part of Gregory the Great’s *Dialogi* – and the *Regula sancti Benedicti*, a collection of precepts for the governance of Benedictine monasteries. In the following, I consider the personal growth of St Benedict according to the legend and analyze individual episodes that are closely connected to specific precepts contained in the *Regula*.<sup>1</sup> Subsequently, I focus on a small but noteworthy textual interpolation in *Benedikts saga* and discuss a significant omission, both of which appear to be deliberate editorial interventions on the part of the Norse compiler.

### The cult of St Benedict in medieval Iceland

*Benedikts saga* is the only Old Norse-Icelandic text devoted entirely to the life of St Benedict of Nursia<sup>2</sup> (traditionally AD 480–547, more likely *c.* AD

<sup>1</sup> For the dependence of numerous episodes of the *Life* of St Benedict from the *Regula Benedicti*, I have relied on two rich commentaries to Gregory’s *Dialogi*: Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, ed. Adalbert de Vogüé, 3 vols. Sources Chrétiennes 251, 260, 265 (Paris, 1978–80); Gregory the Great, *Storie di santi e di diavoli (Dialoghi)*, ed. and trans. Manlio Simonetti, intr. Salvatore Pricoco, 2 vols, Scrittori greci e latini (Milan: Fondazione Lorenzo Valla/Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 2005–2006), with due adaptations and reconsiderations of their readings.

<sup>2</sup> The other two are the first Old Norse translation of Gregory’s *Dialogi* and a brief hagiographic text on St Benedict that was read on his feast-day. A critical edition of the former appears in *Heilagra manna sögur: Fortællinger og legender om hellige mænd og kvinder*, ed. Carl R. Unger, 2 vols (Christiania [Oslo]: Bentzen, 1877), I, pp. 179–255 (extant parts of Book II on pp. 200–19); see also *The Arna-Magnæan Manuscript 677, 4to*, ed. Didrik Arup Seip. Corpus

490/500–560).<sup>3</sup> There is scant information about the cult of St Benedict in medieval Iceland, though Margaret Cormack provides some evidence in her surveys of the veneration of saints in Iceland.<sup>4</sup> The earliest is a record of St Benedict's Holy Day of Obligation in the religious calendar in *Grágás* on March 21,<sup>5</sup> which is traditionally considered his *dies natalis*. This was later abolished by the 1275 *Kristinn rétrr Árna byskups (hinn nýji)*, the Code of Ecclesiastical Law by Árni Þorláksson (1237–1298), which applied only to the Skálholt diocese, however.<sup>6</sup> In addition, all the calendars examined by Cormack mention his *translatio* on July 11.<sup>7</sup>

Secondly, the *máldagar* ('church inventories') testify that the cult of St Benedict was associated with the monasteries founded during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which were mostly Benedictine houses. The first two monasteries were in the Hólar diocese: the monastery of Þingeyrar

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codicum Islandicorum medii aevi 18 (Copenhagen: Einar Munksgaard, 1949); *The Life of St. Gregory and His Dialogues*, ed. Hreinn Benediktsson; Kirsten Wolf, 'Gregory's Influence on Old Norse-Icelandic Literature', in *Rome and the North: The Early Reception of Gregory the Great in Germanic Europe*, ed. Rolf H. Bremmer Jr, Kees Dekker, and David F. Johnson (Paris: Peeters, 2001), pp. 266–68. As for the other text, see Kirsten Wolf, *The Legends of the Saints in Old Norse-Icelandic Prose*. Toronto Old Norse and Icelandic Series 6 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), pp. 59–60.

<sup>3</sup> See footnote 26 below.

<sup>4</sup> Margaret Cormack, *The Saints in Iceland: Their Veneration from the Conversion to 1400*, pref. Peter Foote. Subsidia Hagiographica 78 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1994), pp. 84–85; and Cormack, 'Saints of Medieval Hólar: A Statistical Survey of the Veneration of Saints in the Diocese', *Peregrinations: Journal of Medieval Art and Architecture* 3/2 (2011), pp. 7–37. See <http://digital.kenyon.edu/perejournal/vol3/iss2/2>, last accessed October 16 2020.

<sup>5</sup> 'Messv daga eigum ver at halda logtekna. þa er nv mvn ec telia [...] Þa erv [...] ix. nætr til benediktus messv' ['We have to keep as established feast days these days I shall now enumerate [...] nine nights to Benedict's day'], *Grágás. Konungsbók. Genoptrykt efter Vilhjálmur Finsens udgave 1852*, ed. Vilhjálmur Finsen (Odense: Odense Universitetsforlag, 1974), *Kristinna laga þátrr* 13, p. 30. *Grágás: Laws of Early Iceland. The Codex Regius of Grágás with Material from other Manuscripts*, trans. Andrew Dennis, Peter Foote, and Richard Perkins. University of Manitoba Icelandic Studies 3 (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1980), p. 45.

<sup>6</sup> Cormack, *The Saints in Iceland*, p. 19.

<sup>7</sup> Cormack, *The Saints in Iceland*, p. 84. The translation of Benedict's remains from the Abbey of Montecassino to the Abbey of Fleury in Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire traditionally dates to July 11 AD 660. The episode, followed by a dispute that lasted more than a thousand years, is narrated in book 2, chapter 6, of Paul the Deacon's *Historia Langobardorum*. See Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, ed. Ludwig Konrad Bethmann and Georg Waitz. Monumenta Germaniae Historica, supplementary series rer. Germ. 48 (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1878), pp. 211–12; see also Amalia Galdi, 'S. Benedetto tra Montecassino e Fleury (VII–XII secolo)', *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome – Moyen Âge* 126/2 (2014), available at <http://mefrm.revues.org/2047>, last accessed October 16 2020.

(Húnaþjörður), the construction of which was promoted by Bishop Jón Ögmundarson (1052–1121) and which began its activities in 1133, and the monastery of Munkaþverá (Eyjafjörður), founded in 1155. About a decade later (1166), a Benedictine monastery was also built in the Skálholt diocese, in Hítardalur (Borgarbyggð), but it remained active only until 1202. Two Benedictine convents were also established in those dioceses: one was founded in 1186 by Bishop Þorlákr Þórhallsson in Kirkjubær (diocese of Skálholt), the other in 1296 in Staður on Reynisnes (diocese of Hólar).<sup>8</sup>

According to the *máldagar*, St Benedict was the official patron of the monastery of Munkaþverá,<sup>9</sup> which boasted a large gilded *líkneski* ('image, portrait') of the saint ('benedictus líkneske stort gyllt').<sup>10</sup> Both a *líkneski* and an altar dedicated to Benedict are listed among the possessions of the monastery of Þingeyrar in 1525 ('benedictus líkneski [...] benedictus alltari').<sup>11</sup> St Matthew's Church in Fagranes (Skagafjörður) also had a Benedict *líkneski*, acquired between 1318 and 1360, and an old, ruined altar slab dedicated to him, which was recorded in 1394 ('alltarissteýnar. ij. benedictus og Gudmundus miog fornligir').<sup>12</sup> Finally, St Benedict is indicated as the co-patron of the half-church in Alviðra (Dýrafjörður), consecrated in 1344, which also owned a *líkneski* of him ('líkneski sancti benedicti').<sup>13</sup>

Thirdly, personal names and wills may provide further evidence of the veneration of St Benedict. The use of *Benedikt* as a personal name seems to have begun in the late-twelfth century. Its first attestation is a patronymic that appears in one of the manuscript traditions of *Íslendinga saga* ('Álof Benediktz dóttir').<sup>14</sup> As for wills, *sýslumaðr* ('bailiff') Benedikt Kolbeinsson (1287–1379) declares that he made large donations to the monastery of Þingeyrar throughout his life in the hope that he would be buried inside the church of the monastery. Moreover, he mentions St Benedict when he claims that he believes that the saint will intercede on his behalf, should he pass away before being accepted into the monastery:<sup>15</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Cormack, *The Saints in Iceland*, p. 84; Eiríkr Magnússon, 'Benedictines in Iceland', *The Downside Review* 16 (1897), pp. 168–77 and 258–67.

<sup>9</sup> *DI* 2, p. 485; Cormack, *The Saints in Iceland*, p. 84; Cormack, 'Saints of Medieval Hólar', p. 7.

<sup>10</sup> *DI* 9, p. 305; Cormack, 'Saints of Medieval Hólar', p. 17. It should be borne in mind that Old Norse *líkneski* may refer to either a statue or a painting.

<sup>11</sup> *DI* 9, p. 313; Cormack, 'Saints of Medieval Hólar', p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> *DI* 3, p. 562.

<sup>13</sup> *DI* 2, p. 787; Cormack, *The Saints in Iceland*, p. 84.

<sup>14</sup> *Sturlunga saga including the Íslendinga saga of Lawman Sturla Thordsson and other Works*, ed. Gudbrand Vigfusson, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1878), I, p. 381, footnote 10.

<sup>15</sup> *DI* 3, p. 185. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own. I am extremely grateful to Margaret Cormack for revising my translation of the



Her med kys ek likama minum legstad at thingeyrum j stopplinum þar sem borgilldr hustru min liggr adr firer. Ok her till stadfesti ek till æfinligrar eignar þa peninga sem ek hefer adr firer longum tima afhendat þui sama klaustri sua sem eina spiru lokada oc enn nockur hundrud aunnur. er ek hefer þangat lagt stadnum till eignar. Jtem gefr ek klaustrinu stadfastliga till fullrar oc æfinligrar eignar þria luti i hafnar londum a skaga ut med ollum þeim lunnendum gaugnum og gægnum oc gædum hualreka oc uidreka eggveri selueri smafiskaueidi oc ollu þui er nefndar ierder hafa att oc þeim hefer fylgt at fornu oc at nyiu. Eignaz klaustrid optnefndar iarder epter mik andadan [...] [E]f ek aundumz i ueralldar klædum ella treyster ek in subfragijs hins blezada benedicti oc uerdi þa eptir guds skipan.

[I hereby choose for my body the burial at Þingeyrar, in the steeple where my wife Borghilðr has already been lying for a long time. In addition, I confirm that the money that I donated to the same monastery long ago is its perpetual possession, as is a lidded beaker and some other (items worth) hundreds,<sup>16</sup> which I have already transferred to the place as its own. Furthermore, I donate to the monastery as its permanent possession three parts of (the farm) Höfn on Skagi for (its) full and perpetual possession with all the privileges, profits, and benefits, drift whales and driftwood, egg collection, seal hunting, small fish catching, and all that said parts have been endowed with and has belonged to them in past or recent times. The monastery will get ownership of the aforementioned parts after my death (...) If I die in secular clothes, I will trust in the intercessory prayer of the blessed Benedict, and so be it according to God's design.]

In another will from 1427, one Einar Bessason (born c. 1380?) commends his soul to God and a number of saints, seemingly indicated in order of importance. St Benedict occupies the second to last position, just before All Saints, and is probably included because of Einarr's request for burial at the monastery of Þingeyrar:<sup>17</sup>

[E]k gefr fyst mina syndvga sal vnder vægd oc myskvnnsemi almatigs gvds oc hans signadrar modr jvngfrv sancte marie oc hins sæla m(i)kaels hofuds eingils oc ens blezada petrvs oc iohanes edevangelista [sic] oc ens signada olafs kongz oc ens sæla benediktvs oc allra gud(s) heilagra manna. þa kys ek minvm likama legstad i heilogvm kirkivgarde at þingeyrum.

[First and foremost, I render my sinful soul to the compassion and mercy of Almighty God and his blessed Virgin Mother Saint Mary, and the blessed Michael archangel and the blessed Peter and John the Evangelist and of the blessed king Óláfr and of the blessed Benedict and

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quoted passage from Benedict Kolbeinsson's will and for pointing out to me that St Benedict is also mentioned in the will of Einar Bessason.

<sup>16</sup> Old Norse *hundrað* 'hundred' (pl. *hundrað*) indicates here a unit of value.

<sup>17</sup> *DI* 4, p. 350.



FIGURE 8.1. Map of religious institutions related to the cult of St Benedict in medieval Iceland.

of all other saints of God. Then, I choose for my body the burial in the sacred churchyard at Þingeyrar.]

Finally, since St Benedict's *vita* was originally part of Gregory's *Dialogi*, its original Latin version would have been at least available in the seven ecclesiastical institutions that listed copies of Gregory's hagiographic treatise in their inventories.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, a copy of *Benedikts saga* itself is listed among the possessions of the Benedictine monastery of Munkaþverá from 1525 ('þessar sogubækur [...] benedictus saga')<sup>19</sup> and of the Augustinian house at Möðruvellir (established in 1296) in the second half of the fifteenth century ('Þessar norrænv bækur. [...] benedictus saga') (See Fig. 8.1).<sup>20</sup>

### Composition and characteristics of *Benedikts saga*

As mentioned above, *Benedikts saga* is an Old Norse epitome of Gregory the Great's (c. 540–604) *Vita beati Benedicti abbatis*, originally contained in his *Dialogi* (published in 595) – a widely circulated treatise in four books on the

<sup>18</sup> Cormack, *The Saints in Iceland*, p. 97, mentions Hólar Cathedral, the monastery of Viðey, and the churches at Grenjaðarstaður, Hjarðarholt, Múli (Aðaldalur), Staður (Kinn), and Vellir (Svarfaðardalur).

<sup>19</sup> *DI* 9, p. 307.

<sup>20</sup> *DI* 5, pp. 288–89; Cormack, 'Saints of Medieval Hólar', p. 17, where it is erroneously dated to the fourteenth century, yet the *máldagi* dates to 1461.

lives and miracles of saints of the Italian peninsula – whose Book II is entirely devoted to the legend of St Benedict of Nursia. The only extant copy of the saga is preserved in Stockholm, Kungliga biblioteket, Holm perg 2 fol (fols 53r–57r), which was produced in Iceland between 1420 and 1445.<sup>21</sup> From a textual point of view, *Benedikts saga* differs from other *Vitae Benedicti* in that it appears to depend on the same source in two different ways:

- 1 It is based largely on a pre-existing abridged Old Norse translation of the *Dialogi*,<sup>22</sup> originally produced in Norway in the mid-twelfth century,<sup>23</sup>
- 2 Yet it was augmented in several instances with a new translation of Gregory's Latin text, particularly to restore larger sections or smaller details that were omitted or summarized in the Old Norse *Dialogi*.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> This dating was established in *Lives of Saints: Perg. fol. no. 2 in the Royal Library, Stockholm*, ed. Peter Foote. Early Icelandic Manuscripts in Facsimile 4 (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde & Bagger, 1962), pp. 7–29. For a discussion of Foote's data, see *La saga islandese di san Benedetto*, ed. and trans. Camiz, pp. 33 and 39–44.

<sup>22</sup> For information about the diffusion and early translations of *Dialogi*, see Gregory the Great, *Dialogi. Libri IV*, ed. Umberto Moricca. Fonti per la storia d'Italia pubblicate dall'Istituto storico italiano 57 (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano, 1924), pp. lxxix–xcv; and Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, ed. De Vogüé, I, pp. 141–43. For a discussion of the reception of Gregory's works in the Old Norse world, see Wolf, 'Gregory's Influence', pp. 266–69, for information about the influence of the *Dialogi*; see also Adele Cipolla, 'I *Dialogi* nella letteratura norrena', in *I 'Dialogi' di Gregorio Magno. Tradizione del testo e antiche traduzioni*. Atti del II Incontro di studi del Comitato per le celebrazioni del XIV centenario della morte di Gregorio Magno in collaborazione con la Fondazione Ezio Franceschini e la Società internazionale per lo studio del Medioevo latino (Certosa del Galluzzo, Firenze, November 21–22 2003), ed. Paolo Chiesa (Florence: SISMEL edizioni del Galluzzo, 2006), pp. 195–203; Régis Boyer, 'The Influence of Pope Gregory's *Dialogues* on Old Icelandic Literature', in *Proceedings of the First International Saga Conference, University of Edinburgh, 1971*, ed. Peter Foote, Hermann Pálsson, and Desmond Slay (London: University of Edinburgh, 1973), pp. 1–27. Among the first scholars who identified references to the *Dialogi* within the corpus of Old Norse-Icelandic literature and tradition is Leifar fornra kristinna fræða íslenzkra, ed. Þorvaldur Bjarnarson (Copenhagen: Hagerup, 1878), pp. xv–xvi. More specifically, he referred to the account of the fake fire provoked by a pagan idol thrown into the kitchen by some monk in Book 2, chapter 10. See *Dialogues*, ed. De Vogüé, II, pp. 171–73, which corresponds to chapter 12 of *Benedikts saga: La saga islandese*, ed. and trans. Camiz, p. 120. This account became popular in Icelandic beliefs and tales and confirms a general remark by Gabriel Turville-Petre in *Origins of Icelandic Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), p. 136, who observed that Icelanders probably enjoyed Gregory's *Dialogi* more for the stories they contain than for the moral and religious precepts upon which they are based.

<sup>23</sup> See footnote 2 above.

<sup>24</sup> The fact that *Benedikts saga* derives from Gregory's *Dialogi* was first noted in *Heilagra manna sögur*, ed. Unger, I, p. x. Its dependence on the corresponding

Apart from minor changes, a fundamental innovation in *Benedikts saga* is the editorial interventions that converted the text from one literary genre to another. In both Gregory's original and its Old Norse rendition, the hagiographic material is embedded within a dialogue between Pope Gregory himself and his young disciple Peter (fl. c. 550–600). These verbal exchanges lead to long, in-depth discussions of the interpretation of the characters' conduct and of Benedict's exemplary actions as well as his miracles. As a result of the reshaping of the text, *Benedikts saga* has lost the interpretative function of its original dialogic frame, which served as a guide for the reader. In its new form, it is an unembellished, highly simplified narrative focusing primarily on the entertainment offered by the saint's life and miracles. Only short chapter introductions and conclusions, usually adapted from Pope Gregory's lines in the original dialogic frame, enable the reader to understand the context of the more obscure episodes.

Latin versions of the *Vita beati Benedicti abbatis* – all epitomes drawn from Book II of the *Dialogi* – frequently appear in medieval legends, lectionaries/legendaries, and homiliaries/legendaries. Only rarely, however, do such *vitae* include each and every episode of Gregory's text, as is the case with *Benedikts saga*. Usually, their compilers selected from the original episodes to generate new versions of the legend, where the text is often altered or reworked. Furthermore, as with *Benedikts saga*, the dialogical parts of Gregory's original text are often expunged: apparently, a more fluid and continuous narrative can only be obtained at the cost of forfeiting the dialogical frame despite its valuable guiding role.<sup>25</sup>

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parts in the Old Norse translation of Gregory's *Dialogi* was first proposed in *Lives of Saints*, ed. Foote, pp. 24–25. For a detailed analysis of the textual relationship of *Benedikts saga* with the two versions of its source, see Mauro Camiz, 'La *Benedictus Saga* e la questione della doppia fonte', in *Intorno alle Saghe Norrene. XIV Seminario avanzato in Filologia Germanica*, ed. Carla Falluomini. Bibliotheca Germanica. Studi e testi 34 (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2014), pp. 175–202; and *La saga islandese*, ed. and trans. Camiz, pp. 13–16 and chapter 4.

<sup>25</sup> In a survey of the manuscripts containing versions of Latin *Vita beati Benedicti abbatis* (isolated from *Dialogi*), Fabiana Boccini, 'La *Vita beati Benedicti abbatis* (BHL 1102) in alcuni omeliari e leggendari medievali', in *I 'Dialogi' di Gregorio Magno. Tradizione del testo e antiche traduzioni*. Atti del II Incontro di studi del Comitato per le celebrazioni del XIV centenario della morte di Gregorio Magno in collaborazione con la Fondazione Ezio Franceschini e la Società internazionale per lo studio del Medioevo latino (Certosa del Galluzzo, Firenze, November 21–22 2003), ed. Paolo Chiesa (Florence: SISMEL edizioni del Galluzzo, 2006), pp. 57–81, at pp. 57–67, counted 213 codices (209 spanning from the ninth to the seventeenth century, plus four of uncertain dating) and analyzed 33 in depth. Only in nine of the latter (i.e., less than a third of the analyzed texts) do all of the original episodes appear.

One might wonder if *Benedikts saga* could have been based on an Old Norse-Icelandic translation of a Latin *vita* that was already independent from Gregory's text, perhaps even one that had been reworked to some extent. However, substantial textual similarities with both language version of the *Dialogi*, particularly the Old Norse translation, seem to confirm its close dependence on it (see footnote 24). Of course, the editorial criteria that led the author of the saga to isolate and partially rework the narrative sections and discard most of the explanatory dialogues may well be the consequence of an established practice among compilers of hagiographic, liturgical, or other religious literary works of the Latin tradition that were later transferred into the vernacular.

In terms of content and from a purely biographical standpoint, *Benedikts saga* describes the life of the saint in central and southern Italy at the time of the fall of the Western Roman Empire (476) and the subsequent outbreak of the Gothic war (535–554). Within the saga, Benedict's life may be divided into five phases, the chronology of which is far from clear due to the lack of dates in Gregory's *Dialogi* (whose interest in Benedict's life was moral and spiritual rather than historical or biographical in modern terms), as well as to the absence of other historical sources. Accordingly, dates and time spans may only be inferred from the content with a degree of approximation:<sup>26</sup>

- 1 Benedict's early years in late Roman society (c. 490–c. 510);
- 2 Escape from civilization and hermitage (c. 510–c. 515?);
- 3 First monastic experience and return to hermitage (c. 515?–??);
- 4 Second monastic experience and transfer to a new site (??–c. 530);
- 5 Third monastic experience and death (c. 530–c. 560).

Gregory's eight-centuries-old narrative is presented rather faithfully in *Benedikts saga* as follows:

<sup>26</sup> See Luigi Salvatorelli and Silvana Simonetti's entry 'Benedetto, santo' in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1966), VIII, pp. 279–89, in which it is pointed out that only St Benedict's death can be historically dated, that is, after December 16 546. More radically, *La Regola di san Benedetto e le Regole dei Padri*, ed. Salvatore Pricoco, 4th rev. ed., *Scrittori greci e latini* (Milan: Fondazione Lorenzo Valla/Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 2006), pp. xxx–xxxiii, states that all three of the dates traditionally considered as certain in St Benedict's biography – 480 (year of birth), 529 (foundation of Montecassino), 547 (year of death) – are absolutely conventional. The most recent research in philology and literature (mainly concerning the relation of *Regula Benedicti* with other monastic rules, especially the anonymous *Regula Magistri*, as well as coeval legislation or religious literary texts), together with an improved general knowledge of the historical period, point to a one-decade lower chronology: around 490/500 for Benedict's birth, c. 530 for his arrival at Montecassino, c. 560 for his death.

*A Reading of Benedikts saga in Light of the Regula sancti Benedicti*

- 1 Benedict was born, presumably around 490/500, to a wealthy family in the rural area of Nursia – now Norcia – in the central Italian region of Umbria. As a teenager, he was sent to Rome accompanied by his nurse to pursue an education in liberal arts, which he would never complete;
- 2 At some point in his late teens or early twenties, he felt the urge to flee from the immoral customs by which he found himself surrounded in the decadent old capital of the Western Roman Empire. After leaving Rome, he spent some time in a small Christian community in Effide – currently Affile – but left to seek complete isolation in the woodlands of the central Apennines. There, he spent approximately three years as a hermit in a cave by the ruins of the ancient villa of the Emperor Nero (AD 37–68) in Sublacus – currently Subiaco – on the bank of the river Aniene, where the Romans had created three interconnected artificial lakes. Having made his reputation mainly thanks to his miracles, many people started visiting him in his cave;
- 3 Among these was a group of monks whose abbot had recently died. They asked him to become their new leader. Benedict tried to discipline the monks but failed and returned to his cave;
- 4 The number of his visitors kept growing, many of whom were young Roman aristocrats, who became his permanent disciples. Benedict could now establish his own community and create a network of monastic communities. He kept his most devoted disciples with him in Subiaco, while simultaneously promoting the construction of twelve more monasteries, each assigned to a group of twelve monks led by an abbot.<sup>27</sup> According to the legend, this network ultimately relied on Benedict's guidance, as is evident from the many occasions on which he is called upon for help. This second cenobitic experience proved to be positive, but after an

<sup>27</sup> Due to the lack of geographic references or any other information concerning those monasteries in the *Dialogi*, modern attempts to locate them have produced only partially reliable lists of possible candidates (a half dozen of such lists is quickly examined in Gregory the Great, *Dialogi. Libri IV*, ed. Moricca, pp. 84–85, footnote 1). Although all resulting lists are quite recent (i.e., from the sixteenth century onwards), it must be borne in mind that in a territory as rough as the right bank of the Aniene River such houses could have been positioned only in a limited number of sites. Consequently, those lists may be regarded as being partially plausible (Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, ed. De Vogüé, II, p. 149–51, footnote 13). However, the recurrence of the number twelve – twelve monasteries, twelve abbots, twelve monks in each house – immediately suggests various numerological parallels, among which the most obvious is the number of the Apostles. Accordingly, this figure might well be more symbolic than actual (Gregory the Great, *Storie di santi*, ed. and trans. Simonetti, intr. Salvatore Pricoco, I, pp. 315–16).

escalating conflict with an envious local priest, who attempted to poison him and destroy his young disciples by corrupting their souls, Benedict decided to abandon Subiaco and the other communities and leave them to their fate. Refraining from any action that could have potentially led to further violence, he swiftly organized the agenda of his monasteries and left along with his closest disciples, even though he heard news of the priest's sudden death;

- 5 Heading south, Benedict reached the village of Casinum – currently Cassino – and built a new monastery (around AD 530) on a nearby hill. This is referred to as Montecassino (Mount Cassino), or *Montakassin* in Old Norse sources ('(þann) stad kalla Nordmenn Monntakassin').<sup>28</sup> In addition to founding the monastery on top of the remains of a Roman temple devoted to Apollo, Benedict also began to convert heathens in the vicinity. He spent the rest of his life in this place, until he caught malaria and died, following a week of agony. The date of his death is traditionally established on March 21 547, but more recently it has been suggested that he may have lived until around 560.<sup>29</sup>

Most of the legend is comprised of the accounts of the many miracles performed by Benedict during phases 2–5. Within each phase, these accounts usually do not follow a strict chronological order; they often seem isolated, almost as if they are occurring out of time. Yet a thematic arrangement can be detected: among the recurrent themes are Benedict's problems with the water supply and with the construction and organization of the monasteries, as well with as with famine, disease, and death.<sup>30</sup>

One major theme connects various aspects of the legend. Benedict's spiritual growth, the governance of his communities, and the numerous conflicts among monks, or between the monks (or similar characters) and Benedict can all be read in light of the *Regula Benedicti* (composed in Montecassino between AD 530 and 560),<sup>31</sup> because they address several of its precepts. In this regard, certain sections of Gregory's original work – and consequently of *Benedikts saga* – may be viewed as a literary dramatization of the daily life of a Benedictine monastic community, since these episodes often account for events that may be better or only understood in closer relation to the norms contained in the *Regula*.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>28</sup> *La saga islandese*, ed. and trans. Camiz, p. 118.

<sup>29</sup> See footnote 26 above.

<sup>30</sup> See also *La saga islandese*, ed. and trans. Camiz, pp. 13–23.

<sup>31</sup> *La Regola di san Benedetto*, ed. Pricoco, pp. xxxiii–xxxiv.

<sup>32</sup> According to *La Regola di san Benedetto*, ed. Pricoco, p. xxxiii, all the allusions to the *Regula* contained in *Dialogi* contribute to pointing out that Gregory must have had at least some acquaintance, if not familiarity, with the rules as we know them today. However, Pricoco tends to exclude the possibility that Gregory personally introduced the *Regula* in the monastery of St Andrew

As has been noted, however, the figure of Benedict that emerges from the *Dialogi* is slightly different from the Benedict of the *Regula*. In the latter, only the aspects of *conversatio* ('way of life, conduct') are considered, with a focus on the life and the relations within the walls of the monastery. In the former, Gregory's ideology shapes Benedict as a character whose monastic role is enriched with the historical – and, I would add, political – role of *conversio* ('conversion'), which takes place mostly outside the walls of the monastery.<sup>33</sup> Gregory portrays Benedict as a structural model representing both an ideological and a literary motif. In his portrait of the saint, using clear literary precedents – from the sacred texts to older hagiographic legends – Gregory combined emblematic aspects of Christianity (humility, victory over temptation, defeating the devil, control over nature, all kinds of miracles, and cosmic visions) with monasticism, whose prescriptions and complex organization are embodied, as it were, by Benedict. All of the above elements are compounded in the saint, who is simultaneously a role model of Christian and monastic life.<sup>34</sup>

### Phase 3: Benedict's spiritual growth and the four types of monks

In the chronology of Benedict's biography, phases 3–5 comprise three different monastic experiences reflecting the development of St Benedict's role as abbot.

In leading his monastic communities, Benedict's major concern is a strict control of the monks' discipline and the organization of their lives

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in Rome (established by him in 575–580), and that he later appointed St Augustine of Canterbury (534?–604) to spread its adoption in Britain. It is worth mentioning here that an Old Norse translation of the *Regula sancti Benedicti* is preserved in five fragments from Norway (Oslo, Riksarkivet Nor. fragm. 81a 1–5). According to linguistic and paleographic analysis, the surviving fragmentary copy was produced around 1200 in the Old Norwegian dialect of Trøndelag from an exemplar dating back to the mid-twelfth century. Its scribe was of probable English origin or trained under strong English influence in the second half of the twelfth century and was associated with an unidentifiable religious institution in Trondheim (Michael Gullick and Åslaug Ommundsen, 'Two scribes and One Scriptorium Active in Norway c. 1200', *Scriptorium* 66/1 [2012], pp. 39–41). For an edition of the fragments, see Ernst Walter, 'Die Fragmente zweier Klosterregeln für Benediktinermonche in altnorwegischer Übersetzung (NRA 81 A und B)', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 82 (1960), pp. 83–131.

<sup>33</sup> Claudio Leonardi, 'La spiritualità monastica dal IV al XIII secolo', in *Dall'eremo al cenobio. La civiltà monastica in Italia dalle origini all'età di Dante* (Milan: Garzanti Scheiwiller, 1987), pp. 183–214.

<sup>34</sup> See also Réginald Grégoire, 'Il volto agiografico di Benedetto', *Ravennatensia* 9 (1981), pp. 1–20.



around prayer and work. This is based on the observance of the *Regula* both inside and outside the monastery, which assigns various roles to the monks – such as prior, cellarer, doorkeeper, and so forth – according to their reliability and their natural aptitude.

In the tales that follow, the success of each monastic experience increases as does the narrative space attributed to each stage in *Benedikts saga*. Benedict's first experience as the abbot of unruly monks is introduced and concluded in chapter 5. The second and more successful experience – the foundation of the monastery in Subiaco, which serves as a guide for the entire network of monasteries in the surrounding region – occupies chapters 6–10. The third and final phase, the Montecassino endeavor, is described in chapters 11–39 and takes up roughly three quarters of *Benedikts saga*. It is at Montecassino that most of Benedict's miracles take place.

The account of the first experience includes an explicit prediction that Benedict and his monks will not get along. In fact, Benedict himself foretells that their ways will prove incompatible with his own. Nonetheless, at the monks' insistence, he agrees to serve as their leader. During their common life, the attitudes of the characters are strongly polarized. Benedict acts as a very strict mentor: '[H]ann heilt vel stiörn í munklífinu ok lofadi eingum at ganga af réttu götu sidsemi' ('He [Benedict] was effectively ruling the monastery and would let no one stray from the right path of morality').<sup>35</sup> The monks grow tired of his discipline and become violent. They blame each other for having invited him to serve as their leader and eventually plot to get rid of him by poisoning his wine. They realize that 'hann lofadi þeim ecki þess at gera, sem mótstadligt var munkalögum' ('he would not let them do what was contrary to the laws of the monks').<sup>36</sup> The compound noun *munkalög* ('laws of the monks') implies that it is impossible for them to live together: as a supervisor, Benedict demands absolute obedience to a codified rule of behavior, whereas the monks prefer to follow a dissolute life.

The failure of this first monastic experience may be read in light of two fundamental principles of the *Regula Benedicti*, concerning the role of the abbot in chapter 2 and the duty of obedience of his monks in chapter 5: 'Abbas [...] Christi [...] agere uices in monasterio creditur, quando ipsius uocatur pronomine [...] *abba pater*'<sup>37</sup> ('The abbot [...] is believed to hold

<sup>35</sup> *La saga islandese*, ed. and trans. Camiz, p. 106. All quotations from *Benedikts saga* have been silently normalized in terms of typeface regardless of the editor's usage of italics, bold, and special characters.

<sup>36</sup> *La saga islandese*, ed. and trans. Camiz, p. 108.

<sup>37</sup> *Benedicti regula*, ed. Rudolph Hanslik, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 75, 2nd rev. ed. (Vienna: Hoelder Pichler Tempsky, 1977), p. 21 (editor's italics highlight quotation from Romans 8:15).

the place of Christ in the monastery, since he is addressed by a title of Christ [...] *abba, father*')<sup>38</sup> and 'si inquieto uel inoboedienti gregi pastoris fuerit omnis diligentia adtributa et morbidis earum actibus uniuersa fuerit cura exhibita, pastor eorum in iudicio domini absolutus dicat'<sup>39</sup> ('if he [the abbot] has faithfully shepherded a restive and disobedient flock, always striving to cure their unhealthy ways, [...] the shepherd will be acquitted at the Lord's judgment').<sup>40</sup> For the monks, meanwhile:<sup>41</sup>

Primum humilitatis gradus est oboedientia sine mora [...] [M]ox aliquid imperatum a maiore fuerit, ac si diuinitus imperetur, moram pati nesciant in faciendo [...] [H]ii tales statim [...] quod agebant [...] imperfectum relinquentes uicino oboedientiae pede iubentis uocem factis [...] ut non suo arbitrio uiuentes uel desideriiis suis et uoluptatibus oboedientes, sed ambulantes alieno iudicio et imperio in coenobiis degentes abbatem sibi praeesse desiderant.

[The first step of humility is unhesitating obedience. [Monks] carry out the superior's order as promptly as if the command came from God himself (...) Such people as these immediately put aside their own concerns, abandon their own will, and lay down whatever they have in hand, leaving it unfinished. With the ready step of obedience, they follow the voice of authority in their actions (...) [so that] they no longer live by their own judgment, giving in to their whims and appetites; rather they walk according to another's decisions and directions, choosing to live in monasteries and to have an abbot over them.]

According to Hanslik, this group of monks had previously lived under the Rule of Pachomius the Great (c. 292–348).<sup>42</sup> This may be historically accurate, since it was one of the most common rules in western European monasticism at the time, but it is irrelevant to this discussion. What is relevant is what occurs next in the legend, especially in light of the beginning of chapter 1 of the *Regula Benedicti*, which describes the different types of monks. Four existing categories of monks are contemplated: cenobites, anchorites, sarabaites, and gyrovagues, with the anchorites (also known as hermits) occupying the top level in the hierarchy. Throughout his life, Benedict encountered or personally experienced all four types of monasticism.

Concerning the first two types, the *Regula* states: 'Primum coenouitarum [genus monachorum], hoc est monasteriale, militans sub regula

<sup>38</sup> *The Rule of St. Benedict in English*, trans. Timothy Fry (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1981), p. 23 (author's italics).

<sup>39</sup> *Benedicti regula*, ed. Hanslik, p. 22.

<sup>40</sup> *The Rule of St. Benedict*, trans. Fry, p. 23.

<sup>41</sup> *Benedicti regula*, ed. Hanslik, pp. 38–39. *The Rule of St. Benedict*, trans. Fry, pp. 32–33.

<sup>42</sup> *Benedicti Regula*, ed. Hanslik, p. xi.

uel abate'<sup>43</sup> ('First, there are the cenobites, that is to say, those monks who belong to a monastery, where they serve under a rule and an abbot').<sup>44</sup> Accordingly, cenobites are monks who live together under the supervision of an abbot and follow the principles of the *Regula*, a rule of behavior specifically intended for them.

As for the anchorites, Benedict praises the practice of retreating into solitude, but recommends that hermitage be left to the most experienced monks after they have spent a long time in a *coenobium*:<sup>45</sup>

[S]ecundum genus est anachoritarum, id est heremitarum, horum qui non conuersionis feruore nouicio, sed monasterii probatione diuturna, qui didicerunt contra diabolum multorum solacio iam docti pugnare et bene extracti fraterna ex acie ad singularem pugnam heremi securi iam sine consolatione alterius sola manu uel brachio contra uitia carnis uel cognitionum deo auxiliante pugnare sufficiunt.

[Second, there are the anchorites or hermits, who have come through the test of living in a monastery for a long time, and have passed beyond the first fervor of monastic time. Thanks to the help and guidance of many, they are now trained to fight against the devil. They have built up their strength and go from the battle line in the ranks of their brothers to the single combat of the desert. Self-reliant now, without the support of another, they are ready with God's help to grapple single-handed with the vices of body and mind.]

Chapters 2–4 of *Benedikts saga* relate that Benedict spent three years as a hermit in the cave of Subiaco, where he learned to fight the devil and eventually overcame all temptations of the flesh. However, at this point he was a young adult and not a trained monk. As noted by Régis Boyer, it is commonplace in hagiography that a saint 'reveals qualities or virtues which are always [...] moral authority, clear-sightedness, [...] a precocious wisdom' and behaves as if he were an experienced old man since his/her childhood.<sup>46</sup> Benedict is no exception, as is evident from one of the first passages in the Norse text: '[h]ann hafdi gamals manz hiarta þegar aa ungum alldri' ('he had the heart [i.e., soul/mind] of an elderly man

<sup>43</sup> *Benedicti regula*, ed. Hanslik, p. 18. Spelling irregularities here and in following quotations (i.e., *coenouitarum* for *coenobitarum*, *gulae* for *gulae*, etc.) reflect Hanslik's editorial choices.

<sup>44</sup> *The Rule of St. Benedict*, trans. Fry, p. 21.

<sup>45</sup> *Benedicti regula*, ed. Hanslik, pp. 18–19; *The Rule of St. Benedict*, trans. Fry, p. 21.

<sup>46</sup> Régis Boyer, 'An Attempt to Define the Typology of Medieval Hagiography', in *Hagiography and Medieval Literature: A Symposium*, ed. Hans Bekker-Nielsen, Peter Foote, Jørgen Højgaard Jørgensen, and Tore Nyberg, Proceedings of the Fifth International Symposium organized by the Centre for the Study of Vernacular Literature in the Middle Ages held at Odense University on November 17–18 1980 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1981), pp. 27–36, at p. 32.

from a young age.’)<sup>47</sup> Accordingly, he was able to survive the harshness of isolation and finally triumph over the devil’s temptation, even at a relatively young age.<sup>48</sup>

In contrast, the last two classes of monks are strongly condemned in the *Regula*. The sarabaites, for example, are defined as follows:

Tertium uero monachorum teterrimum genus est sarabaitarum, qui nulla regula adprobati [...], sed [...] adhuc operibus seruantes saeculo fidem mentiri deo per tonsuram noscuntur. Qui bini aut terni aut certe singuli sine pastore, [...] pro lege eis est desideriorum uoluptas.<sup>49</sup>

[Third, there are the sarabaites, the most detestable kind of monks, who with (...) no rule to try them (...) (are) still loyal to the world by their actions, (...) (and) clearly lie to God by their tonsure. Two or three together, or even alone, without a shepherd (...) their law is what they love to do, whatever strikes their fancy.]<sup>50</sup>

It is clear that the ‘orphaned’ monks may have introduced themselves to Benedict as an honest group of cenobites in search of a new spiritual guide only to soon reveal their true sarabaitic nature. They refuse to follow Benedict’s rules, expect to live according to their own desires and pleasure, and almost succeed in killing him. As a result, he abandons this wild community.

It is reasonable to conclude that Benedict is tired and angry and that he fears for his life. This is, at least, what readers of *Benedikts saga* likely assumed, since the reason for his decision was not made explicit. When Benedict kindly invites the monks to find a more suitable abbot, he simply repeats his initial opinion: “Sagda ek ydur fyrir, at eigi mundi sidir vórir saman koma” [...] Ok er hann hafdi þetta mællt, þá fór hann aprt í einsetu sína ok vardveitti hug sin í Guds augliti’ (“I told you before that our customs would not be compatible”. And after he had said that, he went back to his hermitage and kept his mind in the

<sup>47</sup> *La saga islandese*, ed. and trans. Camiz, p. 100.

<sup>48</sup> Like many other parts of *Vita Benedicti*, the episode of the devil’s temptation and the overcoming of the temptation during hermitage has literary parallels in Atanasius of Alexandria’s *Vita Antonii* (written c. AD 360) (Gregory the Great, *Storie di santi*, ed. and trans. Simonetti, intr. Salvatore Pricoco, I, p. 311), where St Anthony is also sexually tempted in order to make him abandon his ascetical retreat (*PG* 26, cols 845–50). Of course, both *vitae* have as their primary model the biblical passage of the temptation of Christ, who begins his ministry among the Galileans after having struggled with the devil, who tempted him during his forty days of fast in the desert (Matthew 4:1–12; Luke 4:1–15; Mark 1:12–14).

<sup>49</sup> *Benedicti regula*, ed. Hanslik, pp. 19–20.

<sup>50</sup> *The Rule of St. Benedict*, trans. Fry, pp. 21–22.

eyes of God.’)<sup>51</sup> The reason why Benedict leaves the monks becomes clear only from the lengthy discussion following the corresponding episode in Gregory’s *Dialogi*.<sup>52</sup> Had he kept his position as a censor and governor of a highly hostile congregation, he might eventually have lost his morals and sanity. Instead, he realizes that he needs isolation in the hermitage to concentrate on the contemplation of God.

Finally, chapter 27 tells of a monk who was not a steady member of the monastery of Montecassino ‘er hugr hans var óstadfastr’ (lit. ‘because his mind was unstable’, i.e., he was having second thoughts)<sup>53</sup> despite the abbot’s repeated invitations to join the monastery and become part of the community. The monk refuses and asks Benedict for permission to leave, who reluctantly agrees. As soon as the monk exits the gate of the monastery, he encounters a horrible dragon ready to swallow him. Though unable to see the creature, the other monks rush out to rescue him and bring him inside the monastery. Shocked by the frightful sight, the monk swears that he will never leave the monastery again.

In *Benedikts saga*, there is no explanation for the appearance of the dragon, and no interpretation of the episode is provided. Readers might assume that the sudden appearance of the evil creature is a trick by Benedict to frighten the monk and convince him to change his mind. Only Gregory’s commentary makes it clear that the dragon is a diabolical enticement made visible by Benedict: ‘[S]ancti uiri orationibus contra se adsistere draconem uiderat, quem prius non uidendo sequebatur’ (‘Thanks to the holy man’s prayers, [the monk] had seen rise against himself the dragon that he had been previously following without seeing.’)<sup>54</sup> With Benedict’s prayers, the monk’s urge to wander around restlessly is revealed in its true form. Every time he felt compelled to leave a community, he was attracted by this invisible dragon.

Monks of a similar kind must have been common figures in early medieval monasticism and are strongly stigmatized in chapter 1 of the *Regula*, in which they are considered worse than the sarabaites. These gyrovagues, or wandering monks, are described as follows:<sup>55</sup>

Quartum uero genus est monachorum, quod nominatur gyrouagum, qui tota uita sua per diuersas prouintias ternis aut quaternis diebus per diuersorum cellas hospitantur semper uagi et numquam stabiles et propriis uoluntatibus et guilae inlecebris seruientes et per omnia deteriores sarabaitis.

<sup>51</sup> *La saga islandese*, ed. and trans. Camiz, p. 108.

<sup>52</sup> Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, ed. De Vogüé (1979), II, pp. 142–48.

<sup>53</sup> *La saga islandese*, ed. and trans. Camiz, p. 140.

<sup>54</sup> Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, ed. De Vogüé (1979), II, p. 212.

<sup>55</sup> *Benedicti regula*, ed. Hanslik, p. 20; *The Rule of St. Benedict*, trans. Fry, p. 22.

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[Fourth and finally, there are the monks called gyrovagues, who spend their entire lives drifting from region to region, staying as guests for three or four days in different monasteries. Always on the move, they never settle down, and are slaves to their own wills and gross appetites. In every way they are worse than sarabaites.]

This unstable monk's attitude is clearly not in line with the monastic organization advocated by Benedict, which is firmly centered around the concept of *stabilitas* ('stability'). With this term, the *Regula* obviously refers not only to the physical constraint of a monk in one place, as this is just one aspect of the monastic organization, with the enclosure representing the place where it is best to exert the *instrumenta bonorum operum* ('tools for the good works'), the spiritual and moral principles that all monks are required to abide by in order to build and maintain an existence inspired by the Lord.<sup>56</sup> The concept of *stabilitas* is primarily a spiritual one and the prohibition to leave the premises unauthorized represents its institutional, outer component. The precept of *stabilitas* is meant to counteract the lack of perseverance, the incertitude, and the impulsiveness that prompts a monk to come and go. By observing the precept, the monk will resist the need for change, as it might break the continuity of his effort to concentrate exclusively on God.<sup>57</sup>

Nonetheless, it is clear from the *Regula* itself – not to mention various episodes in *Benedikts saga* – that Benedictine monasticism does not involve a complete separation of the cenobites from the outside world. Although the monastic center is generally a self-sufficient and protected site, it can also serve as a hub that welcomes individuals from the outside world and sends its members to other places. When authorized, Benedictine monks are allowed to leave the monastery, as long as they engage in a recognized mission. In other words, their absence must be justified by their involvement in a specific activity, which has to be approved by the abbot; however, once the activity is over, they are required to return to the monastery immediately. This form of authorized absence is in perfect accordance with the concept of *stabilitas*, and even when a monk is away for a long time, he always remains a member of his original community. Leaving the monastery because of personal need is, however, strictly forbidden.

By refusing the precept of *stabilitas*, the gyrovague described in *Benedikts saga* opposes and disrespects Benedict's monastic project, which requires absolute obedience of both the *Regula* and the abbot.

<sup>56</sup> *Benedicti regula*, ed. Hanslik, pp. 31–37.

<sup>57</sup> See Jacques Winandy, 'La stabilité bénédictine: un mot et un concept non exempts d'ambiguïté', in *Atti del VII Congresso Internazionale di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo*, Norcia - Subiaco - Montecassino, September 29 – October 5 1980, ed. Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo (Spoleto: CISAM, 1982), II, pp. 521–25, at p. 524.

#### Phase 4: The Foundation of monasteries and the organization of monastic communities

Benedict's second and third monastic experiences are described from an entirely different perspective. Benedict is now concurrently responsible for the education of his community, for the material construction of the monastery, and for its elaborate organization. However, disobedient monks still trouble him to the extent that in many instances Benedict has to discipline and punish them. During the Subiaco phase and the establishment of the first new monasteries and their communities, Benedict must also face some basic spiritual and material problems.

First, he must deal with a monk who is unable to attend prayers along with his brethren and repeatedly leaves the communal chapel when all the members are gathered in the church. When the monk's supervisor asks him for help, Benedict realizes that the monk's behavior is caused by the devil who, in the guise of an invisible black boy, physically drags the monk out of the church at precisely the time of prayer. Once outside, Benedict hits the monk with a rod, and subsequently the devil leaves the monk alone.<sup>58</sup>

The monk's unstable character runs counter to the Benedictine rule, as laid out in chapters 8–20 of the *Regula*, which focus on prayer as the monks' primary duty. More specifically, it violates the prescriptions in chapters 19 and 20, which are devoted to the reverential demeanor that monks are required to maintain during liturgy and prayer in order to ensure that 'mens nostra concordet uoci nostrae'<sup>59</sup> ('Our [the monks'] minds are in harmony with our [the monks'] voices'),<sup>60</sup> and that monks 'facto signo a priore omnes pariter surgant'<sup>61</sup> ('when the superior gives the signal, all should rise together.')<sup>62</sup>

In the second instance, Benedict and his brethren are personally involved in the maintenance of their monasteries and communities, and the first and most serious problem they face is the water supply. In chapter 7, some monks are concerned with the collection of fresh water in the mountains where they built their monasteries, and in chapter 9, a young monk nearly drowns while attempting to fetch water. As for manual work, chapter 8 contains a description of a new disciple in Benedict's monastery in Subiaco, who works as a gardener for the benefit of his new community, clearing an area on the lakeshore where his abbot wants to plant an orchard.

These accounts in chapters 7–9 agree perfectly with the prescriptions of the *Regula*, which reads: 'Otiositas inimica est animae; et ideo certis

<sup>58</sup> *La saga islandese*, ed. and trans. Camiz, p. 110.

<sup>59</sup> *Benedicti regula*, ed. Hanslik, p. 82.

<sup>60</sup> *The Rule of St. Benedict*, trans. Fry, p. 53.

<sup>61</sup> *Benedicti regula*, ed. Hanslik, p. 83.

<sup>62</sup> *The Rule of St. Benedict*, trans. Fry, p. 53.

temporibus occupari debent fratres in labore manuum, certis iterum horis in lectione diuina'<sup>63</sup> ('Idleness is the enemy of the soul. Therefore, the brothers should have specified periods for manual labor as well as for prayerful reading')<sup>64</sup> and 'Si autem necessitas loci aut paupertas exegerit, ut ad fruges recollendas per se occupentur, non contristentur, qui tunc uere monachi sunt, si labore manuum suarum uibunt, sicut et patres nostri et apostoli'<sup>65</sup> ('They must not become distressed if local conditions or their poverty should force them to do the harvest themselves. When they live by the labor of their hands, as our fathers and the Apostles did, then they are really monks.')<sup>66</sup>

Ensuing events in the tale of the gardener monk take an interesting turn. While the monk is cutting away roots and plants along the shore, he accidentally drops the blade of his knife into the deep waters of the lake. Feeling terribly guilty, he immediately notifies Abbot Benedict, who goes to the shore, retrieves the blade, and asks the monk to return to his work. According to the *Regula*, all the tools provided to the monks for their tasks are the property of the monastery; accordingly, they are required to take good care of them: 'Substantia monasterii in ferramentis [...] praeuideat abbas fratres [...] Si quis autem [...] neglegenter res monasterii tractauerit, corripiatur; si non emendauerit, disciplinae regulari subiaceat'<sup>67</sup> ('The goods of the monastery, that is, its tools [...] should be entrusted to brothers whom the abbot appoints [...] Whoever fails to keep the things belonging to the monastery clean or treats them carelessly should be reprovved. If he does not amend, let him be subjected to the discipline of the rule.')<sup>68</sup>

When he loses the pruning knife, the monk apparently violates this precept, but his sincere desperation and his immediate report of the loss are accepted by Benedict as a sign of good faith. For this very reason, Benedict decides to intervene with a miracle rather than to reproach or punish him. Indeed, the monk's behavior is faultless. By admitting guilt, he abides by another precept of the *Regula*, which he must have memorized: 'Si quis, dum in labore quouis [...] in horto [...] uel in quocumque loco [...] aliquid [...] perdiderit [...] et non ueniens continuo ante abbatem uel congregationem et prodiderit delictum suum, dum per alium cognitum fuerit, maiori subiaceat emendationi'<sup>69</sup> ('If someone commits a fault while at any work – while working [...] in the garden [...] or anywhere else – [...] by losing something [...] he must at once come

<sup>63</sup> *Benedicti regula*, ed. Hanslik, p. 125.

<sup>64</sup> *The Rule of St. Benedict*, trans. Fry, p. 78.

<sup>65</sup> *Benedicti regula*, ed. Hanslik, p. 127.

<sup>66</sup> *The Rule of St. Benedict*, trans. Fry, pp. 78–79.

<sup>67</sup> *Benedicti regula*, ed. Hanslik, pp. 97–98.

<sup>68</sup> *The Rule of St. Benedict*, trans. Fry, pp. 62–63.

<sup>69</sup> *Benedicti regula*, ed. Hanslik, pp. 123–24.



before the abbot and the community and of his own accord admit his fault and make satisfaction. If it is made known through another, he is to be subjected to a more severe correction.’<sup>70</sup>

Chapter 10 of *Benedikts saga*, which concludes the second phase, deals once again with the topic of obedience to the abbot. However, this time Benedict does not confront one of his monks, but instead interacts with a bird. It is told that he has received – and accepted (!) – a poisoned loaf of bread sent as a gift by an envious priest who wants him dead. Benedict has a habit of feeding small bits of bread to a raven who visits him daily, so he orders the bird to grab the poisoned bread and take it where no one will find it. The raven reacts as follows: ‘Þá tók hrafninn at gapa munni ok rann umhverfis leifinn, breiddi vængi ok skrækti, svó sem hann sýndi, ath hann villde hlýdne hallda vit Benedictum, enn hann mætti eigi. Þá mællti Benedictus vit hann í annat sinn ok et þridia’<sup>71</sup> (‘Then the raven began to open its beak and flew around the loaf. It spread its wings and cawed, as if showing that it wanted to keep obeying Benedict, but just could not do it. Then Benedict spoke to him a second and a third time.’)

Understanding that the poisoned bread may be a threat to Benedict, the raven faces danger by handling the loaf. In order to obey Benedict’s order and overcome fear, the raven has to be encouraged by Benedict, who repeats his command three times before the raven eventually grabs the bread and flies away with it. Like a Benedictine monk, the bird seems to know that it must comply with his superior’s orders, however unpleasant or dangerous they may be. This is in accordance with the *Regula*, which prescribes that ‘mox aliquid imperatum a maiore fuerit, ac si diuinitus imperetur, moram pati nesciant in faciendo’<sup>72</sup> (‘they [those who cherish Christ above all; more specifically, the monks] carry out the superior’s order as promptly as if the command came from God himself.’)<sup>73</sup>

## Phase 5: Governing Montecassino through the power of miracles.

With the foundation of Montecassino, the third and final phase of Benedict’s monastic experience, readers are presented with a wider range of miraculous episodes. Many of them deal with conflicts occurring both within the walls of the monastery and in the surrounding area, but they are invariably resolved by Benedict due to his miraculous powers. Benedict has now become a charismatic figure, representing a moral

<sup>70</sup> *The Rule of St. Benedict*, trans. Fry, p. 77.

<sup>71</sup> *La saga islandese*, ed. and trans. Camiz, p. 116.

<sup>72</sup> *Benedicti regula*, ed. Hanslik, p. 38.

<sup>73</sup> *The Rule of St. Benedict*, trans. Fry, p. 32.

and spiritual guide both within and outside his community, and is considered a noble benefactor and powerful healer, since many people turn to him for help.

Benedict makes abundant use of his clairvoyance and telepathy, the latter counting as an extension of the former if the human mind may be considered an 'inner space'. Benedict uses this prophetic gift in a number of instances, such as saving people in danger, revealing someone's future, and catching thieves in action. More often, however, he exploits his prophetic powers to expose his monks and other religious people, such as nuns and pilgrims, when they disobey the principles contained in the *Regula*.

On many occasions, Benedict detects wrongful behavior and confronts the wrongdoers. The latter are usually shocked when they realize that their abbot found them out; as for the abbot, he typically takes advantage of their emotional state to make them confess, repent, and promise to behave.

In the list of violations of the norms of the *Regula Benedicti* or other monastic rules in the last section of *Benedikts saga* (see Appendix), two are particularly noteworthy. The first occurs in chapter 22, which describes how Benedict's principle of authority reaches its peak. The second is found in chapter 21, in which *Benedikts saga* deviates considerably from its source(s).

Since the time of the Subiaco experience,<sup>74</sup> young males from the urban aristocracy had been encouraged to embrace monastic life under the teachings of St Benedict. This was the case with the young monk of chapter 22, described in *Benedikts saga* as 'eins ríks manz son.'<sup>75</sup> Here the adjective *ríkr* means 'important, powerful' and the genitive *ríks manz* translates the Latin noun *defensor*,<sup>76</sup> which refers to the title of *defensor Ecclesiae* ('defender of the Church.') Attributed to high-ranking civil servants, the title was recognized by the Emperor Honorius I (384–423) in 407 and was initially assigned to a lawyer and legal representative, but was later extended to higher administrative or diplomatic offices.<sup>77</sup> All of this explains the arrogance of this prominent and wealthy man's son, who feels degraded by the humble duty assigned him – holding a candle while Benedict is dining.

During one dinner, a haughty spirit possesses the monk,<sup>78</sup> who silently expresses his anger at and contempt for his abbot and his duty: "Hvat manna er síá þes, at ek skal hǫnum þjóna ok hallda liósi fyrir

<sup>74</sup> See Phase 3, p. 207 above.

<sup>75</sup> *La saga islandese*, ed. and trans. Camiz, p. 132.

<sup>76</sup> Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, ed. De Vogüé, II, p. 196.

<sup>77</sup> See Gregory the Great, *Storie di santi*, ed. and trans. Simonetti, intr. Salvatore Pricoco, p. 260.

<sup>78</sup> 'Ofmetnadarandi kom í bríóst hǫnum', *La saga islandese*, ed. Camiz, p. 132.

hōnum?""<sup>79</sup> ("What kind of man is this, that I must wait upon him and hold a candle for him?") With this arrogant thought, the monk forsakes the humble behavior required of him. More precisely, he violates a number of precepts associated with the concept of humility, which is thoroughly treated in chapter 7 of the *Regula*. Accordingly, those monks willing to practice humility at the highest level are offered a specific pathway, depicted metaphorically as a stairway: this can be either climbed to the top to reach humility in its fullest expression, or descended to the bottom in case the monk perseveres in his arrogance and pride. The stairway of humility consists of twelve *gradus humilitatis* ('grades of humility'), each representing a particular behavior. The monk who correctly practices all these behaviors and abides by all twelve principles will make it to the highest grade, thus achieving the perfect love of God that defies all fear.<sup>80</sup>

To summarize from the *Regula*:

- 1 The first grade of humility consists of maintaining the fear of God, who sees and knows all, and refraining from sinful and depraved conducts,<sup>81</sup>
- 2 The second is to not succumb to the pleasure of fulfilling one's own desires and to not pursue one's own will;<sup>82</sup>
- 3 The third is the submission to and obedience of one's superior for the sake of God,<sup>83</sup>
- 4 The fourth is to patiently and obediently endure the suffering caused by a superior's orders, however difficult, disagreeable, or even unjust;<sup>84</sup>
- 5 The fifth is to not hide from the abbot in confession any evil thoughts that may be present in one's mind or evil deeds committed secretly,<sup>85</sup>
- 6 The sixth is to be content with the most vile and abject treatment, having the lowest opinion of oneself for any task assigned;<sup>86</sup>
- 7 The seventh is to practice self-humiliation not only in words but also in the depths of one's heart;<sup>87</sup>

<sup>79</sup> *La saga islandese*, ed. Camiz, p. 132.

<sup>80</sup> *Benedicti regula*, ed. Hanslik, pp. 43-44 and 57.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 45-49.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 50-52.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.

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- 8 The eighth is to do only what is prescribed by the rule of the monastery or what is indicated by the example of one's superiors;<sup>88</sup>
- 9 The ninth is to maintain absolute silence and break it only to answer a question;<sup>89</sup>
- 10 The tenth is to refrain from laughter, in which only fools indulge;<sup>90</sup>
- 11 The eleventh is to speak only when necessary, in the most serious and concise manner, and without raising one's voice;<sup>91</sup>
- 12 The twelfth is to display humility when carrying out any task and always bowing one's head and keeping one's eyes down to the floor.<sup>92</sup>

The above episode from *Benedikts saga* describes a failure to exercise the humility defined in all the grades from three to seven: in his mind, the monk, reflecting on his superiority (seventh grade), does not practice patience and is not pleased with the assigned task (fourth grade); but considers it unsuitable for someone of his social rank (sixth grade); moreover, he insults his superior (third grade) instead of confessing his evil thoughts to him (fifth grade).

For all of these reasons, Benedict approaches the monk after the evil thought has manifested itself in the monk's mind: "Hvat er nú, bródir? Sign þú þic ok hiarta þitt"<sup>93</sup> ("What is that now, brother? Cross yourself and your heart.") It is worth noting that this is one of only two cases in which Benedict does not rehabilitate a disobedient monk after he has repented. Instead, he orders the other monks to take the candle from him and invites the youngster to step aside, probably to reflect on his behavior.

For Benedict, respect for the rule within the community and the obedience shown to the abbot are so fundamental that he does not hesitate to read the monk's mind, although he knows that his wondrous ability will not go unnoticed by the others. In fact, the episode might serve as an example for all members of the community, so that at the end of the chapter it is perfectly clear to them that 'ecki mátti leynaz fyrir Benedicto þat, sem hann villdi vita, er eigi máttu hugrenningar leynazt fyrir honum'<sup>94</sup> ('It was impossible to conceal from Benedict what he wanted to know, because the thoughts in the mind [lit. the mind-wanderings] could not be concealed from him.')

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., pp. 54–55.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., pp. 55–56.

<sup>93</sup> *La saga islandese*, ed. and trans. Camiz, p. 132.

<sup>94</sup> *La saga islandese*, ed. and trans. Camiz, p. 134.

## Two textual divergences between *Benedikts saga* and *Dialogi*

Finally, I consider two passages of the saga where the text conflicts with its sources. Both passages concern the *Regula*.

The first passage is in chapter 21 of *Benedikts saga*, which relates that Benedict sends a monk to preach the Gospel in a nearby newly Christianized village, where a community of nuns also lives. Before he returns to the monastery, the nuns give him a number of handkerchiefs, though it is unclear if these are intended as a gift to the whole community or are meant as a present just for him. The monk hides them underneath his habit with the intention of keeping them for himself. When he returns to the monastery, Benedict asks him about the handkerchiefs, thereby revealing that he knows about the gift from the nuns. Taken by surprise, the monk hands over the handkerchiefs and repents.

Within the following sentences from chapter 21, we find a brief suspension of the narrative for explanatory purposes:<sup>95</sup>

Enn ádr hann fór heim, þá gáfu nunnur honum dúka, enn hann stack í serk sér ok villdi sér nýta. **Þat vóro lavg munka, at allir skylldu eiga samann þat, er þangat var sent, þóat einum væri fyrst gefit.** Ok er hann kom heim, þá ásakadi Benedictus hann.

[Before he (the monk) went home, the nuns gave him some handkerchiefs, and he slid them into his habit meaning to use them for himself. **Such were the laws of the monks, that all should own together what was sent there** (to the monastery), **even though it had been first given to one.** And when he came home, Benedict rebuked him.]

The phrase *lavg munka* refers once again to the *Regula*, which prescribes that ‘praecipue hoc uitium radicitus amputandum est de monasterio, ne quis praesumat aliquid dare aut accipere sine iussione abbatis neque aliquid habere proprium, nullam omnino rem’<sup>96</sup> (‘above all, this evil practice [private ownership] must be uprooted and removed from the monastery. We mean that without an order from the abbot, no one may presume to give, receive or retain anything as his own, nothing at all’)<sup>97</sup> and summarizes the entire concept a couple of lines later as ‘omniaque omnium sint communia’<sup>98</sup> (‘All things should be the common possession of all.’)<sup>99</sup>

<sup>95</sup> *La saga islandese*, ed. and trans. Camiz, p. 132; my bold.

<sup>96</sup> *Benedicti regula*, ed. Hanslik, p. 98–99.

<sup>97</sup> *The Rule of St. Benedict*, trans. Fry, p. 63.

<sup>98</sup> *Benedicti regula*, ed. Hanslik, p. 99.

<sup>99</sup> *The Rule of St. Benedict*, trans. Fry, p. 63; translator’s italics highlight quotation from Acts 4:32.

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For these reasons, a monk has to abandon his clothes when the monastery will provide him with a habit and shoes. Accordingly, the *Regula* states:<sup>100</sup>

Si cui inuentum fuerit, quod ab abbate non accepit, grauissimae disciplinae subiaceat. Et ut hoc uitium peculiaris radicitus amputetur, dentur ab abbate omnia, quae sunt necessaria, id est cuculla, tunica, [...] **mappula** [...], ut omnis auferatur necessitatis excusatio.

[A monk discovered with anything not given him by the abbot must be subjected to very severe punishment. In order that this vice of private ownership may be completely uprooted, the abbot is to provide all things necessary: that is, cowl, tunic (...) **handkerchief** (...) In this way every excuse of lacking some necessity will be taken away.]

Thus, the monk is not allowed to keep the nuns' gift – hence Benedict's intervention and reproach, and the monk's request for pardon.

A comparison of the above passage from *Benedikts saga* with the corresponding parts of its sources – the Old Norse translation of the *Dialogi* and its Latin original – shows that both lack any reference to the monastic precept of common ownership:

Old Norse <i>Dialogi</i>	Gregory's <i>Dialogi</i>
[E]n hann toc vit duconom oc fal i serc ser. En es hann com heim, þa toc Benedictus þegar at avita hann [...]. <sup>101</sup>	[M]appulas accepit sibique eas abscondit in sinu. Qui mox ut reuersus est, eum uir Dei uehementissima amaritudine coepit increpare [...]. <sup>102</sup>
[And he took the handkerchiefs and hid (them) in his habit. When he came home, Benedict took immediately to rebuke him.]	[He received the handkerchiefs and hid them in his breast. As soon as he was back, the man of God began to rebuke him very harshly.]

Accordingly, it must be concluded that the sentence 'Þat vóro lavg munka [...] fyrst gefit' was interpolated in *Benedikts saga* to provide the reader with the precept upon which the episode was based in order to clarify Benedict's harsh reproach and the monk's repentance. This choice of editing may be due to the fact that the author of the saga was familiar with the precept of common ownership as expressed in the *Regula Benedicti*, perhaps because he was himself a member of a Benedictine monastic community.

<sup>100</sup> *Benedicti regula*, ed. Hanslik, p. 143; *The Rule of St. Benedict*, trans. Fry, p. 87; my bold.

<sup>101</sup> *Heilagra manna sögur*, ed. Unger, I, p. 214.

<sup>102</sup> Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, ed. De Vogüé, II, pp. 194–96.

As for the second passage, it must be noted that *Benedikts saga* proceeds from chapter 38 (Benedict's last vision, corresponding to *Dialogi* chapter 2, 35) to 39 (Death of Benedict, corresponding to *Dialogi*, 2, 37), with no trace of chapter 2, 36 of the *Dialogi*. A large lacuna in the Old Norse translation, starting about halfway through chapter 2, 34 and extending beyond the end of Book 2, makes it impossible to ascertain the intervening events in the main source of *Benedikts saga*. However, since the author had both language versions of the *Dialogi* to hand while compiling his new version,<sup>103</sup> it seems most unlikely that the same chapter was lost in both sources; also, had a chapter been missing from one of the texts, it would have been easy to retrieve it, as in other instances, from the other.

With scarcely a dozen lines of text, *Dialogi* chapter 2, 36 is very short, so one might wonder if the corresponding part could be lost in the course of tradition of *Benedikts saga*, although a different conclusion appears more likely when one considers its content. The chapter consists only of Gregory's response to Peter's request, placed at the end of the previous chapter, to resume the account after the complex and detailed explanation of Benedict's cosmic vision. The pope responds that he is about to draw Benedict's *Vita* to a close and will soon move on to other legends. Nevertheless, he adds, anyone wishing to learn more about Benedict's 'mores uit[a]que' ('conduct and life') will find 'omnes magisterii illius actus' ('all the actions inspired by his teachings') in the only written work he left, his 'monachorum regul[a]' ('monastic Rule'), because the saint 'nullo modo potuit aliter docere quam uixit' ('in no other manner could have taught than how he lived'). In addition, Gregory praises the literary value of the *Regula* as 'discretionem praecipu[a], sermone luculent[a]' ('excellent for discernment and brilliant in its language').<sup>104</sup>

Though short, the chapter discloses to the reader the tight relationship between the *Regula* and the *Vita* and the key role of the former to appreciate the latter in full. Therefore, its absence from the saga is particularly significant: the only mention of Benedict's written legacy, and its importance in our understanding of the legend, is removed.

Yet we are not dealing with a mechanical lacuna or a consequence of censorship, because as mentioned above, *Benedikts saga* includes many references to the *Regula sancti Benedicti*. This is an intentional, non-accidental expunction and should be considered a consequence of the editorial criteria followed in the saga. Clearly, chapter 2, 36 of the *Dialogi* is based on meta-narrative references and authorial opinions on Benedict and the *Regula* and is structurally part of the external dialogic

<sup>103</sup> See footnote 24.

<sup>104</sup> Quotations from *Dialogi* 2, 36 are from Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, ed. De Vogüé, II, p. 242.

frame. Since it lacked any of those simple and entertaining narratives that were of primary interest to the author of *Benedikts saga*, it could not enter the new version of the legend and was simply skipped.

## Conclusion

Designed from the beginning as a structurally simplified version of Gregory's *Vita beati Benedicti abbatis*, *Benedikts saga* maintains many of the substantial aspects of the original within an apparently plain narrative. By removing many details and most of the hermeneutical parts, though, its author pushed to a more abstract level what Gregory conceived as an eminently historical event. As a consequence, many of the ideological aspects the legend contained in the *Dialogi*, were lost, to the advantage of its moral function.

Nonetheless, aspects such as Benedict's monastic experiences and his growing capabilities to govern communities and individuals were so central to the development of the legend, that they could not be (and did not need to be) discarded in its reworking. On the contrary, monastic life is one of the few traits that maintain a minimum of explanation, keeping the legend soundly grounded in reality. All the episodes illustrated testify to the favorable reception – also in the North – of one of the main aspects of Gregory's initial project, when he first devised Benedict's *Vita* as (among other essential aspects) the literary counterpart to the *Regula*. Moreover, with its narrative and stylistic simplicity, *Benedikts saga* emphasizes the dynamic and climactic perspective of the legend even more when compared to the *Regula*, which statically exposes a (detailed) set of rules, without considering how they came to be.



## Appendix

### *Violations of the Regula Benedicti in Benedikts saga*

The following table summarizes the episodes in the last section of *Benedikts saga*, which depict conflicts between Benedict and his monks or other individuals under his supervision, and revolve around the violation of norms in the *Regula Benedicti* or other monastic rules:

<i>Ch.</i>	<i>Unlawful behavior</i>	<i>Norm(s) violated</i>	<i>Benedict's miracle</i>
14	Monks sent on a one-day mission to a nearby village have dinner at a Christian's house and deny doing so upon their return to the monastery.	Obligation to return immediately to the monastery after mission and have meals there: 'Frater, qui pro quouis responso dirigitur et ea die speratur reuerti ad monasterium, non praesumat foris manducare, etiamsi omnino rogetur a quouis' <sup>1</sup>	Benedict lists what the monks were eating and drinking.
15	Pressed by a random travel companion, the brother of one monk, a layman, breaks his fast during pilgrimage to Benedict's monastery.	The pilgrim is scolded for giving in to weakness and to the Devil's lure. <sup>2</sup>	Benedict reveals that the man let himself be persuaded by the devil disguised as a pilgrim, who succeeded on his third attempt.

<sup>1</sup> *Benedicti regula*, ed. Hanslik, p. 133. ('If a brother is sent on some errand and expects to return to the monastery that same day, he must not presume to eat outside, even if he receives a pressing invitation'). *The Rule of St. Benedict*, trans. Fry, p. 82.

<sup>2</sup> This is the only case where Benedict's accusation is not based on a specific norm of the *Regula*, but rather generically points to the man's weakness.

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21	A monk receives some handkerchiefs as a gift from a community of nuns where he served Mass and conceals them to keep them for himself.	Common ownership and personal belongings. <sup>3</sup>	Benedict reveals he knows about the gift and that the monk is hiding the handkerchiefs beneath his habit.
22	A monk mentally insults his abbot (Benedict), judging the task he has been assigned as tedious and too humble.	Humility. <sup>4</sup>	Benedict reproaches the monk as soon as he insults him, implicitly revealing to have read his mind.
25	Two nuns are excommunicated because of their arrogance and insolence towards a man who assisted them. After their death, their bodies are seen leaving their graves and the church during services.	Inappropriate language: <sup>5</sup> ‘[N]on murmuriosum, non detractorem [esse]’ <sup>6</sup> ‘Os suum a malo uel prabo eloquio custodire’ <sup>7</sup> ‘[A] malis uerbis propter poenam peccati debet cessari’. <sup>8</sup>	Benedict sends a consecrated particle to offer on behalf of their souls to break excommunication, granting mercy to their bodies.

<sup>3</sup> *Benedicti regula*, ed. Hanslik, pp. 98–99 and 140–44; see also above, on p. 221.

<sup>4</sup> *Benedicti regula*, ed. Hanslik, pp. 43–57; see also above, on pp. 218–19.

<sup>5</sup> Excommunication as a punishment for the violation of precepts concerning language abuse is not endorsed in the *Regula Benedicti*, but it is in the *Regula Magistri*: ‘moneat praua eloquentem discipulum praepositus, dicens: “Claude os tuum, frater, malo eloquio”’. *La règle du Maître*, ed. Adalbert De Vogüé, 3 vols, Sources Chrétiennes, 105–07 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1964–1965), vol. 2, pp. 18–20. (‘Let the provost warn the disciple who uses deceptive speech with these words: “close your mouth, brother, to bad language”’); ‘[i]n his omnibus supradictis [i.e. in chapter 11] si quis frater contumax aut superbus aut murmurans aut inoboediens praepositis sui frequenter extiterit et [...] semel et secundo uel tertio de quouis uitio monitus et correptus non emendauerit, [...] qui praeest [...] excommunicatione condemnet’, *La règle du Maître*, ed. De Vogüé, vol. 2, pp. 32–34 (‘If, in all that is said in chapter 11, a brother frequently shows himself stubborn, or arrogant, or murmurer, or disobeying to his provosts and he has been warned and reprimanded one, two, or three times against any vice, and he doesn’t amend, let his superior condemn him to excommunication.’)

<sup>6</sup> *Benedicti regula*, ed. Hanslik, p. 34. (‘Do not grumble or speak ill of others.’) *The Rule of St. Benedict*, trans. Fry, p. 30.

<sup>7</sup> *Benedicti regula*, ed. Hanslik, p. 35. (‘Guard your lips from harmful or

26	A child monk leaves the monastery without permission to visit his beloved parents but suddenly dies in their house. His body cannot be buried because it is rejected by the earth. <sup>8</sup>	Leaving the monastery unauthorized: '[U]indictae regulari subiaceat [...] qui praesumpserit claustra monasterii egredi uel quocumque ire [...] sine iussione abbatis'. <sup>9</sup>  Renounce family: 'Domum parentum [...] sciat [monachus] sibi esse extraneam. Inaccessibile limen eius ulterius habere iam credat, quia nisi qui reliquerit patrem aut matrem aut fratres aut domum non potest esse Christi discipulus'. <sup>10</sup>	Benedict sends a consecrated particle to put on the dead boy's chest, granting him mercy.
27	A gyrovague chooses to leave the monastery despite being invited to settle down, only to find a horrible dragon that tries to swallow him just outside the gate.	Stability <sup>11</sup>	Benedict made visible the diabolical dragon that the monk unconsciously followed every time he felt the impulse to leave.

deceptive speech.') *The Rule of St. Benedict*, trans. Fry, p. 30.

<sup>8</sup> *Benedicti regula*, ed. Hanslik, p. 41. ('Evil speech [should] be curbed so that punishment for sin may be avoided.') *The Rule of St. Benedict*, trans. Fry, p. 34.

<sup>9</sup> *Benedicti regula*, ed. Hanslik, p. 173. ('Let be subjected to the punishment of the rule [...] anyone who presumes to leave the enclosure of the monastery, or go anywhere [...] without the abbot's order.') *The Rule of St. Benedict*, trans. Fry, p. 105.

<sup>10</sup> *La règle du Maître*, ed. De Vogüé, vol. 2, pp. 388–90. ('The monk shall know that his parents' house is now foreign to him. He shall henceforth regard its threshold as inaccessible, for none can be a disciple of Christ but he who leaves his father, or mother, or brothers, or house.')

<sup>11</sup> *Benedicti regula*, ed. Hanslik, p. 147; see also above, p. 213.

31–32	During famine, a cellarer contradicts Benedict's order to donate the last drops of oil left in the monastery. A furious Benedict orders the other monks to throw the bottle of oil out of the window. The glass bottle is found unbroken, and the oil is donated.	Donating to the poor: 'Pauperes recreare'. <sup>12</sup>  Obedience due to the abbot by the cellarer: '[Cellararius] sine iussione abbatis nihil faciat; quae iubentur, custodiat'; <sup>13</sup> '[Cellararius] [n]eque auaritiae studeat [...] sed omnia mensurate faciat et secundum iussionem abbatis. Humilitatem ante omnia habeat, et cui substantia non est quod tribuatur, sermo responsioni porrigatur bonus, ut scriptum est: Sermo bonus super datum optimum'. <sup>14</sup>	The glass bottle of oil is found intact after having been cast on the rocks. After Benedict's prayer, there appears a large quantity of new oil in a big jar.
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<sup>12</sup> *Benedicti regula*, ed. Hanslik, p. 32. ('You must relieve the lot of the poor.') *The Rule of St. Benedict*, trans. Fry, p. 29).

<sup>13</sup> *Benedicti regula*, ed. Hanslik, p. 95. ('[The cellarer] will do nothing without an order from the abbot. Let him keep to his orders.') *The Rule of St. Benedict*, trans. Fry, p. 61.

<sup>14</sup> *Benedicti regula*, ed. Hanslik, p. 96–97. ('[The cellarer] should not be prone to greed [...], but should do everything with moderation according to the abbot's orders. Above all, let him be humble. If goods are not available to meet a request, he will offer a kind word in reply, for it is written: A kind *word is better than the best gift*.' ) *The Rule of St. Benedict*, trans. Fry, pp. 61–62; translator's italics highlight quotation from Sirach 18:17.

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## The Lore of St Dominic in Medieval Iceland and Norway

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In 2016, the Dominican Order celebrated the 800th anniversary of the confirmation of the order, also known as the ‘Ordo Praedicatorum’ (‘Order of Preachers’). The Order was founded by Dominic of Caleruega (1170–1221), also called Dominic de Guzmán, with the approval of Pope Honorius III (1150–1227) in 1216. Inspired by this event, I examined the dissemination of information about St Dominic in Norway and Iceland. The Old Norse-Icelandic legend of St Dominic is preserved in *Reykjahólabók*, which has been dated to around 1530–1540.<sup>1</sup> The codex is a legendary based for the most part on a now-lost Low German version of the High German *Der Heiligen Leben*. In addition, relevant episodes about St Dominic are preserved in *Mariú saga*.<sup>2</sup> These episodes cover features of the traditional lore of the saint and are clearly based on a version different from that in *Reykjahólabók*.

Dominican religious houses existed in Scandinavia, but there is no evidence of any Dominican institution in Iceland. Margaret Cormack is of the opinion that St Dominic enjoyed a very limited *cultus* in medieval Iceland and mentions the fact that there was only one church dedication, at Kolbeinsstaðir (in south-western Iceland),<sup>3</sup> where he was listed as a co-patron probably by the Dominican Jón Halldórsson, who came

<sup>1</sup> The text of *Dóminíkuss saga* is edited in *Reykjahólabók: Íslandske helgenlegender*, ed. Agnete Loth. 2 vols, Editiones Arnamagnæanæ, Ser. A, vols 15–16 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1969–1970), II, pp. 287–304.

<sup>2</sup> *Mariú saga: Legender om Jomfru Maria og hendes jertegn*, ed. Carl R. Unger. 2 vols (Christiania [Oslo]: Brøgger & Christie, 1871).

<sup>3</sup> See Margaret Cormack, *The Saints in Iceland: Their Veneration from the Conversion to 1400*, pref. Peter Foote. *Subsidia Hagiographica* 78 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1994), pp. 27–29. Johnny Grandjean Gøgsig Jakobsen, an expert on the Dominican history of Scandinavia and responsible for the *Centre for Dominican Studies in Dacia* and the related homepage, is, however, of the opinion that the church dedication in Kolbeinsstaðir may be a sign of St Dominic’s popularity in Iceland, since practically no other churches in

from the Dominican friary in Bergen and became bishop of Skálholt in 1322. The *Nikuláskirkja* at Kolbeinsstaðir was (re)consecrated during his episcopate,<sup>4</sup> though Cormack mentions the possibility that the decision to dedicate the church to St Dominic was made by one of his successors at the see of Skálholt, the Danish Bishop Vilkin Hinriksson (d. 1405), who was also a member of the Dominican Order. It is in his 1397 inventory that the consecration is first recorded.<sup>5</sup>

This article investigates Old Norse-Icelandic texts dealing with St Dominic in an attempt to determine how and in what kind of form information about him found its way to Iceland and seeks to relate this information to the history of the Dominican Order in medieval Norway.<sup>6</sup>

St Dominic died on August 6 1221, and was buried 'Sub pedibus Fratrum' ('under the brethren's feet')<sup>7</sup> in the Church of St Nicholas of the Vineyards in Bologna. At the request of Pope Gregory IX (before 1170–1241), his body was translated on May 24 1233, and brought to a marble sepulcher during the celebration of a General Chapter<sup>8</sup> of the Order of Preachers in Bologna. St Dominic was canonized in 1234, and in 1267 his remains were moved to a new shrine in the same church designed by Nicola Pisano in 1264 and embellished later by other artists, including Michelangelo (during the years 1469–1473).

The Order of Preachers spread quite rapidly in Europe and reached Scandinavia, where the province of Dacia was established.<sup>9</sup> Although this has been disputed by scholars, it is believed that Dominic was in Denmark in 1203 with Diego de Acebo (1170–1207), the bishop of Osma,

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medieval Scandinavia were dedicated to him – not even Dominican friary churches. See <http://jggj.dk/CDS.D.htm>, last accessed October 19 2020.

<sup>4</sup> See Magnús Már Lárusson, 'Sct. Magnus Orcadensis Comes', *Saga 3* (1960–1963), p. 472. For chronological reasons, Magnús Már assigns the dedication to Jón Halldórsson. The other saints are Mary, Peter, Magnús, Catherine, All Saints (and also Ambrose and Basil, who are represented but not in the dedication).

<sup>5</sup> See *DI* 4, p. 180.

<sup>6</sup> A portion of this article has been published in an essay about the Icelandic saga of St Nicholas of Tolentino: Simonetta Battista, 'Dalla Vita latina alla Reykjahólabók: La tradizione testuale della Saga di San Nicola da Tolentino', in *Testi agiografici e omiletici del medioevo germanico*, ed. Adele Cipolla and Mosè Nicoli. *Medioevi, Studi 7* (Verona: Edizioni Fiorini, 2006), pp. 287–310.

<sup>7</sup> *Acta Ampliora S. Dominici Confessoris: Die Quarta Augusti*, in *Acta Sanctorum Augusti*, ed. Jean Baptiste Du Sollier, Jean Pien, Guillaume Cuypers, and Pieter van den Bosch (Antwerpen: Jacobus Antonius van Gherwen, 1733), I, p. 602a/69.

<sup>8</sup> The General Chapter is the annual general meeting of the Order of Preachers, which is held at Pentecost with the participation of representatives from all provinces of the Order.

<sup>9</sup> See Johnny Grandjean Gøgsig Jakobsen, 'The Dominican History of Scandinavia (1): The Dominican Convents of Medieval Norway', *Dominican History Newsletter* 12 (2003), pp. 211–21.

on a mission for the Spanish king Alfonso VIII of Castile (1155–1214), and again in 1206. He possibly had the occasion to meet the archbishop of Lund, Anders Sunesen (1167–1228). During the first General Chapter held in Bologna in 1220, it was decided to send two Scandinavian friars, Nicholas of Lund (*fl. c. 1200–1240*) and Simon of Sweden (*fl. c. 1200–1240*) – both admitted into the order in 1219 – to Sweden to establish a convent<sup>10</sup> in Sigtuna. The *Historia Ordinis Prædicatorum in Dania 1216–1246*<sup>11</sup> tells the adventurous story of the journey of the Danish friar Frater Salomon (*fl. c. 1210–1250*) (admitted into the order in 1220), who had met Dominic at the Second General Chapter in Bologna in 1221 and was sent on a mission to his homeland, Denmark, but ended up in Niðaróss (Trondheim) because of a storm, which drove his ship off course. He later went to Denmark, and his mission led to the establishment in the same year of a Dominican religious house in Lund, the first in Scandinavia.

Four Dominican convents were established in Norway. The first was founded in the 1230s in the archiepiscopal city of Niðaróss by Frater Salomon.<sup>12</sup> Three more convents were founded in Bergen, Oslo, and Hamar, and a fifth may have been planned in the late fifteenth century in Oddevoll.<sup>13</sup> As elsewhere in Europe, the Dominicans played a leading role in the intellectual life of the episcopal cities of medieval Norway. The cosmopolitan city of Bergen, in particular, had important connections to Iceland and may be credited with having transmitted the content of *Reykjahólabók*, including the lore of St Dominic, to Iceland.<sup>14</sup>

The first extant biography of St Dominic is the *Libellus de principiis Ordinis Praedicatorum*, which also contains a history of the foundation of the Order. It was written around 1233 by Dominic's successor as Master

<sup>10</sup> In this article the word 'convent' is used in the etymological sense of a community of mendicant friars (from Latin *conventus*) and as a synonymous of 'friary', also when the word refers to a building.

<sup>11</sup> In addition to the actual yearbooks or annals kept by the Friars Preachers in Dacia, Dominican history writing in the province also produced this chronicle, probably written in the convent of Tallinn (Estonia) in the mid-thirteenth century. The chronicle was collected by Jacob Langebek and first published with this title in *Scriptores Rerum Danicarum medii ævi*, ed. Peter F. Suhm, Jacob Langebek, Peter Frederik Suhm, Laurits Engelstoft, E.C. Werlauff, and Casper Frederik Wegener, 9 vols (Hafniæ [Copenhagen]: Typis vidæe A.H. Godiche, 1772–1878), V, pp. 500–02. The most recent edition is the *Historia ordinis predicatorum in Dacia*, published online with a Danish translation by Johnny Grandjean Gøgsig Jakobsen at <http://jggj.dk/HOPD.htm>, last accessed October 19 2020.

<sup>12</sup> Jarl Gallén dates the Niðaróss Convent to 1228. See Jarl Gallén, *La Province de Dacie de l'ordre des Frères Prêcheurs 1 – Histoire générale jusqu'au Grand Schisme*. Institutum Historicum ff. Praedicatorum Romae ad S. Sabinae. Dissertationes Historicae 12 (Helsingfors: Söderström & Co., 1946).

<sup>13</sup> See Jakobsen, 'The Dominican History of Scandinavia', p. 212.

<sup>14</sup> See Kalinke, *The Book of Reykjahólar*, pp. 31–32.



General of the Order of Preachers, Jordan of Saxony (c. 1190–1237). Other versions of the *vita* are found in the *Legenda aurea* by Jacobus de Voragine, originally composed around 1258 and gradually expanded to eventually contain about 448 legends, and the *Speculum historiale* by Vincent of Beauvais. The two works, both compiled by Dominicans, provided material for a variety of vernacular legendaries in Europe. The *Fornsvenska legendariet*, composed between 1276 and 1312, for example, was most likely written by a Dominican friar, since it is dedicated to St Dominic.<sup>15</sup> The *Legenda aurea* is also one of the main Latin sources of the High German *Der Heiligen Leben*, which was composed in Nürnberg by a Dominican friar between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The main German sources are the *Vers-Passionael*, a work in three volumes containing the lives of Christ and Mary, the Apostles and seventy-five other saints, and the *Märterbuch* or *Buch der Märtyrer*, also in verse, composed around the year 1320.<sup>16</sup>

*Der Heiligen Leben*, which was produced for monastic use, quickly became popular among laity in Europe, and it played an essential role in the spread of hagiographic literature because of its anecdotal style and the character of the legends, which combine entertainment and education.<sup>17</sup> The style of the narratives is laconic and straight-forward. Accordingly, they were suitable for monastic refectories, catechesis, or homilies.<sup>18</sup>

The High German version was in turn translated into Middle Low German and became part of the analogous legendary *Dat Passionael*; this Low German version is, at least for the time being, the closest one can get to the source of most of the Icelandic sagas in *Reykjahólabók*. Among the many extant versions of the *Passionael*, the one edited by Steffen Arndes

<sup>15</sup> *Fornsvenska legendariet* is a chronologically arranged collection of legends from the earliest Christian times to the middle of the thirteenth century. It begins with the legends of the Virgin Mary, John the Baptist, and Christ, and ends with Peter Martyr (Dominican, d. 1252). It includes the lives of SS Dominic, Francis, and Elisabeth of Hungary, as well as a few Scandinavian saints. See Börje Tjäder, 'Old Swedish Legendary', in *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Phillip Pulsiano and Kirsten Wolf (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1993), pp. 454–55.

<sup>16</sup> See Kalinke, *The Book of Reykjahólar*, p. 12; and Werner Williams-Krapp, *Die deutschen und niederländischen Legendare des Mittelalters: Studien zu ihrer Überlieferungs-, Text- und Wirkungsgeschichte. Texte und Textgeschichte. Würzburger Forschungen 20* (Tübingen: De Gruyter, 1986), p. 273.

<sup>17</sup> The work was edited in 1996 in two volumes, the first of which contains the summer section of the liturgic calendary, including the legend about Saint Dominic. See *Der Heiligen Leben I: Der Sommerteil*, ed. Margit Brand, Kristina Freienhagen-Baumgardt, Ruth Meyer, and Werner Williams-Krapp (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1996). The edition is based on the oldest extant manuscript for the summer section, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Cod. Laud. Misc. 443 (c. 1300–1330).

<sup>18</sup> Kalinke, *The Book of Reykjahólar*, p. 21.

in Lübeck in 1492 seems to be fairly close to some of the legends in *Reykjahólabók*, including *Dóminíkuss saga*.<sup>19</sup>

The correspondence between the texts in the *Passionael* and *Reykjahólabók* was examined by scholars in the 1960s, and re-examined by Marianne Kalinke in her 1996 study of *Reykjahólabók* (and later in her edition of the legend of St Oswald).<sup>20</sup> Although she does not doubt Low German influence on the Icelandic texts, which also manifests itself in syntax and semantics, Kalinke rejects the idea that the divergent passages are simply the result of the author's rhetorical interests and compositional talent. Her hypothesis is that the real source of the Icelandic text is an earlier version of the *Passionael*, and implicitly of the corresponding High German *Der Heiligen Leben*, richer in content and probably lost. Following her argument, *Reykjahólabók* preserves a more faithful version of the Low German legends that are otherwise no longer extant.

As a result of her comparison of the paleographic and orthographic idiosyncrasies of *Reykjahólabók* with Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 667 V 4to (c. 1525) and XI 4to (c. 1525), Mariane Overgaard identified the author of *Reykjahólabók* as Björn Þorleifsson,<sup>21</sup> who was born between 1467 and 1471, or at the latest in 1474, and died between 1548 and 1554.<sup>22</sup> He belonged to an influential family at Reykjahólar in Borgarfjörður, which had a significant tradition of scribal activity and engagement in the production of manuscripts. One of Björn's forefathers,

<sup>19</sup> A copy of this edition is preserved at the Royal Library in Copenhagen as the incunabulum nr. 2204, catalogued among the many Low German versions of the *Legenda aurea*. See Victor Madsen, *Katalog over det Kongelige Biblioteks inkunabler*, 3 vols (Copenhagen: Levin & Munksgaard, 1935–1963), I, p. 398.

<sup>20</sup> *St. Oswald of Northumbria: Continental Metamorphoses. With an Edition and Translation of Óswalds saga and Van sunte Oswaldo deme Konninghe*, ed. Marianne E. Kalinke. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 297 (Tempe, Arizona: Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005).

<sup>21</sup> See *The History of the Cross-Tree Down to Christ's Passion: Icelandic Legend Versions*, ed. Mariane Overgaard. Editiones Arnamagnæanæ, Ser. B, vol. 26 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1968), pp. ciii–cxi. In two articles, Ole Widding and Hans Bekker-Nielsen had proposed Oddr Gottskálksson (c. 1514–1556) as the scribe. See Ole Widding and Hans Bekker-Nielsen, 'En senmiddelalderlig legendesamling', *Maal og Minne* (1960), pp. 105–28; 'Low German Influence on Late Icelandic Hagiography', *The Germanic Review* 37 (1962), pp. 237–62.

<sup>22</sup> A third fragment Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 667 X 4to, which represents a different manuscript and consists in its present state of a single leaf, has also been attributed to Björn Þorleifsson. See Agnete Loth, 'Et islandsk fragment fra reformationstiden. AM 667, X, 4<sup>o</sup>', *Opuscula* 4 (1970), pp. 25–30. The fragment contains a commentary to the Apocalypse, which incorporates a version of the Biblical text quite close to Oddur Gottskálksson's translation of the New Testament published in 1540. The production of post-Reformation material is indicative of the fact that Björn Þorleifsson was an eager collector, regardless of whether the texts are Catholic or not.

Ormr Snorrason (c. 1315–1403), lived at Skarð in the fourteenth century, and he is known to have shared with the church at Skarð the cost of a very large manuscript of the lives of the Apostles, Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, SÁM 1, better known as *Codex Scardensis*. Like several other manuscripts, it was probably written at the monastery at Helgafell. Björn's father, Þorleifr Björnsson (c. 1430–1486), the son of Björn Þorleifsson at Skarð (c. 1408–1467), was also involved in literary activity. It seems that he was responsible for a leechbook,<sup>23</sup> and it is known that at some point he acquired *Flateyjarbók* (Copenhagen, Den gamle kongelige samling, GKS 1005 fol) and made a major contribution to a later addition in it. It is believed that he was one of the main scribes in this later addition.<sup>24</sup> His family owned the island of Flatey for many generations.<sup>25</sup>

Throughout his life, Björn Þorleifsson was busy defending his property rights. His parents were third cousins, and all of their many children were therefore technically prohibited from inheriting from their parents.<sup>26</sup> Despite being granted dispensation in 1477 to marry Ingveldr Helgadóttir (c. 1430–1480), the mother of his children, Björn's father struggled with rival members of the same family, who continued to dispute the legality of his children's inheritance. While in Norway during one of his attempts to have the legal issue reviewed, he died, and Björn then inherited the dispute. Like his father, he often travelled abroad to appeal to various authorities in Norway and Denmark. His situation improved

<sup>23</sup> *An Old Icelandic Medical Miscellany*, ed. and trans. Henning Larsen (Oslo: Dybwad, 1931), pp. 21–23.

<sup>24</sup> See Jonna Louis-Jensen, 'Den yngre del af Flateyjarbók', in *Afmælisrit Jóns Helgasonar 30. júní 1969*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, Jón Samsonarson, Jónas Kristjánsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Stefán Karlsson (Reykjavík: Heimskringla, 1969), pp. 235–50.

<sup>25</sup> See Stefán Karlsson, 'L'Islanda alla fine del Medioevo: l'ambiente culturale e la traduzione islandese della Vita di San Nicola da Tolentino', in *La saga di San Nicola da Tolentino. Edizione e traduzione italiana dei testi medio basso tedesco e antico islandese*, ed. Giovanna Salvucci. Provincia Agostiniana d'Italia, Monografie Storiche Agostiniane, Nuova Serie 5 (Tolentino: Biblioteca Egidiana, 2004), p. 23.

<sup>26</sup> Canon law (from the time of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215) and contemporary Icelandic law prohibited marriage within four degrees of consanguinity. Beginning in the fifteenth century, the pope gave dispensations from this rule, but such potential dispensation was not incorporated in Icelandic laws. Björn's parents were granted permission to marry in 1477 thanks to a dispensation issued by the poenitentiarus of Pope Sixtus IV. Agnes S. Arnórsdóttir, 'Icelandic Marriage Dispensations in the Late Middle Ages', in *The Roman Curia, the Apostolic Penitentiary and the Parties in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Kirsi Salonen and Christian Krötzl. Acta Instituti Romani Finlandiae 28 (Rome: Institutum Romanum Finlandiae, 2003), pp. 159–60. See also *DI 6*, pp. 102–03.

significantly after 1520, when he gained support from Bishop Ögmundur Pálsson (c. 1475–1541) of Skálholt,<sup>27</sup> the diocese to which he belonged. A large number of charters dating from the period 1501–1539 are written in the same hand as that of *Reykjahólabók* and played an important role in the identification of his authorship of *Reykjahólabók*.<sup>28</sup>

In his early years, Björn probably learned sufficient Middle Low German to enable him to translate it into Icelandic. Low German was widely used as a kind of *lingua franca* due to the Hanseatic commerce, and maybe as a young man Björn spent time in Bergen in the Birgittine monastery, where he would have become acquainted with the collecting and making of books, a well-known Birgittine activity.<sup>29</sup> It is known that in 1504–1506 he was in Norway, mainly Bergen, where he was in the service of Hans Teiste (1440–1505), a man of learning, who had studied in Paris and Rostock, and who served as bishop from 1474 until his death. The University of Rostock, founded in 1419, was closely associated with the local Dominican convent. Dominican lecturers played a significant role in the teaching of theology, and the lectures sometimes took place in the friary itself.<sup>30</sup>

During the period in which he served the bishop, Björn would no doubt have become familiar with Low German saints' lives. The German books from which he translated were probably printed books, which he might have bought in Bergen, but it is also conceivable that he borrowed works from an Icelandic library, perhaps that of his friend Bishop Ögmundur of Skálholt.<sup>31</sup> The most significant example of his literary activities that has survived is *Reykjahólabók*, which in its defective state now contains twenty-five legends. Since the manuscript is incomplete, it probably included other sagas, as suggested by internal references.

As noted above, *Reykjahólabók* contains the only Icelandic version of *Dóminíkuss saga*. Other sagas in the legendary, which are not extant in other Icelandic translations are *Heilagra þriggja konunga saga*, *Hendriks saga ok Kúnigúndísar*, *Qsvalds saga*, *Rókuss saga*, *Lazaruss saga*, *Kristófors saga*, *Georgíuss saga*, *Gregors saga byskups*, *Nikuláss saga af Tólentínó*, *Jóns saga*

<sup>27</sup> Ögmundur Pálsson, of the Ordo Eremitarum sancti Augustini, was the last Catholic bishop of Skálholt (1521–1540). He served as abbot in the Augustinian monastery of Viðey from 1515 to 1519, when he was elected as bishop and consecrated in 1521 in Niðaróss.

<sup>28</sup> *The History of the Holy Cross-Tree*, ed. Overgaard, pp. cv–cviii; and *Reykjahólabók*, ed. Loth, I, pp. xxii–xxix.

<sup>29</sup> For more biographical information about Björn, see *Reykjahólabók*, ed. Loth, I pp. xxix–xxxiv.

<sup>30</sup> See Ingo Ulpts, *Die Bettelorden in Mecklenburg: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Franziskaner, Klarissen, Dominikaner und Augustiner-Eremiten im Mittelalter*. Saxonia Franciscana 6 (Werl: Dietrich-Coelde-Verlag, 1995), pp. 252 and 258–59.

<sup>31</sup> Kalinke, *The Book of Reykjahólar*, pp. 31–34.

*gullmunns*, *Servasiuss saga*, and *Jerónímuss saga*.<sup>32</sup> Among these legends, two are devoted to friars: the Augustinian Nicholas of Tolentino (1246–1305) and Dominic, who are, from a medieval perspective, two of the most recent saints (the most recent saint in *Reykjahólabók* is St Roch, who lived in the fourteenth century).

*Dóminíkuss saga* is based on a Low German source, similar to the one found in the *Passionael*. According to Williams-Krapp and Söder,<sup>33</sup> the main source of the legend of St Dominic found in the *Passionael* is an Alemannic verse legend, but the ultimate association with the *Legenda aurea* is stated by the quotation of Jacobus da Voragine as a source. Jacobus, also a Dominican, is mentioned as ‘Broder Jacob’ (‘Brother Jacob’) in the Low German text (*Van Sunte Dominico*, p. 100ra/29) and as ‘(M)eistare einn er Jacobvs hiet’ (‘A certain master by the name of Jacob’) in the Icelandic saga (*Dóminíkuss saga*, p. 298/25).

Bearing in mind that we are not dealing with a source but a parallel text, a comparison between the versions of the legend in the *Passionael* and *Reykjahólabók* shows that *Dóminíkuss saga* is among the sagas that are closest to the Low German legend both in structure and content. For this reason, this is the text used by the ONP as a foreign parallel.<sup>34</sup>

### *Dóminíkuss saga* in *Reykjahólabók*

The following is an overview of the content of the saga, which incorporates the most relevant elements of the story of St Dominic and the establishment of his order.

- 1 During her pregnancy, Dominic’s mother dreamed of a dog with a lighted torch in his mouth, which spread light all over the world. This vision was interpreted by a ‘hreinlífismaðr’ (‘friar’) as a premonition of the child’s future career as a preacher.<sup>35</sup> Another sign is the star seen by Dominic’s godmother on his forehead, which foreshadows the effect of his preaching against heresy.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>32</sup> See complete list in the Appendix.

<sup>33</sup> Roland Söder, ‘Märterbuch und Prosapassional. Untersuchungen zur Legendenüberlieferung in dreizehnten und vierzehnten Jahrhundert’ (Ph.D. dissertation, Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg, 1972).

<sup>34</sup> See ONP Online: [onp.ku.dk/v97](http://onp.ku.dk/v97), last accessed October 9 2020.

<sup>35</sup> According to the legend, Dominic’s mother made a pilgrimage to the Silos Abbey (Castile and León) before Dominic’s birth and dreamed that a dog leapt from her womb carrying a torch in its mouth, which seemed to set the earth on fire. As a result of this story, his order became known after his name, as the Dominican order: ‘Dominicanus’ in Latin, which is a word-play of ‘Domini canis’ (‘dog of the Lord’).

<sup>36</sup> The Icelandic text has the wording ‘einn ærlegh qvinna [...] er yfer konan atte være og vid barnenv skylldi thaka þa þat kæme thil’ (‘a honourable woman

As a child, he often slept on the bare ground and kept away from the sinful occupations typical of youngsters. He learned Holy Scripture and was sent to school in Palencia (Castile and León).

- 2 During a famine in the country, Dominic sold his clothes and books to help the poor and abstained from drinking wine for ten years. Upon hearing of this, the bishop of Osma<sup>37</sup> decided to make him a canon regular at the Cathedral [Low German 'domhere' ('Dome lord'), Old Norse 'kanúnkr' ('canon')]<sup>38</sup> and later a prior in a cloister. He prayed to God for help and converted a heretic [Low German 'ketter' ('Cathar, i.e. heretic'),<sup>39</sup> Old Norse 'villumaðr' ('heretic')]. Later, he met with Pope Innocent III (c. 1161–1216), who gave him the power to preach in heretic countries,<sup>40</sup> where he underwent an ordeal to prove the truth of his belief against the Cathars (Albigenses). The ordeal consisted of both parties writing down the fundamentals of their faith on books, which were then cast into a fire. Dominic's books survived the fire three times, but those written by the heretics immediately burned.

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[...] who was to be the midwife (?) and should receive the child when he was due'). *Dóminíkuss saga*, p. 287/18–20, which seems to be a corrupted form of 'yfirsetukona' ('midwife'), while the Low German text has 'des Kindes pade' ('the child's godmother'). *Van Sunte Dominico*, p. 98rb/5–6, which corresponds to the Latin 'Cuidam etiam matronae, quae ipsum ex sacro fonte levaverat' ('to a woman, who raised him from the holy font'). *Legenda aurea*, p. 466/26–27, that is, the godmother. The Low German legend *Van Sunte Dominico* is quoted from *Dat Passionael*, Stephan Arndes (Lübeck, 1492) [IncHaun 2204] and the *Legenda aurea* is quoted from Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea vulgo Historia lombardica dicta*, ed. Theodor Graesse (Dresden: G. Koebner, 1890).

- <sup>37</sup> Regarding this place-name, the Low German and Old Norse text share the reading 'Oxonia', which is the Latin name of Oxford and must be a misreading of what should be 'Oxoma', namely Osma.
- <sup>38</sup> There is a close similarity between the Low German and the Icelandic texts in what seems to be an expansion: 'De heren weren regulerer. vnde leueden gotliken' ('the canons were regulars and lived piously'). *Van Sunte Dominico*, p. 98rb/38–39; 'þeir kanvnkar sem þar j domkirkivne vorv hieldv reglv halld og lifdv gvdlega' ('the canons who were there in the cathedral kept the Rule and lived piously'). *Dóminíkuss saga*, p. 288/34–35.
- <sup>39</sup> Low German 'ketter' and Old Norse 'kettari', also used in the text along with 'villumaðr', refer to Catharism, a heretical movement which was spread in southern Europe between the twelfth and the fourteenth century. The Cathars were also known as Albigenses or Albigensians.
- <sup>40</sup> 'Hann gaf honvm þa megth ath ganga vr sinv klavstre til þess at predika amothe ketthorvm og avdrvm villv monnvm hvar hann villde' ('He gave him the mandate to leave the convent in order to preach against the Cathars and other heretics wherever he wished'). *Dóminíkuss saga*, p. 289/11–13.

- 3 Dominic brought along a number of brothers to preach against the heretics. At one point, some people asked him if he was afraid of death. His answer was that his preference was a slow and painful death.
- 4 At a different time, Dominic asked a heretic to convert and offered to sell himself to free him from his poverty, but this was prevented by the intervention of divine mercy. He also helped a woman, whose brother was kept prisoner in a pagan country.
- 5 After having travelled to the Albigensian region in order to preach, Dominic heard about heretic women and decided to reside close to them in order to serve as an example. During Lent, he fasted and rested on the bare ground.<sup>41</sup> Realizing that he was unaffected by these physical tests, the heretics converted.
- 6 After having preached for ten years in Toulouse, Dominic considered founding a rule. His bishop brought him to Rome as his chaplain. Dominic asked Pope Innocent III to accept his order or rule, but the Pope refused. During the same night, the bishop (sic) had a vision that the Lateran Church was about to fall down, but that Dominic sustained it. Accordingly, the Pope gave him permission to found an order on the condition that he select an existing rule. Together with his sixteen brothers, he chose the rule of St Augustine, but with some additional rules to make it stricter. The order was called 'predikaraorden' ('Order of Preachers') and was confirmed by Pope Honorius III (1150–1227) in 1216.
- 7 After the order had been established and when Dominic was praying in St Peter's Church in Rome, the Apostles Peter and Paul came to him and gave him a staff and a book, telling him to travel the world in order to preach. He then had a vision of his brothers preaching in pairs. Again while praying, Dominic saw Christ holding three swords in his hands and brandishing them against the world. Mary appeared and asked his son to take mercy on the sinners. She introduced the 'kapellán' ('chaplain') Dominic and his 'stallbróðir' ('companion') Francis to Jesus as the two preachers who may redeem sinners. This particular

<sup>41</sup> 'nær sem hann hvilde sikh þa lagdi hann sikh nidr æ einhveria fiol eda steinvm þeim er astrak heita og lagder erv nidr j golf' ('when he rested he lay down on a board or those tiles (lit. 'stones') which are called astrak and are laid on the floor'). *Dóminíkuss saga*, p. 291/28–30; 'vp eneme breede. edder vp deme astrake' ('on a board or on the [tile-covered] floor'). *Van Sunte Dominico*, p. 98vb/30–31. Here the Icelandic text reproduces the Low German *astrak* together with a definition of the word. See Marianne Kalinke, 'Reykjahólabók: A Legendary on the Eve of the Reformation', *Skáldskaparmál* 2 (1992), p. 245.

episode is also found in *Mariu saga*, in which it is introduced as a tale related by an otherwise unidentified Franciscan to the Friars Preachers,<sup>42</sup> a detail also found in the *Legenda aurea*. Moreover, it is related in *Mariu saga* that while praying at night Dominic had a vision of Christ holding three spears in his hands and about to throw them against the world in order to destroy violence, fornication, and avarice. Mary interceded with Jesus for humankind, saying that Dominic would conquer the world for him with the help of St Francis. In both versions, it is related that because of this vision Dominic met with Francis in church the following day, and the two saints agreed to combine their efforts to preach God's word.

- 8 The next episode, which is also related in *Mariu saga*, deals with Dean Reginald of Orléans (c. 1180/1183–1220), who became ill shortly after having joined Dominic's rule. Dominic asked Mary to intercede with God, so that he would not take his companion from him, and Reginald had a vision of Mary in the company of two maidens: the Virgin anointed his feet with oil and asked him to preach the word of God.<sup>43</sup> An important detail in this episode is the fact that she showed him the black and white habit of the Order of Preachers. Three days later, she appeared again and gave him a book containing the doctrine, which he had to learn and teach.<sup>44</sup> Subsequently, Reginald was healed, and the following day Dominic received the habit from him.
- 9 Dominic had a vision, in which the Virgin Mary appeared together with SS Cecilia and Catherine. The Virgin granted him and his order her protection and used holy water to sprinkle the

<sup>42</sup> 'Nockur brodir af berfættu brædra lifnadi' ('a brother of the bare-footed order [Franciscans]'). *Mariu saga*, II, p. 811/24.

<sup>43</sup> The vision occurred in 1218, and, according to contemporary writers, 'clinched his (Reginald's) determination to become a Friar Preacher.' William A. Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, I, p. 343, quoted in Kalinke, *The Book of Reykjahólar*, p. 276 n. 4.

<sup>44</sup> The detail is found in the Low German text but not in the *Legenda aurea*. The closing sentence of the chapter in the Low German and the Icelandic texts is one of many examples of striking similarity: 'darna hadde de meyster nee boze begherte. vnde hadde eyn reyne vnde vnbeflekket herte. vnde was an dogheden vnde an hillicheit. vnde an gotliker lere eyn hyllich speghel' ('Afterwards the master never had evil lust, but a pure and immaculate heart, and was a holy mirror [example] in virtues and holiness and divine doctrine'). *Van Sunte Dominico*, p. 99va/32–36; 'vpp fra þvi þa kom alldre nockvr ondzleg freistne at honvm. helldr hreinth og ofleekat hiartta. en j dygdvm og j heilagleik og so j gvdlegre keningv var hann einn dyrlegr spegill' ('From then on no wicked temptation came to him, but a pure and immaculate heart, and he was a holy mirror in virtues, holiness and in divine doctrine'). *Dóminikuss saga*, p. 296/8–11.



beds of the friars with the exception of one, who had not used the 'náttbelti'.<sup>45</sup> During this vision, Dominic ascended in ecstasy to heaven, where he saw the Holy Trinity. He was disappointed, because he didn't see his brothers, but then realized that Mary protected his order in a special way under her own mantle. Interestingly, this episode is not found in the section of *Mariu saga* dealing with Dominic and must be an interpolation in the German text, since it is not found in the *Legenda aurea* either. This motif has been considered by Leopold Kretzenbacher to be a kind of 'propaganda' and is common to many religious orders. It appears to originate with the Cistercians, and in the Dominican tradition it is often associated with the above-mentioned vision of Christ with the three spears.<sup>46</sup>

- 10 While writing a sermon during the night, an evil spirit appeared to Dominic in the shape of a she-ape to divert him from his task. Dominic asked her to hold the candlelight for him. The evil spirit requested permission to leave, because she was burning more than in Hell, but Dominic ordered her to stay until the light had burnt out. While Dominic and six brothers were in Dolus (Toulouse), a master of Holy Scriptures had a dream that seven stars came to his school. He noticed that the stars became increasingly brighter, and soon afterwards Dominic and brothers visited him and explained their mission.<sup>47</sup> This episode recalls the vision of the star on Dominic's forehead soon after his birth.

<sup>45</sup> 'fyrir því at sá sem þar vǫre vanvr at liggja. læge ecki hreinlega sem honvm heyrde. af því at hann hefde ecki natth bellted vmm sig sem adrer brædr' ('Because the one who usually slept there didn't lie in a pure way as he was supposed to because he was not girdled with the 'night-belt' like the other brothers'). *Dóminíkuss saga*, p. 296/27–29. The word corresponds to the Low German 'nachtgordel' and seems to reproduce the German misreading of the word 'cinti' in some rendering of the passage referring to the night garments prescribed by the Rule: 'Cum tunica et caligis cincti dormiant' ('They would [always] sleep with a tunic and wearing stockings'). *Regula et constitutiones FF. et sororum ordinis praedicatorum*, Prima distinctio 9, I.

<sup>46</sup> Kalinke, *The Book of Reykjahólar*, p. 130 and p. 276 n. 6.

<sup>47</sup> 'Domicivs svarar og qvazt vera predikara broder og so aller vær sagde hann. þvíat vær hofvm þat valld feinget af pavanvm at vær skyllde alla kettera mega fordrifa. og heyra jathningar manna og þar med predika og [fyrir þ] vi erm vær hier konner at vær vilivm [læra]' ('Dominic answers and says that he is a friar preacher "and so (are) all of us" he said, "because we have got from the Pope the mandate that we should eliminate all the heretics and listen to the confessions and preach and we have come her because we want to learn"). *Dóminíkuss saga*, p. 298/17–21; 'Do sprak sunte dominicus. Wy heten preddikers. vnde hebben de walt van dem pawesze. dat wy de kettere scolen vordriuen. vnde bycht horen. vnde preddyken. vnde wolden gherne leren' ('St Dominic said: "We are called preachers and we have from the Pope the

- 11 At the beginning of the chapter, the author of the story is quoted as 'Meistari Jacobus'. It is related that every night Dominic beat himself with an iron chain and did so three times: one for his sins, one for Christianity and its sinful people, and one for his soul.<sup>48</sup> Again, the devil made his appearance. Once, when Dominic held vigil in the friary church in Bologna, the devil appeared in the shape of a friar preacher. Dominic signaled to him that he should go back to sleep, and the next day he reminded the friars of the importance of obedience. The following night, the devil appeared again and encouraged Dominic to speak. Subsequently, Dominic broke his silence, and the devil mocked him for doing so, but Dominic answered that he was not touched by his insults (as a prior he was not subject to the rule of silence).
- 12 The devil appeared in the church, and Dominic led him through the convent asking how he tempted the friars in various places: cloister, choir, refectory, parlatory. When finally they came to the chapter room, the devil was reluctant to enter and had to admit that in this room all his efforts turned out to be wasted, because that was where the friars confessed their sins and atoned for them.

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mandate that we should eliminate the heretics and listen to the confessions and preach and we would like to learn'). *Van Sunte Dominico*, p. 100ra/21–25.

<sup>48</sup> '(M)eistare einn er Jacobvs hiet skrifar og liferne sancte Dominici og seiger so at hann hefr miogh grathed og med godmothlegv hiartha fram flvtt j (gvdz) avglithe sinar bæner. og a hvere nott sette hann sier j both sinna brotha þriar fleingingar med jarn vidivm og þo eigi at eins fyrer sig sialfan nema og fyrer adra sem hier greiner þann fyrsta fyrer sinar sialfs synder. adra fyrer heilaga kristne og syndoght folk er j henne erv. hina þridiv fyrer sinne salv' ('A master by the name of Jacob writes about the life of St Dominic and says that he has cried a lot and with a sincere heart manifested his prayers in front (of God), and every night he gave himself, in atonement for his sins, three lashes with iron whips, and not only for himself but also for others as it says here: the first for his own sins, the second for holy Christianity and the sinful people in it, the third for his soul'). *Dóminíkuss saga*, p. 298/25–31; 'Broder Jacob secht. dat sunte Dominicus ghans vele wenede. vnde ynnichliken bedede. vnde nam alle nacht dre bothe mit ener yseren keden. De erste nam he vor syne sunde. de ander vor de cristenheit. de drudde vor syne zeze' ('Brother Jacob says that St Dominic cried a lot and prayed piously and each night took three penalties with an iron chain: he took the first for his sins, the second for Christianity, the third for his soul'). *Van Sunte Dominico*, p. 100ra/29–34. The reference is to the *Legenda aurea*. Here the Low German and the Icelandic texts are somehow corrupt compared to the Latin tradition: 'Tres singulis noctibus accipiebat manu propria de quadam catena ferrea disciplinas, unam videlicet pro se, alteram pro peccatoribus, qui versantur in mundo, tertiam vero pro his, qui in purgatorio cruciantur' ('He received with his own hand, three times during the night, discipline with an iron chain, one for himself, the second for the sinners in the world, and the third for those who are tormented in purgatory'). *Legenda aurea*, p. 477/8–11.

- 13 As the fame of Dominic's holiness increased, an envoy of Pope Honorius visited him in Bologna and asked many questions to which he gave noteworthy answers, although – says the author of the saga – 'they are not inserted in this story'.<sup>49</sup> Also in Bologna, Dominic had a conversation with the prior of the convent of Casamari ('Samaria' in the Low German and Icelandic texts), who asked him to make sure that the priest Master Conrad join the order. Because of Dominic's prayers, Master Conrad entered the order the following morning and 'became a new light of Holy Christianity'.<sup>50</sup>
- 14 The last two chapters of the saga tell of Dominic's death and the accompanying miracles. According to the Icelandic text, Dominic had prayed to God that he might suffer a painful death, and when the time came, he became very ill. The brethren were sad, but Dominic comforted them by saying that he would be more helpful after death and would assist them, whenever they called upon him. He asked that they live according to his example. Shortly afterward he died and was buried in Bologna with the bishop and many people present at his funeral. On the same day, a prior in Prixia (Brescia) slept 'by a little bell',<sup>51</sup> when he had a dream about a hooded man, a Dominican friar (whom he recognized as Dominic himself) sitting on a ladder and ascending to heaven as Christ and Mary raised the ladder.<sup>52</sup> At the end of the
- 49 'þo at þav sie og ecki hier jnnsett j þessa historia'. *Dóminíkuss saga*, p. 300/33. The observation might refer to the fact that Dominic's answers are not found in the text, as the reader would expect (nor are they found in the Low German).
- 50 'vard eit nyth lios heilagre kristne'. *Dóminíkuss saga*, p. 301/13; 'wart der cristenheyt ein nyge licht'. *Van Sunte Dominico*, p. 100va/21–22.
- 51 'J þenna thima sath einn prior af þvi klavstre er Prixia heiter og svaf hia einne lithille klvckv' ('At that time a prior of the convent called Brescia sat and slept by a little bell'). *Dóminíkuss saga*, p. 302/7–9. Concerning this detail, there is a discrepancy between the Icelandic text on the one hand and the Low German and Latin tradition on the other. The latter two have: 'do sat de prior to prixia by deme cloksele vnde entsleep' ('The prior of Brescia sat by the bell tower and fell asleep'). *Van Sunte Dominico*, p. 100va/46–47; 'Nam cum in campanili fratrum capite ad murum inclinato levi somno dormitasset' ('As he slept a light sleep in the bell tower of the friars, with his head inclined to the wall'). *Legenda aurea*, p. 479/1–2. It seems that the Latin *campanile* at some point in the Low German tradition (in a text different from the Lübeck edition of the *Passionael*) was interpreted as a 'little bell'.
- 52 The dream of Friar Guala of Brescia (1180–1244) during the night of Dominic's death is a popular motif in sacred art. It is depicted, for example, as the initial M in an antiphonary from a Bolognese illuminator, dated around 1265, Los Angeles, The J. Paul Getty Museum, 62 (95.MS.70), recto. See Thomas Kren and Kurt Barstow, *Italian illuminated manuscripts in the J. Paul Getty Museum* (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2005), p. 8.

dream, he woke up, went to Bologna, and heard of Dominic's death. This story is also the third and last episode about St Dominic in *Mariu saga*.

- 15 While celebrating Mass for the sick Dominic, the preacher Rabo saw Dominic walking away from Bologna in snow-white clothes with a golden crown on his head and accompanied by joyful angels. Rabo then understood that he had died. This last chapter continues with the story of the translation of the saint and is introduced by a connecting sentence: 'It is also written that the almighty God has done many and great miracles although they are not inserted here'.<sup>53</sup> Because of these miracles, it was decided to translate the body of Dominic to a more suitable place. The translation took place on Whitsunday, on the occasion of a General Chapter at Bologna, and it was attended by Jordan of Saxony and many brethren. When the burial place was opened, a marvelous scent emanated from his sacred body. The concluding passage is a metaphor of Dominic as a sweet-smelling rose among the thorns of the world, an image that amplifies the passage in the *Passionael* and may be an interpolation in Björn's Low German exemplar.<sup>54</sup> It is possible that the image of the roses is meant to recall the importance of the Holy Rosary (Latin 'rosarium', Icelandic 'rosenkranz', which is a loan word from Low German) among the Dominicans from the beginning of the order. It is important to bear in mind that Alanus de Rupe (c. 1428–1475), the Dominican theologian who recorded and disseminated the revelation about St Dominic receiving the rosary, taught in many places, including Rostock, in the period 1459–1475, and his movement had a significant impact on the print culture of Europe before the Reformation.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> 'So finzt og skrifat at gvd almatthogr hefvr giortt bæde margar og storar jartheigner þo at þær sie og ecki hier insettar'. *Dóminikuss saga*, p. 303/3–5.

<sup>54</sup> The text also compares Dominic to a violet as a symbol of patience, and this equation echoes a passage in the *Acta Sanctorum. De S. Dominico Confessore*: 'Erat autem odor ille aliis odoribus fragrantia dissimilis, & ut liquido dominici eloquii Prædicatorem pateret in agro Ecclesie Christi bonum odorem fuisse, videbatur odor agri pleni, cui Deus benedixit. Et merito: viola pollebat humilitatis, liliis virginitatis albescebat, vernabat rosa patientie in ipso' ('The scent was unlike other scents in fragrance, so that it appeared clearly that the preacher of the word of the Lord was the good scent in the field of Christ's Church, it seemed to be the scent of a field in full bloom, which God had blessed. And deservedly: it was enriched with the violet of humility, brightened with the lilies of chastity, flourished with the rose of patience'). *Acta Sanctorum Augusti*, p. 526a/54–60.

<sup>55</sup> Alanus founded a local Rosary Confraternity in Rostock. His book *De dignitate et utilitate psalterii precelse virginis Marie* was published in 1498 at Gripsholm monastery, which had been founded by monks from Rostock. A

While the Low German text continues with a section describing miracles that took place after Dominic's death, *Dóminíkuss saga* ends abruptly at the bottom of folio 134vb in the manuscript, which also coincides with the end of a quire. Accordingly, the saga might well be incomplete.<sup>56</sup> With the exception of *Qnnu saga*, which is incomplete,<sup>57</sup> this is the only legend in *Reykjahólabók* which does not contain a formulaic ending.<sup>58</sup> It is possible that a similar conclusion was intended for the legend of St Dominic.

Most of the other texts in *Reykjahólabók* conclude with an invocation of God and the saintly protagonist of the saga, though *Nikuláss saga* and *Ambrósiuss saga* have a peculiar reference to the composition of the legend and the reception from the public:<sup>59</sup>

og enndezt hier nv hans historia gvde thil lof og honvm en þeim thil gamans er hlytt hafa. og þeim ecki til syndar avka sem krabbat hefvr. So og þeim lavn af gvde sem lesith hefr. Enn ollvm eylifa hvild med gvde og ollvm hans helgvm j himerike vthann enda. Amenn.

[And here ends his legend, in praise of God and the saint, and for the delight of those who have listened. May it not increase the sins of the one who scribbled it down and may God reward the one who read it aloud. To all, however, eternal rest with God and all his saints in the kingdom of heaven without end. Amen.]

Formulas of this kind may be considered clichés; they are found in many literary genres and are probably a self-ironical comment or a sort of plea for mercy, although such is not needed in a work like *Reykjahólabók*.

Regardless of its source, *Reykjahólabók* is a primary testimony to tangible evidence of Low German influence on Icelandic literary culture in the late Middle Ages. The codex is a remarkable achievement, because it fills a gap in Icelandic hagiographic literature on the eve of the Reformation. It

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new edition of the book was printed in Lübeck in 1506. Jarl Gallén, 'Alanus de Rupe', in *KLNM* 1, col. 66; and Wolfgang Undorf, *From Gutenberg to Luther: Transnational Print Cultures in Scandinavia 1450–1525*. Library of the Written Word 37 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2014), pp. 288–89.

<sup>56</sup> Folio 135r is blank (or rather erased), but the text of a new saga begins on the following verso side. According to Loth, *Reykjahólabók*, pp. xii–xiii, this was originally the first page of the manuscript.

<sup>57</sup> In addition to *Qnnu saga* in *Reykjahólabók*, there is another Low German legend of St Anne. See *Saga heilagrar Önnu*, ed. Kirsten Wolf. Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, Rit 5 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, 2001). This translation, which was produced presumably sometime between 1507 and 1550, has been associated with Bishop Jón Arason of Hólar (1484–1550) or his predecessor Gottskálk Nikulásson (1469–1520). This legend represents yet another example of the influence of Low German literature and the continued interest in the lives of the saints in late medieval Iceland.

<sup>58</sup> Kalinke, *The Book of Reykjahólar*, p. 238.

<sup>59</sup> *Reykjahólabók*, ed. Loth, II, p. 166/17–21; Kalinke, *The Book of Reykjahólar*, p. 238.

is probably for this reason that the collection contains sagas devoted to late medieval saints or saints whose popularity had increased during the course of the Middle Ages, such as SS Dominic, Nicholas of Tolentino, Roch, Gregory on the rock, and Anne.

According to Kalinke, the choice of content in the legendary demonstrates the author's familiarity with, and maybe preference for, the Augustinian order, which was represented in medieval Iceland by five monasteries: Þykkvibær, Flatey (moved to Helgafell in 1184), Viðey, Möðruvellir, and probably Saurbær. St Dominic was the founder of the Order of Preachers, which adopted the rule of St Augustine, and St Nicholas was the first Augustinian saint and may well have played a significant role in the diffusion of the order. In addition, *Reykjahólabók* includes a version of the legend of St Augustine based on Low German, which is different from the one produced in the second half of the thirteenth century by Abbot Runólfur Sigmundarson (d. 1307) in Þykkvibær, which is based, according to the author's own testimony, on a Latin source.<sup>60</sup>

The composition of a work like *Reykjahólabók* should be considered in light of the close relationship between Norway and Iceland, in particular Bergen and Skálholt, and the connection between Scandinavia and centers of learning in continental Europe, such as Rostock and Lübeck. It is well known that there was a flow of books from Rostock to Norway. Some of these books were commissioned by the Birgittine monastery in Bergen, with which Bjørn was associated. Moreover, Bjørn had the means and the opportunity to collect and translate the material needed for an enterprise, to which he devoted the last decades of his life.

If it is assumed that the choice of material for his legendary is his own, his intent must have been to revive the hagiographic genre and supplement the existent sagas with new material. This would also have included translating sagas already existing in a different version.

That Bjørn Þorleifsson follows a precise *ordo* in his choice of material is demonstrated by the fact that he keeps a global overview of the legendary as a whole, which is achieved by editorial work and the use of internal references. For instance, in the Saga of St Jerome (*Jerónímuss saga*), the narrative adheres closely to the text of the *Passionael*, but two chapters are omitted, since the content of these chapters had already been treated in the saga of St Augustine (*Ágústínuss saga*), to which Bjørn makes a reference: 'Jthem j sancte Avgvstinvs historia ma og fina tvær merckilegar vithraner. er sancte Jeronimvs vithradezt sancte Avgvstino þa sem hann var og ny faren af heimenvm' ('Also in the legend of St Augustine

<sup>60</sup> Kalinke, *The Book of Reykjahólar*, pp. 33–34. Cf. the rubric in the fragment Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 221 fol, edited in *Heilagra manna sögur: Fortællinger og legender om hellige mænd og kvinder*, ed. Carl R. Unger, 2 vols (Christiania [Oslo]: Bentzen, 1877), I, p. 149.

one may find two important visions, when St Jerome appeared to St Augustine after he (Jerome) had just departed from the world.’<sup>61</sup>

Another example of editorial work is the omission in *Ambrosíuss saga* of a passage relating how Augustine was converted by Ambrose, since ‘it can be found in his own legend, which follows’.<sup>62</sup> In both cases, the author uses a pre-existing text but with an eye to material found elsewhere.

## Conclusion

The legend of St Dominic in *Reykjahólabók* provides the traditional lore about a saint, who never became the object of a cult, but was nevertheless the founder of a very influential order. In comparison with the known Latin sources, the Low German and Icelandic versions of the legend focus on the main themes of Dominic’s biography: the many signs of sanctity in his life, the fight against heresy, and the establishment of the Order of Preachers.

Although there were no Dominican houses in Iceland, many Icelanders were educated by Dominicans, and four Dominicans became bishops, three at Skálholt and one at Hólar. It is also related in *Lárentíuss saga biskups* that a Dominican friar named Björn accompanied Lárentíus on his visitation in Iceland in 1307–1309.<sup>63</sup> In the rest of Europe, the Dominicans served as confessors, envoys, and ambassadors to a number of monarchs and prominent individuals, and one may presume that such visitations and diplomatic missions were more common in the northern province of Dacia than recorded.

In light of this, the inclusion of *Dóminíkuss saga* in *Reykjahólabók* testifies to the structure in which the legend spread in the different vernacular languages in the Middle Ages and pays due homage to the founder of the great Order of Preachers.

<sup>61</sup> *Reykjahólabók*, ed. Loth, II, p. 222/19–21.

<sup>62</sup> ‘finzt þat j hans sialfs historia sem hier næst er efter a’. *Reykjahólabók*, ed. Loth, II, p. 86/15.

<sup>63</sup> ‘stoduast þa sv rada giord. ad þeir broder Biorn og sira Lafrans voru skipader \*visitatores. vt til Islandz med iofnu valde bader’ (‘It was then decided that brother Björn and Lord Laurence were sent to Iceland as visitators both with equal power’). *Laurentius saga biskups*, ed. Árni Björnsson. Rit Handritastofnunar Íslands 3 (Reykjavík: Handritastofnun Íslands, 1969), p. 31/9–10.

## Appendix

### *Texts in Reykjahólabók*

A full list of the sagas in the collection is presented below with the corresponding sections of them in the *Passionael*: the sagas in italics are new sagas, while those in bold italics are sagas based on pre-existing Old Icelandic versions of Latin sources. In these three sagas, the correspondent passage in the *Passionael* is in italics. The source of the last saga is a Low German now-lost text of a composite legend about Emmerantia, Anna and Maria; accordingly, the corresponding passage in the *Passionael* is in italics:

	<i>Reykjahólabók</i>	<i>Passionael</i> (Lübeck 1492)	
1	<i>Heilagra þriggja konunga saga</i>	1ra(1)–7v(13)a	318ra–322vb
2	<i>Hendriks saga ok Kúningúndísar</i>	7v(13)a–14r(26)b	57va–61va
3	<i>Qsvalds saga</i>	14r(26)b–19r(36)a	102ra–104vb
4	Barlaams saga ok Jósafats	19r(36)a–25v(49)a	285ra–289va
5	<i>Rókuss saga</i>	25v(49)a–29r(56)a	200rb–202vb
6	Sebastianuss saga	29r(56)b–30v(59)b, 87r(173)a–87v(174)a	333ra–334rb
7	<i>Lazaruss saga</i>	87v(174)b–92r(183)a	5ra–6vb
8	Sjau sofanda saga	92r(183)a–94v(188)b, 55r(108)a–55v(109)b	49ra–49va
9	Stefáns saga	56r(110)a–62r(122)a	(96vb–98ra)
10	<i>Lárentíuss saga erkidjákns</i>	<i>62r(122)a–66v(131)b</i>	<i>(111va–112rb ...)</i>
11	<i>Kristófors saga</i>	66v(131)b–70v(140)b	81vb–83rb
12	<i>Georgíuss saga</i>	70v(140)b–78v(156)b, 47r(92)a–54r(106)b	6vb–13rb
13	Silvesters saga	54r(106)b–54v(107)b, 79r(157)a–84r(167)a	314rb–318ra
14	<i>Gregors saga byskups</i>	84r(167)a–86v(172)b, 31r(60)a–33v(65)a	280vb–284rb
15	Gregors saga páfa	33v(65)b–38v(75)a	374rb–377va
16	<i>Ambrósíuss saga byskups</i>	<i>38v(75)b–45v(89)b</i>	<i>(1ra–2vb)</i>



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	<i>Reykjahólabók</i>	<i>Passionael</i> (Lübeck 1492)
17 <i>Ágústínuss saga</i>	45v(89)b–46v(91)b, 95r(189)a–100v(200)a	129ra–132rb [...]
18 <i>Erasmuss saga</i>	100v(200)b–104r(207) b	33ra–35vb
19 <i>Nikuláss saga af Tólentínó</i>	104v(208)a– 107v(214)b	148ra–150va
20 <i>Jóns saga gullmunns</i>	108r(215)a–112v(224) b	346va–350va
21 <i>Servasíuss saga</i>	113r(225)a–116v(232) a	26vb–29va
22 <i>Jerónímuss saga</i>	116v(232) a–124v(248)b	208rb [...] 216ra
23 <i>Antóníuss saga</i>	124v(248)b–131r(261) a	326vb–332rb
24 <i>Dóminíkuss saga</i>	131r(261)b–134v(268) b	98ra–101ra
25 <i>Qnnu saga</i>	135v(270) a–168v(336)b	(83rb (...) 413vb)

## The Veneration of St Michael in Medieval Iceland

Margaret Cormack

The Archangel Michael, whose name was believed to mean '[he] who is like God',<sup>1</sup> was known in the Middle Ages as the leader of the angels in the battle against the devil and his followers. Having cast Lucifer out of heaven at the beginning of time, he and other angels defend the souls of the dying against demonic attack, so that they will escape hell. These functions were often portrayed in medieval art: usually in armor, with a lance or sword, the Archangel defeats Lucifer and/or the Antichrist, depicted either as a dragon or as human. He is also shown weighing the good and bad deeds of souls at death (*psychostasia*).<sup>2</sup>

### St Michael in early Christian Scandinavia

St Michael is the only saint other than the Virgin Mary mentioned on the eleventh-century rune stones in Denmark and southern Sweden. References to him are found on one stone in Uppland, one in Gotland, one on Lolland, and four on Bornholm. Another stone, whose

<sup>1</sup> 'hveR es sem goþ'. *The Icelandic Homily Book: Perg. 15 40 in the Royal Library, Stockholm*, ed. Andrea de Leeuw van Weenen. Icelandic Manuscripts Series in Quarto 3 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, 1993), folio. 41r. 'hver sem guð'. *Gamal Norsk homiliebook: Cod. AM 619 4<sup>o</sup>*, ed. Gustav Indrebø (Oslo: Dybwad, 1931), p. 136. 'hverr sem guð'. *Heilagra manna sögur: Fortællinger og legender om hellige mænd og kvinder*, ed. Carl R. Unger, 2 vols (Christiania [Oslo]: Bentzen, 1877), I, p. 711.

<sup>2</sup> See David Keck, *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 201–07, and Ebbe Nyborg, 'The Cult of St Michael in Denmark and the Origin of Obits in Parish Church Liturgy', in *Ora pro nobis. Space, Place, and the Practice of Saints' Cults in Medieval and Early-Modern Scandinavia and Beyond*, ed. Nils Holger Petersen, Mia Münster Swendsen, Thomas Heebøll-Holm, and Martin Wangsgaard Jürgensen. Publications from the National Museum Studies in Archaeology and History 27 (Copenhagen: Danmarks Nationalmuseet, 2019), pp. 103–17.

original location is unknown, is now part of the church in Linköping, Östergötland.<sup>3</sup> By comparison, about three hundred stones mention God or Christ, and at least thirty-seven mention the Virgin Mary.<sup>4</sup> No other saints are named. Since the object of these stones is, among other things, commemoration of the dead and the hope of a seamless transfer of their souls to Paradise, it is probable that St Michael was being invoked in the role of psychopomp.

There are at least twenty churches dedicated to St Michael in Denmark, of which two – in Slagelse and Schleswig – appear to be from the eleventh century.<sup>5</sup> In Norway, it is the Viken area, closest to Denmark, that has the most dedications to the Archangel: twenty out of a total of twenty-eight according to Tue Gad.<sup>6</sup> Given the common association of St Michael with heights, it is worth noting that the monastery of St Michael in Bergen (Munkeliv Abbey), founded in the 1130s, was on a hill on the Nordnes peninsula (though there were much more impressive heights nearby). The mountainous island of Selja may have boasted a church dedicated to St Michael as one of its five churches (or perhaps chapels). However, the cave in a cliff from which a healing spring trickles is associated with the Seljumenn and St Sunniva rather

- <sup>3</sup> Tue Gad, Bengt Ingmar Kilström, Niels M. Saxtorph, and Bernt C. Lange, 'Mikael', in *KLNM* 11 (1966), col. 618. See also Stéphane Coviaux, 'Saint Michel en Scandinavie au Moyen Âge', in *Culto e santuari di San Michele nell'Europa tardoantica e medievale/ Culte et sanctuaires de saint Michel dans l'Europe médiévale. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi (Bari-Monte Sant'Angelo, April 5–8 2006)*, ed. Pierre Bouet, Giorgio Otranto, and André Vauchez (Bari: Edipuglia, 2007), pp. 68–69. The stones are listed in Karen Bek Pederson, 'St Michael and the Sons of Síðu-Hallur', *Gripla* 23 (2012), p. 178, note 3.
- <sup>4</sup> Coviaux, 'Saint Michel en Scandinavie au Moyen Âge', p. 69. See also Lucien Musset, 'Saint Michel au Danemark', in *Culte de Saint Michel et pèlerinages au mont*, ed. Marcel Baudot. Millénaire monastique du Mont Saint-Michel 3 (Paris: Lethielleux, 1971), pp. 505–10.
- <sup>5</sup> Coviaux, 'Saint Michel en Scandinavie au Moyen Âge', p. 71. See also Lucien Musset, 'Saint Michel au Danemark' p. 128. For medieval art pertaining to the saint, which is often of more value than church dedications as evidence of local cult, see Gad, Kilström, Saxtorph, and Lange, 'Mikael', and Sissel F. Plathe and Jens Bruun, *Danmarks middelalderlige altertavler: og anden billedbærende kirkeudsmykning af betydning for liturgien og den private andagt* (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2010), and the database at <http://asp.altertavler.dk>; for Sweden, similar information can be found at 'Medeltidens bildvärld', <http://medeltidbild.historiska.se/medeltidbild/>, last accessed October 19 2020.
- <sup>6</sup> Gad, Kilström, Saxtorph, and Lange, 'Mikael', col. 618, which characterizes this part of Norway as its oldest Christian landscape. Dedications of Norwegian churches are listed by Lorentz Dietrichson, *Sammenlignende fortegnelse over Norges kirkebygninger i middelalderen og nutiden* (Oslo: Mallings, 1888). Bek-Pedersen, 'St Michael and the sons of Síðu-Hallur', p. 178 note 4, lists five Norwegian sculptures and one altar-panel featuring the saint.

than the Archangel.<sup>7</sup> This is all the more striking since a stream is also associated with his shrine at Mt. Gargano; Graham Jones has called our attention to the saint's connections with low-lying places, and associations with baptism and healing. An association with conversion, if not baptism, is seen in Icelandic literature (see below).<sup>8</sup>

## St Michael in Iceland

Of European shrines of St Michael, only Mount Gargano (Apulia, Italy), referred to simply as 'Michael's mountain', is mentioned as a possible goal for pilgrims from Iceland. *Leiðarvísir*, the itinerary attributed to Abbot Nikulás Bergsson of Munkaþverá (b. unknown–d. 1159), states that: 'Sepont hon stendr undir Michialsfialli ok er iii milur á breidd, en x á leng[d], ok er hon á fiall upp, þar er hellir Michaelis ok silkidukr, er hann gaf þangat'<sup>9</sup> ('Siponto stands at the foot of Michael's mountain, which is three miles in breadth but ten in length, and it is up on the mountain; there is Michael's cave and the silken cloth that he gave to the place.') Although Mount Gargano was a common point of departure for pilgrims heading to Jerusalem, this fact is not mentioned by Nikulás, who sends his pilgrim to Bari (where there was a major shrine of St Nicholas) to end this portion of the itinerary.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *Saga Óláfs Tryggvasonar af Oddr Snorrason munk*, ed. Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen: Gad, 1932), pp. 102–03.

<sup>8</sup> Graham Jones, 'The Cult of Michael the Archangel in Britain. A survey, with some thoughts on the significance of Michael's May feast and angelic roles in healing and baptism', in *Culto e santuari di San Michele nell'Europa tardoantica e medievale/ Culte et sanctuaires de saint Michel dans l'Europe médiévale*. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi (Bari-Monte Sant'Angelo, April 5–8 2006), ed. Pierre Bouet, Giorgio Otranto, and André Vauchez (Bari: Edipuglia, 2007), pp. 147–82.

<sup>9</sup> *Alfræði íslenzk: Íslandsk encyklopædisk litteratur.Cod. mbr. AM. 194, 8vo*, ed. Kristian Kålund and Nathaniel Beckman, 3 vols (Copenhagen: Samfund for udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur, 1908–1918), I, p. 20; Joyce Hill, 'From Rome to Jerusalem: An Icelandic Itinerary of the Mid-Twelfth Century', *Harvard Theological Review* 76/2 (1983), p. 178. The cloth is described as 'red' rather than 'silken' in *Mikjál's saga*. See *Heilagra manna sögur*, ed. Unger, I, pp. 698–99. According to Hill, 'From Rome to Jerusalem', p. 183, 'red' agrees with the Latin. Although traditionally attributed to Abbot Nicholas, parts of the extant text, written in 1387, appear to be later additions, see works cited in Dale Kedwards, *The Mappae Mundi of Medieval Iceland*. Studies in Old Norse Literature 6 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2020), p. 51.

<sup>10</sup> The first route in the itinerary incorporates Monte Cassino (Lazio), the monastery of St Benedict, which would have been of special interest to Nikulás, from whence it leads to Capua, Benevento, and Salerno (Campania), and on to Siponto/Michaelsfjall, and Bari (Apulia). The text then gives an alternative route from Rome to Capua. Bari appears to have been Nikulás' point of departure and return across the Adriatic.

St Michael's feast was ranked highly both in the Christian laws sections of the various provincial law-codes – the first Icelandic one, known as *Grágás*, was composed between the years 1122–1133 – and in the liturgical calendars of the Scandinavian countries.<sup>11</sup> As an important feast of the Universal Church, it would be surprising if this were *not* the case. In the litany for All Saints, as in other hierarchically organized lists of holy beings, Michael occupies first place after the Virgin Mary.<sup>12</sup> Angels, including Michael, were among the subjects of the thirty-fourth of Gregory the Great's forty gospel homilies, which, according to Britta Olrik Fredriksen, were likely translated into Old Norse/Icelandic in the first part of the twelfth century; the thirty-fourth homily is one of those preserved in Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 677 4to (7r/1–10r/29), from the first quarter of the thirteenth century.<sup>13</sup> Material from it appears in the homilies for the feast of St Michael in the *Old Icelandic Homily Book* and *Old Norwegian Homily Book*, both from around 1200.<sup>14</sup> The two homilies contain information about the different types of angels, based ultimately on Gregory. In addition, the *Norwegian Homily Book* mentions the rationale for the feast, the anniversary of Michael's defeating 'heathens' attacking Seponto, and his appearance on Mount Gargano is briefly described.<sup>15</sup>

St Michael appears in Icelandic translations of saints' lives and visionary literature, generally in connection with death, transportation, and the defense of souls from the devil. Such texts include *Marteins saga byskups*, *Niðrstignings saga*, *Mariu saga*, *Páls leizla*, and *Heilagra feðra æfi* (a translation of *Vitæ Patrum*).<sup>16</sup>

<sup>11</sup> See Lilli Gjerløw and Magnús Már Lárusson, 'Kalendarium II', in *KLNM* 8, cols 93–147.

<sup>12</sup> Gad, Kilström, Saxtorph, and Lange, 'Mikael', col. 616.

<sup>13</sup> Britta Olrik Fredriksen, 'Til englefsnittet i Gregors 34. evangeliehomilie in norrøn oversættelse', *Opuscula* 7 (1979), p. 64. AM 677 4to: *Four Early Translations of Theological Texts: Gregory the Great's Gospel Homilies, Gregory the Great's Dialogues, Prosper's Epigrams, De XII abusivis saeculi*, ed. Andrea de Leeuw van Weenen. Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, Rit 100 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, 2018), pp. 5, 7.

<sup>14</sup> *The Icelandic Homily Book*, ed. de Leeuw van Weenen, fols 40v/27–42/v31; *Gamal norsk homiliebok*, ed. Indrebø, pp. 136–43, ff. 66v/1–69r/5 (the rubric is found on the last line of fol. 66r).

<sup>15</sup> *Gamal norsk Homiliebok*, ed. Gustav Indrebø, p. 136, f. 66v. Papal advice on the feast-day is described at more length in *Mikjál's saga*, in *Heilagra manna sögur*, ed. Unger, I, pp. 697–98.

<sup>16</sup> See the indices in *Heilagra manna sögur* (where *Heilagra feðra æfi* appears under its Latin title, *Vitae patrum*), *Mariu saga: Legender om Jomfru Maria og hendes jertegn*, ed. Carl R. Unger (Christiania [Oslo]: Brögger & Christie, 1871), *Niðrstignings saga: Sources, Transmission, and Theology of the Old Norse 'Descent into Hell'*, ed. and trans. Dario Bullitta. Toronto Old Norse and Icelandic Series 11 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), and *Páls leizla: The Vision of St Paul*, ed. and

Church dedications, images of, and literature about the Archangel provide evidence of Michael's veneration outside of the liturgy. In the case of Iceland, information is found in church contracts with inventories, known as *máldagar*, which were required to be kept up-to-date and read aloud to the assembled congregation once a year. In surviving transcriptions, additions to church property are often added at the end of the main text. These additions might represent payments of vows, gifts (including testamentary bequests), or payments made from the church's income. It is not always possible to determine which is which. Although the primary purpose of the inventories was to keep track of church property, the names of the patron saint(s) of the church were frequently included.

The church copies of inventories have rarely survived, and even these may not have precise dates.<sup>17</sup> For the most part, we have to rely on copies made by bishops for their records. For the diocese of Skálholt, the earliest surviving collections are preserved in a manuscript with the shelf mark Reykjavík, National Archives of Iceland, BSS A II 1, from 1601.<sup>18</sup> In an unpublished study, Sveinbjörn Rafnsson concluded that this manuscript was a compilation of earlier collections, which could be dated to the late-thirteenth century, the second quarter of the fourteenth century (here referred to as 'early-fourteenth century'), and the mid-fourteenth century. A complete collection of inventories for the entire diocese was compiled by Bishop Vilkin Hinriksson of Skálholt (in office from around 1394–1405) at the end of the fourteenth century. The inventories from Hólar are to be found for the most part in collections by known bishops: Auðunn Þorbergsson (in office 1313–1322), whose collection is dated 1318 (though there are later additions), Jón skalli Eiríksson (1358–1390), Pétur Nikulásson (1392–c. 1401), and Sigurður Jónsson (1525). The last-mentioned collection is exceptional in that it includes inventories of monasteries, which otherwise appear to have kept their own records. Depending on the scribal practice of

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trans. Dario Bullitta. Viking Society Texts (London: University College London, Viking Society for Northern Research, 2017).

<sup>17</sup> One of the oldest surviving inventories is that of Reykholt, Reykjavík, Þjóðskjalasafn Íslands, Kirknasafn, Reykholt í Reykholtsdal, AA/2 Reykholtsmáldagi, which illustrates several additions between the late-twelfth century and 1247. See *Reykjaholtsmáldagi*, ed. Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson and trans. Margaret Cormack (Reykholt: Reykholtskirkja-Snorrastofa, 2000), pp. 31–32.

<sup>18</sup> Formerly Reykjavík, Landsbókasafn Íslands – Háskólabókasafn, Lbs 268 4to, and often referred to by this shelf mark in *DI*. Prior to that, it was nr. 68 4to in the manuscript collection of Bishop Hannes Finnsson, and then D 12 in the diocesan library (*Stiftsbókhlaða*) in Reykjavík, see *DI* 1, pp. 167–68, and Björn K. Þórólfsson, ed., *Biskupsskjalasafn. Skrár Þjóðskjalasafns*, vol. 3 (Reykjavík: Þjóðskjalasafn, 1956), p. 90.

the recorder, none, one, or all of the patrons may be listed. If several are named, they are usually in hierarchical order: the Virgin Mary, Archangel Michael, apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins.

Dedications, however, do not tell the whole story. The bishop had the final say in the dedication of a church, but his opinion of a saint's importance might well differ from those of the local landowners, priests, and congregation. Of greater interest in evaluating the importance of a saint in the lives of parishioners is the presence of images representing the saint, sagas about him, the burning of candles before an altar to the saint, or gifts donated to him or her. Images (*skriptir*, *likneski*), candles, and books cost money.<sup>19</sup> If a church owned an image or saga of a saint to whom it was dedicated, chances are that the saint was locally venerated, although it is always possible that an image of a patron saint was purchased out of a sense of propriety rather than devotion. Images were generally obtained before sagas, especially in the present case, where the saga in question, *Mikjál's saga* by Bergr Sökkason, was not composed until the first half of the fourteenth century (see below). The presence of candles burning before an image or the reading of a saga would emphasize the saint's importance for church-goers and encourage devotion to the saint.

An examination of the *máldagar*, beginning with the earliest extant texts pertaining to each church, reveals the following evidence for veneration of the Archangel. Obviously in some cases – especially when the first documents are recorded in the sixteenth century – dedications and objects listed are much older than the time of recording, but there is no way of determining by how much. It is, however, often possible to determine the order in which objects were acquired, for example when there is an addition at the end of the inventory naming an object of a type that was previously listed, such as at Ytraskarð, Land in the diocese of Skálholt.<sup>20</sup> That church was dedicated to St Michael and owned a statue of the Virgin Mary according to the main body of the inventory; a *Michels skrift* ('Michael's image') was, however, added after what

<sup>19</sup> I use 'image' as a general term for any sort of representation, here and in the list of locations accompanying the map. Although we cannot be sure, the Icelandic term *likneski* (lit. 'likeness') may be a three-dimensional statue, while a *skript* ('picture, drawing, likeness') is probably two-dimensional. A study of the terminology used in the *máldagar* is much to be desired. Other things being equal, presumably a three-dimensional image was more expensive than a two-dimensional one; surviving examples had often been imported. The inventories sometimes indicate the material out of which the image was made, such as alabaster, or state whether it was colored or gilded. In the following, I have used the Icelandic terms for the objects rather than translating them.

<sup>20</sup> For locations, see the list of churches where St Michael was venerated (pp. 273–76) and the map (p. 271).

appears to have been the original conclusion of the document, which was probably from in the early fourteenth century.<sup>21</sup>

The church at Búðardalur, Skarðsströnd, founded 1239–1268, was dedicated to St Michael and owned a *skript* of him at the time of its earliest recording, in the mid-fourteenth century. By the end of the fourteenth century, *Mikjál's saga* (as well as *Margretar saga*) had been obtained.<sup>22</sup>

The church at Steinar, Eyjafjöll was dedicated to Michael and owned a *skript* depicting him at the time of its first recording in the early fourteenth century.<sup>23</sup>

The church at Borg, Mýrar was dedicated to St Michael, and the dedication is found in the earliest *máldagi*, but the only images mentioned in that document, from the mid-fourteenth century, are two *skriptir* of Mary Magdalene.<sup>24</sup> By the end of the century, however, its *máldagi* records, in hierarchical order, *skriptir* of the Virgin Mary, St Michael, and St Óláfr, as well as a small *líkneski* of St Blaise.<sup>25</sup> It is quite possible that 'Magdalen' in the earlier manuscript was a misreading for 'Michael' (two images of the Magdalen as the only images in a church at that date would be surprising) at some point in transmission, and in fact the church owned the statues of St Mary and St Michael mentioned in the later *máldagi* at the time of the earlier one as well.

In the diocese of Hólar, the inventories of Bishop Auðunn Þorbergsson (r. 1313–1322), whose cartulary is traditionally dated to 1318, generally do not record the dedication of the church – nor does that of Bishop Jón skalli Eiríksson (r. 1358–1390/1391) always do so. Sometimes the dedications appear first in the cartulary of Bishop Pétur Nikulásson (r. 1391–1410/1411).<sup>26</sup> The following churches are in Hólar diocese.

St Michael was the patron of the church at Bólstaðarhlíð, which in 1318 owned a *Michials líkneski* and a *Maríu skript*.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *DI* 2, pp. 695–96, cf *DI* 4, p. 63. In the following, I mention images of saints other than Michael to give readers an idea of which saints were popular at different times. I have not included the *líkneski* which are often mentioned as being under the cross: these were presumably three-dimensional images of the Virgin Mary and John the Evangelist, and their presence in a crucifixion group would not indicate veneration of them individually. See, for example, the entries for Núpufell and Eyjafjörður, discussed below.

<sup>22</sup> *DI* 2, pp. 650–51; *DI* 4 (1897), p. 157. See Margaret Cormack, *The Saints in Iceland: Their Veneration from the Conversion to 1400*, pref. Peter Foote. Subsidia Hagiographica 78 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1994), p. 179, note 9.

<sup>23</sup> *DI* 2, pp. 679–80.

<sup>24</sup> *DI* 3, p. 88.

<sup>25</sup> *DI* 4, p. 187.

<sup>26</sup> Auðunn in *DI* 2, pp. 423–89. Jón skalli in *DI* 3, pp. 155–78. Pétur Nikulásson in *DI* 3, pp. 508–91.

<sup>27</sup> *DI* 2, p. 471. The dedication is first mentioned in 1394. *DI* 3, p. 545.



Michael was the main patron at Núpufell, Eyjafjörður and is identified as such in 1318, at which time a *líkneski* of Michael was listed in the main body of the inventory:<sup>28</sup> Two 'hundreds' (a unit of value) of linen owned by the angel Michael, a new cross with two *líkneski* under it, and a new *líkneski* of the Virgin are added towards the end of the document. The church had acquired a copy of *Mikjál's saga* by 1394.<sup>29</sup>

The church at Reykir in Tungusveit owned a *Michalis líkneski* in 1318.<sup>30</sup> It had acquired a *maríu skript* by 1360 (at which time Michael is also named as patron) and a copy of *Mikjál's saga* by 1399.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, of the seven churches known to have been dedicated to St Michael before 1400, all but one owned images of him by the mid-fourteenth century, and the apparent exception, Borg, may have done so, if we assume miscopying as described above. To this number one might add the church at Geithellur, Álftafjörður, which owned an image of him (as well as an 'old' image of the Virgin Mary) at the end of the fourteenth century,<sup>32</sup> although it is first identified as 'Michaelskirkja' in a brief list of churches from the end of the fifteenth century.<sup>33</sup> By the end of the fourteenth century, three of these churches had also obtained copies of *Mikjál's saga*.

In addition, there are several churches of which St Michael is one of a number of patrons, which do not own an image of him. In the diocese of Skálholt, the churches are at Kaldaðarnes/Kaldrananes, Bjarnarfjörður (cons. 1269–1319), Gilsbakki, Hvítársíða (where we are explicitly told that of the three patrons, it is St Nicholas who 'allan þennan stad a med Gude' ('owns all this estate along with God'), Grunnavík; Heynes, Akranes; and Lambastaðir, Mýrar.<sup>34</sup> The church at Lambastaðir was a half-church (meaning that half the normal number of masses were celebrated there) recorded in the second half of the fifteenth century as being dedicated to God, the Virgin Mary, Michael, and All God's saints.<sup>35</sup> Michael is probably included in the dedication because of the church's proximity to Borg, but the locals purchased statues of the Virgin Mary and St Clement, who is not even included in the dedication. Michael was also a co-patron at Tjörn, Svarfaðardalur in the diocese of Hólar, which, however, did not own an image of him.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>28</sup> *DI* 2, p. 450. The Virgin Mary and St Olaf are also mentioned as patrons in 1394. *DI* 3, pp. 527–28.

<sup>29</sup> *DI* 3, p. 527.

<sup>30</sup> *DI* 2, pp. 465–66. What happened to this copy we do not know, for it was missing in the *máldagi* of 1521, and a new one provided in 1537, see *DI* 8, p. 837 and *DI* 10, p. 116.

<sup>31</sup> *DI* 3, pp. 175, 530.

<sup>32</sup> *DI* 4, p. 203.

<sup>33</sup> *DI* 7, p. 35.

<sup>34</sup> *DI* 2, pp. 407, 358, *DI* 4, p. 138, *DI* 7, p. 57, *DI* 5, p. 406.

<sup>35</sup> *DI* 5, p. 406.

<sup>36</sup> *DI* 2, p. 457.

In contrast, images of the saint are recorded at one church apparently not dedicated to Michael in the diocese of Skálholt and three in the diocese of Hólar. In Skálholt, Staðarhóll, Saurbær owned a *skript* in the sixteenth century.<sup>37</sup> In Hólar diocese, in 1318 the church at Höfði, Höfðaströnd (dedication unknown) owned a ‘mariuskript [...] michialz lýkneski oc Thorlaks’ (*skript* of Mary [...] *líkneski* of Michael and [one] of Þorlákr.)<sup>38</sup> Kaupangur, Eyjafjörður (dedication unknown) boasted a ‘mariu skriptt. michials lijkneski. olafz lijkneski’ (*skript* of Mary, *líkneski* of Michael, *líkneski* of Óláfr’) in 1318.<sup>39</sup> Nothing can be deduced from the order in which the images are named, which is their hierarchical order of importance. In the church at Glaumbær (dedicated to St John the Baptist), the image of Michael is one of five recorded in 1360.<sup>40</sup> The Virgin Mary is mentioned first, but John the Baptist precedes Michael in the list, presumably because of his status as the church’s main patron. A *líkneski* had been acquired by the church at Möðruvellir in Eyjafjörður, dedicated to St Martin, on the occasion of the visitation of Bishop Gottskálf in 1471.<sup>41</sup> Michael is one of nine saints whose *líkneski* are included along with many other items recently purchased out of church funds. A *líkneski* of Michael was acquired by the church at Laufás (dedicated to St Peter) between 1461 and 1525.<sup>42</sup> In addition, two images of angels are mentioned in the two inventories. At that time, the monastery at Munkaþverá had both a large *líkneski* of and an altar dedicated to St Michael,<sup>43</sup> though they may well have been older – the contents of monasteries were not included in the same episcopal visitation records as were parish churches, and it is not until the ‘Sigurðar register’ of 1525 that inventories of many monasteries are recorded.

The church at Höfði, Höfðahverfi in the diocese of Hólar (dedicated to SS Ambrose and Nicholas) had obtained a *historia* (‘rhymed office’) of the saint between 1318 and 1394.<sup>44</sup>

Mass on the feast of St Michael was to be celebrated at Langárfoss (or Foss), Mýrar (dedication unknown).<sup>45</sup> This church was a half-church, and it was not unusual to mention feasts that were specifically required at such churches. Accordingly, it is not surprising to find the mass of St Michael listed.

<sup>37</sup> *DI* 7, p. 289.

<sup>38</sup> *DI* 2, pp. 459–60.

<sup>39</sup> *DI* 2, p. 449.

<sup>40</sup> *DI* 3, p. 175.

<sup>41</sup> *DI* 5, p. 308.

<sup>42</sup> *DI* 9, p. 330; cf. *DI* 5, p. 267.

<sup>43</sup> *DI* 9, pp. 305–06.

<sup>44</sup> *DI* 3, p. 569. It also owned *historiae* of SS Martin, Catherine and Andrew. Cf.

*DI* 2, pp. 446–47.

<sup>45</sup> *DI* 1, pp. 276–77.

In addition to those mentioned above, the patronage of some churches is uncertain; it is easy to make a scribal error when copying the various spellings used in Icelandic for 'Michael' and 'Nicholas'. Such confusion arises for three churches in the diocese of Skálholt. The earliest inventory for Hagi, Barðaströnd lists the patron as Michael,<sup>46</sup> but two younger inventories list Nicholas.<sup>47</sup> For the church at Dyrhólar in Mýrdalur, the two copies of the same inventory differ.<sup>48</sup> For the half-church at Holt, Síða, *Hítardalsbók* from 1367 names the patron Michael,<sup>49</sup> but *Vilkinsbók* from 1397 names him Nicholas.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, an inventory for the church at Selárdalur in the Skálholt diocese mentions a *michalz sogu*, perhaps a misreading for *Nichulas sǫgu* (*Nikuláss saga erkibyskups*).<sup>51</sup>

### St Michael in Icelandic Literature

The first literary evidence for knowledge of St Michael in the Old Norse vernacular is from the eleventh century. This is a skaldic fragment by Arnórr jarlaskáld (c. 1010–c. 1073):

Mikáll vegr, þats misgǫrt þykkir,  
mannvitsfróðr, ok allt it góða;  
tyggi skiptir síðan seggjum  
sólar hjalms á dæmistóli.

[Michael, wise with discernment, weighs what seems wrongly done, and all that is good; the sovereign of the helmet of the sun (i.e., sky/heaven, whose sovereign is God) then separates out men at his judgement seat.]<sup>52</sup>

It has been suggested that this fragment was part of a memorial poem dedicated to Gellir Þorkelsson (d. 1073) who, according to *Laxdæla saga*, 'lét gera kirkju at Helgafelli virðuliga mjök, svá sem Arnórr jarlaskáld váttaf í erfidrápu þeiri, er hann orti um Gelli, ok kveðr þar skýrt á þetta'

<sup>46</sup> *DI* 2, p. 259.

<sup>47</sup> *DI* 3, pp. 193, 775.

<sup>48</sup> *DI* 2, p. 742.

<sup>49</sup> *DI* 3, p. 235.

<sup>50</sup> *DI* 4, p. 237.

<sup>51</sup> Cormack, *The Saints in Iceland*, p. 133, note 327, with reference to *DI* 3, p. 92, and *DI* 4, p. 148.

<sup>52</sup> Diana Whaley, 'Arnórr jarlaskáld Þórðarson', in *Poetry from Treatises on Poetics*, ed. Kari Ellen Gade and Edith Marold, *Part 1: Poetry by Named Skalds*. Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 3 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), pp. 3–4. See also *The Poetry of Arnórr jarlaskáld: An Edition and Study*, ed. Diana Whaley. Westfield Publications in Medieval Studies 8 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998), pp. 28, 35, 46, 134. See also Kirsten Wolf and Natalie M. Van Deusen, *The Saints in Old Norse and Early Modern Icelandic Poetry*. Old Norse and Icelandic Series 10 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), pp. 252–53.

(‘had a very fine church built at Helgafell, as is stated explicitly by Arnórr the earls’ poet in the memorial poem he composed about Gellir.’)<sup>53</sup> Opinions differ as to whether the surviving verse is from the memorial poem, but if so, the presence of Michael, who might help the soul of the deceased into heaven, is not surprising, and it is unnecessary to posit the presence of tapestries with this motif in Gellir’s church, as do the editors of *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*.<sup>54</sup>

Most Icelanders in the Middle Ages must have been familiar with St Michael through the ecclesiastical calendar, church dedications and ornaments, or sermons on the day of the church’s dedication, if Michael was its primary patron. As noted by Siân Grønlie, familiarity with St Michael is reflected in vernacular sagas, some of which give the celebration of his feast a decisive role in the conversion of the island to Christianity.<sup>55</sup> In the following, I mention only a frequently-cited episode associated with the priest Þangbrandr’s mission to Iceland at the end of the first millennium, best known from its appearance in two thirteenth-century texts. According to *Njáls saga*, Þangbrandr:

Þu gættu messu í tjaldinu ok hafði mikit við, því at hátíð var mikil. Hallr mælti til Þangbrands: ‘Í hverja minning heldur þú þenna dag?’ ‘Michaels engils,’ segir hann. ‘Hver rök fylgja engli þeim?’ segir Hallr. ‘Mörg’ segir Þangbrandr; ‘hann skal meta allt þat, sem þú gerir, bæði gott ok illt, ok er svá miskunnsamr, at hann metr allt at meira, sem vel er gort. Hallr mælti, ‘Eiga vilda ek hann mér at vin.’ ‘Þat munt þú mega,’ segir Þangbrandr, ‘ok gefsk þú honum þá í dag með guði.’ ‘Þat vil ek þá til skilja,’ segir Hallr, ‘at þú heitir því fyrir hann, at hann sé þá fylgjuengill minn.’ ‘Því mun ek heita,’ segir Þangbrandr. Tók Hallr þá skírn ok ǫll hjú hans.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>53</sup> *Laxdæla saga. Halldórs þættir Snorrasonar. Stúfs þáttur*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson. Íslensk fornrit 5 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1934), p. 229; *The Saga of the People of Laxardal and Bolli Bollason’s Tale*, trans. Keneva Kunz (London: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing, 2008), p. 174.

<sup>54</sup> *Corpus Poeticum Boreale. The Poetry of the Old Northern Tongue, from the Earliest Times to the Thirteenth Century*, ed. Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Frederick York Powell, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1883), II, p. 184. Einar Ól. Sveinsson (see previous note) considers the surviving verse was not part of the poem; *The Poetry of Arnórr jarlaskáld*, ed. Whaley, p. 35 thinks it may have been.

<sup>55</sup> Siân E. Grønlie, *The Saint and the Saga Hero: Hagiography and Early Icelandic Literature*. Studies in Old Norse Literature 2 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2017), see index.

<sup>56</sup> *Brennu-Njáls saga*, ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson. Íslensk fornrit 12 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1954), p. 257. According to the ONP, *fylgjuengill* (lit. ‘following’ or ‘accompanying’ angel) is a *hapax legomenon*. The treatment of St Michael in the Þangbrandr episode has also been discussed by Bek-Pedersen, ‘St Michael and the sons of Síðu-Hallur’, pp. 182–83.

[He sang Mass with great ceremony, for it was an important feast-day. Hallr asked him: 'In whose honor are you celebrating this day?' 'The angel Michael', replied Þangbrandr. What power has this angel?' asked Hallr. 'Great power', said Þangbrandr, 'He weighs everything that you do, both good and evil, and he is so merciful that he gives more weight to what is well done'. Hallr said: 'I would like him for my friend'. 'That you may', said Þangbrandr, 'give yourself to him today, in the name of God'. 'I'll do it on this condition', said Hallr, 'that you promise, on his behalf, that he shall be my guardian angel'. 'I promise', said Þangbrandr. Hall and his household were then baptised.]<sup>57</sup>

The same episode appears in *Kristni saga*, though in this text Hallr notices that the Christians stop working one day, and asks why. Þangbrandr explains:

'Á morgin er hátíð Mikjál's höfuðengils.' Hallr spurði: 'hversu er hann háttaðr?' Þangbrandr svarar: 'Hann er settr til þess at fara mót sálum kristinna manna.' Síðan sagði Þangbrandr mart frá dýrð Guðs engla. Hallr mælti: 'Voldugr mun sá er þessir englar þjóna.' Þangbrandr segir: 'Guð gefr þér þessa skilning.' Hallr sagði um kveldit hjónum sínum: 'Á morgin halda þeir Þangbrandr heilagt guði sínum, ok nú vil ek at þér njótið þess ok skulu þér ekki vinna á morgin, ok skulu vér nú ganga at sjá athœfi kristinna manna.' Um morgininn veitti Þangbrandr tíðir í tjaldi sínu, en Hallr gekk ok hjón hans at sjá athœfi þeira ok heyrðu klukknahljóð ok kenndu ilm af reykel'si ok sá menn skryðda guðvef ok purpura. Hallr spurði hjón sín hversu þeim þóknaðisk athœfi kristinna manna, en þau létu vel yfir. Hallr var skírðr laugardaginn fyrir páska ok hjón hans ǫll þar í ánni. Hún er síðan kǫlluð Þvátta.<sup>58</sup>

['Tomorrow is the feast of the Archangel Michael.' Hallr asked: 'Of what nature is he?' Þangbrandr answers: 'He is appointed to receive the souls of Christians.' Then Þangbrandr said many things about the glory of God's angels. Hallr said: 'The one whom these angels serve must be powerful indeed.' Þangbrandr says: 'God has given you this understanding'. In the evening, Hallr said to his household: 'Tomorrow Þangbrandr and his men are observing a feast-day for their God, and I now wish you to benefit from this, and you shall not work tomorrow, and we shall now go and see the rites of the Christians.' In the morning, Þangbrandr held the divine service in his tent, and Hallr and his household went to see their rites, and heard the sound of the bells, and smelled the scent of incense, and saw men clothed in costly material and fine cloth. Hallr asked his household how they liked the

<sup>57</sup> *Njáls saga*, trans. Robert Cook (London: Penguin, 2001), pp. 173–74.

<sup>58</sup> *Biskupa sögur I: Kristni saga, Kristni þættir, Þorvalds þáttur víðförla I, Þorvalds þáttur víðförla II, Stefnis þáttur Þorgilssonar, Af Þangbrandi, Af Þiðranda ok dísunum, Kristniböð Þangbrands, Þrír þættir, Kristnitakan, Jóns saga ins helga, Gísls þáttur Illugasonar, Sæmundar þáttur*, vol. 1: *Fræði*, vol. 2: *Sögutextar*, ed. Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Peter Foote. Íslenzk fornrit 15 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 2003), I, pp. 18–19.

rites of Christians, and they spoke well of them. Hallr was baptised the Saturday before Easter together with his whole household in the river there. It has since been called Þvátta.<sup>59</sup>

It should be noted that the baptism of Kjartan Ólafsson (fl. end of the tenth century) as described in *Heimskringla* has parallels with this episode – the Icelanders observe the singing and bells at Michaelmas, after which Óláfr Tryggvason persuades Kjartan to be baptized.<sup>60</sup>

*Kristni saga* simply states in passing that Pangbrandr told of the glory of God's angels. *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, however, puts into Pangbrandr's mouth a two-page description of the glories of heaven.<sup>61</sup> This is still not adequate to convince Hallr, who first tests the advantages and possible dangers of baptism on two elderly women, who not only survive the rite but also declare that they feel as if their youth had returned to them.<sup>62</sup>

Two miracle accounts penned in the early fourteenth century also involve infirm women – and, in one case, a cure. In the first miracle, which takes place at Svínafell, the holy man Guðmundr Arason says farewell to an old woman on her death-bed who had lost the power of speech. He kisses her and tells her:

‘Nú ber þú kveðju mína sælli Marie Guðsmóður ok Michaele höfuðengli, Johanne baptista, Petro ok Paulo, Óláfi konungi ok einkum Ambrosio byskupi vin mínum ok öllum helgum.’ Þá svaraði kerling, svá at þeir heyrðu eigi ógerr er fyrir framan váru stofuna: ‘Já’ kvað kerling.<sup>63</sup>

[‘Now take my greetings to blessed Mary, mother of God, and the Archangel Michael, John the Baptist, Peter and Paul, King Óláfr and especially my friend Bishop Ambrose, and All Saints.’ The old woman answered, so that even those who were at a distance heard (this is the miracle): ‘Yes’ said the old woman.]

<sup>59</sup> *Íslendingabók. Kristni saga: The Book of the Icelanders. The Story of the Conversion*, trans. Siân Grønlie. Viking Society, Text Series 18 (London: University College London, Viking Society for Northern Research, 2006), p. 41. The name of the river ‘Þvátta’ (‘washing river’) is here etymologized as referring to the washing of baptism.

<sup>60</sup> *Heimskringla*, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, 3 vols, Íslenzk fornrit 26–28 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1941–1951), I, pp. 329–30.

<sup>61</sup> *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, ed. Ólafur Halldórsson, 3 vols, Editiones Arnarnagnæanæ, Ser. A, 1–3 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, Reitzel, 1958–2000), II, pp. 152–53.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 155–56.

<sup>63</sup> *Guðmundar sögur biskups I, Ævi Guðmundar biskups, Guðmundar saga A*, ed. Stefán Karlsson. Editiones Arnarnagnæanæ, Ser. B, vol. 6 (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde & Bagger, 1983), p. 122. The normalization is from the forthcoming Íslenzk fornrit edition. I thank the publishers of Íslenzk fornrit for allowing me to use the texts, which are based on those supplied by Stefán Karlsson, before publication.

She died a few hours later, and we are to assume that Guðmundr knew of her impending death and therefore sent his message with her.

The second miracle, set in Kirkjuból in Kollafjörður, relates that a cripple by the name of Þorbjörg had her knees bent up to her chest. The farmer Óláfr asked Guðmundr to cure her, and Guðmundr promised to pray for her to God, Queen Mary, and the Archangel Michael. The woman was placed in his bed while he sang (that is, prayed the hours, presumably Matins). The next morning, she was brought to church and placed by the altar. Guðmundr went to her three times during mass, the last time when he had washed his hands. He rubbed the water he had used for washing on her and blessed her, and at once she was cured and able to walk.<sup>64</sup>

Finally, mention should be made of the fact that the author of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* in *Heimskringla* considered it appropriate to make King Sveinn Haraldsson tjuguskegg (r. 986–1014) and the *Jómsvíkingar* ‘drink toasts’ (*‘minni’*) to Christ and St Michael in a scene set in the late tenth century.<sup>65</sup> Presumably for this masculine society the militant Michael was more appealing than the Virgin Mary, normally in second place after her son.

Michael also had his own saga. In the first half of the fourteenth century, the monk Bergr Sökkason of Munkaþverá composed a saga about the Archangel. This is *Mikjál's saga*, which the author calls a booklet (*bæklingr*) that was:

Til þess eina skrifaðr ok samansetttr, at hann iafnlega lesiz æ messuðagh Michaelis kirkiusoknar monnum til skemtanar, einkanlega í þeim stöðum sem hann er kirkiudrottinn yfir, at því öllu sætari verðr hans minning í rettlatra manna hugrenning, sem firir þessa litlu ritning verðr ollum kunnari hans agæta virðing.<sup>66</sup>

[‘Written and composed for the sole purpose that it always be read on Michael’s feast-day for the enjoyment of the parishioners, especially in those places where he is patron, so that his remembrance will become all the sweeter in the thoughts of righteous men, the better known his great excellence becomes to everyone by means of this little work.’]

The saga draws on a variety of sources, both Latin and Norse, which have been discussed, among others, by Christine Fell and Lucien Musset.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>64</sup> *Guðmundar sögur biskups II*, ed. Stefán Karlsson and Magnús Hauksson, Editiones Arnarnænae, Ser. B, vol. 17 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2018), p. 245; *Biskupa sögur*, ed. Jón Sigurðsson and Guðbrandur Vigfússon, 2 vols (Copenhagen: Møller, 1858–1878), I, p. 606.

<sup>65</sup> *Heimskringla*, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, I, p. 274.

<sup>66</sup> *Heilagra manna sögur*, ed. Unger, I, p. 676. For literature on the saga see Wolf, *The Legends of the Saints*, pp. 259–62.

<sup>67</sup> Christine Fell, ‘Bergr Sökkason’s *Michaels Saga* and its Sources’, *Saga Book* 16 (1962–1965), pp. 354–71. Lucien Musset, ‘La saga de Saint-Michel par Bergr Sökkason, abbé de Munkathverá’, in *Vie montoise et rayonnement intellectuel du Mont Saint-Michel*, ed. Marcel Baudot. Millénaire monastique du

In addition to the Bible, they include (directly or indirectly) Gregory the Great's thirty-fourth gospel homily, *Heilagra feðra æfi (Vitæ patrum)*, *Duggals leizla*, *Karlamagnúss saga*, and Vincent of Beauvais' version of similar material in his *Speculum historiale*, Marian miracles, and the *Apparitio sancti Michaelis in monte Tumba*.<sup>68</sup> Most of these texts existed in Icelandic translations, which Bergr was apparently not averse to using, although in the case of the Marian material, Fell argued that both sagas used a common source.<sup>69</sup> Bergr also composed a new redaction of *Nikuláss saga erkibyskups*, in which he mentions some of St Nicholas' visions, including one of St Michael with unusual iconography (see below). After briefly describing Michael's role in the expulsion of the rebel angels from heaven, the saga contains a number of *exempla* emphasizing the importance of contrition before death. It includes detailed descriptions of the origins of the shrines at Mount Gargano and Mont-St-Michel; at the former, we are told, an elegant cloth given by the Archangel himself adorned the altar; part of it was subsequently given to representatives of Mont-St-Michel when they were in need of a relic. Between these is the account of Bishop Bonitus or Bonus which is shared with *Mariu saga*.

In the first half of the sixteenth century, the priest Hallr Ogmundarsson, who appears to have spent most of his life in the Westfjords, composed several religious poems, including a *flokkr* of 66 stanzas about St Michael, *Michaelsflokkr*.<sup>70</sup> After an invocation of Christ and request to the Virgin to aid him in his poetic task and with a source reference to Augustine, the *flokkr* tells the stories of Mt. Gargano and Bonus; the second half of

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Mont Saint-Michel 2 (Paris: Lethielleux, 1967), pp. 435–38. A translation into Italian by Maria Elena Ruggerini, *La saga norrena di san Michele* (Bergr Sökkason, *Mikaelssaga*), will soon be published by Prometheus (Milan).

<sup>68</sup> Fell considers that Bergr made use of the Marian miracle ('Bergr Sökkason's *Michaels Saga* and its Sources', pp. 367–68). Ole Widding, on the other hand, considers that an original miracle of St Michael was borrowed into the Marian material ('St Michele at Gargano as seen from Iceland', *Analecta Romanae Instituti Danici*, 13 (1984), p. 80). Mattias Tveitane also held this opinion in 'Bonus, et latinsk Maria-dikt i norrøn prosaversjon', *Maal og Minne* (1962), pp. 109–21. The Marian miracles include two more mentions of Mont-St-Michel, in one of which Michael is invoked; however, in both cases it is the Virgin, not Michael, who is the active saint, indeed in one of them St Michael's church burns down and nothing but a statue of the Virgin survives (*Mariu saga*, ed. Unger, I, pp. 128, 260, 604; II, pp. 1072, 1190). A pregnant woman caught by the tide at Mont-St-Michel calls on both saints, but it is the Virgin who comes to her aid, *Mariu saga*, II, pp. 975–77.

<sup>69</sup> Fell, 'Bergr Sökkason's *Michaels Saga*', pp. 368–69.

<sup>70</sup> *Kvæðasafn eftir Íslenzka menn frá miðöldum og síðari öldum*, ed. Jón Þorkelsson, vol. 1, part 3 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1922–1927), pp. 370–85. See Kirsten Wolf and Natalie M. Van Deusen, *The Saints in Old Norse and Early Modern Icelandic Poetry*. Old Norse and Icelandic Series 10 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), pp. 255–56.





FIGURE 10.1 Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, AM 673 a III 4to, folio 17v. Photo by Jóhanna Ólafsdóttir. Published with permission.

the poem deals with coming events, speaking of ‘the vision of Johannes’, but also making reference to the Book of Daniel and the comments on it of SS Isidore, Ambrose, and Gregory.

### Artistic representations

Surviving artistic representations of St Michael in medieval Iceland are rare, which may in part be due to the overall destruction of images in the Lutheran period.<sup>71</sup> Folio 17v of Reykjavík Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í

<sup>71</sup> For surviving images elsewhere in Scandinavia, see the databases [www.medeltidbild.historiska.se](http://www.medeltidbild.historiska.se) (Sweden), <http://www.kalkmalerier.dk> (Denmark) and <http://asp.altertavler.dk/default.htm> (Denmark). For Norway, see Erla Hohler, ‘Medieval Wooden Sculptures in Norway’, *Collegium Medievale* 30 (2017), pp. 33–84. For a discussion of images in the diocese of Skálholt after the

Íslenskum fræðum, AM 673 a III 4to, better known as *Íslenska teiknibókin*, contains an illustration which, according to a note along the side of the page, is intended to illustrate the Office of the Dead (*sálutíðir*). The picture is devoted to the struggle between angels and devils.<sup>72</sup> One half of the page depicts angels taking charge of the soul of a dying woman despite two demons below. The other half of the page portrays St Michael standing above the dragon and piercing it with a spear through the mouth. The drawings and text are by the so-called C-artist, who worked between 1450–1475 (Fig. 10.1) Images of St Michael are found on the inside of the doors of cases of two altarpieces. The case of a statue of St Óláfr from Vatnsfjörður Church (which was dedicated to him), dating from the first half of the sixteenth century, shows on the lower left wing a painting of a winged St Michael raising his sword to slay the dragon (Fig. 10.2).<sup>73</sup> A sixteenth-century altarpiece from Reykholt in Borgarfjörður, where it is still to be seen, features a crucifixion as the main image. The wings contain statues of four saints, the one on the lower right being a wingless St Michael in a full-length robe killing an anthropomorphic devil



FIGURE 10.2 Winged St Michael from Vatnsfjörður Church.

Þjóðminjasafn Íslands, acquisition number Þjms. 3327. Photo by Ívar Brynjólfsson. Published with permission.

Reformation, see Margaret Cormack, 'Vorur helgimyndir eyðilagðar á Íslandi? Athugun á varðveislu dýrlingamynda fyrsta áratuginn eftir siðaskipti', in *Áhrif Lúthers: Siðaskipti, samfélag og menning í 500 ár*, ed. Hjalti Hugason, Loftur Guttormsson, and Margrét Eggertsdóttir (Reykjavík, 2017), pp. 243–60.

<sup>72</sup> *Íslenska Teiknibókin*, ed. Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir (Reykjavík: Crymogea, 2013), pp. 148–49, reproducing AM 673 a III 4to, folio. 17v. I thank Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson of the Árni Magnússon Institute in Reykjavík for the following transcription: 'Villtu gíora salutijder þa [gi]or þessa minnín(g) þar v[í]d' ('If you want to make an office of the dead, put this commemoration by it.')

<sup>73</sup> Kristján Eldjárn, *Hundrað ár í Þjóðminjasafni* (Reykjavík: Menningarsjóður, 1973), nr. 26, Þjóðminjasafn Íslands, acquisition number Þjms. 3327.



FIGURE 10.3 St Michael in the Reykholt altarpiece. Þjóðminjasafn Íslands, acquisition number Þjms. 4333. Photo by Ívar Brynjólfsson. Published with permission.

with a spear (Fig. 10.3).<sup>74</sup> A less traditional image is described in Bergþ Sokkason's *Nikuláss saga erkibyskups*. In a vision, the Archangel appears to St Nicholas as a 'gofugr madr sitiandi fridan hest allr herklæddr sva sem dubbadr riddari, hafandi blomb-erandligan sprota i hendi ser grafinn ok fagrt formeradan med heilogu krossmarki' ('noble man sitting on a beautiful horse, fully armed like a dubbed knight, having a blooming rod in his hand engraved and beautifully shaped with the holy sign of the cross') to reveal to him things that have not yet happened and provide interpretations for his earlier dreams.<sup>75</sup>

Hörður Ágústsson argues that the feet visible on fragment 12 of the fragmentary wooden panels from Bjarnastaðir (Skagafjörður) are those of the Archangel carrying a scale to weigh souls.<sup>76</sup> This conclusion is based on his assumption that a large painting of the Last Judgement (of which the panels are presumed to be remnants) was similar to the one

preserved on the island of Torcello in the Venetian Lagoon (Italy). While the feet in question appear to belong to a flying being, further identification belongs to the realm of speculation, as do the date and original location of the panels.

<sup>74</sup> Þjóðminjasafn Íslands, acquisition number Þjms. 4333. There is in fact enough space for Michael to have had wings, which might have been damaged or removed, but I have been unable to examine the object to determine whether this is the case.

<sup>75</sup> Grønlie, *The Saint and the Saga Hero*, pp. 138–39. *Heilagra manna sögur*, II, 89.

<sup>76</sup> Hörður Ágústsson, *Dómsdagur og helgir menn á Hólum*. Staðir og kirkjur 2 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1989), p. 59; cf. pp. 14, 16.

## Wills

One other source of evidence for the popularity of individual saints makes its appearance in Iceland in the fifteenth century, namely wills. While some of the gifts to churches listed in inventories are explicitly stated to be testamentary, others may have been so without this being mentioned. There are just under two dozen surviving wills which name saints. These documents were made by wealthy and powerful individuals and often included donations to numerous churches – probably for the most part churches on farms owned by the testator, though a detailed study of this material is needed. Monasteries also received donations, since monks would pray for the soul of the deceased; gifts were also made to miracle-working images, such as the Cross at Kaldaðarnes, Flói, and the Virgin Mary at Hofstaðir. Many of the wills begin by invoking numerous saints (it is in wills that St Dorothy is mentioned for the first time in Iceland). Three wills mention St Michael.

In 1427, Einar Bessason gave his sinful soul to the mercy of ‘almatigs gvds oc hans signadrar modr jvngfrv sancte marie oc hins sæla m(i)kaels hofvds eingils oc ens blezada petRus oc iohanes edevangelista (*sic!*) oc ens signada olafs kongz oc ens sæla benediktvs oc allra gud(s) heilagra manna’ (‘Almighty God and his blessed mother Holy Virgin Mary and the blessed Archangel Michael and the blessed Peter and John the Evangelist and the blessed King Óláfr and the blessed Benedict and All God’s Saints.’)<sup>77</sup> As usual, St Michael is named after the Virgin Mary, and he is presumably included because of his role as psychopomp. St Benedict is undoubtedly named because of Einar’s wish to be buried in the churchyard at Þingeyrar monastery, a Benedictine house.

In 1478, the priest Magnús Einarsson, who wanted to be buried at Hólar cathedral, commended his soul to the heavenly host in the customary order: after Almighty God and the Virgin Mary, to the ‘bæna fulltingh sancte Michaelis haufut Eingils ok allra guds eingla. sancte peturs oc allra guds postola. iohannis baptista ok hins helga jons holabiskups ok goda gudmundar biskups. Sancte martinus Erchibiskups ok allra guds heilagra manna’ (‘Aid of the prayers of St Michael the Archangel and all God’s angels, St Peter and all God’s Apostles, John the Baptist, and the Holy Bishop Jón of Hólar and Bishop Guðmundr the Good, Archbishop [*sic*] St Martin and all God’s holy men.’)<sup>78</sup>

The document was written at Möðruvellir church, whose patron was St Martin. On January 17 1495, Solveig Björnsdóttir (b. c. 1450–d. unknown) made elaborate dispositions and invokes her Savior, the Virgin Mary, SS Anne, Andrew, Peter, the blessed Bishop Þorlákr, *beatum Godemundum*, St Óláfr, and, last but not least ‘sancte micael

<sup>77</sup> *DI* 4, pp. 350–51.

<sup>78</sup> *DI* 6, pp. 129–31.

eigi sidur minn hallkuæman uardhalldz eingil med ollum odrum himinrikis herskap sie bidiandi firir mier til allzualldanda guds at ec mætti fa frid og firirgefning allra minna synda' ('May St Michael, my beneficent guardian angel with all the battalions of heaven, pray for me to Almighty God that I might receive peace and forgiveness for all of my sins.')<sup>79</sup>

## Vows and Prayers

It was customary in Northern Iceland to make communal vows in cases of common disaster, such as plague.<sup>80</sup> These, however, were usually directed to the patron saints of the diocese – some combination of the Virgin Mary, St Jón, and Guðmundr the Good. In 1477, volcanic activity led the people in the district of Eyjafjörður, under the auspices of the Abbot of Munkaþverá and lawman Brandr Jónsson (d. 1498), to meet at Grund and make a vow promising prayers and almsgiving, invoking all possible inhabitants of heaven, starting with the Virgin Mary and St Michael, and promising masses in honor of all the groups involved, including angels.<sup>81</sup>

Several vernacular prayers invoking St Michael have survived, mostly in late medieval manuscripts. The prayers often contain other late medieval devotions, such as Christ's wounds, blood, and so forth. Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 241 A I fol from around 1325, contains, along with Latin texts, a translation of a prayer attributed to Alcuin, which, it is argued by Magnús Már Lárusson, was based on an Icelandic exemplar written 1200 or earlier.<sup>82</sup> Unfortunately, the exact form of the Latin text translated cannot be ascertained. Where the *PL*

<sup>79</sup> *DI* 7, pp. 242–47.

<sup>80</sup> Margaret Cormack, 'How do we know, how did they know? The Cult of Saints in Iceland in the Late Middle Ages', in *Faith and Knowledge in Late Medieval and Early Modern Scandinavia*, ed. Karoline Kjesrud and Mikael Males. Knowledge, Scholarship, and Science in the Middle Ages 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020), pp. 123–47 at 135.

<sup>81</sup> *DI* 6, pp. 103–07 and *DI* 10, pp. 44–46.

<sup>82</sup> Magnús Már Lárusson, 'Doktorsvörn: Róbert A. Ottósson. *Sancti Thorlaci episcopi officia rhythmica et proprium missæ in AM 241 A folio*', *Íslenszk Tungja* 2 (1960), p. 100. The Latin text followed by Magnús in his article is printed in *PL* 101, pp. 476–79, characterized as 'Pseudo-Alcuin' in *Liturgica Islandica*, ed. by Lilli Gjerløw, 2 vols, Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana 35 (Copenhagen: The Arnamagnæan Commission, 1980), I, p. 169. She discusses the manuscript on pp. 94–97 and 169–70 of the same volume. The attribution to Alcuin was rejected by André Wilmart, in 'Le Manuel de prières de saint Jean Gualbert', ed. André Wilmart, *Revue Bénédictine* 48 (1936), pp. 262–63. The text is also edited in *Íslenskar bænir fram um 1600*, ed. Svavar Sigmundsson. Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, Rit 96 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, 2018), pp. 79–82, which is used here.

text addresses the 'Holy Archangel', the Icelandic translation mentions Michael by name. The Latin text also contains references to St George and St Christopher not found in the Icelandic (and not to be expected if the Icelandic text originated in the twelfth century). The Icelandic prayer begins on folio 31v, with the following on 32v:

Þig bið ek astsamliga hinn helga mikael ýfer engill er vellde hefer at veita viðtokv sálum. Þig bið eg at þv virþiz at taka við sálu míne þa er hon verþr fra færð líkam mínom ok varðveit henne fra vellde vvína. at hon megi ecki í gegnum komaz dýr helvítis ok gautur mýrkra. at eigi meiní henni dýr hit oarga eða dreki sa er vanr er at taka ander til helvítis ok leiða til eilifra kvala. Þig bið ek drottin mín gvð allzvalldande at þv sender hín helga engil mer til hialpar.

[I pray to you with devotion, Holy Michael the Archangel, who has the power to receive souls, I pray that you be willing to receive my soul when it is separated from my body, and preserve it from the power of demons, so that it may not pass through the doors of hell and roads of darkness, so that the lion or dragon which is accustomed to take souls to hell and lead them to eternal torments will not harm it. I pray to you my Lord Almighty God that you send the holy angel to help me.]

St Michael is emphasized in the manuscript by the fact that the invocation begins on a new line with the capital *P* of 'Þig' in an eye-catching position to the left of the column.

A burial prayer in Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, AM 687 c 4to, copied around 1480, concludes as follows on folio 5v: 'Þa skulum bidia j nafni fōdr og sonar og anda heilaghs a\* aflate millde skapara vōrs fyrer saal þessa framlidna manz NN medr arnadar orde sællar marie og heilags mich(a)els eingils og allra heilagra manna og sa hinn sami guds son er salernar leysti med sinu banna blode aa enum helga krosse [...]' ('Therefore we shall pray in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit that the grace of our creator have mercy on the soul of the dead person NN for the intercession of Blessed Mary and the Holy Angel Michael and All Saints and that very Son of God who redeemed the souls with His death blood on the Holy Cross[...]')<sup>83</sup>

A 'good daily prayer', first recorded in a Reykjavík, Landsbókasafn Íslands-Háskólabókasafn, ÍBR 1 8vo, from around 1550, begins by invoking the Trinity, the holy body (Corpus Christi), the five wounds of Jesus Christ, His blood, and then concludes with the following prayer (fol. 33v): 'eg bifala mig vnder vernd og vardueiting michaels hofud

<sup>83</sup> *Íslenskar bænir fram um 1600*, ed. Svavar Sigmundsson, pp. 88–89. The letter transcribed by Svavar Sigmundsson as *t* is here marked by an asterisk \* because it is unclear in the manuscript. I thank Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson for this information. Despite this uncertainty, the general meaning of the prayer is clear.

eingils. og allra annara heilagra eingla' ('I entrust myself to the defence and protection of Michael the Archangel and all other holy angels.')

Another mid-sixteenth-century manuscript, Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 461 12mo, contains the following on folio 46r:

[S]ju er þyding vm eingla vors herra jesu christus hver er fylger þeirra nofnum at huer sem þau ber aa sier og j hug hefur mun hialpaz og sigra alla hluti. Fyrst um morna er þu uaknar haf j hug þier michael og mun þu þan allan blidann hafa. Gabriel þa þv heyrer reidar þrumur og mun þier ecki til meins uerda. Xuriel er þu fer j moti wuinum þinum þa muntu sigra þa. Raphaeler er þu fær þeir mat og dryck. Raguelem er þv gengur ut edur jnn. Barakielem er þu kemr at domi. Pa munu þar aller þin ord uel virda. Pantaleon er þu kemr til samkunda þa munu aller aa moti þier glediazt. Tobiel og vriel þa þu kemr fyrir hofdingia og þu gengur aa skip þa munu þier aller hluter vel takaz.

[This is the significance of angels of Our Lord Jesus Christ, which accompanies their names, that whoever bears them on himself, and has them in his mind, will be helped and overcome all things. When you first awaken in the morning, have Michael in your mind, and it (here this would have to be 'the morning'; AM 426 12mo, see below, has 'day' which makes more sense) will be pleasant. Gabriel when you hear thunder, and it will not harm you. Xuriel (AM 426 12mo has 'Uriel') when you go against your enemies, then you will overcome them. Raphael when you take food or drink. Raguel when you go out or in. Barachiel when you go to a law-court, then everyone there will value your words. Pantaleon when you arrive at feasts, then everyone there will become joyful towards you. Tobiel and Uriel when you go before chieftains and board a ship, then everything will turn out well for you.]<sup>85</sup>

Passages like this were the sort of belief Lutheran Reformers (and before them, some Catholic theologians) wanted to eliminate. These texts appear in Icelandic manuscripts at the end of the Middle Ages; it is worth noting that both the 'daily prayer' and the description of the powers of the names of angels are part of a much longer prayer on folios 19v–28r of Reykavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, AM 426 12mo (c. 1650–1699).<sup>86</sup> The manuscript also contains poetry and prayers to the Virgin Mary (fols 3r, 16r–18v) and a 'kveðlingur um englana' ('little poem about the angels'), fols 3v–10v, attributed to the priest Ólafur Jónsson á Söndum (1560–1627).

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., pp. 243–44. The prayer also invokes late medieval entities, such as the Holy Blood and Five Wounds of Christ.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., pp. 102–04.

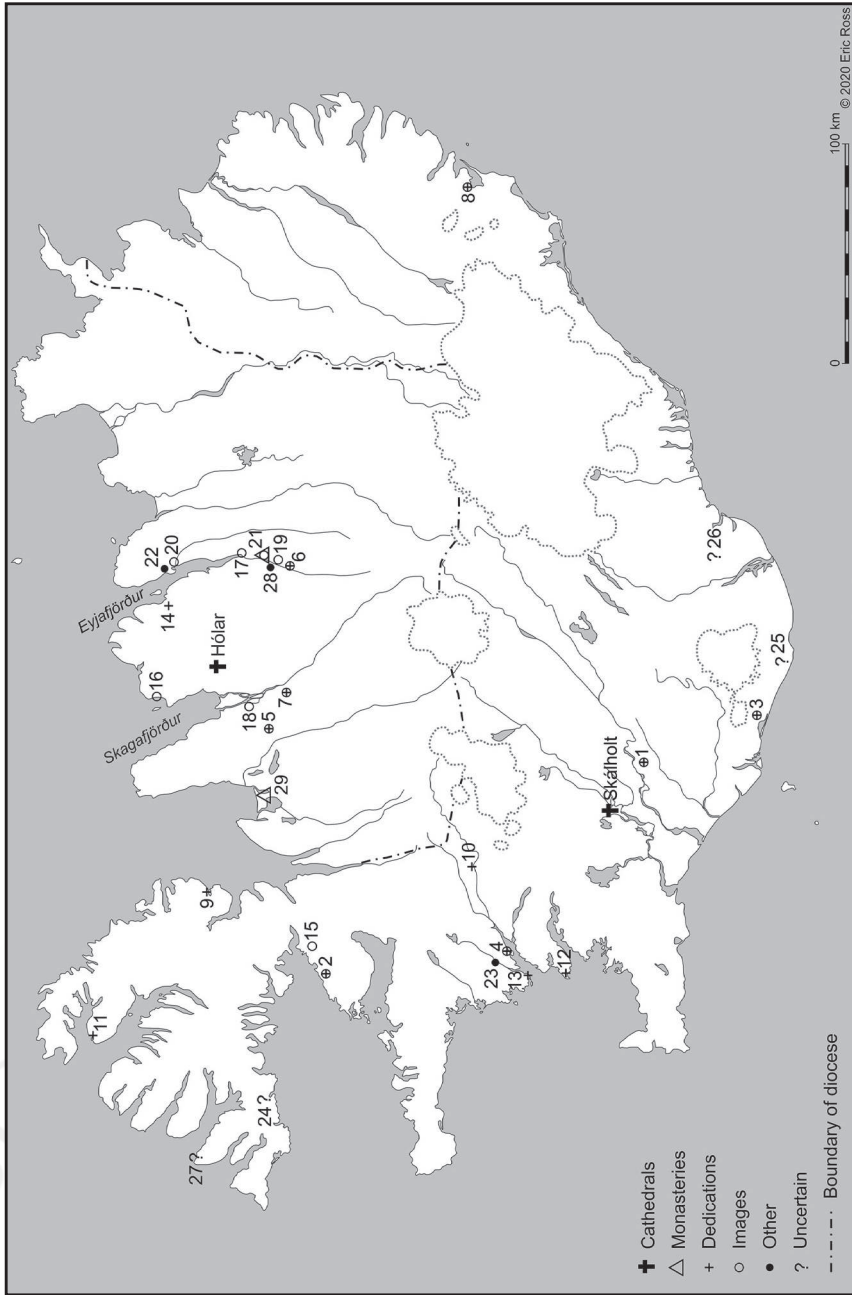


FIGURE 10.4 Churches with evidence of veneration for St Michael in Medieval Iceland (see Appendix).

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A manuscript discussed above throws light on the reception the Archangel met at the hands of the reformers. In AM 241 a I fol., a reader crossed out the words on folio 32v in which God is asked to send his holy angel, as well as the apostle Peter, to the aid of the supplicant.<sup>87</sup> On folio 33r, the names of the angels Michael, Gabriel and Raphael are allowed to stand, but in the following text someone crossed out the lines referring to the patriarchs and prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, holy virgins, and heavenly powers, who were asked for help, as well as the evangelists who are mentioned by name.<sup>88</sup>

## Conclusion

Whatever may have been the case in reality, the feast of St Michael played an important role in the conversion of Iceland as it was imagined by medieval Icelanders. He was an important member of the heavenly hierarchy. Churches were dedicated to him and adorned with art portraying him throughout the medieval period. From the end of that period, he appears in wills, artwork, and prayers. And although he may not have been venerated in the same way in the Lutheran centuries as he was in Catholic ones, the copying of invocations of St Michael show that he was still a power to be reckoned with.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Visible in photographs housed at the Árni Magnússon Institute in Reykjavík, and on high quality black and white photographs at [digitalesamlingur.hum.ku.dk](http://digitalesamlingur.hum.ku.dk) folio 16v: 'at þv send(ir) hín helga engil m(er) til hialpar. Ok þig bæni ek hín. h(elgi). petr p(ostul)i hofþ(ingi). p(ostu)la e(r) tokt velldi him(i)n rikis lukla at opna himneskt hlið.' *Íslenskar bænir fram um 1600*, ed. Svavar Sigmundsson, p. 80. ('That you send the holy angel to my aid. And I beseech you, holy apostle Peter, chief of the apostles who received the power of the keys to heaven with which to open the heavenly gate.')

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81. Other references to saints in the manuscript are at least in one case crossed out: AM 241 a I fol., folio. 17r: 33, after the named Archangels Michael and Raphael, the following is struck through 'allir engl(ar) allir hofud fedr & spa m(enn). allir pislar vætt(ir). allir iatarar & allar helgar meyar & allir himnesk(er) kr(a)pt(a)r stande m(e)r til hialpar & til biargar vi(t)' ('All angels, all patriarchs and prophets, all martyrs and all holy virgins and all heavenly powers, stand [by] me for aid and assistance with') not crossed out: 'drottin minn ih(esu)m x(ristu)m' ('my Lord, Jesus Christ') crossed out: 'heilag(ir) gvdspialla m(enn) MatHevs Markus Lucas Joh(anne)s & allt heilagt hyski g(uds) bidi & bæne f(yri)r m(er)' ('holy evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and all the holy family of God, pray and beseech for me.')

<sup>89</sup> I wish to thank the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies in Reykjavík for space in their reading room and access to their collection and expertise while I was writing this article; I am grateful to Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson in particular for aid deciphering difficult texts. I thank both the Árni Magnússon Institute and the Þjóðminjasafn Íslands for permission to reproduce pictures of items in their collections. I thank the anonymous readers for their suggestions, and Eric Ross for making the map using data retrieved from the website of Landmælingar Íslands, and Gottskálf Jensson for transcribing text from AM 241 a I fol. and for formatting. Any remaining errors are my own.

## Appendix

*Churches with evidence of veneration for St Michael in Medieval Iceland (see Fig. 10.4)*

Name of Farm	13th-early 14th c.	Mid 14th c.	Late 14th c.	15th c.	Late 15th-16th c.
1 Ytraskarð, Land, Rangárþing Ytra	Ded. early 14th c.; image at end of document. <i>DI</i> 2, pp. 695-96				
2 Búðardalur, Skarðsörönd, Dalabyggð	Ded. mid 13th c., see <i>DI</i> 2, p. 635	Image mid-14th c. saga added <i>DI</i> 2, pp. 650-51			
3 Steinar, Eyjafjöll, Rangárþing Eystra	Ded. early 14th c. <i>DI</i> 2, p. 680	Image <i>DI</i> 3, pp. 260-61			
4 Borg, Mýrar, Borgarbyggð		Ded. mid 14th c.	Image end 14th c. <i>DI</i> 4, pp. 187-88 (but see above pp. 255-56)		
5 Bólstaðarhlíð, Húnavatnshreppur	Image c. 1318 <i>DI</i> 2, p. 472		Ded. <i>DI</i> 3, p. 545		

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Name of Farm	13th-early 14th c.	Mid 14th c.	Late 14th c.	15th c.	Late 15th-16th c.
6 (G)Núpufell, Eyjafjarðarsveit	Ded., image, 2 hundreds of linen c. 1318 <i>DI</i> 2, p. 450		Saga c. 1394 <i>DI</i> 3, p. 527		
7 Reykir, Tungusveit, Skagafjörður	Image 1318 <i>DI</i> 2, pp. 465-66		Ded., saga 1399 <i>DI</i> 3, pp. 530-31		
8 Geithellur/-ar, Álftafjörður, Djúpavogshreppur			image c. 1397 <i>DI</i> 4, p. 203	Ded. 15th c. <i>DI</i> 7, p. 35	
9 Kaldaðarnes/Kalditananes, Bjarnarfjörður, Kaldrananeshreppur	Ded. late 13th c. <i>DI</i> 2, p. 407				
10 Gilsbakki, Hvítársíða, Borgarbyggð	Ded. 2nd half 13th c. <i>DI</i> 2, p. 358				
11 (Staður í) Grunnavík			Ded. c. 1397 <i>DI</i> 4, p. 138		
12 Heynes, Akranes					Ded. c. 1500 <i>DI</i> 7, p. 57
13 Lambastaðir, Mýrar, Borgarbyggð				Ded. 15th c. <i>DI</i> 5, p. 406	
14 Tjörn, Svarfaðardalur, Dalvíkurbyggð	Ded. c. 1318 <i>DI</i> 2, p. 457				

	Name of Farm	13th-early 14th c.	Mid 14th c.	Late 14th c.	15th c.	Late 15th-16th c.
15	Staðarhóll, Saurbær					image c. 1500 <i>DI</i> 7, p. 289
16	Höfði, Höfðaströnd, Skagafjörður	Image c. 1318 <i>DI</i> 2, pp. 459-60				
17	Kaupangur, Eyjafjarðarsveit	Image c. 1318 <i>DI</i> 2, p. 449				
18	Glaumbær, Skagafjörður		Image c. 1360 <i>DI</i> 3, pp. 174-75			
19	Möðruvellir, Eyjafjarðarsveit				Image 1471 <i>DI</i> 5, p. 308	
20	Laufás, Grýtubakkahreppur					Image 1525 <i>DI</i> 9, p. 330
21	Munkaþverá monastery, Eyjafjarðarsveit					Altar, image 1525 <i>DI</i> 9, pp. 305-06
22	Höfði, Höfðahverfi, Grýtubakkahreppur			<i>historia</i> 1394 <i>DI</i> 3, pp. 568-69		
23	Langárfoss (Foss), Mýrar, Borgarbyggð			Mass date <i>DI</i> 1, pp. 276-77		
24	Hagi, Barðaströnd, Vesturbyggð ?	Ded. Michael late 13th c. <i>DI</i> 2, p. 259		Ded. Nikulás <i>DI</i> 3, pp. 193, 775		
	Name of Farm	13th-early 14th c.	Mid 14th c.	Late 14th c.	15th c.	Late 15th-16th c.

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	Name of Farm	13th-early 14th c.	Mid 14th c.	Late 14th c.	15th c.	Late 15th-16th c.
25	Dyrhólar, Mýrdalshreppur ?		Ded Michael ? Nikulás <i>DI</i> 2, p. 742			
26	Holt, Síða, Skafthreppur ?		Ded. Michael, <i>DI</i> 3, p. 235	Ded. Nicholas <i>DI</i> 4, p. 237		
27	Selárdalur, Vesturbyggð ?		Michalz saga <i>DI</i> 3, p. 92	Nichulassaga <i>DI</i> 4, p. 148		
28	Grund, Eyjaförður				vow 1477 <i>DI</i> 6, p. 103	
29	Pingeyrar monastery				Will 1427 <i>DI</i> 4, pp. 350-51	

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*HEILAGAR MEYJAR*

HOLY MAIDENS

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## Katrínarhólar: St Catherine's Hills, Milk, and Mount Sinai

Helgi Þorláksson

Katrínarhóll ('Catherine's hill or hillock') is a rather steep hill or hillock close to the farm of Húsafell (Borgarfjörður) in the western part of Iceland and offers a splendid view. The site draws attention, because it is in the vicinity of Sesseljuvarða ('Sesselja's cairn'), which is closer to the farm (see Fig. 11.1). Sesseljuvarða has been associated with St Cecilia, in Icelandic Sesselja, who was a patron saint of the church at Húsafell in the Catholic Middle Ages. Accordingly, Katrínarhóll might also be of medieval origin. There is good evidence of its name in sources dating from the eighteenth century onwards, yet they cannot explain the origin of the name. It is a prominent landmark at a much-traveled road; and therefore, the name is probably quite old.

Sesseljuvarða could originally have been a regular cairn of stones. At present, it is an irregular and huge pile of stones. It is believed that medieval pilgrims on their way from the west to Sesseljuvarða laid stones at the cairn because that is exactly where they saw the church at Húsafell for the first time. Accordingly, it could be seen as a 'mons gaudii' ('a mount of joy'). A similar pile of stones is found in, for example, Cruz de Ferro (on the Montes de León), where pilgrims on their way to Santiago de Compostela added a stone.<sup>1</sup> When they finally arrived at Monte de Gozo ('The Mount of Joy'), they were able to see Compostela for the first time.<sup>2</sup> Pilgrimage to St Cecilia at Húsafell is well attested in the late twelfth century.<sup>3</sup> This was possibly the beginning of a tradition, pilgrims seeking St Cecilia at Húsafell for the times to come.

<sup>1</sup> Ólafur H. Torfason, *Nokkrir Íslandskrossar* (Reykjavík: no publisher, 2000), pp. 48–50. The author includes a photo of the pile and the iron cross.

<sup>2</sup> Jón Björnsson, *Á Jakobsvegi* (Reykjavík: Ormstunga, 2002), pp. 285–86 and 306–08.

<sup>3</sup> *Heilagra meyja sögur*, ed. Kirsten Wolf. Íslensk trúarrit 1 (Reykjavík: Bókmenntafræðistofnun Háskóla Íslands, 2001), pp. 119–20.



Katrínarhóll might take its name after the virgin martyr and princess St Catherine of Alexandria (c. 287–c. 305).<sup>4</sup> There is a cairn at the top of Katrínarhóll, alas of indiscernable age. Moreover, there was another church at the deserted medieval farm of Reyðarfell, much closer to the Katrínarhóll, which may have been visible at the ‘hóll’ to people arriving from the west. The location of the church at Reyðarfell is known, but when tested that spot could not be seen from Katrínarhóll.<sup>5</sup>

## Clusters

There is another cairn close to Húsafell called Kláusarvarða (‘Kláus’s cairn’); it may have been named after St Nicholas of Myra or St Claus (in Icelandic ‘Kláus’), a patron saint of the nearby church at Gilsbakki.<sup>6</sup> It is well known that the inclusion of a saint’s name in a place name encouraged similar practices nearby. There are several examples of pairs and clusters, including St Blaise, Blasiusbás (‘Blaise’s basin’),<sup>7</sup> Blasiusboði (‘Blaise’s breaker on a skerry’),<sup>8</sup> and Katrínarvík (‘Catherine’s inlet’) in the southern part of Iceland (see Fig. 11.2); all three are in the vicinity of a church dedicated to SS Blaise and Catherine at Staður in Grindavík (close to modern Keflavík airport).<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup> There were many different categories of saints; see Robert Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things? Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013), pp. 150–51, 202–05, 216–21. St Catherine of Alexandria belonged to several categories (virgin, martyr, princess), which obviously made her very appealing.

<sup>5</sup> Helgi Þorláksson, ‘Katrínarhóll’, in *Geislabaugur fægður Margaret Cormack sextugri 23. ágúst 2012*, ed. Margrét Eggertsdóttir, Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, Viðar Pálsson, and Þórður Ingi Guðjónsson (Reykjavík: Menningar- og minningarsjóður Mette Magnussen, 2012), pp. 42–47.

<sup>6</sup> Þorsteinn Þorsteinsson associates Kláusarvarða with St Nicholas. The first occurrence in Iceland of the name Kláus is from the late sixteenth century, which makes this suggestion rather doubtful. One possibility is that the name Nikulásarvarða was turned into Kláusarvarða after the Reformation.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Bás’ means a stall and this is a stall-like basin. The place is at the tip of the Reykjanes promontory. The name was known around 1700, and must be medieval, see, Árni Magnússon, *Chorographica islandica*. Safn til sögu Íslands og íslenzkra bókmennta, Annar flokkur 1/2 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1955), p. 49. See also Gísli Brynjólfsson, *Mannfólk mikilla sæva: Staðhverfingabók* (Reykjavík: Örn og Örlygur, 1975), pp. 31–32.

<sup>8</sup> On Blasiusboði in Reykjanesröst, see *Gullbringu- og Kjósarsýsla: Sýslu- og sóknalýsingar Hins íslenska bókmenntafélags 1839–1855*, ed. Guðlaugur R. Guðmundsson and Svavar Sigmundsson (Reykjavík: Sögufélag, 2007), p. 40.

<sup>9</sup> *DI 4*, p. 101. For evidence of the veneration for St Catherine before 1400, see Margaret Cormack, *The Saints in Iceland: Their Veneration from the Conversion to 1400*, pref. Peter Foote. *Subsidia Hagiographica 78* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1994). For Catherine’s veneration after 1400 in the diocese of Hólar, see Cormack, ‘Saints of Medieval Hólar’.

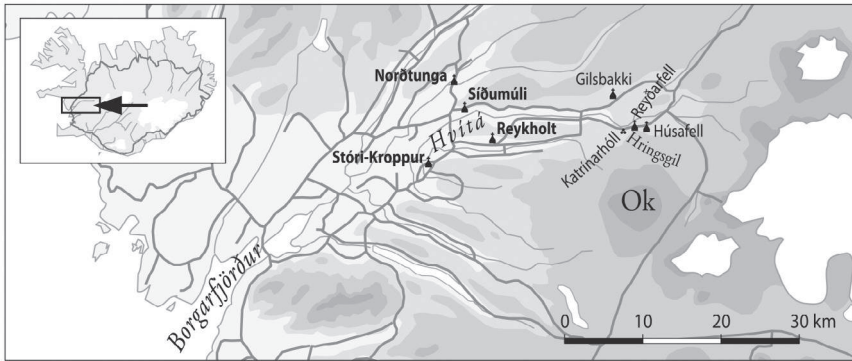


FIGURE 11.1. Map of Húsafell. The veneration of St Catherine varied. At Norðtunga she was patron, at Stóri-Kroppur she was co-patron. There were images of her in the church at Reykholt, and the church at Síðumúli had an altarpiece featuring her. Bishops could decide about dedications but images indicate real local interest and veneration. The maps (1–7) show inter alia medieval churches where St Catherine was venerated (all in bold type). Some of the churches shown have been abolished; Reyðarfell, for instance, has been deserted since around 1500, and a church at Stóri-Kroppur no longer exists. Maps/GOI.

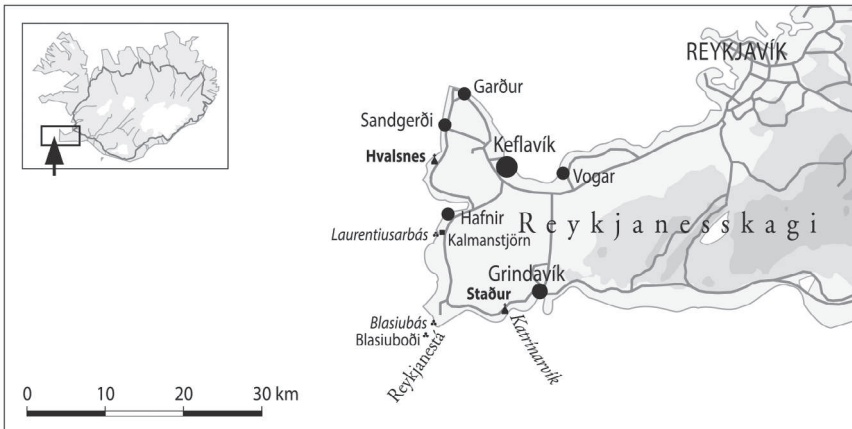


FIGURE 11.2 Map of Reykjanes. Blasiusbás, Blasiusboði and Katrínarvík form a cluster of place-names derived from the names of SS Blaise and Catherine, co-patrons of the church of Staður. Laurentiusarbás should probably be seen in this context, referring to St Laurence. There was a church at Kalmanstjörn, abolished a long time ago and the dedication is not known.

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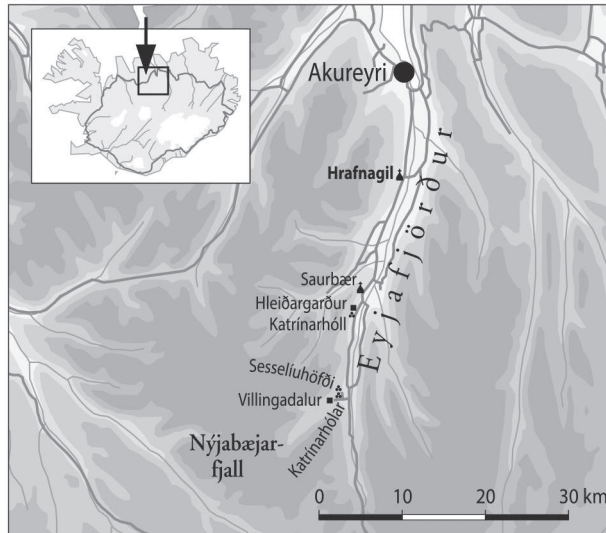


FIGURE 11.3 Map of Eyjafjörður. The church at Hrafnagil owned two images of St Catherine and her legend, all indicative of zealous veneration. She was most probably venerated at the two Katrínarhólar at Villingadalur and Katrínarhóll at Hleiðargarður. Between the two Katrínarhólar at Villingadalur there is a Katrínarbali (grassy patch). A horse-track over Nýjabæjarfjall passed the Katrínarhólar and lead on to Akureyri and further to Gásar, the medieval market place. The church at Saurbær was dedicated to St Cecilia and thus the place name Sesseliuhöfði could be explained. Another lost name in the same area was Sesseliupartur. One name like that sometimes breeds another or more (cf. other clusters like this).

Laurentiusarbás ('Laurence's basin') is also in the neighborhood, but the dedication of St Laurence is not certain.<sup>10</sup>

The place name Sesseliuhöfði ('Cecilia's promontory') in Eyjafjörður (north of Iceland) is obviously connected with a church at Saurbær, dedicated to St Cecilia (see Fig. 11.3), and it, too, is close to a place name associated with Catherine, Katrínarhólar, though the dedication to St Catherine is uncertain.<sup>11</sup> A place name associated with the Virgin Mary,

<sup>10</sup> This is on the land of the neighboring farm Kalmanstjörn.

<sup>11</sup> The church at Saurbær in Eyjafjörður was dedicated to Saint Cecilia. See *DI* 2, p. 451. The church owned a forest, Sesseliuhöfði, in Leyningshólar, and close to it are two Katrínarhólar, both in Villingadalur. There also was a Sesseliupartur (Ceciliupartur ['Cecilia's plot']) a name of a forest in the same area (*DI* 3, p. 524), now lost. Here and in corresponding instances 'hólar', as in Katrínarhólar, is the plural of 'hóll'. See *Jarðabók Arna Magnússonar og Páls Vídalíns*, ed. Hið íslenska fræðafjelag, 11 vols (Copenhagen: Íslenska fræðafjelag í Kaupmannahöfn, 1913–43), X, p. 243. Angantýr Hjörvar

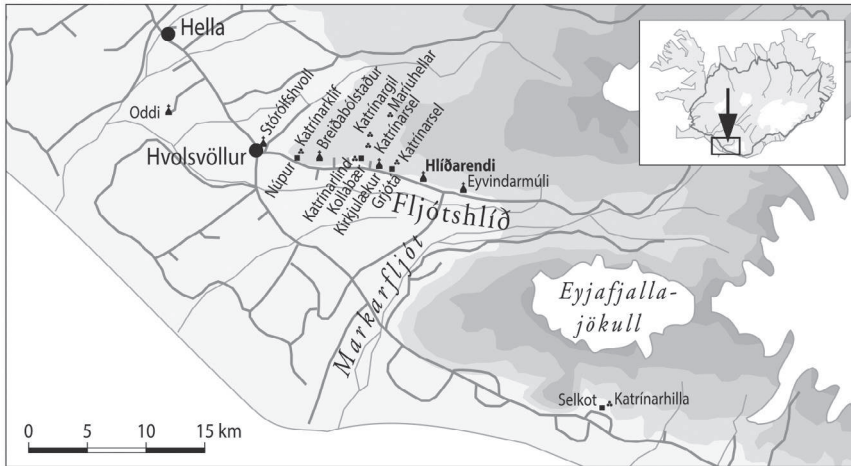


FIGURE 11.4 Map of Fljótshlíð. The church at Hlíðarendi owned a statue of St Catherine prior to 1400, and two in the 15th century which could explain the place-names derived from her name, *Katrín*. In the 15th century the church at Stórolfshvöllur also owned her statue. In the Fljótshlíð area there was a *Mariúlind* (Mary's well) at Hlíðarendi, and another one, *Jakobsblind* (well of St James), at Breiðabólstaður, while *Jónssel* (shieling of John the Apostle) belonged to Eyvindarmúli.

*Mariuhellar* ('Mary's caves'), on the land of Kollabær in Fljótshlíð in the south (see Fig. 11.4) is in close proximity to three places carrying the name of Catherine, *Katrínarlind* ('Catherine's well/fountain'), *Katrínarsel* ('Catherine's shieling') and *Katrínargil* ('Catherine's gorge'),<sup>12</sup> though none of these can be connected to a parish church.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, it is tempting to connect the name of *Katrínarhóll* at Húsafell with St Catherine of Alexandria.

## Two Catherines

Furthermore, it seems clear the Catherine in question is the Roman-Egyptian saint, rather than her Italian namesake, St Catherine of Siena (1347–1380). The latter has also been proposed as the dedicatee of the

Hjálmarsson and Pálmi Kristjánsson, *Örnefni í Saurbæjarhreppi* (Akureyri: [no publisher], 1957), pp. 125–26. [*Eyjafjardarsýsla*]. *Sýslu- og sóknalýsingar Hins íslenska bókmenntafélags 1834–1854*. ed. Magnús Kristinsson. Eyfirzkr fræði 2 (Akureyri: Sögufélag, 1972), pp. 199–200.

<sup>12</sup> On *Katrínargil* at Þríhyrningsháls, see Skúli Guðmundsson, 'Undir Þríhyrningi', *Árbók Hins íslenska fornleifafélags 1937–1939* (Reykjavík: Ísafoldarprentsmiðja, 1939), p. 112.

<sup>13</sup> See the discussion below, at pp. 291–93.

Katrínarhóll place name at Húsafell.<sup>14</sup> St Catherine of Siena was canonized in 1461 and her cult did not gain ground in Iceland.<sup>15</sup> In contrast, St Catherine of Alexandria was already a well-known saint in Iceland in the second half of the thirteenth century, and her popularity seems to have peaked toward the end of the Middle Ages. Evidence for this are two vernacular texts, *Katrínar saga* and *Katrínar jarsteinir*, which preserve her *vita* and miracles,<sup>16</sup> and the many pieces of art from several churches, primarily the Hólar and Skálholt cathedrals, which housed depictions of St Catherine of Alexandria and not St Catherine of Siena (see Appendix).

### Neighboring churches as indicators

The best way to support the assumption that a place name like Katrínarhóll should be associated with a saint of the same name would be a medieval dedication to the saint or the possession of an image of the saint at a church connected to the location. Examples are the place name Katrínarvík ('Catherine's inlet') close to the church at Staður in Grindavík, which was dedicated to St Catherine along with other saints, and Katrínarvarða ('cairn of Catherine') at Haukholt in Árnessýsla, which had connections with the church at Hrúni, dedicated to St Catherine and other saints.<sup>17</sup> The church at Húsafell was not dedicated to St Catherine, and the nearest churches in which Catherine was venerated are at Norðtunga (see Fig. 11.1), of which she was the patron saint, and Reykholt, hardly close enough to provide an obvious explanation for the name Katrínarhóll.<sup>18</sup> Nonetheless, it is possible that St Catherine of Alexandria's name may be associated with these places as will be seen in the comparison below.

<sup>14</sup> Þorsteinn Þorsteinsson refers to Reverend Geir Waage of Reykholt on this matter, which is touched upon by Þorsteinn in a response to questionnaire 111, no. 17196, for the Þjóðminjasafn Íslands, Reykjavík, available at <https://www.sarpur.is/Adfang.aspx?AdfangID=546990>, last accessed October 20 2020.

<sup>15</sup> She was a prominent saint within the Birgittine order and consequently more popular in Denmark and Sweden. See especially Oloph Odenius, 'St. Catherine of Siena in Late Medieval Scandinavia', in *Congresso Internazionale di Studi Cateriniani. Siena-Roma, 24-29 Aprile 1980* (Rome: Herder, 1981).

<sup>16</sup> See Kirsten Wolf, *The Legends of the Saints in Old Norse-Icelandic Prose*. Toronto Old Norse and Icelandic Series 6 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), pp. 69-71.

<sup>17</sup> For information about Staður, see *DI* 4, p. 101. For information about Hrúni, see *DI* 2, p. 664. For churches not dedicated to St Catherine but which owned images of her, prior to 1400, see Cormack, *The Saints in Iceland*, p. 87, cf. pp. 28 and 72.

<sup>18</sup> Cormack, *The Saints in Iceland*, pp. 197, 213 and 215. On Reykholt after 1400 *DI* 7, p. 666 (statue?); 8, p. 675 (image); 10, p. 397 (image).

## Hills and wells

A possible explanation for the Katrínarhóll may be found through a comparison with southern English place-names, where hills named after St Catherine of Alexandria are particularly common.<sup>19</sup> In the Middle Ages, people ascended such hills in order to pray to and invoke St Catherine, the reason being that climbing such hills to venerate her was considered an alternative to climbing Mount Sinai, where her relics were believed to be preserved.<sup>20</sup> Interestingly, as noted below, places in Iceland carrying the name Catherine are often at high elevations, and most of these were close to common thoroughfares. It seems likely, therefore, that in the Middle Ages, Icelanders, too, climbed high places to venerate St Catherine when traveling. It should be noted that in England, chapels would usually have been at the top of these hills with an image of Catherine inside. Similarly, some of the hills in Iceland had cairns, possibly foundations of crosses, as discussed below.

There are at least seven hills and hillocks in Iceland with the name Katrínarhóll. In addition to Katrínarhóll at Húsafell, there are two Katrínarhólar at Villingadalur in Eyjafjörður (see Fig. 11.3) and a Katrínarhóll close to Eyvindartunga in the neighborhood of Laugarvatn in the southwest. These three sites and Katrínarhorn near Bíldudalur (see Fig. 11.5) offer splendid views and are situated at common thoroughfares. Two others with splendid views are (see Fig. 11.4) Katrínarklif at Núpur in Fljótshlíð and Katrínarhilla at Selkot in Eyjafjöll.<sup>21</sup> However, height may be more important than a view in some of these locations.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Katherine J. Lewis, 'Pilgrimage and the Cult of St Katherine in Late Medieval England', in *St Katherine of Alexandria: Texts and Contexts in Western Medieval Europe*, ed. Jacqueline Jenkins and Katherine J. Lewis. *Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts* 8 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), pp. 37–52; for a comparison with Mount Sinai, see pp. 37, 46–47, and 51. Lewis provides several examples of Catherine's hills in England, from Hampshire, Dorset (six in all), Surrey, and The Isle of Wight. The present author encountered others, one in Frome/Somerset, a second in Glastonbury/Somerset, and a third in Reading. An additional three are found in Launceston/Cornwall, Bray/Swansea (Wales), and Aberdeen/Scotland.

<sup>20</sup> For information about the preservation of her relics, see John Watson, 'A History of St. Catherine's Monastery', especially the section 'Other Chapels and Ruins'. See <http://www.touregypt.net/featurestories/catherines1.htm>, last accessed March 14 2020.

<sup>21</sup> 'Horn' here means a peak of a mountain, 'klif' is a path or passage on a slope, and 'hilla' a shelf in a cliff-wall.

<sup>22</sup> See the discussion below at pp. 296–98. One might expect to find parallels in Norway due to the close relationship between the two countries in the Middle Ages. In Norway, the name Katrin ('Catherine') developed into Kari and the same happened in place-names. See Oluf Rygh, *Norske gaardnavne. Opplysninger samlede til brug ved matrikelens revision / efter offentlig foranstaltning udgivne med tilføiede forklaringer af O. Rygh*, 22 vols, (Christiania [Oslo], 1898–1986), XI, p. 396. Here it is pointed out that the farm name Kartveit in Manger was Karinethueidt in 1563 and that its original Old Norse form would have been \*Katrínarþveit.

In England and Ireland, there are several Catherine's wells, and in England they are often close to her hills.<sup>23</sup> These wells were probably appreciated by thirsty travelers, who quenched their thirst, rested, and, if devout, gave thanks to St Catherine. Wells or fountains named after Catherine at common thoroughfares are known also in two instances in Iceland, and two other Icelandic instances of Catherine's wells are also touched upon below. It seems reasonable, therefore, to connect hills, wells, and fountains featuring Catherine's names in Iceland with St Catherine of Alexandria.<sup>24</sup>

## Catherine and milk

At Kollabær in Fljótshlíð in the southern part of Iceland, there is a shieling or *sel* ('a place for dairy production') called *Katrínarsel* and also a well named *Katrínarlind* (see Fig. 11.4). Þórður Tómasson argues that both should be associated with the medieval belief in St Catherine of Alexandria.<sup>25</sup> There is also a *Katrínarsel* at Grjótá in the same district, Fljótshlíð, which Þórður does not mention, but it supports his suggestion. Þórður makes reference to another *Katrínarsel* in a different district, at Geirland in Síða in the south-east (see Fig. 11.6), and explains

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It is suggested that *Katrín* in this case was St Catherine, since the parish church was probably a Catherine's Church. Further Rygh, *Norske gaardnavne*, V, p. 131 (Kariset, Kari from Katharina); and further still, Rygh, *Norske gaardnavne*, XIII, p. 354. The origin of the farm name Kariset is here explained in a similar way as deriving from the Old Norse \**Katrínarsetr*. There are numerous mounds or hills in Norway called Karihaug(en) and also several called Karihol. Moreover, there are many instances of Karibakken and Kariberg and other forms of *Katrin* (Karen, Katrine) associated with hills and heights. In the Noregskart stadnamn, Karihaugen occurs more than thirty times, and Karihol and Karibakken quite often. See <https://kartkatalog.geonorge.no/metadata/d0940f8e-4bdc-4572-859d-2a8c9aeab55a>, last accessed October 21 2020. I wish to thank Þorsteinn Indriðason and Ivar Utne in Bergen for their help with this matter.

<sup>23</sup> Lewis, 'Pilgrimage and the Cult', pp. 49–50 discusses the wells in general and mentions one in Milton Abbas (Dorset). I have looked for further examples and found one in Beaumont Crescent (Coventry), one in Doncaster, and one in Newark (Devon [healing]), Selworthy (Somerset), Sugnall (Straffordshire), and Bredon Hill (Worcestershire), respectively. There are also wells in Boot (Cumbria), Branxton (Northumberland), and Port Erin (Isle of Man). Furthermore, there is the Balm Well in Edinburgh (healing) and one more well in Scotland, at Glenluce Abbey (Canmore). There are at least three wells in Ireland, at Killybegs (Donegal), Drumcondra (Dublin), and Leixlip (Kildare [healing]).

<sup>24</sup> In Iceland, two fountains or wells with the name *Katrínarlind* are known to the present author and two with the name *Katrínarkelda* ('Cathrine's well, spring or pit.')

<sup>25</sup> Þórður Tómasson, 'Þrír þættir', *Árbók Hins íslenska fornleifafélags 1982* (Reykjavík: Ísafoldarprentsmiðja, 1983), pp. 109–13.

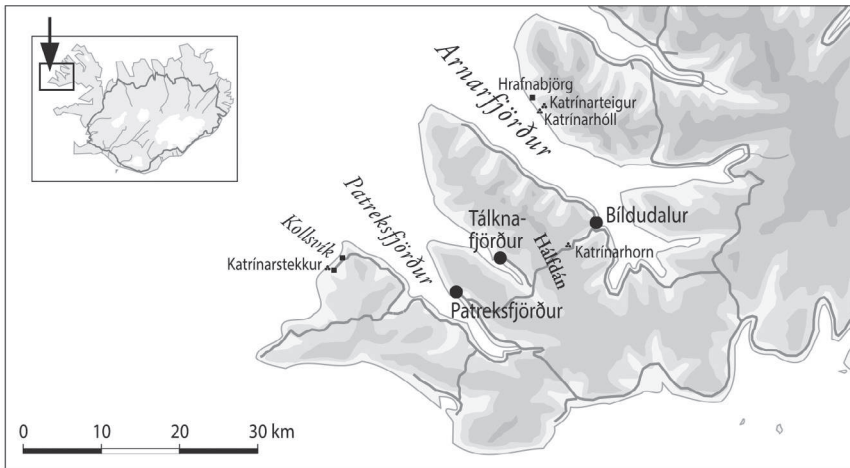


FIGURE 11.5 Map of Vestfirðir. At Kollsvík there was a so-called half-church (i.e., a church where only half of the usual number of masses were celebrated) whose dedication is not known. There were several churches in Arnarfjörður, some of them probably half-churches or chapels (*bænhús*) and abolished long ago, whose dedication are not known. There was such a chapel at Lokinshamrar, close to Hrafnabjörg.

it in the same way.<sup>26</sup> His argument is convincing, because it is told in *Katrínar saga* that when she was decapitated in Alexandria, milk, instead of blood, flowed from her severed neck.<sup>27</sup> This was evidently memorable, and so it became a custom of breastfeeding women to invoke her name to increase lactation.<sup>28</sup> It is commonly known that outside of Iceland Catherine was one of the most popular saints in the late Middle Ages. She was one of the fourteen holy helpers and one of the four chief virgins (*quatuor virgines capitales*).<sup>29</sup> Her name was also called upon in order to secure good crops and yield of the soil, including grass.<sup>30</sup> Obviously, the amount of milk for domestic animals depended

<sup>26</sup> Katrínarsel at Geirland is, according to Þórður Tómasson, mentioned in 1822.

<sup>27</sup> See *Heilagra manna sögur: Fortællinger og legender om hellige mænd og kvinder*, ed. Carl R. Unger, 2 vols (Christiania [Oslo]: Bentzen, 1877), I, p. 421. See also *Heilagra meyja sögur*, ed. Kirsten Wolf. Íslensk trúarrit 1 (Reykjavík: Bókmenntafræðistofnun Háskóla Íslands, 2001), p. 141. Milk instead of blood was seen as a sign of her chastity.

<sup>28</sup> Catherine of Alexandria was a patron saint for nannies and nurses, because 'milk flowed from her severed neck'. See Rosa Giorgi, *Saints in Art* (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2003), p. 76.

<sup>29</sup> Jørgen Raastad, 'Helgener', in *KLNM* 6, col. 326. Bengt Ingmar Kilström, 'Nödhjälperna', in *KLNM* 12, cols 458–66.

<sup>30</sup> On crops and growth of the soil related to Catherine, see Otto Wimmer and



on the availability of grass, so in late medieval Iceland it might have been common among farmers, peasants, and milkmaids, at home or at shielings, to invoke the name of Catherine.

The connection between Catherine and milk is particularly interesting. The workforce at a farm was paid in kind, frequently with butter produced from sheep. During bad seasons or famine, these people would have been provided with less butter or none at all. Moreover, the rearing of newborn lambs must have been of great concern for the farming community, since milk was necessary for the lambs. Milk was considered essential for both lambs and people, and in order for both parties to share it, 'stekkir' ('folds') were constructed, so that the ewes could be kept away from the sucklings during the night and then milked.

Around the seven Katrínarhólar in Iceland, there was plenty of grass, and not too far away there were 'stekkr'-folds where ewes could be milked. In the spring when the lambs were born, they needed extensive care due to the harsh climate and aggressive ravens and foxes.<sup>31</sup> When after about ten days or so, they had gained some strength mainly due to the intake of milk, the lambs were no longer free to suckle the ewes during the night. The sucklings were kept in the 'stekkr'-folds at night, and their mothers were milked in the morning before the lambs were released and free again to suckle. Milk was precious and too important for people to give it all to the lambs. In the early summer, the ewes and lambs were permanently separated; the lambs were driven to the mountains (together with castrated rams), while the ewes were kept at home or at shielings for milking.<sup>32</sup>

The use of 'stekkr' is an ancient custom. It is mentioned in *Dorskfirðinga saga* from the fourteenth century, and here the 'stekkr' was used for both

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Hartmann Melzer, 'Katharina', in *Lexikon der Namen und Heiligen*, 5th rev. ed. (Innsbruck/Wien: Tyrolia; 1984), pp. 481–83, at p. 482. On 'markens grøde', see Per Einar Oddsen, 'Den hellige Katarina av Alexandria (~ 288(?)) – ~ 306 (?)', *Den katolske kirke*, available at <http://www.katolsk.no/biografier/historisk/katalexa>, last accessed October 20 2020.

<sup>31</sup> On menacing ravens and foxes at the 'stekkr'-period, see Kristján Á. Benediktsson, 'Endurminningar Kristjáns Á. Benediktssonar', *Heimilisblaðið* 7–9/33 (1944), p. 125.

<sup>32</sup> For information about 'stekkr', see Þorvaldur Thoroddsen, *Landbúnaður á Íslandi*, in *Lýsing Íslands*, 4 vols, (Copenhagen: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1919–1935), III, pp. 117, 324–25, and 334. The verb 'stía' is used here for keeping the lambs separated at a 'stekkr'. Jónas Jónasson frá Hrafnagili, *Íslenzkir þjóðhættir*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson (Reykjavík: Rafnar, 1934), pp. 165–70. Kristján S. Sigurðsson, 'Á stekk', *Ljósberinn* 3–4/29 (1949), p. 40; Jóhannes Davíðsson, 'Fráfærur og lambahjáseta', *Ísfirðingur: Blað Framsóknarmanna í Vestfjarðakjördæmi* 20–28/20 (1970), p. 12; and Arni Óla, 'Fíflamál', *Lesbók Morgunblaðsins* 6 (February 15 1953), p. 92.

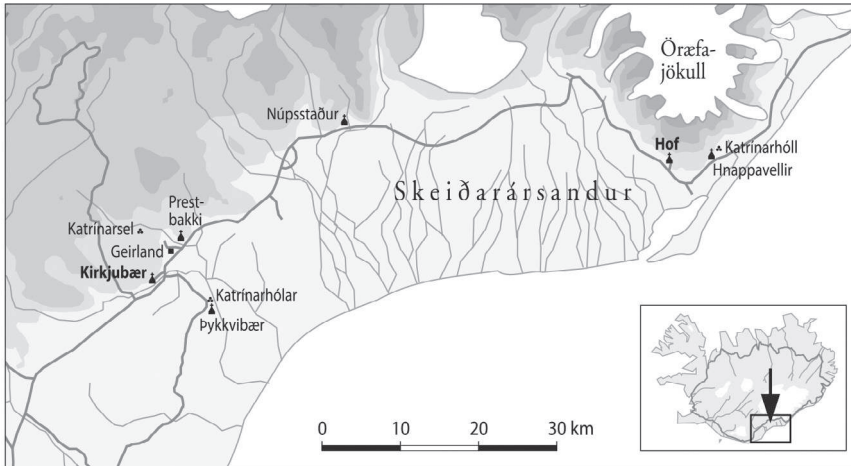


FIGURE 11.6 Map of Kirkjubæjarklaustur. There was a convent at Kirkjubær, owning a large image of St Catherine. The land at Geirland was a property of the convent, as was the shieling, Katrínarsel. In the 14th century, an image of St Catherine was among the ornaments of the church at Hof.

sheep and goats.<sup>33</sup> However, goats and kids were not as numerous and important as sheep and lambs.<sup>34</sup>

Based on the above evidence, it is reasonable to suppose that Icelandic shepherds and milkmaids climbed the Katrínarhólar in order to invoke St Catherine and ask her to secure good crops and milk in abundance. First and foremost, the hills and hillocks enabled the shepherds to watch the sheep and lambs and pray to St Catherine. Secondly, the hillocks were substitutes for Mount Sinai in a symbolic way. Thirdly, medieval prayers show the importance of certain saints, when it came to protecting sheep and animal husbandry in general.

The main argument in this essay is that the original reason for the names Katrínarhólar is the invocation of the saint's name in order to secure sufficient milk for lambs and kids. Such hills and hillocks with

<sup>33</sup> *Harðar saga, Bárðar saga, Þorsfirðinga saga, Flóamanna saga, Þorsteins þátr uxafóts, Egils þátr Síðu-Hallssonar, Orms þátr Stórolfssonar, Þorsteins þátr tjaldstæðings, Þorsteins þátr forvitna, Bergbúa þátr, Kumbúa þátr, Stjörnu-Odda draumr*, ed. Þórhallur Vilmundarson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson. Íslenzk fornrit 13 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1991), p. 205. *Þorsfirðinga saga* is also called *Gull-Þóris saga*.

<sup>34</sup> For other examples of 'stekkr', early ones, see *Grágás: Elzta lögbók Íslendinga eptir skinnbókinni í bókasafni konungs*, ed. Vilhjálmur Finsen, 3 vols (Copenhagen: Fornritafélag Norðurlanda í Kaupmannahöfn, 1852), 1a-b, p. 155; *Sturlunga saga*, ed. Jón Jóhannesson, Magnús Finnbogason and Kristján Eldjárn, 2 vols (Reykjavík: Sturlunguútgáfan, 1946), I, pp. 31 and 99.

cairns and possibly crosses would later prove suitable locations to inhabitants and passers-by for praying to and invoking St Catherine.

## Saints and sheep

In the Christian law section of *Grágás*, the Icelandic Commonwealth Law written between 1122 and 1133, it is stated that people should invoke saints in order to protect their livestock. There is also a remark in the law about the adequate religious practices of a Christian individual and old religious habits that should be avoided. About an owner of livestock, it specifies that, 'If he dedicates his livestock to others than God and his holy saints, he is worshipping pagan gods' ('Þá blótar hann heiðnar vættir ef hann signir fé sitt öðrum en Guði eða helgum monnum hans.')

Farmers had several ways of trying to secure the blessing and help of God and his special friends, the saints, for their domestic animals. At times, grazing areas and shelters for sheep were donated to churches dedicated to the Virgin Mary. An example is free grazing and a cave for shelter donated to the Madonna in the mountain Múlafjall close to Reynivellir for forty sheep.<sup>36</sup> The cave was called Maríuhellir ('Mary's cave'), and the church was dedicated to Mary with the expectation that she took care of the sheep of the church farm. In comparison, there are Maríuhellar ('Mary's caves') on the land of the farms Vífilsstaðir and Urriðakot and Maríuvellir ('Mary's plains') closer to Vífilsstaðir with a 'stekkr'-fold. The parish church of Vífilsstaðir was Garðar (today in the greater Reykjavík area), which owned an image of Mary.<sup>37</sup>

Good grazing was essential for lambs and ewes not only during the 'stekkr'-fold period (referred to as 'stekktið'), but also when the sheep had been separated, lambs driven into the mountains, and the ewes milked. Several prayers testifying to this, which must be from Catholic times, have been preserved in post-Reformation tradition. In one prayer, God is asked to feed the sheep or livestock in the pasture, while the Virgin Mary is requested to provide protection for them. Similar prayers or invocations reveal how much was at stake for the well-being of the animals and reveal the importance of milk. God is also asked for grass in the belly of the livestock, milk in the teats, and strength in the udder.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> *Grágás*, ed. Vilhjálmur Finsen, Ia, p. 22.

<sup>36</sup> *DI* 4, p. 117, and *DI* 6, p. 179. The alleged donor is not mentioned but must have owned the farm Múli.

<sup>37</sup> *DI* 4, p. 108. See also below on Maríuhellar belonging to Kollabær, its parish church either one dedicated to Mary or another one where Mary was venerated.

<sup>38</sup> 'Nú er ég búin(n) að reka fé mitt í haga/Guð gefi því gras í maga/mjólk í spena, fisk í júgur, hold á bein./Sankti María seztu á stein./Guð greiði götu mína/geng ég svo heim'. ('Now I have driven my sheep into the pasture/may God provide grass in the belly/milk in the teats, strength in the udder, flesh on the

It appears that there was a distinction between Mary and Catherine with regard to the protection of milking livestock. While Mary was invoked to take care of the sheep generally (ewes included), the help requested from Catherine was primarily connected with milk. Accordingly, Catherine was important during the 'stekkr'-fold period, especially the first ten days, or so, when it was necessary for the ewes to yield much milk. This was a *sine qua non* for the lambs, who not only had to be raised quickly and develop, but also needed to survive. This implies that milk was very important during the 'stekkr' period, but maybe not as important at shielings, such as Katrínarsel, when lambs and ewes had been permanently separated. Nonetheless, it is possible that a shieling close to a farm could have served as a 'stekkr'-fold.

### A closer look at Þórður Tómasson's hypothesis

When potential place-names of saints are associated with actual saints, one of the main arguments is usually the existence of a nearby church, typically a parish church, dedicated to the saint in question. Þórður Tómasson had this in mind, when he suggested that Katrínarsel and Katrínarlind on the land of Kollabær in Fljótshlíð were named after the saint (see Fig. 11.4). The parish church for Kollabær was at Breiðabólstaður, but there was no dedication to St Catherine for that church. Þórður regarded it as a counter-evidence that a church at Kollabær could not be attested. Accordingly, he argued that there must have been a church dedicated to St Catherine at Kollabær despite the lack of evidence. This is open for speculation.<sup>39</sup> However, the lack of a church in which Catherine might have been venerated at Kollabær led other scholars to suggest that the place-names Katrínarsel and Katrínarlind were derived from a local woman by the name of Katrín. Indeed, a seventeenth-century Katrín was suggested.<sup>40</sup> This implies that the Katrínarlind at Kollabær was also named after a known woman, though the reason for this name has not been explained. In addition, there was

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bones./St Mary have a seat on a stone/may God lead me on/I walk home.')

Jónas Jónasson frá Hrafnagili, *Íslenzkir þjóðhættir*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, p. 376. For further prayers of this kind, see Jón M. Samsonarson, *Ljóðmál: Fornir þjóðlífsþættir. Safn ritgerða gefið út í tilefni sjötugsafmælis höfundar 24. janúar 2001*, ed. Einar G. Pétursson, Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, and Vésteinn Ólason (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, 2002), pp. 56–58 and 139–40.

<sup>39</sup> There were main churches quite close by, one at Breiðabólstaður and two at Kirkjulækur and Teigur, respectively. None of these was dedicated to St Catherine. In a list of medieval churches, there is no mention of Kollabær. See *Prestatal og prófasta á Íslandi*, ed. Björn Magnússon (Reykjavík: íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1949), p. 58.

<sup>40</sup> Oddgeir Guðjónsson, A response to questionnaire 81.a., nr. 10538, available at <https://www.sarpur.is/Adfang.aspx?AdfangID=552675>.

a Mariúlind ('Mary's well/fountain') and a Jakobslind ('James's well/fountain') in the same area, Fljótshlíð, named after SS Mary and James which suggests that Katrínarlind was named after the saint. However, Mariúlind and Jakobslind are close to churches of the corresponding saints.<sup>41</sup> In contrast, there were Mariúhellar ('Mary's caves') for sheltering sheep on the land of Kollabær along with Katrínarlind, Katrínargil, and Katrínarsel, mentioned above.<sup>42</sup> This is without any known church at Kollabær whose dedication could have given occasion for the names. The parish church for Kollabær was most probably at Breiðabólstaður and was dedicated to Mary, which might explain the Mariúhellar.<sup>43</sup>

Accordingly, Catherine, from whose name Katrínarlind, Katrínargil, and Katrínarsel are derived, is probably not to be found at the alleged church at Kollabær, but at a nearby church, possibly the church dedicated to her in Fljótshlíð at Hlíðarendi, about 6km away (see Fig. 11.4). Prior to 1400, this church owned one statue of St Catherine, and in the fifteenth century it owned two statues of her.<sup>44</sup> The distance between Hlíðarendi and Grjótá (where the other Katrínarsel is in Fljótshlíð) is about 3.5km, and the church at Hlíðarendi was not a parish church for Grjótá.<sup>45</sup> There is also a Katrínarklif ('Catherine's path') above the farm Núpur in the Fljótshlíð area, which might have been an appropriate place to invoke the name of St Catherine. The distance between Hlíðarendi and Núpur is about 10km. This suggests that no parish church is needed to explain possible place-names of saints in a district, and that a church with a pertinent dedication in the neighborhood, even 10km away, would be sufficient. It is reasonable to assume that people living in the parish of Breiðabólstaður paid visits to St Catherine at Hlíðarendi.

Several shielings carried the name of saints, such as Jónssel ('Jón's shieling'), named after John the Apostle.<sup>46</sup> There are other shielings in other places with the same name and also a Péturssel ('Peter's shieling'), possibly named after St Peter,<sup>47</sup> and a Marteinsel ('Martin's shieling'),

<sup>41</sup> *DI* 4, p. 69 (Mary at Hlíðarendi), and p. 81 (James at Breiðabólstaður). James carried a gourd, which was used as a water container by pilgrims. See Giorgi, *Saints in Art*, p. 173.

<sup>42</sup> Helga Skúladóttir, 'Örnefni í Þríhyrningi', *Árbók Hins íslenska fornleifafélags 1933-1936* (Reykjavík: Ísafoldarprentsmiðja H.F., 1936), p. 23.

<sup>43</sup> *DI* 4, p. 81. Such was the case in later centuries. Another possibility for a parish church would be the abolished church at Kirkjulækur, which was dedicated to St Þorlák and owned an image of Mary. *DI* 4, p. 83.

<sup>44</sup> *DI* 4, p. 69; *DI* 6, p. 332.

<sup>45</sup> A parish church for Grjótá could have been either at Kirkjulækur, dedicated to SS Þorlák and Mary, or at Teigur, dedicated to Mary and with veneration of St Andrew (image). Cf. *DI* 2, pp. 868-87; *DI* 3, p. 403

<sup>46</sup> *DI* 4, pp. 76-77 (Eyvindarmúli in Fljótshlíð).

<sup>47</sup> *Jarðabók Arna Magnússonar og Páls Vídalíns*, ed. Hið íslenska fræðafjelag, IV, p. 237.

which is most certainly named after St Martin.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, there are *Andréarsstekkir* ('Andrew's 'stekkr'-folds'), and *Andrésfjós* ('Andrew's cowshed'); the former should probably be connected with St Andrew and the latter certainly.<sup>49</sup> Generally speaking, when one sees a name like *Katrínarsel*, one would expect that it carries the name of the saint. And even though there is no church dedicated to St Catherine at Kollabær, it is perfectly understandable why the 'sel' was named after St Catherine.

It should be noted that *Katrínarlind* at Kollabær is not an ordinary well; sources referred to by Þórður suggest that it had healing powers. There are three more wells and fountains in Iceland connected with Catherine's name and several outside of Iceland, and some are believed to have healing powers. One might compare the well with *Marteinslaug* ('Martin's pool') in *Haukadalur*, which in 1756 – more than 200 years after the Reformation – was considered to have healing powers.<sup>50</sup> Since the church at *Haukadalur* was dedicated to St Martin, there is no doubt that this pool was also dedicated to him.<sup>51</sup> However, 'lind' and 'laug' are not the only parallels between *Haukadalur* and *Kollabær*, because there was also a *shieling*, *Marteinssel*, in *Haukadalur*, like the *Katrínarsel* at *Kollabær*.

The *Katrínarlind* at *Kollabær* is of interest in this context. There is further evidence that it is named after St Catherine. As Þórður points out, its water was believed to have healing effects just like the water of a certain *Katrínarkelda* in the Faroe Islands.<sup>52</sup> There are at least four examples of *Karíkjelda* in the western part of Norway.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, as mentioned above, there were wells and fountains of St Catherine in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and some of these were supposed to have healing effects. A liquid is said to have constantly poured out of the relics of St Catherine at her tomb on Mount Sinai, and this liquid was believed to cure people from their afflictions. A renowned Catherine's well in Edinburgh healed the skin, and two Catherine's wells, in Newark (Devon, Nottinghamshire) and Leixlip (northwestern Ireland), also had healing properties. The *Katrínarlind* at *Kollabær* and the *Katrínarkelda*

<sup>48</sup> See the discussion below, at p. 300.

<sup>49</sup> There were *Andréarsstekkir* at *Oddi*. There was an *Andrésfjós* at *Ólafsvellir*, a farm which had a church dedicated to St Andrew. See *DI* 3, p. 115; *DI* 4, p. 50.

<sup>50</sup> Eggert Ólafsson and Bjarni Pálsson, *Ferðadagbækur 1752–1757 og önnur gögn tengd Vísindafélaginu danska*, ed. Sigurjón Páll Ísaksson (Reykjavík: Sigurjón Páll Ísaksson, 2017), p. 382.

<sup>51</sup> *DI* 2, pp. 667–68. St Martin was a co-patron, the church also owned a statue of him.

<sup>52</sup> Þórður Tómasson, 'Katrínarkelda', *Árbók Hins íslenska fornleifafélags 1983* (Reykjavík: Ísafoldarprentsmiðja, 1984), p. 134.

<sup>53</sup> See *Stadnamnsamlinga* <http://hordanamn.uib.no/cgi-bin/stadnamn/lydkart/stadnamn-kart-lyd.py>. Two are close to Bergen, at *Askøy* and *Os*; the others are at *Bømlo* and *A. Øye*. This should be taken with precaution, since it has not been studied any further.

in the Faroes should be considered in light of this. There is a *Katrínarlind* at Villingaholt in Flói (see Fig. 11.7). Not far from this place, there is a *Katrínarkelda* at Syðri-Völlur in Flói.<sup>54</sup> There is yet another *Katrínarkelda* in the west in Mýrasýsla.<sup>55</sup>

There was a common thoroughfare at Villingaholt where the *Katrínarlind* is located. The route started at the ferry at Egilsstaðir where the church (dedicated to St Nicholas) owned a statue of St Catherine in the late fifteenth century. The image was shown special honor by having a cloth draped over it unlike other images in the church.<sup>56</sup> Most travelers would head for the harbor and marketplace at Eyrarbakki (medieval Eyrar) or the fishing stations further west. They might have enjoyed the fresh water of *Katrínarlind* at Villingaholt and also the water of *Katrínarkelda*, a small brook at Syðri-Völlur. Both farms were close to the common thoroughfare, which took them further to Gaulverjabær and Eyrarbakki.<sup>57</sup> The clerics at Gaulverjabær are known to have served the church at Gagnishólar, where they sang mass in honor of St Catherine.<sup>58</sup> At Skúmsstaðir, close to the marketplace at Eyrarbakki, there was a chapel belonging to Norwegian merchants mainly from Bergen. There is no doubt that this chapel was dedicated to St Catherine. This is interesting in light of the fact that in Bergen there was a church dedicated to St Catherine and also a hospital or hospice for paupers dedicated to St Catherine.<sup>59</sup> Accordingly, there are good reasons to associate the well at Syðri-Völlur with St Catherine.

Another road leading from the east to Eyrarbakki went by Stórólfsvoll (medieval Neðri-Hváll) and Ás or Oddi to the ferry at Sandhólar (Sandhólaferja). From there, the route continued to Stokkseyri and Eyrarbakki and/or to the ferry at Kaldaðarnes (medieval Kallaðarnes). In the fifteenth century, the church at Stórólfsvoll owned a statue of

<sup>54</sup> In the place name collection (*Örnefnasafn*), this is called a brook and an unknown woman, called *Katrín*, is said to have drowned there. A man (b. 1931), familiar with the place, says this is drinkable, running water (a small brook).

<sup>55</sup> This is on the boundary between the farms Beigaldi and Bóndhóll. It used to be a small brook, but it is now a ditch. A man living in the area from 1958 says that people would cross the *Katrínarkelda* coming from or going to the meadows and might take a sip since running bog water like that was the only available water.

<sup>56</sup> *DI 6*, p. 320.

<sup>57</sup> This route or thoroughfare from Egilsstaðir, by Villingaholt and Syðri-Völlur, is shown on a map, *Suðvesturland*, 1: 250.000, revised in 1929. It is described in the place name collection (*Örnefnasafn*) under Hamar.

<sup>58</sup> *DI 6*, p. 320.

<sup>59</sup> Knut Helle, *Bergen bys historie*, vol. 1: *Kongssete og kjøpstad: fra opphavet til 1536* (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1982), pp. 78, 617, 772, and 875–77. Helgi Þorláksson, 'Katrín frá Alexandríu aflar sér hylli á Suðurlandi', *Goðasteinn* 56 (2020), pp. 62–81.

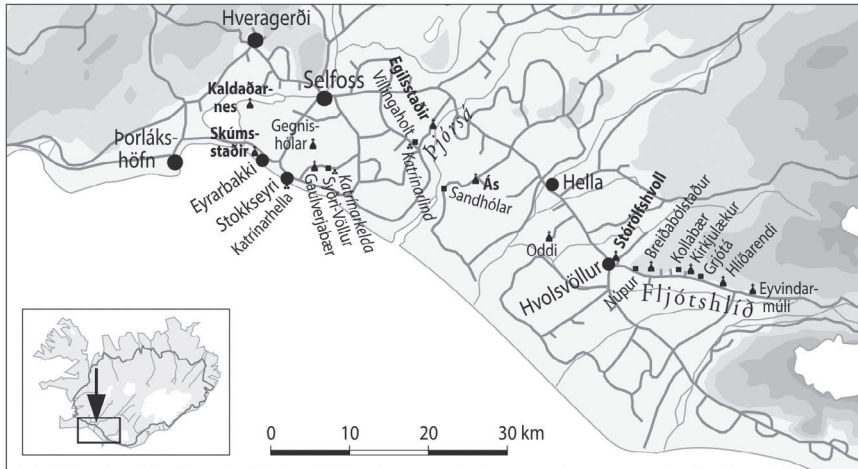


FIGURE 11.7. Map of Suðurland. Djórsá is a major river. There was an old road (horse-track) leading from the ferry place Egilsstaðir to Villingaholt and Syðri-Völlur, via Hamar. The church at Egilsstaðir owned a statue of St Catherine and further along the road there were two wells, Katrínarlind at Villingaholt and Katrínarkelda at Syðri-Völlur. The clerics at the major church Gaulverjabær were obliged to sing a mass once a year at the nearby chapel at Gagnishólar in honor of St Catherine. The road lead via Gaulverjabær to the important harbor Eyrarbakki (medieval Eyrar), a medieval market place where there was a chapel at Skúmsstaðir, dedicated to St Catherine. At the ferry at Kaldaðarnes there was a church which owned an image of St Catherine. Another road lead from Stórolfshvoll, either via Ás or Oddi, to the ferry place Sandhólar and on via Stokkseyri to Eyrarbakki. The churches at Stórolfshvoll and Ás owned images of St Catherine and her mass was to be sung at the major church of Oddi every other week.

St Catherine, and her veneration was important at the church of Oddi.<sup>60</sup> The people in charge of the church at Ás prided themselves on owning a colored image of Catherine, probably a painting.<sup>61</sup> At Stokkseyri, on the same route from Sandhólar, there is a Katrínarhella ('Catherine's slab') at a central spot but of uncertain origin. At Eyrarbakki, the St Catherine chapel of Skúmsstaðir was well endowed. Finally, at the ferry in Kaldaðarnes there was a fourteenth-century statue of St Catherine; it was made of alabaster and was likely English.<sup>62</sup> From Kaldaðarnes, the route could lead to the assembly site of the Alþingi at Þingvellir.

<sup>60</sup> *DI* 6, p. 328; *DI* 4, p. 76 (at Oddi, a St Catherine's mass was sung every other week).

<sup>61</sup> *DI* 4, p. 61.

<sup>62</sup> *DI* 4, p. 55.



Accordingly, there were many places where travelers to Eyrarbakki or the fishing stations or even to Þingvellir, or coming from there, could rest and invoke St Catherine and sometimes enjoy her water.

So, it is difficult to explain the place name *Katrínarlind* on the *Kollabær* land without reference to St Catherine. The same goes for *Katrínarsel* at *Kollabær*, the argument that it is related to milk and the shieling (pointed out by Þórður) is convincing. No church at *Kollabær* is needed to connect *Katrínarlind* and *Katrínarsel* with St Catherine. The arguments are sufficient without the existence of such a church. The same applies to the *Katrínarsel* at *Grjótá* close to *Kollabær*.

The other *Katrínarsel* pointed out by Þórður was on the land of the farm *Geirland*. Again, he suggests that there might have been a church at *Geirland* dedicated to St Catherine, but there is no information about such a church. However, he also mentions that the convent at *Kirkjubær* (see Fig. 11.6) owned the farm in the fourteenth century and during the late Middle Ages and argues that this might explain the name of the shieling.<sup>63</sup> It most probably does, because the church of the convent owned a large image of St Catherine.<sup>64</sup> The farm *Geirland* is only some 3km from the convent, which apparently influenced the farmers not only at *Geirland* but also at *Þykkvibær*, with its *Katrínarhólar*, about 7.5km away.<sup>65</sup> In later centuries, *Kirkjubær* served as the parish church for *Geirland* and *Þykkvibær* and may have done so also during the Middle Ages.

## The hills and hillocks

*Katrínarhóll* at *Húsafell* has several namesakes in Iceland: at *Hrafnabjörg* in *Arnarfjörður* in the western part (see Fig. 11.5); at *Hleiðargarður* in *Eyjafjörður* in the northern part; at *Villingadalur* (which has two), also in *Eyjafjörður* (see Fig. 11.3); at *Hnappavellir* in *Öræfasveit* in the south-eastern part; at *Þykkvibær* (which has two) in *Landbrot*, also in the southeast (see Fig. 11.6); and at *Eyvindartunga*, close to *Laugarvatn* in the southern part. The names are of unknown origin, and when this is the case, the given explanation is typically that some casualty gave rise to the name. An unknown *Katrín*, for example, reportedly drowned at *Villingadalur* and another at *Syðri-Völlur*.<sup>66</sup> Much the same is the case

<sup>63</sup> Þórður Tómasson í Skógum, *Svipast um á sögu slóðum: Þættir um land, menningu og mannaminjar í Vestur-Skaftafellssýslu* (Reykjavík: Skrudda, 2011), pp. 179, 192–93, and 201.

<sup>64</sup> *DI* 2, p. 781.

<sup>65</sup> See the discussion below, at pp. 298–99.

<sup>66</sup> Here as elsewhere the place-names can be found at the collection *Örnefnasafn Árnastofnunar* under adequate 'hreppur'-district; more seldom they are available at *leitir.is* and *sarpur.is*, see footnote 92.

with regard to places named after unknown Helgas, Ingas, and so on; usually, they are believed to have perished by accident and occasioned the names.<sup>67</sup> Another unknown Katrín is said to have lived inside one of the two Katrínarhólar at Þykkvibær. The sources for these names are rarely more than a hundred years old, and there is no known explanation of the names of the Katrínarhólar at Húsafell, Hrafnabjörg, Hleiðargarður, Hnappavellir, and Eyvindartunga by Laugarvatn.

In *Katrínar saga*, the medieval Icelandic translation of the *vita* of St Catherine, angels moved her body to a mountain called Syna (Mount Sinai).<sup>68</sup> The name Syna is also used in another medieval translation,<sup>69</sup> which relates how Catherine was first venerated in Rouen (Normandy) in the first half of the eleventh century.<sup>70</sup> This may allude to the meaning 'sight' or 'view' in the Icelandic word 'sýn'. The name appears in *Stjórn* I as "Sýnar land/Sjónar land" from where one had a far view.<sup>71</sup> In the late Middle Ages, the martyrdom of St Catherine was well known; indeed, it is listed in Icelandic annals for the year 304.<sup>72</sup> In fact, it is believed that the saint's body was first brought to Jabal Kātrīnā ('Catherine's Mountain') on Sinai, which reaches approximately 2,630 m and has a chapel on the summit. St Catherine's Monastery is located at a gorge in the slopes of Mount Sinai. It is situated 3km beyond the summit of the Jabal Kātrīnā. Mount Sinai is adjacent to it, and the monastery there is more than 1500 m above sea level. At this monastery on the slopes of Mount Sinai, the purported relics of St Catherine are enshrined.<sup>73</sup> When a reference is made to a mountain named for St Catherine, Mount Sinai is the one usually meant. The location is not always clear, however, and it may be noted that the view from the chapel on Catherine's Mountain to the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba is generally considered magnificent. As mentioned by Lewis, tours taken in Europe to the top of hills to venerate St Catherine are considered parallel to tours

<sup>67</sup> An unknown Katrín allegedly drowned in a pool (Katrínarbolli) below one of the two Katrínarhólar at Villingadalur, the southern one. The other hill (Katrínarhóll), to the north, would hardly have been named after the same woman, and the same goes for Katrínarballi (Catherine's grassy patch [plain]) nearby, between the hills.

<sup>68</sup> *Heilagra manna sögur*, ed. Unger, I, p. 421.

<sup>69</sup> See note 70 below.

<sup>70</sup> Kirsten Wolf, 'The *Translatio et Miracula Rotomagensis* in Icelandic Translation (AM 180b fol)', *Gripla* 19 (2008), pp. 169–91, at pp. 172–73. First the name is 'synay' (p. 171) and then 'syna' three times.

<sup>71</sup> *Stjórn: tekst etter håndskriftene*, ed. Reidar Astås. *Norrøne Tekster* 8, 2 vols (Oslo: Riksarkivet, 2009), I, p. 195.

<sup>72</sup> *Islandske Annaler indtil 1578*, ed. Gustav Storm (Christiania [Oslo]: Grøndahl & Søn, 1888), p. 236.

<sup>73</sup> See, for example, Watson, 'A History of St. Catherine's Monastery', especially the section 'Other Chapels and Ruins'. <http://www.touregypt.net/featuresstories/catherines1.htm>.

to the monastery on Mount Sinai.<sup>74</sup> The monastery of Catherine in Rouen stands on a hill with great view and a church at its side.<sup>75</sup> The name *Sýna* for Sinai in Icelandic is interesting, since the meaning of 'sýn' in Icelandic is 'sight' or 'view'. Medieval devotees were not overly concerned with etymology and might have found in the name some kind of symbolism. However, height or elevation above ground level rather than a view seems to be more important in connection with climbing Catherine's hills as substitutes of Mount Sinai.

St Catherine's feast-day is November 25 and was important in England, France, and Germany, especially to unmarried women older than twenty-five. These women would climb Catherine's hills and/or pray to St Catherine for a good husband. In the fourteenth century, St Catherine was generally regarded as the mystical fiancée of Christ and portrayed with a wedding ring as a sign of her special relationship with Christ. This practice may have been known in Iceland as well.<sup>76</sup> In that case, the Hringsgil just by Katrínarhóll at Húsafell with its fresh water may have been important.<sup>77</sup>

The information available about the altitude of Catherine's hills in England suggests that it is between 45 and 67 m. above sea level. The hills typically offered a splendid view. The views from Katrínarhólar at Húsafell and Laugarvatn (Eyvindartunga) are spectacular, and at Villingadalur the view is quite exceptional. However, some of the Katrínarhólar rise only slightly above the level of the immediate neighborhood without offering particularly good views. The only Katrínarhóll that does not provide much of a view is the one at Hleiðargarður, which rises only a few meters above ground. Nonetheless, it might have served a shepherd wanting to invoke the name of St Catherine.

### The shielings and 'stekkr'-folds

The example of Katrínarhóll at Hleiðargarður demonstrates that there may have been considerations more important than a view, such as milk. This is suggested by the fact that the two Katrínarhólar at

<sup>74</sup> Lewis, 'Pilgrimage and the Cult of Saint Catherine', pp. 37, 46, and 51.

<sup>75</sup> Wolf, 'The *Translatio et Miracula*', p. 172. Apparently it was not built on the hill to imitate the one on Mount Sinai. Cf. Christine Walsh, *The Cult of St Katherine of Alexandria in Early Medieval Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 71–76. See also Christine Walsh, 'The Role of the Normans in the Development of the Cult of St Katherine', in *St Katherine of Alexandria: Texts and Contexts in Western Medieval Europe*, ed. Jacqueline Jenkins and Katherine J. Lewis. *Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts* 8 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), pp. 25–27.

<sup>76</sup> Lewis, 'Pilgrimage and the Cult of Saint Catherine', pp. 49–50. Some Kvennagönguhólar ('Hills for women's walk') are found in Iceland. It is not known with certainty why they have this name.

<sup>77</sup> Hringsgil ('the gorge of the ring') is named after a site called Hringur. Most people in the Middle Ages would probably have understood it symbolically.

Þykkvibær were also named Stekkjarhólar. As mentioned above, this place is close to the Kirkjubær convent, which in the fourteenth century owned a large image of St Catherine and probably served as the parish church for Þykkvibær, where the *vita* of St Catherine was probably well known.<sup>78</sup> Of interest, too, in this context is Katrínarstekkur in Kollsvík in the western part (see Fig. 11.4). Above the 'stekkr', there is a cairn which in former times served as a 'mið' ('pointer') for fishing grounds and was called Stekkar. It seems, therefore, that the place name Katrínarstekkur in Kollsvík must be quite old.<sup>79</sup>

The Katrínarhóll at Hnappavellir is rather low; it reaches only about 5m above ground level and does not provide much of a view. However, since the land around it is flat, it is a convenient place for watching sheep and provides a good view down to the sea. In the fourteenth century, the church at Hof, some 9km away, owned an image of St Catherine.<sup>80</sup> For this reason, she was probably well known to the people at Hnappavellir. The land around Katrínarhóll is good for grazing, and a 'stekkr' or 'stekkir' as suggested by the name Stekkatún, was about 1000m away. It cannot be ascertained, that there was a 'stekkr' on this particular location in the fourteenth century, but it is certain that the reasons for having a 'stekkr' would have been the same in the Middle Ages: the hillock and the grazing land around it would have been suitable for rearing lambs. A comparison with Katrínarhólar and the 'stekkir' at Þykkvibær in the same district supports the use of Katrínarhóll at Hnappavellir, that is, milk for rearing lambs. Even though the hillock is not high, it might have been useful to a shepherd, just like the 'hóll' at Hleiðargarður.

As mentioned above, the Katrín in Katrínarvík in Grindavík must refer to St Catherine (see Fig. 11.1). There was important land for grazing at Stekkjarhólar, close to Katrínarvík. Katrínarlaut ('Catherine's hollow') by a cowshed and Stekkatún are also found at Vestri-Kirkjubær in the southern part (Rangárvallasýsla).

We should thus examine grazing lands and the 'stekkr' or 'stekkir' in the immediate neighborhood of the other four Catherine's 'hólar' at Húsafell, Hrafnabjörg, Hleiðargarður and Villingadalur. In the old infield of Reyðarfell, there are ruins of 'stekkir', which the farmers at Húsafell must have used and the farmers at Reyðarfell possibly before them, that is, prior to 1442 when the farm at Reyðarfell was

<sup>78</sup> *DI* 2, p. 781.

<sup>79</sup> There was a so-called half-church at Kollsvík. It is not known to whom it was dedicated. On two more Katrínarstekkir see footnote 92.

<sup>80</sup> *DI* 2, p. 775. There was a church dedicated to St Mary at Hnappavellir. It was probably abolished in 1362. Later, the church at Hof became the parish church for Hnappavellir. See *DI* 4, p. 202, and Jón Þorkelsson, 'Kirkjustaðir í Austur-Skaptafellspingi', *Blanda* 2 (1921–1923), pp. 260–61.

still inhabited.<sup>81</sup> Close to Katrínarhóll at Hrafnabjörg, there is also a Katrínarteigur ('Catherine's piece of grassland') suitable for grazing during the 'stekkr' period. There are still ruins of the 'stekkr' between the farm buildings and Katrínarhóll. The 'stekkir' are close to the Katrínarhólar in Villingadalur and Hleiðargarður and grazing lands are nearby. The 'stekkr' for Katrínarhóll at Laugarvatn would probably have been at Stöðull, which belonged to the farm Eyvindartunga, about 1km away.

If the 'stekkir' were truly important for the rearing of the lambs, and if invocation of St Catherine was so essential during that period, one might wonder about the shieling period when the lambs had been permanently separated from their mothers and driven into the mountains. It is possible that now and then the shielings served as 'stekkir', since they might be relatively close to the farms. The distance between the farm Grjótá in Fljótshlíð and its shieling was unusually short, and so the shieling may have served as a 'stekkr' as well. The distance between the farm Kollabær and its Katrínarsel is longer, about 3.5km, probably considered too long for a 'stekkr'. In the middle of the path, there was Stekkatúnsholt (at Klittnabali), however, and the milk may have been brought from there to the shieling. The lambs and kids may have been considered one of St Catherine's concerns because of the milk. Nonetheless, this can be explained more generally: after the separation and during the shieling-time, the protection of the ewes may have been regarded as a concern of also SS Mary, John the Apostle, Peter, and Martin. Still, dairy production was what the shielings were mainly about, and so it was natural – at least in the districts Fljótshlíð and Síða – to ask St Catherine for help also while the shielings were in use.

### Katrínarhólar for travelers and passers-by

The 'stekkr' period did not last long each year, usually just about five weeks. However, since the Katrínarhólar were associated with St Catherine and probably regarded as symbolic of Mount Sinai, they would have been useful locations to invoke the name of the saint all year round. As Ólafur H. Torfason points out, it was obligatory to pray three times daily, and if there was no nearby church, praying should take place at crosses. He suggests that some of the piles of stones, which now look like collapsed cairns or beacons, may be old foundations of crosses.<sup>82</sup> Most of the Katrínarhólar are close to common thorough-

<sup>81</sup> Þorkell Grímsson, 'Miðaldabyggð á Reyðarfelli', in *Minjar og menntir: Afmælisrit helgað Kristjáni Eldjárn 6. desember 1976*, ed. Guðni Kolbeinsson (Reykjavík: Bókautgáfa Menningarsjóðs, 1976), p. 566. *DI* 4, p. 123; *DI* 7, p. 737.

<sup>82</sup> Ólafur H. Torfason, *Nokkrir Íslandskrossar*, pp. 13–14, and 51–52.

fares.<sup>83</sup> A statuette of St Barbara, found at a chapel in Kapelluhraun ('Chapel lava'), close to Hafnarfjörður (today in the greater Reykjavík area) indicates that saints were venerated by travelers.<sup>84</sup>

Places carrying the name *Katrín* are quite common at the most frequented routes in the southern quarter of Iceland. Among the travelers were men heading for fishing stations further west on Reykjanes to work during the fishing season in Selvogur and Grindavík, which both had churches dedicated to St Catherine.<sup>85</sup> The workforce coming from the northern part via Borgarfjörður should also be considered, because they, too, headed for the fishing stations on Reykjanes. In the late Middle Ages, about 360 men traveled annually in January from the North and crossed the mountains, weather permitting. A short-cut over the most difficult passes was tempting but dangerous because of shifting weather conditions. These men often walked by Húsafell and Katrínarhóll (see Fig. 11.1) and possibly along the less dangerous road by the mountain Ok.<sup>86</sup> They might have continued along the route by the church at Reykholt, which owned images of St Catherine, and further to the church at Stóri-Kroppur, which was dedicated to St Catherine and owned an image of her. More commonly, however, they walked by the church at Norðtunga, of which St Catherine was a patron saint, and by the church at Síðumúli, which owned an altarpiece of St Catherine, and on to the church at Stóri-Kroppur where Catherine was one of the patrons.<sup>87</sup> The men from the north heading for the fishing stations were called *Norðlingar*, and their route is well known. They ended up in fishing stations like Engey or Hvalsnes, which had churches dedicated to St Catherine as a co-patron.<sup>88</sup> The Katrínarhóll by Laugurvatn

<sup>83</sup> Katrínarhóll at Hrafnabjörg is by the church route. The Katrínarhóll at Hnappavellir is somewhat doubtful with regard to communications.

<sup>84</sup> Kristján Eldjárn, 'Kapelluhraun og Kapellulág. Fornleifarannsóknir 1950 og 1954', *Árbók Hins íslenska fornleifafélags 1955–1956* (Reykjavík: Ísafoldarprentsmiðja, 1957), pp. 11–15. Vilhjalmur Örn Vilhjálmsson, 'Af heilagri Barböru og uppruna hennar', *Árbók Hins íslenska fornleifafélags 1982* (Reykjavík: Ísafoldarprentsmiðja, 1983), pp. 171–75.

<sup>85</sup> This is at Nes in Selvogur. See *DI* 2, p. 378. For information about Staður in Grindavík, see above, p. 280 and footnote 17.

<sup>86</sup> For information about the number of men, see Jón Egilsson, 'Biskupa-annálar', in *Safn til sögu Íslands og íslenskra bókmenta að fornu og nýju* (Copenhagen: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1856), I, p. 98. For information about the route by Ok, see Þórarinn Kristjánsson, 'Lýsing Mýra- og Hnappadalssýslna 1840', in *Mýra- og Borgarfjarðarsýslur*, ed. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir and Björk Ingmundardóttir. *Sýslu- og sóknalýsingar Hins íslenska bókmenntafélags 1839–1873* (Reykjavík: Ísafoldarprentsmiðja, 2005), p. 27.

<sup>87</sup> For information about Reykholt, see *DI* 7, p. 666; *DI* 8, p. 675; and *DI* 10, p. 397. For information about Stóri-Kroppur, see *DI* 4, p. 121. For information about Norðtunga, see *DI* 4, p. 126, and *DI* 13, p. 398. And for information about Síðumúli, see [www.sarpur.is](http://www.sarpur.is), last accessed March 14 2020.

<sup>88</sup> *DI* 3, pp. 256–57 and 338.

(Eyvindartunga) was a particularly good resting place for men on their way to the fishing stations and a perfect place to invoke St Catherine before they left the inhabited area and headed for the deserts.

In addition, there was a common route from Ábær in Skagafjörður in the northern part over the mountain Nýjabæjarfjall to Villingadalur in Eyjafjörður (see Fig. 11.2) via the two Katrínarhólar there and the Katrínarhóll at Hleiðargarður and on to the much frequented market place at Gásar and later Oddeyri and Akureyri close by. The route was high, steep, and hazardous in the dark or in cloudy or foggy weather, which might easily cause travelers to lose their way and perish. The conditions were even worse during the winter but still the route was used all year.<sup>89</sup> On the way, travelers could pay visits to the major church at Hrafnagil, which owned an image of St Catherine, a copy of her legend, and a 'Katrínarblað'.<sup>90</sup>

## Conclusion

Farmers invoked St Catherine during the 'stekkr' and shieling periods. St Catherine was especially important when lambs had just been born during the 'stekkr' period. This in turn made hills or hillocks important, not only for watching the lambs and ewes but also for praying to St Catherine for her intercession with the Almighty to help the infirm lambs. Catherine's hills in England have their parallels in Katrínarhólar in Iceland. There are at least seven such sites in Iceland, typically on frequented routes.

Most of the preserved names of the hillocks were probably well known, because travelers could pause there and pray to St Catherine. Weary and devout travelers probably found wells or fountains of St Catherine refreshing and invigorating; in Iceland, at least two of them are called Katrínarlind. Such sites, hills, and wells, may also have been places of hope for the infirm or the sick, though there is no evidence in Iceland of such worship of St Catherine in the open. However, the Sesseljuvarða at Húsafell suggests to the present author that pilgrims and others prayed at St Cecilia's cairn. Something similar may have been the case also for St Catherine, some worship of her in the open.

It is known that people, especially women, climbed Catherine's hills in England in order to invoke her name, and the climbing of such hills is the most obvious explanation for the names of the Katrínarhólar in

<sup>89</sup> Þormóður Sveinsson, 'Nýjabæjarfjall', *Blanda 7* (1940–1943), pp. 330–61. For information about Nýjabæjarfjall, see also *Eyjafjarðarsýsla. Sýslu- og sóknalýsingar*, pp. 182 and 202–03.

<sup>90</sup> *DI 3*, p. 560, *DI 5*, p. 315, and *DI 9*, p. 332. A 'blað' is a sheet with illustrations. Sheets like the 'Katrínarblað' with images of saints were common in Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. See Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir, *Íslenska teiknibókin* (Reykjavík: Crymogeia, 2013), p. 150.

Iceland. The limited elevation and, by extension, limited view in at least two instances may seem contradictory to this argument. However, the hills were all symbolic substitutes for Mount Sinai. The importance of their height and their view is not clear. Typically, there are grazing lands and 'stekkir' at or close to the hillocks; accordingly, it makes sense to connect the Katrínarhólar with milk and accept Þórður Tómasson's hypothesis about St Catherine and shielings.<sup>91</sup> The analysis of 'stekkir' and Katrínarhólar in this article supports his hypothesis. It is argued that the Katrínarhólar may have begun as places for watching sheep and praying, became attached to St Catherine, were named after her, and were turned into sites for praying and invoking St Catherine's name throughout the year, even though in two cases the hillocks were rather low-lying. The stately Katrínarhóll at Húsafell, for instance, probably served several purposes: shepherds and milkmaids could have invoked St Catherine during the 'stekkr' period, other inhabitants and travelers could have done the same during the same period or at other times during the year.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>91</sup> Þórður Tómasson, 'Þrír þættir'.

<sup>92</sup> In the present study, use has been made of the collection of Icelandic place-names in Örnefnasafn Stofnunar Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, at Laugavegur 13, 101 Reykjavík. About one sixth of the collection has been digitized and is accessible at [www.sarpur.is](http://www.sarpur.is). However, the digitization is somehow unorganized. The present author has scrutinized all the preserved lists of place-names for the area from Rangárvallasýsla in the east through the districts to the west of it, Árnessýsla, Gullbringu- og Kjósarsýsla (the greater Reykjavík area included) and Borgarfjarðar- og Mýrasýsla [Borgarfjörður (Borgarfjörðr) and Mýrar]. A considerable number has been found outside this area; it is to be expected that there is still a considerable number of Katrín place-names, not mentioned here, to be found. Some of the names found can with certainty or in all probability be traced back to known women named Katrín and are consequently not included. Place-names at the collection are ordered by the number of each 'hreppur'-district. Most of the Katrín place-names, mentioned in the article, are digitized and can be found on [leitir.is](http://leitir.is) [Landsbókasafn Íslands (National Library of Iceland)], or [sarpur.is](http://sarpur.is) [Þjóðminjasafn Íslands (National Museum of Iceland)]. Þorsteinn Þorsteinsson, Húsafell. Athugasemdir og viðbætur. Also available at <https://www.sarpur.is/Adfang.aspx?AdfangID=1461978>, last accessed March 15 2020. Two more instances have been found of Katrínarstekkur, i.e. 'stekkr'-folds, named after Catherine. These are on lands belonging to two farms in the parish of Staður in Grunnavík, one called Faxastaðir and the other Höfði. In the late middle ages the church at Staður owned an image of Catherine ('Katrínarlíkneski', DI 4, p. 139). Finally, I wish to thank Margaret Cormack for reading early and late drafts of this essay and for offering some very useful comments. I also wish to extend my gratitude to the editors of the volume.



## Appendix

### *Depictions of St Catherine Extant in Medieval Iceland*

#### *Hólar Cathedral*

- 1 A bishop's cope (c. 1500; Arras, France [?]), today at the Þjóðminjasafn Íslands, Reykjavík, with the number Þjms. 4401. See Matthías Þórðarson, 'Biskupskápan gamla', *Árbók Hins íslenska fornleifafélags 1911* (Reykjavík: Ísafoldarprentsmiðja, 1911), pp. 46–47, and Kristján Eldjárn, *Hundrað ár í Þjóðminjasafni* (Reykjavík: Menningarsjóður, 1994), pp. 35–36
- 2 An altarpiece, Hólabrík (c. 1525; Germany [?]). See Kristín Huld Sigurðardóttir, 'Altarisbrík', in Kristján Eldjárn and Þorsteinn Gunnarsson, *Um Hóladómkirkju* (Hólar: Hólanefnd, 1993), pp. 65–69, where Catherine is shown twice, at nos 9 and 46.
- 3 An altarpiece (c. 1470; England), today at the Þjóðminjasafn Íslands, with the number Þjms. 4634/1899–105. See Sigurður Vigfússon, 'Rannsóknarferð um Húnavatns og Skagarfjarðar sýslur 1886', *Árbók Hins íslenska fornleifafélags 1888–1892* (Reykjavík: Ísafoldarprentsmiðja, 1892), p. 96. Bera Nordal, 'Skrá um enskar alabastursmyndir', pp. 104–06.

#### *Skálholt Cathedral*

- 1 An altarpiece, Ögmundarbrík (c. 1500 [?]), today at the Þjóðminjasafn Íslands, acquisition number Þjms. 10884. See Kristján Eldjárn, 'Ögmundarbrík', in *Stakir steinar: tólf minjaþættir* (Akureyri: Bókaútgáfan Norðri, 1961), pp. 112–13, 119–21, and Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir, 'Búnaður dómkirkna', in Hjalti Hugason, ed., *Kristni á Íslandi II* (Reykjavík: Alþingi, 2000), pp. 164–71, p. 168.
- 2 A mantle or chasuble ('høkull', c. 1400–1500, with sections from the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries) now at the Þjóðminjasafn Íslands, acquisition number Þjms. 11923.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.sarpur.is/Leit.aspx?search=h%c3%b6kull%2011923&filter=895&museumID=1&typeID=15>.

*Síðumúli church*

- 1 An altarpiece (c. 1400–1500, Germany [?]).<sup>2</sup>

*Vatnsfjörður church*

An altarpiece (c. 1400–1500, Germany [?]). See Kristján Eldjárn, 'Minnisgreinar Árna Magnússonar um merka kirkjugripi', *Árbók Hins íslenska fornleifafélags 1976* (Reykjavík: Ísafoldarprentsmiðja, 1977), pp. 140–43. From Draflastaðir church: An altarfrontal (c. 1538, Iceland), with the number Þjms. 3924. See Elsa E. Guðjónsson, 'Hannyrðir Helgu Sigurðardóttur', *Árbók Hins íslenska fornleifafélags 1979* (Reykjavík: Ísafoldarprentsmiðja, 1980), pp. 85–86, and Kristján Eldjárn, *Hundrað ár í Þjóðminjasafni* (Reykjavík: Menningarsjóður, 1994), pp. 32–33.

*Reykholt church*

An altarpiece (c. 1500 Germany [?]) now at the Þjóðminjasafn Íslands, acquisition number Þjms. 4333. Geir Waage, Guðrún Sveinbjarnardóttir, Guðrún Harðardóttir, Lilja Árnadóttir, and Gunnar Bollason, 'Reykholtskirkja', in *Kirkjur Íslands 13* (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 2009), p. 265. The present author suggests that Catherine of Alexandria is shown in the upper right section of the altarpiece; this is corroborated by Margaret Cormack.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.sarpur.is/Adfang.aspx?AdfangID=335068>.

BOYDELL & BREWER

## St Agnes of Rome in Late Medieval and Early Modern Icelandic Verse<sup>1</sup>

Natalie M. Van Deusen

St Agnes, the young Christian virgin who was martyred in Rome in the fourth century, was a highly important early virgin martyr saint. Her story, the oldest attested rendering of which is in Ambrose of Milan's (c. 340–397) *De virginibus* from 377,<sup>2</sup> enjoyed widespread popularity in Latin and the vernacular and in both ecclesiastical and popular tradition. The most influential legend of St Agnes and the one on which all subsequent versions are based in one way or another is the so-called *Passio Agnetis* or *Gesta sanctae Agnetis* (BHL 156),<sup>3</sup> which has been attributed to Ambrose but was written by an anonymous author now referred to as Pseudo-Ambrose. According to the Pseudo-Ambrosian legend, Agnes was born to a noble Roman Christian family. One day, the prefect Symphronius' son caught sight of Agnes as she was walking home from school and immediately fell in love with her. He attempted to get her hand in marriage but was promptly rejected and returned home heartbroken. Symphronius demanded that Agnes change her mind, and ultimately, he gave her two choices: either sacrifice to idols and become a Vestal Virgin or live her life as a prostitute. She refused both, and as a result she was led naked to a brothel. Her hair miraculously grew to cover her body, and when she entered the brothel, an angel appeared, cast a bright light around her for protection, and gave her a garment with which to cover

<sup>1</sup> I owe thanks to Katelin Parsons and Ryan Eric Johnson for directing me to these manuscripts, and to Katelin for the biographical information on Jón Jónsson Thorkelsson, which she obtained from the New Iceland Heritage Museum's archivist.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Joseph Denomy, *The Old French Lives of Saint Agnes and Other Vernacular Versions of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1938), p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Paolo Tomea, 'Corpore quidem iuvenula sed animo cana. La *Passio Agnetis* BHL 156 e il topos della *puella senex* nell'agiografia mediolatina', *Analecta Bollandiana* 128/1, pp. 18–55. The text is edited in *PL* 17, cols 735–42; the following summary is based on this version of the legend.

her body. This miraculous trifecta of events transformed the brothel into a place of prayer, so that everyone who entered was purified. This angered Symphronius' son, who, followed by his companions, stormed the building. He attempted to rape Agnes, but was immediately struck dead. The heartbroken Symphronius demanded that Agnes resurrect his son, and after she had successfully brought him back to life, both father and son converted to Christianity. The temple priests, however, continued to press their case against Agnes, who was charged with witchcraft. Symphronius dared not oppose the priests, so he recused himself from the trial and had his lieutenant, Aspasius, continue the proceedings. Aspasius requested that Agnes be burned. She was thrown into the flames, but they did not harm her and were extinguished through her prayers. Finally, Aspasius himself thrust a sword into Agnes' throat, at which point she died as a martyr with her virginity intact. Agnes' parents buried her body at their estate, but the Christians gathering there were ambushed by angry pagans. They stoned to death Agnes' foster-sister, Emerentiana, who was later buried near Agnes' tomb. Later, while keeping watch at their daughter's tomb, Agnes appeared to her parents in a vision, in which she was surrounded by an army of virgins dressed in gold and with a lamb by her side, speaking words of comfort to them. The vision became famous, and news of it reached Emperor Constantine's daughter Constantia, who suffered from leprosy and went to Agnes' tomb to pray. While in prayer, she fell asleep and had a vision of Agnes. When Constantia awoke, she was cured and made her father build not only a basilica at Agnes' tomb, but also a mausoleum for herself: the so-called Santa Costanza Mausoleum. St Agnes' feast-day is January 21.

St Agnes was the co-patron of two churches in medieval Iceland: Þerney and Bær, both in Borgarfjörður. Bishop Þorlákur Þórhallsson was responsible for the dedication at Bær, and he was also the one, who declared her feast-day a Holy Day of Obligation in 1179 as a result of Guðmundr kárhqfði's (fl. c. 1170–1200) vision of St Agnes, which is related in the A-redaction of *Guðmundar saga*:<sup>4</sup>

EN þa inn fyra uetrin. fecc Guðmundr karlhöfðe uitron af Guði og Agnete meyio. Þann uetr sat fyrstan at stole. hinn heilage Thorlakr byskup. ok þa fell Erlingr j(arl) ok Hlauðuer Frakka konungr. ok var i lög tekit um sumarit eptir af uitron Guðmundar. er firi hann bar. Ambrosius Messo ok Cecilio Messo ok Agnesar Messo.

<sup>4</sup> Margaret Cormack, *The Saints in Iceland: Their Veneration from the Conversion to 1400*, pref. Peter Foote. *Subsidia Hagiographica* 78 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1994), p. 75; *Guðmundar sögur biskups I, Ævi Guðmundar biskups, Guðmundar saga A*, ed. Stefán Karlsson. *Editiones Arnarnagænar*, Ser. B, vol. 6 (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde & Bagger, 1983), p. 40. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own.

[But the previous winter Guðmundr Curly-Haired had a vision of God and the virgin Agnes. That (1179) was the first winter the holy Bishop Þorlákr held the episcopal see, and was when Jarl Erlingr (skakki) and Louis (VII) King of the Franks died. And the summer after Guðmundr's vision was revealed to him, the masses of Ambrose, Cecilia, and Agnes were made law].

The Kirkjubær convent reportedly owned an image of St Agnes and appears to have acquired it while Jórunn Hauksdóttir (d. 1361) served as abbess. When in 1344 Jórunn was consecrated abbess of the convent, she adopted Agnes' name. The annal entry for that year reads: 'Vígð Jorunn abbadis i Kirkiu bæ ok nefnd Agnes' ('Jórunn was consecrated as abbess of Kirkjubær and was named Agnes.')

<sup>5</sup> The legend of St Agnes was translated into Old Norse-Icelandic and survives in seven manuscripts dating from around 1300.<sup>6</sup> The church at Miðbæli (Eyjafjöll) reports owning her saga ('agnesar sogv.')<sup>7</sup> There are also several poetic renderings of the legend of St Agnes in Iceland, both from the late Middle Ages and the early modern period, which differ in content and emphasis as well as popularity (based on manuscript dissemination). This article provides details about the five late medieval and early modern Agnes poems, including two hitherto undiscovered works, the *Vísur af heilagra jómfú Agnesi* and the one-stanza *Agnesarvísa*. It discusses the manner in which the poets interpreted the legend, and examines the sources and interrelationship of the poems, as well as their dissemination.

## St Agnes in medieval Iceland

All three prose redactions of the Old Norse-Icelandic legend of St Agnes are translations of the aforementioned Pseudo-Ambrosian *Passio Agnetis*, also known as the *Gesta sanctae Agnetis*. One is *Agnesar saga* I, which is a slightly abbreviated version of the Pseudo-Ambrosian *passio* that omits the epilogue. It is extant in five manuscripts, of which Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 238 fol. I, a fragment from around 1300, is the earliest. The other witnesses of this redaction comprise another fragment, Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 238 fol. II (c. 1300–1350), two defective versions of the text in Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 235 fol. (c. 1400), and Stockholm, Kungliga biblioteket, Holm perg 2 fol (c. 1425–1445), and the only complete version of the legend in Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 429 12mo, better known as *Kirkjubæjarbók* (c. 1500). *Agnesar*

<sup>5</sup> *Islandske Annaler indtil 1578*, ed. Gustav Storm (Christiania [Oslo]: Grøndahl & Søn 1888), p. 210; Cormack, *The Saints in Iceland*, p. 75.

<sup>6</sup> Manuscripts of all redactions of *Agnesar saga* are listed in Kirsten Wolf, *The Legends of the Saints in Old Norse-Icelandic Prose*. Toronto Old Norse and Icelandic Series 6 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), pp. 20–23.

<sup>7</sup> *DI* 2, p. 679.

*saga* II, which Kirsten Wolf defines as ‘a somewhat less faithful translation’ of the same source, is preserved in Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 233a fol. (c. 1350–1375), but is defective and contains only the miracle about Constantia. The third redaction, *Agnesar saga* III, is, as Wolf notes, a quite ‘different’ and ‘much abridged’ translation of *BHL* 156; this redaction is preserved only in Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 238 fol. XV (c. 1450–1500), which also preserves only the end of the legend, which pertains to Constantia.<sup>8</sup>

St Agnes’ Outside the Walls Basilica in Rome is mentioned in *Leiðarvísir*, a guide for pilgrims from northern Europe to the Holy Land composed around 1157 traditionally ascribed to Abbot Nikulás Bergsson of Munkaþverá. The section about St Agnes’ Church includes the legend of Constantia, which relates that she was responsible for its construction:<sup>9</sup>

En austr þadan II milur er Agnesar kirkia, hun er dyrliguzt i allri borginni, hana lét gera Constantia dottir Constantini konungs, er hon tok fyrri tru en hann, ok bad hon leyfis ath lata gera Agnesar kirkiu, en konungr leyfði henne utan borgar ath radi Silvestri pafa.

[But 2 miles east of there is the Church of St Agnes, which is the most glorious in the entire city. Constantia, the daughter of King (*sic!*) Constantine, had it built when she adopted the faith before him and asked his permission to have a church of St Agnes built, and the king allowed it to be built outside of the city upon the advice of Pope Sylvester.]

Similar accounts of Constantia and the legend of the construction of St Agnes’ Outside the Walls Basilica are found in *Silvesters saga* and *Veraldar saga*.<sup>10</sup> St Agnes also features in the fourteenth-century poem about holy

<sup>8</sup> Wolf, *The Legends of the Saints*, pp. 20–23. *Heilagra manna sögur: Fortællinger og legender om hellige mænd og kvinder*, ed. Carl R. Unger, 2 vols (Christiania [Oslo]: Bentzen, 1877), I, pp. 15–22. Unger’s edition is of *Agnesar saga* I; the fragment of *Agnesar saga* II appears on p. 22/4–19, and the fragment of *Agnesar saga* III, which corresponds to p. 21/18–35 in Unger’s *Heilagra manna sögur*, is edited in *A Female Legendary from Iceland: ‘Kirkjubæjrbók’ (AM 429 12mo) in the Arnamagnæan Collection, Copenhagen*, ed. Kirsten Wolf. *Manuscripta Nordica: Early Nordic Manuscripts in Digital Facsimile 3* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2011), p. 42.

<sup>9</sup> *Alfræði íslenzk: Islandsk encyklopædisk litteratur. Cod. mbr. AM. 194, 8vo*, ed. Kristian Kålund and Nathaniel Beckman, 3 vols (Copenhagen: Samfund for udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur, 1908–1918), I, p. 18. See also Rudolf Simek, *Altnordische Kosmographie: Studien und Quellen zu Weltbild und Weltbeschreibung in Norwegen und Island vom 12. bis zum 14. Jahrhundert, Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde 4* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1990), p. 481.

<sup>10</sup> *Heilagra manna sögur*, ed. Unger, II, p. 255; *Veraldar saga*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson. *Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur 61* (Copenhagen: Luno, 1944), p. 59; Tommaso Marani, ‘*Leiðarvísir*: Its Genre and Sources, with

maidens, *Heilagra meyja drápa*; stanzas 30–32 focus on her trials and execution as well as her burial.<sup>11</sup> It seems, therefore, that St Agnes and her legend were popular in Iceland in the Middle Ages.

## Icelandic poetic renderings of the legend of St Agnes

The legend of St Agnes continued to capture the imagination of Icelanders well into the early modern period and inspired no fewer than five separate poetic renderings of her life and passion.

The earliest of the five poems, *Agnesardiktur*, is extant in thirteen manuscripts, the earliest of which are from the beginning of the eighteenth century.<sup>12</sup> Although the manuscripts are of a late date, it is assumed that the poem was written before the Reformation. Jón Helgason notes that it cannot be ascertained if the poem dates to the Catholic period, but comments that it is transmitted in manuscripts collecting various other poems that are decidedly of Catholic origin. Hálfðan Einarsson (1732–1785) wrote that *Agnesardiktur* was composed before the Reformation,<sup>13</sup> and Ólafur Jónsson (b. 1722), the scribe of *Pingvallabók*, Reykjavík, Landsbókasafn Íslands – Háskólabókasafn, JS 260 4to (1796), likewise groups the poem together with other so-called ‘páþiskra kvæða’ (‘popish poems’). *Agnesardiktur*, which consists of twenty-six stanzas, tells only a portion of the legend of St Agnes; it omits the details about her martyrdom and ends at the point when the prefect’s son is resurrected. The omission might be due to the fact that the poem is fragmentary, because it is missing one or more stanzas after the twelfth stanza. However, it is also possible that the poet never intended to give a complete account of the legend and wanted to focus on the conflict between the Christian virgin and her heathen suitor, which was resolved when she brought him back to life. The poet does not name his source, but sections of the poem have clear parallels in the Pseudo-Ambrosian legend.

The second-oldest poetic rendering of the legend of St Agnes is the *Vísur af heilagri jómfriú Agnesi*, which survives only in Reykjavík, Landsbókasafn Íslands – Háskólabókasafn, JS 207 8vo (c. 1720). The manuscript, which contains psalms, poems, and prayers, was in 1747 in the possession of

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Particular References to the Description of Rome’ (Ph.D. dissertation, Durham University, 2012), pp. 166–70.

<sup>11</sup> Kirsten Wolf, ‘Anonymous, *Heilagra meyja drápa*. ‘Drápa about Holy Maidens’ (Anon Mey.)’, in *Poetry on Christian Subjects: Part 2*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross. Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 7 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 908–09.

<sup>12</sup> For a list of manuscripts containing *Agnesardiktur*, see Wolf and Van Deusen, *The Saints in Old Norse and Early Modern Icelandic Poetry*, p. 14.

<sup>13</sup> Hálfðan Einarsson, *Sciagraphia historiarum literarum Islandicarum et scriptorum tum editorum tum ineditorum indicem exhibens* (Havniæ [Copenhagen]: Sander er Schröder, 1777), p. 58.



Sigríður Gunnlaugsdóttir (b. 1693), who lived at Brjánslækur in Vestur-Barðastrandarsýsla, and the bulk of the manuscript (except for the final four leaves) may have been written by her husband, Sigurður Þórðarson (c. 1688–1767), who was a known poet, scholar, and translator.<sup>14</sup> It was later given to Sigurður and Sigríður's great-granddaughter, Guðríður Hjaltadóttir (1800–1876),<sup>15</sup> according to the unfinished dedication on the inside cover of JS 207 8vo: 'gud hrædda og digdumm pridda heidurs jomfru Gudrydur Hialtadottir a bokina med ...' ['The God-fearing, virtue-adorned, honourable maiden Guðríður Hjaltadóttir owns the book with ...'] *Vísur af heilagri jómfú Agnesi*, which is preserved on fols. 152v–57r of JS 207 8vo, is almost certainly a copy of a now-lost exemplar, since the manuscript is dated to c. 1720 and the poem, according to its introduction, was 'skrifad vr þysku Anno 1664' (translated from German in 1664, as noted on fol. 152v). There is no indication of the poem's authorship. There also appears to be no relationship between this poem, which covers the life and martyrdom of St Agnes but not the posthumous miracles, and the other poetic renderings of the legend.

Also from the seventeenth century is a *rímnaflokkur* entitled *Rímur af Agnesi píslarvotti* (or *Agnesarrímur*), composed by the Reverend Eiríkur Hallsson í Höfða (1614–1698). The *rímur*, which are in four fits, are extant in only one manuscript, Reykjavík, Landsbókasafn Íslands – Háskólabókasafn, Lbs 705 4to (c. 1825–1834), which itself is a *rímnaþók*; it is the third work in the collection and was copied by Þorsteinn Þorsteinsson (1792–1863), who lived in the Skagafjörður region.<sup>16</sup> Eiríkur Hallsson was a well-known poet, and he composed a number of other psalms, poems, and *rímur* during his lifetime of both religious and secular content. In the fourth stanza in the third *ríma* of *Agnesarrímur*, Eiríkur states that he composed the verses for Hólmfríður Benediksdóttir (c. 1650–1695), who was the daughter of Benedikt Pálsson (1608–1664), *klausturhaldari* ('proprietor') at the former Augustinian monastery and house of Canons regular at Möðruvellir from 1639 until his death in 1664. Eiríkur was reportedly good friends with both Hólmfríður's father and her mother, Sigríður stórráða Magnúsdóttir. After Benedikt's death, Eiríkur was also well-acquainted with Hólmfríður's stepfather Jón Eggertsson (1643–1689), who took over from Benedikt as *klausturhaldari*. Eiríkur's

<sup>14</sup> Páll Eggert Ólason, Lárus H. Blöndal, and Grímur M. Helgason, *Skrá um handritasöfn landsbókasafnsins*, Páll Eggert Ólason, Lárus H. Blöndal, and Grímur M. Helgason, 3 vols (Reykjavík: Prentsmiðjan Gutenberg, 1918–1935), II, p. 655; *ÍÆ* 4, p. 275.

<sup>15</sup> Guðríður's mother, Sigríður Guðbrandsdóttir (1774–1842, m. Hjalti Jónsson [1766–1827]), was the daughter of Guðbrandur Sigurðsson (1735–1779), who was the son of Sigurður Þórðarson and Sigríður Gunnlaugsdóttir. See *ÍÆ* 2, pp. 113 and 359.

<sup>16</sup> See 'Þorsteinn Þorsteinsson' at <https://handrit.is/en/biography/view/ThoThoo26>, last accessed October 23 2020.

youngest daughter, Ragnhildur, married Sigríður and Jón's youngest son, Eggert, who was Hólmfríður's half-brother.<sup>17</sup>

Hólmfríður was born around 1650, and Jón Espolín (1769–1836) describes her as 'kvenna fríðust' ('most beautiful of women.') She was born and raised at Möðruvellir and later lived at Myrká (Hörgárdalur) until her death in 1695.<sup>19</sup> It is not entirely clear when Eiríkur composed the *rímur* (preserved only in Lbs 705 4to) for Hólmfríður, who was considerably younger than him. At the beginning of the third *ríma*, Eiríkur thanks Benedikt Pálsson for giving him his poem's subject-matter and dedicates the *rímur* to Hólmfríður (fol. 26r): 'Blijd Holffrijdur Benidickts Dottir brag skal eiga' ('Gentle Hólmfríður Benediktsdóttir shall own the poem'). He refers to Hólmfríður as 'su unga sæta' (fol. 26r) ('that young woman') and expresses many good wishes for the girl, including the wish that she will become 'af bragds snot' (fol. 26r) ('a remarkable woman.'). He then invokes the examples of the Hebrew Bible women Sarah, Rebecca, and Rachel and expresses the hope that she will become 'Somaleg sem Sara' (fol. 26r) ('honorable like Sarah'), 'Sem Rebecka Ræda frod' (fol. 26r) ('wise in counsel like Rebecca'), and (fol. 26r) 'Jndisleg sem Rakcel' ('lovely like Rachel'). He further writes at the end of the final *ríma* that he presents the poem to 'Godum stulkum' (fol. 29v) ('good girls'), which also implies a young age for the poem's recipient. It is not entirely clear in Eiríkur's reference to Benedikt, if the poem was composed while Benedikt was alive, but if so, the *rímur* would have been composed before 1664, when Hólmfríður was no more than fourteen years old.

Unlike *Agnesardiktur*, *Agnesarrímur* provides a complete account of Agnes' martyrdom and the events leading up to it. Accordingly, it does not seem that the *rímur* were based on *Agnesardiktur*, nor is there any apparent connection to the poem translated from German. Each of the four *rímur* tells its own part of the legend. The first *ríma* is an introductory one, which presents the various characters of the legend; it begins with the poet's preface, followed by an introduction to the Roman co-emperors Diocletian and Maximian as well as the prefect Symphronius and his unnamed son. It then introduces Agnes, describes the son's failed courtship of the virgin, and mentions her arrest. The second *ríma* details Symphronius' attempts to break Agnes' will by having her stripped naked and led to the brothel. It concludes with the first of the three miracles, that is, the growth of her hair to cover her body. As mentioned above, the third *ríma* begins with a

<sup>17</sup> *ÍÆ* 1, pp. 134–35, 322, and 408–09; Jón Þorkelsson, 'Frá síra Eiríki Hallsyni (Frásögn Bólu-Hjálmars. – Vitnisburðir. – Rógsvala síra Eiríks)', *Blanda: Froðleikur gamall og nýr*, 9 vols (Reykjavík: Félagsprentsmiðjan, 1918–1920), I, p. 357 note 1.

<sup>18</sup> Jón Espolín, *Íslands árbækur í sögu-formi*, 22 vols (Copenhagen: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1821–1855), VIII, p. 111.

<sup>19</sup> *ÍÆ* 3, p. 306.

dedication to Hólmfríður Benediktsdóttir. It then describes Agnes' trials in the brothel, the attempted rape, and the death and resurrection of Symphronius' son. The fourth and final *ríma* begins with the conversion of Symphronius and his son, describes the attempted burning of Agnes by the angry heathen priests, and concludes with her martyrdom. In this *ríma*, Eiríkur names 'Ambrosius hinn ágæti' (fol. 29v) ('Ambrose the excellent') and 'Maximilius loflegi' ('the glorious Maximilius'), who are 'Bádir sagdir biskupar og besti menn i löndum þar' ('both said to be bishops and the best men there in the land') as authors of St Agnes' legend. The Ambrosius mentioned here is most certainly Pseudo-Ambrose. It is clear, therefore, that the primary source of the *rímur* was a version of the Pseudo-Ambrosian legend. In this context, it is important to note that the former Augustinian monastery at Möðruvellir, where Eiríkur's friend Benedikt Pálsson was *klausturhaldari* from 1639 to 1665, reportedly owned two copies of *Agnesar saga*, which are mentioned in the well-known 1461-inventory of what must have been a substantial library.<sup>20</sup> It is possible that Eiríkur gained access to one of these copies from Benedikt or even Jón Eggertsson, Benedikt's successor and Eiríkur's friend.

'Maximilius loflegi' ('the glorious Maximilius') is likely the fifth-century Bishop Maximus of Turin (d. 408/423), to whom a sermon for the feast of St Agnes (*BHL* 158) has been attributed.<sup>21</sup> The author's name was probably rendered incorrectly in either the original or the *rímur*'s nineteenth-century copy. Maximus' homilies are among the sources used by the compiler of the *Old Icelandic Homily Book* (c. 1200).<sup>22</sup> The S-redaction of *Jóns saga helga*, the Latin fragment II of the *Vita sancti Thorlaci*, and the A-, B-, and C-recensions of the *Þorláks saga helga* all quote a passage from Pseudo-Maximus' homily on St Eusebius; moreover, he is quoted three times in *Jóns saga baptista* II.<sup>23</sup> Accordingly, it seems that works both by and attributed to Maximus were available in Iceland and may have been among the unspecified Latin books and saints' lives listed in the 1461 and 1525 inventories of the Augustinian monastery at Möðruvellir.<sup>24</sup> As noted above, two lives of St Agnes are registered in the 1461 inventory for Möðruvellir.<sup>25</sup> In the *rímur*, certain additions to the Pseudo-Ambrosian

<sup>20</sup> *DI* 5, p. 289. On the Möðruvellir inventory see especially the discussion by Bullitta above, at pp. 70–71.

<sup>21</sup> *PL* 57, cols 641–48.

<sup>22</sup> *The Icelandic Homily Book*, ed. de Leeuw van Weenen, pp. 10–11 and 14.

<sup>23</sup> *PL* 57, col. 419; Joanna Skórzewska, *Constructing a Cult: The Life and Veneration of Guðmundr Arason (1161–1237) in Icelandic Written Sources*. The Northern World 51 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), p. 95, note 63; *Jóns saga ins helga*, ed. Foote, pp. cclii–cclv; Gottskálk Jensson, 'The Lost Latin Literature of Medieval Iceland', pp. 164–66; Marner, 'Väterzitate und Politik in der *Jóns saga baptista*', pp. 38, 40, and 71.

<sup>24</sup> *DI* 5, pp. 286–91; *DI* 9, pp. 316–18.

<sup>25</sup> *DI* 5, p. 289

*passio* can be traced to Maximus' sermon. Sarah, Rebecca, and Rachel are all mentioned as model wives in the same order in which they appear in the third *ríma*, where Eiríkur again invokes the examples of the three biblical matriarchs in his wishes for Holmfríður's future.<sup>26</sup> Eiríkur also names one additional source, an annal (fol. 29v), which may be the source from which Eiríkur obtained the other information contained in the *rímur* but not found in Pseudo-Ambrose's text or Pseudo-Maximus' sermon, that is, the names of the co-emperors Diocletian (244–311) and Maximian (c. 250–310) and the date of St Agnes' martyrdom in January 306. A number of the extant Icelandic annals include the reign of Diocletian and Maximian.<sup>27</sup> While some of the extant annals mention the persecution and martyrdom of Christians under the rules of Diocletian and Maximian, there is, however, no reference in them to St Agnes and her martyrdom. *Logmannsannáll* (Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 420b 4to [c. 1350–1400]) lists a number of Christian martyrs, but not St Agnes, and *Oddverjaannáll* includes 'Maximus son Diocletiani' under 306, but not St Agnes.<sup>28</sup> The annal that Eiríkur had access to may well have been Niels Heldvad's (1564–1634) *Martyrologia sanctorum*, Book IV of his *Historiarum sacrarum encolpodion*, which was printed in Copenhagen in 1634 and which was obviously well known in Iceland.<sup>29</sup> The unpaginated volume has a brief entry for 'Agnes jomfru' under January 21, and after a brief account of her life indicates that Agnes was martyred on this day in 306 during the reign of the co-emperors Diocletian and Maximian: 'Dette skeede vdi Keyser Diocletiani oc Maximiani tider Anno Christi 306 den 21. Januarij' ('this took place during the time of Emperors Diocletian and Maximian in the year of our Lord, 306, on January 21'). It is highly likely that Eiríkur

<sup>26</sup> PL 57, col. 644.

<sup>27</sup> *Íslandske annaler*, ed. Storm, pp. 4, 37, 86, 161–62, and 236–37.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 236–37; *Oddaannálar og Oddverjaannáll*, ed. Eiríkur Pormóðsson and Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir. Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, Rit 59 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, 2003), p. 76.

<sup>29</sup> Excerpts from Heldvad's matryrology in Icelandic are found in Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 124 8vo (c. 1600–1699); Reykjavík, Landsbókasafn Íslands – Háskólabókasafn, ÍBR 3 8vo (c. 1750–1795); Reykjavík, Landsbókasafn Íslands – Háskólabókasafn, Lbs 1960 8vo (1650); and Reykjavík, Landsbókasafn Íslands – Háskólabókasafn, Lbs 4942 8vo (1860). See *The History of the Cross-Tree Down to Christ's Passion: Icelandic Legend Versions*, ed. Mariane Overgaard. Editiones Arnamagnæanæ, Ser. B, vol. 26 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1968), pp. xciv and xcvi–xcix, and Margrét Eggertsdóttir, 'The Once Popular and Now Forgotten *Veróníkukvæði*', in *Sainthood, Scriptoria, and Secular Erudition of Medieval and Early Modern Scandinavia: Essays in Honor of Kirsten Wolf*, ed. Dario Bullitta and Natalie M. Van Deusen (Turnhout: Brepols, forthcoming).

obtained the information not found in his other sources from Heldvad's martyrology, either in the original Danish or in Icelandic translation.

There is much to suggest that Eiríkur's *rímur* served as the basis for *Agnesarkvæði*, which was composed around 1725 by Þorvaldur Magnússon (c. 1670–1740) and which, as evidenced by its over one hundred manuscript witnesses and audio recordings, was by far the most popular of the St Agnes poems during the eighteenth, nineteenth, and even twentieth centuries, not only in Iceland, but also in Icelandic settlements in Canada.<sup>30</sup> The attribution of the poem to Þorvaldur comes from one of the earlier manuscripts, Reykjavík, Landsbókasafn Íslands – Háskólabókasafn, Lbs 987 8vo, written by Jón Steingrímsson at Prestbakki in 1780. The well-known *Veronikukvæði* has also been attributed to Þorvaldur, along with other poems, psalms, and *rímur* of both secular and religious content. It is likely that Þorvaldur and Eiríkur were acquainted, or that at least Þorvaldur knew of Eiríkur, who died when Þorvaldur was in his thirties. Both were from the northern part of Iceland, and Þorvaldur was known as something of a wayfarer. According to Finnur Sigmundsson, he 'dvaldist hér og þar, helzt hjá heldri mönnum, og orti þá gjarna fyrir þá' ('stayed here and there, mostly with the better sort of people, and gladly composed for them.')<sup>31</sup> Most importantly for the purposes of establishing a connection between the two men and a relationship between *Agnesarkvæði* and *Agnesarrímur*, it has been demonstrated that Þorvaldur wrote the last *ríma* of Eiríkur's *Rímur af Hrólfi kraka*.<sup>32</sup> For this reason, it is not out of the question that Þorvaldur was familiar with *Agnesarrímur*, and that he based his considerably shorter *Agnesarkvæði* on Eiríkur's work. As Jon Gunnar Jørgensen and Tuomas Järvelä put it, 'Hafi Þorvaldur fengið köllun til að ljúka við rímur Hrólfs Kraka, er það alls ekki ósennilegt að hann hafi notað meira af efni því sem Eiríkur lét eftir sig, og ort kvæðið um Agnesi á grundvelli Agnesarrímanna' ('If Þorvaldur was called upon to complete the *rímur* of Hrólfr Kraki, it is not at all unlikely that he made use of more

<sup>30</sup> For a list of the manuscripts of *Agnesarkvæði*, see Kirsten Wolf and Natalie M. Van Deusen, *The Saints in Old Norse and Early Modern Icelandic Poetry*. Toronto Old Norse and Icelandic Series 10 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), pp. 15–17. There are seven additional manuscripts containing the poem, which were discovered after the publication of this catalogue. These comprise: 1) Borgarnes, Héraðsskjalasafn Borgarfjarðar, EE 166/34-1 (1825–1865); 2) Búðardalur, Héraðsskjalasafn Dalasýslu, IS-HD-2012-3-1 (c. 1800); 3) Eyrarbakki, Icelandic Heritage Centre (c. 1900–1950); 4) Gimli, New Iceland Heritage Museum (c. 1900); 5) Húsavík, Héraðsskjalasafn Þingeyinga, E-1432/4 (1865); 6) Húsavík, Héraðsskjalasafn Þingeyinga, E-1357/6 (1895); and 7) Winnipeg, Burton Lysecki Books (1800–1900).

<sup>31</sup> Finnur Sigmundsson, *Rímnatal*, 2 vols (Reykjavík: Rímnafélagið, 1966), I, p. 29 and II, p. 150.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 261 and 37.

of the material that Eiríkur left behind and composed the poem about Agnes based on *Agnessarrímur*.)<sup>33</sup>

Like *Agnessarrímur*, *Agnessarkvæði* gives a complete account of the legend of St Agnes, and two of the manuscripts of Þorvaldur's poem name the same Latin sources for the legend and provide the same dates for the events described. The first of these is Reykjavík, Landsbókasafn Íslands – Háskólabókasafn, ÍB 183 4to, which has been dated to around 1750, and which is probably closest to the original text. The title of the poem indicates that Þorvaldur Magnússon's sources were 'fraasøgn þeirra: Martini og Ambrosii Lærfedra i Þ:L: [Þyskalandi]' ('accounts of the teachers Martin and Ambrose in Germany'), and that he misinterpreted the 'Maximilius' mentioned in the *rímur* as a reference to Martin of Tours, who, incidentally, was known to have had a vision of St Agnes. The second-oldest witness, a fragmentary manuscript of unknown provenance probably from the second half of the eighteenth century, Akureyri, Héraðsskjalasafn, G-13/29, was written not much later than ÍB 183 4to and might well be a copy; not only are the texts quite similar, but the later text also has only a few errors and one minor variant. Moreover, G-13/29 includes 'Martynus' and 'Ambrosius' in the title, though it takes the Germany connection a bit further, stating that both were from 'Uln (*sic!*) j Þyskalandi' ('Ulm in Germany'). Like the *rímur*, these two manuscripts date St Agnes' martyrdom to January 21 306.

In terms of content, *Agnessarkvæði* and *Agnessarrímur* are closely related, and Þorvaldur gives an account of St Agnes' martyrdom that is similar to both the Pseudo-Ambrosian *passio* and Eiríkur Hallsson's *rímur* – though, of course, very much abridged. The two poems have similar phrasing. For example, the earliest witnesses of *Agnessarkvæði* both begin with 'J þann Tyma Rykti i Róm' (ÍB 183 4to, fol. 82v) / 'J þann tyma Rykte i Rom' (G-13/29, fol. 1) ('In that time ruled in Rome'), an incipit that echoes the 'J þann tijd sem drigdu Dom, Dioclesianus yfir keijsari allra j Rom, og þeir Maximinus' (Lbs 705 4to, fol. 22v) ('In that time when Diocletian, Senior Emperor [*augustus*] of all in Rome, and Maximian committed judgment'), of the first *ríma* in *Agnessarrímur*; there are several other stanzas in *Agnessarkvæði* that have close parallels in *Agnessarrímur*.<sup>34</sup> *Agnessarkvæði* also contains those additional elements that are included in the *rímur* but not in the Pseudo-Ambrosian legend, namely the identity of the Roman Emperor Diocletian (but not Maximian). A final feature shared by the *rímur* and the poem is the use of Mohammed

<sup>33</sup> Tuomas Järvelä and Jon Gunnar Jørgensen, 'Agnessarkvæði', in *Fimm kvæði um heilaga menn: Agnessarkvæði, Dórotheukvæði, Laurentiuskvæði, Margrétarkvæði, Úrsúlukvæði*, Landsbókasafn Íslands – Háskólabókasafn (Reykjavík: Unpublished manuscript, 1981), p. 31.

<sup>34</sup> Järvelä and Jørgensen, 'Agnessarkvæði', pp. 27–28.

(571–632) and Muslims as synonymous with idols and heathens, which is hardly uncommon in late medieval and early modern Icelandic literature – particularly the *riddara sögur* – but which is otherwise unattested in the Icelandic material on St Agnes.<sup>35</sup>

Importantly, both the *rímur* and the poem conclude the story at the point when St Agnes is buried and do not mention the stoning of Emerentiana and Constantia's miracle. The omission of the latter may be due to the time at which they were composed. The inclusion of a posthumous miracle attributed to a Catholic saint might have been problematic and pushed the boundaries of rewriting the life of a saint. In many ways, the manner in which the episode has been omitted from both the *rímur* and poem is similar to the way in which Catholic poems about the Virgin Mary were redacted following the Reformation to suit Protestant sensibilities and theologies surrounding the mother of Christ.<sup>36</sup> Both the *rímur* and the poem relate that Symphronius was responsible for burying St Agnes. Moreover, emphasis is placed on the more dramatic aspects of the legend: the failed courtship, Agnes' three trials, the miraculous resurrection of Symphronius' son, and her martyrdom at the hands of Symphronius' deputy, who thrust a sword through her after having unsuccessfully attempted to burn her alive.<sup>37</sup> In the *rímur*, he thrust a knife through her throat, and in the poem, a knife through her chest, though these slight differences may have to do with the need to adhere to end-rhyme. And while the *rímur* place St Agnes' trials in a brothel, *Agnesar kvæði* sanitizes the narrative and situates them in a temple, thus conflating Pseudo-Ambrose's 'double martyrdom' of chastity and faith into a single trial, since she is to be led naked into a 'góðahús' ('temple.')

As mentioned above, there is little doubt that *Agnesar kvæði* originated in the north of Iceland with Þorvaldur Magnússon. Þorvaldur was born at Húsavík in the late seventeenth century, and, according to the 1703 census, he stayed there and worked for his parents, though it is reported that he was ill at that time. He lived at Víðivellir in Blönduhlíð between 1724 and 1729, possibly longer, and it is told that he died at Þingeyrar.<sup>38</sup> *Agnesar kvæði* has been dated to around 1725, and it is quite possible that Þorvaldur composed

<sup>35</sup> See Sverrir Jakobsson, 'Saracen Sensibilities: Muslims and Otherness in Medieval Saga Literature', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 115/2 (2016), pp. 213–38; and Katelin Parsons, 'Radiant Maidens and Butchered Brides: Finding St Ursula in Icelandic Literature', in *The Cult of St Ursula and the 11,000 Virgins*, ed. Jane Cartwright (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2016), pp. 227–44.

<sup>36</sup> See Einar Sigurbjörnsson, 'Maríukvæðskapur á mótum kaþólsku og lúthersku', in *Til heiðurs og hugbótar: Greinar um trúarkvæðskap fyrri alda*, ed. Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir and Anna Guðmundsdóttir (Reykholst: Snorrastofa, Rannsóknarstofnun í Miðaldafræðum, 2003), pp. 113–29.

<sup>37</sup> See Järvelä and Jørgensen, 'Agnesar kvæði', p. 12

<sup>38</sup> Espólín, *Íslands árbækur*, IX, p. 140; Gísli Baldur Róbertsson, 'Himnabréf

the poem while at Víðivellir, where Þrúður Þorsteinsdóttir biskupsekkja (1666–1738), who had a well-known interest in poetry and sagas, lived between 1712–1730.<sup>39</sup> It is perhaps worth noting too that Þrúður's father, Skagafjörður district magistrate (*sýslumaður*) Þorsteinn Þorleifsson (1635–1705), was for a while at the former Augustinian monastery at Möðruvellir, where *Agnesarrímur* was composed.<sup>40</sup> It is easy to imagine that while at Möðruvellir, Þorsteinn obtained a copy of the *rímur* and brought it with him to Víðivellir, which creates yet another possible point of contact between Þorvaldur and his source text and supports the argument that the poem had its origin at Víðivellir.

Reykjavík, Landsbókasafn Íslands – Háskólabókasafn, ÍB 183 4to, which is the oldest manuscript witness of *Agnesarkvæði* and the one that is probably closest to the original text, has its provenance in the north. The names of its earliest known owners are written in the margins of the manuscript and can be traced to Skatastaðir, Sveinsstaðir, and Ábær in the Skagafjörður region, which is not far from Víðivellir. A number of other eighteenth-century manuscripts containing *Agnesarkvæði* can also be traced to the north, including the above-mentioned G-13/29, as well as Reykjavík, Landsbókasafn Íslands – Háskólabókasafn, JS 582 4to, which was owned by Guðrún Jónsdóttir (1741–1796) at Sandhólar in the Eyjafjörður region. Further manuscripts include Reykjavík, Landsbókasafn Íslands – Háskólabókasafn, Lbs 1157 8vo from around 1777; Reykjavík, Landsbókasafn Íslands – Háskólabókasafn, Lbs 1571 8vo from around 1780; and Reykjavík, Landsbókasafn Íslands – Háskólabókasafn, Lbs 2930 from 1788. There are several other manuscripts that also have their provenance in the north of Iceland.

The poem spread early to the east, as evidenced by Reykjavík, Landsbókasafn Íslands – Háskólabókasafn, Lbs 1718 8vo. The part of the manuscript that contains *Agnesarkvæði* was written in 1765 in Valþjófsstaður. There is also Reykjavík, Landsbókasafn Íslands – Háskólabókasafn, ÍB 136 8vo, written in 1797 by Sigurður Magnússon of Hnappavellir (1720–1805). A number of other manuscripts from eastern Iceland were copied and disseminated during the nineteenth century. In the south, the earliest manuscript containing *Agnesarkvæði* is Reykjavík, Landsbókasafn Íslands – Háskólabókasafn, Lbs 987 8vo from around 1780, and in the west, Reykjavík, Landsbókasafn Íslands – Háskólabókasafn, Lbs 3391 8vo from 1803. The poem also appears in miscellanies in Canada; a nineteenth-century manuscript discovered and

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á Húsavíkurþingi 1724' at [https://skjalasafn.is/heimild/himnabref\\_a\\_husavikurthingi\\_1724](https://skjalasafn.is/heimild/himnabref_a_husavikurthingi_1724), last accessed October 23 2020.

<sup>39</sup> Gísli Baldur Róbertsson, 'Himnabréf á Húsavíkurþingi 1724'; Jón Espólin and Einar Bjarnason, *Saga frá Skagfirðingum: 1685–1847*, 4 vols (Reykjavík: Íðunn, 1976–79), I, pp. 36–37.

<sup>40</sup> Espólin and Einar Bjarnason, *Saga frá Skagfirðingum*, I, p. 9; *ÍÆ* V, p. 235.



currently housed at Burton Lysecki Books in Winnipeg preserves the poem, as does a manuscript from the first part of the twentieth century, which is currently housed at the Eyrarbakki Icelandic Heritage Center in Manitoba. A third defective copy of the poem, probably from around 1900, was discovered in an envelope in a box of printed books at Gimli New Iceland Heritage Museum in Manitoba; the papers have been linked to Jón Jónsson Thorkelsson (1855–1942), who emigrated to Arnes, Manitoba in 1886. It is difficult, if not impossible, to establish a stemma of the manuscript of *Agnesarkvæði*, since written and oral traditions existed side-by-side, as evident from the many audio recordings of the poem made in the latter half of the twentieth century. However, certain key variants may be identified, according to which Jon Gunnar Jørgensen and Tuomas Järvelä grouped a number of manuscript witnesses.<sup>41</sup>

One of the manuscripts preserving *Agnesarkvæði*, Reykjavík, Landsbókasafn Íslands – Háskólabókasafn, Lbs 2286 4to (1892–1893), also preserves a fifth and (until now) unknown poem about St Agnes by an anonymous author. The single verse, entitled *Agnesarvísa* (fol. 211r) appears immediately before *Agnesarkvæði*, which, according to Sighvatur Grímsson Borgfirðingur (1840–1930), the compiler of the manuscripts, was copied ‘eptir gömlum blöðum í minni gamallar konu’ (fol. 211v) (‘from some old leaves according to the memory of an old woman’.) According to Sighvatur, who was from the Ísafjörður region in the northwest, *Agnesarvísa* was derived from the same source. The verse is not extant in any other manuscripts containing *Agnesarkvæði*, and it is impossible to determine its age. It reads as follows:

### *Agnesarvísa* in Lbs 2286 4to

[fol. 211r] *Agnesarvísa*

um höfund hennar og aldur veit eg ekki; – skrifud hér eftir sömu blöðum og næst á undan.

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Agnes kristin ung meyan frída, átti víst í Róm hardla strída,  
kjörin birt og kúgun nam líða, klæd flettist í hofinu víða,  
bál kveiktist, ei brann nidr in frída, brád kvaddist sæfljóð vildi nida,  
hlaut þó ristinn hrings audur bliða, hels ángist af knífs sting ad lida.

[A Verse About Agnes

I do not know about its author and age; – it is written here according to the same leaves as the poem below.

<sup>41</sup> Järvelä and Jørgensen, ‘Agnesarkvæði’, pp. 34–35.

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The beautiful young Christian virgin Agnes certainly had a great struggle in Rome,  
the chosen one appeared and suffered oppression, she was disrobed in the large temple,  
the bonfire was kindled, the beautiful one did not burn down, he said he would soon slander the girl,  
the gentle woman's fate was cut: to suffer death's anguish from the knife's sting.]

Despite its brevity, *Agnesarvísa* contains the key elements of the legend: Agnes was a beautiful young Christian virgin from Rome who was subjected to various trials and ultimately killed for her faith. It focuses on the various ways in which Agnes was tortured until she was killed, while the episode about Symphronius and his son is omitted. In many ways, the selection of the various components of the legend of the St Agnes is opposite of the selection in *Agnesarðiktur*, in which the martyrdom is absent and the focus is on the failed romance. Presumably, this verse derives from *Agnesarkvæði*, though it has not been possible to locate any other manuscripts of the single-stanza poem or to determine more about Sighvatur's source. It is tempting to conclude that it was a short ditty composed by one of the singers of *Agnesarkvæði*, perhaps the woman on whom the scribe of Sighvatur's exemplar relied for his transcription, and that it was limited to the repertoire of a single source or, at best, a limited group of singers of *Agnesarkvæði*.

## Conclusion

Regardless of its dubious impact beyond the one manuscript, this fifth and final poetic rendering of St Agnes' legend demonstrates the widespread appeal of St Agnes' story in late medieval and early modern Iceland. As was the case with many saints and their lives, St Agnes and her legend proved to be highly malleable, and her example was used for a variety of purposes and in a variety of contexts. Hannah Jones has observed that '[a]t different points in the history of her legend, Agnes was sequentially appropriated and reinvented, first as the acceptable face of imperial hegemony, then as the icon of docile submission to episcopal authority, and finally as an exemplum of lay patronage and piety'.<sup>42</sup> Iceland's medieval and post-medieval poetic tradition represents a unique and important way in which the legend of St Agnes was 'appropriated and reinvented' far beyond early Christian Rome. The reasons for this

<sup>42</sup> Hannah Jones, 'Agnes and Constantia: Domesticity and Cult Patronage in the *Passion of Agnes*', in *Religion, Dynasty, and Patronage in Early Christian Rome, 300-900*, ed. Kate Cooper and Julia Hillner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 115-39, p. 116.

widespread appropriation and reinvention are not entirely clear, but I speculate that the popularity of *Agnesar kvæði* in particular may be understood within the context of conduct literature. Also, since many of its manuscripts were written for and/or owned at some point by women, the poems should be considered within the broader context of 'Mirror for Women' literature in early modern Iceland. This genre, which was common in early modern Europe, presented guidelines for proper female conduct.<sup>43</sup> Conduct literature need not be explicit – expectations for proper behavior might be conveyed through models. Virgin martyrs were often presented as role models not only for the professional religious but also for young, well-to-do women ultimately destined for marriage, as evident from the examples of French poet and author Christine de Pizan (1364–c. 1430) and *Livre pour l'enseignement de ses filles du Chevalier de La Tour*, written by Geoffroy IV de la Tour Landry (1330–1402/1406) for his daughters in order to instruct them on proper courtly behavior.<sup>44</sup> This is in line with Alexander Joseph Denomy's explanation of the popularity of the legend of St Agnes in the vernacular:

It was inevitable that the *Legend of Saint Agnes* should prove immensely popular, especially with the young. Venerated as a patroness of virgins, honored by the Church by the insertion of her name into the Canon of the Mass, the romantic elements with which her legend is replete, must have caught the popular fancy and interest. As such, her legend and life were invaluable in instructing the youth in purity and in modesty, and in edifying the adult to a cultivation of those virtues.<sup>45</sup>

In *Agnesar kvæði*, Agnes is praised and rewarded after her death for her piety and unwavering faith. It is possible that her example of piety and virtue was considered an appropriate choice for including her legend in the reading collections of young women in Iceland and even across the Atlantic Ocean in Icelandic settlements in Canada. It is not a coincidence that many of the copyists and owners of manuscripts containing one or more virgin martyr poems were ministers, who themselves would have been at least partially responsible for conveying gender-specific

<sup>43</sup> For more on the Icelandic adaptation of conduct literature in early modern Europe and its adaptations in Iceland, and in early modern Icelandic poetry in particular, see Natalie M. Van Deusen, 'A Tale of Model Women: An Edition of *Kvendæmaþáttur*', in *Sainthood, Scriptoria, and Secular Erudition of Medieval and Early Modern Scandinavia: Essays in Honor of Kirsten Wolf*, ed. Dario Bullitta and Natalie M. Van Deusen. Acta Scandinavica. Aberdeen Studies in the Scandinavian World (Turnhout: Brepols, forthcoming)

<sup>44</sup> See Katherine J. Lewis, 'Model Girls? Virgin Martyrs and the Training of Young Women in Late Medieval England', in *Young Medieval Woman*, ed. Katherine J. Lewis, Noel James Menuge, and Kim M. Phillips (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), pp. 25–46, especially 25–31.

<sup>45</sup> Denomy, *The Old French Lives of Saint Agnes*, p. 119.

behavior expectations (as per Luther's *Minor Catechism*)<sup>46</sup> to their flocks through such didactic models. There is undeniably also a romance element to *Agnesarkvæði*, not only in the attention given to St Agnes' beauty and her noble birth, but also in the failed courtship, complete with Symphronius' son's lovesicknesses and the subsequent attempts to force Agnes to be his bride, as well as the chaste love between Agnes and her heavenly bridegroom, with whom she is united in death. This invocation of themes of courtly romance in *Agnesarkvæði*, taken in combination with possible conduct literature elements, make for a compelling narrative that both conforms to religious ideals and contains sufficient intrigue for popular audiences.

<sup>46</sup> *Sa Minne Catechismus D. Martini Lutheri: Epter þeirre fyrre Vtleggingu: Psalm. 34. Koméd hingad Børn heyredier, Eg vil kiena ydur Otta Drottins. Prentadur en ad Nyu* (Hólar: no publisher, 1660), pp. 56 and 59.

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