

## I. Valkyries

- A. Archeological evidence
- B. Textual evidence (Snorri)

## II. “Shield maidens”

### A. Named in texts, sagas

1. Brynhilde (*Saga of Volsungs*)
2. Lagertha (*Saxo Grammaticus*)
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4. Heid (*Chronicon Lethrense*)
5. Visina (*Saga of Ragnar Lodbrök*)
6. Aslaug (*Saga of Ragnar Lodbrök*)
7. Inghen Ruaidh *War of Gaedhil & Gaill*
8. Frakkok (*Orkneyinga saga*)

### B. Great Heathen Army invading England

1. Textual evidence (Anglo-Saxon Chronicle)
2. Archeological evidence
  - a) Problems with identification
  - b) ID by grave goods  
(3 failed examples in England)
  - c) Osteo sexual identification
  - d) Mitochondrial evidence for Norse ♀

### C. The Birka skeleton reclassified.

## III. Other examples of violence

- A. Gudrun
- B. Aud
- C. Hunting Tacitus' *Germania*

## IV. Unn the Deep-Minded

- A. Founder of Iceland
- B. Ship burial
  1. Oseberg ship burial
  2. Other ship burials

## V. Death

## VI. What can we learn from the Grágás?

- A. Care for elderly parents
- B. Inheritance
- C. Avenging your kin (or taking *wergild*)

## VII. Trade and wealth

## VIII. Music and poetry

## IX. Sexual autonomy?

# Valkryies

31. On all sides saw I | Valkyries assemble,  
Ready to ride | to the ranks of the gods;  
Skuld bore the shield, | and Skogul rode next,  
Guth, Hild, Gondul, | and Geirskogul.  
Of Herjan's maidens | the list have ye heard,  
Valkyries ready | to ride o'er the earth.

## Voluspo The Wise-Woman's Prophecy

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“Hrist and Mist | I would have bear the horn to me,  
Skeggjöld and Skögull;  
Hildir and Thrúdr, | Hlökk and Herfjötur,  
Göll and Geirahöd,  
Randgrídr and Rádgrídr | and Reginleif  
These bear the Einherjar ale.

These are the Valkyrs: them Odin sends to every battle; they determine men's feyness and award victory. Gudr and Róta and the youngest Norn, she who is called Skuld, ride ever to take the slain and decide fights.”

Snorri Sturlson Prose Edda  
Gylfaginning

# Saga of the Volsungs

By long roads rides Sigurd, till he comes at the last up on to Hindfell, and wends his way south to the land of the Franks; and he sees before him on the fell a great light, as of fire burning, and flaming up even unto the heavens; and when he came thereto, lo, a shield hung castle before him, and a banner on the topmost thereof: into the castle went Sigurd, and saw one lying there asleep, and all-armed.

Therewith he takes the helm from off the head of him, and sees that it is no man, but a woman; and she was clad in a byrny as closely set on her as though it had gown to her flesh; so he rent it from the collar downwards; and then the sleeves thereof, and ever the sword bit on it as if it were cloth.

[https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The\\_Story\\_of\\_the\\_Volsungs/Chapter\\_XX](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Story_of_the_Volsungs/Chapter_XX)

Sigurd answered, *"Good friend, hearken to what lies on my mind; for my hawk flew up into a certain tower; and when I came thereto and took him, lo there I saw a fair woman, and she sat by a needlework of gold, and did thereon, my deeds that are passed, and my deeds that are to come,"*

Then said Alswid, *"Thou has seen Brynhild, Budli's daughter, the greatest of great women."*

"Yea, verily," said Sigurd; *"but how came she hither?"*

Aswid answered, *"Short space there was betwixt the coming hither of the twain of you."*

Says Sigurd, *"Yea, but a few, days ago I knew her for the best of the world's women."*

Alswid said, *"Give not all thine heed to one woman, being such a man as thou art; ill life to sit lamenting for what we may not have."*

*"I shall go meet her,"* says Sigurd, *"and get from her love like my love, and give her a gold ring in token thereof."*

Alswid answered, *"None has ever yet been known whom she would let sit beside her, or to whom she would give drink; for ever will she hold to warfare and to the winning of all kinds of fame."*

...

Sigurd said, *"That day would dawn the best of days over our heads whereon each of each should be made happy."*

Brynhild answered, *"It is not fated that we should abide together; I am a shield-maid, and wear helm on head even as the kings of war, and them I oft help, neither is battle loathsome to me."*

[https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The\\_Story\\_of\\_the\\_Volsungs/Chapter\\_XXIV](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Story_of_the_Volsungs/Chapter_XXIV)

# SAXO GRAMMATICUS: BOOK OF THE DANES

## BOOK NINE

After Gotrik's death reigned his son OLAF; who, desirous to avenge his father, did not hesitate to involve his country in civil wars, putting patriotism after private inclination. When he perished, his body was put in a barrow, famous for the name of Olaf, which was built up close by Leire.

He was succeeded by HEMMING, of whom I have found no deed worthy of record, save that he made a sworn peace with Kaiser Ludwig; and yet, perhaps, envious antiquity hides many notable deeds of his time, albeit they were then famous.

After these men there came to the throne, backed by the Skanians and Zealanders, SIWARD, surnamed RING. He was the son, born long ago, of the chief of Norway who bore the same name, by Gotrik's daughter. Now Ring, cousin of Siward, and also a grandson of Gotrik, was master of Jutland. Thus the power of the single kingdom was divided; and, as though its two parts were contemptible for their smallness, foreigners began not only to despise but to attack it. These Siward assailed with greater hatred than he did his rival for the throne; and, preferring wars abroad to wars at home, he stubbornly defended his country against dangers for five years; for he chose to put up with a trouble at home that he might the more easily cure one which came from abroad. Wherefore Ring (desiring his) command, seized the opportunity, tried to transfer the whole sovereignty to himself, and did not hesitate to injure in his own land the man who was watching over it without; for he attacked the provinces in the possession of Siward, which was an ungrateful requital for the defence of their common country. Therefore, some of the Zealanders who were more zealous for Siward, in order to show him firmer loyalty in his absence, proclaimed his son Ragnar as king, when he was scarcely dragged out of his cradle. Not but what they knew he was too young to govern; yet they hoped that such a gage would serve to rouse their sluggish allies against Ring. But, when Ring heard that Siward had meantime returned from his expedition, he attacked the Zealanders with a large force, and proclaimed that they should perish by the sword if they did not surrender; but the Zealanders, who were bidden to choose between shame and peril, were so few that they distrusted their strength, and requested a truce to consider the matter. It was granted; but, since it did not seem open to them to seek the favour of Siward, nor honourable to embrace that of Ring, they wavered long in perplexity between fear and shame. In this plight even the old were at a loss for counsel; but Ragnar, who chanced to be present at the assembly, said: "The short bow shoots its shaft suddenly. Though it may seem the hardihood of a boy that I venture to forestall the speech of the elders, yet I pray you to pardon my errors, and be indulgent to my unripe words. Yet the counsellor of wisdom is not to be spurned, though he seem contemptible; for the teaching of profitable things should be drunk in with an open mind. Now it is shameful that we should be branded as deserters and runaways, but it is just as foolhardy to venture above our strength; and thus there is proved to be equal blame either way. We must, then, pretend to go over to the enemy, but, when a chance comes in our way, we must desert him betimes. It will thus be better to forestall the wrath of our foe by reigned obedience than, by refusing it, to give him a weapon wherewith to attack us yet more harshly; for if we decline the sway of the stronger, are we not simply turning his arms against our own throat? Intricate devices are often the best nurse of craft. You need cunning to trap a fox." By this sound counsel he dispelled the wavering of his countrymen, and strengthened the camp of the enemy to its own hurt.

The assembly, marveling at the eloquence as much as at the wit of one so young, gladly embraced a proposal of such genius, which they thought excellent beyond his years. Nor were the old men ashamed to obey the bidding of a boy when they lacked counsel themselves; for, though it came from one of tender years, it was full, notwithstanding, of weighty and sound instruction. But they feared to expose their adviser to immediate peril, and sent him over to Norway to be brought up. Soon afterwards, Siward joined battle with Ring and attacked him. He slew Ring, but himself received an incurable wound, of which he died a few days afterwards.

He was succeeded on the throne by RAGNAR. At this time Fro (Frey?), the King of Sweden, after slaying Siward, the King of the Norwegians, put the wives of Siward's kinsfolk in bonds in a brothel, and delivered them to public outrage. When Ragnar heard of this, he went to Norway to avenge his grandfather. As he came, many of the matrons, who had either suffered insult to their persons or feared imminent peril to their chastity, hastened eagerly to his camp in male attire, declaring that they would prefer death to outrage. Nor did Ragnar, who was to punish this reproach upon the women, scorn to use against the author of the infamy the help of those whose shame he had come to avenge. Among them was Ladgerda, a skilled amazon, who, though a maiden, had the courage of a man, and fought in front among the bravest with her hair loose over her shoulders. All-marveled at her matchless deeds, for her locks flying down her back betrayed that she was a woman.

Ragnar, when he had justly cut down the murderer of his grandfather, asked many questions of his fellow soldiers concerning the maiden whom he had seen so forward in the fray, and declared that he had gained the victory by the might of one woman. Learning that she was of noble birth among the barbarians, he steadfastly wooed her by means of messengers. She spurned his mission in her heart, but feigned compliance. Giving false answers, she made her panting wooer confident that he would gain his desires; but ordered that a bear and a dog should be set at the porch of her dwelling, thinking to guard her own room against all the ardor of a lover by means of the beasts that blocked the way. Ragnar, comforted by the good news, embarked, crossed the sea, and, telling his men to stop in Gaulardale, as the valley is called, went to the dwelling of the maiden alone. Here the beasts met him, and he thrust one through with a spear, and caught the other by the throat, wrung its neck, and choked it. Thus he had the maiden as the prize of the peril he had overcome. By this marriage he had two daughters, whose names have not come down to us, and a son Fridleif. Then he lived three years at peace.

The Jutlanders, a presumptuous race, thinking that because of his recent marriage he would never return, took the Skanians into alliance, and tried to attack the Zealanders, who preserved the most zealous and affectionate loyalty towards Ragnar. He, when he heard of it, equipped thirty ships, and, the winds favoring his voyage, crushed the Skanians, who ventured to fight, near the stead of Whiteby, and when the winter was over he fought successfully with the Jutlanders who dwelt near the Liim-fjord in that region. A third and a fourth time he conquered the Skanians and the Hallanders triumphantly.

Afterwards, changing his love, and desiring Thora, the daughter of the King Herodd, to wife, Ragnar divorced himself from Ladgerda; for he thought ill of her trustworthiness, remembering that she had long ago set the most savage beasts to destroy him. Meantime Herodd, the King of the Swedes, happening to go and hunt in the woods, brought home some snakes, found by his escort, for his daughter to rear. She speedily obeyed the instructions of her father, and endured to rear a race of adders with her maiden hands. Moreover, she took care that they should daily have a whole ox-carcass to gorge upon, not knowing that she was privately feeding and keeping up a public nuisance. The vipers grew up, and scorched the country-side with their pestilential breath. Whereupon the king, repenting of his sluggishness, proclaimed that whosoever removed the pest should have his daughter.

Many warriors were thereto attracted by courage as much as by desire; but all idly and perilously wasted their pains. Ragnar, learning from men who travelled to and fro how the matter stood, asked his nurse for a woolen mantle, and for some thigh-pieces that were very hairy, with which he could repel the snake-bites. He thought that he ought to use a dress stuffed with hair to protect himself, and also took one that was not unwieldy, that he might move nimbly. And when he had landed in Sweden, he deliberately plunged his body in water, while there was a frost falling, and, wetting his dress, to make it the less penetrable, he let the cold freeze it. Thus attired, he took leave of his companions, exhorted them to remain loyal to Fridleif, and went on to the palace alone. When he saw it, he tied his sword to his side, and lashed a spear to his right hand with a thong. As he went on, an enormous snake glided up and met him. Another, equally huge, crawled up, following in the trail of the first. They strove now to buffet the young man with the coils of their tails, and now to spit and belch their venom stubbornly upon him. Meantime the courtiers, betaking themselves to safer hiding, watched the struggle from afar like affrighted little girls. The king was stricken with equal fear, and fled, with a few followers, to a narrow shelter. But Ragnar, trusting in the hardness of his frozen dress, foiled the poisonous assaults not only with his arms, but with his attire, and, singlehanded, in unweariable combat, stood up against the two gaping creatures, who stubbornly poured forth their venom upon him. For their teeth he repelled with his shield, their poison with his dress. At last he cast his spear, and drove it against the bodies of the brutes, who were attacking him hard. He pierced both their hearts, and his battle ended in victory.

After Ragnar had thus triumphed the king scanned his dress closely, and saw that he was rough and hairy; but, above all, he laughed at the shaggy lower portion of his garb, and chiefly the uncouth aspect of his breeches; so that he gave him in jest the nickname of Lodbrog. Also he invited him to feast with his friends, to refresh him after his labors. Ragnar said that he would first go back to the witnesses whom he had left behind. He set out and brought them back, splendidly attired for the coming feast. At last, when the banquet was over, he received the prize that was appointed for the victory. By her he begot two nobly-gifted sons, Radbard and Dunwat. These also had brothers—Siward, Biorn, Agnar, and Iwar.

Meanwhile, the Jutes and Skanians were kindled with an unquenchable fire of sedition; they disallowed the title of Ragnar, and gave a certain Harald the sovereign power. Ragnar sent envoys to Norway, and besought friendly assistance against these men; and Ladgerda, whose early love still flowed deep and steadfast, hastily sailed off with her husband and her son. She brought herself to offer a hundred and twenty ships to the man who had once put her away. And he, thinking himself destitute of all resources, took to borrowing help from folk of every age, crowded the strong and the feeble all together, and was not ashamed to insert some old men and boys among the wedges of the strong. So he first tried to crush the power of the Skanians in the field which in Latin is called Laneus (Woolly); here he had a hard fight with the rebels. Here, too, Iwar, who was in his seventh year, fought splendidly, and showed the strength of a man in the body of a boy. But Siward, while attacking the enemy face to face, fell forward upon the ground wounded. When his men saw this, it made them look round most anxiously for means of flight; and this brought low not only Siward, but almost the whole army on the side of Ragnar. But Ragnar by his manly deeds and exhortations comforted their amazed and sunken spirits, and, just when they were ready to be conquered, spurred them on to try and conquer.

Ladgerda-- who had a matchless spirit though a delicate frame-- covered by her splendid bravery the inclination of the soldiers to waver. For she made a sally about, and flew round to the rear of the enemy, taking them unawares, and thus turned the panic of her friends into the camp of the enemy. At last the lines of HARALD became slack, and HARALD himself was routed with a great slaughter of his men. LADGERDA, when she had gone home after the battle, murdered her husband.... in the night with a spear-head, which she had

hid in her gown. Then she usurped the whole of his name and sovereignty; for this most presumptuous dame thought it pleasanter to rule without her husband than to share the throne with him.

Meantime, Siward was taken to a town in the neighborhood, and gave himself to be tended by the doctors, who were reduced to the depths of despair. But while the huge wound baffled all the remedies they applied, a certain man of amazing size was seen to approach the litter of the sick man, and promised that Siward should straightway rejoice and be whole, if he would consecrate unto him the souls of all whom he should overcome in battle. Nor did he conceal his name, but said that he was called Rostar. Now Siward, when he saw that a great benefit could be got at the cost of a little promise, eagerly acceded to this request. Then the old man suddenly, by the help of his hand, touched and banished the livid spot, and suddenly scarred the wound over. At last he poured dust on his eyes and departed. Spots suddenly arose, and the dust, to the amaze of the beholders, seemed to become wonderfully like little snakes.

I should think that he who did this miracle wished to declare, by the manifest token of his eyes, that the young man was to be cruel in future, in order that the more visible part of his body might not lack some omen of his life that was to follow. When the old woman, who had the care of his draughts, saw him showing in his face signs of little snakes; she was seized with an extraordinary horror of the young man, and suddenly fell and swooned away. Hence it happened that Siward got the widespread name of Snake-Eye.

Meantime Thora, the bride of Ragnar, perished of a violent malady, which caused infinite trouble and distress to the husband, who dearly loved his wife. This distress, he thought, would be best dispelled by business, and he resolved to find solace in exercise and qualify his grief by toil. To banish his affliction and gain some comfort, he bent his thoughts to warfare, and decreed that every father of a family should devote to his service whichever of his children he thought most contemptible, or any slave of his who was lazy at his work or of doubtful fidelity. And albeit that this decree seemed little fitted for his purpose, he showed that the feeblest of the Danish race were better than the strongest men of other nations; and it did the young men great good, each of those chosen being eager to wipe off the reproach of indolence. Also he enacted that every piece of litigation should be referred to the judgment of twelve chosen elders, all ordinary methods of action being removed, the accuser being forbidden to charge, and the accused to defend. This law removed all chance of incurring litigation lightly. Thinking that there was thus sufficient provision made against false accusations by unscrupulous men, he lifted up his arms against Britain, and attacked and slew in battle its king, Hame, the father of Ella, who was a most noble youth. Then he killed the earls of Scotland and of Pictland, and of the isles that they call the Southern or Meridional (Sudr-eyar), and made his sons Siward and Radbard masters of the provinces, which were now without governors. He also deprived Norway of its chief by force, and commanded it to obey Fridleif, whom he also set over the Orkneys, from which he took their own earl.

Meantime, some of the Danes who were most stubborn in their hatred against Ragnar were obstinately bent on rebellion. They rallied to the side of Harald, once an exile, and tried to raise the fallen fortunes of the tyrant. By this hardihood they raised up against the king the most virulent blasts of civil war, and entangled him in domestic perils when he was free from foreign troubles. Ragnar, setting out to check them with a fleet of the Danes who lived in the isles, crushed the army of the rebels, drove Harald, the leader of the conquered army, a fugitive to Germany, and forced him to resign unbashfully an honor which he had gained without scruple. Nor was he content simply to kill his prisoners: he preferred to torture them to death, so that those who could not be induced to forsake their disloyalty might not be so much as suffered to give up the ghost save under the most grievous punishment. Moreover, the estates of those who had deserted with Harald he distributed among those who were serving as his soldiers, thinking that the fathers would be worse punished by seeing the honor of their

inheritance made over to the children whom they had rejected, while those whom they had loved better lost their patrimony. But even this did not sate his vengeance, and he further determined to attack Saxony, thinking it the refuge of his foes and the retreat of Harald. So, begging his sons to help him, he came on Karl, who happened then to be tarrying on those borders of his empire. Intercepting his sentries, he eluded the watch that was posted on guard. But while he thought that all the rest would therefore be easy and more open to his attacks, suddenly a woman who was a soothsayer, a kind of divine oracle or interpreter of the will of heaven, warned the king with a saving prophecy, and by her fortunate presage forestalled the mischief that impended, saying that the fleet of Siward had moored at the mouth of the river Seine. The emperor, heeding the warning, and understanding that the enemy was at hand, managed to engage with and stop the barbarians, who were thus pointed out to him. A battle was fought with Ragnar; but Karl did not succeed as happily in the field as he had got warning of the danger. And so that tireless conqueror of almost all Europe, who in his calm and complete career of victory had travelled over so great a portion of the world, now beheld his army, which had vanquished all these states and nations, turning its face from the field, and shattered by a handful from a single province.

Ragnar, after loading the Saxons with tribute, had sure tidings from Sweden of the death of Herodd, and also heard that his own sons, owing to the slander of Sorle, the king chosen in his stead, had been robbed of their inheritance. He besought the aid of the brothers Biorn, Fridleif, and Ragbard (for Ragnald, Hwitserk, and Erik, his sons by Swanloga, had not yet reached the age of bearing arms), and went to Sweden. Sorle met him with his army, and offered him the choice between a public conflict and a duel; and when Ragnar chose personal combat, he sent against him Starkad, a champion of approved daring, with his band of seven sons, to challenge and fight with him. Ragnar took his three sons to share the battle with him, engaged in the sight of both armies, and came out of the combat triumphant.

Biorn, having inflicted great slaughter on the foe without hurt to himself, gained from the strength of his sides, which were like iron, a perpetual name (Ironsides). This victory emboldened Ragnar to hope that he could overcome any peril, and he attacked and slew Sorle with the entire forces he was leading. He presented Biorn with the lordship of Sweden for his conspicuous bravery and service. Then for a little interval he rested from wars, and chanced to fall deeply in love with a certain woman. In order to find some means of approaching and winning her the more readily, he courted her father (Esbern) by showing him the most obliging and attentive kindness. He often invited him to banquets, and received him with lavish courtesy. When he came, he paid him the respect of rising, and when he sat, he honored him with a set next to himself. He also often comforted him with gifts, and at times with the most kindly speech. The man saw that no merits of his own could be the cause of all this distinction, and casting over the matter every way in his mind, he perceived that the generosity of his monarch was caused by his love for his daughter, and that he colored this lustful purpose with the name of kindness. But, that he might balk the cleverness of the lover, however well calculated, he had the girl watched all the more carefully that he saw her beset by secret aims and obstinate methods. But Ragnar, who was comforted by the surest tidings of her consent, went to the farmhouse in which she was kept, and fancying that love must find out a way, repaired alone to a certain peasant in a neighboring lodging. In the morning he exchanged dress with the women, and went in female attire, and stood by his mistress as she was unwinding wool. Cunningly, to avoid betrayal, he set his hands to the work of a maiden, though they were little skilled in the art. In the night he embraced the maiden and gained his desire. When her time drew near, and the girl growing big, betrayed her outraged chastity, the father, not knowing to whom his daughter had given herself to be defiled, persisted in asking the girl herself who was the unknown seducer. She steadfastly affirmed that she had had no one to share her bed except her handmaid, and he made the affair over to the king to search into. He would not allow an innocent servant to be branded with an extraordinary charge, and was not ashamed to prove another's innocence by avowing his own guilt. By this generosity he partially removed the woman's reproach,

and prevented an absurd report from being sown in the ears of the wicked. Also he added, that the son to be born of her was of his own line, and that he wished him to be named Ubbe. When this son had grown up somewhat, his wit, despite his tender years, equalled the discernment of manhood. For he took to loving his mother, since she had had converse with a noble bed, but cast off all respect for his father, because he had stooped to a union too lowly.

After this Ragnar prepared an expedition against the Hellespontines, and summoned an assembly of the Danes, promising that he would give the people most wholesome laws. He had enacted before that each father of a household should offer for service that one among his sons whom he esteemed least; but now he enacted that each should arm the son who was stoutest of hand or of most approved loyalty. Thereon, taking all the sons he had by Thora, in addition to Ubbe, he attacked, crushed in sundry campaigns, and subdued the Hellespont with its king Dia. At last he involved the same king in disaster after disaster, and slew him. Dia's sons, Dia and Daxo, who had before married the daughters of the Russian king, begged forces from their father-in-law, and rushed with most ardent courage to the work of avenging their father. But Ragnar, when he saw their boundless army, distrusted his own forces; and he put brazen horses on wheels that could be drawn easily, took them round on carriages that would turn, and ordered that they should be driven with the utmost force against the thickest ranks of the enemy. This device served so well to break the line of the foe, that the Danes' hope of conquest seemed to lie more in the engine than in the soldiers: for its insupportable weight overwhelmed whatever it struck. Thus one of the leaders was killed, while one made off in flight, and the whole army of the area of the Hellespont retreated. The Scythians, also, who were closely related by blood to Daxo on the mother's side, are said to have been crushed in the same disaster. Their province was made over to Hwitserk, and the king of the Russians, trusting little in his own strength, hastened to fly out of the reach of the terrible arms of Ragnar.

Now Ragnar had spent almost five years in sea-roving, and had quickly compelled all other nations to submit; but he found the Perms in open defiance of his sovereignty. He had just conquered them, but their loyalty was weak. When they heard that he had come they cast spells upon the sky, stirred up the clouds, and drove them into most furious storms. This for some time prevented the Danes from voyaging, and caused their supply of food to fail. Then, again, the storm suddenly abated, and now they were scorched by the most fervent and burning heat; nor was this plague any easier to bear than the great and violent cold had been. Thus the mischievous excess in both directions affected their bodies alternately, and injured them by an immoderate increase first of cold and then of heat. Moreover, dysentery killed most of them. So the mass of the Danes, being pent in by the dangerous state of the weather, perished of the bodily plague that arose on every side. And when Ragnar saw that he was hindered, not so much by a natural as by a factitious tempest, he held on his voyage as best he could, and got to the country of the Kurlanders and Sembs, who paid zealous honour to his might and majesty, as if he were the most revered of conquerors. This service enraged the king all the more against the arrogance of the men of Permland, and he attempted to avenge his slighted dignity by a sudden attack. Their king, whose name is not known, was struck with panic at such a sudden invasion of the enemy, and at the same time had no heart to join battle with them; and fled to Matul, the prince of Finmark. He, trusting in the great skill of his archers, harassed with impunity the army of Ragnar, which was wintering in Permland. For the Finns, who are wont to glide on slippery timbers (snowskates), scud along at whatever pace they will, and are considered to be able to approach or depart very quickly; for as soon as they have damaged the enemy they fly away as speedily as they approach, nor is the retreat they make quicker than their charge. Thus their vehicles and their bodies are so nimble that they acquire the utmost expertness both in advance and flight.

Ragnar was filled with amazement at the poorness of his fortunes when he saw that he, who had conquered Rome at its pinnacle of power, was dragged by an unarmed and uncouth race into the utmost peril. He, therefore, who had signally crushed the most glorious flower of the Roman soldiery, and the forces of a most great and serene captain, now yielded to a base mob with the poorest and slenderest equipment; and he whose luster in war the might of the strongest race on earth had failed to tarnish, was now too weak to withstand the tiny band of a miserable tribe. Hence, with that force which had helped him bravely to defeat the most famous pomp in all the world and the weightiest weapon of military power, and to subdue in the field all that thunderous foot, horse, and encampment; with this he had now, stealthily and like a thief, to endure the attacks of a wretched and obscure populace; nor must he blush to stain by a treachery in the night that noble glory of his which had been won in the light of day, for he took to a secret ambuscade instead of open bravery. This affair was as profitable in its issue as it was unhandsome in the doing.

Ragnar was equally as well pleased at the flight of the Finns as he had been at that of Karl, and owned that he had found more strength in that defenseless people than in the best equipped soldiery; for he found the heaviest weapons of the Romans easier to bear than the light darts of this ragged tribe. Here, after killing the king of the Perms and routing the king of the Finns, Ragnar set an eternal memorial of his victory on the rocks, which bore the characters of his deeds on their face, and looked down upon them.

Meanwhile Ubbe was led by his grandfather, Esbern, to conceive an unholy desire for the throne; and, casting away all thought of the reverence due to his father, he claimed the emblem of royalty for his own head.

When Ragnar heard of his arrogance from Kelther and Thorkill, the earls of Sweden, he made a hasty voyage towards Gothland. Esbern, finding that these men were attached with a singular loyalty to the side of Ragnar, tried to bribe them to desert the king. But they did not swerve from their purpose, and replied that their will depended on that of Biorn, declaring that not a single Swede would dare to do what went against his pleasure. Esbern speedily made an attempt on Biorn himself, addressing him most courteously through his envoys. Biorn said that he would never lean more to treachery than to good faith, and judged that it would be a most abominable thing to prefer the favor of an infamous brother to the love of a most righteous father. The envoys themselves he punished with hanging, because they counselled him to so grievous a crime. The Swedes, moreover, slew the rest of the train of the envoys in the same way, as a punishment for their mischievous advice. So Esbern, thinking that his secret and stealthy manoeuvres did not succeed fast enough, mustered his forces openly, and went publicly forth to war. But Iwar, the governor of Jutland, seeing no righteousness on either side of the impious conflict, avoided all unholy war by voluntary exile.

Ragnar attacked and slew Esbern in the bay that is called in Latin Viridis; he cut off the dead man's head and bade it be set upon the ship's prow, a dreadful sight for the seditious. But Ubbe took to flight, and again attacked his father, having revived the war in Zealand. Ubbe's ranks broke, and he was assailed single-handed from all sides; but he felled so many of the enemy's line that he was surrounded with a pile of the corpses of the foe as with a strong bulwark, and easily checked his assailants from approaching. At last he was overwhelmed by the thickening masses of the enemy, captured, and taken off to be laden with public fetters. By immense violence he disentangled his chains and cut them away. But when he tried to sunder and rend the bonds that were (then) put upon him, he could not in any wise escape his bars. But when Iwar heard that the rising in his country had been quelled by the punishment of the rebel, he went to Denmark. Ragnar received him with the greatest honour, because, while the unnatural war had raged its fiercest, he had behaved with the most entire filial respect.

Meanwhile Daxo long and vainly tried to overcome Hwitserk, who ruled over Sweden; but at last he enraptured him under pretence of making a peace, and attacked him. Hwitserk received him hospitably, but Daxo had prepared an army with weapons, who were to feign to be trading, ride into the city in carriages, and break with a night-attack into the house of their host. Hwitserk smote this band of robbers with such a slaughter that he was surrounded with a heap of his enemies' bodies, and could only be taken by letting down ladders from above. Twelve of his companions, who were captured at the same time by the enemy, were given leave to go back to their country; but they gave up their lives for their king, and chose to share the dangers of another rather than be quit of their own.

Daxo, moved with compassion at the beauty of Hwitserk, had not the heart to pluck the budding blossom of that noble nature, and offered him not only his life, but his daughter in marriage, with a dowry of half his kingdom; choosing rather to spare his comeliness than to punish his bravery. But the other, in the greatness of his soul, valued as nothing the life which he was given on sufferance, and spurned his safety as though it were some trivial benefit. Of his own will he embraced the sentence of doom, saying, that Ragnar would exact a milder vengeance for his son if he found that he had made his own choice in selecting the manner of his death. The enemy wondered at his rashness, and promised that he should die by the manner of death which he should choose for this punishment. This leave the young man accepted as a great kindness, and begged that he might be bound and burned with his friends. Daxo speedily complied with his prayers that craved for death, and by way of kindness granted him the end that he had chosen. When Ragnar heard of this, he began to grieve stubbornly even unto death, and not only put on the garb of mourning, but, in the exceeding sorrow of his soul, took to his bed and showed his grief by groaning. But his wife, who had more than a man's courage, chided his weakness, and put heart into him with her manful admonitions. Drawing his mind off from his woe, she bade him be zealous in the pursuit of war; declaring that it was better for so brave a father to avenge the bloodstained ashes of his son with weapons than with tears. She also told him not to whimper like a woman, and get as much disgrace by his tears as he had once earned glory by his valor. Upon these words Ragnar began to fear lest he should destroy his ancient name for courage by his womanish sorrow; so, shaking off his melancholy garb and putting away his signs of mourning, he revived his sleeping valor with hopes of speedy vengeance. Thus do the weak sometimes nerve the spirits of the strong. So he put his kingdom in charge of Iwar, and embraced with a father's love Ubbe, who was now restored to his ancient favor. Then he transported his fleet over to Russia, took Daxo, bound him in chains, and sent him away to be kept in Utgard.

Ragnar showed on this occasion the most merciful moderation towards the slayer of his dearest son, since he sufficiently satisfied the vengeance which he desired, by the exile of the culprit rather than his death. This compassion shamed the Russians out of any further rage against such a king, who could not be driven even by the most grievous wrongs to inflict death upon his prisoners. Ragnar soon took Daxo back into favor, and restored him to his country, upon his promising that he would every year pay him his tribute barefoot, like a suppliant, with twelve elders, also unshod. For he thought it better to punish a prisoner and a suppliant gently, than to draw the axe of bloodshed; better to punish that proud neck with constant slavery than to sever it once and for all. Then he went on and appointed his son Erik, surnamed Wind-hat, over Sweden. Here, while Fridleif and Siward were serving under him, he found that the Norwegians and the Scots had wrongfully conferred the title of king on two other men. So he first overthrew the usurper to the power of Norway, and let Biorn have the country for his own benefit.

Then he summoned Biorn and Erik, ravaged the Orkneys, landed at last on the territory of the Scots, and in a three-days' battle wearied out their king Murial, and slew him. But Ragnar's sons, Dunwat and Radbard, after fighting nobly, were slain by the enemy. So that the victory their father won was stained with their blood.

He returned to Denmark, and found that his wife Swanloga had in the meantime died of disease. Straightway he sought medicine for his grief in loneliness, and patiently confined the grief of his sick soul within the walls of his house. But this bitter sorrow was driven out of him by the sudden arrival of Iwar, who had been expelled from the kingdom. For the Gauls had made him fly, and had wrongfully bestowed royal power on a certain Ella, the son of Hame. Ragnar took Iwar to guide him, since he was acquainted with the country, gave orders for a fleet, and approached the harbor called York. Here he disembarked his forces, and after a battle which lasted three days, he made Ella, who had trusted in the valor of the Gauls, desirous to fly. The affair cost much blood to the English and very little to the Danes. Here Ragnar completed a year of conquest, and then, summoning his sons to help him, he went to Ireland, slew its king Melbrik, besieged Dublin, which was filled with wealth of the barbarians, attacked it, and received its surrender. There he lay in camp for a year; and then, sailing through the midland sea, he made his way to the Hellespont. He won signal victories as he crossed all the intervening countries, and no ill-fortune anywhere checked his steady and prosperous advance.

Harald, meanwhile, with the adherence of certain Danes who were cold-hearted servants in the army of Ragnar, disturbed his country with renewed sedition, and came forward claiming the title of king. He was met by the arms of Ragnar returning from the Hellespont; but being unsuccessful, and seeing that his resources of defense at home were exhausted, he went to ask help of Ludwig, who was then stationed at Mainz. But Ludwig, filled with the greatest zeal for promoting his religion, imposed a condition on the Barbarian, promising him help if he would agree to follow the worship of Christ. For he said there could be no agreement of hearts between those who embraced discordant creeds. Anyone, therefore, who asked for help, must first have a fellowship in religion. No men could be partners in great works who were separated by a different form of worship. This decision procured not only salvation for Ludwig's guest, but the praise of piety for Ludwig himself, who, as soon as Harald had gone to the holy font, accordingly strengthened him with Saxon auxiliaries. Trusting in these, Harald built a temple in the land of Sleswik with much care and cost, to be hallowed to God. Thus he borrowed a pattern of the most holy way from the worship of Rome. He unhallowed, pulled down the shrines that had been profaned by the error of misbelievers, outlawed the sacrificers, abolished the (heathen) priesthood, and was the first to introduce the religion of Christianity to his uncouth country. Rejecting the worship of demons, he was zealous for that of God. Lastly, he observed with the most scrupulous care whatever concerned the protection of religion. But he began with more piety than success. For Ragnar came up, outraged the holy rites he had brought in, outlawed the true faith, restored the false one to its old position, and bestowed on the ceremonies the same honor as before. As for Harald, he deserted and cast in his lot with sacrilege. For though he was a notable ensample by his introduction of religion, yet he was the first who was seen to neglect it, and this illustrious promoter of holiness proved a most infamous forsaker of the same.

Meanwhile, Ella betook himself to the Irish, and put to the sword or punished all those who were closely and loyally attached to Ragnar. Then Ragnar attacked him with his fleet, but, by the just visitation of the Omnipotent, was openly punished for disparaging religion. For when he had been taken and cast into prison, his guilty limbs were given to serpents to devour, and adders found ghastly substance in the fibers of his entrails. His liver was eaten away, and a snake, like a deadly executioner, beset his very heart. Then in a courageous voice he recounted all his deeds in order, and at the end of his recital added the following sentence: "If the porkers knew the punishment of the boar-pig, surely they would break into the sty and hasten to loose him from his affliction." At this saying, Ella conjectured that some of his sons were yet alive, and bade that the executioners should stop and the vipers be removed. The servants ran up to accomplish his bidding; but Ragnar was dead, and forestalled the order of the king. Surely we must say that this man had a double lot for his share? By one, he had a fleet unscathed, an empire well-inclined, and immense power as a rover; while the other inflicted on him the ruin of his fame, the slaughter of his soldiers, and a most bitter end. The executioner beheld

him beset with poisonous beasts, and asps gorging on that heart which he had borne steadfast in the face of every peril. Thus a most glorious conqueror declined to the piteous lot of a prisoner; a lesson that no man should put too much trust in fortune.

Iwar heard of this disaster as he happened to be looking on at the games. Nevertheless, he kept an unmoved countenance, and in nowise broke down. Not only did he dissemble his grief and conceal the news of his father's death, but he did not even allow a clamor to arise, and forbade the panic-stricken people to leave the scene of the sports. Thus, loth to interrupt the spectacle by the ceasing of the games, he neither clouded his countenance nor turned his eyes from public merriment to dwell upon his private sorrow; for he would not fall suddenly into the deepest melancholy from the height of festal joy, or seem to behave more like an afflicted son than a blithe captain.

But when Siward heard the same tidings, he loved his father more than he cared for his own pain, and in his distraction plunged deeply into his foot the spear he chanced to be holding, dead to all bodily troubles in his stony sadness. For he wished to hurt some part of his body severely, that he might the more patiently bear the wound in his soul. By this act he showed at once his bravery and his grief, and bore his lot like a son who was more afflicted and steadfast. But Biorn received the tidings of his father's death while he was playing at dice, and squeezed so violently the piece that he was grasping that he wrung the blood from his fingers and shed it on the table; whereon he said that assuredly the cast of fate was more fickle than that of the very die which he was throwing. When Ella heard this, he judged that his father's death had been borne with the toughest and most stubborn spirit by that son of the three who had paid no filial respect to his decease; and therefore he dreaded the bravery of Iwar most.

Iwar went towards England, and when he saw that his fleet was not strong enough to join battle with the enemy, he chose to be cunning rather than bold, and tried a shrewd trick on Ella, begging as a pledge of peace between them a strip of land as great as he could cover with a horse's hide. He gained his request, for the king supposed that it would cost little, and thought himself happy that so strong a foe begged for a little boon instead of a great one; supposing that a tiny skin would cover but a very little land. But Iwar cut the hide out and lengthened it into very slender thongs, thus enclosing a piece of ground large enough to build a city on. Then Ella came to repent of his lavishness, and tardily set to reckoning the size of the hide, measuring the little skin more narrowly now that it was cut up than when it was whole. For that which he had thought would encompass a little strip of ground, he saw lying wide over a great estate. Iwar brought into the city, when he founded it, supplies that would serve amply for a siege, wishing the defenses to be as good against scarcity as against an enemy.

Meantime, Siward and Biorn came up with a fleet of 400 ships, and with open challenge declared war against the king. This they did at the appointed time; and when they had captured him, they ordered the figure of an eagle to be cut in his back, rejoicing to crush their most ruthless foe by marking him with the cruellest of birds. Not satisfied with imprinting a wound on him, they salted the mangled flesh. Thus Ella was done to death, and Biorn and Siward went back to their own kingdoms.

Iwar governed England for two years. Meanwhile the Danes were stubborn in revolt, and made war, and delivered the sovereignty publicly to a certain SIWARD and to ERIK, both of the royal line. The sons of Ragnar, together with a fleet of 1,700 ships, attacked them at Sleswik, and destroyed them in a conflict which lasted six months. Barrows remain to tell the tale. The sound on which the war was conducted has gained equal glory by the death of Siward. And now the royal stock was almost extinguished, saving only the sons of Ragnar. Then, when Biorn and Erik had gone home, Iwar and Siward settled in Denmark, that they might curb the rebels

with a stronger rein, setting Agnar to govern England. Agnar was stung because the English rejected him, and, with the help of Siward, chose, rather than foster the insolence of the province that despised him, to dispeople it and leave its fields, which were matted in decay, with none to till them. He covered the richest land of the island with the most hideous desolation, thinking it better to be lord of a wilderness than of a headstrong country. After this he wished to avenge Erik, who had been slain in Sweden by the malice of a certain Osten. But while he was narrowly bent on avenging another, he squandered his own blood on the foe; and while he was eagerly trying to punish the slaughter of his brother, sacrificed his own life to brotherly love.

# Vebjorg

"At that moment, Vebjorg the shieldmaiden made a great attack against the Swedes and Gauts. She charged at the champion called Attack-Soti, and she had trained herself so much with helm and Burnie and sword that she was the foremost in knighthood, as Starkad the Old says...She struck champions with mighty blows, and attacked for a long time. She struck one blow on his cheek and spit his jawbone apart and sliced off his chin..."

## The Saga of Ragnar Lodbrok

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"... Now out of the town of Sle, under the captains Hetha (Heid) and Wisna ... came Tummi the Sailmaker. On these captains-- who had the bodies of women-- nature bestowed the souls of men. Webiorg was also inspired with the same spirit, and was attended by Bo (Bui) Bramason and Brat the Jute, thirsting for war."

"The maidens I have named, in fighting as well as courteous array, led their land-forces to the battle-field."

"...The same man witnesses that the maiden Weghbiorg (Webiorg) fought against the enemy and felled Soth the champion. While she was threatening to slay more champions, she was pierced through by an arrow from the bowstring of Thorkill, a native of Tellemark. For the skilled archers of the Gotlanders strung their bows so hard that the shafts pierced through even the shields; nothing proved more murderous; for the arrow-points made their way through hauberk and helmet as if they were men's defenceless bodies."

Saxo Grammaticus  
History of the Danes, Book VIII

interempto, filius eius Ingyald in regnum leuatur. Huic quoque defuncto successit Olauus filius eius, et ipsi filia, nomine Asa, de qua prouerbia multa dicuntur. Mortua Asa, que patri Olauo successerat, rex Danorum factus Haraldus, qui et Hyldetan dicebatur; iste dominium *maximum* habuisse 5 dicitur, factis sibi tributarijs omnibus regnis usque ad mare mediterraneum. Cumque ad Suethiam exigendorum tributorum causa proficisceretur, bello excepit eum rex Ring in campo, nomine Brawel; ubi ex parte Haraldus uexillifere puelle pugnasse feruntur, quarum una Hethæ, altera Wysna dicebatur. 10 In congressu illo Haraldus occubuit, et ex permissu Ring, regis Suethie, Dani puellam Hethæ regem super se constituerunt. Que eciam Dacie imperans ciuitatem sui nominis Hethæby apud Jutlandiam in portu statuit Sleswicensi.

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1. regnū *scripsi*; regno **C**. 4. que patri **E**;  $\bar{q}$ ; (= quem?) pater **M** successit **M**. 5. Hyldedan **M** maximum *addidi*. 8. proficeretur **C**, *correx*i. Ryng **E**. 9. Brarwel **C**. 10. Hethæ **V**; Heth **E**; Heltd **M** Wysnæ **M**. 12. Heth **E**; Helt **M**. 13. inparans **M**. 14. Slesuicensi **M**; Sleswycensi **E**. — *Post hæc* **C**: Hic transit imperium Romanorum ad reges Francie.

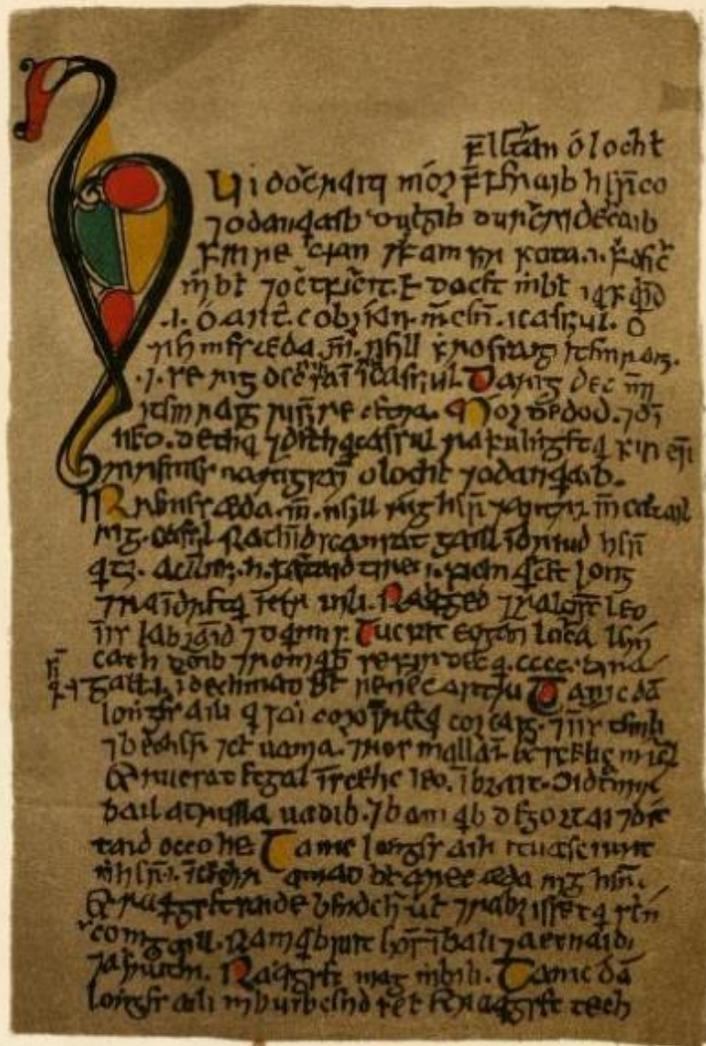
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## Visina

"These Champions were with King Harold... there were the shieldmaidens Visina and Heid and each had come with a great host to King Harald. Visina bore his standard. With her where the Champions Kari and Milva...a great host of Wends followed Visina the shield maiden. They were easy to recognize: they had long swords and bucklers, but they did not have long shields like other men."

## Aslaug

"After that Ragnar's Sons assembled an overwhelming force. When they were ready, they traveled with a fleet of ships to Sweden, but Queen Aslaug travelled overland with 1500 knights and that force was very well equipped. She herself wore armor and commanded this Army, and was called Randalin. They met up in Sweden and plundered and burned everywhere they went."



Specimen of the M.S.L (Book of Leinster)

cozawoh gaedhel re gallaibh.

THE  
 WAR OF THE GAEDHIL WITH THE GAILL,  
 OR  
 THE INVASIONS OF IRELAND BY THE DANES  
 AND OTHER NORSEMEN.

THE ORIGINAL IRISH TEXT,

EDITED, WITH

TRANSLATION AND INTRODUCTION,

BY

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1867.

This chieftain plundered the eastern coast of Munster, compelling the inhabitants to pay tribute, or personal service. In his wake followed innumerable hosts, so that, in the language of our author (p. 41), "there was not a harbour, nor a landing-port, nor a Dún, nor a fortress, nor a fastness, in all Munster without fleets of Danes and pirates." The leaders of several of these fleets are named,<sup>1</sup> and a pathetic description is given of the ravages and outrages committed by them, which exceeded, we are told, all that the country had hitherto endured. Particular mention is made of the captives of both sexes, who were carried off, "over the broad green sea," into oppression and bondage; and our author exclaims, "Alas! many and frequent were the bright and brilliant eyes that were suffused with tears, and dimmed through grief and despair, at the separation of son from father, and daughter from mother, and brother from brother, and relatives from their race and from their tribe."

In the next three or four chapters<sup>2</sup> we have a record of some battles in which the Danes of Dublin and other

Outrages committed upon the Irish.

Victories of the Danes of Dublin.

sailed to Ireland. "Ii tamen clade oppressi, quandam insulam, quæ Reoric [Flatholme] nominatur, petierunt, ubi tandem considerant, quousque plures eorum essent fame consumpti; unde necessitate compulsi, prius ad Deomedum [Suthwalliam], deinde autumnali tempore ad Hiberniam navigarunt." So says *Flor. Wigorn.*, A.D. 915 (*Monum. Hist. Britan.* p. 570). Comp. *Anglo-Sax. Chron.* A.D. 912 (*Ibid.*, p. 375) and *Lappenberg* (Thorpe's Transl.) ii., p. 94 *sq.* The Otter and Rhoald of the English Chronicles are very probably the Otter or Ottir and Ragnald of the Irish (see ch. xxviii., p. 31, and note <sup>6</sup>, p. 39). This is rendered the more likely, because Waterford Harbour, where they landed, is easily reached by sailing due west from South Wales. The date also agrees

sufficiently. We have seen also that our author's statement (ch. xxix., p. 35) that Otter and Ragnald were both killed in Scotland, is not confirmed by other records. See p. lxxii.

<sup>1</sup> *Named.* These are Oibert, Oduinn, [Audunn?] Griffin, Snuatgar, Lagmann, Erolf, Sitric, Buiduin, Birnidiu, Liagrslach, Toirberdaeb, Eoan Baran, [John the Baron?] Milid Buu, [the Knight Buu?] Suimin, Suainin, and the *Inghen Ruaidh*, which is Irish, and signifies the red or red-haired virgin. Examples of female adventurers, taking the command of a fleet, are not uncommon in Scandinavian history. The Editor has not identified the above named chieftains with any of those mentioned in the Sagas.

<sup>2</sup> *Chapters.* See p. 43, chaps. xxxvii.-xl.

together their surviving chieftains and men, encamped on the Green of Dublin (p. 211), where they remained for

Orc or Orkney Islands. 3. Of the foreigners of Dublin were slain 2,000, amongst whom are mentioned Dubhgall, son of Amlaff, son of Sitric, King of Dublin; Gillaciarain, son of Gluniarann, son of Olaf Cuaran (see p. 165); Dunchadh Ua h-Erulf (grandson of Heriolf, see note, p. clxxiv.); Amlaff the Lagman, son of Godfrey (see p. 165, and p. clxxiv., n. <sup>2</sup>), King of the Insi Gall, or Hebrides; and Erual Scot (see p. clxxxi., n. <sup>2</sup>). 4. Of the other foreigners are mentioned Oitir the black, Grisin [? Griffin], Luimiuin, and Siogradh, four leaders of the foreigners and chieftains of ships. 5. Carus and Carlus, two sons of the King of Lochlann. 6. Goistilin Gall, and Amund, son of Dubhginn [or Dubhcenn], two Kings of Port Lairge or Waterford. 7. Simond, son of Turgeis. 8. Sefraid or Geoffrey, son of Suinin. 9. Bernard, son of Suainin. 10. Eoin Baran (John the Baron?), and Ricard, the two sons of the Inghen Ruaidh [red maiden, see p. 41]. 11. Oisill and Ragnald, the two sons of Ivar O'Ivar. These were evidently the Danes of Waterford; therefore our author adds, p. 207, that it was right they should fall with Brian, because it was by Brian and his brother Mahon the fathers of all these had been slain.

Then follows a list of the Irish chieftains who fell on the Danish side. These were—1. Maemordha, King of Leinster. 2. Brogarbhan, son of Conchobhair, King of Ui Failge or Offaly (see p. clxiii., n. <sup>1</sup>). 3. Domball, son of Fergal, King of Fortuatha Laighen. (See p. clxxv., n.). 4. Dunlang (son of Tuathal), King of Life or Liffey. See p. 35, and note <sup>2</sup>, p. lxxxix. With these fell 2,000 of the Leinster men, and 1,100 of the Ui Ceinnselaigh,

the total loss of the enemy being 66,000, which is no doubt exaggerated. Brian lost his son Murchadh and his grandson Torrdelbach, with Conaing, his nephew, son of his brother Donnucan. Next to these are enumerated Eochaidh, son of Dunadhach, chief of the O'Scanlainn; Cuduiligh, son of Cennedigh or Kennedy; and Niall O'Quin, the three "rear guards" or body guards of Brian (see p. clxxvi., n. <sup>2</sup>). Dombhall, son of Diarmaid, King of Corcabbaiscinn (*Ibid.* and *Four M.*, p. 775, n. <sup>2</sup>); Mothla, son of Faelan or Phelan, King of the Deisi (*Ibid.* and *Four M.*, p. 773, n. <sup>1</sup>), with Magnus, son of Annchadh, King of the Ui Liathain (see p. clxxvi., n. <sup>2</sup>); Gehennach, son of Dubhagan, King of Fera-Maighe [Fermoy], (*Four M.*, p. 774, n. <sup>6</sup>); Dubhdabhoirenn, son of Dombhall, (i.e., of the Dombhall mentioned, p. 213); and Loingsech, son of Dunlang (i.e., of Dunlang, k. of Leinster, No. 4, supra.); Scannlan, son of Cathal, King of the Eoghanacht Locha Lein (or Killarney), *Four M.*, p. 775, n. <sup>1</sup>; Baedan, son of Muircertach, King of Ciarriaghe Luachra (the co. of Kerry). The *Four M.* and *Ann. Ult.* call this chieftain *Moc Beatha*, son of *Muireadhach Claen*, whom Dr. O'Donovan identifies with the ancestor of the O'Connor Kerry. *Four M.*, p. 774, n. <sup>2</sup>. The *Ann. of Loch Cé* have copied verbatim the list of the *Ann. Ult.* Macluanaidh Ua hEidhin (or O'Heyne), King of Aidne (see p. clxxvi., n. <sup>4</sup>). *Four M.*, p. 775, n. <sup>5</sup>. Tadhg Ua Cellaigh [O'Kelly], K. of Hy Many (p. clxxvi., n. <sup>5</sup>, *Four M.*, p. 774, n. <sup>2</sup>), and Dombhall, son of Eimhin (son of Cairneach, Mormaor or Steward of Mar in Scotland, *Four M.*) See p. clxxviii., n. <sup>2</sup>, and *Four M.*, p. 775, n. <sup>5</sup>.

# FRAKKOK

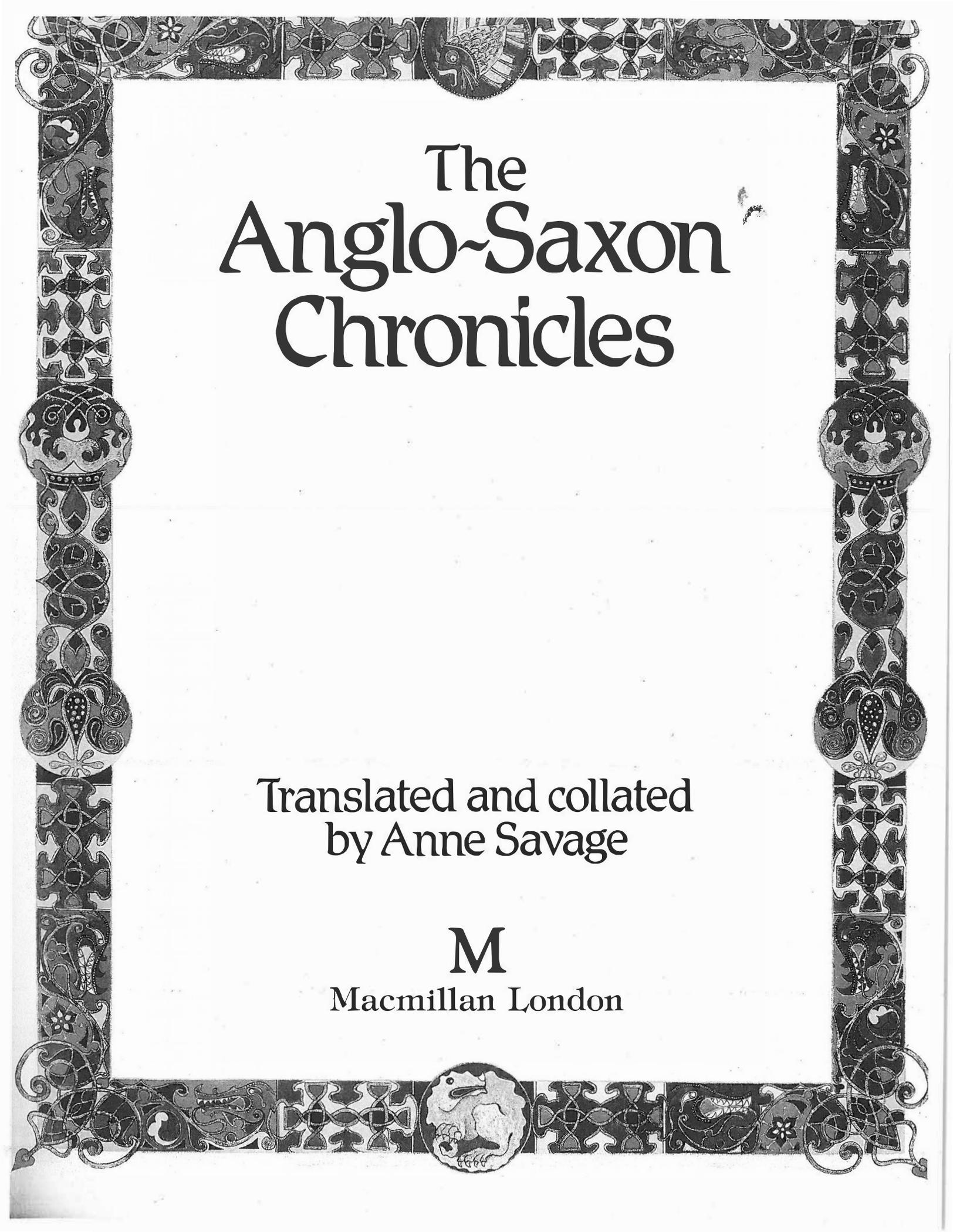
From *Orkneyinga Saga*:

Chapter 66. Kol gave this advice to send men to the Orkneys at once after this, and (Rognvald) begged earl Paul that he would give up half the isles as king Harold had given them to him; then friendship and thorough kinship should spring up between them. But if earl Paul refused these things, then these very same men should fare to find Frakok and Oliver the unruly, and offer them half the lands with earl Rognvald, if they would seek to get it from earl Paul with a host. But when these men came to the Orkneys and saw earl Paul, and brought forward their errand there, then earl Paul answers: "I understand this claim, how it is made with mickle cunning and forethought; they have betaken themselves to the kings of Norway to get the realm away from under me. Now I will not reward that faithlessness by giving up my realm to those who come no nearer to me than Rognvald, and by refusing it to my brother's son and my sister's son. There is no need here of long words, for I will guard the Orkneys by the strength of my friends and kinsfolk while God grants me life to do so." Then the messengers saw how their errand was likely to turn out there. So they fared away, and went south over the Pentland firth to Caithness, and so into Sutherland to find Frakok, and tell their errand there, how earl Rognvald and Kol offer Oliver and Frakok half the Orkneys if they will win them back from earl Paul. Frakok speaks thus: "True it is that Kol is a very wise man, and wisely has it been seen to in this plan to look hither for strength, because we kinsfolk have great strength, and many men bound to us by ties. I have now given away Margaret Hacon's daughter to earl Moddan of Athole, who is noblest of all the Scottish-chiefs by birth. Melmari his father was brother of Malcolm the Scot-king, father of David, who is now the Scot-king. We have also," she said, "many true claims to the Orkneys, but we are ourselves something of schemers, and we are said to be rather deep-witted, so that this strife does not come upon us unawares; but still it seems good to me to join fellowship with that father and son for many things' sake. Ye shall say these words to Kol and Rognvald that we two, Oliver and I, will come to the Orkneys next summer at midsummer with a host to fall on earl Paul; let Rognvald and his men come thither then to meet us, and let us then fight it out with earl Paul; but this winter I will draw strength to me out of Scotland and the Southern isles from my kinsfolk and friends and connexions." Now the messengers fare back east to Norway, and tell that father and son how they had sped.

Chapter 67. That winter after this earl Rognvald busked him to fare west, and these chiefs with him, Solmund and John; they fared in the course of the summer after, and had picked men, though not many; (and) five or six ships. They come off Shetland at midsummer and heard nothing of Frakok. Then high and foul winds arose, and they laid their ships up in Alasound,

(23) but fared about to feasts and free-quarters over the land and the freemen made them good cheer. But of Frakok it must be told that she fares in the spring out to the Southern isles, and she and Oliver gather force thence to themselves in men and ships; they got twelve ships, and all of them small and rather thinly manned. And near midsummer they held on for the Orkneys, and mean to meet earl Rognvald, as was said; they were slow in getting a wind. There Oliver the unruly was leader of that host, and the earldom in the Orkneys was meant for him if they could get it. Frakok was there in the fleet too, and many of her kith and kin.

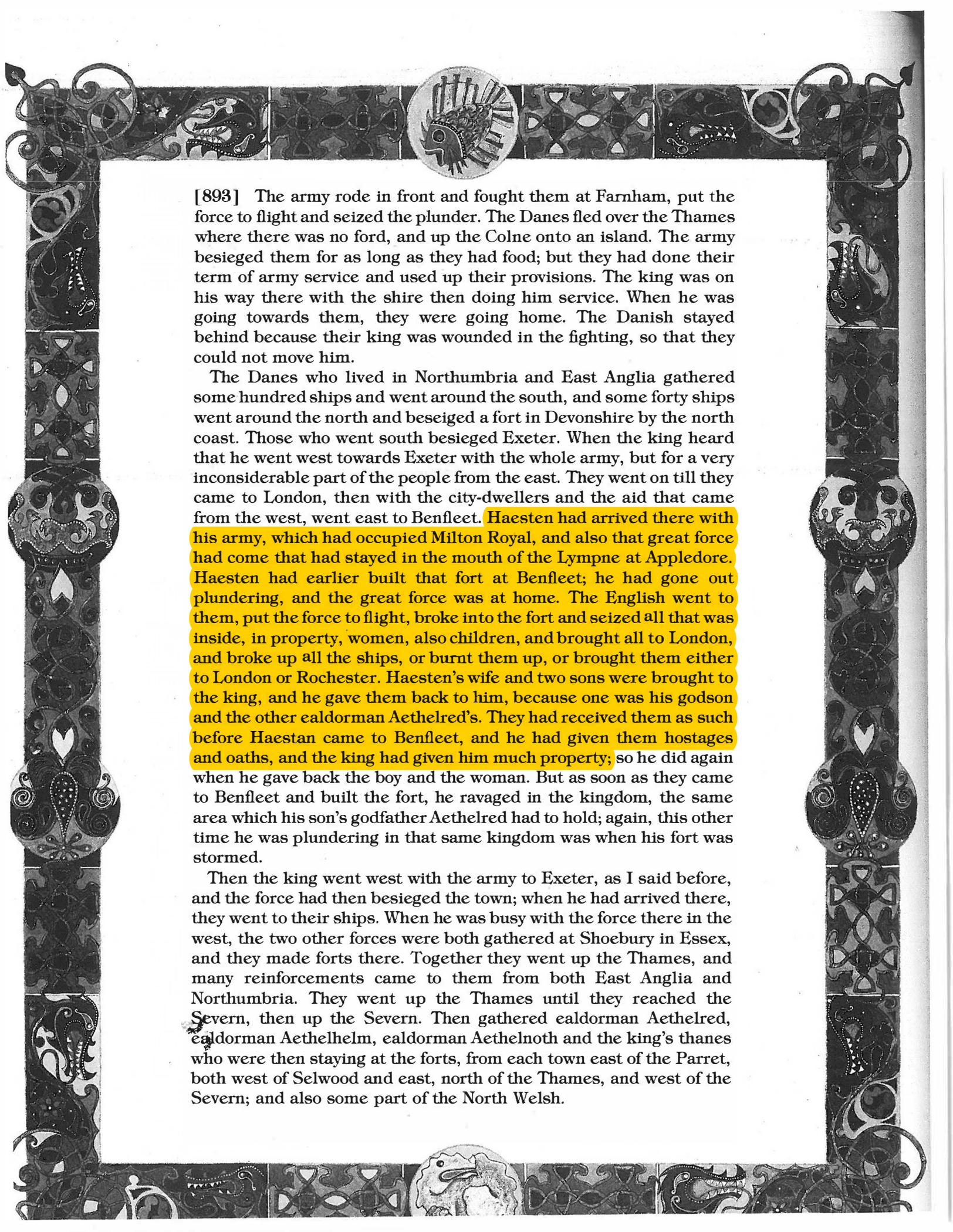
68. Earl Paul was then at Westness in Rowsay at a feast with Sigurd, when he heard that earl Rognvald was come to Shetland; then too was heard how a host was gathering together in the Southern isles to attack them. Then the earl sent word to Kugi in Westray, and to Thorkell flayer, they were wise men; and many other chieftains he summoned to him. At this meeting the earl asked counsel of his friends, but they did not all look on the matter in one way; some wished to share the realm with one or other (of the foe), and not to have both against them, but some advised that the earl should fare over to the Ness to his friends, and see what force he could get there. Earl Paul answers: "I will not now offer my realm to those to whom I refused it then right out when they sought it by fair means; methinks too it is unchieftainlike to fly my land without one trial of strength; I will take that counsel to send men tonight round all the isles to gather force, and let us fare against Rognvald and his men as soon as we can, and let our quarrel come to the sword" point ere the South-islanders come.'" This plan was taken which the earl spoke of. That man was then with earl Paul, whose name was Sweyn breastrope; he was one of the earl's bodyguard, and well honoured of him; he was ever on viking voyages in the summer, but the winters he spent with earl Paul. Sweyn was a tall, strong man, swarthy and rather unlucky-looking; he was very fond of the old faith, and had all his life lain out at night (to follow his black arts). He was one of the earl's forecastle men. These chiefs came at once that night to earl Paul; Eyvind Melbrigdi's son; he had a longship fully manned. Olaf Hrolf's son of Gairsay had another, Thorkell flayer a third, Sigurd the master of the house there a fourth, the fifth the earl had himself. With these five ships they hold on to Hrossey, and come there on the evening of the fifth day of the week (Thursday evening) at sundown; then force flocked to them during the night, but they got no more ships. They meant the day after to sail to Shetland against Rognvald and his men. But next morning, when it had got light, and the sun was just up, those men came to the earl, who said they had seen longships fairing from the south on the Pentland firth; they said they could not tell whether there were ten or twelve of them. The earl and his men made up their minds that there must be coming Frakok's host.



# The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles

Translated and collated  
by Anne Savage

**M**  
Macmillan London



[893] The army rode in front and fought them at Farnham, put the force to flight and seized the plunder. The Danes fled over the Thames where there was no ford, and up the Colne onto an island. The army besieged them for as long as they had food; but they had done their term of army service and used up their provisions. The king was on his way there with the shire then doing him service. When he was going towards them, they were going home. The Danish stayed behind because their king was wounded in the fighting, so that they could not move him.

The Danes who lived in Northumbria and East Anglia gathered some hundred ships and went around the south, and some forty ships went around the north and besieged a fort in Devonshire by the north coast. Those who went south besieged Exeter. When the king heard that he went west towards Exeter with the whole army, but for a very inconsiderable part of the people from the east. They went on till they came to London, then with the city-dwellers and the aid that came from the west, went east to Benfleet. Haesten had arrived there with his army, which had occupied Milton Royal, and also that great force had come that had stayed in the mouth of the Lympe at Appledore. Haesten had earlier built that fort at Benfleet; he had gone out plundering, and the great force was at home. The English went to them, put the force to flight, broke into the fort and seized all that was inside, in property, women, also children, and brought all to London, and broke up all the ships, or burnt them up, or brought them either to London or Rochester. Haesten's wife and two sons were brought to the king, and he gave them back to him, because one was his godson and the other ealdorman Aethelred's. They had received them as such before Haestan came to Benfleet, and he had given them hostages and oaths, and the king had given him much property; so he did again when he gave back the boy and the woman. But as soon as they came to Benfleet and built the fort, he ravaged in the kingdom, the same area which his son's godfather Aethelred had to hold; again, this other time he was plundering in that same kingdom was when his fort was stormed.

Then the king went west with the army to Exeter, as I said before, and the force had then besieged the town; when he had arrived there, they went to their ships. When he was busy with the force there in the west, the two other forces were both gathered at Shoebury in Essex, and they made forts there. Together they went up the Thames, and many reinforcements came to them from both East Anglia and Northumbria. They went up the Thames until they reached the Severn, then up the Severn. Then gathered ealdorman Aethelred, ealdorman Aethelhelm, ealdorman Aethelnoth and the king's thanes who were then staying at the forts, from each town east of the Parret, both west of Selwood and east, north of the Thames, and west of the Severn; and also some part of the North Welsh.

# The Lay of Atli

Found in the *Codex Regius*, a.k.a. *Atlakvitha*

...

The mighty Atli mounted Glaum and rode away, his warriors around him.

Gudrun invoked the gods of war; holding back tears, she came into the hall. *"May you be granted, Atli, what you to Gunnar swore in many oaths and often vowed by the sun in the southlands, by Sigtyr's rock-- the gods resting place-- and by Ull's ring."*

But at that moment, the Master of the Gold was being dragged toward his death. Alive into the slithering pit a crowd of men lowered the king; but Gunnar, alone among the serpents struck his harp with wrathful hands. The strings resounded. So shall a war-lord defend his treasure against his foes.

Atli spurred his swift horse and galloped home after Gunnar's murder; hoofs clattered in the crowded yard, weapons clashed, as Huns returned from the heath.

Gudrun came to welcome Atli, offered the king a gilded cup: *"My lord, in your hall let Gudrun's hands make you merry with fresh young meat!"*

Ale-cups echoed, heavy with wine, as Huns assembled in Atli's hall; long-bearded warriors made haste to come. Bright-faced Gudrun served them drink; to the yellow-beaked warrior, against her will, she offered ale-dainties, then reviled Atli: *"Now has the sword-wielder eaten his sons' gory hearts made sweet with honey! Digest the ale-dainties of dead men's flesh sent to your high-seat, that, drunk, you devoured! Never again will you call to your knees Erp and Eitil, merry with ale; never will you see the princes at their sports, dividing war-spoils, fitting shafts to spears, trimming manes, spurring their swift horses."*

A strange murmur came from the men; warriors cried out and wept aloud. Only Gudrun gave no tears to her bear-hearted brothers, or the sweet boys-- the innocent sons-- she bore to Atli.

The swan-white lady scattered gold, with red rings she enriched the warriors, hastened their fate as she flung bright metal-- she did not spare the treasure-stores.

Atli, unwary, had drunk himself weak; he had no weapon to ward off Gudrun-- many times the princes had seen these two softly embracing in that same hall. Gudrun held a spike in murderous hands; the bed drank blood.

She let loose the dogs, and ran to wake up the warriors in the hall with a burning brand: they paid for her brothers. She gave to the flames all those she found inside who from the murders had come out of Mirkwood; old timbers fell, treasure houses filled with smoke, the Budling fortress burned, and inside the doomed shield-maids died in the flames.

The tale has been told. Never since that time has a woman wrought such revenge for her brothers; three great kings Gudrun the Fair sent to their deaths before she died.

[https://www.courses.psu.edu/ger/ger100\\_fgg1/supplementary/atli.html](https://www.courses.psu.edu/ger/ger100_fgg1/supplementary/atli.html)

# Tale of Gisli the Outlaw

## Chapter 16 - Spy-Helgi and Havard

By this time Eyjolf collected the promised silver and with eleven other men, rode to Gisli's farmstead and delivered the bribe-money to Gisli's wife, Aud.

Counting it, Aud concluded: "It's all here, exactly as you promised, Eyjolf. Can I do whatever I like with this silver? Anything at all?"

Smelling victory, Eyjolf smirked and told Aud she could do whatever her heart desired.

Aud then carefully poured the heavy silver coins into a big purse, got up, and slowly sauntered up to Eyjolf. Quick as a flash she swung the purse, silver and all, smack down on Eyjolf's nose. Blood spurted and gushed out, all over him.

As she struck him she said: "Take **that**, you stupid, evil wretch! Did you really think I'd sell out my husband? Put Gisli into your filthy hands? Never forget, that a woman smashed your face in! As long as you live, remember that a woman beat you! You'll NEVER make me help you, no matter what you do."

"Grab her, men!" screamed Eyjolf, gripping his bleeding nose. "Kill that bitch!"

But then Havard jumped out, saying: "This is an awful business already, without our murdering women on top of it. Let's go, guys; don't listen to him."

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## Chapter 18 - Gisli's Slaying

...Helgi rushed up the crag at Gisli. He hurried to meet him, and brandished his sword, and smote him on the loins, and sliced him in half at the waist; and each half of Helgi fell down from the crags, each on its own side. Eyjolf climbed up and there Aud met him, and hit him on the arm with her club so that he lost all his use of that arm and toppled down the mountainside. Then Gisli said: "Long ago I knew I married well, though I never dreamed half as well, as I did!"

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## Chapter 19 - Thordis' Welcome to Eyjolf

Eyjolf rode from home with eleven men to see Bork the Stout, and told Bork the whole story (how he and the eleven found, surrounded and killed Gisli).

Bork was happy at that and bade Thordis to make Eyjolf welcome.

"Remember now all your love for my brother, Thorgrim, and be good to Eyjolf."

"I will weep for my brother Gisli, instead" claimed Thordis. "It should be welcome enough for Gisli's killer if I make him broth and serve that."

That evening when Thordis brought in the food, she let the tray of spoons fall. Now Eyjolf had laid the sword that Gisli had borne between the table and his legs. Thordis recognized her brother Gisli's sword, and as she stooped after the spoons she caught hold of the sword by the hilt and stabbed Eyjolf under the table. Although she intended to run Eyjolf through his stomach, she did not reckon that the hilt pointed up and caught the table; so she thrust lower than she would, and hit him on the thigh, giving him a great wound.

Bork seized Thordis, twisting the sword out of her hand. Everyone jumped and push away the board with the meat. Bork offered to let Eyjolf determine his own compensation, and he laid it at the full price of a man, and said he would have laid it higher had not Bork behaved so well.

As for Thordis, she immediately called the assembled men to witness, saying she is divorcing Bork, and will never come into his bed again. Thordis kept her word, leaving to live at Thordisastead, out on the Ere. Bork stayed behind at Helgafell till Snorro the Priest kicked him out; and then Bork went to dwell at Glasswaterwood.

As for Eyjolf, he returned home to nurse his wound, ill-pleased with everything.

## THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

must be the gum of a tree, because within its transparent substance there are often visible various creatures, creeping or flying things, which, having been entangled in the gum as it flows, are imprisoned in its mass as it afterwards hardens. Therefore, I venture to think that in the isles and lands of the west there must be woods and groves of very luxuriant growth, like those of the far-distant East, dropping frankincense and balsams, and that the burning rays of their near neighbour the sun melt and distil these humours until they drop into the sea below, and that then the force of storms washes them up on the shores that lie opposite.

If we test the nature of amber by applying fire to it, it blazes up like a torch and burns with a rich and strongly-scented flame, and presently melts into a viscid mass like so much pitch or resin.

The tribes of the Sitones<sup>1</sup> are conterminous with those of the Swedes, whom they resemble in all respects with only one point of difference : they are ruled by a woman. So far, they fall not merely below the position of free-men, but even beneath that of slaves.

Here Suabia comes to an end.

XLV. I am in some doubt as to whether I ought to class the nations of the Peucini, the Wends, and the Finns, as Germans or as Slavonians, although the Peucini, otherwise known as the Bastarnians, in their language and their degree of civilisation, and in their settlements and houses, are undoubtedly German. Dirt and indolence are universal among them, and by the in-

<sup>1</sup> ? Norwegians.

## THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

termarriages of chiefs<sup>1</sup> they are acquiring something of the unseemliness of the Slavonians.

The Wends<sup>2</sup> have borrowed many of the Slavonian habits, and go roaming about in search of plunder through all the wooded and rocky highlands that separate the Peucini and the Finns. Nevertheless, they are on the whole to be classed among the Germans because they have fixed habitations, and carry shields, and are proud of being footmen and of their powers of running, in all which matters they are unlike the Slavonians, who live on horseback and whose home is in a waggon.

The Finns are utter savages, and squalidly poor ; they have no arms, no horses, no homes ; they eat wild herbs, go clad in skins, and lie on the bare earth ; their only hope of getting better fare is in their arrows, which for lack of iron they tip with points of bone. The **women** seek their sustenance by the chase, exactly like the men ; they accompany them wherever they go, and claim their share of the prey. Their infants have no other refuge against wild beasts and storms than a booth of wattled boughs ; here the old folk crouch and hither the young folk return after hunting. Yet they esteem their life a happier one than if it were spent in groaning over the clods and labouring to build houses, dreading ever to lose what has already been gained, or hoping to gain what another must lose.

<sup>1</sup> Reading "procerum connubiis mixtis".

<sup>2</sup> Wends has become a general term amongst the Germans for Slavonians.

# Unn The Deep-Minded

## Chapter 4

Unn the Deep-minded was in Caithness when her son, Thorstein, fell. When she heard that Thorstein was dead, and her father had breathed his last, she deemed she would have no prospering in store there. So she had a ship built secretly in a wood, and when it was ready built she arrayed it, and had great wealth withal; and she took with her all her kinsfolk who were left alive; and men deem that scarce may an example be found that any one, a woman only, has ever got out of such a state of war with so much wealth and so great a following. From this it may be seen how peerless among women she was.

## Chapter 7

Unn now became very weary with old age, and she called Olaf "Feilan" to her and said: "It is on my mind, grandson, that you should settle down and marry." Olaf took this well, and said he would lean on her foresight in that matter. Unn said: "It is chiefly in my mind that your wedding-feast should be held at the end of the summer, for that is the easiest time to get in all the means needed, for to me it seems a near guess that our friends will come hither in great numbers, and I have made up my mind that this shall be the last bridal feast arrayed by me..."

Then Unn said: "Bjorn and Helgi, my brothers, and all my other kindred and friends, I call witnesses to this, that this dwelling with all its belongings that you now see before you, I give into the hands of my grandson, Olaf, to own and to manage." After that Unn stood up and said she would go to the bower where she was wont to sleep, but bade everyone have for pastime whatever was most to his mind, and that ale should be the cheer of the common folk. So the tale goes, that Unn was a woman both tall and portly. She walked at a quick step out along the hall, and people could not help saying to each other how stately the lady was yet. They feasted that evening till they thought it time to go to bed. The next day, Olaf went to the sleeping bower of Unn, his grandmother, and when he came into the chamber there was Unn sitting up against her pillow, and she was dead. Olaf went into the hall after that and told these tidings. Everyone thought it a wonderful thing, how Unn had upheld her dignity to the day of her death. So they now drank honor to both Olaf's wedding and Unn's funeral. The last day of the feast, Unn was carried to the howe (burial mound) that was made for her. She was laid in a ship in the cairn, and much treasure with her, and after that the cairn was closed up."

*(Laxdæla Saga)*

# Grágás

Dependants:

"It is prescribed that every man in this country must maintain his dependents. A man must first maintain his mother. If he can manage more, then he is to maintain his father. If he can do better, then he is to maintain his children. If he can do better still, then he can maintain his brothers or sisters...."

"If a man goes into debt-bondage for his father, but then his mother needs maintenance later on, his father is to pass to his kinsmen for maintenance, and he is to go into debt-bondage for his mother." Gragas, K Section 128, Ib. p. 3. Dependents.

## INHERITANCE SECTION<sup>1</sup>

K § 118; p. 218

A son free born and a lawful heir is to **inherit** on the death of his father and mother. If a son does not exist, then a daughter is to **inherit**. If a daughter does not exist, then the father is to **inherit**, then a brother born of the same father, then the mother. If she does not exist, then a sister born of the same father is to **inherit**. If she does not exist, then a brother born of the same mother is to **inherit**. If he does not exist, then a sister born of the same mother is to **inherit**.

*Inheritance  
sequence of  
legitimate kin*

<sup>2</sup>After a sister born of the same mother and legitimate . . . and so on to . . . to **inherit**.<sup>3</sup>

A killing case lies with an illegitimate son . . . and so on to . . . after a dependent.<sup>4</sup>

If (p. 219) she<sup>5</sup> does not exist, then an illegitimate son is to **inherit**. If he does not exist, then an illegitimate daughter is to **inherit**. If she does not exist, then an illegitimate brother born of the same father is to **inherit**. If he does not exist, then an [illegitimate] sister born of the same father is to **inherit**. If she [does] not exist, then an [illegitimate] brother born of the same mother is to **inherit**. If he does not exist, then an illegitimate sister born of the same mother is to **inherit**.

*Inheritance by close  
illegitimate kin*

From there on only persons born legitimate stand to **inherit**.<sup>6</sup> Father's father and mother's father, son's son and daughter's son stand next to **inherit**. Next to them father's mother and mother's mother, son's daughter and daughter's daughter have the right to **inherit**. Then come father's brother and mother's brother, brother's son and sister's son. Finally father's sister and mother's sister, brother's daughter and sister's daughter **inherit**.

*Remoter heirs must  
be legitimate*

†PERSONAL COMPENSATION For some transgressions personal compensation had to be paid: for physical assault (in case of death also called “killing compensation”), unlawful intercourse and verbal injury. The rate for all free people was the same, 48 ounce-units in *legal tender* (a *mark* of silver); a *slave* seems to have got three ounce-units (cf. I, 173); incorrigible *vagrants* lost the right to personal compensation. The compensation was doubled for injuries suffered at assemblies formally inaugurated (I, 245) or in spite of peace guarantees (I, 254). Words and actions are also defined as requiring half or full personal compensation, cf. Add. § 130 (ii), but prosecution of words for which half personal compensation should be paid could only be undertaken when aggravation had made full compensation payable (cf. I, 131, 172).

# Freydis

## Chapter 12

... When that time had passed, there was seen approaching from the south a great crowd of Skrælingar (Esquimaux) canoes, coming down upon them like a stream, the staves this time being all brandished in the direction opposite to the sun's motion, and the Skrælingar were all howling loudly. Karlsefni's men encountered them and fought, and there was a great shower of missiles, because the Skrælingar had also war-slings, or catapults.

Then Karlsefni and Snorri saw that the Skrælingar were bringing up poles, with very large balls attached to each, about the size of a sheep's stomach, dark in color; and these flew over Karlsefni's company towards the land, and when they came down they struck the ground with a hideous noise. This produced great terror in Karlsefni and his company, so that their only impulse was to run upriver, because it seemed as if crowds of Skrælingar were driving at them from all sides. And they didn't stop running until they came to certain crags. There they offered their pursuers stern resistance.

Freydis came out and saw all the men running away. She called out: *"Why run you away from such worthless creatures, stout men that ye are, when, as seems to me likely, you might slaughter them like so many cattle? Let me but have a weapon, I think I could fight better than any of you."* They paid no attention. Freydis tried to follow, but soon lagged behind, because she was eight months pregnant. She ran into the woods, with the Skrælingar in hot pursuit. She came upon a dead man-- Thorbrand, Snorri's son-- with a flat stone fixed in his head; his sword lay beside him, so she picked it up and prepared to defend herself.

Then came the Skrælingar upon her. She let down her sark and struck her breast with the naked sword. At this they were frightened, rushed off to their boats, and fled away. Karlsefni and the rest eventually came out, found her heading back to camp and praised her zeal.

## Saga of Eric the Red

# Steinnun

## Chapter 98 Thankbrand and Christianity

Thangbrand and his messmate fared right through the west country, and Steinnun, the mother of Ref the Skald, came against him; she preached the heathen faith to Thangbrand and made him a long speech.

Thangbrand held his peace while she spoke, but made a long speech after her, and turned all that she had said the wrong way against her.

"Hast thou heard," she said, "how Thor challenged Christ to single combat, and how he did not dare to fight with Thor?"

"I have heard tell," says Thangbrand, "that Thor was naught but dust and ashes, if God had not willed that he should live."

"Knowest thou," she says, "who it was that shattered thy ship?"

"What hast thou to say about that?" he asks.

'Thangbrand's vessel from her moorings,  
Sea-king's steed, Thor wrathful tore,  
Shook and shattered all her timbers,  
Hurled her broadside on the beach;  
Ne'er again shall Viking's snow-shoe,  
On the briny billows glide,  
For a storm by Thor awakened,  
Dashed the bark to splinters small.'

After that Thangbrand and Steinvora parted, and they fared west to Bardastrand."

Njal's Saga