

the Norsemen very soon after the landnam began to use antler as material for their arrowheads shows that it cannot only be looked upon as a matter of lack of iron, and not at all as a consequence of the severing of intercourse with Iceland and Norway, which did not take place until some hundred years later. The use of antler instead of iron must be given the simple explanation that the Norsemen very soon found that this material, which was easily obtainable as there were reindeer in abundance at that time, was just as good for arrowheads as iron, and they were easily made and easily replaced if lost. Among the implements of bone I must mention a handsome little comb of late Viking or early medieval type. Besides the finds include numerous objects of soapstone, especially spindlewhorls and fragments of lamps and vessels, and there are also many whetstones. Most of these objects—also many of wood and bone—cannot be dated with any certainty, but many of them undoubtedly are later than the stick with the runic inscriptions and the other artefacts mentioned here.

Briefly to sum up the results of the excavations at the Norse farm no. 17a at Narssaq: we here have a farm which was undoubtedly established in the first decades of the colonization. I am of opinion that we can classify it as a landnammsman's farm. This is proved first and foremost by the type of dwelling and its construction, but also by a number of the artefacts found, especially by the stick with the runic inscriptions and the arrowheads of antler. How long the habitation lasted we do not know, but it is to be believed that the farm existed for quite a long time, maybe some hundred years.

There are still problems to be solved at the landnammsman's farm at Narssaq. I hope that in the not too distant future at least some of the questions can be answered.

The following recent note has been submitted:

Since the above paper was submitted the author has in July 1962 finished the excavation of the dwelling of the Narssaq-farm. The results of this excavation solved most of the problems attached to this interesting Norse dwelling. Here it is impossible to go into details, but it must be mentioned that it was now proved that the oldest element of the house was the central part (with the fireplace) and this early house only consisted of one single room. Moreover it was found out that the drainage systems were much more complicated than stated in the investigations in 1954 and 1958, and it could with certainty be ascertained that parts of the drainage systems were also combined with water supply arrangements. Accordingly Fig. I. in this paper can only be considered as a preliminary plan.

EYSTEINN HARALDSSON IN THE WEST, c. 1151

ORAL TRADITIONS AND WRITTEN RECORD

A. B. TAYLOR

I: INTRODUCTION

THE expedition of Eysteinn Haraldsson, King of Norway, to the west, c. 1151 has been taken as the subject of this paper for several reasons. It is the last recorded Viking raid on the north-east coast of England. The various accounts of it are of interest from numerous aspects—textual, historical, toponymic and historiographical. Some of the historical aspects are rather odd. So far as is known, it has not been the subject of a paper before.

The historiographical aspect has been used as a starting point for a general, if brief, study of the manner in which commemorative skaldic verses about the kings of Norway passed from oral tradition into written histories. It is suggested that these verses usually survive embedded in an explanatory prose commentary because this was the form in which they were commonly handed down orally from skald to skald.

II: THE TEXTS

The Three Primary Accounts

Let us look at the three primary accounts of the episode, the first composed in Norway, the second in either Norway or Iceland, and the third in England.

The first was a series of commemorative verses composed soon after the event by the Icelandic skald Einar Skúlason who for many years was attached to the royal family in Norway.

The second was a passage or chapter containing the verses of Einar embedded in a narrative prose commentary and written about 1170 by an Icelandic historian Eirík Oddsson in a work called *Hryggjarstykki* ('back-bone piece'). This work was a history of the kings of Norway from 1130 to 1161 and appears to have been based on inquiries made by Eirík during a stay in Norway between 1160 and 1170. It is now lost, but substantial extracts from it survive in *Morkinskinna* (c. 1220) and Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla* (1230–40). Use is also made of it in *Orkneyingasaga* (1200–25).

The third account is in an early chapter of a manuscript work in Latin on the virtues and miracles of St. Cuthbert, written by Reginald, a monk

of Durham, about 1172. The manuscript, apparently in Reginald's own hand, is preserved by the Dean and Chapter of Durham. It was printed in 1835 in the first volume of the publications of the Surtees Society.

In addition there is a reference to the episode in the thirteenth-century *Icelandic Annals* under the year 1151:

'King Eysteinn Haraldsson plundered in England. He made Erlend Haraldsson earl in the Orkney Isles.'¹

Translations of the versions of *Hryggjarstykki* surviving in *Morkinskinna* and in *Orkneyingasaga* and of the narrative of Reginald of Durham will be found in Appendix A.

III: HISTORICAL ASPECTS

The Historical Facts as Given

The main facts as recorded in these accounts are that in the early summer of 1151 King Eysteinn Haraldsson of Norway sailed with a large force to Orkney and thence to Thurso in Caithness where he forced the submission of Harald Maddadsson, one of the joint Orkney Earls; that he then continued south on a traditional, and apparently successful 'Viking' cruise, plundering, burning, and killing in Aberdeen, the Farne Islands, Hartlepool, Whitby and several other places on the English coast; and that he then returned to Norway, probably before winter set in.

Historicity

If only the Old Norse accounts had existed, one might have had some doubts about the historical reality of this belated exhibition of the violent variety of Viking enterprise. There are contemporary records of peaceful trading at this time between Norwegian and English seaport towns.² But Reginald of Durham's story of the well of St. Cuthbert on *Farnea* running dry when *Aeistan rex Norwagiorum* and his men were encamped on the island forces us to accept the expedition as fact. Reginald names the two eye-witnesses who told him about the episode. Although cast in the form of a miracle story, the account rings true. It is quite easy to believe that the well on the island would run dry with a band of Norwegian Vikings using it, and that it would flow again on the day that they left. But for this coincidence, which Reginald grasped with hagiographic zeal as a miracle, there would have been no confirmation of the Old Norse accounts. I have traced no other reference to the episode outside Old Norse sources.

Historical Setting

Assuming then that the expedition was in fact made, let us see how it fits into its historical setting.

¹ G. Storm, *Islandske Annaler til 1578* (Christiania, 1888), 114.

² Summary of evidence for trading between Scandinavia and England in A. L. Poole, *From Domesday Book to Magna Charta* (Oxford, 1958), 88.

When Eysteinn sailed to the west, he was one of three kings then ruling in Norway. In 1136, Ingi and Sigurd, two sons of Harald Gilli, became joint kings of Norway. Six years later, in 1142, a group of Norwegian barons (among them Kolbeinn Hríga, better known as a chieftain in Orkney) brought over from Scotland a son of Harald Gilli by an Irish mother Bjadök. This was Eysteinn—described in *Heimskringla* as 'dark, with black hair, rather above middle height, an intelligent man and shrewd; but he lost influence through being miserly and grasping'.¹ A little older than Ingi and Sigurd, he was accepted as a third king, the realm now being divided in three. It was a period of much unrest among the chief families in Norway and both Sigurd and Eysteinn ultimately died violent deaths—in 1155 and 1157 respectively. But it is recorded that there was peace in Norway while the three kings were still young; and it was during this period that Eysteinn sailed to the west, and was able to stay away from home with impunity for several months.

What had Earl Harald Maddadsson of Orkney done to deserve his humiliation at Thurso? So far as I can see, nothing at all. But he was young, and his co-earl, Rögnvald Kali, was away on a crusade to the Holy Land. Perhaps he was merely vulnerable to the grasping Eysteinn; or perhaps there were other motives that have been lost in tradition or have not been recorded.

In England, Stephen was in the last years of his reign, retaining a tenuous hold on his throne while anarchy filled much of his kingdom. Most of the English chroniclers do not have much to say about the period 1150 to 1154, but it seems that he spent much of it in the south and the south-west—far from the coast where Eysteinn carried out his raids.² The state of England must have been well known in Norway at this time, and may have indicated to Eysteinn that the risks of an expedition were not very great.

Why a Plundering Expedition?

Let us look for a moment at the question why the expedition did not stop at Caithness. Eirik Oddsson himself seems to have encountered some doubts among his informers about the reasons for or the wisdom of the subsequent plundering expedition to the south, for all accounts of the expedition include, near the end, the sentence 'Different opinions are held about this expedition' (*ok ræddu menn um þessa ferð allmisjafnt*). Further, the versions in *Morkinskinna* and *Orkneyingasaga* have a sentence to the effect that Eysteinn thought himself to be avenging the death of King Harald Sigurdarson, killed at Stamford Bridge in 1066.³

As a genuine reason for the raids on the English coast, however, this does not sound sincere. Eysteinn may have given out that he was avenging

¹ *Heimskringla*, by Snorri Sturluson, ed. F. Jónsson (Copenhagen, 1911), 581, 586.

² See especially *Gesta Stephani*, ed. K. R. Potter (London, 1955).

³ *Heimskringla*, p. 585; *Morkinskinna*, ed. J. Jónsson (Copenhagen, 1932), 445; *Orkneyingasaga*, ed. S. Nordal (Copenhagen, 1913-16), 263.

the death of King Harald, either before the expedition, or as a defence against the criticism after his return home. This is not the first saga reference to avenging King Harald: Hákon Pálsson, aspirant to the Orkney earldom about 1094, tried to tempt King Magnus Barelegs to invade England 'and so avenge Harald Sigurdarson thy grandfather'.¹ But this was now 1151. It is difficult to believe that Eysteinn, a young monarch of ten years' standing, felt more than a nominal duty towards vengeance for the death of a distant ancestor in a battle that took place in a foreign country nearly one hundred years before.

There is no evidence of his obtaining any political or economic gain for his country or himself. The expedition cannot have helped his standing with the church. Cardinal Nicholas Breakspear came to Norway from Rome in 1152, and both *Morkinskinna* and *Heimskringla* say that his wrath fell on Sigurd and Eysteinn—but not on Ingi—and that he required the allegiance of both of them before the establishment of an archbishopric at Niðaros.² It is not impossible that the Cardinal had heard of Eysteinn's conduct on *insula Farnea*.

I should like to suggest that the plundering expedition was not planned in advance, and might not have been made at all if Eysteinn had taken longer to overcome Earl Harald in Caithness. As it happened, he was able to take him by surprise. The campaign was brief and it was still early summer. Perhaps his men egged him on to sail south; or his own grasping nature urged him. Aberdeen was plundered and set on fire to make the beginning of a viking holiday. Once begun, the expedition seems to have been a technical success. Booty was obtained and the company returned home. But the fact that Eysteinn had to give a public reason for it is the easier to understand if it is assumed that he had not announced it as part of his itinerary before he left home.

The Date

The date 1151 given in the Icelandic Annals appears to accord with the dates of other events in Orkney and Norway, and in particular with the absence of Rögnvald Kali on his crusade, also given in the Icelandic Annals under the year 1151. A. O. Johnson has argued that both events took place in 1152.³ No comment is offered on this, but a precautionary *circa* has been inserted before '1151' in the title and first sentence of this paper.

IV: THE NAMES IN THE VERSES

Each of the six verses of Einar contains one or more proper names. The only personal name is that of Maddad, father of Harald, Earl of

¹ *Orkneyingasaga*, 99.

² *Morkinskinna*, 453; *Heimskringla*, 586.

³ A. O. Johnson, *Nicolaus Brekespears legasjón til norden* (1945), Excursus II. Summarized in *Heimskringla III*, Íslenzk Fornrit (1951), ed. Bjarni Aðalbarnarson, Introduction, p. lxviii.

Orkney, which occurs frequently in *Orkneyingasaga*.¹ There are two ethnic names—*Englar* in the second verse, and (possibly) *Partar* in the last one. Einar appears to regard *Partar* as a name for the English or an English tribe; he seem to have plagiarized it from a verse by Sighvat, who used it somewhat obscurely and not necessarily as a proper name in connection with an attack on Canterbury in 1009.²

The remaining names are six place names. I give them in the MS. forms in *Morkinskinna*, followed by normalized forms and, so far as practicable, identifications:

Msk 444	<i>Aþardíonar</i>	<i>Aþardjón</i>	Aberdeen
	<i>vid Hiartar poll</i>	<i>Hjartarpollr</i>	Hartlepool
	<i>vid Hvítaby</i>	<i>Hvítabyr</i>	Whitby
	<i>vid Skörpusker</i>	<i>Skörpusker</i>	Not hitherto identified
Msk 445	<i>iPíla vic</i>	<i>Pílavík</i>	
	<i>Langa tvn</i>	<i>Langatún</i>	

Aþardjón occurs in only three other *loci*—*Orkneyingasaga* 267, *Hauksbók* 502, and *Pulur* IV. v. 3. *Hvítabyr* occurs in only one other *locus*—*Ragnars saga loðbrókar* Chapters 7 and 8.³ *Hjartarpollr* does not occur in any other independent *locus*, and but for Einar's verse it would not have survived. The three remaining names present various difficulties, some of which are discussed in Appendix B. *Skörpusker*, 'sharp skerries', is probably the Farne Islands—the largest being Reginald's *insula Farnea*. *Pílavík* is probably a Scandinavianized form in which the first element is Old English *pil*, 'a stake'; and the second Old English *wic*, 'a village'. *Langatún* is 'long town'. *Pílavík* and *Langatún* appear along with the pseudo-tribal name *Partar* which, as I have said, was associated by Sighvat with Kent. But I should doubt if *Pílavík* and *Langatún* are to be looked for further south than East Anglia. I have no suggestions to offer. That they were real places, however, is fairly certain. Einar does not seem to have been with Eysteinn on his expedition, but he may have visited England as a young man along with Sigurd the Crusader. He may thus have heard some of the six names long before Eysteinn's expedition.

V: ORAL TRADITION AND WRITTEN RECORD

In this last and longest part of this paper, I shall look again at the Old Norse account as a whole, and see whether anything can be deduced from

¹ Maddad, earl of Atholl, married Margaret, daughter of Earl Paul Thorfinnson of Orkney. O. N. *Maddadr* appears to be a Scandinavianized form of his Celtic name, which is represented by the form *Madeth* comes in two Dunfermline charters. See A. O. Anderson, *Early Sources of Scottish History* (Edinburgh, 1922), ii. 139.

² *Partar* may originally have meant 'inhabitants of the port, citizens'—a suggestion made by Margaret Ashdown, in a discussion of the word in her *English and Norse Documents relating to the reign of Ethelred the Unready* (Cambridge, 1930), 161, 222.

³ *Hauksbók*, ed. E. Jónsson and J. Jónsson (Copenhagen, 1896), 505; *Pulur*, IV. v. 3 in *Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning*, ed. F. Jónsson (Copenhagen, 1913–16), A. I. 670; *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, ed. M. Olsen, Samfund series xxxvi (Copenhagen, 1908), 111–222.

it about the oral tradition on which the first written version by Eirík Oddsson was based. I shall then conclude by using this study as a starting point for a more general discussion of the method of oral transmission of skaldic verses. In the Old Norse accounts, the first items to be composed were the commemorative verses of Einar Skúlason. Einar, who appears to have been a priest in West Iceland, became one of the official court poets in Norway in the first half of the twelfth century. A dozen verses by him about the reign of Eysteinn survive in the historical sagas, some of them fragmentary; two are in *dróttkvaett* metre, and ten in *runhenda*. They were probably composed soon after the events that they commemorate.

I might here interpose a word or two about the functions of court poetry of this kind. It is, as has been said, commemorative. It is intended to establish in oral tradition—a tradition probably passed on by one skald to another—a permanent record of events in the lives of kings and earls—not just any events but events which had what the newspaperman of today calls 'news-interest' and which in Old Norse were called *tíðindi*. *Tíðindi* consisted of events in which a man of rank did something characteristic, or important, or slightly unusual. Four qualities served to make the court poet's verses memorable, to give them a mnemonic quality:

- (i) the news interest of the event commemorated;
- (ii) the complex verse structure, which demanded exact memorization;
- (iii) the striking nature of the metaphors or kennings used; and
- (iv) the riddle- or enigma-effect of the content and the language.

This fourth quality seems to me to be a significant one. A typical verse of eight lines may contain only one clue to connect it with its context in space and time—a place-name or a personal name—and the rest is obscure metaphor and vague generalization. This in my view was deliberate. It was a way of composition devised, like the riddles of *Gestumblindi* and all the other riddles from ancient times until today, to appeal to a particular kind of human curiosity. The riddle effect of a verse or group of verses provided an excuse for reciting them, inviting guesses as to their meaning, and discussing them; and in the course of discussion, the events with which they were associated were kept alive in memory.

At this point it is relevant to read the prose translation of Einar's six verses (in Appendix A) without the prose commentary. My translation is flat and dull, as I have extinguished nearly all the poet's metaphors. It will be seen that except for the few place and personal names the verses are vague and riddle-like.

Let us go back to Eirík Oddsson while he was collecting material for his history in the sixties of the twelfth century. He may have met Einar the skald himself, or he may have obtained his information from someone else, perhaps another skald, who could recite Einar's verses. If all that he heard consisted of these six verses, what would he learn from them? He would not learn very much—only

- (i) that an earl with a Celtic father, Maddad, was captured by a chieftain greater than he, and made to submit to him;
- (ii) that a king, not named, plundered various places in the west, some of them being in England and six of them being actually named; and
- (iii) that he won a sea-battle and a fight with some knights on horseback.

If he heard these verses alone, he would clearly have numerous questions to ask—

Who was the son of Maddad? Where was the earldom of Maddad's son? To whom did this earl submit? Where? When? Who was the king who plundered in the west? When did he do so? Why?

Perhaps he did ask these questions and get answers to them. Perhaps the prose passages in his account of the expedition as we have it are composed of the answers to his questions—so far as the verses themselves did not furnish him with answers. This would be consistent with what Snorri says of him, that 'he was an intelligent man and spent a considerable time in Norway', where 'wise and reliable eye-witnesses told him of what they had seen and heard'.¹

There is a rather different explanation, however, which seems worth consideration. Let us suppose that someone recited the six verses to him—a tantalizing, riddle-like mixture of historical fact and vague literary verbiage. He asked his questions, and the reply he received was not a series of answers to each of them, but a fresh recital of the verses, embedded this time neatly in an explanatory narrative commentary. That such oral commentaries existed is not an entirely new idea. There are hints of it in the studies of saga origins by Heusler and Liestøl. At the Third Viking Congress, Dr. E. F. Halvorsen noted that court poems were originally composed to be recited before the people who had taken part in the events, who did not need to be told exactly what had happened; 'but when the poems were repeated to an audience of people who only knew of the events by hearsay, a commentary became necessary'.²

I should like to look at this general hypothesis in a rather broader field than the account of Eysteinn's expedition. And as it is awkward to be continually speaking of 'verses embedded in narrative commentary', I shall call the phenomenon 'VNC' for short.

We find VNC in a great many histories and family sagas, and also in Snorri's *Edda*. In probing for origins, however, we can start with the histories. The first fact of interest is that examples of VNC—in various forms—are found in all five extant histories of the kings of Norway written in the latter half of the twelfth century. Examples of VNC are found in numerous other chapters of *Morkinskinna* which appear to have been derived from Eirík Oddsson's *Hryggjarstykki*. Examples of VNC are also

¹ *Heimskringla*, p. 579.

² *Þriðji Víkingafundur—Third Viking Congress, Reykjavík 1956* (Reykjavík, 1958), 154.

found in the 'Oldest' Saga of Saint Olaf, c. 1180; in Odd Snorrason's Saga of Ólaf Tryggvason, c. 1190; in Karl Jónsson's *Sverrissaga*, c. 1185–1190; and in *Ágrip*, c. 1190.¹ The verses of the court poets were also known to the Norwegian monk Theodricus who wrote his *Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagiensium* c. 1190, but he does not quote any of them, probably because of the difficulty of translating them into Latin.² As if aware, however, that verse quotations were proper to a historical work, he quotes a few lines here and there from Lucan's *Pharsalia*! It would be interesting to know if Ari's lost history of the kings of Norway contained examples of VNC, but knowledge of this is hidden from us.

I have said that there are several types of VNC in these five historical works. The account of Eysteinn's expedition constitutes one type—a series of verses in a matrix of simple prose. At the other extreme are fragments of single verses quoted at longer intervals to confirm sites of battles or other episodes. Between these extremes are single complete verses appearing in the middle of speeches; and the single verse used to round off and give point to a short anecdote. This last is the most 'literary' and effective type of VNC; it occurs in *Hryggjarstykki*, in the Oldest Saga of Saint Ólaf, and in *Sverrissaga*.

What are the possible explanations of the almost simultaneous appearance of VNC in five separate historical works? In asking this question one must bear in mind that VNC occurs quite frequently in these works (except in *Ágrip* where there are only five verses); and that the five works were written in different places (the Sagas of Ólaf Tryggvason and of Saint Ólaf in Iceland; *Sverrissaga* and also probably *Hryggjarstykki* partly in Norway and partly in Iceland; and *Ágrip* probably but not certainly in Norway). If Ari invented VNC as a literary form for historiographic purposes, it is conceivable that the five authors learned it from his writings. Yet imitation of Ari, even if there were some evidence for it, would not necessarily account for the prolific use of VNC in these five histories. This prolific use, however, can be easily understood if VNC existed in oral tradition, ready for each and every historian to listen to, and to commit to writing. It might be added that the surviving commemorative verses of the court poets are usually found embedded in prose. This, while not conclusive in itself, is consistent with the hypothesis that they ordinarily survived during their oral stage in this setting.

It may be objected that instances occur where a verse has been misunderstood by the historian quoting it. This, however, might be taken as an argument for the reality of VNC; it shows what was liable to happen when a verse survived without having, or without retaining, its own commentary.

¹ *Otte Brudstykker af den ældste Saga om Olav den hellige*, ed. G. Storm (Christiania, 1893). *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar* [Odd's Ólaf's Saga], ed. P. A. Munch (Christiania, 1853). *Sverrissaga*, ed. G. Indrebø (Christiania, 1920). *Ágrip of Noregs Konunga Sögum*, ed. F. Jónsson (Halle, 1929).

² 'Theodrici monachi Historia de antiquitate Regum Norwagiensium', in G. Storm, *Monumenta historica Norvegiae* (Christiania, 1880).

One may properly ask if any of the Icelandic historians gives any explicit statement or even hint that he has made use of VNC whether direct from oral tradition or in written form. I have not had time to make an exhaustive search, but I have not found so far any such statement or hint. When we examine what is usually taken as the classic reference to the historiographic use of skaldic verses—the Prologue to *Heimskringla*—the value of the verses is stressed, but there is no hint of any associated prose commentary. This silence, however, is not conclusive. In medieval writing we must distinguish between an author's 'sources' and his 'authorities'. In his Prologue, Snorri is explaining and extolling what he regards as his best authorities; he is not giving a hint of his sources. Indeed, he mentions in his subsequent text only a few of his sources (e.g. Eirík Oddsson). Even, therefore, if he made extensive use of oral VNC, he would not necessarily mention the fact in either his Prologue or his text; nor would any other historian of the period. Indeed there is a possibility that VNC was so well known as an oral or literary form, so ordinary, as to be beneath specific mention. To sum up on this point, I have not found anything in what the historians say about their craft which specifically supports the hypothesis of oral VNC, but equally I have not found anything which renders such a hypothesis impossible or improbable. Lastly, I have been unable to find any medieval historian or chronicler from whose writings the five Norse historians could have learned this particular method of verse quotation.

The point that has now been reached in this study, then, is that there is presumptive evidence, and no definite contra-indication, that skaldic verses about the Norwegian kings were sometimes transmitted orally embedded in a narrative commentary; that the account of Eysteinn's expedition is possibly one particular variety of this kind of oral tradition; but that this whole matter needs much more study than I have given to it, or am able in present circumstances to give to it.

Such a study might possibly cover the use of verses in all Old Norse literature—the *Prose Edda*, family sagas and romantic sagas as well as histories. But what is true of one class of literature may not be true of another; and interesting results might well emerge from a detailed comparison of all the examples of VNC in the five histories of the twelfth century to which I have referred.

Now it might be thought that the study I suggest looks as if it implied a revival of the free prose theory—*die Freiprosalehre*—for which, so far as the family sagas at any rate are concerned—a general case can no longer be made out. It is wrong, however, to take the rejection of the free prose theory in that context as a rejection of the oral transmission of all prose narrative. On this point, useful guidance may possibly be had from studies during the past forty years of the oral traditions that lie behind the Gospels according to Mark, Matthew and Luke. These studies, begun in Germany under the general title of *Formgeschichte*, 'oral form history', have shown that oral narratives and other thematic material in prose could

apparently survive intact over a period of thirty to forty years if they had an inherent and recognizable structure or 'form' which had its origin in the life situation or *sitz im leben* in the community in which the traditions began. Dibelius and other exponents of *Formgeschichte* have shown that there were different varieties of oral 'forms', and that each had certain characteristics of content, structure and style which made it easier to remember than free prose.¹ In my view, any study of the oral traditions lying behind the Old Norse histories should not neglect the methods of New Testament *Formgeschichte*.

APPENDIX A

THREE ACCOUNTS OF THE EXPEDITION OF
KING EYSTEINN HARALDSSON TO THE WEST,

c. 1151

1. ACCOUNT OF EYSTEINN HARALDSSON'S EXPEDITION IN
MORKINSKINNA

Source: Copenhagen, MS. AM 1009 fol., known as *Morkinskinna*.

Date: MS., second half of thirteenth century. Original *Morkinskinna* about 1220.

Printed: *Morkinskinna*, ed. Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen, 1932), 443-5.

Variants: A few variants in *Heimskringla* and *Orkneyingasaga* are given in square brackets. A fuller list of variants in these and later versions is to be found in A. O. Anderson, *Early Sources of Scottish History*, ii. 216-17.

'A little later, King Eysteinn set out on a voyage to the west. He sailed to Caithness, and learned that Earl Harald Maddadsson lay in Thurso. The King advanced with three cutters, and came upon them without warning. The Earl had a ship of 25 thwarts, expensively fitted out [and 80 men in it, *Hkr.*, *Ork.*]. But as they were caught unprepared King Eysteinn and his men got aboard, made the Earl prisoner and took him to their ship. He ransomed himself with seven [three, *Hkr.*, *Ork.*] gold marks, and then they parted. So says Einar:

"There were eighty men
with the son of Maddad.
The bold warrior won fame;
the seafarer, with three cutters,
took the earl captive.
The gallant chieftain submitted
to the mighty prince."

¹ Dibelius, Martin, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* (2nd edn., Teubingen, 1933). English trans. *From Tradition to Gospel* by B. L. Woolf (London, 1934). Commentary in *Form Criticism* by E. Basil Redlich (London, 1948).

'From there King Eysteinn sailed south round the east coast of Scotland. He made an attack on the market town called Apartion. He killed many men there and ransacked the town. So says Einar:

"I have heard that the men of Apartion fell.
Swords were splintered. The king broke the peace."

'Other battles he had south of Hiartarpoll and put men to flight. So says Einar:

"The king's sword bit,
blood fell on spear,
and his faithful bodyguard followed
near Hiartarpoll.
The flow of warm blood gladdened the raven
and waxed greatly.
The ships of the English were cleared of men."

'After that he sailed on to Hvitabyr and fought and won a battle there and burned the town—as is here said:

"The king fought a great fight,
there was song of swords
and shields were split
near Hvitabyr
Fire played mightily among the houses.
The wolf reddened his tooth.
There was grief for men."

'After that he plundered far and wide round the coast of England. Stephen was then king of England. The next fight that King Eysteinn had was with some knights at Scorposcer; and he put them to flight. So Einar says:

"The mighty king slew the shield-bearing host
near Scorposcer.
Showers drove from the bow-strings.
The shield was broken
when knights on horseback were attacked with swords
and had to take to flight."

'Next he fought at Pilavic and won. So says Einar:

"The prince reddened his sword at Pilavic.
Wolves tore the proud dead of the Partar.
The king burned all Langatun.
To the west of the salt sea
sword rang on forehead."

'The last place in England that he burned before he left was Langatun . . . they came back to Norway.

'Different opinions are held about this expedition. King Eysteinn thought himself to be avenging King Harald Sigurdarson who had sailed west and been killed there.'

2. ACCOUNT OF EYSTEINN HARALDSSON'S EXPEDITION IN ORKNEYINGA SAGA

Source: Copenhagen, MS. AM 325 I 4to.
Date: MS. c. 1300. Original, 1210-35.
Printed: *Orkneyinga Saga*, ed. Sigurdur Nordal (Copenhagen, 1916), 262-3.

'Now it must be told what was happening in Orkney while Earl Rögnvald was out on his crusade.

'During the summer that the Earl went abroad, King Eysteinn son of Harald Gilli came west from Norway with a large force of men. When he reached Orkney, he made for South Ronaldsay with his men.

'He then learned that Earl Harald Maddadsson had gone over to Caithness in a ship of 20 thwarts with 80 men and lay in Thurso.

'When King Eysteinn learned that he manned three cutters and sailed west over the Pentland Firth and so to Thurso. He came in such a way that the Earl and his men were unaware of them until the King's men boarded their ship and made the Earl prisoner. He was led before the King, and they came to an agreement that the Earl ransom himself for three gold marks; but he gave his earldom into the hands of King Eysteinn, so that he would hold it from him for ever afterwards. Then the Earl made himself the King's man and bound himself to that by oaths.

'From there King Eysteinn sailed to Scotland and spent the summer plundering there. He plundered far and wide round the coast of England on this expedition, and he thought himself to be avenging King Harald Sigurdarson.

'After that King Eysteinn sailed east to his realm in Norway. And different opinions are held about this expedition.'

3. ACCOUNT OF EYSTEINN HARALDSSON'S EXPEDITION BY REGINALD OF DURHAM

Source: *Reginaldi monachi Dunelmensis libellus de admirandis Beati Cuthberti virtutibus* Durham Dean and Chapter, MS. Hunter 101.
Date: Circa 1172.
Printed: Surtees Society, i (London, 1835), 65-66, from which the following is translated.

'Chapter XXIX How, the king of the Norwegians coming and plundering the aforesaid island [Farnea], suddenly the water in the well of St. Cuthbert failed, and . . . could not be obtained by the inhabitants of the place; but it flowed again in its usual way when the robbers went away.'

'St. Cuthbert gave judgment and justice with compassion to everyone in misery. He gives judgment to those who persecute him and to evil-doers; justice to the pious and devout; compassion to the needy and aged; pity to the poor, to wanderers, and to the unhappy.

'This, the following miracle can show forth if any one will consider it well.

'Now in these days, in the reign of King Stephen, Ælstan King of the Norwegians had come to the coasts of England with a large fleet and a huge armed host, for the purpose of plunder. And he laid the country waste by harrying far and wide wherever he could.

'He did not dare, however, to go far from the sea-beaches, although when his boldness was sufficient he would pillage in places near to the sea.

'He was not willing to spare churches built on the shores of the sea, where he laid waste the abbeys by driving out those who dwelt in them, taking away their ornaments and stripping the coverings from the relics of the saints. And he did these things openly, and never without the energy of a madman.

'From there by night and by day he moved his ships further away from the coast, and now and then indeed he spent some time on the sea beaches among the islands when the tide was out, and destroyed everything nearby his idle ships.

'It was thus that it happened that he came to the island of *Farnea*. At first peace was granted to the brothers who were then living there as hermits but soon after he broke his promise.

'For they destroyed sheep with their lambs beside them, and cooked them in boiling water for food. They pulled out timbers from the walls and took them to repair their ships. . . . But because they could not quench their thirst with salt sea water, they frequently took for their company the water which flowed from the well of St. Cuthbert.'

[The narrative explains at length that the water ceased to flow as soon as they broke the peace, but began to flow again on the day that they left the island.]

'The witnesses who attest this miracle are no less than all the people of that district who saw it, and Bartholomaeus and Aelwinus, monks of Durham, who at that time lived in a secret place in the island and were present at all these events.'

APPENDIX B

NOTES ON SKÖRPUSKER AND PÍLAVÍK

Abbreviations

Msk. *Morkinskinna*, ed. F. Jónsson, Copenhagen, 1932.
Hkr. *Heimskringla*, ed. F. Jónsson, Copenhagen, 1893-1900.
N. I. Skjald. *Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning*, ed. F. Jónsson, Copenhagen, 1913-16.

SKÖRPUSKER

This place name, meaning 'sharp skerries', appears in the fifth verse by Einar Skulason composed soon after 1151 and preserved in the account of Eysteinn's expedition in *Morkinskinna*, and also in the prose commentary. The form is accusative plural—*við Skorposcer* 13th Msk. 444—and has been checked in the published facsimile of the manuscript.

Heimskringla has *við Skörpusker* in the verse, but *við Skarpasker* (an unaccountable accusative singular) in the commentary (13th Hkr. iii. 377).

The only other occurrence of the name is in the Icelandic poem *Krákumál* of the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, which has the dative plural—*j Skarpa skerium* (N. I. Skjald, A. I. 643, verse 6). This poem, however, is romantic in character and borrowed a variety of place names from different sources to give it an exotic colouring. One cannot say whether its author obtained this name from Einar or elsewhere; and he gives no help in identifying the name.

Old Norse *skarpr* could mean either 'sharp' or 'barren', and appears to have given rise to the first element in such island names as *Skorpa* near Bergen, which occurs as *Skarpa* 13th Hkr. iii. 457; *Scarp*, Harris, which appears to occur as *við Skorpu*, 14th *Codex Frisianus* (ed. C. R. Unger, Christiania, 1871), p. 270; and *Scarba*, Argyll. These and similar names are discussed in O. Rygh, *Norske Gaardnavne*, xii. 358–9.

There is good evidence for identifying *Skörpusker* with the Farne Islands off the coast of Northumberland.

It was in the largest of these islands, Inner Farne (*insula Farne*, c. 730 Bede, *insula Farnea*, c. 1172 Reginald of Durham), that St. Cuthbert had his cell in the ninth century and hermits lived in the time of Reginald. Between Inner Farne and three neighbouring small islands of Knoxes Reef, East Wideopen and West Wideopen there is an excellent anchorage, still used as a refuge for ships; and no doubt Eysteinn based his fleet in this, getting water, as Reginald says, from St. Cuthbert's well on Inner Farne.

The name *Farne* is of uncertain meaning and etymology, and difficult to relate to the topography of the islands; but they answer very well to the Old Norse name *Skörpusker*. They are partly barren and have precipitous, deeply fissured coasts, with isolated stacks of columnar rock at several points. The Old Norse name probably signified 'sharp skerries' rather than 'barren skerries'.

There is just a possibility that the Old Norse name does in fact survive. There are two islets on the Ordnance Survey map to the east of East Wideopen named *Little Scarcar* and *Big Scarcar*. No early forms of this name have been found to enable us to say definitely, however, whether or not it is to be equated with *Skörpusker*.

Apart from any evidence that *Scarcar* might offer, there are no other islands on the east coast of England that answer so well to the Old Norse name and are likely to have been visited by a Norwegian king on a viking cruise. Einar says that Eysteinn fought a number of knights on horseback

'near *Skörpusker*' (*við Skorposcer*). It seems quite reasonable to suppose that he did so in a raid on the mainland from his base at Inner Farne.

The identification of *Skörpusker* with the Farne Islands is a new one; for the preceding verses of Einar contains the names Hartlepool and Whitby, and it has been customary in the past to look for *Skörpusker* south of these towns. But, as has been said, where are 'sharp' or 'barren' skerries of any considerable size to be found south of Whitby? The identification with the Farne Islands is so probable that one must assume that some mistake has been made. There are two possibilities: one is that the verses were transposed in oral or written transmission; the other is that Einar himself thought that the Farne Islands lay south of Whitby.

PÍLAVÍK

Pilavik occurs in the last of the verses of Einar Skulason and in the accompanying prose commentary about Eysteinn's expedition. The surviving forms are consistent: *i Pila vic*, 13th Msk. p. 445 (checked in facsimile of MS.); *i Pila vik*, 13th Hkr. iii. 377.

If we follow the order of the verses as we have them, *Pilavik* is to be looked for south of Whitby. But I have been unable so far to identify it on any part of the east coast of England.

There is of course no lack of names in England with the element [pi:l]. Old English *pil*, gen. plur. *pila*, 'a stake', occurs frequently. There might conceivably have been an Old English village name *Pila-wic*, its location being marked by stakes on a hillock or at its harbour mouth.

There is an alternative Old English element *pyll*, 'a pool or tidal creek', found on both sides of the Bristol Channel. It occurs as a simplex name in *Pylle*, Somerset. If there were evidence of such a name on the east coast, one might think of *Pilavik* as an aggregate of synonyms—like Pill Creek at Falmouth. But I have seen no evidence of such a name there.

Old English *pil* is not geographically restricted, has a long vowel, and thus seems definitely to be the preferable derivation. (See *pil* and *pyll* in *English Place-Name Elements*).

Whatever its origin, the Old Norse name may have been formed on the analogy of certain place names in Norway, e.g. *Pilabrekka*, *Piladalrinn*, *Pilastofa* surviving in *Biskop Eysteins Jordebog*, c. 1400 (ed. H. J. Huitfeldt, Kristiania 1879, 358, 311, 351), the first element, it would appear, being from Old Norse *pil*, 'a willow tree'.

Supplementary note on *Skörpusker* (1963)

Mrs. Grace Hickling's recent book *Grey Seals on the Farne Islands* (London, 1962) has led me to two early forms of the island name *Scarcar* which tend to confirm my guess that it might be derived from *Skörpusker*. These are:

Skarfcarres 15th century MS. Hale 114 in Lincoln's Inn Library, London.

Quoted in J. Raine, *History and Antiquities of N. Durham* (London, 1852), p. 361.

Scaphcarrs, 1422-42, Thomas Lawson, Bursar of Durham. Quoted by Mrs. Hickling, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

I find that I am not the first to suggest that the temporary drying up of St. Cuthbert's well was due to over-use by the Norwegian forces. Raine (*op. cit.*, 1852, p. 24 note) wrote: 'Surely, my reader . . . will be able to account for the temporary drying up of the spring without a miracle—that spring which, according to Bede, was never a copious one, and which had been supplying water for more than a day to a numerous body of men.' Mrs. Hickling (*op. cit.* p. 9) quotes an expert opinion that the well is replenished by surface drainage, and says that it dried out completely in 1959.

It is of interest to find that the hermit Bartholomew who told Reginald of Durham about Eysteinn's visit to Farne Island had spent some time in his youth in Norway (J. Bollandus, *Acta Sanctorum*, Junius, V, p. 715, ed. Paris, 1867). If Bartholomew learned something of the Norse language then, he would be the more able to keep in contact with his somewhat difficult visitors, and his account of the episode, apart from the miraculous interpretation, has the greater authority.

A SURVEY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS IN THE FAEROES

SVERRI DAHL

ARCHAEOLOGICAL investigations in the Faeroes are all of recent date, compared with Great Britain and Scandinavia. However, we have already a series of results, of which I now have the privilege to give a short survey, but I must stress, that my remarks are only short glimpses of the work of recent years.

Unlike Iceland, and like Orkney and Shetland, the Faeroes have no book of settlements and for that matter, no written sources from the Viking age or from the early Middle Ages. Therefore, in the Faeroes, these periods may very well be characterized as prehistoric. Certainly, we have the Icelandic *Færeyingasaga* (the Saga of the Faeroemen), relating family feuds and political conditions during the latter half of the tenth and early years of the eleventh century, but otherwise giving very little information. Its reliability as a source, however, may be doubted.

The first definite account of the Faeroes was given by an Irish monk named Dicuil in the year 825, who mentions that the islands, previously uninhabited, had been inhabited for a hundred years by Irish Christian hermits (called papas-fathers) by the Scandinavians, but that they had lately been abandoned because of the ravages of the Norse pirates.

It is unlikely that the Irish hermits were numerous, and they had no influence on the later history and culture of the islands. It is most remarkable that not a single find has been made yet which may be attributed to these papas. These may come, however, when investigations are made in the places which, through tradition and place names, have a connection with these presumably first inhabitants of the islands.

And be it said at once that, till this day, no other relics dating back to visits or habitation older than the Scandinavian settlement have been found. Also, relics from the Scandinavian settlement have till now been very sparse, both as casual finds and visible monuments. Considering the long period from the beginning of the Norse settlement about 800 till the introduction of Christianity about the year 1000, one would expect to find several heathen graves; but that is not the case, and as far as is known, not even legends about the finding of such graves are in existence, with the exception of two fairly certain burials in a barrow, one at Hovi, Suðuroy, the other at Sandavágur, Vágur—in both places were found bones and crumbled objects which were partly indeterminable, and partly lost.