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**“RÚMFERLAR” IN THE ICELANDIC SAGA LITERATURE:
KINGS' SAGAS, THE SAGAS OF ICELANDERS, AND PILGRIMAGE**

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Abstract

Rúmferlar in the Old Norse Saga Literature: King's Sagas, the Sagas of Icelanders, and Pilgrimage

The aim of this thesis is to analyze examples of pilgrimages to Rome in the Old Norse saga literature with focus on king's sagas and the sagas of Icelanders. Even though the pilgrimage to Rome is a common motive in these saga genres, their role in the saga texts has scarcely been investigated so far. This paper examines the characteristics of Roman pilgrimages in selected sagas and furthermore suggests that their appearance in the narratives might be incompatible with the time of saga action. This paper seeks to affirm this assumption by outlining historical facts and scholarly opinions on the Christianization of Scandinavia and compares them to the reflection of the religious situation in the sagas. By surveying the main theories of the origins of sagas, the possibilities which the analysis of saga pilgrimages can bring to the studies on creation and development of saga literature will be illustrated.

Keywords: Old Norse saga literature, Christian pilgrimage, Rome.

Whan that Aprill with his shoures sote
The droghte of Marche hath perced to the rote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour,
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eek with his swete breeth
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his halve cours y-ronne;
And smale fowles maken melodye,
That slepen al the night with open yë –
So priketh hem Nature in hir corages –
Than longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,
And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes,
To ferne halwes, couthe in sondry londes <...>.

Geoffrey Chaucer, The Canterbury Tales. The General Prologue

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Introduction

The Old Icelandic saga literature extensively embodies the all-embracing urge to travel. The sagas depict people on the move if not from continent to continent, then from fjord to fjord, running errands, making contacts, creating bonds, and exploring. The never-ceasing longing for travel is pronounced by Auðunn Vestfirzki (Auðunn of the Westfjords) in his words to the Danish king Sveinn: „Braut fýsir mik nú, herra.“¹ (Auðunar 2: 392) This *fýsi*, an unexplained and (partially?) unexplainable urge, brings Auðunn south to the holy city of Rome. The unsettling yearning for distant lands mingles with Christian piety, and takes Auðunn away from the protection of king Sveinn in order to travel southward on an exceedingly challenging and fateful journey.

The topic for this paper originated in a question, or rather astonishment, of why the Old Norse saga characters after being newly converted to Christianity undertake dangerous and very often fatal pilgrimages, which require a great level of religious self-consciousness and utmost faith. In other words, what makes them leave everything they have – may it be family, property, respect or favourable social positions – behind and become *rúmferlar*, travellers to Rome?

During the process in which I was trying to find answers to this question, the discrepancy between the content and the time in the sagas became increasingly noticeable. It seemed surprisingly early for saga characters to attain such devotion, as the events depicted in the texts I was analyzing almost coincided with the time of the conversion of Scandinavia. These observations resulted in a slight suspicion and then in **a hypothesis that saga pilgrimages reflect phenomena much later than the times they are set in.** This hypothesis, if proved true, leads to the main question of how the pilgrimages can be used as a tool for analyzing creation and origins of the sagas.

In order to support the hypothesis, the research is divided into two main sections according to different approaches to analysis. The first section encompasses a general survey on pilgrimage in the Old Norse sagas with focus on character motivation and change. In the second section, the general survey is supplemented with the discussion on the background for the genesis of saga literature. This is done by investigating both the historical situation and the literary impetus of creating narratives on pilgrimages in the medieval Scandinavian culture.

The main primary sources of the present study include a selection of texts which represent two Old Norse saga genres, the king's sagas (*konungasögur*) and the sagas of Icelanders (*Íslendingasögur*). These are the genres most generously illustrative of saga pilgrimages. Further reasons for the choice of

¹ “I am now eager to leave here, my lord.” (Audun 2: 371)

particular sources are explained in the section *Main Definitions and Sources*. The genres as well as the selected sagas are described in the same section.

In accordance to the two main research approaches, the body of the paper is divided into two larger parts. In the first, I analyze the possible reasons which bring the Old Norse saga characters on a pilgrim route to Rome. Through discussing selected examples, I gather the expectations and goals of Scandinavian pilgrims in the sagas, both ordinary and royal, as well as their characteristics in terms of status and piety. This serves as a descriptive study of the examples, which illustrates further, more complex analysis.

In the second part of the paper, I explain the aforementioned disagreement I see between the level of Christianization among the characters of the sagas and the real situation in Scandinavia at that time. The hypothesis of the paper is introduced and general commentary on Scandinavian Christianization is delivered. Analyzing the correlation between the real time and saga-time reveals to the problems affiliated with dating the sagas, which lead to discussing the approaches to retracing saga origins. By connecting the facts available on the origins of sagas and the historical situation, I intend to comprehend the sources for pilgrimages in saga narratives and reflect on the ‘obsession’ with Rome by the Icelandic society in the Middle Ages. On the closing note, I suggest that further study on saga pilgrimages could shed light on certain questions concerning the Old Norse saga narratives, including the author’s figure and the dating.

In this paper, personal names and toponyms are used in normalized Old Norse forms, as well as the names of the sagas. This is mainly because the research is based on the editions of the sagas in Old Norse. If there are commonly used English forms of historical names, the English form is given once in the brackets, and the Old Norse form is used throughout (for example, Knútr inn ríki in English sources is usually referred to as Canute the Great). Personal names with translatable segments are explained (for example, the name of Auðunn vestfirzki is for once translated as “Auðunn of the Westfjords” in the first paragraph of the present Introduction). Citations in Old Norse are also supplied with English equivalents.

Literature Review

Pilgrimage in Old Norse saga literature is a topic that so far has received surprisingly little attention. Secondary literature research for this paper has shown a modest amount of texts which more or less specifically refer to saga pilgrimages. In most studies, saga pilgrimages to Rome are analyzed together with other kinds of voyages (Shafer 2010a) or as examples for outlining textual characteristics of the sagas and their origins (Hermann Pálsson 2002, Andersson 2003, Sveinbjörg Rafnsson 2005).

The most specific study which focuses on saga pilgrimages to Rome in particular is an article by John D. Shafer from 2011. In this article, examples of pilgrimage in *konungasögur*, *Íslendingasögur*, and *Orkeyinga saga* are analyzed by drawing attention to the motivation of saga pilgrims. Most of the questions in the article from 2011 are also analyzed in the same author's dissertation on Norse far-travellers (2010a), particularly in the section on southern saga journeys. An article based on this dissertation (2010b) has also been taken in consideration.

John D. Shafer's observations encompass mostly textual material with modest evaluation of pilgrimages' role and purpose in saga texts. Shafer distinguishes between piety-motivated pilgrimages and location-specific journeys, which he refers to as 'tourism' (2010b: 7, 2011: 24). Valuable for the present paper have been Shafer's remarks on the relationship between two main pilgrim destinations, Rome and Jerusalem. In general sense, his studies on saga pilgrimages have been of greatest importance in both primary and secondary sources' selection for present paper, as well as for its focus on saga pilgrims' motivation.

In contrast to saga pilgrimages, the pilgrim guide by abbot Niculás has been discussed in numerous studies. For this paper, Niculás *Leiðarvísir ok borgaskipan* has served as a complementary primary source on understanding the status of Rome (on more details see *Main Primary Sources*). A dissertation about *Leiðarvísir ok borgaskipan* by Tommaso Marani (2012) has been important for its general discussion of Old Norse pilgrimages, examples from the Old Norse saga literature, and critical approach to the origins of the narratives on devotional journeys. His historically based observations on indulgence and absolution have influenced the arguments for the present paper's hypothesis.

The lack of sources which specifically discuss saga pilgrimages has made it necessary to turn to general studies on Roman pilgrimage. Studies by Debra J. Birch (1998) have been important in their focus on Rome as a devotional destination throughout various ages, and the main motivations and purposes that draw pilgrims to this city. General information on Christian pilgrimages to Rome and the culture of pilgrimage in Europe has also been based on parts of Harpur (2002) and Herwaarden (2003).

Their studies offer a broad range of topics, including the attractiveness of Rome as a pious destination, the figure of the pope, and the granting of indulgences.

With only John D. Shafer's saga pilgrimage studies at hand, this paper has a wide and almost untouched but slightly vulnerable base on which to place assumptions on. It is therefore yet to be shown, and attempted to in this paper, if analysis of saga pilgrimages has prospects in the wider research of the Old Norse saga literature.

Main Primary Sources

In this paper, I analyze the Old Norse saga material which includes characters going on pilgrimages to Rome. The reasons for not including Jerusalem in the study as another major devotional destination are primarily those of the length requirements for a BA thesis, as analyzing pilgrimages to both destinations would better suit a paper of larger extent. As it appeared throughout the research progress, Rome of the Old Norse literature is in itself worthy of attention and as important a sacred city as Jerusalem, which I discuss in Chapter 3.

The Old Norse sagas constitute a wide-ranging literary corpus, traditionally divided into multiple genres differing in content matter, main characters, and origins. Primary sources of this paper include the king's sagas (*konungasögur*) and the sagas of Icelanders, or Family sagas (*Íslendingasögur*). These are the genres which are exceptionally constituted by original, indigenous Old Norse texts. Chivalric sagas (*riddarasögur*) are therefore excluded because of their translated or European Medieval literature-inspired material.²

Another genre of original Old Norse sagas – the sagas of Icelandic Prehistory (*fornaldarsögur*) – is not included in the research either. Unlike *konungasögur* and *Íslendingasögur*, they deal with pre-Christian material, while the other two describe the times of emergence, spreading and growth of Christianity in Scandinavia. Because of this reason *fornaldarsögur* are irrelevant when analyzing pilgrimages. Bishops' sagas (*biskupasögur*) focus on lives of representatives of Christian institutions, and in this respect their pilgrimages can be considered more appropriate and natural, thus less striking and fruitful as material for this analysis.

In addition to *konungasögur* and *Íslendingasögur*, I discuss an example of short prose narratives (*þættir*), which are often referred to alongside sagas. This is due to the fact that *þættir* may sometimes be preserved as parts of longer narratives, and have similarities to the content material of sagas (Rowe, Harris 2005: 462). The only example of Roman pilgrimage in *þættir* I discuss comes from *Auðunar þáttur vestfirzka*.

The particular primary sources, i.e. specific sagas, for this paper are chosen in accordance with the main secondary source: studies on saga pilgrimage by John D. Shafer. As already mentioned in the Literature Review, his input in describing pilgrims of the Old Norse sagas has so far been the most

² This does by no means suggest that the texts which were primarily written in Old Norse, by Scandinavian authors or in Medieval Scandinavia are superior to the texts in Old Norse of other origins. It is simply because *riddarasögur*, as well as most saints' lives (*heilagra manna sögur*), include no main characters of Scandinavian origin. *Riddarasögur* here refer to both adaptations and translated material (Glauser 2005: 373)

thorough and remarkable. Therefore, his research serves as basic inspiration both in terms of the main approaches to analysis and the choice of sources.³

The Sagas of Icelanders mentioned in this paper include (in alphabetical order)⁴:

- *Fóstbræðra saga*. This saga is considered one of the earliest and is dated back to the early thirteenth century. The saga's character Bjarni goes on a pilgrimage to Rome.
- *Grettis saga* is a comparably late saga, presumably from the second half of the fourteenth century. Roman pilgrimage is illustrated in the final section of *Grettis saga* is sometimes referred to as *Spésar þáttur ok Þórsteins drómundar*, as it focuses on the lives of Spés and Þórsteinn.
- *Gísla saga* is considered to be written in the mid-thirteenth century. The saga's pilgrimage to Rome is undertaken by Auður and Gunnhildr.
- *Grænlendinga saga* might also represent the earliest period of the creation of Íslendingasögur, namely the early thirteenth century. However, it might also be written as late as the fourteenth century. The saga's character Guðríðr leaves for a pilgrimage to Rome.
- *Njáls saga* mentioned three pilgrims, of which two, namely Flósi and Kári, are focused on in this paper due to their importance as main characters and to their pilgrimages' detailed descriptions. *Njáls saga* is one of the most famous texts of the Old Norse saga literature and is dated the late thirteenth century.

Auðunar þáttur vestfirzka (in citations: *Auðunar*) is a short narrative present in *Morkinskinna* and *Flateyjarbók*. This *þáttur* is further categorized as *Íslendingaþáttur*, i.e. included in the sub-genre of short narratives about the chieftain-and-retainer relationship between Norwegian kings and free Icelandic farmers (Rowe, Harris 2005: 468).

Konungasögur are represented here by:

- *Knýtlinga saga*, a chronicle of Danish kings from the mid-tenth to the late twelfth century. Its dating is unclear, though it is possible that the saga has been written in the mid-thirteenth century (Hermann Pálsson, Edwards 1986). The pilgrims of this saga which are included in this paper are

³ Though *Orkneyinga saga* is discussed by John D. Shafer, I decided to exclude it because of the following reasons. *Orkneyinga saga* hovers somewhere in between the genre boundaries of *konungasögur* and *Íslendingasögur*. It has the traits of both genres but lacks some of the main characteristics which constitute the corpus of either *konungasögur*, *Íslendingasögur* or a compilation of *þættir* (Taylor 1938: 1-9). In addition, most pilgrimages in *Orkneyinga saga* are dated in the saga itself (The pilgrimage of Earl Hakon takes place after St Magnus' death in 1091) and stretch over the span of *söguöld*. Including this text in the study, it would also require to consider the Christianization of the Islands of Orkney and their background as different from that of Iceland, Norway and Denmark. The connection between St Magnus and his inspired pilgrimages in the end of the saga are also to be discussed separately.

⁴ The source for the approximate dating of the sagas as literary works, i.e. written texts, is Annette Lassen's introduction to the recent Danish edition of *Íslendingasögur* (Lassen 2014).

king Knútr inn ríki (Canute the Great) and Eiríkr góði. Knútr Sveinsson, son of king Eiríkr's brother, is excluded due to the lack of details on his pilgrimage and his character.

- *Ólafs sögur Tryggvasonar* (Sagas of Ólafr Tryggvasonr) in this paper refer to two different works of literature: a saga by Oddr Snorrasonr and an anonymous saga.
 - *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar* by Oddr Snorrasonr (in citations: Oddr + abbr. manuscript) has been originally written in Latin around 1200 and is preserved in fragments on different manuscripts (see Chapter 2) (Andersson 2003).
 - *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar inn mesta* (The Greatest saga of Ólafr Tryggvasonr, in citations: inn mesta) might have been written in the late thirteenth century. It is best preserved in AM 61 fol. and Flateyjarbók (Sveinbjörn Rafnsson 2005).

Leiðarvísir ok borgaskipan (in citations: *Leiðarvísir*) is used alongside the saga material. Abbot Nikulás in *Leiðarvísir ok borgaskipan* describes a pilgrim journey from Iceland to Jerusalem and back⁵. The treatise consists of two parts: a travel account/guide *Leiðarvísir* and a description of the towns *Borgaskipan* and it is considered to be compiled in the second half of the twelfth century (Marani 2012).

Further comments on each saga and their pilgrims as well as abbot Nikulás travel account is provided throughout the paper.

⁵ Recent studies on *Leiðarvísir ok borgaskipan* no longer consider the abbot's pilgrimage in the text as real and historical. Tommaso Marani (2012) suggests that the travel guide is a mere composition which draws inspiration and material from other similar treatises, and not a description of a real journey Niculás himself travels.

I. General Overview of Saga Pilgrimages to Rome

1. How to Recognize a Pilgrimage

In the end of *Gísla saga*, we learn that the two saga women, Auðr and Gunnhildr, “go south”:

þær Auðr ok Gunnhildr fara til Danmerkr í Heiðabæ. Tóku þær við trú ok gengu suðr ok kómu eigi aftr. (*Gísla* 38: 99)

Aud and Gunnhild went to Denmark, to Hedeby. They converted [to Christianity] and went south, and did not return⁶.

The same phrase is used to describe Guðríðr and her journey in *Grænlandinga saga* (*gekk suðr*⁷), which illustrates how inexplicit and ungenerous Old Norse sagas can be in regards to specific details, also including journey destinations. In order to interpret these aforementioned journeys and other, less unclear examples as pilgrimages, background knowledge on pious travelling is to be drawn on.

A traditional Christian pilgrimage, in contrast to any other journey one may take, has the following essential traits: (1) the destination is a holy place or places, bearing the relicts and the memory of the Christian past and/or of the saints, thus (2) the motivation is religious and piety-oriented, often with a goal of absolution; (3) the journey is undertaken on foot, and any superfluous material comfort is being avoided throughout (Birch 1998, Johansen 2005).

The direction southwards in saga narratives is usually understood as pointing to a pious destination. This is simply due to geographical location of Rome and Jerusalem, the two most prominent holy places in Christian tradition (Shafer 2010b: 4, Shafer 2011: 8). However, to categorize the previously mentioned examples from *Grænlandinga saga* and *Gísla saga* as descriptions of pilgrimage, the verb *að ganga* has to be put into consideration. *To walk* is the main meaning of the Old Norse verb *að ganga* unlike the Modern English *to go*. The latter does not indicate the means of travelling⁸, while the former primarily describes moving on foot⁹. In the case of the journeys of Auðr and Gunnhildr as well as Guðríðr, the direction southwards is complemented with walking as the means of travelling (the verb *að ganga*), and therefore they can be interpreted as pilgrimages.

⁶ My translation. Other places throughout the paper published translations are given when available. As for a professional translation of *Gísla saga*, Peter Foote's (1963) interpretation for this episode seems to be misleadingly specific for using it in the beginning of the present paper: “Aud and Gunnhild went to Denmark, to Hedeby, and they became Christians there and went on pilgrimage to Rome, and did not return.” (*Gisli* 38: 60)

⁷ *Grænlandinga* 9: 390

⁸ 1. Start, depart, move <...>; 2. Journey, travel <...> (The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1966)

⁹ For the meaning *to walk* as the most common, see Icelandic-English Dictionary (Cleasby, Vigfusson, Craigie, 1975).

However, the phrase *að ganga suður* hardly allows to safely deduce a specific devotional destination, as Rome and Jerusalem falling in the same category of popular southern pilgrimage places. It might be tempting to suggest that Rome is more easily reachable on foot for Northern travellers, but distance is a little impediment for a pilgrim. The combination of *að ganga suður* and *Rómaborg* is on the other hand represented in a multitude of saga examples¹⁰. A pilgrim route from Iceland to Rome is described in *Njáls saga*, where both Flosi and Kári sail from Iceland to Norðmandí (Normandy) and then walk each on a separate pilgrimage to the final destination¹¹. Bjarni in *Fóstbræðra saga* arrives to Denmark and from there walks to Rome (“Heldr Bjarni suður til Danmerkr ok gengr út til Roms”¹²). Pilgrimage to Rome in *Auðunar þáttur vestfirzka* is also described in the formula *að ganga suður* (“Suður vil eg ganga”¹³).

In order to make the discussion throughout the paper clearer, I have made a list of important expressions and definitions which are common descriptions of saga pilgrimages to Rome. These include *að fara suður* (“to travel south”), *að ganga suður* (“to walk south”), *Rómaborg/Róm* (“Rome”), *Jórsalaborg* (“Jerusalem”), *Pétur ok Páll* (“Peter and Paul”), *páfann* (“the pope”), *lausn* (“absolution”). I have also added a key phrase of *að koma aftur* (“to come back”), as it describes a result of the journey which is crucial for the discussion in Chapter 3. Afterwards, I have extracted the descriptions of pilgrimages from the primary sources, and marked the presence of specific key words or phrases in a table. The table can be found in the Appendix together with the citations from the sagas. It becomes handy when comparing different characters and their pilgrimages as well as different texts.

2. Goals, Expectations and Achievements of Saga Pilgrims

In more general sense, the figure of a medieval European pilgrim is varied in both personal and journey characteristics. In the early Middle Ages, pilgrimages are mostly an occupation of the aristocracy, primarily attracted by the asceticism, solemnity and profoundness of such trips. The 11th century brings a repentant and penitent figure “awaiting the imminent last Judgement”. Centuries after the millennium change and the failing-to-come apocalypse there repeatedly emerges a type of an intellectual traveller, deeply interested in both the sacred and the personal, reflecting on own experiences in travel accounts and journals (Chareyron 2011: 3). The 13th and 14th century pilgrims are

¹⁰ Reference to the primary sources of this study only.

¹¹ *Njáls* 158: 432 and *Njáls* 159: 433. For citations, see Appendix.

¹² *Fóstbræðra* 24: 362

¹³ *Auðunar* 2: 392

mostly headed to specific churches and, if possible, to the pope himself in order to attain absolution (Johansen 2005: 34).

Do *rúmferlar* in the Old Norse sagas in any way reflect these types of pilgrims? What do the saga people expect from a pilgrimage to Rome? Though in some instances the accounts of pilgrimage are extremely laconic, as discussed in previous chapter, the *motive* of the pilgrimage – why exactly and what for this pious journey is being undertaken – can be deduced by comparison.

Fóstbræðra saga introduces a Greenlander Bjarni, whose pilgrimage is directed to visiting Rome as the city of the apostles Peter and Paul¹⁴. It is clear that his journey is pious: he travels to Rome on foot, and the apostles, described as “holy”, are considered prominent early Christian influencers.¹⁵ Rome at that time as well boasts a plenitude of fine churches and relicts, which attract massive crowds (Oldfield 2014: 182). In a wider sense, Bjarni’s reasons for becoming a pilgrim might be connected to a pure Christian curiosity to see the relicts of saints, to visit churches and to meet other pilgrims, what Shafer (2010b: 7, 2011: 24) simply calls “tourism”.

It is also possible that Bjarni is lead all the way from Iceland to Rome by the hope of absolution. Whilst travelling there, he might expect his faith being challenged, refreshed and finally proved, and this genuine repentance earning him God’s forgiveness. In general terms, the asceticism pilgrims practice – the avoidance of any material and physical comfort, earthly temptations and indulgence – is a voluntary approach to achieving more in the sphere of religious clarity and purity. By accepting the challenges of a difficult journey and ignoring the mundane needs and desires, a deeper concentration on one’s own religious feelings and faith is achieved. Nonetheless, the offering of the physical well-being and content (not to confuse with psychological fulfilment) is understood as a price a pilgrim pays for the past sins (Birch 1998: 3).

It is however the figure of the pope which can be approached for seeking God’s total forgiveness – only the pope can give an unquestionable absolution (Harpur 2000: 90). The papal institution is one of the objectives of the pilgrims of *Grettis saga*, Spés and Þórsteinn. In Spés’ words, the pope is the only instance which can help tackling with the past sins (Grettis 91: 291). The partners are aware of how their love and marriage, which only was possible after a row of deceitful actions and arrangements, corrupts their image as Christians. Despite the fact that the couple is recognized as

¹⁴ *Fóstbræðra* 24: 326

¹⁵ Peter, traditionally referred to as the patron of the church (in Catholic tradition – the first pope), and Paul, the author of the Christian doctrine-forming epistles, are believed to have died and been buried in Rome (Jones 1995: 190-194), thus securing the city wide recognition among Christians.

honourable and righteous in Norway, and Þórsteinn is being encouraged to join the king's troops, they decide to leave the manifold abundance behind and repent in the presence of the pope.

The Norwegian king Ólafr Tryggvason also chooses penitence and solitude instead of attempting to regain power in Norway. Oddr Snorrason's *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonnar* and *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar inn mesta* tell about the king's survival of the battle of Svölðr (Svolder) and his further life as pilgrim and hermit. Both Oddr's saga in its three main versions (AM 310 4to – A, Sth. perg. 4to nr. 18 – S, og Uppsala De la Gardie 4-7 – U) and *inn mesta* agree on the king's escape from the battle by a ship from Vinðland (Wendland). He is taken care of by Wendish king's daughter Astríð, and afterwards offered help and encouraged to try and regain power in Norway again. King Ólafr refuses the prospect and chooses to go on a pilgrimage instead.

While the manuscripts A and S of Oddr Snorrason's saga only mention Greece, Syria¹⁶ and Jerusalem as the king's destinations¹⁷, Rome plays an important role in the U manuscript and *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar inn mesta*: the king visits Rome before continuing the journey to Constantinople (*Garð*, manuscript U) and Jerusalem (manuscript U and *inn mesta*)¹⁸. The U-manuscript tells about the king's arrival to Rome with an entourage of nine men¹⁹. He stays there for one year undercover as a "Scandinavian merchant" (*norraenn kaupmaðr*²⁰). Even though the main purpose of such journey may be pious, as the king himself expresses²¹, one can negotiate the attractiveness of a pilgrimage as a refuge and hideaway. However, this assumption is doubtful, as king Ólafr has plenty of royal supporters in both England and Wendland (Shafer 2010a: 128). The *inn mesta* version also mentions the king's popularity among other pilgrims, which might not be appreciated in the situation of fleeing and hiding.

Also according to *inn mesta*, the king presents himself as a merchant from Scandinavia, and, in the words of Shafer (2011: 20, 2010a: 161, r. 20), assists other pilgrims as interpreter (*túlkr*). On the other hand, it might suggest his role as a spokesman or a leader²², emphasizing his exceptionality and kindness as a person.

¹⁶ Abbot Niculás in *Leiðarvísir* uses *Jórsalaland* and *Sýrland* as synonyms. According to him, *Sýrland* is a muslim word for Jerusalem (Hill 1983).

¹⁷ see Appendix.

¹⁸ Sveinbjörg Rafnsson (2005: 107) divides the manuscripts of Oddr's saga into two groups according to their endings: both A and S and in the same way; the corresponding chapter in U is much more elaborate in content. The ending of U is almost identical to that of *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar inn mesta*.

¹⁹ *Inn Mesta*: eight men (*Mesta* 267: 319)

²⁰ Oddr U: 260

²¹ The verb *að fýsa* here ("hann kuaz fýsa at fara ut til Rums", see Appendix) is corresponding to the one in *Auðunar þáttir vestfirzka*, as mentioned in the Introduction.

²² *Tulkr*: an interpreter, a spokesman (Icelandic-English Dictionary, 1975)

Inn mesta also depicts the king's meeting with the pope. The process of the visit, in the same manner as Spés and Þórsteinn's in *Grettis saga*, includes a confession: "[Ó]lafr konungr /.../ sagði honum alt sitt rað"²³ (Mesta 268: 319). However, there is no textual evidence that Ólafr receives absolution received from the pope. According to Shafer, there might be a reason for this: it seems that Ólafr is motivated directly by god's will more than by his own. King Ólafr is aware of the specific life path, which is predestined and to be followed, and interprets his defeat at Svölðr as a sign from god repent for the past sins and go on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land (Shafer 2011: 21). The Ólafr of *inn mesta* is indeed aware of that his loss of power is predestined, and this is why the pilgrimage is not a mere act of running away from the enemies:

En hann [Ólafr] sagðiz eigi vilja beriaz við guðsifia sína. þviat ek ætla s(egir) hann at guð vili at þeir hafi nv ríkit j Noregi. Ma ek ok vm þat hræddr vera at guði hafi mis likat min rikis stíorn.“ (Mesta 267: 318)

He said he did not wish to fight with his god-relatives, because I think, he says, that God wants them now to rule Norway. I should also be alarmed of that God has been displeased with my government.²⁴

In either case, the pilgrimage of king Ólafr is purely monastic and penitential in contrast to the more 'touristic' example of Bjarni: the king pays visit to the pope, and after being (possibly) redeemed finds himself living his last years as a monk in Jerusalem²⁵. This might be seen as another example of a pilgrim in pursuit of absolution and god's forgiveness.

The royal pilgrims of *Knýtlinga saga*, Knútr inn ríki and Eiríkr góði, are depicted as most generous and kind travellers. *Knýtlinga saga* describes donations to monasteries and the building of a pilgrim hostel, all results of the initiative by king Knútr. Fellow pilgrims are also generously taken care of when they meet the pilgrim king:

Meðan Knútr konungr var á Rómavegi, þá þyrfti engi maðr sér matar at biðja, sá er hans fundi mátti ná, svá gaf hann öllum nóga skatpenninga. (Knýtlinga XVII: 123)

None of his people had to beg for food while the king was on his way to Rome: and everyone who needed it had money in his pocket. (Knytlinga 17: 40)

King Knútr's behaviour may suggest not only his virtues as a chieftain: his generosity and benevolence can also be interpreted as a way of paying for the past sins. In this respect, king Knútr's pilgrimage might be closely connected to the desire for redemption and absolution.

King Eiríkr, son of a nephew to king Knútr, is by no means less "philanthropic": he donates to monasteries and is in general described in terms of wealth. On the other hand, he also visits "many holy

²³ King Ólafr presented him [the pope] the whole case (my translation).

²⁴ My translation.

²⁵ See Appendix.

places”²⁶, what suggests the religious curiosity and engagement already described in the example of Bjarni (Fóstbræðra saga). The culmination point of the pilgrimage of king Eiríkr is a meeting with the pope²⁷. As a result of this meeting, the saga attributes king Eiríkr the organizing of the first archbishopric in Denmark. Even though there is no evidence of the king’s absolution, a close contact with the pope is made, and important cases regarding Christianity in Scandinavia are discussed:

Marga hluti aðra þá Eiríkr konungr af páfanum, þá er nytsamligir hafa verit í Norðurlöndum. (Knýtlinga LXXIV: 217-219)

King Eirik was granted many other things by the Pope which have proved useful in the northern lands <...>. (Knyttlinga 74: 110)

Royal pilgrimages of *Knýtlinga saga* are remarkable in their results. They serve not only the royal travellers themselves but also have influence on bigger matters such as general welfare of other pilgrims or situation of Christian institutions in Scandinavia. *Knýtlinga saga* seems to concentrate more on the virtues and achievements on the kings rather than on religious matters. *Ólafs sögur Tryggvasonar*, focus more on the humble Christian nature of Ólafr than his generosity or political abilities.

Considering the purposes of saga pilgrimages, they represent both monastic journeys, taken for the purposes of repentance, and location-specific pilgrimages, taken in order to visit a particular town, shrine or other attraction. However, either because of the ambiguity of the accounts in primary texts or the inseparableness of these two different purposes, no clear line between the monastic and the touristic may be drawn. Bjarni is clear about what attracts him in Rome but there is no evidence against him *not* pursuing absolution. On the other hand, king Ólafr is depicted as the most pious seeker of god’s forgiveness, though his primary goal is to visit Rome, where he is escorted to by his men and worshipped there by other pilgrims. The royal pilgrimages in *Knýtlinga saga* are even more complex: they are also driven by political expectations. To reflect on Chareyron’s (2013) survey of different purposes on pilgrimages, mentioned in the first paragraph of the present chapter, the characters of pilgrims in the sagas seem to be complex combinations of pilgrimage trends throughout centuries.

²⁶ “/.../ sótti heim marga helga staði” (Knýtlinga LXXIV: 217)

²⁷ The uniqueness of this account is that the pope is named. However, the saga’s statement of Páskális papacy is incompatible with historical facts (Knýtlinga LXXIV: 219, r. 2). I will not elaborate on historicity of the saga and rather concentrate on its descriptions of pilgrimages.

3. The Social and Personal Characteristics of Saga Pilgrims

The Old Norse sagas, as already shown above, depict both royal and common pilgrims. Rome welcomes the ordinary Bjarni, the aristocratic Spés and Þórsteinn, as well as the royal Ólafr Tryggvasonr, Knútr inn ríki and Eiríkr góði. While they all have different purposes for becoming pilgrims, and their achievements vary both in type and extent, several questions linger. For example, does the social status of a pilgrim influence the nature of the journey, and does the journey influence the pilgrim's status? In what stage of life do the Old Norse saga characters think it suitable to leave for a devotional voyage? And at last, what change does the journey bring to the pilgrim's personality and behaviour?

Before attempting to find indications regarding social status of the Old Norse saga pilgrims, I find it necessary to elaborate on the relationship between the two major pilgrim destinations, Rome and Jerusalem. It has both to do with the narrower scope of primary sources, as mentioned earlier, and the social status of the travellers.

The question of whether Rome or Jerusalem attracts most saga pilgrims, and why, is important in analyzing the pilgrims' background, conditions and status before and after the journey. John D. Shafer suggests that compared to Jerusalem Rome is a more mundane and even a "second-class"²⁸ destination. It seems that common saga pilgrims lacking high status would content themselves with a trip to Rome, while the royal would travel all the way to Jerusalem. According to Shafer, it might represent the relationship between Jesus and his apostles Peter and Paul, the former's life story being connected to the Holy Land, and the apostles' – with Rome. Rome pilgrims serve their kings and aristocracy – pilgrims to the Holy Land – in the same way as the apostles serve Christ as his followers and apprentices, being a step below Christ on the ladder of Christian influence and power (Shafer 2010: 6, Shafer 2011: 31). This generalization, however, reflects the content of *konungasögur* and *Íslendingasögur* only partly, what is shown in the following paragraphs.

At first sight, Rome might indeed seem a place one can visit on the way to the Holy Land. However, most accounts of Scandinavian more or less fictional pilgrimages seem to either depict Rome (Shafer 2011: 8) or, if both cities appear, to give more credit or attention to Rome. As seen in the version U of Oddr Snorrason's *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar* and *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar inn mesta*, although Jerusalem remains the final destination of the king's pilgrimage, it brings more of a resolution than a culmination. In the version of *inn mesta*, Rome is also the city mentioned when the king

²⁸ "The numbers and types of people making pilgrimages to the two locations powerfully suggest that Rome is the 'common' or even 'second-class' pious destination, while Jerusalem is the more noble, royal site." (Shafer 2010: 6)

expresses his wish to travel south, and where he meets the pope. Other royal pilgrims – Knútr in ríki and Eiríkr góði (*Knýtlinga saga*) – travel exclusively to Rome.

Consistent to Shafer's division of the holy cities is the fact that women of the sagas go on pilgrimages to Rome. However, they can hardly be described as common characters. They possess extraordinary courage, strength, and wisdom. Guðríðr in *Grænlandinga saga* does not play the main role (they are exceptionally represented by men), but in contrast to other women in the saga there are no more positive or remarkable characters than her. She is described as intelligent (*vitr*²⁹) and as an ancestor of an exceptional kin³⁰. Her inner strength is marked by an independent pilgrimage to Rome and life as a hermit afterwards. Auðr and Gunnhildr (*Gísla saga*) also travel independently. Auðr is depicted as extraordinary in her manner of self-respect and loyalty when she humiliates her husband Gísli's adversary Eyjólfur by slapping him by his own bribe-money (*Gísla* 32: 83). Even though Véstein's widow Gunnhildr's personality is not dwelled upon, she is worthy of attention as Auðr's companion and an independent female pilgrim.

The case of why women pilgrims are inherently remarkable is the critical attitude towards female travellers in the Middle Ages. The traditional notion at that time is of a woman as tied to a specific place, i.e. the family home, and expected to take care of the domestic as their only true and meaningful occupation. Pilgrimage would make one unable to tend the household while away on a journey. Moreover, women were also ascribed lower morale than men. Thus the critique of devotional journeys as allowing or encouraging misbehaviour had also contributed to the scepticism towards female pilgrims (Craig 2009: 3). However, Guðríðr, Auðr and Gunnhildr are already widows when they leave for Rome, so they neither cause the household danger of falling apart nor do they risk their status as respectable married women. It seems as though a pilgrimage concludes a widow's life after the death of her husband more than it marks her exceptionality as a pilgrim.

Spés (*Grettis saga*) is of a different background as a female traveller. Back in Constantinople she is highly respected and influential, which allows her to divorce her lower-status husband and retain all possessions. After marrying Þórsteinn and moving to Norway, it takes no time for her to win acclaim there. Throughout the saga, she is described in medieval romance-like terms: the adjectives depicting Spés include *göfug*, *harðla rík*, *stórættuð*, *stórlynd*, *svarkr* (87: 277), *ör*, *stórlynd* (90: 290)³¹.

To reflect on Shafer's observation of Rome as a "second-class" devotional destination, the examples have been shown to be controversial. Even though the kings of *Knýtlinga saga* do not

²⁹ *Grænlandinga* 6: 378

³⁰ *Ibid.* 9: 389

³¹ distinguished, very rich, highly born, proud, "had much dignity" (*Gretti* LXXXVII: 223), generous, noble (*Gretti* XC: 234)

proceed to Jerusalem, Ólafr Tryggvasonr does; female pilgrims go on Roman pilgrimages only, even though they might be remarkable characters (especially Spés). It is only clear that no royal status is required to become a *rúmferill*.³²

An example of a *rúmferill* from a distinctly humble background can be found in *Auðunar þáttr Vestfirzka*. In the very beginning of the *þáttr*, Auðunn is described as a poor (*félítill*³³) Icelandic peasant. During a journey to Greenland, he buys a polar bear for all of his belongings. Even though his poverty is ambiguous, as he both leaves his mother in Iceland with resources enough for three years and manages to buy a polar bear, *gersimi mikill*³⁴, the bear is emphasized as his only possession. At last, Auðunn has to beg for food for both himself and the animal.

However, the change to better of both Auðunn's material situation and status throughout the *þáttr* is remarkable. He leaves for Rome already as a member of the Danish king Sveinn's retinue. Even though his decision to leave for Rome is received with benevolence by king Sveinn, the king is even more in favour of Auðunn upon his comeback. No conflict arises either when Auðunn expresses his wish to leave the king's troops and return to Iceland, while he is presented by extraordinary gifts, including a ship, plenitude of silver and arm rings.

The remarkable status of Auðunn is emphasized in the general didactic purpose of *Íslendingaþættir*: the Christian theme serves as an example of what is proper and respectful for an Icelandic in the king's court. Furthermore, Auðunn serves as a "a blessed peacemaker": a conduit to king Haraldr for communicating his congeniality and willingness to stop the conflict to king Sveinn (Rowe, Harris 2005: 463). He has an ability to combine loyalty to the chieftains with a strong sense of independence and Christian ethics. In serving the Danish king, he does not lose or surrender his individual choice and thinking but is brave enough to exchange the support and comfort of the king's court for a journey to Rome. His pilgrimage can thus be seen as a means of accentuating the right behaviour of an individualistic Icelandic who is supposed to artfully manoeuvre between the roles of a retainer and a free man.

It also seems that Auðunn's pilgrimage is undertaken during a specific stage of life rather than prompted by a spontaneous impulse. Auðunn has already won the Norwegian and the Danish kings' support (or rather a curious and forgiving attitude towards him from the Norwegian sovereign) and secured himself an enviable position before he decides to go on a pilgrimage. His acquiring of a polar

³² In order to draw clearer conclusions on the relationship of Rome and Jerusalem, it requires a thorough research of all saga pilgrimages to both destinations. It would be of too large an extent for this study, and therefore remains as material for further investigation.

³³ *Auðunar* 1: 389

³⁴ "a great treasure" (*Auðun* 1: 370)

bear is understood as a great achievement, the wish to present it to the Danish king – as a noble intention, and the way Auðunn treats the Norwegian king while staying loyal to king Sveinn – as brave and cunning conduct. Therefore his pilgrimage seems to mark a zenith of his achievements.

That Auðunn only desires to return to his homeland after the pilgrimage suggests that his life, and the *páttr* itself, have come to a resolution. Pilgrimage as an action with which concludes a character's life is also present in *Njáls saga*. The two pilgrimages in *Njáls saga* appear in the very last chapters of the remarkably long saga text. In addition to that, the saga's pilgrims Flósi and Kári undergo such a radical value change during their pilgrimages that they reconcile after years of savage feuds. Their conflict originates from the burning of Njáll and his people, which Flósi takes part in as a leader. Njáll's son-in-law Kári attempts revenge by slaying the involved in the burning. Flósi after a row of vengeful events is the first to leave for Rome but it does not seem as an attempt to escape from the danger of Kári's revenge: he walks to Rome on foot, which suggest a pious motivation (Shafer 2011: 14). Kári leaves for a pilgrimage immediately after Flósi, and in attempt to return to Iceland his ship breaches close to Flósi's homestead. Kári is then welcomed by Flósi in the kindest manner:

Flósi var í stofu. Hann kenndi Kára, er hann kom í stofuna, ok spratt upp í móti honum ok minntist til hans ok setti hann í hásæti hjá sér. (Njáls 159: 434)

Flosi was sitting in the main room. He recognized Kari at once and jumped up to welcome him, embraced him, and placed him on the high-seat beside him. (Njal's 159: 354)

After staying in the house of his former mortal enemy for the winter, Kári even marries Flósi's niece. In this saga, pilgrimage is a means for reconciliation of the two main adversaries, and a general conclusion of the narrative.

While pilgrimage is an ultimate *achievement* for almost all other discussed pilgrims, for some it becomes an ultimate *action*. As illustrated by the Appendix, approximately every other pilgrim returns, while the others stay either by their own will (Spés and Þórsteinn, king Ólafr) or die on their way (Auðr and Gunnhildr, Bjarni). Though there is no evidence if Auðr and Gunnhildr (*Gísla saga*) ever reach their southern destination, the reader is informed about their death outside Iceland. It happens in the last section of the saga just before the closing words: “Ljúkum vér hér Gísla sögu Súrssonar.”³⁵ (Gísla 38: 100). Bjarni (*Fóstbræðra saga*) also dies on a pilgrimage and at the same time is eliminated from the action in the saga. In this sense, “sending” a character on a pilgrimage might serve as a proper way of finishing the narrative by not leaving any loose ends or removing a secondary character from the further progress of the story.

³⁵ “We close here the story of Gisli, the son of whey-Thorbjorn.” (Gisli 38: 60)

In a general sense, saga characters leave for a pilgrimage as the last undertaking in urge for higher status, more profound respect, and better life. No matter the position before the journey, the returned saga pilgrims experience both social and personal progress. All in all, both the primary decision to leave for a pilgrimage and the voyage itself emphasize the importance of pilgrims in the saga literature.

II. Reflections on Saga Pilgrimages to Rome as Social and Textual Phenomena

There is no wrong in reading the sagas as purely fictional narratives and marvelling at their stories without connecting them to the society in which they were born. However, as with any work of literature, there emerges at some point a natural reader's curiosity and desire to catch a glimpse of the origins of the story, the motives, and the characters. A literary work of earlier times may not merely serve as an entertaining read about people from back then, more or less different than us. It is also a key to learning about the actual life at these times, as no literature appears from vacuum and is naturally a product of an individual, a group or a whole society in a specific period of time.

The Old Norse sagas are not an exception. Long ago having been discredited as historical material, they still play an important role in both literary and historical studies: as texts creating a whole world of their own, and as texts *from* the world of their creation. With a sceptical eye on historicity, there still remains an urge to find “the grain of truth inside the sagas” (Gísli Sigurðsson 2004: xxi). It is as if allowing the texts to breathe, not locking them up in their own separate worlds, at the same time opens up a new range of impressions and meanings.

If one lets the saga pilgrims “breathe” and tries to connect them to their own times, i.e. the times of the saga action, they appear as surprisingly pious Christians. They go on pilgrimages around the year 1000, the date traditionally set for the conversion of Iceland, as well as a mid-point of the Christianization process for the whole Scandinavia. It is here where the sagas seem to concentrate on another times than they *intend* to depict. On the other hand, there might also be a purpose for such discrepancy of time, either intended or not. In other words, two questions and insecurities in reading the material on saga pilgrimages arise: **do the saga pilgrims originally come from much later in the Scandinavian history, and why do they exist in these texts at all?**

The main questions discussed in the second part of the present paper are: to what extent do Roman saga pilgrimages reflect actual events? If they do, then there is no space for further discussion and only for the belief that they are more historical documents than a combination of both literary work and common, social tradition. If they do *not* reflect real, actual pilgrimages, where do these stories come from, or if the pilgrimages themselves *are* real, to what extent are they adjusted and expanded? Do the models according to which they are adjusted come from other, non-Scandinavian traditions, or are they products of a clash between different times, the saga-time and the writing-down time?

In order to ground these precarious notions, it is necessary to discuss both the historical and the literary characteristics of saga narratives. For the historical part, a survey of the process of the Scandinavian conversion creates the background for further analyzing the origins of saga pilgrimages. As for the literary, a line between the time which is reflected in sagas and the time in which the sagas were created has to be drawn. The time of the creation of Old Norse sagas naturally brings up a discussion of their origins and dating.

4. The Realities of *söguöld*. Conversion to Christianity in Scandinavia

The two genres which are discussed in this paper, *konungasögur* and *Íslendingasögur*, depict quite different time spans. Events described in *Íslendingasögur* go back to around the year 1000, the so-called *söguöld* (“the time of the sagas”) from around 930 to 1030 (Lassen 2014: XXV, XXVII). *Konungasögur* cover a more extensive period of time, depicting Norwegian and Danish kings from the ninth to the thirteenth century (Ármann Jakobsson 2005: 388). However, the events in *Ólafs sögur Tryggvasonar* and *Knýtlinga saga* are close to *söguöld*, considering the birth and death dates of the depicted kings. *Ólafs sögur Tryggvasonar* describe the very end of the tenth century (Ibid. 389), and the parts of *Knýtlinga saga* about Knútr inn ríki and his closest relatives³⁶ - the end of eleventh century (Hermann Pálsson, Edwards 1986: 10).

As has already been mentioned in the Introduction, *konungasögur* and *Íslendingasögur* more or less openly depict the Christianization of Iceland. The surprising thing is how devout Scandinavian saga-pilgrims from around the year of 1000 are pictured, and how involved in serving the Christian god they are. For example, Auður and Gunnhildr (*Gísla saga*) leave for a pilgrim journey just after being converted to Christianity in Denmark. Bjarni (*Fóstbræðra saga*) must also have been a newly converted Christian by the time he travels to Rome because the saga describes the times of St. Olav’s

³⁶ It is due to the fact that the beginning of *Knýtlinga saga* is lost, and it might have also started with pre-historic kings.

reign, i.e. the first half of the 11th century³⁷. The events in *Grettis saga*, where Spés and Þórsteinn express Christian devotion of an enviable level, also take place at the same time as in *Fóstbræðra saga*, as the main characters of the two sagas meet each other in both texts (for example, *Grettis* 25: 86). At first glance, the devotion of these newly converted Scandinavians is suspicious. One may guess they had been utterly captivated by the appeal of the new religion, or that they had been prepared and familiar with it in advance to undertake such a challenging journey south.

Considering the question of how familiar with Christianity and willing to convert to it (or how far in the process of conversion) Scandinavians were at the time of saga action, it seems that the Christening of Scandinavia was a mere result “of a process, a slow cultural change and an adoption of new ideas” than an abrupt change (Brink 2008: 621). In the case of Iceland, the people there had probably already been familiar with Christianity well enough. It is of the contact with the British Isles on the way between Iceland and Norway, as well as with the Irish *papi*, who discovered the remoteness (divine for *papi*, and politically useful for the Norwegians) of Iceland long before the first Nordic settlers. According to Strömbäck (1975), Christianity was merely a convenient religion to adopt in Iceland because of the already existing strict political and religious system of *goði*, which could be easily exchanged with that of priests, and the familiarity of people with social norms, laws and general order. In other words, the heathen people of Iceland had been unwillingly (?) prepared for the arrival and adoption of the new religion long time in advance (Strömbäck 1975: 60):

In Iceland Christianity encountered a people of religious mood. They were aware of the numinous and had firm respect for forms, formulas and ceremonies, for commands and prohibitions derived from religious observance as well as from secular law. Already in this may be seen the prerequisites for the adoption of a new order, not least when Christian dispensation could fulfil three conditions: it could preserve the old legal system and the idea of one nation; it could satisfy the need for religious reverence, now with worship of a novel deity, mightier than the gods, not subject to Ragnarok but ruling through eternity; and in its early stages it could adapt itself to existing social forms. (Strömbäck 1975: 58)

However, this does not explain the slow appearance and development of Christian institutions in the years after 1000 (Orri Vésteinsson 1996: 51). It rather suggests that the transition from the heathen to the Christian society was not rapid enough to consider the Icelanders and other Scandinavians of the year 1000 fully adapted and converted. The peaceful conversion of Iceland in particular might not be a

³⁷The explanation of dating the events in the saga is omitted here. However, it is important to note that *Gísla saga* starts with the words: „Þat er upphaf á sögu þessi, at Hákon konungr Aðalsteinsfóstri réð fyrir Nórøgi, ok var þetta á ofanverðum hans dögum.“ (*Gísla* 1: 1). Hákon Aðalsteinsfóstri is believed to have died in Fitjar at around 961. However, the source of this information is *Heimskringla*, a collection of kings’ sagas, and therefore the discussion of the saga’s historicity can continue *in perpetuum*.

result of “political shrewdness” and familiarity with the common European development, but rather the insignificance and lack of influence of such change (Orri Vésteinsson 1996: 51).

To reaffirm the hypothesis, historical sources have to be taken into account. The chronology of conversion is reconstructed in Nordeide’s study (2011) by analyzing the burial sites and customs in Norway³⁸. The archaeological evidence of these studies shows a general adaption to Christian customs dating no earlier than the second millennium. This means that even the most fundamental practices of Christianity only became widespread after the year 1000. Pilgrimage when compared to adopting the burial customs seems to require much more religious devotion and self-consciousness, and therefore the concept of pious journeys manifests itself later.

On this note, it is important to mention that current studies also distinguish between the terms “Christianization” and “conversion”. According to Winroth (2012), religious and political processes have to be considered separately. On the one hand, Christian ideas “slowly infiltrated Scandinavia”, as already discussed in the paragraphs above. This process can be studied through archaeology and is referred to as Christianization. On the other hand, Scandinavia experienced an “institutional conversion”, which is closely connected to establishing the institution of the church, baptizing the rulers and, at last, creating a strong bond between these two entities, the king’s throne and the church (Winroth 2012: 103-104).

Throughout different times, pilgrimage has remained “the choice of the individual”, never developing to “a duty or an obligation” (Birch 1998: 2). Therefore the practice of pilgrimages has to be understood as an expression of strong Christian self-consciousness, and as the result of the Christianization and not the conversion process. The motivation of saga pilgrims, either based on piety or religious curiosity as has been shown in Chapter 2, thus shows a high level of Christianization. Even if the *conversion* happens around the year 1000, the *Christianization* as well as the pilgrim-trend is supposed to take much more time to emerge and develop. On the other hand, the pilgrimage as individual practice would challenge the hypothesis. It would suggest that even though historically early, solitary pilgrims could have existed and manifested their deep individual faith. In an attempt to compromise the issue, I return to it in the last section of the paper (Chapter 6).

³⁸ The earliest Christian burial site in Norway seems to be no older than the late ninth century, and probably originating from a foreign Christian settlement or mission (Nordeide 2011: 301). More Christian burial sites in Norway are found dating at around the year 1000 which means that Christian customs – burials being the first ones to be changed and adapted – are not spread widely before the second millennium. The old and the new religions exist alongside each other at some point around the change of the millennium, as it is shown by excavations of both Christian crosses and hammers of Þór in both Norway and Denmark around AD 1000 (Nordeide 2011: 310).

However, different social strata are also affected by conversion and Christianization in different ways. As the focus in this paper is on *konungasögur* and *Íslendingasögur*, I find it important to stress the sagas' generic differences which are crucial to analyzing the reflections of Christian culture. The focus of *Íslendingasögur* is on the Icelandic society which consists of free farmers and no royal institutions. On the other hand, this society is in close contact with Norwegian and Danish kings, the main figures in *konungasögur*. The aforementioned slow Christianization process, affecting the broader society, therefore can be more associated with the content of *Íslendingasögur* but not *konungasögur*, which depict the lives of kings.

In the case of *Konungasögur*, it has to be taken into consideration that the royals and aristocracy are more likely to convert much earlier. In Norway, the kings were themselves Christian and were interested in bringing missionaries to the country. This may be a result of the kings being aware of Christianity as a uniting force, allowing them to become individual leaders of a strong centralized country³⁹, and it is not surprising that the kings were the first to be converted during the late tenth to mid-eleventh century (Nordeide 2011: 323). While Ólafr Tryggvasonr and the kings in *Knýtlinga saga* as historical persons come respectively from the late tenth and late eleventh centuries, it thus seems that *konungasögur* might be much more historical in treating the faith of the kings and their pilgrimages. For this reason, I concentrate the most substantial part of further discussion on *Íslendingasögur* and handle the content in *konungasögur* more carefully, only returning to them while discussing the cult of Rome.

5. Origins of the Old Norse Sagas. The Theories of Free-prose and Book-prose

As has been outlined in *Main Primary Sources*, the saga corpus of this paper dates from the late 12th century to the late 14th century. It means that the events described in the *Íslendingasögur* and *konungasögur* previously discussed precede their written versions by at least two centuries. However, the terms “written versions” and “dating” in this respect are extremely ambiguous. In an attempt to compare the historical background of *söguöld* with that of the creation of saga literature it is impossible to ignore the discussion on the origins of the Old Norse sagas. Is their creation a process of oral tradition, eventually resulting in written versions of oral tales, or does it have to be considered as a

³⁹ The benefits of a Christianized society had a lot in common with those of an urbanized society: “towns as Christian centres, with churches and monasteries that could be visited by those coming from further afield” were expected to “attract merchants” (Nordeide 2011: 311-312). Therefore Christianity served the monarchy as a beneficial ideology in establishing towns, strengthening the foreign contacts, and empowering the institution of the king as a sole ruler.

separate, independent literary act in itself? In this section, I explain the problem of dating the sagas as well as cover the fundamentals of the two main approaches, the free-prose and the book-prose theory⁴⁰.

The dating of the Old Norse sagas is a naturally complicated and obscure task as there do not exist any first versions of sagas, only copies of copies (Lethbridge 2013: 78). This problem indeed brings some scholars to desperate declarations of passiveness:

“The uncertainties of dating make it a hazardous venture to speculate about any kind of development during the thirteenth century.” (Vésteinn Ólason 1998: 21)⁴¹

How are we then to know what to date? It might be the the first (non-extant) manuscripts, the manuscripts which survived to our day, or even the roots of the stories in oral tradition. The disagreement between scholars on those fundamental questions has induced a formation of two differing points of view on the origins of sagas: the theories of free-prose and book-prose. In a narrow sense, the free-prose theory, especially in early scholarship, analyzes the written sagas as if they were more or less accurate reflections of corresponding oral tales. Early work supporting free-prose theory lies on the decline theory and claims that the oldest sagas were put on paper when the art of storytelling was in zenith (Mundal 2013: 40). The book-prose theory is on the other hand in favour of the idea that the Old Norse saga literature even if based on traditional storytelling is mostly a literary production or has to be analyzed as such. This theory focuses on the fact that texts influence each other. Book-prose attempts as well to reconstruct literary authorship and retrace signs and influences of it in the saga texts (Gísli Sigurðsson 2005: 287).

In recent scholarship, the two points of view start to mingle and complement each other. Most modern scholars are, for example, in agreement that sagas come from a more or less specified oral tradition (Andersson 2006). Lethbridge (2013) also states, that the extremes are left behind and the usefulness of both approaches is becoming visible:

“The tendency amongst most scholars in recent years has been to take a moderate position between the two extreme bookprose and freeprose positions acknowledging the importance of oral traditions and the likely existence of some coherent oral narratives about “söguold” characters or events on the one hand, but, on the other hand, emphasizing the extent to which these traditions were transformed during the process of the writing down of individual saga narratives, as a result of their being mingled with, or subjected to, new influences, both foreign and native.” (Lethbridge 2013: 79)

Returning to the time gap between saga pilgrimages and the real, historical pilgrimages, separation of the two approaches might be helpful as a starting point. In Gísli Sigurðsson’s words, a clearer position is useful and necessary to take, “since the position we adopt on origins will influence

⁴⁰ Freiprosa, Buchprosa (Gísli Sigurðsson 2005: 285)

⁴¹ from Andersson 2006: 1.

all our attempts to interpret the texts.” (Gísli Sigurðsson 2004: 34) Discussing different approaches to origins would therefore shed light on the prospects of analyzing saga pilgrimages and what those pilgrimages can tell both about the texts, the authors, and medieval Scandinavia.

In simplified and generalized versions, the free-prose and book-prose theories would interpret saga pilgrimages quite differently (the following paragraphs are my interpretation how free-prose and book-prose theories would approach saga pilgrimages):

- If saga pilgrims would be treated exceptionally from the free-prose perspective, this would suggest that the stories of pilgrimages might have been added to the narrative at some point when actual real-life pilgrimages started to appear. In other words, it would mean that specific saga narratives without pilgrimage-material had existed in oral tradition for a certain period of time before common European or Icelandic pilgrimages became relevant. And when they did become relevant, the stories about them evolved into common knowledge⁴².
- The “radical” book-prose theory would interpret saga pilgrimages as conscious inventions of scribes, serving a specific narrative, literary, or social purpose, or as reflections of the influence from continental Europe and its literature.

Using these fundamental statements by different views of saga origins, I discuss the examples in the texts which support the hypothesis given in the Introduction.

6. Textual Support for the Hypothesis. Suggestions for Analyzing the Origins of Saga Pilgrimages

In addition to the general idea that pilgrimages in the Old Norse sagas are comparatively early, there exist examples in the text which support this assumption. By repeatedly returning to the discussions on Christianization and the dating of sagas in previous sections, I attempt to supplement the ideas with evidence from the primary sources. The main points of interest for further proof for the hypothesis are those: (1) the practice of granting indulgences by the medieval church; (2) the cult of Rome in the Old Norse sagas; and (3) textual borrowings from the narratives of continental Europe. Other reflections on the origins of saga pilgrimages include (4) the prevalence of the formula *að ganga suðr*; (5) the elaborate knowledge on pilgrimage routes from Scandinavia.

The first temporal disproportion may be seen in the fact that numerous saga pilgrims attain or attempt to attain absolution. The figure of the pope granting absolutions is also a common motive. Flósi (*Njáls saga*), Spés and Þórsteinn (*Grettis saga*), king Ólafr (*inn mesta*) and king Eiríkr (*Knýtlinga saga*) all are being granted a conference with the pope. Though Kári’s (*Njáls saga*) meeting with the

⁴² I elaborate this further in page 33 as a discussion on the prevalence of saga pilgrimages.

pope is not mentioned in the text, he receives absolution (*lausn*), as well as Flósi, Spés and Þórsteinn does. Other aforementioned characters' absolution might only be inferred, as there is no clear textual evidence of *lausn*.

The most remarkable in this case are Spés, Þórsteinn and Flósi. Spés and Þórsteinn are depicted to be forgiven all their sins: “lausn allra sina mála” (Grettis 92: 293). In other words, they receive total absolution. Though there is no textual evidence of the extent of the indulgence granted to Flósi, he pays for it with money: “han tók lausn af sjálfum páfanum, ok gaf hann þar til mikit fé”⁴³ (Njáls 158: 432). These two motives reflect the extreme practices of the medieval church and the papal institution: issuing pilgrims with complete absolution for the sins of the whole lifetime and selling indulgences.

Rome as a city of indulgences is also mentioned in the pilgrim guide *Leiðarvísir*, where visitors to St Peter's church are given absolution:

Þa er hin gaufga Petrs kirkia hardla mikil ok dyrlig. Þar er Lausn öll of vandrædi manna of allan heim <...>. (Leiðarvísir 23-24)

Then there is the venerable Church of Peter, very large and splendid. In that place is full release from the troubles of men from the whole world <...>. (Marani 2012: 113)

These examples are striking because the procedure and the practice of granting indulgences in the Middle Ages is a comparably late phenomenon, while the concept of complete absolution appears even later. In the eleventh century, at the time of saga action as well the creation of *Leiðarvísir*, indulgences are only being granted for crusaders. The twelfth century introduces indulgences of one to several years only. Plenary indulgences, or complete spiritual redemption, are not registered in historical sources before the late thirteenth century. The first plenary indulgence for the visitors of St Peter's church specifically is introduced by pope Boniface VIII in 1300 (Harpur 2002: 67). As the description of Rome in *Leiðarvísir* refers to plenary indulgence for visitors of St Peter's church, it sets the year 1300 as a *terminus post quem* for the creation of the paragraph. It thus seems to be a much later addition to the original text⁴⁴ (Marani 2012: 198). Respectively, Spés and Þórsteinn's complete absolution is impossible in Rome of the early eleventh century. It thus suggest that their pilgrimage reflects a phenomenon from not earlier than the late thirteenth century.

To ponder on the origins of the pilgrimages in *Grettis saga* and *Njáls saga*, the historical facts and the dating of the manuscripts has to be taken in consideration. The development of the “market” of indulgences involves whole Christian Europe, thus the influence of foreign sources, if possible, would

⁴³ “<...> he was accorded the great honour of receiving absolution at the hands of the Pope himself; he paid a large sum of money for it.” (Njal's 158: 353)

⁴⁴ The fact that paragraphs on Rome might be added later that 1300 also makes the influence of Niculás work on Roman pilgrimages in sagas implausible.

have not been crucial. In other words, the pilgrims of Iceland would have participated in the race for absolution at the same time as other Christian Europeans. It can neither be proved that pilgrimages are added to the written texts later, even if it would be plausible. As the dating of the written versions approximately corresponds to the time when the culture of indulgences appears, it has to be the scribes themselves who would have ‘supplied’ the narratives with pilgrimages. It is then the realities of the scribes’ times which are clearly represented in the text about *söguöld*. This appearance of the author would then serve as potential material for analysing the scribe’s input by using the analytical tools of book-prose theory.

As for the Flósi’s purchased absolution, it is harder to tell whether it could be added by the scribe as a reflection of their own time. The practice of buying indulgences becomes more common in the fourteenth century onwards but is also present much earlier (Harpur 2002: 67). If this would be the case, then both influence of foreign sources as well as original oral tradition could be sources of the pilgrimage in *Njáls saga*.

Another way to ‘detect’ the realities of later times is the general interest in Rome, as the prospect of gaining absolution in general made the city the most desirable pilgrim destination from around the year 1300 and onwards (Harpur 2002: 67, Herwaarden 2003: 269). The examples given below witness a high status which Rome has as a pious destination and suggest uses of such observation.

Rome plays a surprisingly important role in the travel aforementioned travel account by abbot Nikulás. Each of the two parts of the work attested to Niculás, both *Leiðarvísir* and *Borgaskipan*, include a detailed description of Rome, its churches and secular monuments. The content emphasizes how important and interesting the monuments of Rome were for a pilgrim at that time. Even though the main destination in Niculás’ treatise is the Holy Land, the description of Jerusalem in *Leiðavísir* is of 117 words, while 440 words are used to depict Rome (Marani 2012: 111). The paragraph about Rome in *Borgaskipan* is shorter but the city is described as superior to others: a classical depiction of Rome as *caput mundi* (Herwaarden 2003: 212).

Most of the discussed saga accounts on pilgrimages to Rome do not see a necessity to describe the city, treating the phenomenon of religious journeys and the destination itself as common and widespread knowledge. However, some of the manuscripts of *Fóstbræðra saga*⁴⁵ from the late fourteenth century include a paragraph on the origins of Rome. It begins with a classical description:

Rómaborg létu gera tveir bræðr; hét annarr Romulus, en annarr Remus. /.../” (*Fóstbræðra* XXIV: 257)

⁴⁵ Flateyjarbók and Codex Regius. The edition of *Fóstbræðra saga* in Íslensk fornrit is based on Hauksbók as the oldest extant source (Björn K. Þórólfsson, Guðni Jónsson 1943: LXX, 257). I will not elaborate on which source is based on which although this insertion is important in dating the manuscripts.

Rome was built by two brothers; the first one was called Romulus, the other Remus.⁴⁶

The paragraph further recalls the killing of Romulus, and the derivation of *Rómaborg* from the name of Remus. Such ‘intellectual’ material in sagas might have had educational reasons: the scribe’s intention may have been either to demonstrate their own knowledge or make the text more informative.⁴⁷ On the other hand, such description might attest to deep interest and fascination with Rome. The fact is that the oldest version of *Fóstbræðra saga* in Hauksbók does not include the reflection on the origins of Rome (Björn K. Þórólfsson, Guðni Jónsson 1943: LXX). While Bjarni’s pilgrimage is present in all the versions, the addition in later manuscripts might suggest the growing of the cult.

However, the differences between manuscripts of *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar* by Oddr Snorrason (as described in Chapter 2) are hardly transparent in their treating of Rome. In comparison to *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar inn mesta*, only manuscript U has similarities to this saga in recounting the king’s pilgrimage. How are the manuscripts connected, and is the mentioning of Rome important in retracing this connection? Finnur Jónsson in his introduction to the edition of Oddr Snorrason’s work suggests that both A, S and U versions originate from the same translation of the original Latin text. He dates A to the second half of the thirteenth century, S – to the beginning of the fourteenth century, and U – to the mid-thirteenth century (Finnur Jónsson 1932: III-VIII). Sveinbjörn Rafnsson in his study on sagas about Ólafr Tryggvasonr mentions the same dating and points out that the three versions may not have come directly from the Latin translation but does not reconsider Jónsson’s arguments on manuscript origins (Sveinbjörg Rafnsson 2005: 36). The different versions then would have an opposite relationship than those of *Fóstbræðra saga*: the oldest version would be the most elaborate on Rome, while younger versions would not mention it at all.

It then raises a question if there is a reason for including the narrative on the king’s Roman pilgrimage in manuscript U and *inn mesta*. Focusing on the book-prose theory-celebrated existence of the author, why does one scribe include such narrative, while the other omits it? Does it have to do with the spread of ‘the cult of Rome’ in the early fourteenth century? Is it a personal choice of the scribe, or does the relationship between the manuscripts of Oddr Snorrason’s work and *inn mesta* have to be reconsidered? In this paper, these questions remain unanswered as it would require a thorough, specified analysis of *Ólafs sögur Tryggvasonar*, but suggest material for further study.

⁴⁶ My translation.

⁴⁷ Annette Lassen (2014) gives another example from *Fóstbræðra saga* about Egill and the “calculation” of his bones. This paragraph is as well found in the Flateyjarbók version of the saga (*Fóstbræðra* XXIII: 233).

At last, the Old Norse saga pilgrimages might originate from foreign literary sources. In *Grettis saga* one might find clear reminiscences of European romances. Especially in the episode where Spés meets Þórsteinn, the prototypical coldness and objectiveness of *Íslendingasögur* gives place to dreamy romance: Þórsteinn sings so beautifully in his cell that the finest woman in Constantinople cannot help detecting whom this voice belongs to. Þórsteinn in this saga seems to have all the characteristics of a medieval chevalier, while Spés embodies the values of a court lady (on the description of Spés see Chapter 3). The love story and the characters of *Spésar þáttur ok Þórsteins drómundar* share similar motives with *Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar*⁴⁸. Hermann Pálsson (2002) retraces almost identical patterns in the content of both sagas including the obstacles the lovers have to remove in order to be together, the secret meetings, and cunning ways of deceit. It might thus mean that even though the absolution mentioned earlier would reflect the historical situation in Christian Europe, the pilgrimage of *Grettis saga* might also have been influenced by foreign literary sources.

The textual evidence discussed above demonstrates that saga pilgrimages might have been additions which correspond to the writing down-time of the narratives. It means that the pilgrimages' origins could be dated to the same time as the sagas might have been *written*. They thus might shed light on the sagas rather as literary works than orally distributed and developed stories.

On the other hand, it may also be assumed that the knowledge of Christian pilgrimages comes from foreign but not written sources (as in the case of *Grettis saga*). It cannot be overlooked that stories about pilgrims in Scandinavian culture might have existed even before local Christians started to go on pilgrimages, as devotional journeys were already a widespread phenomenon in the medieval European culture (Harpur 2002: 9). The characteristic of the saga texts which might suggest such existence of presumably oral tales is the ubiquity of saga pilgrimages in general. The way in which the formula *að ganga suðr*⁴⁹ is used throughout the saga corpus might suggest that if pilgrimage is not prevalent as a phenomenon, then it might be widespread as common knowledge.

If pilgrimage is to be considered a repetitive motive, and the formulaic, inferable-only character of *að ganga suðr* is to be pointed out, it might mean that saga pilgrimages have much deeper level of origins than the experience of the scribes or the influence from foreign sources. As Theodore M. Andersson puts it:

⁴⁸ *Tristrams saga* is a reworking of an Old French courtly romance from the end of the 12th century (Pálsson 2002: 151). In the prologue of *Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar*, the saga is dated to the year 1226, what makes the earliest known dating of a *riddarasaga*, though numerous courtly romances and *chansons de geste* might have been translated before (Glauser 2005: 373).

⁴⁹ See Chapter 1.

”The events of the Saga Age retold centuries after, although imagined, might not have been created from scratch. This is because of how harmonized they are throughout different narratives, and that a purpose of simply inventing things is hardly imaginable” (Andersson 2006: 9).

It is then only by agreeing with different saga pilgrimages constituting a continuous body that such assumption can be made. In other words, if saga pilgrimages in different sagas are not considered results of rather unconnected influences and impulses, they can be seen as realisation of common, widespread narratives. In case of the discussion to what extent saga pilgrimages reflect real events from the time of their creation, the *realness* becomes less important. As Gísli Sigurðsson (2005: 294) argues, a repetitive element in different sagas does not proof their “realness”, actuality or historicity but rather reflect the narrative devise of *immanent art*⁵⁰. This view would support the free-prose side of the debate of saga origins by eliminating the importance of outside influence and underlining the power of the common, widespread knowledge and storytelling.

In addition, the existence of the common collective knowledge on pilgrimages would reaffirm the hypothesis of the present paper. It has been pointed out earlier (page 26) that the hypothesis overlooks the possible existence of early individual pilgrimages, which might have had strong religious impetus and preceded the common practice of devotional journeys. It could therefore be argued from the perspective of immanent narratives that singular and rare pilgrimages would not have appeared in the sagas. In order to exist as *widespread* stories, pilgrimages or at least accounts on them have to be *widespread* themselves.

However, considering saga pilgrimages primarily as products of common knowledge and as in lesser extent inspired by the reality is only plausible by overlooking the detailed and accurate information present in sagas. This includes the aforementioned church practice of granting indulgences. In addition, common descriptions of travel routes as in *Leiðarvísir ok borgaskipan* suggest the *realness* of such practice. As mentioned in Chapter 1, an elaborate account on how to reach Rome from Iceland is given in *Njáls saga*, where both Flósi and Kári’s voyages are described in geographical terms.

All in all, it seems that saga pilgrimages, though available for analysis from different perspectives, are more illustrative of the reality- and literary-based influence. They are more possibly products of self-conscious authorship than a collective experience, or might be rewardingly studied as such.

⁵⁰The term is borrowed from Carol J. Clover, who with *the immanent saga* refers to shorter narratives as patches familiar to the people of that time and from which longer sagas are being constructed. It means that what we refer to as the sagas of Icelanders or king’s sagas are literary works, “literary innovation”, and only the shorter narratives might have been orally delivered (Andersson 2006: 4).

Conclusions and Discussion

I. The first part of this paper has outlined the main motivations of saga pilgrims. The purpose and motives of saga pilgrimages are usually complicated to deduce and tend to intermingle. On the one hand, there exist piety-motivated voyages, which represent the fundamental characteristic of pilgrimages, i.e. religious self-consciousness. On the other hand, pilgrims are also attracted by the touristic potential of the holy destinations. The analyzed saga pilgrimages have traits of both types of religious travelling.

It is pointed out that Rome may not be considered as inferior to Jerusalem in the sagas, as the textual evidence is inconsistent. In addition, pilgrimages are accessible both to royal, aristocratic and ordinary saga Christians.

Pilgrimages induce remarkable change in the saga characters' status, personal values and behaviour. The pilgrims attain respect and fame no matter their status before the journey. The journeys serve as the resolution of the pilgrims' lives, and after the return (if it happens) they embrace quiet, Christian kindness-permeated life.

II. The second part of this paper proves the hypothesis that saga pilgrimages reflect much later times than the period they describe, i.e. *söguöld*. This is partly because the process of Christianization seems to have been slow and hardly developed in *söguöld*, while pilgrimages witness deep faith and elaborate Christian tradition. The discussion on Christianization is supplied with evidence from the saga texts. The evidence shows that the following phenomena appear much later than *söguöld*: (1) complete absolution; (2) the cult of Rome. Borrowings from later than *söguöld* are also illustrated by (3) influence of foreign literary sources on *Grettis saga*.

The aforementioned textual evidence serves both as proof for the hypothesis and as illustration of possible ways of the creation of sagas. Other characteristics of the saga texts, namely (4) the prevalent formula *að ganga suðr* and (5) the specific descriptions of pilgrimage routes from Scandinavia, demonstrate different views on saga origins. The former observation suggest that the sagas have their roots in the collective knowledge, while the latter accentuates the sagas' use of real historical or literary sources, corresponding to the time of their creation.

* * *

On the closing note, I consider it important to underline some crucial points which could be potential problems for further study. At first, the pilgrimages might have a meaning, purpose or a narrative function in the text, and they may thus be used as narratological devices. A study on the figure of the author could thus be based on such assumption. The way the pilgrimages are ‘transferred’ to one period of time to the other might illustrate the historicity of the saga literature. At last, as presented in the last section of the paper, saga pilgrimages may serve as a potential tool for studying saga origins and the figure of the author. Therefore, further study in saga pilgrimages, potentially to both Rome and Jerusalem, could shed more light on the origins of the saga narratives, due to the pilgrimage being at the same time a historical phenomenon, spiritual practice and a common European trend.

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Santrauka

Pagrindinė bakalaurinio darbo tema – piligriminės kelionės į Romą senojoje islandų sagų literatūroje. Darbe analizuojami pavyzdžiai iš atrinktų sagų, kurios reprezentuoja du žanrus: karalių (*konungasögur*) ir islandų (*Íslendingasögur*). Darbo tema pasirinkta pirmiausia dėl dažno piligrimystės motyvo pasikartojimo sagų literatūroje. Be to, moksliniame kontekste galima pastebėti studijų tokia tema trūkumą.

Darbo įvade iškeliamą hipotezę, teigianti, jog piligrimystės sagų literatūroje atspindi ne sagų veiksmo, o daug vėlesnį laiką Skandinavijos istorijoje. Kadangi aptariamų sagų veiksmas piešia Skandinavijos paveikslą X a. pabaigoje ir XI a. pirmoje pusėje, t.y. krikšto priėmimo bei krikščioniškosios kultūros perėmimo laikais, sagų tekstuose aprašomi piligrimai ir jų kelionės į Romą išreiškia stebėtinai aukštą religinės savimonės lygį.

Tyrimas susideda iš dviejų pagrindinių dalių. Pirmoje dalyje pateikiamas tekstinių pavyzdžių aptarimas ir analizė. Svarbiausia šioje dalyje yra išsiaiškinti pagrindinius sagų veikėjų piligriminių kelionių tikslus, jų įtaką ir padarinius piligrimams. Atsižvelgiama į tai, koks yra pagrindinių viduramžių šventųjų miestų – Romos ir Jeruzalės – santykis sagų literatūroje, bei nagrinėjamas šių miestų sąryšis su piligrimų socialiniu statusu. Antroji dalis susideda iš abstraktesnio tyrimo, susijusio su sagų istoriškumu, kilme ir piligrimystės kaip motyvo reikšme senuosiuose islandų tekstuose. Norint išsiaiškinti, ar hipotezė pagrįsta, aptariamas Skandinavijos krikšto procesas. Parodoma, jog viduramžių Skandinavijoje krikščioniški papročiai perimami vėliau, nei piligrimystės būtų galėjusios paplisti sagų veikėjų laikuose. Pristatant pagrindines sagų kilmės teorijas, siekiama pažvelgti į piligrimystę islandų sagose kaip į motyvą, padedantį suvokti sagų kūrimo ir užrašymo aplinkybes. Pavyzdžiai iš darbo eigoje aptariamų tekstų panaudojami parodyti hipotezės pagrįstumą bei iškelti klausimą apie piligrimystės kaip motyvo paskirtį sagų naratyve.

Resumé

Bachelorprojektet handler om pilgrimsrejser til Rom i de oldislandske sagaer. Der analyseres eksempler fra udvalgte kongesagaer og islændingesagaer. Hovedgrunden for temavalget er at pilgrimsrejser forekommer som et hyppigt motiv i oldislandske sagaer. Udover det har sagapilgrimmene fået forholdsvis lidt opmærksomhed i den videnskabelige kontekst.

I indledningen introduceres en hypotese, at pilgrimsrejser i sagaerne afspejler et andet, meget senere tidspunkt i Skandinaviens historie end sagahandlingen udspilles i. Sagapilgrimmene opnår et overraskende højt niveau af religiøs selvforståelse i slutningen af 900-tallet og første halvdel af 1000-tallet, mens skandinaverne kun lige er begyndt at omvende sig til kristendommen og overtage kristne traditioner.

Analysen består af to større dele. Eksempler fra sagateksterne beskrives og analyseres i den første del, hvor de vigtigste mål er at finde sagapilgrimmenes motivation, rejsernes påvirkning og resultater i pilgrimmenes liv. Der er fokus på at beskrive de to vigtigste pilgrimdestinationer Rom og Jerusalem, deres forhold til hinanden og til pilgrimmenes sociale status. Den anden del består af en mere abstrakt analyse, som handler om sagaernes historicitet, oprindelse og pilgrimsrejsernes rolle i de oldislandske sagaer. Omvendelsesprocessen i Skandinavien undersøges for at begrunde hypotesen. Undersøgelsen viser, at kristne skikke i Skandinavien overtages meget senere end pilgrimsrejser som fænomen kunne have spredt sig i sagatiden. Oprindelsesteorier til oldislandske sagaer introduceres som et forsøg på at vise, at pilgrimsrejser er et relevant redskab til at forstå, hvordan sagaerne opstod og blev skrevet ned. Til sidst bekræftes hypotesen med eksempler fra de omtalte sagaer, mens jeg stiller nogle spørgsmål om pilgrimsrejsernes formål i sagaerne, som kunne være relevante i potentielle undersøgelser.

Appendix. Descriptions of Pilgrimage in Analyzed Sagas

				Key Words in Describing Saga Pilgrimages							
				Character(s)	Saga/páttir	<i>að fara</i> <i>(suður)</i> ⁵¹	<i>að ganga</i> <i>(suður)</i>	<i>Rómaborg/Róm</i>	<i>Jórsalaborg</i>	<i>Pétur</i> <i>(ok Páll)</i>	<i>páfann</i>
Íslendingasögur	1.	Auðunn	Auðunar þáttir vestfirzka		+	+					+
	2.	Auður, Gunnhildr	Gísla saga		+						
	3.	Bjarni	Fóstbræðra saga		+	+		+			
	4.	Guðríður	Grænlandinga saga		+						+
	5.	Flósi	Njáls saga	+	+				+	+	+
	6.	Kári		+	+				+	+	
	7.	Spés, Þórsteinn	Grettis saga/Spésar þáttir ok Þórsteins drómundar	+		+			+	+	
Konungasögur	8.a	Ólafr Tryggvassonr	Oddr A, S				-/+ ⁵²				
	8.b		Oddr U	+		+	+				
	8.c		Inn mesta	+		+	+		+		
	9.	Knútr inn ríki	Knýtlinga saga		+	+					+
	10.	Eiríkr			+	+			+		+

Table. Key Words on Pilgrimages to Rome in the Analyzed Saga Texts

⁵¹ For translations to English, see Chapter 1.

⁵² Jerusalem is mentioned in S but not in A.

Appendix continues.

1. Auðunar þáttur vestfirzka: “Suðr vil ek ganga.” “Nú fór hann ferðar sinnar, unz hann kemr suðr í Rómaborg.” (Auðunar 1,2: 392-393)
2. Gísla saga: “Þær Auðr ok Gunnhildr fara til Danmerkr í Heiðabæ. Tóku þær við trú ok gengu suðr ok kómu eigi aftr.” (Gísla 38: 99)
3. Fóstbræðra saga: “Heldr Bjarni suðr til Danmerkr ok gengr út til Róms ok sækir heim inn heilaga Pétr postula ok Pál postula, ok í þeiri för andask Bjarni.” (Fóstbræðra XXIV: 257)
4. Grænlandinga saga: “þá fór Guðriðr útan ok gekk suðr ok kom út aftr <...>” (Grænlandinga 9: 390)
5. Njáls saga (Flósi): „Flósi fór þaðan suðr um sjá ok hóf upp suðrgöngu sína ok gekk suðr ok létti ekki fyrr en hann kom til Rómaborgar. Þar fekk hann svá mikla sæmð, at han tók lausn af sjálfum páfanum, ok gaf hann þar til mikitt fé.“ (Njáls 158: 432)
6. Njáls saga (Kári): “hann <...> sigldi suðr um sæ ok hóf upp suðrgöngu sína í Norðmandí gekk suðr ok þá lausn <...>.” (Njáls 159: 433)
7. Grettis saga: “[Spés:] Nú vil ek breyta ráðhag okkrum ok fara ór landi ok á páfagarð, því at ek trúi, at svá má mitt mál leysast.” “Réðust þau nú til Rómferðar.” “Fóru þau nú allan veg, þar til er þau kómu til Rómaborgar. <...> En fyrir þann skuld, at þau höfðu sjálf orkast hugar á at bæta sína meinbugi án allri þröngvan ok hatri af kirkjunnar formönnum, þá var þeim létt um allar álögur, svá sem fremst mátti vera, en beðin með blíðu, at þau skipaði nú sem skynsamligast fyrir sinni sál ok lifði hreinliga þaðan í frá af fenginni lausn allra sína mála.” (Grettis 91-92: 291-293)
8. Ólafr Tryggvasonr:
 - a. Oddr A: ”hann [var] imunclifi i Girclandi eða Syrlandi“ (Oddr A 78: 242)
Oddr S: „at hann veri i mvnklife. <...> men ok trvi ek at hann hafe verit i Girklande ok Iorsala lande ok Syrlande“ (Oddr S 65: 242)
 - b. Oddr U: „hann kuaz fýsa at fara ut til Rums“; „O. for suðr til Rums með .ix. mann oc lez vera norrænn kaupmaðr. /.../ En a hinu nesta sumri for hann iGarða austr oc var i Alldæigiu borg æinn vetr þaðan for han til Iorsala ut oc var þar hinn .iii. vetr“ (Oddr U: 259-260)
 - c. Inn mesta: “hann sagðiz vilia fara til Roms. <...> for hann þa suðr til Roms.” (Mesta 267: 319) “[O]Lafr konungr fann pavann ok sagði honum alt sitt rað ok sva huerr hann var. <...> Siþan for Olafr ut vm haf til Iorsala ok fann þar patriarchann ok Iorsala konung.” (Mesta 268: 319)
9. Knútr inn ríki: “fór hann suðr til Róms <...>. Knútr konungr gekk af Flæmingjalandi til Rómaborgar.” (Knýtlinga XVII: 123)
10. Eiríkr: “Hann gekk alla leið suðr til Róms.” “Í þenna tíma var Paskális páfi í Rómaborg, er annarr hefir verit með því nafni. Hann tók sæmiliga við Eiríki konungi ok gerði hann sér kæran í vináttu. Eiríkr konungr þá lof til þess af páfanum, at erkibiskupsstóll skyldi vera í Danmörk <...>. Marga hluti aðra þá Eiríkr konungr af páfanum, þá er nytsamligr hafa verit í Norðlondum.” (Knýtlinga LXXIV: 217-219)