

ROYAL SANCTITY AND THE WRITING OF HISTORY ON THE PERIPHERIES OF  
LATIN CHRISTENDOM, C. 1000 - 1200

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## **ABSTRACT**

Elizabeth Hasseler: Royal Saints and the Writing of History on the Peripheries of Latin Christendom, c. 1000 - 1200  
(Under the Direction of Marcus G. Bull)

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the edges of Latin Christendom were expanding outwards as new peoples along its northern and eastern peripheries converted to the Christian faith, including the Danes, Norwegians, and Hungarians. Closely related to this process of Christianization was the centralization of traditionally disunited peoples into unitary polities under the rule of new royal dynasties. These early kings used their novel political authority to patronize religious men and houses, found episcopal institutions, and enforce Christian observance amongst their peoples, and in turn they wielded the spiritual legitimacy offered by their new faith to bolster their dynastic ambitions. Founder-kings such as Knútr IV of Denmark, Óláfr II Haraldsson of Norway, Stephen I of Hungary, and Ladislaus I of Hungary were central to the emergence of their Christian kingdoms: and in death, they came to be venerated as their peoples' first Christian saints.

This dissertation explores the centrality of royal sanctity to the historical traditions of medieval Norway, Denmark, and Hungary. It asks what role was attributed to holy kings in the foundation of the northern and eastern kingdoms by native historians who, for the first time, were textually codifying their peoples' pasts in chronicles, sagas, and saints' lives. Royal sanctity was both a powerful and fraught category in that it united two types of authority, secular and spiritual, which had had a fraught interrelationship within the tradition of western Christian

thought. Throughout the early Middle Ages, kings who had achieved posthumous sanctification had traditionally done so by renouncing their royal office in order to perfect themselves spiritually. This dissertation argues that the eleventh and twelfth century represents a distinct historical moment during which the concept of royal sanctity provided a particularly useful vocabulary for conceptualizing the emergence of new Christian polities on the edges of Latin Christendom. It did so because of, rather than in spite of, the internal tension between the identities of the king and the saint. Its duality allowed historians on the Christian peripheries to speak to both the religious and political transformation of their societies, and to explore in subtle ways the interrelations between kingship and salvation.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DD	<i>Diplomatarium Danicum</i> . Copenhagen: E. Munksgaard, 1958-2000. 24 Volumes.
DMA	Erik Kroman, editor. <i>Danmarks middelalderlige annaler</i> . Copenhagen: Selskabet for Udgivelse af Kilder til dansk Historie, 1980.
LDNH	Eirik Vandvik, editor. <i>Latinske dokument til norsk historie fram til år 1204</i> . Oslo: Norske Samlaget, 1959.
MHN	Gustav Storm, editor. <i>Monumenta Historica Norvegiae</i> . Oslo, 1880.
PKS	Diana Whaley, editor. <i>Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 1: From Mythical Times to ca. 1035</i> . 2 Volumes. Turnhout: Brepols, 2012.
SRH	<i>Scriptores rerum hungaricarum tempore decum regumque stirpis arpadianae gestarum</i> . Budapest, 1938. 2 Volumes.
VSD	Martin Clarentius Gertz, editor. <i>Vitae Sanctorum Danorum</i> . Copenhagen: Selskabet for Udgivelse af Kilder til Dansk Historie, 1908-12.

## INTRODUCTION

The edges of the Latin Church were pushing outwards at the turn of the first millennium. Peoples who had in centuries past terrorized the communities along Christendom's northern and eastern frontiers, including the Norwegians, Danes, and Magyars, were themselves joining the community of believers.<sup>1</sup> This was a process driven largely by newly powerful rulers, and especially new kings.<sup>2</sup> In areas where monastic or other ecclesiastical missionaries had initially struggled to gain a foothold, kings could wield their political authority to impose and police new norms of observance amongst their peoples. Christianity offered its own attractions to ambitious monarchs. It was a faith whose messiah was himself styled the King of kings; and it was the faith of the powerful rulers of England, France, and Germany, whom the northern and eastern kings

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<sup>1</sup> Johann P. Arnason and Björn Wittrock, eds., *Eurasian Transformations, Tenth to Thirteenth Centuries: Crystallizations, Divergences, Renaissances* (Leiden: Brill, 2004); R.I. Moore, "The Transformation of Europe as a Eurasian Phenomenon," *Medieval Encounters* 10 (2004): 77-97; Gábor Klaniczay, "The Birth of a New Europe About 1000 CE: Conversion, Transfer of Institutional Models, New Dynamics," *Medieval Encounters* 10 (2004): 99-129; Ildar Garipzanov, Patrick Geary, and Przemysław Urbańczyk, eds., *Franks, Northmen, and Slavs: Identities and State Formation in Early Medieval Europe* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008); Nora Berend, ed., *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy: Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus' c. 900 - 1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Anders Winroth, *The Conversion of Scandinavia: Vikings, Merchants, and Missionaries in the Remaking of Northern Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012)

<sup>2</sup> Knut Helle, *Norge blir en stat, 1130-1139* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1974); Tore Nyberg, *Die Kirche in Skandinavien: Mitteleuropäischer und englischer Einfluss im 11. und 12. Jahrhundert; Anfänge der Domkapitel Børglum und Odense in Dänemark* (Sigmaringen: J. Thorbecke, 1986); László Veszprémy, "Conversion in Chronicles: The Hungarian Case," in Gudya Armstrong and Ian N. Wood, eds., *Christianizing Peoples and Converting Individuals* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000): 133-46; Birgit Sawyer and Peter Sawyer, "Scandinavia Enters Christian Europe," in Knútr Helle, ed., *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia Vol. 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 147-59; Berend, *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy*; Sverre Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom: State Formation in Norway, c. 900 – 1350* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2010); Stefan Brink, "Early Ecclesiastical Organization of Scandinavia, Especially Sweden," in Kirsti Salonen, Kurt Villads Jensen, and Torstein Jørgensen, eds., *Medieval Christianity in the North: New Studies* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013): 23-9; Nora Berend, Przemysław Urbańczyk, and Przemysław Wiszewski, *Central Europe in the High Middle Ages: Bohemia, Hungary, and Poland, c. 900 – c. 1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 111-37.

alternately competed with and leaned on for support. Styling themselves as the apostles of their people, missionizing kings appointed bishops, founded churches, enforced baptism, promulgated Christian laws, and persecuted pagans. And in death, many of these holy kings became their peoples' first native saints, celebrated for having transcended their earthly kingdoms to rule alongside Christ in the kingdom of heaven.

As the northern and eastern peoples joined the wider community of medieval Europe, the legends of the saint-kings became central to the stories they told about their shared pasts. Part of the royal saint's conceptual power came from his embodiment of multiple intersecting categories of authority. These men were among their peoples' first kings. Their memories invoked the foundation of regnal institutions, traditions, and ritual. At the same time, they were counted among the Christian elect, and their saintliness also activated competing metanarratives about martyrdom and renunciation. In its claim to spiritual as well as secular authority, royal sanctity was thus a category that could speak to broad cross-sections of the social order, even as it also threatened to collapse under its own internal contradictions. How could the king, who was made powerful by the wielding of violence and wealth and whose office demanded that he traffic in the business of the world, also perfect his soul?

This dissertation explores the category of royal sanctity as it is represented in the historical writing of the northern and eastern Latin Christian peripheries in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.<sup>3</sup> It asks how the linking of two powerful social categories, kingship and

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<sup>3</sup> The term "periphery" is used here not in the sense that it retains in core-periphery economic theory, to suggest the dependence of a marginal area on a hegemonic center. Instead it is a convenient general term to denote regions that existed on the edges of Latin Christendom in the variety of ways in which it defined itself, both as a linguistic community and above all a religious one. On the theorization of medieval peripheries and frontiers, see David Abulafia and Nora Berend, eds., *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), especially at pp. 6-34.

sanctity, allowed medieval historians to narrate the origins of their peoples and their entry into the European community: how did the kings of the Hungarians, Norwegians, and Danes come to be sanctified, and what role did historical writing play in the shaping of their memories? What conceptual work did royal sanctity do for historians as they crafted narratives of political and religious transformation? And how did ideas about kingship and sanctity on medieval Christendom's edges adapt and subvert the conventions of its cultural centers? We shall argue that royal sanctity was central to the intellectual project of conceptualizing the foundational structures of the adolescent northern and eastern kingdoms. The realities of political and religious transformation were complicated. The idealization of extraordinary men who exercised the powers both of kingship and Christianity had the capacity to cut through that complication by embodying the perfect ordering of their societies around those two structures. But royal sanctity, in its uneasy fusing of two competing modes of authority, was also itself a complex category. Its complexity, as we shall see, hardly undermined its historiographical usefulness. Instead, its persistent sense of internal tension, which allowed for compromise or contradiction, made it a flexible and creative category for working through the complexities of historical change. Royal sanctity was, by the eleventh and twelfth centuries, a concept familiar to the Christian tradition. But as Christendom's peripheries began to transform, and as local writers worked to make sense of that transformation, royal sanctity became historiographically powerful in a way it rarely had been before.

## THE LATIN PERIPHERIES

It is for this reason that this dissertation focuses geographically on the peripheries of Latin Christendom. These regions have rarely been central to the grand narratives of medieval

European history. Neither were they necessarily familiar to medieval observers at the turn of the first millennium. When they thought about the Danes, Northmen, or Magyars at all, most western Christians imagined violent raiders and persecutors of Christians lurking outside the bounds of their civilization. Then, the standard narrative goes, over the course of two centuries of sustained change these peoples transformed themselves internally and became members in the Christian community rather than a threat to it. By the turn of the thirteenth century, the kingdoms of Norway, Denmark, and Hungary looked roughly analogous to their European neighbors: they were governed by kings who increasingly delegated formally defined powers to courtly and bureaucratic officials; they possessed ecclesiastical infrastructures that enmeshed their peoples' devotional lives within the hierarchical structures of the Latin Church; and they fostered literary and intellectual output in the familiar genres of the chronicle, annal, and saint's life.

The transformation of northern and eastern Europe during the high Middle Ages into participants in the western order was less a process of colonial efforts than one of gradual internal acculturation.<sup>4</sup> It was driven largely by the twin processes of royal centralization and Christianization. In Denmark, for example, although proximity to the Franks and Germans provided early exposure to the Christian faith, monastic-led missionary efforts were only of limited effectiveness.<sup>5</sup> Many viking-kings made pragmatic decisions to convert when their raiding activities, which brought them the wealth that allowed them to consolidate their authority as rulers, taught them the cultural prestige of their neighbors' faith. By the tenth century,

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Bartlett, in *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization, and Cultural Change, 950 - 1350* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), made a strong case for the colonial model of expansion, particularly in areas of Norman conquest. However, his argument only tangentially addresses the situation of the northern and eastern Latin frontiers.

<sup>5</sup> Ian Wood, *The Missionary Life: Saints and the Evangelisation of Europe, 400 - 1050* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2001), pp. 123-42.

members of the Jelling dynasty were raising monuments that celebrated their Christianity alongside their conquests. Knútr the Great (r. 1018 - 1035), that dynasty's most famous member, ruled over a North Sea Empire that at various points also encompassed the kingdoms of Norway and England, and he instituted an ecclesiastical infrastructure in his homeland modeled on that of the Anglo-Saxons. Throughout the eleventh century, kings continued to play a central role in the adolescent Danish Church. Distinguished among them was King Knútr IV (r. 1080-6), who developed a reputation as a strict protector of ecclesiastical property and law. After he was killed by Jutish rebels, Knútr came to be celebrated as a paragon of royal piety and as a martyr, so that he became Denmark's first royal saint. Several decades later, he was joined by his nephew Knútr Lavard (d. 1135), the popular duke of Schleswig, who was murdered by his jealous cousin, and like his namesake was recognized posthumously as a martyr.

The kingdom of Norway was even more remote from Latin colonial efforts than the Danes. Its historical development was shaped by its vast geography. What centralized political culture it had was focused on population areas along the southeastern and central-western coasts, while the interior remained a patchwork of chiefdoms, jarldoms, and petty kingships that were only slowly brought under the authority of a high kingship. Norway's earliest Christian kings were, like the Danes, converted in the context of their viking activities. Óláfr Tryggvasson (r. 995 - 1000) reputedly received baptism on the Isles of Scilly and had plans to convert his people as he subjugated them to his rule, but his ambitions were thwarted when he was soon killed by his rivals. His successor and namesake, Óláfr Haraldsson (r. 1015 - 1028), spent his youth raiding in England and the Baltic, received baptism in Normandy, and then returned to Norway to establish himself as its sole king. For thirteen years, Óláfr pursued a harsh valley-by-valley program of Christianization and political subjection. His efforts seem to have been moderately

successful, but they also aroused the discontent of subjected landholders and farmers. With Danish backing, Óláfr's opponents forced him out of the kingdom, and when he attempted to reclaim his position in 1030, he died in battle. Despite the opposition he had inspired in life, Óláfr was almost immediately celebrated as Norway's apostle and a saint in death.

The experiences of the Hungarians, who lived in relative proximity to their rivals the Germans, were more comparable to those of the Danes than the Norwegians. Very little is known about the Magyars before their settlement in the Carpathian basin in the ninth century. What is known of Hungarian history begins with the rule of the Árpáadian kings, and particularly that of Vajk, known as Stephen I (r. 1000 - 1038). To Stephen were attributed significant projects of state and ecclesiastical institutionalization. He is credited with the organization of the kingdom into administrative districts (*várispánság*) governed by royal representatives (*ispán/comes*), as well as the establishment of Hungary's eight medieval bishoprics. After Stephen died in 1038, the Hungarians venerated him as their kingdom's apostle, and in 1083 King Ladislaus I (r. 1077 - 1095) arranged his canonization, as well as that of his pious son, Emeric (d. 1031). It was one of many acts of religious patronage that would contribute to Ladislaus's own sanctification as Hungary's third royal saint late in the twelfth century.

The northern and eastern peripheries of Latin Christendom reflect a remarkable synchronicity in the kinds of historical pressures and transformations they experienced over the course of the high Middle Ages. This parallelism has made them useful cases for comparison for historians studying the expansion of the Christian world.<sup>6</sup> In addition to their shared traditions of

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<sup>6</sup> See particularly Berend, *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy*; Lars Boje Mortensen, ed., *The Making of Christian Myths on the Periphery of Latin Christendom (c. 1000 - 1300)* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2006); Haki Antonsson and Ildar Garipzanov, eds., *Saints and their Lives on the Periphery: Veneration of Saints in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe (c. 1000 - 1200)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010); and Ildar

royal sanctity, Denmark, Norway, and Hungary also adapted the literary culture of their Christian neighbors in similar ways. From the eleventh century on, native intellectual elites wrote in Latin as well as the vernacular to express their new sense of communal identity and to explore the recent formative pasts of their peoples. This source base, as we shall see, presents us with a valuable opportunity to analyze concepts of regality and sacrality.

## SOURCES

As even a cursory overview of the histories of the medieval kingdoms of Denmark, Norway, and Hungary has shown, the legends of exceptional kings could not be separated from the stories of kingdom formation and Church-building. From the beginning, the commemoration of holy kingship was central to the construction of new national histories. Royal cults did not only provide the key characters in the native historical imagination. They were also the cultural and institutional environments within which early historical writing emerged. The earliest extant text about the Danish past, for example, was the *Passio sancti Kanuti*, composed by a monk of Odense for the translation of St. Knútr IV's body in 1095. Similarly, one of the earliest dateable Norwegian texts is the *Passio sancti Olavi*, compiled in the 1170s by the custodians of St. Óláfr's cult at Nidaros cathedral; while in Hungary, the earliest native writing about the past was a collection of saints' lives from the second half of twelfth century that included the *vitae* of St. Stephen and his son, St. Emeric.

Whether saints' lives and other hagiographical texts such as these ought to be considered historical sources is an issue that historians have thoroughly litigated over the past half century.

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Garipzanov, ed. *Historical Narratives and Christian Identity on a European Periphery: Early Historical Writing in Northern, East-Central, and Eastern Europe (c. 1070 - 1200)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011).



Since the 1990s, the pendulum has swung in favor of those who argue for criticizing or otherwise deconstructing modern generic designations.<sup>7</sup> In this dissertation, the label “historical writing” shall likewise be used quite broadly. The term “history” refers in modern discourse not only to the events of the past and the record of past events, but also to the academic discipline through which the past is encountered and interrogated. The labeling of those texts that can best facilitate that task as “historical sources” contains an implicit judgment about their perceived empirical value.<sup>8</sup> This built-in orientation towards methodological rigor, however, is distinct from medieval thinkers’ use of the term *historia* or their conception of how the past was to be remembered and used.<sup>9</sup> Many diverse types of medieval writing were oriented towards the past, and to a variety of ends: descriptive, ritual, devotional, prescriptive, moral, instructional, and so on. The texts used in this current project all share this orientation towards the past, though they vary in form and function. Despite their obvious generic differences, they all engaged with topics, events, and themes that contributed to cultural memories about national origins. For ease of reference, and in acknowledgment of their shared historicizing aims, we shall refer to them under the collective heading of “historical writing.”

The historical tradition on the northern and eastern Latin peripheries was in large part represented by familiar Latin narrative genres such as the chronicle, the annal, and the saint’s

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<sup>7</sup> Felice Lifshitz’s classic article, “Beyond Positivism and Genre: ‘Hagiographical’ Texts as Historical Narrative,” *Viator* 25 (1994): 95-114, was decisive in this shift of viewpoint. For a discussion of the state of the field at that point in time, see also Patrick Geary’s “Saints, Scholars, and Society: The Elusive Goal,” in *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994): 9-29.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Lars Boje Mortensen’s remarks on the drawing of disciplinary and generic boundaries in his “Nordic Medieval Texts: Beyond ‘Literature’ and ‘Sources’: Reflections on Expanding Interdisciplinary Border-Zones,” *Saga-Book* 38 (2014): 95-112.

<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth Tyler and Ross Balzaretti, “Introduction,” in *Narrative and History in the Early Medieval West*, pp. 1-9, at pp. 3-5.

life.<sup>10</sup> The *vitae* of the royal saints were, as discussed above, among their peoples' earliest extant texts, and laid the foundation for the florescence of historical writing that followed. By the twelfth century, Danish and Norwegian chroniclers had also begun to write Latin accounts of their peoples' pasts. These were at first shorter works, such as the *Chronicon Roskildensis* (c. 1138), Sven Aggesen's *Brevis historia regum Dacie* (c. 1185), and the three so-called Norwegian "synoptic chronicles," *Historia Norwegie* (c. 1150 - 1200), Theodoricus Monachus's *Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagensium* (1177 - 1188), and *Ágrip af Noregskonungasögum* (c. 1190).<sup>11</sup> By the turn of the thirteenth century, they had grown more substantial. Saxo Grammaticus's monumental *Gesta Danorum* (c. 1185 - 1208), for example, narrated over fourteen centuries of Danish history in densely learned Latin.<sup>12</sup> Hungarian chroniclers, too, were active throughout the twelfth century, and compiled a text known as the *Gesta Hungarorum*. The early form of this work, however, has been lost to us, and we are reliant on the later redaction known as the

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<sup>10</sup> The overview of historical writing provided here can only be very schematic. In addition to the studies cited below, more substantial surveys can be found in Norbert Kersken, *Geschichtsschreibung im Europa der 'nationes': National-geschichtliche Gesamtdarstellungen im Mittelalter* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1995); Lars Boje Mortensen, "Den formative dialog mellem latinsk og folkesproglig litteratur ca 600-1250. Udkast til en dynamisk model," in Else Mundal, ed. *Reykholt som makt- og lærdomssenter: i den islandske og Nordiske kontekst* (Reykholt: Snorrastofa, 2006): 229-71; and Mortensen, "Sanctified Beginnings and Mythopoeitic Moments: The First Wave of Writing on the Past in Norway, Denmark, and Hungary, c. 1000 - 1230," in Mortensen, ed., *The Making of Christian Myths on the Periphery of Latin Christendom*, pp. 247-73.

<sup>11</sup> See Michael Gelting, "Da Eskil ville være ærkebiskop af Roskilde: Roskildekroniken, *Liber daticus Lundensis* og det danske ærkesædes ophævelse 1133 - 1138," in Peter Carelli, Lars Hermanson, and Hanne Sanders, eds., *Ett annat 1100-tal: Individ, kollektiv och kulturella mönster i medeltidens Danmark* (Göteborg: Makadam förlag, 2004): 181-229; Theodore Andersson, "The Two Ages in *Ágrip af Nóregs konungasögum*," in Garipzanov, ed. *Historical Narratives and Christian Identity on a European Periphery*, pp. 93-109; and Sverre Bagge, "Theodoricus Monachus: The Kingdom of Norway and the History of Salvation," in Garipzanov, ed., *Historical Narratives and Christian Identity on a European Periphery*, pp. 71-90.

<sup>12</sup> See Karsten Friis-Jensen, ed., *Saxo Grammaticus: A Medieval Author Between Norse and Latin Culture* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1981); Carlo Santini, ed., *Saxo Grammaticus: Tra storiografia e letteratura* (Rome: Il Calamo, 1992); Thomas Riis, *Einführung in die Gesta Danorum des Saxo Grammaticus* (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2006); and André Muceniecks, *Saxo Grammaticus: Hierocratical Conceptions and Danish Hegemony in the Thirteenth Century* (Kalamzoo: Arc Humanities Press, 2017).

*Chronicon pictum* after its fourteenth-century manuscript, which incorporated significant amounts of material from the older *Gesta*.<sup>13</sup>

The historians of medieval Hungary only ever wrote in Latin, and not in their vernacular. In the Nordic regions, by contrast, the vernacular flourished. Danish and Norwegian writers built on the historical traditions of the Icelanders, who in the so-called *konungasögur* had produced the most substantial contemporary works on their neighbors' kings.<sup>14</sup> St. Óláfr Haraldsson was a popular subject of theirs. They recounted his life and career in the now-lost *Elsta saga Óláfs helgi* (c. 1160 - 1200) and in the extant *Legendary Saga* (c. 1200) and Snorri Sturluson's *Óláfs saga helgi* (c. 1220). This latter text went on to become the central core of Snorri Sturluson's magisterial *Heimskringla* (c. 1230), which connected the myths of the legendary Yngling dynasty to the histories of the Norwegian kings from the early eleventh century until the turn of the thirteenth century.<sup>15</sup> The first decades of the thirteenth century also saw the production of the composite works *Morkinskinna* (c. 1220) and *Fagrskinna* (c. 1225), which, like *Heimskringla*, wove together the sagas of several generations of Norwegian kings.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> See Kornél Szovák, "L'historiographie hongroise à l'époque arpadienne," in Sándor Csernus and Klára Korompay, eds., *Les hongrois et l'Europe: conquête et intégration* (Paris: Publications de l'Institut Hongrois de Paris, 1999): 375-84; and László Veszprémy, "Conversion in Chronicles: The Hungarian Case," Veszprémy, "The Invented 11<sup>th</sup> Century of Hungary," in Przemysław Urbańczyk, ed., *The Neighbors of Poland in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century* (Warsaw: DIG, 2002): 146-9.

<sup>14</sup> Theodore Andersson, "Kings' Sagas (*Konungasögur*)," in Carol Clover and John Lindow, eds., *Old Norse-Icelandic Literature: A Critical Guide* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005): 197-238; Shami Ghosh, *Kings' Sagas and Norwegian History: Problems and Perspectives* (Leiden: Brill, 2001); and Theodore Andersson, *The Sagas of Norwegian Kings (1130 - 1265): An Introduction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016).

<sup>15</sup> See Diana Whaley, *Heimskringla: An Introduction* (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1991); Sverre Bagge, *Society and Politics in Snorri Sturluson's Heimskringla* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Birgit Sawyer, *Heimskringla: An Interpretation* (Tempe, A.Z.: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2015).

<sup>16</sup> See Ármann Jakobsson, "The Individual and the Ideal: The Representation of Royalty in 'Morkinskinna,'" *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 99:1 (2000): 71-86; and Jakobsson, *A Sense of Belonging: Morkinskinna and Icelandic Identity, c. 1220* (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2014).

These narrative texts can be supplemented by two other genres which belong less obviously under the label of historical writing, yet which also describe, evaluate, and otherwise make use of the historical past: liturgical offices and skaldic poetry. Liturgical offices – which were also referred to as *historia* – collected the prayers, chants, and lections to be performed in the course of the daily office. The northern and eastern royal saints were their peoples’ first native contributions to the Latin calendar. Their earliest offices tended not to be proper, that is, specifically unique to their feast days. The first extant office for St. Óláfr, for example, was composed of elements from the *commune sanctorum* and various Anglo-Saxon royal saints’ offices. It was replaced at the end of the twelfth century with a new proper office, which was based heavily on the recently completed *Passio sancti Olavi*.<sup>17</sup> The liturgical commemoration of St. Óláfr, like that of other royal saints, was thus a complex combination of original and adapted material which, in the form of responsory chants, prayers, and prose lections wove the life of the Norwegian saint-king into the cycle of liturgical time. The offices can therefore be valuable witnesses to the adaptation of Christian representations of authority and devotion on the peripheries.

Skaldic poetry was a uniquely Nordic genre that originated in the oral tradition of the early royal courts. Throughout our period, skalds – who were retainers and advisors to kings as well as poets – produced verses commemorating the deeds of their royal patrons.<sup>18</sup> Much of what

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<sup>17</sup> Eyolf Østrem has produced a definitive study of the liturgies of St. Óláfr in *The Office of Saint Olav: A Study in Chant Transmission* (Uppsala: Uppsala University Library, 2001). See also the studies by Gunilla Iversen, “Transforming a Viking into a Saint: The Divine Office of St. Olaf,” in Margot Fassler and Rebecca Baltzer, eds., *The Divine Office in the Latin Middle Ages: Methodology and Source Studies, Regional Developments, Hagiography: Written in Honor of Professor Ruth Steiner* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000): 401-29; and Åslaug Ommundsen, “A Saint and His Sequence: Singing the Legend of St Olaf,” *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 5 (2009): 151-76.

<sup>18</sup> Important studies of skaldic verse include Gudrún Nordal, *Tools of Literacy: The Role of Skaldic Verse in Icelandic Textual Culture of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); Heather O’Donoghue, *Skaldic Verse and the Poetics of Saga Narrative* (Oxford: Oxford University

they composed was praise poetry, and thus represented kingship in its idealized forms. But skalds, who could maintain close lifelong relationships with kings, also occasionally rebuked rulers for what they saw as dishonorable or dangerous behavior. Although it was composed and delivered orally, skaldic poetry later became material for the writers of sagas, who embedded verses into their narratives both to color their own accounts and as a form of eyewitness evidence. Read on its own, skaldic poetry can thus offer vivid glimpses of royal ideals and prescriptions in a uniquely vernacular genre. Read within the context of the *konungasögur*, it allows for an analysis of how saga writers worked intertextually to construct Norse historical narratives.

Although Hungary lacked the vernacular texts that were so prolific in Scandinavia, the historical traditions of northern and eastern Europe in the eleventh and twelfth centuries otherwise developed in ways that are usefully congruent. As writers in both areas worked to understand the transformation of their political and religious systems in the image of their Latin Christian neighbors, they adapted historical genres and literary forms, as well as particular schemata for conceptualizing historical time, from the Christian tradition. In a variety of textual genres, through the persons of their early kings, they wrote their people into the universal community of Latin Christendom.

## MEMORY AND NARRATIVE

These texts collectively represent the material on which modern historians have had to

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Press, 2005); Judith Jesch, "The 'Meaning of the Narrative Moment:' Poets and History in the Late Viking Age," in Jesch, Elizabeth Tyler, and Ross Balzaretti, eds., *Narrative and History in the Early Medieval West* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006): 251-65; and Erin Michelle Goeres, *The Poetics of Commemoration: Skaldic Verse and Social Memory, c. 890 - 1070* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

rely for their knowledge of the Latin Christian peripheries in the high Middle Ages almost in its entirety. They also present significant challenges to the historian who would like to use them as evidence for the social or political realities of that period. As we have seen, they were often substantially removed in time from the events they purported to describe. The *Passio sancti Olavi*, for example, postdated its subject by one hundred and forty years. They also often had complicated textual histories which philologists and paleographers have struggled to reconstruct. The Hungarian *Chronicon pictum*, compiled in the fourteenth century from material first composed in the twelfth century, is a good example, as are the Norwegian synoptic chronicles, which owe unmistakable yet largely untraceable debts to the lost works of Icelandic saga writers and to each other. And, in addition to their chronologically distant perspectives and complicated transmission histories, these texts also often have literary elements that make them fraught sources for empirical historical work.

While these are challenging sources for the history of the conversion era, however, they are very good sources for the commemoration of the conversion era. Commemoration and memory have been important themes in the historical scholarship of the last several decades.<sup>19</sup> Although Maurice Halbwach's pioneering of the category of collective memory predated the epistemic shifts of the linguistic turn, the theorization his ideas inaugurated has critically influenced the ways in which historians have since reconceptualized the relationships between

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<sup>19</sup> Important studies of memory in the field of medieval history alone have included: Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Patrick Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Elizabeth Van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe, 900-1200* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); Elizabeth Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); Bruce Lincoln, *Between History and Myth: Stories of Harald Fairhair and the Founding of the State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014); Constance Bouchard, *Rewriting Saints and Ancestors: Memory and Forgetting in France, 500-1200* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).

event, experience, and record.<sup>20</sup> Several generations of scholars working in a variety of fields have, over the last ninety years, critiqued, refined, and redeployed his theories, although perhaps because of the ubiquity of memory studies, “collective memory” itself still remains imperfectly defined.<sup>21</sup> Marc Bloch criticized Halbwachs’ conception of an amorphous social consciousness that seemed to supersede the individual mind, and many historians have since adopted alternative vocabularies, referring instead to “cultural memory” or “social memory.”<sup>22</sup> Even as scholars have continued to attempt to locate these types of memory more precisely and more tangibly, Halbwach’s core idea has persisted: that much of the mental architecture individuals use to orient themselves within their social worlds necessarily relies on the comprehension of shared ideas about how the past has contributed to present realities.

In this sense, the production of corpuses of historical texts that narrate the origins of newly organized peoples is a topic of central interest to the field of commemoration and memory studies. Jan Assmann, in an influential book on mnemonic regimes in premodern societies, identified a variety of forms of memory storage and recall, including visual, customary, spatial, ritual, and oral strategies as well as textual ones.<sup>23</sup> Pierre N  ra agrees with Assmann that the development of a textual historical canon was of particular significance for premodern cultures.

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<sup>20</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *Les cadres sociaux de la m  moire* (Paris: Librairie F  lix Alcan, 1925); reprinted in 1952 by Presses Universitaires de France.

<sup>21</sup> See especially the discussion in James V. Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 30-66.

<sup>22</sup> Marc Bloch, “M  moire collective, tradition et coutume,” *Revue de Synth  se Historique* 40 (1925): 73-83; James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992); Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Ged  chtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identit  t in fr  hen Hochkulturen* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1992), since translated into English by Assmann as *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); and Jeffrey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins, “Social Memory Studies: From ‘Collective Memory’ to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998): 105-40.

<sup>23</sup> Assmann, *Das kulturelle Ged  chtnis*.

He argues that textualization fundamentally alters the relationship a society has with its past by codifying a singular, authoritative perspective and erasing others.<sup>24</sup> Brian Stock, who has thought in much greater detail about these kinds of transformations in a specifically medieval context, identifies the high Middle Ages as just such a moment. Over the course of these two centuries, he argues, texts more and more often became “reference systems” for cultural discourse, even when the texts themselves were not immediately present. Stock also pioneered the concept of the “textual community:” that is, communities that shared textually derived systems of cultural reference.<sup>25</sup> His enduringly significant work is useful for reminding ourselves that the textual communities oriented around the historical writing of high medieval Norway, Denmark, and Hungary would have been quite small and overwhelmingly elite. But despite the inherent limitations on their cultural reception, these texts still performed important work constructing cultural narratives that would, over time, become familiar systems of reference for understanding the origins of peoples and nations.

The development of a written historical tradition also allowed for the construction of longer and more complex narratives about the past. Almost all of the texts used in this study are narrative in form, and narrativity will be central to the analysis provided here. In its simplest definition, narrative links concepts together, whether causally, chronologically, or otherwise. It is thus fundamental to the historicizing process. Narrative is also central to cultural memory, and to the capacity of shared ideas about the past to ground communal identities. As we will see, the historical writing of the medieval north and east in particular grounded two levels of communal

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<sup>24</sup> Pierre N  ra, “Between Memory and History: *Les lieux de m  moire*,” *Representations* 26 (1989): 7-25, at p. 8.

<sup>25</sup> Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).



identity. The first might be called “national,” in that it made clearly bounded *gentes* out of the inhabitants of newly centralizing kingdoms. By giving peoples’ political communities a singular point of origin, and by locating that point in the institution of kingship, medieval historians projected consensus onto what was in reality a complex and multilayered demography.<sup>26</sup> At a broader level, historians wrote their *gentes* into the wider European community. They described how their peoples had been transformed from barbaric and pagan outsiders into civilized participants in the Latin Christian order, again through the twin historical processes of centralization and conversion. Narrative played a central role in the cohesion of these communal identities. Although it mediates between event and text, narrative is often normalizing in function, in that it can make certain sequences of events, explanations of causality, or relationships between actors seem natural or unmediated. Narratives of the origins of kingdoms could thus help normalize new visions of communal ordering within the textual communities that engaged with their projects of historical meaning-making.

While Hungarian chronicles and Norse sagas may thus pose serious challenges to empirical historical work, their rich narratives of kings and kingdoms do provide a wealth of material for understanding the ways in which medieval writers thought about and commemorated a transformative historical moment. As we shall see, they also offer particularly productive material for exploring the representation of royal saints, who, as particularly extraordinary participants in the regnal order, became central to their peoples’ narratives of origin and development.

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<sup>26</sup> For cogent theorizations of the interconnections between narrative and communal identity, see especially Margaret Somers, “The Narrative Constitution of Identity: A Relational and Network Approach,” *Theory and Society* 23 (1994): 605-49; and Ronald Grigor Suny, “Constructing Primordialism: Old Histories for New Nations,” *Journal of Modern History* 71 (2001): 862-96.

## HISTORIOGRAPHY

Royal sanctity as a subject has attracted sustained attention from scholars since the turn of the twentieth century. Over much of that time, the primary issue that historians have debated has been whether or not the veneration of rulers as saints should be understood as a Christianized articulation of an older Germanic concept of sacral kingship, understood here as the numinous, quasi-divine quality that inheres within charismatic rulership.<sup>27</sup> It is similar, but still distinct, from the posthumous attribution of Christian sanctity to a king, which relied, at least nominally, on the working of miracles as witnesses to the deceased's capabilities as an intercessor between heaven and earth.<sup>28</sup> To many historians in both the European and American academies, however, including József Deér, Karl Hauck, William Chaney, and Erich Hoffmann, it seemed clear that there must be some connection between the two categories.<sup>29</sup> The idea that the saint-king represented a Christianization of the Germanic sacral king predominated until it received its first significant challenge in 1965 from František Graus. In his *Volk, Herrscher und Heiliger im Reich der Merowinger*. Graus made the argument, which would gradually become the new orthodoxy

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<sup>27</sup> Many of the ideas about sacral kingship in the pre-Christian era were first formulated by James George Frazer in *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (Macmillan: London, 1890), which, although it had become the target of sustained criticism from anthropologists and historians alike by the 1920s, continued to contribute significant assumptions about the nature of pre-Christian belief systems.

<sup>28</sup> On the distinction, see especially Janet Nelson, "Royal Saints and Early Medieval Kingship," *Studies in Church History* 10 (1973): 39-44.

<sup>29</sup> Significant works in this tradition include József Deér, *Pogány magyarság – keresztény magyarság* (Budapest: Egyetemi Nyomda, 1938); Karl Hauck, "Geblütsheiligkeit," in Bernhard Bischoff and Suso Brechter, eds., *Liber Floridus. Mittellateinische studien. Paul Lehmann zum 65. Geburtstag am 13. Juli 1949 gewidmet von Freunden, Kollegen, und Schülern* (St. Ottilien: Eos Verlag der Erzabtei, 1950): 187-240; William Chaney, *The Cult of Kingship in Anglo-Saxon England: The Transition from Paganism to Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970); and Erich Hoffmann, *Die heiligen Könige bei den Angelsachsen und den skandinavischen Völkern: Königsheiliger und Königshaus* (Neumünster: K. Wachholtz, 1975).

in the final decades of the twentieth century, that assumptions of royal sacrality were not native to, but rather antithetical to, the early Christian tradition. He showed that in the Merovingian context, those kings who achieved posthumous veneration as saints did so not on account of their royal status, but in spite of it, by renouncing their office and rejecting the trappings of nobility in favor of adopting a monastic lifestyle.<sup>30</sup> Graus's argument against the origins of Christian royal sanctity in Germanic sacral kingship – which cannot not be directly witnessed, only glimpsed in its supposed cultural antecedents – gradually became the new orthodoxy in the final decades of the twentieth century. In 1988, Susan Ridyard's study of the Anglo-Saxon royal saints reached similar conclusions. She, like Graus, argued that the mode of royal sanctity that predominated in early medieval England was that of the "absentee king," who only achieved spiritual excellence by renouncing the trappings of his secular office.<sup>31</sup>

The scholarship on royal sanctity in the twentieth century was thus driven by two major impulses: first, by historians' interest in tracing the origins and genealogies of cultural phenomena; and second, by their recognition that Christian sanctity, which had its origins in the veneration of martyrs killed by the Roman state, seemed fundamentally irreconcilable with the royal office.<sup>32</sup> Gábor Klaniczay, who wrote what remains the most substantial study of the medieval royal saint, likewise dedicated himself to these two avenues of inquiry. In his *Az uralkodók szentsége a középkorban* (2000), which was translated into English as *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses* (2002), Klaniczay traced the development of the subject from what he saw as

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<sup>30</sup> František Graus, *Volk, Herrscher und Heiliger im Reich der Merowinger. Studien zur Hagiographie der Merowingerzeit* (Prague: Nakladatelství Československé Akademie Věd, 1965).

<sup>31</sup> Susan Reynolds, *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England: A Study of West Saxon and East Anglian Cults* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

<sup>32</sup> Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 23-49.

its origins in the Germanic “god-king” and the Roman ruler cult through the medieval period, devoting particular attention to the Hungarian royal saints and concluding with the fourteenth-century Angevin-Luxembourgish *beata stirps*. Klaniczay argued that the early medieval royal saints, and particularly the Merovingian and Anglo-Saxon “absentee kings” studied by Graus and Ridyard, had failed to resolve the contradiction at the core of royal sanctity: that is, they had failed to develop a model in which a king could achieve sanctity on account of his royal status, and not in spite of it. In Klaniczay’s view, this synthesis was first witnessed in the Hungarian cults of Stephen I and Ladislaus I, and later perfected in the political programs of the Angevin rulers of Hungary. These Hungarian kings, Klaniczay argued, embodied the Christian ideal of the *rex iustus*, in which the holy king ruled piously and charitably, and as a protector of law, justice, and the Church.<sup>33</sup>

Klaniczay’s work has remained the standard to which historians refer when discussing the subject of royal sanctity, although his uncritical treatment of pre-Christian sacrality invites the same kinds of criticism levied by Graus and Ridyard against their predecessors. More recent studies of royal sanctity have begun to turn away from the issue of sacrality and to provide fresh approaches to the topic. In 2008, Cecilia Gaposchkin provided a new study of perhaps the most well-known of the medieval royal saints, Louis IX of France. Her major contribution in *The Making of Saint Louis: Kingship, Sanctity, and Crusade in the Later Middle Ages* was to demonstrate the significant insight that liturgical materials can offer as sources for cultic institutions and ideologies of regality.<sup>34</sup> Most importantly for this project, in an influential essay

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<sup>33</sup> Gábor Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe*, trans. Éva Pálmai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>34</sup> M. Cecilia Gaposchkin, *The Making of Saint Louis: Kingship, Sanctity, and Crusade in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008). See also Gaposchkin, “Talking About Kingship when Preaching

from 2006 Lars Boje Mortensen highlighted the significant interconnections between royal sanctity and the emergence of traditions of historical writing in Norway, Denmark, and Hungary. Mortensen describes the establishment of native royal cults in the newly Christianizing kingdoms as “mythopoietic moments,” that is, moments at which foundational collective myths emerged and were first codified and disseminated. He shows that, in addition to providing material for new national myths, royal cults and the religious communities that fostered them also provided the institutional environment for the early production of historical writing by Latin-literate and often foreign-educated clerics and monks.<sup>35</sup>

By moving beyond genealogies of sacral kingship, Gaposchkin and Mortensen have developed new approaches to their sources that are sensitive to their texts’ particular capacities and limitations. Their work thus points the way towards new approaches to royal sanctity that work with the grain of the texts in which it is commemorated. These texts, and particularly the historical writing of the northern and eastern Latin peripheries, are poorly equipped to reveal connections between pre-Christian and medieval political mentalities. But they are excellent sources for understanding royal sanctity as a uniquely medieval category. This dissertation aims to provide such a reading of the internal construction of royal sanctity in Norwegian, Danish, and Hungarian historical writing and to draw out the work that these texts did to conceptualize complicated categories of authority.

For as we shall see in the chapters that follow, royal sanctity on Latin Christendom’s expanding frontiers frequently was complicated. It did not fit a single typology, and both within

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about Saint Louis,” in Franco Morenzoni, ed., *Preaching and Political Society: Late Antiquity to the End of the Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013): 135-72.

<sup>35</sup> Mortensen, “Sanctified Beginnings and Mythopoietic Moments.”

and across textual traditions writers sometimes used royal saints to make statements about kingship that were inconsistent, or even contradictory. What studying the rich profusion of writing about royal sanctity at this moment in time reveals, however, is not just that there were multiple and complicated ways in which contemporaries attempted to fuse two modes of elite authority. Instead it challenges us to reconsider the necessary opposition between the two poles of the saint-king's identities. During this historical moment, as the northern and eastern kingdoms sought to situate themselves within the wider world, the persistent tension between secular authority and spiritual perfection was not a sign of a failure of imagination, but rather a source of creative productivity. The antithesis as well as the synthesis between his dual roles was what made the royal saint so productive for conceptualizing the scope of the king's authority, the role he played vis-à-vis the nascent national Church, his responsibility for safeguarding the morals and the souls of his people, the ability of his laws to bolster the salvational order of society, and more.

## PLAN OF THE WORK

The goal of this work is to explore representations of royal sanctity as contained in the historical traditions of northern and eastern Europe comparatively and synthetically, rather than to isolate localized idiosyncrasies. To that end, its chapters progress thematically. Each takes as its subject a specific category of analysis that allows us particular avenues of entry into our material. These broad categories – dynastic politics, justice, violence, and masculinity – often overlap and intersect, revealing certain recurring core themes.

Chapter One explores the building of the royal cults through processes of sanctification, canonization, *translatio*, and ritual and textual commemoration. Our sources for these events are

frustratingly sparse, but what we do have can often suggest something to us about the communities that formed around the royal cults. It explores the various levels at which these communities coalesced, from the immediately local to the national and even the international. Who was responsible for instigating the veneration of deceased kings? What programs of devotion did they pursue? And how do the interactions among these cultic communities reveal broader relationships between European ecclesiastical centers and the peripheries? Most initial cult-building initiatives, we shall see, were pursued by local churchmen, with the support of royal dynasties. By the twelfth century, the royal cults, like the local churches that promoted them, had increasingly become enmeshed in the globalizing aspirations of the ascendant “papal monarchy.” This interconnection was pursued at both ends through the circulation of papal legates on the edges of the Christian world, the travel of local churchmen and kings to Rome, and the pursuit of the prestigious category of papal canonization for local candidates. Chapter One therefore seeks to understand the role played by local saints’ cults in the establishment of national churches and the integration of the peripheries into the Latin Church.

Chapter Two digs more deeply into the significance of royal sanctity to the self-representation of princes and kings, particularly during moments of civil war and political instability. It asks what having a saint in the family did for other royal aspirants: were “political saints” simply the instruments of ambitious men? Or did their memories have deeper resonances when it came to the conceptualization of the royal office? The chapter also considers how royal sanctification facilitated the narrativization of political conflicts in medieval historiography. How did the dynamics of royal sanctification allow contemporary historians to give shape to their narratives? It suggests that moments of intra-dynastic competition and instability were important “narrative moments,” during which first royal contenders, and then writers of history, produced

accounts of the lives of holy kings, with aims of normalizing their perspective in the historical record.

Chapter Three analyzes representations of just kingship in the royal cults. Justice was a powerful category in the histories of the royal saints. As the institutor of juridical institutions, protector of laws, and punisher of wrongdoers, the king was attributed with a substantial ability to dictate the social ordering of his kingdom. The chapter analyzes what justice looked like and meant in a historical context. Did medieval historians champion a singular, normative portrayal of the holy king as lawmaker and keeper of the peace? If not, how did their conceptions of justice vary according to generic context and narrative form? Or, to put it differently: how did their representations of royal justice help structure their social story-worlds? Justice remained a powerful category in historical writing, we shall suggest, because of its flexibility, rather than its adherence to a singular, hegemonic definition. In working through what royal justice meant, writers of history could conceptually organize their transforming societies.

Chapter Four deals with the role and meaning of violence in the construction of royal sanctity. For kings on the European peripheries, violence was unavoidable, whether it was in the raiding that brought ambitious men wealth and prestige, contests for the throne, or the subjection of rivals, religious discontents, or rebels. The chapter asks how violence was represented in the histories of the royal saints. Did medieval historians try to downplay or conceal the royal saint's use of force? If not, how did they reconcile the necessity of bloodshed with his reputation for spiritual purity? We shall see that royal-saintly violence was often less problematic for medieval writers of history than it has been for modern historians. Violence could in fact be narratively productive, allowing writers to clearly place boundaries on social in- and out-groups. The king's enemies, placed outside the bounds of the properly ordered society, became a threat to the



Christian community. Thus the king who dealt with them could be celebrated as a preserver of the peace, rather than a disturber of it.

Finally, Chapter Five explores the masculinities of the royal saint as represented in the historical tradition. What modes of masculinity was he made to embody? How did his gendering in historical texts reflect broader societal trends, such as reformers' privileging of male celibacy or the rise of chivalric knighthood? And how did medieval historians reconcile certain competing gendered ideals? Masculinity and gender were foundational and polyvalent constituent elements of identity, in historical narrative as well as in historical reality. They are powerful tools, therefore, for interrogating the persistent tension between the saint-king's dual roles. The types of social behavior and inner comportment expected of the ideal king varied according to narrative context. This mutability allowed writers of history to place into antithesis, synthesize, or resolve certain competing expressions of gendered identity. Masculinity was thus a crucial tool for narrativizing social realities.

Collectively, these categories of analysis allow for the construction of a rich portrait of royal sanctity as it was celebrated on the expanding peripheries of Latin Christendom in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Sainthood kingship, we shall see, was central to the written historical traditions of newly organizing kingdoms. Holy kings anchored historical narratives by embodying important ideals of authority, and became powerful and enduring symbols of new kingdoms and communities. We shall also see how royal sanctity's powerful capacity for shaping historical narratives resulted from its complexity, rather than in spite of it. For Hungarians, Danes, and Norwegians seeking their national origins in the kings of the past, those extraordinary men, who could at once embody the authority and prestige of their Christian faith as well as that of their royal institutions, became powerful and enduring symbols of the histories

of their kingdoms.

## 1. THE CREATION OF ROYAL CULTS AND CULTIC COMMUNITIES

Before royal saints became the subjects of new national histories, they became the focal points of the religious lives of their communities. The development of royal cults represented a crucial step in the integration of the new northern and eastern kingdoms into Latin Christendom. Their feast days, written into the *sanctorale*, tethered these far-flung locales to the universal cycle of salvational time that structured annual patterns of Christian ritual; while their shrines carved out new sacred spaces in which the Christian faithful, though remote from the religious centers of the post-Carolingian core, could directly access the salvific power of God through the presence of the saint. This chapter will explore how the adoption of these cultic strategies signified the extent to which the new kingdoms had, by the end of the twelfth century, fundamentally reshaped themselves institutionally and culturally in the image of their Christian neighbors to the south and west.

At the same time, the development of native saints' cults provided the opportunity for significant programs of self-definition on the part of the various communities that claimed association with them. Closest at hand were the religious communities that acted as the custodians of the saints' shrines. They regulated access to the holy kings' bodies, celebrated their memories in the liturgical cursus of the Mass and the daily office, and produced and recopied their *vitae*, *passiones*, and *miracula*. Beyond the immediate cult site, the holy kings' royal successors and kin also often sought to align themselves with their predecessors' venerable memories by patronizing projects of cult-building and commemoration. And further abroad, under the direction of such outward-looking popes as Gregory VII, Alexander III, and Celestine

III, the high medieval “papal monarchy,” which increasingly claimed authority over the validation of new saints’ cults, demonstrated a particular interest in those that emerged in the frontier kingdoms that it sought to bind more closely into the community of Latin Christendom.

This chapter explores the institutional processes through which the Scandinavian and Hungarian royal cults were created. Unfortunately, our evidence for these activities is sparse, and prevents the elaboration of a comprehensive study of the sort that has recently enriched our understanding of the lived realities of other medieval saints’ cults.<sup>36</sup> Our most abundant sources are narrative histories, which often significantly postdated the establishment of the cults, and which presented carefully crafted accounts of the circumstances of their establishment. Similarly, while liturgical materials can further illuminate patterns of ritual commemoration, their extant textual witnesses are often distant from the cults geographically as well as temporally. Charters issued on behalf of the various communities that preserved and promoted the memories of the royal saints can more directly shed light on patterns of local cultic patronage; but these unfortunately have survived in very small numbers in the frontier kingdoms before the late Middle Ages. Despite the challenges they present, however, our sources do allow us to explore – if occasionally tentatively – the development of the royal cults in northern and central Europe.

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<sup>36</sup> Some particularly notable examples that explore the institutional and communal setting of saints’ cult in close detail include Sharon Farmer, *Communities of St. Martin: Legend and Ritual in Medieval Tours* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); Simon Yarrow, *Saints and their Communities: Miracle Stories in Twelfth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006); and Rachel Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate: Miracle Stories and Miracle Collecting in High Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2011). Several valuable recent studies have particularly emphasized the importance of understanding medieval cults through a synthetic understanding of their visual, architectural, musicological, and material programs. See for example Susan Boynton, *Shaping a Monastic Identity: Liturgy and History at the Imperial Abbey of Farfa, 1000-1125* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); M. Cecilia Gaposchkin, *The Making of Saint Louis: Kingship, Sanctity, and Crusade in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008); Margot Fassler, *The Virgin of Chartres: Making History through Liturgy and the Arts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); and Benjamin Brand, *Holy Treasure and Sacred Song: Relic Cults and their Liturgies in Medieval Tuscany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

The first and most substantial portion of this chapter will outline what evidence does exist and how we can best make use of it. The second portion takes a step back to consider how the royal cults reflect the ways in which communities on the frontiers of Latin Christendom forged inter-regional bonds – both institutional and individual, supportive and oppositional – with their co-religionists to the south and west.

## THE CREATION OF ROYAL CULTS

### *Norway: St. Óláfr (d. 1030)*

The first sanctified king of the Latin Christian peripheries was Óláfr Haraldsson of Norway. In life, Óláfr exemplified the centralizing ambitions of the Scandinavian kings of his era. He spent his youth in exile, leading a viking band in England and the Baltic, and thereby amassing wealth and a band of young male supporters. By 1015 he felt confident enough to return to Norway and attempt to dislodge the jarls of Lade who ruled it in the absence of a high king. Although he soon killed one jarl and drove the other into exile, Óláfr spent the remainder of his thirteen-year reign enforcing his authority throughout Norway's restive interior. He wielded violence and Christianity as twin tools of political subjugation, compelling the populace and the landowning elite alike to receive baptism and publically executing or maiming those who resisted. By 1028, Óláfr's *regnum* was in all likelihood the most extensive of any Norwegian king to that point. But his authority had come at a price. The subjugated Norwegian farmers, led by resentful landowners and backed by King Knútr of Denmark, forced Óláfr out of Norway. He took refuge in Sweden for two years, and then in 1030 led his supporters back to their homeland in an attempt to reclaim his throne. They met their opponents in battle at Stiklestad, just north of the city of Nidarós, in late July, and there Óláfr fell in battle along with most of his supporters.

Soon after his death, Óláfr's afterlife as the patron saint of the Norwegians began. For the origins of his cult on the battlefield, however, we are reliant on the thirteenth-century testimony of the Icelandic saga writers. Snorri Sturluson claimed in his *Óláfs saga helga* that after the king's death at Stiklestad, it did not take long for either his supporters or his enemies to realize that he had died a martyr. As Thórir *hundr*, one of the men who had given him his death blow, cleaned the king's body on the battlefield, he noticed that Óláfr was beautiful in death: "the king's face was so fair and rosy in his cheeks, as though he was sleeping, and much brighter than before when he was alive." As Óláfr's blood flowed over Thórir's injured fingers, the warrior's injured hand immediately healed, making Thórir "the first of those powerful men who had stood against the king to witness his sanctity."<sup>37</sup> Later, as Óláfr's supporters were hiding his body at a nearby farmstead, a blind man who spent the night near the royal corpse regained his sight and a bright column of light shone down on them.<sup>38</sup> To Snorri, looking back across two centuries, these and similar stories clearly demonstrated that Óláfr's body had revealed his sanctity in the immediate aftermath of his death on the battlefield.

As clear as Óláfr's sanctity was to his medieval biographers, however, a dearth of contemporary evidence makes it difficult for modern historians to make pronouncements about the status of his early cult with any degree of certainty.<sup>39</sup> This is a limitation we will come up against again and again in our survey of the evidence for the Scandinavian and Hungarian royal

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<sup>37</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, p. 387: "ok er hann þerrði blóð af andlitinu, þá sagði hann svá síðan, at andlit konungsins var svá fagrt, at roði var í kinnum, sem þá at hann svæfi, en miklu bjartara er áðr, meðan hann lifði...varð Þórir hundr fyrst til þess at halda upp helgi konungsins þeira ríkismanna, er þar höfðu verit í mótstöðuflokk hans."

<sup>38</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, pp. 394-7.

<sup>39</sup> See Lars Boje Mortensen, "Writing and Speaking of St Olaf: National and Social Integration," in Haki Antonsson and Ildar H. Garipzanov, *Saints and their Lives on the Periphery: Veneration of Saints in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe (c. 1000 – 1200)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010): 207-218, at pp. 207-8.

cults. In St. Óláfr's case, there are primarily three kinds of textual evidence that bear witness to the development of his cult: skaldic poetry, the kings' sagas, and liturgical materials. The first of these is valuable in that much of it was produced by Óláfr's contemporaries, but limited in its sparseness and allusiveness. One such poetic sequence, Thorarin *loftunga's* *Glælongskviða*, was produced around 1032, only two years after Óláfr's death, and gives us a vivid glimpse of Óláfr's tomb, where "the pure praise-blessed prince lies so pure, with his body incorrupt."<sup>40</sup> Thorarin described how the wooden church that housed Óláfr's body had been transformed by his relics into a vital sacred space. There, he claimed, "bells in the wooden structure ring by themselves above his bed" and "candles burn, acceptable to Christ, up from the altar." Fittingly, he described the church, animated by the physical and spiritual presence of the deceased king, as the site of miracle-working: "a host comes there, where the holy king himself is, and bows down for access...petitioners for speech and the blind, make their way there, and go from there whole."<sup>41</sup> Sigvatr Þórðarson, who had been a member of Óláfr's retinue, described the site of the shrine in similar terms in his *Erfridrápa*, which was likely composed during the reign of Óláfr's son Magnús around 1035: "a golden shrine has been made for my lord...many a 'tree of the sword' [warrior] who came thither blind goes soon with healed eyes from the glorious resting-place of

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<sup>40</sup> *Glælongskviða*, ed. and trans. by Matthew Townend, in Diana Whaley, ed., *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas I*, vol. 2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012): 863-876, at p. 870: "Þar svá hreinn með heilu liggr lofsæll gramr líki sínu, svát þar kná sem á kvikum manni hár ok negl hǫnum vaxa." See also Jessica Rainford, "Óláfr Haraldsson, King and Saint of Norway, and the Development of Skaldic Style (ca. 1015 – ca. 1135), Unpublished DPhil Thesis (University of Oxford, 1996), pp. 75-83; Haki Antonsson, *St. Magnús of Orkney: A Scandinavian Martyr-Cult in Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), p. 110; Erin Michelle Goeres, *The Poetics of Commemoration: Skaldic Verse and Social Memory, c. 890-1070* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 113-120.

<sup>41</sup> *Glælongskviða*, ed. and trans. Townend, pp. 871-3: "Þar borðveggs bjöllur knigu of sæing hans sjalfar hringjask, ok hvern dag heyra þjóðir klokna hlóð of konungmanni. En þar upp af altári Kristi þæg kerti brenna. Svá hefr Öleifr, áðr andaðisk, synðalauss sölu borgit. Þar kœmr herr, es heilagr es konungr skjalftr, krýpt at gangi. En beiðendr blindir sækja þjóðir máls, en þaðan heilir."

that pure king.”<sup>42</sup> As skaldic poets in the entourages of Óláfr’s royal successors, Sveinn Knútsson and Magnús Ólafsson, the memory of the dead king was of immediate importance to Thorarin *loftunga* and Sigvatr Þórðarson.<sup>43</sup> Importantly for us, their verses bear witness to the existence of popular devotion at the site of Óláfr’s tomb in the years immediately following his death. They cannot, however, tell us whether these acts of miracle-working were supported by the institutional cult-building efforts of the Nidarós canons. For this, we must turn to the kings’ sagas.

Although they differ somewhat in their details, the three thirteenth-century kings’ sagas that discuss Óláfr’s posthumous career – *Legendary Saga* (c. 1200), *Fagrskinna* (c. 1225), and Snorri Sturluson’s *Óláfs saga helga* (c. 1230) – agree that after his death, Óláfr’s supporters hid his body in an unmarked grave outside of Nidarós, where it lay for a year before its dramatic *revelatio* to the people of Þrændalög and *elevatio* to the church of St. Clement in 1031. Snorri’s account of these events is the most extensive. According to him, in the immediate aftermath of the battle a local farmer, Thorgils Hálmuson, feared that Óláfr’s enemies would mistreat the body. He thus concealed it from Thórir *hundr*, and, under cover of darkness, transported the body by river to Nidarós along with several of Óláfr’s men. They landed at a site called Saurhlið north of the town, where they buried it in the sandy riverbank. As the body lay hidden there for a year, rumors of Óláfr’s sanctity, as well as discontent with the reign of Sveinn Knútsson, grew among the people of Þrændalög. Led by the magnate Einarr Þambarskelfir, the Þrændir

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<sup>42</sup> *Erfidrápa*, ed. and trans. by Judith Jesch, in Whaley, ed., *Poetry from the Kings; Sagas I*, vol. 2, pp. 663–697, at p. 693: “görts, þeims gött bar hjarta, gollit srkín at mínum – hrösak helgi ræsis – hann sótti goð – dróttni. Á r gendr margr frá mæru meiðr þess konungs leiði hreins með heilar sjónir hrings, es blindr kom þingat.” On *Erfidrápa*, see also Judith Jesch, “The Once and Future King: History and Memory in Sigvatr’s Poetry on Óláfr Haraldsson,” in S. Rankovic, E. Mundal, and L. Melve, eds., *Along the Oral-Written Continuum* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010): 103–117; Goeres, *The Poetics of Commemoration*, pp. 123–131.

<sup>43</sup> See especially Goeres, *The Poetics of Commemoration*.



disinterred Óláfr's body from its sandy grave, discovering that his skin was as smooth as when he had been alive and that his hair and nails had grown while he lay in the ground. The Danish regent in Norway, Sveinn Knútsson, and his mother, Álfifa, were present, and the latter, skeptical that this was a sign of sanctity, insisted that a piece of his beard be tested in fire. The beard hair survived the ordeal unsinged, and the Þrændir publically declared witness to Óláfr's sanctity. Then in a solemn ceremony attended by Sveinn and Álfifa and presided over by Einarr þambarskelfir and the missionary bishop Grimkel, Óláfr's body was elevated into a sarcophagus in the church of St. Clement in Nidarós.<sup>44</sup> In describing the movement of the body after Stiklestad, naming the individuals who guarded it, and describing the role played by the various actors in the *elevatio*, Snorri fleshed out his depiction of the early days of Óláfr's cult with substantial details.

However, Snorri was distant in time from these events and reliant on the sparse details of the skalds, and many of his account's details – in particular his singling out of Einarr þambarskelfir as the primary animating force behind the establishment of Óláfr's cult – were fashioned in a such a way that suited the exigencies of his broader narrative. The elevation of St. Óláfr in 1031 serves largely as a transitional episode in *Óláfs saga helga*, in that it establishes the conditions for the deposition of Sveinn Knútsson in 1035 and sets up the subsequent restoration of Óláfr's son Magnús to the Norwegian throne. The figure of Einarr þambarskelfir unites these political developments. Throughout *Óláfs saga helga*, Snorri represented Einarr þambarskelfir as a useful bellwether of the Norwegian magnates' attitudes towards Óláfr's rule. After initially fighting against Óláfr in 1016, Einarr had made overtures of friendship towards him after he established himself as king. When the magnates began to turn against Óláfr, however, Einarr

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<sup>44</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, pp. 403-5.

made himself the man of Knútr of Denmark; and then later, when Knútr failed to fulfill the promises he had made to him, Einarr left Norway for England. He thus avoided either supporting or opposing Óláfr in the battle of Stiklestad. Snorri suggests that by supporting the elevation of Óláfr's body, Einarr had continued to prove himself to be cannily adaptable. In Snorri's telling, the testing of Óláfr's relics in the fire became an opportunity for Einarr to publically rebuke the much-hated Álfifa and, through her, Sveinn's rulership. According to Snorri, Einarr's alignment with the rising anti-Danish sentiments in Þrændalög soon paid off, when, along with Kálfr Árnasson, he travelled to the court of Grand-Prince Yaroslav of Rúss, where he convinced young Magnús to return with him to Norway to reclaim his father's throne.<sup>45</sup> Upon Magnús's accession, Einarr became one of the king's closest advisors. Snorri thus explains Einarr's savvy reintegration into the royal political scene through his support of Óláfr's sanctification. Snorri is the only saga author to mention Einarr's participation in the *elevatio*, and it is thus quite unlikely that he in fact played the central role in the creation of Óláfr's cult that Snorri had attributed to him.

While Einarr Þambarskelfir was unlikely to have been a primary driver behind the establishment of the royal cult, recently historians have instead suggested that Sveinn Knútsson, the unpopular Danish regent, may have been a more probable actor in the cult-building activities of 1031.<sup>46</sup> Matthew Townend in particular has read Thorarin *loftunga's* *Glælongskviða* as telling evidence for this argument. The poem, which as we have seen praised the salvific capabilities of the martyred king, was addressed to Sveinn. In its final two stanzas, *Glælongskviða* urges the regent: “pray to Óláfr that he grant you his ground [Norway] – he is God's man; he obtains from

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<sup>45</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, pp. 414-15.

<sup>46</sup> Antonsson, *Saint Magnús of Orkney*, pp. 109-111.

God himself peace and prosperity and peace for all people – when you present your prayers before the ‘sacred nail of the language of books’ [Óláfr].”<sup>47</sup> Townend argues that the skald was here encouraging Sveinn to buy into Óláfr’s burgeoning cult in order to defuse any elements of anti-Danish sentiment within it and thus legitimize his rule in Norway. Precedence for this kind of royal appropriation of the cult of a fallen opponent can be found, he argues, in Knútr’s patronage of high-status saints who had been martyred by Scandinavians, including Edith, Edmund, and Ælfheah. Sveinn would have picked up this political strategy from having seen his father rule successfully in England.<sup>48</sup>

Townend’s reading of Thorarin *loftunga*’s intentions in *Glælongskviða* seems credible, although in the absence of more direct evidence it cannot be substantiated. Nor is there any substantial evidence in the kings’ sagas to support his suggestion that the Danish regent may have followed Thorarin’s advice and actively patronized Óláfr’s nascent cult. Snorri claimed that Sveinn gave his permission for the elevation of Óláfr’s body and that he and Álfifa were present at the ceremony, which, as we have seen, became in his telling a stage for Einarr’s public castigation of the Danish queen. The *Legendary Saga* and *Fagrskinna* authors likewise claimed that Sveinn and Álfifa were present at the elevation, but otherwise did not attribute any of the cultic activities to the regent.<sup>49</sup> It may not be surprising, however, that the saga authors were reticent to attribute to an unpopular Danish ruler the establishment of Norway’s most foundational national cult. The strongest support in favor of Townend’s argument is found not in

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<sup>47</sup> *Glælongskviða*, ed. and trans. Townend, p. 875: “bið Öleif, at unni þér – hans goðs maðr – grundar sinnar – hann of getr af goði sjölfum ár ok frið öllum mönnum – Þás þú rekr fyr reginna bóka máls bænir þínar.”

<sup>48</sup> Matthew Townend, “Knútr and the Cult of St Óláfr: Poetry and Patronage in Eleventh-Century Norway and England,” *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 1 (2005): 251-79. Antonsson also makes this point in *St. Magnús of Orkney*, pp. 111-12.

<sup>49</sup> *Legendary Saga*, pp. 206-7.

the kings' sagas, but instead in several pieces of evidence that Óláfr's cult spread early on in England in areas with a strong Danish landed presence.<sup>50</sup> The D manuscript of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* records that when Earl Siward *digri* of York died in 1055, he had himself buried in "that church which he himself had built and consecrated in the name of God and St. Óláfr."<sup>51</sup> Likewise, sometime between 1056 and 1065, a *comitissa* named Gytha granted her land at *Scireford* (Sherford) in Exeter to the church of St. Óláfr located there.<sup>52</sup> Such acts of ecclesiastical patronage, although only sparsely evidenced, do indicate that Óláfr's cult found some level of support among the Anglo-Danish elite in the mid-eleventh century. Ultimately, however, the assumption that these individual acts can be connected to the active influence of the Knýtling dynasty must remain speculative.

If our knowledge of the role played by secular rulers in the establishment of Óláfr's cult must remain limited, our understanding of the role played by ecclesiastical authorities is only slightly clearer. *Legendary Saga* and *Óláfs saga helga* claim that the elevation ceremony of 1031 was presided over by Grimkel, a missionary bishop who had previously been a member of Óláfr's retinue.<sup>53</sup> Again, our best evidence to corroborate this claim comes from England. As Eyolf Østrem has demonstrated, it seems likely that this Grimkel can be identified with Bishop Grimkillus of Selsey (1038-1047), and that he may have been responsible for promoting Óláfr's

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<sup>50</sup> See also Bruce Dickins, "The Cult of S. Olave in the British Isles," *Saga-Book of the Viking Society* 12 (1937-45): 53-80.

<sup>51</sup> Townend, "Knútr and the Cult of St Óláfr," p. 268; G.P. Cubbin, ed. and trans., "MS D," in David Dumville and Simon Keynes, eds., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*, vol. 6 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1996), p. 74: "on þisan gere forðerde Syhward eorl on Eoferwic, und he ligeð æt Galmahon on þam mynstre þe he sylf let timbrian und halgian on Godes und Olafes naman."

<sup>52</sup> Townend, "Knútr and the Cult of St Óláfr," p. 268.

<sup>53</sup> *Legendary Saga*, p. 206; Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, pp. 516-18.

ritual veneration in the south of England.<sup>54</sup> The earliest extant liturgical materials for St. Óláfr are to be found in English manuscripts produced in regions proximate to Grimkillus's sphere of influence. The Red Book of Darley, compiled in 1061 in the diocese of Winchester, contains three Mass prayers for St. Óláfr, while the Leofric Collectar, produced at Exeter during the rule of Bishop Leofric (1050-1072), contains an early office to be celebrated on the day of Óláfr's death, July 29.<sup>55</sup> Óláfr's name also appears alongside those of English royal martyrs in the litanies for the dedication of churches found in several manuscripts produced in or near Exeter.<sup>56</sup> This extant liturgical material is limited in what it can tell us about the extent of Óláfr's liturgical popularity in southern England or about its origins, but given what evidence we do have, it seems most likely, as Østrem has argued, that the spread of liturgical veneration of St. Óláfr to the dioceses of Selsey, Winchester, and Exeter was the result of Grimkillus's cultic promotion.

What, then, do we know about early veneration of Óláfr Haraldsson? *Glælongskviða* and *Erfisdrápa* provide brief yet vivid glimpses of an early relic cult at the church of St. Clement, while the kings' sagas present a narrative of the events that led to Óláfr's recognition as a saint in the context of Sveinn Knútsson's regency in 1031. Fragments of evidence, found primarily in English manuscripts, suggest potential actors in those efforts, including Sveinn Knútsson and the English bishop Grimkillus. We know from English liturgical materials that an office of St. Óláfr existed by the last quarter of the eleventh century, although most of its chants and prayers were

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<sup>54</sup> Eyolf Østrem, *The Office of St Olav: A Study in Chant Transmission* (Uppsala: Uppsala University Library, 2001), pp. 31-3.

<sup>55</sup> Red Book of Darley: Cambridge Corpus Christi College MS 422; Leofric Collectar: London British Library MS Harley 2961. July 29 remained Óláfr's primary feast day, and there is little evidence that the translation (August 3) was celebrated beyond Nidarós.

<sup>56</sup> London British Library Cotton Vitellius A VII, fol. 18; Leofric Psalter, London British Library MS Harley 863. Like the Leofric Collectar, the Psalter was donated by Bishop Leofric during the third quarter of the eleventh century.

not proper to Óláfr, but were instead taken from the *commune unius martyris* or the offices of English royal martyrs.<sup>57</sup> Our knowledge of events in the century that follows is even sparser. The kings' sagas attribute a few acts of cultic patronage to Óláfr's Norwegian successors, his son Magnús (r. 1035 - 1047) and half-brother Haraldr Harðráði (r. 1046 - 1066).<sup>58</sup> Snorri attributed to Magnús the creation of an opulent golden shrine to house Óláfr's body and the designation of July 29 as his feast day.<sup>59</sup> Snorri also explained that Magnús begun construction on the church of St. Óláfr in Nidarós, and that after Magnús's death, Haraldr had it completed.<sup>60</sup> Nor was this the only church of St. Óláfr that Haraldr was said to have constructed. According to Snorri, while in service to Emperor Michael IV in Constantinople, he founded a church there that he dedicated to his holy half-brother.<sup>61</sup> Snorri also claimed that after he became king of Norway, Haraldr had Óláfr's body moved once more, out of the church of St. Clement to a newly constructed church

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<sup>57</sup> Østrem, *Office of Saint Olav*, pp. 28-40. See also Eyolf Østrem and Lars Boje Mortensen, "The Early Liturgy of St Olav," in A. Dybdahl et al., eds., *Gregorian Chant and Medieval Music: Proceedings from the Nordic Festival and Conference of Gregorian Chant, Trondheim, St. Olav's Wake 1997* (Trondheim: Senter for Middelaldertstudier, 1998): 43-58.

<sup>58</sup> Antonsson, *St. Magnús of Orkney*, p. 112-15.

<sup>59</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga ins helga inni sérstöku*, in *Heimskringla* II, p. 441: "King Magnús had a shrine made and adorned with gold, silver, and gemstones. This shrine was made both in size and in other matters of shape like a coffin, but with columns beneath and above a lid shaped like a roof, and up above that a carved head and a gable. On the back of the lid were hinges and on the front fastenings, which were locked with a key. After that, King Magnús had the relics of King Óláfr laid in the shrine. Many miracles were worked there at the relics of King Óláfr." / "Magnús konungr lét gera skrin ok búa gulli ok silfri ok steinum. Er skrin þat svá gort bæði at mikilleik ok at öðrum vexti sem líkkista, en svalir undir niðri, en yfir uppi vétt vaxit sem ræfr ok þar af upp hófuð ok burst. Eru á véttinu lamar á bak, en hespur fyrir ok þar læst með lukli. Síðan lét Magnús konungr leggja í skrin þat helgan dóm Óláfs konungs. Urðu þar margar jarregnir þá at helgum dómi Óláfs konungs." Øystein Ekroll challenges Snorri's attribution of the golden shrine to Magnús Ólafsson, however, suggesting that its commissioner could have instead been Magnús Erlingsson (r. 1161 – 1184). The former, he argues, may have merely had Óláfr's existing wooden shrine gilded. See Ekroll, "The Shrine of St Olav in Nidarós Cathedral," in Margrete Syrstad Andås et al., eds., *The Medieval Cathedral of Trondheim: Architectural and Ritual Constructions in their Ritual Context* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007): 147-208, at pp. 154-5.

<sup>60</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Saga Haralds konungs harðræða*, in *Heimskringla* III, p. 131.

<sup>61</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Saga Haralds konungs harðræða*, in *Heimskringla* III, pp. 95-8.

in Nidarós dedicated to Our Lady.<sup>62</sup> The *Óláfs saga helga* thus provides some evidence that Óláfr's kin and successors kept his memory alive in the mid-eleventh century.

The defining moment for Óláfr's cult, in which he was transformed into a common symbol for the kingdom of Norway, arrived in the second half of the twelfth century. By this point the gradual organization of the Norwegian church – through the settling of its bishops in fixed urban dioceses, the construction of episcopal churches, and the foundation there of cathedral chapters – had provided the institutional foundations for the development of a more sophisticated cultic apparatus.<sup>63</sup> In 1152 or 1153, papal legate Cardinal Nicholas Breakspeare – soon to ascend the papal throne as Adrian IV (1154 - 1159) – visited Norway and elevated Nidarós to an archbishopric, thus freeing the Norwegian church from the authority of its former Danish metropolitan in Lund.<sup>64</sup> The cardinal selected Nidarós to be the site of the Norwegian archdiocese, despite its vacancy, due to St. Óláfr's presence in the church of the Holy Trinity (Christ Church). Construction on this new stone minster had begun at the end of the eleventh century under Haraldr Harðráði's son and successor, Óláfr III Kyrre (r. 1067 - 1093). A century later, Nidarós's second archbishop, Eysteinn Erlendsson (1161 - 1188), began the reconstruction of the minster in the high Gothic style.<sup>65</sup> The fabric of Óláfr Kyrre's original church was incorporated into the new Gothic building in such a way that St. Óláfr's body, elevated above the

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<sup>62</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Saga Haralds konungs harðræða*, in *Heimskringla* III, p. 131.

<sup>63</sup> By 1112, there were four Norwegian sees at Nidarós, Oslo, Selja, and Stavanger. In 1152/3, a fifth Norwegian see, Hamar, was created, while the Orkney Islands, Shetland Islands, and Hebrides, formerly subject to the archdiocese of York, were also placed under the authority of the newly created archdiocese of Nidarós.

<sup>64</sup> See Anders Bergquist, "The Papal Legate: Nicholas Breakspeare's Scandinavian Mission," in Brenda Bolton and Anne Duggan, eds., *Adrian IV: The English Pope (1154 – 1159)* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003): 41-8.

<sup>65</sup> On Archbishop Eysteinn, see Erik Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein: Statsmann og kirkebygger* (Oslo, 1996); and Anne Duggan, "The Decretals of Bishop Øystein of Trondheim (Nidarós)," *Proceedings of the Twelfth International Congress of Medieval Canon Law: Washington, D.C. 1-7 August 2004* (2008): 491-530.

altar, remained in place at the site where, according to local legend, it had first been hidden in the ground. As Øystein Ekroll has put it, the old chancel thus became a feretory for his shrine.<sup>66</sup> Around the same time, in celebration of the transformation of Christ Church into Norway's metropolitan seat, the skaldic poet Einarr Skúlason performed his drápa *Geisli* for Archbishop Jón Birgersson and the co-kings Sigurðr II Munn (r. 1136 - 1155), Inge Haraldsson (r. 1136 - 1161), and Eysteinn II Haraldsson (r. 1142 - 1157). Einarr's poem placed St. Óláfr at the center of Nidarós's ecclesiastical identity. The skald offered his verses to the saintly king, declaring that "I intend to praise the beautiful friend of 'the king of the sun' [Christ]; the value of the bishop's seat increases, there where the holy king lies."<sup>67</sup> He then further detailed the prestige that the archbishopric gained from the presence of the saint's body by enumerating the miracles worked at his shrine. Einarr's celebration of the enrichment of the Norwegian archbishopric through its association with the royal saint proved enduring, as the shrine of St. Óláfr served thereafter as the key symbol of the archdiocese, often standing in metonymically for the archbishop's court.<sup>68</sup>

The newly institutionalizing Norwegian church also provided the setting for the development of a native literary tradition, much of which was centered around the memory of the

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<sup>66</sup> Øystein Ekroll, "Nidarós Cathedral: The Development of the Building," in Gisela Attinger and Andreas Haug, eds., *The Nidarós Office of the Holy Blood: Liturgical Music in Medieval Norway* (Trondheim: Tapir Academic Press, 2004): 157-73, at p. 161. The old Romanesque church became the chancel of the new cruciform cathedral. While the chancel and chapter house were likely under construction during Eysteinn's archiepiscopate, construction on the new nave and Octagon (east end) continued over the next century. See also Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein*, pp. 172-190.

<sup>67</sup> Einarr Skúlason, *Geisli*, ed. and transl. by Martin Chase, *Einarr Skúlason's Geisli: A Critical Edition* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), p. 59.

<sup>68</sup> See for example Magnús Erlingsson's succession law of 1163/4, which declares that "on the death of a king all the bishops and abbots and the chieftains of the royal household with the entire *hird* shall without further summons make the journey north to the shrine of the holy King Óláfr to take counsel with the archbishop." In Laurence M. Larson, ed. and transl., *The Earliest Norwegian Laws: Being the Gulathing Law and the Frostathing Law, Translated from the Old Norwegian* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935), p. 36.



holy king.<sup>69</sup> Just as Archbishop Eysteinn spearheaded the architectural transformation of Christ Church, he was also one of the main drivers of this textual program. He oversaw the writing at Nidarós of the first Latin hagiographical treatment of St. Óláfr, the *Passio sancti Olavi*, as well as the expansion and collection of Óláfr's *miracula*.<sup>70</sup> He was also the dedicatee of Nidarholmr monk Theodoricus's *Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagensium* (c. 1177 - 1188), in which Óláfr was a central figure. One of Eysteinn's most significant accomplishments, however, was the expansion and codification of the Nidarós liturgy. He began work on the Nidarós Ordinal, a compendium of the incipits for all of the divine offices to be celebrated throughout the liturgical year.<sup>71</sup> The Ordinal contained two significant new elements for Óláfr's feast day on July 29: a new proper office for St. Óláfr, "In regali fastigio," the chant texts and lessons of which were provided by the *Passio*;<sup>72</sup> and a verse sequence, "Lux illuxit," which introduced proper elements into the Mass.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> On this subject, see especially the work of Lars Boje Mortensen: Mortensen, "The Nordic Archbishoprics as Literary Centres around 1200," in Karsten Friis-Jensen and I. Skovgaard-Petersen, eds., *Archbishop Absalon of Lund and his World* (Roskilde: Roskilde Museum, 2000): 133-57; Mortensen and Else Mundal, "Erkebispesetet i Nidarós: arnestad og verkstad for olavslitteraturen," in Steinar Imsen, ed., *Ecclesia Nidrosiensis 1153 – 1537: Søkelys på Nidaróskirkens og Nidarósprvinsens historie* (Trondheim: Tapir Academic Press, 2003): 353-84; Mortensen, "Writing and Speaking of St Olaf"; and Mortensen, "Sanctified Beginnings and Mythopoietic Moments: The First Wave of Writing on the Past in Norway, Denmark, and Hungary, c. 1000-1230," in Mortensen, ed., *The Making of Christian Myths in the Periphery of Latin Christendom (c. 1000-1300)* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2006): 247-74.

<sup>70</sup> The *Passio* and *miracula* have recently been the subject of a thorough study by Lenka Jirouskova, who also provides new critical editions of both texts: Jirouskova, ed., *Der heilige Wikingerkönig Olav Haraldsson und sein hagiographisches Dossier: Text und Kontext der Passio Olavi (mit kritischer Edition)*, 2 volumes (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

<sup>71</sup> Lilli Gjerløw, ed., *Ordo Nidrosiensis ecclesie* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1968).

<sup>72</sup> See Østrem, *Office of Saint Olav*; Gunilla Iversen, "Transforming a Viking into a Saint: The Divine Office of St. Olaf," in Margot Fassler, ed., *The Divine Office in the Latin Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000): 401-25.

<sup>73</sup> See Åslaug Ommundsen, "A Saint and His Sequence: Singing the Legend of St Olaf," *Viking Age and Medieval Scandinavia* 5 (2009): 151-76.

In the second half of the twelfth century, therefore, St. Óláfr became the premier symbol of the archdiocese of Nidarós and the entire Norwegian church. He became, too, the premier symbol of the prestige of the Norwegian kings. In 1163 or 1164, Archbishop Eysteinn orchestrated the first coronation of a Norwegian king, at which King Magnús Erlingsson (r. 1161 – 1184) dedicated the kingdom to God and St. Óláfr, and declared himself to be the successor of the royal saint. Shortly thereafter Magnús recognized an extensive set of liberties enjoyed by the church of Nidarós, which had been negotiated but never confirmed by Cardinal Nicholas Breakspear in the previous decade.<sup>74</sup> Magnús's integration of St. Óláfr into his novel program of royal legitimacy – a program that will be explored in greater detail in the next chapter – was a dramatic statement of the position that Óláfr occupied in the Norwegian political imagination. By the middle of the twelfth century, St. Óláfr had come to be definitively recognized as *rex perpetuus Norwegiae*.

*Hungary: St. Stephen (d. 1038) and St. Ladislaus (d. 1095)*

Unlike St. Óláfr – and indeed, unlike most other eleventh-century royal saints – Stephen I of Hungary did not die a martyr on the battlefield, but instead in bed at nearly seventy years of age, after nearly forty years spent establishing the Hungarian bishoprics, founding churches, instituting laws, and fending off rivals.<sup>75</sup> His biographer, who is known only as Bishop Hartvic, reports that after his death, Stephen's body was taken to the royal city of Székesfehérvár and buried in the basilica of Our Lady at the same time that the church, which Stephen himself had

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<sup>74</sup> *LDNH*, nos. 9-10.

<sup>75</sup> Hartvic, *Vita sancti Stephani*, c. 23, p. 431.

founded, was consecrated.<sup>76</sup> Despite the solemnity of his burial, however, it does not appear that a popular cult immediately emerged around Stephen's tomb. Instead his body remained buried beneath the church pavement for forty-five years, a state of affairs that two early sources for his life, the anonymous *Legenda minor* (post-1083) and Hartvic's *Vita* (c. 1095 - 1100), found it necessary to comment on, although they reached very different conclusions about it. For the author of the *Legenda minor*, the continued concealment of Stephen's body could only have been the result of the "clear malice of the people" or "some division of the church."<sup>77</sup> That the king's merits, as well as his body, had remained hidden was undoubtedly detrimental to the spiritual state of the Hungarian people. Hartvic, on the contrary, viewed the situation more optimistically. For him, the concealment of Stephen's body was the result of divine predestination, not human malice. The king's time under the earth meant that he had become "worthier to be revealed at the predestined time, and would deserve to be more gloriously recalled on resurrection day."<sup>78</sup> Hartvic further suggested that as a king, Stephen must have retained some "pinch of earthly dust, without which those who rule, as though by a certain powerful law, are hardly in any way able to lead this present life."<sup>79</sup> His forty-five years under the earth were therefore a necessary pause, during which his remains could be purified until that time when God deemed it appropriate to reveal the merits of his saint.

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<sup>76</sup> Hartvic, *Vita sancti Stephani*, c. 23, p. 432.

<sup>77</sup> *Legenda minor*, c. 8, p. 399: "multis igitur annorum curriculis labentibus, seu propter exhabundantem populi malitiam, seu propter aliquam divisionem in ecclesia, thesaurus tante pecunie in terra latuit et mortalium cognitioni occultus, solius oculis domini apparebat."

<sup>78</sup> Hartvic, *Vita sancti Stephani*, c. 24, p. 432: "hic tempore predestinato declarari dignius, et in resurrectionis die gloriosius revocari mereretur."

<sup>79</sup> Hartvic, *Vita sancti Stephani*, c. 24, p. 433: "forsitan quedam in ipso terreni pulveris asperse igne divine examinationis purificanda remanserant, sine qua regnantes quasi quodam iure potentiale vitam presentem vix aut nullatenus ducere queunt."

Regardless of why it took nearly a half-century for the Hungarians to elevate Stephen's remains, the early authors agree that they did so in a solemn ceremony at Székesfehérvár in 1083. Again, however, their accounts of these events diverge somewhat. Writing not long after the *elevatio*, the author of the *Legenda minor* described how God had revealed the location of Stephen's body by working through it a multitude of miracles. Having witnessed these signs of sanctity, the preeminent ecclesiastics of the kingdom met in council and proclaimed that a three-day fast should be held as a test of the king's merits. At the fast's end, they removed the pavement from atop his tomb, and a new wave of miracles swept the church, proving his sanctity beyond any doubt. They then elevated Stephen's sanctified body into an expensive silver shrine.<sup>80</sup> The *Legenda minor* thus describes a local canonization in terms typical for the eleventh century: it was driven by local reports of miracle working, judged and presided over by native ecclesiastical authorities, and capped by a solemn translation ceremony, in which the elevation of the saint's body above the church pavement symbolized the elevation of his soul after death from his earthly kingdom to the kingdom of heaven.

Hartvic composed his *Vita* around the turn of the twelfth century by splicing together long passages from the earlier *Legenda minor* and *Legenda maior* (before 1083). At only a few points in his *Vita* did Hartvic find it necessary to replace or augment the text of the earlier *Legendae* with his own material. The account of Stephen's translation in 1083 is one such point. In a lengthy original passage, Hartvic explains that the *revelatio* of Stephen's body had occurred after the receipt in Hungary of an apostolic letter that decreed that Stephen's body, along with those of four others who had "sowed the seeds of the Christian faith in Pannonia," should be

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<sup>80</sup> *Legenda minor*, c. 8, p. 400.

elevated in saintly veneration.<sup>81</sup> In response, King Ladislaus I (r. 1077 – 1091), “whose character was distinguished by the complete integrity of his morals and illustrious for the brilliance of his virtues,” consulted with the bishops, chief lords, and wise men of the kingdom.<sup>82</sup> They declared that a three-day fast should be held, because it seemed appropriate that the *revelatio* “be sought from Christ through the revelation of signs, established by the common prayers, fasting, and almsgiving of all.”<sup>83</sup> However, after their fast was complete, they found themselves unable to budge the cover from atop Stephen’s tomb. A holy recluse, consulted about this unexpected setback, revealed to the king and his advisors that Stephen’s relics could not be transferred unless Ladislaus freed his cousin Solomon, whom he had deposed from the throne two years earlier, from captivity. Ladislaus took the recluse’s advice, pardoned his rival, and the Hungarians repeated their three-day fast, at the end of which they were easily able to remove the stone lying over Stephen’s grave. Like the author of the *Legenda minor*, Hartvic claims that the *revelatio* of Stephen’s body was a miraculous occasion. He describes how Stephen’s sepulcher was discovered to be filled with sweet-smelling, endlessly replenishing pink water, and how Stephen’s incorrupt right hand, the so-called holy *dexter*, was stolen by a monk, later to be revealed and elevated as a cultic object in its own right.<sup>84</sup> Hartvic thus made a number of

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<sup>81</sup> Hartvic, *Vita sancti Stephani*, c. 24, p. 433: “ex Romane sedis institutione apostolicis litteris sancitum est, ut eorum corpora elevari deberent, qui in Pannonia Christiane fidei semina iacentes.” The other Hungarian saints canonized in 1083 included Stephen’s son Emeric, Bishop Gerard, and the hermits Zoerard-Andrew and Benedict.

<sup>82</sup> Hartvic, *Vita sancti Stephani*, c. 24, p. 433: “rex Ladizlaus, qui tunc rempublicam aministrabat, universa morum honestate preclarus habitus et virtutum fulgore conspicuus, laudibus et servitio dei perfecte deditus, spiritus paracliti perlustratione tactus, habito colloqui cum episcopis et primatibus et totius Pannonie sapientibus.”

<sup>83</sup> Hartvic, *Vita sancti Stephani*, p. 433: “videretur fore proficuum, communi cunctorum deprecatione ieiuniis et helmosinis fundata, per manifestationem signorum a Christo deberet esse querendum.”

<sup>84</sup> Hartvic, *Vita sancti Stephani*, p. 433-4.

important additions to the *Legenda minor*'s narrative, attributing to King Ladislaus a key role in carrying out the translation, connecting the event to the resolution of the rivalry between Ladislaus and Solomon, and providing specific examples of the miracles worked upon the opening of Stephen's tomb.

Perhaps the most significant original claim Hartvic made was that Stephen's elevation had been carried out according to the instruction of Pope Gregory VII. Papal canonization was still relatively uncommon in the second half of the eleventh century, and though it remained more symbolically significant than canonically mandated, it could bolster a local cult with apostolic authority and imbue it with the prestige of international recognition. However, recent commentators have expressed doubts about the veracity of Hartvic's account of the canonization, and rightly so.<sup>85</sup> The way in which Hartvic inserted the apostolic letter into a narrative of sanctification that was otherwise largely adapted from the *Legenda minor* yielded an unlikely description of a contemporary canonization process. According to Hartvic, local efforts to investigate Stephen's sanctity had begun only after the receipt of the unsolicited papal letter in Hungary. This is a sequence of events for which there is no contemporary analogue: throughout the eleventh century, the few canonization proceedings that did take place were not initiated by the papal curia, but were instead responsive to petitions sent to Rome by local churches.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princes*, pp. 125-6; Janka Szendrei, "Commune pro missionariis? Die ältesten Offiziumsgesänge für König Stephan den Heiligen," in Roman Hankeln, ed., *Political Plainchant? Music, Text and Historical Context of Medieval Saints' Offices* (Ottawa: Institute of Mediaeval Music, 2009): 81-92, at p. 84.

<sup>86</sup> For example, Simeon of Syracuse (d. 1035) was canonized in 1042 after Archbishop Poppo of Trier sent a canonization dossier including a newly composed *Vita* and two episcopal letters of support to Benedict IX; Theobald (d. 1066) was canonized by Alexander II after receiving the petition of the people of Vicena, supported by two local bishops; Robert of Chaise-Dieu (d. 1067) was also canonized by Alexander II following the arguments made on his behalf by his disciple Gerald de Venna in front of the pope and cardinals in Rome; Urban II canonized the empress Adelaide (d. 999) sometime after 1096, having received Odilo of Cluny's *Vita* and several letters of ecclesiastical support; and so on. See E.W. Kemp, *Canonization and Authority in the Western Church* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948); André Vauchez, *Sainthood in the*

Moreover, while several of the *vitae* of the other Hungarian saints elevated in 1083 did repeat Hartvic's claim of papal involvement, they were unable to agree on the details of the procedures involved. For example, the author of the *Legenda sancti Gerardi*, rather than mentioning the receipt of an apostolic letter, instead described the arrival in Hungary of an unnamed papal legate and his participation in a local ecclesiastical council that gathered to deliberate about the canonizations.<sup>87</sup> Its author thus shared Hartvic's idea that the pope ought to have been involved in the creation of the new saints, but presented a significantly different description of how that had been achieved.

What of Hartvic's claim that there was a special relationship between Hungary and Rome that might have led Gregory to spontaneously recognize the saintly status of Ladislaus's royal predecessor? A series of papal letters shows that the Hungarian kings and the papacy had indeed recently been in contact, although their relationship was considerably more one-sided than Hartvic implied. As the head of a Roman church with universalizing aspirations, Gregory had showed a sustained interest in ministering to the Hungarian people through their kings.<sup>88</sup> In particular, he had been concerned to maintain the independence of the Hungarian crown and church from the influence of the German emperor Henry IV, which had come under threat during the dynastic struggle between King Solomon and his cousins Géza and Ladislaus from 1071 onwards. To that end, Gregory had urged the Hungarian kings to recognize St. Peter's lordship

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*Later Middle Ages*, transl. by Jean Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); and Thomas Wetzstein, *Heilige vor Gericht: das Kanonisationsverfahren im europäischen Spätmittelalter* (Köln: Böhlau, 2004).

<sup>87</sup> *Legenda sancti Gerardi*, *SRH*, vol. II, c. 7, pp. 478-9.

<sup>88</sup> For what follows, see H.E.J. Cowdrey, *Pope Gregory VII (1073 – 1085)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 443 – 452. See also Zoltan J. Kosztolnyik, "The Relations of Four Eleventh-Century Hungarian Kings with Rome in the Light of Papal Letters," *Church History* 46:1 (1977): 33-47; Ferenc Makk, *Ungarische Aussenpolitik (896-1196)* (Herne: Tibor Schäfer Verlag, 1999), pp. 69-88.

over the Hungarian crown. In a letter sent to Solomon in October 1073, Gregory reminded Solomon that after Henry III's victory over the Magyars at the Battle of the River Raab (1044), the emperor had sent the Hungarian crown and royal lance to Rome in acknowledgment of the Hungarian kingdom's subordination to apostolic authority.<sup>89</sup> In 1073, however, Solomon, was hardly in a position to entertain Gregory's overtures. As his struggle with Géza and Ladislaus had increasingly gone in their favor, Solomon had come to rely on the military aid of his brother-in-law Henry IV, even offering to receive his kingdom *in beneficium* from the German emperor in return for his continued support. This prompted Gregory to write twice to Géza in 1075, sharply criticizing Solomon for having jeopardized Hungarian independence, describing his defeat at the decisive Battle of Mogyoród the previous year as an act of divine judgment against him, and urging Géza to bring peace and concord to the Hungarian people and their leaders.<sup>90</sup>

Whatever hopes Gregory had of cultivating Géza as a papal ally in opposition to Solomon died suddenly with him in 1077, however.<sup>91</sup> Ladislaus succeeded his brother as king, and at first Gregory seems to have viewed Ladislaus's election as another opportunity to achieve Hungarian

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<sup>89</sup> Gregory VII, *Register*, ed. and trans. H.E.J. Cowdrey, II.13, p. 108. Gregory suggested that Solomon's correspondence would have been received more favorably "if your ill-considered submission [to Henry IV] had not so greatly offended blessed Peter, for, as you might learn from the elders of your land, the kingdom of Hungary is the property of the holy Roman church and was in the past offered and devoutly handed over to blessed Peter by King Stephen with all his right and power."

<sup>90</sup> Gregory VII, *Register*, ed. and trans. H.E.J. Cowdrey, II.63, p. 157, and II.70, pp. 165-6. In the first letter, sent in March, Gregory claimed that Solomon had acquired his kingdom "by usurpation, from the German king, not from the Roman pontiff." By the time he wrote his second letter a month later, Gregory's rhetoric had hardened: "when, in despite of the illustrious lordship of blessed Peter and the prince of the apostles, whose kingdom we believe it not to be hidden from your prudence that it is, the king [Solomon] has made himself subject to the king of the Germans, he has also received the name of sub-king...and so, whatever right in succeeding to the kingdom he has had before, he has stripped it from himself by sacrilegious usurpation."

<sup>91</sup> Gregory may have been encouraged by the fact that it had been Géza who had first made contact with the papal see. In March 1074, the pope had written to Géza, responding to a letter (now lost) that the duke had sent him. Gregory commended Géza for his "reverence of the apostolic see" and established Marquis Azzo of Este as an intermediary, through whom "matters which you shall intend to be referred to apostolic hearing will be most readily communicated and conveyed to us." *Register*, ed. and trans. H.E.J. Cowdrey, I.58, p. 62.



recognition of the suzerainty of St. Peter and Rome.<sup>92</sup> He quickly wrote to Archbishop Nehemiah of Esztergom, instructing him to urge the new king to “declare to us his will and proper devotion and reverence towards the apostolic see” by sending a royal envoy to Rome to establish a direct connection between their courts.<sup>93</sup> By March 1079, however, Gregory seems to have still been awaiting a reply. He wrote directly to Ladislaus, claiming that although he had heard reports of the king’s willingness “to serve blessed Peter as a religious power should and to obey us as becomes a freeborn son,” he had never received his envoy as requested.<sup>94</sup> But Gregory’s overtures seem to have gone permanently unreciprocated, and by 1091 Pope Urban II was writing to Ladislaus in a very different tone, sharply criticizing him for his conquest of Croatia, whose former king had sworn an oath of fealty to the papacy in 1076 and been invested with a papal standard (*vexillum*), sword, crown, and scepter.<sup>95</sup> Shortly afterwards, Ladislaus recognized the anti-pope Clement III and began negotiations to ally himself with Henry IV.

Hartvic’s account of the canonization therefore seems unlikely when read against other contemporary sources of evidence for the relationship between Hungary and Pope Gregory VII. Moreover, despite Gregory’s clear desire to encourage the orientation of the Hungarian crown towards Rome, there are no records that Gregory canonized any saints at all throughout his papal career, or that he deployed canonization as a political tool through which to bind the frontier

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<sup>92</sup> Gregory would likely have been encouraged by Ladislaus’s close connections to German anti-imperial parties: he had married Adelaide, daughter of the anti-king Rudolf of Swabia (to whom Gregory wrote in 1081: *Register*, ed. and trans. H.E.J. Cowdrey, VIII.22, p. 396), while his younger sister had married Duke Magnus of Saxony.

<sup>93</sup> Gregory VII, *Register*, ed. and trans. H.E.J. Cowdrey, IV.25, pp. 238-239.

<sup>94</sup> Gregory VII, *Register*, ed. and trans. H.E.J. Cowdrey, VI.30, pp. 311-312.

<sup>95</sup> Cowdrey, *Pope Gregory VII*, ed. and trans. H.E.J. Cowdrey, pp. 441-2. Cowdrey suggests that Demetrius Zvonimir’s oath of fealty and papal investiture represented the “model of elective kingship” that Gregory envisioned deploying throughout the frontiers of Christendom, including potentially in Hungary.

regions more closely to the Latin church. It thus seems highly unlikely that he would have preemptively authorized the canonization of five Hungarian saints, petitions unheard, at a point in time in which he had twice failed to make contact with Hungary's king. In particular, there are indications in his correspondences that he viewed the potential of kings or other secular powers to achieve sainthood with extreme pessimism, entangled as they were in the trappings of earthly power.<sup>96</sup> Instead, Gregory's praise in his letters to Ladislaus was predicated on the king's willingness to show himself to be a dedicated servant of the apostolic see by acknowledging St. Peter as his suzerain. Ladislaus's persistent silence in response to Gregory's missives suggests his unwillingness to place himself in that kind of a subordinate relationship to Rome. In fact, Ladislaus appears to have carefully navigated his precarious position in the early years of his reign without subordinating himself to any of the outside powers, papal or imperial, that sought to take advantage of his political vulnerabilities.

Nevertheless, there are indications that Ladislaus's sense of his own legitimacy as king remained fragile given the way in which he had come to power. He had helped his brother depose Solomon, the rightfully crowned king of Hungary, and had himself never been crowned. Moreover, whereas Solomon was the direct descendant of St. Stephen Ladislaus was descended

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<sup>96</sup> Gregory VII, *Register*, ed. and trans. H.E.J. Cowdrey, VII.21. In his blistering denunciation of Henry IV in 1081, Gregory demanded: "let us carefully recognize how perilous and how to be feared is the imperial or royal dignity, in which very few are saved, and those who by God's mercy come to salvation are not by the judgment of the Holy Spirit celebrated in the holy church equally as the many of the poor. For from the beginning of the world up to these times in our in all authentic writings we do not find seven emperors or kings whose life has been so distinguished by religion and adorned by the powers of miracles as was that of a multitude without number of despisers of the world...truly, that we may be silent about apostles and martyrs, who among emperors and kings has shone forth with miracles equally as blessed Martin, Antony, or Benedict? For which emperor or king has raised the dead, cleansed lepers, and given sight to the blind? Behold! The holy church does indeed praise and venerate Constantine of pious memory, Theodosius and Honorius, Charles and Louis - lovers of righteousness, propagators of religion, and defenders of churches. She does not, however, declare that they have been bright with so great a glory of miracles. Besides this, to how many names of kings and emperors has the holy church decreed that basilicas or altars should be dedicated or that masses should be celebrated in their honor? Let kings and other princes fear, lest, the more they rejoice to prefer themselves to other men in this life, the more they may be plunged beneath eternal fires."

from an ancillary branch of the Árpád dynasty. As Klaniczay has argued, when read in this context, Ladislaus's participation in Stephen's sanctification in 1083 appears to have been a remarkably successful act of dynastic self-fashioning and royal legitimation.<sup>97</sup> By solemnly celebrating Stephen as a spiritual patron, Ladislaus implicitly connected his royal fortunes to those of his saintly predecessor, even in the absence of a direct dynastic connection. Likewise, by freeing Solomon from captivity on the occasion of Stephen's elevation, he transformed the former king from a rival for Ladislaus's throne to a beneficiary of the royal saint's mercy, which Ladislaus mediated as king. Hartvic later imbued these proceedings with the added authority and prestige of apostolic sanction through his fabricated claim of papal canonization, without necessitating the Hungarian king's acknowledgment of the subordinate relationship that Gregory had pressed him to accept.

The long-term success of Ladislaus's program of royal self-definition is suggested by the fact that he was remembered by later Hungarian historians as himself having been an ideal ruler, who was pious and generous towards the church as well as virile and martially successful, rather than as a usurper.<sup>98</sup> By the end of the twelfth century, in fact, Ladislaus himself had come to be recognized as one of Hungary's royal saints alongside Stephen. His model of royal sanctity proved to be highly attractive, particularly to the fourteenth-century Angevin kings of Hungary, under whom Ladislaus's cult became immensely popular, so that it eclipsed even that of St. Stephen in terms of the ubiquity of his visual representation and ritual commemoration.<sup>99</sup> Despite

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<sup>97</sup> Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses*, pp. 123-134.

<sup>98</sup> *Chronicon pictum*, pp. 176-182.

<sup>99</sup> See particularly Erno Marosi, "Between East and West: Medieval Representations of Saint Ladislav, King of Hungary," *Hungarian Quarterly* 36 (1995): 102-10; Annamária Kovács, "Costumes as Symbols of Warrior Sainthood: The Pictorial Representations of the Legend of King Ladislaus in Hungary," *Annual of Medieval Studies at the CEU* 6 (2000): 145-63; Scott B. Montgomery and Alice A. Bauer, "*Caput sancti regis Ladislai*: The Reliquary Bust of Saint Ladislav and Holy Kingship in Late Medieval Hungary," in Stephen Lamia and

his later popularity, however, in the century after his death there is very little evidence witnessing the early existence of a popular cult of St. Ladislaus.<sup>100</sup>

Ladislaus died in 1095 and was buried in the church he had founded at Várad (Oradea) in Transylvania, a circumstance that the anonymous *Legenda sancti Ladislai* attributed to his own miraculous intervention.<sup>101</sup> After his burial, we possess almost no evidence of the ways in which he might have been commemorated until 1192, when he was sanctified. The evidence for his sanctification, including the actors involved and the procedures they followed, is also very sparse. The *Legenda*, written not long after the event, records tersely that “when the Author of the created universe had declared this king to be his holy consort in divine virtue through the working of such miracles, in the year of our Lord 1192 his holy body was magnificently “canonized” (*canonizatum est*).<sup>102</sup> Although the phrasing here suggests papal canonization, neither the *Legenda* nor the thirteenth-century Hungarian chroniclers explicitly mentioned the involvement of the pope in the authorization of Ladislaus’s cult. The only writer to make this claim was the Croatian historian Thomas of Spalato, writing c. 1266, who in his *Historia*

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Elizabeth Valdez del Álamo, eds., *Decorations for the Holy Dead: Visual Embellishments on Tombs and Shrines of Saints* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002): 77-92; and Carmen Florea, “Relics at the Margins of Latin Christendom: the Cult of a Frontier Saint in the Late Middle Ages,” *Pecia: Resoures en médiévisique* 8-11 (2005): 471-96.

<sup>100</sup> Klaniczay argues that the miracle stories contained in the so-called *Gesta Ladislai regis*, the section of the *Chronicon pictum* that treats the life of the king, were later interpolations. See Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses*, pp. 176-82.

<sup>101</sup> According to the *Legenda sancti Ladislai*, ch. 8, pp. 522-3, when Ladislaus’s men attempted to convey his body to Székesfehérvár, the coach in which it lay drove itself towards Várad, making it clear that the holy confessor had chosen that church as his burial site.

<sup>102</sup> *Legenda sancti Ladislai*, c. 11, p. 525: “dum igitur auctor universe creature hunc sanctum regem divine virtutis consortem esse tantis miraculis declarasset, anno domini millesimo centesimo nonagesimo secundo sanctum corpore eius gloriose est canonizatum.” Both recensions of the *Legenda* describe the working of miracles before and during the event, including the healing of the blind, the healing of a boy with deformed hands and feet, the appearance of red stars in the sky, and so on (pp. 525-6).

*pontificum Salonitanorum atque Spalatensium* described a journey to Hungary made in the early 1190s by the papal legate Cardinal Gregory of Crescentio and a young cleric named Bernard, who would later become the archbishop of Spalato. According to Thomas, Gregory and Bernard were sent to Hungary via the Dalmatian coast by Pope Innocent in order to carry out the canonization of Ladislaus at the request of King Béla III.<sup>103</sup> However, Thomas composed his account more than seven decades after the event, and he also misidentified the pope who would have been involved in Ladislaus's canonization: in 1192 it would have been Celestine III, not Innocent III, who occupied the Apostolic See. Celestine's register contains no mention of the canonization or the journey to Hungary of Gregory of Crescentio, and so historians have generally been in agreement that it was unlikely that Celestine had been involved in the establishment of Ladislaus's cult.<sup>104</sup> It seems more probable that, as in Stephen's case, later writers such as Thomas of Spalato fabricated claims of papal canonization in order to bolster the legitimacy of a cult that had developed locally.

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<sup>103</sup> Thomas of Spalato, *Historia pontificum Salonitanorum atque Spalatensium*, ed. and trans. Damir Karbic et al., in *Archdeacon Thomas of Split, History of the Bishops of Salona and Split* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006), pp. 134-137: "at that time, the illustrious Béla, king of Hungary, sent emissaries to the Holy See to entreat Pope Innocent to have the remains of the blessed King Ladislaus exhumed and interred in a more fitting place, and to declare that Ladislaus should be enrolled in the catalogue of saints. The pope granted this request and sent a man, the most reverend Cardinal Gregory of Crescentio, to fulfill the king's wishes in a fitting manner. Having been entrusted with the papal legation, the cardinal then crossed the sea, and, coming to the region of Dalmatia, landed at Trogir....the legate eventually set out for Hungary, and after he had fulfilled the duties of the legation on which he had been sent, he returned home." / "Eo tempore illustris vir Bella Hungarie rex missis apochrissariis ad apostolicam sedem supplicavit domino pape Innocencio, ut iuberet reliquias beati Vladislavi regis sublevare et in loco decenciori componi ac ipsum in sanctorum chathalogo decerneret ascribendum. Cuius petitioni summus pontifex annuit et misit quondam virum revendissimum Gregorium de chrescencio cardinalem, ut voluntati regie satisfaceret condecenter. Tunc cardinalis apostolica legacione suscepta transferavit et venit in partes Dalmacie applicuitque Tragurium...cum ergo legatus in Hungariam profectus legationis sue peregrisset officium, ad propria reversus est."

<sup>104</sup> Michael Goodich does attribute the canonization to Celestine, albeit very briefly, and without seeming to have read his sources very closely: thus he claims that the *Legenda* did mention Celestine's involvement, and that Várad was the site of a "flourishing cult" by the twelfth century. See Goodich, "The Canonization of Celestine III," in John Doran and Damian J. Smith, eds., *Pope Celestine III (1191-1198): Diplomat and Pastor* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008): 305-16, at p. 310.

Klaniczay has argued that it was King Béla III, rather than Celestine III, who was the driving force behind the establishment of Ladislaus's cult in 1192. However, there is again very little contemporary evidence to connect Béla to the emerging cult. Neither the *Legenda* nor the national chronicles mention the king's involvement in the canonization or suggest his interest in patronizing the royal saint. As we have seen, Thomas of Spalato did attribute the canonization to Béla, although it is unclear why Klaniczay is willing to accept his testimony regarding the king's involvement but not the pope's. The only potential contemporary evidence that suggests that Béla may have had some stake in Ladislaus's commemoration rests in the idea that the *Legenda* author modelled his description of Ladislaus's physical prowess on contemporary descriptions of Béla himself.<sup>105</sup> But even if the *Legenda* author had intentionally drawn implicit comparisons between Béla and his saintly ancestor, this is by no means enough evidence to argue for his involvement in a royally directed program of canonization. Instead, the early history of Ladislaus's cult must unfortunately remain obscure.

*Denmark: St. Knútr IV (d. 1086) and St. Knútr Lavard (d. 1131)*

Although it was the first of the new kingdoms to convert to Christianity, Denmark was the last to gain for itself a local saint. As in Norway and Hungary, the first Dane to achieve sanctification was one of its kings, Knútr IV (r. 1080-6). Despite his posthumous hagiographers' high praise for his virtues, in life Knútr seems to have been a highly unpopular ruler, particularly with the people of Jutland. In 1086, the Jutes rose up in rebellion against him, culminating in his death in the church of St. Alban in Odense, which he himself had founded and endowed with the

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<sup>105</sup> Kornél Szovák, "The Image of the Ideal King in Twelfth-Century Hungary: Remarks on the Legends of St Ladislaus," in Anne Duggan, ed., *Kings and Kingship in Medieval Europe* (London: KCL Centre for Late Antique and Early Modern Studies, 1993): 241-64.

relics of the British martyr. The author of the anonymous *Passio sancti Kanuti* (post 1095) described the king's death in explicitly Christomimetic terms: he was pierced in his side with a lance, "with his hands stretched out along the cross at the altar of St. Alban the martyr."<sup>106</sup> Despite his hagiographer's compelling description of the setting of his death, however, as with St. Stephen and St. Ladislaus, there is no evidence that any immediate efforts were made to recognize Knútr's sanctity. The *Passio*, as well as Ælnoth of Canterbury's *Gesta* (c. 1122) later claimed that his tomb had soon become the site of miracles; but if they or another writer ever assembled a miracle collection for Knútr, it has not survived. In the twelfth century, Danish historians including Saxo Grammaticus, Sveinn Aggesen, and the author of the *Chronicon Roskildense* (c. 1138) looked back on the environmental catastrophes and famines of the reign of Óláfr I (r. 1086 - 1095), Knútr's brother and successor, as divine punishment meted out to the Danes for their murder of their rightful king and for the continued lack of repentance for the act shown by the Jutes.<sup>107</sup> Despite this later historiographical framing of Knútr's death, however, the lack of early evidence for the existence of Knútr's cult prefigures what appears to have been an ongoing lack of popular interest in the murdered king.<sup>108</sup> Modern commentators have suggested that even as Knútr increasingly achieved recognition as a saint at the turn of the twelfth century,

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<sup>106</sup> *Passio sancti Kanuti*, c. 7, pp. 69-70: "unus de sacrilegis religiosum regem perfodit lancea. Nam crucis in modum manibus expansis ad altare sancti Albani martiris transfixus est in latere cuspidis mucrone."

<sup>107</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, XI.15.1-2, vol. II, pp. 860-863; *Chronicon Roskildense*, c. 11, p. 24.

<sup>108</sup> Tore Nyberg, in "St Knud and St Knud's Church," in H. Bekker-Nielsen, ed., *Hagiography and Medieval Literature* (Odense, 1981): pp. 100-10, at p. 101, argues that Knútr *rex*'s cult would have found its beginnings amongst those inhabitants of Fyn who were dissatisfied by Olaf I's disastrous reign: "a people in distress, tormented by plague and other inflictions, clung to the king of the previous epoch, which in retrospect must have seemed so happy, just and blessed, compared with the current miserable state of affairs." While as we have seen, the Danish historians including Saxo Grammaticus, Sveinn Aggesen, and the author of the *Chronicon Roskildense* did characterize the calamities of Olaf's reign as divine punishment for Knútr's murder, we can only speculate whether these attitudes – and a retrospective longing for the days of Knútr's reign – were widespread amongst the general population of Fyn.

the appeal of his cult remained locally restricted to Fyn and the small islands surrounding it.<sup>109</sup>

Our knowledge about Knútr's cult may thus have remained minimal if not for the survival of a small group of charters that illuminate the efforts of two parties to celebrate Knútr's holy memory. These were the Danish kings and the monastic house of St. Alban and St. Knútr at Odense. In 1095, Óláfr I died and was succeeded by his brother, Erik I (r. 1095 - 1103). Shortly thereafter, Erik arranged for twelve monks from the English monastery of Evesham to be brought to Odense to establish a new Benedictine house there.<sup>110</sup> Around the same time, the wooden church in which Knútr had died was replaced by a new stone structure.<sup>111</sup> Even before this new church had been consecrated, Knútr's body was elevated and translated into it. The establishment of the new monastic community, the construction of the new stone church, and Knútr's *elevatio*, all of which took place around 1095, were therefore closely interrelated. The author of the *Passio* and Ælnoth both described the events, although their accounts differed somewhat in their details. According to the *Passio*, Knútr's elevation took place after a series of

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<sup>109</sup> Nyberg, "St Knud and St Knud's Church," p. 107, bases his argument on patterns of royal patronage to the cultic sites of Odense and Ringsted over the course of the twelfth century. In his edition of the *Chronicon Roskildense*, Michael Gelting argues that the biblical symbolism deployed by its author to describe Knútr as a ruler forms a subtle but damning critique of his actions as king. See Gelting and Elisabeth Gorst-Rasmussen, eds. *Roskildekrøniken* (Højbjerg, 1979), pp. 54-5; as well as Gelting, "Two Early Twelfth-Century Views of Denmark's Christian Past: Ailnoth and the Anonymous of Roskilde," in Ildar Garipzanov, ed., *Historical Narratives and Christian Identity on a European Periphery: Early History Writing in Northern, East-Central, and Eastern Europe (c. 1070 – 1200)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011): 33-55, at p. 37. Similarly, Kim Esmark, "Spinning the Revolt: The Assassination and Sanctification of an Eleventh-Century Danish King," in Henrik Jansen, ed., *Rebellion and Resistance* (Pisa, 2009): pp. 15-31, at pp. 24-5, argues that echoes of a "counter-narrative" to the sanctification of St. Knútr can be identified in sources such as the *Chronicon Roskildense* and Saxo Grammaticus's *Gesta Danorum*. However, on traces of Knútr's cult in Lund, see Curt Wallin, "Knudskulten i Lund," in Vincent Lind et al., eds., *Knuds-bogen 1986: Studier over Hund den Hellige* (Odense: Bys Museer, 1986): 79-86.

<sup>110</sup> *DD*, I.2, no. 24. On the establishment of the community, see Tore Nyberg, *Monasticism in North-Western Europe, 800-1200* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 102. Paul Gazzoli has argued that Erik may have arranged for the transfer of the Evesham monks to Odense during a trip he and his wife Bothild made to northern England, during which they also left their names in the *Liber vitae Dunelmensis*. See Gazzoli, "Anglo-Danish Connections and the Origins of the Cult of Knud," *Journal of the North Atlantic* 4 (2013): 69-76, at pp. 72-3.

<sup>111</sup> Nyberg, "St Knud and St Knud's Church," pp. 104-6.



miracles revealed his sanctity to the Danish people. Like the Hungarians at the tomb of St. Stephen in Székesfehérvár, they collectively undertook a three-day fast “with prayers, alms, hymns, and spiritual songs” and then raised the body of the king, “now made holy (*iam sacratum*),” out of the ground.<sup>112</sup> Ælnoth, on the other hand, claimed that the events of 1095 had been set in motion after an ecclesiastical council had been convened, on the desire of the “entire clergy of people,” to determine Knútr’s sanctity. Like the Norwegians at the tomb of St. Óláfr in Nidarós, they tested Knútr’s bones in fire, and when his relics remained unburnt, the body of the king “was lifted from the ground and solemnly carried to the southern basilica...and there closed up in a stone sarcophagus placed in the crypt.”<sup>113</sup> Despite the divergences in the details of their accounts, Ælnoth, like the *Passio* author, described Knútr’s elevation as a largely local event, undertaken on the initiative of the Odense monks and clergy, which marked the inauguration of the Benedictine community and the cult of one of its patron saints.<sup>114</sup>

Ælnoth is our sole source for the next stage of development in Knútr’s cult, which took place some five years later, and to which Ælnoth claimed to be an eyewitness. While the *elevatio* of 1095 had relocated Knútr’s body to the new stone church of St. Alban, signifying the interdependent establishment of the Odense monastic community and the royal cult, according to

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<sup>112</sup> *Passio sancti Kanuti*, c. 9, pp. 70-1: “tum, indicto triduo ieiunio peractoque cum orationibus, elemosinis et ymnis et spiritualibus canticis, corpus regis iam sacratum de pulvere terreno esset eleuatum.”

<sup>113</sup> Ælnoth, *Gesta*, c. 32, p. 129: “requieuit autem rex deo dilectus Canutus et martyr egregius eodem in loco annis bis quaternis et mensibus fere ter ternis, Olauo regni eius successore imperante, usque dum, crebrescentibus uirtutum miraculis, communi consilio et pari uoto cleri totius et populi, singulis pontificibus cum multitudine cleri aggregatis sacrisque ossibus igne examinatis, ex humi mole sustollitur et ad basilicam australem, insigni lapideo tabulatu a fundamentis erectam, sed nondum penitus constructam, nunc uero postmodum eius nomini consecratam, sollempniter aduehitur ibique saxeo sarcofago positus in cripta reconditur.”

<sup>114</sup> On the *elevatio* of 1095, see Kim Esmark, “Hellige ben i indviet ild: Den rituelle sanktifikation af kong Knud IV, 1095,” in Hans Jacob Orning, Lars Hermanson, and Kim Esmark, eds., *Gaver, ritualer og konflikter: Ett rettsantropologisk perspektiv på nordisk middelalderhistorie* (Oslo: Unipub, 2010): 161-210.

Ælnoth the events of 1100 represented the formalization of Knútr's cult and its recognition on an international level.<sup>115</sup> After Knútr's elevation, Ælnoth claimed, the famines of Olav I's reign eased and the Danish people prospered under the rule of Erik I. As part of his program of just rulership, wishing to provide "for the benefit of the public," the king sent emissaries to the papal curia, where they described to the supreme pontiff "the deeds that had been done [by Knútr], and earnestly requested that by his apostolic authority the pope might take into consideration the devotion of the faithful." In response to the Danish petition, Ælnoth explained, the pope convened an ecclesiastical synod, which carefully considered the "facts of the deeds" (*rerum gestarum*) as they had been presented by Erik's envoys. By unanimous consent, the synod decided that "the once glorious king should be admitted into the company of the blessed martyrs in heaven," and declared that he should henceforth be known as "Canutus," on account of how brightly his memory shone in illuminating God's gifts. Ælnoth described how the Danish people rejoiced when news of the canonization reached them. Bishop Hubald of Odense commissioned the crafting of a suitable shrine for the martyr's bones, "bright with pure golden metal, adorned beautifully with small cerulean and gold precious stones, where the holy relics (*pignora*) of the saint could be hidden."<sup>116</sup> Then, on April 19, 1100, a huge crowd of Danish bishops, clergy, and laity came together, and "with solemn praise and the enormous joy of everyone gathered there," Bishop Hubald reverently transferred Knútr's body from its stone sarcophagus into the new

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<sup>115</sup> Nyberg's argument that the second *translatio* took place in 1100, rather than 1101, on the basis of the evidence provided on the *Epitaphium* about the positioning of the ceremony within the liturgical year, is convincing. See Nyberg, "St Knud and St Knud's Church," p. 102.

<sup>116</sup> Ælnoth, *Gesta*, c. 35, p. 133: "unde ex collatis et conseruatis regis imperio et reuerendi eiusdem sedis pontificis Hubaldi consilio simul et amminiculo ossibus arca sacris insigni scemate facta conficitur, puro nitidi fuluique metallo, ceruleis, croceis pulchre decorata lapillis, quo possent sancti iam pignora sancta recondi."

golden shrine.<sup>117</sup>

Modern historians have for the most part been willing to accept Ælnoth's account of Knútr's canonization relatively uncritically, in large part because of his authority as an eyewitness, but also because of the event's symbolic significance as the first purported papal canonization of a Scandinavian saint.<sup>118</sup> However, very little additional evidence survives to corroborate Ælnoth's claims. There is no extant bull of canonization, and Knútr is, unusually for a papally canonized saint, absent from the Roman liturgical calendar. We must therefore entertain the possibility that Ælnoth, like Hartvic, fabricated his account of the papal canonization in order to add luster and legitimacy to the incipient cult of the Danish king.<sup>119</sup> Ælnoth's description of the canonization processes pursued by King Erik is certainly more plausible than Hartvic's. Moreover, we know that by 1100 Erik had already established a close relationship with Rome: he had journeyed there himself on pilgrimage, and in 1103/4, following his petitioning of Paschal II (r. 1099 - 1118), the pope created a Danish ecclesiastical province with its metropolitan seat at Lund, freeing the Danish kingdom from the authority of Hamburg-

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<sup>117</sup> Ælnoth, *Gesta*, c. 36, pp. 133-4: "anno autem sexto imperii magnifici regis Herici, congregatis uniuersis Dacie pontificibus cum multitudine cleri et terre populo innumerabili, preciosas beati martyris reliquias ex saxeo sarcophago assumptas atque e cripta, ubi hactenus seruabantur, euectas, sollempnibus laudibus et ingenti Leticia uniuersis comitantibus, ab eodem, quem prefati sumus, pontifice Hubaldo xiii kal. Mai. eadem, quam prediximus, arca oculis peccatores nos inspeximus impositas, ad instar niuis candidas et serico decenti inuolutas."

<sup>118</sup> Haki Antonsson, in "False claims to papal canonisations of saints: Scandinavia and elsewhere," *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 19 (2009): 171-204, at p. 172, fully accepts Ælnoth's claims as authentic and notes that "the significance of his testimony has rightly been emphasized, for this is the first instance of a Scandinavian saint being accorded such an honour." See also Michael Gelting, "The Kingdom of Denmark," in Nora Berend, ed., *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy: Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus' c. 900-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 73-120, at p. 101. Ann-Kathrin Marchlewski, "St Cnut of Denmark, King and Martyr: His Lives, their Authors and the Politics of his Cult (c. 1086 – 1200), Unpublished PhD Thesis (University of Lancaster, 2012), pp. 56-70, is considerably more critical of Ælnoth's claims, while still allowing that it is as difficult to fully discount them as it is to corroborate them.

<sup>119</sup> Despite his uncritical acceptance of Ælnoth's claims for St. Knútr, this is a pattern well documented by Antonsson in "False claims to papal canonisations of saints."

Bremen.<sup>120</sup> It is therefore not unlikely that emissaries would have been traveling between Denmark and Rome at the turn of the century. Nevertheless, in the absence of additional evidence, we cannot definitively prove – or disprove – Ælnoth’s claims about the canonization of St. Knútr in 1100.

Although Erik I died in Cyprus in 1103 while en route to Jerusalem as a pilgrim, his brother and successor, Niels (r. 1104 - 1134) continued his patronage of Knútr’s cult, as evidenced by three extant charters witnessing his donations to the church of St. Alban and St. Knútr at Odense.<sup>121</sup> Then in 1117 Niels procured a papal bull from Paschal II confirming the Odense monks in their role as a regular cathedral community, an unusual arrangement likely reflective of the community’s English origins.<sup>122</sup> Accordingly, Ælnoth dedicated his *Gesta* to the king, expressing his hope that Niels would follow in his brother’s venerable footsteps by vanquishing the enemies of the church and establishing “the security of peace” in Denmark.<sup>123</sup> Despite Ælnoth’s hopes, however, by 1134 Niels had been killed in battle, forced from power after his son Magnus had scandalously arranged for the murder of Erik I’s son, Knútr Lavard, duke of Schleswig and ruler of the Obotrites, in 1131. Knútr Lavard’s murder and King Niels’s deposition by the duke’s brother, Erik II (r. 1134 - 1137), threw the Danish crown into turmoil, instigating a multi-generational dynastic conflict that would only come to an end after Knútr Lavard’s son Valdemar I (r. 1146 - 1182) had established himself as the sole undisputed king of

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<sup>120</sup> The details of Erik’s Roman pilgrimage are made uncertain by the disagreement of the medieval accounts. Markus Skeggjason, Erik’s contemporary, praised the king for his journey to Rome, where he won an archbishopric for Denmark (1103/4). See Wolfgang Seegrün, *Das Papsttum und Skandinavien bis zur Vollendung der nordischen Kirchenorganisation (1164)* (Neumünster, 1967), pp. 108-113.

<sup>121</sup> *DD I.2*, nos. 32, 34, and 35.

<sup>122</sup> *DD I.2*, no. 42.

<sup>123</sup> Ælnoth, *Gesta*, pp. 77-8.

Denmark.

Knútr Lavard's murder represented not only one of the more significant moments of political crisis in twelfth-century Denmark, but also led to the establishment a second Danish royal cult and an important shift in royal patterns of cultic patronage. After his death, the duke's supporters had intended to bury his body in Roskilde cathedral, but, according to the prose lections of the office for his translation (1170), they were prevented from doing so by Niels, who feared that his grave would become a focal point for resistance to himself and his son. Instead they carried Knútr's body to Ringsted, a smaller city to the south of Roskilde and the site of a Benedictine monastery dedicated to the Virgin Mary.<sup>124</sup> There, his office claims, Knútr Lavard's grave became the site of substantial miracle working. In 1134, Erik II won a decisive victory over Niels at the battle of Fotevik and soon afterwards assumed the Danish throne. In 1135, in celebration of his victories, Erik made a substantial donation to the monastic community at Ringsted "in memory of my brother of beloved memory, Knútr, who was cruelly murdered," and decreed that out of reverence for the Virgin and for "my most beloved brother Knútr" the community would retain its holdings in perpetual liberty.<sup>125</sup> Erik's donation represented a significant renewal of the Ringsted community's fortunes and marked the beginning of its profitable relationship with the Danish kings vis-à-vis Knútr Lavard's cult. Tore Nyberg has argued that by donating to Ringsted in commemoration of the duke, Erik consciously sought to distance himself from the Odense community and its St. Knútr, to whom Niels had shown so

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<sup>124</sup> "In translacione sancti Kanuti," ed. Michael Chesnutt, in "The Medieval Danish Liturgy of St Knud Lavard," *Bibliotheca Arnemagnaeana* 42 (2003): 1-160, at p. 115.

<sup>125</sup> *DD* I.2, no. 65: "fratre meo felicis memoriae Canuto crudeliter enecato, ob recordationem ipsius, quem prae cunctis mortalibus unice dilexi, ad honorem Dei et sanctae Mariae congregationem fratrum regulariter viuentium in loco sepulture eius, Ringstadensi videlicet ecclesia, coadunauimus, quibus victum est vestitum copiose, ut competit, regali munificentia, domino iuuante, subministrabimus."

much munificence.<sup>126</sup> Whether or not he deliberately rejected the memory of Knútr *rex* in order to make a political point, Erik's donation to Ringsted did serve to reinforce the legitimacy of his own claim to the throne. Erik's rebellion against Niels had been predicated upon the injustice of Knútr Lavard's murder. By making a pious donation in memory of his brother shortly after his accession to the throne, Erik reemphasized that his motives in deposing Niels had been just, driven by the memory of his cruelly murdered brother rather than by his own ambition.

However, despite Erik's patronage of Ringsted in Knútr Lavard's name, there is little evidence that a cult arose around his memory in the decades after his death. Erik did not explicitly attribute his victory at Fotevik to Knútr's intercession, nor did the wording of his charter suggest that he thought his brother should be considered a saint, or his "cruel murder" an act of martyrdom. In 1137, Erik was himself killed by rebelling subjects, and his nephew, Erik III (r. 1137 – 1146), succeeded him as king. Erik III did not follow his uncle in patronizing Ringsted. Over the course of his nine-year reign, he instead made a series of donations to the Odense monastic community, reconfirming their privileges and settling in their favor in a conflict concerning possession of the nearby church of St. Alban.<sup>127</sup> The politically powerful archbishop of Lund, Eskil, followed the king in this, reconfirming the Odense monks in their status as a Benedictine cathedral chapter independent of royal obligations at a significant metropolitan synod in 1139, at which the papal legate Cardinal Theodewin was present.<sup>128</sup> Finally, in 1146, Erik abdicated the Danish throne and entered the Odense community, dying later that year as a monk in the house he had supported as a king. Erik therefore demonstrated a

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<sup>126</sup> Nyberg, *Monasticism in North-Western Europe*, pp. 99-104.

<sup>127</sup> *DD I.2*, nos. 71, 81, 85.

<sup>128</sup> *DD I.2*, no. 77.

lifelong generosity to the Odense community and veneration for Knútr *rex*, but showed little corresponding interest in commemorating the memory of Knútr Lavard or the community of Ringsted, as his uncle had before him. There are no extant records of donations or confirmations of rights made by Erik on behalf of the community of Our Lady, and the fact that Prior Orm of Ringsted felt it necessary to write to Pope Innocent II in 1138, requesting that the pope place the monastery under the protection of St. Peter, is perhaps indicative that he felt no similar support would be forthcoming from the Danish king.<sup>129</sup>

Instead, the first steps towards the establishment of a cult of Knútr Lavard were taken in the context of the continued dynastic struggles of the 1140s and 1150s. Erik III's abdication in 1146 spurred the resumption of intra-dynastic conflict over the succession to the throne, contested this time between Erik II's son Sveinn III (r. 1146 - 1157), Magnus's son Knútr V (r. 1146 - 1157), and Knútr Lavard's son Valdemar I (r. 1146 - 1182). Valdemar was still in his minority in 1146, and initially allied himself with his cousin Sveinn against Knútr, whose father Magnus had been responsible for Knútr Lavard's murder. The office for the translation records that in 1146, Valdemar and Sveinn jointly undertook the project of elevating Knútr Lavard's remains "from the grave to a bier." Archbishop Eskil's response suggests that this *elevatio* was intended as an act of sanctification. The office reports that "out of reverence for the Holy See...[Eskil] issued an episcopal prohibition against it being done."<sup>130</sup> Two years later, Sveinn, like his father Erik II before him, made a grant of lands and privileges to the Ringsted community "out of reverence for the singular merits of the eternal virgin Mary, and no less of my

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<sup>129</sup> *DD* I.2, no. 76.

<sup>130</sup> "In translacione sancti Kanuti," p. 118.

venerable kinsman Knútr of Ringsted.”<sup>131</sup> In the early years of their struggle against Knútr V, therefore, Valdemar and Sveinn appear to have emphasized their kinship with Knútr Lavard in order to undermine the moral and dynastic legitimacy of their opponent. Their sporadic attempts at cultic patronage soon ceased, however, along with their political alliance: Valdemar abandoned Sveinn to ally himself with Knútr, and in 1157, Sveinn attempted to have both of his rivals assassinated. He managed to kill Knútr, but Valdemar survived, and later that year, he defeated and killed Sveinn at the Battle of Grathe Heath, establishing himself as the sole ruler of Denmark.

After Grathe Heath, Valdemar may have had plans to further pursue the establishment of his father’s cult.<sup>132</sup> These plans seem to have been forestalled, however, when he became involved in the Alexandrine papal schism in 1162. Throughout their dynastic wars, the German emperor had represented both an ever-present threat and a source of potential support for the Danish royals. Several decades earlier, in 1134, as his position against Erik II rapidly deteriorated, Magnus Nielsson had been compelled to recognize Lothar III as his lord, provide him with hostages, and swear an oath that in the future the kings of Denmark would seek imperial recognition of their election.<sup>133</sup> In 1158, after he had defeated Sveinn, Valdemar therefore duly sought confirmation of his election from Frederick I Barbarossa. He continued to

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<sup>131</sup> *DD* I.2, no. 101.

<sup>132</sup> Shortly after his victory at Grathe Heath, there is evidence that he raised money to gild Knútr’s shrine at Ringsted. See *DD* I.2, no. 122.

<sup>133</sup> Erik II repeated Magnus’s oath ca. 1137, and sent his son Sveinn to be educated at the court of Conrad III, where he befriended Conrad’s nephew, the future Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa. Sveinn married the sister of Archbishop Hartwic of Hamburg-Bremen, and in 1152, he swore an oath of loyalty to Frederick I at the council of Merseburg as part of an attempt to broker an imperially-mediated peace between himself, Knútr V, and Valdemar. However, Sveinn had become highly unpopular in Denmark for his close relations with the Germans, and he was forced into exile in Germany in 1154.



rely on German support over the next decade, swearing an oath of friendship with Henry the Lion of Saxony in 1159, traveling to Burgundy in 1162 to meet with the emperor, and demonstrating increasing sympathy for the cause of anti-pope Victor IV, receiving his emissaries in Denmark in 1159 and 1161. In 1162, Archbishop Eskil, a strong supporter of Alexander, departed from Denmark, first traveling on pilgrimage to Jerusalem and then remaining in exile in France and England. He did not return to Denmark until 1167 or 1168, after Frederick's attention had turned south from Denmark to Lombardy and Valdemar had abandoned the anti-papal party and instead begun to support Alexander.<sup>134</sup>

The ecclesiastical turbulence of the 1160s prevented Valdemar from fully committing to the establishment of Knútr Lavard's cult, but very soon after his rapprochement with Alexander, he moved to have his father's sanctity formally recognized by the pope. Together with Eskil, he sent a delegation to Rome headed by Archbishop Stephen of Uppsala – whom Eskil had recently consecrated – to present a petition for Knútr's canonization at the papal curia. On November 4, 1169, Alexander issued a papal bull granting the diocese of Roskilde authority over the newly-conquered island of Rügen; and then, four days later, he issued another, declaring that Knútr's name was to be inscribed on the *catalogus sanctorum* and that his holy body was to be glorified with earthly praise in the same way that he was glorified through the grace of God in heaven.<sup>135</sup> The next summer, on June 25, 1170, the Danes translated the body of Knútr Lavard in a lavish ceremony. The author of the *Lund Annals* records that the *translatio* was attended by all the bishops of the Danish church, as well as bishop-elect Halgi of Nidarós and Archbishop Stephen

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<sup>134</sup> In 1165 or 1166, Alexander wrote to Valdemar, encouraging him to receive Eskil back in Denmark (*DD* I.2, no. 167). Further sign of the normalization of Valdemar's relationship with Alexander was his granting in 1169 that newly-conquered Rügen should be subject to the see of Roskilde (*DD* I.2, no. 189).

<sup>135</sup> *DD* I.2, nos. 189, 190.

of Uppsala,<sup>136</sup> while Saxo Grammaticus records that Valdemar summoned the entire Danish nobility to Ringsted for the occasion.<sup>137</sup> The translation ceremony thus provided Valdemar – now the undisputed sole ruler of Denmark, and free of imperial entanglements – with a dramatic stage for his most significant act of dynastic self-fashioning since his ascension to the throne thirteen years earlier. As his father's body was elevated into a golden shrine, Valdemar anointed his young son, Knútr VI, as king and his co-ruler.<sup>138</sup> Thus, as the author of the *Lund Annals* remarked, “on that day all the Danes doubled their joy, in one part, that the father of the king was recognized, and in another part, that the son of the king, Knútr, was anointed.”<sup>139</sup> As he formalized the cult of his father, whose memory had underpinned his own contested claim to the Danish throne, Valdemar attempted to secure the succession of his son in order to prevent the continuation of the Danes' dynastic struggles – a strategy that, on his death in 1182, would ultimately prove successful.

Valdemar and Knútr VI continued to patronize Ringsted and the cult of Knútr Lavard throughout their reigns. Valdemar confirmed the privileges of the Ringsted monastic community at the 1170 *translatio*, while Bishop Absalon of Roskilde, who would become Valdemar's most powerful ally after his elevation to the archbishopric of Lund in 1178, supported the right of the community to collect the so-called *Knuts scut* from all the districts of Zealand on several

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<sup>136</sup> *Lund Annals*, excerpted in *VSD*, pp. 218-19. The source records that the Danish bishops present included Eskil of Lund, Absalon of Roskilde, Simon of Odense, Sveinn of Århus, Ralph of Ribe, Tyge of Børglum, Nicholas of Viborg, and Fritheric of Hedeby. The *Annals*, along with Saxo Grammaticus (XIV.40.12, vol. II, pp. 1322-3), claim that Eskil presided over the ceremony, while according to the *Older Zealand Chronicle* it was Absalon of Roskilde, who was to succeed Eskil as archbishop in 1178, who carried out that office (*Older Zealand Chronicle*, *SMHD*, vol. II, p. 41).

<sup>137</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, XIV.40.1, vol. II, pp. 1312-13.

<sup>138</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, XIV.40.1, vol. II, pp. 1312-13; *Older Zealand Chronicle*, *SMHD*, vol. II, p. 41; “In translacione sancti Kanuti,” p. 120-1.

<sup>139</sup> *Lund Annals*, excerpted in *VSD*, p. 218.

occasions.<sup>140</sup> Valdemar also patronized another form of cultic community that became particularly significant for the memorialization of his holy father: the so-called guilds of St. Knútr, which remembered the duke as a stalwart protector of merchants on the North Sea and a vanquisher of the Wendish pirates who threatened their trade. In his “Letter of Gotland,” issued sometime after the translation of 1170, Valdemar recognized the spiritual brotherhood (*fraternitas*) that had coalesced around Knútr’s memory within the Danish merchant community. He declared that the brothers of the guild should donate annually to the community of Ringsted, proclaimed his own membership in their *societas*, and promised that they would continue to enjoy his favor and protection.<sup>141</sup> Valdemar’s support for the cult of his murdered father was thus sustained not only by his patronage of the monastic house at Ringsted, but also by his support for the Danish merchant community in his father’s name.

## THE CREATION OF CULTIC COMMUNITIES

Between the mid-eleventh and the late-twelfth century, cults dedicated to the memories of holy kings appeared along the northern and eastern edges of an expanding Latin Christendom, from Nidarós on the western Norwegian coast to Várad in the Transylvanian marches of eastern Hungary. Having surveyed the available evidence for these royal cults, there are several lessons we can now draw out from a wider synthetic perspective. First of all, it is clear that at each religious center, veneration of the deceased kings emerged not as the result of popular pressure,

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<sup>140</sup> *DD*, I.3, nos. 15, 18, 62, 68.

<sup>141</sup> *DD* I.3, no. 63. See also Hans Torben Gilkær, “In honore sancti Kanuti martyris. Konge og Knudsgilder i det 12. århundrede,” *Scandia: Tidskrift för historisk forskning* 46:2 (2008): 121-61; Lars Hermanson, “Vertical Bonds and Social Power: Ideals of Lordship in Twelfth-Century Scandinavia,” in Bjørn Poulsen and Søren Michael Sindbæk, eds., *Settlement and Lordship in Viking and Early Medieval Scandinavia* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011): 63-78, at p. 74.

but instead as the product of elite patronage. Significant periods of time – ranging from two decades to an entire century – elapsed between the kings’ deaths and the emergence of their formal cultic apparatuses. Despite the conventional insistence of their hagiographers that the pull of their sanctity had immediately and spontaneously attracted large crowds of pilgrims to their shrines, the evidence we have surveyed instead suggests that sustained veneration only developed in the wake of instances of carefully crafted, spectacular performances of the kings’ sanctity. Foremost among these performances were ceremonies of elevation and translation, performed at Nidarós in 1035, Székesfehérvár in 1083, Roskilde in 1100 and 1105, Ringsted in 1170, and Várad in 1192. These ceremonies were at once formalized rituals that spatially arranged the relics of the holy king in an elevated site that signified his elevated spiritual rank, as well as spectacles that declared and publicized his venerable status to the nobles, ecclesiastics, and laity in attendance.

Of course these ritual spectacles did not occur spontaneously either, but instead were carefully orchestrated by individuals and communities who sought to associate themselves with the memories of the royal saints. In northern and central Europe alike, the desire to commemorate holy kings often cut across social boundaries, as their cults developed through the patronage of diverse groups. Royal support was particularly crucial in the early stages of the cults’ development. Traditionally it had been local bishops who authorized and oversaw royal *translationes*. However, in the frontier kingdoms, where the king was so closely involved in the religious affairs of his realm, and in the context of the royal saints, whose memories were inevitably politically charged, the consent of the king was also a necessary prerequisite for the public acknowledgment of royal sanctity. Sveinn Knútsson may or may not have bought into the burgeoning saintly reputation of St. Óláfr after 1030; but the sources make it clear that Bishop

Grimkel only elevated Óláfr's body from the bank of the Níð in 1031 with his assent. In Hungary, Ladislaus I organized the *translatio* of St. Stephen in 1083, while likewise in Denmark, Valdemar I finally secured the canonization of his father, Knútr Lavard, in 1170 after his persistent efforts to elevate his remains and gild his shrine. Even after the dramatic moment of the *translatio*, royal patronage remained vital for the continued operations of the cults. Kings often founded churches in the saints' honor, as did the three eleventh-century Norwegian kings Magnús Ólafsson, Harald *harðraða*, and Óláfr *kyrre*, who respectively built the churches of Our Lady and St. Óláfr in Constantinople, the church of St. Óláfr in Nidarós, and the stone minster of Christ Church. Likewise, royal donations and privileges helped sustain the saints' religious houses, a practice most visible in Denmark, where charters detail the actions of Erik I, Erik II, Sveinn III, Erik III, and Valdemar I on behalf of the Benedictine communities at Ringsted and Odense. The next chapter will explore in more detail the place of royal sanctity in eleventh- and twelfth-century kings' conceptions of their office and dynastic status; but here it is enough to emphasize that they frequently acted as powerful patrons and advocates for their holy predecessors.

Just as the royal cults at once reflected the growing significance of the institution of kingship in northern and central Europe and were themselves the beneficiaries of an increasingly strong royal authority, they facilitated and were in turn facilitated by ecclesiastical institutionalization. This was a gradual process that involved a variety of developments occurring on several levels. A fundamental first step in Norway, Denmark, and Hungary alike, though, was the settlement of resident bishops in established ecclesiastical centers.<sup>142</sup> Bishops, often working

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<sup>142</sup> This occurred earliest in Hungary, where at least eight bishoprics – Veszprém, Győr, Transylvania, Pécs, Kalocsa, Eger, Csanád, and the archbishopric of Esztergom – had been founded by the end of Stephen's reign in 1038. The Danish kings were also responsible for the foundation of their kingdom's earliest bishoprics. By the turn of the twelfth century, there were eight Danish sees at Odense, Ribe, Roskilde, Lund, Århus, Børglum,

in tandem with kings, were frequent supporters of royal cults. Missionary-bishop Grimkel performed St. Óláfr's *translatio* in 1031, while a century and a half later Archbishop Eysteinn of Nidarós pursued an ambitious program of cultic elaboration that solidified Óláfr's reputation as *rex perpetuus Norwegiae*. Likewise, Bishop Hubald of Odense performed the *translatio* of St. Knútr *rex* in 1100, while at Ringsted, Archbishop Eskil of Lund and future archbishop Absalon of Roskilde presided over Knútr Lavard's magnificent *translatio* of 1170, which was further attended by a large crowd of Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish bishops. The growth of episcopal authority also allowed for institutional development at the local level. On a day to day basis, the royal cults were maintained by religious communities of various kinds. Shortly after 1095, Erik I founded the Benedictine community at Odense that maintained Knútr *rex*'s body by relocating a small coterie of monks from Evesham in England, while a Benedictine community likewise housed St. Knútr Lavard's relics in Ringsted. Székesfehérvár, St. Stephen's royal chapel, was staffed by a cathedral chapter headed by a provost; while Ladislaus founded Várad, the site of his future shrine, as a house of canons. These religious communities were responsible for the basic machinery of the cults: they performed daily liturgical services in their memories, regulated access to the saints' shrines, received donations and gifts made in the saint's name, and so on.

They also became some of the earliest textual communities of the new frontier kingdoms, as their members produced liturgical, historical, and hagiographical texts to glorify the memories of their resident saints. Daily offices and Masses, which introduced the royal saints into the sanctorale, provided a locally specific point of entry for these young communities into the universal schema of Christian time. The royal saints seem to have initially been celebrated using

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Slesvig, and Viborg. Ecclesiastical development occurred later in Norway, where royal power centralized more slowly, but by 1112 there were bishoprics at Nidarós, Selja, and Oslo, and Stavanger.

liturgical materials adapted from preexisting texts. The eleventh-century office for St. Óláfr witnessed in the Leofric Collectar, for instance, consisted primarily of material taken from the *commune unius martyris* and the offices for various Anglo-Saxon royal saints;<sup>143</sup> while the early office for St. Stephen in the *Codex Albensis* took the form of an annotated rubric of incipits from the *commune sanctorum*, supplemented by three fully-transcribed proper antiphons and responsories.<sup>144</sup> Only later do we see the production of proper offices that celebrated the lives of the holy kings in unique chants and prayers. The late twelfth-century proper office of St. Óláfr was produced in the context of Archbishop Eysteinn's program to enhance the prestige of his archdiocese, to which his expansion and codification of Nidarós's local liturgical practices significantly contributed. Likewise, the two proper offices for St. Knútr Lavard in the Kiel Ordinal, to be celebrated on his feast day and the day of his translation, were products of the canonization of 1170.<sup>145</sup> The elaboration of proper liturgical texts celebrating the royal saints in the twelfth century mirrored, and in many cases built upon, the simultaneous emergence of *vitae* and histories narrating their lives and deaths.<sup>146</sup> The proper office of St. Óláfr, for example, took the bulk of its text from the *Passio sancti Olavi* of the late twelfth century. The chant texts of the

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<sup>143</sup> Østrem, *Office of St Olav*; see also Ommundsen, "A Saint and his Sequence;" Iversen, "Transforming a Viking into a Saint."

<sup>144</sup> László Dobszay, "From 'crudelitas' to 'credulitas': Comments on Saint Stephen's *Historia Rhythmica*," in Roman Hankeln, ed., *Political Plainchant? Music, Text and Historical Context of Medieval Saints' Offices* (Ottawa: Institute of Medieval Music, 2009): 93-106; Janka Szendrei, "Commune pro missionariis?" pp. 81-92; Dobszay, *Historia Sancti Stephani Regis, 1190 - 1270* (Ottawa: Institute of Medieval Music, 2010).

<sup>145</sup> Michael Chesnutt argues that the textual history of the offices was more complicated than this; see "The Medieval Danish Liturgy of St Knud Lavard," pp. 1-160. However, John Bergsagel's argument that the Kiel MS reproduced at least the *translatio* office in more or less the same form as it must have been celebrated in 1170 seems to have garnered more support; see Bergsagel, ed., *The Offices and Masses of St. Knud Lavard (d. 1131): (Kiel, Univ. Lib. MS S.H. 8 A.8<sup>o</sup>)*, 2 volumes (Copenhagen: The Royal Library, 2010), at vol. 2, pp. xxxvi – xxxix. See also the reviews of Chesnutt by Nils Holger Petersen in *Music and Letters* 96:4 (2015): 639-40; and Karsten Friis Jensen in *Danske Studier* 100 (2005): 222-5.

<sup>146</sup> Mortensen, "Sanctified Beginnings and Mythopoietic Moments," 252-5.

offices for St. Knútr Lavard have collectively come to be known as the *Vita altera*, and joined the *Vita* composed for the monks of Ringsted by the English monk Robert of Ely as an important text witnessing the memory of the holy duke. The earliest text commemorating St. Knútr *rex*, now known as the *Tabula othinensis*, was inscribed upon a copper plate, which seems to have been produced on the occasion of the king's first *translatio* in 1095 and subsequently moved with his body in 1100. It was soon joined by two narrative *vitae*, the first produced by an anonymous author shortly after the death of King Olaf I in 1095, and the second by Ælnoth of Canterbury.

As centers of ritual activity and textual production, the cults of the royal saints thus reflect the vibrancy of the institutionalizing Norwegian, Danish, and Hungarian churches in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. But interest in the royal saints permeated beyond the borders of their kingdoms. Inherently political, their memories often became highly visible platforms for inter-regional communication, reflecting their communities' relationships with other Christian powers. The most significant neighbors of the Scandinavian kingdoms and Hungary alike were the German emperors and the imperial church. It is clear that the royal cults of the Christian frontiers tended to develop most successfully in the context of freedom from German imperial and ecclesiastical suzerainty. In large part this was because the establishment of independent episcopal provinces facilitated the development of local ecclesiastical institutions. In Norway, for example, the elaboration of the cult of St. Óláfr in the second half of the twelfth century followed immediately upon the creation of the independent archdiocese of Nidarós in 1152/3 and the accession in 1157 of the ambitious Archbishop Eysteinn Erlendsson.

Royal cults were also bolstered by the supportive relationships with the papacy frequently developed by local churches attempting to counterbalance German influence. The Danish case



provides a good example. If Ælnoth of Canterbury's claim that Knútr IV was papally canonized in 1100 is to be believed, then the canonization took place in the context of the significant shift in the relationships between the Danish church, the archbishopric of Hamburg-Bremen, and Rome at the turn of the century. Shortly after 1095, Erik I traveled to the papal court, having recently been excommunicated by Archbishop Liemar of Hamburg-Bremen for having failed to support the imperial anti-pope Clement III. While in Rome, he proposed that the pope create an independent Danish episcopal province and thus free the north from the authority of Hamburg-Bremen. Paschal II followed up on the king's suggestion soon thereafter. He took advantage of the deaths of anti-pope Clement and Archbishop Liemar in September 1100 and May 1101 respectively to establish the archbishopric of Lund, thereby stripping Hamburg-Bremen of every one of its suffragans, establishing a rival for its ecclesiastical authority in the North, and binding a new ally to himself as a counterweight to German might in that region.<sup>147</sup> Even if Ælnoth's account of Knútr's canonization was fabricated, its inclusion in his *vita* still signifies the perceived significance of papal authority as a support for royal power in the Danish political imagination.

The relationship between the frontier kingdoms and the papacy was not always simply one of mutual support, however. Ladislaus I, for example, perpetually ignored Gregory VII's forceful overtures, even as he was pressured by German incursions into western Hungary, due to his unwillingness to cede Hungarian independence to the authority of St. Peter. It is also clear that false claims of papal canonization were a more consistent theme amongst the royal cults than the actual achievement of papal canonization. Of all the northern and eastern royal saints, we possess clear evidence for the canonization of Knútr Lavard (1170) alone. The claims of

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<sup>147</sup> On these developments, see especially Seegrün, *Das Papsttum und Skandinavien*, 108-113.

canonization made on behalf of Stephen (1083), Knútr IV (1100), and Ladislaus (1192), on the other hand, are of doubtful authenticity. This pattern reflects the fact that local efforts, rather than papal sanction, remained the most fundamental prerequisite for the establishment of new cults in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. It was not until the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 that the papal prerogative over the authorization of new saints' cults was formally codified. But the frequency with which false canonization claims were made also signifies the perceived significance of papal authority to the backers of royal cults. For writers such as Hartvic, Ælnoth of Canterbury, and Thomas of Spalato, the pope's symbolic inscription of the name of the saint on the *catalogus sanctorum* bolstered his legitimacy and prestige, and by association the legitimacy and prestige of his community. Their persistent claims that local candidates had achieved that canonical benchmark indicates the potential appeal of the post-Gregorian vision of a wide-reaching papal authority over an interconnected Latin church, even as their persistent failure to achieve papal canonization reflects the ultimate inability of the high medieval papacy to fully realize that vision.

The development of the royal cults of Norway, Denmark, and Hungary reflects the persistent creative tension between universality and local particularity that characterized the integration of the frontier kingdoms into the community of Latin Christendom. An Odense cleric nicely characterized this tension when he noted at the opening of his *Passio Kanuti* of c. 1095:

It is customary that throughout the churches of the entire world all Christian peoples come together to celebrate the feasts of the saints, praise the victory of the martyrs, and imitate their lives. In each place, however, some are considered particularly worthy and are honored by their citizens and the people on account of the familiarity of those who live near them and the presence of their holy relics, which are given to the inhabitants of this place or that for their consolation.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> *Passio Kanuti*, in *VSD*, p. 62: “licet per totius orbis ecclesias conueniat omni populo christiano festa sanctorum celebrare, uictorias martirum laudare uitamque istorum imitari, in singulis tamen locis propter familiaritatem cohabitantium et propter sanctorum presentiam reliquiarum, que in solacium istis uel illis

As the Odense author noted, native saints allowed local churches to access and celebrate Christian schemata of perfection that had their origins in the earliest days of the Church. Peter Brown famously described the cult of the saints as a web, at the nodes of which – the sites of relics – the holy was immediately present, regardless of how distant one was from any ecclesiastical center.<sup>149</sup> The presence of the relics of the royal saints enveloped the new kingdoms within that web of sacred geography. At the same time, they possessed such a potent hold on the local imagination because of their familiarity. The cults at Odense, Ringsted, Nidarós, and Várad, and Székesfehérvár developed in the context of particular local circumstances and according to the needs of their local communities, and especially local elites. Even as the new kingdoms were rapidly brought within the political and social order of Latin Christendom, these circumstances and needs remained locally specific. This interplay between universalizing and vernacular cultural forms is visible not only in the royal cults themselves, but also in the historical texts that commemorated them. The remaining chapters of this study will narrow in focus to the textual worlds in which royal saints were described. By analyzing how holy kings were represented in historical narratives, we can further illuminate the interplay between universalizing concepts of Christian perfection and locally specific conceptions of political authority, law and justice, violence, and masculinity.

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habitoribus condonate sunt, ueneratione (inquam) speciali apud ciues populosue suos digne habentur atque honorantur.”

<sup>149</sup> Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), particularly at pp. 86-105.

## 2. THE DYNASTIC POLITICS OF ROYAL SANCTITY

Sometime during the first two decades of the twelfth century, English expatriate Ælnoth of Canterbury dedicated his recently completed text, which synthesized a history of the early Danish kings with a life of Denmark's royal saint, to King Niels, who was the half-brother of St. Knútr. In his letter of dedication, Ælnoth exhorted Niels to "rejoice, most distinguished king, to have been honored with the glorification of such a brother; exult, confident that you have an advocate with God, by whose allowance you have deserved to occupy this throne of kingship."<sup>150</sup> In the previous chapter we saw how vital royal patronage was for the establishment and maintenance of princely cults. Niels himself, for example, made at least three donations in support of the community of St. Knútr in Odense.<sup>151</sup> In this chapter we will explore the significance of royal sanctity to princes like Niels. That there was prestige to be gained through the association of one's family or office with a recognized saint is obvious.<sup>152</sup> As Ælnoth

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<sup>150</sup> Ælnoth of Canterbury, *Gesta Swenomagni*, p. 81: "Letare ergo, rex insignissime, tanta fratri adornatus glorificatione! Exulta confidens apud deum aduocatum habere, in cuius hic regni solio eo concedente meruisti residere."

<sup>151</sup> *DD* I.2, nos. 32, 34, and 35.

<sup>152</sup> As Constance Bouchard in *Rewriting Saints and Ancestors: Memory and Forgetting in France, 500-1200* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015) has recently put it: "representations of a family's past could serve as a bulwark for their political and social position in the present" (4). Her study is among the most recent works of a significant body of scholarship that traces the shaping by elite families of the histories of their saintly ancestors. See also Patrick Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Felice Lifshitz, *The Norman Conquest of Pious Neustria: Historiographic Discourse and Saintly Relics, 684-1090* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1995); Catherine Cubitt, "Memory and Narrative in the Cult of Early Anglo-Saxon Saints," in Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes, eds., *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000): 29-66; and Samantha Kahn Herrick, *Imagining the Sacred Past: Hagiography and Power in Early Normandy* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 2007).

promised Niels:

Through his intervention your enemies' forces will be subdued, their ranks thinned; royal justice will be strengthened, the security of peace confirmed; the soundness of health will be granted, illness and pestilence driven out; advantage will grow strong and disadvantage decrease; and, dying at the end of a long life of rule, you will be carried to the eternal heavenly kingdom of glory.<sup>153</sup>

By tending to his brother's holy reputation, Ælnoth claimed, Niels would find success in battle and in governance. At the same time, he could take reassurance from Knútr's spiritual achievements that wearing the earthly crown could be a viable path to the heavenly kingdom.

Despite Ælnoth's assurances that venerating St. Knútr would bring Niels earthly success and spiritual glory, however, by 1134 Niels had been deposed and killed. Nor was he the only Danish prince to lose his life in the twelfth century. In Denmark as well as Norway and Hungary, the age of the royal saint was also an era of persistent political conflict, dynastic disruption, and civil war. The two phenomena were closely interrelated. Dynastic conflict created royal martyrs like St. Knútr, and its persistence made their legacies useful for men still striving to navigate the tempestuous world of elite politics. The idea that the political saint could be useful politically is far from novel. It seems clear that royal contestants could benefit from aligning themselves with their venerated predecessors. But what will become clear from our reading of the contemporary historical writing that records these processes is that the commemorative potency of the royal saint extended far beyond the moment of crisis in which their cult emerged. Royal martyrs achieved significant historiographical afterlives not just because princes had leaned on their memories to bolster their own political ambitions, but because writers of history also engaged in

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<sup>153</sup> Ælnoth of Canterbury, *Gesta Swenomagni*, p. 82: "eius quoque intercessionis obtentu hostium tibi uires subiciantur, inimicorum cuneus attenuetur, regni ius consolidetur, pacis securitas confirmetur, sospitatis integritas tribuatur, morbus ac pestilentia pellatur, commoda queque conualescant, incommoda descrescant, et decidui longeva imperii meta decursa ad superna transmissus in regia glories eterna."

the contestation of royal saintly legacies, evaluating, rewriting, and erasing the stories being told about them. As we study the political valences of royal sanctity, we can therefore more fully explore the emergence of normative narratives about the holy kings' lives and deaths.

To this end, we will investigate two interconnected mechanisms of royal commemoration. In the first part of the chapter, we will analyze the political conflicts ignited by the violent death of a king and the ensuing contests to control his memory. In the second, we will examine the emergence in the eleventh and twelfth centuries of new royal rituals as strategies to regularize and solemnize the frequently contested process of kingmaking. Both processes are witnessed only in medieval historical texts. As we shall see, saintly kings, remembered as the originators of dynastic regimes and royal ceremony, thus became central to historical conceptualizations of kingship in Norway, Denmark, and Hungary. The production of historical texts became another opportunity to reinforce or challenge the ideological purposes to which royal saintly memories had previously been put.

## DISPUTING KINGSHIP

We will begin by considering the ways in which political elites reacted to the violent deaths of their kings. Even during periods of endemic political instability, the violent death of a king was always a charged moment. Regicide not only promised significant shifts in the organization of power, but also potentially created in the person of the murdered king a powerful commemorative figure. Not every murdered king became a saint. For every St. Knútr and St. Óláfr, there were many more royal victims, like Niels of Denmark, who never became the objects of cultic veneration. But kings who did go on to be celebrated as martyrs were particularly powerful symbolic figures, and not only because of the valence of spiritual authority

that accompanied that status. Saints' cults were first and foremost commemorative institutions, and through the production of histories, lives, and liturgies, the saints' memories became unusually well detailed and widely projected. They could therefore become powerful vehicles of meaning-making for political actors seeking to shape perceptions of themselves and their causes.

*Norway: Magnús Ólafsson and St. Óláfr*

Here we will explore two particularly well documented moments at which royal claimants invoked martyred kings in order to define or support some element of their own situation. The first is the fraught period following the accession of Magnús Ólafsson to the Norwegian throne in 1035. As he struggled to establish himself as king, multiple parties – including Magnús himself, the skaldic poet Sigvatr Þórðarson, and the perpetually restive farmers of Þrændalög – struggled to control the meaning of his father Óláfr's death, and in so doing promote their perspectives on the proper place of the Norwegian king within a multilayered and turbulent society. The second historical moment we will explore is the early stages of the Danish civil war that followed the murder of Knútr Lavard in 1131. His death became the foundational cause for an ultimately successful rebellion against King Niels, anchoring a series of emotive appeals for the righteousness of resisting an unjust king. In both situations, the memory of the martyred prince proved to be as contentious in death as he himself had been in life. Neither the battlefield death of the Norwegian king nor the assassination of the duke of Schleswig possessed an inherent historical meaning. Instead that meaning was in the first instance established by those who engaged in the struggle to memorialize the royal dead.

Our starting point for understanding the dynamics of these contests is one of the most famous episodes of royal commemoration in the Norse kings' sagas: the deliverance of

*Bersöglisvísur* (Untarnished Verses) by skaldic poet Sigvatr Þórðarson to young king Magnús Ólafsson (r. 1035 - 1047), which successfully averted the brewing threat of rebellion.<sup>154</sup>

*Morkinskinna* (c. 1220) and Snorri Sturluson's *Magnúss saga ins góða* (c. 1230) both narrate the circumstances surrounding the recitation of the verses, and also contain extensive selections of the *Bersöglisvísur* verses.<sup>155</sup> According to Snorri and the *Morkinskinna* author, Norwegian political society in 1035 was largely unreconstructed following the battle of Stiklestad five years earlier. After Óláfr's death, the unpopular Danish regent Sveinn Knútsson had had little success mending the rift between Óláfr's defeated supporters and the Norwegians who had allied with the Danes to force him from power. Magnús, by contrast, despite his youth and his five-year exile at the court of the Kievan Rus', had gained two important points of entry into this latter group: the *lendir menn* Einarr Thambarkelfir and Kálfr Árnason, who had traveled to the east to retrieve the young prince in order to mount a challenge to Sveinn's rule. Neither Einarr nor Kálfr were immediately obvious supporters for the young Magnús, as both had opposed his father, though only Kálfr had fought against Óláfr at Stiklestad. Nonetheless, they were successful in forcing the Danes out of Norway, and in the early days of Magnús's reign, Kálfr served as one of the new king's closest advisors. The *Bersöglisvísur* episode opens with the subsequent deterioration of relationships between king and magnate. According to the saga authors, fractures developed between Magnús and Kálfr when Óláfr's previous supporters began to complain that

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<sup>154</sup> On this poem see Kari Ellen Gade, ed. and trans, "*Bersöglisvísur*," in Gade, ed., *PKS 2*: 11-34; Judith Jesch, "The Once and Future King: History and Memory in Sigvatr's Poetry on Óláfr Haraldsson," in Slavica Rankovic, Leidulf Melve, and Else Mundal, eds., *Along the Oral-Written Continuum: Types of Texts, Relations and their Implications* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011): 103-117; Gareth Lloyd Evans, "The Construction of Diplomacy in the Various Accounts of Sigvatr Þórðarson's *Bersöglisvísur*," *Saga-Book 38* (2014): 49-60; and Erin Michelle Goeres, *The Poetics of Commemoration: Skaldic Verse and Social Memory, c. 890 – 1070* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015): 135-45.

<sup>155</sup> *Morkinskinna*, vol. I, pp. 29-42; Snorri Sturluson, *Magnúss saga ins góða*, in *Heimskringla* III, pp. 26-30.



the new king had elevated his father's enemies at the expense of his friends. One day while Magnús was hearing cases, he was approached by a farmer named Þorgeirr of Súla, who had aided Óláfr shortly before his death, and who publically proclaimed a verse to the young king: "Speak to me, King Magnús! I was in the following with your father. Then I carried my cleft skull, when they stepped over the dead king. You love that wretched crowd, traitors to their liege-lord, who gratified the devil."<sup>156</sup> As Snorri put it: old supporters of Óláfr's like Þorgeirr "began to remind the king about Kálfr's whereabouts at Stiklestad," and Magnús began to grow increasingly angry with his advisor about the role he had played in his father's unjust death.<sup>157</sup>

Matters come to a head in a scene found in both *Morkinskinna* and Snorri's *Magnúss saga*, in which Magnús compels Kálfr to walk the battlefield with him and uses it as a stage for the imaginative reenactment of Óláfr's death. He forces Kálfr to narrate the events of the struggle that had taken place there by ordering Kálfr to indicate to him where the king had fallen and where he himself had stood when Óláfr was struck down. Snorri describes how, when Kálfr reluctantly pointed out the close proximity of the two places, Magnús's face grew blood-red as he said: "'it seems then that your axe may have reached him.'" <sup>158</sup> Kálfr insists that he had not harmed Óláfr, and together they leave the battlefield; but Kálfr had clearly received Magnús's message, and that same day he fled from Norway into exile in the Orkneys, where his sister was married to Jarl Thorfinn. According to the saga authors, therefore, the guided tour of the

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<sup>156</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Magnúss saga ins góða*, in *Heimskringla* III., p. 23; Þorgeirr *flekkir*, *Lausavísa*, ed. and trans. Kari Ellen Gade, in Gade, ed., *PKS* 2, pp. 9-10: "mæl þú við mik, ek vas í fylgju Magnús konungr, með föður þínum; Þá bark höggvinn þú elskar haus minn þaðan, þá arma þjóð es þeir of dauðan dróttinsvika, dögling stigu; es djöful hlægðu."

<sup>157</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Magnúss saga ins góða*, in *Heimskringla* III., p. 24: "en þá gerðusk menn til áminnigar við konung, hvar Kálfr hafði verit á Siklastöðum."

<sup>158</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Magnúss saga ins góða*, in *Heimskringla* III., p. 24: "konungr mælti ok var þá rauðr sem dreyri: 'taka myndi þá ox þín til hans.'"

battlefield served not only as an imaginative reenactment of the battle, but also as a revivification of the unresolved conflict that had persisted between Kálfr and Óláfr at the time of his death.

The budding conflict between Magnús and Kálfr affected not only the king's advisor, but also the farmers of Þrændalög, where Kálfr possessed extensive lands. According to Snorri, after Kálfr's flight from Norway Magnús appropriated his properties there, along with the estates of many of the Þrændir who had fought against his father at Stiklestad. He drove some into exile and slaughtered the livestock of others.<sup>159</sup> The king's harsh actions against the Þrændir caused them to begin murmuring against him. They complained that though they had once been the "heart" of Norway, they were now being made the slaves of the king's stewards. According to Snorri, they began to predict that Magnús would soon meet Óláfr's same end: "he will surely take the same path as his father or another of our rulers whose lives we have taken when we grew tired of their tyranny and lawlessness."<sup>160</sup> Some of them, including the men of Sogn, had even begun to take up arms against Magnús, preparing to forcefully drive him from power as they had done to Óláfr fewer than ten years earlier.

It is at this point that Sigvatr Þórðarson enters the narrative. The skald had spent the better part of his life in Óláfr's retinue before departing, shortly before Óláfr's death, on pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The sagas record that he had for that reason been chosen by Magnús's friends to advise the king against his increasingly aggressive behavior towards the Þrændir. To do so, Sigvatr composed his *Bersöglisvísur*, which directed candid advice at the young king. The verses of *Bersöglisvísur* are presented differently in each of the kings' sagas: *Ágrip* (c. 1190)

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<sup>159</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Magnúss saga ins góða*, in *Heimskringla* III., pp. 25-6.

<sup>160</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Magnúss saga ins góða*, in *Heimskringla* III., p. 26: "Mun hann hafa farar fǫður síns eða annarra höfðingja þeira, er vér höfum af lífi tekit, þá er oss leiddisk ofsi þeira ok lǫglausar."

incorporates only a single stanza, for example, and *Fagrskinna* (c. 1225) only three, while Snorri reproduced nine stanzas in his *Magnúss saga ins góða*. *Morkinskinna* contains the most extensive version of the poem, presenting sixteen stanzas punctuated by brief prose interjections that guide the reader through the verse. In the *Morkinskinna* version of *Bersöglsívisur*, Sigvatr opens his appeal to Magnús by recounting his long service to Óláfr and establishing the dynamics of an ideal relationship between a lord and his retainer:

[1] I was with the lord who gave gold to his loyal men and carrion to the ravens, throughout the lifetime of that king; he gained fame. I saw the most valiant troop fall; the son of the king gave many a slain warrior to the grey, keen-eyed wolf by means of swords. [2] I followed your father well, that generous lord, who wanted my company; now people are pleased with the peace. There was no gap in the ranks where I stood proudly in the midst of his men with my sword; one must make the forest denser with brush. [3] Magnús, your father went with great spirit with his company all through the throng where sea-warriors fought. He defended the inheritance of princes fiercely, and high-mettled hearts beat hard at that; Óláfr pushed forwards thus.<sup>161</sup>

According to Sigvatr, Óláfr was a brave war-leader whose successes in battle had allowed him to distribute appropriate rewards to the men who followed him. More than that, he was a capable protector of their land and property. Sigvatr's reference to the inheritance of kings (*jöfra erfðir*) in the third stanza works on two levels. It invokes Magnús's own inheritance, the Norwegian realm that had, according to poetic and saga tradition if not according to genealogical fact, been passed down to him through the unbroken line of Fairhair kings. It also introduces one of Sigvatr's major critical themes: that Magnús, by appropriating the lands and livestock of the *Þrændir*, had impinged on the liberties of a historically proud and independent people, who

<sup>161</sup> *Morkinskinna*, vol. I, pp. 32-31; Sigvatr Þórðarson, *Bersöglsívisur*, ed. and trans. Gade, in *PKS* 2, stanzas 2-4, pp. 14-16: "vask með gram, þeims gumnum goll bauð dróttinhollum – nafn fekk hann – en hröfnum hræ, þess konungs ævi. Fullkerskum, sák falla, fráneggjum sonr gró'num gaf margan val vargi, verðung, konungs sverðum. Fylgðak þeim es fylgju fémildum gram vildi – nú eru þegnar frið fegnir – fōður þínum mína. Vasat á her með hjörvi hlið þars ek stóð í millum hresinn, skal með hrísi, hers folki, við þjokkva. Gekk með móð enn mikla, Magnús, allt í gognum ferð, þars flotnar bōrðusk, faðir þinn liði sínu. Varði hart, en hjörtu hugfull við þat skullu, Óláfr lét svá, jöfra erfðir, fram at hverfa."

before Óláfr's campaigns in Þrændalög had been ruled by a dynasty of powerful jarls that had often been able to claim and enforce quasi-regnal authority. Magnús's lack of respect for the Þrændirs' property and inheritance distinguishes him negatively from his venerable father, and calls into question his own right to kingship over the Norwegian kingdom.

Throughout *Bersöglisvísur* Óláfr Haraldsson serves as Sigvatr's primary model of good lordship, but he also invokes two additional historical exemplars: Hákon *inn góði*, who had "punished hostile looting;" and Óláfr Tryggvason, who had "upheld the laws that men received." These references are clearly pointed. According to Snorri, the Þrændir had accused Magnús of ignoring the laws that Hákon had established, and as we will see in the next chapter, the rhetoric of law served as a powerful language through which the Norwegians could criticize and condemn tyrannical kings. Sigvatr tells Magnús that the Norwegians had at first rejoiced in his assumption of the throne, when he had behaved according to Hákon's and Óláfr Tryggvasson's good examples. But more recently, people had been given reason to feel that "they have other, inferior laws...than you promised people earlier in Ulfasund."<sup>162</sup> Magnús was deviating from the examples of good rulership established by his father and his father's forebears.

After summarizing the Þrændirs' charges against Magnús, Sigvatr goes on to exhort the king directly, warning him that his hand must be wielded with moderation:

[14] Who urges you, battle-promoter, to slay the livestock of your subjects? It is insolence for a prince to do that in his own land. No one had earlier advised a young ruler in such a way; I think your troops are tired of plunder; people are angry, king. [15] The threat is dangerous when all gray-haired men, as I hear, intend [to revolt] against the ruler; that must be prevented in advance. It is rather grim when assembly members hang their heads and stick their noses into their cloaks; silence has descended on your followers. [16] Who urges you, vengeful lord, to go back on your promises? Frequently you test slender swords. A prosperous prince of the people must be true to his word; it is

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<sup>162</sup> *Morkinskinna*, vol. I, p. 36; *Bersöglisvísur*, ed. and trans. Gade, in *PKS* 2, st. 9, pp. 20-1: "skulut ráðgjafar reiðask, ryðr þvít, konungr, yðrir, dróttins orð til dýrðar, döglingr, við bersögli. Hafa kveðask lög, nema ljúgi landherr, búendr verri endir í Ulfasundum önnur en þú hézt mönnum."

never proper for you to break your pledges, battle-increaser. [17] They all say the same thing: ‘my lord appropriates his subjects’ ancestral properties;’ proud farmers revolt. That man, who parcels out his patrimony to the king’s counts according to precipitate rulings, will call that robbery.”<sup>163</sup>

In his criticism of Magnús’s actions, Sigvatr inverts the model of good lordship that he had established in Norway’s earlier kings, and especially in Óláfr Haraldsson. Rather than taking up the sword to provide booty for the Þrændir, Magnús had raised it against them, and where he should have protected the Þrændirs’ ancestral inheritances (*óðal*), he had harried them. Sigvatr closes his verses by expressing a hope that there would be a “quick change in the affairs of Óláfr’s son,” and implies that if there was not, he would flee to the court of the Danish king Harðaknútr.<sup>164</sup> In this a king who had failed to act properly would inevitably lose the service of his previously loyal retainers.

Over the course of the *Bersögglisvísur* episode, St. Óláfr’s memory is deployed three times, to different effect each time. First, Óláfr’s former supporters indict Magnús for ignoring them while elevating the men who had killed his father. They use Óláfr’s memory to criticize the network of elite support he had relied upon while establishing himself as king and to argue for a reorientation of royal patronage that referred back to the state of affairs in 1030. According to the saga authors, Magnús internalized these criticisms and made real their disruptive intent in his and

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<sup>163</sup> *Morkinskinna*, vol. I, pp. 37-9; *Bersögglisvísur*, ed. and trans. Gade, in *PKS* 2, sts. 11-14: “hverr eggjar þik höggva hjaldrgegna búþegna? Ofrausn es þat ræsi innan lands at vinna. Engr hafði svá ungum áðr bragningi ráðit; rön hykk rekkum þínum – reiðrs herr, konungr – leiðask. Hættis, þats allir ætla – áðr skaltu við því ráða – hárir menn, es ek heyri, hót, skjöldungi í móti. Greypst þats höfðum hneppa heldr ok niðr í feldi – slegit hefr þögn yfir þegna – þingmenn nqsum stinga. Hverr eggjar þik, harri heiptar strangr, at ganga – opt rýðr þegnum þínum þunn stól – á bak mqlum? Fastorðr skyli fyrða fegnsæll vesa þengill; hæfir heit at rjúfa, hjaldrmagnaðr, þér aldri. Eitt es mál þats mæla: ‘Minn dróttinn lét sína egg á óðal þegna.’ Öfgask búendr göfgir. Rán mun seggr ef sína selr út í því telja fárs at fellidómi fōðurleifð, knoungr, greifum.”

<sup>164</sup> *Morkinskinna*, vol. II, p. 41; *Bersögglisvísur*, ed. and trans. Gade, in *PKS* 2, st. 15: “Syni Óláfs biðk snúðar – síð kveða aptans biða óframs sök; meðal okkar allts höligt – svá mála.”

Kálfr's walkthrough of the Stiklestad battlefield, at which point he severed his bonds with his advisor and began the process of reorienting his base of supporters in the way that his father's old friends had argued for. Second, the restive Þrændir, responding to Magnús's attacks on their lands, invoke Óláfr as a cautionary example of a tyrannical king. By aligning Magnús with Óláfr, they threatened violence against him in order to restore a more equitable standard of law, which they identified as having originated with Óláfr's predecessor Hákon *inn góði*. Finally, in his verses to the king, Sigvatr inverts the Þrændirs' representation of Óláfr, presenting him not as a tyrant, but instead as an ideal lord who had always acted appropriately towards his men, enriching them with the spoils of war and protecting their properties. But although Sigvatr subverted the Þrændirs' representation of the dead king, he still wielded Óláfr's memory to critique Magnús's actions. The poet urged Magnús to adopt his father as a model of kingly behavior in order to salvage his relationship with the Þrændir. According to the saga authors, this was the vision of Óláfr that ultimately prevailed and allowed Magnús to reconstitute Norway's fractured elite society. The *Morkinskinna* author explains that "for the second time [Magnús] reconciled himself with the farmers and forswore the great wrath that he harbored against all of them because they had broken the peace and gone to war against the sainted King Óláfr." As a result of his emotional conversion, his transition from destructive wrath to forgiving mildness, Magnús earned his epithet *inn góði*, "the good," because he had become so beloved of all Norwegians. Ultimately, therefore, the narration of the *Bersöglisvísur* episode in the kings' sagas did as much to shape the historical memory of Magnús as it did that of St. Óláfr.

#### *Denmark: Erik II and St. Knútr Lavard*

Just as St. Óláfr's memory became a powerful tool for the Norwegian political elite to

come to terms with the consequences of Stiklestad, the Danish contenders in the civil wars of the twelfth century likewise used the memory of the murdered duke Knútr Lavard to make arguments about the conditions of royal legitimacy and processes of succession. Knútr had been assassinated on the orders of his cousin Magnús, the son of King Niels, and his death had sparked widespread revolts against the king that ultimately led to his deposition and death in 1134. Knútr's brother Erik Ólafsson, who had led the forces against Niels, succeeded to the throne; but Erik himself soon met a violent end, and Danish society spiraled into recurring cycles of violence for another two decades. Medieval historians, including Saxo Grammaticus, Sveinn Aggesen, the Roskilde chronicler, and the author of *Knytlinga Saga*, described how two generations of royal contenders invoked the murdered duke in order to bolster their emotive appeals against their opponents and support their own claims to legitimacy.

The Danish historians report that Knútr's murder in the forests outside of Roskilde was immediately shocking to the people of Zealand. The author of *Knytlinga Saga* (c. 1250) and Saxo Grammaticus (c. 1185 - 1208) describe the *populus*'s expressions of grief and anger. The former writes that Niels "had earned the great dislike of all the people of Denmark for the slaying of Knútr Lavard;" while the latter characteristically provides a more lengthy and colorful account: "when the people heard the devastating news of [Knútr's] slaughter, they straightaway abandoned the joyful celebrations being held at that time of year and exchanged the seasonal customs for grief; as they bewailed his passing, both sexes joined their groans in unison, like those of a single companion."<sup>165</sup> Several of the historians also report that, in this context of social

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<sup>165</sup> *Knytlinga Saga*, p. 259: "En þat var ok, sem fyrr var sagt, at þeir Níkulás konungr ok Magnús, son hans, hófðu mikinn óþokka fengit af alþýðu manns í Danmörk af drápi Knúts lávarðar;" Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, vol. II, pp. 940-1: "populus enim, cum calamitosum de nece eius nuntium accepisset, protinus conuiuiorum, que ea tempestate gerebantur, hilaritate deposita morem tempori impensum moerore mutauit, inque eo lamentando uterque sexus unius gemebundi amici uocem habuit."

disturbance, Erik Ólafsson was quick to move against Niels. Sveinn Aggesen (c. 1185) writes that when he learned about Knútr's death, Erik was at once "moved by the finger of God" to avenge his brother."<sup>166</sup> The *Chronicon Roskildensis* (c. 1138) likewise attributes the initial momentum of the rebellion to Erik, although its author is far more critical of his cause than was Sveinn Aggesen. The chronicler claims that Erik and his half-brother Harald Kesja "roused themselves to sedition against King Niels and his son Magnús, and worked hard that they might deprive Niels of his name and kingdom and kill Magnús." To that end, they gathered "all the treacherous and wicked men" who would support their cause.<sup>167</sup>

By contrast, Saxo Grammaticus reports that Erik only gradually focused the popular rage and sorrow that Knútr's murder had invoked into a full-scale rebellion. According to Saxo, Niels had at first attempted to counter accusations that he had condoned the murder by appearing at public assemblies and sending Magnús into exile in Götaland. It was only when Niels, acting on the advice of his friends, quickly recalled Magnús from exile that Erik and his brother Harald Kesja – who until that point had remained distant from the discontent of the common people – sharply criticized the king. It was then that the *populus*, sensing the brothers' growing sympathy to their cause, and "unwilling to attack the king without royal leadership," decided to fight under their banner. They elected Erik as king, bypassing Harald on account of his clear deficiencies of character. From that point forward, according to Saxo, Erik led the rebellion against Niels and

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<sup>166</sup> Sveinn Aggesen, *Brevis historia*, c. 14, pp. 132-3: "nam in fratris ultionem Ericus cum patruo suo regnante Nicalao, dei instigatus digito, ad pugne certamina suscitatur."

<sup>167</sup> *Chronicon Roskildense*, c. 14, p. 27: "unde fratres eius Haroldus et Hericus sedicionem contra Nicholaum regem et Magnum filium excitabant et, ut Nicholaus regno et nomine priuaretur, et Magnús interficeretur, omnimodis laborabant. Igitur Hericus collectis omnibus perfidis et scleratis in Iuciam uenit ibique per partem populi falsis promissionibus regium nomen sibi usurpauit."



Magnús, fighting in Knútr Lavard's name.<sup>168</sup>

Although they provide varying accounts of the early days of Erik's rebellion against Niels, these historians do agree that he was able to mobilize a powerful base of support by activating Knútr's substantial network of friends. Saxo records that Erik's most significant supporters included Hákon of Jutland, Peder Bodilson, and the sons of Skjalm Hvide; however, the process of constructing an effective political faction from this quite varied group of men had hardly been neat. Hákon was brother-in-law to Knútr and Erik, having married their half-sister Ragnhild, and may thus have seemed a natural ally of his wife's kin.<sup>169</sup> However, according to Saxo and the *Vita altera*, Hákon had originally conspired with Magnús against Knútr, and had only abandoned the plot after learning of Magnús's murderous intent. Saxo does not explain why Hákon then chose in 1131 to support Erik's program of vengeance on behalf of the duke whom he had only recently opposed.<sup>170</sup> Nevertheless, his support seems to have paid off when, after Erik's murder in 1137, Hákon's son became King Erik III. By contrast, Peder Bodilson, another of Knútr's former friends, broke with Erik II after his ascension to the throne. Peder owned significant lands in Zealand, and is remembered by historians for having founded the Benedictine monastery of St. Peter at Næstved along with his brothers. Tore Nyberg reads Næstved's foundation charter, which was witnessed by Erik's adversary, Bishop Eskil of Roskilde, as a challenge to the king's recent monastic foundation at nearby Ringsted.<sup>171</sup> This potential

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<sup>168</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, vol. II, XIII.8.2-3, pp. 946-9.

<sup>169</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, vol. II, XII.4.2, pp. 876-7; XIII.6.1, pp. 932-3. The situation is complicated by Saxo's apparent conflation of Hákon the Jutlander with the Norwegian magnate Hákon Sunnivason, who was also one of Magnús's co-conspirators.

<sup>170</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, vol. II, XIII.6.1-2, pp. 932-3; *Vita altera*, *Passio* Lectio 6, pp. 97-8.

<sup>171</sup> *DD* 1:2, no. 64; Nyberg, *Monasticism in North-Western Europe*, pp. 104-9.

institutional rivalry is borne out by the fact that Peder later supported an uprising of the Zealanders against Erik, which according to Saxo was led by Bishop Eskil. Erik quickly put down the rebellion, and Saxo reports that Peder, “anticipating the vengeance that the king was preparing, escaped it by dying.”<sup>172</sup> The positive fortunes of Hákon and his descendants indicate the potential that a royal murder offered to advantageously reshape bonds of elite friendship and patronage. In contrast, Peder’s fate suggests the limits of the support forged by the emotional appeal of Knútr’s death.

Beyond Hákon and Peder, there was one particularly significant winner amongst the Danish elite who supported Erik out of love for Knútr: the powerful Jutland-based Hvide family. Knútr Lavard had been fostered by Skjalm Hvide, whom Saxo celebrates as a brave and loyal warrior. During his youth Knútr grew close to Skjalm’s sons, Toke, Sune, Ebbe, and Asser. Saxo records that after his murder it was the brothers who convened the public assemblies that became a stage for the expression of popular anger and for the organization of political resistance to Niels’s rule.<sup>173</sup> The Skjalmssons remained important supporters of Erik’s as he fought against Niels and Magnús, and unlike Peder Bodilson, they did not abandon him after he gained the throne. In fact, according to Saxo, Skjalm’s sons were among the only elites who did not participate in the Zealanders’ rebellion.<sup>174</sup> Instead, they continued to benefit from the gradual estrangement of their rivals, the Thurgunna family of Zealand, from Erik and his royal descendants. The Thurgunnas had initially supported Erik’s bid for the throne when their

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<sup>172</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, vol. 2, XIV.1.11, pp. 980-1: “Petrus uero fatis suis ultionem precurrentibus poenam, que a rege parabatur, effugit.”

<sup>173</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, vol. 2, XIII.7.4, pp. 942-3.

<sup>174</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, vol. 2, XIV.1.11, pp. 980-1.

patriarch, Christiern the Old, had defected from Niels's camp to Erik's.<sup>175</sup> However, Christiern's son Eskil, the bishop of Roskilde, had soon grown hostile towards Erik and had spearheaded the unsuccessful Zealand rebellion. Eskil was nominated to succeed his uncle Asser as archbishop of Lund when the latter died in May 1137. His archiepiscopal election was confirmed after Erik's murder in August 1137, and Eskil held the position for the next four decades, before stepping down at the end of his life in 1177 to become a monk of Clairvaux.<sup>176</sup> Eskil chose as his archiepiscopal successor Bishop Absalon of Roskilde, the grandson of Skjalm Hvide, who thereafter served as the powerful right hand of Knútr Lavard's son and Erik's eventual successor, Valdemar I. By this point, the gradual decline of the Thurgunnas and the ascendancy of the Hvide had been fully realized.<sup>177</sup>

The familial histories of Hákon the Jutlander, Peder Bodilson, and the Skjalmson and Hvide clans highlight the risks and opportunities inherent in their decisions to support Erik Óláfsson in 1131 and suggest the careful political calculations that each would have made as they transferred their allegiance from Knútr Lavard to his brother. Saxo is rarely coy about the complexity of the Danish magnates' political calculus. However, the rhetoric that he uses to describe their negotiation of the fraught political terrain is strongly emotional, suggesting that there was more at stake than cold self-interest. For example, he describes the Skjalmssons' keen

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<sup>175</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, vol. 2, XIII.9.1, pp. 952-3.

<sup>176</sup> On Eskil's election and archiepiscopal career, see especially Michael Gelting, "Da Eskil ville være ærkebiskop af Roskilde: Roskildekrøniken, *Liber daticus Lundensis* og det danske ærkesædes ophævelse 1133 - 1138," in Peter Carelli, Lars Hermanson, and Hanne Sanders, eds., *Ett annat 1100-tal: Individ, kollektiv och kulturella mönster i medeltidens Danmark* (Göteborg: Makadam förlag, 2004): 181-229.

<sup>177</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, vol. 2, XIV.5.10, pp. 1428-9. Historians have debated Saxo's account of the election process, including his insinuation that Eskil may have supported the election of his own nephew, Asser, over Absalon. See Friis-Jensen, ed., Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, vol. 2, p. 1424, n. 352.

grief at the death of their foster-brother, and tells how during their visits to Danish public assemblies they displayed Knútr's torn cloak in order to "excite the people's anger" and thereby benefit their "mournful plot."<sup>178</sup> Saxo likewise explains Christiern the Old's defection from Niels to Erik as the result of the hatred that Knútr's death had aroused in him towards Magnús.<sup>179</sup> Similarly, Saxo writes of Bishop Peder of Roskilde that he "followed Erik with his body, but Niels in his heart, driven by fear towards the former, and charity towards the latter."<sup>180</sup> The strong affective element to these scenes does not obscure the rationality or the complexity of the individual actors' choices, but instead makes their maneuvering comprehensible within the narrative context of the *Gesta Danorum*. The emotions of Erik's supporters are described in strong terms: they lament, they rage, they hate; and these passions make clear the ways in which they responded to the personal appeals that were reorganizing their rapidly polarizing political world. Saxo's emotional scripts thus provide a consistent social logic to his narrative of political reorganization. They also organize the complex shifting of personal alliances as responses to a singular event: the murder of Knútr Lavard. That Erik himself framed his royal campaign in these emotive terms is suggested in the 1135 diploma he issued for the monastic community of Our Lady at Ringsted in celebration of his decisive victory over Niels at the battle of Fotevik. In that charter's arenga, he invoked the memory of his "brother of beloved memory, Knútr, who was cruelly murdered, and whom I loved before all living."<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, vol. II., XIII.7.4, pp. 942-3: "...aduersum iniquissimum percussoris actum uulgi iram erigere cupiendo. Quinetiam tunicam eius crebris foraminibus absumptam omnium oculis in concione subiiciebant. Nec parum luctuosam eorum actionem lacere uestis irritamentum adiunxit."

<sup>179</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, vol. II., XIII.9.1, pp. 952-3.

<sup>180</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, vol. II., XIII.9.1, pp. 952-3: Petrus uero, Roskyldensium pontifex, Ericum corpore, Nicolaum animo comitabatur, metu alterum, alterum charitate complexus."

<sup>181</sup> *DD* 1:2, no. 65: "fratre meo faelicis memoriae Canuto crudeliter enecato, ob recordationem ipsius, quem prae cunctis mortalibus unice dilexi."

The memory of Knútr Lavard was therefore central to the Danish historians' narration of the dynastic conflicts of the 1130s. Perhaps surprisingly, it seems to have played a lesser role in the decade-long struggle of Knútr's son, Valdemar I, against his co-rulers Svein III Grathe and Knútr V in the 1140s and 1150s. Valdemar's claim to the Danish throne, unlike his uncle Erik's, was not based on an emotional appeal to the injustice of his father's murder. His campaign was not one to enact justice against a king delegitimized by the violence perpetrated by his son, but rather one to achieve dominance amongst a crowded field of royal contenders. *Knytlinga Saga* does note that Valdemar originally allied himself with Svein, the son of Erik II, against Knútr, "because Magnús, Knútr's father, had betrayed St. Knútr Lavard, Valdemar's father."<sup>182</sup> In 1146, early in Svein and Valdemar's alliance, the co-kings attempted to translate Knútr Lavard's remains from his grave to a *feretrum*.<sup>183</sup> While the office for the translation (1170) is silent about Svein and Knútr's motives, this is the first instance in which Knútr Lavard is described as a saint and martyr, rather than simply as a victim of a political murder. The elevation of his remains into a *feretrum* would have made visible Knútr Lavard's new saintly status and would have served as an implicit reminder of the venerable status of Valdemar's father and the murderous reputation of Knútr's. There is, however, no available evidence that Valdemar continued to make use of his father's memory as a point in favor of his royal candidacy after 1146. Instead Valdemar's most substantial cultic activity on his father's behalf began in the late 1160s, after his achievement of sole rulership and the resolution of his role in the Alexandrine papal schism. By this point his

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<sup>182</sup> *Knytlinga Saga*, p. 272: "Hann var meirr snúinn til vináttu við Svein konung en Knút konung, því at Magnús, faðir Knúts, hafði svikit inn heilaga Knút lávarð, fǫður Valdimars."

<sup>183</sup> *Vita altera, Translatio* Lectio 6: "Unde in consilio Waldemarum patris et Svenno patris secundum opinionem suam honori consulentes, eius reliquias de tumulo in feretrum transferre disposuerunt. Ex quo hoc innotuit archipresuli Eskillo, Romane sedis reuerenciam obseruans, nec obuians ratione, a uoto iuuenum uelle auertens id ne fieret auctoritate pontificali interdixit."

cultivation of his father's memory had achieved a different valence, as we shall see shortly.

The significant efforts made by Magnús Ólafsson of Norway and Erik II of Denmark to memorialize their saintly predecessors, set alongside Valdemar's apparent lack of urgency in promoting his saintly father, suggest that the moment at which a murdered king's memory was most potent was during those turbulent times when structures of power were being reorganized and bonds of support renegotiated. In this charged moment, the deceased king's memory was up for grabs in that it had yet to be normatively narrativized by one party or another. In describing the life and death of the royal saint, political contenders could promote their perspective on the unfolding of events that had led to and followed his death. The memory of the royal saint was therefore powerful not simply because it could lend associative prestige or legitimacy to those who invoked it. Instead its potency resided in the act of commemoration itself.

## RITUALIZING KINGSHIP

This powerful process of commemoration and the normalization of royal-saintly memory was accomplished not only in text, but also in the new royal rituals that kings staged with increasing frequency in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Scholars have studied these rituals on a variety of levels: as tools of social ordering; as articulations of royal iconography; as windows onto the deeper cultural ideas underpinning Christian conceptions of rulership, and so on.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> For an overview of scholarship on ritual in the North, see Lars Hermanson, "Introduction: Rituals, Performatives, and Political Order in Northern Europe c. 650-1350," in Wojtek Jezierski, Lars Hermanson, Hans Jacob Orning, and Thomas Småberg, eds., *Rituals, Performatives, and Political Order in Northern Europe, c. 650-1350* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015): 1-40. Foundational studies of medieval royal ritual include Marc Bloch, *Les rois thaumaturges: étude sur le caractère surnaturel attribué à la puissance royale particulièrement en France et en Angleterre* (Strasbourg, 1924); Ernst Kantorowicz, *Laudes Regiae: A Study in Liturgical Acclamations and Mediaeval Ruler Worship* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1946); Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957); Walter Ullmann, *The Carolingian Renaissance and the Idea of Kingship* (London:

Following the paradigmatic work of Geoffrey Koziol and Gerd Althoff, who have applied theories of Geertzian cultural anthropology to the study of medieval elite culture, historians of the past several decades have most often read royal ritual as performative: that is, as a public and rule-bound display that did not simply reflect an underlying political reality, but also actively reoriented and reshaped it.<sup>185</sup> Anthropologically informed studies of ritual have since shed valuable light on strategies of royal authority and dispute resolution in early and high medieval political societies.

In the frontier kingdoms, where strong centralized royal power was slow to develop, ritual emerged in the eleventh and particularly the twelfth centuries as a potentially powerful strategy for performing particular visions of rulership. However, we do not possess sources, such as the coronation *ordines* used to such valuable effect by scholars of the English, Frankish, and German realms, that would allow us to develop a comprehensive understanding of the procedural details or cultural debts of their ritual traditions. Instead we are dependent on the accounts of our narrative histories. Philippe Buc has warned us against uncritically accepting these “rituals-in-text” as transparent representations of contemporary practice.<sup>186</sup> However, to writers of history in the eleventh and twelfth century, it was clear that the memories of holy kings had been central to the establishment of new royal rituals, and thus to the practice of kingship. Here we will analyze the emergence of two rituals, coronation and saintly *translatio*, as they appear in historical texts

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Methuen, 1969); and the work of Janet Nelson, including the articles collected in *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe* (London: Hambledon Press, 1986).

<sup>185</sup> See particularly Geoffrey Koziol, *Begging Pardon and Favor: Ritual and Political Order in Early Medieval France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); Gerd Althoff, *Spielregeln der Politik im Mittelalter: Kommunikation in Frieden und Fehde* (Darmstadt: Primus, 1997); and Althoff, *Die Macht der Rituale: Symbolik und Herrschaft im Mittelalter* (Darmstadt: Primus, 2003).

<sup>186</sup> Phillippe Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual: Between Early Medieval Texts and Social Scientific Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

in order to further unpack the historiographical afterlives of the royal saints.

### *Coronation*

Of the northern and eastern kingdoms, it is in Hungary, with its early traditions of episcopal organization, where we find the earliest evidence for the practice of royal coronation.<sup>187</sup> After the death of Grand-Prince Géza in 997, the Hungarian people, having several years earlier elected Stephen to succeed his father, according to the *Legenda maior* (c. 1083) “anointed him with chrismal oil and happily crowned him with a diadem of regal dignity.”<sup>188</sup> Stephen’s biographer therefore presented anointing and coronation as having been a constitutive element of the Hungarian king-making process from the earliest days of their royal traditions. Through the work of the early Hungarian historians, the royal *corona* came to hold a special significance for the way in which Stephen in particular was remembered. In the *Legenda maior* Stephen’s crown is consistently depicted as the central symbol of his identity as a ruler. Describing Stephen’s birth and baptism, the writer comments that his baptismal name had proven to be particularly appropriate, “for clearly in Greek, ‘Stephanus’ means ‘crowned’ in Latin.”<sup>189</sup> He furthermore draws a parallel between Stephen’s coronation with the earthly crown and his achievement of an eternal crown as God’s saint. In an early scene, Géza receives a divine vision

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<sup>187</sup> On the history of coronation in medieval Hungary, see particularly Erin Fügedi, “Coronation in Medieval Hungary,” *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 3 (1980): 157-89; László Péter, “The Holy Crown of Hungary, Visible and Invisible,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 81:3 (2003): 421-510. On the close interconnection between the rite of coronation and episcopal activity in the Carolingian period, see Janet Nelson, “National Synods, Kingship as Office, and Royal Anointing: An Early Medieval Syndrome,” *Studies in Church History* 7 (1971): 41-59.

<sup>188</sup> *Legenda maior*, c. 9, p. 384: “quinto post patris obitum anno, divina sic volente clementia, benedictionis apostolice litteris allatis, presulibus cum clero, comitibus cum populo laudes congruas acclamantibus, dilectus deo Stephanus rex appellatur et unctione crismali perunctus, diademate regalis dignitatis feliciter coronatur.”

<sup>189</sup> *Legenda maior*, c. 5, pp. 381: “Stephanus quippe Grece, coronatus sonat latine.”



of his son's birth in which he was assured that "he will be one of the kings elected by the Lord, who will transform his crown of secular life into an eternal one."<sup>190</sup> The idea is echoed throughout in the text: "for God wished him to attain royal power in this world, and resolved to redeem him eternally in the future one through the crown of beatitude."<sup>191</sup> Through claims such as these, Stephen's association with the *corona* becomes not only a sign of his royal status, which he would go on to share with his successors, but also a special symbol of his imminent sanctity.

Stephen's coronation, though a symbolically significant moment, is only treated briefly in the *Legenda minor* (post-1083). It receives a more substantial treatment in Hartvic's *Vita S. Stephani* (c. 1095 - 1100), which drew substantially on the earlier text for its account of Stephen's election and coronation. Hartvic supplemented the *Legenda*'s brief account of the coronation with an original episode explaining the provenance of Stephen's crown. According to Hartvic, in 1000 several Polish envoys arrived at the papal court, seeking "apostolic benediction" and a royal diadem for their new ruler Mieszko I. The pope had at first assented to their requests; but, as Hartvic explained, because the Lord recognized His apostles [Acts 1:23-26], He "decided happily to distinguish instead Stephen, his elect, with this temporal crown, who later was to be glorified more happily by an eternal one."<sup>192</sup> In a dream the pope was instructed to prepare to receive a delegation from a heretofore unknown people and to bestow his apostolic diadem on their holy leader, rather than on Mieszko. The next day, the Hungarian prelate Asericus arrived at

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<sup>190</sup> *Legenda maior*, c. 3, p. 379: "hic unus erit de regibus electis a domino, coronam vite secularis commutaturus eterna."

<sup>191</sup> *Legenda maior*, c. 5, p. 381: "ipsum quod et in hoc seculo deus voluit ad regni potentiam, et in futuro corona beatitudinis semper permanentis redimere decrevit ad percipiendum iugis indeficientem gloriam."

<sup>192</sup> Hartvic, *Vita sancti Stephani*, c. 9, p. 413: "ille nimirum potius electum suum Stephanum hac temporali statuerat feliciter insignire corona, ipse postmodum eundem felicius decoraturus eterna."

the papal court and regaled the pope with stories about Stephen's virtues and his victories over "infidel peoples." Rejoicing that his divine vision had been fulfilled, the pope granted his crown to Stephen to be worn as a sign of his "apostleship" and declared: "I am apostolic, but truly he is deservedly Christ's apostle, through whom Christ converted so many people." He thus relinquished to Stephen's governance "the Church as well as the people, to be ordered according to both laws (*utroque iure*)."<sup>193</sup>

Hartvic's story about the origins of Stephen's crown served several purposes. It elevated him above his local rival, the Polish duke, by attributing to him a special royal status. It negated the claim, which would be articulated a decade later by the German chronicler Thietmar of Merseburg, that it had been Emperor Otto III who had granted the Hungarian king his crown.<sup>194</sup> And perhaps most significantly, it carefully navigated the issue of the Hungarian kingdom's relationship with Rome. We saw in the previous chapter how during the 1070s, a decade or two prior to Hartvic's composition of the *Vita*, Pope Gregory VII sent a series of letters in which he commentated on the state of the Hungarian kingdom, expressing concern that King Solomon threatened the independence of his realm by relying on the support of his brother-in-law Henry IV to combat the advances of his cousins and rivals Géza and Ladislaus. Seeking to counter German influence in the east, Gregory urged Solomon to instead acknowledge the suzerainty of St. Peter and Rome over the Hungarian kingdom. He made several historical arguments in support of this position. In a letter of 1073, he reminded Solomon that the Hungarian royal

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<sup>193</sup> Hartvic, *Vita sancti Stephani*, c. 9, p. 414: "ego, inquiring, sum apostolicus, ille vero merito Christi apostolus, per quem tantum sibi populum Christus convertit. Quapropter dispositione eiusdem, prout divina ipsum gratia instruit, ecclesias simul cum populis utroque iure ordinandas relinquimus."

<sup>194</sup> Thietmar of Merseburg, ed. Robert Holtzmann, *Die Chronik des Bischofs Thietmar von Merseburg und ihre Korveier Überarbeitung*, MGH SSRG, n.s. 9 (1935), IV.59, at p. 199: "imperatoris [Otto III] autem predicti gracia et hortatu gener Hinrici, ducis Bawariorum, Waic [Stephen] in regno suo episcopales cathedras faciens, coronam et benedictionem accepit."

regalia, including the crown and royal lance, had been sent to Rome several decades earlier. Likewise, he claimed that “the kingdom of Hungary is the property of the holy Roman church and was in the past offered and devoutly handed over to blessed Peter by King Stephen with all his right and power.”<sup>195</sup> Hartvic’s account of the origins of Stephen’s crown directly refuted Gregory’s claims. Instead, according to the Hungarian bishop, as a result of his personal sanctity Stephen had earned papal recognition of his apostolic status and his authority over the secular and ecclesiastical laws of his kingdom. By narrating an origin story for Stephen’s crown that simultaneously claimed papal acknowledgment of Stephen’s apostolic status and freed him and his successors from claims of papal suzerainty, Hartvic originated what was to become a powerful argument in favor of the special status of the Hungarian kings.

In fact, although he could not have known it at the time, Hartvic’s account of Stephen’s coronation became the starting point of an important national tradition that vested intense historical significance in the symbol of Stephen’s crown.<sup>196</sup> The “doctrine of the holy crown,” as it came to be known, was almost entirely the product of a later period, and became particularly significant for the Angevin rulers of Hungary, who after 1301 had themselves crowned with St. Stephen’s *corona* in order to emphasize their sacral connection with the founder of the dynasty that they had supplanted.<sup>197</sup> Nevertheless, during our period, out of all the regalia it was the

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<sup>195</sup> Gregory VII, *Register*, ed. and trans. H.E.J. Cowdrey, II.13, p. 108.

<sup>196</sup> The crown now known as the Crown of St. Stephen in fact postdates the holy king’s life. The lower crown, known as the *corona graeca* was a gift from Byzantine Emperor Michael VII to King Géza or his wife in the 1070s. The dating and provenance of the upper crown, known as the *corona latina*, is disputed. See Péter, “The Holy Crown of Hungary,” pp. 424-5; Nora Berend, “The Kingdom of Hungary,” in Berend, ed., *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy: Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus’ c. 900-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), at p. 350.

<sup>197</sup> Andrew III (1290-1301), the last of the Árpáadian kings, had been the first Hungarian ruler to claim that he had been crowned with St. Stephen’s *corona*. The claim became a constitutive part of the accession rituals of the Angevin kings, and the troubles encountered by a king who had not been crowned with St. Stephen’s *corona* were clearly illustrated by the experiences of Charles Robert, who on account of the crown’s theft had to be crowned twice with “substitute” crowns, before finally receiving a third and final crowning with the

crown that became an important metonymic symbol for the Hungarian *regnum*. For example, in the early text known as *De institutione morum* (before 1031), which billed itself as a book of advice composed by Stephen for his son Emeric, but which was more likely the work of a member of Stephen's court, the *corona* is repeatedly invoked as an abstracted symbol of the office of the king. Stephen, as the work's implied author, beseeches his implied princely audience to exalt and embellish his royal crown by showing deference to clerics, honor to magnates, and charity to guests. He also warns Emeric that a king who rules without faith "neither rules honorably here nor will share in the eternal kingdom and crown," thereby activating the parallelism between Stephen's earthly and heavenly crowns that became a central image in his *Legenda*.<sup>198</sup> Half a century before Hartvic wrote his account of Stephen's coronation, therefore, his crown could be meaningfully deployed not only as a sign of his royal authority, but also as a divinely charged symbol of the royal office's divine origins.

While coronation was a central element of the kingmaking process and the crown a foundational symbol of kingship from the earliest days of the Hungarian kingdom, neither entered into use in the kingdom of Norway until the 1160s, a century and a half after St. Óláfr had been made king. Norwegian royal succession instead remained a process that took place on a local level, through acclamation at assemblies, rather than a ritual event. Because of the ability of each regional *thing* to recognize their own royal candidate, as well as the difficulty that the early Norwegian kings faced in maintaining a personal presence throughout an enormous and geographically forbidding realm, co-rulership remained a common feature of Norwegian

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*sancta corona* after its return to Hungary. On the history of the idea of the holy crown from the medieval to the modern period, see especially Péter, "The Holy Crown of Hungary."

<sup>198</sup> *Libellus de institutione morum*, ed. Joseph Balogh, *SRH* II pp. 612-27, at p. 621: "quia fides sine opere moritur, nec hic honeste regnant, nec eterno regno vel corona participantur."

rulership from the mid-eleventh through the early thirteenth centuries.<sup>199</sup> All of a king's sons, regardless of their mother's status, were considered to have equally valid claims to kingship. This resulted in the co-rulership of Magnús Ólafsson and Harald Hardrada, St. Óláfr's half-brother, in the mid-eleventh century; the tripartite rule of brothers Sigurðr *Jorsalafar*, Eysteinn Magnusson, and Óláfr Magnusson from 1103 until the deaths of Óláfr in 1115 and Eysteinn in 1123; and then, after Sigurðr's death in 1130, the variously overlapping reigns of Magnús the Blind, Harald Gille, Sigurðr Munn, Inge Hunchback, Eysteinn Haraldsson, and Hákon *Herdebrei*. Several of Norway's would-be kings – such as Harald Gille, Sigurðr *Slembe*, and Sverrir Sigurðarson – were men who had arrived in Norway as adults, claiming to be long-lost bastard sons of deceased kings. Some of them, like Harald, were able to prove their paternity by submitting themselves to the ordeal of ploughshares. Others, like Sigurðr Munn, who was executed in spectacularly gruesome fashion by his opponents in retaliation for his royal pretensions, were not able to do so.<sup>200</sup>

Even as the so-called “civil war” (*borgerkrig*) period heated up after the death of Sigurðr *Jorsalafar* in 1130, traditional standards of succession – regional acclamation of those who could prove paternal royal descent – remained strictly observed. The accession to the throne of Magnús Erlingsson in 1161, by contrast, represented a boldly novel program of royal succession, and as we will see, Magnús and his supporters drew heavily on the memory of St. Óláfr in order to

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<sup>199</sup> On the dynamics of intra-dynastic conflict, see Birgit Sawyer, “The ‘Civil Wars’ Revisited,” *Historisk tidsskrift* 82 (2003): 43-73; Hans Jacob Orning, “Conflict and Social (Dis)order in Norway, c. 1030 – 1160,” in Kim Esmark, Lars Hermanson, and Hans Jacob Orning, eds., *Disputing Strategies in Medieval Scandinavia* (Leiden: Brill, 2013): 45-82; Orning, “Borgerkrig og statsutvikling i Norge i middelalderen: En revurdering,” *Historisk Tidsskrift* 93 (2014): 193-216.

<sup>200</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Haraldssona saga*, in *Heimskringla* III, pp. 366-8; *Morkinskinna*, vol. II, p. 208: “síðan gekk Þjóstólfr Álason þangat ok mælti við hann: ‘hví vartu svá djarfr, þrælssonrinn, at þora at segja at þú værir sonr Magnúss konungs?’” (“Then Þjóstólfr Álason went up to him and spoke to him: ‘how could one such as you, the son of a thrall, be so impudent as to say that you are the son of King Magnús?’”)

legitimize his unconventional actions. Magnús was the son of Erlingr Skakke, an influential *lendrmann* and a supporter of King Inge. Erlingr had married Kristin, the daughter of King Sigurðr *Jorsalafar*, and when Inge was killed by his rival Hákon *Herdebrei* in 1161, Erlingr assumed leadership of his supporters. According to Snorri Sturluson, Erlingr's band identified a number of potential candidates to elevate to the kingship in opposition to Hákon. None of them, however, were the sons of kings, and all refused to put themselves forward. They ultimately decided to elevate Erlingr's own son, the five-year-old Magnús, who was a grandson of King Sigurðr through his mother. Magnús was acclaimed king at the Bergen assembly, where all those who had been supporters of King Inge swore him allegiance.<sup>201</sup>

Erlingr and his band achieved victory over Hákon *Herdebrei* in 1162, and then in 1163 defeated another royal claimant who claimed to be a son of Sigurðr Munn. Having defeated his rivals, Erlingr now focused on consolidating his young son's tenuous claim to the throne. He did so by forming a strategic alliance with the ambitious new archbishop of Nidarós, Eysteinn, who had only recently returned to Norway from Rome, where he had received the *pallium* from Alexander III.<sup>202</sup> Drawing from *Fagrskinna*, Snorri Sturluson narrates the birth of this new partnership in a dialogue between Erlingr and Eysteinn. He describes how Erlingr questioned Eysteinn about his recent attempts to convince the farmers of Trondheim to significantly increase the dues they paid to his archdiocese. The *lendrmann* asks: ““is this the law of the holy King Óláfr, lord, or have you taken this stipulation (*mál*) more liberally than how it is written in the law book?”” The archbishop responds with his own accusation: “you have already now built up your name and your son's power enough; and if I have unlawfully taken dues (*auralög*) from the

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<sup>201</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Magnúss saga Erlingssonar*, in *Heimskringla* III, pp. 432-4.

<sup>202</sup> *Diplomatarium Norvegicum*, 17B, p. 200.

Þrændir, I think it is an even greater breach of the law that that man is king over the land who is not the son of a king.” For that, Eysteinn claimed, there was “neither laws nor precedents in this kingdom.”<sup>203</sup>

In Snorri’s telling, both men proved their pragmatism when they recognized that they could be of mutual assistance to one another. Erlingr tells the archbishop: “if Magnús was not chosen to be king as has traditionally been done in our kingdom, then you in your authority may give him the crown according to God’s law for anointing a king to power.”<sup>204</sup> He cites William the Conqueror and Svein Ástriðarson of Denmark as examples of men who were not the sons of kings, but had gone on to achieve the crown nevertheless. To have Eysteinn likewise crown Magnús would be a great honor for Norway, Erlingr claims: “let us have a crowned king like the English or the Danes.”<sup>205</sup> According to Snorri, Eysteinn acceded to Erlingr’s proposition after consulting with the papal legate, Stephen of Orvieto, whom Alexander had sent to Norway in 1163 to help secure the king’s support for his side in the ongoing papal schism. The archbishop crowned and anointed young Magnus in Bergen in late 1163 or early 1164, in the presence of Stephen of Orvieto and the Norwegian bishops.

Accounts of the coronation in the sagas are uniformly terse. However, several extant texts

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<sup>203</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Magnúss saga Erlingssonar*, in *Heimskringla* III, c. 21, pp. 395-6: “Erlingr segir: ‘hvárt er þat lög, herra, ins helga Óláfs konungs, eða hafið ér tekit nokkuru frekara þetta mál, en svá sem ritit er í lögþókinni?’ Erkbyskup segir: ‘svá mun inn heilagi Óláfr konungr löginn hafa sett sem hann fekk þá jáorð ok samþykki alþýðu til, en ekki finnsk þat í hans lögum, at bannat sé at auka guðs rétt.’ Erlingr svarar: ‘vilið þér auka yðarn rétt, þá manuð þér styrkja vilja oss til þess, at vér aukim jafnmiklu konungs réttinn.’ Erkbyskup segir: ‘aukit hefir þú nú áðr með gnógu nafn ok ríki sonar þíns. En ef ek hefi aflaga tekit auralöginn af þeim Þrændum, þá ætla ek stærra bera hin lagabrotin, er sá er konungr yfir landi, er eigi er konungs sonr. Eru þar hvártki til þess lög né dæmi hér í landi.’”

<sup>204</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Magnúss saga Erlingssonar*, in *Heimskringla* III, c. 21, p. 396: “‘ef Magnus er eigi svá til konungs tekinn sem forn síðr er til hér í landi, þá meguð þér af yðru valdi gefa honum kórónu, sem guðs lög eru til at smyrja konung til veldis.’”

<sup>205</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Magnúss saga Erlingssonar*, in *Heimskringla* III, c. 21, p. 397: “‘aukum vér nú enn með góðum hlutum, hofum konung kórónaðan eigi síðr en enskir menn eða Danir.’”

produced in Magnús's name around the time of the coronation are revealing of how the event represented a significant novelty in the way that Norwegians were being asked to think about their kings. While no coronation *ordo* for this or other medieval Norwegian coronations is extant, the coronation oath that Magnús swore in 1163/4 does survive. This text makes clear the extent to which Erlingr had pinned his son's kingship on his alliance with the church. In the presence of the papal legate, Magnús swore to be faithful and obedient (*fidelis et obediens*) to the Roman church and to Alexander. As protector of the church, he declared that he would defend priests, widows, orphans, and wards. Finally, he promised to maintain "the deserved reverence and obedience towards the church of Nidarós and the entire kingdom of Norway according to divine custom and human law." He would not force any compliance from them, he swore, "except for those things that the holy canons of the church are prepared to concede to kings."<sup>206</sup>

Magnús more fully outlined the privileges he had conceded to the church of Nidarós in a letter addressed to Archbishop Eysteinn at the time of the coronation. In this document the young king acknowledged that as a servant of Christ, his *ministerium* had been mediated by the archbishop: "we have received our crown and the rule of our kingdom from the hands of the Lord, with the laying on of your hands having invoked the Holy Spirit."<sup>207</sup> But Magnús then consistently invokes St. Óláfr, rather than the archbishop, as his spiritual mediator. As Magnús's predecessor, God's saint, and Nidarós's patron, Óláfr neatly triangulated the sources of authority invoked at his coronation. Magnús also made use of Óláfr's reputation as the spiritual founder of

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<sup>206</sup> *LDNH*, no. 10, pp. 62-5: "quod debitam reverentiam et debita obsequie secundum instituta divine et humane legis ecclesie Trundensis et totius regni Norwagie pro posse meo prestabo et ab ea nulla obsequie violenter exigam, nisi que sacri canones ecclesiam regibus parare concedunt, nisi gratis pro necessitate temporis ipsa prestare velit."

<sup>207</sup> *LDNH*, no. 9, pp. 58-9: "quoniam communicato sapienciorum consilio dominatum et diadema regni huius, inuocato spiritu sancto vestre manus impositione, reuerende pater Augustine, de manu domini suscepimus..."



the kingdom to justify his assumption of royal authority without direct paternal descent from a king. He promised to govern as Óláfr's heir, "possessing the kingdom under his dominion and holding it from him as though I were his vicar (*vicarius*).” He went on:

For in the past the martyr, on behalf of the law of God, the salvation of his subjects, and the preservation of the present kingdom, fearlessly opposed his enemies and, not hesitating to deliver himself into the hands of the guilty, consecrated the present kingdom through the spilling of his precious blood. Desiring to be in the same way a successor to his kingdom, using what abilities I have at hand and aided by God and His martyr, I will become an imitator of his virtue in whatever way necessity, tribulation, or difficulty requires of me, in order to uphold the law and justice and in order to protect the ancestral possession of St. Óláfr, fearlessly upholding his sacred defenses as his knight, prepared to fight; and if forces stand against me, my heart will not be fearful.<sup>208</sup>

Here Magnús counters a potential critique of his unsuitability for the throne by aligning himself with the memory of St. Óláfr in several ways. Firstly, he claims that he can act as Óláfr's vicar and heir – even, it is implied, if he is not directly descended from Óláfr as the previous kings of Norway have been – by imitating his virtuous style of rule. To imitate St. Óláfr would be to act as a *miles Christi*, to defend the kingdom against its enemies with the aid of God and his royal saint. In doing so, Magnús could translate his passive reception of his *ministerium* into outward action. Acting as Óláfr's successor was therefore presented as a continuously pursued project of self-fashioning, in contrast to the one-time assumption of the royal dignity from the archbishop's hands at the coronation. Secondly, Magnús implies that there was a precedent for his novel use of the coronation rite by describing Óláfr's willing embrace of martyrdom as a kind

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<sup>208</sup> LDNH, no. 9: “deo namque in hac die gloriose resurrectionis me cum regno in perpetuum et glorioso martyri regi Ola[u]o cui integraliter speciali deuotione secundo post dominum regnum assigno Norwegie, et huic regno, quantum deo placuerit, velut eiusdem gloriosi martyris possessioni hereditarie sub eius dominio tamquam suus vicarius et ab eo tenens presidebo. Porro quoniam prefatus martyr pro lege dei sui, pro salute subiectorum, pro presentis regni conseruacione intrepidus inimicis occurrit, et non dubitans manibus tradi nocentum presens regnum sui preciosi sanguinis effusione consecrauit, eius cupiens sicut in regno successor, sic et, in quantum vires suppetunt, adiutus a deo et ab eodem martyre fieri quoque virtutum imitator, quecunque me vocauerit necessitas, tribulacio siue angustia, pro lege et iusticia tendenda, pro patria tamquam sancti Olaui possessione tuenda, diuino et eius tutus munimine d certamen ipso preduce tamquam eius miles in suis castris pugnaturus intrepidus accedam, et si consistent aduersum me castra, non timebit cor meum.”

of proto-coronation. Magnús's path to the throne had hardly been a deviation from past precedent because the blood Óláfr had spilled at Stiklestad had in effect consecrated the entire kingdom. Magnús even hinted at appropriating the language of martyrdom for himself, claiming that he would not fear to stand against the enemies of Óláfr's "ancestral possessions," and implying that he would likewise be willing to re-consecrate the kingdom through the spilling of his own blood.

Finally, soon after the coronation Magnús promulgated a law of succession which was later passed down as part of the *Gulathing Law*, although it does not appear to have dictated any subsequent royal elections.<sup>209</sup> The law proclaims that the king of Norway should be "one who is born a legitimate son of a king of Norway" – a criterion that would seem to contradict Magnús's own claim to the throne. However, the law goes on to qualify, a king should be succeeded by his son "unless he be dominated by evil-mindedness or lacking in discretion." The judges of a royal candidate's suitability were to be "the archbishop, the bishops, and twelve of the most prudent men of each bishopric, whom the bishops shall appoint to act with them;" that is, the same men who had acted with Jarl Erlingr to elevate Magnús to the throne. The succession law also designated St. Óláfr's shrine in Nidarós cathedral as the site of future royal elections. This was both a pragmatic designation, given that the archbishop of Nidarós was to mediate the election; but the law also implies the presence of the royal saint would lend a sense of legitimacy to the process of kingmaking. Its provisions for the commemoration of deceased kings further leaned on the symbolic function of Óláfr's shrine. At the shrine, the law declares, "the crown of the departed king shall be offered up for the health of his soul; and let it hang there forever to the

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<sup>209</sup> For a close reading of the Succession Law of 1163/4 in the longer context of the history of Norwegian succession practices, see Sverre Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom: State Formation in Norway, c. 900-1350* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2010), pp. 158-61.

glory of God and the sainted King Óláfr according to the promises of King Magnús, the first king to be crowned in Norway.” Magnús’s succession law thus attempted to establish the crown as a perpetual symbol of royal commemoration. The crowns of deceased kings, beginning with Magnús’s, would hang above the shrine as a visual statement about the continuity of the Norwegian royal line from Óláfr through his successors.<sup>210</sup>

Despite the elaborate program of self-representation developed at Magnús’s coronation, many of the Norwegian elite continued to view his rule as illegitimate, and throughout his twenty-three year reign he contended with several competitors for the throne. Two early challengers were Óláfr Guðbrandsson, who was a grandson of Eysteinn Magnússon through his mother, and Eysteinn *Meyla*, who claimed to be a son of Eysteinn Haraldsson. Jarl Erlingr defeated both within the first four years of Magnús’s reign. However, in an example of the increasing inflexibility of political groupings during the *borgerkrig* period, Eysteinn *Meyla*’s band of supporters had solidified into a faction (*flokkr*) that survived his death in 1177. The *Birkebeinar*, as they came to be known, then came under the leadership of a man named Sverrir, who claimed to be a son of Sigurðr *Munn*, and who posed an ultimately successful challenge for the throne that resulted in Jarl Erlingr’s death in 1179 and Magnús’s in 1184. Sverrir thereafter defeated several other claimants to the throne in order to rule as sole king; but he soon came into conflict with Magnús’s former episcopal allies, including most significantly Archbishop Eysteinn’ successor, Eirik Ivarsson (r. 1180 - 1205), who in 1194 excommunicated Sverrir with

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<sup>210</sup> Laurence M. Larson, ed. and trans., *The Earliest Norwegian Laws: Being the Gulathing Law and the Frostathing Law, Translated from the Old Norwegian* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935), pp. 35-7.

the support of Pope Celestine III.<sup>211</sup>

In two contemporary texts, Sverrir's partisans defended his position against the archbishop by emphasizing his right to rule and condemning the false pretensions of his former rival Magnús – who, as a result of his father's deal with Eysteinn in 1163/4, had been responsible for significantly heightening the position of the archbishop vis-à-vis the king. In challenging the foundations of Magnús's claim to the throne, these writers redeployed the memory of St. Óláfr in a way that forcefully rejected his ambitious model of liturgical kingship. In a polemical tract known as *En tale mot biskopene* ("A Speech Against the Bishops"), written sometime between 1196 and 1200, an anonymous writer harshly condemned the current state of the Norwegian episcopate. By extorting tithes and alms through threats of excommunication, and by driving secular lords "like heathens" from the churches that they themselves had built, the pamphlet author argued, the bishops had confused the proper order of the Norwegian body politic.<sup>212</sup> He quoted extensively from Gratian's *Decretum* as well as from Gelasius, Augustine, and Jerome, translating each into Norse, in order to show that "secular chiefs," and especially the king, should "hold the highest rank in the Holy Church." This claim was derived from the author's perception of the divine source of royal power. Directly refuting Magnús, Erlingr, and Eysteinn, he proclaimed: "kingly rule is created by God's command, and not after man's ordinance, and no man obtains kingly rule except by divine dispensation."<sup>213</sup> The king, who ruled by divine

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<sup>211</sup> For a comprehensive narrative of Sverrir's conflicts with the church, see Torben K. Nielsen, "Celestine III and the North," in John Doran and Damian J. Smith, eds., *Pope Celestine III (1191-1198): Diplomat and Pastor* (Farnham, U.K.: Ashgate, 2008): 159-79, at pp. 169-76.

<sup>212</sup> "En tale mot biskopene," ed. David Brégaunt, Stéphane Coviaux, and Jan Ragnar Hagland, in *Le Discours contre les évêques: Politique et controverse en Norvège vers 1200* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2013), at p. 50: "Nu er komet at hinum sama hætte: mer erom krafder tiunda vara ok annara godgærninga mædr hotan ok mædr banne ok stormælom. mer erom til þrøngder kirkiur up at ger er sidan gorfuar værda."

<sup>213</sup> *En tale mot biskopene*, p. 72: "en gud villdi þa eigi firirlita tighn konongsdomsens er konongar varo heidnir, þui at sua mykill dœma fiolde syna openbærlega at huerium liggr salo tion vidr er eigi gæter fullz

mandate, had a responsibility to “guard the teachings of the Holy Church and the precepts of Christianity.”<sup>214</sup> It was therefore fitting that he should have an extensive authority over the Church. He should be involved in episcopal and abbatial elections, and should retain his authority over his proprietary churches. There was historical as well as canonical precedent for these customs: they had existed from the earliest days of the Christian faith in Norway, and had continued in the days of St. Óláfr.<sup>215</sup>

The author of *En tale* thus cited two types of law in order to argue against the archbishop’s placement of Magnús on the throne and subsequent assumption of an expansive and exclusionary ecclesiastical authority: canon law, and the “law of St. Óláfr.” As a nebulously defined yet historically foundational category, the “law of St. Óláfr” was invoked even more extensively in *Sverris saga* (c. 1200 - 1210). This text is unusual in that it is largely contemporaneous with the events it describes. According to its prologue, at least its first part was composed by Kárl Jónsson, abbot of Þingeyrar, with the input and supervision of Sverrir himself.<sup>216</sup> The text therefore presents itself as an articulation of Sverrir’s argument for the legitimacy of his rule against that of his rivals, particularly Magnús Erlingsson. In contrast to Magnús, who is described as having been elevated through novel and illegitimate means, Sverrir is represented as having restored the “old laws of the land,” that is, the “law of St. Óláfr (*lög ins*

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trunadar ædr kononglegar tignar ok rettrar lydni. Þui at kongdomr er skipadr æftir guds bodorde en eigi æftir manna sætningh, ok fær enge konongdom mædr gudlegre forsio.”

<sup>214</sup> “En tale mot biskopene,” p. 64: “sua sœm skyrir Decreta in tertia causa, questione quinta j þui capitulo er sua mæler: *Principes seculi non umquam intra ecclesiam potestatis adepti culmina tenent ut per eandem potestatem disciplinam ecclesiasticam muniant*. En þat er at þyda a vara tungu: hofdingjar væralldar hafua at hallda hina hæsto tighn heilagrar kirku till þess at mædr þui sama vælde skolo þeir gæta kenningar heilagrar kirkiu ok lærengar kristni.” The author cites Gratian, *Decretum*, C. 23, q. 5, c. 20.

<sup>215</sup> “En tale mot biskopene,” p. 82: “stod þesse disuenia allt j fra uphafue kristninnar. Eftir þui var um daga hins hælga Olafs konongs ok iæmnan sidan allt til þeria dagha Haraldz sona, Æysteins ok Sigurðar ok Inga.”

<sup>216</sup> *Sverris saga*, pp. 3-4.

*helga Óláfs konungs*).<sup>217</sup> Most fundamental amongst these laws was the custom that kingship should be restricted to the sons of kings. In the *Saga*, Sverrir consistently rebukes Jarl Erlingr for having set his son on the throne, most memorably in a speech made in Bergen following Magnús's burial in 1184:

“Thus some here in this kingdom have raised themselves up who were not of royal lineage, such as Jarl Erlingr, the son of Kyrpinga-Orm. He allowed the name of jarl to be given to himself and the name of king to his son. Then they killed all the descendants of the royal lineage, and none could say that they were of that lineage or they would be killed. They had with them the best counsellors in the kingdom, and they seized the entire realm of the kings who were of the royal lineage, until God sent from the distant islands a small and lowly man to overthrow their arrogance: and I was that man.”<sup>218</sup>

Again and again Sverrir invokes the “law of the land” (*landslog*), “God’s law” (*Guðs lög*), and the “law of St. Óláfr” (*lög ins helga Óláfs konungs*) in defense of the righteousness of his royal prerogative. Responding to his excommunication by Archbishop Eirik in 1194, for example, Sverrir declares: “I am a king’s son and the legitimate (*réttkominn*) [ruler] of this land and kingdom...I would not break the law of the holy King Óláfr for his [Eirik’s] sake, even if he should ban or curse eternally.”<sup>219</sup> *Sverris saga* therefore rejects Magnús’s vision of St. Óláfr as the spiritual mediator of his liturgical kingship and instead invokes the royal saint as the institutor of the kingdom’s customs and laws. Óláfr’s law becomes a point of historical precedent for Sverrir’s style of strong rulership and his independence from the mediation of the Norwegian

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<sup>217</sup> *Sverris saga*, pp. 171-2, 177-9, 186-7.

<sup>218</sup> *Sverris saga*, p. 153: “svá hefir ok fram farit hér í landinu at þeir hafa upp hafizk er ekki váru konunga ættar, svá sem var Erlingr jarl, son Kyrpinga-Orms. Hann lét gefa sér jarls nafn en syni sínum konungs nafn. Síðan drápu þeir niðr allar konunga ættir, ok engi skyldi kalla sik þeirar ættar, skyldi hvern drepa. Höfðu þeir með sér it bezta ráðuneyti er í var landinu, tóku öll ríki konunganna, þeira er ættbornir váru til, allt þeir til er Guð sendi utan af útskerjum einn lítinn mann ok lágan at steypa þeira ofdrambi, en sá maðr var ek.”

<sup>219</sup> *Sverris saga*, p. 187: “en ek em konungs son ok réttkominn til þessa lands ok ríkis...þá mun ek eigi brjóta lög ins helga Óláfs konungs fyrir hans sakir, þó at hann bannisk jafnan um eða blótisk.”

episcopate. This was, the *Saga* insisted, a return to the proper order of things after Magnús, in his attempt to shore up his illegitimate rule, had improperly elevated the Norwegian episcopate above the king. Sverrir may have called himself a “small and lowly man;” but, with his three rivals defeated, he also declared: ““there is now one man in the place of three: one in the place of king, jarl, and archbishop; and I am that man.””<sup>220</sup>

Like the writer of *En tale*, the author or authors of *Sverris saga* rejected the idea that episcopal anointment was sufficient to create a king in the absence of direct, paternal royal descent. At the same time, the *Saga* reveals a persistent desire on Sverrir’s part to be formally crowned as his rival had been. In one of the several vision scenes to be found near the beginning of the text, Sverrir has a dream that the prophet Samuel visited him, anointed his hands with holy oil, and said: ““let these hands be made holy and strong with hate for one’s enemies and foes and to govern many peoples.””<sup>221</sup> Sverrir was thus likened to Saul, who similarly was said to have been reluctant to be elevated to the kingship. The episode also implies that Sverrir had been spiritually anointed even before his acclimation at the *Eyrathing*. This implication would perhaps have been welcome given the trouble that Sverrir encountered in achieving an ecclesiastical coronation. Archbishop Eirik had flatly refused to coronate Sverrir.<sup>222</sup> After Eirik had fled in exile to Lund, the *Saga* records that Sverrir met with a papal legate at Konungahella and requested that he consecrate and crown him. At first the legate was willing to do so; but when he was informed by his fellow clergy that the king had forced his archbishop into exile and had

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<sup>220</sup> *Sverris saga*, p. 61: “einn maðr er nú fyrir þrjá: einn fyrir konung ok einn fyrir jarl, einn fyrir erkisbyskup, ok em ek sá.”

<sup>221</sup> *Sverris saga*, p. 17: “helgisk ok styrkisk þessar hendr til hatrs við óvini ok mótstöðumenn sína at stjórna mǫrgum lýðum.”

<sup>222</sup> See Eirik’s letter to Celestine III explaining his position: *LDNH*, no. 28.

been placed under a papal ban of excommunication, the legate refused and instead instructed the king to be reconciled with Eirik.<sup>223</sup> Sverrir, however, did not heed the legate's instructions. Instead, according to the *Saga*, he began to threaten and harass Bishop Nikolas of Oslo, ultimately compelling him to make peace with the king by swearing an oath of fealty to him. Having faced Sverrir's campaign of intimidation, the bishop became "most meek." He gave his consent to Sverrir appointing his personal chaplain, Martin, as the bishop of Bergen; and then Nikolas and Martin, along with Bishops Thori of Hamar and Nial of Stavanger, consecrated and crowned Sverrir at a "grand banquet" in Bergen.<sup>224</sup>

*Sverris saga* makes it clear that even as he judged Magnús's coronation to have been a novel rite, Sverrir still thought it important that he himself also be crowned king. The role played by the episcopate in Magnús's and Erling's respective coronations is strikingly distinct, however. Jarl Erlingr convinced Archbishop Eysteinn to crown his young and illegitimate son by granting the church of Nidarós sweeping privileges and couching them in language that elevated the archbishop as the mediator of royal authority. Sverrir, on the other hand, took advantage of Archbishop Eirik's absence to exert his will over the remaining Norwegian bishops. His manipulation of Nikolas of Oslo, along with his appointment of his personal chaplain as the bishop of Bergen, reads as a realization of the model of social order described by the author of *En tale*, in which the king retains the right to direct and appoint churchmen. For Sverrir, therefore, coronation served as a ritual recognition of the royal status that he already held as a right of his royal blood, rather than as a constitutive process necessary to create a king. Magnús had described St. Óláfr as the spiritual mediator of that constitutive process; while Sverrir drew

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<sup>223</sup> *Sverris saga*, pp. 187-8.

<sup>224</sup> *Sverris saga*, pp. 188-9.



on the memory of the royal saint as a symbol of the traditional customs and rights of dynastic kingship that he claimed to uphold.

### *Translatio*

The earliest attested Danish coronation, that of Valdemar I's son Knútr VI in 1170, marked the end of the Danish civil wars that had persisted since the murder of Knútr's grandfather, Knútr Lavard, in 1131. The coronation was performed within the context of another significant, royally-staged ritual: the translation of the body of his saintly grandfather following Knútr's canonization by Alexander III earlier that year. In order to contextualize the emergence of a Danish tradition of royal coronation, we will therefore spend some time exploring the phenomenon of royal *translatio*. Since the early days of the church, the translation of the bodies of holy men and women had been the primary mechanism for the spread of the cult of the saints throughout western Europe; and through the eleventh and twelfth centuries in Denmark as elsewhere, the *translatio* ceremony allowed for the local authorization of an individual's sanctity in the absence of formal papal canonization procedures.<sup>225</sup> As we will see, the elevation of the body of the holy king in a cultic setting was a charged commemorative moment, both for the ecclesiastics who organized the cult and the princes who coopted their rituals to make political statements of their own.

The cult of St. Stephen provides an early example of royal *translatio* on the Christian frontiers. The king's body, along with the remains of four other early Hungarian saints, was elevated at Székesfehérvár in 1083. We have previously discussed the difficulty of relying on the

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<sup>225</sup> Andre Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 22-24.

extant sources to reconstruct the precise nature of the events of 1083 or to identify the individuals responsible for shaping the ritual program. While the early *legendae* described the *elevatio* as an ecclesiastically driven event, Bishop Hartvic, who repurposed and reshaped these early texts, introduced two important new actors into their narrative: the pope and the Hungarian king. As we have seen in the previous chapter, it seems unlikely that Pope Gregory VII had been involved in Stephen's canonization as Hartvic claimed. Historians have been more willing to accept Ladislaus's participation, because it seems to accord with his sustained dynastic project of legitimizing his rule. Ladislaus's problems were twofold: he was descended from an ancillary branch of the Árpáadian family, and he been elevated to the Hungarian throne at the expense of a legitimately crowned and anointed king, Solomon, whom his brother Géza had deposed in 1074. For the latter reason, Ladislaus was never himself crowned, and he came under significant criticism for it, not least from Pope Urban II, who condemned him for having led his people down the "path of error."<sup>226</sup> Historians, Gábor Klaniczay foremost among them, have read Ladislaus's participation in the events of 1083 as an attempt to telescope the distance between himself and his dynasty's prestigious founder, thereby eliding the problem of his descent while associating with himself Stephen's qualities of sanctified rulership.<sup>227</sup> Given the silence of the available sources on Ladislaus's involvement in the *elevatio* of 1083, these arguments must remain speculative. Nevertheless, the success of his project to represent himself as a legitimate ruler is suggested in the fact that by the turn of the thirteenth century, when Ladislaus himself was translated and celebrated as a saint, he had come to be remembered not as an usurper, but as a paragon of good rulership in the mode of St. Stephen. If Ladislaus had been involved in the

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<sup>226</sup> JL vol. 1, no. 5662.

<sup>227</sup> Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses*, pp. 123-34.

events of 1083, as Klaniczay and others have argued, it thus seems to have served as an important moment at which he was able to project a useful narrative about the source of his royal authority.

The translation of the body of a sanctified king remained an important performance of royal identity and dynastic intent throughout the twelfth century. It seems to have gained particular significance during the lead-up to the Second and Third Crusades, as prospective crusader kings looked back on their saintly forebears as archetypes of crusading virtues.<sup>228</sup> In Germany, for example, King Conrad III made efforts to canonize and translate Emperor Henry II in the same moment that arrangements for his involvement in Eugenius III's new crusade were underway. Eugenius promulgated a bull of canonization for Henry II in March 1146, citing amongst the emperor's virtues the conversion of King Stephen and the Hungarian people.<sup>229</sup> Adalbert of Bamberg expanded on this idea in his reworking of the *Vita sancti Henrici* in 1147, where he praised Henry for having striven as the spiritual companion of St. Adrian, St. Lawrence, and St. George "to subdue the barbaric nations to the Roman empire and lead them to the Christian faith."<sup>230</sup> The emperor had furthermore founded the bishopric of Bamberg, Adalbert claimed, in order "to destroy the paganism of the Slavs and so that they might forever hold the renowned memory of the name of Christ there."<sup>231</sup> Conrad was not the only German prince of the twelfth century to elevate the remains of a holy predecessor and, in so doing, refashion them

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<sup>228</sup> Kurt Villads Jensen, "Creating a Crusader Saint: Canute Lavard and Others of that ilk," in John Bergsagel, David Hiley, and Thomas Riis, eds., *Of Chronicles and Kings: National Saints and the Emergence of Nation States in the High Middle Ages* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2015): 51-72.

<sup>229</sup> *PL* vol. 180, cols. 1118C-1119B.

<sup>230</sup> Adalbert of Bamberg, *Vita Henrici*, ed. G. Waitz, *MGH Scrip.* 4, pp. 792-814, at p. 793: "Romano imperio et christianae religioni subiugavero."

<sup>231</sup> Adalbert of Bamberg, *Vita Henrici*, p. 795: "ut et paganismus Sclavorum ibi destrueretur et christiani nominis memoria perpetualiter inibi celebris haberetur."

as a proto-crusader. Nearly two decades later in December 1165, the imperial anti-pope Paschal III canonized Charlemagne at the request of Frederick Barbarossa and Rainald of Dassel, the newly consecrated archbishop of Cologne.<sup>232</sup> In a diploma promulgated on 8 January 1166 confirming the privileges of the church of St. Mary in Aachen, Frederick recalled how he had personally lifted the most holy body of the Frankish king into a gemstone-encrusted golden container.<sup>233</sup> That diploma also described Charlemagne as a “true apostle” who had been responsible for the conversion of the Saxons, Frisians, Westphalians, Spanish, and Vandals through both the word and the sword, and claimed that he had been willing to die as a martyr for the cause of promoting the Christian faith amongst those barbarous peoples.<sup>234</sup> This theme was given a central place in the new *Vita* produced shortly after the *elevatio*, which incorporated, amongst other texts, Pseudo-Turpin’s account of Charlemagne’s wars against the Muslims in Spain.<sup>235</sup> The translations of Henry II in 1146 and Charlemagne in 1165 therefore provided an opportunity for Conrad III and Frederick Barbarossa to recast their forebears as examples of martial and apostolic virtue, whose actions on the battlefield had not only aided the salvation of the people they ruled and those they had converted, but had also led to their own achievement of the heavenly kingdom.

It seems that Svein III of Denmark and his young cousin Valdemar had had a similar idea

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<sup>232</sup> Frederick claimed that he had decided to pursue Charlemagne’s canonization on the urging of his “dearest friend,” King Henry II of England, who in 1163 had presided over the triumphant translation of Edward the Confessor following his canonization by Alexander III. See *MGH DFI* II, no. 502, at pp. 422-3.

<sup>233</sup> *MGH DFI* II, no. 502, pp. 429-34.

<sup>234</sup> *MGH DFI* II, no. 502, p. 432: “in fide quoque Christi dilatanda et in conversione gentis barbarice fortis athleta fuit et verus apostolus, sicut Saxonia et Fresonia atque Westphalia, Hispani quoque testantur et Wandali, quos ad fidem catholicam verbo convertit et gladio.”

<sup>235</sup> *Vita Karoli Magni*, ed. Gerhard Rauschen, in *Die Legende Karls des Grossen im 11. und 12. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig, 1890): 1-93.

when they attempted to elevate the body of Sveinn's uncle and Valdemar's father, Knútr Lavard, in 1146. Earlier that year, a papal legate, Hubald, had invited King Erik III to join the holy war that Bernard of Clairvaux was preaching to the German princes. Rather than take the cross, Eiríkr stepped down from the throne and entered the monastery of St. Knútr in Odense, allowing Svein to become king in his place. Kurt Villads Jensen has argued that Svein used the papal call to crusade to pressure Eiríkr – so widely known for his meekness that he was nicknamed “the lamb,” and thus evidently unsuited to command such a significant military endeavor – to abdicate.<sup>236</sup> No surviving evidence save the sequence of events in 1146 can support Jensen's hypothesis, but the argument seems at least plausible. Svein and Valdemar's attempt to establish Knútr Lavard as a suitably martial dynastic patron, possibly in emulation of Conrad of Germany, shortly preceded Svein's entry into the Wendish crusade, along with his rival Knútr V, in 1147. And although Svein ultimately failed to establish Knútr Lavard as a saint in the 1140s due to the opposition of Archbishop Eskil, later, when Knútr did achieve a saintly reputation, he would be described in his *vitae* and liturgical offices as a quasi-crusading figure.<sup>237</sup>

This program of representation was finally fully articulated in the early 1170s through the initiative of Valdemar, who by then had defeated Svein to become sole king of Denmark. The events of 1169-1170 in some ways represent the most complete achievement of the ritual programs of coronation and translation that we have been exploring here, in that their synthesis yielded a powerful performative statement of dynastic strength and continuity. In 1169, after years of campaigning, Valdemar conquered the island of Rügen from the Wends, capturing their

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<sup>236</sup> Kurt Villads Jensen, “Denmark and the Second Crusade: the Formation of a Crusader State?” in Jonathan Phillips, ed., *The Second Crusade: Scope and Consequences* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001): 164-79.

<sup>237</sup> Janus Møller Jensen, “*Sclavorum expugnator*: Conquest, Crusade, and Danish Royal Identity in the Twelfth Century,” *Crusades* 2 (2004): 55-81, at pp. 70-5; Kurt Villads Jensen, “Creating a Crusader Saint.”

major fortress, Arkona, and tearing down their statues of the pagan goddess Svantevit. He then sent a delegation headed by Archbishop Stephen of Uppsala to Alexander III's court to inform the pope of these developments, and on 4 November Alexander promulgated a papal bull granting the diocese of Roskilde ecclesiastical authority over the inhabitants and churches of Rügen.<sup>238</sup> In this document, Alexander rejoiced that Valdemar, "aroused by the celestial flame, fortified with the arms of Christ, equipped with the shield of faith, protected by divine gift, with his strong arm extended, conquered the hardness of the men of that island and, as powerfully as bravely, in rebuke of their barbarity, recalled them to the faith and law of Christ so that they too are subjected to his mastery."<sup>239</sup> Four days later, the pope issued another bull, this time announcing the canonization of Knútr Lavard, whose virtues had been made known to him through the testimony of Stephen of Uppsala and through the written evidence of a book of miracles brought along for that purpose. Valdemar, whose victories over the pagan Wends had received the enthusiastic approbation of the pope, was at last allowed to venerate the memory of his father, who was represented as a similarly fierce war-leader and enemy of paganism.

On June 25, 1170, the Danes celebrated the translation of the relics of Knútr Lavard at Ringsted, and at this ceremony, which was attended by a large crowd of magnates and ecclesiastics, Valdemar had his young son, who was also named Knútr, crowned and anointed as king. The Danish chroniclers recognized the significance of the linking of these royal rituals. The author of the *Annales Lundensis* (c. 1267) writes that "on that day all Danes doubled their joy, in one part, that the father of a king was canonized (*autorizatur*), and in another part, that the son of

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<sup>238</sup> *DD* I.2, no. 189, pp. 343-5.

<sup>239</sup> *DD*, I.2, no. 189, p. 345: "quod idem rex, celesti flamine inspiratus et armis Christi munitus, scuto fidei armatus considerans, diuino munere protectus, cum brachio forti ex extento duriciam hominum illius insule expugnauit et exprobacionem immanitatis illorum ad fidem et legem Christi tam potenter ac valide magnanimiterque reuocauit, ut sue quoque subiecerit dominationi."

the king, Knútr, was anointed as king.”<sup>240</sup> Similarly, the *Chronicon Sialandie* records that “on that same day on which the son was crowned, the parent was honored at the altar.”<sup>241</sup> The rituals of translation and coronation, fused together in such a way that placed in parallel the promise of the young Knútr and the reputation of the saintly Knútr, yielded a powerful statement about the prestige and continuity of the Valdemarian dynasty. In adopting the practice of crowning the young king during his father’s lifetime, as the Capetians did, the Danes established a new mechanism of royal succession that was intended to prevent the continuation of the dynastic infighting that had preoccupied Valdemar for the first two and a half decades of his rule. This strategy seems to have paid off: when Valdemar died in 1182, Knútr VI, who by then had been ruling under his father for over a decade, peacefully succeeded him.

## CONCLUSION

The presence of a royal saint in the family was undoubtedly a source of pride and prestige for the early kings of Norway, Denmark, and Hungary. Our exploration of the dynamics of dynastic sanctity in this chapter has revealed, however, that the messages to be found in the life and especially the death of a holy king were hardly simplistic or singular. Instead political actors made use of them in a multiplicity of ways. The *Bersöglisvísur* episode attested to in the Norse kings’ sagas, for example, demonstrates how the significance of St. Óláfr’s battlefield death was contested in the 1030s between King Magnús Ólafsson, who used his father’s unjust deposition as a justification for feud with his former advisor Kálfr Árnason; the farmers of Þrændalög, who

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<sup>240</sup> *Annales Lundenses*, excerpted in *VSD*, an. 1171, p. 219: “die illo Danis omnibus gaudium dipulicatur, ex parte una, quod pater regis autorizatur, ex parte alia, quod regis filius Kanutus in regem inungitur.”

<sup>241</sup> *Chronicon Sialandie*, *SMHD* vol. II, p. 41: “eodem enim die, quo filium diademate, parentem altario honorauit.”

denounced Magnús as a tyrant in the same mode as his father, who had been rightfully removed from power; and skald Sigvatr þórðarson, who successfully transformed Óláfr into a symbol of reconciliation and good rulership. More than a century later, the clash between the resurgent archbishop of Nidarós, custodian of Óláfr's relics, and the king, his successor, led to a new contestation of what the holy king meant to those two institutions. King Magnús Erlingsson, in attempting to craft an ideology of episcopally-mediated kingship, described himself as the heir and vassal of St. Óláfr and as the servant of Óláfr's church. His rival and successor, King Sverrir Sigurðarson, rejected the strengthened spiritual authority of the church of Nidarós and instead made a strong statement of royal supremacy by citing the traditional laws of St. Óláfr. Over the course of a century and a half, therefore, the kings of Norway along with their supporters and rivals assigned a variety of meanings to St. Óláfr's legacy, debating as they did so the proper form and function of the Norwegian kingship.

During the same period, founder-king St. Stephen likewise became a powerful symbol of the kingdom of Hungary. The story, elaborated by Bishop Hartvic, of his coronation with a papally-gifted crown encapsulated an idea central to the Hungarian kings' sense of self: that their realm was unique in its independence from both imperial and papal suzerainty, and that its independence originated in their royal progenitor's apostolicity. Stephen's crown became a central metonymic symbol of the Hungarian kingship, culminating in the Angevin period in the powerful dynastic ideology of the holy *corona*. Earlier, however, in the last decades of the eleventh century, King Ladislaus, despite having defeated his rival Solomon and achieved sole rulership, struggled with his weak claim to royal legitimacy, which was hurt by his indirect descent from St. Stephen and his deposition of a rightfully crowned and anointed king. For that reason he refused to be crowned with the holy *corona*; but, just as the Angevin kings later relied



on coronation with the *corona* to underscore their spiritual if not dynastic continuity with the Árpáadian line, there is suggestive evidence that Ladislaus orchestrated a grand translation of Stephen's relics in order to associate himself with his predecessor's prestigious cult. In Hungary, therefore, while the meaning of Stephen as a royal saint was strongly articulated from the start and endured less contestation than did that of St. Óláfr, his memory was still imaginatively appropriated at several points to make statements about the dynastic status of the king.

Finally, the murder of popular Danish duke Knútr Lavard in the 1130s persisted as an important imaginative undercurrent that directed the dynastic struggles of the twelfth century. Saxo Grammaticus, developing a narrative about the righteousness of removing an unjust king, described how the assassination sparked an emotive popular response against the murderer and his father, King Niels. He also describes two ways in which Knútr's half-brother Eirik profitably harnessed the intensity of that sentiment: by winning over the common people who were protesting the murder to his cause, and by adopting his brother's friendship networks to gain elite support. Eirik's active deployment of the memory of Knútr Lavard as a central element of his royal campaign contrasts with the way Valdemar promoted his saintly father's memory. Valdemar did not rely on appeals to his father's death in his own pursuit of the throne. After a failed attempt to elevate Knútr's body in 1146, which may have been inspired by mounting crusading energy, Valdemar does not seem to have made any more efforts at cult formation until the early 1170s. By this point, Valdemar was comfortably established as the sole king of Denmark for the first time in almost three decades, he had resolved his early conflict with the Alexandrine papacy, and he had enjoyed prestigious successes campaigning against the Wends in the Baltic region. His triumphant translation of his father's body at Ringsted set the scene for his coronation of his young son, Knútr, celebrated the strength of his new dynasty and brought to

an end Denmark's persistent struggles over royal succession.

To analyze how princes and kings made use of the memories of their holy predecessors in response to certain circumstances is not to suggest that their interest in royal cult was wholly and cynically bound up in the political gain it could offer. The royal saint was useful in a political context precisely because the idea of a ruler who had in death transcended his earthly kingdom to become a spiritual and salvific patron for his people was a powerful one. Its importance necessitated the proper remembrance of the holy king. His memory spoke not only to the short-term interests of political contenders, but also beyond, to deeper structures of power and legitimacy. If the royal saint was to be properly commemorated, his successors, who claimed his legacy and who supported his cult, needed to tend to the proper ordering of the body politic. The memorialization of the royal saint therefore did not only shape the dynastic conflicts of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. It also articulated important ideas about the proper ordering of the holy king's society. It is to this issue that we now turn in Chapter Three.

### 3. THE ROYAL SAINT AS *REX IUSTUS*

Near contemporaries St. Óláfr of Norway (d. 1030) and St. Stephen of Hungary (d. 1038) were both remembered in the histories of their peoples as foundational kings. Both were said to have promulgated their nations' first formal legal codes, and were likewise described as unyielding protectors of peace, justice, and order. By impressing their will on their formerly violent, inchoate societies, medieval writers claimed, Óláfr and Stephen had forged the properly ordered kingdoms of Norway and Hungary out of the barbarous Northmen and Magyars. In doing so, they had established themselves as venerable representatives of just kingship, and were deservedly remembered by their peoples as *reges iusti*.

This chapter analyzes representations of just kingship in the royal cults of the Christian peripheries. It focuses in particular on the fashioning of St. Óláfr and St. Stephen as their peoples' foundational lawgivers. By the time it was taken up in the eleventh century by Norwegian and Hungarian writers, the idea of the *rex iustus* as a category of good Christian kingship had had a long intellectual life. The Old Testament books of Deuteronomy and Kings provided examples of how the kings of Israel had set down laws for their people.<sup>242</sup> In the absence of a tradition of formal political philosophy, medieval theologians often rehearsed Augustine of Hippo's claim that, in the postdiluvian world, it was the imperative of the secular ruler to exercise his personal virtues to instill in his realm a social order that most closely

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<sup>242</sup> Deut. 17:18-19: "postquam autem sederit in solio regni sui describet sibi deuteronomium legis huius in volumine accipiens exemplar a sacerdotibus leviticae tribus et habebit secum legetque illud omnibus diebus vitae suae ut discat timere Dominum Deum suum et custodire verba et caerimonias eius quae lege praecepta sunt."

approached the eternal perfection of the celestial kingdom.<sup>243</sup> In the ninth century, the duties of the Christian king had received their first sustained treatment from the intellectuals who gathered at the courts of the Carolingian kings and emperors. In their letters of instruction and *specula principis*, men such as Alcuin of York, Jonas of Orleans, Smaragdus, and Sedulius Scottus drew upon Old Testament models to craft guides to good rulership. Chief amongst the functions of the king in Carolingian thought was the working of justice. In his letter to Charlemagne of 775, for example, Kathwulf claimed that the king was the vicar of God who, like David and Solomon, constituted and maintained the law over all of God's people.<sup>244</sup> A century later, Hincmar of Rheims quoted the Book of Wisdom to urge the son of Louis the Stammerer: "love justice, you that are the judges of the earth." Through their study of the book of the law, he continued, kings "might know how to rule themselves, correct the wicked, and direct the good along the path to righteousness."<sup>245</sup> In seeking to guide the behavior of the king, therefore, these thinkers emphasized *iustitia* as the central category through which he might pursue his duty to lead his people to salvation through his earthly government.<sup>246</sup>

By the eleventh and twelfth centuries, writers in newly Christianized areas likewise began to make use of the language of just kingship in order to understand the character of their

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<sup>243</sup> See particularly Augustine, *De ciuitate Dei*, V.20-4. See also J.A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

<sup>244</sup> *MGH Epp.* IV, 501-5, at p. 503.

<sup>245</sup> Hincmar of Rheims, *De ordine palatii*, p. 12: "ut scirent qualiter scipsos regere et prauos corrigere et bonos in viam rectam deberent dirigere." Translation by D. Herlihy, *A History of Feudalism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), pp. 209-227, reprinted by Paul Edward Dutton, ed., *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader* (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2004), pp. 516-33.

<sup>246</sup> See J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, "The *Via Regia* of the Carolingian Age," in Beryl Smalley, ed., *Trends in Medieval Political Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965): 22-41; Walter Ullmann, *The Carolingian Renaissance and the Idea of Kingship* (London: Methuen, 1969); Wojciech Fałkowski, "The Carolingian *speculum principis*: Birth of a Genre," *Acta Poloniae Historica* 98 (2008): 5-27; Paul Kershaw, *Peaceful Kings: Peace, Power, and the Early Medieval Political Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

young regnal communities. They expressed their ideas about the duties and virtues of kingship not in political tracts or letters of instruction, however, but instead in histories about the deeds of kings. In chronicles, sagas, and saints' lives, they developed the moral exercise of kingship as a central theme. In this chapter we will ask: what were the defining characteristics of the *rex iustus* as envisioned by writers on the expanding frontiers of Latin Christendom? Many worked from the earlier models developed by the Carolingian political thinkers, and expressed concepts of just kingship that would have been familiar to men like Kathwulf and Hincmar. For this reason, the appearance of ideas about just rulership and the *rex iustus* on the Latin frontiers is a particularly significant development highlighting the integration of the northern and eastern kingdoms into the wider Christian community of ideas.<sup>247</sup>

We should be cautious, however, in assuming that the category of just kingship represented a monolithic or normative ideology that had been cleanly exported from the intellectual centers of Latin Christendom to its peripheries.<sup>248</sup> To do so would be to obscure

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<sup>247</sup> Similar arguments are made by Erich Hoffmann, *Die heiligen Könige bei den Angelsachsen und den skandinavischen Völkern: Königsheiliger und Königshaus* (Neumünster: K. Wachholtz, 1975); Sverre Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom: State Formation in Norway, c. 900 – 1350* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2010); Sverre Bagge and Sæbjørg Walaker Nordeide, "The Kingdom of Norway," in Nora Berend, ed., *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy: Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus' c. 900 – 1200* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2007): 121-66; and Gábor Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe*, trans. Éva Pálmai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>248</sup> This has been the tendency of historians like Sverre Bagge, who frequently refers to an "ideology of the *rex iustus*." There has, however, been a lack of consistency in the ways that historians have defined this ideology. Robert Folz presented perhaps the strictest definition of the *rex iustus*, using it simply to describe a king who was either imaginatively or in actuality associated with the promulgation of a body of law. Conversely, Bagge has deployed the term broadly and not always consistently, using it to describe the general belief that the prince should rule and pass judgment in accordance with the will of God, as well as an idoneic principle of royal succession. Gábor Klaniczay has tended to use the term to describe a model of royal sanctity that allowed for the conceptual reconciliation of the antithetical roles of the king and the saint. See Robert Folz, *Les saintes rois du moyen âge en occident, VIe-XIIIe siècles* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1984), pp. 155-67; Sverre Bagge, *The Political Thought of the King's Mirror* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1987); Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*; and Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses*, pp. 114-54.

much of the flexibility and creativity with which writers of history on the edges of Latin Christendom developed the idea. For those writers looking back at the foundation of their young kingdoms, defining just kingship was more than an abstract exercise in political theology. Instead it had real implications for their understanding of the character of their developing political societies. Through his foundation of juridical institutions, codification of new laws, and correction of the bad deeds of his people, the just king embodied a particular vision of the constitution of his kingdom. That is, in describing the king's socially constitutive role, writers of history revealed their assumptions about how their societies ought to be ordered. Representations of just kingship on the frontiers of Latin Christendom did not simply reflect the importation of normative ideologies of rulership, but rather the adaptation and subversion of inherited conventions that allowed for the creation of new and foundational definitions of regnal communities.

The perspectives of Norwegian and Hungarian writers on the constitutive role of the just king were far from monolithic. Instead they developed a diverse array of representations of the just king. As we explore representations of Óláfr and Stephen as *reges iusti* in the Norwegian synoptic chronicles, Norse kings' sagas, and Hungarian saints' lives, we will pay close attention to how generic convention and narrative strategy inflected particular visions of just kingship. The adoption of genre-specific strategies of structuring material and developing historical character provided useful textual vocabularies through which medieval writers could make historical meaning. The chapter concludes with a survey of the various portraits of just kingship encountered in the Norwegian and Hungarian texts and an assessment of the diverse conceptions of political and social ordering that they contained.

## NORWAY: THE LEGENDS OF ST. ÓLÁFR

Modern commentators have often been exercised by the perceived sense of contradiction in Óláfr Haraldsson's various roles as viking, king, and saint. K.A. Laity, for example, has suggested that this contradiction reflects the inherent difficulties that Nordic writers faced in mapping western models of Christian sanctity onto the narrative forms native to the Scandinavian warrior societies; while Carl Phelpstead, who argues that the legends of St. Óláfr are characterized less by unresolved contradiction than by creative synthesis, has described Snorri Sturluson's *Óláfs saga helga* as a "mixed text," halfway between history and hagiography, that presented "a paradoxical portrait of Óláfr as holy viking, *beatissimus tirannus*."<sup>249</sup> When medieval commentators discussed St. Óláfr, however, it was rarely in terms of contradiction or paradox. Instead, they represented him as a lawgiver and guarantor of justice, the source of their kingdom's legal and monarchical traditions: that is, as a just king.

In order to form a comprehensive picture of how Icelandic-Norwegian historical writers represented St. Óláfr as a just king and how that representation informed their understanding of the Norwegian past, we will examine two historical genres that focused closely on the kings of Norway: the synoptic chronicles and the kings' sagas. These genres lend themselves nicely to comparison. The former was produced by Norwegian ecclesiastics, who wrote mainly in Latin and whose sources and models were historical and religious texts shared with the wider Christian west; while the latter was dominated by an Icelandic elite who wrote in the vernacular and who drew primarily from an orally-transmitted poetic tradition. As we will see, the narrative strategies through which these writers developed their representations of St. Óláfr yielded

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<sup>249</sup> K.A. Laity, "Translating Saint as (Vi)king: St. Óláfr in the *Heimskringla*," *Viator* 35 (2004): 169-202; Carl Phelpstead, *Holy Vikings: Saints' Lives in the Old Icelandic Kings' Sagas* (Tempe, A.Z.: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2007), at p. 118.

distinctive visions of what it meant for him to have been a *rex iustus*.

*Synoptic Chronicles: Theodoricus Monachus, Ágrip, and Historia Norwegie*

The synoptic chronicles, so called for their brevity, represent some of the earliest extant attempts by Norwegian writers to look back at their people's past and explain how their kingdom had come to be.<sup>250</sup> Each chronicler took a distinctive approach to early Norwegian history. The author of *Ágrip* (c. 1190) wrote in the vernacular, for example, whereas Theodoricus Monachus (1177 - 1188) and the author of *Historia Norwegie* (c. 1150 – 1200) consciously invoked Latin exemplars: the former punctuated his *Historia* with frequent digressions that displayed the depth of his reading of classical and Christian authors, while the latter opened his text with an extended geographical discursus in the style of Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis*.<sup>251</sup>

In narrative terms, however, the three synoptic chronicles are closely comparable. In the eyes of the chroniclers, the history of the kingdom of Norway could be equated with the history of its kings. Each structured his work according to the succession of dynastic genealogy, so that the progression of historical time, its organization into periods and ages, was defined by the reign of successive rulers. This continual regnal progression lent the synoptic narratives a clear sense of teleology. The reigns of the early Fairhair kings were made to anticipate the imminent triumph

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<sup>250</sup> In the first half of the twelfth century, several Icelandic authors had produced now-lost works on the history of the Norwegian kings, including Sæmundr Sigfússon (d. 1133); Ari Þorgilsson (d. 1148), whose *Íslendingabók* had in its first iteration narrated the acts of kings; and Eiríkr Oddson, whose *Hyggjarstykki* (c. 1150) appears to have been the earliest vernacular kings' saga.

<sup>251</sup> See Theodore Andersson, "The Two Ages in *Ágrip af Nóregs Konunga Sögum*," in Ildar Garipzanov, ed., *Historical Narratives and Christian Identity on a European Periphery: Early History Writing in Northern, East-Central, and Eastern Europe (c. 1070 – 1200)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011): 93-110; Sverre Bagge, "Theodoricus Monachus: The Kingdom of Norway and the History of Salvation," in Garipzanov, ed., *Historical Narratives and Christian Identity*, pp. 71-92; Lars Boje Mortensen, "The Language of Geographical Description in Twelfth-Century Scandinavia," *Filologia mediolatina* 12 (2005): 103-21.



of Latin Christianity as the dominant system of faith in Norway and dynastic kingship as its dominant system of political organization. According to the chroniclers, it was only under Óláfr Haraldsson that both historical processes were fully realized. In the synoptic chronicles, St. Óláfr was therefore positioned as the fulcrum of the teleological development of the early Norwegian state. As an ideal ruler, a saint as well as a king, he embodied the proper ordering of Norwegian society, uniting under his law an earthly with a spiritual peace and thereby opening up for his people the path to salvation.

Essential to the establishment of this teleological narrative is the characterization of individual kings. In the Norwegian synoptic chronicles – as in medieval historical writing more generally – the character of the king is made to directly inform the experiences of his rule. This is particularly clear in instances where his personal failings caused the Norwegian people to suffer.<sup>252</sup> For example, although the chroniclers do not describe Harald Fairhair (r. 872 - c. 932), the founder of Norway's earliest royal dynasty, as inherently malicious, they do claim that he had been vulnerable to the seductive and demonic influence of pagans, to the detriment of the peace and order of his kingdom. According to *Ágrip*, a Lappish sorcerer bewitched the king into falling in love with his daughter, Snjófríðr. The spell was not broken when she died, but instead Harald remained in perpetual mourning, and while “he mourned her, dead, the people of the kingdom mourned him, bewitched.”<sup>253</sup> It was only after one of Harald's retainers burned

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<sup>252</sup> The idea that a wicked king would invite misfortune on his people and realm had a long history by this point. It had been discussed, for example, by the seventh-century Irish writer known as Pseudo-Cyprian in his *De XII abusivis saeculi*, where he warned of the catastrophes that would befall the kingdom governed by an unjust king. See M. Blattmann, “‘Ein Unglück für sein Volk.’ Der Zusammenhang zwischen Fehlverhalten des Königs und Volkswohl in Quellen des 7.-12. Jahrhunderts,” *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 30 (1996): 80-102; Rob Meens, “Politics, Mirrors of Princes and the Bible: Sins, Kings, and the Well-Being of the Realm,” *Early Medieval Europe* 7:3 (1998): 345-57.

<sup>253</sup> *Ágrip*, c. 3, p. 6: “syrgði hann hana dauða, en landslýðr allr syrgði hann villtan.”

Snjófríðr's body and thereby released the sorcerer's hold over the king that Harald "forgot his folly" and from then on "governed his kingdom and strengthened it; he was made happy by his subjects, and they by him, and the kingdom by them both."<sup>254</sup> In *Ágrip*, therefore, Harald Fairhair's vulnerability to susception compromises his ability to effectively rule. His bewitchment was made even more dangerous by the fact that the sorcerer, as a pagan and a Lapp, stood outside both the religious and ethnic order of the Norwegian *gens*.

Perhaps the clearest representation of the way in which kingship was informed by the character of the ruler can be found in Jarl Hákon Sigurðarson (r. c. 975 - 995), called Hákon the Evil by the synoptic chroniclers. Hákon, a member of the powerful line of Lade jarls, had deposed Harald Fairhair's son Harald Gray-fur (r. 961 - 970) and ruled with quasi-regnal authority over large areas of the Norwegian kingdom. In the chronicles he is made to represent not only the dangers of an evil ruler, but also of a non-royal one. In fact, the chroniclers suggest that his moral degeneracy and his diversion of the rightful royal line went hand in hand. According to Theodoricus, Hákon was tyrannical, yet weak willed. Like Harald Fairhair, he had become "the slave of demons," but whereas Harald had been the victim of an aggressive sorcerer, Hákon had actively sought out demonic assistance by making them frequent sacrifices. Theodoricus goes on to compare him to the Roman apostate emperor Julian, who, like Hákon, had been a persecutor of Christians and who had sacrificed "not only brute animals, but even that which was more acceptable, his own body and soul," to pagan demons.<sup>255</sup> According to the

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<sup>254</sup> *Ágrip*, c. 4, p. 6: "konungr steig til vizku ok hugði af heimsku, stýrði síðan ríki sínu ok styrkði; gladdisk hann af þegnum sínum, ok þegnar af hónum, en ríkit af hvóru tveggja."

<sup>255</sup> Theodoricus, *Historia*, c. 8, p. 13: "hic Iulianus seductus a malignis spiritibus, qui ei pro certo victoriam in eadem pugna promiserant, quibus ipse paene quotidie non solum bruta animalia, verum, quod illis multo acceptius est, corpus et animam suam immolabat, accendi fecerat omnes naves, quibus illuc advectus fuerat, ut ablata spe revertendi corda militum ad pugnam animaret."

author of *Ágrip*, he also imposed his tyranny upon the women of the kingdom: “he ruled imperiously, and, as time passed, grew more and more unpopular, particularly because he considered all women whom he desired equally available to him, making no distinction as to who was whose wife or sister or daughter.” Hákon’s inability to rule his own body was thus made to reflect his inability to effectively rule.<sup>256</sup> His death was even more symbolically revealing of his masculine and moral bankruptcy. Theodoricus reports that Hákon was forced to flee when Óláfr Tryggvasson, who presented himself as a rightful claimant to the throne that Hákon had usurped, returned to Norway in 995. Fleeing, he relied on the assistance of his concubine and his slave, a man named Karkr, to hide him in a pigsty. That night while the jarl slept, Karkr crept up to him and stabbed his former master in the throat. Hákon thus died in the mud of a pigsty at the hands of a slave, an appropriate end for a man who had subverted the proper ordering of Norwegian society.

While Hákon Sigurðarson represents the antithesis of good kingship in the synoptic narrative of political development, the chroniclers look more favorably on the potential of kings of the Fairhair line to effectively rule the Norwegian kingdom. We have already seen how Harald Fairhair was said to have “well improved the kingdom and brought it peace” when he was not under the thrall of pagan sorcery.<sup>257</sup> Likewise, Theodoricus had high praise for Harald’s son, Hákon “the Good” (r. 934-961), describing him as “handsome in appearance, vigorous in bodily strength, preeminent in fortitude of heart and mind, and greatly in favor with the people.”<sup>258</sup> But

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<sup>256</sup> On sexual misconduct as a marker of a king’s inability to effectively rule, see Megan McLaughlin, “‘Disgusting Acts of Shamelessness’: Sexual Misconduct and the Deconstruction of Royal Authority in the Eleventh Century,” *Early Medieval Europe* 19:3 (2011): 312-31.

<sup>257</sup> *Ágrip*, c. 2, p. 4: “siðaði vel land sitt ok friðaði.”

<sup>258</sup> Theodoricus Monachus, *Historia*, pg. 9: “hic fuit aspect pulcher, viribus corporis robustus, animi virtute praestans, omni populo gratissimus.”

while Hákon, like Harald, could mobilize his royal authority to provide for the peace and order of the kingdom, he was still not an ideal king. Hákon was Norway's first Christian ruler, having been baptized in the court of his foster-father, King Æthelstan of England (d. 939). The problem, the author of *Ágrip* explained, was that "Norway was so well off under his rule so that none could remember it having been better, except that there was then no Christianity."<sup>259</sup> Despite his personal dedication to the Christian faith, Hákon did not impose its practice on the Norwegian people, but instead acquiesced to their demands to maintain the old pagan rituals. The author of *Historia Norwegie* was highly critical of him for this reason. Even after his youth spent in the court of Æthelstan, a most Christian king, Hákon, "having reversed himself wretchedly, placed transitory power before the eternal kingdom." Although Hákon was a naturally gifted ruler, and had maintained his kingdom's laws more assiduously than any ruler before him, due to his "blind ambition for a perishable kingdom" he was ultimately denied the "enduring dignity" of salvation."<sup>260</sup> The synoptic chroniclers thus drew a distinction between Hákon's ability to maintain an earthly peace and his failure as a Christian to actively encourage his people to spiritual improvement and salvation. As long as the Norwegian people remained imperfectly converted, any royally sanctioned peace could only be superficial.

This distinction was made clear by the arrival in the synoptic narrative of the two Óláfs: Óláfr Tryggvasson (r. 995 - 1000) and St. Óláfr Haraldsson (r. 1015 - 1030). In the eyes of the chroniclers, the achievements of the former explicitly anticipated those of the latter. Óláfr

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<sup>259</sup> *Ágrip*, c. 5, p. 8: "var Nóregr svá góðr undir hans ríki at hann var eigi munaðr betri, fyr utan þat at eigi var kristni á."

<sup>260</sup> *Historia Norwegie*, c. 13, pg. 82: "hic a christianissimo rege in Anglia officiosissime educatus in tantum errorem incurrit, ut miserrima commutatione eterno transitorium preponeret regnum ac detinende dignitatis cura – pro dolor – appostata factus, ydolorum seruituti subactus, diis et non Deo deseriret. Qui quamuis labilis regni ceca ambitione a durabili dignitate eternaliter labefactus, cunctis tamen in paganismo degentibus diligencius leges patrias et scita plebis obseruabat regibus."

Tryggvasson was Norway's first actively Christianizing king. Before his return to Norway in 995, he had organized a band of priests and deacons, led by a missionary-bishop named Sigeweard, and through their ministry converted the jarl and all the people of the Orkney Islands.<sup>261</sup> Óláfr then forced Jarl Hákon Sigurðarson out of power and reestablished royal rule over Norway. From the outset, he "set his mind, with his entire strength and heavenly aid, to expelling idolatry and demon worship from the entire kingdom."<sup>262</sup> But paganism was deeply rooted in the north. Theodoricus describes the Norwegians' faithlessness as an "ancient filth," an "inborn devil worship, which they had almost imbibed with their mother's milk."<sup>263</sup> We have seen already how paganism, in its association with sorcery and demon worship, was treated in the synoptic chronicles as an obstacle to the historical progress promised by the twin programs of royal centralization and Christianization. Similarly, here Theodoricus describes it as a changeless, ahistorical force. Óláfr Tryggvasson's project of conversion, on the other hand, was progressive in that it allowed the Norwegian people to spiritually advance. The author of *Historia Norwegie* reported that "the chariot of God, increased by ten thousand, and the chariot of Christ, loaded with his freely-given salvation, were drawn by this wondrous king, as though by the strongest horse, to the furthest ends of the world, on a course returning to the land of Paradise."<sup>264</sup> Óláfr Tryggvasson was therefore an ideal example of a strong king whose forceful measures not only imposed the peace and ordering of lawfulness on his kingdom, but also led

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<sup>261</sup> Theodoricus, *Historia*, cc. 8-9, pp. 15-7.

<sup>262</sup> Theodoricus, *Historia*, c. 11, p. 18: "post haec intendit animum rex totis viribus coelitus adjutus exterminare idolatriam et daemonum cultum a tota patria, impiger cultor vineae domini sui."

<sup>263</sup> Theodoricus, *Historia*, c. 11, p. 18: "cernens namque effera corda barbarorum et a veterino squalore perfidiae et quodammodo congenita cultura daemonum, quam paene cum lacte matris ebiberant."

<sup>264</sup> *Historia Norwegiae*, c. 17, pp. 94-6: "unde currus Dei decem milibus multiplicatus ac quadriga Christi gratuita eiusdem saluacione referta per hunc mirificum regem ueluti ualidissimo equo usque in fines orbis terre circumducti retrogrado cursu ad patriam Paradisum reuehuntur."

them to an eternal peace by enforcing their adherence to the Christian faith.

Despite his successes, however, Óláfr Tryggvasson's reign was short. In 1000 he was forced from power and killed by a coalition of Danish, Swedish, and discontented Norwegian forces, and for the next fifteen years Norway again came under the rule of the Danish-backed jarls of Lade. However, just as Óláfr Tryggvasson had forced Hákon Sigurðarson from power, in 1015 Óláfr Haraldsson returned to Norway from exile, defeated the jarls, and reestablished direct royal authority. Even after he became king, Óláfr Haraldsson's reign continued to recall that of his predecessor and namesake. Theodoricus describes how he strove "to become the collaborator of the best of men, Óláfr Tryggvasson, so that he, instructed by the spirit of God, might wisely water that which he had magnificently sown." But in doing so, Óláfr had to contend with the significant backsliding that had occurred during the interregnum, during which "many had veered from the truth of Christianity."<sup>265</sup>

According to Theodoricus, Óláfr therefore strove "to lead them back to the right path and to show them the road of salvation."<sup>266</sup> The program of spiritual renovation he describes is comprehensive, and unites a concern for lawgiving and justice with one for spiritual reformation. Óláfr thus strove to realign the kingdom's temporal as well as spiritual ordering, the one reinforcing the other. Describing how Óláfr had "had laws of justice and moderation written in the native language," Theodoricus explains that he was "steadfast in his justice towards all, hurting no one, intimidating no one, and damning no one,

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<sup>265</sup> Theodoricus, *Historia*, c. 16, pp. 28-9: "tempore vero, quo Ericus praefuerat, multi quantum ad christianismum a vero exorbitaverant. Hos vero ad viam reducere et salutis iter monstrare, ecclesias in quibus non errant locis fundare, fundatas redditibus ditare rex Olavus modis omnibus intendebat et cooperatore existere viri optimi Olavi filii Tryggva, ut quod ille magnifice plantaverat, iste sagaciter ut a Dei spiritu doctus rigaret."

<sup>266</sup> Theodoricus, *Historia*, c. 16, p. 28: "hos vero ad viam reducere et salutis iter monstrare."

except those whose own malice and wickedness in evil had already damned themselves.”<sup>267</sup>

Óláfr’s laws, like his program of conversion, brought the morally corrupt to justice. Along similar lines, his political opponents’ resistance to his exercise of royal authority is described using the same kind of language previously reserved for the pagan resistance to Óláfr Tryggvasson’s program of Christianization. Theodoricus describes Óláfr’s opponents as “savage” and “barbarous,” driven by an insensate rage, which he contrasts with the rationality and consideration with which Óláfr had enacted his laws. In Theodoricus’s *Historia*, therefore, opposition to Óláfr’s political program is indistinguishable from resistance to his religious program. His determination to minister to the spiritual health of his people and to establish a strong legal tradition was aimed at the same goal: to lead his people down the path of salvation (*salutis iter*). As Theodoricus explains: “he ruled over mortal men in order to guide them, however much he could, to the glory of immortality.”<sup>268</sup>

This idea carries through the narrative of Óláfr’s martyrdom at the hands of his opponents in 1030. Lamenting his death, Theodoricus wrote that the king’s purpose had always been clear:

His cause was beyond doubt and distant from all ambiguity: to restrain the criminal and unjust from the persecution of the good, to support the things sanctioned by Christ, and, if it could be done, to raise sons of Abraham from the hardest stones. This was certainly revealed in his daily services and miracles, no less numerous than remarkable, which almighty God sees worthy to work through his merits, not only in our region, but truly in any place, for whoever faithfully seeks the aid of the blessed martyr.<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> Theodoricus, *Historia*, c. 16, p. 29: “leges patria lingua conscribi fecit juris et moderationis plenissimas, quae hactenus a bonis omnibus et tenentur et venerantur. Iusti tenax ad omnes, neminem affligebat, neminem concutiebat, nullum damnabat, nisi forte quem propria malitia et obstinatio in malo damnasset.”

<sup>268</sup> Theodoricus, *Historia*, c. 16, p. 29: “ut breviter concludam ad hoc tantum principabatur mortalibus, ut eos ad immortalitatis gloriam, quantum in se esset perduceret.”

<sup>269</sup> Theodoricus, *Historia*, c. 19, pp. 40-1: “in promptu causa est procul dubio, remota omni ambiguitate, ut sceleratos et iniquos a bonorum persecutione compesceret, Christi sancita stabiliret, de durissimis lapidibus si fieri potuisset filios Abrahae suscitaret. Haec ita fuisse certissime declarant quotidiana beneficia et non minus crebra quam inusitata miracula, quae omnipotens Deus dignatur operari per eius merita, non in nostra regione, verum ubicunque locorum et a quibuscunque auxilium beati martyris fideliter imploratur.”

Again he unites his praise for Óláfr's program of lawgiving and his actions as a missionizing king, emphasizing their fundamental unity of purpose. But here Theodoricus goes further and suggests that Óláfr's ministerial mission had not ended with his death. Instead, his sanctification had made his role as an intermediary between the earthly and heavenly kingdoms eternally active. From his tomb, Óláfr continued to guide the Norwegian people spiritually, raising them up, however hard or barbarous they might be, as "sons of Abraham."

What, then, did it mean to the synoptic chroniclers for a king to rule justly? For them, the *rex iustus* was a ruler who properly harmonized the projects of royal centralization and Christianization, placing the royal prerogative to impose order and justice in service to the spiritual improvement of the Norwegian people. The synthesis of these two projects was crucial: while the chroniclers represented Norway's early kings, such as Harald Fairhair and Hákon Haraldsson, as capable of promoting an earthly peace through lawgiving and the promotion of justice, in their eyes it was only the Christian kings who could translate this earthly order into the true celestial peace necessary for salvation by creating a hierarchical and intercessory relationship between Christ, the king, and his people. Óláfr Tryggvason had been one such king, although his earthly mission was cut short by his early death. Óláfr Haraldsson, who continued Óláfr Tryggvasson's project, likewise only ruled for fifteen years before he was killed in battle. In the synoptic chroniclers' accounts, though, it was his death, read as martyrdom, that had caused him to represent the apogee of the historical project of royal centralization and Christianization. As a venerated saint, he made eternal the ministerial mission of the just king. The ongoing necessity of his intervention in his kingdom was made clear by Theodoricus Monachus, who lamented that the Norwegians' spiritual trajectory since the days of St. Óláfr had been downward. While several of Óláfr's successors, including his son, Magnús góði (r. 1035 -



1047), his grandson Óláfr *kyrre* (r. 1067 - 1093), and great-grandson Eysteinn Magnússon (r. 1103 - 1123), had ruled justly and effectively, since the death of Sigurðr *Jórsalafari* in 1130 and the advent of the so-called “civil wars” period, the kingdom had entered an “age of baser vein.”<sup>270</sup> Theodoricus laments that it was “entirely shameful to deliver to the judgment of the memory of future generations the crimes, murders, perjuries, parricides, defilements of holy places, contempt for God, pillaging of the religious no less than the whole people, enslavement of women, and other abominations which would take a long time to list.”<sup>271</sup> He thus refuses to include in his history, which had celebrated the spiritual and cultural reformation of the formerly barbarous Northmen, their descent back into violence and chaos.

#### *Kings’ Sagas: Snorri Sturluson’s Óláfs saga helga*

While the synoptic chronicles are narratively defined by their brevity and straightforwardness, the kings’ sagas, and particularly Snorri Sturluson’s *Óláfs saga helga*, which we will focus on here, are typically lengthy and structurally complex, adhering to the standards of what Carol Clover has called “open composition.” Their most basic narrative building blocks, the scene and the episode, are linked not in a straightforwardly sequential manner that leads the reader through a clearly defined beginning, middle, and end, but instead in a more complex branching pattern. A scene or episode could be elaborated upon at either its beginning or end, a narrative strategy referred to as entailment, in order to provide contextual material on the personal histories of relevant characters, the location where the action took place,

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<sup>270</sup> Theodoricus, *Historia*, c. 34, p. 67; quoting Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, I. 128-131.

<sup>271</sup> Theodoricus, *Historia*, c. 34, p. 67: “indignum valde iudicantes memoriae posterorum tradere scelera, homicidia, perjuria, parricidia, sanctorum locorum contaminationes, Dei contemptum, non minus religiosorum depraedationes quam totius plebis, mulierum captivationes et ceteras abominationes, quas longum est enumerare.”

the background circumstances of the action, and so on. Thus the structure of the saga often came to resemble a complex web of interrelated peoples, places, and events that were only gradually brought together to advance a core plot. The progression of this central plot could also frequently be suspended by digressions, most notoriously by the embedding of self-contained *þættir*, or “short story”-type narratives, which, while outwardly extraneous to the scene or episode at hand, were typically thematically relevant to the broader plot and thus served to augment the story being told.<sup>272</sup>

The sagas’ narrative complexity meant that their authors could develop extensive and sophisticated critiques of Norwegian kingship. By representing the king’s interactions with various kinds of people or his reactions to certain types of circumstances, digressions and *þættir* revealed additional facets of his character. As a corollary of the texts’ structural complexity, therefore, the characterization of rulers in the sagas is also often complex. We have seen how in the synoptic chronicles, kings tended to be characterized as singularly good or evil archetypes who contributed in clear and predictable ways to the advancement or obstruction of a teleological historical program. The kings’ sagas were similarly hardly objective in their evaluation of kingship. Their authors clearly valued some qualities of kingship, such as cleverness, martial ability, and generosity positively, and others, such as cowardice and dishonesty, negatively. However, individual kings in the sagas are rarely possessed of either singularly good or bad attributes of rulership. Instead, they are complex figures, and the saga authors take a particular

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<sup>272</sup> Carol J. Clover, *The Medieval Saga* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982). See also Theodore Andersson, *The Icelandic Family Saga: An Analytic Reading* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1967); Joseph C. Harris, “Genre and Narrative Structure in Some *Íslendinga Þættir*,” *Scandinavian Studies* 44:1 (1972): 1-27; Clover, “Scene in Saga Composition,” *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 89 (1974): 57-83; Kathryn Hume, “Beginnings and Endings in the Icelandic Family Sagas,” *Modern Language Review* 68 (1973): 593-606; and John Lindow, Lars Lönnroth, and Gerd Wolfgang Weber, eds., *Structure and Meaning in Old Norse Literature: New Approaches to Textual Analysis and Literary Criticism* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1986).

interest in exploring how an individual's personal idiosyncracies translated into a particular style of rulership.<sup>273</sup> Accordingly, in Snorri's *Saga*, Óláfr's reputation as *rex iustus* is not, as it is in the synoptics, a product of his function within a teleological narrative of state formation. Instead, Óláfr's unwavering dedication to justice is presented as a unique aspect of his character, stemming from his conviction that the role of the king was to impose God's law through the exercise of royal authority. Through a series of interlinking conflicts, Snorri describes how Óláfr's intractability inevitably caused a breach between him and the Norweigan magnates, who viewed his inflexible imposition of the royal prerogative as a threat to their traditional liberties. Óláfr's association with justice thus serves as the primary explanation in Snorri's *Saga* for the breakdown of his rule. But even as Snorri claims that Óláfr's attempt to rule justly had led him to his death, he also represents his concern for justice as his defining characteristic as a saint.

To fully understand how Snorri's narrative construction of character and conflict inflected his representation of St. Óláfr as a *rex iustus*, we first need to develop the contours of the "story-world" in which his characters and their relationships were situated. According to Snorri, Óláfr established his rule through two interrelated strategies: presence and delegation. In the absence of a formalized procedure for king-making, Óláfr relied on the acclamation of various local assemblies to become the ruler of Norway. Large portions of Snorri's *Saga* are thus dedicated to the continuous itineration necessary to personally earn this acclamation. These scenes follow a familiar pattern. For example, Snorri reports that while traveling through the Uppland district Óláfr made three stops in Orka Dale, Methal Dale, and a third unnamed valley. In each dale he called an assembly of the local farmers (*bóndi*, pl. *bændr*) and asked them to

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<sup>273</sup> On the complexity of the character of Harald Hardrada in *Morkinskinna*, for example, see Ármann Jakobsson, "The Individual and the Ideal: The Representation of Royalty in *Morkinskinna*," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 99:1 (2000): 71-86.

accept him as their king. In return, he promised to maintain the “laws as King Óláfr Tryggvason had given them.”<sup>274</sup> Before he would in turn recognize the *bændr* as his subjects with a right to be protected by his laws, however, Óláfr required that they accept Christianity. His visitations to individual valleys thus served not only as opportunities for royal acclamation, but also for testing the Christian faith of its inhabitants and inculcating proper observance where it was lacking. Óláfr was relentless in his program of Christianization: pagans who refused to receive baptism were often mutilated, sent into exile, or killed.<sup>275</sup> In order to enforce Christian observance in his absence, Óláfr also founded new churches and installed them with priests.<sup>276</sup> From the beginning of his reign, Snorri therefore describes a very close association between the exercise of Óláfr’s royal authority and his imposition of God’s laws.

Because Óláfr was not able to be continuously present throughout his kingdom, he relied on royal representatives in order to extend and impose his authority throughout Norway. According to Snorri, many of these were “new men” whom Óláfr raised to a more preeminent social status in order to earn their friendship and extend his influence in a given region. For example, Snorri reports that when he visited the Naumudál district in Hálogaland in the far north of Norway in order to reinforce the observance of Christian laws there, Óláfr was feasted by a local man named Hárek of Thjótta, whom the king then took as his landed-man (*lendrmaðr*, pl. *lendir menn*). In this particular context, this seems to mean that Óláfr invested Hárek with the responsibility to protect royal interests in the area in return for recognition of his claims to the

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<sup>274</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, p. 56: “lög, svá sem boðit hafði Óláfr konungur Tryggvason.”

<sup>275</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, p. 123.

<sup>276</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, pp. 221-4.

revenues from the lands he already possessed.<sup>277</sup> Similarly, when a local man named Brynjólf Úlfaldi caught Óláfr's eye at a Yule banquet he held in East Agthir, the king gifted him with a sword inlaid with gold ornaments, an estate called Vettaland, and the title of *lendrmaðr*, "and Brynjólf was the king's great friend (*vinr*) all his life."<sup>278</sup> Óláfr also relied on the lower-status *ármaðr* (pl: *ármenn*), or steward. These men were not invested with lands to hold from the king, but rather administered the king's royal estates. They also kept the king informed of circumstances in their districts. For example, when Thoraldi, Óláfr's steward at his estate at Haug in Veradál, warned Óláfr that many men in the valley had abjured their Christian baptisms and were performing pagan sacrifices, Óláfr traveled there and raided the apostates' lands and property, confiscating their goods and taking relatives as hostages before appointing priests to see that the faith was maintained there in the future.<sup>279</sup>

In several dozen interlocking episodes, Snorri therefore provides a detailed picture of how Óláfr built up his reputation and authority as king. In the central portion of the *Saga*, he then explores how these strategies of rule deepened Óláfr's preexisting conflicts with Norway's powerful magnates, earned him new enmities, and ultimately caused his hold on power to slip away. According to Snorri, the first group of local powers Óláfr came into conflict with were the petty kings of Uppland. He describes how these men met in council shortly after Óláfr had arrived in Norway to discuss whether or not they should give him their support, making extensive speeches both for and against his cause. One of the petty kings in particular, Hrœrek, was wary of Óláfr, arguing that none of them would be able to "maintain his independence" once

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<sup>277</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, pp. 216-17.

<sup>278</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, p. 96: "Þá gaf konungr honum lenz mannz nafn, ok var Brynjólf inn mesti vinr konungs alla stund."

<sup>279</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, pp. 221-4.

Óláfr had claimed kingship of all of Norway. The others managed to overrule Hrærek's concerns, however, and they promised Óláfr their support, who in return promised them his "perfect friendship" (*vináttu fullkominni*) and an increase in their privileges after he became high king.<sup>280</sup> However, Óláfr's energetic programs of Christianization in their districts soon began to cause the Uppland kings no little concern. They met again in Heithmork, at Hrærek's home, where the king of Ramaríki told the others about "Óláfr *digra*'s movements and the unrest (*ófrið*) he had caused, both in executing men and maiming them, driving some from the kingdom and seizing the wealth of others...he said as well that he had fled there from this unrest, and that many other powerful men had fled from their patrimonies (*óðul*) in Raumaríki."<sup>281</sup> The king from Guthbrandsdál echoed Hrærek's earlier sentiments: "if he will now begrudge each man what little power he already has, and gives us tyranny and antagonism, then I can say for myself that I will resist thralldom under his kingship...for I say to you, that we shall never be free while Óláfr lives."<sup>282</sup>

Snorri thus describes the gradual disillusionment of the Uppland kings with Óláfr's rule: while they were initially willing to recognize Óláfr's supremacy as long as he reciprocally recognized their traditional rights and freedoms, in his zealous efforts to Christianize the interior, Óláfr's claims for a strong royal prerogative marked him as a dangerous threat to the

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<sup>280</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, p. 54: "hann hét þeim sinni vináttu fullkominni ok réttar-bót, ef hann yrði einvaldz-konungr yfir Nóregi."

<sup>281</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, pp. 124-5: "segir frá ferð Óláfs digra ok þeim ófriði, er hann gerði bæði í manna aftökum ok manna meizlum, suma rak hann ór landi, ok tók upp fê fyrir öllum þeim, er nökkut mæltu móti honum, en fór með her mannz um landit, en ekki með því fjölmenni, er lög váru til; hann segir ok, at fyrir þeim ófriði kvezk hann hafa þangat flýit, kvað ok marga aðra ríkismenn hafa flýit óðul sín af Raumaríki."

<sup>282</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, p. 126: "en ef hann vill nú fyrir muna hverjum várum þess ins lítla ríkis, er vér höfum áðr haft, ok veita oss pyndingar ok kúgan, þá kann ek þat frá mér at segja, at ek vil fœrask undan þrælkan konungs...fyrir því at þat er yðr at segja, at aldri strjúkum vér frjálst höfuð, meðan Óláfr er á lífi."

independence of local powers. His personal visits to local communities, his unmerciful punishment of recalcitrant pagans, and his building up of an armed retinue to enforce his religious programs may, for Óláfr, have seemed to be an authoritative way of ensuring the conversion of his subjects in regions where his predecessors had struggled to enforce the royal will; but for the petty kings, they were the actions of a tyrant.

This pattern of rising conflict also characterizes Óláfr's dealings with another group that represented an even greater threat to Óláfr's kingship than the petty kings of Uppland: the landed magnates who throughout the reigns of the early kings had remained some of Norway's most significant local powers. According to Snorri, many of these men recognized the threat that Óláfr posed to them and opposed him from the outset of his reign. Two *lendir menn* in particular, Einar Thambarskelfir and Erling Skjálggsson, had fought against Óláfr on the side of Jarl Sveinn at the Battle of Nesjar in 1016. According to Snorri, after Óláfr had defeated Sveinn, his step-father Sigurd *syr* had urged him to go after the *lendir menn* while they were weakened, lest they continue to obstruct his rule. Óláfr refused, insisting that he would not be worthy of the victory God had given him if he allowed so many honorable men to be killed. Instead he managed to reconcile himself with Erling Skjálggsson, on terms that emphasized the king's supremacy and suggested that the *lendrmaðr* would remain powerful only by Óláfr's will, and not by any inheritance of his own: "I will allow you to be the most honored man in the kingdom, although I plan to bestow grants of land according to my own free will, and not let it seem that the landed-men are entitled by birth (*óðalbornir*) to my patrimony (*ættleif*)."<sup>283</sup> Erling only accepted Óláfr's offer after being advised by his friends that "you will always be the most honored landed-man in

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<sup>283</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, p. 88: "en ek man þik láta vera göfgastan mann í landinu, þó at ek vilja veizlurnar miðla at sjálfræði mínu, en eigi láta sem lendir menn sé óðalbornir til ættleifðar minnar, en ek skylda margföllum verðum yðra þjónustu kaupa."

Norway” and that the status of his lands and reputation would be uncertain if he refused the king’s offer of reconciliation. Erling thus swore an oath of fealty to the king and the two were reconciled – “at least in name.”<sup>284</sup>

Óláfr’s early dealings with Erling Skjálggsson telegraph the inevitable breakdown in the relationships between the king and the magnates on account of their incompatible expectations of the experience of royal power. According to Snorri, these breakdowns most often occurred when Óláfr refused to back down from his strict claims to his royal prerogative, particularly when he felt that he was exercising his authority in defense of Christian law. One such episode was responsible for permanently driving Erling and his powerful relative, Thórir *hundr*, apart from the king. After their reconciliation, the relationship between Óláfr and Erlingr remained fragile. Erling continued to rule a large district between Sogn and Cape Lithandisness, and it seemed to Óláfr that “Erling’s power was too great.”<sup>285</sup> He thus relied on the familiar strategy of installing a new *lendrmaðr* as a royal representative in Erling’s district. He established a man named Áslák Fitjaskalli with “extensive grants of land (*veizlur*) and commanded him to stand strong against Erling.”<sup>286</sup> This strategy failed, however, when Áslák proved unable to compete with Erling. For his part, Erling found it increasingly difficult to “bow his head” to Óláfr’s “new men,” including Áslák but especially one of Óláfr’s local stewards, a man named Seal-Thórir who was “thrall-

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<sup>284</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, p. 89: “eptir þat gengu til frændr Erlings ok vinir ok báðu hann til vægja ok færa við vit en eigi ofrkapp – ‘muntu, segja þeir, vera ávalt göfgastr lendra manna í Nóregi bæði at fram kvæmð þinni ok frændum ok fjárafla.’”

<sup>285</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II c. 116, p. 192: “konungi þótti ofgangr at ríki Erlings.”

<sup>286</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, c. 116, p. 192: “Áslakr var mikill vinr Óláfs konungs, ok setti konungr hann niðr á Sunn-Hörðalandi, fekk honum þar lén mikit ok veizlur stórar ok bað konungr hann halda til fullz við Erling.”



born throughout his family.”<sup>287</sup> The situation came to a head when Ásbjorn Sigurthsson, nephew of Erling and the powerful Thórir *hundr*, prevailed upon Erling to sell him some grain to provision a festival, despite the fact that Óláfr had embargoed all shipments of grain in Erling’s district. Before Ásbjorn could return home, however, Seal-Thórir boarded his ship and not only confiscated the contraband grain, but also stole Ásbjorn’s valuable Halogaland-cloth sail. The incident angered Ásbjorn, who felt he was being made a mockery by the king’s low-born *ármaðr*. When the two next crossed paths, it was at Óláfr’s Easter festivities. Seal-Thórir insulted Ásbjorn’s masculinity, and Ásbjorn, enraged, drew his sword and struck the steward’s head from his body. It landed on the king’s table, spattering his robes with blood.<sup>288</sup>

According to Snorri, Óláfr was deeply angered by Ásbjorn’s actions and sentenced him to death. He rejected the pleas of Ásbjorn’s friends for mercy, insisting that he had breached both God’s law and the royal dignity: “is it not an act worthy of death if a man has broken the Easter peace, and then again if he killed a man in the king’s lodgings, and then third...if he has used my feet as the chopping block?”<sup>289</sup> Ásbjorn’s life was only spared when Erlingr, who had been informed of the unfolding conflict, arrived at the king’s residence with a large group of armed men and compelled the king to come to terms with his nephew. Óláfr, angered by Erlingr’s show of force, demanded that Ásbjorn take Seal-Thórir’s place as his *ármaðr* and manage his estate at Ogsvaldness. Erlingr and Ásbjorn unhappily agreed and parted company with the king. When

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<sup>287</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, c. 116, p. 193: “en hit mun mér örðigt þykkja, at lúta til Selþóris, er þrælborinn er í allar ættir, þótt hann sé nú ármaðr yðarr, eða annarra þeira, er hans makar eru at kynferð, þótt þér leggið metorð á.”

<sup>288</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, c. 118, p. 200.

<sup>289</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, c. 118, p. 200: “konungr segir: er eigi þat dauðasök, Skjálgr, ef maðr brýtr páska-frið ok sú önnur, er hann drap mann í konungs herbergi; sú in iii., er ykkur föður þínum mun þykkja lítls verð, er hann hafði fætr mína fyrir höggstokinn?”

Thórir *hundr*, however, heard of Óláfr's terms, he insisted to Ásbjorn that it would result in "shame for both you and your kinsmen if it should so happen that you became the thrall of the king and the equal of that worst of men, Thórir Seal."<sup>290</sup> Ásbjorn thus refused to minister Óláfr's estate. He was soon afterwards slain by another of Óláfr's stewards, Ásmund Grankelsson, irreparably severing the relationship between Thórir *hundr*, Erlingr Skjálgsson, and the king.

Throughout this episode, Snorri represents Óláfr as stubborn and impolitic. The development of conflict between the king and *lendir menn* in the *Saga* is driven by more than Snorri's characterization of the king, however. It is also driven by the expectations he had established for the way that Norwegian political society functioned. As we have seen, Snorri describes a political world constituted by the personal relationships that powerful men held with each other – relationships of friendship, kinship, patronage, and competition that were in constant need of public and performative affirmation. In the early stages of the *Saga*, as Óláfr built a consensus for his rule, Snorri shows that the king knew how to play by these rules. He first built up a retinue (*hirð*) through gift-giving and display, simultaneously creating bonds of mutual responsibility between himself and his retainers and performing his ability to act as a generous patron. Using the resources of his foster-father Sigurd *syr*, Óláfr held frequent feasts where he made a lavish display of his ability to provide large quantities of meat, beer, and gold.<sup>291</sup> We have already seen other demonstrations of how generosity of this type established social bonds, for example, when Óláfr gifted Brynjólf Úlfadi with a gold-inlaid sword and an estate and Brynjólf in turn accepted the responsibilities of being a royal *lendrmaðr*.

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<sup>290</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, c. 120, p. 206: "en þessi fœr er bæði þín kjömm ok frænda þinna, ef þat skal framgengt verða, at þú gerisk konungs þræll ok jafningi ins versta mannz, Þóris sels."

<sup>291</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, c. 34, pp. 119-20.

When these interpersonal bonds came under strain, in order for the relationship of friendship or patronage to survive, the two parties had to be reconciled. We have already seen how Óláfr and Erling were reconciled, at least nominally, after the Battle of Nesjar, and pledged mutual friendship to the other. The dynamics of reconciliation as Snorri described them would ideally allow conflict to become a socially constitutive force, through which bonds of mutual obligation could be reworked, rather than a destructive one. Accordingly, the early instances of reconciliation between Óláfr and Erling were mutually beneficial, as they allowed the supportive relationship between the two individuals to be perpetuated. Óláfr received the backing of a powerful and influential magnate in a region of the kingdom over which the early kings had traditionally struggled to enforce their authority, while Erling earned the king's recognition of his extensive landholdings. Later on, however, Óláfr denied Ásbjorn and Erling the opportunity for satisfactory reconciliation. Instead, he demanded justice for the injuries done to his royal dignity and the holiness of the day. Through a show of force, Erling managed to compel Óláfr to offer terms for reconciliation, which was clearly the *lendrmaðr's* desired outcome. In Thórir *hundr's* eyes, though, the terms the king offered – that the high-born Ásbjorn accept a position as Óláfr's *ármaðr*, a position typically held by much lower status individuals – were too demeaning to be acceptable. No longer did the relationship between the king and Ásbjorn's powerful family seem mutually beneficial. It was therefore when Óláfr, by imposing an unfamiliar standard of royally-defined justice, denied his *lendir menn* the possibility of reconstituting their personal relationships with him that he lost their support and drove them to support the Danish king Knútr – who, Snorri notes, skillfully and impressively patronized the discontented Norwegian magnates through lavish gifts of gold and promises of influential jarldoms, as a good lord should.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>292</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, c. 130, pp. 221-2.

In Snorri's *Saga*, Óláfr is not idealized or raised above the messy "reality" of the saga-world by virtue of his imminent saintly status. Instead, his defeat at Stiklestad is fully earned, the result of a long series of decisions he had made about how to conduct himself as king vis-à-vis the *lendir menn*. However, Snorri was hardly mindless of Óláfr's posthumous reputation. On the contrary, he, like the other saga authors, praised Óláfr's sanctity both in life and after death. How, then, did Snorri reconcile Óláfr's messy, flawed, and often violent politics with his reputed spiritual perfection? As the narrative nears the scene of Óláfr's martyrdom at Stiklestad, there is a significant shift in focus and tone that brings his spirituality into clearer focus. From this point onwards, Snorri frequently abandons his objectifying narratorial distance from his subject in order to directly praise the virtues of the soon-to-be-martyred king. At the same time, whereas ample space earlier in the *Saga* had been dedicated to other actors such as the Norwegian magnates or Knútr of Denmark, Snorri's focalization narrows in the *Saga*'s final act to the thoughts and actions of Óláfr alone. The tenor of these thoughts and actions also undergo a noticeable change, shifting away from the episodes of interpersonal conflict that had driven the earlier narrative to instead highlight signs of Óláfr's imminent sanctification. For example, Snorri describes how Óláfr worked several miracles of healing after his flight into exile at the court of his brother-in-law;<sup>293</sup> how, after unknowingly breaking the Sabbath, Óláfr did penance by burning a pile of wood shavings on his palm, but was miraculously unburned;<sup>294</sup> how he considered abandoning his royal status altogether in order to go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem or take holy orders;<sup>295</sup> and how he was visited in a dream by Óláfr Tryggvason, who encouraged

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<sup>293</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, c. 155, p. 287; c. 179, pp. 323-6; c. 244, pp. 403-5.

<sup>294</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, c. 190, p. 342.

<sup>295</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, c. 187, pp. 339-40.

him to return to Norway to reclaim his kingdom.<sup>296</sup> As the narrative draws nearer to Stiklestad, the *Saga* thus presents a more comprehensive picture of Óláfr's inner spirituality.

These narrative adjustments allowed Snorri to reemphasize Óláfr's reputation as *rex iustus* while also achieving a subtle shift in what that reputation meant. We have seen how the earlier stages of Snorri's *Saga* were driven by the inevitable conflict between the opposing worldviews of the king and the magnates. In Óláfr's eyes, his office merged royal justice and God's law and conscripted the former in service of the latter. His program of consolidating and expanding royal authority was therefore necessary because it facilitated the Christianization of the Norwegian people. According to Snorri, the magnates did not share Óláfr's conviction. Instead, his adherence to a punishing standard of royal justice rather than a socially constitutive process of reconciliation, his unwillingness to show mercy to social elites as befitted their high status, and his raids on their lands to enforce Christian observance signaled his determination to undercut their independence and local authority. As the narrative shifts from exploring the roots of the conflict to building expectations for Óláfr's imminent sanctification, however, several scenes suggest the implications of Óláfr's martyrdom on his Óláfr's reputation as a *rex iustus*. Snorri reports that before drawing up his lines for battle, Óláfr gave a purse full of silver to a local farmer and instructed him to donate the money after the battle for the salvation of the souls of the men who would die fighting against him.<sup>297</sup> His new willingness to forgive the men who had betrayed their loyalty to him contrasts markedly with his earlier refusal to show mercy to men such as Ásbjorn Sigurdsson. Whereas Óláfr's quarrel with Ásbjorn had been motivated by an inflexible protection of the royal dignity, this scene now instead indicates that Óláfr's concern

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<sup>296</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, c. 188, pp. 340-1.

<sup>297</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, c. 207, pp. 360-1.

for the salvation of his peoples' souls superseded his instincts to defend the royal prerogative.

Similarly, in another pre-battle scene, Óláfr explains his willingness to forgive the rebellious *bændr*:

The farmers know that I have burned their homes and given them other strong punishments. I did that when they had left the true faith and taken up pagan sacrifices (*blót*), and would not obey my commands. We then had to impose God's laws. Now this treachery against their lord is of much less worth, though they do not hold true with me, and although this will not be thought befitting of men who wish to be properly manly. Now I am somewhat more disposed to grant forgiveness when their transgression was against me, than when their hatred was against God.<sup>298</sup>

This speech represents a complete inversion of Óláfr's priorities. Here there is an explicit distinction drawn between "God's right" and the dignity of the king, whereas in earlier episodes they had been explicitly conflated, and the former is privileged above the latter.

This thematic shift is reinforced by Snorri's description of the battle of Stiklestad itself. According to Snorri, the greatest sacrifice that Óláfr made for the spiritual health of his people was his willing embrace of martyrdom. He describes how the king dropped his sword and opened his arms wide to receive his deathblow so that his remains might become an instrument for the spiritual restoration of his people.<sup>299</sup> Accordingly, after his death, his body began to work miraculous acts of healing. In Snorri's *Saga*, Óláfr's first posthumous miracle is worked on behalf of Thórir *hundr*, who had been one of three men to give Óláfr his deathblow. During the battle Thórir had received a wound to his hand, but according to Snorri, when the deceased king's blood ran over his fingers, "the wound healed so quickly that it did not need a

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<sup>298</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, c. 205, pp. 356-7: "hafa bændr verðleik til þess, at svá væri gört, sem þér vilið; þat vita þeir, at ek hefi gört þat, at brenna innin fyrir þeim, ok veit þeim aðrar stórar refsingar. Gerða ek þá þat, er þeir höfðu áðr gengit af trú sinni ok tekit upp blót, en vildu ekki láta at orðum mínum; áttu vér þá guðs réttar at reka. Nú eru þessi dróttinsvik miklu minna verð, þótt þeir haldi eigi trú sína við mik, ok munu þó þessi eigi þykkja vel sama þeim, er manndóms-menn vilja vera. Nú á ek hér nokkuru heimilla at veita nokkura frían, er þeir misgera við mik, en þá er þeir hötuðusk við gud."

<sup>299</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, c. 228, pp. 383-6.

bandage.”<sup>300</sup> This scene represents Óláfr’s final judgment of the rebellious *lendrmaðr*, but here, unlike earlier, it is a merciful act of judgment. Just as Óláfr had forgiven the rebellious *bændr* and provided for the expiation of their sins – including the sin of betraying their king – the healing of Thórir’s wound by the king’s blood represented the king’s forgiveness of the *lendrmaðr* and the washing away of his sins.

In his *Óláfs saga helga*, Snorri explained the resistance to King Óláfr as the result of his strict program of Christianization and centralization, which privileged royal prerogative over the traditional local authority of landed men, chieftains, and petty kings. It was this same project, however, that earned Óláfr his reputation as a *rex iustus*: his assiduous enforcement of a strict code of behavior facilitated the development of a royal power that could impose the Christian faith on the intransigent Norwegian interior. Even as Snorri explained Óláfr’s rise and fall in the terms of the personal politics that structured and drove the narrative of the kings’ sagas, however, he still allowed for the king’s posthumous reputation as a saint. In the final act of the *Saga*, through a series of narrative shifts, Snorri transformed Óláfr’s reputation as a just ruler, prefiguring his imminent ascension to the heavenly kingdom in his admirable and often miraculous acts of mercy and forgiveness.

## HUNGARY: THE *LIVES* OF ST. STEPHEN

We can now turn our attention from the nascent kingdom of Norway to that of Hungary, which at the turn of the eleventh century was undergoing many of the same processes of political centralization and Christianization. According to thirteenth-century Hungarian chroniclers, the

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<sup>300</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, c. 230, p. 387: “Þá kom blóð konungsins á hnd Þóri ok rann upp á greipina, þar er hann hafði áðr sár fengit, ok þurfti um þat sár eigi umband þaðan í frá; svá grøri þat skjótt.”

Magyar tribes that had settled in Pannonia had gradually organized themselves through the efforts of their rulers, who were descended from the *gyula* Árpád. Stephen I (d. 1038), Hungary's first king and its first Christian ruler, was remembered as the most distinguished of the Árpadian kings. His biographers attributed to him wide-ranging contributions to the institutions of the young kingdom. He had taken a central role in directing religious life, organizing the Hungarian episcopate, endowing its monasteries and churches, protecting the kingdom's borders, putting down internal rebellions, and, finally, establishing and enforcing a set of secular and ecclesiastical laws. Just as the Norse authors of the synoptic chronicles and kings' sagas coded the socially constitutive actions of their royal saint in the language of royal justice, peace, and order, so too did the Hungarian hagiographers embed fundamental ideas about the character of their young political society in their representations of St. Stephen and his foundation of legal and juridical institutions.

In order to explore this program of historical meaning-making, we will examine the three *vitae* composed in the years surrounding the king's canonization in 1083: the anonymous *Legenda maior* (before 1083) and *Legenda minor* (after 1083) and the *Vita sancti Stephani* (c. 1095 - 1000) by Bishop Hartvic. These *vitae*, which are textually very closely related to one other, present the same basic narrative of Stephen's life and royal career. Although their major narrative beats are, on the surface, very similar, subtle choices of organization, Biblical typology, and intertextual borrowing allowed each author to develop a distinctive representation of what it meant in the grand scheme of Hungarian history for Stephen to have been a just king. We will examine each in turn.



## *Legenda maior*

Although the narrative boundaries of the *Legenda maior* are firmly circumscribed by the life of its subject, in the preface its author glanced back at the Hungarians' pre-settlement past to explain that even though their pagan ancestors had been notorious "sons of perdition," it had been predestined that they would someday turn away from the darkness of unbelief towards the path of justice (*iustitie semitam*). God had elected the holy ruler Stephen to lead them away from their "rough and wandering" past down that path of Christian progress.<sup>301</sup> The *Legenda* describes the achievement of this transformational process through the life of the royal saint. Not unlike the Norse synoptic chronicles, there is a sustained progressivism to the *Legenda's* narrative, in that each stage of Stephen's life is presented as having contributed cumulatively to the achievement of this foundational project. Stephen's life becomes a continuous realization of the Hungarians' progress along the path of justice, and his lawgiving is made to represent a major step along that path, one that built upon and reinforced his closely interrelated roles as a peacemaker and a patron of the church.

Peacemaking is presented as the fundamental first step in the political organization of the Hungarian kingdom. The text opens with a brief account of the rule of Stephen's father, the grand-prince Géza, whose character, we are told, was defined by an unreconciled duality: although he believed in Christ, he remained ensnared by the "pagan rite."<sup>302</sup> His greatest desire

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<sup>301</sup> *Legenda maior*, c. 1, p. 378: "unde contigit divine pietatis intuitu in 'filios perditionis' et ignorantie, populum rudem et vagum, creaturam dei se nescientem, Ungaros videlicet, Pannonie patriam inhabitantes clementi visu de celo prospicere, ut quos ad ulciscendas prevaricationes christianorum de sedibus naturalibus in occiduas partes occult perpetuitatis consilio prius destinaverat, hos tempore sue predestinationis iam instanti de via iniquitatis ad iustitie semitam deleta nebula ad spem in eternum permanentis perduceret retributionis."

<sup>302</sup> *Legenda maior*, c. 2, pp. 378-9. The details of Géza's religious life are left uncertain by contradictory historical records. German sources, including Thietmar of Merseburg, emphasize the importance of the imperial-Hungarian connection in leading up to his baptism, recording that Géza had sent envoys to the imperial court at Quedlinburg in 973, asking for missionaries to be sent to his kingdom. See Thietmar of

was to make peace with Hungary's neighbors – perhaps a sign, the author suggests, quoting Matthew 5:9, that he was being drawn closer towards Christ: “blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called children of God.” However, Géza's ambitions were not to be fulfilled during his lifetime: one night in a dream he received a vision of handsome young man who told him that “what you are thinking of has not been granted to you, because your hands have been polluted with human blood.” He was reassured, though, that a son would come to him who would be “one of the kings elected by the Lord, who will transform his crown of secular life into an eternal one.”<sup>303</sup> The prenatal prophecy of a future saint's arrival is a frequently attested hagiographic trope, and in the *Legenda maior* it emphasizes what would become one of Stephen's most enduring legacies: the stabilization and consolidation of the Hungarian kingdom in peace. It also establishes a progressive relationship between Géza's reign and that of his son. Stephen's rule represents an important next step in the way in which the young Hungarian kingdom was ordered by its king. Géza had ruled with a “strong hand” and had thus managed to control the unruly Hungarians, but at the expense of polluting himself with violence so that he was unable to achieve the true, divinely-ordained peace he desired. By contrast, Stephen in his spiritual perfection was divinely elected to make peace.

Accordingly, the *Legenda maior* records that after Géza's death in 997 Stephen was immediately able to realize his father's project of peacemaking, establishing peace with the “peoples of the surrounding provinces,” likely a reference to the neighboring Bohemians and

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Merseburg IV.59, VIII.4.

<sup>303</sup> *Legenda maior*, c. 3, p. 380: “non tibi concessum est, quod meditaris, quia manus pollutas humano sanguine gestas. De te filius nasciturus egredietur, cui hec omnia disponenda divine providentie consilio dominus commendabit. Hic unus erit de regibus electis a domino coronam vite secularis commutaturus eterna.”

Poles who made frequent raids into Hungarian lands.<sup>304</sup> Soon after he had accomplished this external peace, however, Stephen was tested in another way when the devil stirred up a “civil war” (*intestina bella*) against him, agitating the “pagan commoners” (*plebs gentilis*) to try to free their necks from the twin yokes of royal rule and the Christian faith.<sup>305</sup> Marching under the protection of the virgin Mary and beneath the banners of St. Martin and St. George, Stephen was able to effect a quick victory against the rebelling pagans and to compel their subjugated leaders to accept baptism.<sup>306</sup> The *Legenda maior* thus records that Stephen assumed the role of peacemaker on several fronts: he ensured the security of the kingdom by making peace with its neighbors; he compelled its unruly counts and commoners to accept the yoke of his rulership; and he stamped out the lingering paganism that was closely related to political opposition to his rule.

These achievements laid the groundwork for Stephen’s next major project: the conversion of the Hungarian people and the organization of the Hungarian church. The author of the *Legenda* makes it clear that the success of Christianization depended on the effectiveness of Stephen’s programs of peacebuilding. In part this was due to the internal security that Stephen had established, which allowed religious individuals and institutions to flourish. The *Legenda*

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<sup>304</sup> *Legenda maior*, c. 6, p. 381: “regno denique Pannonico beati iuvenis nutu adtendente pacem cum exterarum provinciarum populis fideliter statutam corroboravit, ut in securius, quod in mente tractabat, in novella plantatione christianitatis explere sufficeret.”

<sup>305</sup> *Legenda maior*, c. 6, pp. 381-2. The Hungarian chronicle tradition records that the first years of Stephen’s reign were in fact a fractious period in which he faced opposition from rivals within his own family and from local chieftains reluctant to cede authority to a central power. His challengers included Koppány, who according to the Hungarian Chronicle attempted to marry himself to Stephen’s widowed mother; Gyula, whom some scholars have identified as Stephen’s uncle, Procui, and who according to the *Annales Hildesheimenses* ruled his territory autonomously under the title of *rex*; and Ajtony, an adherent of Greek Christianity, and according to the *Life of St. Gerhard*, a Byzantine ally. See Nora Berend, Premysław Urbańczyk, and Premysław Wiszewski, eds., *Central Europe in the High Middle Ages: Bohemia, Hungary and Poland c. 900 - c. 1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), at pp. 148-9.

<sup>306</sup> *Legenda maior*, c. 6, pp. 381-2.

describes how venerable abbots and monks left their homelands and traveled to Hungary because they desired to pursue their religious lives under the rule of such a pious prince.<sup>307</sup> Stephen's peacemaking also nourished the development of Hungarian Christianity because of the personal conversion it effected within Stephen himself. According to the *Legenda* author, after he had achieved victory under the banners of Martin and George he was "filled with spiritual joy," and became determined that he should become his nation's "shelter of the evangelical seed."<sup>308</sup> To such an end, he began to recruit holy individuals to bring to Hungary, including the monk Asericus, who before his martyrdom would be elected as the first bishop of Kalocsa, and the Polish hermits Zoerard and Benedict, who became the subjects of the first Hungarian saints' life.<sup>309</sup> The king also became a great patron of churches and religious houses, founding and endowing the monastery of Pannonhalma in the name of St. Martin, and allowing other new houses of canons and monks to flourish throughout Hungary.<sup>310</sup> Finally, meeting in consultation with Hungary's holy men, the *Legenda* describes how Stephen divided his kingdom into ten bishoprics, headed by the metropolitan archdiocese of Esztergom, thereby establishing an institutional basis for ecclesiastical governance, the collection of tithes, and sacramental ministry.<sup>311</sup> In the *Legenda maior* Stephen thus exercises a wide *ministerium*, as we see him not

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<sup>307</sup> *Legenda maior*, c. 7, p. 382: "abbates et monachi nichil proprium habere cupientes sub tam religiossimi principis patrocinio regulariter vivere desideraverunt."

<sup>308</sup> *Legenda maior*, c. 7, p. 382: "devictis ergo Christi miles hostibus gaudio spirituali repletus, totius ingenii consilium evangelici seminis decrevit fore receptaculum."

<sup>309</sup> *Legenda Zoerardi et Benedicti*, ed. E. Madszar, *SRH* vol. II, pp. 357-61.

<sup>310</sup> *Legenda maior*, c. 8, pp. 383-4.

<sup>311</sup> *Legenda maior*, c. 8, p. 383. While historians tend to agree that Stephen was likely responsible for the foundation of Hungary's ten earliest bishoprics, it seems clear that he did not found them all at once, as the *Legenda maior* would have it. Instead the earliest dioceses were likely to have been Veszprém, Győr, and the archdiocese of Esztergom, all west of the Danube, while those in the eastern regions of the kingdom were organized later as Stephen extended his rule over territories there. See Gábor Thorockay, "The dioceses and bishops of Saint Stephen," in Attila Zsoldos, ed., *Saint Stephen and His Country: A Newborn Kingdom in*

only policing his subjects' spiritual practices, but also grounding the institutional foundations of the Hungarian church in the exercise of royal authority.

It is only at this point in the narrative, several years after his father's death, that Stephen is consecrated and crowned as king. This achievement is presented as the culmination of his already impressive feats of peacemaking and Christianization, and it sets the stage for his next project of social ordering: the promulgation of a code of law.<sup>312</sup> Soon after Stephen's coronation, the *Legenda* author reports, "what kind of man he was in his mode of life and discretion was made manifest in the statutes he decreed with the bishops and magnates of Hungary, in which he prescribed an antidote for every crime."<sup>313</sup> Here, as in the representation of Stephen's father Géza, lawgiving is presented as having depended on the character of the king, rather than on the existence of the office of the king *ipso facto*. Whereas Géza had failed to institute peace and order as a result of his deficiencies as a Christian, Stephen's success as a lawgiver was founded on his personal virtue. It was also founded on his earlier successes: Stephen is described as having relied on the counsel of the Hungarian bishops and magnates (*primatibus*), two important social groups that he had already brought to order by quelling the pagan revolt and by patronizing a new class of holy men. Finally, by describing Stephen's legal innovations in the language of sin and atonement, the passage further emphasizes the close equivalence in the

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*Central Europe: Hungary* (Budapest, 2001): 49-68; László Koszta, "L'organisation de l'Église chrétienne en Hongrie," in Sándor Csernus and Klára Korompay, eds., *Les Hongrois et l'Europe: conquête et intégration* (Paris, 1999): 293-311; and Berend, Urbańczyk and Wiszewski, *Central Europe in the High Middle Ages*, 155.

<sup>312</sup> Although the *Legenda maior* records that five years had passed between Géza's death and Stephen's coronation, Géza died in 997 and Stephen was crowned on Dec. 25, 1000, so the interregal period was in reality closer to three years in length.

<sup>313</sup> *Legenda maior*, c. 9, p. 384: "post acceptum imperialis excellentie signum, qualis vite vir et discretionis fuerit, cum episcopis et primatibus Ungarie statutum a se decretum manifestum facit, in quo scilicet uniuscuiusque contrarium dictavit antidotum."

*Legenda maior* between Stephen's roles as ruler and defender of the faith. There is very little distinction made between the secular and spiritual authority of the king. Instead, just as Stephen's achievement of an external peace provided for the stability of the young Hungarian church, and just as the rebels were compelled to accept both Stephen's rule and the Christian faith, so too was his codification of legal statutes aimed at correcting his subjects' crimes and sins alike.

In the *Legenda maior*, therefore, Stephen's role as lawgiver can be seen as the culmination of his ongoing projects to create a Hungarian kingdom that was properly ordered at every level. His edicts decreed that "no one should invade another in hostility, no one should injure another without judicial examination, and no one should oppress widows and orphans."<sup>314</sup> Here the levels at which Stephen's laws effected peace are described in descending order, from the kingdom to the community to the household. This is immediately followed by an account of Stephen's marriage to Gisela, sister of Henry of Bavaria, later to become Emperor Henry II.<sup>315</sup> She is described as Stephen's companion in "adorning the worship of God" through her endowment of churches and monasteries, including most notably the bishopric of Veszprém, with crosses, vessels, and ornaments.<sup>316</sup> Having brought order to his kingdom, Stephen thus orders his own household in a way that further glorified the Hungarian church. The consonance

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<sup>314</sup> *Legenda maior*, c. 9, p. 384: "ut pacis, per quam Christus mundum coadunavit se fore probaret filium, quod nullus alium hostiliter invaderet, nemo inimicum sine iudicii examinatione lederet, viduas et orphanos nullus obprimeret, subscriptione federis non pereuntis posteris suis relinquit stabilitum."

<sup>315</sup> Erik Fügedi and János Bak have noted that, although the relationship between Stephen and Henry II's successor, Conrad, later became antagonistic, many German knights accompanied Gisela to Hungary and became a significant force within Stephen's court. See Fügedi and Bak, "Foreign Knights and Clerks in Early Medieval Hungary," in Nora Berend, ed., *The Expansion of Central Europe in the Middle Ages* (Farnham, 2013): 319-23.

<sup>316</sup> *Legenda maior*, c. 9, pp. 384-5: "que qualis erga dei cultum ornandum extitit, quam frequens et benefica circa deo servientium congregationes apparuit, multarum ecclesiarum cruces et vasa vel paramenta opera mirifico facta vel contexta usque hodie testantur."

between his projects of ordering at each level of society emphasizes the totality of the royal and spiritual authority that Stephen exercises in the *Legenda maior*. In the earliest work celebrating his holy life, therefore, Stephen is represented as a paternalistic and ministerial figure who, in the multiplicity of roles he played on the royal stage, marshaled his historically “rude, wandering” people and led them down the “path of justice.”

### *Legenda minor*

The representation of Stephen found in the *Legenda minor* is quite different, despite the fact that its major events and their ordering are very similar to those in the *Legenda maior*. While the narrative of the earlier text progresses cumulatively, in that one stage of Stephen’s life is presented as leading into and reinforcing the next, the historical progression of the *Legenda minor* is tinged by a persistent fear of backsliding and recurring threats to Stephen’s peace. If the narrativization of the earlier text supported a paternalistic representation of Stephen as *rex iustus*, in which Stephen ordered the Hungarian political and spiritual community as a royal “head of household,” that of the later *Life* presents Stephen as a strict and often forceful judge, whose relationship with those he governed was not so much paternalistic as frequently oppositional.

Where the *Legenda minor*’s sequence of events does deviate from that of the *Legenda maior*, it undercuts the latter’s progressive narrativization of Stephen’s achievements. We have seen how in the earlier text, the five-year period between Géza’s death and Stephen’s crowning as king provided space for Stephen’s institution of peace and foundation of the Hungarian church, royal programs that later culminated in his formal coronation and codification of the laws. However, in the *Legenda minor*, the time between Géza’s death and Stephen’s acclamation

as king is compressed, so that his coronation follows directly after the death of his father.<sup>317</sup> The narrative therefore does not build up to Stephen's role as a lawgiver, but instead from the start characterizes him as concerned with *iustitia*: he "placed judgment and justice before his eyes, according to the words of Solomon: 'a wise man shall hear and shall be wiser: and he that understandeth, shall possess governments.'"<sup>318</sup> Stephen's status as *rex iustus* is thus presented as the result of his innate personal virtues, and in particular by his Solomonic wisdom.

Accordingly, the *Legenda* explains how Stephen's dedicated study of the Scriptures compelled him to act as a "faithful and wise steward (*dispensator*)," according to the dictates of Luke 12:42: "and the Lord said: who, thinkest thou, is the faithful and wise steward, whom his lord setteth over his family to give them their measure of wheat in due season?"<sup>319</sup> However, in the *Legenda minor*, the role that Stephen plays as *dispensator* is less that of a minister than that of a corrector. There is a persistent sense of concern about the constancy of the Hungarians towards Stephen's moralistic and spiritual mandates. According to the *Legenda*, the king feared that "the people, having once been reborn by the consecration of baptism, might abandon it without instruction (*disciplina*) and easily be returned back to the error of their vanity." He thus "instituted the appropriate ecclesiastical doctrine and placed the yoke and law of instruction on their bowed necks, and destroyed at once the foulness of evil acts."<sup>320</sup> He identified a similar

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<sup>317</sup> *Legenda minor*, c. 2, p. 394.

<sup>318</sup> Prov. 1:5; *Legenda minor*, c. 2, p. 394: "scripturarum divinarum, quibus adprime flagrabat non inmemor, iudicium et iustitiam ante oculos proponebat iuxta illud Salomonis: 'audiens sapiens sapientior erit et intellegens gubernacula possidebit.'"

<sup>319</sup> Luke 12:42: "dixit autem Dominus quis putas est fidelis dispensator et prudens quem constituet dominus super familiam suam ut det illis in tempore tritici mensuram."

<sup>320</sup> *Legenda minor*, c. 2, p. 395: "in omnibus mandatis dei 'fidelis dispensator' existens, apud se cepit meditari, ut si populum iam pridem baptismatis consecratione renatum absque disciplina dimitteret, facile post errorem vanitatis sue iterum converteretur. Hunc secundum ecclesiasticam doctrinam instituens, iugum et legem discipline suppositis cervicibus adhibuit, omnesque inmunditias malorum prorsus destruxit."



threat of moral corrosion amongst the elite that could only be countered by his forceful correction: “certain noble men, in whose hearts were luxury and sloth, seeing that the men he compelled abandoned the things to which they were accustomed, and driven by diabolical instinct, scorned the king’s judgments, brought their minds back to their previous habits of pleasure, and raised arms against him.”<sup>321</sup> The *Legenda maior* had identified the cause of this early revolt as the opposition of pagan commoners to Stephen’s program of Christianization. According to the *Legenda minor*, however, the revolt was the result of the military elite’s reluctance to accept Stephen’s mandates regarding moral rectitude and discipline. Accordingly, whereas in the *Legenda maior* the defeated rebels were compelled to accept baptism, in the *Legenda minor* they were instead compelled to pay a tenth of their possessions in order to compensate those whom their actions had harmed.<sup>322</sup> This punishment underlined the ability of the king to impose upon the lands and goods of the nobility in judgment of their crimes. It also neatly inverted the chapter’s opening Scriptural reference: to be an effective lord meant not only granting the subjects their “measure of wheat,” but also taking it away in punishment when they needed to be brought back in line. Where the *Legenda maior* drew on the early events of Stephen’s reign to construct a portrait of ministerial kingship, the *Legenda minor* used those same events to instead characterize the king as a strict judge and corrector.

The sense persists throughout the *Legenda minor* that Stephen’s imposition of order remained under threat. According to its author, soon after Stephen had put down the revolt against his rule, the city of Székesfehérvár came under attack from the Pechenegs, who despised

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<sup>321</sup> *Legenda minor*, c. 3, p. 395: “quidam vero nobilium, quibus luxur et desidie cordis inerat, videntes, quod assueti coacti reliquissent, diabolico instinctu iudicia regis contempserunt, et ad priores voluptatis sue usus animum reducentes, contra eum arma movebant.”

<sup>322</sup> *Legenda minor*, c. 2, p. 395.

the Hungarians' Christian faith with "bestial stupidity" (*beluina stultitia*). Although the city and its inhabitants were spared from their barbaric rampage thanks to Stephen's miraculous premonition of the attack, the scene emphasizes the threats that continued to lurk on the kingdom's eastern frontiers.<sup>323</sup> Accordingly, throughout the *Legenda minor* Stephen responds to threats to the security of his kingdom with a strong hand. For example, one episode describes the experiences of a group of sixty Bulgars who, while traveling to Stephen's court, were set upon by a group of Hungarians who killed many of their number and robbed the survivors of all their goods. The surviving Bulgars managed to reach the king's court and told Stephen about the crimes they had been subjected to, begging him to do justice. Stephen had the perpetrators brought before him and demanded of them: "why did you, transgressing the law of God, not comprehend mercy and condemn innocent men? 'For not the hearers of the law,'<sup>324</sup> but transgressors shall be struck down. Thus as you have done, so the Lord shall today do to you before me.'"<sup>325</sup> Here Stephen describes the perpetrators' actions as crimes against God and suggests that God, acting through the king, will be their punisher. Again he cites Scripture in passing judgment – although again, his judgment depends on an inverted reading of the Biblical verse he invokes. He recasts the second half of Romans 2:13, transforming the verse from a statement about the distinction between knowing and following the law into one about the necessity of punishing the law's transgressors. Accordingly, at Stephen's command, the criminals were hanged two by two along the roads throughout the kingdom. The episode ends

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<sup>323</sup> *Legenda minor*, c. 5, p. 397.

<sup>324</sup> Rom. 2:13: "non enim auditores legis iusti sunt apud Deum sed factores legis iustificabuntur."

<sup>325</sup> *Legenda minor*, c. 6, p. 398: "'cur,' inquit, 'legem preceptorum dei transgredientes non intellexistis misericordiam et viros innocentie condempnastis? 'Non enim auditores legis,' sed transgressores feriendi sunt. Sicut fecistis, ita faciet dominus hodie vobis coram me.'"

with a clear statement of Stephen's intent in handing down this particular punishment: "through this he wished it to be understood that whoever did not acquiesce to the lawful administration of justice as the lord had set it out would suffer in this way." He was understood: "the inhabitants of the kingdom heard the judgment as the king had decided it, and were afraid."<sup>326</sup>

This is far from the only act of corporeal punishment that Stephen employs to make an example out of criminals in the *Legenda minor*. The following episode describes how, towards the end of his life, four palatial officials plotted together to kill the king and chose one from among their number to act as assassin. The murderer snuck up behind Stephen at night with the intention of cutting his throat. However, "on heavenly impulse" he dropped his sword and alerted the king to his presence. The erstwhile assassin begged Stephen on his knees for forgiveness for his sinful plan. Stephen "did not turn away the requested pardon" and allowed him to live; but he did pronounce harsher judgment on his co-conspirators, and "so that they might be an example and might learn to venerate their king with the highest honor," had them blinded and their hands cut off.<sup>327</sup> Together, this chapter and the one that preceded it make a clear statement about the necessity of physically enacting the judgment of the law on the bodies of criminals. Hanged, blinded, and maimed, they were made into spectacles meant to be seen by the people to induce a sense of simultaneous fear and veneration towards the king and his law.

Stephen's forceful judgments against wrongdoers in the *Legenda minor* emphasized the

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<sup>326</sup> *Legenda minor*, c. 6, p. 399: "per hoc denique volens intelligi, ut quicumque non acquiesceret iudicio iustitie, quod a domino proposuerat, sic fieret illi. Audierunt habitatores terre iudicium, quod iudicasset rex et timuerunt."

<sup>327</sup> *Legenda minor*, c. 7, p. 399: "veniam querentem non avertit, facinus facile dimisit, idemque iussus traditionis conscius aperuit. Postera die precepto regis homicide illi inventi adducuntur, et adversus eos iudicia locutus est. Ut autem reliquis essent in exemplum et discerent dominos summo honore venerari, visu privavit, manus noxias abscidit et qui iniustitia sua insidias iusto sanguini paraverant, iudicio iustitie in malum vite sue devenerunt."

idea, pervasive throughout the text, that the peace and order of his kingdom needed constant policing. With infractions against royal law expressed as sin, the king became an agent of divine justice and his mercy a form of absolution. Even as the punished body of the criminal served in the *Legenda* as a reminder of the king's ability to punish, and thus a spur towards the maintenance of peace and order, it also contained the promise of his ability to absolve and heal. Appropriately, the *Legenda* closes by praising Stephen's posthumous reputation as a miraculous healer in language that reinforced the close interrelations between sin, *disciplina*, and absolution. At his shrine, "those who had suffered the blow of corruption were returned to firm restraint."<sup>328</sup> The *Legenda minor* thus presented Stephen as a vehicle of divine judgment, firmly correcting the sins of his people, and through that correction, opening up avenues for the salvational reordering of the self and society.

#### *Hartvic's Vita sancti Stephani*

Bishop Hartvic's *Vita sancti Stephani*, composed at the request of King Coloman (r. 1095 - 1115), was not so much a new text as a repurposing of the earlier *Legendae*. Hartvic's composite work consists primarily of borrowings from those earlier texts, interspersed with shorter original passages. Hartvic drew more extensively on the *Legenda maior* than the *Legenda minor*, tending to follow its sequence of events and only occasionally drawing on the latter to provide additional detail. The portrait of Stephen as just king found in the *Vita* thus strongly resembles that in the *Legenda maior*. He is represented first and foremost as a ministerial king and an institution builder, a peacemaker and a patron of the Hungarian church. However, Hartvic's modulation of the material taken from the *Legenda minor* and his insertion of original

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<sup>328</sup> *Legenda minor*, c. 8, p. 400: "qui corruptionis plaga pene defecerant, in solidum astricti revertabantur."

material at key points in the narrative yielded a subtly distinctive synthetic text, in which he presents a totalizing vision of Stephen's historical significance as the apostle of the Hungarians.

Where Hartvic drew from the *Legenda minor*, he softened its unapologetic presentation of Stephen's use of coercive force as a tool of royal justice. For example, we can compare this brief passage from the *Legenda minor*, which we have already seen, with its adaptation in the *Vita*:

*Legenda*: Not forgetful of holy scripture, for which he was inflamed before all else, he placed judgment and justice before his eyes, according to the words of Solomon: 'a wise man shall hear and shall be wiser: and he that understandeth, shall possess governments' [Prov. 1:5]. He did not place unjust things before his eyes, but remained the 'faithful steward' of God in all his commandments, and he began to think to himself whether the people, having once been reborn by the consecration of baptism, might abandon it without instruction and easily be returned back to the error of their vanity. He instituted the appropriate ecclesiastical doctrine and placed the yoke and law of discipline on their bowed necks, and destroyed at once the foulness of evil acts.<sup>329</sup>

*Vita*: Not forgetful of holy scripture, for which he was inflamed before all else, he placed judgment and justice before his eyes, according to the words of Solomon: 'a wise man shall hear and shall be wiser: and he that understandeth, shall possess governments' [Prov. 1:5]. He did not place unjust things before his eyes, but remained the 'faithful steward' of God in all his commandments, and he began to think to himself *how he might transfer the people subject to him to the worship of God alone. But because he perceived that this would hardly be possible without the cooperation of the neighboring peoples, he 'faithfully strengthened the peace with the peoples of the surrounding provinces, so that he could more securely be able execute what was in his mind in the new plantation of Christianity'* [*Legenda maior*, c. 6, p. 381].<sup>330</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> *Legenda minor*, c. 2, pp. 394-5: "Scripturarum divinarum, quibus adprime flagrabat non immemor, iudicium et iustitiam in oculis proponebat iuxta illud Salomonis: 'audiens sapiens sapientior erit et intelligens gubernacula possidebit.' Non proponebat ante oculos suos rem iniustam, sed in omnibus mandatis dei 'fidelis dispensator' existens, apud se cepit meditari, ut si populum iam pridem baptismatis consecratione renatum absque disciplina dimitteret, facile post errorem vanitatis sue iterum converteretur. Hun secundum ecclesiasticam doctrinam instituens, iugum et legem discipline subpositis cervicibus adhibuit, omnesque immunditias malorum prorsus destruxit."

<sup>330</sup> Hartvic, *Vita sancti Stephani regis*, c. 5, pp. 407-8: "Scripturarum divinarum, quibus adprime flagrabat non immemor, iudicium et iustitiam in oculis proponebat iuxta illud Salomonis: 'audiens sapiens' disciplinam 'sapientior erit et intelligens gubernacula possidebit.' In omnibus itaque mandatis dei 'fidelis dispensator' existens apud se cepit meditari, qualiter subiectum sibi populum unius dei cultui manciparet. Sed quia perpendebat id absque vicinarum gentium confederatione fieri minime posse, pacem cum exterarum provinciarum populis fideliter institutam roboravit, ut eo securius, quod in mente tractabat, in novella plantatione christianitatis explere sufficeret."

Here Hartvic adopts the *Legenda minor*'s characterization of Stephen as a Solomonic king and a *fidelis dispensator*. However, he substitutes the earlier text's discussion of Stephen's fears about the inconstancy of the Hungarians with an original passage that emphasizes the king's eagerness to see to the spiritual improvement of his people, which then segues into a borrowing from the *Legenda maior* about Stephen's skill as a peacemaker. Hartvic thus elided the *Legenda minor*'s description of Stephen's program of discipline and correction in order to emphasize his role in converting the Hungarian people and securing peace along its borders. This strategy is consistent throughout the *Vita*. Wherever Hartvic borrowed from the *Legenda minor*, he glossed over or erased its representation of his harsh punishments of wrongdoers. For example, he included the episode about the rapacious Hungarians who attacked a Bulgar traveling party; but, explaining why Stephen had the perpetrators put to death, he added: "it is to be believed that he did this to instill fear in the rest and in his zeal for justice, as he wished his kingdom to be an asylum open to all, which any could enter freely, so that no one would consider in any way injuring or disturbing anyone who entered."<sup>331</sup> Hartvic thus used the scene not to illustrate the strictly punitive nature of Stephen's laws, but instead to emphasize his concern for the safety of travelers, a frequent trope in contemporary depictions of royal peacemaking.<sup>332</sup> Likewise, he adopted the episode from the *Legenda minor* about the attempt on his life made by the disgruntled palace officials, but entirely omitted that text's description of how they were blinded and maimed in punishment for their crime. Instead he only preserved the *Legenda minor*'s description of the king's mercy towards the repentant would-be assassin, thereby completely

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<sup>331</sup> Hartvic, *Vita sancti Stephani*, c. 18, p. 427: "quod ob terrorem incutiendum reliquis zelo eum iustitie fecisse credendum est, ut quia regnum suum omnium hospitium parens asilum esse volebat, sic liber omnibus introitus esset, ut nullus ingredientem quemlibet in aliquot ledere vel molestare persumeret."

<sup>332</sup> Kershaw, *Peaceful Kings*, 31-9.

inverting the original meaning of the scene.<sup>333</sup> Hartvic's occasional borrowings from the *Legenda minor* therefore augmented his more extensive use of the *Legenda maior* with episodes and scenes not found in that text, but his framing of this material manipulated the meaning to be drawn from it in such a way that brought it in line with his overall representation of St. Stephen as a ministerial king and a peacemaker.

Hartvic also augmented his borrowings with occasional insertions of original text. Of this original material, the most significant is Hartvic's account of Stephen's coronation. As we have seen in the previous chapters, Hartvic's account of Stephen's crown and coronation became the starting point of a long-lasting debate about the status of the Hungarian crown and its relationship to the papacy. According to Hartvic, when the pope bestowed his crown upon Stephen, he declared: "I am apostolic, but truly [Stephen] is deservedly Christ's apostle, through whom Christ converted so many people." He then relinquished "both laws" (*utroque iure*), secular and spiritual, to Stephen's authority.<sup>334</sup> The political implications of these claims are clear. They at once provide a legitimating origin for Hungarian crown and declare its independence from papal sovereignty. They also suggest the totalizing extent of Hartvic's conception of apostolic kingship. Stephen deserved to be called the apostle of the Hungarians because he had been responsible for their conversion to Latin Christianity; but also because his acts as the ruler of an earthly kingdom paralleled and pointed forward to his imminent habitation of the kingdom of heaven. For that reason it was only right, Hartvic argues, that Stephen should

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<sup>333</sup> Hartvic, *Vita sancti Stephani*, c. 21, p. 430.

<sup>334</sup> Hartvic, *Vita sancti Stephani*, c. 9, p. 414: "ego, inquiring, sum apostolicus, ille vero merito Christi apostolus, per quem tantum sibi populum Christus convertit. Quapropter dispositione eiusdem, prout divina ipsum gratia instruit, ecclesias simul cum populis utroque iure ordinandas relinquimus."

have authority over both laws, spiritual and temporal.<sup>335</sup> In crafting his representation of Stephen as apostolic king, Hartvic thus augmented the *Legenda maior*'s account of his lawgiving. By codifying Hungarian legal traditions, Stephen not only regularized provisions for dealing with criminals, but also defined "the antidote of each sin" for his newly Christianized people. As *rex apostolicus* as well as *rex iustus*, he therefore properly ordered his kingdom according to both laws.

## CONCLUSION

Although they were on the face of it very different men, St. Óláfr of Norway and St. Stephen of Hungary were remembered for having made similar achievements as kings: they had attempted to impose order on their historically fractious peoples through the exercise of a novel royal authority; they had patronized the emergent Christian faith and actively enforced its observation within their kingdoms; and, to those ends, they had promulgated novel codes of law. In narrating the deeds of their kings, writers of history in Norway and Hungary alike had crafted diverse visions of the ordering of their societies. We can conclude this chapter by surveying the representations of just kingship encountered in the three major genres of historical writing we have explored here. The Norse synoptic chroniclers, in crafting a teleological historical narrative around the interrelated processes of centralization and Christianization, had described a young kingdom emerging from a dark, pagan past into a brighter Christian present. The Norwegian kings were the protagonists of that transformation. Their most fundamental occupation, as

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<sup>335</sup> Compare this idea with the statement in the preface to the law code of St. Stephen: "Just as they are enriched by the divine laws, so may [the Hungarian people] similarly be strengthened by secular ones, in order that as the good shall be made many by these divine laws, so shall the criminals incur punishment." János M. Bak, György Gónis, and James Ross Sweeney, eds., *The Laws of Hungary, Series I: The Laws of the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary, 1000 – 1526*, volume I (Idyllwild, CA: Charles Schlacks, Jr., 1999), at p. 1.



represented through the characters of the early kings, was to maintain the kingdom in peace and order. He therefore constituted the society of the kingdom at a fundamental level. St. Óláfr, who granted laws both religious and secular, was thus the ideal representative of royal authority. He imposed a temporal peace through his lawgiving, and through his program of conversion he opened up the path of salvation for his people. The ideal vision of social ordering presented in the Norse synoptic chronicles is therefore one in which the earthly kingdom is made consonant with the heavenly kingdom through the mediation of the king.

What made Óláfr significant in the synoptic chronicles was that he represented the realization, if only temporarily, of this ideal vision of social ordering. In Snorri Sturluson's *Óláfs saga helga*, by contrast, his significance ultimately lay in his inability to achieve his ambitious program of political and social reorientation. Here Óláfr's reign represents the Norwegian kingdom's first halting steps towards a unified royal rule. His program of enforced conversion is an expression of the new royal confidence, as is Óláfr's attempt to hold the elite to a punitive juridical standard. But unlike in the synoptic chronicles, in which the king almost singularly defined the character of the social fabric, in Snorri's saga the king represents only one node in a complex web of political actors. Óláfr struggled to enforce his political program due to the opposition of locally powerful chieftains and petty kings, and ultimately he was killed as a result of his unwillingness to compromise his strong vision of royal authority. In the synoptic chronicles, the realization of Óláfr's political program achieved the reorientation of the Norwegians' spiritual gaze towards the kingdom of heaven. In Snorri's saga, by contrast, the success of his program, had it come about, would have represented the fundamental restructuring of social bonds and the reorientation of political society around the royal prerogative.

Different as they were, both traditions of Norse historiography described the creation of the Norwegian kingdom as the process of carving out a new Christian society from an older political order. By contrast, the Hungarian writers characterized the creation of the Hungarian kingdom as an *ex nihilo* act. Where Óláfr appears as a transformational figure, in the Hungarian saints' lives Stephen is instead represented as a creative figure who built a new political society from the ground up. But the *Lives*' authors had competing ideas of what that process had looked like and what role the king had played in it. According to the author of the *Legenda maior*, it had been a steadily progressing, cumulative process. Through his programs of peacemaking, conversion, and lawgiving, the king had crafted a Christian kingdom for a newly Christian people. The author of the *Legenda minor*, by contrast, had represented Stephen's attempts to impose order as a persistent struggle. The Hungarian people, at least in the early days of their political community, were naturally inclined to wickedness, and it was the duty of the king to act as their stern corrector.

By the turn of the eleventh century, the category of just kingship and the idea of the *rex iustus* had had a long history in works of Carolingian and post-Carolingian political theology. The adoption of similar strategies of political thought on the northern and eastern frontiers of Latin Christendom is an important indicator of the way in which a new cohort of intellectual elite was beginning to draw from a wider tradition of ideas. But as a survey of early works of historical writing has shown, representations of just kingship in eleventh- and twelfth-century Norway and Hungary were not informed by a singular normative ideology, but were instead diverse and creative, modulated according to historiographical and narrative context. The just king could be vengeful and punitive or merciful and fair. He could rule by prescription or by example, and he could be driven by a concern for the royal prerogative or for the salvation of his

peoples' souls. Through the person of the just king in all his polysemic complexity, writers of history situated themselves within the intellectual community of Latin Christendom. At the same time, they also embedded in the social memory of the royal saint foundational claims about the distinctive character of their own political societies.

#### 4. VIOLENCE, PEACE, AND ROYAL SANCTITY

Sometime in the first two decades of the eleventh century, Norwegian court skald Sigvatr Þórðarson crafted a *lausavísa*, or praise poem, for his lord and patron Óláfr Haraldsson. In it he described Óláfr's youthful victories in battle, claiming with satisfaction that as the king waged "assemblies of weapon-points" (battles) throughout the country, "the farmers who ran away had their feet to thank for their lives; few stood waiting for wounds." This was what made Óláfr such a powerful and praiseworthy king: that he had boldly waged "storms of steel" against those who opposed him – including the farmers whose lives and property he would later swear to protect.<sup>336</sup> Nor was Sigvatr alone in praising his royal patron for his prowess on the battlefield. The Hungarian author of the *Chronicon pictum* wrote approvingly of Ladislaus I's annihilation of a Cuman army, describing with relish how his men had split open their enemies' heads as though they were "unripe gourds."<sup>337</sup> Sven Aggesen, describing Knútr Lavard's campaigns against the Obotrites, claimed that the duke had "restrained the savage madness of the Slavs with his wonderful strength."<sup>338</sup>

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<sup>336</sup> Sigvatr Þórðarson, *Víkingavísur*, stanza 2, ed. and trans. by Judith Jesch, in Diana Whaley, ed., *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 1*, vol. 2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), p. 536: "þan vas enn, es qnnur Óláfr - né svik fólusk - odda þing í eyddri. Eysýslu gekk heyja. Sitt öttu fjör fótum - fær beið ór stað sára - enn, þeirs undan runnu, allvaldr, vúendr gjalda."

<sup>337</sup> *Chronicon pictum*, c. 102, p. 368: "quos Hungari celerius persequentes acutissimos gladios suos et sitibundos in sanguinibus Cunorum inebriaverunt. Capita quippe Cumanorum noviter rasa, tamquam cucurbitas ad maturitatem nondum bene perductas, gladiatorum ictibus disciderunt."

<sup>338</sup> Sven Aggesen, *Brevis historia regum Dacie*, c. 13, p. 130: "tempore illo prefatus Canutus Ringstadiensis, uir prudens, discretus, facetus, strenuus omnique uirtutis probitate pollens, dux factus Sleuicensis claruit. Nam et mire strenuitatis preualentia Slauorum efferam rabiem compescuit mirificaque uirtute sue iurisdictioni subiugauit."

The ubiquity of these kinds of acts of saintly violence has long been seen as one of the central paradoxes of high medieval royal sanctity, particularly in the context of the northern and eastern frontiers, where princes like Óláfr, Ladislaus, and Knútr were frequently represented at the head of raiding parties or armies, sword and axe in hand. In 2014, Norwegian MP Torgeir Knag Fylkesnes argued that the state should cease its annual celebration of *Olsoke* (“Óláfr’s Wake”) because it lauded a mass-murdering, sadistic tyrant as a national hero.<sup>339</sup> Nor is this discomfort with the idea that Christian saints could be prolific shedders of blood an exclusively modern concern. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries there was a renewed interest in the question of what bloodshed did to a person’s spiritual state: whether it made a priest ritually impure, for example, or whether it hindered a *miles*’ chance of salvation.<sup>340</sup>

In this chapter we will ask how medieval writers reconciled royal saints’ histories of violence with their sanctified reputations. Pious kings engaged in violence in a number of roles: as war-leaders, on the battlefield; as missionaries, against non-Christians; and as judges, against criminals and wrongdoers. The category of violence thus seems to offer a particularly useful point of entry into our sources through which to interrogate the core binary between the royal saint’s worldly concerns and his reputation for spiritual excellence. Did the violence perpetrated by the holy king represent an intractable flaw in his saintly persona? The significance of the issue is heightened on the Latin Christian peripheries, where the reshaping of traditional societies and

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<sup>339</sup> Sigrun Hofstad and Ugo Fermariello, “Olav den Hellige var en masseorder,” *NRK*, July 23, 2014.

<sup>340</sup> See Amy G. Remensnyder, “Pollution, Purity, and Peace: An Aspect of Social Reform between the Late Tenth Century and 1076,” in Thomas Head and Richard Landes, eds., *The Peace of God: Social Violence and Religious Response in France around the Year 1000* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992): 280-307; James A. Brundage, “The Hierarchy of Violence in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Canonists,” *The International History Review* 17:4 (1995): 670-92; Jonathan Riley-Smith, “Christian Violence and the Crusades,” in Anna Sapir Abulafia, ed., *Religious Violence Between Christians and Jews: Medieval Roots and Modern Perspectives* (New York: Palgrave, 2002): 3-20; Thomas Mastnak, *Crusading Peace: Christendom, the Muslim World, and Western Political Order* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

the entry into the European order were projects necessarily pursued at the point of the sword. Did Scandinavian and Hungarian historians' allowance for violence in the legends of their holy kings represent a concession to the challenge of making a newly-converted Magyar or a viking into a Christian saint?

What we shall find is that writers on the peripheries in fact only occasionally appeared vexed by any perceived incompatibility between sanctity and the spilling of blood. For them, violence was necessary for the wielding of royal power, and it could often be what made a king great. Thus their treatment of saintly violence did not merely seek workarounds for a fraught theological issue. Instead, they treated violence as a narratively critical category in the histories of kingdoms. Like justice, violence allowed medieval writers to demarcate the social boundaries of the Christian society. In the previous chapter, we saw how representations of just kingship organized internal social structures as portrayed in historical texts. Here we will explore how representations of violence drew the external boundaries of the Christian society. The licit use of force by the just king could narratively identify where people stood within a hierarchy of overlapping binary identity groups: foreign or native, Christian or pagan, and so on. When the king wielded the sword against individuals or groups who stood outside the licit bounds of the properly ordered society, this was not an aberrance against a Christian peace, but rather a tool through which to achieve it.<sup>341</sup> Holy kings who wielded the “sword of the Spirit” (*gladium Spiritus*) to defend Christendom and defeat social disorder were therefore treated as keepers of the peace, rather than as disturbers of it.

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<sup>341</sup> For high medieval clerical conceptualization of peace, see particularly Jehangir Malegam, *The Sleep of Behemoth: Disputing Peace and Violence in Medieval Europe, 1000 - 1200* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

## THE ROYAL SAINT ON THE BATTLEFIELD

One of the finest pieces of artwork in Trondheim cathedral is an altar frontal of c. 1300, which depicts scenes from the life of the church's saintly occupant, St. Óláfr of Norway. In three of the four scenes, Óláfr is dressed for battle, wearing armor and bearing a sword, spear, or shield. In the fourth, his corpse is bared to reveal the three wounds he sustained in his final fight at Stiklestad. In the center of the image stands a larger image of Óláfr underneath a pointed arcade. Here, he holds the *globus cruciger* of the Christian king in one hand and the axe that would become his personal insignia – and an element on the modern Norwegian coat of arms – in the other. The Trondheim frontal celebrates Óláfr's sanctity by depicting his heavenly favor and the *revelatio* of his incorrupt body. But it also shows the centrality of war-making to his public identity. Óláfr may have been a saint; but he was also a king, and the battlefield provided the stage for many of the significant moments of his saintly history.

Perhaps the most prosaic explanation for the ubiquity of violence in the royal saints' histories is that the waging of war and the exercise of force were the essential tools of the would-be ruler of a decentralized, face-to-face society. A king won and sustained his support by distributing captured wealth, land, and social prestige to his friends, followers, and officials. But the qualities that distinguished an eleventh-century king of Norway or Hungary, bellicosity and acquisitiveness, were not typical qualities of the Christian saint. In this section we shall first examine the centrality of war-making to royal identity, and then ask how this conflicted, or accorded, with the royal saint's reputation for spiritual purity.

### *War-Making and King-Making*

The eleventh and twelfth centuries have often been described by historians of England

and France as a period in which kingship became increasingly impersonal and administrative.<sup>342</sup> In the younger kingdoms of Norway, Hungary, and Denmark, however kingship remained intensely personal and reliant on the distribution of the spoils of war well into the thirteenth century.<sup>343</sup> Thus Snorri Sturluson, looking back at the first half of the eleventh century, was able to equate the roles of viking and king, claiming that Óláfr had first earned the royal title (*konungsnafn*) when he first took command of a raiding party at the age of twelve.<sup>344</sup> Similarly, eleventh-century skalds such as Óttar *svarti* celebrated Óláfr's martial heroics through kennings drawn from the Norse legendary corpus that alternately portrayed him as a warrior (a "feeder of the swan of the battle-serpent;" the "battle-daring master of the storms of Yggr [Óðinn]") and a provider (the "supporter of seafarers;" a "harmer of the flames of the land of the hawk [generous man]").<sup>345</sup> The two roles were mutually supportive: it was Óláfr's success as a warrior that allowed him to act as a provider, and thus as a ruler.

Although the symbiosis of these roles was familiar within the skaldic lexicon, in the *konungasögur* these dynamics of warfare and patronage were translated into a novel style of kingship that made claims to a universalizing royal authority. In his *Óláfs saga helga* (c. 1230), for example, Snorri crafts a speech in which Óláfr justifies his campaign to become high king of

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<sup>342</sup> The foundational work on the subject is C. Warren Hollister and John W. Baldwin, "The Rise of Administrative Kingship: Henry I and Philip Augustus," *The American Historical Review* 83:4 (1978): 867-905. For a different perspective on similar developments, see Thomas Bisson, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century: Power, Lordship, and the Origins of European Government* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

<sup>343</sup> See particularly Hans Jacob Orning, *Unpredictability and Presence: Norwegian Kingship in the High Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

<sup>344</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, c. 4, p. 4-5.

<sup>345</sup> Sigvatr Þórðarson, *Vikingavísur*, stanza 7, ed. and trans. Judith Jesch, in Whaley, ed., *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas I*, vol. 1, p. 544; Óttar *svarti*, *Höfuðlausn*, stanzas 6, 7, 8, 17, ed. Matthew Townend, in Whaley, ed., *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas I*, vol. 1, pp. 739-67.



Norway to his step-father Sigurðr *syr* by using the familiar language of war as a mechanism of patronage. Óláfr deplores the fact that “foreigners” (*útlendir menn*) have laid claim to his *óðal* lands, his familial possessions, and declares that he will invoke the support of all his relations and friends and in turn protect their possessions at the point of the sword.<sup>346</sup> As the narrative of *Óláfs saga helga* progresses and Óláfr makes good on his promise to extend his royal claim over the fragmented Norwegian localities, the sword transforms from a symbol of successful raiding and the redistribution of captured loot into a signifier for the more formal bond of lordship between the king and his retainers and officials. A similar symbolic transformation is evident in the verse of Sigvatr Þórðarson, a skald who remained Óláfr’s loyal retainer throughout his lifetime. In a particular praise poem, he celebrated the king’s gifting of a sword to him as a symbol of their bond. As Russell Poole has noted, in this verse Sigvatr uses the language of both blood-brotherhood alongside that of vassalage to describe his relationship to Óláfr. He thus places in parallel a culturally-specific type of personal bond, the Norse concept of blood-brotherhood, with a term (*lánardrottin*, “liege-lord”) adopted from the European lexicon of lordship.<sup>347</sup> The sword remains the central symbol of Óláfr’s bonds with his men, although the cultural milieu it invokes has shifted from the intense interpersonality of the viking ship to the newly adapted language of lordship.

Raiding and war-making not only allowed a young prince to establish himself as a patron

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<sup>346</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, c. 35, pp. 43-6.

<sup>347</sup> Sigvatr Þórðarson, *Lausavísur*, ed. and trans. R.D. Fulk, in Whaley, ed., *Poetry from the Kings’ Sagas* I, vol. 1, pp. 702-3: “Ek tók lystr, né lastak - leyfð ið es þat - síðan, sóknar Njqrðr, við sverði - sás mín vili - þínu / I accepted, eager, your sword, Njqrðr of combat [warrior], and I will not find fault with it afterwards; this is what I wish; it is a praiseworthy occupation. Fir-tree of the lair of the serpent’s brother [generous man], you got a loyal retainer, and I got for myself a good liege-lord; we have both decided well.” See Russell Poole, “Claiming Kin Skaldic-Style,” in Antonina Harbus and Russell Poole, eds., *Verbal Encounters: Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse Studies for Roberta Frank* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005): 269-77, at p. 283. See also Goeres, *The Poetics of Commemoration*, pp. 120-31.

of elite men, but also demonstrated his ability to fight for and protect the kingdom he would rule. In the Danish histories, royal saints Knútr *rex* and Knútr Lavard spent their youths engaged in piracy (*piratica*) in the Baltics and Russia, earning themselves “splendid plunder” and an increase in their *dignitas*.<sup>348</sup> In his *Gesta Danorum* (c. 1185 - 1208), Saxo Grammaticus claims that the Danish princes had raided the Wends not only because it brought them personal profit, but also in order to proactively safeguard Denmark from the despoliation of the Wends. Knútr *rex*, for example, “completely subdued the threats of pirate ships, and distinguished his illustrious youth with triumphs over the Samlanders and Estlanders.”<sup>349</sup> Saxo thus suggests that there was a close interrelationship between military victory, personal prestige, and the defense of the realm. This relationship was at the foundation of Knútr Lavard’s personal history in Saxo’s telling as well. In the rhetorically formal speech that is the centerpiece of Saxo’s account of Knútr Lavard’s life, in which Knútr defends his reputation against his cousin Magnús’s slanders, he declares: “you know yourself whether I have been an efficient soldier. Tend to your coasts, Danes, if you wish; place your buildings as close to the sea as you please! Avoid the waves yourselves – I shall protect you from sea-robbers!”<sup>350</sup> Saxo therefore develops a close parallelism between the petty raiding of the sort that St. Óláfr had used to build up his base of support and the effective protection of the realm that distinguished a young prince as capable of carrying out the duties of a king.

Knútr Lavard’s speech serves as an example of how representations of leadership in

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<sup>348</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, XIII.5.5, pp. 922-3.

<sup>349</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, XI.8.1, pp. 818-19: “contracta iuuentute mypoaronum piratica monstra perdomuit, Sembicis atque Estonicis illustrem tropheis adolescentiam egit.”

<sup>350</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, XIII.5.10, pp. 928-9: “ipse, an efficaciter militauerim, nosti. Littora, Dani, si placet, excolite: equoribus edes quantalibet propinquitae iungantur! Ipsi undas caute: a maritimis ego uos predonibus prestabo securos!”

historical texts often did more narratively than simply depict the military elites' capabilities on the battlefield or signal their qualifications as potential rulers. Scenes of raiding and war-making were also uniquely revealing of royal character. Most obviously, they demonstrated the royal saint's courage and bravery. Thus the Hungarian *Chronicon pictum* (c. 1358) chronicler reported that Ladislaus had unhesitatingly engaged five Cumans in battle at once and defeated them without fear; while Saxo wrote of Knútr *rex* that "his fame for military strength rose to such distinction that he seemed to revive the soul of Knútr the Great and to have received an equal share in his fortune as well as his name."<sup>351</sup> There is likewise a consistent language of courageousness in the skaldic poetry celebrating "battle-daring" Óláfr's early raids. Óttarr *svarti's* *Höfuðlausn* boasts that "many a man possesses less courage than the king" and describes how Óláfr was unafraid to steer his ships into turbulent waters or to lead his men into dangerous situations.<sup>352</sup> These stories of princely courage demonstrated to the readers of history that the king's proper comportment on the battlefield – his defeat of his enemies, his capture and distribution of loot, his protection of his people – was mirrored by proper internal comportment of his character and his emotions. Success in rulership, historians showed, followed the good character of the king. Only a king who unhesitatingly combatted the threats to his peoples' safety could hope to order his kingdom in peace and security.

Closer to home, many Scandinavian and Hungarian historians also showed a sustained interest in the interactions between the king and his magnates. In this context, too, the king's

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<sup>351</sup> *Chronicon pictum*, c. 102, pp. 367-8; Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, XI.8.1, pp. 818-19: "famaque eius bellica ui in tantum claritatis excessit, ut rediuiuum magni Kanuti spiritum fortunamque simul cum nominis uideretur communione sortitus, adeo ut nullus cum paterni regni successione potiturum ambigeret."

<sup>352</sup> Óttarr *svarti*, *Höfuðlausn*, stanza 7, ed. and trans. Matthew Townend, in Whaley, ed., *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas I*, vol. 1, p. 749: "Rann, en maðr of minna margr býr of þrek (varga hungr frákr austr) an yngvi, Ensýslu lið þeyja."

treatment of his defeated enemies often became another vital indicator of his character and suitability for rule. For example, Saxo writes that Knútr Lavard acted as King Niels's conscience in his dealings with Vartislav, the ruler of the Liutizians, whom he had taken prisoner after falsely promising him peace. According to Saxo, Knútr publically reminded the king that self-restraint was a royal virtue, and warned him that by taking Vartislav prisoner after having promised him safety, he was "depriving [Vartislav] of his liberty and himself of his permanent reputation and magnificence."<sup>353</sup> In praising Knútr's character at Niels's expense, Saxo cautions that bad faith eroded a king's support and undermined his ability to rule. The author of the *Legendary Saga* (c. 1200) likewise makes Óláfr's willingness to give his defeated enemies *grið* ("truce") a consistent quality of his character, and one of the most essential building blocks of his success first as war leader and then as king. According to the saga author, Óláfr gave *grið* to opponents both insignificant – such as Jarl Wilhelm, captured in his early victory against the Danes at Ringmere Heath in East Anglia – and more dangerous, as when he allowed Jarl Hákon of Lade to go into exile, rather than face death, after his victory at the Battle of Nesjar.<sup>354</sup> Óláfr furthermore frequently expresses a sense of grief at the idea of causing the death of noble men. To Jarl Hákon he declares: "it is sad when such a distinguished man dies," and insists that he would prefer to see him live "healthy and whole."<sup>355</sup> In an exchange between Óláfr and his step-father Sigurðr

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<sup>353</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, XIII.5.3, pp. 920-1: "quam rem Kanutus in concione querela prosequutus magnopere regem monere coepit, ne plus aliene perfide uiribus quam proprie indulgeret temperantie neue hostem, fidem suam secutum, captione implicans, ut eum libertate, ita seipsum perpetuo fame splendore priuaret."

<sup>354</sup> *Legendary Saga*, c. 13, p. 54; c. 20, pp. 68-70. See also Bjørn Bandlien's discussion in "Hegemonic Memory, Counter-Memory, and Struggles for Royal Power: The Rhetoric of the Past in the Age of King Sverrir Sigurdsson of Norway," *Scandinavian Studies* 85:3 (2013): 355-77.

<sup>355</sup> *Legendary Saga*, c. 21, p. 70: "þa mællte Óláfr: 'illa er þat, er sva virðulegr maðr dæyr. Huat viltu til vinna, at ec late þic liva hæilan oc osakaðan?'"

*syr*, the author expands on Óláfr's instinct to value the lives of noble men. Sigurðr urges Óláfr to put to death all of the *lendrmenn* who had supported Jarl Hákon. Óláfr refuses, and insists that he would not be worthy of the victory God had granted to him if he allowed so many honorable men to be put to death. His insistence on mercy wins out; but Sigurðr sharply warns his son-in-law that "your rule will be opposed as long as you and these *lendrmenn*, whom you allowed to escape today, both lived." He predicts that Óláfr's mercy would one day make him a saint – not to praise Óláfr's personal virtue, but rather to warn him that he would not be long for this world if he did not yield to the hard necessities of ruling an earthly kingdom.<sup>356</sup>

In his retelling of this exchange between Óláfr and Sigurðr *syr*, the author of *Legendary Saga* demonstrates his understanding of the persistent challenge that faced the early kings of the newly centralizing northern and eastern kingdoms. Success as a war leader was a prerequisite for rulership because it brought a prince resources and renown, and because it revealed him to be the kind of man who could be relied upon to comport himself appropriately in his relationships with his supporters. But the widening of the king's sphere of power would always breed resentment and opposition, whether from local powers who would see their own influence curtailed by a more powerful king, or from rivals for his regnal authority. The case of Knútr Lavard makes it clear how an ambitious prince's successes as a war leader could become his downfall, rather than his making. The Danish chroniclers agree that Knútr's successful campaigns in the Baltic and his protection of Danish seafarers from Wendish pirates had made him significantly more popular

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<sup>356</sup> *Legendary Saga*, c. 26, p. 78: "Óláfr svarar: 'æigi vil ek launa sva guði þann fagra sigr, er hann hævir mer gevet, at drepa nu magan goðan dræng her i dag.' 'Vist er þat guðretletct,' sagde Sigurðr, 'oc æigi mæle ec þetta, firir þui at mik skipti. Sva man ek mins raðs fa giætt, at ek man litt þessa hæims þin þurva. En þta man ek þer sægia, at þer man annstræymt þitt riki vera, meðan þu ert oc þesser lændir menn ero uppi, er nu lætr þu her undan ganga i dag.'"

than King Niels's son and heir, Magnús.<sup>357</sup> According to Saxo, Niels began to fear that the threat posed by Knútr's popularity had been compounded by the power he had amassed as duke of Schleswig and *knes* of the Obotrites. At a public assembly, the king accused Knútr of attempting to prematurely seize the title of king. Knútr's reply is one of Saxo's most impressive rhetorical set-pieces. Knútr assures Niels that "what seed I sowed, you have painlessly reaped the fruit; for it is right that the knight pay the cost and the king receive the profit."<sup>358</sup> But despite Knútr's protestations that he did not aim to supplant Magnús, his jealous cousin shortly thereafter arranged for the duke's assassination. To Magnús it looked too much like Knútr – who was doing the kinds of things expected of a future king, and doing them better than he himself could – was positioning himself to mount a challenge for the throne.

### *The Pollution of Bloodshed?*

For those kings who had to campaign for their rulership, being a war leader was a necessary, if perilous, part of achieving and holding onto royal power. But what were the implications of their wielding of the sword for their reputations as saints? From the earliest years of the Church, Christian theologians had expressed the concern that bloodshed polluted the hands of priests, and both Carolingian and eleventh-century reformers had echoed these concerns. In the eleventh century in particular, anxieties about the accessibility of salvation to members of the military aristocracy intensified.<sup>359</sup> These concerns intersected in a unique way, for example, in

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<sup>357</sup> *Knytlinga Saga*, c. 91, pp. 250-2; Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, XIII.5.7, pp. 924-5.

<sup>358</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, XIII.5.11, pp. 928-30: "itaque, quarum ego rerum sementem ieci, tu fructum absque negotio messuisti. Et quidem impensam ad militem, emolumentum ad regem redundare par est."

<sup>359</sup> Pope Zacharias, for example, in a letter to St. Boniface, had denounced bishops who made war as "false priests" whose hands were "stained with human blood." See Zacharias's letter of 1 April, 743, in *The Letters of Saint Boniface*, ed. Thomas F.X. Noble and trans. Ephraim Emerton (New York: Columbia University Press,

Odo of Cluny's biography of St. Gerald of Aurillac (c. 930).<sup>360</sup> Gerald, as presented by Odo, was an unusual saintly figure, not only because he was a member of the lay elite, but because he sought to reconcile his elite status and the necessity of fighting it entailed with his apparent conviction that bloodshed was inherently sinful. Although Odo praises Gerald's attempts to live a spiritual life on the battlefield, the difficulty of doing so is evident in the absurdity of the compromises Gerald was said to have arrived at: he would lead his men in battle, but urged them to strike their foes only with the flats of their swords and the butts of their spears in order to avoid the shedding of blood.

In addressing the issue of whether the pollution of bloodshed would compromise a holy king's saintly purity, none of the Scandinavian or Hungarian writers of history expressed the same kind of profound discomfort that Odo of Cluny had when building a case for Gerald of Aurillac's sanctity. Instead their tone on the subject ranged from cautiously conservative to celebratory. At the one end of the spectrum was the late twelfth-century writer of the *Passio sancti Olavi*, who was a member of Eysteinn of Nidaros's archiepiscopal court, and who simply erased Óláfr's youthful career as a viking from the narrative of the king's life. Instead he emphasizes that when Óláfr received baptism as a youth, he had "changed into a new man" and had forgotten all his earthly glories, which, a reader familiar with the story of his life could infer,

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2000), no. 84. On the shifting boundaries between monk, priest, and warrior, see particularly Katherine Allen Smith, *War and the Making of Medieval Monastic Culture* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2011).

<sup>360</sup> On Odo's *Vita sancti Gerald*, see Stuart Airlie, "The Anxieties of Sanctity: St Gerald of Aurillac and his Maker," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 43:3 (1992): 372-95; and Mathew Kuefler, *The Making and Unmaking of a Saint: Hagiography and Memory in the Cult of Gerald of Aurillac* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014).

included his earlier martial escapades.<sup>361</sup> But this was hardly a uniform response amongst writers working within a clerical milieu. Theodoricus, a monk of Nidarholmr who also wrote at the close of the twelfth century, claimed that although Óláfr had “hated the spilling of human blood,” he had felt compelled to respond forcefully to the “savage disposition” of the unchristian barbarians who opposed him. Theodoricus was thus less concerned than was the *Passio* author that Óláfr had continued to take up the sword after baptism. Instead, in his view, the threat posed to the social order by civil wars (*civilibus bellis*) necessitated a strong response from the king.<sup>362</sup>

Bishop Hartvic took an even more ambiguous stance on the issue in his *Vita sancti Stephani* (c. 1095 - 1100). His text opens with an episode borrowed from the earlier *Legenda maior* (before 1083), in which Stephen’s father Géza expresses a desire to foster peace between Hungary and its neighbors. Géza experiences an angelic vision, in which his heavenly interlocutor tells him: “what you wish has not been given to you, because your hands are polluted by human blood.” However, Géza would be given a son who would be one of the kings “chosen by the Lord to exchange the crown of secular life for an eternal one,” and who would realize the goal of peacemaking that he could not.<sup>363</sup> Stephen, who orders the Hungarian kingdom in peace, is proven to be that son. But on the face of it, Stephen’s hands are no less polluted by blood than his father’s. What distinguishes Stephen’s use of violence from Géza’s is

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<sup>361</sup> *Passio sancti Olavi*, P.II.1, pp. 17-18: “purificatus igitur lauacro salutari repente mutatus est in alium uirum et, iuxta quod apostolus ait, consepultus Christo per baptismus in mortem, oblitus, que retro sunt, in anteriora se extendens in nouitate uite susceptae religionis perfectissimus obseruator ambulabat.”

<sup>362</sup> Theodoricus, *Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagensium*, c. 19, pp. 39-40: “detestari se effusionem humani sanguinis et maxime in civilibus bellis, nullo modo se velle manum conserere, si salubribus eius monitis acquiescant. Effera vero mens barbarorum unanimi consensu paci contradicit et multo miseri magis eligunt sanctum Dei hostiliter impetere quam salutaria eius monita suscipere.”

<sup>363</sup> Hartvic, *Vita sancti Stephani*, c. 2, p. 404: “iubeo te de sollicitudine tua fore securum. Non tibi concessum est, quod meditaris, quia manus pollutas humano sanguine gestas. De te filius nasciturus egredietur, cui hec omnia disponenda divine providentie consilio commendabit dominus. Hic erit unus ex regibus electis a domino, coronam vite secularis commutaturus eterna.”



its ends, which are driven by Stephen's spiritual character. Géza had prevaricated about fully committing to the Christian faith and had continued to practice the "pagan rite." Stephen, on the other hand, was a committed Christian and a missionizing king, and he wielded the sword in order to bring peace and order to his turbulent kingdom. Thus Hartvic, drawing again from the *Legenda maior*, explains how early in Stephen's reign "the devil, who is the enemy of all goodness, and full of jealousy and ill-will, provoked a civil war (*intestina bella*) against him so that he might upset the holy plan of Christ's champion."<sup>364</sup> Hartvic, like Theodoricus, recognizes the necessity of Stephen's strong response to a threat against internal order and the Christian faith. Only after the threat of civil war had been stamped out was Stephen able to securely establish his new Church. Even if Hartvic did not celebrate Stephen's spilling of human blood, therefore, he did accept its necessity in bringing about the Christianization of the Hungarian people.

Some writers of history did go so far as to seemingly celebrate the royal saints' violent acts. The *Chronicon pictum* chronicler, for example, lingered more than once on the visceral effects of Ladislaus's efforts on the battlefield. Describing how Ladislaus had on one occasion led the Hungarians to victory against the Cumans, he writes that Ladislaus's men had pursued the fleeing pagans and "drenched their sharp and thirsty swords in their blood." Having caught them, they "cut in two the Cumans' newly shaven heads as though they were unripe gourds."<sup>365</sup> Similarly, the Norse skaldic poetry commemorating the acts of kings was suffused with imagery that vividly brought to life scenes of battlefield carnage. Óláfr's skalds made frequent use of

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<sup>364</sup> Hartvic, *Vita sancti Stephani*, c. 6, p. 408: "sed adversarius totius bonitatis, invidie plenus et malitie diabolus, ut sanctum Christi tyronis propositum disturbaret, intestina contra eum bella commovit."

<sup>365</sup> *Chronicon pictum*, c. 102, p. 368: "quos Hungari celerius persequentes acutissimos gladios suos et sitibundos in sanguinibus Cunorum inebriaverunt. Capita quippe Cumanorum noviter rasa, tamquam cucurbitas ad maturitatem nondum bene perductas, gladiatorum ictibus disciderunt."

these traditional tropes in their praise poetry for him. For example, in his *Nesjavísur*, Sigvatr Þórðarson described the field of battle at Nesjar:

“Men made our shields red, that came there white; that was obvious to the sharers of the sword-clamor [battle > warriors]. There I think the young king made his advance up onto the ship, where swords were blunted, and we followed; the bird of blood [raven/eagle] gained a battle-draught [blood].”<sup>366</sup>

This stanza demonstrates several of the tropes familiar to this poetic genre, including a pervasive awareness of the materiality of the gore of the battlefield and the claim that the bodies of fallen men would be consumed by animals. The poet does not treat the blood staining the white shields as polluting: instead the scenes of death and destruction on the battlefield serve as proof of the king’s courage and strength in arms – characteristics which, as we have already seen, were central to ideas of good rulership. Most historians in expanding kingdoms did not make much effort to disguise the earthly nature of the violence effected by holy kings. Instead they celebrated the royal saints’ military victories as evidence that they were behaving as good kings ought to, by winning battles and rewarding their followers.

Some even treated the battlefield as a space in which the pious king could express his spiritual character. In part, this meant displaying the proper emotional response to the death of other Christians. For example, in describing a battle waged between King Solomon and Duke Géza, the author of the *Chronicon pictum* wrote that Ladislaus, “always a man of exceptional piety, was greatly moved deep in his heart upon seeing how many thousands had fallen, even though those who had been killed were his enemies; he wept bitterly, rending his cheeks and

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<sup>366</sup> Sigvatr Þórðarson, *Nesjavísur*, ed. Russell Poole, in Whaley, ed., *Poetry from the Kings’ Sagas 1*, vol. 2, p. 569: “Qld vann ossa skjöldu (auðsætt vas þat) rauða, (hljóms) þás hvítir kómu (hringmiðlondum) þingat. Þar hykk ungan gram gongu (gunnsylgs), en vér fylgðum, (blóðs fekk svorr) þars sláðusk sverð, upp í skip gerðu.”

striking his hair, as though he was a mother at the burial of her sons.”<sup>367</sup> Here the chronicler is approving of Ladislaus’s display of excessive emotionality over the bodies of fallen Christians, even insofar as it likens him to a bereaved mother. But pious grief for the fallen should only extend so far. The gendered and emotive dynamics of this scene stand in stark contrast to another episode from earlier in the same chronicle, in which Ladislaus rescues a young Hungarian woman from a pagan Cuman warrior. The woman begs Ladislaus to spare her captor; but he rejects her womanish pleas and kills the Cuman. In the battlefield scenes of the *Chronicon*, Ladislaus therefore moves between two distinct modes of behavior, both of which are described approvingly. In the first, he capably dispatches a pagan enemy and dismisses mercy as a feminine and weak impulse; and in the second, he mourns the necessity of spilling Hungarian blood, expressing the emotions of compassion and sorrow. These contrasting emotional scripts say something about the place of Ladislaus’s fallen enemies within the chronicler’s imagined Hungarian community. The Cuman, rejected as an appropriate object of mercy, stands outside it; while the Hungarian warrior, Ladislaus’s kin, remains within it, despite his opposition to Géza’s campaign. Ladislaus’s ability to move between these registers, to demonstrate piety as well as strength at the appropriate times on the battlefield, is at the heart of his portrayal in the *Chronicon* as an idealized *miles Christi*.

Occasionally, the king’s expression of piety on the battlefield reads as an attempt to mitigate the spiritual debt incurred by his violent actions. Stephen, for example, was renowned for having dedicated the riches he had won to new religious foundations, thereby channeling the

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<sup>367</sup> *Chronicon pictum*, c. 122, p. 391: “dux autem Ladizlaus, sicut erat semper eximie pietatis, videns tot milia interfectorum, quamvis inimici eius fuissent, qui occisi erant, tamen commota sunt omnia viscera eius super illos, et flevit eos amare scindens sibi genas et capillos planctu magno, tanquam mater in funere filiorum.”

spoils of war into the nascent Hungarian church.<sup>368</sup> The Danish author of the *Passio sancti Kanuti regis* (post 1095), conversely, expresses a completely different idea: that warfare could in itself be a spur to the improvement of the Danish peoples' characters. In this text, Knútr wages an enduring struggle against his peoples' natural inclination to sloth and vice. To combat these sins, we are told, Knútr devised a plan to invade England and reclaim the English throne, which had been held by his ancestor Knútr the Great but lost by his sons. The *Passio* author explains that through this campaign Knútr hoped to "refresh his soldiers' minds, exercised and instructed by wakefulness, concerns, hunger, thirst, cold, and other labors, lest their wickedness emerge easily at that time, as though from lasciviousness and gluttony, and they become affected at heart."<sup>369</sup> Here warfare is represented as a whetstone for the virtues, one which will grind away at the Danes' turpitude. The *Passio* author is the only of Knútr's biographers to describe his English campaign as an exercise in personal improvement, rather than as an attempt to recapture the glory of Knútr the Great's North Sea empire. For him, the plan was of a piece with Knútr's persistent and occasionally ham-handed efforts to nudge the Danes towards a more virtuous life, and although it never came to fruition, it presented the king as the dedicated moral guardian of his people.

Though few other writers of history ascribed a positive moral benefit to war-making as did the *Passio sancti Kanuti regis*, many did claim that as war leaders the royal saints had Christianized the battlefield by integrating religious rites and prayers into their preparations for

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<sup>368</sup> *Chronicon pictum*, cc. 66-7, pp. 315-18.

<sup>369</sup> *Passio sancti Kanuti regis*, c. 5, p. 67: "denique inuentum ac cito consultum, ex precepto regis ei principum diligenter diuulgando ad Anglos transmeandum, ut eorum generationem per militum uirtutes de graui iugo seruitutis indigne absolueret aut scilicet militum istorum animos uigiliis, solitudinibus, fame, siti, gelu uel aliis laboribus redderet exercitatos et eruditos, ne ut ad id temporis leuiter quasi ex lasciuia et adipe iniquitas eorum prodiret et in affectum cordis transirent."

battle.<sup>370</sup> Most often this took the form of prayers to saints for divine aid. The *Chronicon pictum* author, for example, wrote that prior to Géza and Ladislaus's battle with Solomon at Zymgota, Ladislaus had prostrated himself on the ground and swore to build a church in honor of St. Martin if the Lord should grant him victory.<sup>371</sup> The chronicler reports that Stephen had similarly sought St. Martin's aid before his battle with Duke Cupan; while Hartvic records in his *Vita sancti Stephani* that while combatting the invading German forces of Conrad II the king had beseeched the Virgin Mary not to allow Hungary's enemies to devastate her inheritance and destroy "the new transplantation of Christianity."<sup>372</sup> In his *Gesta Danorum*, Saxo tells a story about how Knútr Lavard, while making inroads into the lands of the Obotrites, suffered a sudden defeat and found himself surrounded on all sides by enemies. His men, "despairing of human aid, appealed to heavenly aid," and on the next day, the feast of St. Lawrence, vowed that in the future all Danes would mark the eves of the feasts of St. Lawrence, All Saints, and the Passion with strict fasts.<sup>373</sup>

The royal saints are therefore frequently represented as having called upon the aid of the Christian saints before their battles. In every instance these prayers for divine aid were reportedly granted: Géza and Ladislaus won their battle against Solomon, and Stephen won his against Cupan. Conrad II's forces suddenly ceased their march into Hungary and returned home. Knútr

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<sup>370</sup> On the centrality of the liturgy to the waging of the crusades, see M. Cecilia Gaposchkin, *Invisible Weapons: Liturgy and the Making of Crusade Ideology* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017). See also Bernard Bachrach, *Religion and the Conduct of War c. 300 - 1215* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003): 78-95.

<sup>371</sup> *Chronicon pictum*, c. 121, p. 389: "cumque Ladizlaus se armaret, in terram se prostravit et omnipotentis Dei clementiam postulavit et Beato Martino votum vovit, ut si Dominus ei victoriam concederet, in eodem loco ecclesiam in honore Beati Martini construeret."

<sup>372</sup> *Chronicon pictum*, c. 64, pp. 312-14; Hartvic, *Vita S. Stephani*, c. 16, pp. 423-4: "novellam plantationis christianitatis aboleri."

<sup>373</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, XII.2.5, pp. 902-5: "humane opis desperatione ad coeleste presidium confugerunt, absumpteque spei sue reliquias in dei quam hominum fortitudine reponere maluerunt."

Lavard's men, pinned down in Wendish territory, were unexpectedly reinforced by a fresh troop of Scanians. According to the historians, the royal saints gave appropriate thanks for their heavenly patrons' intercession. Ladislaus built a church and dedicated it to St. Martin on the site of his victory over Solomon, while according to the *Gesta* Stephen decreed that all the peoples of the province he had recently won from Duke Cupan should permanently dedicate one-tenth of their children, crops, and flocks to the monastery of St. Martin.<sup>374</sup> Saxo likewise writes that the Danes faithfully upheld the pledge made by Knútr Lavard's men to St. Lawrence – albeit begrudgingly, as most considered it to have been a promise made due to “the impatience of the stomach and the greed for food.”<sup>375</sup> Saxo, like Hartvic and the *Gesta* chronicler, nevertheless understood how the royal saints' military exploits could further their self-representation as pious Christians. Their invocation of the saints before battle allowed them to frame their struggle as a religious one and, when they were victorious, let them claim that their cause had been divinely sanctioned.

If the kings' invocation of saintly aid on the battlefield pointed to the holiness of their cause, then their frequently attested working of battlefield miracles, which witnessed their sanctity, confirmed that they fought with the favor of God. Battlefield miracles were a favorite subject of the author of the *Legendary Saga of St. Óláfr*. An episode from early in Óláfr's life, for example, tells how, when his ship had been trapped in a small sound by his enemy, King Óláfr the Swede, he got down on his knees and prayed to God for aid. Suddenly a passageway

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<sup>374</sup> *Chronicon pictum*, c. 64, p. 314: “beatus enim Stephanus dux votum, quod tunc voverat, Deo fideliter reddidit, nam universum populum in provincia Cupan ducis degentem, decimas liberorum, frugum ac pecorum suorum cenobio Sancti Martini dare perpetuo iure decrevit.”

<sup>375</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, XIII.2.5, pp. 904-5: “quod uotum publice necessitatis exigentia nuncupatum exactissima posteritatis cura firmavit, indignum rata statim a maioribus continentiam stomachi impatientia atque escarum aviditate conuellere.”

carved itself into the surrounding promontory, allowing the Norwegians to sail away unmolested by the Swedes. The *Saga* author declares: “so it is for all those whom God aids.”<sup>376</sup> This idea that Óláfr was infused with an internal, God-given gift, which manifested as the ability to emerge improbably well from difficult situations, echoes the Norse concept of luck (*gipta, happ, heill*) in terms of its operation within the saga narrative.<sup>377</sup> This gift was inherent but not random. A man’s possession of luck revealed the nobility of his birth or character, and accordingly in *Legendary Saga* Óláfr’s luck is associated with his honorable treatment of his defeated opponents. But it is also explicitly characterized as a God-given gift. Throughout this text there is therefore a consistent, mutually reinforcing relationship between Óláfr’s proper comportment of himself in battle, demonstrated most significantly through his willingness to give *grið* to his enemies, and his luckiness in war. Óláfr waged war in the right way, and for it he received divine assistance which made him a persistently successful military leader.

The Hungarian *Chronicon pictum* also contains a significant number of battlefield miracles, but unlike in *Legendary Saga*, where they serve to highlight Óláfr’s noble humility, in the *Chronicon* they underscore Ladislaus’s overwhelming superiority on the battlefield. In the scene in which the Hungarians slaughter an army of Cumans and split open their heads like gourds, the chronicler records that Ladislaus sustained a serious wound. “By divine mercy,” however, he was quickly healed, so that he was able to continue fighting and to lead his men to an overwhelming and bloody victory over God’s foes.<sup>378</sup> Similarly, the chronicler writes that as Ladislaus prepared to engage with King Solomon’s army at Mogyoród, “a certain white ermine,

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<sup>376</sup> *Legendary Saga*, c. 16, pp. 60-2: “sem allum þæim er guð styrkir.”

<sup>377</sup> Bettina Sebjerg Sommer, “The Norse Concept of Luck,” *Scandinavian Studies* 79:3 (2007): 275-94.

<sup>378</sup> *Chronicon pictum*, c. 102, p. 368: “postmodum divina miseratione a vulnere illo cito est sanatus.”

marvelous to relate, sat upon his lance and then ran up it onto his chest.”<sup>379</sup> In the battle that followed, Ladislaus’s ferocity was described as terror-inducing. He routed Solomon’s men, who tried to flee, but instead “were ‘shut up in cruel death.’”<sup>380</sup> Ladislaus’s God-given capabilities made him larger than life, an overwhelming force of violence and destruction. For the Hungarian chronicler, therefore, the blood shed in battle was not polluting, but instead was an indicator of Ladislaus’s divine approbation.

The *Gesta* chronicler and other medieval historians could claim that the royal saints’ acts of violence accorded with their upholding of God’s law because much of it was waged against pagans who stood outside of, and actively threatened, Christian society. The question of whether saintly violence was licit took on another dimension when it was waged in the name of conversion. It is to this question that we shall now turn.

## THE ROYAL SAINT AS MILITANT MISSIONARY

To the communities who commemorated them, the most significant achievement of the royal saints of Norway, Denmark, and Hungary had been the introduction of Christianity where it was lacking and its strengthening where it was faltering. In most cases they had achieved this not through the peaceful preaching of the missionary, but instead by leveraging the might of the crown to compel religious conformity where it was not voluntarily given. The writers who narrated the deeds of apostolic royal saints therefore entered into a long tradition of discussion and debate about the validity of Christian conversion that was coerced through the threat of

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<sup>379</sup> *Chronicon pictum*, c. 121, p. 390: “cumque tetigisset veprem lancea, quedam hermelina albissima mirum in modum lancee eius insedit et super ipsam discurrando in sinum eius usque devenit.”

<sup>380</sup> *Chronicon pictum*, c. 121, p. 390: “milites autem Ladizlai agmina Salamonis, tamquam in cortinis retro respicientia, terribili tinnitu gladium sauciata ‘in morte conclusit’ crudeli” [Ps. 77].



violence. Augustine of Hippo's pronouncements on the issue had long served as the orthodox standard, insofar as there was one, to which medieval canonists and theologians continued to return when confronting difficult questions of doctrine and practice. Augustine's position was that violence was only an appropriate tool of the missionary if the would-be recipient of the faith had remained unrepentant in their paganism, or had backslid from faith to superstition. But, as Peter Brown has shown, this Augustinian "orthodoxy" was less definitive than it is often made out to be, and Augustine's thoughts had been inflected throughout his life by the complexities of his role as a bishop in the religiously heterogeneous late Roman Empire, and especially by his dealings with the Donatist schism.<sup>381</sup> Later, as the bearers of Christ's message of peace encountered disputatious peoples in western and then northern and eastern Europe, the difficult realities they met on the ground likewise meant that the issue of coercive conversion remained live well into the eleventh and twelfth centuries.<sup>382</sup>

By the late eleventh century, with the rise of the Gregorian reform movement and the advent of the First Crusade, thought about the complex interrelationships between Christianity, violence, and religious difference had taken on new dimensions. The armed pilgrimage to the Holy Land as it was preached by Urban II in 1095 promised a new kind of holy warfare, in which violence could be penitential when it was waged against the infidel enemies of Christ, as the various Muslim peoples of Syria and Palestine were described. The reclamation of the city of Jerusalem, so central to Christian conceptions of sacred space and eschatological time,

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<sup>381</sup> Peter Brown, "St Augustine's Attitudes to Religious Coercion," *Journal of Roman Studies* 54 (1964): 107-16.

<sup>382</sup> It was particularly vividly illustrated in the context of Charlemagne's conquest and conversion of the Saxons, on which see Lawrence Duggan, "'For Force is Not of God?' Compulsion and Conversion from Yahweh to Charlemagne," in James Muldoon, ed., *Varieties of Religious Conversion in the Middle Ages* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997): 49-62; and Steven Stofferahn, "Staying the Royal Sword: Alcuin and the Conversion Dilemma in Early Medieval Europe," *The Historian* 71:3 (2009): 461-80.

represented the deliverance of the crusaders' eastern Christian brethren, while death in pursuit of that aim represented an act of Christo-mimetic self-sacrifice that would earn the *miles Christi* remission of his confessed sins. In the mid-twelfth century, when Eugenius III called the Second Crusade in response to the loss of Edessa, the expansion of the targets of crusade to include Latin Christians' immediate neighbors as well as the Muslim inhabitants of the Holy Land meant that the parameters of crusading violence likewise expanded. The Wendish Crusade, approved by Eugenius in the bull *Divine dispensatione* in April 1147, became the first crusade that explicitly aimed at the conversion of pagans to the Christian faith ("*eos Christiani religioni subjugare*").<sup>383</sup> German churchmen and nobles could now describe the Slavic frontier as "our Jerusalem," as worthy a target of penitential warfare as the Holy Land itself.<sup>384</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux articulated the logic of the crusade of conversion in his notorious letter of March 1147, in which he claimed that a truce could not be made with the pagan Slavs "until, with God's help, they are either converted or their nation is wiped out."<sup>385</sup>

The expansion of the crusading battlefield in the twelfth century brought the theology of penitential violence and armed pilgrimage close to home for the northern and eastern churchmen and princes. The Hungarians, Norwegians, and Danes were all participants in the crusading activities of the twelfth century, and crusading has long been seen as one of the major avenues for the "Europeanization" of the frontier areas during this period.<sup>386</sup> The histories of the royal

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<sup>383</sup> *Pommersches Urkundenbuch*, ed. Rodger Prümers, vol. 1 (Stettin, 1968): 36-7.

<sup>384</sup> "Magdeburg Charter," in Giles Constable, "The Place of the Magdeburg Charter of 1107/8 in the History of Eastern Germany and of the Crusades," in Franz J. Felten and Nikolas Jaspert, eds., *Vita Religiosa im Mittelalter: Festschrift für Kaspar Elm zum 70. Geburtstag* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1999): 283-99, at pp. 296-9.

<sup>385</sup> *S. Bernardi Opera*, vol. 8, no. 457.

<sup>386</sup> Karen Skovgaard-Petersen, *A Journey to the Promised Land: Crusading Theology in the Historia de profectioe Danorum in Hierosolymam* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2001); Nora Berend, *At the*

saints were therefore occasionally inflected by crusading rhetoric. As we have seen in Chapter One, at the translation of his body in June 1170, Knútr Lavard's raids into Pomerania and his rulership over the Obotrites were made to prefigure his son Valdemar's conquest of Rügen in 1169. In Hungary, the author of the *Legenda sancti Ladislai* (c. 1200) claimed that in 1095, Ladislaus had made a vow to travel to Jerusalem "so that he might fight with his blood against the enemies of the Cross of Christ in that place where the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ was spilled for our redemption." So esteemed was his reputation as a Christian prince that he was elected leader of the crusading army of Franks, Lotharingians, and Alemanni; but before he could depart on the expedition, he was stricken by an illness and died unexpectedly.<sup>387</sup> Insofar as they were represented as crusaders, therefore, royal saints like Knútr Lavard and Ladislaus tapped into contemporary ideas about the spiritual prestige of waging war against the enemies of Christ, whether they resided in Lithuania or Syria.<sup>388</sup>

However, more often than not, the missionary kings who became royal saints had been engaged in a struggle not with external religious enemies, but rather with non-Christians within their own kingdoms. For the writers of history who commemorated their campaigns of conversion, the task was thus to show how the pious princes of the past had succeeded in

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*Gate of Christendom: Jews, Muslims, and 'Pagans' in Medieval Hungary, c. 1000 - c. 1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Kurt Villads Jensen, "Denmark and the Second Crusade: The Formation of a Crusader State?" in Jonathan Phillips and Martin Hoch, eds., *The Second Crusade: Scope and Consequences* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001): 164-79; and Janus Møller Jensen, "The Second Crusade and the Significance of Crusading in Scandinavia and the North Atlantic Region," in Jason T. Roche and Janus Møller Jensen, eds., *The Second Crusade: Holy War on the Periphery of Latin Christendom* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015): 155-82.

<sup>387</sup> *Legenda S. Ladislai*, c. 7, p. 521: "Iherosolimam se iturum voverat, ut ubi sanguis domini nostri Ihesu Christi pro redemptione nostra fusus est, ipse ibi sanguine suo contra inimicos crucis Christi dimicaret."

<sup>388</sup> Kurt Villads Jensen, "Creating a Crusader Saint: Canute Lavard and Others of that ilk," in John Bergsagel, David Hiley, and Thomas Riis, eds., *Of Chronicles and Kings: National Saints and the Emergence of Nation States in the High Middle Ages* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2015): 51-72.

bringing the spiritually deviant within their own communities into line, and their challenge was how to legitimate the use of the sword when contemporarily powerful rhetorics of crusading were not always immediately applicable. As we shall see, chroniclers of conversion on the northern and eastern edges of Latin Christendom alike developed a consistent narrative logic through which they could explain the existence of pagan resistance within their own kingdoms, categorize non-Christians as social others, and thereby validate the forcefulness of the royal saints' response.

At the heart of this narrative logic was the characterization of pagans as an emotionally turbulent people. The men and women who resisted Christianity were represented as stubborn and savage, ruled by irrationality, blind to reason, and frequently roused by the uncontrollable passion of rage. Theodoricus, for example, wrote at the end of the twelfth century that during the reign of Óláfr Tryggvason (d. 1000) a certain priest, Theobrand, had spent two years preaching to the Icelanders, but had only managed to make a tiny number of converts “on account of the inhabitants' naturally obdurate and cruel nature (*nativam duritiam et crudelis ingenia*).”<sup>389</sup> Using similar language, Ælnoth of Canterbury claimed that the Swedes, Goths, Northmen, and Icelanders had converted much later than their southern neighbors “due to the savagery of the barbarians (*barbarorum feritate*) and their innate obstinacy (*innata duricia*);”<sup>390</sup> while the Hungarian author of the *Legenda minor* claimed that the pagan Cumans hated the Christian faith

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<sup>389</sup> Theodoricus, *Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagensium*, c. 12, pp. 19-20: “qui cum illuc venisset, coepit illis praedicare Christum, multumque instans vix biennio potuit paucissimos convertere propter nativam duritiam et crudelis ingenia.”

<sup>390</sup> Ælnoth of Canterbury, *Gesta Swenomagni*, c. 1, p. 82: “...tanto serius fidei signa suscepere, quanto illuc fidei doctores tam pro uictus rerumque enuria quam et pro barbarorum feritate et innata duricia magnipendebant diuertere.”

with a “bestial stupidity” (*beluina stultitia*).<sup>391</sup>

This representation of paganism was hardly new during the conversion age. In the Scandinavian kingdoms in particular it had developed out of a long tradition, originating in the prophetic texts of the Old Testament and adopted by medieval Saxon churchmen, that described the North as a wild fount of mysterious hyperborean evils. The books of Isaiah and Jeremiah warned about the arrival from the north of terrible enemies, while Jewish eschatology held that Gog, enemy of the children of Israel, would launch his army of heathens from the north.<sup>392</sup> These ideas went on to inform the rhetoric of medieval German writers who described the dangers posed by the peoples beyond their northern frontiers in apocalyptic tones. The secular and ecclesiastical elites who put their names to the so-called Magdeburg Charter of 1107/8, for example, frequently cited the book of Joel to lament that “most cruel heathens” frequently “rage against our region, and, sparing no one, seize, kill, vanquish, and afflict with exquisite torments.”<sup>393</sup> The Charter stated that these pagans were “inhuman” in their cruelty. In the 1070s, Adam of Bremen made this accusation literal by claiming that the northern Baltics were the home of Pliny-esque horrors, including *cynocephali*, *cyclopes*, and *ymantopodes*, monstrous dog-headed, one-eyed, and one-footed monsters who had a taste for human flesh.<sup>394</sup>

This geographical conceptualization of the malevolent far North often found its way into

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<sup>391</sup> *Legenda minor*, c. 5, p. 397: “gens Byssenorum longe a fide aliena et quasi beluina stultitia carens intellectu patrie eius confinia demoliri aggressa est.”

<sup>392</sup> See Ya’acov Sarig, “In Jewish Lore, Not Only Evil Descends from the North,” in Eleanor Rosamund Barraclough, Danielle Marie Cudmore, and Stefan Donecker, eds., *Imagining the Supernatural North* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2016): 3-24.

<sup>393</sup> Magdeburg Charter, ed. and trans. by Constable, in “The Place of the Magdeburg Charter in the History of East Germany and the Crusades,” at p. 296.

<sup>394</sup> Adam of Bremen, *Gesta Hammaburgensis*, *MGH SS rer. Germ. II*, ed. Bernhard Schmeidler IV.19, pp. 246-7; IV.25, pp. 256-7.

the works of Christian writers native to the Scandinavian kingdoms as well, who in narrating the expansion of Christendom described a sharp spatial distinction between the untamed heathen North and the Christian South that sought to civilize it. Thus the Nidarós writer of the *Passio sancti Olavi* (c. 1166 - 1188) opened his text by decrying the Norwegian peoples' persistent refusal to accept the Christian faith. The problem, he explained, was that they "they inhabited a place near the North, that North which seized them closely and froze them more persistently in the ice of faithlessness, and from which spread every evil thing across the entire face of the world." This was the northern fount of evil warned of by Jeremiah and Isaiah, he explained. But it would not remain so eternally. With the arrival of St. Óláfr as his apostle at the beginning of the eleventh century, the Lord had finally "dispersed the hardness of the North with the mild breeze of the South and softened the savage, obstinate peoples and their wild minds with the warmth of faith."<sup>395</sup>

In the *Passio* writer's view, the spiritual battle that would determine whether Norway would remain part of the pagan North or join the Christian South hinged on the defeat of the pagans' inherent stubbornness and irrationality. This victory could occasionally be achieved peacefully. He writes that through the "sweet speech" of his preaching, Óláfr frequently softened demon worshippers' "hardness" and roused their "torpor and idleness."<sup>396</sup> This depiction of

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<sup>395</sup> *Passio sancti Olavi*, pp. 15-16: "sicut enim loca aquiloni proxima inhabitabant, ita familiarius eas possederat et tenaciori glacie infidelitatis astrixerat aquilo ille, a quo panditur omne malum super uniuersam faciem terre, et a cuius facie ollam succensam uidet Ieremias et qui in Ysaia iactanter profert: 'super astra celi exaltabo solium meum, sedebo in monte testamenti in lateribus aquilonis' [Is. 14:13]. Ceterum 'magnus Dominus et laudabilis nimis,' [Ps. 47.2], qui de lateribus aquilonis edificat ciuitatem suam, austri palcido flamine aquilonis dissipauit duriciam et gentium efferarum obstinatos ac feroces animos calore fidei tandem emoluit."

<sup>396</sup> *Passio sancti Olavi*, p. 19: "cuius enim obstinationem, cuius duriciam insignissimi regis sermo dulcis et sapientia plenus spiritali non frangeret? Cuius torporem uel desidiam conuersatio singularis illius non excitaret?"

conversion as a movement from ignorance to rational understanding plugged into widely familiar tropes that represented the most fundamental function of the saint – the witnessing of Christ’s truth – through symbols of light and illumination. In many widely-circulated healing miracles, for example, the saint is shown curing an individual of their bodily blindness while inwardly leading their spirit to the Lord’s light.<sup>397</sup> The Hungarian author of the *Legenda maior* also used the image of illumination when he wrote of St. Stephen’s early missionizing efforts that “the ‘light that enlightens every man’ [Jn 1:9] and drives away the dark began to shine in Hungary, fulfilling the words of the prophet: ‘the people that walked in darkness have seen a great light’ [Is. 9:2].” This light was Christ, and pagans, when they came to see that he was truly both God and man, were “recalled from the darkness.”<sup>398</sup>

However, even the author of the *Passio sancti Olavi* accepted that this peaceful narrative, this transition from blind irrationality to discerning sight, did not always win out. Despite Óláfr’s ability to soften the hearts of pagans, most Norwegians remained moved “more by will than piety, more by custom than reason, more by dangerous violence of spirit than by love of truth,” and so opposed St. Óláfr’s imposition of Christianity.<sup>399</sup> Óláfr accordingly became harder towards these “savage people:” he smashed their idols, shamed their worshippers, and

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<sup>397</sup> Discussed at length by John P. Bequette in “Aelred of Rievaulx’s *Life of Saint Edward, King and Confessor*: A Saintly King and the Salvation of the English People,” *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 43:1 (2008): 17-40.

<sup>398</sup> *Legenda maior*, c. 4, p. 380: “Lux quippe que illuminat omnem hominem tenebris expulsi cepit in Ungaria enitescere, et impleta sunt verba prophete dicentis: ‘gentium populus, qui ambulabat in tenebris, vidit lucem magnam.’ Lux lucis invisibilis Christus est, quem tunc gentes videre meruerunt, quando revocati de tenebris, ipsum verum lumen, deum et hominem verum esse crediderant.”

<sup>399</sup> *Passio sancti Olavi*, P.IV.1, pp. 19-20: “uerumtamen in medio nationis prae et peruerse positus, licet multos conuerteret, quam plurimos tamen habebat aduersarios fortes et potentes, in quibus maiorem locum sibi uendicabat uoluntas quam pietas, consuetudo quam ratio, animi preceps impetus quam amor ueritatis.”

“‘confounded [those] that trust in a graven thing’ [Is. 42:17].”<sup>400</sup> But ultimately this strategy of destroying the pagans’ idols while leaving the pagans themselves unharmed proved inadequate. Óláfr, though a “peace loving” king, was forced to raise arms against his enemies. Although the word was Óláfr’s first weapon against paganism, the most effective was “the sword of the Spirit” (*gladium Spiritus*).<sup>401</sup>

Some writers even suggested that pagans in their irrationality stood outside the bounds of humanity. The German signatories of the Magdeburg Charter had called the Wends “inhuman,” and Adam of Bremen had implied the same when he suggested that beyond the bounds of Christian civilization, paganism soon shaded into inhuman monstrosity.<sup>402</sup> It was also the implication of a story told about St. Óláfr’s spiritual predecessor in Oddr Snorrason’s late twelfth-century *Saga Óláfs Tryggvasonar*.<sup>403</sup> In this story, Óláfr Tryggvason attempts to convert a man named Eyvindr *kinnrifa*, first through preaching, and then through prolonged torture. Regardless of the pain he is exposed to, however, Eyvindr refuses to accept the Christian faith, and shortly before his death reveals why. His parents, he explains, had turned to Finnish magic when they had struggled to conceive him. An air demon had impregnated his mother, which took human form when she gave birth. Thus, as Eyvindr tells Óláfr, he was not in fact a human – “*ek*

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<sup>400</sup> *Passio sancti Olavi*, P.VI.1, p. 22: “erubescant ydolorum cultores, confundebantur, qui confidebant in sculptili.”

<sup>401</sup> *Passio sancti Olavi*, P.VIII.1, p. 26: “indutus igitur lorica fidei et accinctus gladio Spiritus, quod est uerbum Dei, per infamiam et bonam famam, per gloriam et ignobilitatem, per arma iusticie a dextris et a sinistris. [Eph. 6:14-17]”

<sup>402</sup> For a longer view, see Tinna Damgaard-Sørensen, “Danes and Wends: A Study of the Danish Attitude Towards the Wends,” in Ian Wood and Niels Lund, eds., *People and Places in Northern Europe, 500 – 1600* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1991): 171-86.

<sup>403</sup> Although Oddr originally wrote his *Saga* in Latin, it is only extant in a later Old Norse translation, which is presented most fully in AM 310 4to. See Theodore M. Andersson, *The Saga of Olaf Tryggvason*, pp. 26-7 on the saga’s textual history, and for a translation of the AM 310 4to text.



*em eigi maðr*,” and without possessing a human nature (*mannz eðli*), he was incapable of converting to Christianity.<sup>404</sup> Oddr therefore directly associates the capacity for Christian faith with humanity and codes paganism as demonic. His story takes this association to an extreme end, as Eyvindr’s refusal to convert is revealed to be the result of an inborn, constitutional incapacity to do so. The connections he draws between rationality, Christianity, and humanity nevertheless accord with contemporary theories of religious difference. As Anna Sapir Abulafia has argued, twelfth-century Christian intellectuals who developed a “universalistic construct” of what it meant to be human identified rationality as one of its core characteristics. Religious others were made to stand outside the universalistic category of humanity as a result of their unwillingness or inability to accept rationalizing arguments for the tenets of the Christian faith.<sup>405</sup> Eyvindr’s situation, in which his pagan inhumanity demanded his violent death, was an extreme case. But again and again in the history writing of the newly converting kingdoms, it is made clear that pagans stood outside the bounds of a properly ordered Christian society, and that this state of disorder was in itself an act of violence. It must therefore be met; and because pagans in their intractability responded more readily to the sword than the word, it must be met forcefully. Only by wielding the *gladium Spiritus* could the king restore peace and protect the Christian faithful from pagans’ dangerous influence.

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<sup>404</sup> Oddr Snorrason, *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, ed. Finnur Jónsson, pp. 139-40.

<sup>405</sup> Anna Sapir Abulafia, *Christians and Jews in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance* (London: Routledge, 1995). Similar arguments were made by twelfth-century Christian intellectuals about the Muslim occupants of the Holy Land. In his *De laude novum militae* Bernard of Clairvaux had written that the Muslim occupants of the Holy Land (*paganos*) “do not appear as human” and that Christians should rejoice in their deaths; while Peter the Venerable had claimed that Muslims’ refusal to recognize the divinity of Christ went against rational human nature. Peter the Venerable, *Liber contra sectam sive haeresim Saracenorum*, ed. and trans. Irven M. Resnick, *Peter the Venerable: Writings Against the Saracens* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2016): pp. 51-162. See also Dominique Iogna-Pratt, *Order and Exclusion: Cluny and Christendom Face Heresy, Judaism, and Islam (1000-1150)* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), especially at pp. 9-25.

Following this logic, chroniclers could write approvingly of missionizing kings' use of force against pagans. As Theodoricus wrote vividly at the end of the twelfth century: "only a strong hand could free [pagans] from the age-old, ingrained filth of faithlessness and the more or less inborn devil's-worship which they had practically imbibed with their mother's milk." Thus St. Óláfr, like Óláfr Tryggvasson before him, "often reinforced words with blows" to compel the Norwegian people to accept the Christian faith. In doing so, Theodoricus claims, the Óláfrs were only following the example of the Good Samaritan, who had "poured oil and wine onto the wounds of the injured," and Christ himself, who according to the Gospel of Luke had commanded his apostle: "'compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.'"<sup>406</sup> Through physical coercion, even stubborn pagans might be reformed and brought into the Lord's house and Christian society. Used in this way, the wielding of the *gladium Spiritus* was therefore not an act of violence, but one of *caritas* and *correctio*. This idea accorded with the thinking of contemporary canonists who engaged with the Augustinian tradition regarding coerced conversion. For Anselm of Lucca, for example, the sentiment of *caritas* was central to the legitimation of the missionary's use of the sword. Force could be benevolent if it stemmed not from hate, but from a concern for saving souls.<sup>407</sup>

From other accounts of conversion, however, this logic of *caritas* was notably absent. The author of *Fagrskinna*, for example, writes of St. Óláfr's famous defeat and capture of the

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<sup>406</sup> Theodoricus, *Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagensium*, c. 11, p. 18: "cernens namque effera corda barbarorum et a veterino squalor perfidiae et quodammodo congenita cultura daemonum, quam paene cum lacte matris ebiberant, nisi in manu valida non posse liberari, et quia minus movebantur ad verba, addidit frequenter et verbera, imitatus dominum suum, qui vulneribus sauciati infudit oleum et vinum, nec non et illud evangelicum: 'compelle intrare, ut impleatur domus mea' [Luke 14:23]."

<sup>407</sup> Anselm of Lucca, *De caritate*, ed. and trans. by Herbert Cowdrey, in "Christianity and the Morality of Warfare during the First Century of Crusading," in Marcus Bull and Norman Housley, eds., *The Experience of Crusading*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2003): pp. 175-92.

Uppland petty kings that “when King Óláfr found that they did not wish to accept Christianity, he captured nine kings in one morning, had some blinded, and some otherwise maimed, and others he had outlawed.”<sup>408</sup> In this text, Óláfr’s mutilation of the Uppland kings reads as an act of vengeance against his former political enemies, rather than one of *caritas* or *correctio*. It did, however, clearly mark the boundaries of Óláfr’s new Christian society at a crucial point early in his reign. There was to be no place in Óláfr’s Norway for men, especially elite men, who refused his faith. As the saga author writes: Óláfr “took such great pains to ensure that all men in his kingdom should be Christian that one must lose one’s life or leave the realm, or as a third choice accept baptism, as the king commanded.”<sup>409</sup> The severity with which Óláfr treated the previously powerful Upplanders made a statement about the singularity of his royal authority, while also serving as a fear-inducing spur for any witnesses who may previously have resisted baptism to conform and convert.

This use of violence to mark social boundaries in the histories of conversion had the effect of eliding the royal saint’s religious adversaries with his political opponents. Snorri Sturluson, for example, frequently coded Óláfr’s enemies as religious others, and showed how the king’s enforcement of Christian adherence often reinforced his royal authority. He describes how Óláfr, while first imposing his rule as king, frequently called local assemblies of farmers at which he would compel them to submit to his rulership and to receive baptism and renounce their old rites. These orders were invariably backed by the threat of force. Snorri writes that in Naumdœla, Óláfr “instituted [a penalty] of life or limbs or confiscation of all property on any

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<sup>408</sup> *Fagrskinna*, c. 29, p. 178: “á þeim sama vetri lagði Óláfr konungr stefnu við heiðna heraðskonunga ofan af landi, ok at þeira fundi, þá er Óláfr konungr fann þat, at þeir vildu eigi taka við kristni, lét hann taka á einum morgni níu konunga, lét suma blinda, en suma qðruvís meiða, en suma sendi hann í útlegð.”

<sup>409</sup> *Fagrskinna*, c. 29, p. 178: “Óláfr konungr lagði svá mikla stund á þat, at menn skyldi allir kristnir vera í hans ríki, at annat hvárt skyldi láta líf eða fara ór landi, þriðja kosti taka skrín, eptir því sem konungr bauð.”

man who did not wish to submit to Christian law.”<sup>410</sup> Óláfr’s hand was even heavier against chieftains and *lendirmenn* who resisted his imposition of authority. When he learned that the influential Trondheimer Olveir of Egg was continuing to organize seasonal sacrificial feasts, for example, Óláfr surrounded Olveir’s estate, killed him and his men, and confiscated his lands and the provisions for their feast. He then called an assembly of the Trondheim farmers who had supported Olveir. As in *Naumdœla*, he compelled them to submit to him and accept baptism. Finally, he emphasized the inflexibility of his laws about Christian observance, and his unilateral authority as king, by denying Olveir’s family the traditional recourse against politically motivated killings by declaring that they could not collect any compensation for Olveir’s death and keeping possession of Olveir’s estates for himself.<sup>411</sup> In this episode, Snorri indicates that while Christianization was a moral imperative of Óláfr’s royal duties, it was also an effective mechanism through which he could definitively impose his authority on previously independent regions of Norway.

These same dynamics are also evident in the Hungarian sources. In his *Vita sancti Stephani*, Hartvic writes that Stephen “subjugated by threats and terror” the leaders of his army who had not yet come around to the worship of the Christian God: “treating them according to ecclesiastical doctrine, he placed the yoke and law of discipline onto their bent necks, and entirely destroyed all the foulness of evil.”<sup>412</sup> Drawing from the forceful language of *Legenda minor*, Hartvic represents Christianity as the heavy yoke through which Stephen subjected his

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<sup>410</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, c. 105, p. 176: “hann...lagði við líf ok limar eða aleigusøk hverjum manni, er eigi vildi undir ganga kristin lög.”

<sup>411</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, c. 108, pp. 178-9.

<sup>412</sup> Hartvic, *Vita S. Stephani*, c. 8, p. 411: “quos vero aliene vie sectatores repperit, minis terroribusque subiugavit.”

officials to his authority. The imperative to Christianize the Hungarian people also frequently provided the *causa* for Stephen's campaigns against his political opponents. The *Chronicon pictum* chronicler claims that the king waged war against his uncle Gyula early in his reign "because Gyula, though admonished times without number by the blessed King Stephen, would neither be converted to the Christian faith nor would he refrain from doing injury to the Hungarians."<sup>413</sup> Stephen's victory over Gyula was one of both "glory and gain:" he benefitted significantly from his uncle's death, adding the extensive and rich territory of Erdelw, which had been under Gyula's rule, to his own kingdom.<sup>414</sup> In practical terms, Stephen's victory was therefore significant in that it neutralized a powerful enemy and substantially augmented his realm. But for the chronicler, this was also a glorious victory of the Christian faith. As in *Fagrskinna*, Gyula's paganism was not considered coincidental to his resistance to Stephen's rulership. Instead, his paganism became the clearest indicator that he stood outside Stephen's rightfully ordered society, and it thus legitimated Stephen's waging of war against him.

## LAW AND ORDER

It is therefore clear that in the context of historical writing, royal saints' acts of violence demarcated the imagined contours of social worlds and their communal order. The dynamics of war-making established and made visible interpersonal networks of friendship, patronage, and support; while theological justifications for turning the sword against pagans reinforced a hierarchical and exclusionary vision of Christian society, the boundaries of which were policed

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<sup>413</sup> *Chronicon pictum*, c. 65, p. 315: "hoc autem fecit, quia sepiissime amonitus a beato rege Stephano nec ad fidem Christi conversus, nec ab inferenda Hungaris iniuria conquievit."

<sup>414</sup> *Chronicon pictum*, c. 65, p. 315: "universum vero regnum eius latissimum et opulentissimum monarchie Hungarie adiunxit. Dicitur autem regnum illud Hungarice Erdeelw, quod irrigatur plurimis fluviis, in quorum arenis aurum colligitur et aurum terre illius optimum est."

by a king who acted as the highest agent of spiritual authority in his kingdom. Threats to the royally-enforced social order were not limited to foreign enemies or religious deviants, however. As we saw in the previous chapter, royal saints were consistently represented as lawgivers, judges, and peacekeepers. In protecting the peace from the internal disorder of criminals and other wrongdoers, they frequently enforced their verdicts forcefully.

Writers of history disagreed about whether it was more spiritually praiseworthy for the king to lean more towards harshness or mercy when passing his judgments. In the *Legenda minor* (c. 1095), St. Stephen acts as a harsh and merciless judge who, in shaping the Hungarian kingdom in his image, placed the “yoke and law of discipline onto [his peoples’] bent necks.”<sup>415</sup> The author writes approvingly of the severity of the punishments he handed down. For example, Stephen, judging a group of robbers who had predated a group of traveling Bulgars, demands of them: “why did you, transgressing the law of God, not choose mercy and condemn innocent men?” Although they beg him for leniency, he declares: “as you have done, so shall the Lord do to you before me.”<sup>416</sup> The *Legenda* author therefore turns the question of whether Stephen should show mercy back onto the perpetrators of the crime, asking why they had not shown mercy to their victims, and declares that God’s law requires that they be punished to the same degree as the harm they had caused. In the *Legenda*, the peace that Stephen is made to embody requires the frequent and brutal application of the sword, and justice is absolute in its inability to accommodate the continued existence of those who had transgressed against God’s law.

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<sup>415</sup> *Legenda minor*, p. 395-9: “in omnibus mandatis dei ‘fidelis dispensator’ existens, apud se cepit meditari, ut si populum iam pridem baptismatis consecratione renatum absque disciplina dimitteret, facile post errorem vanitatis sue iterum converteretur. Hunc secundum ecclesiasticam doctrinam instutens, iugum et legem discipline suppositis cervicibus adhibuit, omnesque inmunditias malorum prorsus destruxit.”

<sup>416</sup> *Legenda minor*, p. 398: “‘cur,’ inquit, ‘legem preceptorum dei transgredientes non intellexistis misericordiam et viros innocentie condemnastis? ‘Non enim auditores legis,’ sed transgressores feriendi sunt. Sicut fecistis, ita faciet dominus hodie vobis coram me.’”

Few other writers, from Hungary or elsewhere, were as uncompromising in their vision of royal justice and mercy as the author of the *Legenda minor*. Many, however, did speak approvingly of the value of royal strictness. Saxo Grammaticus, for example, crafted a series of character studies of the sons of King Svein Estridssen, in which he makes the argument that it was better for a king to be strict than lenient in disciplining his people. Of St. Knútr *rex*'s brother and predecessor, the largely unsuccessful Harald *kesja*, he writes: "on account of his weak and indulgent feebleness he neglected the severity of the law and disregarded everyone's unpunished acts, and all the defenses of the law as it was established were overthrown." What Harald had failed to understand, according to Saxo, was that "the strict cultivation of justice was more pleasing to the Lord than empty praise."<sup>417</sup> When he succeeded his brother, Knútr did not make this same mistake. Instead he quickly developed a reputation as a hard ruler. "When he observed that the force of ancient laws had been blunted and loosened by the extravagance of the powerful," Saxo wrote, "he strove with all his innate capability to renew their moral education."<sup>418</sup> This meant punishing wrongdoers with a heavy hand, and, as he spared neither the powerful nor the lowly, he soon earned widespread antipathy. In Saxo's eyes, however, this was a style of kingship more pleasing to the Lord than Harald's affected piety. This was because the exercise of royal justice had a direct connection to spiritual probity and salvation. The laxity of Harald's reign had shown that juridical negligence opened the door to moral and spiritual

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<sup>417</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, XI.10.8, pp. 828-30: "Haraldus uero solis sacrorum officiis deditus latarum a se legum seueritate neglecta impunitas omnium noxas enerui segnitie indulgentia preteribat omniaque statuti iuris munimenta conuulsi, ignarus plus deo synceram regni amministrationem quam inania superstitionis momenta placer seuerum iustitie cultum superuacua precum adulatione gratiorem existere."

<sup>418</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, XI.11.3, pp. 830-1: "cumque magnatum insolentia solutos hebetatosque prisci iuris neruos aspiceret, omnibus ingenii modis ad reparandum patrii moris disciplinam connisus probatoris iustitie cultum seruerissimis edidit institutis, contusumque et labentem equitatis tenorem in pristinum habitum reuocauit."

dissolution. As the Danes had grown unchecked in matters of the law, they had become similarly vulnerable to “empty acts of superstition.”<sup>419</sup> Knútr’s style of *disciplina* was necessary to return them to the stricter moral standards that had prevailed during the reigns of his father, Svein Estridssen, and his grandfather, Knútr the Great. Mercy of the kind that Harald *kesja* had practiced, lazy and misguided, was no mercy at all when it endangered wrongdoers’ souls.

When writers of history did praise the triumph of royal mercy above royal discipline, they were careful to distinguish between those situations in which mercy was a virtue and those in which it was not. The author of *Legendary Saga*, for example, wrote of St. Óláfr that although he was unyielding in his punishment of criminals, robbers and pagans, he was always merciful towards those who had only caused injury to himself.<sup>420</sup> He also, as we have seen, regularly gave *grið* to his defeated noble opponents. While *Legendary Saga*’s Óláfr showed mercy on the battlefield while remaining strict as a juridical authority, however, the writer of the Hungarian *Chronicon pictum* inverted those priorities in his characterization of St. Ladislaus. On the battlefield, Ladislaus rejected mercy as feminine and weak. Ladislaus “‘destroyed his enemies on every side and extirpated his adversaries,’ [Sir. 47:8]” the chronicler writes, comparing him to the Old Testament king David.<sup>421</sup> But the *Gesta* chronicler goes on to explain that after Ladislaus had won the Hungarian throne, he no longer strove for worldly glory, but instead kept the fear of God before his eyes “in all his judgments, and most of all in criminal cases that imposed a blood penalty for vengeance or punishment.” Enlightened by divine inspiration, Ladislaus “softened

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<sup>419</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, XI.10.8, pp. 828-9: “ignarus plus deo synceram regni amministrationem quam inania superstitionis momenta placere seuerumque iustitie cultum superuacua precum adulatione gratiorem existere.”

<sup>420</sup> *Legendary Saga*, c. 28, p. 80.

<sup>421</sup> *Chronicon pictum*, c. 131, p. 404: “convertit enim inimicos suos undique et exstirpavit adversarios.”



the severity of laws with the mildness of mercy.”<sup>422</sup> Mercy may have been inappropriate on the battlefield; but once Ladislaus ruled as king, it became necessary for him to exercise the virtue of discernment.

Kings could not, however, forgive offences against themselves when they faced the rebellion or resistance of their people. Rebels did more than personally injure the king. By forcefully seeking to overthrow his rightfully mandated social order, they also undermined the peace of the kingdom. This is a point that St. Knútr *rex*’s biographers repeatedly emphasized in their narration of the rebellion that had led to Knútr’s martyrdom in 1086. Ælnoth of Canterbury, in his *Gesta*, described the Danish rebels using the same rhetoric of turbulence, rage, and irrationality that he and other writers also deployed to describe paganism. For Ælnoth, the connection between the two groups was clear. The rebels, like pagans, had been agitated into action by the devil:

The messengers of impiety and madness rushed here and there, inciting the minds not only of those quick to evil acts, but even those of the simple and innocent, so that they might increase their accomplices in evil and everywhere disturb the law of truth and justice...the people were aroused to every crime, and like a beast ready to consume, thirsting, they wished to sate themselves with royal blood.<sup>423</sup>

The anonymous author of the *Passio sancti Kanuti* likewise described the descent of the Danish rebels into an animalistic rage:

At last, in truth, with nearly everyone from the northern regions, which are called Vendel, conspiring against their lord and his Christ, their opposition was revealed, and clear dissent seemed to arise, sweeping through like a storm; and thus, raging through Jutland

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<sup>422</sup> *Chronicon pictum*, c. 131, p. 405: “semper enim timorem Domini pre oculis habuit in omnibus iudiciis suis et maxime in causis criminalibus, ubi ultio sive pena sanguis irrogatur. Divina quidem inspiratione illustratus sciebat, quod rex non tam regat, quam regatur. Unde in omnibus iudiciis suis mitigata legum severitate semper utebatur misericordie lenitate.”

<sup>423</sup> Ælnoth of Canterbury, *Gesta Swenomagni*, c. 16, p. 103: “Discurrunt ergo impietatis et dementie intercessores et non modo ad scelera promptos, uerum etiam simplicium atque innocentium incitant animos, ut complices scelerum multiplicent et ueritatis ac iusticie ius usquequaque perturbent...plebs ad omne sceus incitatur et uelut belua ad deglutendum parata sanguine sitibunda cupit saturari regio...”

and inciting [the Jutes] to the same fury, and each day gathering more arms, they came to the city known as Schleswig, roaring and gnashing, and followed the trail of the holy king.<sup>424</sup>

While Oddr Snorrason had implied the essential inhumanity of pagans on account of their inability to recognize rational arguments for Christ's divinity, Knútr *rex*'s biographers claimed that the Danish rebels had placed themselves outside of the ordered bounds of Christian society by rejecting the rulership of their king. In doing so, they had descended from their humanity into an animalistic state: they "roared (*fremens*)" and "gnashed (*frendens*)," like a beast thirsting for royal blood.

By deploying the same language to describe anti-royalist rebels that they employed to describe pagans, writers like Ælnoth again elided the royal saint's political and religious goals. The king imposed his rule on his kingdom, sometimes forcefully, because he sought to organize the properly ordered socio-political relationships that constituted a peaceful Christian society arranged under God's law. By undermining this process, rebels threatened the salvation of the king's subjects. As Ælnoth wrote: "when Knútr tried to snatch them from the slavery of sin and lead them back to the liberty of justice, 'seeing they see not and hearing they hear not [Is. 6:9], they considered him to be an invader of their ancient peace and calm and a disruptor of their prior liberty.'"<sup>425</sup> Blind to the true nature of peace, which was not tranquility but adherence to divine law, rebels endangered the spiritual health of the kingdom, and could not be as easily

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<sup>424</sup> *Passio sancti Kanuti* c. 6, p. 68: "ad ultimum uero pene omnibus contra dominum et christum eius conspirantibus a parte aquilonari, que appellatur Wendele, aperta est contradictio, manifestaue repugnatio uidetur oriri tamquam turbo inuoluens; et sic per partes Iutensium seuendo et eos ad eundem furem prouocando, octidie plura congregans arma, ad ciuitatem, que uocatur Schlesuic, fremens ec frendens sancti regis insequitur uestigia."

<sup>425</sup> Ælnoth of Canterbury, *Gesta Swenomagni*, c. 8, p. 94: "nam cum ipse eos a peccati seruitute eripere et ad iusticie libertatem conaretur reducere, audiendo non intellegentes et obcecati uidentes ueluti antique pacis et quietis inuasorem ac pristine libertatis eum deputabant ereptorem."

forgiven as wrongdoers who had only personally injured the king. In seeking to preserve peace against the turbulence of rebellion, it was therefore necessary that the king respond to them with violence.

Narratives of royal rebellion most often ended not in the restoration of God's law, but instead in royal martyrdom. The king's death at the hands of his people, though, did not represent a permanent defeat of his social order. Instead, writers of history agreed that the king's martyrdom was the greatest of his battlefield miracles, which ultimately, if not immediately, ensured the triumph of his vision of peace. If pagans and rebels alike were described as blind to truth, then the martyrdom of the king was an undeniable act of revelation, which burned away the pretense of false peace and witnessed the king as the agent of divine law. For example, Óláfr's death at Stiklestad in 1030 at first appeared to have halted the momentum of the nascent Norwegian monarchy, which was subsumed once again beneath Danish imperial hegemony. According to the *konungasögur*, however, Óláfr's projects of royal centralization and Christianization were vindicated soon after his death by the battlefield miracles that gave witness to his sanctity. In these scenes, Thórir *hundr* – who had been among Óláfr's loudest detractors, and who was named as one of the four men who had given him his death wounds – serves as a stand-in for the magnates whose error Óláfr's death revealed. Snorri Sturluson writes that Thórir, “the first of those powerful men who had stood against the king,” fittingly became “the first to witness his sanctity” when he witnessed the preternatural beauty of Óláfr's corpse as he cleaned it on the battlefield, and when the dead king's blood healed a wound he had sustained in the battle.<sup>426</sup> Óláfr's first post-mortem healing miracle was therefore both an act of forgiveness and

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<sup>426</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, c. 230, p. 387: “ok er hann þerrði blóð af andlitinu, þá sagði hann svá síðan, at andlit konungsins var svá fagrt, at roði var í kinnum, sem þá at hann svæfi, en

one revealing of his sanctity. In *Legendary Saga*, the dynamics of the miracle narrative are inverted. That author reported that as Thórir tended to Óláfr's body, he saw the king ascend to heaven in a great flash of light, the brightness of which permanently blinded him. Afterward, Thórir declared: "now I recognize his sanctity."<sup>427</sup> In this telling of the story, Thórir is punished for opposing the king, while his punishment makes literal the blindness of the rebels.

Images of illumination and revelation also predominate in Saxo Grammaticus's account of Knútr *rex*'s martyrdom in 1086. Although the Danish rebels celebrated over the king's dead body, attempting to snuff out the glory of his death as they had "extinguished his mortal light," Saxo declared that "divine brightness cannot be consumed in human darkness." Knútr's burial site quickly became the site of regular healing miracles, and, as Saxo explained, "the brilliance of the miracles drove away the darkness of doubt with bright light."<sup>428</sup> But even then the Jutes, who had led the rebellion, continued to defend their actions against him. Saxo – himself likely a canon of the Scanian church of Lund, and frequently critical of the Jutes – condemned their perpetuation of their "errors of the past."<sup>429</sup> The author of the *Passio sancti Kanuti*, however, claimed that the Lord sent a famine to punish the Jutes for their act of regicide and subsequent stubbornness. As the famine laid Jutland low, it was made clear "through visions and revelations to many people" that Knútr deserved saintly reverence. The Jutish bishops and priests therefore joined with the inhabitants of Funen "in good faith" to elevate the king's body in recognition of

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miklu bjartara er áðr, meðan hann lifði...varð Þórir hundr fyrst til þess at halda upp helgi konungsins þeira ríkismanna, er þar höfðu verit í mótstöðuflokki hans."

<sup>427</sup> *Legendary Saga*, c. 86, p. 204: "'Oc iatom ver,' sagðe Þorer, 'haeliaglaeik hans.'"

<sup>428</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, XI.15.2, pp. 860-1: "sed humanis tenebris diuinus splendor inolui non poterat. Quippe miraculorum nitor dubietatis caliginem clara rerum luce pellebat. Nam sanctitatis eius medela uarias imbecillitatum affectiones remediorum salubritate prosecuta est."

<sup>429</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, XI.15.3, pp. 862-3.

his martyrdom, and following the royal *translatio*, the famine came to an end. In the *Passio*, therefore, Knútr's postmortem miracles revealed the Jutes' error and compelled them to join right-thinking Danes in venerating the king they had once despised.

## CONCLUSION

The waging of war and the perpetration of violence are central to the histories of the royal saints of Scandinavia and Hungary. Few medieval historians were able to ignore that their subjects had been members of a military elite, whose material and social resources were dependent on their ability to subdue their opponents, forcefully impose their political authority, and build up their wealth and that of their supporters through predation. But violence was a complex and culturally polyvalent category in high medieval society. Eleventh-century ecclesiastical reformers had emphasized that the spilling of blood rendered priests ritually impure. This had given rise to anxieties about the spiritual effects of bloodshed for members of the laity, which had been met in part in the twelfth century by the articulation of new crusading theologies of militant pilgrimage and the foundation of new military orders. In texts celebrating the lives of holy kings, these issues were particularly complicated. The royal saint was at once a member of the laity and a Christian saint. Did his shedding of blood jeopardize his spiritual and salvational status, as it did for priests?

The answer for most medieval historians, as we have seen, was that it did not. Instead they recognized that war-making was a fundamental function of kingship. Its centrality to conceptions of political authority had long predated the Church, and it continued to define Christian rulers from Constantine forward, even as churchmen developed irenic theologies and attempted to separate the professional religious from the world and its pollutants. By the time

that the Scandinavians and Hungarians made their first efforts to write their peoples' histories through the persons of their founder-kings, they had centuries of material on Christian kingship on which to draw.

Although violence remained a complicated category within the histories of the northern and eastern royal saints, eleventh- and twelfth-century historians developed a consistent logic of royal-saintly violence. They represented those categories of people who in some way threatened the social order of the kingdom – including pagans, rebels, and political opponents – as licit targets of royal violence. They often used rhetorics of emotional disorder and dehumanization in order to do so. Pagans, thus, had an “insensible and cruel nature” (*duritiam et crudelis ingenia*) and were governed by a “bestial stupidity” (*beluina stultitia*) in their inability to see the light of Christ's message. Likewise, rebels who were overcome by the turbulent emotion of rage “growled and gnashed” like animals as they threatened their king.

The broad applicability of this language to religious as well as political opposition meant that royal violence became a powerful, if blunt, narrative marker of social boundaries in historical texts. In their emotional disorder and irrational behavior, these people stood outside the bounds of the king's properly ordered society. Through proper *correctio*, which must be founded on sincere *caritas*, the king might be able to lead them back from their error to correct behavior. If they continued to threaten the social order, however, the king must react forcefully. To wield violence in this sense was not disruptive of peace: instead, peace could often only be achieved through the exertion of force to protect Christian society, as the king had harmoniously ordered it. Violence, therefore, was not just a straightforwardly problematic category in the histories of the royal saints. It was narratively essential for drawing the social boundaries of the Christian kingdom.

## 5. ROYAL SANCTITY AND MASCULINITY

Sanctified kings were a lot of things: they were princes and rulers, knights and crusaders, fighters and Christians, husbands and fathers. They were also men, and that gendered identity inflected every other social role they played. As W.M. Ormrod has noted, the masculinity of the medieval king has often remained invisible; but despite, or perhaps because of, its powerful normativity, understanding royal masculinity is crucial to understanding medieval monarchical culture.<sup>430</sup> The masculinity of the sanctified king in particular was at once exceptional and fraught, in that he was the idealized representative of multiple modes of authority that did not always mesh harmoniously. His unavoidable involvement in a secular world that was, by the end of the twelfth century, increasingly described as polluting threatened to conflict with his status as God's saint, as the latter category became more and more often restricted to men who had fled the world and rejected many of its traditional markers of elite masculinity.<sup>431</sup>

In the field of medieval history, as elsewhere, masculinity has proven to be a powerful category of analysis over the last several decades, facilitating studies of, for example, the organization of social roles, sexualities, life-cycles, power structures, and so on.<sup>432</sup> Here, it will

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<sup>430</sup> W.M. Ormrod, "Monarchy, Martyrdom, and Masculinity: England in the Later Middle Ages," in Patricia H. Cullum and Katherine J. Lewis, eds., *Holiness and Masculinity in the Middle Ages* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004): 174-91.

<sup>431</sup> See particularly Jo Ann McNamara, "The *Herrenfrage*: The Restructuring of the Gender System, 1050 - 1150," in Clare A. Lees, ed., *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994): 3-29.

<sup>432</sup> On the theorization of masculinity and its growth as a field of study, see R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). John Tosh provides a useful introduction to the field and its uses by historians in his "What Should Historians do with Masculinity?", in *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd., 2005): 29-60. Masculinity has likewise become

be used as another route of entry into discourses of royal sanctity in the history writing of the Latin peripheries. We shall explore what the diverse masculinities of the holy king can tell us about conceptualizations of saintly kingship. As with violence in the previous chapter, masculinity is a category that allows us to interrogate with particular precision the internal tensions within the person of the royal saint. How did writers of history reconcile the masculinity of saintliness and the masculinity of kingship? Were there particular contexts in which these two modes of gendered identity were safely congruent, rather than oppositional? And how were these categories represented and deployed in a historiographical context?

To unpack these issues, we shall first explore two hegemonic modes of royal masculinity.<sup>433</sup> The first, which we can broadly label as martial masculinity, speaks to the king's secular responsibilities; while the second, devotional masculinity, speaks to his concern for his eternal soul. As we shall see, these typologies were polyvalent and flexible within medieval historical discourse. They are therefore useful not only for drawing out the qualities of royal masculinity as it was represented in historical writing, but also for testing the extent to which it

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central to the understanding of gender in the Middle Ages. Important collections on the subject have included Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Bonnie Wheeler, eds., *Becoming Male in the Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Dawn M. Hadley, ed., *Masculinity in Medieval Europe* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Jacqueline Murray, ed., *Conflicted Identities and Multiple Masculinities: Men in the Medieval West* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Samantha J.E. Riches and Sarah Salih, eds., *Gender and Holiness: Men, Women and Saints in Late Medieval Europe* (London: Routledge, 2002); Cullum and Lewis, eds., *Holiness and Masculinity in the Middle Ages*; and Jennifer D. Thibodeaux, ed., *Negotiating Clerical Identities: Priests, Monks and Masculinity in the Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); and Patricia H. Cullum and Katherine J. Lewis, eds., *Religious Men and Masculine Identity in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2013). To date, Katherine Lewis has carried out the most substantial studies of the intersections of kingship and masculinity. See her "Becoming a Virgin King: Richard II and Edward the Confessor," in Riches and Salih, eds., *Gender and Holiness*, pp. 86-100; "Edmund of East Anglia, Henry VI and Ideals of Kingly Masculinity," in Cullum and Lewis, eds., *Holiness and Masculinity*, pp. 158-73; *Kingship and Masculinity in Late Medieval England* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013); and "'Imitate, too, this king in virtue, who could have done ill, and did it not:' Lay Sanctity and the Rewriting of Henry VI's Manliness," in Cullum and Lewis, eds., *Religious Men and Masculine Identity in the Middle Ages*, pp. 126-42.

<sup>433</sup> On hegemonic masculinity, Connell, *Masculinities*, 76-81.



as a category was able to synthesize opposing ideas or hold together unresolved contradictions. We shall then consider how representations of diverse masculinities were written into historical texts at a narrative level. Gender, it will become clear, was a central organizing principle of the histories of the Latin Christian peripheries. Certain types of episodes, tropes, and scripts that relied on gendered ideas or gendered interactions facilitated the communication of particular meanings to the readers of historical narratives. In this sense, therefore, masculinity was not just a prescriptive or ideological message of the medieval histories – it was itself a tool of effective historical communication.

## MODES OF ROYAL-SAINTLY MASCULINITY

To communicate ideas about their society and its development over time, medieval historians necessarily drew on a variety of culturally recognizable expressions of gendered characteristics, behaviors, and social relationships. The discursive potency of these ideas came not only from their familiarity, but also their flexibility. Here we will outline the key features of these masculine types, analyzing how they are represented across a variety of textual traditions.

### *Martial Masculinity*

First we will examine one of the most fundamental masculinities inhabited by the royal saint: that of the warrior. Chapter Four contended with the moral issues of violence, bloodshed, and pollution raised by the saint's wielding of the sword. Here, we will consider some of the major external markers, emotional profiles, and homosocial behaviors of martial masculinity as it is represented in the histories of the royal saints. The ability to fight and lead men in battle was among the most significant elements of elite secular masculinity throughout the Middle Ages. War-making, an activity almost always restricted to men, was a crucial way in which princes and

kings engaged in the world. Martial masculinity as it was represented in the histories of the royal saints therefore signified much more than the king's physical capabilities. It was also revealing of his relationships with other men, including his friends, kin, dependents, and enemies. It demarcated a specific range of emotional expression appropriate for an elite man, including anger, fear, and love. And, in the context of Latin Christendom's frontiers, it allowed for commentary on the differences – and, occasionally, similarities – between Christian and pagan societies.

The Norse *konungasögur* were products of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but the societies their writers described were those of an earlier age. Saga writers often drew on skaldic poetry that was contemporary with the kings whose lives they were narrating in order to represent them as war-leaders, raiders, and vikings. In this poetic tradition, the masculinity of the viking-king was, at its core, agonistic. It was challenged, performed, and validated in contests of might, and it was most clearly visible when contrasted against the deficiencies of lesser men. In praise poetry, therefore, a common marker of distinction for the successful viking was the fear that he induced in otherwise brave men. Sigvatr Þórðarson, the lifelong friend and skald of St. Óláfr Haraldsson, made frequent use of this trope. In *Erfidrápa Óláfs helga*, he declares: “I think it was fearful for the distributors of the flame of the lagoon [generous men] to look into the spear-sharp eyes of battle-glad Óláfr; the men from Trøndelag did not dare to look into his snake-bright eyes; the king seemed terrifying.”<sup>434</sup> Similarly, in *Víkingavísur*, he describes how

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<sup>434</sup> Sigvatr Þórðarson, *Erfidrápa Óláfs helga*, stanza 13, ed. and trans. Judith Jesch, in Diana Whaley, ed., *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 1: From Mythical Times to c. 1035*, Part I (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), p. 679: “Geir - hykk grimmligt vöru gunnreifum Ôleifi loghreytöndum líta lóns í hvassar sjónir. Þorðut þrœnzkir fyrðar - þótti hersa dróttin ógurligr - í augu ormfrôn séa hônum.”

fighters fled before Óláfr: “few stood waiting for their wounds.”<sup>435</sup> On the field of battle which was so often the stage for the subject of skaldic praise-poetry, a king’s martial prowess could be expressed through the fear he induced in others.

While the battlefield represented an important stage for the *agon* that structured many male relationships in the Norse *konungasögur*, away from the battlefield the northern war-leader maintained important non-combative relationships with other men, particularly his friends, family, and retainers. The social world that St. Óláfr inhabited at the beginning of the eleventh century was one shaped by the dynamics of kinship and friendship.<sup>436</sup> He relied on the support of his immediate family, including his father-in-law, the locally powerful petty king Sigurðr syr; the members of his retinue (*hirð*); and the men whom he made his officials by endowing them with land (*lendir menn*) or by establishing them as stewards of his property (*ármenn*). These homosocial relationships were constituted and maintained by gift-giving and patronage, and were performed in public spaces, such as the royal hall Óláfr constructed in Nidarós. Snorri Sturluson describes Óláfr’s hall as an imposingly grand space in which Óláfr sat flanked by his household bishop and clerics, his counsellors, and his marshal. There he might feast his men, making a show of his ability to provide beer, mead, and meat seemingly effortlessly to the large crowds of fighting men with whom he surrounded himself. The hall also served as accommodations for

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<sup>435</sup> Sigvatr Þórðarson, *Vikingavísur*, stanza 2, ed. and trans. Judith Jesch, in Diana Whaley, ed., *Poetry from the Kings’ Sagas 1: From Mythical Times to c. 1035*, Part I (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), p. 536: “Sitt öttu fjör fótum - fær beið ór stað sára - enn, þeirs undan runnu, allvaldr, vúendr gjalda.”

<sup>436</sup> See particularly Lars Hermanson, *Släkt, vänner och makt: en studie av elitens politiska kultur i 1000-talets Danmark* (Göteborg: Historiska Institutionen, 2000); Jón Viðar Sigurðsson and Thomas Smålberg, eds., *Friendship and Social Networks in Scandinavia, c. 1000 - 1800* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013); and Sigurðsson, *Viking Friendship: The Social Bond in Iceland and Norway, c. 900 - 1300* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017).

himself and his retinue, as well as any visiting “noble men” (*goðgir menn*).<sup>437</sup>

In imagining the masculine social world of the viking-king, centered on the *hirð* and the hall, the Norse saga writers described a traditional society that had, by the turn of the thirteenth century, largely passed into memory. By then, new modes of martial masculinity had become culturally dominant in European literature. The knightly-chivalric identity, unlike the viking ideal-type, had developed in the socio-economic context of the landed aristocracy and the cultural context of courtly culture and romantic literature.<sup>438</sup> It nevertheless became popular in the North as well as the South: the so-called “chivalric sagas” (*riddarasögur*), which translated stories from the French romantic canon into Norse, were among some of the most widely circulated saga texts of the Scandinavian Middle Ages.<sup>439</sup> The *konungasögur*, too, were often inflected by romantic and chivalric themes, and even traditional viking-kings like Óláfr were often represented in a quasi-knightly mode. This is most clearly evident in the *Legendary Saga* of c. 1200, where St. Óláfr is described in one miracle story as the leader of a ghostly band of “God’s knights” (*guðs riddarar*), and where one of his most distinctive personal characteristics is

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<sup>437</sup> Snorri Sturluson, “Óláfs saga helga,” *Heimskringla* II, c. 77, pp. 72-3: “Óláfr konungr lét húsa konungsgarð í Niðarósi...ef goðgir menn kómu til konungs, var þeim vel skipat.”

<sup>438</sup> There is a vast literature on knighthood, aristocratic culture, and chivalry. See particularly Tony Hunt, “The Emergence of the Knight in France and England 1000-1200,” trans. W.T.H. and Erika Jackson, in W.T.H. Jackson, ed. *The Concept of Knighthood in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1981): 1-22; Peter Coss, *The Knight in Medieval England 1000-1400* (Conshohocken, PA: Combined Books, 1993); Matthew Strickland, *War and Chivalry: The Conduct and Perception of War in England and Normandy, 1066-1217* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Constance Brittain Bouchard, *Strong of Body, Brave and Noble: Chivalry and Society in Medieval France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); Richard Kauper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Ruth Mazo Karras, *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), pp. 20-66; and David Crouch, *The Birth of Nobility: Constructing Aristocracy in England and France 900-1300* (Harlow, UK: Pearson Longman, 2005).

<sup>439</sup> Marianne Kalinke and P.M. Mitchell, *Bibliography of Old Norse-Icelandic Romances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985); Kalinke, “Norse Romance (Riddarasögur),” in Clover and Lindow, eds., *Old Norse-Icelandic Literature*, pp. 316-65.

his honorable treatment of his defeated enemies and his willingness to give them *grið* (peace).<sup>440</sup>

Beyond Norway, this style of knightly masculinity was particularly pronounced in the legends of twelfth-century saintly princes. The biographers of St. Ladislaus I of Hungary and St. Knútr Lavard of Denmark, for example, celebrated their youthful virility, impressive physiognomies, martial prowess, courage and boldness, and emotionally intense relationships with their fellow fighting men.<sup>441</sup> The author of the *Legenda sancti Ladislai* (c. 1200) claimed that young Ladislaus was physically distinguished amongst his peers, for he had “strong hands, a beautiful face, and a desirable physiognomy, with limbs as great as those of a lion; while his tall stature raised him above the shoulders of other men.”<sup>442</sup> He distinguished himself, too, on the battlefield. According to the *Chronicon pictum* (c. 1358), Ladislaus always led his men into battle, displaying his bravery in his disregard for danger.<sup>443</sup> His imposing stature and eagerness to charge into battle made him fearsome to his enemies, who, like St. Óláfr’s adversaries, often

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<sup>440</sup> See Bjørn Bandlien’s discussion of Óláfr’s giving of *grið* in “Hegemonic Memory, Counter-Memory, and Struggles for Royal Power: The Rhetoric of the Past in the Age of King Sverrir Sigurdsson of Norway,” *Scandinavian Studies* 85:3 (2013): 355-77.

<sup>441</sup> Ideals knighthood were also evident in twelfth-century rewritings of the legends of Anglo-Saxon martyr kings, particularly St. Edmund and St. Oswald, and in the late-twelfth-century legends of Charlemagne. See Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses*, pp. 161-73; Lewis, “Edmund of East Anglia, Henry VI and Ideals of Kingly Masculinity;” Peter Clemoes, *The Cult of St Oswald on the Continent* (Jarrow, 1983); Robert Folz, *Le souvenir et la légende de Charlemagne dans l’Empire germanique médiéval* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1951).

<sup>442</sup> *Legenda sancti Ladislai*, c. 3, p. 517: “erat enim manu fortis et visu desiderabilis et secundum phisonomiam leonis magnas habens extremitates, statura quippe procerus ceterisque hominibus ab humero supra preeminens ita, quod exuberante in ipso donorum plenitudine ipsa quoque corporis species regio dyademate dignum ipsum declararet.” For a close reading of this passage, see Kornél Szovák, “The Image of the Ideal King in Twelfth-Century Hungary: Remarks on the Legend of St Ladislaus,” in Anne Duggan, ed., *Kings and Kingship in Medieval Europe* (London: King’s College London Centre for Late Antique and Medieval Studies, 1993): 241-64. See also Ernő Marosi, “Der heilige Ladislaus als ungarischer Nationalheiliger,” *Acta Historiae Artium Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 33 (1987): 210-55; and László Veszprémy, “Dux et praeceptor Hierosolimitanorum: König Ladislaus (László) als imaginärer Kreuzritter,” in Balázs Nagy and Marcell Sebök, eds., *The Man of Many Devices, Who Wandered Full Many Ways: Festschrift in Honour of János M. Bak* (Budapest: Central European University, 1999): 470-7.

<sup>443</sup> *Chronicon pictum*, c. 102, pp. 366-9.

fled before him.<sup>444</sup> Ladislaus's presence on the battlefield therefore emboldened his men. The chronicler claimed that Ladislaus had strong affective relationships with the band of *iuvenes* he led, and that the intense emotionality of their bonds collectively strengthened them on the battlefield. He writes, for example, that Ladislaus had wept before he led his men into battle with the Cuman warleader known as Kopulch, and swore that he would rather die with them than see their wives and children in captivity.<sup>445</sup>

The duty to protect women and children was another recurring element of Ladislaus's knightly masculinity in the *Chronicon*. Among the most famous of St. Ladislaus's exploits was his rescue of a young Hungarian woman from her Cuman captor, which became for the chronicler an opportunity to praise Ladislaus's masculinity at the expense of the young woman who had been the Cuman's victim. He claims that she had pleaded with Ladislaus to spare the pagan's life, proving that "there is no faith in women, because she wished to free him due to strong sexual desire." Ladislaus rejected the woman's pleas for mercy, and, having "severed [the Cuman's] tendons" (*absciso nervo*), killed him.<sup>446</sup> This scene contrasts the weak femininity of the Hungarian woman with Ladislaus's immovable strength of will, and codes sexual desire and mercy as feminine and the willingness to do violence as masculine. It also draws a clear gendered distinction between Ladislaus, a *miles Christi*, and his pagan enemy. The latter, defeated as a warrior, becomes an emasculated object of feminine sexual desire, while an

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<sup>444</sup> *Chronicon pictum*, c. 102, pp. 366-9; c. 105, pp. 370-1; c. 121, pp. 388-91; c. 129, pp. 400-3.

<sup>445</sup> *Chronicon pictum*, c. 137, p. 413: "rex autem Ladizlaus militibus suis dicebat: 'utilius est michi mori vobiscum, quam uxores vestras et filios videre in captivitate.' Haec dices lacrimabatur et primus vexillo rubeo impetum fecit in castra Cunorum."

<sup>446</sup> *Chronicon pictum*, c. 102, p. 369: "quem puella valde rogavit, ne eum interficeret, sed ut dimitteret. Unde in hoc notatur, quod fides in mulieribus non sit quia forte amore stupri illum liberare voluit. Sanctus autem dux diu cum eo luctando et absciso nervo illum interfecit."

alternate reading of Ladislaus's hamstringing of him could also suggest that the Hungarian prince had violently destroyed his vigor, virility, or even sexual capacity (*nervus*). The *Chronicon* author thus uses the episode to set Christian knighthood and pagan sexual violence in opposition to one another, and to celebrate the triumph of the former over the latter's failure of masculinity.

We can compare this scene, in which a feminized paganism contrasts with the idealized masculinity of the Christian knight, with Saxo Grammaticus's account of St. Knútr Lavard's conquest of the Obotrites. Saxo's characterization of Knútr as a youthful knight in the service of Niels, his uncle and king, is in many ways similar to that of Ladislaus in the *Legenda*. Saxo describes Knútr as a *miles* and as the leader of a band of other young knights (*equites*), amongst whom he was distinguished by his physical prowess, instinctive leadership, and honorable and honest character.<sup>447</sup> Knútr's most notable victories included his triumph over the Obotrite *knes*, Heinrik, to whom Knútr was a maternal cousin. According to Saxo, Knútr first overwhelmed Heinrik with force of arms until the other man could no longer put up a defense against him. Then Knútr, "moved by the blood that connected them closely, having publicly acted as an enemy, now privately acted as a friend." He led a small band of knights to Heinrik's residence, where he declared their kinship and expressed his desire for reconciliation.<sup>448</sup> Whereas the Hungarian chronicler treated the pagan Cuman as Ladislaus's natural foe, to be dominated by his hero's martial prowess and superior masculinity, Saxo instead describes Heinrik as a potential ally for Knútr, whom he wins over through his honorable behavior and willingness to engage

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<sup>447</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, XIII.5.10-11, pp. 928-9.

<sup>448</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, XIII.3.5, pp. 910-12: "Postremo quum totas Henrici vires prudentia sua ac fortitudine debilitasset, sanguinis, quo illum proxime contingebat, natura actus ut publice hostem, ita priuatim amicum egit."

him in friendship. Their new alliance is marked affectively by the shedding of tears and an embrace, and socially by Heinrik's feasting of Knútr and his men over two consecutive nights.<sup>449</sup> For Saxo, this representation of a knightly masculinity that achieves victory not only through force of arms, but also through homosocial bonding, serves narratively to explain Knútr's achievement of the title of *knes* of the Obotrites after Heinrik's death in 1127/8. In contrast to Helmold of Bosau, who claimed that Knútr had purchased the office from King Lothar III of Germany, Saxo asserts that Knútr had come into the position as a result of his friendship with Heinrik. Far from subordinating himself to the German king, Knútr had therefore earned the title as a result of his good character and correct performance of the ideals of knightly behavior.<sup>450</sup> As it does so often in Saxo's chronicle, Knútr's princely character both determines and explains his political achievements.

However, Saxo's claim that Knútr had subordinated Wendish paganism in the 1120s through the formation of masculine friendship was hardly a universal representation of the duke's reputed treatment of non-Christians. Elsewhere, Knútr was styled as a quasi-crusader, whose victories over the Wends anticipated the later triumphs of his son, Valdemar I, in the same region.<sup>451</sup> Alexander III's canonization of Knútr on November 4, 1169 came four days after he had issued a bull recognizing the authority of the bishop of Roskilde over the island of Rügen,

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<sup>449</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, XIII.3.5: "Quibus ut Henricus fidem habuit, fuge meditationem amoris indicio castiauit. Enimuero tabule innixus suffuso lachrymis ore infoelicem Daniam futuram, dum tali uiro caruerit, aiebat, se uero amicitiam eius syncera amodo fide culturum...deinde ingredientem amplexatus haud parcius lachrymas quam epulum prebuit."

<sup>450</sup> Helmold of Bosau, *Chronica Slavorum*, p. 188. See also John H. Lind, "Knes Kanutus: Knud Lavard's Political Project," in John Bergsagel, David Hiley, and Thomas Riis, eds., *Of Chronicles and Kings: National Saints and the Emergence of Nation States in the High Middle Ages* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2015): 103-28, at p. 114-17.

<sup>451</sup> Janus Møller Jensen, "Sclavorum expugnator: Conquest, Crusade, and Danish Royal Ideology in the Twelfth Century," *Crusades* 2 (2004): 55-81; Kurt Villads Jensen, "Creating a Crusader Saint: Canute Lavard and Others of that ilk," in Bergsagel, Hiley, and Riis, eds., *Of Chronicles and Kings*, pp. 51-72.



which Valdemar had captured the previous year. The pope, as well as the Danish king, therefore recognized the connection between Knútr's canonization and the Danish crown's victory over its pagan neighbors. As we have seen in Chapter One, this association was further developed at the *translatio* of Knútr's remains in Ringsted on June 25, 1170. Before the assembled Danish episcopate and nobility, Valdemar elevated his holy father's body in a ceremony that celebrated his own fulfillment of Knútr's ongoing campaign against paganism. The office for the *translatio* opened with a *capitula* praising the duke's wielding of the sword against the enemies of the Christian faith: "blessed is the man on whose head the Lord places a crown, and whom He encircles with the wall of salvation, and whom he arms with the shield of faith and the sword to conquer all the enemy peoples."<sup>452</sup> This was an image of the Christian king that left little room for friendship with or accommodation of pagans. Instead, the passage echoes the spiritualized martial imagery of Ephesians 6.<sup>453</sup> Knútr had taken up the shield and sword of faith in conquest; and his martial capability, wielded against a religious other, had become a virtue of a Christian saint.

### *Devotional Masculinity*

In their activities as vikings, war-leaders, and knights, royal saints inhabited an elite

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<sup>452</sup> "In festis sancti Canuti ducis ad horas et missam," ed. Michael Chesnutt, "The Medieval Danish Liturgy of St Knud Lavard," *Bibliotheca Arnemagnaeana* 42 (2003): 1-160, at p. 87: "Beatus vir, cuius capiti dominus coronam imposuit, muro salutis circumdedit, scuto fidei et gladio muniuit ad expugnandas gentes et omnes inimicos."

<sup>453</sup> Ephesians 6:14-17: "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of justice, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace: in all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one. And take unto you the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." On this passage and its deployment in medieval thought, see particularly Philippe Buc, *Holy War, Martyrdom, and Terror: Christianity, Violence and the West* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), at pp. 72-3.

masculinity that was located firmly within the world. But each of them also had a reputation as a spiritual exemplar who looked beyond the earthly realm to the kingdom of heaven. We will next explore what Katherine Lewis has called “devotional masculinity:” that is, how men expressed their spirituality and piety, both in institutional and private settings, in ways that were inflected by social and religious status.<sup>454</sup> The eleventh and twelfth centuries saw significant shifts in the ways in which the Christian faithful at all levels of society practiced their devotion. Reformers gradually but ultimately successfully enforced the norm of clerical celibacy, thereby reemphasizing male sexual renunciation as a marker of spiritual achievement, as well as clearly demarcating the clerical and secular statuses on the basis of sexual purity.<sup>455</sup> The twelfth century also saw an extraordinary burst of spiritual enthusiasm throughout Christian society, which manifested in the proliferation of new religious orders as well as new forms of piety pursued by both the religious and the laity. These new “apostolic” ways of life often involved a renewed dedication to interiority, affective piety, extreme bodily practice, and worldly withdrawal.<sup>456</sup> If

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<sup>454</sup> Katherine Lewis, “Male Saints and Devotional Masculinity in Late Medieval England,” *Gender & History* 24:1 (2012): 112-33.

<sup>455</sup> Bodily and sexual renunciation were, of course, a long-standing element of Christian askesis. See especially Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

<sup>456</sup> The scholarship on high and late medieval spirituality and devotion is vast. See as a starting point the classic works by Herbert Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages*, trans. Steven Rowan (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995); Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, trans. Catherine Misrahi (New York: Fordham University Press, 1961); Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); and André Vauchez, *The Spirituality of the Medieval West From the Eighth to the Twelfth Century*, trans. Colette Friedlander (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1993). On the impact of contemporary spiritual trends on saints’ cults, see Vauchez’s *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, trans. Jean Birell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). On the development of mystical piety and bodily practice in the late Middle Ages, see especially Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991); Giles Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); and Karma Lochrie, *Margery Kempe and the Translations of the Flesh* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

these trends posed a challenge to the masculinity of religious men, who by vowing themselves to perpetual chastity had already removed themselves in a significant way from the gendered markers of the lay elite, they proved even more difficult to reconcile with the norms of royal masculinity.<sup>457</sup> Of necessity the king lived within the world. The behaviors of self-deprivation that distinguished the ascetic posed a challenge to the king's personal authority, which depended on his perceived nobility of character and social capital.<sup>458</sup>

In the cultural centers of Latin Christendom, this tension between the devotional masculinity of the ascetic and the demands of kingship were often evident in the cults of royal saints. Both Edward the Confessor of England and Emperor Henry II, for example, were celebrated for having maintained their chastity within the bounds of their marriages to Queen Edith and Empress Cunigunde, which led after their deaths to succession disputes.<sup>459</sup> But were these ideals of sexual and bodily renunciation as visible in the royal cults of northern and eastern Europe, where churchmen were still more often preoccupied with conversion and institutionalization above reform? Again, we shall explore the polyvalency of the category of

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<sup>457</sup> The most influential proponent of a crisis of masculinity in the high Middle Ages has been Jo Ann McNamara. In her now-classic article, "The *Herrenfrage*," McNamara argued that this crisis, which developed out of the significant transformations that reshaped the socio-political world following the decline of the Carolingian order, manifested in part in a deep insecurity among religious men that by denying themselves sex they were relinquishing the primary marker of their gender. More recently, historians have pushed back against the "crisis of masculinity" narrative and pointed out that many of the elements of McNamara's *Herrenfrage* can be witnessed in the early Middle Ages as well. See especially Rachel Stone, *Morality and Masculinity in the Carolingian Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), as well as Janet L. Nelson, "Monks, Secular Men and Masculinity, c. 900," in Hadley, ed., *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, pp. 122-42.

<sup>458</sup> At issue, too, was the extent to which secular elites were willing to buy into modes of spiritual reform whose terms were defined by religious authorities. On this issue, see Rachel Stone, "'In What Way Can Those Who Have Left the World be Distinguished?': Masculinity and the Difference Between Carolingian Men," pp. 1-12, and Carol Braun Pasternack, "Ruling Masculinities: From Adam to Apollonius of Tyre in Corpus 201b," pp. 34-61, both in Cordelia Beattie and Kirstin A. Fenton, eds., *Intersections of Gender, Religion, and Ethnicity in the Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

<sup>459</sup> Dyan Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 94-131.

devotional masculinity as it is represented in the histories of the royal saints, as well as the appearance of new European cultural trends within formerly traditional societies.

One of the most frequently cited ways in which the royal saints of Norway, Denmark, and Hungary demonstrated their faith in the historical record was through church building and other acts of ecclesiastical patronage. St. Knútr IV of Denmark, for example, donated significant tracts of land to the diocese of Lund to finance the bishop's construction of a new cathedral and his foundation of a cathedral school; while St. Ladislaus of Hungary established the monastery of Szentjobb in Bihar to house the relic of St. Stephen's holy right hand, as well as the cathedral of Várad (Oradea) in which his remains were later said to have been buried. St. Stephen himself was remembered as a prolific patron of the Hungarian Church. He organized its eleven dioceses; began construction on the basilica of Our Lady, later known as St. Stephen's basilica, in Székesfehérvár; founded the monastery of St. Martin at Pannonhalma; and patronized priests, monks, and clerics throughout his kingdom.

Describing Stephen's church-building activities in his late-eleventh century *Vita sancti Stephani*, Bishop Hartvic cast Stephen as a benevolent patriarch who, through his patronage of holy ascetics, monks, and hermits, drew adjacent to their apostolic mode of spirituality while preserving the rich trappings of his kingship and his Church. Stephen not only endowed the Hungarian abbeys with "estates, manor houses, households, and revenues," Hartvic wrote: he also often investigated the monks' way of life (*conversatio*), "reproving the lazy and taking up the vigilant in his love."<sup>460</sup> Although he was himself in no way monastic, the king was represented as capable of skillfully judging and directing the monastic mode of life,

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<sup>460</sup> Hartvic, *Vita sancti Stephani*, c. 10, p. 416: "monachorum vitam et conversationem nunc per alios, nunc per seipsum explorando diligenter examinabat, torpentes arguens, vigiles sub dilectione constituens."

demonstrating both his spiritual acuity and his paternalistic authority. According to Hartvic, Stephen had a similar relationship with the cathedral chapter of Székesfehérvár. He had richly endowed that basilica with sculptures and marble floors, costly vestments and golden ornaments.<sup>461</sup> He had also guaranteed the church's liberty from episcopal oversight, so that Stephen himself personally directed the bishops who celebrated Mass there. When he was present, the king would send for the bishop to perform the sacrament, but when he was not, "no bishop would usurp the liberty to celebrate Mass or administer episcopal duties himself" without the agreement of the provost and the brothers of the chapter.<sup>462</sup> In describing his ecclesiastical patronage, therefore, Hartvic represented Stephen as patriarchal and pontifical, the undisputed supreme authority in the Hungarian Church as well as the Hungarian kingdom. This authority, in Hartvic's eyes, was clearly justified by his subtle discernment of the proper modes of religious life.

Writers similarly treated royal saints' generosity towards the poor and needful as a reflection of their paternalistic care for their subjects. Around 1122, Ælnoth of Canterbury wrote of Knútr IV of Denmark that he "nourished the hungry and the poor, clothed the naked and the cold, mercifully aided orphans and widows, and sustained pilgrims and the needy with stipends of mercy."<sup>463</sup> To provide in this way for the orphans, widows, and poor of the kingdom was not

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<sup>461</sup> Hartvic, *Vita sancti Stephani*, c. 12, pp. 417-18: "et, ut maiorem ipsius deffensionis misericordiam consequi valeret, in ipsa regalis sede civitate, que dicitur Alba, sub laude et titulo virginis eiusdem perpetue famosam et grandem basilicam opere mirifico, celaturis in chori pariete distinctis, pavimento tabulis marmoreis strato construere cepit. Quam, qui vidit, testimonium veritati perhibet verborum nostrorum innumerabilis palliorum paramentorum et aliorum ornamentorum ibi esse genera, thabulas circa altaria plures auro purissimo fabricatas, lapidum series preciosissimum in se continentes, ciborium arte mirabili supra Christi mensam erectum, cameram omni genere vasorum cristalinorum, onichinorum, aureorum, argenteorum pleniter refertam."

<sup>462</sup> Hartvic, *Vita sancti Stephani*, c. 12, p. 418: "in regis autem absentia absque prepositi et fratrum consensu nullus episcopus vel missam celebrandi vel cuiuslibet episcopalis officii exercendi sibi licentiam usurparet."

<sup>463</sup> Ælnoth of Canterbury, *Gesta Swenomagni*, c. 7, p. 93: "famelicos fouebat et pauperes, nudos uestiebat et algentes, orphanis et uiduis clementer succurrebat, peregrinos et egentes misericordie stipendiis sustentabat."

only to be a good king, it was to honor God. Of Stephen, the author of the *Legenda maior* similarly wrote: “he embraced the poor of Christ, or rather Christ in them, with such merciful and pious arms that no guest or pilgrim ever departed from him sorrowfully, without some sort of kindness or comfort.”<sup>464</sup> In this role, the king was still clearly a provider, capable of giving largesse to those who needed it. But it also allowed him to demonstrate a softer affect, and to reveal the mercy, kindness, and love, which were born of Christ, behind the royal majesty.

It was through affective language that writers were able to most clearly express the holy king’s interior piety. For example, the author of the *Legenda sancti Ladislai*, who worked shortly after the turn of the thirteenth century, wrote of the Hungarian king that he would often “reflect on the short-lived and transitory glory of the world with a smiling, sweet face, ‘hungering and thirsting after justice’ [Matt. 5:6]...for however much the flourishing world shone for him, in his heart he still thirsted with desire to be crucified in hope of the son of God.”<sup>465</sup> This characterization is consistent throughout the *Legenda*, where Ladislaus is represented as a strong and bold king who was motivated by his deeply felt devotion to Christ and who, despite his victories on the battlefield, always had his eyes fixed on the kingdom of heaven. In this text, there was therefore little tension between the holy king’s humility in the face of God and his earthly majesty, because the former would always support and supersede the latter. Far from undercutting his royal authority, Ladislaus’s devotion in fact only added to it: he was “armed

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<sup>464</sup> *Legenda maior*, c. 12, p. 387: “tantis igitur misericordie et pietatis brachiis Christi pauperes, immo Christum in ipsis amplexabatur, quod nullus umquam hospes et peregrinus ab eo sine benignitatis alicuius solamine tristis abscessit.”

<sup>465</sup> *Legenda sancti Ladislai*, c. 3, pp. 516-17: “illustratus enim sancti spiritus gratia, aridentis sibi atque blandientis mundi gloriam caducam reputans et transitoriam, ‘esurivit atque sivit iustitiam’ [Matt. 5:6] ut ad eternam feliciter perveniret patriam. Quamvis enim mundus sibi florens albesceret, in eius tamen corde iam aruerat, cuius ipse concupiscentiis in spe filiorum dei crucifixus fuerat.”

with humility, powerful in his piety, and distinguished by his generosity.”<sup>466</sup>

Even St. Stephen had moments of affective piety – although his biographers made it clear that the king would only humble himself before God, and not in public. For example, the author of *Legenda maior* explained that when Stephen would enter a church building he would frequently “frequently cling to the pavement of the holy house, shedding tears, and commit the completion of the things he wished to do to God.”<sup>467</sup> In another scene, Stephen is tested by one of Christ’s poor, who rips out a handful of his beard as he is handing out alms alone at night. Rather than responding in anger, however, the king lay “prostrate on the ground” and gave thanks to the Virgin Mary, declaring:

My celestial queen, thus your soldiers honor him whom you made king. If this had been inflicted by some enemy of mine, I would avenge my injuries through your support. Knowing, however, lady, that I am made worthy of eternal happiness through this, I greatly rejoice in it, giving thanks for the consoling words of our Savior, with which he consoled his disciples, saying: ‘a hair of your head shall not perish’ [Luke 21:18].

Stephen was inspired by the experience to “never close the doors of his heart to those seeking help,” and dedicated himself with a new fervor to charity and almsgiving.<sup>468</sup> His response, the author makes clear, was situationally appropriate. If the man had maliciously or publically injured Stephen’s royal dignity, it would have been grounds for vengeance and possibly

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<sup>466</sup> *Legenda sancti Ladislai*, c. 5, p. 519: “cum itaque ipse ius rex esset armatus humilitate, potens pietate, precipuus tamen erat largitate.”

<sup>467</sup> *Legenda maior*, c. 7, p. 382: “frequenter pavimento adherens domus sancte ecclesie, lacrimis fuis perfectionem propositi sui dei commisit voluntati.”

<sup>468</sup> *Legenda maior*, c. 12, pp. 387-8: “ob hoc gaudio repletus miles Christi maximum configium fecit ad beatissimam creatoris omnium genitricem, prostratus terre gratias agens sic exclamavit: ‘regina celestis et mea, quem tu reem statuisti, milites tui sic honoraverunt. Si ab aliquo adversario mihi hoc illatum fuisset, meas iniurias per tuum ulciscerer adminiculum. Sciens ergo domina per hoc eterna felicitate dignum nimis exulto, gratias agens salvatoris nostri verbis consolatoriis, quibus discipulos suos consolatus est dicens: ‘capillus de capite vestro non peribit.’ His dictis se vir dei celesti gratia percipiens visitatum et spirituali carismate perfusum, cordis ianuas opem querentibus numquam claudere decrevit et per se deinceps et per alios, sed precipue per Christi servos et familiares.”

violence. But in a devotional context, in the privacy of the church, it instead became a lesson in the virtues of patience, humility, and forgiveness.

To the Hungarian royal saints was ascribed an *in vita* miracle that further emphasized the importance of situational awareness in the modulation of the holy king's religious devotion. Both Ladislaus and Stephen were reputed to have occasionally levitated during their nocturnal prayers, signifying the ability of the holy king to spiritually transcend the limits of his earthly body during liminal moments of solitary devotion. The *Legenda sancti Ladislai* claims that one night, while Ladislaus was staying with the monks of Várad, his *cubicularius* looked in on his prayers and witnessed the king levitating in the air. The author declared: "O truly blessed man, who, though constituted of flesh is not oppressed by fleshly weight, but through his merits is lifted up in fellowship with the citizens of heaven."<sup>469</sup> Similarly, Hartvic records in his *Vita* that Stephen too had been witnessed in celestial communion while praying alone at night, although in this instance only his tent left the ground.<sup>470</sup> Both biographers read the holy king's miraculous ability as a revelation that, even as he occupied his earthly office, he was able to free his soul from the desires and sins of his flesh. But the private circumstances of the miracle were also crucial. Both Stephen and Ladislaus demanded that the witnesses to their wondrous devotions keep them a secret. This allowed for a deft code switching between the saintly king's royal persona and religious character. It also safeguarded him from any claim that he took pride in his spiritual exceptionalism.

This idea, that the more intense expressions of the royal saint's devotion should be kept

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<sup>469</sup> *Legenda sancti Ladislai*, c. 5, p. 520: "O vere beatum virum, quem adhuc in carne constitutum carnea moles non premebat, sed prerogativa meritorum ad consortia supernorum civium sublevabat."

<sup>470</sup> Hartvic, *Vita sancti Stephani*, c. 17, p. 425.



secret to avoid the sin of pride – and also, perhaps, to protect the royal dignity – also appears in Ælnoth of Canterbury’s description of St. Knútr IV’s devotional habits. Ælnoth claimed that under the guidance of his royal chaplains Gerald and Arnold, Knútr “submitted himself to divine mercy so that, what may seem incredible to some, he did not refuse them to inflict the blows of a rod on his body, with only themselves and God as witnesses aware of his secrets; for he had heard, and hearing had understood, that however much the exterior flesh is worn away, by that much more the interior spirit is revealed.”<sup>471</sup> Ælnoth explained that “since those who wish to be with Christ do not recoil from crucifying their flesh with its vices and desires,” Knútr also often drank water at the royal table when those present assumed him to be drinking wine, and that he would fast, only holding food briefly to his lips, and then distributing it to the poor after the feast was over.<sup>472</sup> In this way, the saint’s body was “not so much sustained as crucified.”<sup>473</sup> These practices of bodily mortification through flagellation and fasting are the most extreme of the devotional practices described in the histories of the royal saints. Through these acts of intense submission, which Ælnoth compares to an act of voluntary martyrdom, the king made himself Christ-like and accessed the salvational potency of Christ’s crucifixion.<sup>474</sup> But they were also intensely private habits, disguised at public feasts and made the secret of the king’s personal

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<sup>471</sup> Ælnoth of Canterbury, *Gesta Swenomagni*, c. 9, p. 95: “nunc autem pontificibus uenerandis, Geroldo scilicet et Arnoldo, uere et sincere confessionis humilitate adaperiens deuotionis sue affectum ita diuine subieciebat clementie, ut, quod quibusdam incredibile uidebitur, corporalis etiam uindictæ plagas, ipsis solis, deo teste eiusque secretorum consciis, ab eis sibi inferri non renueret. Audierat enim et audiens intellexerat, quia, quanto magis caro exterior attereretur, eo amplius spiritus interior releuaretur.”

<sup>472</sup> Ælnoth of Canterbury, *Gesta Swenomagni*, c. 9, p. 95: “et cum, qui Christi esse desiderant, carnem suam cum uiciis et concupiscentiis crucifigere non perhorrescant...”

<sup>473</sup> Ælnoth of Canterbury, *Gesta Swenomagni*, c. 9, pp. 95-6: “corpus deliciis assuetum non tam sustentabat quam et his non ad sufficientiam sumptis cruciabat.”

<sup>474</sup> On the masculine virtues of self-control, submission, and continence in the context of Anglo-Saxon holy kingship, see Edward Christie, “Self-Mastery and Submission: Holiness and Masculinity in the Lives of Anglo-Saxon Martyr Kings,” in *Holiness and Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, pp. 143-57.

chaplains. Alone before God, the king might debase himself in order to open himself up to Christ; but in public, Stephen, Ladislaus, and Knútr alike maintained the persona of the pious yet dignified ruler.

Perhaps appropriately, therefore, our most significant example of bodily denial is not to be found in the legend of a holy king, but rather in that of a holy prince who died young, before he could succeed to the royal dignity. When Ladislaus translated Stephen's body at Székesfehérvár in 1083, he also elevated the relics of Stephen's son, Emeric (d. 1030), who afterwards became one of medieval Hungary's most enduringly popular native saints. Emeric became the subject of a saint's life in the mid-twelfth century, and central to his *Legenda* is the celebration of lay masculine celibacy. The author reports that in his youth, Emeric had proved himself – like his father – able to discern and judge the vocation of the monks of Pannonhalma, when, on a visit there, he bestowed kisses on the brothers in quantities proportionate to the strictness of their lives. Emeric particularly singled out those who had persisted in the life of the virgin, multiplying their kisses sevenfold, thereby revealing a miraculous ability to discern chastity.<sup>475</sup> Several years later, while he was praying alone in the church of St. George in Vésprem, Emeric himself received a divine vision in which an imperious voice commanded him to observe the “distinguished” life of the virgin. It was an injunction he took to heart; and when he was later “induced to be married” on account of his father's desire to propagate the royal line, Emeric continued to preserve his “incorrupt” virginity within the bonds of his marriage. The *Legenda* author found it particularly impressive that Emeric had managed to do so as a youth

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<sup>475</sup> *Legenda sancti Emerici*, c. 4, p. 454: “beatus itaque Henricus singulorum merita coram patre pertractans, videlicet quanto temporis spatio singuli in virtute continentie perstitissent sub ea consideratione se plura aliis et paucior aliis oscula dedisse edocuit, eumque cui septena multiplicaverat oscula virginalem vitam per duxisse asseruit.”

(*iuvenis*), when the flames of ardor burn the brightest. Mortifying his body through fasting in order to tame the corruption of the flesh, Emeric maintained his virginity throughout his short life, and when he died unexpectedly in 1030, his wife, Constance of Aragon, confirmed that they had only ever lived together chastely.<sup>476</sup>

Very little is known about the anonymous author of the *Legenda sancti Emerici*.<sup>477</sup> The author's clearly educated argument about the respected status of virginity, however, indicates his familiarity with contemporary spiritual trends. Emma Bartoniek and Gábor Klaniczay have suggested the ninth-century work known as *Exhortatio ad sponsam Christi* as a likely source for his discussion of these issues.<sup>478</sup> The author of this earlier text, who is sometimes referred to as Pseudo-Athanasius, addressed his admonitions to a female virgin; but by the mid-twelfth century, the *Legenda* author would have been aware of the growing prestige of male virginity as well.<sup>479</sup> The earliest male royal saint celebrated as a perpetual virgin was Edward the Confessor of England, whose life was first written by Osbert of Clare in the 1130s. It is more likely that the *Legenda* author would have been directly aware of the spiritual legacy of Emperor Henry II, who had been Emeric's uncle, and who had similarly lived in chastity with his wife Cunigunde.<sup>480</sup> In addition, there is a strong element of Marian devotion in the *Legenda*'s representation of

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<sup>476</sup> *Legenda sancti Emerici*, c. 5, pp. 544-6.

<sup>477</sup> *Legenda sancti Emerici*, c. 6, p. 456. The author does tell us that he had once traveled to Constantinople in the company of Álmos, the brother of King Coloman (r. 1095 - 1116). Álmos is known to have made two journeys to Constantinople, in 1108 and again between 1125 and 1127.

<sup>478</sup> Emma Bartoniek, "Praefatio," in *SHR* vol. 2, p. 444; Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses*, 159.

<sup>479</sup> On the subject of lay male virginity, see particularly Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage*; Lewis, "Becoming a Virgin King."

<sup>480</sup> Osbert of Clare, *Vita beati Eadwardi regis Anglorum*, ed. by Marc Bloch in "La Vie d'Edouard le Confesseur par Osbert de Clare," *Annalecta Bollandiana* 41 (1923): 64-123; see also Bernhard Scholz, "The Canonization of Edward the Confessor," *Speculum* 36:1 (1961): 38-60. On Henry II, see Klaus Guth, *Die Heiligen Heinrich und Kunigunde: Leben, Legende, Kult und Kunst* (Bamberg: St.-Otto-Verl., 1986).

Emeric's heroic chastity: the author diverts from his praise of the Hungarian prince to celebrate the eternal virginity of the mother of Christ, concluding that together the two prove that the "fullness of divinity, blessed and unsullied," could exist in both sexes.<sup>481</sup>

It was perhaps easier to celebrate a celibate prince who had predeceased his father than a virginal king. The reputed chastity of both Edward the Confessor and Henry II led to crises of succession after their deaths; while the *Legenda sancti Emerici*, noting that Emeric had made his vow of perpetual chastity "against any hope of posterity for the regnal succession," explicitly recognized his spiritual choices as a subversion of what was traditionally a core royal priority. Whereas Emeric, who would only ever remain the promising son of a king in the Hungarians' historical memory, could more easily be made to embody a more radical form of devotional masculinity, the devotional practices of holy kings themselves continued to emphasize traditional virtues consonant with the royal dignity. But it is also clear that by the mid-twelfth century, the values of bodily denial and sexual purity had become increasingly visible in the cults of the saintly kings as well. In the *legendae* of St. Stephen, which were produced in the final two decades of the eleventh century, these themes remained subtle: the king might reveal a more personal affective piety in the privacy of the royal chapel or while praying alone at night, but in public he remained the stern patriarch. In Ælnoth of Canterbury's *Gesta* of c. 1122, these themes were more explicit, although they were ultimately ancillary to Ælnoth's larger narrative. In the *Legenda sancti Emerici* of the mid-twelfth century, however, they were both explicit and central, and Emeric's virginity became the centerpiece of his claim to sanctity.

St. Emeric's complete sexual renunciation did not signal the rise of a new type of royal-

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<sup>481</sup> *Legenda sancti Emerici*, c. 5, p. 455: "quo demonstratretur, in utroque sexu beatam et integram divinitatis habitare plenitudinem meruisse."

saintly masculinity on Latin Christendom's peripheries: he remained Hungary's only virgin prince. His exceptionalism, though, can suggest the power of a polyvalent gendered discourse to negotiate the complicated category of royal sanctity. In reconciling the masculinities of the king and the saint in a single person, medieval writers did more than mute one to spare the other. Instead they treated both flexibly, allowing the multiple and often opposing elements of his persona to synthesize or coexist alongside one another to creatively productive ends. In the *Legenda*, Emeric's early death distances him from the demands of the regnal dignity, allowing him to embody a more radical expression of religious devotion than could an apostolic patriarch like St. Stephen. Elsewhere, writers found meaning in the juxtaposition of apparent contradictions. Thus when St. Ladislaus was described in his *Legenda* as "armed with humility, powerful in his piety, and distinguished by his generosity," the dual aspects of his identity, placed alongside each other, gained new nuance rather than negating one another.<sup>482</sup>

## NARRATING MASCULINITY

As a category of analysis, masculinity therefore allows us to better understand how medieval writers of history developed royal sanctity as a complex and historiographically meaningful subject. We shall now turn to consider in greater depth how royal-saintly masculinity was developed narratively in historical writing. Chronicles, sagas, and saints' lives all contained certain types of episodes, tropes, and scripts that relied on gendered ideas to communicate historical meaning. These narrative forms can seem formulaic; but, we shall see, their adherence to culturally recognizable conventions often facilitated the subtle modulation of gendered

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<sup>482</sup> *Legenda sancti Ladislai*, c. 5, p. 519: "cum itaque ipse ius rex esset armatus humilitate, potens pietate, precipuus tamen erat largitate."

discourse.

### *The Character Sketch*

We will begin with the most straightforward of these kinds of scenes: the character sketch. In these descriptive passages, the authors of chronicles, saints' lives, and sagas catalogued the physical and personal qualities of their subject, usually along normative gender-specific lines. These scenes are often highly conventional, describing habits of character in recognizably archetypal terms. For example, good kings in general, and royal saints in particular, are almost always described as physically advantaged, strong and beautiful, to the extent that they stand out clearly from other men. In a well-known passage we have already seen, for example, the author of the *Legenda sancti Ladislai* wrote of his subject that "he was distinguished from the common man by the strength of his hand, the beauty of his face, and his pleasing physiognomy, like that of a lion, as well as his height, which was taller than that of other men."<sup>483</sup> Similarly, Saxo Grammaticus explained how St. Knútr Lavard had "through continual use had strengthened his young body for the energetic waging of war and the manly support of arms;"<sup>484</sup> while the author of *Legendary Saga* dedicated significant space to describing St. Óláfr as "a handsome man, of good appearance, stout but not fat, with strong shoulders and clear eyes; shiny, dark brown, curly hair, a red beard and a fresh, red complexion,

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<sup>483</sup> *Legenda sancti Ladislai*, c. 3, p. 517: "in naturalibus autem bonis divine miserationis gratia speciali eum prerogativa preeminentie supra communem hominum valorem pretulerat. Erat enim manu fortis et visu desiderabilis et secundum phisionomiam leonis magnas habens extremitates statura quippe procerus ceterisque hominibus ab humero supra preeminens ita." See Szovák's discussion of this passage in "The Transformations of the Image of the Ideal King in Twelfth-Century Hungary," where he argues that the *Legenda's* description of Ladislaus's physical appearance drew from contemporary representations of King Béla III.

<sup>484</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, XI.8.1, p. 819: "quinetiam iuuenile corpus continuo usu ad bella impigre conficienda armaque uiriliter sustinenda firmabat."

a regular gait, broad shoulders and large eyes, well-formed limbs and small feet, freckles, and a steady gaze.”<sup>485</sup> The royal saint’s outward beauty reflected the inner nobility of his character and justified his holding of the throne. As St. Ladislaus’s biographer put it: “fruitful in its abundance of gifts, the beauty of his body revealed his worthiness of a royal crown.”<sup>486</sup>

Also standard in the character sketch of the royal saint was praise for his generosity and good judgment. The most frequently cited recipients of the king’s generosity were widows, orphans, and the poor. This formula crossed generic and linguistic boundaries. Thus the Nordic author of the *Legendary Saga* wrote that Óláfr “gave gifts to good men, clothed the cold, gave gold to the fatherless, widows, and foreigners, gave rich gifts to those who were poor, consoled the afflicted, and supported the upright with good advice and also with donations,”<sup>487</sup> just as the Hungarian author of the *Legenda sancti Ladislai* claimed that Ladislaus was a “consoler of the afflicted, an elevator of the oppressed, a commiserator of orphans, and an affectionate father of orphans, the poor, and the needy.”<sup>488</sup> The holy king’s generosity was often praised in connection with his good judgment, and attributed to his ability to discern right and wrong and his attentiveness to the will of God. For example, the author of *Legendary Saga* claimed that whenever Óláfr felt that his judgment was not in alignment with God’s law “he often subjugated

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<sup>485</sup> *Legendary Saga* c. 28, p. 80: “Óláfr konongr var vænn maðr oc listulegr ivirlitum, riðvaxenn oc ækci har, hærðimikill oc biartæygðr, lios og jarpr a har oc liðaðezc væl, rauðskæggiaðr oc rioðr i anlete, rettlætir oc ænnibræiðr oc openæygðr, limaðr væl oc litt fœttr, fanknutr oc fastæygðr, hugaðlatr oc raundriugr.”

<sup>486</sup> *Legenda sancti Ladislai*, c. 3, p. 517: “exuberante in ipso donorum plenitudine ipsa quoque corporis species regio dyademate dignum ipsum declararet.”

<sup>487</sup> *Legendary Saga* c. 28, p. 80: “Oc gædde giauum goða menn; klædde kalna; gaf fe faðurlausum, auðræðe ækcium oc utlændum, þeim er fatækervaro; huggaðe ryggua oc studdi alla raðvanda menn bæðe i hæilræðom oc aðrum tillagum.”

<sup>488</sup> *Legenda sancti Ladislai*, c. 3, p. 517: “erat enim consolator afflictorum, sublevator oppressorum, miserator orphanorum, pius pater pupillorum, miserorum et inopum necessitas misericordie visceribus affluens subveniebat.”

his will to the will of God.”<sup>489</sup> Likewise, the *Chronicon pictum* claims of Ladislaus that “he always had the fear of God before his eyes in all his judgments, and most of all in criminal cases that imposed a blood penalty for vengeance or punishment; and because he was illuminated by divine inspiration, he knew that a king does not rule, but is ruled.”<sup>490</sup> Thus, while the royal saint’s generosity represented him as paternally capable of providing for weaker men and women, his keen judgment revealed his discernment of when to submit to the higher authority of God.

Character sketches therefore presented in summary form standard elements of an idealized portrait of elite masculinity. Their rigid adherence to generic convention can be frustrating insofar as they rarely seem able to tell us much about their subjects as real individuals. However, adherence to narrative convention could be a narratively powerful way for an author to establish controversial claims about the king’s character in the historical record. For example, the author of *Legendary Saga* wrote that certain people had wrongly judged Óláfr’s character during his life, perceiving him to be “arrogant and domineering, tyrannical and vengeful, stingy and money-grubbing, angry and quarrelsome, proud and flashy, and concerned above all with his lordship in this world.” In fact, as we have seen in Chapter Three, these had been standard complaints levied against Óláfr during his lifetime, which had led directly to his removal from power as a tyrant. However, the *Legendary Saga* author went on to claim that these criticisms were unfair. Óláfr’s friends knew him to be “mild and humble, kind and affable, meek and gentle, smart and friendly, reliable and trustworthy, considerate and reserved in

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<sup>489</sup> *Legendary Saga* c. 28, p. 81: “ef hann grunaðe þat, at nokcorom sinnum være æigi allt æit, hans fyst siafals oc guðs forsio, þa braut hann oftlega sinn vilia, en gerðe guðs vilia.”

<sup>490</sup> *Chronicon pictum*, c. 131, p. 405: “semper enim timorem domini pre oculis habuit in omnibus iudiciis suis et maxime in causis criminalibus, ubi ultio sive pena sanguis irrogatur. Divina quidem inspiratione illustratus sciebat, quod rex non tam regat, quam regatur.”



speaking, generous and elegant, famous and good-natured, powerful and honest, good and righteous, proficient in governance and very controlled, well-considered on the laws of God and good people.”<sup>491</sup> Here, the author of the *Legendary Saga* focused attention on familiar standards of royal virtue in order to reject the complaints against Óláfr as the vengeful slander of the ignorant.

The character sketch of Ladislaus presented in the *Chronicon pictum* was similarly politically pointed, although more subtly so. The chronicler’s lengthy description of Ladislaus’s virtues constituted a weighty repertoire of reasons why Ladislaus deserved to possess the kingship. His physical prowess, size, and natural beauty revealed the nobility of his inner character, while his generosity and good judgment revealed that he innately understood how to act in the way that a good king should. The chronicler claimed that Ladislaus was beloved by the Hungarian people on account of his distinguished qualities: “for all knew that he was clothed in the perfection, orthodox in his faith, distinguished in his piety, munificent in his generosity, conspicuous in his charity.” Even his name demonstrated his fitness to rule, for its etymology, from the words *laos* and *dosis*, meant “praise given divinely to the people.”<sup>492</sup> The chronicler had a reason for being so effusive in his praise of Ladislaus’s royal virtues: his legitimacy had been seriously compromised by the fact that he and his brother Géza had deposed a rightfully anointed king in order to gain the throne for themselves, despite being descended only tangentially from

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<sup>491</sup> *Legendary Saga*, c. 28, p. 82: “En þær giorr vissu, kallaðu hann linan oc litilatan, huggoðan oc hægan, millðan oc miuklatan, vitran oc vingoðan, tryggvan oc trullyndan, forsialan oc fastorðan, giaflan oc gofgan, frægian oc vællyndan, rikian oc raðvandan, goðan oc glæpvaran, stiornsaman oc væl stilltan, væl gæymin at guðs lagum oc goðra manna.”

<sup>492</sup> *Chronicon pictum*, c. 131, p. 404: “omnes enim noverant ipsum esse vestitum consumatione virtutum, fide catholicum, pietate precipuum, largitate munificum, caritate conspicuum...erat enim magnus, secundum nomen suum maximum. Nam si ethymologie ominis eius alludamus, Ladizlaus, quasi laus divinitus data populo dicitur.”

St. Stephen's Árpadian dynasty. Hungarian scholars have referred to this method of legitimation as "ideoneic," that is, based on the individual's fitness to rule, rather than his dynastic right.<sup>493</sup> In his character sketch of Ladislaus, the chronicler overwhelmed the reader with an abundance of proof of Ladislaus's idoneity, while omitting any discussion of his familial descent. This otherwise conventional passage therefore serves the purpose of making Ladislaus's rulership seem natural and right, while obscuring the grounds on which it might have been contested.

Finally, despite their frequently evident adherence to rote stereotype, in their summary of the virtues and qualities of the holy king character sketches often revealed places where the ideals of sanctity and those of kingship could safely overlap. Both the saint and the king could be physically beautiful, revealing the inner beauty of his character. Both were commended for their attention to the weak, poor, and vulnerable. And for both, discernment and judgment were necessary qualities. For all its apparent straightforwardness, therefore, the character sketch could perform a significant amount of narrative work.

### *Holy Kings and their Queens*

Another important way in which writers of history could model the masculinity of their royal subjects was by narrating his interactions with women. The elite society that the holy kings inhabited, as it was represented in historical writing, was overwhelmingly masculine. The spaces that he occupied – the royal hall, the battlefield, the church – were constituted by and for powerful men, while the chief historical actors who drove the narratives of kings' sagas, chronicles, and saints' lives were almost exclusively male. When elite women do appear in

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<sup>493</sup> See for example Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses*; Szovák, "The Image of the Ideal King in Twelfth-Century Hungary."

historical narratives, however, their treatment can be uniquely revealing of gendered expectations towards character and conflict – not for the queen herself, but also the kings with whom she interacts.<sup>494</sup>

Queens are elusive figures in eleventh- and twelfth-century Scandinavia and Hungary, and the most notable feature of the royal saint's wife in contemporary historical writing is her absence.<sup>495</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, for example, has almost nothing to say about Knútr IV's wife, Adela of Flanders, despite the fact that she was the daughter of the powerful count of Flanders and the mother of the famous Charles the Good. On the kings' sexualities, too, the histories are nearly silent, with the exception of the *Legenda sancti Emerici*, where Emeric's wife, Constance of Aragon, is identified as a willing partner in his conjugal chastity.<sup>496</sup> Ælnoth of Canterbury also makes an interesting, if terse, statement on the subject of royal sexuality. He writes that before his marriage to Adela, Knútr had kept many concubines, but after it he put aside their "shameless embraces" and for the rest of his life remained "satisfied with marriage to her alone, with Jesus Christ and his angels as his witness." Throughout his adulthood, he thus "avoided the lasciviousness of many other kings, even Solomon."<sup>497</sup> Ælnoth treats Knútr's youthful

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<sup>494</sup> On the subject of queenship, see Pauline Stafford, *Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers: The King's Wife in the Early Middle Ages* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1983); John Carmi Parsons, ed., *Medieval Queenship* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993); and Anne Duggan, ed., *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1997).

<sup>495</sup> Nor was this uncommon for contemporary historical writing. Anne Duggan, for example, has written that queens were "virtually invisible" in medieval narrative sources. See her "Introduction" to *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe*, p. xv. On queenship and women's voices in a later Scandinavian context, see William Layher, *Queenship and Voice in Medieval Northern Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

<sup>496</sup> *Legenda sancti Emerici*, in *SRH* vol. 2, c. 5, pp. 544-6.

<sup>497</sup> Ælnoth of Canterbury, *Gesta*, c. 8, p. 93: "regum quamplurium, sed ipsius Salomonis, deuitans lasciuam, ob quam eius quondam posteri bis quinis regni partibus ablatis uix duabus irato deo principari merebantur, imperatorii generis nobilissimam sibi coniugem sapientum consilio elegit. Qua insigni honorificentia ex occidentalibus horis adducta, secundum nominis eius estimationem, que Ethela, id est nobilis, dicebatur,

lustfulness as something that was not praiseworthy, but also not unexpected, and he does praise him for setting his concubines aside after he had grown older and ascended to the royal dignity.<sup>498</sup> He further describes the continence of Knútr's adulthood as not only a spiritual virtue, but a masculine one. Being ruled by excessive sexual desire was unmanly, particularly for a king, who needed to be able to govern his own body just as he governed his kingdom.<sup>499</sup>

If queens are rarely visible as their husbands' marriage partners, they are also only sporadically represented as wielders of female lordship. The best example of a queen accorded this style of authority is to be found in Stephen of Hungary's wife, Gisela of Bavaria, who was the sister of saintly emperor Henry II. The author of the *Legenda maior* wrote that when Stephen married Gisela, he "made her his associate in wearing the crown."<sup>500</sup> He also represented her as his companion in religious patronage. In parallel passages, the author describes how Stephen founded the institutions of the Hungarian Church, including its bishoprics and major abbeys, while Gisela adorned the fabric of Stephen's churches with "crosses, vessels, and ornaments," and "everything sufficient for the service of God in gold and silver."<sup>501</sup> Although Gisela is only a

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nobilem nobiliter excipiens impudicis concubinarum despectis amplexibus solius eius conubio, Ihesu Christo teste angelisque eius, contentus est."

<sup>498</sup> On the royal life-cycle and royal sexuality, see Anthony Perron, "Saxo Grammaticus's Heroic Chastity," pp. 119-26.

<sup>499</sup> On the masculine virtue of continence and its relationship to royal ideology, see Katherine Lewis's "Edmund of East Anglia, Henry VI and Ideals of Kingly Masculinity" and *Kingship and Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe*, as well as Megan McLaughlin, "'Disgusting Acts of Shamelessness': Sexual Misconduct and the Deconstruction of Royal Authority in the Eleventh Century," *Early Medieval Europe* 19:3 (2011): 312-31.

<sup>500</sup> *Legenda maior*, c. 9, p. 384: "ad consortium vero regni, precipue causa sobolis propagande, sororem Romane dignitatis augusti, videlicet Heinrici, qui ob mansuetudinem morum pius est appellatus, Gillam nomine sibi in matrimonio sociavit, quam unctione crismali perunctam gestamine corone sociam esse noticavit."

<sup>501</sup> *Legenda maior*, c. 9, p. 384-5: "Que qualis erga dei cultum ornandum extitit, quam frequens et benefica circa deo servientium congregationes apparuit, multarum ecclesiarum cruces et vasa vel paramenta opere mirifico facta vel contexta usque hodie testantur. Pre cunctis tamen episcopatus Besprimiensis, quam ipsa a

shadowy presence in this text, and is never herself present as an active character, she is thus credited as a major supporter of the programs that earned Stephen his distinguished saintly legacy.<sup>502</sup>

Where queens do appear with some regularity in narratives of royal sanctity is in the role of the peacemaker. In this role, her ability to modulate the slippery divide between the personal and public lives of the ruler, his inner emotional state and actions as king, becomes particularly revealing of the gendered dynamics of rulership. For example, Queen Margrete of Denmark is central to Saxo Grammaticus's narrating of the conflict between St. Knútr Lavard and his jealous cousin Magnús. Magnús had few of Knútr's masculine strengths: according to Saxo he was cowardly where Knútr was bold, weak where Knútr was physically distinguished, and duplicitous where Knútr was honest and honorable. Saxo tells us that during the cousins' youths, the peace between them was kept largely through the efforts of Queen Margrete, who was Magnús's mother and Knútr's aunt. Margrete was the daughter of King Inge of Sweden, and had first been married to King Magnús III Barelegs of Norway (d. 1103) before she married Niels of Denmark. She was thus highly experienced in navigating the political world of the Scandinavian royal courts, and Saxo describes how she alone proved capable of modulating the volatile emotions of the Danish royal family. He writes: "Margrete, however, the mildest nurturer of fraternal charity, counterbalanced the passionate dispositions of the young men with the tranquility of her deliberation and tempered the dangerous fury of their unruliness with her most

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fundamento ceptam omnibus sufficientiis ad servitium in auro vel argento vestimentisque multiplicibus adornavit."

<sup>502</sup> On the religious patronage of elite women, see Erin L. Parsons, *Women, Power, and Religious Patronage in the Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

beneficial and moderating instruction.”<sup>503</sup> However, in 1130 she died of an illness, and “as she had stemmed the tide of youthful jealousies while she had lived, so her passing away released it.”<sup>504</sup> In his mother’s absence, Magnús formulated his plot against his cousin which would culminate in Knútr’s murder the next year. Saxo therefore uses the person of the queen to develop his martyrdom narrative. It is natural, he explains, that Margrete as a maternal figure should act as a moderating influence on the otherwise untamed emotional turbulence of the *iuvenes*. With her death, the tenuous bonds of friendship between the young men dissolved, and their strife led to Knútr’s martyrdom.

Another Swedish princess, Ingigerth of Sweden, played an even more central role in the legends of St. Óláfr, where she was represented as the key mediator between Óláfr Haraldsson of Norway and his bitter rival King Óláfr of Sweden (d. 1022), her father. Snorri Sturluson reports that when Óláfr of Norway sent his envoy Hjalti to the Svíar king’s court to make peace in his name, Hjalti found his most ready ally and competent facilitator in the Swedish Óláfr’s daughter. He frequently sought advice from Ingigerth about how best to approach her father, and even asked her to attempt to negotiate with him herself, “saying that might be the most helpful thing.”<sup>505</sup> In the end, Ingigerth’s mediation was not as efficacious as Hjalti had hoped, and Óláfr of Sweden, who is persistently represented in the Norwegian kings’ sagas as dangerously volatile, became enraged by her attempts to speak of his rival in conciliatory terms. But Ingigerth

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<sup>503</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, XIII.5.6, p. 922: “Margareta autem, benignissima consanguinee charitatis alitrix, consilii sui tranquillitatem concitatis iuuenum ingeniis opponebat saluberrimaque discipline moderatione insidiosam petulantium rabiem temperabat.”

<sup>504</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, XIII.5.7, p. 924: “Que ut iuuenilis inuidie fluctus uiua cohibuit, ita consumpta laxauit. Nam ab eius fato iuuentutis impatientia primam propositi sceleris licentiam mutuata est.”

<sup>505</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, c. 72, p. 98: “Hjalti bað hana nökkur orð til leggja við konung ok kvað þat helzt tjá mundu.”

did manage to arrange a tentative betrothal between herself and Óláfr of Norway, whom Hjalti had consistently praised to her as an impressively distinguished king. Ingigerth thus sought to make peace both through mediation and through the bonds of marriage. Like peace between the Norwegians and the Svíar, however, the match was not to be. Óláfr of Sweden later spitefully forbid the two to be married, and instead compelled Ingigerth to marry Grand Prince Jaroslav of Rus’.

Ingigerth is the most visible and active of the royal women in Snorri’s *Óláfs saga helga*, and he attributes an unusual level of interiority and agency to her. Snorri presents her as highly capable, strategic, and shrewd in her engagement in the politics of her father’s court. He also describes her as relatively independent, possessing her own estates where she would receive and feast powerful men, including Hjalti, as well as and her consistent supporter, the powerful Jarl Rognvaldr Úlfsson.<sup>506</sup> Even when her father overruled her desire to marry Óláfr of Norway and pushed through her marriage to Grand Prince Jaroslav, she is hardly represented as passive. Instead Snorri claims that she demanded of her father, and received from him, the estate of Aldeigjuborg, as well as assurances for the safety of Jarl Rognvaldr, before she would accede to the marriage.<sup>507</sup> As we shall see, Ingigerth remained an active presence in the kings’ sagas even after she relocated to her new husband’s court. She continued to act as Óláfr of Norway’s ally, she was a central negotiator within the politics of her husband’s princely court, and she was responsible for the foundation of the cathedral of St. Sophia in Kiev, an act of religious patronage for which she was later sanctified.

While Ingigerth of Sweden occupied a central presence in *Óláfs saga helga* as a

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<sup>506</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, c. 72, p. 95; c. 78, p. 122.

<sup>507</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, c. 93, p. 147.

peacemaker, potential wife, and ally, the woman whom Óláfr did ultimately marry was not accorded the same narrative treatment. Astrid of Sweden was Ingigerth's sister, and married Óláfr against the wishes of her father after the earlier betrothal had fallen through. However, Astrid is not treated as an active party in the marriage in the same way that Ingigerth was. Snorri does not attribute to her a single line of direct speech, and instead represents her marriage as having been negotiated by Óláfr's skald, Sigvatr.<sup>508</sup> Astrid is a somewhat more visible presence in *Legendary Saga*, where the author does attribute the making of the match to her agency. He writes that Óláfr had been greatly disappointed by the failure of his betrothal to Ingigerth. To console him, Astrid made the journey to Norway and attempted to raise his spirits. First she told him that Ingigerth wanted him to abandon his sorrow and be happy again, "as befits a king and his worth." When Óláfr did not respond, she returned on the second day, and gave to him a gift of silk shirts sent to him by Ingigerth. Again he did not respond; but on the third day, she offered to marry him in Ingigerth's place, and Óláfr accepted. Through Astrid's persistence, therefore, he "won back his happiness and began to care for his kingdom again."<sup>509</sup> Although she is a non-presence in Snorri's *Saga*, therefore, in the *Legendary Saga* Astrid is momentarily shown to be shrewd like Ingigerth, and similarly capable of managing the king's emotions through flattery, gift-giving, and appeals to his lost love.<sup>510</sup>

It is this emotional work that is the queen's most consistent legacy in the legends of the royal saints. When she does appear in the histories, it is to pacify the rage, assuage the

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<sup>508</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, c. 91, pp. 144-6. On the significance of voice and speech and the gendering of selfhood in medieval Nordic literature, see Layher, *Queenship and Voice*, especially at pp. 29-52.

<sup>509</sup> *Legendary Saga* c. 44, p. 102.

<sup>510</sup> See Judith Jesch, "In Praise of Ástríðr Óláfsdóttir," *Saga-Book* 24 (1994-1997): 1-18.



insecurities, temper the jealousy, and lift the sorrow of her male relations. Only when the king himself is at peace can the peace of the kingdom be maintained. If the private status of the king could never be fully disentangled from his public face, therefore – if his inner comportment translated into his outward actions, and his successes and failures of masculinity became the successes and failures of his realm – then the queen, writers of history seem to suggest, also had a key role to play in the fortunes of the kingdom, despite her shadowy presence in their narratives.

### *Royal Competition and “Man-Evening”*

While kings only rarely interact with royal women in the histories they frequently interact with other rulers. This is particularly true in the Norse *konungasögur*, where the broadest of historical events are represented narratively through personalized instances of homosocial conflict. Competition between kings could decide the fate of kingdoms; but it could also be used to reveal their respective characters, and thereby commentate on and critique the personal aspects of kingship. The most well-known form of masculine competition in the kings’ sagas was the *mannjafnaðr*, or “man-evening.” In these stylized contests, two men traded boasts and counter-boasts, typically before an audience of other men in the public sphere of the hall, in order to determine which was the more distinguished. Royal competition took other narrative forms as well; but it was always public, performative, and the results were always explicitly commented on by another individual who acted as a judge of the contest.<sup>511</sup>

One of the more frequent judges of these competitions in the sagas of St. Óláfr was

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<sup>511</sup> On the *mannjafnaðr* and other Norse genres of masculine competition, see particularly Carol Clover, “The Germanic Context of the Unferþ Episode,” *Speculum* 55:3 (1980): 444-68; and Ward Parks, “Flyting, Sounding, Debate: Three Verbal Contest Genres,” *Poetics Today* 7:3 (1986): 439-58.

Ingigerth of Sweden. She appears, for example, in a particularly well-known episode contrasting the achievements of her father, Óláfr of Sweden, with those of Óláfr of Norway. This scene appears in both *Fagrskinna* and Snorri Sturluson's *Óláfs saga helga*. Óláfr of Sweden returns happy from a day of hunting, having killed five birds in a single afternoon. As Snorri tells it, the king began to boast of his feat to his daughter: “where do you know of a king who has made such a great catch in such a short period of time?” Ingigerth replied: ““this was a good morning’s catch, my lord, since you have captured five partridges – but it was a better one when King Óláfr of Norway captured five kings in one morning and took possession of their entire kingdoms.””<sup>512</sup> The same episode appears in *Legendary Saga* as well, although there the instigating activity is not Óláfr of Sweden’s ability to hunt, but instead his capabilities as a raider. When Óláfr boasts to Ingigerth about the captures he had made at Vogeljagd in one morning, she retorts that “you should not boast so much about your booty, because that man who in one morning deposed eleven kings would despise your booty.” Her father, enraged, promises that he will never allow her to marry Óláfr, and she accuses him of being “malicious and arrogant.”<sup>513</sup>

The message of these episodes is clear: Óláfr Haraldsson of Norway is the superior of his rival, Óláfr of Sweden. Óláfr of Sweden might be skilled at hunting and raiding, but Óláfr of Norway is exceptional. What is more, Óláfr of Sweden reveals himself to be incapable of modulating his emotions in a dignified way, spitefully denying his daughter a prestigious

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<sup>512</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla* II, c. 89, pp. 131-2: “‘Hvar veiztu þann konung, er svá mikla veiði hafi fengit á svá lítilli stundu?’ Hon svarar: ‘Góð morginveiðr er þetta, herra, er þer hafið veitt fimm orra, en meira er þat, er Óláfr Nórekskonungr tók á einum morgni fimm konunga ok eignaðisk allt ríki þeira.’”

<sup>513</sup> *Legendary Saga*, c. 43, p. 100: “Ingigærðr mællte: ‘Eigi þærftu rosa sva miok þesse væiði, firir þui at litls minndi þeim þickcia værð sia væiði, er hann fecc valld xi. kononga a æinum morne.’ Konongrenn ræiddizt miok oc mællte: ‘Gott hyggr þu þer til raðanna við Olaf konong. En þat kann ec þer at sægja, at hann skalltu alldrigin fa firir þessor orð.’ Hon svarar: ‘Þat er þa,’ sægir hon, ‘firir ugíptu sacer minar, en bolfenge þinnar oc ofmetnaðar.’”

marriage. But what is also notable about these scenes is that Óláfr of Norway beats out his rival at traditionally masculine exercises not as a saint, but as an extraordinary man. Óláfr's impending martyrdom and achievement of the kingdom of heaven do not negate his personal capabilities and achievements during life. Instead, Óláfr is shown to be both an extraordinary man and, later, a saint, and these two qualities are consistent with one another, rather than in competition.

Subtly different dynamics are evident in a scene in *Morkinskinna* in which Ingigerth again favorably compares Óláfr of Norway to another ruler. This time her target is her husband, Jaroslav of Rus', at whose court the incident takes place. The grand prince, we are told, had recently had a "glorious hall" built "very beautifully," adorned with precious stones and gold, outfitted with "costly fabrics and lavish weavings," and occupied by a large retinue of "outstanding young men." The prince himself sat at the head of the hall, on a magnificent throne, dressed in "royal apparel."<sup>514</sup> As in the scene with Óláfr of Sweden, the *Morkinskinna* episode begins with Jaroslav's boast. He asks his wife whether she had ever seen "an equally magnificent hall or one so well appointed, first in the band of men gathered together here, and again in its decorations of such great worth." Ingigerth agrees that Jaroslav's hall was indeed well appointed; but, she continues, "the hall in which King Óláfr Haraldsson sits is the better, even if it only stood on posts."<sup>515</sup> Jaroslav becomes furious at Ingigerth's answer and strikes her across the face.

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<sup>514</sup> *Morkinskinna*, c. 1, pp. 3-4: "Þess er víð getit at konungrinn Jarizleifr lét sér gera dýrliga holl með mikilli fergð, prýða með gulli oc gimsteinum, scipaði hana síðan með góðum drengjum ok reyndum með ágætum hlutum, vandaði þar eptir búnað þeira oc herclæði, sem þeir váru aðr reyndir. At öllu sýndisk búningr hallarinnar ok skipun þar eptir sem hon var sjálf vönduð til."

<sup>515</sup> *Morkinskinna*, c. 1, p. 4: "Síðan gekk dróttning í hollina með fagrligri kvenna sveit, ok stóð konungr upp í móti henni ok kvaddi hana vel ok mælti síðan: 'hvar sáttu jafn dýrliga holl eða jafn vel búna, fyrst at sveitinni slíkra manna sem hérru saman komnir ok í annan stað búningr hallarinnar með miklum kostnaði?' Dróttning svaraði: 'herra,' segir hon, 'þessi holl er vel skipuð, ok fá dæmi munu til at slík prýði eða meiri ok fækostnaðr

Unable to stand this public humiliation, the queen decides to leave her husband and his realm, and is only reluctantly persuaded by her friends to instead allow him the opportunity to reconcile. In compensation for the injury and insult Jaroslav had done to her, Ingigerth demands that he agree to foster Óláfr's young son Magnús: "because it is said truly that the less distinguished man fosters the other's child." Jaroslav agrees to the arrangement, and Ingigerth remains at his court, where the young Magnús Ólafsson would soon impress the Russian elite with his good character and youthful prowess.<sup>516</sup>

This scene again draws out markers of elite masculinity: here, the possession and adornment of a fine hall full of loyal retainers. And again, as with Óláfr of Sweden, Jaroslav's loss of face to Óláfr of Norway precipitates an unflattering emotional episode, in which he shames himself and his wife by striking her across the face. The incident ultimately compels Jaroslav to foster Óláfr's son, providing yet another marker of relative status, as Ingigerth claims that it is the less distinguished man who fosters the more distinguished man's son. Ultimately, however, we are told that the performance of elite masculinity through these outward markers is meaningless. Royal virtue is instead an inherent quality. Óláfr would remain the superior man, regardless of whether he possessed a hall that could compete with Jaroslav's or not. In *Morkinskinna*, therefore, his exceptionalism is treated as a perpetual quality of his character, much like his sanctity, rather than one that was dependent on the achievement of masculine feats.

A final scene from *Legendary Saga* further emphasizes that, even though St. Óláfr's quality of character was not contingent on his proper performance of elite masculine normative

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komi saman í eitt hús eða jafn margir góðir hofðingjar ok vaskir menn. En betr er þó sú holl skipuð er Óláfr konungr Haraldsson sitr í, þó at hon standi á súlum einum.”

<sup>516</sup> *Morkinskinna*, c. 1, p. 5: “þú skalt nú,” segir hon, “senda skip í Nóreg til Óláfs konungs, því at ek hefi spurt at hann á einn son ungan laungetinn. Bjóð honum hingat ok veit honum uppfæzlu ok fóst, því at sannligt er þat með ykk, er mælt er, at sá er ógofgari er ǫðrum fósttar barn.”

behavior, his inborn virtues meant that he would still effortlessly best his rivals in such competitions. The saga author claims that, during the period of St. Óláfr's youth that he spent raiding in England, Óláfr had for a time been the guest of King Knútr the Great, who had the habit of attending Mass on the morning of every feast day. However, Knútr often arrived to church late, so that, the author writes, it sometimes seemed that Mass only began when the king arrived. Óláfr, on the other hand, always arrived to the church early. One day, the bishop asked one of his priests whether Knútr would be attending Mass that day, and the priest replied that he probably would not. Then Óláfr entered the church, and the bishop declared: "'now the king has come.'" When the priest again insisted that Knútr would not be attending that day, the bishop replied: "this is the true king who is now here, for he willingly serves the glory of God, just as the law of God serves him."<sup>517</sup> When Knútr later heard what the bishop had said, he became angry, and forced Óláfr to depart from his company. Knútr remained indignant that he had come off the worse in his encounter with Óláfr, and later demanded that the bishop tell him why he had called Óláfr king "when he is without land or lordship, and, as I believe, he has not accomplished any signs or miracles." The bishop replied: "Lord, he is certainly king, and the highest praised by all men." Knútr was still not satisfied, and pointed out that Óláfr had not behaved as "lordly" (*dyrling*) as he himself had, "for [Óláfr] wears silk robes and fine cloth, and enjoys fine food." The bishop conceded that it might be true that Óláfr dressed magnificently, as was befitting his status; but then revealed that underneath his rich clothes, Óláfr always wore a hair shirt.<sup>518</sup>

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<sup>517</sup> *Legendary Saga*, c. 12, p. 54: "biscup læit utar i kirkiuna oc sa, hvar Óláfr stoð oc mællte siðan: 'nu er konongr ut komenn.' Þæir sagðu, at hann var æigi ut kommen. 'Jaur,' sagðe biscup, 'sia er sannr konongr, er nu er ut komenn, firir þui at hann vill hælldr þiona love, en guðs log þione hanum.'"

<sup>518</sup> *Legendary Saga*, c. 13, p. 54: "Nu talar Knútr konongr við ærkibiskup oc spyr, hui hann kallaðe Olaf konong, 'er hann landlaus oc aflat ser ænskis rikis oc æigi hygg ek hann gera iartæignir ne takan.' Biscopenn svarar: 'herra,' sagðe hann, 'vist er hann konongr oc mikill agiætismaðr umfram aðra menn.' Konunga svarar: 'sva synndizt mer, sem hann være hværn dag æigi við værra dyrling en ver, bæðe i silkiklaðom oc guðvaf, oc

This externally straightforward scene deftly navigates several issues that complicate the category of royal sanctity. It raises the question, which we have already encountered, about the proper way for a king to express his intensely felt personal piety. Óláfr's early arrival to church, contrasted with Knútr's inability to arrive on time, reveals that the latter's habit of attending Mass was a performance meant to garner praise, rather than one born of genuine devotion. But can Óláfr's quiet religiosity itself be genuine, an offended Knútr challenges, when he so clearly takes care to dress in fine clothes? The more discerning bishop recognizes that external displays of elite status do not necessarily invalidate personal piety. What mattered was not the performance of Óláfr's devotion, but rather its substance. The revelation that Óláfr wore a hair shirt beneath his fine silks, not unlike the late twelfth century's most popular saint, Thomas Becket, affirms that a genuine religious dedication lay beneath the outward surface of Óláfr's lordliness. In this way, Óláfr therefore synthesized the dignity of the king with the devotion of the Christian saint in a way that Knútr failed to do.

## CONCLUSION

In many respects, the masculinities of the royal saints of the Latin Christian peripheries, though multifarious, tended to reflect contemporary conventions. Our holy kings were fierce fighters and devoted Christians. They built churches and conquered peoples, patronized religious communities as well as friends and retainers. They had wives and children; they hunted, competed, and subjected themselves to the will of God. At the same time, the many different strands of elite masculinity that cohered around the person of the royal saint interacted in

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foedde sic með goðom krasom.' Biskup svarar: 'hærra,' sagðe hann, 'satt er þat, at hann hafðe fagrlegan bunað, sem hanum somde, en þo hafðe hann undir harklæðe, oc opt drakc hann þa vatn, er þu hugðir han vin drekca.'"

complex and discursively revealing ways. By manipulating, critiquing, and subverting gendered ideals, medieval writers constructed royal saints in whom contradicting standards of spiritual perfection and regnal authority could be brought together. Although it is an imposingly broad category of analysis, masculinity therefore helps us better understand the construction of royal sanctity in the histories of northern and eastern Europe.

It also helps us understand the construction of the historical narratives in which royal saints were commemorated. Masculinity was a potent meaning-making device within historical narratives, offering a recognizable set of discourses, symbols, and ideologies through which historians could communicate ideas about their societies. Gendered assumptions thus crucially underpinned a variety of historical narrative forms. The characterization of elite women, for example, facilitated the assessment and critique of kingship in the Norse *konungasögur*, while scenes that placed kings into competition over standard markers of elite masculinity allowed writers to negotiate in complex ways the various, often conflicting demands of royal sanctity. Masculinity was thus far from incidental to historical representations of royal sanctity. Just as it implicitly informed the lived experience of medieval power, it provided the structural logics around which medieval writers crafted their histories of their kingdoms and their holy kings.

## CONCLUSION

Royal sanctity flourished in northern and eastern Europe from the beginning of the eleventh century until the end of the twelfth century. From Nidarós on the western Norwegian coast to Várád in the eastern Transylvanian marches, religious houses maintained the tombs of the kings buried in their churches. When they could get the support from the local community, or, even better, from kings, archbishops, or popes, they elevated the royal remains out of the ground into splendid new shrines, which they hoped would become pilgrimage destinations and sites of miracle working. To foster their nascent cults, they wrote down the deeds of their saints, which, from their perspective, were also part of the histories of their peoples. And so the cults of sanctified kings became part of the landscape of new national Churches, and their subjects became the anchor points of new national histories.

The Scandinavian and Hungarian royal saints were far from the first sanctified kings of the Middle Ages. They were, however, among the last. With the exception of King Louis IX of France (d. 1270) – the last holy king of the Middle Ages – the royal saints of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries were exclusively queens and princesses.<sup>519</sup> By this time, kings and other lay male elites had become increasingly unpopular candidates for sanctity. André Vauchez has shown how late medieval spiritual trends, and particularly the rise of the mendicants and mysticism, informed new ideals of saintliness.<sup>520</sup> Cecilia Gaposchkin has

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<sup>519</sup> See Gábor Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe*, trans. Éva Pálmai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 195-294.

<sup>520</sup> André Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, trans. Jean Birell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 145-246.



suggested that the rise of independent national Churches and the decline of papal universalism during the conciliar period further eroded the historical conditions under which royal saints had historically been made.<sup>521</sup>

The florescence of royal saints' cults on the high medieval Latin peripheries therefore represents a unique and transitory historical moment, during which historical thinkers and writers crafted a new royal sanctity. What was novel about it was not the typologies of holy kingship they identified: there had been martyr kings, apostolic rulers, and warrior saints before, and the new cults drew widely from these available exemplars.<sup>522</sup> Instead, what was new was twofold. First, Norse, Danish, and Hungarian writers made sustained, substantial effort to work royal sanctity into the fabric of their national histories. In the past, kings had become saints by deliberately removing themselves from the public lives of their kingdoms. This meant that their sanctity by necessity dislocated them from the histories of their earthly kingdoms. Now, however, royal sanctity became the foundation stone on which historians could build their visions of a communal past. The new royal saints were not treated as curious sideshows, or divergences from the course of their peoples' histories, but instead as central to them: St. Óláfr's death at Stiklestad is still remembered as a formative moment in the creation of the young Norwegian state, for example, while the institutions founded by St. Stephen, including above all the royal office symbolized by his holy *corona*, were suffused with a sacral legitimacy that

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<sup>521</sup> M. Cecilia Gaposchkin, *The Making of Saint Louis: Kingship, Sanctity, and Crusade in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 240-1.

<sup>522</sup> See Robert Folz, *Les saintes rois du moyen âge en occident, VIe-XIIIe siècles* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1984), 23-69.

persisted across centuries and dynasties.<sup>523</sup>

Writers of history on the European peripheries were therefore able to embrace the dual aspects of the saint-kings' identities to a greater extent than ever before. We have seen how for Gábor Klaniczay, medieval royal sanctity posed a problem, an internal contradiction, that needed solving.<sup>524</sup> For Norse and Hungarian historians in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, however, royal sanctity was historiographically powerful precisely because it allowed them to think about the close interrelationships between political and religious change. This hardly means that they represented the duties of kingship and the virtues of the saint as perfectly consonant. But the tension between the two was more often than not a creatively productive one, through which medieval historians could draw out subtle ideas about the functioning of power in transforming societies.

This project has therefore explored the centrality of royal sanctity to the historical narratives of Norway, Denmark, and Hungary. In Chapter One, we asked how the royal cults had come to be: who had promoted them, and why. In Chapter Two, we further analyzed the importance of the cults to princely self-definition, particularly during moments of political crisis and instability. What we found is that, as might be expected, the royal cults were primarily founded through the efforts of elite patrons. They emerged at the institutional centers of developing local churches, such as Nidarós, Roskilde, and Székesfehérvár. Their most dedicated promoters included other members of royal dynasties, particularly those whose political goals

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<sup>523</sup> Linas Eriksonas, *National Heroes and National Identities: Scotland, Norway, and Lithuania* (Brussels: P.I.E.-P. Lang, 2004), 222-30; Péter László, "The Holy Crown in Hungary, Visible and Invisible," *Slavonic and East European Review* 81:3 (2003): 421-510.

<sup>524</sup> Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses*, 18: "how – given the logical inconsistency of such a move, and the Church's opposition – did the rulers of the time ever manage to make the cult of saints (the primary cult form of medieval Christianity) into a pillar of royal power?"

could be bolstered through association with a venerable forebear. And their promoters used the royal cults to forge closer bonds with the papacy, both through the procurement – or the alleged procurement – of bulls of canonization, and through the involvement of legates in local processes of sanctification. But despite the intentionally political nature of many of the cults, we also found that the afterlives of the royal saints extended far beyond the initial circumstances of their sanctification. If the establishment of the cults represented a first moment of narrativization, when various groups attempted to circumscribe the meaning of the royal saint's life, then the production of historical texts in which the royal saints played a central role represented an important second narrative moment. Not only bishops, princes, and popes, but also medieval historians, engaged in the contestation of the holy kings' memories. Although the efforts of the former have to a significant extent been lost to us, the latter, in their chronicles, sagas, and saints' lives, have provided us with our most substantive sources for encountering the medieval commemoration of royal sanctity.

In Chapter Three, we surveyed just kingship as it is represented in the histories of the royal saints. We found that just kingship was not a monolithic or normative ideology in the political thought of the high medieval north and east. Instead, it encompassed a broad variety of ideas about the role the king ought to play in the ordering and policing of his society. The figure of the *rex iustus*, the idealized institutor of a properly constituted Christian society, could thus be made to embody particular schemata of socio-political ordering within historical narratives. Particularly at stake in the North and the East, where royal power was a novel imposition on traditionally diffuse political societies, was the question of whether the king could act as the singular peace-making and governing force within his kingdom, or whether this was a responsibility to be shared with locally powerful magnates. The writers of national histories in

general approved of a strong royal power, although several – particularly the Icelandic saga writers – also explored the part that the subordination of proud magnates by overly ambitious new kings had played in royal martyrdoms. Finally, the category of royal justice has also allowed us to consider the extent to which thinkers on medieval Christendom’s peripheries had inherited the ideas and ideals of the cultural center. The role of the secular power as a protector of justice, peace, and order had been a central issue in Christian thought since the days of Constantine. Peripheral writers thus had centuries of tradition to draw from as they conceptualized the constitution of their own political societies. This process of acculturation was hardly a passive or totalizing one, however. Instead, as we have seen, Norse and Hungarian historians alike both adapted and subverted inherited ideas about royal justice and the just king as they synthesized them with local traditions and customs.

While representations of *reges iusti* reflect the idealization of rulership, in our final two chapters we explored categories that reveal potential points of fracture in the conceptualization of a spiritually perfected kingship. In Chapter Four we interrogated the royal saints’ reputations for violence and bloodshed, and in Chapter Five we assessed the competing modes of masculinity represented in the royal saintly legends. Both violence and masculinity point to the inherent incompatibility of kings’ actions in the world and the Christian model of sanctity, which is based in askesis, renunciation, and self-sacrifice. But because both seem to challenge the achievability of princely saintliness, they also facilitated the interrogation and reconceptualization of historical kingship. Like royal justice, neither violence nor masculinity were monolithic categories. Instead they were flexible and multivalent. Violence, for example, meant something different when waged against pagans than it did when waged against Christians, just as kings’ masculine identities were expressed quite differently on the battlefield

and in the church. In their flexibility, both categories allowed competing elements of royal saintliness to be placed alongside one another, either to synthesize or to coexist in productive tension. For medieval writers who had to reconcile the imposition of a coercive royal authority on their societies with the simultaneous inheritance of a system of belief that privileged spiritual achievements above earthly glories, violence and masculinity were thus narratively crucial topics of historical thought, particularly when focused through the person of the royal saint.

All of this suggests that it was the experience of existing on the peripheries of Latin Christendom that made royal sanctity so unusually significant in Hungary, Norway, and Denmark during the high Middle Ages. The holy king, himself a liminal figure, could uniquely satisfy the need to historically conceptualize the parallel emergence of kingship and Christianity in transforming societies. He was also a useful person through whom to synthesize European traditions of political and religious thought with local customs. Here, we have analyzed how royal saint reflects the entry of new areas into the Latin cultural sphere. But, as Haki Antonsson has pointed out, the Norwegians, Danes, and Hungarians all looked east as well as west as they situated themselves within high medieval Europe.<sup>525</sup> Further research thus remains to be done on the question of possible Greek influences on concepts of princely religiosity and holy rulership. Nor were Norway, Denmark, and Hungary the only peripheral polities that integrated themselves into the Christian world during this period. In the east, there was also Poland, Bohemia, and the Rus'; in the north, Sweden, followed later by the Baltics; in the southwest, the Spanish kingdoms and principalities, expanding at the expense of their Muslim neighbors; in the Mediterranean, the Norman kingdom of Sicily; and in the Holy Land, the kingdom of Jerusalem and the other

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<sup>525</sup> Haki Antonsson, *St. Magnús of Orkney: A Scandinavian Martyr-Cult in Context*. Leiden: Brill, 2007, 115-16.

crusader states. None of these other peoples celebrated holy kings as founders of their national histories in the same way that the Norwegians, Danes, and Hungarians did. It is thus also worth considering what alternative strategies other peripheral peoples developed for conceptualizing royal power. One of the most valuable outcomes of these kinds of studies of medieval Europe's peripheries, which have traditionally been marginal within the modern historical scholarship, is a greater understanding of the diversity of approaches to political and social organization in a period often stereotyped for its unchanging homogeneity. Northern and eastern Europe may have existed along the geographical edges of medieval Christendom; but, in their imaginative construction of new types of idealized rulership, their thinkers and writers placed themselves at the center of contemporary conversations about the right ordering of the world.

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