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## **Víkingarvísur or Konungavísur? On the Potential Role of the Skaldic Viking Encomia**

The last phase of the Viking period, traditionally dated from the 980s till the late 11th century, brought significant political, economic, and cultural developments to those areas of Europe affected by Viking activity. Among them are, for instance, Danish supremacy in Scandinavia and England, Christianization of Northern Europe, changes in far trade system, and emergence of early towns. The intensity of these developments, especially political encounters, is reflected in a set of written accounts that present us today with a more or less coherent and reliable vision of the period in question.

This time of extraordinary changes was especially favourable for charismatic and talented leaders who were able to take advantage of new political and cultural trends to fight effectively for higher status and more acknowledged positions. Late Viking Age Scandinavia provides us with an assemblage of such figures. In this article I will concentrate on two of them. The missionary kings of Norway, Óláfr Tryggvason and Óláfr Haraldsson (the Saint), do not require a thorough introduction. Each of them acquired the status of illustrious warrior and monarch in the Old Norse tradition, depicted in a series of saga narratives. Scandinavian medieval historiography is full of praise for both their Viking exploits and their charisma in developing Christian royal power and kingdom. Both kings have earned over a century's worth of scholarship which still explores various aspects of their activities, as well as the aforementioned literary tradition emerging around the times of their reign.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sveinbjörn RAFNSSON: *Óláfs sögur Tryggvasonar. Um gerðir þeirra, heimildir og höfundar*. Reykjavík 2005; Ármann JAKOBSSON: *Royal Biography*. In: *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*. Ed. R. McTurk. Malden 2007, pp. 388—402 (further references there).

Despite being memorialized as zealous Christians and strenuous missionaries who, at least in the case of one of them, deserved saintly status, their Viking beginnings were neither forgotten nor dismissed. Indeed, their piracy exploits, even if directed against Christians and Church institutions in various parts of Europe, were primarily treated as evidence of royal bravery, military extravagance and political significance.<sup>2</sup> Contemporary perspective appears equally interesting. Taking active part in Viking exploits brought both Óláfs fame and riches, utilized in successful struggles for the Norwegian throne. Sufficient propaganda accompanied military strength. The former took the usual shape of those times, namely, a series of skaldic poems composed by poets who served in retinues of both kings. The content of their encomia mostly relied on both monarchs' Viking achievements, providing, along with conventional praise of their attitude, intriguing information concerning places of their exploits. A closer look at these poetic utterances unveils another interesting detail. Skalds notably aimed to present their patrons not only as brave, horrifying, and merciless pirates but also as rightful, effective, and potent rulers. Examination of these aspects of skaldic Viking encomia dedicated to both kings is the aim of my article.

Óláfr Tryggvason started his Viking career on the Baltic Sea in the late 980s. Although the tradition about his upbringing in Garðariki (Russia) at the court of prince Valdimarr raises serious doubts,<sup>3</sup> references to his raids on both Scandinavian and Slavonic shores of the Baltic Sea, as found in poetry, may be viewed as reliable. I suggested elsewhere that a *lausavísa* attributed to skald Stefnir Þorgilsson, additionally supported by another stanza, coming from Hallfreð's Óttarsson's *Óláfsdrápa*, the poem I am going to refer to later in the text, points to Óláfr's support for Sveinn Gormsson in the latter's failed attempt to withstand the attack of Eiríkr inn sigrsæli on Denmark in 991/994.<sup>4</sup>

Both leaders continued joint activity in England. Perhaps Sveinn accompanied Óláfr and others at the battle of Maldon. Óláfr's exploits in the British Isles are said to have affected various parts of the region. Óláfr's and Sveinn's joint attack on London in September 994, albeit unsuccessful but resulting in a large payment of Danegeld, put this period to a close. Óláfr declared truce with Æthelred II and decided to accept of baptism, and — according

<sup>2</sup> See C. PHELPSTEAD: *Holy Vikings. Saints' Lives in the Old Icelandic Kings' Sagas*. Tempe 2007.

<sup>3</sup> The stanza referring to twelve-year-old Óláfr leaving Garðar (Russia) with his own fleet, previously treated as part of Hallfreð's *Óláfsdrápa*, has been attributed according to the medieval tradition to the 12th-century skald Hallar-Steinn, whose poem *Rekstefja* also describes life and deeds of the Norwegian king. See *Scandinavian Poetry of the Middle Ages, Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 1. From Mythical Times to c. 1035*, vol. 1—2. Ed. D. WHALEY. Turnhout 2012, p. 387 (further cited as SPMA I).

<sup>4</sup> See J. MORAWIEC: *Viking among the Slavs. Jomsborg and the Jomsvikings in Old Norse Tradition*. Wien 2009, pp. 293—296.

to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, promised to never again return to England as enemy.<sup>5</sup>

The very next year Óláfr Tryggvason became the king in Norway. Circumstances of this political breakdown remain blurred and uncertain. The rule of jarl Hákon of Hlaðir, undisputed up to that point, was met with rebellion that led to his miserable death. Details of those events have been provided only in later saga tradition, making it difficult to verify their reliability. Moreover, it is impossible to determine today how the events of Óláfr's coming to Norway and the fall of Hákon, were related, even if some connection between these events should be considered. Nevertheless, in 995 Óláfr Tryggvason already controlled most regions of the country either by force or by alliances, introducing royal coinage and Christianity.<sup>6</sup>

The advent of the new regime was marked by a composition of a poem praising the new monarch. Its author was Hallfreðr Óttarsson, a skald previously connected with jarl Hákon. Meant as a *drápa*, the poem is preserved only partially as a set of six stanzas.<sup>7</sup> Their main focus is Óláfr's Viking activity. The skald refers to king's ravaging attacks on the territories of Slavs (stanza 1), the island of Gotland, Scania, and Hedeby (stanza 2), Saxony and Frisia (stanza 3), Russia, Bornholm, and Flanders (stanza 4), as well as England (stanzas 5–6).

Scholars studying Hallfreðr's stanzas, following medieval authors in this aspect, assumed that the skald's intention was to reconstruct chronological order of Óláfr's attacks which, supposedly, was determined geographically, starting in Russia in the East and ending up in England in the West. The fact that this supposed geographical order is much disturbed by arrangements of stanzas in kings' sagas, making the future king of Norway bounce back and forth between the Baltic and the West, results in serious doubts concerning original order and a number of stanzas that constituted Hallfreðr's poem.<sup>8</sup> Although there is no room here to debate much on this problem, it may be reasonable to ask rhetorically whether the skald was in fact both interested in and capable of accurate chronological and geographical reconstruction of the king's attacks. Stanzas 1 and 4 are good examples of grouping territories within the space of one stanza that completely disturbs the supposed order. Hallfreðr, composing the poem, was supposedly forced to rely on reports provided by the king and

<sup>5</sup> *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*. Ed. Ch. PLUMMER. Oxford 1892, pp. 128–129; I. HOWARD: *Swein Forkbeard's Invasions and the Danish Conquest of England 991–1017*. Woodbridge 2003, p. 37; J. MORAWIEC: *Knut Wielki. Król Anglii, Danii i Norwegii (ok. 995–1035)*. Kraków 2013, pp. 44–47.

<sup>6</sup> See more in S. BAGGE: *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom. State Formation in Norway ca. 900–1350*. Copenhagen 2010.

<sup>7</sup> On medieval manuscripts that preserve the poem's problematic order of stanzas, see SPMA I, pp. 387–391.

<sup>8</sup> See SPMA I, p. 388 and further references therein.

his retinue. Considering that the skald was supposed to cover the period of almost a decade, it is quite easy to imagine that even his informants could have been uncertain regarding the accurate order of Óláfr's expeditions. Moreover, if Hallfreðr himself felt free to group distant lands in one setting, it seems justified to assume that both geographical and chronological orders were not his main concern. The clustering of territories allegedly attacked by Óláfr Trygvason within a relatively small set of stanzas suggests that Hallfreðr's aim was to impress an audience of the poem as much as possible. Undoubtedly, the longer the list of defeated enemies, the better. The same goes for geographical range and scope of the king's actions, who thereby automatically appears to be a skilled sailor and leader. Thus it seems likely that in composing the *drápa*, Hallfreðr was much more concerned with relevant usage of information about the king's military achievements in order to present him in the expected way, to which I will later return.

According to saga tradition, Óláfr Haraldsson's Viking career was no less impressive and outstanding. Its beginnings possibly featured activity in both Russia and the Baltic. The earliest firm record refers to Óláfr's participation in the so-called army of Þorkell that invaded England in 1009 and remained there until 1012. Óláfr took part in the battle of Hringmere (1010) and in the siege of Canterbury (1011), which resulted in a spectacular capture of archbishop Ælfheah, murdered slightly later. After Þorkel's treaty with Æthelred II, Óláfr most likely remained in the Þorkel's retinue, although the possibility of his separate military actions in France and other parts of the Continent cannot be excluded. When Sveinn Gormsson invaded England in 1013, Óláfr supported Æthelred, accompanying the English king during his exile in Normandy (and accepting baptism there) and in regaining his kingdom in 1014.<sup>9</sup>

In 1015 he took advantage of Knútr in ríki's invasion on England and decided to make an attempt to take control over Norway. The task seemed even easier, as jarl Eiríkr of Hlaðir accompanied Knútr in England, leaving his brother Sveinn in charge. Luck was on Óláfr's side. First he managed to capture young Hákon, jarl Eiríkr's son, and force him to leave Norway. Then he victoriously confronted intervening jarl Sveinn at Nesjar (southern Norway), which supposedly took place on Palm Sunday (25th March) 1016. The defeated Sveinn looked for shelter in Sweden, whereas Óláfr became the ruler of the country.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> I. HOWARD: *Swein Forkbeard's...*, pp. 90—91; J. MORAWIEC: *Knut Wielki...*, pp. 72—74.

<sup>10</sup> C. KRAG: *The Early Unification of Norway*. In: *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia, vol. 1, Prehistory to 1520*. Ed. K. HELLE. Cambridge 2003, pp. 192—194; S. BAGGE: *From Viking Stronghold...*, pp. 29—31; S. BAGGE, S.W. NORDEIDE: *The Kingdom of Norway*. In: *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy. Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus' c. 900—1200*. Eds. N. BEREND. Cambridge 2010, pp. 121—164; J. MORAWIEC: *Między poezją a polityką. Rozgrywki polityczne w Skandynawii XI wieku w świetle poezji ówczesnych skal-dów*. Katowice 2016, pp. 309—311.

Our knowledge about Óláfr's Viking exploits is mainly based on two skaldic poems: Sigvatr Þórðarson's *Víkingarvísur* and Óttarr svarti's *Höfuðlausn*.<sup>11</sup> The former marks the beginning of Sigvatr's service for the king, which quickly surpassed the standard skald—ruler relation. The poet's status at the court grew to royal diplomat and advisor. Finally, at the court of Óláfr's son Magnús, Sigvatr was a respected poet and witness to the king's sanctity. *Víkingarvísur* is a cluster of fourteen full stanzas and one half-stanza, describing, as the title directly indicates, the king's Viking activity in various parts of Europe. Once again, the range of Óláfr's voyages is impressive, embracing various locations in Scandinavia, the Eastern Baltic, present-day Netherlands, England, France, and Spain. Contrary to Hallfreðr, Sigvatr locates his patron's activity at more specific places. The list includes both well known and problematic locations. The former group features places like the isle of Saremaa (*Eysýsla*), London (*Lundún*), Ringmere Heath (*Hringmaraheiði*), Canterbury (*Kantara borg*), the Loire (*Leira*), Poitou (*Peitu*). There is rather no room for surprises here, as most of these places were well known in Scandinavia, due to both Viking raiding and trade contacts. Suðrvíkr, mentioned twice by skald in the poem, is a good example here. In both cases, Sigvatr seems to refer to the same location, that is, a port of Southwark, in the vicinity of London. Not only does his comment about this place, *Dǫnum kuðri* (known to the Danes), seem to confirm this identification but it also reveals the way the skald classified and considered various places he was supposedly told about by the king and his retinue. Identification of locations in the latter group is mainly based on scholarly suppositions and both the stanza and saga context (Herdalar in Finnland, Kinnlimasiða in present-day Netherlands, Nýjamóðu in England, Gríslupollr, Gunnvaldsborg in Spain). Moreover, it features a group of locations with names that reflect their supposed topography rather than exact and real geographical situation (Sótasker, Hringfjörðr, Fetlafjörðr, Seljupollr). As in the case of Hallfreðr's *drápa*, density of locations affected by Óláfr Haraldsson, including famous and familiar places, was thought to impress the poem's audience with the scope of king's abilities.

Óttarr svarti's *Höfuðlausn* is another poem which enumerates Óláfr's Viking exploits. Contrary to Sigvatr's *vísur*, this poem was composed in the mid-1020s, at a time when king's power in the country was much more established.<sup>12</sup> Despite its title,<sup>13</sup> the poem was presumably another classic *drápa*, dedicated to

<sup>11</sup> On the dating of both poems and their literary preservation in medieval manuscripts, see SPMA I, pp. 533—556, 739—767.

<sup>12</sup> See J. MORAWIEC: *Między poezją...*, p. 229.

<sup>13</sup> According to *Óttars þáttur svarta*, a short narrative being part of *Óláfs saga helga*, provides a story of Óttarr's conflict with king Óláfr over the skald's love poetry about the king's wife. Óttarr managed to save both his life and the king's favour thanks to a poem praising the monarch, consequently titled *Höfuðlausn* ("head ransom").



Óláfr and his military achievements. Saga tradition alludes to Sigvatr's *Vikingarvísur* as the main source of Óttar's inspiration, which can be proved by a close comparison of both poems. *Höfuðlausn* consists of 20 stanzas that to a great extent, sometimes almost verbatim, follow Sigvatr's account.<sup>14</sup> Óttarr also describes the king's activity in various parts of the Continent, that is, the Baltic, France, and England. What distinguishes one poet from the other is the fact that Óttarr, contrary to his uncle, is much more clear and straightforward in estimating the king's input and achievements during his campaigns.<sup>15</sup>

As noted above, Hallfreðr Ottarsson's *Óláfsdrápa* marked both the start of skald's service for Óláfr Tryggvason and the king's reign in Norway. The poet's previous connection with jarls of Hlaðir obviously did not pose a problem, as the new ruler clearly needed a skilful poet who would be able to deliver relevant data explaining his royal aspirations and legitimizing his power in the form of a poem. Despite its focus on Óláfr's Viking exploits, the poem seemingly refers to these expectations. First of all, four out of six preserved stanzas of the *drápa* feature epithets that directly emphasize Óláfr's royal status. Hallfreðr calls him *dróttinn* in stanza 2, *tyggi* in stanza 3, *hilmir* in stanza 4, and *konungr* in stanza 5.<sup>16</sup> Employment of such epithets presumably resulted in the impression of Óláfr's military actions as integral part of his reign. Moreover, royalty expressed by means of such vocabulary justified Óláfr's activity and confirmed his ability to rule effectively. In other words, the miserable fate of various peoples who suffered from Óláfr's exploits was meant to show Norwegians the figure of their king in relevant and possibly the most accurate way. Expressions of this kind are counterbalanced, as the poem recapitulates military experiences of the king with phrases that stress the king's abilities in this aspect. Typically for skaldic convention, Hallfreðr depicts the king as *hjórdjarfr* (sword-bold) in stanza 2, *ríkr* (powerful) in stanza 4 and, more elegantly, as *nærir naddskúrar* (nourisher of the missile-shower) in stanza 5, *ógnbliðr greddir ulfa* (battle-glad feeder of wolves), *ægir ýdrógar* (terrifier of the bow-string) in stanza 6.<sup>17</sup>

Besides, there are two other expressions found in stanza 4 which have been recently interpreted as indications of Óláfr's royalty. Hallfreðr describes the king as *lægir róks rekka* (subduer of the strife of men) and *herstefnir* (the army-commander).<sup>18</sup> According to Diana Whaley, the former kenning depi-

<sup>14</sup> See J. GROVE: *Recreating Tradition. Sigvatr Þórðarson's Vikingarvísur and Óttarr svarti's Höfuðlausn*. In: *á austrvega. Saga and East Scandinavia Preprint Papers of the 14th Saga Conference*, Uppsala 9th—15th August 2009. Eds. A. NEY, H. WILLIAMS, F. CHARPENTIER LJUNGVIST. Gävle 2009.

<sup>15</sup> See J. MORAWIEC: *Między poezją...*, p. 338.

<sup>16</sup> SPMA I, pp. 393—395, 397.

<sup>17</sup> SPMA I, pp. 393—398.

<sup>18</sup> SPMA I, p. 395.

cts the just ruler, the one who eliminates (in this case, subdues) crime, and the latter can be simply read as ruler.<sup>19</sup> However, these interpretations, though tempting, raise some doubts. The phrase *herstefnir* directly refers to the king's military and commanding skills that can be easily listed among other expressions, mentioned earlier, depicting Óláfr as a great warrior and army leader. That is why, in my opinion, it was not the skald's intention, in this very case, to underline Óláfr's royal status. The kenning *lægir róks rekka* appears to leave the door open to various interpretations. Everything depends on how one interprets its separate elements and then their combination. The determinant of the kenning, *róks rekka*, is a kenning itself. The noun *róg* can be translated as strife that has rather military connotations, but also as slander, calumny, and quarrel that seem to refer to law/norm violation or dishonour. Then *róg rekka* may stand for either a battle or some normative disorder. Depending on which option one chooses, the king as its *lægir* is depicted as the one who either is a victorious military leader or, as Whaley puts it, a just ruler, guardian of law, and enemy of evildoers. The context of the whole stanza seems to point to the former interpretation, as the skald is entirely focused on listing particular peoples who were defeated by merciless Óláfr. On the other hand, looking at *Óláfsdrápa* as a whole piece, even if only partially preserved, makes Whaley's interpretation tempting and worth considering. The concept of *rex iustus* is connected with the advent of Christian ideology. If Hallfreðr had been truly interested in accentuating this aspect in the stanza, it would be the earliest instance of this concept in the preserved skaldic corpus, with only Sigvatr (in his poetry dedicated to Óláfr Haraldsson) as the next in line.<sup>20</sup>

Hypothesis of promoting the concept of *rex iustus* in Hallfreðr's poem can be strengthened by the content in stanza 1 of his *drápa*. Although it is not certain that this very stanza was indeed the opening to the whole poem,<sup>21</sup> its message remains exceptional. Although the skald also refers here to Viking activities of the king, more generally (*í mǫrgum stað*) in the first helming, and more precisely (*lét endr Jamta ok Vinða falla í styr*) in the second, the stanza contains other, much more intriguing elements. Recalling it, the skald describes Óláfr as *hǫrgbrjótr* (shrine-destroyer) and *végrimmr* (fierce against heathen temples). As there is no indication that Hallfreðr had in mind the peoples and places attacked by the king, the only sensible explanation is that the skald referred here to Óláfr's dealings in Norway. The preserved sagas on Óláfr provide many explicit details regarding the king's uncompromising missionary activity, with destruction of the pagan temple in Niðaross (present-day Trondheim) as the climax of the process. A direct link between the king's

<sup>19</sup> SPMA I, p. 397.

<sup>20</sup> See J. MORAWIEC: *Między poezją...*, p. 331, 404.

<sup>21</sup> See discussion in SPMA I, pp. 390—391.



Viking exploits and his promotion of Christianity served to draw attention to Óláfr's attitude towards both, marked by determination, self-confidence, charisma, and luck. Epithets used by Hallfreðr clearly indicate this direction. The poem's audience could have had limited knowledge about the king's dealings with Vinðr and Jamtar. Certainly they knew much more about the king's attitude towards paganism in the country, something that most likely affected them directly. Thus, grouping these actions together served not only to illustrate them in a proper and expected way, but also to explain and justify them. The skald was able to present Óláfr's Viking exploits as integral part of his royalty and claim that the king is equally worth of poetic praise for his military as well as religious endeavours. Hallfreðr's references to Óláfr's anti-pagan attitude, together with the so-called Conversion stanzas,<sup>22</sup> constitute very unique and exclusive insight into religious breakdown in Norway during Óláfr's reign. If one agreed that the skald's intention was to argue for the king's missionary activity as part of his royal claims, it would be easier to accept the phrase *lægir róks rekka* as an indication of the *rex iustus* concept, as one was the natural consequence of the other. There are other elements in the poem that point to the king's actions as signs of his royalty. In stanza 2, Hallfreðr describes Óláfr as *dróttinn hersar* (lord of *hersar*).<sup>23</sup> Category of *hersar* (sing. *hersir*) contains chieftains, jarls, and other rulers and noblemen who were not predestined kings and were inferior to them. The phrase in question may directly refer to the king's retinue, those who supported him in the ruling system. However, it seems to me that it is possible to attach some wider meaning to this epithet. Óláfr Tryggvason also tried to establish his power in Norway through alliances with selected local noblemen who were willing to support his claim. Erlingr Skjalgsson, A powerful chieftain from Western Norway, married Óláfr's sister Ástriðr.<sup>24</sup> The phrase *dróttinn hersar* can refer to people like Erlingr, pointing to the king's dominant position among the elites in the country that, apart from military and financial aspects, was the key to effective and untroubled reign. A similar phrase or its variants, like *þengil hersar*, *harðr nýtr reifir hersa*, *mæðir hersa*, appear in the 11th—12th-century skaldic court poetry, always focusing on the ruler's ability to establish superior position towards nobility.

Stanza 3 of *Óláfsdrápa* remains in the same vein as Hallfreðr, calling the king *vinhróðigr*, friend-exulting.<sup>25</sup> The concept of friendship was an integral

<sup>22</sup> See R. POOLE: „The Conversion verses” of Hallfreð vandræðaskáld, *Maal og Minne* 2002, vol. 1, pp. 15—37; D. WHALEY: *The ‘Conversion verses’ in Hallfreðar saga. Authentic Voice of a Reluctant Christian?*. In: *Old Norse Myths, Literature and Society*. Ed. M. CLUNIES ROSS. Viborg 2003, pp. 234—257.

<sup>23</sup> SPMA I, p. 393.

<sup>24</sup> J. MORAWIEC: *Między poezją...*, p. 349.

<sup>25</sup> SPMA I, p. 394.

part of social arrangements in the medieval Scandinavia.<sup>26</sup> In regard to the highest layers of society, it meant the existence of exclusive and prestigious relations between a ruler and his most prominent subjects, who, as king's friends, were involved in the regime system. Friendship benefited both sides. The king used his friends' network to control his dominion effectively, his friends had an exclusive access to resources and decision-making process. Hallfreðr's epithet directly points to the king's ability to develop and maintain such a structure and may additionally be interpreted as a call to those who were still reluctant to support the new ruler. The skald claims that Óláfr was able to make new additions to the friends' group and at the same time creates an impression that the group is already large enough so that those unwilling to follow the king end up as losers.

It is probably not by accident that in the same stanza 2, Hallfreðr refers also to Óláfr's generosity, calling him *gollskerði* (gold-diminisher).<sup>27</sup> The same verb, *skerða*, is used by the skald in another stanza (6) to depict the king's generosity (*skerðir seims*).<sup>28</sup> A correlation between these two aspects of royalty, war, and favour, yields interesting results. On the one hand, by an interplay between the words *skerðir* and *sverðr*, Hallfreðr not only fulfilled metre requirements through a set of rhymes in the first helming, but created an image of the king who uses the very sword, a sign of power, to both destroy enemies and diminish riches he possesses. On the other hand, the skald links Óláfr's past with the present, thus demonstrating the source of king's generosity.

The elements listed above show that Hallfreðr's intention was not only to praise Óláfr for his Viking achievements. One can assume that the skald was expected to depict his patron as a rightful and effective ruler. Instances of military activity in various parts of Europe were found as excellent excuses to underline Óláfr's royal virtues, such as: courage, generosity, leadership and, perhaps, law guardianship. Personal charisma and luck, access to resources and fleet, following of the retinue, which brought success in the past, were meant to justify and legitimize present royal claims. *Óláfsdrápa* reveals also, at least partly and laconically, the character of Óláfr's reign, consisting of alliances with *hersar*, as well as strict anti-pagan and pro-missionary tendencies. Even though the fragmentary preservation of the *drápa* makes it very difficult to draw definite conclusions, it seems absolutely justified to perceive the poem as a way to both promote and warrant everything Óláfr had already done and planned to do — not as the Viking military leader but as the king of Norway.

A similar tendency is also to be observed in poetry dedicated to Óláfr Haraldsson. I will start with Sigvatr's *Víkingarvísur* that can be contextua-

<sup>26</sup> Jón VIDAR SIGURÐSSON: *Den Vennlige vikingen. Vennskapets makt i Norge og på Island ca. 900—1300*. Oslo 2010.

<sup>27</sup> SPMA I, p. 393.

<sup>28</sup> SPMA I, p. 398.

lized similarly to Hallfreðr's *Óláfsdrápa*. The former poem also marked the beginning of both the skald's service for the king and the latter's reign in Norway.

In addressing Óláfr, Sigvatr did not forget to refer to his royal status, calling him *konungr* (stanzas 1, 15) or *allvaldr* (stanza 2).<sup>29</sup> The poem contains also more elaborate phrases, absent in Hallfreðr's composition, like *snjallr dróttinn Þrændi* (the brave lord of the Þrændir) in stanza 13 and *hilmir Mæra* (the ruler of Mærir) in stanza 14.<sup>30</sup> These last two point directly at Óláfr's superiority over particular regions of the country (Trøndelag, Møre respectively) and can be interpreted as either its confirmation or claim. Given what is known about Óláfr's reign in Norway, at least in the case of Trøndelag, one of the most crucial regions, the latter interpretation is more plausible.<sup>31</sup> Consequently, these kinds of phrases can be seen as a reflex of skaldic response to particular expectations, signalled by the king and his retinue, revealing character and function of the poem.

In saga tradition, Óláfr Haraldsson's royal claims are legitimized by his kinship with Haraldr hárfagri. Authenticity of this bond has been recently questioned and found rather doubtful.<sup>32</sup> Still, poetry dedicated to the king of Norway reveals that Óláfr, even if he was not Harald's kinsman, kept claiming he was related to the Ynglings.

Sigvatr's poem accords with this trend. I have argued elsewhere<sup>33</sup> that epithets like *kundur jofra* (descendant of rulers) in stanza 1 and *niðr fylkis* (descendant of the ruler) in stanza 3, refer to Haraldr hárfagri and not to Haralds grenske, Óláfr's father. It is supported by another phrase, used by Sigvatr in stanza 7 of *Vikingarvísur*, when he depicts Óláfr as *arfvarðr Haralds* (the guardian of Harald's inheritance). Not only does it mean that Norway was presented as *arfr Haralds* (inheritance of Harald) but also that Óláfr's royal claims were legitimized by his status of *arfi* (heir) of the country. Relatively numerous references to Haraldr hárfagri and Óláfr's kinship with the king in Sigvatr's poem show that this motive played a crucial role at the time of taking control over the country, and was vastly used to justify the king's claims and his policy. It seems quite natural to link the presence of this motive with Óláfr's need to withstand and challenge positions of Hlaðir jarls (Sveinn, Eiríkr and the latter's son Hákon) who at that time had a dominant position in the country.

Similarly to Hallfreðr, Sigvatr uses references to Viking exploits of Óláfr Haraldsson to underline his royal virtues and present him as an effective ruler.

<sup>29</sup> SPMA I, pp. 535, 537, 555.

<sup>30</sup> SPMA I, pp. 552, 554.

<sup>31</sup> See S. BAGGE: *From Viking Stronghold...*, p. 30; J. MORAWIEC: *Między poezją...*, p. 311.

<sup>32</sup> See C. KRAG: *Ynglingatal og Ynglingesaga. En studie i historiske kilder*. Oslo 1991.

<sup>33</sup> J. MORAWIEC: *Między poezją...*, pp. 318—348.

Praise of the king's courage, bravery, as well as military skills appear to be an excellent occasion to show a majesty of his reign, vastness of his wealth and loyalty of his *hird*. One can see it in the second helming of stanza 5:

þás við rausn at ræsis  
reið herr ofan skeiðum,  
en í gegn at gunni  
gekk hilmis lið rekkum.<sup>34</sup>

“when the army rode down magnificently to the ruler's warships and the leader's troop advanced against warriors in battle.”

Loyalty of the king's retinue is also underlined in stanza 10, when the skald says that *lið helt þingat, sem hilmir mælti* (the troop went there, as the ruler commanded).<sup>35</sup> These elements, although provided through past perspective of the king's piracy, had their role to play here and now. Once again, one may first of all think of Óláfr's confrontation with Hlaðir jarls. Óláfr was absolutely aware of the fact that the Norwegian throne was to be won on the battlefield, and promotion of successful military leader served both to keep morale of the retinue and convince new potential allies.

At the same time, Sigvatr promotes an image of Óláfr as a just ruler, a guardian and provider of law, and does it much more explicitly than Hallfreðr did in *Óláfsdrápa*. In stanza 5, Sigvatr depicts the king, attacking imprecisely identified Kinnlimasíða, as *hneigir hlenna* (oppressor of thieves).<sup>36</sup> This phrase is undoubtedly addressed to king's subjects, who are supposed to believe that the execution of justice was one of Óláfr's main concerns.<sup>37</sup>

The same mechanism can be observed in stanza 2:

Þar vas enn, es qnnur                   sitt qttu fjqr fótum  
Qleifr — né svik fqlusk —       — fár beið ór stað sára —  
odda þing í eyddri                   enn, þeirs undan runnu,  
eysýslu gekk heyja;               allvaldr, búendr gjalda.<sup>38</sup>

“There it came about also that Óláfr proceeded to hold other assemblies of weapon-points in destroyed Saaremaa; treachery was not hidden. Mighty ruler, the farmers who ran away had again their feet to repay for their lives; few stood waiting for wounds.”

<sup>34</sup> SPMA I, p. 541.

<sup>35</sup> SPMA I, p. 549.

<sup>36</sup> SPMA I, p. 541.

<sup>37</sup> It is worth noting that the depiction of Óláfr as enemy of robbers and criminals became a permanent feature of Sigvatr's poetry for the king of Norway. In stanza 5 of *erfidrápa*, the skald commemorates the fallen king as “the very glorious king, who maimed the race of pilferers and thieves” (*margdýrr konungr, sás meiddi ætt hvinna ok hlenna*). See SPMA I 671; J. MORAWIEC: *Między poezją...*, pp. 331, 404.

<sup>38</sup> SPMA I, p. 537.

Symbolically, Sigvatr categorizes people of Saaremaa as Óláfr's subjects. King's action is motivated by a treachery (*svik*).<sup>39</sup> It seems obvious that the plot was directed towards the king. Consequently, a mighty ruler, to quote Sigvatr himself, is not violently attacking innocent farmers. In fact, as the poet puts it, he punishes them for their disloyalty. One cannot learn in what way the farmers of Saaremaa plotted against the king, however, this was not the point. The skald's main concern was to display Óláfr's effective reaction, who showed no mercy to traitors.

This very motive was employed by Sigvatr already at the beginning of the poem, placing it in a very general perspective, wherein all those affected by Viking Óláfr in fact committed some crimes against the king, such as:

Langr bar út inn unga  
jǫfra kund at sundi  
(þjóð uggði sér síðan)  
sæmeiðr (konungs reiði).<sup>40</sup>

“The long sea-tree carried the young descendant of princes out to sea; the people then feared the wrath of the king.”

Once again, the king's Viking atrocity is portrayed as just wrath directed towards those who dared to question his position and dealings. It is not done to justify or excuse Óláfr. Rather, it is done to remind his subjects in Norway how effective and uncompromising in execution of law he is. In other words, the skald's message is both a declaration of protection and a warning to those who now remain under his control.

The fact that Sigvatr's *Vikingarvísur* is much better preserved than Hallfreðr's *Óláfsdrápa* automatically affects conclusions one may draw from the former poem. Despite the focus on Óláfr's military activity throughout numerous places in Europe, Sigvatr consequently creates an image of a rightful and effective ruler. The poem not only legitimizes the king's claims, but also explains and justifies his actions as means of his royal power in Norway. In order to achieve his goal, the skald employs various concepts, listed above, to meet obvious expectations of the king and his retinue. Sigvatr's further career at Óláfr's court suggests he managed to satisfy the monarch and prove his skills in channelling the royal propaganda of his patron through poetry.

Óttar svarti's *Hofuðlausn* stands out from the two previous poems. Although it also, most likely, marked the start of the skald's service for Óláfr, circumstances of its composition were completely different. Óttarr delivered his composition when the king's position in the country was fairly established

<sup>39</sup> The same concept was used by Hallfreðr in his *Óláfsdrápa erfdrápa*. See J. MORAWIEC: *Między poezją...*, pp. 289—297.

<sup>40</sup> SPMA I, p. 535.

and when he, with mixed results, tried to weaken Danish dominance in the region.<sup>41</sup> There is rather no doubt Óttarr used extensively Sigvatr's *Víkingarvísur* while composing his own poem. It has been already noted by medieval saga authors, resulting in *Óttars þáttur svarta*, a short narrative which is part of one of the redactions of *Óláfs saga helga*, in which Óttarr found himself in rather unpleasant circumstances and was instructed by Sigvatr on how to avoid king's anger and regain his favour through poetry.<sup>42</sup> As has been already said, it seems very likely that Óttarr's poem may be treated as regular *Óláfsdrápa*, provided in answer to the request of the king and his retinue.<sup>43</sup> Despite focusing on Óláfr's Viking exploits, the poem, similarly to those analysed before, deals with his royal status and claims.

It implies usage of numerous *heiti* (synonyms) of the term "king," employed by the skald to address Óláfr: *allvaldr* (stanza 1), *svinn gramr* (stanza 2), *vígrakkr konungr* (stanza 3), *þengill* (stanza 9), *yngvi* (stanza 10), *vísi*, *døglíngr* (stanza 11), *jøfurr*, *ræsir* (stanza 12), *mætr gramr* (stanza 17), *ynglíngr* (stanza 20).<sup>44</sup> Majority of these epithets is typical for skaldic convention. It seems likely, however, that Óttarr elaborated poetic tools much more extensively than his uncle, only to impress the king with his artistic skills. This is probably the reason Óttarr used a *hieros-gamos* (the sacred marriage) concept to underline Óláfr's royal status in the second helming of stanza 20:

engi varð á jörðu  
 ógnbráðr, áðr þér noðum,  
 austr, sás eyjum vestan,  
 ynglíngr, und sik þryngvi.<sup>45</sup>

"No battle-bold king who subjugated under himself the islands in the west arose east in the land, before we got you."

Although Óttarr located the king's action in Shetlands (*eyrar vestan*), he used the concept frequently present in skaldic corpus and directly associated with ideology of royal power in Norway. Its central motif was the marriage, often accompanied by forceful sexual act, of king with a woman, symbolizing a given land in female personification.<sup>46</sup> Due to sexual overtone of the concept, the verb *þryngva* (*und sik*) was often used as referring to forceful male acts towards women. In this context, male sexual dominance symbolized the abili-

<sup>41</sup> See J. MORAWIEC: *Knut Wielki...*, pp. 233—242.

<sup>42</sup> *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga. Den store saga om Olav den hellige efter pergamenthåndskrift i Kungliga biblioteket i Stockholm nr. 2 4to med varianter fra andre håndskrifter.* Eds. O.A. JOHNSEN, Jón HELGASON, 2 vols, Oslo 1941, pp. 688—689.

<sup>43</sup> See SPMA I, p. 739.

<sup>44</sup> SPMA I, pp. 741—766.

<sup>45</sup> SPMA I, p. 766.

<sup>46</sup> Giantess Jörð, whose name means literally "earth," was a frequent example.



ty to take and keep power over land and its inhabitants. Thus it seems proper to assume that by using the concept, Óttarr had Norway in mind and wanted to underline both Óláfr's exclusive right to rule and the ability to control effectively his own dominion. One may wonder why Óttarr decided to refer to a concept clearly connected with pagan beliefs in a poem dedicated and presented to the Christian king. Even if both Óláfr and the skald were familiar with the original meaning of the concept, the skald (similarly to some of his peers<sup>47</sup>) aimed to show off his artistic skills and connections with the poetry of other acknowledged skalds, including his uncle Sigvatr. Both elements were still found crucial for establishing a new skald in a ruler's retinue. The *hieros-gamos* concept was helpful in that matter for although deprived of his pagan symbolism, it still contained a flavour of antiquity, an important component of skaldic art.

In the very same stanza Óttarr labels Óláfr as *ynglingr*. This "king" *heiti* allowed the skald to fulfil requirements of *dróttkvætt* regarding rhymes and alliteration:

austr, sás eyjum vestan,  
ynglingr, und sik þryngvi<sup>48</sup>

At the same time, the term recalls directly Ynglingar, the Norwegian royal dynasty descending from Haraldr hárfagri. Óttarr, similarly to Sigvatr, referred to Óláfr as Haraldr's kinsman and successor. Phrases like *konr bragna* (kinsman of chieftains) in stanza 10 or *niðjungr Haralds* (descendant of Harald) in stanza 15, leave no doubt about both the skald's intentions and the king's expectations. The term *ynglingr*, although fitting the line metrically, could have been found useful also due to its symbolism and ideological connotations. Consequently, Norway is portrayed by Óttarr as king's property, his ancestral land (*áttlond*).<sup>49</sup> This of course accords with Sigvatr's depiction of the country as *arfvoðr Haralds* in *Vikingarvísur*.

Óttarr followed both Sigvatr and Hallfreðr presenting extensively Óláfr's royal virtues and tasks. Although *Höfuðlausn* lacks direct and straightforward references to the *rex iustus* concept, there are elements that suggest the skald was aware of this aspect's importance. Twice, in stanzas 4 and 13, he calls Óláfr *landvoðr* (land-guardian). The epithet directly implies the king's ability

<sup>47</sup> Examples of the 11th-century usage of the motif are listed in J. MORAWIEC: *Między poezją...*, pp. 157—165.

<sup>48</sup> It appears reasonable to propose that if Óttarr was primarily interested in putting the verb *þryngva* in the couplet, crucial for the *hieros-gamos* concept, the noun *ynglingr* appeared especially suitable as it allowed the skald to provide a full rhyme in the even line of the couplet.

<sup>49</sup> SPMA I, pp. 761, 765.

to protect his own dominion and his subjects the same way a ruler protects peace and guards the law. One can assume its usage reflects Óláfr's willingness to manifest his potency in withstanding threats caused by Knútr inn ríki and jarls of Hlaðir, who aimed at regaining once lost power in the country.<sup>50</sup>

Óttarr did not forget to underline the king's ability to execute power through tributes. Again, Óláfr's Viking exploits served as a good example of a ruler's virtues. In stanza 7 one may read that Gotlanders did not dare to defend their nation's lands against the king (*fírar þorðut at varða þér þjóðlond*) and he forced them to pay a tribute (*at gjaldi*).<sup>51</sup> The same fate met the English who likewise, when confronted by Óláfr, could not stand against him, whereupon he received tribute (*gjöldum*) as well.<sup>52</sup> Piratical raiding is veiled by nomenclature which reflects rather the ruler—subjects relation wherein the demands for loyalty are at stake. Once again, Óláfr is depicted not as an aggressive oppressor but a just punisher and executor. Fire and smoke, meaning death and destruction, are symbols of the king's wrath that results in punishments for disloyalty, as in the case of people of Canterbury:

Lék við ronn af ríki  
— rétt, bragna konr, gagni —  
(aldar, frákk, at aldri)  
eldr ok reykr (of beldir).

“Fire and smoke played against the houses mightily; kinsman of chieftains, you gained victory; i heard that you harmed the life of people.”

The 11th-century court poetry is full of similar examples portraying monarchs who act against rebels and evildoers. The motif of burning settlements was used to present the king as merciless and blind towards those who deserved neither his favour nor friendship. It is obvious that such rhetoric, so visible also in *Höfuðlausn*, addressed the king directly and also, indirectly, his subjects, and served to underline the former's position in Norway. Such interpretation seems to be confirmed by stanza 9 where Óttarr describes the battle of Ringmere Heath. Referring to those who opposed Óláfr, he addressed the king with the following words: “the people of the land bowed down frantically to the ground before you in the clash of shields” (*landfolk laut ótt at jorðu fyr yör í gny randa*).<sup>53</sup> It is hard today not to appreciate the skald's sophisticated style. Both Óláfr and his retinue would have been impressed by imagery of the dead in the battle falling before the king in their last ultimate bowing, acknowledgement of power and superiority.

<sup>50</sup> This context also explains absence of this kind of epithets in Sigvatr's *Vikingarvísur*.

<sup>51</sup> SPMA I, p. 749.

<sup>52</sup> SPMA I, pp. 754—755.

<sup>53</sup> SPMA I, p. 752.

Effective execution of law and royalties allowed Óláfr, according to Óttarr, to show generosity towards those who fully deserved his favour. Direct connection between acquired tributes and munificence was semantically depicted by the skald in stanza 7: *gildir komt at gjaldi*. The king's generosity was linked with his successes in England. In stanza 8, Óttarr addresses Óláfr with the following words: "it has turned out for you to win the lands of the serpent" (*hefr snúinat þér at vinna lǫnd linns*). Once again, the skald reveals his poetic talent. The kenning for gold, "lands of the serpent" (*lǫnd linns*) is quite typical as referring to a motif of serpents as guards of hoarded riches. However, in this very context, the verb *vinna* ("to win") can be read literally and thus point to the skald's suggestion that the king's generosity was a result of taking some power in England. It is important to note that this country was well known in Scandinavia as full of riches and the history of Vikings shows how many Northmen were attracted by this. Óttarr's words refer to this idea by linking England with gold and presenting generosity of his patron as the result of winning the country for himself.<sup>54</sup>

Examples listed above point to a tendency to use fame gained during Viking exploits to legitimize royal claims and justify any attempts to execute royal power. Norwegian examples have their intriguing analogy in contemporary, slightly better contextualized, poetry dedicated to Knútr inn ríki. It consists of a group of four poems, known as *Knútsdrápur*,<sup>55</sup> composed by Sigvatr Þorðarson, Óttarr svartí, Hallvarðr háreksblei and Þorarinn loftunga. All four poems feature extensive references to the conquest of England made by Knútr, praising the king for his military achievements that led him to the English throne.<sup>56</sup> All were composed approximately at the same time, that is, in a period between 1027 and 1029. It was the time when the king of England and Denmark gained undisputed supremacy in the North and acknowledgement in Europe.<sup>57</sup> These poems were evidently meant to celebrate those achievements and the king's status. The list's featuring both Sigvatr and Óttarr is not accidental. Complex political encounters in the region made both poets deliver their poetry to both Knútr and Óláfr.<sup>58</sup> Nonetheless, stylistic and functional

<sup>54</sup> This idea is continued in stanza 11: *ǫld enskrar ættar máttit bæga við þér, þars tókt við gjöldum, gumnar guldut sjaldan hollum dǫglingi goll* — "the people of English race could not stand against you, merciless, when you received tribute, men not seldom paid gold to the gracious king."

<sup>55</sup> One of them, composed by Þorarinn loftunga, has been preserved in literary corpus under the name *Hǫfuðlausn*. However, it is very likely this case is very similar to Óttarr svartí's *Hǫfuðlausn*, it is Þorarinn's poem which also could have been originally titled as *Knútsdrápa*.

<sup>56</sup> It is only an assumption in the case of Þorarinn's *Hǫfuðlausn* as its refrain is the only preserved fragment of the whole poem.

<sup>57</sup> J. MORAWIEC: *Knut Wielki...*, pp. 302—320.

<sup>58</sup> M. TOWNEND: *Contextualising the Knútsdrápur. Skaldic Praise-Poetry at the Court of Cnut*, Anglo-Saxon England vol. 30, 2001, pp. 145—179.

similarities between their *Knútsdrápur* and *Óláfsdrápur* reflect not only their artistic output but also identical expectations of both patrons whose political background featured the Viking past.

References to Knútr's conquest of England were used by skalds to underline magnificence of royal fleet. The king is depicted as the exclusive owner and steerer of richly furnished and armoured vessels. It was he who directly led the whole fleet to success in England. Kennings employed by skalds pointed at Knútr's military skills, portraying him conventionally as a great, brave and merciless warrior and leader. Conquest of England involved direct confrontation with the House of Wessex. Skalds referred to both the past or even legendary Anglo-Saxon rulers (Edgar, Ælla) and the present ones (Æthelred and his sons) to make Knútr's victory even more prestigious.

One of the most intriguing features of these depictions is making Knútr a sole and only conqueror of England. Contrary to the first skaldic depiction of these events, anonymous *Liðsmannaflakkr* and Þórðr Kolbeinsson's *Eiríksdrápa*, authors of *Knútsdrápur* totally ignored the jarls Þorkell háfi and Eiríkr of Hlaðir who played a crucial role in the whole campaign. The attempt to eliminate them from the memory of the Conquest was easier, as both jarls were either already dead (Eiríkr) or politically eliminated (Þorkell), whereas Knútr's position in the country was much stronger.

Consequently, the Conquest, apart from other achievements, was a source of the king's excellence and ultimate supremacy in all his dominions. His exceptional status was defined in refrains where Knútr's power was compared to God's power in the Heavenly Kingdom. Stylistic similarities between all refrains may reveal mutual artistic inspiration but, much more importantly, appeal to skaldic responses to clearly defined ideological expectations of the king and his court.

As has been already noted, the emergence of *Knútsdrápur* coincided with notable achievements of the king, who at that time managed to defend Denmark from joint Norwegian and Swedish attack,<sup>59</sup> easily conquered Norway in 1028 and, a year earlier, took part in imperial coronation of Conrad II in Rome.<sup>60</sup>

At the same time, despite these accomplishments, the king of England and Denmark could not stop initiatives that were aimed at making his position even stronger and more conciliated, both in England and beyond. The vision of ener-

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<sup>59</sup> An expedition organized by Óláfr Haraldsson and Anund Jacob concluded with the naval encounter at Helgeå in 1027. Although either invaders or Knútr gained full victory, Óttarr svarti pointed at Knútr as the one who defeated kings of Norway and Sweden. It seems reasonable to treat his account as reflection of his interpretation of the battle and its result as it was promoted at Knútr's court, especially in context of the latter's plans to conquer Norway. See more J. MORAWIEC: *Knut Wielki...*, pp. 233—242.

<sup>60</sup> J. MORAWIEC: *Knut Wielki...*, pp. 302—308.

getic and victorious warrior-king was meant to distract any potential threads, coming for example from Normandy, where the legal heirs of the throne, sons of Æthelred II, still resided under protection of local dukes.

*Vikingavísur* delivered by Hallfreðr, Sigvatr and Óttarr to Óláfr Tryggvason and Óláfr Haraldsson, respectively, show how easy it was for the poets to find appropriate material in the memory of their patrons' Viking exploits. Bravery, military skills, despair of the defeated, riches and fame constituted ideal agenda for appropriate poetic praise. The poems in question, however, reveal that commemoration of the Viking past served much more important matters, namely, to underline royal qualifications and justify royal claims. This is the reason why casualties of Viking raids were depicted as subjects who mostly either did not acknowledge the king's status properly or did not remain loyal to him. Death and destruction caused by raiding were defined as a deserved punishment and proof that the king is able to react quickly and properly as a just and rightful ruler. Viking exploits constituted a source of fame and riches, as well as they created an opportunity for a monarch to show his generosity towards his followers. The arrival of both Óláfrs in Norway, in 995 and 1016 respectively, meant significant political and ideological breakthrough. *Vikingavísur*, in both cases composed at the dawn of a new reign, were turning in fact into *Konungavísur*, poetic explanations and justifications of new political reality.

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*Jakub Morawiec*

**Vikingarvísur czy Konungavísur?****O potencjalnej roli wikińskich enkomionów skaldycznych**

Streszczenie

Wiersze skaldów sławiące wikińskie dokonania ich bohaterów od dawna zwracały uwagę badaczy, szczególnie tych, którzy podejmowali studia nad aktywnością Skandynawów w rejonie Wysp Brytyjskich na przełomie X i XI wieku. Poematy takie jak *Óláfsdrápa* Hallfreda Óttarssona, *Vikingarvísur* Sigvata Þórðarsona czy też *Høfuðlausn* Óttara svarti postrzegano



też jako świadectwa określonej pamięci o wikingijskiej przeszłości, wykorzystywanej przez tych poetów w zabiegach o uznanie ich twórczości jako kluczowej w kreowaniu ideologii władzy. Prezentowany artykuł proponuje trochę inne spojrzenie na wiersze sławiące wikingijskie dokonania skandynawskich władców. Autor stara się w nim wykazać, że przywołane poematy służyły nie tylko upamiętnieniu wojennych dokonań ich bohaterów, ale nade wszystko podkreśleniu ich władczych przymiotów. Służyło temu między innymi przedstawianie ofiar wikingijskich ataków jako buntowników i złoczyńców, których władca poskramiał, słusznie karząc ich za ich występki i wymuszając uznanie swojej władzy.

Słowa kluczowe: poezja skaldów, mówca prawa, Islandia, Dania, Kościół, hagiografia, Słowianie

*Jakub Morawiec*

### **Vikingarvísur oder Konungavísur? Zu potentieller Rolle der wikingischen skaldischen Enkomionien**

Zusammenfassung

Die Skaldendichtungen, deren Thema kriegerische Leistungen der Wikinger waren, wurden schon seit langem zum Interessengebiet der Forscher, insbesondere deren, die Aktivität der Skandinavier im Bereich der Britischen Inseln an der Wende des 10. Jahrhunderts ergründeten. Solche Sagas wie *Óláfsdrápa* Hallfred Óttarsons, *Vikingarvísur* Sigvat Þórðarsons oder auch *Höfuðlausn* Óttar svartis waren gleichermaßen als Zeugnis von Erinnerung an wikingische Vergangenheit betrachtet und oft von den Skalden zur Schaffung der Machtideologie gebraucht. Im vorliegenden Beitrag schlägt sein Verfasser eine neue Auffassung der zu untersuchten Dichtungen vor und versucht nachzuweisen, dass diese nicht nur kriegerische Leistungen deren Helden zu verewigen, sondern über alles ihre herrischen Eigenschaften hervorzuheben sollten. Das erfolgte u.a. durch Darstellung der Opfer wikingischer Angriffe als Aufrührer und Übeltäter, die vom Herrscher bestraft werden mussten und die gezwungen wurden, die Macht des Herrschers anzuerkennen.

Schlüsselwörter: Skaldendichtung, Redner, Island, Dänemark, Kirche, Hagiografie, Slawen