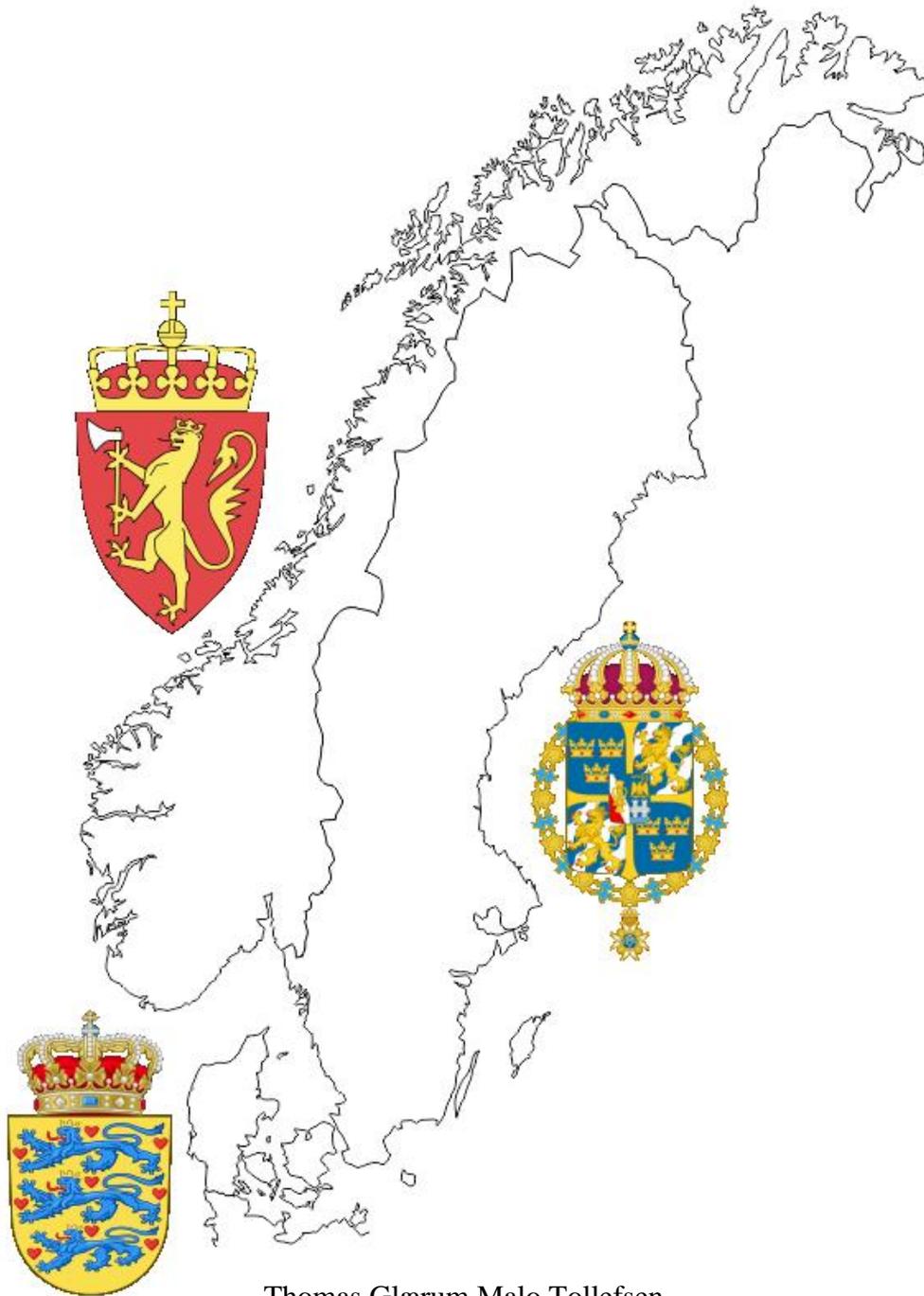


Scandinavian Kingship Transformed

Succession, Acquisition and Consolidation in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries



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Abstract

This is a comparative study of Scandinavian kingship in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, based on the themes of succession, acquisition, and consolidation of power. These themes constitute the study's overarching questions: How did a king become a king? How did he keep his kingdom? And finally, how did he pass it on?

In order to provide answers to these questions this study will consider first the Scandinavian rules of succession, what they were, to whom they gave succession rights, as well as the order of succession. Second, the study will look at different ways in which kings acquired the kingship, such as through trial by combat and designation succession. Third, the study will look at what happens when succession rules were completely disregarded and children were being made kings, by looking at the processes involved in achieving this as well as asking who the real kingmakers of twelfth century Denmark were. Finally, the study will determine how kings consolidated their power.

This study shows, that despite some Scandinavian peculiarities, kingship in Scandinavia was not fundamentally different from European kingship in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It also shows that the practice of kingship was dependent on political circumstances making it impossible to draw general conclusions spanning centuries and vast geographical regions. We can look at principles that gave us a general framework, but individual cases were determined by circumstance.

Acknowledgement

They say it takes a village to raise a child – I would argue it also takes a village to write a PhD.

I would like start by thanking the village elders, otherwise known as my supervisors, and especially the village leader, Jenny Benham, for encouraging me to persevere when things got tough, for picking me up and putting me back together when frustration and irritation got the better of me, and for fostering a dialogue between us that allowed for the level of trust I needed to find my way towards this, the final product. Our conversations have ranged from the serious to the humorous, from which way to stack wood (bark side up) to “you put milk in that?!” (apparently, yes) to the phrase “Yes ma’am!” becoming shorthand answer to any joke. Who knew the Swedes were capable of such range?! I’m proud to say that I belong to the small (but very proud) minority of PhD-students who’ve had a supervisory meeting in an amusement park and discussed kingship whilst sat in a rollercoaster going 88 mph. Oh, and for being married to a man who doubles as the greatest Greek choir in the history of supervisions and has the most AMAZING birds!

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of Lund; and my supervisor, Jenny Benham, who provided me with excerpts from her forthcoming book (which you should all pre-order now so she'd be incentivised to finish it – whilst I do an extra victory laps since I finished first).

What happened to that village metaphor I hear you ask? I haven't got the foggiest. Just turn the page and move on.

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List of Abbreviations

<i>Ágrip</i>	<i>Ágrip af Nóregskonungasögum</i> , ed. and trans. with an intro. and notes by M. J. Driscoll, 2nd edn (Exeter, 2008)
<i>Ak.reg</i>	<i>Akershusregisteret af 1622</i> , ed. by G. Tank (Kristiania, 1916)
<i>Arnold</i>	<i>Arnoldi Chronica Slavorum</i> , ed. G. H. Pertz, MGH SGR, 14 (Hannover, 1868)
<i>ÄVL</i>	<i>Äldre Västgötalagen</i> , in <i>Samling af Sweriges gamla lagar</i> , ed. by Hans Samuel Collin and Carl Johan Schlyter (Stockholm, 1827), I: <i>Västgötalagen</i> , 1-74
<i>ÄVL kung.</i>	<i>Äldre Västgötalagens kungalängd</i> , in <i>Samling af Sweriges gamla lagar</i> , ed. by Hans Samuel Collin and Carl Johan Schlyter (Stockholm, 1827), I: <i>Västgötalagen</i> , 298-303
<i>ÄVL lagm.</i>	<i>Äldre Västgötalagens lagmannslängd</i> , in <i>Samling af Sweriges gamla lagar</i> , ed. by Hans Samuel Collin and Carl Johan Schlyter (Stockholm, 1827), I: <i>Västgötalagen</i> , 295-97
<i>Bs</i>	<i>Böglunga saga</i> , in <i>Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar</i> , ed. by Þorleifur Hauksson, Sverrir Jakobsson and Tor Ulset (Reykjavík, 2013), I, 3-167
<i>DD</i>	<i>Diplomatarium Danicum</i>
<i>DMA</i>	<i>Danmarks Middelalderlige Annaler</i> , ed. by Erik Kroman (Copenhagen, 1980)
<i>DN</i>	<i>Diplomatarium Norvegicum</i>
<i>DS</i>	<i>Diplomatarium Suecanum</i>
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
<i>EK</i>	<i>Erikskrönikan</i> , ed. with intro. and commentary by Sven-Bertil Jansson (Stockholm, 1986); trans. into English: <i>The Chronicle of Duke of Erik: A verse epic from medieval Sweden</i> , trans. by Erik Carlquist and Peter C. Hogg, intro. by Eva Österberg (Lund, 2012)
<i>EC</i>	
<i>Fsk</i>	<i>Fagrskinna: Sagaen om Norges konger</i> , ed. by Torggrim Titlestad, trans. by Edvard Eikill (Stavanger, 2008)
<i>Gesta Friderici</i>	Otonis et Rahewini, <i>Gesta Friderici I Imperatoris</i> , ed. G. Waitz, MGH SRG, 46 (Hannover, 1884); trans. into English: Otto of Freising and Rahewin, <i>The Deeds of Fredrick Barbarossa</i> , trans. and annotated by Charles Christopher Mierow with Richard Emery (New York, 2004)
<i>DFB</i>	
<i>GrD</i>	William of Æbelholt, ‘Wilhelmi Abbatis Genealogia Regum Danorum’, in <i>Scriptores Minores Historiæ Mediæ Ævi</i> , ed. by M. Cl. Gertz, 2 vols. (København, 1917-18), I, pp. 176-85
<i>HARN</i>	Theodoricus Monachus, <i>Historia de Antiquitate Regum Norwagiensium: An Account of the Ancient History of the Norwegian Kings</i> , trans. and annotated by David and Ian McDougall, intro. by Peter Foote (Exeter, 2006)
<i>Helmoldi Chronica Slavorum</i>	<i>Helmoldi presbyteri Bozoviensis Chronica Slavorum</i> , ed. Bernhard Schmeidler, MGH SRG, 32 (Hannover, 1937)
<i>HH</i>	<i>Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar</i> , ed. by Þorleifur Hauksson, Sverrir Jakobsson and Tor Ulset, 2 vols (Reykjavík, 2013)
<i>Historia Norwegie</i>	<i>Historia Norwegie</i> , ed. by Inger Ekrem and Lars Boje Mortensen, trans. by Peter Fisher, e-book (Copenhagen, 2006)
<i>Hkr</i>	Snorri Sturluson, <i>Heimskringla</i> , ed. by Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, Íslenzk Fornrit 26-28 (Reykjavík, 1941-51); trans. into English: <i>Heimskringla</i> :

- History of the Kings of Norway*, trans. with intro. by Lee M. Hollander, 8th edn (Austin, 1964, repr. 2011)
- HkrHH* *Hkr*, The Saga of Harald Fairhair
HkrHG *Hkr*, The Saga of Håkon the Good
HkrHGrey *Hkr*, The Saga of Harald Grey-hide (*gráfeldr*)
HkrOT *Hkr*, The Saga of Olav Tryggvason
HkrOH *Hkr*, The Saga of St Olav
HkrHHard *Hkr*, The Saga of Harald Hardrada
HkrOK *Hkr*, The Saga of Olav the Peaceful (*Kyrra*)
HkrMB *Hkr*, The Saga of Magnus Barefoot
HkrMS *Hkr*, The Saga of the Sons of Magnus
HkrMBHG *Hkr*, The Saga of Magnus the Blind and Harald *gilli*
HkrIngi *Hkr*, The Saga of the Sons of Harald
HkrHHerd *Hkr*, The Saga of Håkon the Broadshouldered
HkrME *Hkr*, The Saga of Magnus Erlingsson
- Howden, *Annals* *The Annals of Roger de Hoveden: Comprising the history of England and other countries of Europe from A.D. 732 to A.D. 1201*, trans. with notes and illus. by Henry T. Riley, 2 vols (London, 1888)
- Howden, *Chronica* *Chronica Magistri Rogeri de Hovedene*, 4 vols, ed. W. Stubbs, Rolls Series, 51 (London, 1868-71)
- Howden, *Gesta Henrici* *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi Benedicti Abbatis*, 2 vols, ed. W. Stubbs, Rolls Series, 49 (London, 1867)
- Hs* *Hirdloven til Norges konge og hans håndgangne menn*, ed. and trans. by Steinar Imsen (Oslo, 2000)
- HT (Dk)* (*Danish*) *Historisk Tidsskrift*
- HT (No)* (*Norwegian*) *Historisk Tidsskrift*
- HT (Sv)* (*Swedish*) *Historisk Tidsskrift*
- IA* *Islandske annaler indtil 1588*, ed. by Gustav Storm (Christiania, 1888; repr. Stavanger, 1977)
- ÍF* Íslenzk Fornrit
- Ks* *Knyttingsaga: Knud den Store, Knud den Hellige, deres Mænd, deres Slægt*, trans. by Jens Peter Ægidius, intro. and notes by Hans Bekker-Nielsen and Ole Widding (København, 1977); trans. into English: *Knyttinga saga: The History of the Kings of Denmark*, trans. by Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards (Odense, 1986). All references are to the English translation.
- MGH Monumenta Germaniae Historica
 SRG Scriptores rerum Germanicarum
 SS Scriptores
 Diplomata Diplomata Regum et Imperatorum Germaniae
- Msk* *Morkinskinna*, ed. by Ármann Jakobsson and Þórdur Ingi Guðjónsson, intro. trans. by Tor Ulset, 2 vols (Reykjavík, 2011); trans. into English: *Morkinskinna: The Earliest Icelandic Chronicle of the Norwegian Kings (1030-1157)*, trans. with introduction and notes by Theodore M. Andersson and Kari Ellen Gade (Ithaca, NY, 2012)
- NgL* *Norges Gamle Love indtil 1387*, ed. R. Keyser and P. A. Munch (Christiania, 1848)
- NMD* *Norske middelalderdokumenter*, ed. Sverre Bagge, Synnøve Holstad Smesdal, Knut Helle (Bergen, 1973)
- ÖgL* *Samling af Sweriges gamla lagar*, ed. by Hans Samuel Collin and Carl Johan Schlyter (Stockholm, 1830), III: *Östgötalagen*,
- RN* *Regesta Norvegica*

<i>Roskilde Chronicle</i>	<i>Scriptores Minores Historiæ Danicæ Medii Ævi</i> , ed. by Martin Clemens Gertz, 2 vols (København, 1917-18), I, pp. 1-33
<i>Saxo</i>	Saxo Grammaticus, <i>Gesta Danorum: The History of the Danes</i> , 2 vols., ed. by Karsten Friis-Jensen, trans. by Peter Fisher (Oxford, 2015). Unless indicated by vol. number, references are to individual books.
SDHK	Svenskt Diplomatariums huvudkartotek
<i>SJH</i>	<i>Scandinavian Journal of History</i>
<i>SM</i>	<i>Scriptores Minores Historiæ Danicæ Medii Ævi</i> , ed. by Martin Clemens Gertz, 2 vols (København, 1917-20)
<i>SSGL</i>	<i>Samling af Sweriges gamla lagar</i> , vol. I-XIII, ed. by Hans Samuel Collin and Carl Johan Schlyter (Stockholm, 1827-77)
Svend Aggesen, <i>BHRD</i>	Svend Aggesen, ‘Brevis Historia Regvm Dacie’, in <i>Scriptores Minores Historiæ Medii Ævi</i> , ed. by M. Cl. Gertz, 2 vols. (København, 1917-18), I, pp. 94-185; trans. into English: ‘A Short History of the Kings of Denmark’, in <i>The Works of Sven Aggesen</i> , trans. by Eric Christiansen, Viking Society for Northern Research Text Series, 9 (London, 1992)
Svend Aggesen, <i>SHKD</i>	
<i>SvS</i>	<i>Sverris saga</i> , ed by Þorleifur Hauksson, intro. trans. by Tor Ulset (Reykavík, 2007); trans. into Norwegian: <i>Sverresoga</i> , trans. by Halvdan Koht, 6th edn (Oslo, 1967; repr. 1995). All references are to <i>ÍF</i> version.
<i>UL</i>	<i>Samling af Sweriges gamla lagar</i> , vol. I-XIII, ed. by Hans Samuel Collin and Carl Johan Schlyter (Stockholm, 1834), III: <i>Upplandslagen</i>
<i>YVL</i>	<i>Yngra Västgötalagen</i> , in <i>Samling af Sweriges gamla lagar</i> , ed. by Hans Samuel Collin and Carl Johan Schlyter (Stockholm, 1827), I: <i>Västgötalagen</i> , 75-254

A note on names and spelling

For the sake of consistency, I have throughout this thesis retained the spelling of the Scandinavian names in their modern day forms (i.e. Erik instead of *Eiríkr*, Håkon instead of *Hákon*), even where acceptable English forms exist (i.e. Cnut/Canute instead of Knud) as not all Scandinavian names have acceptable English forms. To this end, name forms such as Eystein for *Øystein* and Eyraþing for *Øreting* are used throughout.

Similarly, I have also done the same for place names and regional names, therefore Trondheim instead of *Niðarós* when talking about the town and Trøndelag instead of *Trondheimen* when talking about the region, and so on, as some of these forms might be confusing to readers not familiar with Scandinavia. I have also chosen to keep the Swedish provincial names untranslated, therefore Västergötaland and Östergötaland instead of West Gothland or Westrogothia and East Gothland, as some, like Småland would look ridiculous in a literal translation (Small Lands), correspondingly the peoples of these lands are referred to as *götar* and *svear* instead of Goths and Swedes. For Denmark, where acceptable English forms for the major provinces exist, these will be used instead. Therefore, Jutland for Jylland, Zealand for Sjælland, and Scania for Skåne, likewise for the people of these provinces: Jutlanders, Zealanders and Scanians.

However, where acceptable English forms exist, or good translations can be made, English forms will be used, so kindred instead of *ætt*, family or dynasty, Birchlegs instead of *Birkibeinar*, Croziers instead of *Baglarr*, and Ribalds instead of *Ribbungr*. There are some exceptions to this: *þing* and *hirð* instead of assembly and retinue. Likewise, the medieval offices are kept untranslated, so archbishop of *Niðarós* instead of archbishop of Trondheim and *jarl* instead of earl, where clarification is needed that is provided in brackets or in the footnotes.

Where good translations of the epithets of the kings mentioned in this thesis can be made, the English form is used, with the Old Norse form instead given in the full lists in the appendices.

A timeline of relevant events of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries

<i>Date</i>	<i>Europe</i>	<i>Denmark</i>	<i>Norway</i>	<i>Sweden</i>
26.3.1130			Death of Sigurd I; traditional start of the Norwegian Civil War period	
April 1130			Accession of Inge I and Sigurd II	
7.1.1131		Knud Lavard murdered by his cousin Magnus Nielsen; start of the Danish Civil Wars		
25.10.1131	Louis VII of France crowned <i>rex iunior</i>			
25.6.1134		King Niels killed and Erik II becomes king		
22.12.1135	Stephen of Blois crowned king of England; start of the period known as the Anarchy			
1137		Eskil of the Thurgot-kindred becomes Archbishop of Lund following the death of his uncle		
1.8.1137	Death of Louis VI of France, accession of Louis VII			
18.9.1137		Erik II killed, and his nephew Erik III succeeds him		
25-27.05.1142			(Rogation days) Accession of Eystein II and Magnus Haraldsson; Norwegian kingship split in four	
1146		Erik III dies after abdicating (27.8). Svend III elected king by the Zealanders and Scanians, Knud V elected king by the Jutlanders.		
1148		Svend III makes Valdemar duke of Schleswig.		
1151-53			Erling Skakke joins earl Ragnvald of Orkney on crusade, visiting	

			Jerusalem, Constantinople, and Rome before returning	
1151		Svend III and Knud V write to Conrad III asking him to arbitrate their conflict		
15.4.1151	(Easter Day) Roger II of Sicily crowns his son William <i>rex iunior</i>			
9.3.1152	Coronation of Frederick Barbarossa as King of the Romans. Same year he arbitrates between Svend and Knud, awarding Denmark to the former.			
1152/53			Creation of the Norwegian church province centred at Trondheim (Nidaros)	
Summer 1153	Treaty of Wallingford ends the period known as the Anarchy; Henry Plantagenet becomes Stephen's designated heir			
1154		Svend overthrown by Knud and Valdemar, the latter becomes engaged to Knud's sister Sophia. Svend goes into exile in Germany		
19.12.1154	Henry Plantagenet crowned King of England as Henry II			
18.6.1155	Frederick Barbarossa crowned Holy Roman Emperor in Rome			
10.6.1155			Murder of Sigurd II on the orders of Inge I	
25.12.1156				Sverker I, founder of the Sverker-kindred, killed; Erik the Saint becomes king of the Svear
1157		Svend returns to Denmark with the support of Henry the Lion, Duke of Saxony. Danish magnates forced a settlement between Svend, Knud and Valdemar that divided the kingdom		

		into three: Jutland, Zealand, and Scania to be ruled by each of them.		
9.8.1157		The Bloodfeast of Roskilde; death of Knud V		
21.8.1157			Murder of Eystein II on the orders of Inge I; accession of Håkon II shortly afterwards	
23.10.1157		Battle of Grathe Heath, death of Svend III; Valdemar I sole king		
April 1158		Absalon, Valdemar I's foster-brother, elected bishop of Roskilde		
12.4.1159			(Whitsuntide) Håkon II elected king of Norway alongside Inge I at <i>Eyraving</i>	
18.5.1160				King Erik the Saint, founder of the Erik-kindred, killed; Magnus Henriksen new king
1161				At the Battle of Örebro Karl Sverkersson killed Magnus Henriksen and becomes the new king.
3.2.1161			Death of Inge in battle against Håkon II	
Spring 1161			Election of Magnus Erlingsson; Håkon II accepted as king of the whole kingdom by the people of Trøndelag	
7.7.1162			Death of Håkon II in battle against <i>jarl</i> Erling Skakke	
1163/64			Coronation of Magnus Erlingsson; first succession law introduced	
1164				Creation of a Swedish church province centred at Uppsala; Archbishop of Lund named Primate of Sweden
1165		Knud VI, Valdemar I's eldest son, elected co-king		

12.4.1167				Karl Sverkersson assassinated by supporters of Knut Eriksson, son of Erik the Saint
15.08.1169	Henry VI, son of Frederick Barbarossa, crowned King of the Romans at Aachen			
14.6.1170	Henry the Young King, son of Henry II, crowned as English <i>rex iunior</i>			
1170		Coronation of Knud VI as Danish <i>rex iunior</i> and canonisation of Knud Lavard on the same day		
1172/73				Knut Eriksson achieved full control of the Swedish kingdom as undisputed king
Autumn 1174			Creation of the Birchleg-party in Denmark	
Spring 1177		Eskil resigns as Archbishop of Lund; Absalon elected as his successor		
7.3.1177			Sverre Sigurdsson becomes leader of the Birchlegs	
13.3.1177			(<i>Invocavit</i> Sunday) Sverre Sigurdsson elected king in south-eastern Norway	
Late July 1177			(possibly St Olav's Wake (<i>Olsoke</i>)) Sverre elected king at <i>Eyraving</i>	
30.06.1178	Frederick Barbarossa crowned king of Burgundy at Arles			
1.11.1179	Philip II of France crowned <i>rex iunior</i>			
18.6.1179			Battle of Kalvskinnet (Trondheim), death of Erling Skakke, Magnus flees; Sverre generally accepted as king in Norway	
18.9.1180	Death of Louis VII of France, accession of Philip II			
12.5.1182		Valdemar I dies; Knud VI succeeds him		
11.06.1183	Death of Henry the Young King			

15.6.1184			Battle of Norefjorden, death of Magnus; Sverre sole king of Norway	
1185		The Pomeranians surrender to Knud VI and he assumes the title <i>rex Sclavorum (Vendernes Konge)</i> ; last event recorded in the <i>Gesta Danorum</i>	Work begins on <i>Sverre's saga</i> by Karl Jónsson; Sverre marries Margaret Eriksdotter, daughter of King Erik the Saint of Sweden	
c.1188		Saxo Grammaticus begins writing the <i>Gesta Danorum</i> ; Svend Aggesen believed to have composed the <i>Brevis Historia</i> around this time		
Spring 1188			Archbishop Eystein dies (25.1); bishop Eirik of Stavanger elected new archbishop	
1189			Nikolas Arnesson, half-brother of Inge I, elected bishop of Stavanger	
3.9.1189	Death of Henry II of England, accession of Richard I			
10.6.1190	Frederick Barbarossa dies whilst on crusade and is succeeded as King of Germany and of Italy by his son Henry VI			
15.04.1191	Henry VI crowned Holy Roman Emperor in Rome by Celestine III			
15.8.1193	Princess Ingeborg of Denmark weds Philip II of France			
15.6.1194			Sverre excommunicated by Norwegian archbishop	
29.6.1194			Sverre crowned by Norwegian bishops, led by Nikolas Arnesson	
25.12.1194	Henry VI, <i>jure uxoris</i> , crowned King of Sicily			
1195/96				Peaceful death of Knut Eriksson
Spring 1196			Crozier-party formed in Denmark under leadership of Nikolas Arnesson	
6.4.1199	Death of Richard I of England, accession of John			
21.3.1201		Death of archbishop Absalon of Lund		

9.1.1202				Death of <i>jarl</i> Birger Brosa of the Bjälbo-kindred
9.3.1202			Death of Sverre; Håkon III, son of Sverre, elected king at <i>Eyraþing</i> that summer	
Spring 1202			Håkon III reconciles with the Norwegian bishops and the kingdom is released from interdict	
12.11.1202		Death of Knud VI; his younger brother Valdemar II succeeds		
1.1.1204			Håkon III dies of suspected poisoning	
Late June 1204			Erling Stonewall, alleged son of Magnus Erlingsson, elected king by Croziers in Tønsberg in presence of Valdemar II of Denmark	
Late summer 1204			Inge II Bårdsson, nephew of Sverre, elected king at <i>Eyraþing</i> by Birchlegs	
Autumn 1207			Erling Stonewall dies (March) and Philippus Simonsson elected to succeed him. The Archbishop of Nidaros and Nikolas Arnesson begin negotiations to end conflict between Croziers and Birchlegs	
c. 1208		Saxo finishes the <i>Gesta Danorum</i>		
Autumn 1208			At Kvitsøy, a settlement reached between Croziers and Birchlegs, the kingdom is divided into three between Håkon <i>jarl</i> , Philippus Crozier-king, and Inge II, who remained king of the whole	
November 1210				Erik Knutsson crowned king of the Svear
Christmas 1214			Death of Håkon <i>jarl</i> ; Inge II assumes his part of the kingdom	
1215		Valdemar the Young, eldest son of Valdemar II, elected <i>rex iunior</i>		

10.4.1216				Death of Erik Knutsson
Spring 1216				Johan Sverkersson elected king of the Svear
19.10.1216	Death of John of England, accession of Henry III under regency of William Marshal			
23.4.1217			Inge II dies in Trondheim	
June 1217			Håkon IV, son of Håkon III, elected king at <i>Eyraþing</i> ; Skule Bårdsson, brother of Inge II, made regent	
Autumn 1217			Death of Philippus Simonsson; end of Crozier-party as powerbrokers	
1220s	<i>Morkinskinna</i> and <i>Fagrskinna</i> written in this decade			
10.3.1222				Death of Johan Sverkersson and end of Sverker-kindred in the male line
8.1222/7.1223				Erik Eriksson elected king of the Svear
14.7.1223	Death of Philip II of France, accession of Louis VIII			
25.5.1225			Håkon IV weds Margrethe, daughter of Skule Bårdsson	
8.11.1226	Death of Louis VIII of France, accession of Louis IX under regency of his mother Blanche of Castile			
1229				Erik Eriksson deposed by Knut the Tall, nephew of Knut Eriksson
1230s	Snorri Sturluson compiles <i>Heimskringla</i>			
28.11.1231		Death of Valdemar the Young		
30.5.1232		Erik IV, second son of Valdemar II, crowned <i>rex iunior</i>		
1234				Erik Eriksson reinstated as king following the death of Knut the Tall; Birger jarl likely marries Princess Ingeborg Eriksdotter at some point after this

1237			Skule Bårdsson named first Duke in Norway at <i>Eyraping</i>	
6.11.1239			Skule Bårdsson proclaimed king at <i>Eyraping</i>	
1.4.1240			Håkon the Young, son of Håkon IV, elected co-king at <i>Eyraping</i> , repeated in Bergen on 12 April	
25.5.1240			Duke Skule killed in Trondheim; his death marks the end of the Norwegian Civil Wars period	
28.3.1241		Death of Valdemar II, accession of Erik IV		
23.9.1241	Snorri Sturluson killed by agents of Håkon IV			
29.7.1247			(St Olav's Wake (<i>Olsok</i>)) Håkon IV crowned in Bergen by Cardinal William of Sabina	
March 1248				First appearance of Birger as <i>jarl</i> in charters
2.2.1250				Death of Erik Eriksson; Valdemar Birgersson elected king
10.8.1250		Erik IV killed; his successor and younger brother, Abel, believed responsible		
1.11.1250		Abel, third son of Valdemar II, proclaimed king of Denmark at the Viborg <i>landsping</i>		
Autumn 1251			Rikissa, daughter of Birger <i>jarl</i> , weds Håkon the Young	
29.6.1252		Abel killed		
25.12.1252		Christopher I, youngest surviving son of Valdemar II, crowned king of Denmark		
5.5.1257			Håkon the Young dies in Tønsberg	
24.6.1257			Magnus, second son of Håkon IV, elected <i>rex iunior</i>	

29.5.1259		Death of Christopher I of suspected poisoning; accession of Erik V under regency of his mother		
Summer 1260			Håkon IV introduces second succession law	
11.9.1261			Magnus weds Princess Ingeborg of Denmark, granddaughter of Valdemar II	
14.9.1261			Magnus and Ingeborg crowned	
16.12.1263			Håkon IV dies in Kirkwall, Orkney Islands, Magnus succeeds his father as Magnus VI	
1264			Sturla Þórðarson begins writing <i>Håkon Håkonsson's saga</i>	
21.10.1266				Death of Birger <i>jarl</i> and Sweden divided amongst his sons. Valdemar remains as king and his brothers become dukes
25.8.1270	Death of Louis IX of France, accession of Philip III			
16.11.1272	Death of Henry III of England, accession of Edward I			
Summer 1273			Introduction of third succession law; Erik II crowned <i>rex iunior</i> ; his brother Håkon made Duke of Norway	
14.6.1275				Valdemar Birgersson deposed by his brothers; Magnus 'Barnlock' becomes king
1277			Settlement (<i>sættargjerd</i>) at Tønsberg between Magnus VI and Norwegian church	
9.5.1280			Death of Magnus VI; succeeded by his eldest son Erik II	

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‘Scandinavia. The Nordic lands. So far north they’ve often been simply left off the map of world civilisations. Art, literature, philosophy – these belonged to the lands of the south. Of sunshine, warmth, the light of reason. To the north lay the shadowlands, the land of perpetual midnight and darkness. But that’s not the whole story. Scandinavia is not a single country, but three neighbouring nations. Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. Linked by language and a shared Viking past. The art of Scandinavia reflects their stormy history, played out in landscapes of forbidding beauty. Nature’s been the great enemy, but it’s also been the great inspiration. Not just for painting and poetry, but for architecture and design. Inspired by the frozen form of ice, or dark forests of pine. You could say the Scandinavian mind itself has been shaped by nature, like a landscape formed by a glacier. Despite their remoteness, the Nordic people have managed to fashion one of the most remarkable civilisations. And the art of Scandinavia shares many of the characteristics of the Scandinavian landscape – hardness, sharpness, clarity. I think the north has also given it some its most distinctive moral psychological characteristics. Pride, tempered by a sense of living at the margins – anxiety, loneliness, melancholy. And blowing through it all, like a cold, piercing wind, an absolute determination to endure, come what may.’¹

This quote is how Andrew Graham-Dixon, in his 2016 documentary series on Scandinavian art, introduced his viewers to the region. Here, he portrays Scandinavia as being so far away from the rest of Europe and the World that it is almost falling over the edge and into *Ginnungagap*. The Danes, the Norwegians, and the Swedes live so far away, in ‘perpetual midnight and darkness’, that they exist only as peripheral to European trends and culture. This notion is one that can be found also among scholars of medieval history, with medieval Scandinavia, unlike Viking Age Scandinavia, often seen as lagging behind the kingdoms of Western Europe. It is frequently regarded as an area slow to Christianise, where feuding prevailed, and where economic, urban, and social development lagged behind that of ‘the lands to the south’ in the period between the end of the Viking-age period in the eleventh century and the Thirty Years War in the seventeenth century. This period in between the Vikings and Gustavus Adolphus has remained of intrinsic interest only in Scandinavia, with fewer studies available in English than for both earlier and later periods. This thesis of Scandinavian kingship in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries aims to fill some of this historiographical gap. It will explore the extent to which Scandinavia was as peripheral to European trends and culture in the high Middle Ages as has often been implied, by examining the theory and practice of kingship, drawing out principles for comparison and contrast. At its core, this thesis is not merely a study of kingship, it is a study focused on this watershed moment in the history of the region when scholars have

¹ Andrew Graham-Dixon, *The Art of Scandinavia: Episode One: Dark Night of the Soul*, BBC Four, 14 March 2016.

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argued – rightly or wrongly – that the three brethren kingdoms of Denmark, Norway and Sweden begun to emerge.² It will attempt to provide an answer to three age-old and vast questions: How did a king become a king? How did a king keep his kingdom? And, how did a king pass his kingdom on to the next generation? In order to make this task more accessible, it will synthesise these questions into just three words that will form the overarching theme of this thesis: acquisition, consolidation, and succession.

Despite Graham-Dixon's assertion that this was a distant and peripheral part of the world, we know that developments did take place. In fact, medieval Scandinavia provides a strong historical case study as a globalised polycentric region, in which people, culture, and goods frequently moved across and between perceived national boundaries, and in which the universalising factor of Christianity was only slowly emerging. As he rightly points out in his introduction, Scandinavia is not a single country, but rather three separate countries existing at the top of the European landmass with the Jutland peninsula being the only land connection between Scandinavia and the rest of Europe. Known in ancient times as the Cimbric or Cimbrian Peninsula, it is a continuation of the north German plain which again is part of the North European Plain that stretches from the Central European Highlands to the North and Baltic Seas. In large parts due to its geographical location, the climate and terrain of Scandinavia pose problems for agriculture. The majority of the landmass is positioned between 54 and 70 degrees north, making it the northernmost part of Western Christendom. In addition to its northern location, much of Scandinavia is also highlands, particularly in Norway and northern Sweden. The region's saving grace is the Gulf Stream, making the climate far warmer than in any other part of the world at this latitude – without it producing cereal crops above 70 degrees north in Norway would have been impossible.³

² The discussion of state formation and whether or not the modern-day Scandinavian states were formed in this period is beyond the scope of this thesis. Many scholars have written about state formation, from Charles Tilly to Sverre Bagge – who have written extensively on this. In my opinion, to draw a straight line from the Denmark of Knud VI to the Denmark of Margrethe II is just a tad bit anachronistic – it would certainly make Christian IV weep – and would be reading the past with the inevitability of the 20-20 hindsight which is a disservice to the past, present and future generations. Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States, AD 990-1990* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990); *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, ed. by Charles Tilly (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975); Sverre Bagge, *State Formation in Europe, 843-1789: A Divided World* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2019); idem, *Cross & Scepter: The Rise of the Scandinavian Kingdoms from the Vikings to the Reformation* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014); idem, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom: State Formation in Norway, c.900-1350* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2010).

³ Bagge, *Cross & Scepter*, 9-10.

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To Saxo Grammaticus, the twelfth-century Danish chronicler and historian, the defining characteristic of his homeland was the sea. In the preface to the *Gesta Danorum*, Saxo describes Denmark as ‘cut through and through by the surrounding sea waters’ and possessing ‘few unbroken stretches of solid ground’.⁴ Chief amongst the stretches of solid ground, Saxo places the before-mentioned Jutland, followed by Funen, Zealand (whom he describes as having ‘exceptional richness in the resources of life’), and Scania.⁵ These flat and fertile lands – Denmark has no elevation greater than 200 metres above sea level – have geographically more in common with the lands to their south than with the rest of Scandinavia. Throughout his description Saxo notes the richness of fish, from the Limfjord in northern Jutland to the herring fishery in the Sound.⁶ In the period of concern for this thesis, Denmark was the most populous and most densely settled of the three kingdoms, with estimates of it being equal to or double that of Norway and Sweden combined.⁷

When Charlemagne completed the conquest of Saxony in the early ninth century, the Frankish kingdom became neighbours to a Danish kingdom strong enough to be considered a threat. Furthermore, contemporary sources indicate that the kingdom at this time consisted of the three core regions of Valdemar’s reign: Jutland, Zealand, and Scania.⁸ The exact nature of Danish kingship in the following two centuries is unknown. What we do know is that it was capable of mustering a large military force and that it held considerable control over the kingdom. The latter is shown through the actions of the Frankish and German missionaries, whose missions in the ninth and tenth centuries were dependent on the goodwill and authority of the kings. The kings’ power was based on alliances with local magnates, whose power in turn rested upon the allegiance of lesser free men. Economically, all of these relied upon agriculture and cattle farming, in addition to taxes and the Sound herring fishery.⁹ The richest agricultural lands

⁴ Saxo, Pr.2.1 (Qui fit, ut Dania mediis pelagi fluctibus intercisa paucas solidi continuique tractus partes habeat, quas tanta undarum interruptio pro uaria freti reflexioris obliquitate discriminat).

⁵ Saxo, Pr.2.1-2.3 (conspicua necessariarum rerum ubertate laudandam).

⁶ Saxo, Pr.2.1 (In hac sinus, qui Lymcius appellatur, ita piscibus frequens existit, ut non minus alimentorum indigens quam ager omnis exoluere uideatur), Pr.2.4 (Ab huius ortuio latere occasium Scanie media pelagi dissicit interruptio, opimam prede magnitudinem quotannis piscantium retibus adigere soliti. Tanta siquidem sinus omnis piscium frequentia repleti consuevit, ut interdum impacta nauigia uix remigii conamen eripiat nec iam preda artis instrumento, sed simplici manus officio capiatur.)

⁷ To put this into numbers, in the early fourteenth century the population of Denmark has been estimated to more than one million, perhaps nearly two million, whereas Norway’s population was between 350,000 to 500,000 and Sweden’s population somewhere between 500,000 and 650,000. Bagge, *Cross & Scepter*, 10.

⁸ For a historical overview of early Danish history in English, see for instance, Peter Sawyer, *Kings and Vikings: Scandinavia and Europe AD 700-1100* (London: Routledge, 1984).

⁹ Michael H. Gelting, ‘The kingdom of Denmark’ in *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy: Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus’ c.900-1200*, ed. by Nora Berend (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 76-7, 88.

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were the islands and eastern Jutland, while heath and more marginal lands prevailed in western and northern Jutland.

Having described his homeland, Saxo then goes on to describe Norway and Sweden. Norway, he describes as having ‘an unpleasant, craggy terrain; it reveals nothing but a grim, barren, rock-strewn desert’, whereas Sweden receives no geographical description at all.¹⁰ This craggy terrain was probably Saxo’s way of describing the Scandinavian Mountains (commonly known as the Keel), which runs south from Finnmark and the North Cape almost to Stavanger and Värmland. For much of history this mountain range has made crossing between Norway and Sweden difficult. In the Middle Ages it made vast areas of eastern and western Scandinavia practically inaccessible to each other.¹¹ The inaccessibility of inland Norway meant that people gathered along the western and southern coast, and along the many fjords that cuts in from the North Sea. This coastline, which, when discounting fjords and bays, stretches for more than 1600 miles, and its shipping lanes are protected from the North Sea by thousands of islands, holms, and skerries. This, therefore, made communication by sea relatively compulsory, and may have given the country its name – *norð vegr* meaning northern way or way leading north.¹² The Norwegian coast, as well as its rivers and lakes, have rich fisheries, and the forests and mountains had an abundance of game in addition to providing pasture lands for domesticated animals. Compared to its neighbours, the Norwegian land suitable for agricultural cultivation, predominantly the area around Lake Mjøsa, Jæren in the south-west, and the land around the Trondheim Fjord, covered a far smaller area. Therefore, the combination of a mild climate, rich fisheries, and wide areas of pastureland led to the west coast being more densely populated than the eastern inland regions towards Sweden.¹³

Occupying the eastern half of the Scandinavian peninsula is Sweden. Separating the northern and southern parts of the country is Lake Mälaren, Sweden’s third largest lake which drains into the Baltic Sea through the Stockholm Archipelago.¹⁴ The lands around the lake and the hinterland to the north formed in medieval times Svealand, homeland of the Svear people. This is the same people whom Jan Guillou made the eponymous namesakes of the country –

¹⁰ Saxo, Pr.2.6 (Ex quibus Noruagia saxei situs deformitatem nature sortita discrimine rupibus infoecunda ac scopulis undique secus obsita glebarum uastitate tristes locorum salebras representat.)

¹¹ The difficulty of overland travel between Norway and Sweden, outside of the Trondheim gap and the Lake Mjøsa region, is well documented in the saga literature. Examples of this can be found in *Sverre’s saga* and the *Eastern Journey Verses (Austrfaravísur)* preserved in *HkrOH*, 303-4.

¹² Claus Krag, ‘The early unification of Norway’, in *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia: Vol. 1 Prehistory to 1520*, ed. by Knut Helle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 184-201.

¹³ Bagge, *Cross & Scepter*, 10-11.

¹⁴ According to *Gylfaginning*, Lake Mälaren was created by the goddess Gefjun when she ploughed Zealand out of Sweden. Snorri Sturluson, *The Prose Edda: Norse Mythology*, trans. with and intro. and notes by Jesse L. Byock, Penguin Classics (London: Penguin Books, 2005), 9.

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svea rike meaning realm of the Swedes.¹⁵ South of this lake, separated by three deep forests is the two Götalands, spilt into a western and eastern part by Lake Vättern, Sweden's second largest lake. The hills of southern and eastern Götaland belongs to the South Swedish Uplands or highlands whereas the northern parts belong to Central Swedish lowlands, known respectively as the Västgöta- or Östgöta-plain on either side of Lake Vättern, bound by Lake Vänern in the west and the dense forests of Tiveden, Tylöskog, and Kolmgården in the north, and the South Swedish Uplands in the south.¹⁶ These plains, together with the Mälars valley, constituted the agricultural heartland of medieval Sweden. The medieval kingdom of Sweden was formed through a union of Svealand and the two Götalands.¹⁷ The Svear are mentioned in the sources as far back as the first century, whereas the Götar are known from the sixth century. Up until the mid-thirteenth century the reigns of kings are difficult to establish with any form of certainty. What we do know, however, is that most kings in the preceding centuries met a violent end, and that the kingship changed hands frequently between at least two different kindreds. Before Sweden's definite conversion to Christianity in the decades around the year 1000, very little is known about the structure and functions of the kingship, except for that the kingship appears to have been strongly associated with Svealand, the Mälaren region and Old Uppsala. This changed after Christianisation, and in the late eleventh and the twelfth centuries almost all kings were associated with the Götaland provinces.¹⁸

Having offered a brief description of the Scandinavian geography, a similarly brief history of events leading up to the twelfth century is also in order. The Scandinavians burst onto the European stage towards the end of the eighth century. In the following two centuries raiders from Scandinavia would set out to places as far away as North America in the west and the Caspian Sea and the Arab world in the east. In this period settlers from Scandinavia settled on several of the North Atlantic islands, such as Iceland, the Faroes, Shetland, the Orkneys, and the Inner and Outer Hebrides. Likewise, they settled along the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea and along the rivers of central Russia. In France they settled in Normandy, and for a short while at the mouth of the River Loire. Most famously, they also settled in eastern and northern

¹⁵ Jan Guillou, *Riket ved veiens ende*, trans. by Henning Kolstad (Oslo: Piratforlaget, 2007), 512.

¹⁶ These forests, and especially Kolmgården, are described as the border between Svealand and Östergötaland in *Sögubrot af nokkrum fornkonungum í Dana- ok Svíaveldi* (Fragment of a Saga about Certain Early Kings in Denmark and Sweden) 'skógarins Kolmerkr, er skilr Svíþjóð ok Eystra-Gautland' (Kolmark Forest which separates Svealand and Östergötaland). *Sögubrot af nokkrum fornkonungum í Dana- ok Svíaveldi* <<https://www.snerpa.is/net/forn/sogubrot.htm>> [accessed 11 August 2020].

¹⁷ Thomas Lindkvist, 'Kings and provinces in Sweden', in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Scandinavia Volume 1: Prehistory to 1520*, ed. by Knut Helle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 221.

¹⁸ Nils Blomkvist, Stefan Brink and Thomas Lindkvist, 'The kingdom of Sweden', in *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy: Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus' c.900-1200*, ed. by Nora Berend (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 173-74, 179, 190, 204-5.

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England, as well in colonies in Ireland and Wales. The period of raiding and outwards expansion drew to a close around the turn of the millennium, with the date in all three countries put somewhere in the eleventh century.¹⁹

Perhaps the most successful king in this early period of Scandinavian history was the Danish king Svend Forkbeard (r. 986-1014) and his son Knud the Great (r. 1018-35) who ruled over England, Denmark, and Norway in the so-called North Sea Empire. However, Knud's empire collapsed shortly after his death. In fact, in Norway it was already collapsing, a few weeks before Knud the Great's death his son and wife had to leave Norway to be replaced by Magnus I (r. 1035-47), son of Olav II Haraldsson (r. 1015-28). For a short time in the 1040s Magnus would reunite Norway and Denmark under his rule, before Svend II Estridsen (r. 1047-76) wrested control of the Danish kingdom. A grandson of Svend Forkbeard, he was married three times and fathered over twenty children out of wedlock, including the next five kings of Denmark: Harald III Hen, Knud IV the Saint, Oluf I Hunger, Erik I Evergood, and Niels. Svend Estridsen also had to contend with Harald III Hardrada, who, shortly before the death of Magnus I, Harald was made his co-ruler and following Magnus's death he tried to regain control over Denmark. However, Hardrada failed in this and instead turned his focus inwards for the next twenty years, amongst other things he instituted good economic policies, developing a Norwegian currency and a viable coin economy. It is from this point forward, the mid-eleventh century, we begin to see the contours of consolidation and organisation of royal authority across Scandinavia.²⁰

This thesis deals predominantly with the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Of the two, the former has been made out to be many different things by many different scholars: to Charles H. Haskins it was a renaissance of institutional and intellectual progression; to Harold J. Berman it was the 'juridical century', a period characterised by the establishment of a legal profession in universities in Italy and France, and by the codification of laws across Europe.²¹ More recently,

¹⁹ Bagge, *Cross & Scepter*, 21-27. In Norway, the traditional dating is either the Battle of Stiklestad in 1030 or the Battle of Stamford Bridge in 1066. However, Norwegian raiding in the British Isles would continue for at least another two centuries, King Håkon IV (r. 1217-63) died in Kirkwall whilst on campaign in Scotland. In Sweden, the reign of King Olof Skötkonung (r. c.995-1022) was the last of the Scandinavian kings to convert to Christianity and his reign is considered to mark the transition from the Viking Age to the Middle Ages in Sweden.

²⁰ Svein H. Gullbekk, 'Myntvesenet som kilde til statsutvikling i Norge ca. 1050-1080', in *Statsutvikling i Skandinavia i middelalderen*, ed. by Sverre Bagge and others (Oslo: Dreyers forlag, 2012), pp. 76-100.

²¹ Charles H. Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927); Harold J. Berman, *Law and Revolution I: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985); Dieter Strauch, *Mittelalterliches nordisches recht bis 1500*, *Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde*, 73 (Berlin and *From Gang Leader to the Lord's Anointed*, 63-5;

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Thomas Bisson has described it as a century of crisis, where several factors combined to create a crisis of lordship.²² Furthermore, scholars of this period often discuss the development undergone by the Scandinavian kingdoms in terms of a “state tradition”, referring to the period as one in which the Scandinavian states “were formed”, and that, therefore, this transformation ‘merit attention’.²³

It is not my intention in this thesis to draw a straight line between the kings of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and those states Denmark, Norway and Sweden have become in more recent times. Nevertheless, the idea of kingship underwent a profound change in the twelfth and thirteenth century, and it is questionable whether a Scandinavian living in the early twelfth century would have recognised late thirteenth-century kingship as being the same.

It was a period of tumultuous change, not only in Scandinavia but also in the rest of Europe. The period from c. 1130 to 1250 was one of many conflicts, within various kingdoms, regions as well as with continental neighbours. All three Scandinavian kingdoms saw extensive periods of internal strife or civil war. Denmark had one or two, depending on definition, from the death of Knud Lavard in 1131 to the ascension of his son Valdemar in 1157, where a series of princelings descending from King Svend II Estridsen fought over control of the Danish kingship. Similarly, in Norway between c.1130 and 1240, several claimants of dubious origin fought over control of the kingship, giving the period its name *borgerkrigstiden* (civil war period).²⁴ We know very little about what went on in Sweden in this period, however that there were conflicts over the kingship is evident from those kings who met a violent or suspicious death or who were deposed. Conflicts may have been abundant, yet it is apparent that many of the changes introduced in this period were either the causes or the results of these conflicts. In the course of this study, we will encounter underage kings as well as their kingmakers, and, in addition, rival claimants fighting it out over the kingship – which will show that Cersei Lannister was right when she informed Ned Stark: ‘when you play the game of thrones, you win or you die. There is no middle ground.’²⁵ As such, this study of kingship will not focus solely on the kings, but also on the people behind the Scandinavian thrones. The Norwegian and Swedish

idem, *The Political Thought of The King's Mirror*, Medieval Scandinavia Supplements, 3 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1987) New York, NY: De Gruyter, 2011).

²² Thomas N. Bisson, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century: Power, Lordship, and the Origins of European Government* (Princeton, NJ, and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009).

²³ Philip Line, *Kingship and State Formation in Sweden 1130-1290* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), xix.

²⁴ Hans Jacob Orning has argued that the term ‘civil wars’ is a tendentious and misleading description, but its use cannot be entirely avoided due to earlier scholarship. ‘Conflict and Social (Dis)order in Norway, c. 1030-1160’, in *Disputing Strategies in Medieval Scandinavia*, ed. by Kim Esmark and others (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 45-82.

²⁵ *Game of Thrones*, Season 1 Episode 7: You Win or You Die, dir. by Daniel Minahan (HBO, 29 May 2011).

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kingmakers will show that, as Tom Holland wrote: ‘Power does not only belong to those who wear crowns on their head, and it is often those who lurks behind the Iron Throne who understand its workings best.’²⁶

There has, generally speaking, been many studies of medieval European and Scandinavian kingship. Many of these studies are presented following a predetermined chronology of individual kingdoms in shorter or longer timespans that usually include the parts of or the entire medieval period. In some cases, such an approach can be justified; for instance, when the source material is lacking. Such is the case for the study of medieval kingship in Sweden, where historians and others often are dependent on sources written after 1290.²⁷ In part because of this it has been customary in Sweden to regard the whole of this period and the following years to 1319 as the early Middle Ages.²⁸ Therefore, scholars of medieval Sweden are in part forced to rely on archaeology, which for the Late Iron Age (c.600-1100) is rich in Sweden, in particular around Lake Mälaren.²⁹ Whether or not the area around Lake Mälaren should be considered Sweden’s cradle has been a topic of much discussion amongst Swedish scholars.³⁰ There are certainly indications that early kings were associated with this region and the settlement structure at Old Uppsala, whilst there is no evidence of similar kingship among the Götar.³¹ However, the idea of Svealand as a pristine entity has now been rejected by most historians.³² The

²⁶ Tom Holland, ‘Game of Thrones: the real history’, *Empire Magazine*, 26 April 2016.

²⁷ Line, *Kingship and State Formation*, xiv. For a survey of the historiography of Swedish kingship, see Thomas Lindkvist, ‘Swedish medieval society: Previous research and recent developments’, *SJH*, 4 (1979), 253-68. For an overview of the sources, see, amongst others, Herman Schück, *Rikets brev och register*, Skrifterna utgivna av Svenska Riksarkivet, 4 (Stockholm: Riksarkivet, 1976); *Annales suecici medii aevi*, ed. by G. Paulsson, Bibliotheca Historica Lundensis (Lund, 1974); Lars-Arne Norborg, *Källor till Sveriges historia* (Lund: Gleerup, 1972); Ingvar Andersson, *Källstudier till Sveriges historia 1230-1436: Inhemsk berättande källor jämte Libellus Magnipolensis* (Lund: Lindströms Bokhandel, 1928).

²⁸ Jerker Rosén, *Svensk historia I: Tiden före 1718* (Stockholm: Esselte studium, 1962), pp. 103-95; Peter Sawyer, *The Making of Sweden*, Occasional Papers in Medieval history, 1 (Alingsås: Viktoria, 1988); Thomas Lindkvist, *Plundring, skatter och feodala statens framväxt: Organisatoriska tendenser i Sverige under övergången från vikingatid till tidig medeltid*, Opuscula historica Upsaliensia, 1 (Uppsala: Historiska institutionen, 1993).

²⁹ Åke Hyenstrand, *Fasta fornlämningar och arkeologiska regioner* (Stockholm: Riksantikvarämbetet, 1984), 7; idem, *Centralbygd-Randbygd: Strukturella, ekonomiska och administrativa huvudlinjer i mellansvensk yngre järnålder*, Studies in North-European Archaeology, 5 (Stockholm, Almqvist & Wiksell, 1974), 103-18; Anne-Sofie Gräslund, *Birka IV: The Burial Customs: A Study of Graves on Björkö* (Stockholm, Almqvist & Wiksell, 1980).

³⁰ See for instance, Henrik and Fredrik Lindström, *Svitjods undergång och Sveriges födelse* (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers Förlag, 2006), 17-40.

³¹ Thomas Lindkvist, ‘Kings and provinces in Sweden’, in *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia: Volume 1 Prehistory to 1520*, ed. by Knut Helle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 222; Sigurd Rahmqvist, ‘Gamle Uppsala by – Upplands största’, in *Från Östra Aros till Uppsala: En samling uppsatser kring det medeltida Uppsala*, ed. by Nanna Cnattingius and Torgny Nevéus, Uppsala stads historia, 7 (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1986), pp. 257-71; Bo Gräslund, ‘Folkvandringstidens Uppsala: Namn, myter, arkeologi och historia’, in *Kärnhuset i riksäpplet: Årsboken Uppland 1993*, ed. by Karin Blent, Elisabeth Svalin and Iréne Andersson Flygare, Upplands forminnesförening och hembygdsförbunds årsbok (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1993), pp. 173-208.

³² Maja Hagerman, *Spåren av kungens män: om när Sverige blev ett kristet rike i skiftet mellan vikingatid och medeltid* (Stockholm: Prisma, 1996).

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work done in the 1980s and 1990s by scholars such as Thomas Lindkvist, Åke Hyenstrand and Peter Saywer has shown the weaknesses in these arguments. Instead, one now looks abroad for the inspiration, and to Denmark as the most likely transmitter of the new ideas.³³ The first scholarly work in English covering this period in Swedish history was Philip Line's *Kingship and State Formation in Sweden 1130-1290*, published in 2007. Despite its title the work is not aimed at answering whether or not Sweden was a state in this period, instead it examines the nature of political conflicts, kingship, and administration. His study is chronological, thematic, and comparative, focusing on the development over time of the themes, such as administration, geographical division, law, and ecclesiastical matters. The comparisons are conducted between Sweden and Western Europe, and he concludes that Sweden was a 'secondary state' that imported all its new institutions and practices from Europe and that Sweden in 1290 differed little from the other kingdoms in western or central Europe whose culture the Swedish magnates had adopted.³⁴ His work discusses many aspects of kingship but without touching on acquisition, consolidation and succession in any great detail or in comparison with other Scandinavian or European kingdoms. Many questions are hence left unanswered by his study and this thesis attempts to deal with some of these. Unsurprisingly, most of the historiography examining this period is in Swedish. For instance, there is Dick Harrison's *Jarlens sekel: en berättelse om 1200-talets Sverige* from 2002 that, though focused on the Erik- and Sverker-kindreds, aims to reveal the processes that drove the consolidation of Sweden, in particular under the leadership of Birger jarl.³⁵ There is, likewise, *Svitjods undergång och Sveriges födelse* from 2006 by the brothers Henrik and Fredrik Lindström, who also seeks to uncover the processes which led to the consolidation of Sweden.³⁶ What they all have in common, seemingly, is that in order to understand the growth and development of Swedish kingship, only Sweden can be investigated, with limited or none existing input from abroad. As such they stand as representatives of the idea of Scandinavian uniqueness.

The historiography of the Danish kings and kingdom in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, as well as the preceding period, is, not surprisingly, much more extensive than its Swedish counterpart. The main contention of Danish historiography, what Nils Hybel calls its 'classical and controversial issue', is the birth of the Danish kingdom. This issue has divided

³³ Åke Hyenstrand, Eva Bergström Hyenstrand and Jan Svanberg, *Arns rike – bäst utan Arn: föreställningar och tolkningskritik kring äldsta medeltid i Västergötaland* (Skara: Västergötlands fornminnesförening, 2007), 17.

³⁴ Line, *Kingship and State Formation*, 468-80.

³⁵ Dick Harrison, *Jarlens sekel: en berättelse om 1200-talets Sverige* (Stockholm: Ordfront förlag, 2002).

³⁶ Henrik and Fredrik Lindström, *Svitjods undergång och Sveriges födelse* (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag, 2006).

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historians to the point it has developed two distinct thoughts: where one group considers the eleventh century to be an historical fracture in respect of the creation of central, monarchical power, and that during this period and into the thirteenth century a fully-fledged European, medieval kingdom developed in Denmark. The other group pictures an epochal national, Danish kingdom in the second half of the tenth century. What lies at the heart of this dispute is partly a lack of conceptual clarification and systematic analysis, in particular, a lack of a theoretical clarification of what is meant by medieval kingship.³⁷ Hybel's 2018 study, *The Nature of Kingship, c. 800-1300: The Danish Incident*, passed no verdict on this controversy, and indeed neither will this thesis, as to do so will defeat the point of this being a Scandinavian study rather than a study conducted along modern national borders. Instead, Hybel set out to explore the changeable nature of Danish kingship, contextualising medieval Scandinavian history within a broader European frame of reference, acknowledging that the developments undergone by the Danish kingdom were not unique in a European context.³⁸ His chosen method is to deduct what institutions and prerogatives political thinkers and chroniclers in the High Middle Ages, in addition to native sources from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, thought constituted kingship, before measuring, chronologically, the Danish kings against this ideal. Accordingly, one of the reviewers has called the methodological framework Hybel adopts as 'brave'.³⁹ Hybel concludes that the Danish kingship in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries never achieved the standards of his "ideal kingship", though he added that the kingship experienced a profound change in the time from around 800 to 1300.⁴⁰ The latter conclusion is not a surprising one in a study of five hundred years.

The division amongst Danish historians regarding the "birth of the Danish kingdom" can be traced back to the Romanticism of the nineteenth century. The Danish Historical Society (*Den danske historiske forening*) was founded in the early nineteenth century with the explicit purpose of promoting national history, and when the first national history was produced by Carl Ferdinand Allen it was on the theme of the development of people and state – a central element in Danish historiography ever since.⁴¹ Central to Allen's ideal was the autonomous

³⁷ Nils Hybel, *The Nature of Kingship, c. 800-1300: The Danish Incident* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 1.

³⁸ Haki Antonson, 'Nils Hybel: *The Nature of Kingship, c. 800-1300: The Danish Incident*', *American Historical Review*, 125.1 (February 2020), 296; Hybel, *The Nature of Kingship*, 2.

³⁹ Hybel, *The Nature of Kingship*, 1; cf. *ibid.*, 346; Haki Antonson, 'Nils Hybel: *The Nature of Kingship, c. 800-1300: The Danish Incident*', *American Historical Review*, 295.

⁴⁰ Hybel, *The Nature of Kingship*, 355.

⁴¹ Carl Ferdinand Allen, *Haandbog i Fædrelandets Historie med Stadigt Henblik paa Folkets og Statens indre Udvikling* (København: C.A. Reitzel, 1840). The title can be translated as "A Handbook in the History of the Fatherland", the book was reprinted in several editions through the nineteenth century and was even used as a textbook at the University of Copenhagen until 1917.

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development of religion, language, culture, and even public administration by the ancient democratic peasant society free of foreign influence. To him the most important historical change was the introduction of Christianity, though on the one hand it threatened the freedom and independence of Danish kings but on the other hand it was an advance of civilisation and technological development. In Allen's view the introduction of Christianity did not change the fundamental structure of central government, instead this took place in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries when the royal electorate changed from being the people to the bishops and magnates. Overall, he saw no structural change of the central government from the ninth to the twelfth centuries. What he did see was a clash between the Church and the king, who held opposing and antagonistic interests to each other.⁴²

In the mid-1860s Casper Paludan-Müller launched an alternative to Allen's view. Paludan-Müller claimed that the most important political conflict in the twelfth century was the competition between two magnates kindreds fighting in order to take the position second to the royal kindred. In his view it was Zealand and the descendants of Skjalm Hvide against Jutland and the descendants of Svend Thrugotsen. The latter kindred had strong bonds to the canonised Knud IV the Holy, while the Hvide-kindred was closely related to St Knud Lavard, Duke of Schleswig. Lavard's son, the future Valdemar the Great, was fostered by members of the Hvide-kindred and his foster-brother, Absalon, would rise to become Archbishop of Lund in 1177, succeeding Eskil of the Thrugot-kindred – thus the Hvide-kindred emerged victorious over the Thrugot-kindred in the second half of the twelfth century.⁴³

Johannes Steenstrup would continue Allan's view of stagnant political development, though he moderated his view and detected no major changes in the central government until the late twelfth century. In his evaluation the most important constitutional change was the coronation of Knud VI as co-regent in 1170. Steenstrup held that by this act Valdemar annulled the constitutional and political weakness inherent in the custom that a new king could only be elected upon the death of his predecessor. This initiative was part of the foundation of the strong government during the reigns of Valdemar the Great and his sons Knud VI and Valdemar II.⁴⁴ Around the same time, Steenstrup's rival Erik Arup argued differently. Arup saw development in kingship and the territory of the kingdom between the ninth and tenth centuries and the

⁴² Allen, *Haandbog i Fædrelandets Historie*, 34-38, 51-54, 63-64, 76-77, 89, 92-95.

⁴³ Caspar Paludan-Müller, 'To Bemærkninger i Anledning af Prof. F. Hammerichs nyeste Skrift: En Skolastiker og en Bibeltheolog fra Norden', *Ny Kirkehistoriske Samlinger*, vol. 3 (København, 1864-1866), pp. 430-433.

⁴⁴ Johannes Steenstrup, *Det Danske Folks Historie vol. 1: Det Danske Folk i Vikingetiden* (København: Chr. Erichsen, 1927), 364, 370-77; idem, *Det Danske Folks Historie vol. 2: Det Danske Folk 1042-1241* (København: Chr. Erichsen, 1927), 92, 96-97.

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eleventh century. He considered the reign of King Niels a turning point in the development of central government, presenting a fully-fledged medieval kingdom, and concluded that the unification of Denmark was mainly achieved by the Church.⁴⁵

In the mid-1940s John Danstrup would expand upon Paludan-Müller's view of kingship, albeit unknowingly. Danstrup argued that the political struggle in the twelfth century was primarily over the crown, the archbishopric, and bishoprics. In his view, Knud Lavard was merely the Hvide-kindreds first attempt to gain the crown. With Lavard's death, and their dream crushed, the Thrugot-kindred under Christern Svendsen and the Zealand magnate Peter Bodilsen were in the political ascendancy and the dominating force behind the kings Erik Emune (r. 1134-37) and Erik Lamb (r. 1137-46). When the latter's abdication in 1146 sparked a civil war between Knud Magnusen and Svend Eriksen "Grathe", the Hvide-kindred, based in a politically divided Zealand where the Bodilsen-kindred was still powerful, supported the latter. Only with Valdemar's final victory in 1157 did the Hvide-kindred ascend to become the leading group in Danish politics.⁴⁶

Somewhat picking up Paludan-Müller and Danstrup's view, the historian Hal Koch would in the 1960s join in with Paludan-Müllers suggestion that the kingship and the Church were a medium of power for the magnates. Therefore, in Koch's view, these institutions were strengthened by their connections to the leading kindreds. Furthermore, he maintained that the canonisation of Knud Lavard and the coronation of Knud VI as co-regent in 1170 harmonised relations between the two institutions. He argued that this came about in part thanks to the support of the Hvide-kindred and his willingness to compromise with Archbishop Eskil and the ecclesiastical reformers. The coronation of Knud introduced hereditary succession and meant that kingship by the grace of God was a reality. It was a milestone towards a fully developed medieval state in line with contemporary European kingdoms, which reached its culmination around 1200. He also argued that Valdemar the Great's kingship to a large degree rested upon the support of the Hvide-kindred, consequently his defeat of Svend Grathe had only been possible because Svend had never been able to establish useful connections of that kind. The kingship and the Church were now in the ascendancy and consequently all Valdemar achieved was through the agency of the Church.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Erik Arup, *Danmarks Historie*, I (København: H. Hagerup, 1925).

⁴⁶ John Danstrup, 'Træk af den politiske kamp 1131-82', in *Festskrift til Erik Arup den 22. september 1946*, ed. by Astrid Friis and Albert Olsen (København: Gyldendal, 1946), pp. 65-67.

⁴⁷ Hal Koch, *Danmarks Historie*, vol. 3: *Kongemagt og Kirke 1060-1241*, ed. by John Danstrup and Hal Koch (København: Politikens forlag, 1963), 18-20, 107-8, 212-14, 216-17, 274-75, 282-92.

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In 1976 Erich Hoffmann described the right of succession to the Danish throne from the Viking Age to the late fourteenth century and in doing so made a considerable contribution to Danish medieval studies. He showed that the right of succession was based upon a concept of royal blood lines of a single kindred, however, he also noted that it was not defined enough to prevent the disunity of the kingdom and the civil wars of the twelfth century. This civil war he viewed as a manifestation of a blood feud between members of the royal kindred.⁴⁸

In 1977 Aksel E. Christensen moved the turning point of Danish history down to the mid-eleventh century. He claimed that in this century, contact between Scandinavia and Arabia and Byzantium via the Russian were replaced by new contact established between Europe and the Orient via the Mediterranean, thus Denmark was no longer the long-distance trade nexus between the east and the west.⁴⁹ This turning point was attributed to the accession of Svend II Estridsen (r. 1047-76), whom he regarded as both a Viking warlord and a European king.⁵⁰ Christensen followed Arup and Koch's positive regard for the reign of King Niels. However, he did pinpoint two threats to his reign: the question of the succession and the fact that following the Investiture Controversy (1075-1122), King Niels could no longer take German support for granted in ecclesiastical matters. The latter problem stems from Christensen's belief, in opposition to Koch, that King Niels had pleaded with the pope for a Danish church.⁵¹ Whereas the former he held as an even graver and more lasting threat, especially after the murder of Knud Lavard, which kicked-off an exhausting dynastic strife. Though Christensen held it was impossible to determine the actual motives behind Lavard's murder, he agreed with Hege Paludan that he was an un-Danish prince, assisted by Germans against the legal Danish kingdom.⁵²

Writing over twenty years later, Ole Fenger concluded in 1989 that the making of a medieval Danish kingship depended on four factors: The Church, the German emperor, the

⁴⁸ Erich Hoffmann, *Königserhebung und Thronfolgeordnung in Dänemark bis zum Ausgang des Mittelalters*, Beiträge zur Geschichte und Quellenkunde des Mittelalters, 5 (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1976).

⁴⁹ Aksel E. Christensen, *Danmarks Historie, vol. 1: Tiden 1042-1241*, ed. by Inge Skovgaard-Petersen, Aksel E. Christensen and Helge Paludan (København: Gyldendal, 1977), 213.

⁵⁰ Christensen, *Danmarks Historie, vol. 1: Tiden 1042-1241*, 213, 220, 269. See also idem, 'Mellem Vikingetid og Valdemarstid', *HT (Dk)*, 12.2 (1966-67). Svend Estridsen as a transitional figure between the Viking Age and the Middle Ages can be traced back to Hans Olrik, *Konge og Præstestand i den danske Middelalder*, 2 vols (København: [n.pub], 1892-95). See also, Arup, *Danmarks Historie*, I; Koch, *Danmarks Kirke i den begyndende Højmiddelalder, vol 2: Kirkens Institutioner* (København: Gyldendal, 1936); idem, 'Det danske folk 1042-1241', in *Schultz Danmarkshistorie: Vort Folks Historie gennem Tiderne skrevet af danske Historikere*, I ed. by Aage Friis, Axel Linvald and Mouritz Mackeprang (København: Schultz forlag, 1941), pp. 539-778; idem, *Den danske Kirkes Historie, vol. 1*, Den danske Kirkes Historie, ed. by Hal Koch, Bjørn Kornerup, Niels Knud Andersen and P.G. Lindhardt, 8 vols (København: Gyldendal, 1950-66); Lauritz Weibull, *Nordiska Historia, vol. 2: Stat och Kyrka i Danmark under äldra medeltid* (Stockholm: Natur och kultur, 1948).

⁵¹ Christensen, *Danmarks Historie, vol. 1: Tiden 1042-1241*, 271-75

⁵² Christensen, *Danmarks Historie, vol. 1: Tiden 1042-1241*, 275-77; Helge Paludan, 'Flos Danie: Personer og standpunkter i dansk politik under kong Niels', *Historie Jyske Samling*, n.s., 7.4 (1966-67), 498-525.

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Saxon duke, and the Danish magnate kindreds or rather the political parties of local leaders. He presented this development as a process that began in the late eleventh century and found its ultimate form around 1200, though without calling these boundaries absolute. Like Christensen he underlined that Denmark lost her position as a trading nexus when the connection between the north and the Orient was interrupted in the late eleventh century. Denmark's peripheral position was mitigated by the Church, concluding that the Scandinavian realms were a result of ecclesiastical organising ability and maintained that bishoprics were a precondition for the medieval kingdom.⁵³

Fenger's inclusion of the fourth factor for the development of medieval kingship, the Danish magnate kindreds, was in direct continuation of Casper Paludan-Müller and John Danstrup. This tradition has been continued in a more recent study, from 2000, of King Niels's reign by Lars Hermanson, *Släkt, vänner och makt: en studie av elitens politiska kultur i 1100-talets Danmark* (Kin, friends and power: A study of the political culture of the elite in twelfth century Denmark). Picking up where they left off, and in line with Paludan-Müller's ideas and particularly Danstrup's way of thinking, Hermanson argued that in the first three decades of the twelfth century at least five persons or magnate networks had a regional domination, which cannot be reduced to reflect a delegation of royal power by fief or beneficium. On the contrary they saw the kingship as a medium of power.⁵⁴

The idea of a pristine entity, that Denmark was radically different from its continental neighbours and ought to be studied in isolation, have been thoroughly debunked by Michael Gelting.⁵⁵ In Denmark, as in the rest of Europe, society was dominated by magnate landowners who lived off the work of the peasantry, and here too, the elite was divided between Christian clergy and a military aristocracy. Crucially, this elite was just as directly exposed to new ideas in religious life, intellectual debates about political organisation and chivalric culture as their

⁵³ Ole Fenger, "'Kirker rejses alle vegne' 1050-1250", in *Gyldendal og Politikens Danmarkshistorie*, vol. 4, ed. by Olaf Olafsen (København: Gyldendal, 1989; repr. 1993), pp. 30-32.

⁵⁴ Lars Hermanson, *Släkt, vänner och makt: en studie av elitens politiska kultur i 1100-talets Danmark* (Göteborg: Historiska Institutionen, 2000).

⁵⁵ Michael H. Gelting, 'Det komparative perspektiv i dansk højmiddelalderforskning: Om Familia og familie. Lid, Leding og Landeværn', *HT (Dk)*, 99.1 (1999), 146-88. See also, idem, 'Mellem udtørring og nye strømninger: Omkring en symposierapport om dansk middelalderhistorie', *Fortid og Nutid*, 32 (1985), 1-12; 'Danmark en del af Europa', in *Middelalderens Danmark: Kultur og samfund fra trosskifte til reformation*, ed. by Per Ingesman, Ulla Kjær, Per Kristian Madsen and Jens Velle (København: Gads Forlag, 2001), pp. 334-51; 'Danmarks egenart i højmiddelalderen', in *Forskningen i Statens Arkiver: Årsberetning for 2007*, ed. by Hans Schultz Hansen (København: Statens Arkiver, 2008), pp. 18-25; 'The Problem of Danish "Feudalism": Military, Legal, and Social Change in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries', in *Feudalism: New Landscapes of Debate*, ed. by Sverre Bagge, Michael H. Gelting and Thomas Lindkvist (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), pp. 159-84.

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counterparts in Western Europe.⁵⁶ This new appreciation of the variations in Europe's medieval experience made it possible to see Denmark not as fundamentally alien, but yet as another variation of a common European theme. This made it methodologically feasible to place the developments in Denmark in a comparative perspective and to draw parallels and contrast to the development in other European polities, which might help compensate for the inadequacies of the meagre, extant Danish source material.⁵⁷

Central to this thesis is the reigns of Valdemar and his eldest son Knud VI. Their reigns, along with Knud's brother Valdemar II, the so-called Valdemarian period (*Valdemarstid*) from 1157 to 1241, has in Danish historiography traditionally been seen as the golden era of Danish medieval kingship.⁵⁸ Christensen saw Valdemar emerging from the conflict with Svend Grathe in 1157 as an absolute monarch who subsequently tried to consolidate his kingship by the grace of God. However, foreign affairs brought discord to the kingdom, and Valdemar was dragged into a conflict with archbishop Eskil. When Valdemar took an oath of fealty to Frederick Barbarossa in 1162, Christensen denied it had any practical meaning. At the same time, he argued that Valdemar manoeuvred to make himself independent through the subsequent rapprochement to the pope and his reconciliation with Eskil. Valdemar therefore became the Church's devoted and loyal sons, steps Christensen thought Valdemar took on the understanding that Eskil and the pope would support the canonisation of Knud Lavard.⁵⁹ Fenger, on the other hand, argued that the independence of the Danish kings and kingdom was conditional on the king's oath of fealty to the German emperors.⁶⁰ In his view Valdemar managed, not without political strife, to establish strong mutual relations with the magnates, the Church, and the German emperor. He also concedes that Valdemar's power was not absolute. He accepted German overlordship, which secured the independence of the kingdom and supported his campaigns in the Baltic, and he was heavily dependent on his foster-brother Absalon. When Valdemar came into conflict with the papacy and Eskil, the Hvide-kindred provided internal backing and Valdemar helped Absalon to the diocese of Roskilde. Fenger concludes that Absalon and the Hvide-

⁵⁶ Michael H. Gelting, 'Magtstruktur i Valdemarstidens Danmark', in *Viking og Hvidekrist: Et internationalt symposium på Nationalmuseet om Norden og Europa i den sene vikingetid og tidligste middelalder*, ed. by Niels Lund (København: Reitzel, 2000), pp. 179-205.

⁵⁷ Kerstin Hundahl and Lars Kjær, 'Introduction', in *Denmark and Europe in the Middle Ages, c.1000-1525: Essays in Honour of Professor Michael H. Gelting*, ed. by Kerstin Hundahl, Lars Kjær and Niels Lund (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), p. 3.

⁵⁸ Inge Skovgaard-Petersen, 'The Danish kingdom: consolidation and disintegration', in *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia, vol. 1: Prehistory to 1500*, ed. by Knut Helle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 353; Kristian Erslev, *Valdemarernes Storhedstid: Studier og Omrids* (København: J. Erslev, 1898).

⁵⁹ Christensen, *Danmarks Historie, vol. 1: Tiden 1042-1241*, 328-344. See also idem, *Kongemagt og Aristokrati: Epoker i middelalderlig dansk Statsopfattelse indtil Unionstiden* (København: Akademisk forlag, 1945).

⁶⁰ Fenger, "'Kirker rejses alle vegne' 1050-1250", pp. 132, 136-38, 142-43, 159-60.

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kindred were in reality Valdemar's joint rulers and that this coalition of Danish magnates, formally headed by Valdemar, defeated all internal opposition and disappointed claimants. After making his minor son Knud co-ruler in 1170 and the suppression of the rebellion in Scania, at the death of Valdemar in 1182 the establishment of a medieval kingdom, begun in the late eleventh century, was now complete.⁶¹

Focus on state formation and "state tradition" has had an unusually strong position in Norwegian historiography. This, according to Sverre Bagge, one of the most prominent native scholars of Norwegian kingship in the medieval period, is not difficult to explain: for long periods of Norway's history the country has been subordinated to its neighbours. First Denmark from 1319 to 1814, and then Sweden from 1814 to 1905.⁶² This has led Jens Arup Seip, the greatest Norwegian historian of the twentieth century, to quip that Norwegian history in the middle ages contains both the origin and the end of a kingdom.⁶³ This Janus-like fate of the Norwegian medieval kingdom also serves to explain the great importance Norwegian historians of the nineteenth and twentieth century placed on this period.⁶⁴ Nineteenth-century historians used different institutional arrangements to explain the ups and downs of the medieval kingdom's history. Those belonging to the school of agrarian history were in no doubt that Norway was a state in the medieval period, even an advanced and efficient one that they regarded as an instrument by which landowners could oppress the rest of the population.⁶⁵ However, those of the institutional school saw state formation as the main trend of Norwegian history from the twelfth to the early fourteenth century – succinctly expressed by Knut Helle in his influential book from the mid-1970s: *Norge blir en stat, 1130-1319* (Norway become a state).⁶⁶ And for a long time there was a general agreement about this picture, although opinions were divided over whether the state worked mainly according to the interests of the landowning aristocracy or if a strong personal monarchy was able to balance between the interest of various classes. Recently, however, the notion of "Norway becomes a state" has come under closer scrutiny. This has, in part, happened through studies of the saga literature as an expression of pre-state

⁶¹ Fenger, "Kirker rejses alle vegne" 1050-1250', pp. 164, 168-70.

⁶² Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, 11, 14.

⁶³ Jens Arup Seip, 'Problemer og metoder', p. 78

⁶⁴ On the Norwegian historiographical tradition, see amongst others, Ottar Dahl, *Norsk historieforskning i 19. og 20. århundre* (Oslo, 1959); *Making a Historical Culture: Historiography in Norway*, ed. by W.H. Hubbard and others (Oslo, 1995); 'Udsigt og innhogg: 150 års forskning om eldre norsk historie', *HT (No)*, 75 (1996), 37-77.

⁶⁵ Holmsen, *Norges historie*, 251-61. On this school, see Helge Selvesen, 'The Strength of Tradition: A Historiographical Analysis of Research into Norwegian Agrarian History during the Later Middle Ages', *SJH*, 7 (1982), 75-113. Its relationship with the French Annales school, for which there are some parallels, is discussed in Jørn Sandnes, 'Totalhistorie og mentalitetshistorie', *Heimen*, 18 (1981), 751-70.

⁶⁶ Knut Helle, *Norge blir en stat 1130-1319*, *Handbok i norsk historie*, 3, 2nd edn (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1974).

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conditions against the background of social anthropology and studies of early medieval society in the rest of Europe. The most prominent of these critics are Kåre Lunden, Sverre Bagge, Magne Njåstad and Hans Jacob Orning.⁶⁷

When Sverre Bagge tackled the question of Norwegian state formation in 2010, he did so ‘as a case study that may serve to illuminate some general problems of European state formation in the Middle Ages’.⁶⁸ Though the premise is that of a study over a wide chronology, in reality it focused on the period from c.1240 to 1350. Nor does it present proper comparisons with other kingdoms, his focus is prominently on Norway than on the comparisons, ‘a study of one of these kingdoms may contribute to the understanding of the export of state formation from the old to the new areas of Western Christendom’. If there were any parallels between Norway and other kingdoms (such as Denmark and England) they would be the result of factors working independently in the same direction.⁶⁹ The principal theme of the study is the Europeanisation of the Norwegian kingdom. It is also the first study in English that deals with, what Bagge calls, the “European package”, which included a new religion, a different form of literacy, the codification of laws, and the establishment of a royal and ecclesiastical bureaucracy from a Scandinavian perspective. In chronological order, he examines the kings from the tenth century up until 1350. Bagge’s principal conclusion is that there was indeed state formation in Norway in the period discussed, but not quite to the extent argued by the adherents of the “Norway becomes a state”-school, and foreign innovations were adapted to specific, local, needs of the Norwegian kingship.⁷⁰ Bagge’s position in the historiography makes it a useful point of reference for this study, yet his chronological narrative and the notion of a “unique” Norwegian, rather than European experience are two ways in which it differs from this present study.

⁶⁷ See for instance, Kåre Lunden, *Økonomi og samfunn: Synspunkt på økonomisk historie* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1972); Sverre Bagge, *Society and Politics in Snorri Sturluson’s Heimskringla* (Berkeley, 1991); idem, *From Gang Leader to the Lord’s Anointed: Kingship in Sverris saga and Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1996); Magne Njåstad, ‘Grenser for makt: Konflikter og konfliktløsning mellom lokalsamfunn og øvrighet ca. 1300-1540’ (doctoral thesis, NTNU, 2003); Hans Jacob Orning, ‘The truth of tales: Fornaldarsögur as sources of contemporary history’, in *The Legendary Legacy: Transmission and Reception of the Fornaldarsögur Nordurlanda*, ed. by Matthew James Driscoll and others (Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2018), pp. 91-116; idem, ‘Legendary sagas as historical sources’, *Tabularia – Sources écrites de la Normandie médiévale*, 15 (2015), 57-73; idem, *Uforutsigbarhet og nærvær: En analyse av norske kongers maktutøvelse i høymiddelalderen* (Oslo: Unipub, 2004), trans. into English as *Unpredictability and Presence: Norwegian Kingship in the High Middle Ages*, trans. by Alan Crozier (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

⁶⁸ Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, 11. Bagge would continue this study of state formation, first on a regional level in *Cross & Scepter* and on then on a European level in *State Formation in Europe, 843-1789*.

⁶⁹ Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, 16-17.

⁷⁰ Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, 379; Haki Antonsson, ‘review of *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom: State Formation in Norway, c. 800-1350*’, (review no. 1076) <<https://reviews.history.ac.uk/review/1076>> [accessed 26 February 2020]; Ármann Jakobsson, ‘review of *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom: State Formation in Norway, c. 800-1350*, by Sverre Bagge’, *Scandinavian Studies*, 86.2 (2014), 263-39.

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So far, the majority of the studies mentioned bear titles that would indicate that the consolidation of these three kingdoms into their present form was an inevitable outcome: that all roads, twists and turns, led to Denmark, Norway and Sweden – roughly equivalent to the states they are today. At their core, all studies of Scandinavian kingship are studies of kingship from a nationalistic point of view that examines roughly the same period and that arrives at roughly the same conclusions. By contrast, this study is written from a Scandinavian point of view to be a thematic and comparative study of Scandinavian kingship. As such, this study is following other similar studies, such as those conducted by Björn Weiler, Jenny Benham, and *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia* edited by Knut Helle against the insular historiographical traditions of the past.⁷¹ This thematic approach has been chosen in order to avoid the chronological structure used by previous scholars, and to make it easier to reveal Scandinavian frameworks that transcends time and space.

Each theme will further be structured around comparative case studies. According to Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, all historians compare.⁷² However, where previous scholars focused on a single Scandinavian kingdom, or at best two, the present study will instead focus on all three in an inter-Scandinavian comparison aiming to highlight not only the similarities but also the differences that existed between the Scandinavian kingdoms and between Western Europe and Scandinavia.⁷³ Using a methodology of comparative case studies are excellent for this as it is specifically primed towards research that consider how actors with diverse motives, intentions, and levels of influence work with or against the forces that produce the world they inhabited.⁷⁴ Furthermore, this approach does not ignore valuable contextual information or impose concepts; instead, it seeks to disrupt dichotomies, static categories and taken-for-granted notions of what happened.⁷⁵ In short, I have sought to compare along horizontal, vertical, and transversal axis and to break away from chronology.⁷⁶ For example, this approach has allowed me to

⁷¹ Björn Weiler, *Kingship, Rebellion and Political Culture: England and Germany, c.1215-c.1250*, Medieval Culture and Society (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); idem, 'Tales of First Kings and the culture of kingship in western Europe, c. 1050-1200', *Viator*, 46:2 (2015), pp. 101-27; Jenny Benham, *Peacemaking in the Middle Ages: Principles and Practice*, Manchester Medieval Studies (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011); *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia Volume 1: Prehistory to 1520*, ed. by Knut Helle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁷² Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, 'Comparative history: a contested method', *HT (Sv)*, 127.4 (2007), 697.

⁷³ Otto Hintze, 'Soziologische und geschichtliche Staatsauffassung', in *Soziologie und Geschichte: gesammelte Abhandlungen*, ed. by G. Oestreich (Göttingen, 1964), p. 251.

⁷⁴ Lesley Bartlett and Frances Vavrus, *Rethinking Case Study Research* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), 1.

⁷⁵ For more on this see, Peter van der Veer, *The value of comparison* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016); S.B. Heath and B. Street, *On ethnography: Approaches to language and literacy research* (New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 2008).

⁷⁶ Bartlett and Vavrus, *Rethinking Case Study Research*, 6-7, 19, 125.

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not only contrast Denmark, Norway, and Sweden's way of acquiring the kingship with one another, but also to trace the actors and other influences across these cases: a vertical comparison of influence at different levels (e.g. from the magnates, the Church to the kings); and a transversal comparison to previous practices, which entail looking at how it evolved in a political, economic, social, and cultural context.⁷⁷

While some of the previous studies mentioned have leaned towards theory over practice, this thesis intends to do both but with more focus on the practical side. Thus, it will only briefly cover the theoretical rules of succession, instead focusing more on the practical ways acquisition took place over time and space. Finally, it is the aim of this study to break free of the nationalistic mould to showcase similarities between not only the Scandinavian kingdoms but also between Scandinavia and Western Europe.

The available source material for twelfth and thirteenth century Scandinavia is not as plentiful as for other European regions. Generally speaking, the writing of narrative history in Scandinavia began in the twelfth century – or rather, that is when the oldest surviving narrative sources dates from. The main primary narrative sources we have for this period in Scandinavian, and especially Norwegian history, are the sagas. This literature is usually broken down into six genres, of which two, the king's sagas and the contemporary sagas, are of particular interest here. The kings' sagas (*konungasögur*), as the name suggests, are a group of roughly twenty-three sagas that tells the story of the Norwegian kings from legendary times to the reign of King Magnus VI the Law-mender (r. 1163-80). However, the oldest of the sources that have survived is the *Historia Norwegiæ*, a short Latin chronicle written in the latter half of the twelfth century, possibly by a Norwegian cleric.⁷⁸ The main kings' sagas, providing a continuous chronology from legendary times to the thirteenth century, are *Sverre's saga* (c. 1185-1205), *Böglunga saga* (c. 1210-25), *Morkinskinna* (c. 1220 or before), *Fagrskinna* (c. 1220s-1230s), *Heimskringla* (c. 1220s-1230s), *Håkon Håkonsson's saga* (1264-65), and *Magnus the Law-mender's saga* (1280-84) – the latter of which only fragments have survived. Of the kings' sagas, *Sverre's saga*, *Böglunga saga*, *Håkon Håkonsson's saga*, and *Magnus the Law-mender's saga* are also considered contemporary sagas (*samtíðarsögur*) – sagas written practically contemporaneously

⁷⁷ Bartlett and Vavrus, *Rethinking Case Study Research*, 35.

⁷⁸ Inger Ekrem, *Nytt lys over Historia Norwegie: mot en løsning i debatten om dens alder* (Bergen, 1998). Though a chronicle, it is still counted amongst the kings' sagas, as is the *Historia de Antiquitate Regum Norwagiensium*.

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with the events they are describing, or as in the case of *Sverre's saga* and *Håkon Håkonsson's saga*, under direct supervision of the protagonist (*SvS*) or the son of the protagonist (*HH*).

Both *Morkinskinna* and *Fagrskinna*, meaning the rotten (or mouldy) and the fair vellum respectively, are compilation sagas, telling the stories of several kings. As such, they build upon previous compilations such as *Historia Norwegiæ*, *Historia de Antiquitate Regum Norwagiensium*, and *Ágrip af Nóregs konunga sögum*, all written by the end of the twelfth century and handed down to us in thirteenth or fourteenth-century copies. *Morkinskinna* is the older of two, written around 1220, and marked the birth of full-scale royal chronicle writing in Old Norse, according to Theodore Andersson and Kari Ellen Gade.⁷⁹ *Fagrskinna*, also from the 1220s or late 1230s, was known initially as *Nóregs konungatal* (History of Norwegian Kings) but was given its current name by the Icelandic historian Tormor Torfæus in 1691.⁸⁰ It is more politically focused, as Johan Schreiner noted in his partial translation from 1926, commenting that the author was the more 'rational among the old saga writers.'⁸¹ Neither *Morkinskinna* nor *Fagrskinna* is structured in the same way as *Heimskringla*. Instead, about sixty per cent of *Morkinskinna* is devoted to Magnus the Good and Harald Hardrada, with the remaining forty per cent covering the time from 1066 to its abrupt end in 1157.⁸² Likewise, *Fagrskinna* tells a continuous story, beginning with Halfdan the Black, father of Harald Fairhair, right up until the remnants of the Birchlegs' flight to Sweden following their defeat at the First Battle of Re in 1177.

By the seventeenth century, two versions of *Fagrskinna* existed, known as A and B, with the B-version written around 1250 and the A-version in the first half of the fourteenth century. It is believed that Torfæus had access to the A-version, which is the one he named *Fagrskinna*. Three copies each were made of A and B, which unfortunately were lost in the Copenhagen Fire of 1782. The version consulted for this thesis is primarily the second edition of the Norwegian translation of *Fagrskinna* by Edvard Eikill in 2008, based on Íslenzk Fornrit edition of the B-version from 1985, edited by Bjarni Einarsson.⁸³ The saga exists in an English translation by Alison Finlay from 2004, *Fagrskinna: A Catalogue of the Kings of Norway*. However, all translations into English from *Fagrskinna* in this thesis are my own. The oldest

⁷⁹ *Msk*, 1-2, 66.

⁸⁰ *Fsk*, 15.

⁸¹ *Fsk*, 19; Ólafía Einarsdóttir, 'Fagrskinna, forfattelsestidspunkt, Olaf Haraldsson – Tyskland – Håkon Håkonsson', in *Germanisches Altertum und christliches Mittelalter: Festschrift für Heinz Klingenberg zum 65. Geburtstag* (Hamburg, 2001), pp. 51-89; *Fagrskinna: En norsk kongesaga*, trans. by Johan Schreiner (Oslo, 1926; repr. 1972), 10.

⁸² *Msk*, 2-5.

⁸³ *Fsk*, 15-16, 23-25.

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surviving version of *Morkinskinna* is GKS 1009 fol. which was given the name *Morkinskinna* by Torfæus in the mid-seventeenth century. The version used here is the Íslenzk Fornritafélag edition from 2011 by Ármann Jakobsson and Þórður Ingi Guðjónsson, which is based on GKS 1009 fol., GKS 1005 fol. (*Flateyjarbók*), AM 66 fol. (*Hulda*), and GKS 1010 fol. (*Hrokkin-skinna*).⁸⁴ The English translation of *Morkinskinna* used here is the translation by Theodore Andersson and Kari Ellen Gade from 2000, based on all the available surviving manuscripts in order to produce a complete narrative.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ *Msk*, I, lxxii-lxxvii.

⁸⁵ *Msk*, ix.

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as being the author *Heimskringla*. Nor do we know when exactly when it was written, though the 1220s to the 1230s are the usually accepted dates.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, the thesis will treat Snorri as *Heimskringla*'s author.⁸⁸ In the prologue, Snorri gave an account of his method and the sources he used. Some of these such as *Morkinskinna* and *Fagrskinna*, have survived to this day, whereas others, such as a Latin work by Sæmund Frode from c. 1120 and *Hryggjarstykki* by Eirik Oddsson from around 1160 are only known through *Heimskringla*. About the method, he wrote in the preface that it was based 'on the information given me by well-informed men [...] although we do not know for sure whether these accounts are true, yet we do know that old and learned men consider them to be so.'⁸⁹

Heimskringla is preserved in two manuscripts from the second half of the thirteenth century. The best version was *Codex Academicus primus*, otherwise known as *Kringla*, written about twenty years after Snorri's death, in the mid-thirteenth century, and it was brought to Norway sometime in the following years before it ended up in the library at the University of Copenhagen. At that point, it had already lost the first page containing the foreword. The other version, known as *Codex Academicus secundus*, otherwise known as *Jöfraskinna* (King's vellum), written around 1320. This version also ended up in Copenhagen, where copies were made of both versions before they were lost to the Copenhagen Fire of 1728. The oldest extant version of *Heimskringla* is *Codex Frisianus* (AM 45 fol.), though without the saga of St Olav and with *Håkon Håkonsson's saga*, written around 1300, along with this version also the one known as *Eirspennill* (AM 47 fol.) (Vellum with copper clasps) have survived, also written around 1300. This version starts with the accession of Magnus the Good and ends with the death of Håkon Håkonsson. The English translation by Lee Hollander, *Heimskringla: History of the Kings of Norway*, used here was based on Íslenzk Fornrit edition of *Heimskringla*, edited by Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson in three volumes from 1949 to 1951.⁹⁰ The same edition has been used for the Old Norse in this thesis.

Sverre's saga, chronologically speaking, was the first of the kings' sagas used in this thesis to be written, and it holds a unique position amongst the kings' sagas as we know the

⁸⁷ *Hkr*, xiv-xv. See also Magnús Fjalldal, 'Beware of Norwegian Kings: Heimskringla as Propaganda', *Scandinavian Studies*, 85.4 (2013), 455; Birgit Sawyer, 'Comparing Snorri with Saxo; a vindication of a new approach' <https://www.academia.edu/16690814/Comparing_Snorri_with_Saxo_a_vindication_of_a_new_approach> [accessed 23 February 2020] (para 7 of 19); idem, *Heimskringla: An Interpretation*, 1.

⁸⁸ The question of whether or not Snorri actually wrote *Heimskringla* has been hotly debated, though nowadays most scholars agree that he is the author but still debate what role he played in its creation, with the debating ranging from both author and editor, to merely editor, to author but not final editor. For more on this discussion see Birgit Sawyer, *Heimskringla: An Interpretation*, 3-6; Diana Whaley, *Heimskringla: An Introduction* (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1991), 13-19.

⁸⁹ *Hkr*, Snorri's Foreword, 3.

⁹⁰ *Hkr*, xxiv-xxv.

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name of the author as well as the level of influence the saga's protagonist had over its composition.⁹¹ It has been handed down to us in no less than twenty-four manuscripts ranging in age from the latter half of the thirteenth century up until the mid-fifteenth century. The best of these versions, at least according to Árni Magnússon was AM 327 4to, which he called *codex optimus*, dates from around 1300.⁹² Versions of the saga can also be found in *Eirspennill*, *Flatøyjarbók*, which is a compilation of kings' saga written between 1387 and 1394, and *Skálholtsbók yngsta* (AM 18 a fol.) from the mid-fifteenth century, to name but a few of them. The version consulted for the thesis is the Íslenzk Fornritafélag edition from 2007 edited by Þorleifur Hauksson, based on AM 327 4to along with several others. I have also used the sixth edition of Halvdan Koht's translation into New Norwegian, first published in 1913, and primarily based on the version printed in the second volume of *Flatøyjarbók*, edited by C.R. Unger and Guðbrandr Vigfusson published in the 1860s. There is one translation of *Sverre's saga* into English by J. Sephton from 1899, but I have preferred to use my own translations.⁹³

As with *Sverre's saga*, we also know a great deal about the circumstances under which *Håkon Hákonsson's saga* was written as they are recorded in some detail in *Sturlunga saga*. It was written in the 1260s, possibly 1264 to 1265 as indicated by the saga itself, by the Icelandic chieftain and historian Sturla Þórðarson, nephew of Snorri Sturluson, who wrote under the direction of King Magnus VI in much the same manner as Abbot Karl Jónsson wrote *Grýla* under Sverre's direction.⁹⁴ Knut Helle called this the most reliable and detailed of the kings' saga, adding that the reliability lay in its description of events and strict chronology.⁹⁵ The saga has survived in three main redactions: *Eirspennill*, *Codex Frisianus*, and *Flatøyjarbók*, all from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Because the relationship between the manuscripts is complex, amongst other things, some of the scribes have followed different versions, no satisfactory stemma exists.⁹⁶ The version used for this thesis is the Íslenzk Fortiafélag edition from 2013 by Þorleifur Hauksson, Sverrir Jakobsson, and Tor Ulset, based on the forthcoming text-critical edition by Tor Ulset.⁹⁷ I have not found a modern English translation for this saga either; therefore, all such translations are my own.

⁹¹ SvS will be further discussed as part of the first case study in Chapter two, pp. 59-71.

⁹² SvS, cxxxvi-cxxxvii, see also *ibid*, xli-liii.

⁹³ *The Saga of King Sverri of Norway*, trans. by J. Sephton, Northern Library, 4 (London: D. Nutt, 1899).

⁹⁴ HH, I, lxxxix; HH, II, 159; Paul Schach, 'Hákonar saga gamla Hákonarsonar', in *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopaedia*, ed. by Phillip Pulsiano (New York: Garland, 1993), p. 259.

⁹⁵ Helle, *Norge blir en stat*, 108.

⁹⁶ HH, II, cxxxvii-cxli; Schach, 'Hákonar saga gamla Hákonarsonar', in *Medieval Scandinavia*, ed. by Pulsiano, p. 260.

⁹⁷ HH, II, cxli.

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The main problem with these sources, less so for the contemporary sagas, is that they were written significantly later than the events which they described. Their value for the earlier part of this study is therefore doubtful and going back before the twelfth century has been the topic of much discussion. Nineteenth-century scholars regarded the narrative sources as mostly trustworthy, with an increasing amount of scepticism towards the turn of the twentieth century.⁹⁸ In the early twentieth century, scholars such as Lauritz Weibull in Sweden and Halvdan Koht in Norway broke with this attitude albeit in widely different ways that were to have a great impact on later historiography.⁹⁹ From the second half of the thirteenth century, the narrative sources are complemented by an increasing number of royal and ecclesiastical charters, in addition to laws and other normative sources – although the vast majority of what existed has probably been lost.¹⁰⁰

For the part of Danish medieval history covered in this thesis, there are two main narrative sources, namely the works of Svend Aggsen and Saxo Grammaticus. Saxo wrote his *Gesta Danorum* on the orders of Archbishop Absalon of Lund, a close friend, foster-brother, and confidante of King Valdemar the Great.¹⁰¹ About Saxo himself not much is known. Karsten Friis-Jensen has suggested that the ‘Saxoni clerico’ mentioned in Absalon’s will from 1202 is the same as the Saxo who wrote the *Gesta Danorum*.¹⁰² He also found it likely that Absalon’s secretary Saxo should be identified with a contemporary canon of Lund Cathedral who was registered in the canon list as an acolyte and a witness to one of Absalon’s later charters.¹⁰³ He lists a third example of a Magister Saxo who appeared as a witness to one of Absalon’s charters,

⁹⁸ Dahl, *Norsk historieforskning*, 65-69, 195-230.

⁹⁹ Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, 18-19; Lauritz Weibull, *Kritiska undersökningar i Nordens historia år 1000* (Lund, 1911). See the different interpretations by Rolf Torstendahl, *Källkritik och vetenskapssyn i svensk historisk forskning 1820-1920*, *Studia Historica Upsaliensia*, 15 (Uppsala, 1964), 335-66; Birgitta Odén, *Lauritz Weibull och forskarsamhället* (Lund 1975); Rolf Arvidsson and Hans Aarsleff, *Kritiska undersökningar i Weibull-mytens historia* (Lund, 2000); Claus Krag, ‘Lauritz Weibull’, in *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde*, ed. by Rosemarie Müller and others, vol. 33 (Berlin, 2004), cols. 347-56; Halvdan Koht, *Innhogg og utsyn* (Kristiania, 1927), 96-123; Dahl, *Norsk historieforskning*, 239-43; Sverre Bagge, ‘The Middle Ages’, in *Making a Historical Culture: Historiography in Norway*, ed. by W.H. Hubbard and others (Oslo, 1995), pp. 117-18; idem, ‘Udsigt og innhogg: 150 års forskning om eldre norsk historie’, *HT (No)*, 75 (1995), 46-7.

¹⁰⁰ Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, 19.

¹⁰¹ There is a huge historiography on Saxo and his work. As a sample, see, amongst others, Inge Skovgaard-Petersen, ‘Saxo som samtidshistoriker: Det skånske oprør’, *Scandia*, 56 (1990), 31-43; Birgit Sawyer, ‘Valdemar, Absalon and Saxo: Historiography and Politics in Medieval Denmark’, *Revue belge de philologie et d’histoire*, 63 (1985), 685-705; Curt Weibull, ‘Saxos berättelser om de danska vendertågen 1158-85’, *HT (Dk)*, 83 (1983), 35-70; idem, ‘Vem var Saxo’, *HT (Dk)*, 78 (1978), 87-96; Rikke Malmros, ‘Blodgildet i Roskilde historio-grafiskt belyst’, *Scandia*, 45 (1979), 46-66; Kurt Johannesson, *Saxo Grammaticus: Komposition och världsbild i Gesta Danorum* (Stockholm, 1978); *Saxostudier: Saxo-kollokvierne ved Københavns universitet*, ed. by Ivan Boserup (København: Museum Tusulanum, 1975).

¹⁰² Saxo, I, xxix-xxxiii; *DD*, I:4 no. 32.

¹⁰³ Karsten Friis-Jensen, ‘Was Saxo Grammaticus a canon of Lund?’, *Cahiers de l’Institut du moyen-âge grec et latin*, 59 (1989), pp. 331-57 (p. 349); *DD*, I:3 no. 96 (1180-1201).

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concluding that the author of the *Gesta Danorum* was at the same time once Absalon's secretary, a canon of the cathedral chapter, and a magister, which indicate that he may have taught at the cathedral school.¹⁰⁴

The *Gesta Danorum* describes Danish history, and to some extent Scandinavian history, in sixteen books of varying length and in chronological order, beginning with the legendary king Dan and ending with the Danish victory over the Wends in 1185. Karsten Friis-Jensen has argued that it is not purely a historical work, but rather 'a product of Saxo's own time and mind.'¹⁰⁵ The sixteen books can be further divided into two groups. The first nine books told of about sixty legendary kings, with book ix ending with the reign of King Gorm the Old (r. c.936-58), and books x to xiii covers the time from King Harald Bluetooth (r. c.958-86) to the mid-twelfth century. Book xiv covers about a quarter of the text with Book xv wrapping up the story, ending with the Wendish submission to King Knud VI in 1185. In the first eight books, there are only two references to dates, the birth of Christ in book v and Charlemagne's Christianisation of the Saxons in book viii. Beyond this, the *Gesta Danorum* is completely devoid of references to any specific years.¹⁰⁶ It is generally assumed that Saxo had access to both written and oral sources when writing.¹⁰⁷ That he was aware of his contemporary historian, Svend Aggesen's work is clear as he uses both the *Brevis Historia Regum Dacie* and the *Lex castrensis*. Likewise, with Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae Pontificum*, though Karsten Friis-Jensen and Peter Fisher notes Saxo's clear dislike for anything German. Likewise, they do not think Saxo has access to reliable British sources based on Saxo's erratic knowledge of Anglo-Saxon rulers.¹⁰⁸ According to Saxo himself, we know that he consulted Icelandic sources: 'I have scrutinised their packed store of historical treasures and composed a considerable part of this present work by copying their narratives'.¹⁰⁹ His patron Absalon was the most likely source for the contemporary parts of the *Gesta Danorum*. According to Saxo he had 'with dutiful mind and pen taken pains to include [Absalon's statements], respectfully seizing upon his instructive account as if it were tuition from heaven.'¹¹⁰ The preface was probably written last, probably between 1202 and 1241, but most likely in the period 1208 to 1219. When Saxo

¹⁰⁴ Saxo, I, xxx; *DD*, I:3 no. 225 (1197-1201).

¹⁰⁵ Karsten Friis-Jensen, 'In the Presence of the Dead: Saint Canute the Duke in Saxo Grammaticus's *Gesta Danorum*', in *The Making of Christian Myths in the Periphery of Latin Christendom (c. 1000-1300)*, ed. by Lars Boje Mortensen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2006), pp. 195-216 (p. 198).

¹⁰⁶ Saxo, v.15.3, viii.16.5, xxxvii.

¹⁰⁷ On Saxo's sources see Michael H. Gelting, 'Saxo Grammaticus in the archives', in *The Creation of the Medieval Northern Europe: Christianisation, Social Transformation, and Historiography: Essays in Honour of Sverre Bagge*, ed. by Leidulf Melve and Sigbjørn Olsen Sønnesyn (Oslo: Dreyers forlag, 2012), pp. 322-45.

¹⁰⁸ Saxo, xlix.

¹⁰⁹ Saxo, Pr.1.4.

¹¹⁰ Saxo, Pr.1.5.

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began writing is more difficult to ascertain. This most likely means that Saxo did not write in chronological order. An estimation of when he wrote would, therefore, be that he started before 1188 and that he finished not too long after 1208.¹¹¹ The narrative ends in the summer of 1185 with the submission of the Slavs to Knud VI, and since he did not mention the accession of Valdemar II in 1202, it would mean he wrote the contemporary section first, likely before 1202. This was then followed by the mythical section, probably with the intention of providing the Danes with a glorious past that matched that achieved in 1185. Svend Aggesen briefly mentioned Saxo when writing about the sons of Svend Estridsen as the reason for his account of them being so short.¹¹² Svend finished writing shortly after 1185, possibly as early as 1188 as has been suggested by Eric Christiansen.¹¹³ As suggested above, this further indicates Saxo wrote back to front with the last book finished first, likely before 1202. However, the order in which Saxo wrote and what lay behind his arrangement has been, and remains, a much-discussed topic.¹¹⁴ Saxo's original manuscript has been lost, but four fragments has survived: the Angers-fragment (NKS 869 g 4°), the Lassen or Kall-Rasmussen-fragment (NKS 570 2°), the Plesner-fragment (NKS 570 2°), the Laverentzen's-fragment (GKS 2358, IV, 4°). The first is by far the largest fragment and contains the only provable example of handwriting that can be paleographically dated to Saxo's time.¹¹⁵ The others are copies from the late thirteenth century onwards. In addition to these, Saxo's work is known from a long series of quotations and paraphrases in later works.¹¹⁶ For the most part, I have consulted the 2015 English translation of the *Gesta Danorum* edited by Karsten Friis-Jensen and translated by Peter Fisher. Where further clarification has been needed, I have consulted Eric Christiansen's translation, *Danorum Regum Heroumque Historia: Books X-XVI* of 1980-81.

The other great narrative work from this period was produced by Saxo's contemporary, Svend Aggesen. Whereas we know next to nothing about Saxo, we know a little more about Svend. He hailed from the Thurgot-kindred and was a nephew of Archbishop Eskil and distantly related to King Valdemar the Great (their great-grandparents had been siblings). Eric Christiansen sums up Svend thus: 'pride in his father, misgivings about his grandfather and great-uncles, and complete silence about the great Eskil [...] no ideological purist, but a man with an

¹¹¹ Saxo, xxxiii-xxxv.

¹¹² Svend Aggesen, *SHKD*, 65.

¹¹³ Svend Aggesen, *SHKD*, 26.

¹¹⁴ Sawyer, 'Valdemar, Absalon and Saxo: Historiography and Politics in Medieval Denmark', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 687. See also, Inge Skovgaard-Petersen, 'Gesta Danorum's genre-mæssige placering', in *Saxostudier*, ed. by Boserup, pp. 19-27.

¹¹⁵ Saxo, lii-liv.

¹¹⁶ Saxo, li-lii.

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interesting mind'.¹¹⁷ He was most likely a cleric, who had been present both at court and at the surrender of the Wends in 1185, yet his work is not dedicated to anyone.¹¹⁸ His work survives in two versions, neither of which provide an accurate copy of what he actually wrote. Version A (AM 33 4to) is an inexpert copy probably commissioned between the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century by Claus Lyschander of an earlier and authentic manuscript. Version S is the improved and corrected version of an early manuscript written in the late thirteenth century by Stephan Stephanius, who edited the first printed edition published in 1642. This manuscript was lost in the Copenhagen Fire of 1728, making it impossible to work out whether the improvements were made by the late thirteenth-century scribe or by Stephanius, or both. Until 1915-16 this remained the commonly accepted version. Then Martin Clemens Gertz published *En ny Text af Sven Aggesøns Værker* (A new text of Sven Aggesen's Works) which presented four parallel texts: a transcription of A, his own reconstruction of the manuscript misrepresented by the A scribe, his reconstruction of X, the lost manuscript behind A, and the S text. Through an exhaustive critical commentary, he established X as the "best" text, and it was subsequently reprinted in *Scriptores minores historiae Danicae medii aevi* volume I from 1917 with S.¹¹⁹ It is this version that has been consulted for this thesis, together with the English translation by Eric Christiansen from 1992, *The Works of Sven Aggesen*, based on the same version.¹²⁰

The same problem that plague some of the Norwegian sources afflict also the Danish ones; namely, that they were all written almost half a century after the events they describe. Increasingly in the twelfth and thirteenth century, the narrative sources are complemented by charter evidence, provincial law material, annals, and chronicles, with the earliest being the *Annals of Colbaz* which, broadly speaking, in three paragraphs covers world history from the creation to 1127, followed by Danish historical notes from 1130 to 1170, and then finally followed by entries by the monks at Colbaz in the following centuries.¹²¹

Compared to Norway and Denmark, the written source material from Sweden up until the end of the thirteenth century can only be characterised as inferior. It is impossible to know the many reasons for the lack of written sources, but Line has pointed to the destruction of much of the national library and royal archive in the fire that engulfed the *Tre Kronor* Castle in 1697 as one of these.¹²² The number of diplomas and charters increases slightly after 1250, and much

¹¹⁷ Svend Aggesen, *SHKD*, 1, 4.

¹¹⁸ Svend Aggesen, *SHKD*, 3-4.

¹¹⁹ Svend Aggesen, *SHKD*, 4-5.

¹²⁰ Svend Aggesen, *SHKD*, 5.

¹²¹ *DMA*, 1; Fenger, "Kirker rejses alle vegne" 1050-1250', p. 202.

¹²² Line, *Kingship and State Formation*, xiv.

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of it is included in the first volume of *Diplomatarium Suecanum*. As a result of this, research is often dependent on sources written in the late thirteenth century onwards, such as the provincial law texts (*landskapslagar*), in addition to several monastic annals from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as well as several chronicles dating from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries.¹²³

The closest we get to a contemporary narrative source for medieval Sweden is *The Rhymed Chronicle of Erik*, with the general opinion being that it more or less reflects the real politics of Sweden during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.¹²⁴ It is the oldest extant comprehensive literary work that is Swedish through and through.¹²⁵ However, we do not know who wrote the chronicle, and the fact that it only survives through fifteenth-century manuscripts contributes to making the dating uncertain. Following analysis of the chronicle, several scholars have concluded that it was probably written between 1322 and 1332.¹²⁶ This dating is based on the chronicle's mention of the death of a certain Sir Bo, linking this name to a Bo Nilsson who wrote his will in September 1322. Consequently, if this is the same Bo as the one in the chronicle, then it must have been written close to this date. Other scholars argue against Sir Bo and Bo Nilsson being the same person, instead arguing for a date closer to the concluding event described, namely the election of 1319.¹²⁷ For this thesis, I have consulted Sven-Bertil Jansson's edition, which itself was based on Rolf Pipping's edition from 1921 (reprinted in 1963) of the best manuscript, dated to the late fifteenth century, together with the English translation by Erik Carlquist and Peter Hogg of 2012, which is based on Jansson's edition.¹²⁸

In addition to the narrative sources outlined above, I have also consulted a variety of annals and chronicles, some Scandinavian and some from outside of Scandinavia. The majority of the Scandinavian annals have been Danish. These have assisted in the creation of a timeline as neither Svend Aggesen nor Saxo provides specific dates for the events they covered in their works. The work I have consulted is *Danmarks Middelalderlige Annaler* (The Medieval Annals of Denmark), a compilation of thirty annals edited by Erik Kroman. The main issue with the Danish annals is that they were not written independently of each other. The earliest surviving annal was, as already mentioned, the *Annals of Colbaz*. Other annals were written in the twelfth century, but some have been lost, and others have been incorporated into later annals such as

¹²³ Line, *Kingship and State Formation*, xiv-xv.

¹²⁴ *EC*, 7; *EK*, 20.

¹²⁵ *EK*, 9-10.

¹²⁶ *EC*, 13-14; *EK*, 10.

¹²⁷ *EC*, 14.

¹²⁸ *EC*, 28.

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the annals of Lund, Sorø and Næstved, and the so-called *Annals of Valdemar*. What they all have in common is that they all, to a great extent, are based on each other, in addition to Saxo and other annals and chronicles. The same problem plaguing the annals holds true for the chronicles as well.¹²⁹ The worst example of this the *Older Chronicle of Zealand*, which is based in part on Saxo, Adam of Bremen, legends, hagiographical writings, and annal entries. Whereas the continuation of this chronicle, for a large part, is based on *Annals of Ryd*.¹³⁰ These problems aside, they still constitute the best basis for the construction of a chronology for events in the twelfth century onwards, which is the main purpose for which they have been used in this study.

Along with the annals and chronicles, the surviving charters material from Denmark and Sweden proved most useful. From 1150 to 1199 there are 346 surviving Danish charters in the *Diplomatarium Danicum*, and for Sweden from 1150 to 1280, there are 1101 surviving charters in the *Diplomatarium Suecanum*. These figures come with some big caveats as the available charters was not all produced at the Danish or Swedish courts, but also includes that from foreign sources too. The most prolific of these being the papacy, but we also find charters issued by the English or German kings. For the most part, these charters are correspondence dealing with ecclesiastical matters. There are, for examples, twenty-one charters that survive from the reign of King Valdemar the Great, which proved to be very useful in discovering the extent of his alliance and relationship with the Danish church. Likewise, for Sweden, twenty-eight charters from the reign of King Valdemar Birgersson (r. 1250-75) greatly assist in shining a light on the role played by Birger jarl in the kingmaking and consolidation of his son's kingship. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for Norway before the reign of King Håkon IV Håkonsson. For the whole of this period, from 1150 to 1280 there are only 586 surviving charters in the *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* (with the same caveat as above), with the oldest surviving diploma issued by a Norwegian king dating to the reign of Filippus Simonsson "Crozier-king" (r. 1207-17).¹³¹ Incidentally, this is also the oldest surviving letter written in Old Norse in the Norwegian National Archive. Nevertheless, for the reign of King Magnus Erlingsson (r. 1161-84), I was able to find a handful of charters listed in *Akershusregistret* (The Akershus Registry) from 1622, that unfortunately are now lost. As in Denmark and Sweden, the majority of the charters are ecclesiastical correspondence. For instance, for the whole of King Magnus VI's reign as sole king (1263-80) there are just twenty-seven surviving charters either written to him or sent from him.

¹²⁹ Fenger, "'Kirker rejses alle vegne' 1050-1250", pp. 202-4.

¹³⁰ *DMA*, 106.

¹³¹ *DN*, I, no. 3.

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Therefore, when the extant Scandinavian material turned out to be too meagre, I have consulted other European sources such as chronicles, annals and charters when they have related to the subject at hand. In particular, William of Newburgh proved useful in shining some light on the reign of Kings Magnus Erlingsson and Sverre Sigurdsson, as did Roger of Howden who, in addition to describing Sverre Sigurdsson's acquisition of the Norwegian kingship, also provides insight into the Norwegian rules of succession. For Denmark, Ralph Niger's *Chronicon universalis* offers insight into the conflict of the 1150s between Svend III Eriksen, Knud V Magnussen and Valdemar Knudsen, as do the *Annals of Magdeburg* and Helmold of Bosau's *Chronicle of the Slavs*. Seen as a whole, the problems presented by the sources have no easy solutions. The best we can do, however, is to keep them in mind and consider them when they are used and when conclusions are drawn based on them.

This thesis is divided into four chapters that each deals with different aspects of the thesis: acquisition, succession, and consolidation. The first chapter will outline the theoretical rules of succession in Scandinavia, with the main focus of the discussion being on Norway. The reason for this is that the source material for Sweden and Denmark is quite scant when it comes to discussing the theoretical succession rules. That is not to say that the Danish and Swedish primary sources provided no proof of succession rules, but in the case of Sweden, a lack of contemporary narrative evidence makes it difficult to know whether or not the practices described by the thirteenth-century laws were innovations or based on existing practices. In Denmark, on the other hand, there is ample primary narrative evidence, provided by Svend Aggesen and Saxo Grammaticus, but here the challenge is, as will be outlined in the chapter, that they make it difficult to see the extent of Danish practices. For Norway, by contrast, there is an abundance of evidence from the twelfth and thirteenth century dictating the order of succession and the qualifications for becoming Norway's King. The chapter will outline four different succession laws, translated from Old Norse into English, presented side-by-side for greater readability, showing a set of rules growing increasingly more complex. The chapter will argue that this complexity reflects the changes undergone by the kingship in the same period.

Following this, the second chapter will discuss the succession in practice through two scenarios: succession through trial by combat, and succession through designation. The first scenario will analyse how Sverre Sigurdsson of Norway and Valdemar Knudsen of Denmark came into possession of their respective kingdoms. Overall, the first scenario will argue that these two case studies show that the succession rules were subservient to both political and individual circumstances. The second scenario of this chapter will analyse succession through

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designation and the means for a stable transfer of royal power from one generation to the next. This scenario will study the succession of Knud VI of Denmark and Magnus VI of Norway to determine when and in what circumstances they came into possession of the kingship. The chapter will argue that associative kingship and designated succession negated the need to mark the succession politically and provided the best way to achieve a strong and stable transfer of royal power from father to son.

After discussing succession in terms of theory and practice, the discussion in the third chapter turns to another aspect of to acquire the kingship, namely kingmaking. The first part of the chapter will analyse the processes that made two underage claimants, Magnus Erlingsson of Norway and Valdemar Birgersson of Sweden, kings. This analysis will look at who the kingmakers were, what links they had to the kings, and in what circumstances under which one could become a kingmaker. The main focus of the analysis will be the approaches taken by the kingmakers, the steps they took in order to make Magnus and Valdemar kings. The Norway process will turn out to be built upon election, foreign support, and ecclesiastical support, with similar steps also evident in Sweden almost a century later. These similarities tell us that from the mid-twelfth to the mid-thirteenth century not much changed in Scandinavia in terms of how kings were made. The second half of the chapter will consider Denmark, where there are no instances of kingmaking similar to that of Norway or Sweden. This chapter will show that there was no room for domestic actors to act in a kingmaking capacity in the southern Scandinavian kingdom kings due to strong outside influence. Instead, this chapter will argue, that in the second Danish civil war (1146-57), through a case study of Knud V Magnussen, Svend III Eriksen, and Valdemar Knudsen, the kingmaker in twelfth-century Denmark is to be found outside Scandinavian heartland.

Finally, the fourth chapter will analyse the consolidation process of Magnus Erlingsson, Valdemar Birgersson, and Valdemar the Great. Again, there is a high level of similarities between the three kingdoms. The analysis will reveal a set of three different kingships that all rested on the same three pillars: foreign recognition, alliance with the Church, and removal of rivals. We will see this played out in different ways, and with varying degrees of success, aided by the extant sources. In the end, this chapter will show that the consolidation process in Scandinavia was the same in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries irrespective of time, place, and how the kingship was acquired.

This thesis in part builds on the work already undertaken by Philip Line, Sverre Bagge, and Nils Hybel, but where they sought passive comparisons between their subject and one or more European kingdoms, this thesis actively seeks out points of comparison, not only between

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Scandinavian kingdoms but also between a handful of European. This study will show that kingship in Scandinavia was not fundamentally different from European kingship in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. By the end, it will have proven Graham-Dixon right about one thing though: there truly was a cold, piercing wind of absolute determination to endure, come what may, blowing through it all.

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Figure 2. Medieval towns of Scandinavia. Every dot represents a town with the most important ones named. The dotted line shows the modern border, the striped line shows the approximate medieval border.

Norsk Byhistorie: urbanisering gjennom 1300 år, ed. by Knut Helle and others (Oslo: Pax Forlag, 2006), 65.



I. Scandinavian rules of succession in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries

Introduction

In the medieval period, as today, in hereditary monarchies, the order of succession determined who inherited the crown when the incumbent died or otherwise vacated the kingship. Such orders of succession, derived from rules established by customs, traditions, or laws, usually specified an order of seniority, which applied to indicate which relative of the previous king had the strongest claim to succeed to the kingship when the vacancy occurred. Often, the succession was restricted to persons of the royal blood, someone who was legally, or otherwise, recognised as born or descended from the reigning dynasty or a previous king.¹³²

These ground rules could sometimes be superseded or reinforced by the coronation of a selected heir as *rex iunior* or associated co-ruler during the lifetime of the reigning king, who then became the *rex senior*. The most famous examples of this practice are the Capetian kings of France, as well as the coronations of Henry the Young King of England, Magnus VI of Norway, and Knud VI of Denmark, but it also existed in elective monarchies such as the Holy Roman Emperor where the King of the Romans (*Romanorum Rex*) would sometimes be crowned in anticipation of succeeding to the emperorship. An advantage of this practice was, as pointed out by William Chester Jordan, that associated kings were more experienced rulers compared to their contemporary colleagues when they succeeded.¹³³ This practice not only served to enhance the political stability by establishing a clear and very public line of succession, but it could also reduce the competition for the kingship and channel pretenders and cadets into other roles and endeavours.¹³⁴

However, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, none of the Scandinavian kingdoms were hereditary monarchies. Instead, strong evidence points to all three having elective

¹³² See amongst others, David Starkey, *Crown and Country: The Kings and Queens of England* (London: Harper Press, 2010), 101-257; Malcolm Barber, *The Two Cities: Medieval Europe 1050-1320*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2004), 179-372 (esp. pp. 247-304); William Chester Jordan, *Europe in the High Middle Ages* (London: Penguin, 2002), 52-79, 143-76; David Whitton, 'The Society of Northern: Europe in the High Middle Ages 900-1200', in *The Oxford History of Medieval Europe*, ed. by George Holmes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992; repr. 2001), pp. 109-64; Malcolm Vale, 'The Civilization of Courts and Cities in the North 1200-1500', in *The Oxford History of Medieval Europe*, ed. by Holmes, pp. 271-323; John H. Mundy, *Europe in the High Middle Ages 1150/1309* (Harlow: Longman, 1975; repr. 1983), 364-412; Christopher Brooke, *Europe in the Central Middle Ages 962-1154* (Harlow: Longman, 1975; repr. 1981), 124-208.

¹³³ Jordan, *Europe in the High Middle Ages*, 55.

¹³⁴ Matthew Strickland, *Henry the Young King 1155-1183* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016), 40-1 and fns. 57-58.

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kingship, usually reserved for one or more kindreds. This chapter will analyse and discuss the Scandinavian rules of succession in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Due to a lack of coverage in the sources, the Danish and Swedish rules will be discussed together and separate from the Norwegian rules as they are heavily outlined in the surviving sources.

The rules of succession

The succession rules we know the least about are the Swedish rules of succession. From the charters and the *Äldra Västgötalagen kungalängd* (The Older law of Västgötaland's kings list), we can see that the kingship swapped back and forth between two different kindreds from c. 1130 to 1250.¹³⁵ Today these kindreds are known as the Sverker-kindred and the Erik-kindred respectively, named after their supposed founders, Sverker I and St Erik.¹³⁶ Few traceable links exist between these two kindreds and the ones (Munsö and Stenkil) that preceded them. According to *Knytlinga saga*, St Erik's wife was a granddaughter of Inge I (d. 1105/10), thus providing the nascent kindred with a royal link to the past.¹³⁷ Similarly, according to Saxo, Sverker I allegedly legitimised his kingship by a marriage to Ulvhilde, the widow of Inge II, the last Stenkil king, and after her death he married the widow of his old adversary, the Danish prince, Magnus Nielsen, presumably in order to gain the support of Magnus's followers.¹³⁸ That both kings went to such lengths to tie their kingship with the previous kindred can be seen as an indication that kings had to descend from previous kings, as we shall soon see was the rule in Norway. Furthermore, their efforts would in effect make the Sverker and Erik-kindreds into cadet branches of the Stenkil-kindred – with the Erik-kindred actual cognatic descendants of the Stenkil-kindred – not too dissimilar to the four competing cadet branches of the Estridsen-kindred in Denmark after the death of Svend II Estridsen (d. 1076).

Besides showing the existence of two different royal lines, the surviving charters leave us in doubt whether or not Sweden was a unified kingdom in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The charter from Pope Alexander appointing the first Swedish archbishop was addressed to the bishops of the Swedish kingdom ('episcopis per regnum swecie') and Karl Sverkersson, King of the Swedes and the Goths ('regis sweorum & gothorum').¹³⁹ This was also the first

¹³⁵ *ÄVL kung.*, 298-303. See also Lindkvist, 'Kings and provinces in Sweden', pp. 224-26.

¹³⁶ Swedish kings did not use regnal numbers until the reign of Karl Knutson Bonde in the fifteenth century, who referred to himself as 'Caroli Secundi' on the tombstone of his second wife when she was buried at Vadstena Abbey in 1451.

¹³⁷ *Ks*, 123.

¹³⁸ *Saxo*, xiii.10.1, xiv.4.9. Karl Sverkersson, who would rule in the 1160s, was the son of Sverker and Ulvhild.

¹³⁹ SDHK 203/DS 50. See Line, *Kingship and State Formation*, 176-77, for a discussion of the use of *sweorum* and *gothorum*.

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time this title appeared in the charters. By comparison, Karl's son, Sverker II the Younger, was simply titled King of the Swedes during his reign.¹⁴⁰ There are multiple examples of the king's title changing back and forth in the diploma material in this period. The normative evidence from the thirteenth century onwards stated that the Swedish kingship was elective, explaining, in part, the two different royal kindreds alternating the kingship. The first of these normative sources to outline any rules of succession is the *Äldra Västgötalagen* (The Older law of Västgötaland), compiled in the early thirteenth century by Eskil Magnusson.¹⁴¹ The law described, in a complicated process, that it was the Svear ('Sveær') who were entitled to choose the king where upon he must travel to Götaland, a journey which involved the exchange of hostages before the *götar* would swear loyalty to him.¹⁴² The same process is repeated in *Yngra Västgötalagen* (The Younger law of Västgötaland) from the end of the thirteenth century and can be found in a slightly different form in *Upplandslagen* (The law of Uppland) from 1296.¹⁴³ In the latter's *Book on Kings* ('kununx balkær') it was stated that the *folklands* of Uppland had the right to make the first choice, after which the king was to set out on an itinerary through the rest of Svealand and the two Götalands. No specific place was mentioned in *Upplandslagen* for this election, but the Stones of Mora are mentioned in *The Rhymed Chronicle of Erik* as the site of the election of King Magnus Barnlock in 1275.¹⁴⁴ Exactly when the Stones of Mora became the site for the election of the Swedish kings is difficult to ascertain, but that it was a known meeting place by the thirteenth century is clear from saga evidence.¹⁴⁵ The itinerary by the king was called to 'erix gatu riþæ' (to ride *Eriksgata*), and the law outlined the route the king had to take and the hostages that were to be exchanged as he entered each new province.¹⁴⁶ The Svear's right to elect the king can also be found in Saxo, a source which predates any of the Swedish

¹⁴⁰ SDHK 271/DS 102, SDHK 286/DS 115, SDHK 287/DS 116, SDHK 304/DS 127, SDHK 311/DS 131, SDHK 313/DS 133, SDHK 317/DS 139, SDHK 320/DS 135.

¹⁴¹ Fredrik Charpentier Ljungqvist, *Lagfäst Kungamakt under Högmedeltiden: En komparativ internordisk studie*, Rättshistoriskt Bibliotek, 27 (Stockholm: Institutet för Rättshistorisk Forskning, 2016), 443.

¹⁴² *ÄVL*, 36-37: 'Sveær egho konong at taka ok sva vrækæ. han skal mæþ gislum ovan fara ok i. östrægötland. þa skal han sændi mæn hingæt til aldragöta þings. þa skal laghmaþær gislæ skiptæ. tua sunnan af landi. ok tua norþæn af lanþe. siþan skal aþra fiuære mæn af landi gæræ med þem. þer skulu til iunæbækær. motæ faræ. Östgöta gisla skulu fylgiæ ok vittni bæra at han ær sva inlændær sum lægh þerræ. sigiæ. þa skal alþragötæ. þing i gen hanum næmnæ þa han til þings kombær þa skal han sic allum götom trolekæn sværiæ at han ska leigh ræt lægh a landi varu brytæ [...]'.
¹⁴³ *YVL*, 151.

¹⁴⁴ *EC*, 74. The Stones of Mora was situated on the Meadow of Mora, approx. 15 km south of Old Uppsala, and they functioned as the Swedish equivalent of the Stone of Scone.

¹⁴⁵ Line, *Kingship and State Formation*, 198-99. Mora is mentioned in *HkrOH*, in the context of Torgny the Law-speaker's confrontation with Olof Skötkonung at the Uppsala þing, as a place where five kings were once plunged into a well because they became too arrogant. Torgny used the story as a way to threaten the king. *HkrOH*, 321.

¹⁴⁶ *UL*, 87-9.

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laws.¹⁴⁷ According to Saxo, Magnus Nielsen's election by the people of Västgötaland was illegal because that right 'was wholly at the discretion of the Swedes'.¹⁴⁸

That the right to elect the king was reserved for the Svear is odd when considering that both the Sverker- and Erik-kindreds had their powerbases in in Götaland. This then, should be an indication that the political power ought to have been centred on Götaland rather than Svealand. Beyond just being the home provinces of the two royal kindreds, Götaland is also where they, with two exceptions, would die, be buried, and reside when not itinerant. There is in fact little evidence of a royal presence in Svealand among the early Christian kings, with the first evidence of this being Knut Eriksson (r. 1172/73-95) making donations to ecclesiastical instructions in the Mälars region from the 1180s.¹⁴⁹ Philip Line has speculated that the acceptance of Göta magnates in Svealand was because the Svear wanted kings with a weak authority.¹⁵⁰ For Sweden then, it is hard to determine what the practice was, but the frequent change in kings and the provincial laws compiled from the thirteenth century onwards are both strong circumstantial evidence for elective kingship being the norm in the twelfth, as well as the first half of the thirteenth century.

Shifting focus to Denmark, where both Saxo Grammaticus and Svend Aggesen emphasised the elective nature of the Danish kingship in their writings. However, the Danish provincial laws, when they were written down, contained no provisions regarding the election or succession of kings. One possible explanation for this could be that at the time these laws were written, in the first half of the thirteenth century, during the long reign of Valdemar II (r. 1201-41) – and his many sons – the succession may have appeared to have been a foregone conclusion. There was, in other words, no need to regulate something that, at the time, needed no regulation.¹⁵¹ Saxo, of the two historians, made the strongest case for the election being the only legitimate way in which one could gain the Danish kingship by showing that all of King Svend II Estridsen's sons (whom he referred to as the 'usual family') were elected to the kingship.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁷ For a dating of the Swedish laws, see Ljungqvist, *Lagfäst Kungamakt under Högmedeltiden*, 443-47.

¹⁴⁸ Saxo, xiii.5.1: 'Interea Sueticarum partium rege absumpto Gothi summam cuius omne penes Sueones arbitrium erat, Magno deferre ausi, aliene priuilegii detriment dignitatis sibi incrementa querebant.' (Meanwhile, when the ruler of the Swedish territories died, the Götar had the effrontery to confer supreme control on Magnus, even though this gift was wholly at the discretion of the Swedes; the former was seeking to enhance their own status by meddling with prerogative of others.)

¹⁴⁹ SDHK 214/DS 64, SDHK 216/DS 65, SDHK 219/DS 68, SDHK 220/DS 69, SDHK 218/DS 67, SDHK 284/DS 113; Lindkvist, 'Kings and provinces in Sweden', p. 226.

¹⁵⁰ Line, *Kingship and State Formation*, 198

¹⁵¹ *The Danish Medieval Laws: The laws of Scania, Zealand and Jutland*, ed. by Ditlev Tamm and Helle Vogt (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 47, 113, 154, 238.

¹⁵² Saxo, xi.10.2-4, xii.8.2-3, xiii.5.1, xiii.8.3, xiii.10, xiv.1.4, xiv.3.1-2; *ibid*, xii.8.4 (Itaque regem ex consueta potissimum familia petiturus).

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There are some Irish parallels for this form of succession, a kind of collective agnatic succession amongst the sons, rather than following a single line.¹⁵³ What Saxo alluded to here was a kin-right held by all the king's sons with an equal right to succeed to the kingship. Svend Aggesen in his *Brevis Historia Regum Dacie* (*A Short History of the Kings of Denmark*), covering Danish history from the reign of the legendary King Skjold to about 1185, used specific phrases when detailing the succession of each subsequent king. One of the words most often used was 'successit'. For instance, King Knud the Great 'in regno successit' and so did King Knud IV the Holy.¹⁵⁴ Most peculiarly, in just three instances, the succession was marked with the phrase 'regnum obtinuit': Halfdan, son of Skjold, who killed his brother in order to obtain the kingship; Sigwarth, who gained the kingdom through conquest; and, Valdemar the Great, who gained possession of the kingdom after a Battle of Grathe Heath against King Svend III Eriksen.¹⁵⁵ Svend's use of that phrase for those three instances would therefore indicate that their successions did not happen in the customary way: election. Before Svend Aggesen outlined the successions and reigns of the son of King Svend II, he wrote about what he called 'the primeval custom of our forefathers'. This seems to have referred to a custom whereby kings were raised to the kingship by all the Danes coming together in a body at Isøre 'so that royal inaugurations should be enhanced by the consent of all' – a clear indication of election or at the very least acclamation.¹⁵⁶ Isøre was more or less the geographical centre of medieval Denmark and was also mentioned by Saxo as the location for royal elections, but there is no evidence outside their works to support this claim.¹⁵⁷ However, Isøre (modern-day Rørvig), situated at the mouth of the Isefjord on northern Zealand, was not the only election site in medieval Denmark. Each of the three provinces had at least one: Urne (south) and Viborg (north) in Jutland, Ringsted in Zealand, and Lund in Scania, and each *ping* had the right to, independently of the others, elect a king. According to Erich Hoffmann, Viborg had the right to vote first, followed by Scania and Zealand.¹⁵⁸ This is evident in the conflict between Knud V and Svend III, when they were both elected king in Jutland and Scania, respectively. The Danish material leaves us in no doubt

¹⁵³ Bart Jaski, *Early Irish kingship and succession* (Dublin: Four Court Press, 2000), 113-24, 169-70, 229-36, 279-81.

¹⁵⁴ Svend Aggesen, *BHRD*, pp. 121, 127.

¹⁵⁵ Svend Aggesen, *SKHD*, pp. 49, 55, 72; idem, *BHRD*, pp. 97, 107, 139. Valdemar's acquisition of the kingship will be discussed in Chapter two, pp. 72-77.

¹⁵⁶ Svend Aggesen, *SHKD*, p. 65; idem, *BHRD*, p. 125: 'Nec est pretereundum, quod hec prisca ueterum inualuerit consuetudo, ut ad regni inaugurations in Iisóre Danorum uniuersa turba conflueret, ut eo in loco assentientibus omnium ciuium suffragiis regium nomen rerumque summam obtinerent.'

¹⁵⁷ Saxo, iii.3.1, xi.10.2. *Ibid*, 824, fn. 32.

¹⁵⁸ Erich Hoffmann, 'The Unity of the Kingdom and the Provinces in Denmark during the Middle Ages', in *Danish Medieval History: New Currents*, ed. by Niels Skyum-Nielsen and Niels Lund (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 1981), p. 100.

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then, that the kingship in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was elective and reserved for the ‘usual family’, even if specific rules were, beyond those, largely absent.

Of the three Scandinavian kingdoms, Norway is the one for which we have the most significant insight into how the rules of succession worked. However, part of this insight comes to us in the king’s sagas, compiled between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. In addition to the narrative evidence, normative evidence in the shape of three succession laws written between 1163/64 and 1273, gives us direct insight into how the kings themselves, the Church, and the magnates thought the succession should work.

The first Norwegian succession rule can be found in *Heimskringla*, which was compiled in the 1220s or 1230s and as such was more likely a reflection of late-twelfth or early-thirteenth century practices. The passage outlining the rules of succession clearly reflect practices described in other parts of *Heimskringla* up until the reign of Magnus Erlingsson. This would indicate that Snorri tried to make customary rules as ancient as possible and thus give them greater weight. In any case, it makes it very difficult to work out whether there were any actual succession rules before the legislative effort that led to the *Law of Succession of 1163/64* at the start of Magnus Erlingsson’s reign in the 1160s. Nevertheless, the succession rules outlined in the *Saga of Harald Fairhair* is still worth examining as it can provide us with information on what later sources thought the practices were before the written laws emerged. Towards the end of his reign, in c. 900, King Harald Fairhair ‘called a great assembly’ in eastern Norway:

Haraldr konungr stefndi þá þing fjölment austr í landi ok bauð til Upplendingum. Þá gaf hann sonum sínum öllum konunganöfn ok setti þat í lögum, at hans ættmanna skyldi hverr taka konungdóm eptir sinn föður, en jarldom sá, er kvensift var af hans ætt kominn. ¹⁵⁹	There he bestowed the title of king on all his sons and put into the laws that each of his descendants was to inherit a kingdom after his father, and an earldom, each who was of his kin on the female side.
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Here, we again find the kin-right, alluded to above by Saxo. The saga clearly states that all the king’s sons had the right to inherit. At the same time, King Harald is depicted as dividing the kingdom amongst his sons in a manner that on the surface appears similar to Salic patrimony – that is partition amongst all eligible sons – but differs in that it was unclear what constituted the Norwegian *terra Salica* and who the oldest son was.¹⁶⁰ If the division was supposed to follow Salic patrimony, then Vestfold, based on Claus Krag’s arguments regarding the consolidation

¹⁵⁹ *HkrHH*, 87; *HkrHH*, ÍF 26, 136-37.

¹⁶⁰ *The Laws of the Salian Franks*, trans. and with an intro. by Katherine Fischer Drew, University of Pennsylvania Press Middle Ages series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 44-5; Claus Krag, ‘Norge som odel i Harald Hårfages ætt: Et møte med en gjenganger’, *HT (No)*, 68 (1989), 288-89; *HkrHH*, 76.

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of Norway, would have been the *terra Salica* in Snorri's narrative and would have been given to the oldest son. However, in the saga, it was given to Bjørn Chapman and not Eirik Bloodaxe, identified by both *Ágrip* and *Historia Norwegie* as Harald's oldest son.¹⁶¹ As such this saga passage is making a claim for agnatic succession – which is a strong reflection of how succession is handled in the remainder of *Heimskringla*. More than a supposed reflection of tenth century practices, this was Snorri making a claim for the kingdom of Norway being the hereditary property of Norway's kings, a sentiment expressed in writing less than twenty years after his death.¹⁶² Furthermore, this passage also reflects the idea that the Fairhair-kindred would rule Norway for centuries, and that it still did when Snorri wrote *Heimskringla*. The idea of the Fairhair-kindred and its longevity ought to be taken with a grain of salt. The generally held view by most scholars today is that the Fairhair-kindred ended with Fairhair's grandson, King Harald II Greyfell, death in c. 970, and was in part a product of medieval invention.¹⁶³ Indeed, before the accession of King Harald III Hardrada in the eleventh century, it is difficult to talk about stable Norwegian dynasties.¹⁶⁴ While the Hardrada-kindred indirectly claimed descent from Harald Fairhair, that lineage is questionable at best. *Morkinskinna* gave a detailed account of Hardrada's lineage from Harald Fairhair to his father, Sigurd Syr, *Fagrskinna* only said he was the brother of St Olav, with *Heimskringla* somewhere in the middle, he was St Olav's brother and Sigurd Syr's son but without further embellishment.¹⁶⁵ Instead, the accession of Hardrada began a new royal kindred, at least this is what *Fagrskinna* apparently implies when it states 'after king Harald Sigurdsson gained possession of the kingdom, his kindred has held it ever since'.¹⁶⁶ Joan Turville-Petre has argued that Hardrada's connection to Fairhair was a reconstruction 'as [Harald Fairhair] was their political forerunner, so he also must be their common ancestor.'¹⁶⁷ By following this argument, we can, therefore, regard all Norwegian royal kindreds reigning from Harald Fairhair to the Kalmar Union (1397-1523) as retrospectively having been restructured under the moniker "Fairhair-kindred". What this "Fairhair-kindred"

¹⁶¹ *Ágrip*, 4-5; *Historia Norwegie*, 81-2. Claus Krag, 'Vestfold som utgangspunkt for den norske rikssamlingen', *Collegium Medivale*, 3.2 (1990), 179-95. According to *HkrHH*, Eirik was with his father, who resided in the 'centre of the country', and had been assigned Háleygjaland (35), Nordmøre (12) and Romsdal (13) – hardly prime real estate. *HkrHH*, 87.

¹⁶² Absalon Taranger has called the idea of Norway being the hereditary property of Norway's king 'judicial fiction'. 'Om kongevalg i Norge i sagatiden', *HT (No)*, 30 (1934-36), 113.

¹⁶³ Krag, 'The early unification of Norway', p. 185; Jo Rune Ugulen, 'Kongar i dei norske ættetavlene', *Genealogen*, 1 (1999), 20-3; Birgit and Peter Sawyer, *Medieval Scandinavia: From Conversion to Reformation, circa 800-1500* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 61.

¹⁶⁴ Krag, 'The early unification of Norway', pp. 185, 191.

¹⁶⁵ *Msk*, 130; *Fsk*, 236; *HkrHHard*, 577. See also Krag, 'Norge som odel i Harald Hårfagres ætt', 293.

¹⁶⁶ *Fsk*, 256.

¹⁶⁷ Joan Turville-Petre, 'The Genealogist and History: Ari to Snorri', *Saga-Book*, 20 (1978-81), 15.

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construction achieved, whether it was done by Snorri or other medieval writers, was it allowed the kingdom of Norway to become the patrimony of Norwegian kings; a piece of property to be divided up amongst the king's sons after his death.¹⁶⁸ The best expression of this is the long period of shared kingship or coregency (*samkongedømme*), between 1046, when Harald Hardrada returned to Norway and was made co-king by his nephew, to the reign of the sons of King Harald IV *gilli* who reigned in relative peace as co-kings from 1135 to 1155.¹⁶⁹ An example of this can be seen in 1067 when the two surviving sons of Harald Hardrada divided the kingship between them, but without dividing the kingdom. Each brother sat in a separate part of the kingdom and upon the death of one of them, the other assumed sole kingship without further ceremony.¹⁷⁰ Overall, in this period eleven kings had at one point or another shared the kingship with a relative, and between 1142 and 1145 the Norwegian kingship was shared between four men.¹⁷¹ At this point, it ought to be pointed out that the idea of kingship being reserved for members of a specific kindred was not, of course, unique to Scandinavia. For instance, in Hungary, an idea existed in the medieval period that the kingship belonged to the Árpád-dynasty, whose rule was characterised by chronic dynastic instability and resulted in twenty-two different rulers from 1038 to 1301.¹⁷² Similarly, the *Law of Hywel Dda* makes references to kin-right when listing the king's members as 'his sons and his nephews and his male first-cousins', and the custom seems to have existed in early medieval Ireland as well the Gaelic kingdom of Dál Ríata and pre-Viking Anglo-Saxon England.¹⁷³ Thus, the presence of kin-right as part of the Scandinavian succession rules places it within a wider European tradition that straddled the Celtic, Germanic, and Magyar worlds, and likely beyond.

In Norway, this kin-right appears to have formed the basis for what was known as "St Olav's law" – a seemingly catch-all term – referring to ancient customs and traditions regarding the succession. It further dictated that each claimant in possession of the kin-right had to bring his claim to the *þing* where the people would either accept or reject that claim. Acceptance by

¹⁶⁸ Krag, 'Norge som odel i Harald Hårfagres ætt', 294.

¹⁶⁹ *HkrHHard*, 595; *HkrIngi*, 736, 749-50.

¹⁷⁰ *HkrHHard*, 660, 662; *HkrOK*, 664.

¹⁷¹ See Appendix 4 for a list and overview of these kings and period of shared kingship.

¹⁷² Barber, *The Two Cities: Medieval Europe*, 334; M. Rady, *Nobility, Land and Service in Medieval Hungary* (London: Palgrave, 2000), 16-17.

¹⁷³ *The law of Hywel Dda: law texts from medieval Wales*, trans. and ed. by Dafydd Jenkins (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1986), 7; Immo Warntjes, 'Regnal succession in early medieval Ireland', *Journal of Medieval History*, 30 (2004), 377-81; Ian Whitaker, 'Regnal succession among Dalriata', *Ethnohistory*, 23 (1976), 353-55; David N. Dumville, 'The aethling: a study in Anglo-Saxon constitutional history', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 8 (1979), 14-18.

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the *þing*, which represented the people's voice, gave legitimacy to the king.¹⁷⁴ This process was known as *konungstekja*, and though no saga explicitly mentions this term, they nevertheless leave no doubt that election was a requirement for kingship.¹⁷⁵ Our only source for the actual ritual of *konungstekja* is the *Hirðskrá* (*The book of the hirð*), a collection of laws regulating the royal *hirð*, dating from late thirteenth-century Norway.¹⁷⁶ In the beginning, the elections seem to have taken place at the closest *þing*, but over time the assembly place for the people of Trøndelag, *Eyraping*, appears to have gained prominence and became accepted as the principal site of elections to the kingship.¹⁷⁷ In *Heimskringla*, *Eyraping* is first mentioned in this capacity in the *Saga of Olav Tryggvason* (r. 995-1000) where it states: 'In the general assembly in Trondheim, Olav Tryggvason was chosen king over all the land, as Harald Fairhair had been.'¹⁷⁸ This served to further the idea of being an ancient practice when it was written down in the thirteenth century. However, just as Hungary under the rule of the Árpád-dynasty, so to Norway was plagued by dynastic infighting among the real and perceived descendants of King Harald Fairhair following his reign.¹⁷⁹ Roger of Howden also gives dynastic infighting as one of the consequences of what he called 'the custom of the kingdom of Norway'. He provides a very accurate description of Norwegian practices, writing that 'everyone who is known to be the son of any king of Norway, although illegitimate, and the issue of a bondswoman, has equal right to lay claim to the kingdom of Norway.'¹⁸⁰ This infighting culminated in the civil war period lasting from 1130 to 1240 that would serve to revolutionise the kingship and lay the groundwork for the kingship as it appears at the end of the thirteenth century. Kin-right together with an election was clearly the basis for St Olav's law, even though no one seems to know who or what that kin should be, as long as the claimant was able to provide evidence for descent from previous kings.

In the mid-1160s, there was an attempt to replace the uncodified St Olav's law with a codified version. This new set of rules was short in length and written in Old Norse, and it was

¹⁷⁴ Fritz Kern, *Kingship and Law in the Middle Ages*, trans. with and intro. by S.B. Chrimes (New York, NY: Harper Torchbooks, 1970), 12; Jon Viðar Sigurdsson, *Det norrøne samfunnet: Vikingen, kongen, erkebiskopen og bonden* (Oslo: Pax Forlag, 2008), 27.

¹⁷⁵ Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, 169-70; David Brégaint, *Vox regis: Royal communication in High Medieval Norway*, *Northern World*, 74 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 35-37.

¹⁷⁶ *Hs*, 66-69.

¹⁷⁷ Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, 166.

¹⁷⁸ *HkrOT*, 193; *HkrOT*, *ÍF* 16, 299: 'Óláfr Tryggvason var til konungs tekin í Þrándheimi á allsherjarþingi um land allt, svá sem haft hafði Haraldr inn hárfagri'.

¹⁷⁹ Krag, 'The early unification of Norway', pp. 189-91.

¹⁸⁰ Howden, *Chronica*, III, 272: 'Est etiam sciendum, quod consuetudo regni Norweie est usque in hodernium diem, quod omnis qui alicujus regis Norweie dinoscitur esse filius, licet sit spurius, et de ancilla genitus, tantum sibi jus vendicat in regnum Norweie, quantum filius regis conjugati, et de libera genitus. Et ideo fiunt inter eos prælia indesinenter, donec unus illorum vincatur et interficiatur.'

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pragmatic more than anything else. It was written as part of King Magnus Erlingsson's acquisition of the kingship and became part of the foundation on which it was built, meant to secure the political future of the new kingdom.¹⁸¹ This succession law consisted of two parts. The first contained a definition of kingship and detailed how the succession was to be regulated among the king's legitimately born sons, of whom the eldest son was given preference, while at the same time not giving an automatic right to succeed to any of them (cf. St Olav's law). These were then followed by rules regulating the succession if the king had no legitimate sons. The second part contained the procedural rules that must be followed every time, as well as detailing the punishment should anyone accept the kingship in a manner not described in the law:

Þat er nu því nest. at sa skal konongr vera at Norege er skilgetenn er Norex konungs sunr nema þeim ragne illzca æða uvizca. En ef þessir lutir rinda hinum ellzta fra ríki þa skal sa hans broðer samfeðra konongr vera er ærkibiscope oc lioðbiscopum þyckir bezt vera fallenn til. oc þeim tolf vitrastom monnum or hveriu biscopsríki er þeir nemna til með ser. oc gange hinir ulærðo menn með svornom eiði til þess umcemes at þeir scoló þann til taca. er þeim synizt firi guði at bazt se til fallenn.

[...] En ef Norex konongr a eigi sun skilgetenn efter sic. þa sa konongr er erfðum er nestr. efter umdæme þeirra er til verða nemðir. ef hann er til fallenn. En ef sa synisc eigi til fallenn. þa skal sa vera er þeim synic er til ero nemdir at bazt hæve bæðe guðs rettar at gæta oc lannz laga. En ef þa skilr a. þa scoló þeir sitt mál hava er fleiri verða saman. oc ærkibiscop. oc aðrer biscopar fylgia. oc þat sanna með eiði sinum.

En efter frafall konongs. þa se sialfboðet biscopom ollom. oc abotom. oc hiðstiornom með hirð allre at sækia norðr til hins Helga Olafs konongs. til umræðes við ærkibiscop. oc nemne biscop hverr .xij. hian vitrasto menn með sér. oc se aller a for innan fyrsta manaðar. siðan er þeir spyria frafall konongsins.

[...] En ef nokorr letr sic annan veg til taca. þa hever sa firgort fe oc friði. oc hverr sa er hanom fylgir til þess. oc vera i banne guðs. oc allra

It is from now onwards, that he shall be king in Norway who is a trueborn born son of Norway's King unless malice or ignorance takes power over him. If these chases the oldest born son away from the realm, then his brother of the same father whom the archbishop and the suffragan bishops and, the twelve wisest men from every bishopric they appoint with them, think is best suited, shall be king. And the unlearned men shall go to the decision with a sworn oath that they will take as king whom they before God thinks is best suited to it.

[...] If the King of Norway does not have trueborn sons, then he shall be king, whom the appointed decides is next in succession if he is suited for it. But if he is found not suitable, then he shall be king whom the appointed decides is best suited to keep and maintain God's right and the laws of the land. But if there is disagreement amongst them, they who are in the majority, and who have the support of the archbishop and the other bishops, and they who consent with their oaths shall decide the outcome.

But after the king's passing, then all the bishops and abbots and the leaders of the *hirð* with the entire *hirð* shall unsummoned seek north to the Holy St Olav for consultation with the archbishop. And each bishop shall bring with him the 12 wisest men. And all shall have begun their journey within the first month of having learned of the king's passing.

[...] But if anyone else allows themselves to become [king] in a different manner, then each has forfeited peace and property, and they shall in the

¹⁸¹ The kingship of Magnus Erlingsson will be discussed in more detail in Chapters three and four, pp. 89-97, 117-126.

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heilagra manna. pavans oc ærkibiscops. oc allra lioðbiscopa.¹⁸² eyes of God and all the saints, the pope, archbishop and all suffragan bishops be excommunicated.

The law heralded a shift towards a kingship influenced by the *rex iustus*-ideology.¹⁸³ From now on, kingship was an office with no automatic rights of succession that could only be occupied by one person at the time, a practice that was incompatible with St Olav's law. In order to be considered for the office of kingship, a claimant now had to be of legitimate birth (legitimacy-principle), with preference given to the oldest son (primogeniture-principle), and, finally, his suitability for the job had to be assessed by an electoral college consisting of the clergy and the representatives of the people (suitability-principle). Therefore, being the oldest son was not in and of itself a guarantee to become the king; anyone of the king's legitimate sons could be found suitable for the kingship.¹⁸⁴ At the same time, the threshold for passing over the oldest son was made very tall and suitable vague: only if 'malice or ignorance' took power over him could he be passed over. Similarly, a threshold was created to determine the suitability of the candidates: only he who could keep and maintain God's right and the laws of the land could become the king. The form of primogeniture introduced by the law was agnatic primogeniture, and this was the most common form of primogeniture practised in Western Europe. For instance, a similar practice was codified in the Castilian *Siete Partidas* during the reign of King Alfonso X (r. 1252-84).¹⁸⁵ The law, therefore, represented a complete break with St Olav's law. First, the indivisible office of kingship now meant that relatives could no longer share the dignity and prestige of the kingship, as had been the norm from 1046 to 1155. This was illustrated by King Magnus Erlingsson twice rejecting Sverre Sigurdsson's offer to share the kingship with him in the early 1180s.¹⁸⁶ Second, it blocked the automatic right to the kingship previously held by all the king's sons by introducing the principles of legitimacy and suitability. Fritz Kern has argued that first baptism, and then legitimate birth had been established as the two canonical qualifications for the royal office, in this respect, the clerical demand for suitability was opposed to the principle of kin-right because it was determined to exact strict religious or moral standards from the ruler of a Christian kingdom.¹⁸⁷ This was also why the law contained a clearly defined

¹⁸² *NMD*, pp. 32-35. All translations from the *NMD* into English are my own.

¹⁸³ Steinar Imsen, 'Erkebiskop Eystein som politiker', in *Eystein Erlendsson: Erkebiskop, politiker og kirkebygger*, ed. by Kristin Bjørlykke and others (Trondheim: Nidaros Domkirkes restaureringsarbeiders forlag), 2012, pp. 17-19; Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, 167; Claus Krag, *Norges historie frem til 1319* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2000), 114.

¹⁸⁴ Krag, *Norges historie frem til 1319*, 115; Erik Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein: Statsmann og kirkebygger* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1996), 112-13; Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, 166.

¹⁸⁵ *Las Siete Partidas del Rey Don Alfonso X El Sabio*, 3 vols (Madrid, 1807), II, 132-33.

¹⁸⁶ *SvS*, 70, 95.

¹⁸⁷ Kern, *Kingship and Law in the Middle Ages*, 29-30.

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sanction to be used against anyone who broke the new rules.¹⁸⁸ Thus, the process proscribed in the law became the only legal way in which the kingship could be acquired. However, not every aspect of the old order went away. The principle of election remained, but the control of the election now passed from the *þings* and the people and into the hands of the clergy, who were meant to be the true kingmakers from this point forward. Though the law was intended to avoid the chaotic successions of the days of old and instead introduce a stable and orderly succession, this never came to be, as no succession under this law ever took place.

Almost a century later another attempt was made at regulating the order of succession to the Norwegian kingship. This time King Håkon IV Håkonsson made several changes to the law introduced in 1163/64 and had it passed at *Frostþing* with the advice and consent of the most prominent men of the kingdom.¹⁸⁹ The law followed the structure and language of the original, especially in the second part.¹⁹⁰ This revision reworked the line of succession, giving precedence to the senior line of descent over the more junior line, as well as giving illegitimate sons the right to succeed to the kingship if the pool of legitimate sons and sons' sons had been exhausted. This acceptance of an illegitimate son's right to inherit was a clear reflection of Pope Gregory IX's 1241 reply to the Norwegian clergy regarding a coronation for King Håkon. Since there were no trueborn sons or other close male relatives who could lawfully ('de iure') succeed Håkon III, the pope wrote, Håkon could succeed his father according to the laws and customs of the land ('secundum legem et consuetudinem patrie').¹⁹¹ The law also reduced the influence of the Church as the consultation with the archbishop ('umræðes við ærkibiscop') was removed, and the general population of Trøndelag was included, as the general assembly at *Eyrþing* was explicitly mentioned as the site for the acclamation of the new king. It is worth considering the chronology of things here for a moment. The law making *Eyrþing* the principal acclamation site was introduced in or around 1260 – in the middle of the period when the sagas were written, compiled, and edited. None of the great kings' sagas we have today, such as *Sverre's saga*, *Böglunga saga*, *Morkinskinna*, *Fagrskinna*, *Heimskringla*, and *Håkon Håkonsson's saga* have been handed down to us in their original form.¹⁹² *Ágrip*, the oldest known king's saga, written around 1190 and surviving in an early thirteenth century manuscript, makes no mention of the

¹⁸⁸ Compare this to similar sanctions included in some of Valdemar I of Denmark's charters, e.g. *DD*, I:2 nos. 123 and 131. For more on this see Aksel E. Christensen, *Ret og magt i dansk middelalder: Forelæsninger af Aksel E. Christensen med et selvbiografisk tillæg* (København: Gyldendal, 1978).

¹⁸⁹ The law is usually dated to 1260 based on a reference in the contemporary *HH* to Håkon and Magnus making changes to the law. *NMD*, p. 104; *HH*, II, 209: 'Håkon konungr [för inn] til Frostþings ok skipað þar konungs málum' (King Håkon went to Frostating where he made changes to the law).

¹⁹⁰ *NMD*, pp. 106-9.

¹⁹¹ *DN*, I, no. 28. This was later confirmed by Pope Innocent IV in 1246. *DN*, I, no. 38.

¹⁹² *SvS*, cxxxvi-cxxxviii; *Bs*, lxxxvi-lxxxvii; *Msk*, 5-11; *Fsk*, 16-20; *Hkr*, xxiii-xxv; *HH*, II, cxxxvii-cxl.

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Eyraping. Likewise, Theodoricus Monachus in his work, from c. 1180, has no reference to any principal election site.¹⁹³ It is, therefore, most likely that the significance of *Eyraping* was written into the sagas after Trondheim (see Figure 2) and *Eyraping* (now in Trondheim) became the nucleus of royal election and acclamation, first in 1163/64 and then, more explicitly so, in 1260, to give it a historical weight and importance.¹⁹⁴ At the same time, the law made it clear that it was not the duty of the *ping* to decide who the new king was to be. Instead, the *ping* was only meant to acclaim the nearest in the line of succession, either the king's oldest son or the nearest heir after that if the king had no sons. Along with the removal of the election, the suitability-principle was also removed: a royal scion could no longer be denied access to the kingship as long as he fulfilled the other criteria listed in the law.

Sa skal konongr at Noreg vera er skilgeten er Norges konongs svnr hin æilzti odal borenn til landsz oc þængna. En ef eigi er skilgetten svnn till þa skal sa konongs sonar svnr konongr ver er skilgetten er. þa skal oc konongs svnnr vera þo at han se eigi skilgetenn: en ef æigi er sa till ne æinhvær þæssarra þa se konongr at Norege er odalboren er oc þ erfðum nestr. oc þo af kononga ætt kommen.

He shall be the king to Norway who is the oldest trueborn son of Norway's king, born with the inherited right to land and subjects.¹⁹⁵ But if the trueborn oldest son is no more, then shall his son be king if he is trueborn. Thereafter shall also the king's son be king, even if he is not trueborn. But if there are no such sons, then he shall be king in Norway who is born with the right to inherit and is closest in the inheritance and are of the king's kindred

Sidan eiptir frafall konongs. þa se sialfbodet konongs efni biskupum ollom oc abottom. hirdstiorum: oc logmannvm ollum med hirda alla oc sæckia nordr till hins hælga Olafs konongs frænda sins oc nefne hirdstiorar med ser .xij. hina vitrastu menn or hværiv biskups riki oc se a for jnnan fvrsta manadar sidan þæir fregna konongs frafall. þa latter konongs æfni stemfna almennilegt Æyraping. oc se þar till

Then after the death of the king, the king's issue¹⁹⁷, all the bishops and abbots, the leaders of *hirð* and all the lawspeakers¹⁹⁸ with the entire *hirð* shall unsummoned seek north to the Holy St Olav, his kinsman. And the leaders of the *hirð* shall bring with them the 12 wisest men from each bishopric, and they shall depart within a month of having learnt of the king's passing. Then the king's issue shall summon a general *Eyraping*, and there he shall be

¹⁹³ *Ágrip*, ix-xiii; *HARN*, xi-xiii.

¹⁹⁴ Trondheim, then Niðarós, has traditionally been considered as Norway's first capital from its founding in 997, followed by Bergen (*Björgvin*) in much of the thirteenth century, before finally Oslo, when Hákon V (r. 1299-1319) took up permanent residency in Akershus Fortress, built on the outskirts of the town. At the same time, the Norwegian kingship, like its European counterparts, were largely itinerant with the kings spending the winter/Christmas season in one of the major towns.

¹⁹⁵ The ON term 'odal borenn' is a complex phrase to translate but essentially referred to being born with the right to inherit family land, usually through the father. In other words, the Norwegian kingdom was seen as the patrimonial lands.

¹⁹⁷ 'konongs efni/æfni', here translated in its literal meaning as 'king's issue', was a term that were used to refer to pretenders or claimants to the kingship. They emerged in the civil war era (1130-1240) when they became the focal point for various rebellious factions. The most common way for them to prove their status was through the ordeal by hot iron. The term was also used by Henrik Ibsen for his 1863 play, *Kongs-Emnerne* (*The Pretenders*), about the power struggle between Hákon IV and Skule Bårdsson.

¹⁹⁸ 'Logmannvm' (lawmen), also known as 'lögsögumaðr' (lawspeaker). The original office was *lögsögumaðr*, elected by the *ping* to recite the existing laws and customs. This role was changed during Sverre's reign into becoming a royal official (logmannvm), and later still, Magnus VI, made them into judges who presided over the *lögpings*. It is not clear from the context which of these two officials the law is referring to.

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konongs tæikin oc svæiri þegnom sinvm log acclaimed king and swear his subjects law and
hoc rettindi en þæir honom land oc þæгна.¹⁹⁶ justice, and they him land and loyalty.

Here, the shift towards a kingship influenced by the *rex iustus* ideology was completed. From this point onwards, Sverre Bagge has argued, the selection by God of the nearest within the line of succession became more important than the quality of the royal lineage. In Håkon's court, he further argued, the *rex iustus*-ideology and the idea of kingship as an office became fully accepted while managing to integrate within it the idea of dynastic succession and royal blood by labelling it as "God's election".¹⁹⁹ The primogeniture-principle, along with the heredity of the kingship, was enshrined. However, this law was just as pragmatic as the one introduced almost a century before, and it reflected in many ways the political reality of the reign of King Håkon. By 1260 Håkon's firstborn legitimate son had died, leaving behind a young son of his own, yet it was Håkon's second legitimate son, Magnus, who had been elected as co-king. This also happened in 1240 with the election of Håkon the Young as co-king; Håkon IV's illegitimate children and their offspring were passed over.

This practice of associative kingship, sometimes known as anticipatory succession, was usually marked by a coronation of a designated heir during their father's lifetime. By the twelfth century, many European and Levantine kingdoms had either experimented with associative kingship or were currently employing it. The first Carolingian kings had used associative kingship as a means to validate their new dynasty and secure its succession. Likewise, it had been used in Ottonian Germany in order to consolidate their position, as well as the Capetian kings of France from 987 onwards.²⁰⁰ In Scotland, the title 'heir and king designate' (*heres et rex designatus*) was adopted before 1144 by Henry, the only son of King David I, King of Scots.²⁰¹ Though this has been seen as a direct emulation of Capetian practises, Matthew Strickland argues the close relationship between David and his brother-in-law King Henry I of England makes it more probable that in this case, the influence came from England and William

¹⁹⁶ *NMD*, pp. 106-9.

¹⁹⁹ Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, 169.

²⁰⁰ W. Ohnesorge, 'Die Idee der Mitregenschaft den Sachenherrschern', *Mitteilungen des österreichischen Staatsarchivs*, 25 (1972), 539-48, reprinted in *Ost-Rom und der Western* (Darmstadt, 1983), pp. 117-27. For later Staufen practice, see Björn Weiler, 'Suitability and Right: Imperial Succession and the Norms of Politics in Early Staufen Germany', in *Making and Breaking the Rules of Succession in Medieval Europe, c.1000-c.1600*, ed. by F. Lachaud and M. Penman (Turnhout, 2008), pp. 71-86; J. Dhondt, 'Élection et hérédité sous les Carolingiens et les premières Capétiens', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 18 (1939), 913-53; R. Fawtier, *The Capetian King of France: Monarchy and Nations, 987-1328* (London, 1960), 48-50; A.W. Lewis, 'Anticipatory Association of the Heir in Early Capetian France', *American Historical Review*, 83 (1978), 906-27, idem, *Royal Succession in Capetian France: Studies on Familial Order and the State* (Cambridge, MA, 1981), 44-77.

²⁰¹ *Charters of King David I: The Written Acts of David I King of Scots, 1124-53, and of his son Henry Earl of Northumberland, 1139-52*, ed. by G.W.S. Barrow (Woodbridge, 1999), nos. 126, 129

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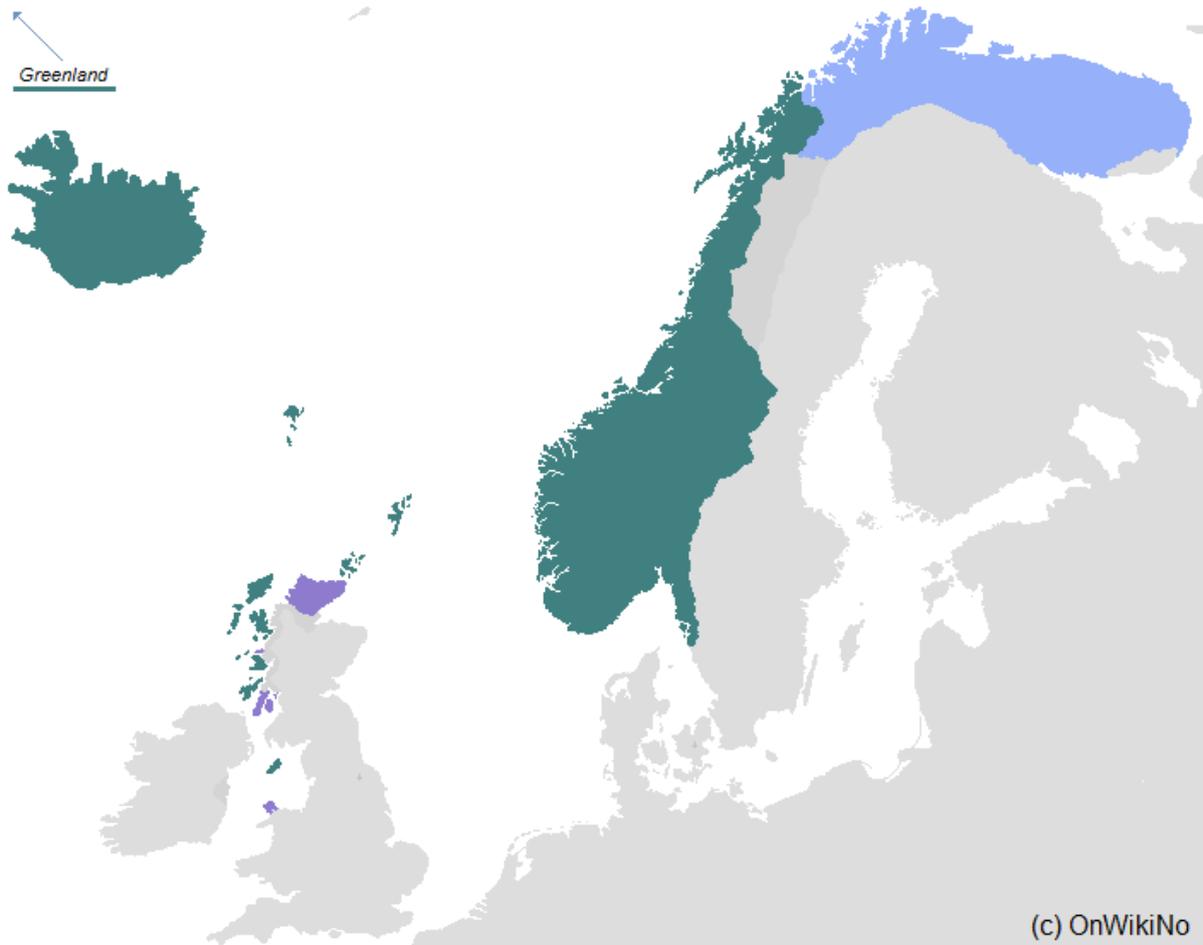


Figure 3. The greatest extent of the Norwegian realm, c. 1263. Green shows Norway proper and purple shows the tributaries (skattland). Light blue is territory where Norway collected the Finneskatt, shared with Novgorod from 1326.
(c) OnWikiNo/CC BY-SA.

Aetheling.²⁰² William was associated with his father's rule from c. 1118, and Henry subsequently participated in the joint governance of David's Scoto-Northumbrian realm.²⁰³ On Henry's premature death, his oldest son Malcolm, though only a child, was associated with the rule of King David. Malcolm's grant to Kelso Abbey furnished an image of this condominium, in which a beardless young Malcolm sat crowned, enthroned, and holding a sceptre beside his grandfather, his superior authority symbolised by him holding a drawn sword.²⁰⁴ Similarly, in the early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, some kings associated younger brothers or sons as co-rulers. One such an example occurred in 787, when King Offa of Mercia (r. 757-96), overlord over

²⁰² *Regesta regum Scottorum, I: The Acts of Malcolm IV, King of Scots 1153-1165*, ed. by G.W.S. Barrow (Edinburgh, 1960), 4, fn. 3; Strickland, *Henry the Young King*, 43.

²⁰³ *Charters of King David I*, ed. by Barrow, 34; K.J. Stringer, 'State-building in Twelfth-Century Britain, David I, King of Scots, and Northern England', in *Government, Religion and Society in Northern England, 1000-1700*, ed. by J.C. Appleby and P. Dalton (Stroud, 1997), pp. 40-62; G.W.S. Barrow, 'The Scots and the North of England', in *The Anarchy of King Stephen's Reign*, ed. by Edmund King (Oxford, 1994), pp. 231-53; idem, 'King David I, Earl Henry and Cumbria', *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, new series, 99 (1999), 117-27.

²⁰⁴ *Liber S. Marie de Calchou: Registrum Cartarum abbacie Tironensis de Kelso*, ed. by C. Innes, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1846), I, plate.

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much of much of what we think of today as England, had his son Ecgfrith consecrated, in a ceremony that appears to have been the first recorded instance of a coronation of an English king.²⁰⁵ Strickland believes this was done in imitation of Carolingian practice. He further argued the event was intended to counter a hostile archbishop of Canterbury and Kentish resistance to Offa's authority and that its primary purpose was the overriding of existing customs of succession, whereby several eligible members of the royal kindred were possible claimants.²⁰⁶ Nevertheless, associative kingship was not adopted by subsequent Anglo-Saxon nor Norman kings of England, until the reign of King Stephen (r. 1135-54), when he unsuccessfully attempted to have his oldest son crowned as his co-king.²⁰⁷ Further afield, for instance, in the kingdom of Jerusalem, the practice was used to counter the potentially dangerous circumstances that could arise with either a female heir, a minority, or through a terminal illness of a ruling king. For instance, Melisende, the oldest daughter and heir of Baldwin II, was crowned co-ruler in 1128, and succeeded him in 1131.²⁰⁸ Moreover, when the kingdom was faced with an imminent succession crisis due to the rapidly deteriorating condition of its leper king, Baldwin IV, his five-year-old nephew was crowned and anointed as his co-ruler.²⁰⁹ Likewise, in the Norman kingdom of Sicily, King Roger II had his son William crowned and anointed as 'rex consor regni' by the archbishop of Palermo at Easter 1151.²¹⁰ King Håkon's decision, therefore, to associate his sons with his kingship had clear European parallels. Moreover, it also reflected the position of Håkon's kindred in 1240. Despite having been in possession of the kingship since 1217, the rebellion by his father-in-law put Håkon in a precarious situation and should he die in the fighting his supporters and followers would thus have someone to rally behind. Håkon's emulation of what was a European practice should be viewed in this light: it was done in order to secure his kindred's future position as Norway's kings. It is therefore interesting to note that there were neither customary rules nor traditions relating to this practice in Norway, nor was there a written rule, as none of the succession laws discussed so far specifically said that the

²⁰⁵ Strickland, *Henry the Young King*, 42; F.M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd edn (Oxford, 1989), 218-19.

²⁰⁶ Strickland, *Henry the Young King*, 42. This is very much similar to the underlying reason for what Valdemar I of Denmark does with his son Knud VI, and to a lesser degree what Håkon IV of Norway does with Magnus VI in the following chapter.

²⁰⁷ Strickland, *Henry the Young King*, 43-44.

²⁰⁸ Bernard Hamilton, 'Women in the Crusader States: The Queens of Jerusalem, 1100-1190', in *Medieval Women*, ed. by D. Baker (Ecclesiastical History Society, 1978), pp. 143-74.

²⁰⁹ Bernard Hamilton, *The Leper King and his Heirs: Baldwin IV and the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 194-5.

²¹⁰ *Chronique de Robert de Torigni*, ed. by L. Delisle, 2 vols (Rouen, 1872-73), 178: 'Willelmus, filius suus, quem pater ante mortem suam sublimatum in regem consortem regni fecerat.'; Donald Matthew, *The Norman Kingdom of Sicily* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 170. See also, Léon-Robert Ménager, 'L'Institution monarchique dans les états normands d'Italie: Contribution à l'étude du pouvoir royal dans les principautés occidentales, aux XI^e-XII^e siècles', *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale*, 2 (1959), 303-31, 445-68.

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present king had to associate his kingship with his son during his lifetime. Similarly, the Danish kings also experimented with associative kingship, without basis in any customary rules or written laws. The first attempt was those of King Niels who attempted to have Lothar III, the Holy Roman Emperor, recognise his son Magnus who ended up submitting to him in 1134.²¹¹ Valdemar I then followed up in the mid-twelfth century and associated his eldest son with his reign, and later Danish kings in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries would follow his example.²¹² The introduction of associative kingship in Scandinavia was hence not based on any ancient local customs or traditions. It was, above all, an expression of political circumstance.

The last succession law to be discussed in this chapter is the revision made to the 1260 succession law by King Magnus VI in 1273. The law was enacted at an assembly (*riksmøte*) but was not dated nor did it specify a location. Besides, it was not included in *Járnsíða* of 1271-72; the first Icelandic law code introduced after Iceland became part of Norway. Moreover, the concordat of Bergen from 1 August 1273 mentions an electoral college of the kind described in the law. In the time between 1271 and 1273 we only know of one assembly, the one in 1273 where the concordat of Bergen was enacted. The *Law of Succession of 1273* can, therefore, be reasonably be dated to this assembly. The law builds on the legal material that precedes it but was more accommodating towards the ecclesiastical ideals of succession than the 1260 law. This accommodation must be seen in light of the negotiations between King Magnus and Archbishop Jon resulting in the concordat of Bergen and the *sættargjerdin* (settlement) of Tønsberg in 1277.²¹³ The major revision undertaken by the law lay in changes made to the order of succession. Instead of the previous short description of who could be king contained in the first law and the 1260 edition, the 1273 edition introduced a list of thirteen different inheritance classes, describing who could succeed to the kingship. Following the seniority-principle introduced in the 1260 edition, the law worked its way down from the oldest son, then the king's sons' sons, followed by the king's trueborn brothers of the same father, then trueborn paternal uncles, trueborn paternal nephews and trueborn paternal grandnephews – always with a preference for the oldest.

iiij. I namfne faður oc sonar oc heilags anda eins guðs i heilagre þriningu skal einn hans þion konungr vera ifir allu Norges uældi bæðe innan landz oc sua skatlondum.

iv. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God in holy trinity, one shall be His servant king over the entire Norwegian realm,

²¹¹ *Saxo*, xiii.8.6; *ibid*, I, 950, fn. 51.

²¹² The introduction of associative kingship to Scandinavia will be further discussed in the second half of Chapter two, pp. 77-85.

²¹³ *NMD*, pp. 118-20, 120-25.

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both within the land and in the lands paying taxes.²¹⁴

v. Fyrsta erfð. En eptir frafall konungs uars þa er su hin fyrsta Norges konungs erfð at sa skal konungr vera ifir Noregs konungs riki sem Norges konungs son er skilgetin hinn ællzti einn.

v. First inheritance: But after the passing of our king, it is the first inheritance then that he shall be king over the Norwegian kingdom who is a son of Norway's king, is trueborn and the oldest.

Hin .ij. erfð. Sv er onnur erfð at sa sonar sonr konungs skal konungr vera sem skilgetin er en ellzti einn. sa faðer hans uar oc skilgetin ef engi er sona til skilgetinna.²¹⁵

The 2. inheritance: It is the second inheritance that the king's son's son shall be the king who is trueborn, the oldest alone. Just as his father was and trueborn if there are no trueborn sons.

If the pool of trueborn male relatives were exhausted, this edition also maintained that illegitimate sons could inherit, given that the king had fulfilled several criteria listed by the law. It was only after this possibility had been exhausted too, that we find the law's innovation: the eligibility for women to pass on the right to succeed to their sons, as long as they and their sons were trueborn. As a result of the negotiations between King Magnus and the archbishop, the Church's decisive role in the election when the thirteen inheritance classes had been exhausted was reintroduced.²¹⁶ The law did, however, expand the number of participants at this electoral assembly to also include the duke and the jarl ('hertuga oc iarle'), if there were any, as well as the *sýslumenn*, making them responsible together with the bishops for choosing the twelve wisest men to accompany them to Trondheim 'according to their own conscience'.²¹⁷ Likewise, the ecclesiastical sanction introduced in the first succession law was kept, adding that along with the excommunication they had forfeited the right to a Christian burial.²¹⁸

Hin .vij. erfð. Sv er hin .vij. erfð er konungs son skal konungr vera eptir faður sinn en ællzti einn þo at hann se eigi skilgetinn. sa þo huarke er getinn i hordome ne frendsemis spelli eða sifskapa oc konungr sealfir hefir gengit uið faðerni hans oc sagt sialfr skilrikum monnum auene til firir samiusti saker sinar oc moðor hans. oc suarar stund su sem barent er foett þeirri tiltolu sem til høyyrir. oc hefir moðeren eigi tuent til faðernis sagt eptir þeim hætte sem logbok uattar vm slik mal. þessu skolu þeir eihl löeyna er uita ifir manað nmea þeir

The 7. inheritance: It is the seventh inheritance when the king's son shall be king after his father, the oldest alone, even if he was not trueborn; since he is neither born in adultery nor in violation of kinship or affinity, when the king has admitted to being his father, and himself informed respectable men that it was expected based on the relationship between him and his mother, and that the time when the child is born corresponds to such calculations as are customarily conducted, and that the mother has not named two fathers, in

²¹⁴ The term 'skatlondum' likely referred to those areas that were tributaries of the Norwegian kings such as Shetland, the Orkneys, Isle of Man, Iceland, Greenland, and Finnmark with the Kola peninsula (see map on p. 37).

²¹⁵ *NMD*, pp. 120-23.

²¹⁶ Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, 299.

²¹⁷ *NMD*, p. 123: 'oc nefne byskup huer or sinu byskupsdæme [oc sýslumenn konungs þeir sem þar eru] .xij. hina uitraztu bændr eptir sinnu samuiszsku'. *Sýslumenn* (*sýslumaðr*, sing.) was a royal official who acted as the king's ombudsman in the *sysse*l (shire), collected the taxes and had important duties within the judiciary, as such the role can be equated with the Anglo-Saxon sheriff. The office still exists in modern-day Norway as the *Sysse*lmann (Governor) of Svalbard, the representative of the Norwegian government on the archipelago.

²¹⁸ *NMD*, p. 123: 'oc eigi kirkiu græfr'.

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ottizt ofriki. þo skolu þeir einum huerium skilrikum monnum fleirum til segia at vitni megi vm bæra ef þess þarf.

the manner the law books proscribe such matters. Those who know [it] should not keep it hidden for more than a month unless they fear violence. Nevertheless, they should speak to some more respectable men, so that testimony may be given, if necessary.

Hin .viij. erfð. Sv er hin .viij. erfð er dottor son konungs skilgetinn hinn ællzti einn sjal konungr vera. Sa sem moðer hans uar skilgetin ef engi er hinna til aðr eru talder.

The 8. inheritance: It is the eight inheritance when the king's trueborn daughter's son shall be king, the oldest alone; he whose mother was also trueborn, if there are no other as previously listed.

Hin .xiiij. erfð. En ef engi er þessara til sem nu eru tallder þa se sa konunger at Noregi hinn ællzti einn er erfðom er þa nestr eptir þui sem gulapings bok uattat i erfða tale. karl þo en eigi kona. oc þo af tette konunga ættene komin.

The 13. inheritance. But if none of those previously listed exists, then he shall be king of Norway, the oldest alone, who then according to the *Gulaping* [law] book is the closest inheritor, yet man not woman, and of the king's kindred.

The Norwegian succession laws written in this period have by some been seen as a result of the Church's growing influence in Norway, with several scholars pointing to Archbishop Eystein Erlendsson (1158-88), whom we will meet again later, as one of the key figures in this regard.²¹⁹ The presence of clergymen in all three of the laws certainly makes it clear that the Church played a role, but it is, however, difficult to know just how significant that role was. However, perhaps the most curious thing is the fact that Norway had a succession law, let alone three, in this period. None of Norway's closest neighbours – Sweden, Denmark, England, or Scotland – had anything resembling any of the three succession laws in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This raises some interesting questions about why the Norwegians were so concerned with stipulating, what in the end became, quite a detailed list of potential heirs. There were no storm clouds on the horizon in 1273, no uncertain succession – the king had two sons, the oldest of whom had just been associated with his kingship – and domestically there was no one to challenge the position of the Sverre-kindred on the throne.²²⁰ Nor were there any foreign relations that could potentially cause trouble for the kingship. What is clear, however, is that these laws were made in a time often called the 'juridical century' (1150-1250). In Norway, the reign of King Magnus, in particular, was a time of extensive legislative revision, from which Magnus's byname, 'the Law-mender', stems. By the time we get to his revision of the succession law, Magnus had already revised the laws of three of the Norwegian *lögþing* districts: *Gulaping* in 1267 and *Borgarþing* and *Heiðsævisþing* in 1268, all of which would be replaced

²¹⁹ Brégaint, *Vox regis*, 34-35; Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein*, 130; Margrete Syrstad Andås, 'Art and Ritual in the Liminal Zone', in *The Medieval Cathedral of Trondheim*, ed. by Margrete Syrstad Andås and others (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), p. 123; Johan Schreiner, 'De første kongekroningene i Norden', *HT (No)*, 34 (1946-48), 518-34.

²²⁰ *Magnúss saga Lagabætis*, in *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, ed. by Þorleifur Hauksson, Sverrir Jakobsson and Tor Ulset, intro. trans. by Tor Ulset (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenszka Fornritafélag, 2013), II, 279.

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by a national law code (*Landsloven*) in 1274. Therefore, the revised succession law can perhaps be explained as one part of the king's project to gradually establish royal authority over several aspects of society and as a reflection of his consolidation of royal power over the process of succession, as David Brégaint has argued.²²¹ Knut Helle similarly argued that the changes to the order of succession reflected increased consolidation and an expression of a kingship growing in power, flexing its muscles. Elsewhere in Europe, he further argued, only the French kingdom could demonstrate an equally established hereditary kingdom in the thirteenth century.²²² Yet, we know that other kingdoms, including both Denmark and England, also saw significant new and/or revised legal compilations, but without adding any succession laws. Nonetheless, the discussion has revealed that, if nothing else, the Norwegians had a firm grasp on the concept of how the succession should have been done in the past and also how it should be done in the future. However, if the emergence of the succession laws is considered in terms economics and dynastic survival a partial picture is revealed.

For close to a century, leading up to the coronation of Magnus Erlingsson, the kingship had at times been shared between multiple individuals, with the 1140s being the best (read: worst) example of this. Sharing the kingship also meant sharing the annual revenue as each king sat in different parts of the kingdom. This revenue – consisting of taxes, fines, land rent, etc. – was estimated by Asgaut Steinnes in 1930 to around 8000 marks or 1500 kg silver.²²³ However, more recent studies have pointed to this calculation being too low. Recently Svein Gullbekk has pointed to minting as a considerable source of income for the kingship. Consistent minting began in Norway with the reign of Harald Hardrada in the mid-eleventh century, which then continued until a collapse in Norwegian coinage in the late fourteenth century. Hardrada apparently succeeded in having his coins accepted as means of payment ahead of foreign currency. The fact that this continued after his reign point to a royal monopoly on minting in Norway, it also serves as evidence of some strength in the kingship. The people appear to have accepted his mint as means of payment at a higher value than its content of silver. This inflated value gave the king a substantial income, especially when he was able to have coins with a lower content of silver accepted at full value. However, the king did not succeed completely in this as there were a distinction between burnt (pure) silver and coins, and between weighted and counted coins. Nevertheless, Gullbekk has estimated this profit at up to 300 to 400 percent, suggesting that in some years it may have reached 7500 to 10,000 marks burnt (2500-3300 kg),

²²¹ Brégaint, *Vox regis*, 327.

²²² Helle, *Norge blir en stat*, 117.

²²³ Asgaut Steinnes, *Gamal skatteskipnad i Noreg*, I, (Oslo, 1930).

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or as much or even more of than the king's other estimated annual revenues.²²⁴ The king's actual profit, of course, depended on the amount of coins in circulation, on which there are widely different opinions.²²⁵ However, Bagge thinks this sum is too large, pointing to Denmark where the king's income from minting in 1230 is estimated at 12 percent (1100-2200 kg silver) of the whole, and where coins are likely to have been in wider use due to Denmark's higher population.²²⁶ Irrespective of what the actual figures were, it is nevertheless apparent that the Norwegian kingship was in possession of some wealth garnered from annual revenues, but split between several individuals their respective shares were not large. This goes a long way in explaining why each iteration of the succession law contained the same clause banning shared kingship.

When considering the other aspect, that of dynastic survival, a similar picture emerges. When Magnus Erlingsson acquired the Norwegian kingship, he represented a clear break with the past, and a such needed to establish his reign on new footings. One of these became the succession law of 1163/64, that besides giving more power over the succession to the Church, also outlawed the old way of acquiring the kingship – a clear indication that the framers behind Magnus's reign were concerned with dynastic survival. Though the same concerns were not as blatantly on display in 1260 and in 1273, dynastic survival was nevertheless a major concern for the kings involved. Håkon IV lost two of his three sons before he himself died, and it is unrealistic to claim that Magnus was not shaped by that experience when he revised the law in 1273. Both kings must have understood that an orderly succession, such as the succession laws outlined, would be beneficial for both themselves and their followers as it would provide the followers with a long-term guarantee that their loyalty would be rewarded. Thus, the succession laws not only co-opt the magnates into the succession, but it also incentivises them to continue to support the current ruling kindred. This then, contrast with the preceding period, where uncertainty surrounding the succession provided the magnates with no incentives for long-term dynastic support and thus opportunity to gain a larger share of the kingdom's income if they

²²⁴ Svein H. Gullbekk, *Pengevesenets fremvekst og fall i Norge i middelalderen* (Oslo: Unipub, 2003), 19-99, 129-78. In Hungary, the king's income from minting is calculated at 35 percent of the total income in the twelfth century. Pál Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen: a history of medieval Hungary, 895-1526*, trans. Tamas Áalósfalvi, English edn ed. by Andrew Payton (London and New York, NY: I. B. Tauris, 2001), 62f.

²²⁵ See Kåre Lunden, 'Mynt, andre pengar og politisk-økonomisk system i middelalderen', *HT (No)*, 86 (2007), 7-34, (pp. 16-23); idem, 'Money Economy in Medieval Norway', *SJH*, 24 (1999), 245-65; Richard Holt, 'What if the Sea were Different? Urbanization in Medieval Norway', in *Rodney Hilton's Middle Ages: An Exploration of Historical Themes*, ed. by Christopher Dyer, Peter Cross and Chris Wickham, Past & Present Supplement, 2 (Oxford, 2007), pp. 132-47. See also, Gullbekk, 'Lite eller mye mynt i Norge i middelalderen?', *HT (No)*, 84 (2005), pp. 551-72.

²²⁶ Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, 127.

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supported a claimant.²²⁷ As Francis Fukuyama concluded: self-interest and legitimacy form the cornerstones of political order.²²⁸ It is therefore hard to reach any other assumption than that the succession laws were introduced to secure access to the kingship's revenues and the long-term possession of the kingship remained within the kindred.

Summary

Beyond what was written in the thirteenth-century provincial laws and what we can extrapolate from the diploma material about the elective nature of Swedish kingship, we know very little about any succession rules in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Take the concept of riding *Erikskata* outlined in the *Upplandslag*; we cannot know if this was a thirteenth-century innovation or was written down based on existing practices. Similarly, despite the near-contemporary writings of Saxo Grammaticus and Svend Aggesen, our knowledge of Danish practices is not much larger. We know that Danish kingship, like the Swedish, was elective in this period and that some form of kin-right existed. It seems likely also that before the Norwegians began writing down their succession laws from the mid-twelfth century onwards, the rules of succession appear to have been similar across all three Scandinavian kingdoms and based on the same principles: kin-right regulated by election. Moreover, kin-right appears to have been practised throughout Europe, from Ireland to Hungary.

In Norway, the kings' sagas from the thirteenth century describe the principle of kin-right regulated by election as St Olav's law, and the kin-right rested with descendants of the Fairhair-kindred, despite no knowledge of what or who that kindred were. Instead, political circumstances came to play an increased role – as long as a claimant could show descent from a previous king, he could claim the kingship. From the mid-1160 onwards these rules underwent a significant revision, resulting in them being written down, first with the *Law of Succession of 1163/64* and then with later revisions in 1260 and 1273. These later revisions would increasingly clarify and expand the order of succession beyond its foundation: legitimate birth with a preference for the oldest suitable son. The first law created provisions for suitability that were abolished in the later revisions, while they were also creating an opening for illegitimate sons and, from 1273, trueborn sons of trueborn daughters, to inherit – a clear reflection of how pragmatic the laws were. Revealing that, above anything else, the 1260 and 1273 editions were about the survival of the kindred. Beyond this, the revisions changed the character of the

²²⁷ Andrej Kokkonen and Anders Sundell, 'Delivering Stability: Primogeniture and Autocratic Survival in European Monarchies 1000-1800', *American Political Science Review*, 108.2 (May 2014), 439-40.

²²⁸ Francis Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order: From Prehuman Times to the French Revolution* (London: Profile Books, 2011; repr. 2012), 16.

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Norwegian kingship. Kingship now became an indivisible office under the influence of the *rex iustus* ideology, signalling an end to the period of shared kingship. Furthermore, the legal work undertaken by King Håkon IV and King Magnus VI integrated the ideas of kingship as an office with dynastic succession and royal blood, creating what was for Scandinavia a brand-new concept of kingship.

With the Scandinavian rules of succession outlined, the question now is the extent to which these rules were applied in practice in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. To understand this, the next chapter will examine two different scenarios: succession through combat by trial and hereditary succession by designation.

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Introduction

Having explored the theoretical rules of succession, this chapter will explore how succession took place in practice based on two concrete scenarios. In the first half, this chapter will explore succession to the kingship as determined by trial by combat through two case studies: firstly, that of King Sverre Sigurdsson of Norway against King Magnus V Erlingsson and Erling Skakke in the late 1170s and early 1180s; and secondly, that of King Valdemar I of Denmark and how he acquired the Danish kingship in competition with King Svend III Eriksen in 1157. These case studies will show that there are many commonalities between Scandinavia and the rest of Europe, especially with regards to how disputes regarding the succession were solved, with one exception, the continued use of the ordeal by hot iron in Norway. The discussion will show that the saga narrating Sverre Sigurdsson's acquisition in several instances reveals awareness and knowledge of contemporary European practices and ideology, capable of painting Sverre as the embodiment of Christian prototype kings such as David, Constantine, and Charlemagne. The second case study will show that despite unwillingness of the Danish primary narrative sources to say that Valdemar acquired the kingship through a trial by combat, there is ample evidence to that effect when the sources written closest to the events are considered. This first part will argue that both Sverre Sigurdsson and Valdemar I acquired their kingships through trials by combat.

The second part of this chapter will explore more planned succession to the kingship by analysing two specific instances of successor designation and associative kingship in Scandinavia: namely, the successions of King Knud VI Valdemarsen of Denmark in 1182 and of King Magnus VI Håkonsson of Norway in 1263. The primary narrative sources connected to each of them are very brief in their description of the transfer of power if they say anything at all. This chapter aims to provide an answer to this by analysing when and how Knud and Magnus acquired their kingships. The latter discussion will, furthermore, highlight the issue of the Norwegian coronation ceremony and to what extent wives of associated kings were crowned alongside their husbands. The second part of this chapter will show that little changed from the twelfth to the thirteenth century, arguing that as long as the proper preparations were made, a stable transfer of royal authority was possible.

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Two instances of succession to the kingship by trial of combat

Sverre Sigurdsson has been called the most important medieval king of Norway by his modern-day biographer Claus Krag.²²⁹ His road to the kingship is the topic of *Sverris saga*. This saga is unique among the king's sagas in that it explicitly states that the author of the first part, known as *Grýla* (lit. bugbear, peeve), was Abbot Karl Jónsson of Þingeyrar who worked under the direct supervision of the king himself from about 1185.²³⁰ The size and extent of this part have been a topic of much discussion among scholars, primarily to determine the extent to which Sverre influenced the re-telling of his story, as it is likely that the king wished to portray himself favourably and prove that he had the right to the kingship.²³¹ It is therefore surprising how little *Grýla* tries to convince its reader that Sverre was the son of King Sigurd II the Mouth (r. 1136-55). It never provides evidence for his paternity, nor is there any evidence that King Sigurd II acknowledged Sverre before he died in 1155. This unproven paternity contrasts with other Norwegian kings and claimants.

In the narrative of the later *Heimskringla*, the paternity of the kings is always established at the opening of the saga, not matter how short or detailed it is. Throughout the twelfth and early thirteenth century there was several examples of uncertain paternity being established though the ordeal of hot iron – a process Sverre never underwent.²³² We find no evidence for a similar practice in neither Denmark nor Sweden, though in the latter we are hindered by a lack of sources. In Norway, however, the practice appears in *Heimskringla*, *Sverre's saga*, *Böglunga saga*, and *Håkon Håkonsson's saga*, enough times that we can draw out a pattern for how and when it is used. In the first instance it is used by the future King Harald IV *gilli* (r. 1130-36), Sverre's alleged paternal grandfather, to prove his descent from King Magnus III (r. 1093-1103)

²²⁹ Claus Krag, *Sverre: Norges største middelalderkonge* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 2005), 9.

²³⁰ *SvS*, cxxiv-cxxvi, cxxxix-cxliii. For examples of the debate, see amongst others Aaron Gurevich, 'From saga to personality: Sverris saga', in *From Saga to Society: Comparative Approaches to Early Iceland*, ed. by Gísli Pálsson (Enfield Lock, 1992), pp. 78-87; Ólafía Einarsdóttir, 'Sverrir: præst og konge', in *Nye middelalderstudier: Kongedømme, kirke, stat*, ed. by Claus Krag and Jørn Sandnes, Norske historikere i utvalg, 6 (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1983), pp. 126-141; Lárus H. Blöndal, *Um uppruna Sverrissögu* (Reykjavík, 1982), 53-157; Ludvig Holm-Olsen, 'Til diskusjon om Sverres saga tilblivelse', in *Opuscula Septentrionalia: festskrift til Ole Widding*, ed. by Bent Chr. Jacobsen (København: C.A. Reitzel Boghandel, 1977), pp. 55-67; idem, *Studier i Sverres saga* (Oslo, 1953), 11-84; Egil Nygaard Brekke, *Sverre-sagaens opphavs: Tiden og forfatteren* (Oslo, 1958); Finnur Jónsson, 'Sverrissaga', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 36 (1920), 112-38; Halvdan Koht, 'Norsk historieskrivning under kong Sverre' *Edda*, 2 (1914), 71-3.

²³¹ Sverre Bagge, 'Ideology and Propaganda in *Sverris saga*', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 108 (1993), 2; Holm-Olsen, *Studier i Sverres saga*, 71.

²³² For more on the unreliability of the outcome of ordeals, see Hanne Monclair, 'Fortidens grunnleggende annerledeshet? En analyse av gudsdomsberetningene i norsk sagamateriale', *HT (No)*, 83.3 (2004), 489-95. It is interesting to note that the Norwegians still used the ordeal in this situation, after it had been condemned at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1216. Robert Bartlett, *Trial by Fire and Water: The Medieval Judicial Ordeal* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 70-102.

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when he arrived in Norway in 1127.²³³ The second time it was used was when Sverre's brother, Eirik, underwent the ordeal of hot iron to prove his ancestry in the summer of 1181. He did so on the condition the outcome would only prove his ancestry and no one else's.²³⁴ The next example occurred in 1207, when according to *Böglunga saga* the paternity of Magnus Erlings-son, son of Erling Stonewall, was proved through the ordeal by hot iron.²³⁵ This event, like the one related in Sverre's saga are contemporary to the time when they were written down – one version of *Böglunga saga* were completed c. 1210 and the other between 1210 to 1217, as the events described were unfolding.²³⁶ And finally, Inga of Varteig, the mother of Sverre's grandson Håkon IV Håkonsson (r. 1217-63) proved her son's paternity by undergoing the ordeal in 1218 in front of the king, the archbishop, the *jarl*, and other magnates.²³⁷ In all these instances paternity had to be established in order to sort out the inheritance after a dead king. Both Harald *gilli* and Eirik Sigurdsson appeared out of nowhere, the former towards the end of the reign of Sigurd I and the latter just after Sverre had secured sole kingship. Neither had any way of showing or proving they were who they claimed to be, it was effectively words against words, and thus the ordeal of hot iron became the only way of offering evidence in a religious or practical manner. As such, there is enough evidence to call this a Norwegian customary rule. The one exception to this was Håkon Håkonsson. In the second paragraph of his saga it was established that several trustworthy men were aware of his parents sleeping together, as such witnesses could be presented according to the laws at the time.²³⁸ However, the precedent created by Harald *gilli* and Eirik Sigurdsson meant that Håkon's paternity could be determined by divine sanction – at least that was how the ordeal process was introduced and defended in the saga.²³⁹ Finally, the usage and acceptance of the ordeal of hot iron to determine these questions was evident from the *Succession Law of 1273* that when including a procedure for illegitimate sons

²³³ *HkrMS*, 707.

²³⁴ *SvS*, 93: 'Þá svarar Eírikr: "Svá láti Guð mik heila hönd bera frá þessu jéarni at ek em son Sigurðar konungs. En Eigi vil ek bera þetta járn fleirum mönnum til faðernis en sjálfum mér.'" (Then Eirik replied: "God let me carry my hand unburned from this iron, and prove I am the son of King Sigurd; I will not carry this iron to prove the paternity of others than myself).

²³⁵ *Böglunga saga*, in *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, ed. by Sverrir Jakobsson, Þorleifur Hauksson and Tor Ulset, 2 vols. (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenska Fornritafélag, 2013), I, 107.

²³⁶ *Böglunga saga*, in *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, I, lxxii, lxxxvii-lxxxix.

²³⁷ *HH*, I, 219: 'Um daginn eftir þrimamál bar konungsmóðir járn eftir réttum tíma [...] Þar var við konungr ok erkibyskup, jarl of aðrir landshöfðingjar, þar var ok jarl af Orkneyjum.'

²³⁸ *HH*, I, 172: 'Inga var í herbergjum Hákonar konungs, ok samrekkði konungr hjá henni, svá at þat vissi Hákon galinn ok fleiri trúnaðarmenn hans.' (Inga was in king Håkon's hostel and the king was sharing her bed, and Håkon galen and several of his trusted friends knew about it). The way the saga described this is very reminiscent how the seventh inheritance in the Succession Law of 1273 (p. 37 above) describe the procedure for how illegitimate sons could inherit the Norwegian kingship.

²³⁹ *HH*, I, 216-17.

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to inherit the Norwegian kingship it was done to work around the fact that the practise had been suppressed almost half a century earlier.

Sverre had no evidence of his paternity beyond what his mother told him. It is therefore unknown whether or not Sverre's contemporaries believed he was Sigurd II's son. His primary opponent from the 1170s and 80s, King Magnus, is depicted in *Sverris saga* as saying he did not believe in Sverre's alleged paternity.²⁴⁰ From all of this, it is evident that the saga author did not focus on Sverre's claim to the kingship being inheritance through the bloodline. Indeed, as observed by Fredrik Charpentier Ljungqvist, often 'hereditary right has not been sufficient enough to claim the throne'.²⁴¹ Erich Hoffmann has argued that there at this time still existed a legal idea that a victorious conqueror had the sole ownership of the kingdom and that it would belong only to him and his heirs. Though he provides no evidence for his argument, this chapter offer an explanation as to how this could come about.²⁴² What this section, therefore, will argue is that Sverre's paternity was irrelevant to his acquisition of the kingship.²⁴³ He did not need to justify his parenthood through his mother, because his military superiority – God's just judgment – confirmed his right to the kingship.

Briefly summarised his saga outlines Sverre's origin story this way: He was born to Gunhild, a woman from western Norway, and Unås, a comb-maker. Sverre was sent to Unås's brother Roe, who was Bishop of the Faroe Islands, at the age of five for fostering. When he was twenty-four, his mother came to the Faroes, where he had become a priest, and told him that he was the son of Sigurd II and that she had been to Rome where the pope, through her confessor, had instructed her to inform Sverre of his royal ancestry. Sverre then travelled to Norway to begin his quest for the kingship.²⁴⁴ Scholars, who have tried to make sense of this origin story, has pointed out several inconsistencies, chronological mishaps, and a general lack of explanations. For instance, the saga fails to provide the reader with a reasonable explanation as to how a craftsman's wife would have travelled to Rome and why the pope and the curia should have cared about her sin.²⁴⁵ That is if it even was a sin. According to his saga, Sverre was at birth considered the son of Gunnhild and Unås. Therefore, the Church would have considered him

²⁴⁰ SvS, 96: 'Sverrir, þeim manni er ek hygg at enga ætt eigi til þess at vera konungr, hvártki hér né í öðrum stöðum.' (Sverre, that man is not of a kindred suitable to be king, neither here nor other places.)

²⁴¹ Fredrik Charpentier Ljungqvist, 'Kristen kungaideologi i *Sverris saga*', *Scripta Islandica*, 57 (2006), 82.

²⁴² Erich Hoffmann, 'The unity of the kingdom and the provinces of Denmark during the Middle Ages', in *Danish Medieval History: New Currents*, ed. by Niels Skyum-Nielsen and Niels Lund (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 1981), pp. 95-109 (pp. 98-9).

²⁴³ Compare this to Reinhard Bendix's argument about how a usurper's rule would only endure if by success and appropriate genealogical constructions they were found to be "related" to the previous ruling kindred. *Kings or People: Power and the Mandate to Rule* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1978), 26.

²⁴⁴ SvS, Chs. 1-5.

²⁴⁵ Helle, *Norge blir en stat*, 80.

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to be of legitimate birth; otherwise, he could not have been ordained to the priesthood.²⁴⁶ If Sverre was born of “spurious” relations he would have needed a papal dispensation.²⁴⁷ Records, or at the very least rumours, would have existed of this – enough circumstantial evidence for someone would have made a forgery of one in order to discredit him they so wanted. There is no evidence of either of this.

Similarly, chronology dictates Bishop Roe could not have fostered Sverre at the age of five if he was born in 1151, as his saga states because Roe did not become bishop of the Faroe Islands until 1162 or 1163.²⁴⁸ The arguments brought forward in *Grýla* are not very convincing, and, according to Sverre Bagge and Knut Helle, they have also failed to convince most modern historians.²⁴⁹ Helle added that the problems with Sverre’s origin story cannot be solved and that all we will ever know about it is what he and his followers wanted us to know.²⁵⁰ Claus Krag outright calls Sverre an imposter, who got caught up in events he had little or no control over.²⁵¹ Lars Roar Langslet, likewise, called the narrative ‘unlikely’ and noted that ‘numerous scientific investigations in our time have lent it no further credibility’.²⁵² Whereas Ármann Jakobsson seemingly believed that Sverre’s uncertain paternity was the most significant obstacle on his path to the kingship.²⁵³

²⁴⁶ SvS, 4: ‘Sverrir [...] kallaðr son Unáss.’ (Sverre was considered to be the son of Unás), ‘[...] han var vígðr til prests.’, (he was ordained to be a priest).

²⁴⁷ Illegitimacy rendered a man unfit to be ordained except by papal dispensation and children born of concubines, or from “spurious” relations, were considered illegitimate under Canon Law. Laura Wertheimer, ‘Children of Disorder: Clerical Parentage, Illegitimacy, and Reform in the Middle Ages’, *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 15.3 (September 2006), 382-83, 386-87. For the development of this “defect of birth” (*defectus natalium*), see Robert Génestal, *Histoire de la légitimation des enfants naturels en droit canonique* (Paris: Leroux, 1905), esp. ch. 1, ‘L’irrégularités ex defectu natalium’. For more on illegitimacy and ordination in medieval Europe, see more recently, Sara McDougall, ‘Bastard Priests: Illegitimacy and Ordination in Medieval Europe’, *Speculum*, 94.1 (January 2019), 138-72. See also Magnús Stefánsson, ‘Kong Sverres alder og prestevigsel’, *HT (No)*, 85.2 (2006), 279-88.

²⁴⁸ SvS, 4-5: ‘Hrói byskup var í þann tíma í Færeyjum er kallaðr var bróðir Unáss kambara [...] Sverrir var fim vetra er hann fór af Nóregi ok vestr til Færeyja, ok var hann þar með Hróa byskupi at föstri ok uppfæzlu.’ (Bishop Roe, who was then the bishop of the Faroes Islands, was the brother of Unás [...] Sverre was five winters old when he was sent west from Norway to the Faroes to be fostered by Bishop Roe); *Ann. Regii, IA*, 116: ‘1162: Vigðr Rói byskup til Féreyja.’; *Flatøbogens Annaler, IA*, 475: ‘1163: Wijgdr Hroe byskup til Færeyja.’.

²⁴⁹ Bagge, ‘Ideology and Propaganda in *Sverris saga*’, 3; idem, *From Gang Leader to the Lord’s Anointed: Kingship in Sverris saga and Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, The Viking Collection: Studies in Northern civilization, vol 8 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1996), 52-61, 61 fn. 53; Helle, *Norge blir en stat*, 78-80.

²⁵⁰ Helle, *Norge blir en stat*, 80.

²⁵¹ Krag, *Sverre: Norges største middelalderkonge*, 97.

²⁵² Lars Roar Langslet, *Våre konger: En vei gjennom norgeshistorien* (Oslo: Cappelen, 2002), 84.

²⁵³ Ármann Jakobsson, ‘King Sverrir of Norway and the Foundations of his power: Kingship, Ideology and Narrative in Sverris Saga’, *Medium Æviuum*, 84.1 (2015), 112-13. For more on the discussion of Sverre’s paternity and the scholarly debate around it, see Magnús Stefánsson, ‘Kong Sverre: prest og sønn av Sigurd munn?’, in *Festskrift til Ludvig Holm-Olsen på hans 70-årsdag*, ed. by Einar Lundeby and Bjarne Fidjestøl (Øvre Ervik: Alvheim & Eide, 1984), pp. 287-307; Halvdan Koht, ‘Korleis vart kong Sverre son til Sigurd munn?’, *HT (No)*, 41 (1962), 293-302; *ibid.*, *Kong Sverre* (Oslo, 1952), 9-19; Geoffrey Malcolm Gathorne-Hardy, *A Royal Imposter: King Sverre of Norway* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1956), 77-93; Holm-Olsen, *Studier i Sverres saga*, 15-17; Sten Sparre Nilson, ‘Kong Sverre og Kong David’, *Edda*, 48 (1948), 73-86; Frederik Paasche, *Kong Sverre* (Christiania, 1920), 258-

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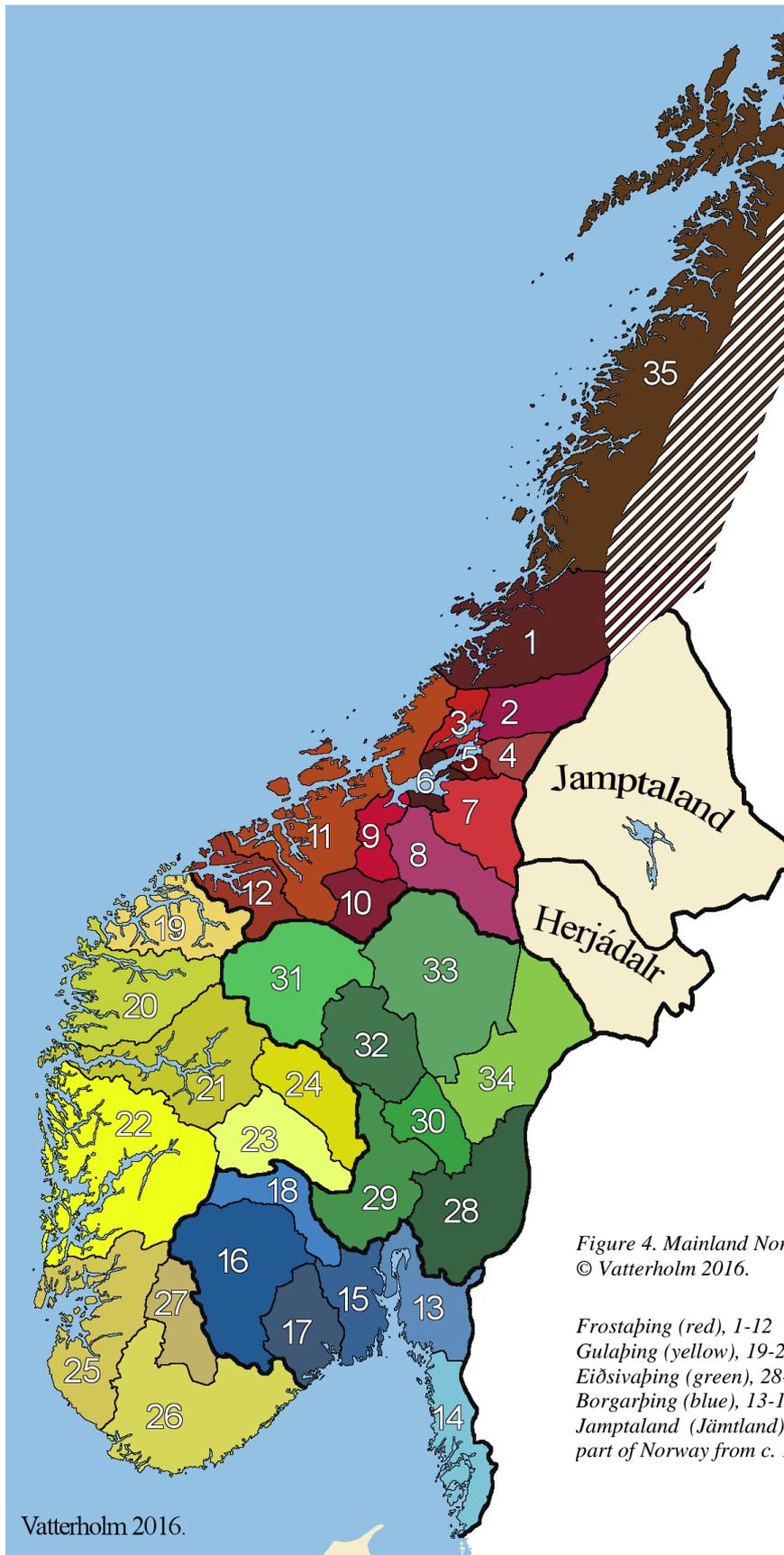


Figure 4. Mainland Norway with lögþing districts and fylki.
© Vatterholm 2016.

Frostþing (red), 1-12
 Gulaþing (yellow), 19-27
 Eiðsivaþing (green), 28-34
 Borgarþing (blue), 13-18
 Jamptaland (Jämtland) and Herjádalsr (Härjedalen) were part of Norway from c. 1178 to 1645.

70; Ludvig Daae, 'Var Sverre kongesøn?', *HT (No)*, 4.3 (1905), 1-28; Gustav Storm, 'Kong Sverres fædrene Herkomst', *HT (No)*, 4.2 (1904), 163-91.

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However, while the scholarly debate over the paternity in the context of how other claimants and kings justified their path to the Norwegian kingship is an important one to have, it also fires wide of the mark of the saga author's intention. Claiming the kingship by right of blood was by far not the only way, nor was it even the best way to become king. Indeed, the author of the saga makes this clear by emphasising actions, or chains of action, at specific times that would lend legitimacy to Sverre's claim to the kingship. In the course of the saga narrative, Sverre's acquisition of the kingship appears to have gone through different stages in emulation of King Magnus's acquisition: a hastily organised election at a locally convened *þing* (assembly) in Viken in 1177, which was later repeated at the national level at *Eyrarþing* the same year, and, finally, a coronation in 1194.²⁵⁴ Knut Helle characterised *Gryla* as literary propaganda in support of Sverre's claim. There are, therefore, good reasons to believe that this mirroring of King Magnus was a narrative construct on the part of the saga author and a comparison between the two kings intended to portray their paths to the kingship as similar.²⁵⁵ The purpose of this can only have been to underscore the significance of Sverre's military superiority.

That emphasis in the saga, on Sverre's martial abilities, was most evident in his military victories over Erling Skakke in 1179 and King Magnus himself in 1184. Of the first one hundred chapters of the saga, detailing Sverre's path to sole kingship, thirty-six are mainly covering armed conflict (battles, sieges, skirmishes, ambushes, raids, etc.). Overall, this amounts to about twenty per cent of the entire saga narrative. The whole number reveals even more: out of the saga's 182 chapters, eighty-seven in one way or another deal with battles, skirmishes, ambushes, and so on. This means that 48% of the total saga narrative, close to half of it, deals with armed conflict in one form or another – meant to enhance Sverre's success. Sverre's victory over Erling Skakke marked his recognition as king throughout Norway, and the victory over King Magnus, secured him sole kingship in Norway. Additionally, the victory over Erling, at Kalvskinnet (in modern-day Trondheim) in 1179 was regarded as the turning point, dividing the struggle into a time before and after this battle.²⁵⁶ Kalvskinnet was a devastating loss for King Magnus's reign: it saw the demise of Erling Skakke, its principal strategist and chief architect, along with most of Erling's followers. Also, Magnus lost ten landed men and sixty

²⁵⁴ SvS, 18, 27, 189. Ólafía Einarsdóttir has suggested, with reference to Sverre's cleverness and tactical abilities, that his election may have taken place during St Olav's wake (29.7-3.8) under the cover of him coming to Nidaros as a pilgrim. 'Sverrir: præst og konge', in *Nye middelalderstudier: Kongedømme, kirke, stat*, ed. by Krag and Sandnes, pp. 126-141.

²⁵⁵ Helle, *Norge blir en stat*, 79; Magnus Erlingsson's path to the kingship will be outlined in Chapter three, pp. 89-97.

²⁵⁶ SvS, 56-61; Helle, *Norge blir en stat*, 82.

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members of his *hirð*.²⁵⁷ The survivors fled, abandoning Trøndelag, something Sverre took advantage of to establish himself in the region – from then on calling it home (‘heimili’). He had many followers from Trøndelag, some of whom were affluent, likely the same men he appointed as *sýslumenn* throughout the region.²⁵⁸ Knut Helle argued that Sverre had now won for himself a base and a starting point from which to conduct military operations in the rest of Norway.²⁵⁹ The importance of these victories was marked by their separate chapters in the saga outlining how each time the conditions changed and improved for Sverre and the Birchlegs.²⁶⁰ Similarly, the Battle of Fimreite in 1184 was seen as significant enough by foreign commentators to make a note of it. William of Newburgh recorded in his *History of the Affairs of the English* a brief account of the battle and its outcome, revealing some of Sverre’s martial abilities, along with a mention of Magnus’s death.²⁶¹ Sverre’s military victory was thus recognised as the path to the kingship by contemporary foreign observers.

This success was a marked contrast to Sverre’s first two years as king and leader of the Birchlegs. In those years, the Birchlegs conducted a highly mobile campaign against Magnus and Erling, using several military tactics that we today recognise as guerrilla warfare. Sverre relied on guerrilla tactics throughout his reign. In 1200 he received a contingent of Welshmen from King John of England, whom the saga calls *Ribbaldar* (ON: wildman, abuser, robber) and described as ‘svá skjótir á fœti sem dýr’. Sverre sent the Welshmen to the Opplands and he appeared to have used them as a form of shock trooper, to harass supporters of the Croziers.²⁶²

²⁵⁷ SvS, 60-1: ‘Fell jarl þar ok flest öll sú sveit er næst honum stóð. [...] Þar fell á akrinum Sigurðr Nikólásson, Jón af Randabergi, Ívarr horti, Einarr litli, lendr maðr, Bótúlfr ór Fjörðum ok tveir synir hand. Björn bukk hljóp úy á ána [...] Hann var í brynju ok sök þegar niðr. Mart manna hljóp út á ána, ok týndisk þar sumt, en sumt fekk líf. Ívarr Sveinsson fell þar ok Guthormr snerill. Þessir váru allir lendir menn Magnúss konungs. Nær sextíu hirðmanna fell þar ok mart annarra manna.’ *Lendir menn* (lit. landed men) was the highest attainable title in the king’s *hirð*. They were granted royal estates from where they administrated districts on behalf of the king; often they had a connection, usually through an inherited local estate, to this district. This administration included collecting taxes, a limited administration of justice, and raising men for the king’s defence. Their numbers fluctuated throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; estimates have varied from about 20-30 to about 120 at the start of the twelfth century to about ten towards the end of the thirteenth century, down from about 15 in the reigns of Hákon IV and Magnus VI (1217-80). In 1179 and 1180 Magnus lost 12 landed-men, Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, *Det norrøne samfunnet: Vikingen, kongen, erkebiskopen og bonden* (Oslo: Pax Forlag, 2008), 129-35; Helle, *Norge blir en stat*, 74-76, 135, 188-89, 192, 200-7.

²⁵⁸ SvS, 64: ‘Sverrir konungi kallaði jafnan sitt heimili í Þrándheimi.’, 65: ‘Setti hann þá sýslumenn um all Þrándheim.’, 67-8. Abp. Eystein had already left Trøndelag in 1178. *Ibid.*, 52. Trøndelag corresponds roughly to nos. 1-10 and 11 on either side of the mouth of the Trondheims Fjord Figure 2, p. 49.

²⁵⁹ Helle, *Norge blir en stat*, 82.

²⁶⁰ His victory at the Battle at Kalvskinnet was marked in SvS, Ch. 40, and his victory against Magnus at the Battle of Fimreite in 1184 was marked by Ch. 100.

²⁶¹ William of Newburgh, *History of the Affairs of the English*, in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, 4 vols., ed. by Richard Howlett, Rolls Series, 82, (London, 1884-89), I, 228-32.

²⁶² SvS, 271: ‘good shots and swift like deer’. Their presence provides an explanation for why the English are so positively portrayed in SvS as compared to *HH*, where the Germans receive a more favourable treatment from the saga author. *HH*, II, 123-24; Thomas Foerster, ‘Foreigners in High Medieval Norway: Images of immigration in chronicles and kings’ sagas, twelfth and thirteenth centuries’, in *Foreigners and Outside Influence in Medieval*

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The saga gives several examples guerrilla warfare, for instance, the way the Birchlegs raided Selbu or the ambush of the people of Gauldal.²⁶³ This tactic also enabled them to defeat numerically superior forces, such as the first defeat Sverre inflicted on the people of Trondheim, and against the people of Jämtland in 1177.²⁶⁴ At the same time, he showed an awareness for his and his men's limits, withdrawing when the enemy's strength was too overwhelming.²⁶⁵ According to the saga, he found a solution in every problematic situation, and he could inspire the men to do their utmost and to endure defeats, dangers, and forced marches.²⁶⁶ As opposed to other saga literature, *Sverre's saga* pays more attention to tactical issues and descriptions of Sverre's genius as a general, describing, for instance, how Sverre did not join in the actual battle but instead led his men from the rear. The author's description of his military virtues focuses mainly on his performance as a general, and it attributed his victories to his leadership skills.²⁶⁷ The saga gives a portrait of a man with an emotional bond of reciprocal trust with his men; a man, who encouraged his men through carefully crafted speeches: he told them what was at stake and assured them God was on his and their side.²⁶⁸

Norway, ed. by Stian Suppersberger Hamre (Oxford: Archaeopress Publishing, 2017), pp. 53-72 (p. 64). On these Welshmen and their experience of guerrilla warfare, see Jenny Benham, 'Philip Augustus and the Angevin Empire: The Scandinavian Connexion', *Mediaeval Scandinavia*, 14 (2005), 37-50; Paul Latimer, 'Henry II's Campaign Against the Welsh in 1165', *The Welsh Historical Review*, 14.4 (1989), 523-552; *Brut y Tywysogyon; or The Chronicle of the Princes: Peniarth MS. 20 Version*, trans. and intro. by Thomas Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1952; repr. 2015), 63.

²⁶³ SvS, 24. Gauldal and Selbu is in no. 8 on the map of mainland Norway (Figure 4, p. 62).

²⁶⁴ SvS, 23 (people of Jämtland), 24-6 (people of Nidaros), 32-4 (against the peoples of Sogn, Voss, Hardanger, and the Sunnhordaland).

²⁶⁵ For instance, when he first scouted Nidaros. SvS, 23.

²⁶⁶ For example, the farmers blocking their path down from Filefjell to Borgund in 1177 and the march over the mountain to Flåmdalen and Flåm the same year. SvS, 31-6.

²⁶⁷ Bagge, *From Gang Leader to the Lord's Anointed*, 63-5; idem, *The Political Thought of The King's Mirror*, Medieval Scandinavia Supplements, 3 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1987), 33-8; Helle, *Norge blir en stat*, 83. For a further analysis of Sverre's tactics and his role as a general, see idem, 'Borgerkrig og statsutvikling i Norge i middelalderen', *HT (No)*, 65 (1986), 145-97 (pp. 173-74); Kåre Lunden, *Norge under Sverreætten 1177-1319*, Norgeshistorie, ed. by Knut Mykland, 15 vols (Oslo: Cappelen, 1976), III, 101-15; Gathorne-Hardy, *A Royal Imposter* (London, 1956). In this the saga author is following the late fourth-century Roman general Vegetius, who was the main general medieval leaders wanted to emulate, and this shows that the saga author was familiar with European literary traditions; see *Vegetius: Epitome of Military Science*, trans. with notes and intro. by N.P. Milner, Translated texts for historians, 16 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1993); Christopher Allmand, *The 'De Re Militari' of Vegetius: The Reception, Transmission and Legacy of a Roman Text in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); David Whetham, *Just Wars and Moral Victories: Surprise, Deception and the Normative Framework of European War in the Later Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 121-22; Christopher Allmand, 'The *De re militari* of Vegetius in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance', in *Writing War: Medieval Literary Responses to Warfare*, ed. Corinne J. Saunders, Françoise Hazel Marie Le Saux, and Neil Thomas (Woodbridge, 2004), 15-28 (esp. p. 19); Helen Nicholson, *Medieval Warfare: Theory and Practice of War in Europe, 300-1500* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 13-19; Clifford J. Rogers, 'The Vegetian "Science of Warfare" in the Middle Ages', *The Journal of Medieval Military History*, 1 (2003), 1-19; Bernard S. Bachrach, 'The Practical Use of Vegetius' *De Re Militari* During the Early Middle Ages', *The Historian*, 47.2 (1985), 239-55; Charles R. Shrader, 'The Influence of Vegetius' *De re militari*', *Military Affairs*, 45.4 (1981), 167-72; Walter Goffart, 'The Date and Purpose of Vegetius' "*De Re Militari*", *Traditio*, 33 (1977), 65-100.

²⁶⁸ For instance, before the Battle at Kalvskinnet, Sverre promised that each man will be promoted to the rank of the man he proved he had killed, SvS, 57: 'þess kyns maðr skal hverr vera sem hann sjálfv ryðr sér til rúms' (each

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In *Sverre's saga* there is ample evidence that God was on Sverre's side. In a set of dreams at the start of the saga narrative, Sverre interacted first with St Olav, and then Samuel the prophet, revealing a divine approval for his quest for the kingship.²⁶⁹ In his interaction with St Olav, the saint entrusts Sverre, whom he re-names Sverre Magnus – effectively Sverre the Great – with his sword and banner: 'Tak nú við merkinu, herra, ok ætla þat með sjálfum þér at þetta merki skaltu jafnan bera heðan í frá'. Sverre then carries the banner through a long and narrow corridor, struggling to keep it upright. Upon exiting the corridor, seven armed men attack them, but the saint protects them with his shield. Having arrived in an open field, Sverre lifts the banner high and advance against the forces of Erling and Magnus, who withdraws from the field as he approaches.²⁷⁰ Here, there is a clear parallel between Sverre's dream and that of Emperor Constantine the Great before the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in 312. In Eusebius of Caesarea's *Life of Constantine*, the emperor tells him of a vision he had while he was praying: he looked up to the sun and saw a cross of light above it with the words *en toutōi níka* written above – a phrase usually rendered in Latin as *in hoc signo vinces* ('in this sign thou shalt conquer'). Eusebius then goes on to describe this new military standard with the Chi-Rho sign and Constantine's use of it in his victory against Maxentius and beyond.²⁷¹ A more contemporary parallel can be found in France with Abbot Suger of St-Denis's story of King Louis VI, who, when threatened by imperial forces in 1124, marched against them as the bannerman of St Denis, his 'dux et protector', inviting all of France of to follow him. According to Suger, princes from all over France flocked to his side. That Louis's opponent, the German emperor, never showed was of little consequence to Suger, or Louis for that matter: the French king had won a bloodless victory and returned to Paris in triumph.²⁷² Both instances clearly show that being

man shall have the rank of the man he kills), and after the Battle of Fimreite in 1184, when speaking to the people of Bergen, Sverre said that 'Magnús frændi minn barðisk í gegn ok bjósk at tapa mínu lífi, en Guð leysti mik nú sem fyrir skipti mér ríki hans. Guð hefir ekki jafnleitt verit allar stundir sem ofmetnaðarmenn; hefir hann ok þat harðast refsat' (Magnus, my *frende*, did battle against me and wanted to kill me, but God saved me as He has done before and gave me his kingdom. Nothing has been so abdominal to God as haughty people, and he has severely rebuked those), in the same speech Sverre also drew a direct comparison between Magnus and King Saul, saying that Saul was one of these haughty people whom God punishes. *SvS*, 152. Sverre was clearly portraying himself as God's tool against the prideful sinners. *Ibid.*, cxxxxv-cxxxvi.

²⁶⁹ *SvS*, 8-9 (St Olav), 16-18 (Samuel).

²⁷⁰ *SvS*, 9 (Now, take my banner, my lord, and remember, from now on this will be your only banner). Magnus was also the name of St Olav's son, who, according to his saga, had been named after Charlemagne ('Karla-Magnús'), Sverre's dream becomes that of a literal adoption in that he became, for all intents and purposes, the saint's son. *HkrOH*, 390; *HkrOH*, *ÍF* 27, 210. For a connection between saints and names, see Robert Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change 950-1350* (London: Penguin, 1993), 270-80.

²⁷¹ *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Volume 1: Eusebius: Church History, Life of Constantine the Great, and Oration in Praise of Constantine*, ed. by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 490-1.

²⁷² Suger, *The Deeds of Louis the Fat*, trans. by Richard Cusimano and John Moorhead (Washington, 1992), 127-32. The banner Louis carried was in fact the standard of the French Vexin, which Louis's predecessor Philip I had held in fief from the abbey, the banner could therefore be perceived as the symbol of the kings' vassalage to the

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God's bannerman equates to victory in battle and that idea was not unique to Sverre or the king's saga. It is also an unambiguous expression by the saga author of God's selection of Sverre, designating him as the real successor to St Olav and the leader of the forces fighting for His cause, as opposed to King Magnus.

The same designation is evident in another of Sverre's dreams. This dream retells how, while the king was in Borg, he was approached by Samuel the Prophet who anointed his hands 'to do battle against your enemies and opponents'.²⁷³ This was intended as a contrast to Magnus, whose kingship Sverre accused of being a rejection of St Olav's law, and who had been anointed in 1163/4 by either the archbishop or the papal legate – thus making him the Saul to Sverre's David. The sequence and similarities to Saul and David in the saga are not accidents. There are, in fact, several examples of Sverre comparing himself to David in the saga.²⁷⁴ Robert Benson has argued that Samuel conceived the unction as God's favour, meaning that God, or a prophet speaking for Him, could take away that favour and the status of being the Lord's anointed.²⁷⁵ This is precisely what this dream was meant to do: Sverre's unction by Samuel symbolised God's rejection of Magnus. Where, in the Bible, David became the tool through which God acted, in the saga, Sverre took up the mantle of David, the Christian prototype king, and became the new David.²⁷⁶ Furthermore, Sverre's many victories proved that he was in direct contact

Apostle of France. Since the time of Charlemagne, the royal flag (*oriflamme*) had by custom been kept at the abbey. However, by the late twelfth century, the *oriflamme* and the banner of the Vexin appears to have merged in people's mind and this standard became regarded as the protector of the French king and people in battle. After these events, the king affirmed in a donation that the French monarchy had been placed by providence under the protection of St Denis and his companions. Barber, *The Two Cities: Medieval Europe*, 248; G.M. Spiegel, 'The Cult of St Denis and Capetian Kingship', *Journal of Medieval History*, 1 (1975), 58-9). On Suger, see also Lindy Grant, *Abbot Suger of St-Denis: Church and State in Early Twelfth-Century France* (London: Longman, 1998); Andrew W. Lewis, 'Suger's Views on Kingship', in *Abbot Suger and Saint-Denis: A Symposium*, ed. Paula Lieber Gerson (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987).

²⁷³ SvS, 17: 'hendr til hats við óvini ok mótsöðumenn sína'. The location of this dream, Borg (modern-day Sarpsborg), was no coincidence either, as it had been founded by St Olav back in 1016. He used it as his primary winter residence and for a while it became an unofficial capital of the Norwegian kingdom. *HkrOH*, 293-95, 334, 449.

²⁷⁴ For instance, there is the comparison Sverre makes between himself and Magnus as David and Saul in a speech in Bergen in 1184. He opened that same speech with a direct quotation from psalm 56, authored by David. Then there are the indirect comparisons. Like David, Sverre was a little and low man from the periphery, like David he wandered around in the wilderness with a small number of men, and like David he defeated enemies that were largely superior to him. The many comparisons between the two was noted already by Sverre's near-contemporaries, Bagge believes that the passage in *The King's Mirror* (c.1250) attributing to David a number of reasons for not killing Saul, is probably an allusion to Sverre's rebellion against Magnus. SvS, 152; Bagge, *From Gang Leader to the Lord's Anointed*, 163; Gurevich, 'From saga to personality: Sverris saga'; Gerhard Loescher, 'Die religiöse Rhetorik der Sverrissaga', *Scandinavistik*, 14 (1984), 1-20; Gathorne-Hardy, *A Royal Imposter*, 99, 125; Sten Sparre Nilson, 'Kong Sverre og Kong David', *Edda*, 48 (1948).

²⁷⁵ Robert L. Benson, 'Images of David in Psalters and Bibles: Medieval Interpretations of Biblical Kingship as Mirrored in Art', in *Law, Rulership and Rhetoric: Selected Essays of Robert L. Benson*, ed. by Loren F. Weber, Giles Constable and Richard H. Rouse (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), p. 131.

²⁷⁶ Bagge, *From Gang Leader to the Lord's Anointed*, 55; Benson, 'Images of David in Psalters and Bibles', pp. 131-32.

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with divinity, showing that he did not need intermediaries – neither the archbishop nor any other of Christ’s earthly vicars – unlike Magnus.

Looking to Europe, the idea of King David as a prototype Christian king had long been established.²⁷⁷ His position was important enough to warrant a place among the Nine Worthies, the paragons of chivalry. According to Christopher Brooke, if a man wanted to know what a king should be like, he would be given an account of the career of King David, amongst others.²⁷⁸ Likewise, P.D. King has pointed out there are several examples of Merovingian kings being compared or likened to David in the sixth and seventh centuries.²⁷⁹ However, it was perhaps the Carolingian use of David that most closely resembles that found in *Sverre’s saga*. Old Testament models of holy kings, such as David, shaped the Carolingian image of kingship and they used that imagery as legitimacy for their usurpation of the Frankish kingdom, turning it into what Ernst Kantorowicz called ‘the *regnum Davidicum*’.²⁸⁰ By invoking the imagery of an anointed David replacing Saul, the Carolingians were able to depose and replace the last Merovingian king, with the *Royal Frankish Annals* commenting that the dynasty had been chosen by God and was ruling in accordance with His will.²⁸¹ Likewise, Brooke argued that when Pope Gregory VII and the German princes planned to depose Emperor Henry IV, the imagery of Samuel anointing David while Saul still lived, must have been part of their planned justification.²⁸²

The imagery of King David reveals the purpose of Sverre’s dreams. His continued success was a demonstration of God’s selection and designation of him as the true Norwegian king. Moreover, it paints Sverre’s struggle for the kingship as one of good vs evil, in line with the Augustinian world view, tasked by God to do war upon the sinners who in their pride broke St

²⁷⁷ D.M. Nicol, ‘Byzantine political thought’, in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought c.350-c.1450*, ed. by J.H. Burns (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988; repr. 1991), 70.

²⁷⁸ Christopher Brooke, *Europe in the Central Middle Ages 962-1154*, 4th edn (Harlow: Longman, 1981), 144.

²⁷⁹ P.D. King, ‘The barbarian kingdoms’, in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought*, ed. by Burns, 136.

²⁸⁰ Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study of Medieval Political Theology*, with a new introduction by Conrad Leyser and a preface by William Chester Jordan, 7th edn (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997; repr. 2016), 81.

²⁸¹ D.E. Luscombe, ‘Introduction: the formation of political thought in the west’, in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought*, ed. by Burns, p. 167; Janet Nelson, ‘Kingship and empire’, in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought*, ed. by Burns, pp. 214-15; cf. idem, ‘Inauguration rituals’, in *Early Medieval Kingship*, ed. by Peter Sawyer and I.N. Wood (Leeds: School of History, University of Leeds, 1977), 56-8; *Annales Regni Francorum et Annales Q.D. Einhardi*, ed. by G.H. Pertz and F. Kurze, MGH SRG, 6 (Hannover, 1895), 40-2, 44, 64. More generally on the link between medieval kingship and David vs. Saul, see Eugen Ewig, ‘Zum christlichen Königsgedanken im Frühmittelalter’, in *Das Königtum: Seine geistigen und rechtlichen Grundlagen*, Vorträge und Forschungen, 3 (Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke, 1956), pp. 42-5; Paul Fouracre, ‘Frankish Gaul to 814’, in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 2: c.700-c.900, ed. by Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 85-109. For an Anglo-Saxon example, see Daniel Orton, ‘Royal Piety and Davidic Imitation: Cultivating Political Capital in the Alfredian Psalms’, *Neophilologus*, 99 (2015), 477-92.

²⁸² Brooke, *Europe in the Central Middle Ages*, 154-55.

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Olav's law and therefore ruled against God's will.²⁸³ In 1260, Sverre's grandson King Håkon IV would enshrine St Olav's law at the same time as he changed the succession law, showing that the Sverre-kindred was willing to change that law as political circumstances dictated.²⁸⁴ The saga author's depiction of Sverre was hence as God's designated instrument and champion. Indeed, Ludvig Holm-Olsen has argued that the author of *Gryla* might have regarded Sverre's success in battle as an argument for his claim to the kingship, and, since we have already determined that Sverre's claim to the kingship did not rest on his ancestry, this could be the case.²⁸⁵ Alexander of Telesè argued similarly on behalf of Roger I of Sicily by highlighting his military prowess (ab eo bellica obtinentur virtute) but also by pointing out his close relationship with his predecessors (propinquitate generis antecedentium ducum iure sibi succedere debent). This matches Sverre's acquisition and accession quite well, though Roger's chronicler makes it clear that he had a hereditary right to Sicily but not to the lands in southern Italy. The greatest divergence between the two cases, though, is that there had not previously been a king in Sicily.²⁸⁶

Sverre's success in acquiring the kingship was, in other words, a form of ordeal. Trial by combat was a well-known method of settling disputes across Europe, used as proof that God was on your side.²⁸⁷ For instance, that settling disputes through trial by battle was accepted practice in England at this time is evident from the contemporary legal treatise known as *Glanvill*.²⁸⁸ A contemporary Scandinavian example can also be found in the work of Saxo Grammaticus, who records that when the Danish princeling Magnus Eriksen was accused of treason by King Valdemar I of Denmark, he fled to the court of Henry the Lion, Duke of Saxony, from where he offered to prove his innocence in a 'duello'.²⁸⁹

²⁸³ Ljungqvist, 'Kristen kungaideologi i *Sverris saga*', 83-4. According to the eleventh-century canon lawyer Burchard of Worms, pride was the queen of all evil, thus requiring the greatest repentance or punishment. Geoffrey Koziol, *Begging Pardon and Favor: Ritual and Political Order in Early Medieval France* (New York: Ithaca, 1992), 187.

²⁸⁴ *NMD*, p. 97: 'Lízt oss þat lícast til at upphafi. at lög ing Helga Ólafs konungs standi eftir því sem hann hafði skipat.' (thought it best to let the laws of holy King Olav stand as he had determined them).

²⁸⁵ Holm-Olsen, *Studier i Sverres saga*, 103f. See also, Bagge, 'Ideology and Propaganda in *Sverris saga*', 4.

²⁸⁶ *Alexandri Telesini Abbatis Ystoria Rogerii Regis Siciliae atque Calabriae atque Apulie*, ed. Ludovica de Nava (FSI, 1991), Bk. II, c. 2 (pp. 23-25), trans. into English as Alexander of Telesè, *History of King Roger*, in *Roger II and the Creation of the Kingdom of Sicily*, tr. Graham A. Loud (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), Bk. II, c. 2 (p. 78).

²⁸⁷ The essential study is that by Robert Bartlett, *Trial by Fire and Water: The Medieval Judicial Ordeal* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), esp. 103-26. See also, Paul R. Hyams, 'Trial by Ordeal: The Key to Proof in the Early Common Law', in *On the Laws and Customs of England: Essays in Honor of Samuel E. Thorne*, ed. Morris S. Arnold et al. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981); Peter Brown, 'Society and the Supernatural: A Medieval Change', *Daedalus*, 104.2 (1975).

²⁸⁸ *The Treatise on the Laws and Customs of the Realm of England commonly called Glanvill*, ed. G.D.G. Hall (Oxford, 1993), 172-3. On similar practices in dispute settlement in France, see Stephen D. White, "'Pactum... Legem Vincit et Amor Judicium.'" The Settlement of Disputes by Compromise in Eleventh-century Western France', *The American Journal of Legal History*, 22.4 (1978), 295, 298.

²⁸⁹ *Saxo*, xiv.54.19: 'in argumentum innocentie duello manum offerere'.

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The structure of the conflict between Sverre and Magnus in the saga is thus clear. Sverre accused Magnus of breaking St Olav's law, and, therefore, of being an unlawful king.²⁹⁰ At the same time, Sverre projected an image of himself as being chosen and designated by God to be his champion in the trial against Magnus. His success and the outcome of the trial proved that his victories against the sinner made him the true Lord's Anointed. Sverre was using powerful Christian imagery: David, Constantine, and Charlemagne were all well-known Christian prototype kings – imagery that would have been well known to Sverre personally, if he had been the priest his opponents accused him of being.²⁹¹ The comparison to King David, the anointing by the prophet Samuel, painting his struggle against Magnus as David vs Goliath, and being St Olav's bannerman, all show clear parallels to, and places Sverre's acquisition of the kingship firmly within contemporary European political culture. In the fight for his future, Sverre, like Constantine the Great and Louis VI of France, turned to God, and through His support overcame his enemies, showing that Sverre won his kingship in a trial by combat. The most compelling confirmation of this divine support comes at the very end of the saga. When Sverre was on his deathbed, he asked that he should remain uncovered after his death, so that 'both friends and enemies [could] see if any mark appear[ed] on his body of the excommunication they [had] pronounced over [him].'²⁹² Upon inspection, all present swore they had never seen a prettier corpse than his.²⁹³ Arnved Nedkvitne has argued that to Sverre's contemporaries, this was a clear indication and confirmation that God received Sverre's soul after his death, and consequently, he had reigned by God's will, even though he had killed Norway's first anointed king in battle.²⁹⁴ The saga was a literary construct, but the death of Magnus in battle and the assumption of the kingship by Sverre is undisputed, showing clearly that in Norway succession could occur through trial by combat.

²⁹⁰ In twelfth-century England, Stephen Church has argued, the power of coronation to end debates about the succession are well attested. However, some were willing to defend the continuation of the struggle against a consecrated ruler if that ruler had acquired the kingship unjustly. 'Succession and Interregnum in the English Polity: The Case of 1141', *The Haskin Society Journal*, 29 (2018), 181-200. See also, George Garnett, *Conquered England: Kingship, Succession, and Tenure, 1066-1166* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 238-9.

²⁹¹ SvS, 55: '[Erlingr] Jarl segir nú þessa kosti er Sverrir prestr'. Sverre also quotes from Psalm 55, authored by King David. SvS, 152. Diarmaid MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* (London: Penguin, 2010), 346-47; Alan Thacker, 'Peculiaris Patronus Noster: The Saint as Patron of the State in the Early Middle Ages', in *The Medieval State: Essays Presented to James Campbell*, ed. by J.R. Maddicott and D.M. Palliser (London: Hambledon Press, 2000), 3-6.

²⁹² SvS, 279: "'Við dauða minn," segir [Sverrir], "látið bert andlit mitt. Látið þá sjá bœði vini mína ok óvini hvárt þá birtisk nökkut á líkama mínum þat er óvinir mínir hafa bannat mér eðr bölvat"'.
²⁹³ SvS, 280: 'sá allir þeir er hjá váru ok báru síðan allir eitt vitni um at engi þóttisk sét hafa fegra líkama dauðs manns en hans'.

²⁹⁴ Arnved Nedkvitne, *Mötet med döden i norrön medeltid*, trans. by Bo Eriksson (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2004), 128-29; Ljungqvist, 'Kristen kungaideologi i Sverris saga', 84. See also, James E. Knirk, *Oratory in the Kings' sagas* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1981), 114.

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King Sverre was not the only Scandinavian king who won his kingship in this manner. To the south, the almost contemporary royal princeling Valdemar Knudsen, acquired the Danish kingship in a process much like Sverre, with the evidence here also pointing to acquisition through trial by combat. Valdemar was the son of Knud Lavard (1096-1131), the only legitimate son of King Erik I (r. 1095-1103), whose murder in 1131 began a period of unrest and instability that would last until Valdemar's ascension in 1157. When looking at the Danish primary narrative sources from this period, Svend Aggesen and Saxo Grammaticus, it is evident that Valdemar's acquisition of the kingship was not in line with how either of them thought it should be acquired. Both were clear in their view that election was the legitimate way to acquire the kingship and therefore used different terminology to describe the moment Valdemar actually acquired the kingship.²⁹⁵ Whereas *Sverre's saga* was written contemporaneously with the events it described, explaining the continued focus on Sverre's martial ability as it was still relevant to his success, Svend Aggesen and Saxo wrote about thirty years after the events they described, at which point it was more important to secure the legitimacy and the future of Valdemar's branch of the royal kindred.²⁹⁶

Following the 1152 arbitration by Emperor Frederick Barbarossa between Kings Knud V Magnussen and Svend III Eriksen, granting sole kingship of Denmark to the latter, Svend went through a period in which his military success waned.²⁹⁷ A culmination of several events, including a disastrous campaign against the Swedes, appeared to have led Valdemar – at the time, Svend's most important supporter – to switch sides and join Knud V.²⁹⁸ This switch is evident in the *Annals of Lund*, where the entry for 1154 said that Knud V had returned to the kingdom and resumed the struggle against Svend, who subsequently fled to Saxony.²⁹⁹ When Svend failed to retake the kingdom with the aid of Duke Henry the Lion of Saxony, the Danish magnates forced Knud, Svend and Valdemar into a negotiated settlement that conformed to the 1152 arbitration.³⁰⁰ In celebration of this settlement, a feast was held in Roskilde, which would become known as the Bloodfeast (*Blodgilde*) of Roskilde because Svend III killed Knud V and wounded Valdemar, who subsequently fled.³⁰¹ Valdemar quickly gathered up a large force and

²⁹⁵ Saxo, xiv.20.1: 'His ita compositis'; Svend Aggesen, *BHRD*, 72: 'Sique rex Waldemarus, gloriosus uictor, solus regnum obtinuit'.

²⁹⁶ Saxo, I, xlv; *ibid.*, II, 984, fn. 24, 1083 fn. 104.

²⁹⁷ For more on this arbitration, see Chapter three, pp. 111-112.

²⁹⁸ Saxo, xiv.11.3-12.7, xiv.14.1-3. Knud was the son of Magnús Nielsen, who had killed Knud Lavard.

²⁹⁹ Saxo, xiv.14.2; *Ann. Lundenses, DMA*, p. 58.

³⁰⁰ Saxo, xiv.17.15; Svend Aggesen, *SHKD*, 71; *Ks*, Ch. 112; *Helmoldi Chronica Slavorum*, 166. In Saxo's account the bishops come in after the fact to 'direct a threat of excommunication on any who broke the pact.' However, both *Ks* and Helmold mention the involvement of the magnates, and, according to Helmold, it was Bishop Elias of Ribe (1142-62) who led the proceedings. *Ks*, Ch. 112; *Helmoldi Chronica Slavorum*, 166.

³⁰¹ Saxo, xiv.18.3-11; Svend Aggesen, *SHKD*, 71-2.

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marched against Svend at Grathe Heath, where Valdemar emerged victorious, having won the kingship through trial by combat.³⁰²

The annals and chronicles provide further evidence of Valdemar's victory against Svend III as a trial by battle. Twelve Danish chronicles and annals record Svend's death in the years 1156 to 1158, along with indications that a battle had taken place at Grathe Heath.³⁰³ However, there is a great deal of overlap amongst these annals, and several have also been proven to have used Saxo and Svend as sources.³⁰⁴ That being said, the consistency and little change in the annal and chronicle entries strongly indicate an absence of competing Danish accounts of how King Valdemar acquired his kingship.

What is, however, less clear from the sources is whether Valdemar's assumption of the kingship at Grathe Heath was de jure as well as de facto. Based on Svend's account one can most likely assume that both happened at the same time, but Saxo's account was a little less clear. For one, he claimed that Valdemar had been elected king as a child, and the *Gesta Friderici* insinuated that Valdemar had been elected following the battle of Grathe Heath, thus suggesting a de facto assumption followed by a de jure assumption of kingship.³⁰⁵ Finally, the continuation of the *Annals of Roskilde* claimed that Valdemar had been crowned and anointed after the battle, as did Heimskringla, who used Valdemar as an example of a crowned king.³⁰⁶

Besides the annals and the chronicles, several other Danish sources also provide evidence of Valdemar's kingship being won through his victory at Grathe Heath. Some shorter works found in *Scriptores Minores Historiæ Danicæ Medii Ævi* explicitly mention Valdemar defeating Svend III in battle, such as the early fourteenth century *Reges Danorum* and the late thirteenth-century *Incerti Auctoris Genealogia Regum Danie*.³⁰⁷ Additionally, the author of the early thirteenth century *Series ac brevior historia regum Danie: A Dan ad Waldemarum II* stated that Valdemar inflicted 'God's divine justice' upon Svend in the Battle at Grathe

³⁰² Saxo, xiv.19.11-15; Svend Aggesen, *SHKD*, 72. These events are also documented in the majority of Danish annals. *Ann. Colbazenses*, *DMA*, p. 10; *Dansk-svenske annaler 916-1263*, *DMA*, p. 13; *Årbog (Lund) 1074-1255*, *DMA*, p. 18; *Ann. Lundenses*, *DMA*, p. 58; *Ann. Valdemarii*, *DMA*, p. 76; *Ann. Nestvediensis minores*, *DMA*, p. 84; *Ann. Sorani vet.*, *DMA*, p. 90; *Ann. Sorani ad 1268*, *DMA*, p. 102.

³⁰³ See for instance, *Ann. Lundenses*, *DMA*, p. 58 (1158): 'in bello uictus eodem anni in Grathæheth [...] Waldemarus totum regnum obtinuit'; *Ann. Visbyenses*, *DMA*, p. 147 (1156): 'Bellum fuit Grathæ, ubi Sueno occiditur, et Waldemarus fit rex Danorum'.

³⁰⁴ See introduction to *DMA* for an overview and the extent of this overlap.

³⁰⁵ Saxo, xiv.2.2, insinuates that Erik II was only acting as regent until Valdemar came of age; *Gesta Friderici*, 197-98, refers to Valdemar as the recently elected king of Denmark ('regis Datiae, nuper elect').

³⁰⁶ *SM*, I, 33: 'unctus et purpuratus et diademate gloriosissime coronatus'; *HkrME*, 806-7.

³⁰⁷ *SM*, I, p. 173: 'sed domino iuuante in Jutiam venit, et eodem anno occisus est idem Swen in bello Grathemose, quod constituit contra Valdemarum.', for a discussion on the date, see *ibid.*, pp. 150-51; *ibid.*, p. 189: 'Kanuto autem a Suenone rege Roskildis interfecto, et eodem Suenone in bello Gratha occiso, predictus Waldemarus Primus monarchiam Datie potestatiue in magna pace obtinuit.' For a discussion on the date, see *ibid.*, pp. 155-56.

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Heath.³⁰⁸ Such wording would indicate that the author believed that the struggle between Valdemar and Svend amounted to some form of trial by combat as such a view was consistent with the contemporary European view on not only the ordeal but also just war.³⁰⁹

Similar evidence for Valdemar gaining his kingship through trial by battle can be found in the foreign sources too, mainly English, and German chronicles and annals. Ralph Niger's early thirteenth century *Chronicon universalis*, the longest of the two chronicles he wrote, offers a remarkably high level of insight into and details about Danish affairs.³¹⁰ Towards the end of

³⁰⁸ *SM*, I, p. 166: 'Ad ultimum Sueno pulsus est. Deinde sub specie pacis reuersus in Daciam Kanutum et Constantinum dolo occifit Roskilde et preuaricatus est pactum et fedus et iusiurandum. Postmodum in Jutia dimicans cum Waldemaro, filio sancti Kanuti martyris, infeliciter occubuit, iusto dei iudicio dignum insidiarum suarum consecutus finem.' For a discussion on the date, see *ibid*, pp. 149-50.

³⁰⁹ Whetham, *Just Wars and Moral Victories*, 102-5, 248; Jacques Le Goff, *Medieval Civilization 400-1500*, trans. by Julia Barrow (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, 1988), 330. See also, Philip Wynn, *Augustine on War and Military Service* (Augsburg Fortress, 2013), 297-320; Kelly DeVries, 'God and defeat in medieval warfare: Some preliminary thoughts', in *The Circle of War in the Middle Ages: Essays on Medieval Military and Naval History*, Warfare in History, 6 (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1999), pp. 87-97; David A. Lenihan, 'The Just War Theory in the Work of Saint Augustine', *Augustinian Studies*, 19 (1988), 37-70; Frederick H. Russell, *The Just War in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

³¹⁰ Mia Münster-Swendsen, 'Lost Chronicle or Elusive Informers? Some Thoughts on the Source of Ralph Niger's Reports from Twelfth-Century Denmark', in *Historical and Intellectual Culture in the Long Twelfth Century: The Scandinavian Connection*, ed. by Mia Münster-Swendsen, Thomas K. Heebøll-Holm and Sigbjørn Olsen Sønnesyn (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2016), pp. 189-210; Ralph Niger, *Chronica: Eine Englische Weltchronik des 12. Jahrhunderts*, ed. by Hanna Krause, Europäische Hochschulschriften 3: Geschichte und ihre Hilfswissenschaften, vol. 261 (Frankfurt am Main, 1985), 94.

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Figure 5. Map of the medieval kingdom of Denmark, at the time of Valdemar's accession, with the major provinces named in bold. (Wikimedia Commons).

the fourth book, we find a mostly abridged timeline of events from the 1140s to the 1150s, from the preliminary request to King Conrad III of Germany for the mediation between Knud V and Svend III, via the Bloodfeast of Roskilde, to the Battle at Grathe Heath where Svend died, and Valdemar became sole king.³¹¹ There are also three German sources, two of which predates any of the Danish sources.³¹² The first of these is Helmold of Bosau's *Chronica Slavorum*, written in two parts, with the first covering a period closing with the year 1168 and the second part finished in 1172, meaning Helmold wrote well before either Saxo or Svend Aggesen.³¹³ Like the later English sources, Helmold also offers a timeline of events, including the Bloodfeast of

³¹¹ *Radulfi Nigri Chronica: The Chronicles of Ralph Niger*, ed. by Robert Anstruther (London, 1851), 89: 'sanato vulnera et instaurato exercitu, invasit impiissimum Suein et occidit; et solus postea regnavit'.

³¹² The last event described in Saxo was the subjugation of Pomerania by Knud VI in 1185, but the preface mentions the Danish conquest of the areas north of the Elbe in 1208, meaning Saxo must have finished his work between these two dates. Svend Aggesen, on the other hand, wrote his *BHRD* in 1186/87, only predating by the *Chronicon Roskildense* (Chronicle of Roskilde) from the 1140s. See the introduction above for more on the dating of the works of Svend and Saxo.

³¹³ For a discussion of the dating of the *Chronica Slavorum*, see *Helmoldi Chronica Slavorum*, 1-11.

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Roskilde, culminating in the Battle at Grathe Heath and the death of Svend III.³¹⁴ Written contemporaneously with Helmold's chronicle, the *Annals of Magdeburg*, written from 1080 to 1176 by a single hand, meaning that the entry concerning the Battle at Grathe Heath also predates the writings of both Saxo and Svend Aggesen.³¹⁵ The entry for 1157 begins with the outcome of the Bloodfeast and ends with Valdemar's victory.³¹⁶ This account was repeated in the late twelfth century *Annals of Pöhlde*, providing ample foreign evidence that it was through his victory that Valdemar acquired the kingship.³¹⁷ The combination therefore of the consistency in the timeline presented by the Danish annals and chronicles, and in the English and German sources proves without a doubt that Valdemar acquired his kingship in a battle against Svend III. Herein lies the difference between the narratives about King Sverre Sigurdsson and King Valdemar. *Sverre's saga* focused on the military aspect of Sverre's acquisition – as did some of the German sources of Valdemar's acquisition. Svend Aggesen and Saxo, on the other hand, as evidenced, did not. This reflects the relative closeness in time to the events described. When the work on the saga began, Sverre was still relying on his martial abilities to repel his rivals. By the time Saxo and Svend Aggesen wrote, the importance had shifted from how Valdemar had acquired the kingship to instead focusing how to secure it for the future of his branch of the royal kindred.

Along with showing two successions to the kingship in Norway and Denmark through trial by combat, it also reveals the ordeal by hot iron to be a Norwegian peculiarity when it came to offering proof. As mentioned above, the saga literature points to two different and distinct situations where paternity, and by extension, the right to inherit, was proved through the ordeal by hot iron. Eirik Sigurdsson proved to be Sverre Sigurdsson's brother, King Harald IV the son of King Magnus III Barefoot, and Inga of Varteig proved that King Håkon III was the father of Håkon IV – the latter one taking place after the Fourth Lateran Council had condemned its use. The use of the ordeal by hot iron in this manner contrasts with the rest of Europe, where trial by battle was the more widespread method of offering proof. One of the best known examples for the use of trial by combat is William the Conqueror's victory at Hastings

³¹⁴ *Helmoldi Chronica Slavorum*, 168: 'Tunc Suein contraxit exercitum de Selande et insulis maris et transfretavit in Iuthlande, ut expugnaret Waldemarum. At ille producto exercitū occurrit ei in manu valida, et commissum est prelium non longe a Wiberge, et occisus est Suein in illa et omnes viri eius pariter.'

³¹⁵ Eva Haverkamp, 'What Did the Christians Know? Latin Reports on the Persecution of Jews in 1096', in *Crusades*, 7 (Abingdon: Ashgate, 2008), p. 96 fn. 46.

³¹⁶ *Annales Magdeburgenses*, ed. by G.H. Pertz, MGH SS, 16 (Hannover, 1859), 191: '1157: Kanutus rex a Suenone dolose interimitur. Waldomarus vero vulneratus vix evasit. Non post multum vero temporis factum est prelium inter Suenonem et Waldomarum. Suenonis pars victa corruit, ipse autem fugiens capitur et obtruncatur.'

³¹⁷ *Annales Palidenses*, ed. by G.H. Pertz, MGH SS, 16 (Hannover, 1859), 90: '1157: Kanutus rex Danorum a Suenone dolose perimitur. Waldomarus vero vulneratus, cix evasit. Non multo post factum est prelium inter Suenonem et Waldemarum; Suenonis pars victa corruit, ipse autem capitur et obtruncatur.'

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over the perjurer Harold Godwinson in 1066.³¹⁸ This shows that if there was a disputed claim to a throne elsewhere in Europe, one way to prove one's right was to fight it out, not proving some superior right of birth through the ordeal of hot iron. Based on the discussion so far then, it would seem that hereditary succession was in and of itself not enough to secure the succession. The second half of this chapter, however, will show that it was possible – under the right circumstances and with the right preparations.

The designated successor: associative kingship and hereditary succession

The hereditary successions of King Knud VI of Denmark and King Magnus VI of Norway were possible due to them being their respective father's designated heir and their associated co-ruler. In the following it is important to separate between accession and succession. Both Knud VI and Magnus VI *accessioned* to the kingship while their respective fathers were still alive, but they did not *succeed* to the kingship until their father's deaths. It was the associative kingship of Knud and Magnus within their fathers' lifetime that made any form of formal succession unnecessary – accession, election, and elevation will, therefore, fall into the same category in the discussion below. By the twelfth century, there were several European role models for King Valdemar I of Denmark and King Håkon IV of Norway to emulate, and in the case of Denmark, the most likely inspiration came from France.³¹⁹

In the kingdom of Denmark, the accession of Knud VI Valdemarsen represented the first time a Danish (and Scandinavian) king was made *rex iunior*.³²⁰ However, Knud was not the first Danish prince to be crowned, in 1134 Magnus Nielsen had been crowned by Emperor

³¹⁸ There is a significant scholarly literature surrounding this account of the promise of the English throne. For some examples, see David R. Bates, *William the Conqueror* (London, 2016), 192-3; Tom Licence, 'Robert of Jumièges, Archbishop in Exile (1052-5), *Anglo-Saxon England*, 42 (2013), 311-29; George Garnett, *The Norman Conquest: a Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2009), 35-44; Stephen Baxter, 'Edward the Confessor and the Succession Question', in *Edward the Confessor: The Man and the Legend*, ed. Richard Mortimer (Woodbridge, 2009), pp. 77-118; David C. Douglas, 'Edward the Confessor, Duke William of Normandy, and the English Succession', *EHR*, 68 (1953), pp. 526-45; Tryggvi Julius Oleson, 'Edward the Confessor's Promise of the Throne to Duke William of Normandy', *EHR*, 72 (1957), 221-8; E. John, 'Edward the Confessor and the Norman Conquest', *EHR*, 94 (1979), 241-67.

³¹⁹ On Denmark's links with France, see also Münster-Swendsen, 'Lost Chronicle or Elusive Informers?', p. 192; Thomas Riis, 'Autour du mariage de 1193: l'épouse, son pays et les relations Franco-Danoises', in *La France de Philippe Auguste: le temps des mutations*, ed. R.-H. Bautier (Paris, 1982), 341-61; Kai Hørby, 'The Social History of Medieval Denmark', in *Danish Medieval History: New Currents*, 39-42; Lucien Musset, *Les peuples scandinaves au Moyen Âge* (Paris, 1951), 181-3. For some European examples of associative kingships, see Chapter one, pp. 48-51.

³²⁰ Knud had an older, illegitimate, brother, Christopher Valdemarsen (c.1150-1173), who was passed over. Instead he was awarded the duchy of Schleswig in 1167. He was made a commander in the fight against the Wends, but his death in June 1173 at the age of twenty-three prevented him from playing a further role in his father and half-brothers' reigns. *Saxo*, II, 1070 fn. 92, xiv.30.7, xiv. 34.3, xiv.39.49, xiv.45.1.

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Lothar III.³²¹ Knud's coronation took place when he was seven years old, at Ringsted on Zealand, at the same time as the canonisation of his grandfather and namesake.³²² There are several reasons behind this double act, but chief amongst them was his father Valdemar I's intention to secure the future of his family and his particular branch of the royal kindred. This intention is comparable to Matthew Strickland's argument for King Henry II of England's desire to have his son, known as Henry the Young King, crowned to secure the dynasty and its status.³²³ King Knud VI of Denmark succeeded to the Danish kingship upon his father's death in May 1182. At the same, the Scanian rebellion, which had begun in 1180, entered its second phase and posed a severe threat to the unity of the kingdom.³²⁴ Of the narrative sources, Saxo Grammaticus offers the most detailed account of Knud's succession. He writes that as soon as King Valdemar's funeral had taken place, Knud rushed off to Jutland 'to claim the kingdom and make it secure, and with the aim of engaging the allegiance of his father's warriors.' Here, it sounds very much like Knud had to be elected ('patrie consensu regni heres efficitur') in order to succeed to the kingship.³²⁵ However, Saxo immediately contradicts this first statement, when, in the very next sentence, he writes: 'There was no need for him to solicit for the title of king now, because he had formally acquired this at the time of his anointing.'³²⁶ Saxo's contemporary historian Svend Aggesen provides no contradictory account, merely writing that Knud 'followed by hereditary right and succeeded to his father's kingdom'.³²⁷ If both Svend and Saxo thought that Knud succeeded by hereditary right, then why the apparent need for an election in Saxo's account? The answer likely lies in that Knud, like his father, did not succeed to, or acquire, the kingship in the manner which Saxo thought legitimate.³²⁸ Hence, he made it sound like Knud had to be elected king when the reality was that he had already acquired the kingship

³²¹ *Die Reichschronik des Annalista Saxo*, ed. by Klaus Nass, MGH SS, 37 (Hannover, 2006), 597.

³²² Saxo, xiv.40.1, xiv.40.12. Saxo places Knud's birth in 1162, after Valdemar's return from Barbarossa's court at Dole near Besançon and that he was seven years old when crowned at Ringsted. *Ibid*, xiv.28.23; xiv.49.12. The Danish annals and the *Chronicle of Zealand*, on the other hand, presents a variety of dates ranging from 1161 to 1163, with a majority (9 entries) stating it was in 1163. *Årbog (Lund) 1074-1255, DMA*, p. 18: 1161; *Ann. Lundenses, DMA*, p. 58: 1163; *Ann. Valdemarii, DMA*, p. 76: 1162; *Ann. Sorani vet., DMA*, p. 90: 1163; *Ann. Soarni ad 1268, DMA*, p. 102: 1163; *Chronicon Sialandie, DMA*, p. 109: 1163; *Ann. Ryenses I, DMA*, p. 166: 1163; *Ann. Ryenses II(A), DMA*, p. 197: 1163; *Ann. Ryenses III(B), DMA*, p. 228: 1163; *Ann. Ripenses, DMA*, p. 257: 1163; *Ann. (Ribe/Tønder) 980-1286, DMA*, p. 270: 1161; *Ann. 1095-1194, DMA*, p. 308: 1163. On the canonisation of Knud Lavard, see Chapter four, pp. 141-42.

³²³ Strickland, *Henry the Young King*, 44.

³²⁴ On the Scanian rebellion, see Chapter four, p. 147-48.

³²⁵ Saxo, xvi.1.1: 'qua regnum peti firmarique oportuit, in Iutiam secessit, paternos sibi milites obligaturus', (with the assent of his countrymen, he was made heir to the kingdom).

³²⁶ Saxo, xvi.1.1: 'Neque enim illi nomen regium ambiendum restabat, quod unctionis sue tempore solenniter adeptus fuerat'.

³²⁷ Svend Aggesen, *BHRD*, 139: 'filius eius Canutus iure succedens hereditario patri in regno successit'. For more on the terminology used by Svend to describe successions, see Chapter one, p. 39.

³²⁸ Cf. this to the discussion above on pp. 73-76 about Valdemar I.

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years before. Valdemar had already designated Knud his successor through associative kingship, negating the need for any other forms of a symbolic transfer of power.

Knud acquired the kingship in 1165 when the Danish magnates ‘resolved to decree royal honours [on him]’ so ‘that they might recognize him as his father’s present colleague in authority as well as future holder of his crown.’³²⁹ At the same time, the magnates also swore oaths of fealty to Knud, even though Buris Henriksen, the senior most member of the royal kindred after Valdemar’s immediate family, thought that there was ‘no record of the Danish realm having been shared amicably by more than one claimant and frequent experience in ancient times had shown that war had arisen between father and son over supreme rule.’³³⁰ Nevertheless, Saxo wrote that Valdemar was ‘delighted with their foresight and consideration’ and that ‘in an address to the leading citizens he obtained their agreement to confer the designation of royalty on his son.’³³¹ This process sounds very much like an acclamation of Knud, serving to highlight the elective nature of Danish kingship, but it also makes Saxo’s dichotomy stand out more. Beyond what Saxo wrote, we know very little of the circumstances of Knud’s election, *Knýtlinga saga* elaborated on Saxo’s account, stating that the election of Knud occurred with the ‘approval of Bishop Absalon and other leaders.’³³² The election of Knud in 1165, therefore, makes it unlikely that Knud travelled to Viborg in 1182 to be elected as Saxo wrote in the opening of his final book. Without further evidence, it is unlikely we will know the intention or reason behind Knud’s 1182 trip to Viborg. Taken together, Saxo and *Knýtlinga saga* provides strong evidence for an election of Knud in 1165, therefore removing the need for a second election in 1182.

The most significant proof of Knud’s possession of the kingship was his coronation in 1170, which is interesting, considering how little coverage it had in the contemporary sources. Saxo’s description, despite its brevity, leaves no doubt of Knud’s coronation: ‘filio regios

³²⁹ Saxo, xiv.33.1: ‘Itaque principibus graues periculorum motus et difficilia rei Danice tempora attendentibus filio Waldemari Kanuto regios honores decernere placuit, qui non solum paterne maiestatis futurus possessor, sed etiam presens dignitatis socius nosceretur’. Friis-Jensen and Fisher believes that this acclamation, as they call it, was closely linked with the military expedition preceding it in the narrative and therefore dates it to 1165. This was, not surprisingly, supported by the chronology in the mid thirteenth century *Knýtlinga saga*, which was in part based on Saxo’s work. For a discussion of *Knýtlinga saga* and the events of the twelfth century, see Rikke Malmros, ‘Blodgildet i Roskilde: Knytlingesagas forhold til det tolvte århundredes danske historieskrivning’, *Scandia*, 45.1 (1979), 43-66. With little else to go on, this discussion follows the 1165 date.

³³⁰ Saxo, xiv.33.3: ‘Danie primatibus apud Roskyldiam Kanuti miles solenni more fieri iussus aliis imperio obtemperantibus id facere recusauit. ...Danie regnum a pluribus amice participatum esse memorie <proditum non sit>, et crebra antiquitatis experimenta sint patrem et filium de rerum dominio bellum creuisse.’

³³¹ Saxo, xiv.33.1: ‘Quorum prudentia rex ac beniuolentia delectatus probata sententia regni maiestatem cum sanguine suo participare non damnnum honoris, sed claritatis incrementum putauit, primatumque uoces ad regium nomen filio deferendum concionando perduxit.’

³³² *Ks*, Ch. 120: ‘þá gaf hann Knúti, syni sínum, konungsnafn með ráði Absalóns biskups ok annarra höfðingja’.

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celebrare constituit [...] si in filio maiestatis sue insignia'.³³³ After his consecration, Knud was surrounded by 'a great concourse of the aristocracy' and 'enthroned in royal purple'.³³⁴ Svend Aggesen, by contrast, is quiet about this event. Nine Danish annal entries mention that Knud was crowned but cannot come to an agreement on when with the date ranging from 1170 to 1172.³³⁵ The extant diploma material also reveals that Knud was referred to as king in the 1170s, but where the English and the French used a distinctive title, e.g. *rex iunior* or *rex designatus*, the Danes seem to have preferred the simple *rex*.³³⁶ Knud's coronation had clear parallels to Capetian practice of crowning the eldest son (or spare) in the father's lifetime in order to secure the succession. It was also a curious mirroring of the coronation of Henry the Young King (1155-83) in England, with the two coronations taking place within nine days of each other. Knud's coronation also parallels some of the reasons behind Henry the Young King's coronation, with Matthew Strickland arguing that it was part of Henry II's efforts after 1154 to restore the authority and dignity of a kingship that had been damaged by a long civil war. However, that such designation could not guarantee the succession is evident from the example of Henry I of England, who had gone to great lengths to persuade the magnates of his Anglo-Norman realm to swear homage and fealty to his daughter Matilda, but upon the king's death circumstances changed and the magnates instead favoured his nephew, Stephen.³³⁷ Valdemar's circumstances mirrored those of Henry II and to some extent the efforts of Henry I in that not only was Knud crowned but Valdemar also asked the Danish magnates to swear oaths of fealty to his son before his coronation. Elections, even in the forms it was practised, left too much to chance and circumstance, therefore associative kingship would appear to be, perhaps, the next logical step in securing a stable transmission of royal authority from one generation to the next. Such thinking would certainly be in line with Derek Whaley's argument was the purpose of

³³³ *Saxo*, xiv.40.1 (royal honours for his son [...] his son endowed with the emblems of his own sovereignty). *Saxo* says this happened when Knud was seven years old which appears to have been the minimum age for these coronations in France, e.g. Henry I had his eldest son crowned at this age. *Saxo*, xiv.40.12; Strickland, *Henry the Young King*, 41; *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France*, ed. by M. Bouquet et al., 24 vols (Paris, 1869-1904), XI, 32-3; J. Dhondt, 'Les Relations entre la France et la Normandie sous Henri Ier', *Normannia*, 12 (1939), 465-86; *Recueil des actes de Philippe Ier, roi de France (1059-1108)*, ed. by M. Pou (Paris, 1908), xxviii-xxxii.

³³⁴ *Saxo*, xiv.40.12: 'magna cum optimatum frequentia regio apparatu feriantem reperiunt.', 'Kanutus rex consecrates regia in sella purpura uenustatur'.

³³⁵ *Dansk-svenske annaler 916-1263, DMA*, p. 13: 1171; *Årbog (Lund) 1074-1255, DMA*, p. 18: 1171; *Ann. Lundenses, DMA*, p. 59: 1170; *Ann. Valdemarii, DMA*, p. 76: 1172; *Ann. Sorani vet., DMA*, p. 90: 1172; *Ann. Sorani ad 1268, DMA*, p. 102: 1170/71; *Ann. Ryenses II (A), DMA*, p. 198: 1171; *Ann. (Ribe/Tønder) 980-1286, DMA*, p. 270: 1172. However, these entries need to be considered in light of their sources, see the introduction to *DMA* (pp. ix-xvi).

³³⁶ *DD*, I:3, nos. 45, 46, 67, 89. The English and the French gave their kings in waiting distinctive styles, for some examples see *Recueil des actes de Louis VI roi de France (1108-1137)*, ed. by R.-H. Bautier and J. Dufour, 3 vols (Paris, 1992-93), I, nos. 3-6: 'Dei gratia Francorum rex designatus', 182, 229, 305. See also Strickland, *Henry the Young King*, 41.

³³⁷ Strickland, *Henry the Young King 1155-1183*, 44-5.

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associative kingship.³³⁸ That Knud's coronation happened at the same time as the canonisation of Knud Lavard further reveals much about Valdemar's intent. He was increasing the prestige of his branch of the Estridsen-kindred – the Valdemarian – much like Peter and Birgit Sawyer argued that King Erik I of Denmark (r. 1095-1103) had done when he encouraged the cult of his brother St Knud the Holy as a means to enhance his authority and to show God's approval of his reign.³³⁹ In the context of the wider Estridsen-kindred, it is evident that the Ringsted events of 1170 were meant to remove other possible claimants to the kingship and delegitimise, or at the very least nullify, their claims. This reveals a larger project of consolidation that ensured that when Valdemar died in 1182, Knud could succeed as sole king of Denmark with as few speedbumps as possible.³⁴⁰ Indeed, Michael Gelting has argued that the canonisation of Knud Lavard was designed to enhance the prestige of Lavard's descendants thereby depriving rival branches of the royal kindred of legitimacy. This, combined with the already canonised King Knud the Holy, whose sainthood was aimed at stigmatising regicide and rebellion against the kingship, should be understood as a policy by King Valdemar, meant to provide the Valdemarian kingship with an aura that placed it outside the reach of the dynastic and social struggle that had cost so many Danish kings their lives.³⁴¹

Knud succeeded by hereditary right because he was the king's oldest legitimate son, already crowned and confirmed to the kingship, and there were no other viable claimants to the kingship that could challenge his position.³⁴² The act of crowning Knud shows the level of European influence in Scandinavia, and, in particular, the connections between Denmark and France. Saxo's dichotomy concerning Knud's succession was rooted in his view of how successions should take place.

In Norway, by contrast, there was no such dichotomy in the narrative sources, but the same mixture of practices that existed in Denmark was also present there. Unlike the sources depicting the succession of King Knud VI, neither *Håkon Håkonsson's saga* nor the extant fragment of *Magnus Håkonsson's saga* mentioned Magnus VI's succession in 1263. The last few chapters of *Håkon Håkonsson's saga* were more focused on giving an account of King

³³⁸ Derek Whaley, 'From a Salic Law to the Salic Law: The creation and re-creation of the royal succession system in France', in *The Routledge History of Monarchy*, ed. by Elena Woodacre and others, Routledge Histories (London: Routledge, 2019), pp. 443-464.

³³⁹ Peter and Birgit Sawyer, *Medieval Scandinavia: From Conversion to Reformation, circa 800-1500* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 215-16.

³⁴⁰ Niels Skyum-Nielsen, *Kvinde og Slave*, Danmarks historie uden retouche, 3 (København: Munksgaard, 1971), 182-83. Strickland has argued similarly with regards to the coronation of Henry the Young King. *Henry the Young King*, 44. On Valdemar's efforts to remove possible claimants to the kingship, see Chapter four, pp. 148-53.

³⁴¹ Michael H. Gelting, 'The kingdom of Denmark', p. 89.

³⁴² For a discussion and eventual fate of some of these claimants, see Chapter four, pp. 148-53.

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Håkon's last days, and the closest it gets to the succession is when King Håkon IV responded negatively to the question of whether he had any other sons in case Magnus should die.³⁴³ The fragment of *Magnúss saga Lagabætis* (Saga of Magnus the Law-mender) was equally silent on the question of succession, focusing instead on Magnus's diplomatic efforts directed towards Alexander III, King of Scots.³⁴⁴ This omission would indicate that a transition of power to Magnus had already taken place and that he had received foreign recognition for his right to rule.³⁴⁵ The silence regarding the succession does not mean it was unimportant. Instead, it is perhaps an indication that, politically, there was no need to mark the succession – as with Knud VI in 1182 – because it had already taken place. Exactly how and when this transition of power took place is the focus of this discussion.

Like Valdemar I in Denmark, Håkon IV of Norway was the last king standing at the end of the Norwegian civil war period, with similar concerns for the future of his kindred. The succession of Magnus VI was the first time in some sixty years (since the succession of Håkon III in 1202) that a king's succession was intentional – sort of. Magnus VI was the second son, the spare, of King Håkon IV Håkonsson and succeeded his older brother, Håkon the Young, as his father's intended heir and co-ruler upon his brother's untimely death in 1257. Like Valdemar I, Håkon IV's intentions were to secure the future of his kindred, and to this end, he introduced a succession law in the summer of 1260.³⁴⁶ This law made it clear that the kingship from now on was to be hereditary, based on the principles of primogeniture and legitimacy. To become king of Norway, the heir had to be of legitimate birth and for the succession to be lineal.³⁴⁷



Figure 6. Contemporary, or near contemporary, bust of King Magnus VI from the choir in Stavanger Cathedral, dated after 1272 to the 1280s. www.snl.no/Magnus_Lagabøte.

³⁴³ *HH*, II, 262.

³⁴⁴ *Magnúss saga Lagabætis*, in *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, ed. by Sverrir Jakobsson, Þorleifur Hauksson and Tor Ulset, 2 vols. (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenska Fornritafélag, 2013), II, 271-72.

³⁴⁵ On importance of foreign recognition, see Chapter four, pp. 123-25, 126-29.

³⁴⁶ *NMD*, p. 104; cf. *HH*, II, 209.

³⁴⁷ *NMD*, p. 107; Helle, *Norge blir en stat*, 116.

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Be this as it may, it is evident that Magnus Håkonsson's path to the kingship began in 1240 with the double election of his older brother, Håkon the Young.³⁴⁸ The election of Håkon the Young represents a definite break with the old customs and traditions, as he too had an older, but illegitimate, brother who was bypassed. This double election was part of the preparations by King Håkon before the showdown with Skule *jarl* who had rebelled in 1239, thus providing his supporters with a successor if he should fall in battle. Håkon the Young would go on to marry the daughter of Birger *jarl* of Sweden, and he fathered a son before he died prematurely in May 1257.³⁴⁹ Less than a month later, King Håkon had Magnus elected at a *þing* convened for that purpose in south-eastern Norway. Again, political circumstances dictated this snap election of Magnus, as King Håkon was preparing for a campaign in Denmark.³⁵⁰ However, had the 1260 law of succession been in effect in 1257 it would have been the infant Sverre Håkonsson who should have been elected to succeed Håkon the Young and not Magnus. However, the young Sverre died after Christmas 1260, thus making this a moot point.³⁵¹ The snap election of Magnus in 1257, therefore, went against the 1260 law and revealed the significant role political circumstances played in these situations – hereditary right was not always enough to secure the succession.³⁵² In any case, the election, together with the coronation that followed four years later, served as Magnus's accession to the kingship.

Whereas the accounts for Knud's coronation in 1170 are not very forthcoming, we know significantly more about Magnus's coronation: the ceremony, the guests who were present, and the circumstances under which it took place. The saga reports that Magnus' coronation occurred on Wednesday 14 September 1261 (the Feast of the Cross) as part of his wedding celebration

³⁴⁸ Håkon the Young was first elected at *Eyraþing* on 1 April 1240 and then again at a *þing* in Bergen on 12 April, here representatives from the *Gulaþinglög*, the Orkneys, *Hjaltland* (Shetland), and Iceland participated. *HH*, II, 79, 82. The double election could then be seen as first a recognition of him by mainland Norway and then a recognition by the *skattlands* and overseas territories.

³⁴⁹ Håkon the Young's marriage to Rikissa Birgersdotter took place in 1252, he died of illness 5 May 1257, and Sverre Håkonsson died of illness the winter 1260-61. *HH*, II, 157-58, 183, 210.

³⁵⁰ *HH*, II, 190-91. King Håkon IV here displayed the same quick thinking as Louis VI of France when faced with his eldest son's sudden death in 1131, and he had his second son crowned in his place. Strickland, *Henry the Young King 1155-1183*, 41; *Recueil des actes de Louis VI roi de France (1108-1137)*, ed. by R-H. Bautier and J. Dufour, I, nos. 182, 229; L. Delisle, 'Sur la date de l'association de Philippe, fils de Louis le Gros, au gouvernement du royaume', *Journal des savants* (1898), 736-40; A. Luchaire, *Louis VI le Gros*, xlix-liii, and nos. 399, 420, 433; *The Chronicles of Robert of Torigni*, in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, ed. by R. Howlett, 4 vols (London, 1884-89), IV, 120.

³⁵¹ *HH*, II, 210: 'vetrinn eftir [jólin 1260] tók junkherra Sverrir sótt þá er hann leiddi til bana, ok þótti konungi þat hinn mesto skaði ok mörgum öðrum.' (the winter after [Christmas 1260] Sverre became sick and died, and the king and many others thought this was a great loss.)

³⁵² The law stated that the oldest legitimately born son shall be king, and if he was dead, then his son shall be king. *NMD*, p.107: 'Sa skal konongr at Norege vera er skilgeten er Noregs konongs svnr hin æiltzi odal borenn till landz oc þængna. En ef eigi er skilgetten svnn till þa skal sa konongs sonar svnr konongr vera er skilgetten er.' However, Sverre's death in the winter of 1260-61 solved the potential problem of overlooking the senior line for the junior line.

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to Princess Ingeborg of Denmark ('jungfrú Ingilborg'). The ceremony was the same as had been used in King Hákon's coronation of 1247: Magnus received a crown ('kórónu'), two sceptres ('ríkisvöndu'), and a 'vígslusverðit' used to knight him ('dubba riddara') after he had received the unction, according to the proscribed ecclesiastical rules ('sem býðr í heilagri kirkju'). Finally, dressed in the coronation robes ('skrýddr [...] konungsskruð'), the archbishop enthroned him, before Ingeborg received her crown as queen.³⁵³ There are several parallels to what happened in this ceremony and to contemporary European customs. Using the coronation of Henry the Young King as an example here too, we know, for instance, that he had also been knighted during the ceremony, though it is worth noting that Henry was fifteen years old whereas Magnus was twenty-three.³⁵⁴ Knighting, and the rituals for dubbing, were well developed at this point. It was one of the most important events in the life of a nobleman – marking both the coming of age and entry into an elite order of warriors. Therefore, it was a necessary preliminary to investiture.³⁵⁵ However, the saga strongly indicates that dubbing for knighthood was not a common practice in Norway at this time, making it questionable or unlikely that it held the same significance in Norway as in the rest of Western Europe. According to the saga, a Scottish knight, Missel, stated that 'I was told knights were not dubbed in this land'. The saga author also used this episode to draw attention to the fact that the King of Scots was not crowned.³⁵⁶ European

³⁵³ *HH*, II, 218: 'Þá er Magnús var skrýddr leiddi erkibyskup hann úttarr til sætis síns. Síðan vígðu þeir dróttningina [Ingilborg].'

³⁵⁴ By comparison, Henry I was nineteen when knighted by William the Conqueror in 1086, while Henry's brother Geoffrey was twenty when knighted by Henry II in 1178, and Henry V, husband of Empress Matilda, had also been knighted at fifteen. Following King John's death in 1216, and in the midst of a civil war, the magnates regarded it as proper to dub Henry III as a knight before his coronation, even though he was only nine years old. Similarly, for the succession of Alexander III of Scotland in 1249, it was debated whether his inauguration should be postponed, allowing for his knighting beforehand. William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, ed. by R.A.B. Mynors, R.M. Thompson and M. Winterbottom, 2 vols (Oxford, 1998-99), I, 71: *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, E, 1086; Howden, *Gesta*, I, 207; Marjorie Chibnall, *Empress Matilda: Queen Consort, Queen Mother and Lady of the English* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1991), 21 and fn. 5; M.D. Legge, 'The Inauguration of Alexander III', in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 80 (1945-46), 77-80; K. Norgate, *The Minority of Henry III* (London, 1912), 5 and fn. 1; A.A.M. Duncan, *The Kingship of the Scots, 842-1292* (Edinburgh, 2002), 132-33. Clearly political circumstance dictated when and under what circumstances one was old enough to be knighted. The saga does not say, however, whether King Hákon was knighted as part of his coronation ceremony, only that it happened according to custom. Strickland, *Henry the Young King*, 82-4; *HH*, II, 129: 'fór vígsla fram eftir því sem býðr.'

³⁵⁵ Strickland, *Henry the Young King*, 82. Jean Flori, *L'Essor de la chevalerie, XI-XIIIe siècles* (Genève: Droz, 1986), 58; idem, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen and Rebel*, trans. by Olive Classe (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 105-6; D'Arcy J.D. Boulton, 'Classic Knighthood as a Nobiliary Dignity: The Knighting of Counts and King's Sons in England, 1066-1272', in *Medieval Knighthood V: Papers from the Sixth Strawberry Hill Conference, 1994*, ed. by Stephen D. Church and Ruth E. Harvey (Woodbridge, 1995), 41-100. For example, King Stephen had knighted his eldest son, Eustace, before endowing him with him with lands and the county of Boulogne, likewise Henry II made John a knight before he intended to establish him as king of Ireland. *Gesta Stephani*, ed. and trans. by K.R. Potter and intro. by R.H.C. Davis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976; repr. 2004), 208-9; Howden, *Gesta*, I, 336: 'honoravit Hohannem filium suum armis militaribus. Et statim misit eum in Hiberniam, et eum inde regem constituit'.

³⁵⁶ *HH*, II, 218: 'Þat var mér sagt at hér væri ekki riddarar dubbaðir í þessu landi', 'því at þat er ekki siðr í Skotlandi at kóróna konunga.'

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courtly literature and *chansons de geste* around Charlemagne (Matter of France) and King Arthur (Matter of Britain) were known at the Norwegian court as early as 1226 when an Old Norse translation of *Tristan and Iseult* was reportedly completed. Knut Helle saw this as the inspiration for, and Håkon IV as a key patron of, the chivalric saga literature (*riddarasögur*) that emerged at this time. This imported European literature may then have inspired the knighting of Magnus.³⁵⁷ There was one important difference between the events in England to the coronation of Magnus as *rex iunior* in Norway. Unlike the coronation of Magnus, Henry the Young King's wife, Margaret of France, was not crowned alongside him in 1170, something which Matthew Strickland has argued was a calculated insult to King Louis VII.³⁵⁸ By contrast, Ingeborg's uncle, King Christopher I of Denmark (r. 1252-59), had proposed the marriage between her and Magnus to end the Norwegian claims on Halland, and he had similarly used the marriage between Ingeborg's sister and King Valdemar Birgersson of Sweden to enter into a settlement with Birger *jarl*. Both Ingeborg and her sister were hence heirs to large estates in Denmark, something which Knut Helle has argued was part of the appeal for the Norwegian king and the Swedish *jarl* in agreeing to these matches.³⁵⁹ More importantly, by agreeing to the match King Håkon recognised Christopher I's reign, and by crowning Ingeborg at the same time as Magnus, Håkon neatly acquired Danish recognition for the succession of his son.

The fact that Magnus was crowned to mark his position as *rex iunior* was very much in line with Capetian practices, coupled with the swiftness of Magnus's election to succeed his older brother in that position only serves to underscore the comparison. There were therefore clear indications that *Håkon Håkonsson's saga* regarded this as the completion of Magnus's elevation to the kingship. As with King Knud VI, Magnus's coronation served as both the point of accession and succession, therefore negating the need for any new process when King Håkon died two years later.

Summary

This chapter has explored how succession took place in practice based on two concrete scenarios: succession to the kingship through trial by combat and succession to the kingship through designation. The first half of this chapter showed that both King Sverre Sigurdsson and King Valdemar I of Denmark acquired to their respective kingships through trial by combat. King

³⁵⁷ Knut Helle, *Under kirke og kongemakt 1130-1350*, ed. by Knut Helle and others, Aschehougs Norgeshistorie, 12 vols (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1995), III, 171-72.

³⁵⁸ Strickland, *Henry the Young King*, 81, 92; Howden, *Gesta*, I, 6; *The Correspondence of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1162-1170*, ed. and trans. by A.J. Duggan, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), II, no. 296.

³⁵⁹ Helle, *Norge blir en stat*, 129-30; idem, *Under kirke og kongemakt*, 197-98.

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Sverre acquisition revealed a high level of and the use of Davidic imagery as part of the legitimacy process. It also depicted multiple instances that showed the saga author's awareness and knowledge of contemporary European practices. The latter case study provided ample evidence that a trial by combat (or battle) took place between Valdemar and Svend III in 1157, with one later source even making explicit reference to the involvement of God's divine justice in the process. This part of the chapter also revealed the continued use of ordeal by hot iron in Scandinavia, even after the Fourth Lateran Council's condemnation of its practice abolished it. The continued use of it was in contrast to Europe, where the trial by combat was a more widespread form of offering proof in disputes over the kingship.

The second half of the chapter shows that hereditary succession was possible as long as the right preparations were made. In apparent emulation of contemporary European practices, both King Valdemar I and King Håkon of Norway had their sons and heirs both elected and then crowned as *rex iunioris*. In Denmark, this process was to a certain degree covered up by the contemporary narrative sources offered by Svend Aggesen and Saxo. This cover-up was mainly because they saw the election as the only legitimate way to succeed to the kingship. Despite this, it is possible to glean some information about the process and the ceremony. However, it was when we turned to Norway that we can gain the most information about the process undertaken by these two kings. From *Håkon Håkonsson's saga*, we learn the name of the participants, the ceremony, how it was conducted and something about what happened during the proceedings. Here, it seems that, in line with European customs, Magnus was knighted, despite this not being common practice in Norway, and that he received a crown and two sceptres, revealing, perhaps, the extent to which European courtly literature had influenced the Norwegian kingdom.

It is evident from both of these scenarios that succession in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Scandinavia did not always happen according to the established rules outlined in chapter one; it even demonstrated that those rules could be changed or amended as political circumstance dictated. However, it also revealed that when the necessary preparations were made – election and designation of the heir – a stable transmission of royal authority from one generation to the next was possible. Finally, this chapter has shown that succession in practice in Scandinavia in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries had clear parallels to and a great awareness of contemporary European practices. In the next chapter, we will see what happens when the rules were entirely disregarded for political circumstance in order to make underage claimants king, and we will investigate who the real kingmaker of twelfth-century Denmark was.

III: Kingmaking in Scandinavia

Introduction

In the previous two chapters, we have explored first the theoretical rules of succession, and then two scenarios under which succession could work in practice. This chapter continues in that vein of exploring succession in practice, however the focus here will be on individuals who under the theoretical rules outlined in the first chapter had, at best, strenuous claims to the kingship. What we will explore below are two case studies of underage kings, and through analysis show, how they could succeed to the kingship. A key factor in this analysis is the kingmaker; in England perhaps best known as the sobriquet of Richard Neville, 16th Earl of Warwick during the fifteenth-century War of the Roses. A Scandinavian example would be Baron Carl Otto Mörner who offered Jean Baptiste Bernadotte the position of Crown Prince of Sweden in 1810. And a more recent and contemporary example would be the role played by Nick Clegg, leader of the Liberal Democrats, following the 2010 UK parliamentary election. Here, however, that title refers principally to the fathers of the underage kings who orchestrated the accessions of their sons.

Underage rulers are a well-known phenomenon in the High Middle Ages. What is less known is the frequency with which they appear in Scandinavia in the same period. Child rulers are historically significant. In the absence of the ruler's ability to exercise actual power, rivalries between competing interests became more heated and exposed. Speaking more broadly, sometimes the minority of a ruler can lead to constitutional change or clarification, or they can emerge from their minority with a renewed conviction of the importance of their power, while others, yet again, have been seen to lead to national weakness.³⁶⁰ Furthermore, scholars have often highlighted that it is through the regency or guardianship of a minor that women were able to exercise actual power, either formally or informally.³⁶¹ Child rulers, in other words, besides being historically significant, also raise difficult questions about power and authority in a period when a ruler is supposed to be imbued with certain qualities and skills inconsistent

³⁶⁰ See for instance, Duncan, *The Kingship of the Scots*, 175-196.

³⁶¹ Emily Joan Ward, 'Anne of Kiev (c.1024-c.1075) and a reassessment of maternal power in the minority kingship of Philip I of France', *Historical Research*, 89 (2016), 435-53; *Royal Mothers and their Ruling Children: Wielding Political Authority from Antiquity to the Early Modern Era*, ed. by Elena Woodacre and Carey Fleiner (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Jon Gunnar Jørgensen, 'Dronninger i kongesagaene', in *Dronningen: i vikingtid og middelalder*, ed. by Karoline Kjesrud and Nanna Løkka (Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press, 2017), pp. 201-27; B. Hamilton, 'Women in the Crusader States: The Queens of Jerusalem, 1100-1190', in *Medieval Women*, ed. by D. Baker (Ecclesiastical History Society, 1978), pp. 143-74.

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with those of a child.³⁶² This chapter will explore a number of such questions, including how does someone as young as three or four years old become king? Who helps these underage claimants become kings? What factors enable someone to become a ‘kingmaker’? What steps did these kingmakers take to make a king? What was the relationship between the kingmakers and the kings?

<i>Kingdom</i>	<i>King/Queen</i>	<i>Avg. age at succession</i>	<i>Avg. age at death</i>	<i>Avg. length of reign</i>
<i>Summary</i>	65	8.2	39.0	30.8
Aragon	3	4.3	45.0	40.7
Castile	4	6.3	34.5	28.3
Denmark	3	12.7	38.7	26.0
England	1	9.0	65.0	56.0
France	6	9.5	40.8	31.3
Galicia	3	5.7	39.3	33.7
Germany	8	8.0	28.3	20.3
Italy	4	9.0	39.7	30.7
Léon	2	6.0	33.0	27.0
Majorca	1	5.0	68.0	63.0
Navarre	6	10.8	29.3	18.5
Norway	13	7.7	28.2	20.5
Portugal	1	14.0	38.0	24.0
Scotland	1	12.0	40.0	28.0
Sicily	5	4.4	23.2	18.8
Sweden	4	7.5	33.8	26.3

Table 1. Overview of underage rulers in Western Europe 1066-1319. Scandinavian kingdoms highlighted in bold.

A survey of European rulers in the period between 1066 and 1319 who had achieved the kingship before their sixteenth birthday show that almost one in three was from Scandinavia. Thirteen, the highest number of underage rulers, were Norwegian (see Table 1). This makes Scandinavia an interesting region for studying this phenomenon and attempting to answer those questions about power and authority surrounding it, and it further makes Norway the best place to start the investigation.

³⁶² For the duties of a medieval king, see Brooke, *Europe in the Central Middle Ages*, 124, 133. Determining the difference between children and adults in this period presents itself with some difficulties. Normative sources indicate that the age of majority in Norway and Sweden was fifteen, but in the Icelandic law code this is sixteen. *The Earliest Norwegian Laws: Being the Gulathing Law and the Frostathing Law*, trans. by Lawrence M. Larson (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1935), 272; *ÖgL*, Eb 15 §3; *YVgL* Add 7 §29; *Grágás: The Codex Regius of Grágás with material from other manuscripts I-II*, transl. and ed. A. Dennis, P. Foote and R. Perkins (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1980, 2000), 32. On the other hand, the narrative sources, in particular the sagas, blurs the boundaries between childhood and adulthood indicating that recognition of the latter was depended upon performance and recognition of that performance: if you could act like an adult, you were and adult. Nic Percivall, ‘Teenage Angst: The Structures and Boundaries of Adolescence in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Iceland’, in *Youth and Age in the Medieval North*, ed. by Shannon Lewis-Simpson (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 146-47.

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Of particular interest to the discussion in this chapter is the game theory scenario known as the kingmaker scenario. This occurs in endgame situations with three or more actors where an actor unable to win has the capacity to determine which of the remaining actors will win. Multiple examples of this is to be found in George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* series and its accompanying TV show. For instance, during the War of the Five Kings, which the author has stated was in part inspired by the War of the Roses and the Hundred Years' War, Lord Mace Tyrell, head of House Tyrell, a powerful house unable to claim the throne for themselves, first start out by supporting Renly Baratheon, younger brother of the late king, and weds his daughter to him. When he dies, he switches his support to Houses Baratheon of King's Landing and Lannister and weds his daughter to their candidate, Joffrey Baratheon. In Westeros, like in medieval Scandinavia, to claim the throne one had to have royal blood and kin-right. None of the kingmakers discussed in this chapter, like the Tyrells, were in possession of any of these. Rather they were the actors with the capacity to determine the outcome, as we shall now see.

The Norwegian case

Until 1161 the Norwegian civil war era (1130-1240) was primarily limited to a fight between the kings and their followers.³⁶³ After 1161, the nature of these conflicts changed to mainly be between various factions who would produce claimants to legitimise their right to govern the kingdom.³⁶⁴ This tells us that while the rules of succession, might have been of some importance, so were also political circumstance. In 1161, Erling Skakke, a magnate, put his son Magnus, aged five, on the Norwegian throne. Erling was a descendant of two powerful Norwegian kindreds, the *Arnmødlings* and the *Ladejarls* and he had been a member of the inner circle of the late king.³⁶⁵ He was married to Kristin Sigurdsdatter, a daughter of King Sigurd I the

³⁶³ Hans Jacob Orning has recently argued that the term "civil wars" is tendentious and misleading. He acknowledges, however, that the term cannot be entirely avoided because it was a key term in earlier scholarship. 'Conflict and Social (Dis)order in Norway, c. 1030-1160', in *Disputing Strategies in Medieval Scandinavia*, ed. by Kim Esmark and others (Leiden: Brill, 2013), p. 45.

³⁶⁴ For this, see *HkrMSHG*, 717-718; *HkrIngi*, 736, 749-750, 760-763, 765-67; *HkrHHerd*, 768-770, 776-778, 785; *Ágrip*: 77; *Msk*: 372, 389, 398-404. *HkrME*, 789-790, 795-797, 802-803, 813-816, 818-820; *Msk*: 358-59 (there is a missing leaf in the manuscript that covers the same events as *HkrMSHG*, 715-23), 367-69, 372, 389; *SvS*: 20, 22, 120, 134-136, 141, 154. For Duke Skule's rebellion, see *HH*, II, 49-114. Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, 42-46.

³⁶⁵ *HkrIngi*, 751-752, 756, 763; *HkrHHerd*, 771-775, 778-780; *Msk*, 392, 402; *Fsk*, 379-381. The *Arnmødling*/*Arnung*-kindred were a landed-kindred from Sunnmøre on the north-west coast of Norway. Because of tactical marriages to other leading magnate-kindreds, and many children, the kindred became very influential in early and high medieval Norway. The *Ladejarls* rose to prominence in the time of King Harald I Fairhair (r. 872-930) and were important and powerful powerbrokers in the Norwegian kingdom up until King Olav II Haraldsson (r. 1015-28, 1030) suppressed them in 1015 when the male line went extinct (*HkrHH*, 63-64; *HkrOH*, 265-66; *Fsk*, 44).

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Crusader (r. 1103-30) and Malfred of Kyiv.³⁶⁶ *Heimskringla* does not depict him as a typical hero, with the description of him placing more emphasis on his mental rather than martial abilities: he ‘was a powerful and resourceful man, an excellent general in times of disturbance, a good and capable ruler. He was considered rather cruel and hard.’ Adding that he ‘was a man of excellent understanding [...] keen understanding, wealthy and high-born, of great eloquence.’³⁶⁷ He was portrayed as the cool, intelligent, and cynical general and political operator – very understanding as *Heimskringla* wants us to believe – a Tywin Lannister or Frank Underwood kind of man.³⁶⁸ In the discussion over which candidate was to succeed the recently deceased King Inge I (r. 1136-61), Erling was described as ‘a wise man, determined, much tested in battle, and an excellent ruler.’³⁶⁹ Snorri gives the impression that the men trusted Erling's abilities and thereby also legitimised Erling's right to put his son on the throne.

In order to do so, Erling followed a few particular steps. The first was to gather the remnants of the faction that had supported King Inge for a consultation (‘*stefnulag*’), most likely in Bergen. The summons, as it was described in *Heimskringla*, give us an idea of who was there, and by its silence, also who was not. Erling ‘sent word to all chieftains whom he knew to have been trusty friends of King Ingi, also to the body of his followers and retainers who had escaped, and to Grégóriús’ housecarls, and set a time for their meeting.’³⁷⁰ From this, it was evident that Erling was in control of the process: he summoned only the most loyal followers, the people whom he had to know would ultimately agree with him. This was further evident in *Heimskringla*’s account of the consultation, during which only people connected to Erling in some way was depicted as speaking. All of the speakers pointed to the five-year-old Magnus Erlingsson as the most suitable claimant, with one being more explicit than the others: he pointed to Magnus, describing him as ‘by birth best entitled to be king in Norway.’³⁷¹ When

³⁶⁶ Malfred of Kyiv was the daughter of ‘Haralds konungs Valdamarssonar [Mstislav I of Kyiv], austan or Hólmgarði’ and sister of Ingeborg of Kyiv, the mother of King Valdemar I of Denmark (*HkrMS*, 702; *HkrIngi*, 790).

³⁶⁷ *HkrME*, *ÍF* 28, 412: ‘Erlingr var maðr ríkr, spakr at viti, hermaðr inn mesti, ef ófriðr var, landráðmaðr góðr ok stjórnsamr, kallaðr heldr grimmr ok harðráðr’; *HkrIngi*, *ÍF* 28, 325: ‘Þótti Erlingr nú miklu meiri maðr en áðr, hvárttveggja af ferð sinni ok kvánfangi sínu. Var hann ok spekingr at viti, auðigr ok ættstórr, snjallmæltr’.

³⁶⁸ Hans Jacob Orning, ‘Borgerkrig og statsutvikling i Norge i middelalderen – en revurdering’, *HT (No)*, 93 (2014), 208-9.

³⁶⁹ *HkrME*, *ÍF* 28, 374: ‘maðr vitr, harðráðr, ok reyndr mjök í orrostum ok landráðamaðr góðr.’

³⁷⁰ *HkrME*, *ÍF* 28, 373: ‘þá sendi hann boð öllum höfðingjum, þeim er hann vissi, at trúnaðarvinir höfðu verit Inga konungs, ok svá hirðsveitinni ok handgengnum mönnum konungs, þeim er undan höfðu komizk, ok húskörlum Grégoríi, ok gerði þeim stefnulag.’. Gregorius Dagsson had been the foremost of King Inge’s supporters and advisors, described in *Heimskringla* as the ‘head of the government of the country with King Ingi’ (*HkrIngi*, *ÍF* 28, 330: ‘hann forstjóri fyrir landráðum með Inga konungi’). Nor was he on good terms with Erling Skakke. *HkrHHerd*, 778-80. All in all, a serious rival to Erling and his kingmaking had he not died in 1161. *HkrHHerd*, 768-71, 774-81. For more on Grégóriús Dagsson, see, Marlene Ciklamini, ‘Grégóriús Dagsson, Snorri’s Flawed Hero’, *Scandinavian Studies*, 50.2 (Spring 1978), 186-194.

³⁷¹ *HkrME*, *ÍF* 28, 373: ‘væri bezt ættborinn til konungdóms í Nóregi’. The crux here was the term ‘ættborinn’ as it harkens back to the kin-right, seemingly instituted in Norway by King Harald Fairhair since the term means that

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they had reached the decision that Magnus was to be their king, they convened a *þing* in Bergen that promptly elected the youngster king.³⁷² Unfortunately, *Heimskringla* is our only source for this event; the pages covering the same events in *Fagrskinna* is missing and *Morkinskinna*, as it has been preserved, ends abruptly in 1157.³⁷³ However, the consultation process and the election is confirmed by the terminology used by Snorri Sturluson at this point and corroborated by the second paragraph of the *Letter of Privileges* later awarded by the new regime to the Norwegian Church.³⁷⁴ Before the *stefnu*, Snorri records that the men came together and held a council (*réðst*), after which they held a debate (*töluðu*). This was reminiscent of the process observed for Ottonian Germany by Gerd Althoff in which there was a clear distinction made between consultation in public and the private sphere. In the saga, the private was represented by the term *réðst* while the public was shown by the terms *stefnu* and *þing*.³⁷⁵ As we see from *Heimskringla*, these men had a shared background from the circle around King Inge I thus there would have been a high level of mutual trust between them. They were men of high status, capable of controlling the decision-making process at the highest levels. Nevertheless, Erling was depicted as firmly in control, and he orchestrated the whole sequence of events: the secret pre-meeting council (*reðst*) designated Magnus as the next king; the meeting (*stefnu*) won over anyone undecided; and finally, at the *þing*, the assembled people assented and acclaimed the choice made by the faction.³⁷⁶ Thus, Erling completed the first step of his kingmaking.

The second step of Erling Skakke's kingmaking involved seeking foreign support against his domestic enemies. *Heimskringla* describes how, and *Saxo* confirms that, as soon as the *þing* in Bergen had elected Magnus king, Erling, some of his supporters, and the new king left for Denmark.³⁷⁷ One of the reasons for leaving Norway for Denmark was to avoid another faction, where the followers of King Inge's brother's had regrouped around the fifteen-year-old King Håkon II the Broad-shouldered, (r. 1157-62), a son of King Sigurd II the Mouth (r. 1136-

Magnus was by birth entitled to succeed Inge I – despite being a cognatic descendant of a king. See Chapter one, pp. 40-43.

³⁷² *HkrME*, 790. Erling also had Magnus elected king at *Eyrþing*, in accordance with the existing traditions and customs for the election and acclamations of Norwegian kings. *HkrME*, 796.

³⁷³ *Fsk*, 380; *Msk*, 1.

³⁷⁴ *HkrME*, *ÍF* 28, 373-74; *NMD*, p. 51: 'Quoniam communicato sapienciorum consilio dominatum et diadema regni huius' (When we have, upon the counsel of the wisest men, received the lordship and crown of this kingdom). The terminology used in the letter all but confirms the sequence of events as laid out here.

³⁷⁵ Gerd Althoff, *Family, Friends and Follower: Political and Social Bonds in Early Medieval Europe* trans. by Christopher Carroll (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 142-143.

³⁷⁶ Brooke has rightly argued that in the medieval period, "election" meant designation and acclamation – a purely formal process. *Europe in the Central Middle Ages*, 150-1.

³⁷⁷ *HkrME*, 790; *Saxo*, xiv.29.12. Here Saxo portrays Erling and Magnus as survivors of a disaster and as going into exile in Denmark. Gathorne-Hardy has argued against this portrayal, saying it portrays their situation as more dire than it actually was. 'Erling Skakke's dispute with King Valdemar', in *Saga-Book*, 13 (1946-53), p. 333.

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55) and King Inge's half-brother, who was also seeking sole kingship. King Håkon's forces had been responsible for killing King Inge in the Battle on the Ice outside of Oslo earlier in 1161, and, by extension, catapulting Magnus into the kingship. Most importantly, King Håkon II was, according to the established rules of succession – those Erling had decided to disregard – the one with the best claim to the kingship. From a dynastic point of view, Sverre Bagge believes a compromise, similar to the Treaty of Winchester of 1153 between King Stephen and Henry Plantagenet (future King Henry II) whereby the latter was nominated the successor to his uncle Stephen, could have been worked out.³⁷⁸ Such a compromise would not have been without precedents in Norway either, where power-sharing through shared kingship (*samkongedømme*) had a long history, stretching back to 1046.³⁷⁹ King Håkon's proven military record further meant that he posed a significant threat to Erling and King Magnus's position.³⁸⁰ The presence of King Håkon made it clear that the support Erling sought from Denmark should be seen as important militarily as well as morally.

The source of that moral and military support was King Valdemar I of Denmark (r. 1157-82), a cousin of King Magnus's mother which dictated that he was the most apparent foreign ruler to seek out for help.³⁸¹ Valdemar had recently secured the sole kingship in Denmark for himself, and that meant an increased opportunity and manoeuvrability to act and influence events in the neighbouring Scandinavian kingdoms.³⁸² The exact relationship between the Danish kings and the claimants to Norwegian kingship in the 1160s was difficult to discern because the sources disagree. For instance, unlike the saga material, there are indications in

³⁷⁸ Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, 45. On the aftermath of the so-called "Anarchy" and the Treaty of Winchester, see Edmund King, *King Stephen* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010); *The Anarchy of King Stephen's Reign*, ed. by Edmund King (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Jim Bradbury, *Stephen and Matilda: The Civil War of 1139-53* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1996); David Crouch, *The Normans: The History of a Dynasty* (London: Hambleton, 2002); Graeme White, 'The End of Stephen's Reign', *History*, 75 (243) (1990), 3-22.

³⁷⁹ Narve Bjørge, 'Samkongedømme og einekongedømme', *HT (No)*, 49 (1970), 1-33; Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, 40-41; idem, 'Samkongedømme og enekongedømme', *HT (No)*, 54 (1975), 239-74. For examples of joint kingship in *Hkr*, see *HkrHHard*, 593, 660, 662; *HkrMB*, 668; *HkrMS*, 688; *HkrMBHG*, 715; *HkrIngi*, 736, 749; *HkrHHerd*, 769. See Chapter one, p. 42, and Appendix 4 for more.

³⁸⁰ Halvdan Koht, 'Hendingsgang og tidsrekning i kongstida til Magnus Erlingsson 1161-1177', *HT (No)*, 40 (1960), 233; Fritz Kern, *Kingship and Law in the Middle Ages*, Gath 28. Saxo also provides for a second reason, that relations had already been established between King Inge and his supporters and King Valdemar through gift giving. *Saxo*, xiv.25.5. Gift giving was an important part of the Norse society and the political culture and invariably denoted a kind of relationship. For more on this, see Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, *Det norrøne samfunnet*, 78-92; Lars Hermanson, 'Vänskapens ideologi och praktik: Teoretiska och metodiska reflektioner rörande vänskapsbandets betydelse i det högmedeltids samhället', in *Gaver, ritualer, konflikter: Et rettsantropologisk perspektiv på nordisk middelalderhistorie*, ed. by Hans Jacob Orning, Kim Esmark and Lars Hermanson, 2nd edn (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2010), pp. 211-51 (pp. 238-242).

³⁸¹ Gathorne-Hardy has questioned whether the blood ties Valdemar had to Magnus meant very much to him, citing his experience of the conduct of his own relatives in the recent civil war. 'Erling Skakke's dispute with King Valdemar', pp. 332-33.

³⁸² *Saxo*, xiv.20.1. For more on how Valdemar secured the Danish kingship, see Chapter two, pp. 72-77.

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Saxo's *Gesta Danorum* that Valdemar initially supported Erling and Magnus's opponents.³⁸³ Furthermore, in Saxo's narrative, from the events following King Inge's death in 1161, there appears to have been a scramble for aid from Denmark by all the claimants: Erling and Magnus, as well as King Håkon.³⁸⁴ If this was the case, it certainly paints Erling and Magnus' situation as much more precarious. It also presented the Danish king with an opportunity to increase his influence abroad. Specifically, Erling's request for support on behalf of his son's kingship presented Valdemar with an opportunity to regain lost Danish territory in Norway.³⁸⁵ It was therefore in Danish king's political interest to support one of the Norwegian kinglets, the opportunity to play the candidates off against each other provided significant leverage, as indicated by Saxo's account, meaning he could choose to support whichever he believed was more likely to allow him to achieve his own goals. Historically, before the start of the consolidation of the Norwegian petty kingdoms in the late ninth century onwards, the area around the Oslo Fjord, Viken (ON: Vík, Víkin), had belonged to the Danish sphere of influence.³⁸⁶ Therefore, despite Snorri's attempts at hiding it, there were numerous historical and political precedents for what King Valdemar sought to achieve. In the end, he struck a deal with Erling in which he would 'obtain the dominion of Norway which his earlier kinsmen, Harald Gormsson and Svein Forkbeard had had; that is, all of Vík up to Rýgjarbit' in return for his assistance in securing the kingship for Magnus.³⁸⁷ Neither *Heimskringla* nor Saxo gives us any clue as to what kind of support Erling and King Magnus received from King Valdemar. In the case of *Heimskringla*, it could be because Snorri Sturluson wished to downplay the fact that Erling sought support from the Danish king, and for Saxo, it could be because Erling and King Magnus did not, in the end, receive much help. Regardless of what the support consisted of, it is evident that ensuring Danish goodwill, or at least that King Valdemar would withhold support for their opponents, was a

³⁸³ Saxo, xiv.29.1; xiv.29.14-15. This view is also found in Howden, *Annals*, I, 537.

³⁸⁴ Saxo, xiv.29.1; xiv.29.14-15.

³⁸⁵ Gathorne-Hardy, 'Erling Skakke's dispute with King Valdemar', p. 333.

³⁸⁶ *HkrHH*, 87, 93-94; *HkrHG*, 97; *HkrHGrey*, 129, 136; *HkrOT*, 152, 154, 163, 193, 244; *HkrOH*, 266, 273; infighting amongst the sons of King Harald I changed the land grants several times. *HkrHH*, 88-90, 94-95. On this issue, see also Claus Krag, 'Rikssamlingshistorien og ynglingerekken', *HT(No)*, 91 (2012), 162, 169 fn. 41; idem., 'Vestfold som utgangspunkt for den norske rikssamlingen', *Collegium Medievale*, 3 (1990), 190ff.; idem., 'Norge som odel i Harald Hårfagres ætt', *HT(No)*, 68 (1989), 288-301; idem., 'Myten om Hårfagreættens 'odel'', *NT(No)*, 81 (2002), 381-394; Johan Schreiner, 'Slaget i Havsfjord', in *Festskrift til Halvdan Koht* (1933), 103-111; idem., 'Harald og Havsfjord', *Scandia*, 9 (1936), 64-88; Klaus von See, 'Studien zum Haraldskvædi', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 76 (1961), 99-111; Ólafía Einarsdóttir, 'Harald Dovresfostre af Sogn', *HT(No)*, 50 (1971), 131-166. See also the entry in the *Royal Frankish Annals* from 813 that tells of a Danish campaign in Vestfold by two Danish kings. *Annales regni Francorum*, ed. by G.H. Pertz, MGH SRG, 6 (Hannover 1895), 138-39. Viken roughly equates to nos. 13-15 and 17 on the map of mainland Norway (Figure 4).

³⁸⁷ *HkrME*, *ÍF* 28, 375: 'en [Valdimarr] skyldi hafa þat ríki í Noregi, sem haft höfðu hinir fyrri frændr hans, Haraldr Gormsson ok Sveinn tjúguskegg, Víkina alla norðr til Rýgjarbits'. Rygjarbit was traditionally the easternmost border of Agder, as well as the dividing point between eastern and western Norway.

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significant strategy for Erling in order to secure the kingship for his son.³⁸⁸ Thus, Erling had completed the second step of his kingmaking and secured foreign recognition for his son's reign.

The third step of Erling's kingmaking involved establishing an alliance with the Norwegian Church and the Archbishop of Niðarós, Eystein Erlendsson, that allowed him to break completely with St Olav's law. This step was the most radical one, for up until this point Erling had primarily followed the traditional path to the kingship, namely, the election we saw as part of the first kingmaking step.³⁸⁹ What Erling sought was a way to make up for the one shortcoming his son had, which he could not get around: namely the lack of legitimacy for his son's kingship due to him not being the son of a king. Eystein Erlendsson belonged to one of the foremost kindreds in Norway, and he was connected to Erling Skakke by marriage and King Magnus by blood.³⁹⁰ Before he became archbishop, a position he most likely was appointed to rather than elected, he had been King Inge's *fehilde* (treasurer).³⁹¹ From all of this, it is, therefore, safe to assume that Archbishop Eystein and Erling Skakke cannot have been strangers.³⁹² Compared to most of his Norwegian contemporaries Eystein was a worldly and cosmopolitan man. He had been educated in Paris – France was, at the time, the cultural centre and one of the leading kingdoms of Western Europe – and it was his time in that city that had made him a strong supporter of the Gregorian reform movement. Once elevated to the archbishopric, he worked to increase the freedom of the Church in Norway and increase the influence of the archbishopric by raising the dues paid to the Church.³⁹³ Initially, *Heimskringla* reports that Archbishop Eystein was sceptical about Magnus's claim to the kingship, precisely because it broke with St Olav's law.³⁹⁴ Egil Nygaard Brekke has argued that what brought the Archbishop around, in the end, was that Magnus's kingship presented him with the best opportunity to influence the kingship to accept the tenets of the Gregorian reform movement.³⁹⁵ *Heimskringla*

³⁸⁸ The relationship between Denmark and Norway in the 1160s is difficult to untangle from the widely different accounts in Saxo and the sagas, but arguments have been put forward that there was some evidence that Valdemar mainly supported Erling's and Magnus's opponents. Helle, *Norge blir en stat*, 69-73; Knut Arstad, 'Kongsemmer og maktkonstellasjoner i innbyrdesstridens Norge', pp. 20f., 29f.).

³⁸⁹ *HkrME*, 790. See Chapter one, pp. 40-43.

³⁹⁰ For Eystein's familial connections see *HkrHHard*, 608; *Msk*, 204; *HkrME*, 802.

³⁹¹ King Sverre would later use this accusation of not being elected against the archbishop. Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein*, 82; *Sverres saga. En tale mot biskopene*, trans. by Anne Holtmark (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1961), 279-280; *Forsvarstale for kong Sverre mot bispene*, trans. by Eirik Eggen (Oslo: Det norske samlaget, 1940), 68-69.

³⁹² Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein*, 89-95; Odd Sandaaker 'Magnus Erlingssons kroning: ein "politiserande" sagatradisjon?', *HT (No)*, 77 (1998), 181-96; Sverre Bagge, 'Den heroiske tid – kirkereform og kirkekamp 1153-1214', in *Ecclesia Nidrosiensis 1153-1537: Søkelys på Nidaroskirkens og Nidarosprovinsens historie*, ed. by Steinar Imesen, Senter for middelalderstudier, NTNU, skrifter 15 (Trondheim: Tapir akademisk forlag, 2003), pp. 68f.

³⁹³ *HkrME*, 802, 805; Langslet, *Våre konger*, 78-9.

³⁹⁴ *HkrME*, 805.

³⁹⁵ Egil Nygaard Brekke, 'Magnus Erlingssons kroningsår', *HT (No)*, 40 (1961), 13.

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tells us that the people of Trøndelag, where the archbishopric was located, liked the Archbishop and that they received him favourably. We are told that this was ‘because most of the leaders there were connected to him by kin or by some other relationship, and all were close friends of his.’³⁹⁶ It was these same friends and kinsfolk that he, presumably, relied on when he pushed through an increase in the dues owed to the archbishopric, which inflation had caused to become less valuable.³⁹⁷ It was this increase in the dues to the archbishopric that caused Erling Skakke to take notice of what he was doing and accuse him of breaking the ‘laws of Holy King Olaf.’³⁹⁸ Instead of a conflict between the Church and the kingship, the archbishop and the kingmaker worked out a compromise. The archbishop got Erling to agree to his increase in dues to the archbishopric and to ‘preserve God’s law with all [his] and the King’s powers.’³⁹⁹ In return, Eystein agreed to give King Magnus’s reign and position what it needed the most – legitimacy. In the saga, Erling sums up their compromise thus: ‘Do you strengthen King Magnús in his power, as you promised, and I in return shall strengthen yours in all matters profitable to you.’⁴⁰⁰ What Erling asked for, and Eystein agreed to, was to have Magnus anointed and crowned. According to Snorri, Erling reasoned that if the archbishop would ‘consecrate him king, then no one may later depose him.’⁴⁰¹ The coronation of Magnus was the most radical of the three steps in Erling’s kingmaking.⁴⁰² It was the one step of his kingmaking that broke with all existing

³⁹⁶ *HkrME, ÍF* 28, 391: ‘Tóku Þrændir vel við honum, því at flest stórmenni í Þrændalögum var bundit í frændsemi eða í nökkurum tengðum við erkibyskup, en allir fullkonnir í vináttu.’

³⁹⁷ *HkrME*, 802. For more on the economy of the archbishopric, see for instance, Audun Dypdahl, ‘Nidaros erketesets økonomi’, in *Ecclesia Nidrosiensis 1153-1537*, ed. by Imsen, pp. 279-319.

³⁹⁸ *HkrME, ÍF* 28, 395-96: ‘Hvært eru þat lög, herra ins helga Óláfs konungs eða hafið ér tekit nökkuru frekara þetta mál en svá sem ritit er í lögbókinni?’. This is a clear expression of St Olav’s law as the catch-all term described in Chapter one, pp. 42-43. See Chapter two, pp. 69-70 for how Sverre Sigurdsson would use this against Erling Skakke and Magnus Erlingsson.

³⁹⁹ *HkrME, ÍF* 28, 396: ‘halda guðs lög ok landsrétt með öllum mínum styrk ok konungs’.

⁴⁰⁰ *HkrME, ÍF* 28, 396: ‘styrkit þér Magnús konung til ríkis, svá sem þér hafit heitit, en ek skal styrkja yðart ríki til allra farsællegra hluta’.

⁴⁰¹ *HkrME, ÍF* 28, 397: ‘konungs vígslu, þá má engi hann taka síðan af konungdóminum at réttu’.

⁴⁰² The coronation of Magnus Erlingsson, and the events surrounding it has been a topic of much discussion among Norwegian historians. See, for instance, Kevin J. Wanner, ‘At smyrja til veldis: Royal Legitimation in Snorri Sturluson’s Magnúss saga Erlingssonar’, in *Saga-Book*, 30 (2006), pp. 5-38; Knut Helle, ‘The Norwegian kingdom: succession disputes and consolidation’, in *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia*, ed. by Helle, pp. 369-391; idem, *Norge blir en stat*, 36-44; Odd Sandaaker ‘Magnus Erlingssons kroning: ein “politiserande” sagatradisjon?’, *HT (No)*, 77 (1998), 181-96; Arstad, ‘Kongsemner og maktkonstellasjoner i innbyrdesstridens Norge’; Sverre Bagge, ‘Herrens Salvete: Kroning og salving i Norge 1163-1247’, in *Kongens makt og ære: skandinaviske herskersymboler gjennom 1000 år*, ed. by Martin Blindheim, Per Gjørder and D. Sæverud (Oslo: Universitets oldsaksamling, 1985), pp. 29-34; Claus Krag ‘Skikkethet og arv i tronfølgeaven av 1163’, *HT (No)*, 54 (1975), 153-180; Fredrik Paasche, ‘Magnus Erlingsson kongedømme’, in *Samfunnsmaktene brytes*, ed. by Andreas Holmsen and Jarle Simensen, Norske historikere i utvalg, II (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1969), pp. 97-117; Erik Vandvik, ‘Magnus Erlingssons kroningseid’, in *Samfunnsmaktene brytes*, ed. by Holmsen and Simensen, pp. 197-207; Torfinn Toibassen, ‘Tronfølgeaven og privilegiebrev: En studie i kongedømmets ideologi under Magnus Erlingsson’, *HT (No)*, 43 (1964), 181-273; Halvdan Koht, ‘Magnus Erlingssons privilegiebrev for Nidaros-kyrka’, *HT (No)*, 41 (1961), 401-5; idem, ‘Hendinggang og tidsrekning i kongstida til Magnus Erlingsson 1161-1177’, *HT (No)*, 40 (1960), 232-59; Egil Nygaard Brekke, ‘Magnus Erlingssons kroningsår’, 1-24; Johan Schreiner, ‘De første kongekroninger i Norden’, *HT (No)*, 34 (1946-48), 518-34; idem, ‘Stridsspørsmål i norsk middelalderhistorie’, *HT (No)*, 32 (1940-

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customs and traditions; it represented something new in Norway and Scandinavia: it was the first coronation ever to be held in the region.⁴⁰³ For Norway, as argued by Knut Helle, it meant that the Norwegian kingship took on a new dimension.⁴⁰⁴ Together, the coronation oath, the *Law of Succession* of 1163/64, and the *Letter of Privileges* issued in the young king's name to the Norwegian Church introduced new ideas surrounding the kingship, such as legitimacy, suitability, and the idea of the kingship being an office – in effect the hallmarks of the *rex iustus*-ideology.⁴⁰⁵ The coronation ceremony proved that the Church had sanctioned Erling Skakke's acquisition of the kingship on behalf of his son. The accompanying coronation oath and the law of succession showed that the new kingship under Erling and Magnus embraced the idea of a free and independent Church.⁴⁰⁶ Furthermore, the new legislation aimed at controlling the succession but also introduced new concepts such as legitimacy and suitability for office. The kingship was, from now on, intended only to be held by one person at the time, and perhaps, most importantly, it was intended to make the traditional path to the kingship illegal: the law included a section excommunicating any claimant, and his supporters, who sought the kingship in any other way than how the law specified.⁴⁰⁷ Effectively, it transferred the kingmaker's role to the bishops and made them the custodians of the rules of succession.⁴⁰⁸ Finally, in the *Letter of Privileges* to the Norwegian Church, the Norwegian king appear for the first time as *rex dei gratia*, and as such he gives himself and his kingdom to God and St Olav, the Norwegian patron saint and *rex perpetuus Norvegiae*, and states that he shall 'hold the kingdom for [St Olav]'.⁴⁰⁹ Interestingly, the choice of St Olav indicates that this was meant to be a direct relationship between the king and the saint, which did not include pope nor archbishop. That Magnus was distantly related to St Olav probably helped in that regard. Furthermore, he promised to rule as

42), 183-99; idem, 'Arvekongedømmet i Norge', *Scandia*, 11.1 (1938), 64-92; Absalon Taranger, 'Kong Magnus Erlingssons privilegium for den norske kirke', *Norvegia Sacra*, 2 (1922), 16-90; Ebbe Hertzberg, 'Den første norske Kongekroning, dens Aarstal og ledsagende Omstændigheter', *HT (No)*, 4 (1905), 29-171.

⁴⁰³ Denmark had their first coronation 1170 when Knud Valdemarsen was crowned, and Sweden had their first (as we know of) in 1219 when King John I Sverkersson was crowned. *Saxo*, xiv.49.12; SDHK 372/DS 184.

⁴⁰⁴ Helle, *Norge blir en stat*, 38.

⁴⁰⁵ *NMD*, pp. 30-32, 32-34, 48-55. See Chapter one, pp. 43-46, for a discussion of the *Law of Succession of 1163/64*.

⁴⁰⁶ *NMD*, pp. 30-32.

⁴⁰⁷ *NMD*, p. 34: 'En ef nokorr letr sic annan veg taca. tha hever ssa firigort fe oc friði. oc hvern sae r hanom fylgir til thess. oc væra i banne guðs. oc allra heilagra manna. pavans oc ærkibiscops. oc allra lioðbiscopa.' (If anyone becomes king in a manner not described herein, then he, and all those who follow him, has forfeited all their worldly goods and property and they shall be anathema to God and all the saints, and by the Pope and the Archbishop and all the suffragan bishops be excommunicated.)

⁴⁰⁸ *NMD*, pp. 32-34: 'konongr væra er ærkibiscop oc lioðbiscopum thyckir bezt væra fallenn til' (he shall be king whom the archbishop and the suffragan bishops think is most suited for it).

⁴⁰⁹ *NMD*, p. 51: 'Deo namque in hac die gloriose resurrectionis me cum regni in perpetuum et glorioso martyri regi Ola[u]o cui integraliter speciali deuotione secundo post dominum regnum assigno Norwegie, et huic regno, quantum deo placuerit, velut eiusdem gloriosi martyris possession hereditary sub eius dominio tamquam suus vicarius et ab eo tenens presidebo'.

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a just king and defender of the fatherland, following the example of St Olav, his liege lord.⁴¹⁰ The coronation then clearly introduced the Church as a new and powerful player into the game of thrones, which would go on to play an increasingly important role. Though King Magnus's immediate successor, King Sverre, would do away with most of these, he too sought to be crowned, as did most of his descendants.⁴¹¹ Thus, the coronation of Magnus became the crowning achievement of Erling Skakke's kingmaking: he had managed to get his son elected, he had secured the support of a foreign power, and he had made sure that no one could depose his son from the throne.⁴¹²

However, some sixteen years after King Magnus's coronation, Sverre Sigurdsson came to Norway to challenge Magnus and Erling for the kingship, and eventually, he succeeded.⁴¹³ In short, Sverre used the pretext of St Olav's law to claim the kingship, the ones the *Law of Succession* sought to ban. Following Sverre's acquisition of the kingship, the steps of Erling's kingmaking would be abandoned, as no other claimant was able to claim the kingship in the same manner – with three exceptions: Sigurd Magnusson, Inge Magnusson, and Erling Stonewall stand out as being closer to Erling's process than any of their opponents.⁴¹⁴ However, some of the innovations of Magnus's kingship would live on; primarily, the ideology of kingship would be developed further in the reigns of Sverre's grandson and great-grandson, Kings Håkon IV and Magnus VI.⁴¹⁵ Hence, the kingmaking process initiated by Erling Skakke came into being because of a series of fortunate circumstances that were difficult to replicate for those who followed. However, some aspects of Erling's process: election, foreign recognition, and alliance with the Church would be replicated close to a century later in Sweden, where Birger *jarl* made his son king in a similar process.

⁴¹⁰ *NMD*, p. 53: 'eius cupiens sicut in regno successor, sic et, in quantum vires suppetunt, adiutus a deo et ab eodem martyr fieri quoque virtutum imitator'.

⁴¹¹ Sverre: *SvS*, 189; Håkon IV: *HH*, II, 127-29; Magnus VI: *HH*, II, 217-20.

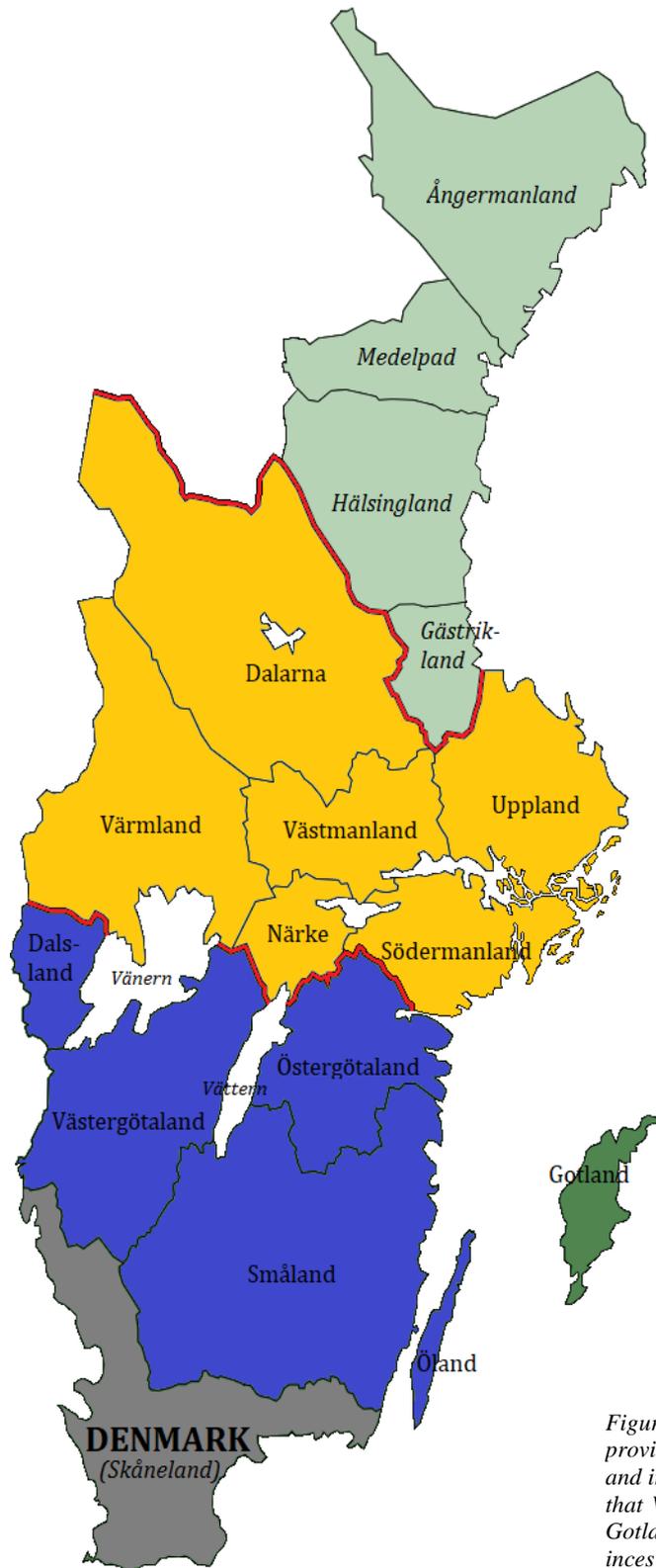
⁴¹² The coronation of Magnus and accompanying elements will be further discussed as part of the consolidation of his kingship in Chapter four, pp. 118-19.

⁴¹³ The process through which Sverre Sigurdsson became king was discussed in Chapter two, pp. 59-71.

⁴¹⁴ Sigurd Magnusson, Inge "Bagler-king" Magnusson, and Erling "Stonewall" Magnusson were the claimants that came the closest to duplicating Erling's kingmaking as outlined above. *SvS*, 179-80, 197-98, 211-12, 975-775; *Bs*, 7-12, 13-18. See Appendix 6 for an overview of claimants to the Norwegian kingship in this period.

⁴¹⁵ See Chapter two pp. 68-70 for more on *SvS* use of Davidic kingship and imagery.

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The Swedish case

Norway may have been the Scandinavian kingdom with the most underage kings, yet Sweden had at the same time the most famous kingmaker in Birger *jarl* and the most unknown underage king in his son Valdemar Birgersson. How this came to be is mainly the stuff of legends and has most recently been brought to a new audience through the writings of Jan Guillou, whose fourth instalment about the family of the fictional Templar knight Arn follows the exploits of Birger – Arn’s favoured grandson – and his ruthless path to unify the Swedish kingdom and secure the throne for his son.⁴¹⁶ Yet, despite the legendary and heroic overtones of this story, it is evident that the main thrust of it rings true: Birger *jarl* – or in English, Earl Birger – was a man, who was never King of Sweden, but yet ruled Sweden for the last sixteen years of his life even after his son came of age, and he is remembered as the unifier of the Swedish kingdom.⁴¹⁷

Figure 7. Map of the medieval kingdom of Sweden, its lands and provinces following modern boundary lines. Yellow are Svealand and its provinces and blue are Götaland and its provinces. Note that Värmland originally was part of Götaland. Dark green is Gotland which today is part of Götaland. The pale green provinces belonged to neither land. Lapplanning/CC BY-SA

⁴¹⁶ Jan Guillou, *Arvet efter Arn* (Stockholm, 2001). For a summary of the available source material see Line, *Kingship and State Formation*, xiv-xv.

⁴¹⁷ Birger was the son of Magnus Minnesköld and Ingrid Ylva, an alleged descendant of the Sverker-kindred who had gone extinct in the male line as recently as 1222. The links to the Sverker-kindred are based on account by the sixteenth-century clergyman Olaus Petri. If such links did exist, they would only serve to strengthen the narrative of “Birger the Unifier”. For more on this see, amongst others, Nils Ahnlund ‘Vreta klostrets äldsta donatorer’, *HT (Sv)*, 65 (1945), 332-351; Natanael Beckman ‘Kungagravar och medeltidshistoria’, *Fornvännen: Journal of*

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In the primary sources, Birger first emerges and begin to exert his influence in the mid to late 1230s, after the restoration of King Erik Eriksson to the Swedish throne in 1234.⁴¹⁸ From this point, he appears in various guises in the king's service: he represents the king in a diplomatic discussion with King Håkon IV of Norway in 1241, and in 1236 as an *ombud* and mediator between Nydala Abbey and the local population.⁴¹⁹ According to the early fourteenth-century *Rhymed Chronicle of Erik*, he even led a crusade to Finland.⁴²⁰

Tracing the steps of Birger's kingmaking, it is clear that this was a more gradual process than that of Erling Skakke. The first step was his marriage to Ingeborg, daughter of King Erik Knutsson (r. 1208-16). Ingeborg had many suitors, but the king chose to wed his sister to Birger at some point in the mid-1230s.⁴²¹ King Erik was reinstated in 1234, and Birger's and Ingeborg's first child were born in 1237 or 1238, which suggests that the marriage took place at some point between these two dates. As such, Birger's marriage to Ingeborg should likely be viewed as his reward for supporting the return of King Erik. This is important because it says something about Birger's status before and after the marriage. In what was, presumably, the late 1230s or 1240s, *Håkon Håkonsson's saga* described Birger as the 'þriði mestr ráðsmaðr í Svíþjóð'.⁴²² The only people above him in the hierarchy was the king (his brother-in-law), and *jarl* Ulf Fase (his cousin). The real power in Sweden at the time was Ulf *jarl*, described by the same saga as 'mestr landráðamaðr í Svíþjóð með konunginum'.⁴²³ Thus, either Birger was in possession of a powerbase and network independent of that of the king's and the *jarl*'s, or Ulf *jarl* must have assented to Birger's marriage to Ingeborg and the growth in his influence that would have come as a result of it – perhaps a bit of both.⁴²⁴ Finally, the marriage between Birger and Ingeborg was also a testament to the regard with which the king and his advisers held the Bjälbo-kindred in general and Birger in particular: they were powerful enough that they

Swedish Antiquarian Research, (1921), 22-47; *Kulten, makten, människan: arkeologi i Östergötland*, ed. by Anita Löfgren Ek and Gunnel Mörkfors (Östergötlands länsmuseum, 2004); Lars O. Lagerqvist, Nils Åberg and Lars E. Hjelm, *Kings and Rulers of Sweden: A Pocket Encyclopaedia* (Stockholm: Vincent Publications, 2002); Henrik and Fredrik Lindström, *Svitjods undergång och Sveriges födelse*.

⁴¹⁸ From 1229 to 1234 a relative of Erik Eriksson, named Knut Holmgerson the Tall, had successfully driven the king into exile. The reason was uncertain, but some have linked it to the Church's effort to install its people in ecclesiastical offices. Philip Line has argued that the power of the Bjälbo-kindred was weakened as a result of Knut the Tall's usurpation. *Kingship and State Formation*, 110-11.

⁴¹⁹ SDHK 506/DS 294; *HH*, Ch. 284.

⁴²⁰ *EK* 35. *EK* is the only source for this expedition, and the whole expedition has been surrounded by controversy, with even the date being uncertain. Line, *Kingship and State Formation*, 116.

⁴²¹ *EK*, 29: 'han gaff henne en östgötzskan man, | Birger kallade folkit han'.

⁴²² *HH*, Ch. 303 (third most powerful man in Sweden).

⁴²³ *HH*, Ch. 308 (most powerful man in Sweden together with the king). For a discussion who the effective ruler was, see for instance, Lindkvist, 'Kings and provinces in Sweden', p., 227; Lindström and Lindström, *Svitjods undergång och Sveriges födelse*, 115, 127; Irene Scobbie, *Sweden: Nation of the Modern World* (London: Ernest Benn, 1972), 24-25.

⁴²⁴ Line, *Kingship and State Formation*, 117.

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warranted the king's attention and goodwill.⁴²⁵ It was more important to the king to secure domestic alliances than foreign alliances, as was usually done with royal marriages.⁴²⁶ Birger and the Bjälbo-kindred was not the only domestic alliance the king secured after his reinstatement. In 1244 the king himself married Katarina Sunesdotter, the daughter of Sune Folkesson and Helena Sverkersdotter, a granddaughter of King Sverker the Younger (r. 1195/96-1208).⁴²⁷ Such a marriage would serve to unite the two kindreds who were vying for the kingship. With the two marriages close to a decade apart they could be viewed as a deliberate attempt by the king to block the possibility of the descendants of King Knut the Tall from inheriting the crown. Nevertheless, he must have known that any children by Birger and Ingeborg could also become future threats to his potential children.⁴²⁸ Whatever the case, the king must have thought this potential conflict a price worth paying. The king must also have calculated that if the descendants of Knut the Tall tried to claim the throne once more, he had tied Birger Magnusson to himself in such a way to ensure his support. Thus, Birger's position of power was secured, and took the first step towards becoming the kingmaker.

The chronology of Birger's second and third step towards becoming his son's kingmaker is difficult to ascertain, but it can be assumed they took place close to one another and they will, therefore, be discussed together. The first thing to note is the death of Holmger Knutsson, the son of King Knut the Tall, in 1247, and the second is Birger's elevation to the office of *jarl* by the spring of 1248. In 1247 a rebellion had broken out against King Erik by a group known as the Folkungs led by Holmger Knutsson.⁴²⁹ We do not know what caused the rebellion, but we know what the outcome was. *The Rhymed Chronicle of Erik, Håkon Håkonsson's saga*, and

⁴²⁵ Birger's kindred are named after Birger's estate in the province of Östergötaland (*EK*, 29: 'Han [Birger] var födder i Biälbo'), it was a powerful kindred that fostered at least three *jarls* of Sweden: Birger Brosa (r. 1174-1202), Karl the Deaf (r. 1216-20), and Ulf Fase (r. c. 1221-48), two bishops of Linköping, and a lawspeaker of Västgötaland, Eskil Magnusson. SDHK 218/DS 67, SDHK 369/DS 181, SDHK 412/DS 216, and *ÄVL lagm*. See also Dick Harrison, *Jarlens sekel*, 176f.; Lindström and Lindström, *Svitjods undergång och Sveriges födelse*, 192. The Bjälbo-kindred have previously been known as the Folkung-kindred; a name that has also been applied to political faction that operated in the same period.

⁴²⁶ Lindström and Lindström, *Svitjods undergång och Sveriges födelse*, 192-193. For examples of marriages between Scandinavian royal kindreds and European royal houses, see Jarle Gallén, 'Knut den helige och Adela av Flandern: Europeiska kontakter och genealogiske konsekvenser', in *Studier i äldre historia tillägnade Herman Schück*, ed. by Robert Sandberg (Stockholm: Minab/Gotab, 1985), pp. 4-5.

⁴²⁷ *Annales Suecici Medii Aevi: Svensk Medeltidsannalistik*, ed. by G. Paulsson, Bibliotheca Historica Lundensis, 32 (Lund, 1974), pp. 260, 269.

⁴²⁸ No children are recorded from the marriage between Erik Eriksson and Katarina Sunesdotter.

⁴²⁹ *EK*, 28: 'Folkunga sampnado sik ok tha | ok wildo kongungenom annan tiid besta'. Sten Carlsson has argued that the use of the name "Folkung" was based on a construction or an assumption made by Olaus Petri. Sten Carlsson, 'Folkungarna: en släktkonfederation', *Personhistorisk Tidsskrift*, 51.3 (1953), 73. Rolf Pipping, on the other hand, viewed Folkung as a faction name, similar to the Norwegian *heklung*, *kuvlung*, and *ribbung*, that supposedly meant followers or descendants of Folke, whom Saxo identified as Birger's great-grandfather. Rolf Pipping, *Kommentar till Erikskrönikan* (Helsingfors: Skrifter utgivna av Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 1926), 43; *Saxo*, xi.14.16. See also Herman Schück, 'Sweden under the dynasty of the Folkungs', p. 392.

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annals inform us that Holmger Knutsson was captured and executed after the rebellious faction was defeated at the Battle of Sparrsätra.⁴³⁰ Furthermore, the annals tell us that in the same battle, the *rustici* of Uppland lost their freedom (*libertatem*) and they were forced to pay tax on cereal crops (*spannmale*), *skipuista*, and many other taxes.⁴³¹ Though many medieval annals and chronicles attribute changes, gradual or not, to one dramatic event, the failure of this rebellion would have provided the opportunity for drastic change, such as new taxes, even if the introduction of them was the cause rather than the result of the rebellion.⁴³² The removal of Holmger Knutsson was a significant and important victory for Birger, even if he at this time had no plans to make his son king, because, another king from the family of Knut the Tall could have led to a second period of diminishment in power and prestige for the Bjälbo-kindred. The removal of Holmger Knutsson was, therefore, a question of survival, and the elimination of rivals constitutes Birger's second step towards becoming the kingmaker.

The third step was Birger's elevation to the office of *jarl*. We know that this had taken place by March 1248.⁴³³ This correlates with the narrative in *Håkon Håkonsson's saga*, which states that the previous *jarl*, Ulf Fase, died in the autumn of 1247 and that 'Ok skjótt eftir andlát jarls gaf konungrinn herra Birgi magi sínum jarlsnafn'.⁴³⁴ A third source, a letter, also mentions a *jarl* at this time. In 1247-48 the papal legate Cardinal William of Sabina visited Sweden and participated in the first provincial council in Skänninge, Östgötaland.⁴³⁵ Present at this council were the Archbishop of Uppsala, the bishops, the lawspeaker of Östgötaland, and several secular nobles, including a *dux terrae*.⁴³⁶ There has been much discussion over who this could have been, but Birger is the most likely candidate. William of Sabina wrote the letter at the time when the rebellion broke out and therefore historians have had trouble reconciling the reference to a *dux terrae* in Götaland in 1247 with the sources that name 1248 as the year of Ulf's death and Birger's elevation as *jarl*. Philip Line believes the rebellion broke out before Ulf died,

⁴³⁰ *EK*, 33; *HH*, II, 144.

⁴³¹ *Annales Suecici Medii Aevi*, ed. by G. Paulsson (Lund, 1974), 260: 'Communitas rusticorum Uplandiae Sparsaetrum amisit libertatem suam et impositatae sunt eis spannmale et skipuista et konera male'.

⁴³² Line, *Kingship and State Formation*, 118.

⁴³³ SDHK 614/DS 360, which was dated to March 2, 1248 and was the first time Birger *jarl* appear as *jarl* in the extant diplomas.

⁴³⁴ *HH*, II, 144 (And soon after the *jarl*'s death, the King made Birger, his brother in law, *jarl*).

⁴³⁵ Skänninge, located in the agricultural rich region of northern Östergötaland, was first named in a written source in 1178 as *Skeningia*. SDHK 242/DS 75. It was a centre for redistribution of surplus agricultural produce that later attracted an ecclesiastical presence. Archaeological research has shown that Skänninge was already a centre for trade by the end of the Viking Period, although the establishment of two monastic houses and a hospital, possibly the first in Sweden as it was founded in 1208, in the thirteenth century stimulated this development further Line, *Kingship and State Formation*, 331; M. Hasselmo, 'Skänninge', in *7000 år på 20 år: arkeologiska undersökningar i Mellansverige*, ed. by T. Andrae, M. Hasselmo, and K. Lamm (Stockholm: Riksantikvarieämbetet, 1987), p. 239).

⁴³⁶ SDHK 613/DS 359, which was dated at Skänninge, 1 March 1248.

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because of the threat of Birger's actual or imminent succession to the office of *jarl*.⁴³⁷ The question of whether Ulf was alive or dead is relevant because of a passage in the *Saga of Håkon Håkonsson* that describe Holmger – the rebel leader – as ‘frænda Úlfs jarls ok annara Fólkunga’.⁴³⁸ Furthermore, Ulf Fase may also have been the *jarl* during the reign of King Knut the Tall as the only extant diploma from the reign mentions a ‘Wlpho dux’ among the witnesses.⁴³⁹ If Ulf Fase served as *jarl* for both King Knut the Tall and King Erik Eriksson, and there was a rebellion close to or following his death, then it is possible to interpret Ulf's role as *jarl* in the reign of King Erik as that of an intermediary between the king and the Folkung faction.⁴⁴⁰ Then, with the imminent death of Ulf and succession of Birger, the Folkungs may have seen their rights as coming under threat, and the uprising an attempt to regain or protect those rights and to install a king favourable to their side. While we cannot tell for sure when the office of *jarl* transferred from Ulf to Birger, we can say something about what the elevation to *jarl* would have meant for the latter's power and prestige. There seems to be a view among historians that the real rulers and executors of royal power in Sweden from about the mid-1160s to the mid-1260s were the *jarls* – for the last of the *jarls* this certainly seems to be the case.⁴⁴¹ Thus, when Birger became *jarl*, he became the effective ruler of the Swedish kingdom – a king in all but name.⁴⁴² In light of this, Thomas Lindkvist has argued that the relationship between the Swedish kings and their *jarls* can best be compared to the relationship between the Merovingian kings and their mayors of the palace.⁴⁴³ Furthermore, Lindkvist sees the office of *jarl* as having undergone the same process of consolidation as that of the kingship, and that the *jarl* may have exercised royal authority on behalf of the king. If so, then the Swedish kingship in this period, from the mid-1160s to 1250, can be more rightly described as a diarchy with both the king and the *jarl* in charge. Support for this view can be found in their shared use of the style *dei gracia*. For instance, in the reign of King Knut Eriksson (r. 1172/73-95) both king and

⁴³⁷ Line, *Kingship and State Formation*, 117-19.

⁴³⁸ *HH*, II, 144: ‘Kin of Ulf *jarl* and the other Folkungs’.

⁴³⁹ SDHK 470/DS 259.

⁴⁴⁰ This would further imply that the return of King Erik Eriksson was based on a set of criteria. Who set them and what they were was unknown to us due to a lack of sources, but one could speculate that Ulf Fase may have been part of this group based on him being the only holdover from the regime that deposed King Erik that we are aware of.

⁴⁴¹ Lindkvist ‘Kings and provinces in Sweden’, p. 227; Lindström and Lindström, *Svitjods undergång och Sveriges födelse*, 115, 127; Scobbie, *Sweden*, 24-25.

⁴⁴² Lindkvist ‘Kings and provinces in Sweden’, p. 227.

⁴⁴³ Lindkvist ‘Kings and provinces in Sweden’, pp. 226-28. On the role of the mayors of the palace, see for instance, Paul Fouracre, *The Age of Charles Martel* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2000), 166ff.; Pierre Riché, *The Carolingians: A Family who forged Europe*, trans. by Michael Idomir Allen (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1993), 51-59; *Late Merovingian France: History and Hagiography, 620-720*, ed. by Paul Fouracre and Richard A. Gerberding (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), pp. 79, 87-96.

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jarl used the style *dei gracia*: The king as ‘*dei gracia sweorum rex*’ in 1192 and the *jarl* as ‘*dei gracia dux sueorum*’ in 1180.⁴⁴⁴ Similarly, Ulf Fase was styled as ‘*dei gratia dux Sueorum*’ in 1244.⁴⁴⁵ Birger *jarl*, likewise, used the style throughout his entire tenure as *jarl* of Sweden.⁴⁴⁶ This shared use of the style, as seen from the extant diploma material, could further indicate that the relationship between the king and the *jarl* in Sweden went further than that of the Merovingian kings and the mayors of the palace. In any case, what is evident is that when Birger was elevated to the office of *jarl*, and thus completed the third step towards becoming the king-maker, he became *de facto* the most powerful man in the Swedish kingdom.⁴⁴⁷

There was also a good chance that he may have engineered an alliance with the Church before 1250. Wherever there was an unclear succession, the Church was not far away, ready to step in and pick one of the many claimants vying for the kingship whom they could then crown king. This was what could be seen in the previous case study from Norway. In this case study, however, the absence of the Church can be explained, by another event that took place in 1248, and briefly touched upon above: the visit by Cardinal William of Sabina and the first provincial council in Skänninge, Östergötland. Skänninge lies less than six kilometres away from Birger's power base, his family's estate in Bjälbo, meaning that the cardinal was effectively Birger's guest during the visit.⁴⁴⁸ This may also explain how the cardinal knew about the ongoing rebellion and wrote about it in the letter issued at the council's conclusion.⁴⁴⁹ Furthermore, if the cardinal were Birger's guest, as Wojtek Jezierski suggested, then it would have been possible for Birger to influence his view on the situation in Sweden. Amongst the stipulations outlined in the letter issued by the cardinal was the enforcement of celibacy. William of Sabina, upon arriving in Sweden had found that many clergymen had wives or concubines which had led to endemic nepotism when the sons of these clergymen inherited their fathers' offices.⁴⁵⁰ In short, the Church's property was disappearing into the hands of magnates, and the cardinal set out to

⁴⁴⁴ SDHK 268/DS 70; SDHK 246/DS 824.

⁴⁴⁵ SDHK 534/DS 316. The same style was used when the Archbishop and chapter confirmed the letter at Uppsala in 1338. SDHK 4409/DS 3356.

⁴⁴⁶ SDHK 604/DS 843 (1248), SDHK 629/DS 846 (1250), SDHK 664/DS 390 (1252), SDHK 738/DS 850 (1256), SDHK 760/DS 445 (1257), SDHK 799/DS 473 (1261), SDHK 824/DS 492 (1264), SDHK 860/DS 518 (1266). As with Ulf Fase, Birger was also afforded the style after his death. SDHK 2019/DS 1471 (1305).

⁴⁴⁷ The importance of Birger's elevation to *jarl* of Sweden can also be shown by when he was first introduced in the early fourteenth-century *Rhymed Chronicle of Erik*. In his introduction, the author, who saw the office of *jarl* as Birger's primary source of power and prestige, finds it essential to stress that Birger became *jarl* before he died. *EK*, 29: ‘ok ward en järl för än han doo’.

⁴⁴⁸ Wojtek Jezierski, ‘Forms of Social Capital in the European Middle Ages: Angels, Papal Legates, and the Scandinavian Aristocratic Elites, 12th-13th Centuries’, *CERGU's Working Paper Series*, 1 (2017), 13.

⁴⁴⁹ SDHK 613/DS 359: ‘Erat siquidem guerra satis dura inter regem & quosdam nobiles, ex qua homicidia & incendia multa contigerant & rapine’.

⁴⁵⁰ SDHK 613/DS 359: ‘spiritualiter autem eo quod fere omnes sacerdotes erant presbiterorum filii patrum uestigiis inherentes contrahendo sollempniter matrimonia uel publice concubinas habendo in sacris ordinibus constituti’.

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end it. The council of Skänninge had a direct impact on the relationship between the secular magnates and those magnates who entered Church service: from now on there was to be a clear separation between these two groups and the flow of properties between secular and consecrated elites to slow down and eventually end.⁴⁵¹ Such stipulations may only have added fuel to the fire of the rebellion. If the cause for the rebellion was the perceived attack on the rights of the magnate kindreds, this went to the heart of it as it removed parts of their income. This was important enough for Birger that he would risk further antagonising his opponents over. We have no way of knowing Birger's plan going into the council meeting, merely, that he was present.⁴⁵² Nor do we know what, if any, influence he had over what was being discussed. Jezierski sees the outcome of the provincial council as the cardinal aligning with Birger and argues that Birger's backing and support were vital to implementing the provisions in the cardinal's letter. He further argued that there must have been a mutual political attraction between the two men since there was mutual recognition.⁴⁵³ To Birger this must, therefore, have appeared as a win-win situation, he gained the support of the Church and at the same time curtailed the economic muscles of other magnates and their kindreds. That he received the Church's support is evident from the fact that the Church subsequently crowned his son shortly after his election, whilst the outcome of the rebellion was still unknown and it was unclear whether his young son would remain king for long.⁴⁵⁴ By the end of the council of Skänninge, Birger had, hence, managed to manoeuvre himself into a position from where he could act if the right situation should arise.

When King Erik Eriksson of Sweden died in February 1250, Birger was the most powerful man in the kingdom: he held the highest office in the realm, had removed serious challengers to his position, and had secured an alliance with the Church. In other words, when the king died, Birger was in a position from which he could act decisively. According to our only native source, *The Rhymed Chronicle of Erik*, Birger was not in Sweden when the king died but in Finland.⁴⁵⁵ In his absence and as a consequence of it, the Swedish magnates under the leadership of Joar Blå elected Birger's eleven-year-old son Valdemar king, since the kingship 'honom til retta baar.'⁴⁵⁶ Upon returning to Sweden, and learning of his son's election, Birger

⁴⁵¹ Jezierski, 'Forms of Social Capital in the European Middle Ages', 13.

⁴⁵² SDHK 613/DS 359: 'quibus interfuit eciam dux per quem fere totaliter regitur terra illa'.

⁴⁵³ Jezierski, 'Forms of Social Capital in the European Middle Ages', 13. The actions here by Cardinal William fits that of the rest of the Church in this period: it sought out powerful men and, through its association with them, sanctioned their actions. Fritz Kern, *Kingship and Law in the Middle Ages*, 28.

⁴⁵⁴ SDHK 654/DS 388.

⁴⁵⁵ *EK*, 30-32.

⁴⁵⁶ *EK*, 32: 'as it rightfully was his'. This language, though a century later, was reflective of how Snorri Sturluson describe Magnus Erlingsson's claim to the Norwegian kingship with the term 'ættborinn'.

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became furious.⁴⁵⁷ From what we have discussed above, the actions of Birger leading up to this point, the version depicted in the *Rhymed Chronicle* cannot be regarded as anything but fiction. Birger himself had no claim on the kingship according to the existing rules of succession at the time, nor are there any indicators in the surviving sources that Birger considered taking the kingship for himself. Instead, all evidence points to Birger orchestrating his son's election. There has been some debate over whether or not Birger was present at the election of Valdemar since the *Rhymed Chronicle* portrays him as absent.⁴⁵⁸ The *Rhymed Chronicle* was compiled in the 1320s, by one or more unknown scribes, mainly to defend and legitimise the kingship of King Magnus Eriksson (r. 1319-64), who had been elected by the Swedish magnates ahead of the previous king's son, who had been beheaded.⁴⁵⁹ As such, the inclusion of Valdemar's election, more than anything, served as a historical example of how kings should be made. Furthermore, Philip Line has argued that it was clear that the events described in the *Rhymed Chronicle* are not always presented in the chronological order in which they happened, and that the author manipulated the sources in order to produce the narrative he wanted.⁴⁶⁰ By contrast, two passages in *Håkon Håkonsson's saga* is strong circumstantial evidence for Birger having had a hand in Valdemar's election. First, the saga says Birger was negotiating with King Håkon Håkonsson in the spring of 1249, amongst other things they agreed that there should be peace between the two kingdoms and that neither would harbour the other's enemy. This agreement was confirmed with the betrothal of Birger's daughter, Rikissa, to King Håkon the Young, son of King Håkon of Norway.⁴⁶¹ In the saga's description of the election of Valdemar Birgersson, it is strongly implied that the election was undecided until Birger arrived and that this arrival swung the vote in favour of Valdemar.⁴⁶² Both Jarle Gallén and John H. Lind has used these passages in the saga to argue that Birger could not have been on a crusade in Finland this year as the chronicle states.⁴⁶³ Lind further argued, with the support of Gisela Nordstrandh, that the author of the *Rhymed Chronicle* joined together the various episodes in the chronicle for the

⁴⁵⁷ EK, 32: 'Then tíid Birge jerl kom hem, | tha wart han vreder summum them, | ther hans son haffde til konungs takit'.

⁴⁵⁸ Line, *Kingship and State Formation*, 123.

⁴⁵⁹ EK, 10-20; Lindström and Lindström, *Svitjods undergång och Sveriges födelse*, 194.

⁴⁶⁰ Line, *Kingship and State Formation*, 124.

⁴⁶¹ HH, II, 152: 'Töluðu þá þat fastliga at friðr skyldi standa milli Nóregs ok Svíaríkis ok hvárigra óvinir skyldu þrífask eða eflask í annarra ríki. Ok hér með festi Hákon konungr ungi frú Ríkizu, dóttur jarls, ok skyldi sá ráðahagr takask þá er þeim þætti tími til vera, konungi ok jarli.'

⁴⁶² HH, II, 152: 'En þegar Birgir jarl kom til [...] þá fylgðu því flestir at hans son væri bezt til kominn konungdómsins. Var síðan Valdimarr til konungs tekinn, son Birgis jarls.'

⁴⁶³ Jarle Gallén, 'Kring Birger jarl och andra korståget till Finland: En omdatering och end omvärdering', *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland*, (1946), 55-70; John H. Lind, 'Early Russian-Swedish Rivalry: The Battle on the Neva in 1240 and Birger Magnusson's Second Crusade to Tavastia', *SJH*, 16.4 (1991), 284-85.

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sake of retaining an epic unity and not chronology.⁴⁶⁴ To this Lind rightly added that the author also manipulated the narrative for political and increased dynastic legitimacy and that it absolved Birger of any guilt in the removal of other claimants to the kingship and manipulations of the election which instead was portrayed as a free and unanimous election of the people.⁴⁶⁵ Thus, the only purpose of this part of the chronicle was to introduce Birger on the political scene, and the inclusion of Valdemar's election, more than anything, served as a historical example of how kings should be made.

Because of these issues with the chronology in the *Rhymed Chronicle*, it should therefore not come as a surprise that the narrative in the near-contemporary *Håkon Håkonsson's saga* contradicts the evidence in the chronicle.⁴⁶⁶ The saga stated that, upon the death of King Erik Eriksson, there was a great deal of disagreement among the people regarding the succession.⁴⁶⁷ However, most of those involved thought that Valdemar Birgersson was closest to the kingship because his mother had 'arf allan eftir hann.'⁴⁶⁸ This was similar to the chronicle's justification of the election of Valdemar: the kingship was rightfully his.⁴⁶⁹ The saga's presentation of Valdemar as the obvious and most popular claimant was most likely based on the fact that it was written some two decades after the events in the mid to late 1260s when the succession was a foregone conclusion.⁴⁷⁰ Furthermore, the subject of the saga, King Håkon Håkonsson, had several meetings with Birger *jarl*, as already noted.⁴⁷¹ Whereas the chronicle only alludes to other claimants, making Joar Blå state 'we then do know of another man' when Birger was unhappy with the election of his son, the saga names at least two: Filip Knutsson and Knut Magnusson.⁴⁷² Filip was the last living son of King Knut the Tall, and his claim was based on

⁴⁶⁴ Lind, 'Early Russian-Swedish Rivalry', 290; Gisela Nordstrandh, 'En kritisk läsning av Erikskrönikans första korstågsperiod', *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland*, (1990), 10. On the methods of the author of the *Chronicle of Erik* and its style of composition, see also Pipping, *Kommentar till Erikskrönikan*, and for a more recent view, see, Gisela Vilhelmsdotter, *Riddare, bonde och biskop: Studier kring tre fornsvenska dikter jämte nyeditioner*, Stockholm Studies in History and Literature, 42 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1999).

⁴⁶⁵ Lind, 'Early Russian-Swedish Rivalry', 290, 293-94.

⁴⁶⁶ John H. Lind has argued that in this case the saga, as a historical source, was far superior to the *Chronicle of Erik* and that if the two sources are incompatible, the saga has to be given absolute priority. 'Early Russian-Swedish Rivalry', 285.

⁴⁶⁷ *HH*, II, 152: 'Var þa grein mikil með fólki um konungstekjuna'.

⁴⁶⁸ *HH*, II, 152: '[she] had all inheritance after [Erik]'.

⁴⁶⁹ *EK*, 32: 'som honom til retta baar'.

⁴⁷⁰ *HH*, I, lxxxix; *HH*, II, 159: 'þar til er þessi bók var saman sett ok Magnús hafði verið tvá vetr konungr at Nóregi, síðan Håkon konungr fór vestr um haf.' (this book [i.e. *HH*] was compiled and Magnus had been king of Norway in two winters since King Håkon went west across the sea). Sverrir Jakobsson and Þorleifur Hauksson dates this to 1265: 'þ.e. árið 1265'. *HH*, 159 fn. 4.

⁴⁷¹ *HH*, II, 149-50, 160-61, 163, 166-68.

⁴⁷² *EK*, 33: 'tha withom vi hwar en annan sither'.

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the fact that his father had been king.⁴⁷³ Knut Magnusson, likewise, was a grandson of King Knut Eriksson (r. 1167-1195/96), showing that, again, being a direct descendant of a previous king was the most common claim to the kingship.⁴⁷⁴ The omission of Filip and Knut from the narrative in the *Rhymed Chronicle* most likely stem from the portrayal of the election as free and unanimous by the people and therefore more legitimate than hereditary succession. By contrast, the saga author – an Icelander – was writing for a Norwegian audience, about King Hákon, whom himself had become king in a bewildering process of differing claims. Hence, it made sense to include in the narrative a process that may or may not have represented actual events in Sweden in 1250 but was relatable for the intended audience. Consequently, while the narrative in the saga was built upon a broad range of sources – from the royal archives and other sagas to men who were close to the late king – it was evident that there are difficulties in using it as a source for events that happened hundreds of miles away from where the author was writing, even if we should perhaps not say, as Ólafía Einarsdóttir has done, that it has no or little value.⁴⁷⁵ In any case, it seems, therefore, that Birger’s position of power and prestige played a deciding role in his son’s election to the kingship. Hence it appears that Birger’s kingmaking was a gradual process in which he over time constructed a power base from which he could act if and when the right circumstances presented themselves.

From what is possible to glean from the scarce source material, Birger *jarl*’s kingmaking was a drawn-out affair that seems to have been calculated and ready to be put into action when the moment to strike appeared. Whereas Erling Skakke was already in a position from which he could act when King Inge I was killed in 1161, Birger, on the other hand, based on the source material, appears to have spent the early parts of his career manoeuvring himself into a similar position. When an opportunity presented itself, he acted with the same swiftness as the Norwegian kingmaker, and followed, in broad strokes, the same pattern as Erling. This shows that even though they were close to a century apart, there were significant similarities between the two kingdoms. Whether these similarities were unique to Norway and Sweden is hard to know – what we do know, though, was that things developed differently in the southernmost of the Scandinavian kingdoms.

⁴⁷³ *HH*, II, 152: ‘Philippus, son Knúts konungs langa, þóttisk en vera til kominn konungdóms, því at faðir hans hafði verit konungr með Eiríki konungi.’ (Philip, son of King Knut the Tall, thought he had a right to succeed because his father had been king with Erik).

⁴⁷⁴ *HH*, II, 152-53: ‘Knútr, son Magnúss brokka, þóttisk enn vera nær kominn konungdóminum. Hann var dótturson Knúts konungs Eiríkssonar er lengi var konungr í Svíaríki.’ (Knut, son of Magnus Broka, likewise thought himself to be close to the kingship for he was the daughter-son of King Knut Eriksson).

⁴⁷⁵ *HH*, II, cxix-cxxvi; Ólafía Einarsdóttir, ‘Om samtidssagaens kildeværdi belyst ved *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*’, *Alvíssmál* 5 (1995), 29-80.

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Who was the real kingmaker in twelfth-century Denmark?

Unlike in Norway and Sweden, the conflicts over the Danish kingship in the twelfth century did not produce an underage king or a kingmaker. In the mid-1860s Casper Paludan-Müller claimed that the most important conflict of twelfth-century Denmark was the competition between two kindreds (*slægter*) over who was to be the most powerful after the royal kindred: it was the descendants of Skjalm Hvide of Zealand (Hvide-kindred, DK: *Hvideslægten*) against the descendants of Svend Thurgot of Jutland (Thurgot-kindred, DK: *Trundslægten*).⁴⁷⁶ Almost a hundred years later John Danstrup picked up the idea, apparently unknowingly. In an article, which does not refer Paludan-Müller, he argued that the political struggle in the period between 1131 and 1182 was primarily a struggle between great kindreds and political parties over the Crown, the archdiocese, and dioceses. In his view, Knud Lavard (1096-1131) represented the first attempt by the Hvide-kindred to acquire the kingship.⁴⁷⁷ This tradition has been resumed in a more recent study of twelfth-century Denmark by Lars Hermanson. In line with Paludan-Müller's ideas, and particularly Danstrup's way of thinking, Hermanson rejected the idea of a political structure consisting of the king, the Church, and what he calls "a third party" in the twelfth century.⁴⁷⁸ Instead, he argued that the twelfth century was dominated by one multifaceted elite who maintained their positions with the help of extensive personal relations. He pointed to the reign of King Svend II Estridsen and his many sons, arguing that a closer analysis of them reveals four competing branches to which he linked four "magnate collectives".⁴⁷⁹ The magnates welcomed such approaches, for in their active support of one of these branches lay the possibility for them to improve their standing. Thus, this became, according to Hermanson's argument, a mutually beneficial arrangement.⁴⁸⁰ In this arrangement, one can also see the idea that existed in Norway and Sweden, that the kingship was reserved for a particular kindred – in this case, the descendants of Sven Estridsen.

While mostly convincing, one of the problems with Hermanson's argument is that it only considered internal powerbrokers. The extant chronicles and diploma material make it clear that in the case of Denmark, one must also consider what influence foreign powerbrokers

⁴⁷⁶ Casper Paludan-Müller, 'To Bemærkninger i Anledning af Prof. F. Hammerichs nyeste Skrift: En Skolastiker og en Bibeltheolog fra Norden', *Ny Kirkehistoriske Samlinger* 3 (København, 1864-66), 430-433.

⁴⁷⁷ John Danstrup, 'Træk af den politiske kamp 1131-82', in *Festschrift til Erik Arup*, ed. by Astrid Friis and Albert Olsen (København, 1946), pp. 65-87.

⁴⁷⁸ Hermanson, *Släkt, vänner, och makt*, 9-12, 88ff.

⁴⁷⁹ Lars Hermanson, 'Makten, individen och kollektivet: Ett alternativt perspektiv på det danska 1100-talets politiska historia', in *Ett annat 1100-tal: Individer, kollektiv och kulturella mönster i medeltidens Danmark*, ed. by Peter Carelli, Lars Hermanson and Hanne Sanders (Göteborg: Makdam förlag, 2004), pp. 65-66; see also, Lars Hermanson, *Släkt, vänner, och makt*, 9-12, 88ff.

⁴⁸⁰ Hermanson, 'Makten, individen och kollektivet', pp. 66-67.

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had over its internal affairs. Denmark's position as the southern-most of the three Scandinavian kingdoms had always put it perilously close to the Holy Roman Empire and its northern princes, and it was evident that Denmark had been moving in and out of the empire's sphere of influence since the early ninth-century.⁴⁸¹ Despite this, Inge Skovgaard-Petersen flat out denied that there had been any German or imperial influence over Denmark in the ninth and tenth century.⁴⁸² The level of imperial influence over Denmark has been a hotly debated topic among Danish scholars. For instance, Ole Fenger saw Denmark as a strategic pawn to be exploited and controlled by the Emperor, while Hal Koch saw no such exploitation by the Emperor.⁴⁸³ Despite admitting that Denmark was under the Emperor's overlordship, Koch argued that 'one cannot say that this meant a limitation of the realm's national independence', and he has been followed in this by scholars such as Aksel E. Christensen.⁴⁸⁴ In the eleventh century, however, the pressure on Denmark seems to have eased up, mainly, as Nils Hybel has argued, due to the domestic political situation in the Empire.⁴⁸⁵ Instead, there appears to have been a shift where, rather than seeking to influence the whole Danish kingdom, the emperors sought to influence the kingdom through individuals. However, this shift appears to have been initiated by Danish individuals and not the emperors, as we shall see. This was particularly evident from the 1120s to the 1150s, first with the dual position of Knud Lavard as Duke of Schleswig and Duke of Holstein under both King Niels (r. 1103-34) and Emperor Lothar III (r. 1125-37), and secondly during the dynastic conflict between Svend III Eriksen, Knud V Magnussen, and Valdemar Knudsen. For instance, both Christensen and Helge Paludan have considered Knud Lavard an un-Danish prince, assisted by Germans, though Christensen never went as far as Paludan did in his characterisation.⁴⁸⁶ While accepting the premise of Hermanson's argument with regards to the

⁴⁸¹ Hybel, *The Nature of Kingship*, 116, 120-21. *Diplomatvm Regvm et Imperatorvm Germaniae, vol. 1: Conradi I. Heinrici I. et Ottonis I. Diplomata*, ed. by Th. Sickel, MGH Diplomata (Hannover, 1879-84), no. 294 (26 June 965) confirms Hamburg-Bremen's authority over the Danish bishoprics. See also, *DD*, I:1 nos. 330, 343.

⁴⁸² Inge Skovgaard-Petersen, 'Oldtid og Vikingetid', in *Danmarks Historie*, ed. by Inge Skovgaard-Petersen, Aksel E. Christensen, and Helge Paludan, 2 vols (København: Gyldendal, 1977), I: *Tiden indtil 1340*, pp. 153-55.

⁴⁸³ Fenger, "'Kirker rejses alle vegne' 1050-1250", pp. 36, 132.

⁴⁸⁴ Hal Koch, *Kongemagt og Kirke 1060-1241*, 2nd edn., *Danmarks historie vol. 3*, ed. by John Danstrup and Hal Koch (København: Politikens forlag, 1963), 119; Aksel E. Christensen, *Vikingetidens Danmark paa oldhistorisk baggrund* (København: Gyldendal, 1969), 232.

⁴⁸⁵ Hybel, *The Nature of Kingship*, 125. There was, however, a dubious reference to German suzerainty in this century to be found on a sandstone capital in the church in Dalby, for which see, Erik Cinthio, 'Dalby kyrkas stiftare och donatorer. En spekulativ bildtolkning', in *Från romantik till nygotik: studier i kyrklig konst och arkitektur tillägnade Evald Gustafsson*, ed. by M. Ullen (Stockholm, 1992), pp. 1-10. See also Peter and Birgit Sawyer, 'The Making of the Scandinavian Kingdoms', in *Die Suche nach den Ursprüngen: von der Bedeutung des frühen Mittelalters*, ed. by Walter Pohl, *Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters*, 8 (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2004), pp. 261-69.

⁴⁸⁶ Aksel E. Christensen, 'Tiden 1042-1241', in *Danmarks Historie*, eds. Inge Skovgaard-Petersen, Aksel E. Christensen, and Helge Paludan, 2 vols (København: Gyldendal, 1977), I: *Tiden indtil 1340*, 275-77; Helge Paludan, 'Flos Danie: Personer og standpunkter i dansk politik under kong Niels', *Historie Jyske Samling*, 7.4 (1966-67), 516-17, 524-25.

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influence of the magnate collectives in the twelfth century, there is thus an argument to be made that foreign influence in twelfth-century Denmark ought to be considered alongside internal influence, and it can be highlighted most clearly by an examination of the struggle between the cousins Svend III, Knud V, and Valdemar in the 1150s.

In 1157 Frederick Barbarossa wrote a letter to his uncle Otto, bishop of Freising, thanking him for the chronicle Otto had sent him and replied with a list of things he had done in the Roman world during the past five years, instructing the bishop and chronicler to amplify and increase them.⁴⁸⁷ The first item on that list, following his coronation, was that the ‘king of the Danes, came upon summons to our assembly and, after pledging allegiance and fealty to us, received the crown of his realm from our hand.’⁴⁸⁸ In 1151, Svend III and his opponent, Knud V, had each written a letter to King Conrad III, Frederick’s predecessor on the German throne.⁴⁸⁹ It is impossible to know which letter reached Conrad first, but in the *Diplomatarium Danicum* Svend III’s letter appears first. It greets *emperor* Conrad as ‘filiam dilectionem et debitam subiectionem’, stating that he was seeking support against his enemies, and asks for a meeting with the German king.⁴⁹⁰ The letter reveals that even though Svend portrays himself as the more successful of the two claimants to the Danish throne, his success had come at a cost.⁴⁹¹ Knud, in his letter, also greets *emperor* Conrad, lamenting that he had been driven from not only the kingdom but also his patrimony (‘regno uerum etiam patrimonio’), and asked for armed assistance or, at the very least, a decision – a decision Knud specifically says he would obey.⁴⁹² While both Knud V and Svend III highlighted that they could draw support from the German kingdom, it is clear that they had been unable to resolve this dispute on their own.

⁴⁸⁷ *Gesta Friderici*, 1-5. For more on Otto of Freising, his life and his work, see amongst others, Joachim Ehlers, *Otto von Freising: Ein Intellektueller im Mittelalter: Eine Biographie* (München: Beck, 2013); Sverre Bagge, ‘Ideas and narrative in Otto of Freising’s *Gesta Friderici*’, *Journal of Medieval History*, 22.4 (1996), 346-77; Charles Christopher Mierow, ‘Otto of Freising: A Medieval Historian at Work’ *Philological Quarterly*, 14 (Jan. 1935), 344-62; idem, ‘Bishop Otto of Freising: Historian and Man’, *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 80 (1949), 392-402.

⁴⁸⁸ *Gesta Friderici*, 1: ‘ubi rex Danorum Petrus ad curiam nostrum vocatus venit et homino ac fidelitate nobis facta coronam regni de manu nostra suscepit.’

⁴⁸⁹ *DD*, 1:2 nos. 103, 104. Both letters appear among the 1151 letters in Wibald’s codex of letters, and despite none of them carrying a date, the circumstances surrounding the letters and their content makes it possible to date them to the middle or latter half of 1151, most likely following Knud’s unsuccessful Jutland campaign the same year.

⁴⁹⁰ *DD*, 1:2 no. 103: ‘C. Dei gracia Romano imperatori’, ‘Impensi beneficii haut immemor. paternitatis uestre clementie semper gracias agimus. omniumque remuneratorem Deum igitur exoramus. ut ibi nostre paruitatis uicissitudo defecerit summa sua misericordia retribuere dignetur.’ Conrad was never crowned emperor, and Svend employs the wrong title, perhaps deliberately.

⁴⁹¹ Saxo plays up their difference in strength, but if this is to make Valdemar’s eventual victory greater is uncertain. What is known, however, was that Svend emerges victorious in every skirmish between the two claimants.

⁴⁹² *DD*, 1:2 no. 104: ‘Priuatī igitur non solum regno uerum etiam patrimonio... Vestram itaque regiam potestatem suppliciter exoramus quod nobis subueniatis et pro uestro honore nobiscum paterne agatis et que iniuste amisimus. gladii uestri seueritate rehabeamus. Nos uero uestra in omnibus uelut filii constanter sequemur.’

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Effectively then, they were asking for Conrad to intervene as an arbiter: someone with connections to both claimants and with the ability to impose and enforce a decision in the dispute.⁴⁹³

However, it was the newly elected Frederick Barbarossa, Conrad's successor, who would reply to these letters. Barbarossa summoned both parties to appear before him at the diet held in Merseburg; a practice Jenny Benham points out had been emerging by the late eleventh century and which Barbarossa reinforced.⁴⁹⁴ At Merseburg, according to Otto, their case was 'settled by the judgement or advice of the chief men'.⁴⁹⁵ Knud was made to give up his claim ('regium nomen per porrectum gladium abdicaret') but keep certain provinces ('relictis sibi quibusdam provinciis'), and Svend III would receive 'the royal power at the sovereign's hand, [and] should be bound to him by fealty and homage'.⁴⁹⁶ These were conditions Svend III apparently accepted for next Otto describes him as having the crown of the realm placed on his head by Barbarossa.⁴⁹⁷ Valdemar is also mentioned in passing at the end where it said he 'received a certain duchy in Denmark'.⁴⁹⁸ However, Otto himself was most likely not present at Merseburg, and some of the information he gives was unsupported by the only contemporary evidence of the arbitration: a charter issued at Merseburg in May 1152.⁴⁹⁹ This charter, for the monastery of Corvey whose abbot was the same Wibald in whose letter collection the original letters asking for the arbitration appears, records both Svend III and Knud V as witnesses: 'Svend, king of the Danes, who received his kingdom from the hands of the king. Knud, who relinquished the kingdom in the same hands.'⁵⁰⁰ Why was Knud made to give up his claim? The answer is simple. The arbitration by Barbarossa confirmed the status quo at the time: Svend III was in possession of the Danish kingdom and Knud had been unable to take it away from him. The charter does not say whether Knud was rewarded in some way, as Otto claims in his account, but circumstantial evidence: Knud's letter to Conrad, Saxo's account of the arbitration, and the fact that Knud was able to promise a third of his inheritance to Valdemar as dowry for his half-sister, would indicate that Knud V, at the very least, maintained control of his

⁴⁹³ On arbitration, its function and role, see Jenny Benham, *International Law in Europe, 700-1200* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021 forthcoming).

⁴⁹⁴ Benham, *Peacemaking in the Middle*, 57. Valdemar would meet with Barbarossa on at least three occasions, all of which took place inside the Empire. *Ibid*, 57-8.

⁴⁹⁵ *Gesta Friderici*, 106: 'iudicio seu consili primatum sic decisa fuisse'.

⁴⁹⁶ *Gesta Friderici*, 106: 'Petrus vero, accepto a manu ipsius regno, fidelitate et homino ei obligaretur.'

⁴⁹⁷ *Gesta Friderici*, 106: 'Ita corona regni sibi per manum principis imposita'.

⁴⁹⁸ *Gesta Friderici*, 106: 'Gwaldemarum etiam, qui eiusdem sanguinis particeps fuit, ducatum quondam Daniae accepit.'

⁴⁹⁹ That Otto was not present at Merseburg seems clear from his usage of 'dicitur'. *Gesta Friderici*, 106.

⁵⁰⁰ *DD*, 1:2 no. 110: 'Sueno rex Danorum, qui ibidem regnum suscepit de manu domni regis. Knut alter Danus, qui ibidem regnum in manu domni regis refutavit.'

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patrimony after giving up his claim to the kingship.⁵⁰¹ In other words, the judgment effectively did what the two candidates had asked for in their letters to Frederick's predecessor, Conrad.

Upon returning to Denmark Svend III's position gradually eroded to the point where his ally, Valdemar, found it beneficial to switch sides and join Knud, at which point Svend fled the kingdom.⁵⁰² After he failed to retake the kingdom, with the aid of Duke Henry the Lion of Saxony; he, along with Knud and Valdemar were forced into a negotiated settlement by the Danish magnates, that evidently abided by the 1152 arbitration. Svend kept the title of king and Knud received his patrimony, Zealand. However, Knud and Valdemar were also awarded the title of king, and Valdemar received Jutland as his share of the kingdom, likely because his patrimony and supporters lay in the area around Schleswig in that province. Svend received Scania, the province where he had first been acclaimed king.⁵⁰³ The settlement was celebrated with a feast in Roskilde, at which Svend murdered Knud, initiating a war with Valdemar which eventually ended in victory for the latter.⁵⁰⁴

This, then, brings us back to Frederick's letter to Otto of Freising, in which the events that had taken place between the arbitration and the time of writing were glossed over. In the letter, Barbarossa thanks Otto for sending him the *Chronica de duabus civitatibus*, saying that he looks forward to, after what he describes as 'the sweat of war', to be reading about the 'magnificent achievements of the emperors'. The letter also says that he compiled 'in compliance with [Otto's] request', an outline of his deeds since his accession to the throne.⁵⁰⁵ However, if Barbarossa wrote this in early 1157, as some scholars have suggested, the version he asks Otto to include does not reflect the events that played out in Denmark later that same year, or indeed the previous three years. Therefore, the letter presents the historian with several interesting questions. Perhaps most relevant to this discussion are the questions of when the letter was written, and, why Barbarossa would think it essential that the 1152 arbitration should be included in the chronicle.

The broadest possible dating of the letter is from late March 1157 to 22 September 1158, when Otto of Freising died. The *Chronica* Barbarossa references in his letter were, according

⁵⁰¹ *DD*, 1:2 no. 104: 'Priuati igitur non solum regno uerum etiam patrimonio'; *Saxo*, xiv.8.2-3; xiv.14.2.

⁵⁰² *Saxo*, xiv.9.1-4, xiv.12.1-13.2, xiv.14.1-3; *Helmoldi Chronica Slavorum*, 166.

⁵⁰³ *Saxo*, xiv.17.1-6, xiv.17.15; *Helmoldi Chronica Slavorum*, 166-67. Among the other sources for this event, only *Knytlingasaga* gives Valdemar the same leading role as Saxo in the proceedings: 'Var þat þá samit, at Valdimarr skyldi skipta með þeim landinu ok svá kjósa'. *Ks*, Ch. 112. Helmold, on the other hand, attributes the decisions to the leading men on both sides: 'Mediante domno Helya pontifice de Ripa et principibus utriusque partis discordiae ad pacem inclinatae sunt, et divisum est regnum in tres partes', *Helmoldi Chronica Slavorum*, 166. However, all three sources agree on the distribution of provinces.

⁵⁰⁴ *Saxo*, xiv.18.2-6, xiv.18.11-20.1; *Helmoldi Chronica Slavorum*, 167-68.

⁵⁰⁵ *Gesta Friderici*, 1: 'bellicos sudores', 'magnificia Gesta imperatorum', 'ad petitionem tuam breviter compilata noticiae tuae libenter commendaremus'.

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to Charles Mierow and Richard Emery, the second edition of the *Chronica de duabus civitatibus* which was sent to Barbarossa in March 1157.⁵⁰⁶ Hans Jungfer has argued that the letter from Barbarossa was written, at the earliest, in early April 1157 and that Otto had completed his part of the *Gesta Friderici* by Pentecost 1158, which fell on 8 June that year.⁵⁰⁷ However, others have dated both the letter from Otto that accompanied the *Chronica* and Barbarossa's reply to the letter to the end of March 1157.⁵⁰⁸ Otto passed away on 22 September 1158, and since we know that Otto wrote both Books I and II of the *Deeds*, it must have been sent well before that.⁵⁰⁹ Furthermore, in June 1158 Valdemar, now king of the Danes, sent emissaries to Barbarossa asking him to recognise his election as the new king – the sum of these events all but eliminates 1158 as a date for the letter. In any case, the span from March 1157 to September 1158 is too broad to be useful in this context, but several things speak against a late March or April 1157 dating. Chief amongst them is the letter itself. In it, Barbarossa writes: 'After the sweat of war', which could be read as if he had just returned from a military campaign.⁵¹⁰ There were no such campaigns at the end of 1156, but in August 1157 Barbarossa went on campaign in Poland, a campaign which the *Gesta Friderici* indicate was long in the making. Such a reading of the letter would indicate a post-August dating of the letter, in the early autumn of 1157. Following the Poland campaign, in late September to early October, Barbarossa held a *Hoftag* in Würzburg, and present there were, amongst others, emissaries from Denmark.⁵¹¹ Before this time, Barbarossa may have learned about the failed outcome of Henry the Lion's campaign in Jutland, perhaps he had even learned about the renegotiated agreement between Svend, Knud, and Valdemar wherein they had agreed to divide the kingdom in three, and perhaps, he had learned about the Bloodfeast of Roskilde and the death of Knud.⁵¹² If Barbarossa was previously unaware of developments in Denmark, he must undoubtedly have learned about it at the *Hoftag*

⁵⁰⁶ *DFB*, 17 fn. 2.

⁵⁰⁷ Hans Jungfer, *Untersuchung und Nachrichten über Friedrichs I. griechische und normannische Politik bis zum Wormser Reichstage (31. März 1157)* (Berlin: W. Weber, 1874), 42-46.

⁵⁰⁸ *Die Regesten des Kaiserreich unter Friedrich I. 1152 (1122)-1190*, ed. by Johann F. Böhmer and others, 4 vols (Wien, 1980-2011), I: *1152 (1122)-1158*, 141.

⁵⁰⁹ *DFB*, 246 fn. 43, 3.

⁵¹⁰ *DFB*, 17.

⁵¹¹ *DFB*, 174-78, 178-80.

⁵¹² Odilo Engels, 'Friedrich Barbarossa und Dänemark' in *Friedrich Barbarossa: Handlungsspielräume und Wirkungsweisen des staufischen Kaisers*, ed. by Alfred Haverkamp (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbeck Verlag, 1992), 372. The renegotiation took place at Lolland in late July or early August, and the Bloodfeast of Roskilde took place on August 9, 1157. Saxo, 1086, fn. 107, 1090, fn. 111; *Annales Nestvediensis minores*, *DMA*, p. 84; *Helmoldi Chronica Slavorum*, 167-68. It should also be noted that several Danish annals entries and a chronicle date the Bloodfeast to either 1156 or 1158 as well. 1156: *Dansk-svenske annaler 916-1263*, *DMA*, p. 13; *Årbog 1074-1255*, *DMA*, p. 17; *Annales Valdemarii*, *DMA*, p. 76; *Annales Sorani vet.*, *DMA*, p. 90; *Chronica Sialandie*, *DMA*, p. 109; *Annales Ryenses*, *DMA*, p. 166; *Annales Essenbecenses*, *DMA*, p. 276. 1158: *Annales Lundenses*, *DMA*, p. 58; *Annales Nestvediensis vet.*, *DMA*, p. 80.

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in Würzburg in October of 1157. It is unknown, and most likely impossible to know, who sent these emissaries, who were involved in their selection, and what their instructions were. Nevertheless, it is unthinkable that the emissaries did not provide Barbarossa with an account of the latest developments in Denmark. Considering the time of the *Hoftag*, its location, and the travel distance, the envoys most likely departed Denmark a fortnight before the start of the *Hoftag* – around early to middle of September – at which point the Bloodfeast of Roskilde had already taken place, and Svend was at war with Valdemar.⁵¹³ This conflict between the two would also explain why there were no Danish emissaries present at the Besançon Diet later the same month.⁵¹⁴ Thus, a later dating of the letter, to the autumn of 1157, would in many ways explain why the Danish king receiving his kingdom was included on a list of achievements in the Roman world: it acted as a historical precedent for an unknown future where there was a need to re-establish relations with a new king. By placing this achievement in the “Roman world” Barbarossa further emphasised that the kingdom of Denmark belonged in a world in which he, at least in his own eyes, reigned supreme. The inclusion anticipates a future wherein Svend might no longer be King of the Danes but where Denmark would remain within Barbarossa’s sphere of influence. As such, the letter was most likely written at some point after Barbarossa’s return from Poland and the news of Svend’s death on 23 October had reached him.

By narrowing the date of the letter down to the autumn of 1157 the reason for the inclusion of Svend’s allegiance and fealty, and, in particular, Barbarossa placing the Danish crown on Svend becomes much clearer. Such a dating makes it evident that Barbarossa made a deliberate attempt to ensure that Denmark stayed within his sphere of influence after Valdemar’s accession to the throne as sole king of Denmark. Barbarossa effectively tried to re-write history, making himself the kingmaker. This was important since it was Svend and Knud, not Valdemar, who had given the German king permission to intervene, and hence Barbarossa could not demand the new king’s allegiance as he had no authority to do so. Instead, by setting a precedent of fealty and homage, he could make a request for the same and hope for Valdemar’s cooperation in complying. Indeed, these efforts by Barbarossa would become an important tool in Valdemar’s consolidation of his kingship, as we will explore in the next chapter.

⁵¹³ Würzburg lies in Northern Bavaria, about 326 miles as the crow flies south of *Danevirke*, a conservative estimate makes the trip between these two points thirteen days if they travelled approx. 25 miles each day (326/25=13.04).

⁵¹⁴ *DFB*, 180.

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Summary

This chapter has explored the kingmaking of two Scandinavian underage kings, Magnus Erlingsson and Valdemar Birgersson. Both Erling Skakke and Birger *jarl* became kingmakers because both were in a position to act when an opportunity arose. Crucial to this process was the underage king and the strong link between them and the kingmaker, shown here to have a close familial connection. Herein lies their success, neither of them could have become kingmakers if they did not have underage sons with links to previous kings. As such, in order to be a Scandinavian kingmaker, one must have three things: an underage son, the means and opportunity, and the right circumstances with which to act. Erling acted in a very rapid manner; all of his kingmaking steps took place over a short period of time, making it appear that his window of opportunity was smaller than that of Birger. The latter, on the other hand, acted more gradually, more carefully, and his steps took place over a more extended period of time compared to Erling. This gradual approach could also be why Birger's kingmaking was more successful than Erling's in the long run; Birger's kindred retained control of the kingship for over a century after his death.

There were no kingmakers like Erling and Birger in Denmark. The closest we come to a Danish kingmaker is the German emperor Fredrick Barbarossa. However, Barbarossa's kingmaking differs from that of Erling and Birger. Chiefly this difference lies in that he had no familial connection to either of the Danish kings and that he was not the instigator of the kingmaking process. The instigators were Svend III Eriksen and Knud V Magnussen who invited Barbarossa's predecessor to settle their dispute over the kingship, and it was Valdemar and the Danish magnates, who abided by Barbarossa's 1152 arbitration when the latter divided up the kingdom among the three kings, thereby accepting and confirming the emperor's right to interfere in Danish politics. Therefore, the absence of underage kings and kingmakers in Denmark in the twelfth century can partially be explained by this very powerful foreign influence from the empire. In terms of scale, this influence was very different from the influence Valdemar had over Erling and King Magnus in the 1160s and 1170s, and factors such as distance to the continent, and Denmark's geopolitical location compared to those of Norway and Sweden certainly played their parts too. From this, it is evident that outside factors dictated a greater need for an adult as opposed to an underage king, showing that the German emperor truly was the kingmaker in twelfth-century Denmark.

The difference in their approaches to the kingmaker role aside, the actual process Erling and Birger undertook to secure the kingship for their respective sons were remarkably similar:

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election and coronation, foreign recognition, and an alliance with the Church. Though hampered by a lack of charter evidence from the reign of King Magnus, the narrative sources give us some insight into how Erling used these three steps to secure the kingship for his son. What little charter evidence there was serves to underscore the alliance with the Church. For Sweden, the opposite is the problem. Here, the lack of a contemporary Swedish narrative source makes it challenging to construct a working chronology. Instead, the extant charters provide evidence for how Birger *jarl* used foreign recognition and the alliance with the Church to secure his son's position. Furthermore, the sagas, as written by the Icelanders, were focused on families, and the lack of charter evidence, especially from Norway, means that the king or even the kingmaker does not always emerge clearly, while the available material for Denmark, both contemporary narrative sources and charter evidence, focus more on the role of the king but not always the Danish one. As shown, the majority of the evidence for the 1152 arbitration is found in German sources, aimed at maintaining Denmark's position in the German sphere of influence.

Having explored the Scandinavian kingmaking process, we will now move on to analyse how these kings, Magnus of Norway, Valdemar of Sweden and Valdemar of Denmark, went about consolidating their kingships and the surprisingly similar way in which they all did it.

IV. Consolidation of power

Introduction

Having explored the kingmaking process previously, this chapter will demonstrate that the consolidation of kingship in Scandinavia happened similarly across the region, irrespective of how one acquired the kingship. To that end, below, we will discuss the consolidation processes of the reigns of King Magnus Erlingsson of Norway, King Valdemar Birgersson of Sweden, and King Valdemar I of Denmark. However, this discussion will not, as previous scholarship, focus simply on the king's relationship with his nobles or magnates, but instead show through clearly defined links how the consolidation process in all three kingdoms rested on the same three pillars: foreign recognition, alliances with the Church, and the removal of rivals.

The consolidation of the kingship of King Magnus V Erlingsson of Norway

We know very little about how Erling Skakke and King Magnus V consolidated the position of the latter. What little information we can extract from normative and narrative sources show a kingdom that appears more as a collective institution, underpinned by ties to specific sections of society or individuals.⁵¹⁵ Emerging most clearly as the pillars which Magnus's position and kingship relied upon was: Archbishop Eystein Erlendsson (1120/30-88), in conjunction with the Church, Magnus's father Erling Skakke, and King Valdemar I of Denmark. As will be explored below, when they fell one by one by the wayside from 1179 to 1183, Magnus's position unravelled, and his kingship eventually collapsed in 1184 with the victory of King Sverre Sigurdsson and the death of King Magnus Erlingsson.

The Church features prominently in the normative sources, which is also why most Norwegian scholars have focused on them and their influence in an attempt to explain how Erling and Magnus consolidated their power.⁵¹⁶ However, based on the narrative sources alone, it is hard to determine how much influence the Church had on the process. The ecclesiastical actor who emerged in both the normative and narrative sources was the second Archbishop of Nidaros, Eystein Erlendsson, and the papal legate.⁵¹⁷ *Heimskringla* states that when Eystein became

⁵¹⁵ Hans Jacob Orning, 'Høymiddelalderens konger og dronninger', in *Dronningen: i vikingtid og middelalder*, ed. by Karoline Kjesrud and Nanna Løkka (Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press, 2017), p. 250.

⁵¹⁶ For an overview and a discussion of this, see Helle, *Norge blir en stat*, 57-69.

⁵¹⁷ Eystein appears in both *HkrME*, *SvS*, the succession law, and was mentioned in the *arenga* of the law of *Frostaping* and *Gulaping*. *HkrME*, 802, 805-7; *SvS*, 14, 43, 47, 49, 54, 56, 59, 78, 91, 95, 108, 127, 133, 137; *NMD*, pp. 32-35; *NgL*, I, 19f; 182f. The legate only appears in *HkrME* and was mentioned by Magnus in *SvS*. *HkrME*, 807; *SvS*, 78, 112.

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archbishop ‘he was well-thought-of by all the people’ and they received him well ‘because most of the leaders there were connected with him by kin or relationship, and all were close friends of his’.⁵¹⁸ At the same time, King Sverre, Magnus’s successor, claimed in 1199 that Eystein’s election had been improper; instead, King Inge appointed him, with Sverre claiming Inge ‘chose Eystein, his chaplain and treasurer – without asking any of the learned men in Trondheim, neither the canons nor any other’.⁵¹⁹

For this discussion, two examples show that the Church was amongst Erling and Magnus’s most prominent supporters and partners. Firstly, the Church played an important role in getting the newly minted reign of King Magnus off the ground and provided it with a base from which it could develop its legitimacy, and second, the role it played, according to Saxo, in reconciling Erling and King Valdemar I of Denmark in 1170. Without more than five extant diplomas from King Magnus’s reign, it is difficult to assess the Church’s contribution to the consolidation process further. What we therefore have left, are the narrative sagas and some normative sources, such as the coronation oath and letters of privileges. Both the normative and narrative sources give a clear indication that Archbishop Eystein had a hand in providing King Magnus’s reign with legitimacy as part of the consolidation process. As discussed in the previous chapter on kingmaking, it is undisputed that Eystein orchestrated the coronation. However, what role he and the papal legate played at the ceremony and in later events is disputed.⁵²⁰ Many scholars believe Eystein to be the author of the coronation oath and the letter of privileges, and that he had a hand in shaping the law of succession. This became clear from its prologue: ‘Her ero nymæle þau er tekin varo með Magnus konungs Eysteins ærkibiscops. oc Erlings jarls oc allra hinn vitrastu manna i Noregi umræðom.’⁵²¹ It was therefore apparent that the Archbishop

⁵¹⁸ *HkrME*, *ÍF* 28, 390-91: ‘var hann vel þokkaðr öllu landsfólki’, ‘því at flest stórmenni i Þrændalögum var bundit í frændsemi eða í nökkurum tengðum við erkibyskup, en allir fullkonnir í vináttu.’

⁵¹⁹ *Forsvarstale for kong Sverre mot bispane*, trans. by Eirik Eggen (Oslo: Det norske samlaget, 1940), 68-9; Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein*, 82. The conflict between Sverre and the Norwegian Church eventually lead to Sverre being excommunicated by Pope Innocent III and the kingdom placed under interdict in October 1198 only to be lifted in 1202. *SvS*, 177-79; *DN* VI, no. 3; *DN* II, no. 3; *NgL*, I, 444-45; *Bs*, 57; *NMD*, pp. 74-7.

⁵²⁰ The narrative sources offer no clear answer: *HkrME*, 807 has Abp. Eystein as the *coronator* and *SvS* has two different version, one with just the legate and one with both. *SvS*, 96, 138. For more on this see, amongst others, Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein*, 110ff.; Helle, *Norge blir en stat*, 59; Imsen, ‘Erkebiskop Eystein Erlendsson som politiker’, in *Eystein Erlendsson*, ed. by Bjørlykke and others, pp. 11-27; Fredrik Paasche, ‘Magnus Erlingssons kongedømme’, in *Samfunnsmaktene brytes*, ed. by Andreas Holmsen and Jarle Simensen, Norske historikere i utvalg, II (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1969), p. 99; Erik Vandvik, ‘Magnus Erlingssons kroningseid’, in *Samfunnsmaktene brytes*, ed. by Holmsen and Simensen, pp. 197-207.

⁵²¹ *NMD*, p. 32: ‘Here is the new law that was enacted by King Magnus, Archbishop Eystein and Earl Erling together with all the wisest men in Norway’; Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein*, 110; Helle, *Norge blir en stat*, 38; Imsen, ‘Erkebiskop Eystein Erlendsson som politiker’ in *Eystein Erlendsson*, ed. by Bjørlykke and others, p. 19; Vandvik, ‘Magnus Erlingssons kroningseid’ in *Samfunnsmaktene brytes*, ed. by Holmsen and Simensen, p. 204; Vandvik, *Magnus Erlingssons privilegiebrev og kongevigslé*, ed. by Vegard Skånland (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1962), 44-50.

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of Nidaros – and by extension the Church – was an important and vital supporter of Erling and King Magnus and played an essential role in Magnus's kingship. The coronation, the coronation oath, the letter of privileges, and the law of succession came to constitute the base on which Magnus's reign built its legitimacy.

The second example which highlights the importance of the Church for King Magnus's reign was the aid it rendered Erling in ending his conflict with King Valdemar.⁵²² Saxo tells us that after the coronation of King Knud VI and canonisation of Knud Lavard in 1170, Valdemar's son and father respectively, Erling sent Bishop Helge of Oslo and Archbishop Stefan of Uppsala to Valdemar to sue for a truce on his behalf.⁵²³ Bishop Helge may have been an ally of Erling before this, as he features in one of five diplomas which have survived from Magnus's reign, and Saxo notes explicitly that it was Erling who sent them.⁵²⁴ Likewise, Stephan of Uppsala may have been an ally of King Valdemar I, as indicated by his participation in the effort to canonise Knud Lavard.⁵²⁵ According to Saxo 'so much respect was allotted to their accomplished eloquence that Erling was promised an audience and a friendly discussion with the king.'⁵²⁶ This 'audience and friendly discussion' meant that Erling removed a severe threat to his son's reign, re-establishing the alliance from 1161 meant he achieved foreign recognition for his son.⁵²⁷ Knut Helle argues that the fact that Erling was aided in this accomplishment by clerics from both Norway and Sweden expressed how strong the alliance between the Church and the kingship of Magnus was.⁵²⁸

Archbishop Eystein's importance to Erling and King Magnus was most evident in *Sverris saga*, where Sverre quickly discarded the archbishop as a possible supporter for his claim when he arrived in Norway in 1176, and Eystein's continued depiction as an opponent of Sverre until 1183.⁵²⁹ Eystein left his seat in Trondheim following Sverre's acquisition of the town in 1178 and travelled in the company of Erling and Magnus until he fled to England in

⁵²² This version was only found in Saxo's account. In *Hkr* it was Kristin Sigurdsdatter, Erling's wife, who was portrayed as facilitating the reconciliation. The only evidence we have of this reconciliation is the narrative sources. *HkrME*, 811-12.

⁵²³ Saxo, xiv.41.1. It is uncertain, based on Saxo's account, if Erling were in Denmark at this time or not.

⁵²⁴ *Ak.reg*, no. 1188. The diploma can tentatively be dated to between 1170 and 1179 based on persons named in the diploma: Magnus (1156-84), Abp. Eystein (1120/30-88), Bp. Helge (r. 1170-90), Erling Skakke (1115-79), and Orm Kingsbrother (1136/46-84); Saxo, xiv.41.1: 'Helgo pontifex Asloensis et Stephanus Vpsalensis ab Erlingo missi' (Helge, bishop of Oslo, and Stefan of Uppsala were sent by Erling).

⁵²⁵ *DD*, I:2, no 190.

⁵²⁶ Saxo, xiv.41.1: 'tantumque excellenti eorum facundie tributum est, ut Erlingo familiaris colloquii adetus promitteretur'.

⁵²⁷ Benham, *International Law in Europe* (forthcoming), chapter one.

⁵²⁸ Helle, *Norge blir en stat*, 72.

⁵²⁹ *SvS*, 10, 45-6, 64, 68.

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1180, possibly as a result of the Battle of Ilevollen in June the same year.⁵³⁰ While in exile, we can follow Eystein's movements through the Pipe Rolls, and we can find a description of the situation in Norway in Roger of Howden's *Gesta Henrici*.⁵³¹ When Eystein returned to Norway in the summer of 1183, we are told he reconciled with Sverre, an indication, perhaps, that he thought Magnus was a hopeless case.⁵³² Nevertheless, the archbishop's actions demonstrate that for a long time, he and the wider Norwegian Church was a significant supporter of Erling, Magnus and the latter's kingship, and hence an explanation as to how his power to rule was consolidated.

However, by placing too much attention solely on the Church, the historiography has missed or downplayed the importance of other actors in the consolidation process. Erling Skakke emerged from the source material as the second important lynchpin of King Magnus's reign. By *Heimskringla* he was described as the principal defender and the leading figure of his son's reign.⁵³³ There is little evidence that Magnus did anything independently of his father, but, again, our view of this is severely hampered by the lack of charter evidence from the Norwegian kingdom. Early on in the *Saga of Magnus Erlingsson*, it was made clear that Magnus always travelled in the company of his father.⁵³⁴ He was only mentioned as an independent actor of his father a handful of times in *Heimskringla* and *Sverris saga* before Erling's death in June 1179 and only introduced as such in 1169 when the king was about thirteen years old.⁵³⁵ Five letters recorded in *Akershusregisteret*, a registry of diplomas found at Akershus Castle in

⁵³⁰ The last time Eystein was mentioned as being in Trondheim before reconciling with Sverre was during a council in Trondheim before the Battle under *Hatthamaren*. SvS, 95-6. See also Jakub Morawiec, 'The Archdiocese of Nidaros and its Political Encounters in Late 12th and Early 13th Century Norway', in *Ecclesia et Violentia: Violence against the Church and Violence within the Church in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Radosław Kotecki and Jacek Maciejewski (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2014), pp. 214-15; Anne J. Duggan, 'Eystein, Thomas Becket, and the Wider Christian World', in *Eystein Erlendsson*, ed. by Bjørlykke and others, p. 28.

⁵³¹ PR 27 Henry II, 74, 93, 98; PR 28 Henry II, 60; Howden, *Gesta*, 266-68. Gunilla Iversen, 'Transforming a Viking into a Saint', in *The Divine Office in the Latin Middle Ages: Methodology and Source Studies, Regional Developments, Hagiography*, ed. by Margot E. Fassler, and Rebecca A. Baltzer, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 412; Morawiec, 'The Archdiocese of Nidaros and its Political Encounters in Late 12th and Early 13th Century Norway', in *Ecclesia et Violentia*, ed. by Kotecki and Maciejewski, p. 215.

⁵³² SvS, 121-22.

⁵³³ *HkrME*, ÍF 28, 417: 'Erlingr jarl væri brjóst ok forusta fyrir þeim feðgum'.

⁵³⁴ *HkrME*, ÍF 28, 384: 'Erlingr skakki hafði með sér jafnan Magnús, son sinn'.

⁵³⁵ *HkrME*, 815: Magnus was asked by an unspecified number of people to intercede on the behalf of his supposed half-brother (*HkrME*, ÍF 28, 410: 'Þá báðu menn Magnús konung, at hann skyldi friða fyrir Haraldi við jarl. Konungr gerði svá.');

HkrME, 819: Magnus and Orm Kingsbrother goes to Viken and defeat a force of Birchlegs (*HkrME*, ÍF 28, 415: 'Magnús konungr fór í Vík austr um haustit með sumu liðinu, ok Ormr konungsbróðir');

HkrME, 821: Magnus 'became very famous from this victory because [before] everyone had said that between them Earl Erling was the shield and leader for both of them' (*HkrME*, ÍF 28, 417: 'ok varð hann allfræg af sigri þessum, því at þat var allra manna mál, at Erlingr jarl væri brjóst ok forusta fyrir þeim feðgum').

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1622 and which are now mostly lost, can be dated to Magnus's reign.⁵³⁶ Three of these specifically mentioned Erling, and in two of them, he appears among the witnesses.⁵³⁷ The diplomas are either donations or confirmations of donations made to a monastery and a nunnery in Oslo.⁵³⁸ One of them, which existed in both Latin and Old Norse, dated to Tønsberg, was a donation to Hovedøya monastery for the salvation of '[Magnus's] brother, parents, Orm Kings-brother's, and his own soul', witnessed by the Bishop of Oslo, Erling Skakke, and Orm Kings-brother.⁵³⁹ A further gift was recorded as having been donated, and confirmed by a third party, to Hovedøya in the 1170s, with Magnus, Erling, Orm, the Bishop of Oslo, and the Archbishop among the people listed.⁵⁴⁰ In addition to these pieces of evidence, Erling also appears as one of the principal actors in the prologue to the succession law.⁵⁴¹

As the principal defender of his son's position, Erling spent most of the 1160s and 1170s defending it against both foreign and domestic opponents. The domestic opponents found support in regions where Erling never achieved full control, such as Trøndelag, the Opplands, Telemark, the eastern parts of Viken on the border with Sweden, but also in Sweden, and possibly, in Denmark.⁵⁴² Of these regions, Trøndelag emerges as the one where Erling had the least

⁵³⁶ The entries in question are: *Ak.reg.*, 1336-37; *Ak.reg.*, 1168; *Ak.reg.*, 1188; *Ak.reg.*, 1347-48; *Ak.reg.*, 2034-36. Halvdan Koht, 'Det gamle norske riksarkive og restene frå det', *Avhandlingar utgitt av Det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi i Oslo II. Historisk-Filosofisk Klasse 1927, No. 1*, p. 31.

⁵³⁷ *Ak.reg.*, 1336-37; *Ak.reg.*, 1168; *Ak.reg.*, 1188.

⁵³⁸ Regarding the monastery: *Ak.reg.*, 1336-37; *Ak.reg.*, 1168; *Ak.reg.*, 1188; and the nunnery: *Ak.reg.*, 2034-36.

⁵³⁹ *Ak.reg.*, 1336-37: 'Thuende breffue, dett ene latin, dett andett norsk, som erre begge kong Magni dendt forstis gaffuebreff paa tredieparten i Dypwig fischerj, giffuet thill Huodøe closter for sin broders, forelders, Ormon [Ormenn] konge, Hingons broder och sin egen siell, *facta donatio in Tunsberg teste Vrstino episcopo Asloensi, Herlingo & Ormone fratre Hingonis regis &c. absque die et anno.* [1164-70].' The brother in question is most likely Harald, whom Erling had beheaded in 1169/70. *HkrME*, 815.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ak.reg.*, 1188, cf. *Ak.reg.*, 1168.

⁵⁴¹ *NMD*, pp. 32-35: 'Her ero nymæ þau er tekin var með Magnus konungs Eystein ærkibiscops. oc Erling jarls'. See Chapter one, pp. 40-56 for a discussion of the Norwegian succession laws.

⁵⁴² Evidence for this was found several places in *Hkr*, *Fsk*, and *SvS*. The band who supported the claim of Sigurd Sigurdsson Markus-fostered (1155-63) had the Opplands as their core area of support. *HkrME*, 797; *Fsk*, 388. Likewise, with the band who supported the claim of Olav *úgæfa* (ON: unlucky). *HkrME*, 813; *Fsk*, 404. When the Birchlegs first appeared, they do so in Marker, the borderlands in eastern Viken on the border with Sweden, they later also gain supporters in Trøndelag, after their defeat at First Battle of Re the remnants flee to Marker and to Telemark. (*HkrME*, 815, 819, 820; *Fsk*, 410, 415, 419). These tendencies are reinforced in *SvS*, 20: Sverre sees Telemark as a recruitment area because 'the people there had disagreements with King Magnus and Erling jarl' (þat sendi hann bréf sín í Nóregi á Þelamörk, því at þeir váru rangsáttir við Magnús konung ok Erling jarl), *SvS*, 24, described their response as positive. The relationship between Denmark and Norway in the 1160s is difficult to untangle from the widely different accounts given by Saxo and the sagas, but arguments have been put forward that there was some evidence that Valdemar mainly supported Erling's and Magnus's opponents. Helle, *Norge blir en stat*, 69-73; Arstad, 'Kongsemmer og maktkonstellasjoner i innbyrdesstridens Norge', pp. 20-1, 29-30. Sverre supposedly received a letter of support and recognition from the Swedish King Knut Eriksen and jarl Birger Brosa promising to 'support and increase you power to the best of our abilities', whereas the jarl had also promised him friendship and that he could keep his army in Sweden. *SvS*, 15: '[Birger Brosa] mælti: [...] "Ok þau megu þér bera honum mín orð at ek heit allri minni vingan, slíkri sem ek má við koma. Skal hann ok hér hafa her sinn ok friðland, hvar sem hann kómur í Svíaveldi. [...] Nú kómu þessir menn í annat sin aftr til Sverris við bréfum Knúts konungs ok Birgis jarls'.

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control. According to *Heimskringla*, Erling ‘did not trust the people [of Trøndelag] to be loyal to him and his son’, and *Sverris saga* records that there were many people there who were jealous of Magnus.⁵⁴³ Also, the western parts of Sweden, in particular, Värmland and the other border areas with Norway, became an important safe-haven and an area of support for the Birchlegs after Sverre assumed control of the group in 1177.⁵⁴⁴ Erling had his power base in Western Norway and Viken. Here, he could count on the support of large kindreds led by powerful magnates such as Nikolas Kuvung of the Giske-kindred and Jon Hallkellsson of the Blindheim-kindred of Sunnmøre, Arne Ivarsson *kongsmåg* of Stovreim in Nordfjord, and Orm Kingsbrother in Viken.⁵⁴⁵ Early on, *Heimskringla*, in tracking Erling’s movements, makes it clear that he intended to use Tønsberg as his seat.⁵⁴⁶ Both *Heimskringla* and *Sverris saga* shows that Viken and Tønsberg were where Erling spent most of his time, followed by Bergen. Of Erling’s most powerful supporters, all, except for Orm Kingsbrother, lived on the Norwegian west coast where Bergen was the largest settlement, meaning there was little reason for Erling to spend much time in the west. Tønsberg was, by tradition, Norway’s oldest urban settlement, first mentioned in a foreign source from 1135.⁵⁴⁷ *Heimskringla* dates the settlement back to the early days of the Fairhair-kindred in the first half of the tenth century, and it was an important and often fought over centre of royal power in the civil war period.⁵⁴⁸ As such, it was the obvious place for Erling to have his seat of power. There are indications that Erling’s military power waned towards the end of the 1170s, and especially after the arrival of Sverre. In the sources, the Birchlegs comes across as a more mobile group and thus demanding more from Erling, who at this point was in his sixties. Indeed, it was Magnus, accompanied by Orm Kingsbrother, who defeated the Birchlegs in the First Battle of Re in 1177, while Erling stayed behind

⁵⁴³ *HkrME*, *ÍF* 28, 383-84: ‘því at honum þóttu þrændir ekki vera trúligir þeim feðgum’; *SvS*, 7: ‘Öfundarmenn átti hann marga, bæði ríka ok óríka, ok var mest at því norðr í land í Þrændalögum’.

⁵⁴⁴ Värmland: *SvS*, 12, 18, 38-40; Västgötaland: *SvS*, 39; Järnbäraland: *SvS*, 20-1, 41; Härjedalen: *SvS*, 21; Jämtland: *SvS*, 23, 42; Hälsingland: *SvS*, 41.

⁵⁴⁵ Helle, *Norge blir en stat*, 57. *HkrME*, 797: ‘the people of Vik were altogether the friends of Magnús and Erling, for the most part because of the popularity of King Ingi Haraldsson’ (*HkrME*, *ÍF* 28, 385: ‘Víkverjar váru fullkomnir vinr Magnúss konungs ok Erlings. Olli því mest vinsöld Inga konungs Haraldssonar, því at Víkverjar höfðu með sínum styrk jafnan þjónat undir þann skjöld.’). Orm Kingsbrother was the half-brother of King Inge by the same mother.

⁵⁴⁶ *HkrME*, *ÍF* 28, 384, makes it clear that Erling intended to use Tønsberg as his winter quarter: ‘fór þaðan austr í Vík ok settisk í Túnsbergi, efnadi þar til vetrsetu’.

⁵⁴⁷ Orderic Vitalis mentioned Tønsberg as one of four *civitates* in Viken alongside Konghelle, Borg, and Oslo, and Snorri first mentioned the city before the Battle of Hafsrjord, dated to 872. *HkrHH*, 70. Tønsberg is (in)famous in Norway for its city council’s decision which states that it is Norway’s oldest city. *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, 6 vols. ed. and trans. by Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969-80), V, 220-1 (Bk. C, ch. 6);

⁵⁴⁸ *HkrHH*, 70; Knut Helle, ‘Fra opphavet til omkring 1500’, in *Norsk byhistorie: Urbanisering gjennom 1300 år*, ed. by Knut Helle and others (Oslo: Pax Forlag, 2006), pp. 57-8.

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in Bergen.⁵⁴⁹ It, therefore, comes as no surprise that *Sverris saga* presents the Battle at Kalvskinnet in June 1179 as a turning point in Sverre's pursuit of the kingship.⁵⁵⁰ Three events serve to underline this point. The first was that Trøndelag became a home and a power base for Sverre: the saga says he placed *sýslumenn* all over the region and that many rich men of good kindreds became his friends and allies.⁵⁵¹ The second was that Sverre was never again recorded as leaving Norway, as he often did in the period between 1177-79 when he frequently went to Sweden to avoid confrontation with Erling or his men. Instead, Magnus was twice recorded as leaving the kingdom after this.⁵⁵² Finally, the historian might look to the movements of Magnus immediately following his father's demise. As soon as the battle was over Magnus retreated first to Bergen, informing the Archbishop and Orm of Erling's death, then to Tønsberg, where he spent the winter.⁵⁵³ Magnus was trying to shore up support for himself and to assume for himself the role his father had played by behaving like him. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the people who participated in Magnus's election did so because they trusted in Erling's abilities to lead them. That Orm Kingsbrother now emerged as an influential actor can be seen as a response to Erling's death and the magnates' inability to place the same level of trust in Magnus. From Erling's death onwards, Orm Kingsbrother's appearances in *Sverris saga* increased and he was often seen in Magnus's company, perhaps taking the role and position Erling had.⁵⁵⁴ Seemingly, the magnates disempowered a king who was well past his age of majority and, in the process, raised some serious question regarding the power of the kingship.⁵⁵⁵ Finally, what speaks most clearly to the role and importance of Erling for his son's position and kingship was that from the moment of his death in 1179 onwards, the situation deteriorated and just five years later, almost to the day, his son too would be dead.

The third crucial lynchpin of King Magnus's kingship was King Valdemar I of Denmark. The support he provided must be understood in two ways. Firstly, he provided the nascent reign

⁵⁴⁹ *HkrME*, 819.

⁵⁵⁰ *SvS*, 65: 'Eftir [...] fall Erlings jarl ok þann bardaga er ar, þá óx svá mjök ríki Sverris konungs at engi maðr var sá í Nóregi at eigi kallaði hann tá konung, nema Magnús konung ok hans menn.'

⁵⁵¹ *SvS*, 65: 'Setti hann þa sýslumenn um allann Þrándheim', 67: 'Eftir þetta drifu til Sverris konungs auðgír menn ok af góðum ættum í Þrændalögum, ok margir vinguðusk til hans þeir er heima sátu. Fal hann þá mjök sitt traust ok trúnað undir Þrændi [...] Sverrir konungr kallaði jafnan sitt heimli í Þrándheimi. Gerði hann sér Þrændi kørsta alls landdsfólks'.

⁵⁵² *SvS*, 76 (June 1179 to April 1180), *SvS*, 122 (summer 1183-April 1184).

⁵⁵³ *SvS*, 64.

⁵⁵⁴ Krag, *Sverre: Norges største middelalderkonge*, 105; *SvS*: 68, 79, 85, 99, 128, 132, 138-45. Orm was the son of Ivar Sneis and Ingerid Ragnvaldsdotter, the widow of Harald *gilli* and the mother of Inge I. *HkrIngi*, 751. Orm's parents were never married and very little is known about his father. It is speculated that Ivar Sneis was a magnate from the Opplands. *SvS*, 40: 'á Upplönd, því at þar var frændaaflí hans allr' (to the Opplands, where he had all his friends).

⁵⁵⁵ Magnus was twenty-three at the time of Erling's death. For a brief discussion on the age of majority, see fn. 362 above.

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of Magnus with important military support when it was getting off the ground, and its position in Norway was very precarious; that support nevertheless came with a huge cost in the shape of Viken. Secondly, he provided it with foreign recognition, again, when Magnus's position was in a very precarious situation. *Heimskringla* makes it clear that Valdemar I recognised Magnus as king in the first agreement Erling and Valdemar entered into in 1161: in exchange for 'Valdemar obtaining dominion in Norway which his earlier kinsmen [...] had had' Erling and Magnus was to receive 'all the support from Denmark which [they] would need to take and to maintain possession of Norway'. This agreement was confirmed by oaths and special covenants.⁵⁵⁶ The use of *ráðagørðum* shows that the two parties, King Valdemar and King Magnus, recognised that the other had the required authority and jurisdiction to enter into the agreement. This recognition, Jenny Benham has argued, was an important tool in establishing legitimacy and authority, as well as territorial jurisdiction.⁵⁵⁷ Saxo never mentions this agreement between Erling and King Valdemar. Instead, he paints Erling's journey to Denmark as that of survivors fleeing from a disaster.⁵⁵⁸ It was not until their second meeting in 1170 that Saxo goes into any details.⁵⁵⁹ At this second meeting, King Valdemar made Erling swear an oath that if King Magnus died without any legitimate issue, he would tend to the upbringing of the Danish king's son Knud, who would first become *jarl* of Norway and then heir to the kingdom. Additionally, Erling would become King Valdemar's *miles* (military man) and guarantee that he would outfit sixty Norwegian ships from his *comitatum* at Valdemar's request.⁵⁶⁰ *Heimskringla* differs from this account but only in as much that it has Erling offering to become Valdemar's '*maðr handgenginn*' (retainer).⁵⁶¹ We know almost nothing about what Erling gained from the 1161 agreement in terms of military support. What we do know, however, based on the narrative sources of *Heimskringla* and Saxo, was that Erling returned to Norway in a stronger position and was

⁵⁵⁶ *HkrME*, ÍF 28, 375: 'Valdamarr konungr tók vel við þeim, ok váru þeir Erlingr löngum á stefnum ok ráðagørðum, ok kom þat upp af tali þeirra, at Valdamarr konungr skyldi veita styrk Magnúsi konungi allan af sínu ríki, þann er hann þyrfti til þess at eignask Nóreg, ok halda síðan, en Valdamarr skyldi hafa þat ríki í Nóregi, sem haft höfðu inir fyrri frændr hans, Haraldr Gormsson ok Sveinn tjúguskegg: Víkina alla norðr til Rýgjjarbits. Var þessi ráðagørð bundin eiðum ok einkamálum.'

⁵⁵⁷ Benham, *International Law in Europe* (forthcoming), chapter one.

⁵⁵⁸ Saxo, xiv.29.12: 'Huius cladis superstes Erlingus cum filio suo Magno admodum paruulo, sed ad Waldemarum artam materni generis propinquitatem habente, ad Iutiam appulit, ibique in summa regis dignatione uersatus uberes exilii impensas et amplissima commeatum instrumenta percepit.' (One survivor of this disaster was Erling; he sailed to Jutland with his son, Magnus, who was still a very small child, but closely related to Valdemar on his mother's side, and there he lived in a position of highest favour with the king, receiving abundant expenses for his exile and very generous means of provision.). Gathorne-Hardy argued against this portrayal. 'Erling Skakke's dispute with King Valdemar', *Saga-Book*, p. 333.

⁵⁵⁹ *Hkr* attempts to place this event in the mid-1160s. *HkrME*, 811-12.

⁵⁶⁰ Saxo, xiv.41.3.

⁵⁶¹ *HkrME*, ÍF 28, 406: 'Slíkt talaði Erlingr ok annat þessu líkt, ok kom svá at lykðum, at Erlingr gerðisk handgenginn Valdamar konungi' (These arguments, and others of a like nature, Erling produced; with the result, finally, that Erling swore fealty to King Valdemar).

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able to defeat King Håkon the Broadshouldered in a matter of months.⁵⁶² After the second meeting with Valdemar, Erling again returned to Norway with his position strengthened. With Erling having entered Valdemar's service, a firm alliance was formed between the Danish king and the regent of Magnus. The Norwegian king himself also reaped the benefits of the agreement brokered by his father, seeking refuge in Denmark twice after Erling's death.⁵⁶³ Furthermore, even after the death of both Erling and Magnus, Norwegian claimants who claimed descent from Magnus received aid in Denmark.⁵⁶⁴ For instance, when Sverre broke with the Church, the Norwegian archbishop spent his exile there, and the most powerful faction opposing Sverre, the Croziers, was formed in Denmark.⁵⁶⁵ Thus, with Valdemar I's support and recognition, Erling was able to consolidate his son's position in Norway. When Valdemar died in 1182, initially not much appears to have changed, still, only two years later Magnus's kingship collapsed, strongly indicating that the support and recognition Erling and Magnus received from the Danish king were perhaps more significant than what the sources revealed.

The limited evidence showed that it was quite an achievement that King Magnus's reign managed to survive for as long as it did. As this discussion shows, the central supporters of King Magnus were the Church and the archbishop; his father, Erling Skakke; and King Valdemar I of Denmark. To some extent, this also shows that previous scholars have been justified in the importance they placed on the support the Church provided to Erling and King Magnus. Two events stand out: the coronation of Magnus in order to provide the infant king with legitimacy, and the aid it rendered Erling in ending his conflict with Valdemar I. The principal defender and de facto leader of his son's reign was Erling, and for as long as his military power remained strong it was secure. The problems arose after the arrival of Sverre Sigurdsson in 1177, which appeared to have coincided with a waning of Erling's military power. With his death in 1179, the cracks in the foundations began to show. The surviving magnates proved unable to place the same level of trust in Magnus as they had in his father, the prime example of which was the

⁵⁶² *Saxo*, xiv.29.13; *HkrME*, 791-95.

⁵⁶³ *SvS*, 76, 128.

⁵⁶⁴ First Norwegian claimant to receive support from Denmark was Sigurd Magnusson "Slembe" (c. 1100-39), he underwent the ordeal by hot iron in Denmark. *HkrMBHG*, 732. Sigurd Sigurdsson "Markus-fostered" (c. 1155-63) received aid first from Valdemar I of Denmark. *Saxo*, xiv.29.14-15. Inge Magnusson "Baglar-king" (d. 1202), alleged son of Magnus Erlingsson, was possibly raised in Denmark. *SvS*, 194. Erling Magnusson "Stonewall" (d. 1207), raised in Denmark, promised help from Valdemar II of Denmark who also oversaw the ordeal by hot iron he underwent to prove his paternity. *Bs*, 5, 8. The final claimant with a connection to Denmark was Sigurd Erlingsson "Ribbung" (d. 1226), alleged son of Erling Stonewall, possibly raised in Denmark from where he was brought to Norway in 1218. *HH*, I, 206.

⁵⁶⁵ Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, 49. Nikolas Arnesson, Bishop of Oslo, and founder of the Croziers, was the son of Arne Ivarsson *kongsmåg* and half-brother of King Inge. He was also second cousin of Queen Margrete, the wife of King Sverre.

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archbishop's reconciliation with Sverre upon his return in 1183. The final lynchpin, as outlined above, was King Valdemar, who provided King Magnus's reign with important moral and possibly military support when it was in its infancy. Furthermore, King Valdemar also provided the Norwegian king with foreign recognition, with *Heimskringla* showing how the two parties recognised that the other had the required authority and jurisdiction. This recognition was an essential tool in establishing legitimacy, authority, and territorial jurisdiction. At the same time, King Valdemar I had an agenda of his own. Erling and King Magnus presented him with an opportunity to regain suzerainty over previously lost territory in Norway, and that he seized on this opportunity only shows his political acumen. Finally, it should be observed that, while what the Church and Valdemar I contributed to Magnus's kingship was of importance, the crucial lynchpin was the military prowess and political acumen of Erling Skakke, and without his power, things crumbled, regardless of who or what else the Norwegian kingship relied upon.

The consolidation of the kingship of Valdemar Birgersson of Sweden

As with the kingship of Magnus Erlingsson, we do not know much about how King Valdemar and Birger *jarl* consolidated their power. Where a lack of charter evidence impeded our analysis and discussion of the former, there are a good number of charters dating from Valdemar Birgersson's reign, but few narrative sources. Some thirty-three diplomas, and normative sources, such as *Västgötalagen* and *Östgötalagen*, survived, but beyond the much later *Rhymed Chronicle of Erik*, a few passages in *Håkon Håkonsson's saga*, and few chronicle entries, the narrative sources do not allow the historian to recreate a coherent chronology or history of the reign. Fortunately, the diploma material covers interactions with both foreign and domestic actors, making it possible to consider those whom the Valdemar Birgersson and Birger *jarl* interacted with, both at home and abroad, in order to consolidate their position.

The best place to begin an analysis of how the new king's reign consolidated its power was with a diploma from August 15, 1256, in which Birger *jarl* ends a diploma written at Linköping to the 'Advocato, consilio & communi' of Lübeck with the words 'quamplurimis nobilibus regni nostri'.⁵⁶⁶ In addition to referring to the Kingdom of Sweden as 'our kingdom', Birger also uses the royal style, 'Byrgerus Dei gratia dux Sveorum', along with the royal we,

⁵⁶⁶ SDHK 738/DS 850: (multiple magnates of *our kingdom* (my emphasis)).

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without ever making any reference to his son, the king.⁵⁶⁷ This was not the first instance of Birger overlooking his son, the king, nor would it be the last. In 1250, shortly after taking power, Birger sent a diploma to the citizens of Lübeck, referring to himself as ‘Brigervs Dei gracia dux Sweorum’ and using the royal we, but without reference to his son.⁵⁶⁸ Instead, he makes references to a previous king, King Knut Eriksson and a peace initiative from King Knut and Birger Brosa to Henry the Lion, Duke of Saxony, most likely referring to the 1161 *Treaty of Artlenburg* between the Germans and the Gotlanders.⁵⁶⁹ Likewise, in a 1261 diploma from Birger to the great and the good of the city of Hamburg, he again styled himself ‘Byrgerus Dei gratia dux Sveorum’, using the royal we



Figure 8. Reconstruction of Birger jarl's face based on a cranium buried in Varnhem Abbey that most likely belonged to him. Photo: Ray Wahlsten, Stockholms Medeltidsmuseum (2010).

without reference to his son. Instead, he referred to ‘fiscum Regium’ (royal treasury) and his role as arbiter in conflicts concerning crimes committed by merchants.⁵⁷⁰

The absence of Valdemar from all of these diplomas is peculiar, though possibly less so from the one in 1250 when he would have been only ten or eleven years old. However, the absence was certainly noteworthy from the 1256 and 1261 diplomas, as both were composed

⁵⁶⁷ SDHK 738/DS 850: ‘Byrgerus Dei gratia dux Sveorum, viris providis Advocato, consilio & communi Lybicensi salutem in domino sempiternam.’

⁵⁶⁸ SDHK 629/DS 846: ‘Brigervs Dei gracia dux Sweorum, prefecto, consilibus & burgensibus universis civitatem Lubicensem inhabitantibus omne bonum cum salute vite presentis partier & future’, ‘rex Sveorum Kantvs’.

⁵⁶⁹ *Urkunden Heinrich des Löwen*, part I, ed. by K. Jordan (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1957-60), no. 48 (pp. 68-70). In the twelfth century the Gotlanders began to increasingly formalise their relationships with surrounding states, as exemplified by the *Treaty of Artlenburg*, at the same time Gotland’s relationship with mainland Sweden in this period is difficult to discern, but that there existed some form of relationship is evident by the thirteenth century *Saga of the Gotlanders* efforts to assert Gotland’s independence from Sweden, likewise Snorri Sturluson believed Gotland to be part of Sweden. *Guta saga: The History of the Gotlanders*, ed. by Christine Peel (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1999, 2010), 13-15; *HkrOH*, 315. For more on this period in Gotland’s history, see, among others, Nils Blomkvist, *The Discovery of the Baltic: The reception of a catholic world-system in the European north (AD 1075-1225)* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 377-504.

⁵⁷⁰ SDHK 799/DS 473: ‘Item si qvis pecuniam seu merces suas ad partes nostras cum alio destinaverit, & ille, cum quo transmittuntur, tale quid commiserit, quod poena corporali, vel etiam pecuniaria sit merito puniendus, in hoc casu petivit a nobis idem civis ac nuncius vester, ut salva sibi pecunia sua, qvi secum aliquvam destinavit, ille solummodo, qui deliquerit, puniatur in rebus suis propriis, vel etiam corporaliter, si tantus fuerit ipsius temeritatis excessus.’

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after Valdemar had reached his majority.⁵⁷¹ Indeed, Valdemar is absent from all of Birger's foreign correspondence, with one exception. In 1255, King Henry III of England replied to Birger's wish of a 'perpetual bond of friendship' by sending two emissaries to investigate the state of the kingdom, the preconditions for negotiations, and, most interestingly, to learn Birger's intentions.⁵⁷² The sixteen-year-old King Valdemar was brought up once, not in the introduction as one of the recipients, but as part of the main text of the diploma: 'the king of the Swedes, your son' (Regem Sueorum, natum vestrum).⁵⁷³ These diplomas paint a picture of Birger *jarl* as a very powerful man, recognised as such by foreign rulers. Evidence of this power is also on full display in the *Saga of Hákon Hákonsson*. In 1253, Sturla Þórðarson, the author of the saga, portrayed Birger *jarl* as negotiating a settlement between the Norwegian king and some envoys of the Danish, which was confirmed by a letter to which the bishops and many good men from both kingdoms affixed their seals.⁵⁷⁴ The following year the Danish king broke the settlement despite Birger's effort to maintain it.⁵⁷⁵ In both instances, the Norwegians thought Birger was too friendly towards the Danes.⁵⁷⁶ Birger and King Hákon had met for the first time in 1249, while Birger was still Erik III's *jarl*; a meeting which had ended in the establishment of permanent peace between Norway and Sweden and an agreement not to support each other's enemies. The treaty was confirmed by the betrothal of King Hákon the Young to Birger's daughter, Rikissa.⁵⁷⁷ This meeting was followed up by several more between 1249 and 1262, but the saga makes no reference to King Valdemar specifically joining Birger for any of them.⁵⁷⁸ For instance, when King Hákon and Birger renewed their friendship in 1260, the author states that 'Birger and his young sons' attended a feast hosted by King Hákon, likely referring to Erik and Bengt, born in 1250 and 1254 respectively.⁵⁷⁹ That these diplomas and meetings span the majority of Birger's time as *jarl* and cover the reigns of two different kings,

⁵⁷¹ For a brief discussion of the age of majority, see fn. 362 above.

⁵⁷² SDHK 719/DS 427: 'perpetuo amicitiarum vinculo', 'ad statum Regni & qualitatem negotii per ipsos investigandos; quibus super hiis omnibus fidem adhibere, & vestram inde voluntatem nobis per eosdem demandare velitis.'

⁵⁷³ SDHK 719/DS 427: 'the King of the Swedes, your son.' The salutation of the diploma makes it clear that Birger was the only intended recipient: 'Rex Domino B. Duci Sueorum salutem.' (The King greets Lord Birger, Duke of the Swedes).

⁵⁷⁴ *HH*, II, 167: 'Ok er þessi sætt var staðfest vǫru þar eftir ger bréf ok sett fyrir innsigli byskupanna ok annarra manna ór hváratveggja ríkinu.'

⁵⁷⁵ *HH*, II, 168: 'Þar kom ok Kristófare Danakonungr, ok var mjök hans traust þar sem jarl var. En er um sættir var talat fannsk þat á at Danakonungi þóttu byskupar hit fyrra sumarit.'

⁵⁷⁶ *HH*, II, 167: 'ok þótti mönnum Birgir jarl flytja meirr mál Dana en þeir ætluðu', *HH*, II, 168: 'ok þótti Norðmönnum hann mjök halla eftir Dönnum.'

⁵⁷⁷ *HH*, II, 152: 'Töluðu þá þat fastliga at friðr skyldi standa milli Nóregs ok Svíaríkis ok hvárigra óvinir skyldu þrífask eflask í annara ríki. Ok hér með festi Hákon konungr ungi frú Ríkizu, dóttur jarls, ok skyldi sá ráðahagr takask þá þeim þætti tími til vera, konungi ok jarli.'

⁵⁷⁸ *HH*, II, 153, 182, 213, 224, 275-7, 279-84.

⁵⁷⁹ *HH*, II, 207-8: 'Var jarl í bóði konungsins ok synir hans hinir ungu ok margir göfgir men með honum.'

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shows the extent of his power and the recognition it received from foreign rulers. Just as foreign recognition by King Valdemar I of Denmark was a central pillar to Magnus Erlingsson and Erling Skakke, so also for Valdemar Birgersson's kingship under his father. The diplomas also reveal a kingmaker vastly more powerful than Erling Skakke. That the other Scandinavian kings recognised his authority and jurisdiction as equal to their own – that he was a ruler of a kingdom just like them – underlined this.

Valdemar Birgersson's diplomas in the period 1250 to 1266 show only minimal independent action, both at home and abroad, providing further evidence for Birger jarl being the true Swedish ruler. For instance, on Valdemar's coronation day he donated land to the church in Linköping on the advice of his parents, and he confirmed donations given by others, including his predecessor, King Erik III, and the dowager queen.⁵⁸⁰ When Birger swapped land with Gudhem nunnery in 1253, it was announced and confirmed by the archbishop and bishops, with Valdemar appearing only in the witness list, ahead of his mother.⁵⁸¹ Only two diplomas show signs of what may be interpreted as independent action on behalf of Valdemar. The first is dated to 1250 and is an announcement that Vreta nunnery, Sweden's oldest ecclesiastical institution established around 1100 just north-west of Linköping, and all its properties were to be exempt from royal decrees. However, the date makes it unlikely that this was a genuine act of independent action as the king would only have been eleven years old at the time.⁵⁸² The second diploma dates from 1266 and is an announcement that the king had taken the prioress and nunnery of Gudhem into his protection.⁵⁸³ Gudhem nunnery in Västergötland was founded in the second half of the twelfth century and, by the thirteenth century, had become one of Sweden's most prestigious nunneries – dowager Queen Katarina entered the nunnery in 1250 and gave all her estates to it.⁵⁸⁴ A curious diploma from 1259 could also be interpreted as independent action by Valdemar. The pope wrote to the Archbishop of Uppsala and the Bishops of Linköping and Viborg, giving permission for Valdemar to marry Princess Sophia of Denmark, per the request by 'Waldemari Sueciæ ac Christophori Daciæ Regum'.⁵⁸⁵ However, it is unlikely, based on what has been outlined above, that Valdemar made that request: it would seem almost out of character. Instead, it was more likely a reflection of whom the pope thought he should deal with and who should make the request – the actions of Birger *jarl* outlined in the above

⁵⁸⁰ SDHK 654/DS 388: 'die coronacionis nostre cum consilio & consensu karissimj patris nostrj ac matris nostre'; SDHK 631/DS 848, SDHK 642/DS 377, SDHK 653/DS 387.

⁵⁸¹ SDHK 682/DS 405.

⁵⁸² SDHK 644/DS 378.

⁵⁸³ SDHK 867/DS 524.

⁵⁸⁴ SDHK 642/DS 377 and SDHK 653/DS 387.

⁵⁸⁵ SDHK 782/DS 463.

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paragraph makes him the most likely candidate for making that request. All in all, the majority of Valdemar Birgersson's diplomas are announcements that deal exclusively with ecclesiastical institutions, a pattern that continued after Birger's death in 1266 until his brothers removed him from the throne in 1275. These diplomas show a passive and reactive king more concerned with domestic than with foreign issues, but overall doing very little. Additionally, they may be an indication of a power-sharing between father and son. However, as with the 1259 papal diploma, the content in the diplomas covering Birger's actions makes this highly unlikely. Instead, the Swedish diploma material from 1250 to 1266 points in the direction of a proforma kingship, where the king did as little as possible and only when he absolutely must – revealing an immensely powerful kingmaker left in close to absolute control of the kingdom. This then leaves no doubt that the person in charge of the consolidation process was Birger.

The 1256 diploma from Birger to Lübeck shows us, not only the use of Birger's title and style but also gives us an idea of how he moved about within Sweden as part of the consolidation process. It is one of the few diplomas from this period which is dated to a specific place; in this case, Linköping.⁵⁸⁶ The city is mentioned in the diplomas more times than any other location or bishop, including the archbishop of Uppsala.⁵⁸⁷ The bishop of Linköping appears in nine diplomas, with the city mentioned a further three times between 1250 and 1266.⁵⁸⁸ The city is first mentioned in the early twelfth-century Florence manuscript as 'Liunga' in a list of ecclesiastical provinces in the Nordic countries.⁵⁸⁹ It was also the *tingplats* (assembly place) of Östergötland, the seat of the Linköping bishopric, and one of Sweden's oldest urban centres.⁵⁹⁰ Linköping's importance as the main settlement of the province was aided by its access to good lines of communication (see Figure 2).⁵⁹¹ When placing a compass rose over Östgötaland with Linköping as the centre, it reveals some very favourable lines of communications. Situated at the heart of the highly cultivated *Östgötaslätten* (Östgöta-plain), Linköping lies just south of

⁵⁸⁶ SDHK 738/DS 850: 'Datum Lynkoping'.

⁵⁸⁷ As a comparison Abp. Uppsala is mentioned in eleven diplomas: SDHK 653/DS 387, SDHK 668/DS 392, SDHK 669/DS 393, SDHK 670/DS 394, SDHK 701/DS 416, SDHK 782/DS 463, SDHK 682/DS 405, SDHK 799/DS 473, SDHK 860/DS 518, SDHK 738/DS 850, SDHK 724/DS 429.

⁵⁸⁸ Bp. Linköping: SDHK 632/DS 863, SDHK 653/DS 387, SDHK 808/DS 479, SDHK 673/DS 379, SDHK 782/DS 463, SDHK 799/DS 473, SDHK 860/DS 518, SDHK 724/DS 429, SDHK 771/DS 453, and three diplomas are dated at Linköping: SDHK 632/DS 863 (1250), SDHK 654/DS 388 (1251), SDHK 738/DS 388 (1256).

⁵⁸⁹ Tore Nyberg, 'Adam av Bremen och Florenslistan', *Scandia* (1991), 154-189, see also Henrik Jansson, *Till frågan om Svearikets vagg*, Västergötlands Hembygdsförbund (1999), 126f. *Florenslistan* (The Florence list or document) mentions eight places in Denmark, three in Norway, and seven places and fifteen "islands" in Sweden (nomina insularum, deregno sueuorum).

⁵⁹⁰ Line, *Kingship and State Formation*, 86, 330. The other ten towns were: Old Lödöse, Sigtuna, Skara, Visby, Enköping, Skänninge, Kalmar, Söderköping, Uppsala, and Västerås. *Ibid*, 329.

⁵⁹¹ Hans Andersson, *Sjuttiosex medeltidsstäder: aspekter på stadsarkeologi och medeltida urbaniseringsprocess i Sverige och Finland* (Stockholm: Riksantikvarieämbetet och Statens Historiska Museer, 1990), 46-47.

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where the River Stång, a 202 km long river originating in northern Småland drains into Lake Roxen. Running through this lake, and Lake Glan to the north-east, in a west-east direction is the Motala ström (Motala stream) which drains Lake Vättern (the divide between Väst- and Östgötaland), into the Baltic Sea near Norrköping. From the north, the River Finspång runs from south-east Närke into Lake Glan. This means that four of Sweden's main drainage basins runs through Östergötland. For much of the thirteenth century, the bishopric at Linköping was controlled by Birger's kindred, with three of its eight bishops being close relatives of Birger.⁵⁹² Additionally, two coronations took place here: that of King Johan Sverkersson in 1219, the first in Sweden, and that of King Valdemar Birgersson in 1250.⁵⁹³ Uppsala had been the seat of the Swedish archbishopric since 1164, but the first recorded coronation that took place there was in 1276 with the coronation of King Magnus Birgersson.⁵⁹⁴ The reason behind this might be due to Linköping's location in the more populous Götalands and greater access to economic resources.⁵⁹⁵ In the case of King Valdemar's coronation, it was certainly closer to home, with Birger's estate at Bjälbo situated just 35 km east of Linköping. Alongside Linköping, only Torshälla appears in the diplomas more than once.⁵⁹⁶ Torshälla was among the urban centres that arose between 1250 and 1320 on the main medieval route from Östergötland through Rekarne, in north-west Södermanland, and between Lake Mälaren and Lake Hjälmaren.⁵⁹⁷ Its location on the southern shores of Lake Mälaren, by the first rapids of Eskilstuna River upstream of the lake, made it a strategic location for the loading and unloading of goods. Torshälla was an important centre of trade, something Birger's correspondence with Lübeck and Hamburg showed was important to him.⁵⁹⁸ For instance, with the latter, he agreed to duty-free trade, and Torshälla would have been one of the places through which this trade was conducted.⁵⁹⁹ Likewise, the location of Linköping also made it an important centre of trade, something which

⁵⁹² Line, *Kingship and State Formation*, 347. Karl Magnusson (bp. 1216-20) and Bengt Magnusson (bp. 1220-36) were both brothers of Birger, and Bengt Birgersson (bp. 1286-91) was his son.

⁵⁹³ SDHK 369/DS 181; SDHK 654/DS 388.

⁵⁹⁴ SDHK 1001/DS 612.

⁵⁹⁵ Line, *Kingship and State Formation*, 109.

⁵⁹⁶ Torshälla appears three times: SDHK 668/DS 392, SDHK 669/DS 393, SDHK 670/DS 394. The name stems from *Pors harg*, meaning "place for sacrificing to Thor", indicating it was a place of importance before the arrival of Christianity, where the god Thor was worshiped.

⁵⁹⁷ Line, *Kingship and State Formation*, 329, 331. On the list with Torshälla we also find Arboga, Gamleby (Västervik), Hästholmen, Jönköping, Nyköping, Skövde, Stockholm, Strängnäs, Åbo, and Örebro. *Ibid*, 329. Torshälla received city rights in 1317 from Birger Magnusson. SDHK 2792/DS 2097. From Lake Hjälmaren it is possible to reach as far south as Lake Toften, some 30 km east of Lake Vänern, and as far north as Lake Väsman in Dalarna County, a distance of 130 km north to south.

⁵⁹⁸ SDHK 629/DS 846; SDHK 799/DS 476; SDHK 738/DS 850.

⁵⁹⁹ SDHK 799/DS 473.

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the 1256 charter with Lübeck, negotiating duty-free trade, indicates – the charter was dated at Linköping.⁶⁰⁰

Thus, the many appearances of Linköping and its bishop in the diplomas in the sixteen years between 1250 and 1266 underlines, not only its geographical and commercial importance, but it also its political importance. By contrast, the diminished role of the archbishop and Uppsala in the diplomas is curious. Of the first three diplomas from Valdemar's reign, only one was dated in Linköping. This diploma talks about the canons of Linköping receiving their 'diuine Remuneracionis' and grants to the canons, their farms and their inhabitants, and the church in Linköping's other estates' freedom from the king's tax collectors.⁶⁰¹ This was quite a substantial gift for a new king to give to an ecclesiastical institution, but the reason behind it remains unknown. The timing of it, however, might suggest the involvement in securing the kingship for Valdemar, perhaps hinting at the ecclesiastical alliance pointed out above.⁶⁰² The next Linköping diploma dates from King Valdemar's coronation on 24 April 1251, so within a year of the previous diploma, and it records the king donating two of his estates outside Linköping and one in the city to its church. The third diploma concerns the creation of a new canon.⁶⁰³ This diploma is also unusual in that it reveals something about the Church's stance when it came to the king-making of Birger. Both *Håkon Håkonsson's saga* and the *Rhymed Chronicle* makes it clear that Birger and Valdemar faced a significant rebellion at the start of the latter's reign, with several disgruntled magnates, led by Karl Ulfsson, Knut Magnusson and Filip Knutsson, rising in rebellion.⁶⁰⁴ A 1251 entry in the *Annals of Skänninge* reveals the outcome of the rebellion: 'Valdemar was crowned in Linköping. Filip and Knut, sons of lord K[nut] son of King Erik II, were decapitated.'⁶⁰⁵ Since we do not know the exact date the rebellion ended, the sequence of the entry in the annals, along with the April dating for Valdemar's coronation, makes it appear that the coronation happened before the end of the rebellion. If that was the case, it clearly shows that the Church had picked a side in the conflict and supported Valdemar's kingship, and, by extension, Birger's right to govern the kingdom. This would also be the outcome of the

⁶⁰⁰ SDHK 738/DS 850.

⁶⁰¹ SDHK 632/DS 863: 'nos canonicis ecclesie lincopensis diuine Remuneracionis intuitu. et vt efficiamur participes oracionum que in dicta nocte dieque fiunt ecclesia. hanc libertatem concessisse ut curie eorum in quibus habitant & incole prediorum prefate ecclesie nostris exactoribus non subiaceant. Set nostra donacione in causis regiis quecumque emergerint ipsorum pertineat correctioni.'

⁶⁰² For more on this see Chapter three, pp. 103-4.

⁶⁰³ SDHK 654/DS 388.

⁶⁰⁴ Karl Ulfsson was the son of the late *jarl* Ulf Fase, whom Birger had succeeded as *jarl*. *HH*, II, 157, 166. Both Knut Magnusson, a cousin of Birger *jarl* and Filip Knutsson, son of King Knut the Tall (r. 1229-34), had claims on the kingship according to *HH*, II, 152.

⁶⁰⁵ *Skänningeannalerna eller Sigtunaannalerna*, trans. by Karl Fredrik Wasén (Höllviken: Fotevikens Museum, 2001) <<http://wadbring.com/historia/sidor/skanninge2.htm>> [accessed 08 February 2020] (para. 32 of 58).

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rebellion, as both narrative sources point out: ‘Then no one dared against the earl stand’.⁶⁰⁶ Based on this, the outcome of the rebellion meant that Birger had secured his son’s position domestically for the foreseeable future.⁶⁰⁷ While the focus on Linköping in the diplomas show the centre of Birger’s power, other diplomas give evidence that it extended far across Sweden. The first of these dates from 1254 when the prioress of Sko nunnery announced a sale to the monks of Nydala monastery and asked that ‘King Valdemar, Birger *jarl*, and Archbishop Jarler’ confirm the sale by affixing their seals.⁶⁰⁸ This shows that the clergy viewed Birger’s authority as on par with that of the king and archbishop, placing him at the pinnacle of society – in a triad comparable to Erling Skakke, King Magnus, and Archbishop Eystein. The second and third of these diplomas, from August 1252 and November 1257 respectively, show Birger, as ‘*dei gracia Dux sweorum*’, instructing the inhabitants in different parts of the kingdom, in Attundaland (1252) and Medelpad and Ångermanland (1257) in matters concerning the ‘*decimas pauperum*’ and money paid to the church in Uppsala.⁶⁰⁹ The fact that neither Medelpad nor Ångermanland was part of Götaland or Svealand tells us that Birger possessed the necessary authority to govern even outside his home region of Östergötland, and further shows the extent to which he had been able to consolidate his power seven years into his son’s reign. The diplomas, therefore, show us that though Linköping and Östergötland was Birger’s centre of power, his influence extended far across Sweden, revealing a high level of domestic authority and influence.

The final of the four diplomas, confirming Birger’s domestic authority, is from Pope Alexander IV, who in 1255 wrote to the Archbishop of Uppsala and the Bishops of Linköping and Skara with instruction to ensure that the division of the kingdom between Birger’s sons must be respected after his death.⁶¹⁰ The *Rhymed Chronicle of Erik* also refers to this division,

⁶⁰⁶ *EK*, 43: ‘Sidhan thorde engen a mot jerlin standa’; *HH*, II, 158: ‘Ok síðan settisk ófriðr í Svíþjóð.’ (Then the unrest in Sweden ended).

⁶⁰⁷ After the 1151 rebellion there are no record of domestic disturbances for the remainder of Birger’s life.

⁶⁰⁸ SDHK 701/DS 416: ‘domini regis. W. & domini B. ducis [et] domini J. archiepiscopi’. Sko nunnery, 50 km north of Stockholm, between Attundaland and Tiundaland in Uppland, had been founded around 1230 by King Knut the Tall, who briefly replaced King Erik III in the early thirteenth century. This was one of only two interactions that the king and Birger had with Sko, the other being one of their joint diplomas. SDHK 824/DS 492.

⁶⁰⁹ SDHK 665/DS 391, SDHK 760/DS 445. Attundaland, together with Tiundaland, Fjärdhundraland, and Roslagen (Roden), constituted the *folklands* of Uppland or Sweden proper, as Snorri Sturluson refers to it. *HkrOH*, 315. The 1257 diploma is the first mention of Medelpad (‘*mizalpaz*’), which until the fifteenth century was part of Hälsingland, and under the Hälsingland law until 1347, with Dick Harrison speculating that Medelpad may have started out as one of the three *folkland* constituting Hälsingland. Dick Harrison, *Jarlens sekel* (Stockholm, 2011), 724-25. Ångermanland, first mentioned in the twelfth century *Historia Norvegiæ* constituted the extreme north of the Swedish kingdom at this time. *Historia Norvegiæ*, p. 2.

⁶¹⁰ SDHK 724/DS 429: ‘Ex parte dilecti Filii nobilis viri Ducis Suwenorum fuit propositum coram nobis, quod ipse Regni Suwenorum quod ad ipsum nouiter legitime deuolutum extitit, ac incolatum eius pacificum statum cupiens & tranquillum intendit certas in Regno ipso assignare suis filiis portiones, nolens per hoc fidelium stragem & animarum pericula, quæ si hoc non fieret, post ipsius obitum accidere possent, salubriter euitare. Nos igitur eiusdem Ducis vota salubria fauore beneuolo prosequi delectantes, monemus quatenus quod idem Dux super hoc de prudentum consilio legitime fecerit, auctoritate nostra faciatis sicut iustum fuerit inuiolabiliter obseruari.’

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stating that after Birger's death, the brothers gathered and that 'King Valdemar then the throne obtained | just as their father ordained'.⁶¹¹ Further along the same passage, Birger's second son, Magnus, was said to have had Södermanland and Nyköping Castle added to his ducal titles, indicating that some form of division had taken place earlier.⁶¹² The immediate comparative to this is the *Ordinatio imperii* of 817 and the *Divisio regnorum* of 806, which divided the Frankish empire. The *Divisio regnorum* was Charlemagne's first attempt at making provision for the division of the empire among his heirs upon his death. He gave the most significant share to his oldest legitimate son, Charles, with smaller shares for his brothers Pippin and Louis – the imperial title was not mentioned.⁶¹³ However, Charles and Pippin's deaths shortly after that meant it was Louis who was crowned co-emperor in 813, just a year before Charlemagne passed away. In the *Ordinatio* of 817, Emperor Louis the Pious elevated his oldest son above his younger brothers by having him crowned co-emperor and promising him the succession to most of the Frankish dominions, excluding the parts going to his brothers as kings. His younger brothers, furthermore, reported to Lothar on specific issues, reinforcing the intended collaboration and status of the brothers individually but also the empire as a whole.⁶¹⁴ Thus, while providing for his sons, Louis was also trying to ensure the future unity of the empire. However, Louis' subsequent re-marriage and the birth of yet another son, resulted in tensions over the division and at Louis' death in 840 a civil war broke out that lasted for much of the rest of the ninth century and eventually saw the breakup of the Empire created by his father. The rivalry over the division of Sweden also haunted the subsequent history of Birger's sons.⁶¹⁵ Likewise, Birger's decision to seek outside approval for his plan to divide the Swedish kingdom was reminiscent of how Svend and Knud went to the German king to ask him to arbitrate in their dispute over the Danish kingdom. In the case of Svend and Knud, Frederick Barbarossa effectively instituted a *divisio regnorum* when he divided the Danish kingdom between the two of them. Birger's division of the Swedish kingdom, for which he received papal permission, therefore places his regency into a broader European context. Perhaps most importantly, the division tells us that Birger viewed the kingdom as his. In the same vein as other European and Scandinavian kings, he divided his lands amongst his sons – even the youngest got his share according to the

⁶¹¹ *EK*, 45: 'Konung Valdemar took tha wid rikit, | swa som faderen haffdit likat'.

⁶¹² *EK*, 45: 'ok han wart hertoghe, Magnus, | yffwer Sudermannaland ok Nyköpungs hus | ok ower alt thet som under hertugadömet laa.' (and Magnus now the duke became: | of Södermanland, and, in the same, | Nyköping Castle and all that with it went.); Line, *Kingship and State Formation*, 187-89.

⁶¹³ MGH Leges, *Capitularia regum Francorum*, I, IV: Karoli Magni Capitularia, 126-30.

⁶¹⁴ MGH Leges, *Capitularia regum Francorum*, I, VIII: Hludowici Pii Capitularia (814-827), 270-73.

⁶¹⁵ This struggle was the focus of much of the *EK*.

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Rhymed Chronicle.⁶¹⁶ The division of the kingdom was perhaps the closest Birger came to behaving like a king in the extant sources, and it might be significant that the charter that recorded the papal approval of the division dates to the same year in which King Valdemar would have reached his age of majority. The papal diploma of 1255 provides significant evidence of how Birger consolidated his power just five years into his son's reign. It appeared a year after Birger had been asked to negotiate between his neighbouring kings – further recognition of his authority and jurisdiction, domestically and abroad – with the pope recognising his right to decide the inheritance of the Swedish kingdom.

It is clear from the discussion above that Birger *jarl* had both foreign and domestic recognition for his right to govern the Swedish kingdom. Furthermore, it is also clear that though the king possessed some independent agency, the undisputed powerbroker was Birger. As such, he was at the centre of the consolidation process, travelling extensively throughout southern Sweden as evidenced by the diplomas issued by him. The king's whereabouts, on the other hand, are harder to track, but, like Magnus Erlingsson before him, presumably, he travelled in the company of his father during his minority.⁶¹⁷ Apart from the information contained in the diplomas, little was known about what Birger did during his *iter* across the kingdom, but one aspect to examine further, which incidentally also tells us something important about Birger's consolidation process, was his role as a lawmaker.

Records of specific legislation enacted by the kings or their councils are very poor. Nevertheless, the *Rhymed Chronicle*, tells us that Birger ordained at least two laws – one, on inheritance, and another on peace – that were still in force by the time the *Rhymed Chronicle* was composed.⁶¹⁸ Birger was of course not the only kingmaker who changed the law. As noted in the third chapter, Erling Skakke too orchestrated a change in legislation in Norway by participating in the introduction of a law of succession. That no similar laws exist in Sweden was a testament to the totality of Birger's victory and removal of possible future claimants in 1251. In fact, one reading of his actions is that he effectively sets a precedence for future succession – that he through his actions effectively devises a succession law where none seemingly existed beforehand. According to the *Rhymed Chronicle*, the first of the surviving laws, on inheritance,

⁶¹⁶ *EK*, 45: 'Jonker Erik fik ok sin del | sith fäderne först, sidhan län ther til' (A share was also to young Erik handed, | his patrimony first, with fiefs expanded).

⁶¹⁷ They appear together in several diplomas in the early years of Valdemar's reign: SDHK 630/DS 847 (1250), SDHK 642/DS 377 (1250), SDHK 654/DS 388 (1251), SDHK 664/DS 390 (1252). After this they only appear together in two more diplomas: SDHK 824/DS 492 (1264) and SDHK 860/DS 518 (1266).

⁶¹⁸ *EK*, 42: 'Tha gaff Birge jerl the lagh | ther sidhan haffwa standit marghan dagh, | at syster matte erffwa med broder | [...] Ther til gaff han hemfrid' (Earl Birger then the law ordained | that has since been long maintained | that a sister shall inherit with her brother | [...] He also did domestic peace defend:).

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gave sisters the same right as their brothers to inherit a third from their mothers and fathers, and extended the same right to more distant female relatives.⁶¹⁹ The second law, on peace, set out that if someone killed a man in his house, the attacker, and his injuries, would lie uncompensated. It further stipulated that if a man was beaten or severely injured in his house, the attacker must leave – a form of regional outlawry – and not come back until he had made amends for his offence, and even then only following pleas by the injured party.⁶²⁰ Beyond the chronicle, there are no other narrative source nor diplomas that suggest that Birger *jarl* introduced new legislation. This lack of evidence has seemingly led Philip Line to suggest that there was good reason to doubt the tale, finding support in Elsa Sjöholm’s suggestion that a confused author of the *Rhymed Chronicle* included it.⁶²¹ However, in the text of *Östgötalagen* (The Law of Östgötaland), there are several references to Birger changing the law. For instance, in the first chapter of the *Book of Inheritance*, it was stated that Birger abolished the right for a man to give away land or other property from the rightful heir, and also abolished that for a man to give himself as *gaeffrael* (gift thrall). In the *Book on the king’s sworn peace*, it was stated that Birger abolished the practice of *iarn byrþina* (the ordeal of hot iron), while the *Book of Killings* states that Birger changed the compensation paid to the king for killing a king’s steward and for killing a king’s man.⁶²² Also, chapter six of the *Book of Accidents* states that Birger set down the law that if a scar or injury from a full wound was visible, then the perpetrator had to make full amends to the king and the district, and the plaintiff had the right to do whatever he wanted with his *raet* ([share of the] compensation).⁶²³

If Birger changed or made amendments to laws, as *Östgötalagen* suggests, this would seem to confirm the portrayal of Birger as *rex iustus* in the extant narrative material. The *rex iustus* ideology in Scandinavia was perhaps best expressed in the *Konungs skugssiá*, a mid-

⁶¹⁹ *EK*, 42: ‘at syster matte erffwa med broder | tridiungh bade epter fader ok moder | ok swa annan skyllan man, | tha skal hon ärrfwa swa fast som han.’ (that a sister shall inherit with her brother | a third from both their father and their mother, | and if there other relatives should be, | she shall inherit then as well as he.).

⁶²⁰ *EK*, 42: ‘Ther til gaff han hemfrid: | hwat innan er grind ok gardzlid, | warder man dräpin eller saar, | tha er thet ogilt hwat han faar | then som utan komber til | ok husbondenom misferm wil. | Varder then som hemit aa | entigia bloduger eller blaa | eller han fanger mera meen, | tha ryme ok kome aldrig i gen, | för än han hawer bätrat theh han bröt | ok han bider for honom som skadan löth.’ (He also did domestic peace defend: | if within a gate or where the infields end | a man should suffer either death or wounds, | no penalty is due upon those grounds | for what outsiders suffer who thus choose | to come with the intent the owner abuse. | Should he to whom the ownership be due | by anyone be beaten black and blue | or he be injured even worse, alack, | the culprit then must leave and not come back | until for his offense he has atoned | and his action by the victim is condoned.).

⁶²¹ Line, *Kingship and State Formation*, 170; Elsa Sjöholm suggested that the author of *EK* has confused the change in inheritance law by Birger as his probable measures to legitimate the succession of his son. *Sveriges Medeltidslagar: Europeisk rättstradition i politisk omvandling* (Stockholm, Institutet för rätthistorisk forskning: 1988), 128-29.

⁶²² *ÖgL*, *Book of Inheritance*, c. 1.11.; *Book on the king’s sworn peace*, c. 17; *Book of Killings*, c. 14, 14.6.

⁶²³ *ÖgL*, *Book of Accidents*, c. 6.5

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thirteenth century Norwegian *speculum regale* (king's mirror), which discusses the king's duties.⁶²⁴ While no such king's mirror has survived from medieval Sweden, there are indications that a similar understanding of kingship existed in Sweden in the latter half of the thirteenth century.⁶²⁵ In the preface to *Upplandslagen*, King Birger Magnusson (r. 1290-1318) included Birger *jarl* among his predecessors of lawgivers on behalf of God – whom the same law says was the first lawgiver.⁶²⁶ The king's role was thus that of lawgiver and dispenser of justice and to foster the common good was the hallmark of any good king.⁶²⁷ At the same time, the king threatened and imposed sanctions on uncooperative or rebellious magnates, sanctions which could entail public humiliation, removal from high office, or confiscation of benefits, patrimony, or allods.⁶²⁸ Beyond the execution of the rebel leaders, Birger's actions in the aftermath of the 1251 rebellion were not included in any of the surviving sources. When in a similar situation King Valdemar of Denmark confiscated the property of the rebel leaders, and it is possible to speculate that Birger did the same.⁶²⁹ Philip Line's argument that Birger has been presumed a lawmaker based on him being the most powerful ruler in the thirteenth century hence seems unduly modest.⁶³⁰ The fact that three different sources, *Östgötalagen*, the *Rhymed Chronicle*, and King Birger Magnusson's preface, independently of each other, portray Birger as a lawgiver must be considered, at least, strong circumstantial evidence that Birger was a lawmaker of some kind. Based on the discussion above, it is hard to argue otherwise.

It is apparent, then, that through the consolidation process Birger *jarl* comes across as a *rex iustus*, but without actually being king. From the point at which Birger secured the kingship for Valdemar in 1251 to his death in 1266, it is possible to draw a clear line of an ever-increasing consolidation of power in Birger's hands. Early on, the Church recognised not only his son's right to be king but also Birger's right to govern the kingdom. The same recognition of his authority is evident in his diplomatic correspondence with foreign rulers. Additionally, the lack of recorded cases of rebellion or other domestic struggles is further evidence of the control which Birger exercised over the kingdom. In every way, therefore, Birger's kingmaking on behalf of his son surpassed that of Erling Skakke on behalf of his. Birger was undisputed in his

⁶²⁴ For some of these, see *Konungs skuggsiá*, 38-126 (p. 97).

⁶²⁵ Line, *Kingship and State Formation*, 378-79.

⁶²⁶ *UL*, preface: 'GVþ siælwær skipaði fyrstu lagh. [...] Ok wilium wir fylghia.i. laghum þæmmeæ warum for-fæþrum. Erikinum hælg hæ. Byrghiri iarli. ok magnussi kunungi.'

⁶²⁷ Jean Dunbabin, 'Government', in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought*, ed. by Burns, pp. 482-83.

⁶²⁸ Janet Nelson, 'Kingship and empire', in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought*, ed. by Burns, pp. 225-26.

⁶²⁹ *Saxo*, xv.2.1. See also fn. 718 below.

⁶³⁰ Line, *Kingship and State Formation*, 170.

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position whereas the kingship under Erling and King Magnus faced several domestic challengers, and both were ultimately removed by one of those. Erling failed to secure a long-lasting grip on the kingship for his son. Birger's Bjälbo-kindred, on the other hand, would remain Kings of Sweden until 1364 – 114 years – which is close to the European average of 123.4 years in the period covered here.⁶³¹ Thus, it is clear that Birger quite successfully controlled the Swedish kingdom for the duration of his life; achieving a greater level of consolidation of power than his Norwegian counterpart.

The consolidation of the kingship of King Valdemar I of Denmark

From the discussion so far, it is clear that there were three elements to the consolidation process: recognition by a foreign ruler, alliance with the Church, and the removal of rivals, and Denmark is no exception to this model. Evidence of this is found in both Danish sources, such as Saxo's *Gesta Danorum* and Svend's *Brevis Historia Regum Dacie*, various chronicles, the *Knýtlinga saga*, and in the extant diploma material, as well as a wide variety of foreign sources. Both Saxo Grammaticus and Svend Aggesen briefly cover Valdemar's actual acquisition of the sole kingship.⁶³² The most likely reason behind their briefness is what happened after the Battle of Grathe Heath – about which the Danish narrative sources say as little as possible. However, an examination of foreign annals and chronicles reveals a different reality.

The German sources reveal the direction in which Valdemar turned in order to find foreign recognition for his kingship. According to the *Deeds of Frederick Barbarossa*, shortly after he had acquired the kingship, Valdemar sent ambassadors to Frederick Barbarossa requesting that he confirm his election (*electionem*) and the 'investiture of his realm'.⁶³³ The same embassy makes an appearance in Saxo's narrative, here masked as Valdemar sending his scribe (*scribam*) to Barbarossa on a fact-finding mission because supporters of anti-Pope Victor IV had made a bid for Danish support.⁶³⁴ Here, Saxo records the German emperor as requesting

⁶³¹ Based on an equation covering 49 royal houses or dynasties from the late eleventh to late fourteenth century, using the same European kingdoms, excluding Germany, as in Table 1.

⁶³² Saxo, xiv.20.1: 'His ita compositis' (After matters had been settled in this fashion); Svend Aggesen, *BHRD*, p. 138; 'Sicque rex Waldemarum gloriosus victor regnum obtinuit'; idem, *SHKD*, 72: 'And so the glorious victor, King Valdemar, gained possession of the kingdom.' See Chapter one, p. 39, for a discussion of the briefness of their description and the terminology used.

⁶³³ *Gesta Friderici*, 197-98: 'Eodem loco hisdemque diebus nuncii regis Daciae, nuper elect, principis aduent presentiam, postulantes, quatinus investituram de regno suo regi mittere ac electionem de ipso factam ratihabitione confirmare dignaretur.' (At the same time, ambassadors of N. [Valdemar], the recently elected king of Denmark, came to the prince, requesting that he deign to king the investiture of his realm and to ratify the choice that had fallen upon him). See Chapter two, pp. 72-77, for a discussion of Valdemar's acquisition of the kingship.

⁶³⁴ Saxo, xiv.28.1. This scribe was Ralph, an Englishman by birth, who by 1157 was Valdemar's chaplain and by 1161 had been appointed his chancellor. *DD*, I:2, nos. 120, 131, 143. He became bishop of Ribe (in south-west

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Valdemar's arbitration in Barbarossa's struggle with the papacy, and if he agreed to be the arbitrator, Barbarossa would reward Valdemar with one of the Italian provinces together with control over all the Wends.⁶³⁵ That no German source can corroborate Saxo's version of events should come as no surprise. It ought to be taken for the fanciful tale that it is, designed to cover for the request Valdemar sent in either 1157 or 1158 to Barbarossa to have him confirmed in his kingship. As plausibly argued by Mia Münster-Swendsen, Saxo was writing to underline and enhance the idea of Denmark as an independent kingdom – both at home and abroad.⁶³⁶ Saxo, as argued above, wrote thirty years after the fact. Therefore, the specific circumstances under which Valdemar acquired the kingship were no longer relevant. Instead, Saxo's focus was on how the kingship should be acquired in the future.

A more interesting question was why Valdemar felt the need for Barbarossa to confirm his kingship, to which the answer was mutual political convenience. Foreign recognition would strengthen Valdemar's kingship. Likewise, for Barbarossa, recognition by Valdemar would strengthen him in his struggle against the papacy. The probability of Barbarossa turning up in Denmark to punish Valdemar for killing his retainer Svend, as other scholars have suggested, was incredibly small as Barbarossa was too preoccupied with campaigning in Italy at this time.⁶³⁷ That Barbarossa was actively looking for recognition and support for his actions against the papacy was revealed by a diploma written to King Henry II of England, incidentally, dated at Crema in Lombardy, in which the emperor asked for his assistance in ending the schisma within the Church.⁶³⁸ There are, in fact, several overlaps between this diploma and what Saxo records Barbarossa as saying to Ralph. Lauritz Weibull and Niels Skyum-Nielsen have speculated that perhaps a similar diploma had been sent to other rulers, including the Danish king.⁶³⁹ The diploma material indeed indicates that such a send to all might have taken place, by listing

Jutland) ca. 1163. *DD*, I:2, no. 168. His appearance as head of this diplomatic mission fits what we know about chancellors as envoys, for which see Benham, *Peacemaking in the Middle Ages*, 122-28.

⁶³⁵ Saxo, xiv.28.2-3: 'Quamobrem se magnopere prudentissimi Danorum regis alloquium affectare, partium suarum moderationem eius potissimum sententiae crediturum, quippe quem animi uirtus et generis sanctitas tante rei iudicem deposcant [...] se ei in premium fatigationis unam ex Italiae prouinciis cum totius Sclauiae prefectura daturum.'

⁶³⁶ Saxo's language and terminology most likely were designed to reach an international audience to produce a counter-narrative to counter that which Abp. Eskil might have spread about Valdemar I when travelling abroad. Münster-Swendsen, 'Lost Chronicle or Elusive Informers?', in *Historical and Intellectual Culture in the Long Twelfth Century*, ed. by Münster-Swendsen, Heebøll-Holm and Olsen Sønnesyn, p. 191. The extent of Abp. Eskil's international network was somewhat revealed in *DD*, I:3, no. 57.

⁶³⁷ Fenger, "'Kirker rejser alle vegne' 1050-1250", p. 151.

⁶³⁸ *DD*, I:2, no. 134: 'Sane cum sis unum de principalibus membris aecclisiae, sine cuius consilio et auxilio tam arduum tamque necessarium negotium salutarem effectum sortiti nec debet ned potest, si fieri posset, pro reformanda unitate ecclesie etiam aersonae tue sublimitas insudare deberet'.

⁶³⁹ *DD*, I:2, no. 256.

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several European rulers as now supporting Victor IV.⁶⁴⁰ It would, therefore, appear that Valdemar's request for recognition of his kingship arrived at the same time as Barbarossa was also seeking recognition for his candidate for the papacy, thus creating a situation of mutual benefit for both rulers. However, once again, the sources make it difficult to discover what happened, with Saxo blaming the emperor's cunning and enticement for what happened next. According to his account of events, Valdemar was tricked into 'offering both hands and agree to comply with his wishes.'⁶⁴¹ Saxo's understated description has led scholars, amongst others Karsten Friis-Jensen and Peter Fisher, to assume that this was a description of Valdemar doing homage to Frederick Barbarossa.⁶⁴² To further emphasise their point, they point to Otto von St. Blasien's *Chronica*, which recorded that Barbarossa placed a crown on Valdemar's head when he did homage, and the *Chronica regia Coloniensis*, which says that Valdemar received his crown from the emperor's hand and became his man.⁶⁴³ However, both of these dates from the thirteenth century, and we need to be mindful when considering them contemporary witnesses to events in 1162. Helmold's *Chronica Slavorum*, written shortly after 1168 and the most contemporary of the German sources, noted that Valdemar was present at the imperial court in 1162, with the Danish bishops, but says nothing about Valdemar doing homage or receiving any crown.⁶⁴⁴ Saxo, writing long afterwards made it appear as if there was an inferior position but not homage, despite modern historians having indicated this.⁶⁴⁵ The most compelling evidence, however, is Helmold, a German, who does not describe this. Having, therefore, eliminated all other options, what we are left with is a mutual recognition by two rulers.

When considering what the two parties stood to gain from this recognition, Nils Hybel believed – in an unfortunate turn of phrase – that Barbarossa intended to bind Valdemar to the 'grand German mission' and subjugation of the Slavic area; Saxo's narrative certainly offers

⁶⁴⁰ *DD*, I:2, nos. 138-9. The Council of Lodi, in June 1161, adds the Norwegian king to the group of supporters. *Annales Laudenses auctoribus Ottone et Acerbo Morenis a. 1153-1168*, ed. by Philip Jaffé, MGH SS, 18 (Hannover, 1863), 632.

⁶⁴¹ Saxo, xiv.28.16: 'eaque fraude et obsequie sibi paciscenda ambas regis manus pertraxit.'

⁶⁴² Saxo, 1206, fn. 188. Nils Hybel and Inge Skovgaard-Petersen, on the other hand, reads the same passage as Valdemar taking an oath of fealty to Barbarossa. *The Nature of Kingship*, 130; 'The Danish kingdom: consolidation and disintegration', p. 355.

⁶⁴³ *Otonis de Sancto Blasio Chronica*, ed. by Adolf Hofmeister, MGH SRG, 47 (Hannover & Leipzig, 1912) 40-1: 'in curia Tholensi iuxta Bisuntium regi Danorum corona imposita regnum sub hominio concessit (sc. Fridericus imperatori)'; *Chronica regia Coloniensis*, ed. by Georg Waitz, MGH SRG, 18 (Hannover, 1880), 113: 'affuit uic curiae rex Danorum nomine Waldimar, qui ibidem coronam de manibus imperatoris suscipiens homo eius factus est'.

⁶⁴⁴ *Helmoldi Chronica Slavorum*, 83: 'Waldemarus cum episcopis Danie'.

⁶⁴⁵ The lack of the term *homagium* or *hominium* in Saxo's account makes it highly unlikely that Valdemar did homage to Barbarossa or became his vassal.

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support for this view.⁶⁴⁶ For Saxo, a more likely explanation for him to argue this was that it gave support to the Danish incursions into and later subjugation of the Wendish lands at the end of Valdemar's reign. It is doubtful, however, that this was the emperor's intention in 1162. As pointed out above, he was far more concerned with Italy and southern Europe than northern Germany and Scandinavia. What Barbarossa gained from the relationship with Valdemar was recognition for his struggle with the papacy, something which was of more value than Valdemar's support for something that was still a decade away. For Valdemar, one immediate consequence was that Henry the Lion, Duke of Saxony, joined in his campaign against the Wends.⁶⁴⁷ For several reasons, this campaign was part of Valdemar's consolidation process. Firstly, the campaign amounted to active defence of the Danish kingdom. Before Valdemar's reign, there were several incidents of Wendish pirates raiding the Danish islands and coastal areas.⁶⁴⁸ The Danish campaigning drastically reduced their ability to continue these raids and had the further consequence of reducing Wendish influence in the southern Danish islands. Secondly, Valdemar's continued military success against them strengthened and contributed to the prestige of his kingship.⁶⁴⁹ Finally, by campaigning against an external threat, Valdemar united the Danish magnates against a common and foreign enemy and thus aided in healing the wounds created by the civil war.⁶⁵⁰ The sum of this makes it quite clear that foreign recognition both by the emperor and by his powerful neighbour, Henry of Saxony, was a crucial way in which Valdemar consolidated his kingship.

The second aspect of Valdemar's consolidation process, his alliance with the Church has already in part been touched upon in the second chapter, namely the coronation of his son Knud. However, the canonisation of his father, Knud Lavard, was more emblematic of their relationship.⁶⁵¹ The canonisation of Knud Lavard was, effectively, about two things: increased legitimacy for Valdemar's branch of the royal kindred, and to block off other claimant's access to the succession. Therefore, the question becomes, what did the Church get out of this? Here, Danish scholars have presented different answers. For instance, Aksel E. Christiansen thought

⁶⁴⁶ Hybel, *The Nature of Kingship*, 130. According to Norman F. Cantor, such a desire to 'create greater Germany' by conquest of the Slavs did not emerge until after Barbarossa's return to Germany after his fifth Italian campaign (1174-77). *Medieval History: The Life and Death of a Civilization* (New York: Macmillan, 1969), 429; Saxo, xiv.28.16.

⁶⁴⁷ Saxo, xiv.25.4, xiv.25.8-13, xiv.30.1-9. For the remainder of Valdemar I's reign, Henry the Lion would be his ally and occasional opponent. Benham, *Peacemaking in the Middle Ages*, 5. Saxo describes multiple interactions between them: Saxo, xiv.28.14; xiv.28.22; xiv.34.4; xiv.35.2; xiv.37.4; xiv.44.15; xiv.48.1; xiv.54.18; xiv.54.22; xiv.57.1; xiv.57.6; xv.3.1. See also, *Helmoldi Chronica Slavorum*, for further encounters between them.

⁶⁴⁸ Saxo, xii.4.1-2; xiv.15.5; xiv.21.4-22.1.

⁶⁴⁹ Saxo, xiv.25.25, xiv.30.9, xvi.31.1, xiv.32.6, xiv.39.1-47, xiv.51.1-4, xiv.57.1-7, xv.1.4-6, xv.6.1-6.

⁶⁵⁰ Hybel, *The Nature of Kingship*, 130-32.

⁶⁵¹ For the coronation of Knud VI, see Chapter two, pp. 77-81.

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the canonisation came about as a deal between Valdemar and the Church, where he would switch sides in the conflict between Barbarossa and the papacy in return for his father's canonisation.⁶⁵² Ole Fenger has presented similar arguments, based on the canonisation of Edward the Confessor on the request by King Henry II of England as reciprocation for his support for the papacy.⁶⁵³ Valdemar's quest to have his father canonised appears to have been well-planned and carried out undertaking, taking place over many years.⁶⁵⁴ Both Saxo's brief account as well as the diploma evidence show the involvement of the Swedish clergy in the delegation sent to Rome – whether or not this happened on the request of the king or the primate in Lund is impossible to determine.⁶⁵⁵ Both Christensen and Fenger's theories seem plausible, however, current evidence makes it difficult to prove them right. Ringsted is not singled out in any way in the surviving diploma material – based on that evidence alone, one would have assumed St Knud Lavard to have been enshrined in the monastery at Sorø. Two diplomas confirming rights for the monastery in Ringsted cannot constitute evidence of a quid pro quo on its own.⁶⁵⁶ As the evidence currently stands the Church's motivations are obscure.

However, what has not been discussed so far was Valdemar's relationship with Archbishop Eskil of Lund (c.1100-81). Eskil hailed from the Thrugot-kindred, a powerful kindred from Jutland that included several notable churchmen and magnates. His grandfather's sister had married Erik I, making him Valdemar's second cousin. After completing his studies at Hildesheim and in France, Eskil quickly rose through the church hierarchy in Denmark. In 1131 he was nominated provost of Lund cathedral, in 1134 he was made bishop of Roskilde, and, after his uncle Asser's death in 1137, he became archbishop of Lund. He was by far the most well-connected Dane of his time, with a large network that at times included Bernard of Clairvaux, John of Salisbury, Pope Alexander III, Peter of Celle, and King Louis VII of France.⁶⁵⁷ As such, Eskil belongs to the same European intellectual elite as his contemporary Norwegian colleague, Eystein Erlendsson. In fact, Sverre Bagge has argued that evidence from their terms as archbishop provides insight into the status of the Scandinavian churches at this time and of

⁶⁵² Aksel E. Christensen, *Tiden 1042-1241*, Danmarks historie, ed. by Aksel E. Christensen and others (København, 1977), I.

⁶⁵³ Fenger, "Kirker rejses alle vegne" 1050-1250', pp. 154-55

⁶⁵⁴ Valdemar had acquired the shrine and gold for its adornment as early as 1157-60. *DD*, I:2, no. 122.

⁶⁵⁵ *Saxo*, xiv.40.1; *DD*, I:2 no. 190, which show the Archbishop Stephan of Uppsala at the head of the delegation. The Archbishop of Lund was the primate of the Swedish Church. *DD*, I:2, nos. 153, 184, 192. This was not the first time Stephan of Uppsala acted in a capacity beneficial to Valdemar, he was also instrumental in getting Rügen placed under the diocese of Roskilde. *DD*, I:2, no. 189.

⁶⁵⁶ *DD*, I:3, nos. 15, 18.

⁶⁵⁷ Mia Münster-Swendsen, 'Banking on – and with – the Victorines: The Strange Case of Archbishop Eskil's Lost Deposit', in *Denmark and Europe in the Middle Ages, c.1000-1525: Essays in Honour of Professor Michael H. Gelting*, ed. by Kerstin Hundahl, Lars Kjær and Niels Lund (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), p. 91 fn. 1.

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their efforts to bring their respective provinces into conformity with international standards. During their reform work they both ran into conflicts with the kings, Eystein with Sverre and Eskil with Valdemar, but both eventually reconciled with them. Eystein's conflict with Sverre stemmed from his support of the kingship of Magnus Erlingsson, whereas Eskil's conflict with Valdemar may have been twofold.

First, Eskil was a member of the Thrugot-kindred of Jutland, identified by Lars Hermanson as one of the magnate collectives vying for power in twelfth century Denmark. During the kingships of Svend II Estridsen, Knud IV the Holy, and Erik I, the kindred had been in ascendency, the first archbishop of Lund, Asser (c.1055-1137) had also belonged to the kindred. Saxo further makes it clear that the kindred supported and promoted the kingship of Knud Magnusen.⁶⁵⁸ However, Valdemar had come to power with the support of the Hvide-kindred, the kindred of his foster-brother, Absalon, who would succeed Eskil as archbishop after his resignation in 1177. The terms and events surrounding this resignation, as well as Saxo's description of it, is a debated topic. Saxo provides the only extant narrative of the events, indicating it was a voluntary act by Eskil brought on by old age, and that Absalon should be elected to succeed him.⁶⁵⁹ However, there are several indicators, both foreign and domestic that indicate a less than congenial process, that instead Valdemar and Absalon may have orchestrated the removal of Eskil and the elevation of Absalon. First, there are two letters from Peter of Celle: one where he describes Eskil's resignation as a humiliation brought on by the archbishop's persecutors; and another, in which he wrote to Absalon expressing deep concern for the well-being of Eskil's relatives.⁶⁶⁰ Then there is an erased entry in the *Annales Colbazenses* under 1177 which said 'Asser successit patruelis istius, papali consensu' (Asser succeeded his uncle, by papal consent), matching Valdemar's suspicion that Eskil planned to support his nephew Asser's candidacy.⁶⁶¹ Eskil did in fact have papal backing to appoint his successor as stated in the surviving papal letters concerning the succession.⁶⁶² Finally, there is a curious passage in Saxo's narrative of these events wherein Valdemar asks Eskil to confirm that he is resigning of his own will, not due to pressure from him, to which Eskil replied he had not been led by his dislike nor any outrage or offence Valdemar may have caused. Valdemar was apparently happy with that reply

⁶⁵⁸ Saxo, xiv.3.3, xiv.3.13.

⁶⁵⁹ Saxo, xiv.55.5: 'Quem ob hoc se deponere statuisse, quod etatis sue magnitudinem ulteriori eius functioni inhabilem sentiat.', xiv.55.10: Et ille: 'Roskildensem', inquit, 'antistitem, mihi propinquitatem, uobis opinione notum, designo.'

⁶⁶⁰ DD, I:3, nos. 73, 81.

⁶⁶¹ DMA, pp. 10-11; Saxo, xiv.55.2: 'Quod dictum rex Ascerum ab eo pontificem adoptari ratus suspitione insequi coepit'

⁶⁶² DD, I:3, no. 61 (dated 1176-77) allowed Eskil both to resign and to appoint his successor.

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for he was anxious that a truthful declaration might cause someone to think he was behind Eskil's resignation.⁶⁶³ The sum of these has led Mia Münster-Swendsen to conclude that Eskil was threatened to resign – a conclusion I agree with.⁶⁶⁴

The second reason for Eskil's conflict with Valdemar was, as argued by Bagge and Nils Hybel, Valdemar's close relationship with Frederick Barbarossa – which he characterised as one of vassal/overlord. This meant that Valdemar supported Barbarossa's imperial candidate Victor IV whereas Eskil supported the Gregorian pope Alexander III.⁶⁶⁵ Responding to a summons for a general parliament and synod in Pavia, Valdemar sent bishop Elias of Ribe to represent him alongside representatives from other polities.⁶⁶⁶ This show of support, as argued above, had more to do with foreign policy than with religious zeal. Valdemar simply calculated that the threat from the north German princes in Holstein and Saxony was greater than the internal one from Eskil and the Thrugot-kindred. By the time of the imperial anti-pope's death in 1164, the political landscape had changed, and Valdemar did not send a representative to the diet in Würzburg where Barbarossa proclaimed a new imperial anti-pope, Paschal III. Saxo explained his absence with Valdemar not being bound to turn up at imperial diets.⁶⁶⁷ This evidently provided the background and the reconciliation with Pope Alexander III the circumstances within which the king and the archbishop could reconcile. Eskil returned to Denmark in 1168, and subsequently, presided over the canonisation of Knud Lavard and coronation of Knud VI in 1170. Eskil's return to the fold provided Valdemar with a powerful ally in the Church, whose personal relationships with dignitaries across Europe, including the pope, enhanced the king's ability to procure foreign recognition. It may even be possible to go as far as to argue that Eskil's return strengthened Valdemar's hand against Barbarossa, laying the ground for subsequent events and his strengthened alliance with Henry the Lion – who had a dicey relationship with Barbarossa. It is likely no accident that around the time of the canonisation in 1170, Valdemar also made a treaty with Erling Skakke and the Norwegian king, and significantly firmed up his alliance with Henry the Lion. Thus, the reconciliation with Eskil shows how the Church and foreign recognition were a two-pronged but interlinked aspect of Valdemar's consolidation of power.

⁶⁶³ Saxo, xiv.55.6-7.

⁶⁶⁴ Münster-Swendsen, 'Banking on – and with – the Victorines', p. 102 fn. 55. For more on Eskil's resignation see, idem, 'History, Politics and Canon Law: The Resignation of Archbishop Eskil of Lund', in *The Use of Canon Law in Ecclesiastical Administration, 1000–1234*, ed. by Melodie H. Eichbauer and Danica Summerlin, *Medieval Law and Its Practice*, 26 (Leiden: Brill, 2018), pp. 51-68.

⁶⁶⁵ Bagge, *Cross & Scepter*, 82; Hybel, *The Danish Incident*, 132.

⁶⁶⁶ *DD*, I:2, nos. 135, 137, 138, 139.

⁶⁶⁷ Saxo, xiv.28.16.

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Besides the Ringsted events, it is worth examining the diploma material. More often than not, scholars tend to focus on narrative sources. However, a combination of the narrative sources and the diploma material provides us with a chance to look beyond the narrative and gain an idea of how this event contributed to the consolidation process. Lars Hermanson has argued that Valdemar's royal kinsmen dominated the witness list of the early diplomas and over time these were replaced with members of different magnate networks.⁶⁶⁸ Aksel E. Christensen observed a similar trend, adding that the Valdemarine reign increasingly used the diplomas to legitimise their growing power and right to rule. In particular, Christensen noted that 'through the *arengas*, they claimed an office directly from God', which also came with legislative power. The *sanctio*, he further argued, authorised the king to also maintain the law and at the same time made it a crime of *lèse-majesté* to disobey the king's command and deny him obedience.⁶⁶⁹ A diploma to Veng monastery on Jutland, dated to the first half of Valdemar's reign, provided evidence for this. Here, Valdemar, in gratitude to God for securing the kingship for him, included an ecclesiastical *sanctio* against anyone who violated what had been decided under the royal seal, ending it with: 'Sitque alienus a sacrosancto corpore et sanguine domini nostril Ihesu Christi. nisi penitentia ductus ad satisfactionem condignam venerit.'⁶⁷⁰ Christensen argued that this should not be regarded as ecclesiastical repentance, citing the double *sanctio* in a near-contemporary donation to Ringsted monastery, linking it to repentance to the king.⁶⁷¹ According to Christensen, the punishment for violating a royal command could only be regarded as a breach of the king's peace (*rettbøde*).⁶⁷² Christensen hence showed a process of legitimisation and a portrayal of Valdemar as *rex iustus*. However, Hermanson's argument that Valdemar's royal kinsmen dominated the witness list of the early diplomas and were gradually replaced with members of different magnate networks seems to falter on the evidence of the witness lists. Of the twenty-one extant diplomas issued by Valdemar, fourteen came with a witness list and seven without. These show that the clergy were, in fact, the most frequent witnesses, making the argument that royal kinsmen dominated the witness list at the beginning of Valdemar's

⁶⁶⁸ Hermanson, *Släkt, vänner och makt*, 226.

⁶⁶⁹ Aksel E. Christensen, *Ret og magt i dansk middelalder: Forelæsninger af Aksel E. Christensen med et selvbiografisk tillæg* (København: Gyldendal, 1978), 34.

⁶⁷⁰ *DD*, I:2, no. 123, dated to 1157-64 (He shall be excluded from the holy body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, unless he is led by remorse to make a full repentance) (my trans.).

⁶⁷¹ *DD*, I:2, no. 131: 'Si quis in posterum ausu diabolico hæc infringere nisus fuerit, vsque ad condignam satisfactionem regiæ maiestatis reus exists atque vinculo anathematis subiaceat. Sitque conuersatio ipsius cum his, qui dixerunt domino Deo: recede a nobis, scienciam viarum tuarum nolumus.' (If anyone in the future, by devilish bewilderment, dares to violate this [diploma], he must plead guilty to royal majesty until he makes full repentance. And he shall be put into chains of excommunication and stand with them that said unto the Lord our God: Depart from us. Knowing your ways is not our desire.).

⁶⁷² Aksel E. Christensen, *Ret og magt i dansk middelalder*, 33.

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reign difficult to sustain. The very first diploma from Valdemar's reign that we have access to, came with twelve witnesses: eight are members of the clergy with no obvious familial connection to Valdemar, while just two are royal kinsmen.⁶⁷³ The last of Valdemar's kinsmen to disappear from the witness list did so on 16 July 1176, when Valdemar's nephew Knud Prislevsen was listed among the witnesses.⁶⁷⁴ Furthermore, the term 'royal kinsman' itself is troublesome. Interpreted in its widest possible meaning, it could include people such as Archbishop Eskil (his great aunt was Valdemar's grandmother) and even Absalon (his mother was King Knud the Holy's granddaughter, while King Knud the Holy was Valdemar's great uncle). When applying a more limited interpretation, just direct descendants of King Svend II Estriden's sons, only five royal kinsmen appear in the witness list: Magnus Eriksen, Niels the Holy, Knud Prislevsen, and Knud and Buris Henriksen.⁶⁷⁵ They appear from 1157/8 to c. 1175, making it very difficult to argue that they dominate the beginning of the reign but were gradually replaced by other magnates. They are outnumbered from the outset and never appear as a powerful block – the closest was when Magnus Eriksen and Knud and Buris Henriksen appear in the same diploma, but even here they are outnumbered by clergymen: Bishop Elias of Ribe, chancellor Ralph, Stephan prior of Odense, Livo the provost, and Frederick the notary.⁶⁷⁶ Looking further, not a single extant diploma from the reign of Valdemar was without an ecclesiastical presence in the witness list. The diploma material reveals a very strong alliance between the Church and King Valdemar. Additionally, they tell of any already established bureaucracy. From the first to the last of these diplomas, we are able to gain a clear idea of who Valdemar's chancellors, chaplains, marshals, seneschals, notaries, and clerks are. If Helmold was to be believed, this alliance with the Church began in 1157 when Bishop Elias of Ribe led the Danish magnates in negotiating the final settlement between Svend, Knud, and Valdemar.⁶⁷⁷ If true, it demonstrated a continuous alliance and reliance on the Church, which pre-dates Valdemar's sole kingship. Furthermore, it provides some insight into Valdemar's decision to go to Barbarossa in 1162. With a good working relationship between himself and the bishops, Valdemar could convince them of the political benefits of recognising anti-Pope Victor IV, and a strong kingship would finally mean a domestic peace where magnates could spend their money on other matters than

⁶⁷³ *DD*, I:2, no. 120: 'Eschillus Lundensis archiepiscopus. Acerus Roschildensis. Helias Ripensis. Eschillus Arhusiensis. Nicolaus Vibergensis. Tocho Burglanensis. Osbernus Slesvicensis. Canutus dux et frater eius Buris. Radolphus Capellanus regis'. The affiliation, if any, of 'Hinricus Palli [...] Albus, et Carolus' is difficult to ascertain.

⁶⁷⁴ *DD*, I:3, no. 55.

⁶⁷⁵ *DD*, I:2, nos. 120, 131, 143; *DD*, I:3, no. 55.

⁶⁷⁶ *DD*, I:2, no. 131 (1158-62).

⁶⁷⁷ *Helmoldi Chronica Slavorum*, 78: 'Mediante domino Helya pontifice de Ripa et principibus utriusque partis, discordie ad pacem inclinate sunt et divisum est regnum in tres partes.'

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war. The diploma material shows continued donations to the Church and other ecclesiastical institutions by members of Valdemar's inner circle and others.⁶⁷⁸ It is also interesting to note that the relationship between the kingship and the Danish church was not affected by the change in allegiance from anti-Pope Victor IV to Pope Alexander III. By the time of Victor's death in 1164, political circumstances across Europe and in Denmark had changed, and the Danish kingdom changed its allegiance to Alexander III seemingly without much effort. The sum of this tells us that Valdemar had a very strong working relationship with the Church, that may even have predated his sole kingship, but it also reveals a relationship going both ways, namely that the Church gained as much with their association with Valdemar as he did in his association with them.

The third aspect of Valdemar's consolidation process concerns his dealings with, and suppression of, threats to his authority. Although his victory in 1157 was absolute, his position was precarious, and during his reign, he constantly faced problems of disloyalty. At one-point, Saxo lets Valdemar voice his complaint about 'the wicked designs and assaults of his close relatives' and how neither kindness nor kinship could protect him from it.⁶⁷⁹ Lars Hermanson has argued that the most significant threats Valdemar faced throughout his reign were from his royal kinsmen, such as Duke Buris Henriksen, Karl and Knud Karlsen and Magnus Eriksen, but also the seemingly popular uprising of the Scanians towards the very end of his life.⁶⁸⁰ However, discussing the latter first, the threat posed by the Scanians to Valdemar's position is not all that clear. Saxo is our only narrative source for this rebellion, and not even he manages to decide what the first phase of this rebellion was about. First, the rebellion began as a 'civil insurrection against the royal tax collectors', then Saxo changes his mind and makes Scanian antagonism towards Absalon the leading cause for the first phase of the rebellion.⁶⁸¹ Several Danish annals and chronicles back this latter view.⁶⁸² Furthermore, Saxo attempts to blame King Valdemar for the escalation of the conflict on the king.⁶⁸³ By doing so, he was trying to place the blame at anyone but his hero, Absalon, who was also the patron of the work and the

⁶⁷⁸ *DD*, I:2, nos. 152 (1163), 156 (1164), 162 (1164-78), 163 (1164-78), 167 (1165-66), 177 (1167-68).

⁶⁷⁹ *Saxo*, xiv.54.9: 'Tunc rex eo secedere iusso ductis alte suspiriis priuatim apud Absalonem queri coepit numquam sibi uel cognationis ius uel beneficentiae meritum obtentui fore potuisse, quo minus malis propinquorum artibus appeteretur.'

⁶⁸⁰ Lars Hermanson, 'How to Legitimate Rebellion and Condemn Usurpation of the Crown: Discourses of Fidelity and Treason in the *Gesta Danorum* of Saxo Grammaticus', in *Disputing Strategies in Medieval Scandinavia*, ed. by Kim Esmark and others, *Medieval Law and Its Practise*, 16 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 108, 123-24.

⁶⁸¹ *Saxo*, xv.4.1: 'dissentem aduersum regios questores publice consternationis impetum distriinxisse.'; xv.4.2: 'dicendo compertum sibi tacita principum conspiratione plebem instinctam non aliud hoc motu quam Absalonis periculum petere'.

⁶⁸² *Ann. Nestvediensis vet.*, *DMA*, p. 81; *Ann. Lundenses*, *DMA*, p. 59; *Chronica Sialandie*, *DMA*, p. 110.

⁶⁸³ *Saxo*, xv.4.13.

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chief informant on events. Nevertheless, as argued by Jenny Benham, there was no notion in Saxo's narrative that members of the royal kindred were involved in the first phase, nor that the rebellion aimed to remove Valdemar.⁶⁸⁴ This, together with a lack of coverage in source material outside Saxo, makes it difficult to determine if the first phase of the Scanian rebellion posed any significant threat to Valdemar's kingship.

We are therefore left with the threats posed by Buris Henriksen and Magnus Eriksen, the latter of whom acted together with Knud and Karl Karlsen and other members of the Thurgot-kindred. Both Buris and Magnus were part of Valdemar's inner circle, making several appearances in the extant diploma material from his reign.⁶⁸⁵ Buris was the son of Henrik Skadelår and great-grandson of King Svend II Estridsen (r. 1047-76), who, at some point between 1163 and 1167, had been made Duke of Jutland, possibly Schleswig, in a process whereby Saxo makes it appear like Buris forced Valdemar into making the grant.⁶⁸⁶ The rebellion of Buris Henriksen in the late 1160s ended with Valdemar arresting and imprisoning him.⁶⁸⁷ Magnus was the illegitimate son of King Erik III Lamb (r. 1137-46), and as the son of a former king, Magnus seems to have had a stronger claim to the kingship than Valdemar.⁶⁸⁸ He had been a supporter of Svend III, but after the Battle of Grathe Heath, Magnus, who must have been young at that point, perhaps in his teens, was granted clemency by Valdemar. According to Saxo, Valdemar 'not only granted him life, out of consideration for their family connection but also increased his public honour and authority'.⁶⁸⁹ Saxo later used this to describe Magnus as ungrateful.⁶⁹⁰ Finally, the ancestry of Knud and Karl Karlsen are the most difficult to work out. Both Saxo and Peter, abbot of St-Remi in France, seems to think they were relatives of Archbishop Eskil, and Saxo makes them descendants of King Knud IV the Holy; thus Valdemar's

⁶⁸⁴ Jenny Benham, 'Rebellious Regions: Law, violence and the Practise of Political Power in England and Denmark in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries' <https://www.academia.edu/2506393/Law_violence_and_the_practice_of_political_power> [accessed 04 January 2020] (para.8 of 12).

⁶⁸⁵ Buris: *DD*, I:2, nos. 120, 131, 143, 152; Magnus: *DD*, I:2, no. 131.

⁶⁸⁶ *Saxo*, xiv.33.4. See also Saxo Grammaticus, *Danorum Regum Heroumque Historia*, ed. by Eric Christiansen (Oxford, 1980), 823, fn. 425. In contemporary feudal discourse this kind of conditional service was associated with bribery and bad lordship. Stephen D. White, 'Giving Fiefs and Honour: Largesse, avarice, and the problem of "feudalism" in Alexander's Testament', in *The Medieval French Alexander*, ed. by Donald Maddox and Sara Sturm-Maddox (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 134. On fiefs as negotiated gifts, see Stephen D. White, 'Service for Fiefs or Fiefs for Service: The Politics of Reciprocity', in *Negotiating the Gift: Pre-Modern Figurations of Exchange*, ed. by Gadi Algazi, Valentin Groebner and Bernhard Jessen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 63-98). *DD*, I:2, no. 152 from March 1163, have Buris using the ducal title.

⁶⁸⁷ *Saxo*, xiv.34.6: 'sed firme custodie traditur.'

⁶⁸⁸ See Chapter one, pp. 38-40, for an outline of the Danish rules of succession.

⁶⁸⁹ *Saxo*, xiv.19.17: 'supra uota propitiam uictoris clementiam expertus est.', 'quem Waldemarum sibi a captoribus presentatum sub respectu cognationis non spiritu modo, sed etiam honoris ac potestatis incrementis donauit.' Magnus's exact birth date of birth was unknown, but Erik III died in 1146 aged 25-26, as such Magnus cannot have been any younger than 10 years old nor older than 20 years during the battle of Grathe Heath.

⁶⁹⁰ *Saxo*, xiv.54.1: 'presentis fortune | stipendiis non contentus [...] sed etiam amicitie et familiaritatis iure donatus atque ex priuata fortuna ad eminentem Dignitatis locum proeuctus fuerat.'

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second cousins once removed.⁶⁹¹ Their plot was revealed in the late 1170s resulting in Magnus's arrest and a final hail Mary attempt by Knud and Karl Karlsen in 1179. However, a study of both rebellions runs into the same issue as a study of the Scanian rebellion – their lack of coverage in sources outside Saxo. Of the two, only Buris's arrest was mentioned in a handful of annals, whereas the rebellion of Magnus was not mentioned at all outside Saxo.⁶⁹² Buris was imprisoned in the castle of Søborg whose castellan appeared once as a witness in a diploma dated between 1158 and 1160.⁶⁹³ Later annal entries add that he was blinded and castrated, a fate similar to what King Magnus the Blind of Norway suffered at the start of the Norwegian civil war era.⁶⁹⁴ *Heimskringla* was clear that this was done in order to complete his removal from office and 'uncrown' him – suggesting perhaps a similar intention of making Buris ineligible for kingship by his lack of body parts.⁶⁹⁵ After his arrest Buris disappears from history.

While Saxo was somewhat quiet about Buris's attempted rebellion, he spends a surprising amount of time on that of Magnus Eriksen, going into great detail about its unravelling, the thoughts, and actions of those involved, and finally, Magnus's public rituals of apology. The plot itself was revealed to Valdemar through what Christiansen has called 'a typical Hermit story'.⁶⁹⁶ At the revelation of the plot, Magnus fled to Lübeck, and his co-conspirators, Knud and Karl Karlsen, to Sweden and *jarl* Birger Brosa. However, Karsten Friis-Jensen and Peter Fisher concluded that Valdemar had publicly pledged clemency to the plotters. Regardless, the whole sequence of events follows a fairly traditional pattern.⁶⁹⁷ Magnus asked Henry the Lion to intercede on his behalf but eventually negotiates his return to 'bring his case to the king's judiciary and submit himself to the defence laid down by the laws of his country'.⁶⁹⁸ Eventually, Magnus confessed to Valdemar in full court, naming all the plotters including several prominent

⁶⁹¹ *Saxo*, xiv.54.1, xiv.54.12, 1404, fn. 340; *DD*, I:3, 81: 'nepotes et amicos prædecessoris uestri'. Their father, Karl governor of Halland, had been a supporter of Svend III. *Saxo*, xiv.12.7.

⁶⁹² Buris's arrest was mentioned in about half of the Danish annals as taking place in 1167.

⁶⁹³ *DD*, I:2, no. 129 (1158-60) 'Thurberno castellano de Seoburgh'. All of the surviving rebels would eventually be imprisoned in this castle.

⁶⁹⁴ *Ann. 980-1286*, 270; *Ann. Visbyenses*, 147; *Ann. Ryenses*, 166; *HkrMBHG*, ÍF 28, 287: 'stungu út augu hans og hjoggu af annan fót, en síðast var geldr.' (*HkrMBHG*, 723: putting out his eyes and cutting off one of his feet; and finally, they gelded him.).

⁶⁹⁵ *HkrMBHG*, ÍF 28, 287: 'þeir órskurðir at taka Magnús svá frá ríki, at hann mætti eigi kallask konungr þaðan í frá.' (*HkrMBHG*, 723: they finally arrived at the decision to depose Magnús and uncrown him.).

⁶⁹⁶ *Saxo*, xiv.54.6-7; Saxo Grammaticus, *Danorum Regum Heromque*, ed. by Eric Christiansen (Oxford, 1980), 870, fn. 648. On this, see also Hermanson, 'How to Legitimate Rebellion and Condemn Usurpation of the Crown', p. 128.

⁶⁹⁷ *Saxo*, xiv.54.14, xiv.54.16. 'Ita perfidum eius animum mordax conscientie crimen regie mansuetudinis promissis fidem habere uetuit.'. For an outline of the process of reconciliation, see Karen Bosnos, 'Treason and Politics in Anglo-Norman Histories', in *Feud, Violence and Practise: Essays in Honor of Stephen D. White*, ed. by Belle S. Tuten and Tracey L. Billado (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 300.

⁶⁹⁸ *Saxo*, xiv.54.18: 'Henrico pandere ueritis reconciliationis ab ipso dumtaxat remedy postulabat.', xiv.54.19: 'sed ut reum causam suam ad regis cognitionem transferre defensionemque patria lege decretam subire moneat.', xiv.54.21-22.

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members of the Thurgot-kindred – Archbishop Eskil’s kinsmen.⁶⁹⁹ According to Saxo, Magnus was supposed to kill Valdemar, whereas Knud and Karl Karlsen were to drum up support for their plot among the Scanians.⁷⁰⁰ According to Hermanson, this portrayed Magnus as violating the traditional obligations and codes of honour that were associated with a retainer, a protégé, a noble friend and a kinsman.⁷⁰¹ When Magnus had finished his confession, he ‘fell groaning at the king’s feet, his face crumpled in supplication.’⁷⁰² Here, Saxo invokes imagery stretching back to Ancient Rome, where those who asked for the forgiveness of a patron or protector commonly did so with similar gestures of humiliation.⁷⁰³ In the medieval period, this became a ritual by which reconciliation was achieved between kings and rebellious subjects.⁷⁰⁴ The act of penance was the same irrespective of the polity. A rebellion against the Lord’s anointed was a sin against God, and the sin was the same: a violation of the order and a desire by a subject to set himself above his natural superiors – pride. According to the eleventh-century canon lawyer Burchard of Worms, pride was the queen of all evil, and the act of penance hence required to be the most public and most humiliating of penances.⁷⁰⁵ Saxo’s description here reflects that of many contemporaries. For instance, Roger of Howden’s description of Henry the Young King’s supplication before his father at the end of the rebellion in 1173-4.⁷⁰⁶ However, unlike Magnus, the rebellious English prince was accepted back into his father’s service.⁷⁰⁷ For a magnate and a kinsman of the king, there was no more public arena than the king’s court, in which to confess and beg forgiveness. However, as argued by scholars such as Althoff and Benham, the nature of the gesture – a show of complete submission and penitence – had to be rewarded with

⁶⁹⁹ Saxo, xiv.54.31. Presumably, he also revealed Knud and Karl Karlsen’s involvement in the plot. The identity of Eskil Asserson and Christiern Svendson is still uncertain, the latter is only known from Saxo. Asser Svendson, Christiern’s brother and nephew of Abp. Eskil, was provost of the cathedral chapter at Lund and appears as a witness in Valdemar’s diplomas in the 1170s. *DD*, I:3, nos. 45, 46, 50.

⁷⁰⁰ Saxo, xiv.54.2-3.

⁷⁰¹ Hermanson, ‘How to Legitimate Rebellion and Condemn Usurpation of the Crown’, p. 128.

⁷⁰² Saxo, xiv.54.34: ‘His dictis genibus regis supplice uultu gemebundus adoliuitur.’

⁷⁰³ Koziol, *Begging Pardon and Favor*, 181.

⁷⁰⁴ Benham, *Peacemaking in the Middle Ages*, 96-7. For this aspect, see also Gerd Althoff, ‘Satisfaction: Amicable Settlement of Conflicts in the Middle Ages’, in *Ordering Medieval Society: Perspectives on Intellectual and Practical Modes of Shaping Social Relations*, ed. by Bernhard Jussen, trans. by Pamela Selwyn (Philadelphia, 2001), 270-80.

⁷⁰⁵ Benham, *Peacemaking in the Middle Ages*, 96-7; Koziol, *Begging Pardon and Favor*, 187.

⁷⁰⁶ Howden, *Gesta*, I, 82; Howden, *Chronica*, II, 57.

⁷⁰⁷ Howden, *Gesta*, I, 77. King Henry II treated his sons and their supporters with a clemency that surprised both contemporaries as well as later historians. For some examples, see Strickland, *Henry the Young King*, 208; *Expugnantio Hibernica: The Conquest of Ireland by Giraldus Cambrensis*, ed. and trans. by A.B. Scott and F.X. Martin (Dublin, 1978), 122-5; William of Newburgh, *Historia rerum Anglicarum*, in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, ed. by R. Howlett, 4 vols (Rolls Series, London, 1884-89), I, 176; G. Lytton, *The History of the Life of Henry the Second and of the Age in which He Lives*, 4 vols (London, 1767), III, 525-6.

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forgiveness and absolution.⁷⁰⁸ The inevitable outcome was why Magnus asked if he would be allowed to confess, and why the matter was discussed with Valdemar in private before the public event; it followed a set sequence of events, as shown by Althoff.⁷⁰⁹ If Magnus surprised Valdemar with his confession, it would be akin to how Buris forced Valdemar into granting him the dukedom. Such a transaction would not be honourable for either of them. Hermanson argued that the removal of Magnus meant an increase in power and influence for both the Valdemarine reign and the Hvide-kindred.⁷¹⁰ Saxo provides some evidence for this, by his account of how Valdemar dealt with those revealed to be plotters.⁷¹¹ However, Saxo does not say the power and influence of either the kingship or the Hvide-kindred increased. Instead, he wrote that Christiern Svenson also confessed and had his goods confiscated before being outlawed.⁷¹² Likewise, the diploma material does not indicate the increase in power and influence of either. The only person Saxo explicitly tell us had his influence diminished was Asser Svenson, a potential contender for the archbishopric, who after this was out of the running.⁷¹³ To, therefore, say here, as Hermanson has done, that the Thurgot-kindred was effectively removed as political actors, would be a bit of a stretch based on this meagre amount of evidence.

Valdemar pardoned Magnus for his confession, but he did not restore him to his friendship.⁷¹⁴ He was also forbidden to have secret communications with Knud and Karl Karlsen. Then, in a sequence that truly showed Saxo was writing long after the events he described, Magnus responded by declaring himself ‘unworthy of further reprieve or assistance’ if he

⁷⁰⁸ The essential study on the topic is Gerd Althoff, ‘Das Privileg der *deditio*: Formen gütlicher Konfliktbeendigung in der mittelalterlichen Adelsgesellschaft’, in Gerd Althoff, *Spielregeln der Politik im Mittelalter: Kommunikation in Frieden und Fehde* (Darmstadt, 1997), 99-125. According to Althoff, a friendly reception was not always certain, for which see, ‘Satisfaction: Amicable Settlements of Conflicts in the Middle Ages’, in *Ordering Medieval Society: Perspectives in Intellectual and Practical Modes of Shaping Social Relations*, ed. by Bernhard Jussen, trans. by Pamela Selwyn (Philadelphia, 2001), 273-79.

⁷⁰⁹ Gerd Althoff, *Family, Friends and Followers: Political and Social Bonds in Early Medieval Europe*, trans. by Christopher Carroll (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 143-46.

⁷¹⁰ Hermanson, ‘How to Legitimate Rebellion and Condemn Usurpation of the Crown’, p. 139.

⁷¹¹ *Saxo*, xiv.54.32, xiv.54.36.

⁷¹² *Saxo*, xiv.54.36: ‘Qui cum se consortis indicio proditum accepisset, defensionis inops confessione ueniam impetravit nec solum spiritum, uerumetiam bonorum omnium incolumitatem assecutus est, exilio dumtaxat poenas dare coactus, ne promptus ad crimen regressus suppeteret. Ita moderatio manifestam militis extremumque supplicium meritam proscriptioni inescui contenta extitit.’

⁷¹³ *Saxo*, xiv.55.2, xiv.55.5-17. Saxo’s account of Abp. Eskil’s resignation and Absalon’s election succeed him is one of the most discussed passages in the contemporary part of Saxo’s work, for a brief overview of this discussion see *Saxo*, II, 1424, fn. 352.

⁷¹⁴ This was not the first time Magnus had been pardoned by Valdemar, who had been granted clemency by the king after the Battle of Grathe Heath ‘out of consideration for their family connection [and] also increased his public honour and authority’. *Saxo*, xiv.19.17. Magnus’s exact age at this point was unknown, but his father Erik III died in 1146 aged 25-26, as such Magnus cannot have been any younger than 10 years old nor older than 20 years during the battle of Grathe Heath. When Magnus’s role in the plot was revealed, Saxo used this to describe Magnus as ungrateful. *Saxo*, xiv.54.1.

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should commit any such acts in the future, and that he would not attempt to plead for his life.⁷¹⁵ Valdemar later used this admission as the pretext for arresting Magnus when it was revealed in 1178 that he was still in secret communication with Knud and Karl Karlsen. Since he could not be pardoned a third time, he was instead imprisoned in Søbørg castle.⁷¹⁶ This imprisonment was possible because of Valdemar's decisive handling of the Thurgot-kindred, enabling him to act with brute force to defend himself. That same brute force was on display when, finally, Knud and Karl Karlsen returned from Sweden in 1179 with Swedish warriors to attack Halland. Karl was killed while Knud ended up imprisoned in Søbørg Castle.⁷¹⁷ This time there was no account of a legal process against the rebel. Instead, Saxo ends the story by saying that Valdemar obtained their inheritance by law and thus 'acquired an unforeseen increase in his wealth.'⁷¹⁸ Hermanson has argued that the reason why Saxo spent so much time describing the judicial process against Magnus Eriksen was because it was intended to provide legitimacy for Valdemar's harsh treatment of his royal opponents.⁷¹⁹ A further point to this that Hermanson did not raise was that the judicial process against Magnus also provides a template for how future Danish kings should deal with rebels and troublemakers of the royal kindred. The inclusion of the judicial process against Magnus reveals a consolidation process operating on two levels, one aimed to justify Valdemar's actions, and another aimed at providing templates for future Danish kings on how to handle scenarios such as these.

When considering the chronology of these attempted rebellions, some interesting observations emerge. The first was the proximity in time from Buris's arrest in 1167 to the events at Ringsted in 1170. Buris was the first of the royal kindred to attempt to seize the kingship during Valdemar's reign. His opposition to the elevation of Valdemar's son, Knud, in 1165 comes through quite clearly in Saxo's narrative and hence his eventual arrest two years later does not come as a surprise.⁷²⁰ Buris was seemingly aiming for a return to the *status quo ante* Knud's

⁷¹⁵ Saxo, xiv.54.35: 'Delectatus rex tam audici hominis responso ueniam se confessioni tribuere, non familiaritatem restituere dixit, ne rursum amicitie copia insidiarum irritamentum existeret. Eundem quoque tacita ad Kanutum Karolumue mandata habere tam constanter obniti persenserit. Ille se, si quid tale committeret, ulterioris uenie remediis indignum uocare, ne precibus quidem salutem deinceps tueri ausurum.'

⁷¹⁶ Saxo, xiv.56.1-3.

⁷¹⁷ Saxo, xv.2.1; Hermanson, 'How to Legitimate Rebellion and Condemn Usurpation of the Crown', pp. 127, 131-32.

⁷¹⁸ Saxo, xv.2.1: 'adeptus insperata opum incrementa contraxit.' For this treason law, see Thomas Riis, *Les institutions politiques centrales du Danemark 1100-1332* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1977), 52-57. For English laws on treason and the confiscation of property see Stephen D. White, 'Alternative Constructions of Treason in the Angevin Political World: *Traïson* in the *History of William Marshal*', *e-Spania* 4 (2007), 1-2.

⁷¹⁹ Hermanson, 'How to Legitimate Rebellion and Condemn Usurpation of the Crown', p. 127. The same process was also used to highlight the difference between Valdemar and Svend III, justifying his opposition to and killing of Svend III. *Ibid.*, 115-17, 138-40.

⁷²⁰ Saxo, xvi.33.2: 'sed amoris indicem affirmabat, quod Danie regnum a pluribus amice participatum esse memorie <proditum non sit>, et crebra antiquitatis experimenta sint inter patrem et filium de rerum dominio bellum

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elevation, and that this then spooked Valdemar in some way does not require a leap of imagination when one considers how Valdemar gained the kingship. Buris had been, on the surface, a loyal friend, just like Valdemar had been to Svend III, but he refused to bend to the changes Valdemar wanted to implement. An anointing of Knud, therefore, at Ringsted, would further secure him in his position ‘as his father’s present colleague in authority, as well as the future holder of his crown’ and make him the Lord’s anointed.⁷²¹ By this action, Valdemar placed significant obstacles in the way for anyone else of the royal kindred seeking to usurp the kingship.⁷²² Both Buris and Magnus belonged to branches of the royal kindred that were delegitimised at Ringsted in 1170. In this context, the chronology of Magnus’s plot from the late 1170s to have Valdemar killed makes sense. Valdemar must have expected that the methods of the consolidation would encounter resistance, considering the nature of Danish kingship for most of the twelfth century made a smooth sailing highly unlikely. Despite Saxo’s best efforts to suppress the notion of there being any rivals or threats to Valdemar’s authority, this discussion has revealed at least two threats significant enough for Saxo to deal with them when he began writing in the late 1180s: one is silenced and written out of history, the other is held up as an example for how to remove similar threats in the future. The third threat, the Scanian rebellion’s first phase, was more a problem for Absalon than Valdemar, whom Saxo tries to blame when he intervenes; his connection to Absalon explaining why he was so concerned with it. Valdemar’s successful suppression of these threats revealed the political ingenuity Valdemar exhibited at the start of his reign when he gained Barbarossa’s recognition for his kingship, as well as his support of the German emperor in his struggle with the papacy. Likewise, the strength of the alliance with the Church that ultimately led to the canonisation of his father and the coronation of his son which secured the future for his branch of the royal kindred. The importance and the value of both of these were revealed by the fact that neither Buris Henriksen nor Magnus Eriksen received any form of recognition from either the empire or the Church. Like Birger *jarl* a century later, Valdemar managed to consolidate his position, paving the way for the successful transfer of royal authority to his son that was explored in chapter two.

creuisse.’ Saxo implies that Valdemar accept this opposition. xiv.33.2: ‘Ea silentii excusatione iram regis in dissimulationem conuertit. Karsten Friis-Jensen and Peter Fisher, assumed, based on how closely linked this acclamation was with the military expedition that Knud’s elevation probably took place in 1165, with little else to go on their dating is followed here. *Ibid*, II, 1244, fn. 239.

⁷²¹ Saxo, xiv.33.1: ‘paterne maiestatis futurus possessor, sed etiam presens dignitatis socius nosceretur, ut haberent proceres, ad cuius nomen titulumque decurrerent, siquid de regis capite fortuna uariaret.’

⁷²² See Chapter two, pp. 79-81.

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Summary

This chapter set out to discuss the consolidation processes of King Magnus Erlingsson of Norway, King Valdemar Birgersson of Sweden, and King Valdemar I of Denmark. The discussion has shown that the consolidation of kingship in Scandinavia contained the same three principles, irrespective of how and when the kingship was acquired: foreign recognition, alliance with the Church, and the removal of rivals. This process, furthermore, demonstrated considerable similarities to those of other rulers in Europe, showing that Scandinavia may have been on the periphery but operated within a similar political culture.

Conclusion

At the core, the discussions above have been about succession, acquisition, and consolidation. To conclude, it may be useful to say something about how successful the Scandinavian kings were at these three things. The discussions above have revealed some Scandinavian peculiarities, such as child kings and the use of the ordeal by hot iron to prove descent. However, overall, it has revealed a Scandinavia very much in contact with and following European practices.

We began by outlining the theoretical Scandinavian succession rules, quickly discovering the difficulty with finding any Danish or Swedish laws to that effect. What we could determine was based on extrapolated evidence from the diploma material and thirteenth-century laws – using the example of riding *Eriksgata* where it was tough to ascertain whether or not this was a thirteenth-century innovation or based on existing practices. Likewise, for Denmark, the near-contemporary writings of Svend Aggesen and Saxo Grammaticus made it difficult for us to see the extent of Danish practices. Instead, what we see in both kingdoms is a trend towards access to the kingship determined by kin-right: anyone who could claim descent from a previous king could lay claim to the kingdom, with the succession settled by election. For Norway, however, the situation was quite different. Here, the thirteenth-century saga material outlined what was meant to appear as Norway's first succession law dating to c. 900 and introduced by the supposed first king of a unified kingdom, Harald Fairhair. In what the saga described as a great *þing*, he divided the kingdom amongst his sons and decreed that each of his male descendants would receive a kingdom after his father. What the saga here described was kin-right, which then became the basis for St Olav's law which dictated that anyone who was a male descendant from Fairhair had the right to inherit the kingdom. This was a recipe for disaster as no one appeared to have any knowledge of who or what that kindred were. Modern scholarship regards the idea of "the Fairhair-kindred" as a medieval construction meant to serve as the basis for the king's ownership of the kingdom. Because of the uncertainty regarding the inherited kin-right, political circumstance would instead play a dominant role in determining who would or could inherit, as long as he could claim descent from a previous king. This meant that the kingdom in long periods from 1046 to 1155 was shared between two or more kings. This reflected the idea of the kingdom being the property of the kin; they could share the prestige and dignity of being a king without splitting the kingdom. Finally, succession based on kin-right found widespread use in Europe, from Ireland to Hungary, where it was employed right up until the start of the fourteenth century. Herein lies the problem with the Scandinavian sources being written from the twelfth century onwards. Though it may appear evident, and logical, that before Norway

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began producing written succession laws, that kingship in Scandinavia was similar and based on the same principle – kin-right regulated by election – there is just too many unknown variables for us to call this conclusive. In the case of Norway, modern scholarship has sowed enough doubt around the idea of kin-right descended from the “Fairhair-kindred” for us to actually determine if this was how succession took place. Educated clerks, knowing practices in Europe as well as European literature, could easily have constructed something credible that explained the chaos of the previous centuries without necessarily telling much truth or untruth, that eventually led to a single king occupying the kingship in the mid-thirteenth century.

Kin-right was from the mid-1160s gradually replaced with increasingly complex succession laws. These laws were a significant revision of what had been St Olav’s law. They replaced kin-right with legitimate birth, preference was given to the firstborn son, and suitability – but kept election. The latter was based on who the electors thought would be the one most able to maintain and keep God’s law and the laws of the land. These electors consisted of two groups: the archbishop and the bishops, and the twelve wisest men from each bishopric appointed by their bishop. This showed that in the beginning, the Church had a significant influence over the succession as the law specifically made them the final arbiter if there was a disagreement. However, the 1260 edition removed the need for suitability as well as the Church’s dominant role in the process. This edition along with the one that would follow thirteen years later, expanded the order of succession also to include other male relatives of the king, as well providing an opening for illegitimate king’s sons to inherit if there were no legitimate sons left. The last edition from 1273 was the most complex yet, as it contained provisions for up to thirteen different forms of succession, each moving further down the family tree to include uncles, nephews, and even sons of daughters. This, more than any of its predecessors, showed how pragmatic the laws were, but beyond that, it also revealed a transformed kingship that had taken on a whole new character. Norwegian kingship had now become an indivisible office wholly under the influence of the *rex iustus*-ideology. The kingdom still belonged to one kindred, the law made sure of that, saying in the thirteenth inheritance provision that if all the other provisions had been exhausted and they had to elect a new king, he still had to be a trueborn member of the late king’s kindred. What the Norwegians did here was to combine the *rex iustus*-ideology with the ideas of dynastic succession and royal, thus creating a brand-new concept of kingship in Scandinavia, showing that also the fringes of Europe could serve as a melting pot of ideas. Finally, the extent to which the Norwegians wrote three succession laws in the span of a century deserves a more careful study than what could be provided here, as it appears to be one of those Scandinavian peculiarities.

Conclusion

After the discussion of the theoretical rules of succession, we moved on to examining succession in practice through two particular scenarios: succession through trial by combat, and succession through designation. The first scenario outlined how King Sverre Sigurdsson of Norway and King Valdemar the Great of Denmark achieved their kingships through trial by combat. Above all Sverre's case study showed that paternity was irrelevant when it came to acquire the kingship, his saga never presented convincing evidence that Sverre was a king's son; instead, it showed that Sverre's military superiority proved he had God on his side. This use of divine support, along with extensive use of Davidic imagery coupled with other Christian proto kings such as Constantine the Great and Charlemagne reveals an in-depth knowledge and awareness of European practices on the part of the saga author, but also possibly Sverre himself. If he had been the priest his enemies accused him of being, these are all things of which he would personally have been aware. Through the medium of dreams, the saga made Sverre the David to Magnus Erlingsson's Saul, painting him as St Olav's personal bannerman and "adopted son", leading the fight against the perjurer and hubristic sinner. Entirely in line with the Augustinian worldview – Sverre's struggle was that of good vs evil – revealing that the purpose of these dreams was to add legitimacy to his success, and show that his acquisition of the kingship was, in fact, a form of ordeal wherein Sverre became God's instrument and champion. This places Sverre's acquisition of the kingship firmly within contemporary European political culture.

The second case study of this scenario was that of Valdemar the Great of Denmark. The first half of the twelfth century was a turbulent time in Denmark, where the kin-right, and the consequence of it, was on full display in the rivalry between Svend III Eriksen and Knud V Magnussen, and later Knud and Valdemar the Great against Svend. Of the two case studies in this scenario, this is perhaps the one that was most clearly a trial by combat (or battle) since the question of the succession was determined by the Battle of Grathe Heath, despite the uncertainty and unwillingness by Saxo and Svend Aggesen to say so. The two near-contemporary historians thought the election was the only proper way to achieve the kingship, thus confirming the elective nature of it in this period. It was therefore when we went beyond Saxo and Svend that we were able to stitch together a more comprehensive picture of what happened. Especially the foreign sources, like Hemold and the *Annals of Magdeburg*, written almost contemporaneously with the events they described, made it clear that Valdemar had bested Svend in battle and become sole king of Denmark. Likewise, later domestic sources such as the Danish annals and shorter works in *Scriptores Minores*, one of which even made an explicit reference to divine justice, shows that there was a great deal of consistency between the Danish and foreign sources

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in their depiction of Valdemar's acquisition of the kingship. Furthermore, the consistency of the Danish sources also indicated the absence of competing Danish accounts of the same process.

These two case studies also highlight the difference in narrative sources written contemporary to the events they describe, such as *Sverre's saga*, and those written after the fact, such as Saxo and Svend Aggesen. The former was written while Sverre was still fighting to secure his kingship and therefore maintained a focus on what had been Sverre's road to success: his martial abilities, and specifically his abilities as general and leader. In this, the saga was painting Sverre as emulating the fourth-century Roman general Vegetius, once more showing a high level of awareness of European culture. This is also where previous scholarship have tended to fire wide of the mark and disregard the saga author's intention when he (or they) emphasised action or chains of action at specific times to show that claiming kingship by kin-right was not the only way. The Danish narratives, on the other hand, had a different focus. By the time Svend and Saxo began writing, almost thirty years had passed since Valdemar's accession in 1157. At this point, it was no longer relevant how that accession had taken place, what mattered was how succession ought to work in the future. Moreover, by not shining too much light on exactly how Valdemar acquired his kingship, they perhaps hoped to avoid copycats in the future – meaning, it was hard to emulate something you never knew happened.

This first scenario also revealed a custom peculiar to Norway, namely, the use of the ordeal by hot iron to prove paternity. Its prevalent use to provide evidence where the paternity was uncertain, became another way for Sverre to break the mould. The Norse-Icelandic saga literature is full of examples of claimants proving their paternity – and by extension their kin-right – through an ordeal by fire. Sverre, interestingly, became the first claimant not to do this – instead, he used trial by combat – whereas his brother proved his paternity the “old fashioned way”. The practice even continued in Norway after the Fourth Lateran Council condemned its practice in 1216 when King Håkon IV's mother used it to prove her son's paternity. To then see that the 1273 succession law included a mechanism for illegitimate sons to inherit show the significance the ordeal by hot iron played in determining paternity. In Europe, on the other hand, the practice and focus were often on fighting it out, to prove you had God on your side by besting your accuser. It was in this way Saxo used it in the case against Magnus Eriksen. However, the most well-known example of the widespread and accepted use of trial by combat to prove one's right is William the Conqueror's victory over Harold Godwinson at the Battle of Hastings in 1066. If anything, this showed that theoretical rules were not supreme in deciding

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the succession but were subservient to political circumstance and the needs of the individuals involved.

The second scenario showed that hereditary succession and a stable transfer of royal power was possible under the right circumstances. The case studies of King Knud VI of Denmark and King Magnus VI of Norway showed two things very clearly. First, that Scandinavians were aware of European practices when it came to the succession and transfer of power from one generation to the next, and second, that the Scandinavian kings were willing to adapt them to their practices – meaning that Håkon IV and Valdemar the Great had no problem designating their sons as their successor through election and then at the same time associating them with their kingship through a coronation. In Denmark, Saxo made it clear that when Valdemar the Great died in 1182 Knud had already acquired the kingship at his coronation twelve years previously; likewise, Svend wrote that Knud succeeded his father by hereditary right. Both Saxo and *Knýtlinga saga* wrote that it was the Danish magnates who first decided to make Knud king, in 1165, with Valdemar being pleased with their initiative. By describing, what ultimately was an election by Knud, Saxo could claim that he acquired the kingship appropriately and in accordance with customs. This could then also explain why Saxo in large parts glossed over the coronation of Knud in 1170 with just a few sentences spent on the ceremony.

This was opposite to how the coronation of Magnus VI was described in *Håkon Håkons-son's saga*. Not only are we told the day of the week, the date, the month, who was there, how the ceremony went, what objects were used (there were two sceptres, a crown, and a sword – amongst others), we are also told that the ceremony was so moving a Scottish knight burst into tears. Effectively, the only thing missing was the time of day, a note on the weather and a gossipy side note on what some lady was wearing, and it would read like a diary entry from Samuel Pepys! Joking aside, the saga passage is a treasure trove of information and a window into a ceremony with clear parallels to other European coronation ceremonies – with one interesting addition: after Magnus was crowned, his wife, the Danish princess Ingeborg, was also crowned. This coronation of Ingeborg seemingly served a dual purpose, as it not only set her aside as the queen consort, but it also meant that Håkon IV acquired Danish recognition for the succession of his son and that he recognised the reign of Christopher I of Denmark. Before his coronation, Magnus too was elected, succeeding his older brother in the role as their father's intended heir and successor in 1257. This happened less than a month after Håkon the Young's death and was dictated by political circumstance as King Håkon was preparing for a campaign against Denmark.

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This leads us to the reasons for associative kingship. Both the Danish and Norwegian sources leave us in little doubt that political circumstances had a hand to play in this. Håkon the Young's double election in 1240 happened because his father was preparing to take on his father-in-law, Skule Bårdsson. Moreover, when Håkon the Young died, and King Håkon once again was planning a military campaign, his second son was elected, though only once, to become the new designated heir and successor. Similarly, for Denmark, though the reasons for Knud's election was somewhat clouded in Saxo's work, how it is written make it possible to link it to the proceeding military expedition in the narrative. Valdemar the Great, like Håkon IV, was concerned with the survival of his kindred, and by associating their sons with their kingships, their sons stood the greatest chance of successfully inheriting the kingship. This way of associating an heir was very much in line with Capetian practices but also several European kingdoms, as well as the crusader kingdom of Jerusalem, experimented with associative kingship in the twelfth century. Hence, by the time Håkon did it with both of his sons, it was in apparent emulation of existing practices. That it worked is evident in the saga, and in Saxo for that matter, because by the time of Valdemar's and Håkon IV's deaths there was no need politically to mark the succession as it had already taken place.

What was clear from the discussions in the first two chapters is that succession in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Scandinavia did not always happen as the established rules dictated. Moreover, it demonstrated that those rules were subject to changes and amendments as the political circumstances in each case required. At the same time, it also showed that when the necessary preparations were made, a stable transfer of royal power from one generation to the next was possible. This malleability and pragmatism on the side of the rules were on even greater display in the third chapter when we began our discussion on Scandinavian kingmaking.

This has left me to wonder whether later changes to hereditary succession have had too much influence over our thinking and understanding of hereditary succession in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries? Did it mean less to their contemporaries than we tend to think? The acquisition of the kingship by King Sverre, for instance, would indicate that this was the case. Despite strong arguments for the economic benefits of hereditary succession – military might still made right. Hereditary right was not always enough – the acquisition of Sverre Sigurdsson's and Valdemar the Great's kingships clearly showed this to be the case. Similarly, the swearing of homage and fealty to the intended heir was also in and of itself not a guarantee for the stable transfer of royal power, as evidenced by the example of Henry I of England and his daughter Matilda. Thus, several things speak against the importance of hereditary succession and show that it was only possible to achieve under the right circumstances. This brings us to associative

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kingship; whose purpose was to bridge the gap between elective and hereditary kingship. This was the purpose for which it was introduced in Scandinavia, as evidenced by the discussion about Knud VI and Magnus VI in the second chapter.

Our exploration of the kingmaking of the Magnus Erlingsson and Valdemar Birgersson revealed that despite being individuals who at best had a strenuous claim according to the principle of kin-right, their fathers were still able to make them kings. This kingmaking showcased another Scandinavian peculiarities, namely the high number of underage Norwegian kings in the period from 1066 to 1319. A survey of European rulers who achieved their kingship before their sixteenth birthday showed that almost one in three were Scandinavian, with the highest number of them all being Norwegian. Although, this is a well-known phenomenon in the high Middle Ages, they also raise some difficult questions about power and authority – child-kings give power to factions who then have no incentive to delegate that power. Specifically, in this chapter we focused on answering how it was possible to make children kings, who helped them in this endeavour, what were the factors enabling someone to become a kingmaker, what steps did they take, and what was the relationship between the kings and the kingmakers.

What we found was that in Norway and Sweden there were strong familial connections between the kings and the kingmakers. Furthermore, we found that the kingmaker had to be in a position to act when the opportunity arose. This enabled to us to establish that in order to be a Scandinavian kingmaker one had to in possession of three things: an underage son, the means and opportunity, and the right circumstances with which to act. Though the starting point had to be similar, we also saw that the two kingmakers, Erling and Birger *jarl*, acted in different manners. Erling appeared to have acted quickly, indicating a small window of opportunity that he nevertheless was able to exploit. Birger *jarl*, on the other hand, acted more carefully and over a more extended period of time. This gradual approach could, therefore, have been the reason behind the longevity of his kingmaking.

Despite this, Berger and Erling clearly followed the same approach: alliance with the Church, election, and foreign recognition. In Norway, we saw that Erling took command of the situation after the death of King Inge I in 1161, gathered up the remaining magnates he knew to have been loyal to the late and convinced them that his son was their best bet. He then approached King Valdemar the Great, his wife's cousin, and secured from him moral and military support for his son's reign – thereby also securing recognition of Magnus's right to rule. Finally, Erling approached the Church and Eysteir Erlendsson, Archbishop of Niðarós, and secured the Church's approval of Magnus's reign by having him crowned. Whereas the Norwegian case study could rely on the narrative of the *Heimskringla* to construct a chronology of events, this

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was made more challenging for Sweden, which lacked contemporary narrative sources for this period. On the other hand, there is more charter evidence for Sweden than for Norway, and what little Norwegian charter evidence there is only underlined the alliance between Erling and Magnus, and the Church. Despite the struggles with constructing a chronology, we were able to see that Birger *jarl* from 1250 onwards followed the same steps as Erling did almost a century before him. Birger most likely orchestrated the election of his son, despite later Swedish sources trying to place him as far away from the election as possible. The Swedish charters provide much evidence for both foreign recognition, as it shows him negotiating treaties with foreign rulers even without references to his son, the king. It, furthermore, shows an alliance with the Church, through which the Swedish archbishop, Birger and his son acted as a trinity much in the same way as the normative and narrative Norwegian evidence show Erling, Magnus and Eystein Erlendsson did.

Moving on to southern Scandinavia, it became apparent that there were no domestic kingmakers, such as Erling and Birger, in Denmark. Instead, the closest we came to a Danish kingmaker was the German emperor, Frederick Barbarossa. Barbarossa's kingmaking differed from that of Erling and Birger by the lack of a familial connection between himself and the Danish kings, and by the fact that he was not the instigator of the kingmaking process. In terms of scale, the influence Barbarossa had over Denmark was very different to the influence Valdemar had over Erling and Magnus with factors such as the Danish kingdoms geopolitical location and proximity to the empire playing a part too. The instigators behind the German emperor's kingmaking were Svend III Eriksen and Knud V Magnussen, who had invited Barbarossa's predecessor to settle the dispute between them over the kingship, and it was Valdemar and the Danish magnates, who abided by Barbarossa's arbitration, when the kingdom was divided up between Svend, Knud and Valdemar. This action then accepted and confirmed the emperor's right to interfere in Danish politics. The outside influence, therefore, created the need for an adult over an underage king, perhaps explaining why there were no underage kings in Denmark until a later period. This also served to show that it was indeed the German emperor who acted as the kingmaker in the twelfth century Denmark.

The similarities we have seen so far with regards to kingmaking will be evident again when we now move on to the consolidation processes in the three kingdoms, with Denmark joining Norway and Sweden.

The discussion in the final chapter clearly showed that the consolidation process in all three Scandinavian kingdoms rested on the same three pillars irrespective of how and when the kingship was acquired: foreign recognition, alliance with the church, and removal of rivals.

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In Norway, we saw this play out in part through the Church's effort to provide Magnus's reign with the necessary legitimacy. This came in the form of the coronation of Magnus and a set of three documents: a coronation oath, a succession law, and a letter of privileges to the Church. These three documents, together with the coronation, came to constitute the basis for Magnus's legitimacy. The second example that highlighted the church's supportive role of Erling and Magnus was how it assisted Erling in ending his conflict with Valdemar the Great and re-established relations between them. Through these two examples, we were able to see that the archbishop and the Church for a long time were significant supporters of Erling, Magnus, and their position. This explains why scholars have placed so much attention on just the Church in the consolidation process at the cost of the two other pillars.

The second important pillar that Magnus's reign rested upon was his father, Erling. He was the principal defender of his son's position and spent most of the 1160s and 1170s defending it against both foreign and domestic opponents. The sources indicate that his military power waned towards the end of the 1170s and especially after Sverre Sigurdsson arrived in Norway. When Erling died in 1179, Magnus's base began to erode as it had been Erling who brought them together and led them, and after 1179 the magnates struggled to place the same level of trust in Magnus. The ultimate evidence for Erling's position is that it would take just five years, almost to the day, from Erling's death until Magnus also was dead.

The third important pillar or lynchpin for Magnus's reign was King Valdemar the Great of Denmark. His role must be understood in two, both in relations to the military and moral support provided at the start of Magnus's reign, but also in relations to the recognition of Magnus's authority and jurisdiction. After the Church helped Erling re-establish this relationship he became a retainer of the Danish king and a firm alliance was formed between the two kingdoms, something which Magnus was able to benefit from as he sought refuge in Denmark in the year between his father's death and his own. In the end, the support and recognition provided by Valdemar were perhaps more significant than what the sources indicated as only two years after Valdemar's death in 1182, Magnus would be dead too. What little evidence there was for the consolidation process in Norway showed that it was quite an achievement Magnus's reign was able to survive for as long as it did.

Two things became quite apparent early on in the discussion regarding the Swedish consolidation process. The first was the inactivity of the Swedish king as evidenced by Birger's legislative work, and second, the portrayal of Birger *jarl* as a *rex iustus* and the real ruler and king in all but name. Early on in Valdemar Birger'sson's reign the Church recognised and confirmed his right to reign by crowning him, and by extension, Birger's right to govern the

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kingdom. Similarly, Birger's correspondence with foreign rulers showed that they too recognised his right to govern the kingdom, with, for instance, Henry III writing to Birger to establish bonds of friendship between them – without making any references to the Swedish king. Another example came from the papacy, confirming Birger's division of the kingdom amongst his sons. Finally, Birger appears in *Håkon Håkonsson's saga* as the arbiter between, which again served as an expression of the other Scandinavian king's recognition of him as the ruler of a kingdom just like them. This revealed a kingmaker vastly more powerful than Erling Skakke. Compared to Erling, Birger was also more successful in his handling of rivals to his son's position. We learned from the saga that shortly after Valdemar Birgersson became king, several disgruntled magnates rose up in rebellion against him. The fact that the sources recorded no internal opposition to Valdemar Birgersson's reign showed that Birger's victory was absolute. It is, therefore, possible to draw a line from this victory in 1251 to Birger's death in 1266, revealing an ever-increasing consolidation of power into Birger's hands.

Birger's kingmaking and consolidation surpassed Erling's kingmaking of his son and the consolidation of his position in every way. Erling turned out to be incapable of securing the long-term position of his son, whereas Birger was able to establish a new royal kindred that would reign as Kings of Sweden for the next hundred and fourteen years. Birger hence achieved a level of consolidation rarely seen in Scandinavia or beyond.

Denmark, as evidenced by a wide range of both foreign and domestic sources, was no exception to the consolidation framework outlined so far. German sources revealed that Valdemar turned to the empire to find foreign recognition for his kingship. This recognition rested on mutual political convenience: at the same time as Valdemar sought recognition, Barbarossa was seeking recognition for his struggle against the papacy. This means that Valdemar did not, as many scholars have previously argued, do homage to or become a vassal of the German emperor. Such a view found no support in the source closest to the events, namely Helmold's *Chronicle of the Slavs*. An immediate consequence of his recognition for Valdemar was that he gained allies in his campaign against the Slavs. This campaign made it possible for Valdemar to actively defend his kingdom from Wendish pirates, provide prestige for his nascent kingship by continued military success against his enemies, and unite the Danes against a common enemy and thus aid the strained relations between the Jutes, Zealanders, and the Scanians.

Valdemar benefitted from his alliance with the Church in two ways. First, he managed to have his father canonised thereby providing legitimacy and prestige for his branch of the royal kindred and also negate some of the prestige garnered from the canonisation of St Knud the Holy for his descendants. It also made it possible for Valdemar to block off the access other

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claimants had to the Danish kingship. This last aspect was further advanced by the second way in which he benefitted from the alliance, namely the coronation of his son, Knud VI. Finally, the extent and importance of the Church's support of Valdemar were found in an examination of the diploma material, which revealed the presence of clergymen in a majority of the diplomas. This showed that Valdemar's position was not reliant on his royal kinsmen, as Lars Hermanson has argued, but instead on a very powerful alliance with the Church, as evidenced by the fact that none of the rebellions or uprisings against Valdemar was recorded as receiving any form of recognition or support from the Church.

The third aspect of Valdemar's consolidation process is also the hardest to tease out because of Saxo's unwillingness to portray any opposition to Valdemar. First, we determined that the first phase of the Scanian rebellion posed no direct threat to the kingship, rather that it was a threat to Absalon which was by Saxo focused so much time and effort on it. Second, we examined the claim by Hermanson that the greatest threats to Valdemar's reign came from his royal kinsmen. The first uprising by these kinsmen, that of Buris Henriksen, Saxo was mostly quiet about, instead of spending more time on the uprising by Magnus Eriksen in a sequence that followed a fairly traditional pattern ending in his pardon. This revealed a consolidation process operating on two levels: both as a way of justifying Valdemar's actions against his kinsmen and to serve as a template for how future kings should deal with rebels or troublemakers from the royal kindred.

What this last chapter then showed was that consolidation of power in Scandinavia in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries followed the same framework irrespective of time, place, or how the kingship had been achieved.

* * *

At the very beginning of this endeavour, I said this thesis was going to give the answers to three age-old and vast questions: How did a king become a king? How did he keep his kingdom? And finally, how did he pass it on? The answers provided here to these questions depend on who you are, where you are, and when you are. In other words, the practice of kingship was dependent on political circumstances, making it impossible to draw general conclusions spanning centuries and vast geographical regions. We can look at principles that gave us a general framework, but individual cases were determined by circumstance.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: List of Danish kings in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries

<i>Name</i>	<i>Birth</i>	<i>Reign</i>	<i>Death</i>	<i>Claim/relationship to predecessor</i>	<i>Father</i>	<i>Note</i>
Svend II Estridsen	c. 1019	1047-76	1076	Grandson of Svend I; nephew of Knud the Great	Ulf <i>jarl</i>	
Harald III the Whetstone <i>Harald Hen</i>	c. 1040	1076-80	1080	Son of Svend II	Illegitimate son of Svend II	
Knud IV the Holy <i>Knud den Hellige/St Knud</i>	c. 1042	1080-86	1086	Son of Svend II	Illegitimate son of Svend II	
Olaf I “Hunger” <i>Olaf Hunger</i>	c. 1050	1086-95	1095	Son of Svend II	Illegitimate son of Svend II	
Erik I “Evergood” <i>Erik Ejegod</i>	c. 1050	1095-1103	1103	Son of Svend II	Illegitimate son of Svend II	
Niels	c. 1065	1104-34	1134	Son of Svend II	Illegitimate son of Svend II	
Erik II the Memorable <i>Erik Emune</i>	c. 1090	1134-37	1137	Son of Erik I	Illegitimate son of Erik I	
Erik III “Lamb” <i>Erik Lam</i>	c. 1120	1137-46	1146	Grandson of Erik I; nephew of Erik II	Håkon Sunni- vasson	Only king to abdi- cate
Svend III Eriksen “the Grey” <i>Svend Grathe</i>	c. 1125	1146-57	1157	Son of Erik II	Illegitimate son of Erik II	
Knud V Magnussen	c. 1129	1146-57	1157	Grandson of Niels	Magnus I	
Valdemar I the Great <i>Valdemar den Store</i>	1131	1154-82	1182	Grandson of Erik I	Knud Lavard	Sole king from 1157
Knud VI	1163	1182-1202	1202	Son of Valdemar I	Valdemar I	<i>Rex iunior</i> 1170-82
Valdemar II the Victorious <i>Valdemar Sejr</i>	1170	1202-41	1241	Son of Valdemar I	Valdemar I	

Valdemar the Young <i>Valdemar den Unge</i>	c. 1209	1215-31	1231	Son of Valdemar II	Valdemar II	<i>Rex iunior</i> 1215-31
Erik IV "Ploughpenny" <i>Erik Plovpenning</i>	c. 1216	1241-50	1250	Son of Valdemar II	Valdemar II	<i>Rex iunior</i> 1232-41
Abel	c. 1218	1250-52	1252	Son of Valdemar II	Valdemar II	
Christopher I	c. 1219	1252-59	1259	Son of Valdemar II	Valdemar II	
Erik V the Short-changer <i>Erik Klipping</i>	c. 1249	1259-86	1286	Son of Christopher I	Christopher I	Regency, 1259-61
Erik VI "Menved" <i>Erik Menved</i>	c.1274	1286-1319	1319	Son of Erik V	Erik V	Regency, 1286-94

Appendix

Appendix 2: List of Norwegian kings in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries

<i>Name</i>	<i>Birth</i>	<i>Reign</i>	<i>Death</i>	<i>Claim/relationship to predecessor</i>	<i>Father</i>	<i>Note</i>
Olav II Haraldsson <i>St Olav</i> (Rex Perpetuus Norvegiae)	c. 995	1015-28	1030		Harald Grenske	
<i>Danish rule, 1028-1035</i>						
Magnus I Olavsson <i>Magnus the Good</i>	c. 1024	1035-47	1047	Son of Olav II	Illegitimate son of Olav II	Coregency 1046-47
Harald III Sigurdsson <i>Harald Hardrada</i>	c. 1015	1046-66	1066	Brother of Olav II;	Sigurd Syr	Coregency 1046-47
Magnus II Haraldsson	c. 1049	1066-69	1069	Son of Harald III	Harald III	Coregency 1066-69
Olav III Haraldsson <i>Olav the Peaceful</i> (Kyrre)	c. 1050	1067-93	1093	Son of Harald III	Harald III	Coregency 1067-69
Magnus III Olavsson <i>Magnus Barefoot</i>	c. 1073	1093-1103	1103	Son of Olav III	Illegitimate son of Olav III	
Olav (IV) Magnusson	c. 1098	1103-05	1105	Son of Magnus III	Illegitimate son of Magnus III	
Eystein I Magnusson	c. 1088	1103-1123	1123	Son of Magnus III	Illegitimate son of Magnus III	Coregency 1103-23
Sigurd I Magnusson <i>Sigurd the Crusader</i> (Jórsalafari)	c. 1089	1103-30	1130	Son of Magnus III	Illegitimate son of Magnus III	Coregency 1103-23, sole king 1123-30
Magnus IV Sigurdsson <i>Magnus the Blind</i> (Blinda)	c. 1115	1130-35	1139	Son of Sigurd I	Illegitimate son of Sigurd I	
Harald IV Magnusson <i>Harald gilla</i>	c. 1102	1130-36	1136	(Alleged) son of Magnus III	Illegitimate son of Magnus III	
Sigurd II Haraldsson <i>Sigurd the Mouth</i> (munn)	c. 1133	1136-55	1155	Son of Harald IV	Illegitimate son of Harald IV	Coregency 1136-55
Inge I Haraldsson <i>Inge the Hunchback</i> (krókhryggr)	c. 1135	1136-61	1161	Son of Harald IV	Son of Harald IV	Coregency 1136-57
Eystein II Haraldsson	c. 1125	1142-57	1157	Son of Harald IV	Illegitimate son of Harald IV	Coregency 1142-57

Appendix

Magnus (V) Haraldsson	c. 1135	1142-45	1145	Son of Harald IV	Illegitimate son of Harald IV	Coregency 1142-45
Håkon II Sigurdsson <i>Håkon the Broadshouldered</i> (herðibreið)	c. 1147	1157-62	1162	Son of Sigurd II	Illegitimate son of Sigurd II	
Magnus V Erlingsson	c. 1156	1161-84	1184	Maternal grandson of Sigurd I	Erling Skakke	
Sverre Sigurdsson	c. 1151	1177-1202	1202	(Alleged) son of Sigurd II	Illegitimate son of Sigurd II	Sole king from 1184
Håkon III Sverresson	1170s	1202-04	1204	Son of Sverre	Illegitimate son of Sverre	
Inge II Bårdsson	1185	1204-17	1217	Maternal grandson of Sigurd II	Bård Gutormsson	
Håkon IV Håkonsson <i>Håkon the Old</i> (gamli)	1204	1217-63	1263	Son of Håkon III	Illegitimate son of Håkon III	
Håkon Håkonsson <i>Håkon the Young</i> (ungi)	1232	1240-57	1250	Son of Håkon IV	Håkon IV	Rex iunior 1240-57
Magnus VI Håkonsson <i>Magnus the Law-mender</i> (lagabœtir)	1238	1257-80	1280	Son of Håkon IV	Håkon IV	Rex iunior 1257-63
Erik II Magnusson	c. 1268	1273-99	1299	Son of Magnus VI	Magnus VI	Rex iunior 1273-80
Håkon V Magnusson <i>Håkon Longlegs</i> (Háleggr)	1270	1299-1319	1319	Son of Magnus VI	Magnus VI	

Appendix

Appendix 3: List of Swedish kings in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries

<i>Name</i>	<i>Birth</i>	<i>Reign</i>	<i>Death</i>	<i>Claim/relationship to predecessor(s)</i>	<i>Father</i>	<i>Note</i>
Magnus I Nielsen	c. 1106	c. 1120s-32	1134		Niels I of Denmark	
Sverker I the Elder	?	c. 1130-56	1156	Elected according to Saxo		King in Östergötland, 1125-30
Erik (IX) Jedvardsson <i>St Erik</i>	c. 1120-25	c. 1156-60	1160	Unknown	Jedvard (?)	
Magnus II Henriksen	c. 1130	1160-61	1161	Great-grandson of Inge I the Elder	Henrik Skadelår	
Karl (VII) Sverkerson	c. 1130	1161-67	1167	Son of Sverker I	Sverker I	King in Östergötland, c. 1158-61
Knut I Eriksson	1140s	1172/73-1195/96	1195/96	Son of St Erik	St Erik	
Sverker II the Younger	Before 1167	1196-1208	1210	Son of Karl Sverkerson	Karl Sverkerson	
Erik (X) Knutsson	1180	1208-16	1216	Son of Knut I	Knut I	
John I Sverkerson <i>John the Child (unge)</i>	1201	1216-22	1222	Son of Sverker II	Sverker II	
Erik (X) Eriksson <i>Erik the Lisp and Lamé (läspe och halte)</i>	1216	1222-28/29	1250	Son of Erik Knutsson	Erik Knutsson	Deposed. Restored 1234-50
Knut II Holmgerson <i>Knut the Tall (långe)</i>	?	1229-34	1234	Grandnephew of Knut Eriksson	Holmger	
Valdemar Birgersson	1239	1250-75	1302	Nephew of Erik Eriksson	Birger <i>jarl</i>	Deposed 1275
Magnus III Birgersson <i>Magnus Barnlock (ladulås)</i>	1240	1275-90	1290	Nephew of Erik Eriksson	Birger <i>jarl</i>	
Birger Magnusson	1280	1290-1318	1321	Son of Magnus III	Magnus III	Deposed 1318

Appendix

Appendix 4: List of Norwegian coregencies (*samkongedømme*)

	King	Birth	Reign	Death
<i>Coregency</i>	Magnus I the Good	c. 1024	1035-47	1047
	Harald III Hardrada	c. 1015	1046-66	1066
<i>Coregency</i>	Magnus II Haraldsson	c. 1049	1066-69	1069
	Olav III <i>Kyrre</i>	c. 1050	1067-93	1093
<i>Coregency</i>	Håkon Tores-fostered	c. 1069	1093-94	1094
	Magnus III Barefoot	c. 1073	1093-1103	1103
<i>Coregency</i>	Olav (IV) Magnusson	c. 1098	1103-05	1105
	Eystein I Magnusson	c. 1088	1103-23	1123
	Sigurd I the Crusader	c. 1089	1103-30	1130
<i>Coregency</i>	Magnus IV the Blind	c. 1115	1130-35	1135
	Harald IV <i>gille</i>	c. 1102	1130-36	1136
<i>Coregency</i>	Sigurd II the Mouth	c. 1133	1136-55	1155
	Inge I the Hunchback	c. 1135	1136-61	1161
	Eystein II Haraldsson	c. 1125	1142-57	1157
	Magnus (V) Haraldsson	c. 1135	1142-45	1145

Appendix

Appendix 5: List of Norwegian and Swedish *riksjarls* (earls of the realm) and dukes, 1150-1266

<i>NORWAY</i>					
<i>Name</i>	<i>Ancestry</i>	<i>Party/faction</i>	<i>Birth</i>	<i>Reign</i>	<i>Death</i>
Erling Ormsson <i>Erling Skakke</i> (skakki)	<i>Kyrpinga</i> -Orm Sveinsson	Landed-men party	1115	1163-79	1179
Eirik Sigurdsson	Alleged son of Sigurd II	Birchlegs	?	1181-90	1190
Håkon Folkvidsson <i>Håkon the Crazy</i> (galinn)	Maternal grandson of Sigurd II	Birchlegs	?	1204-14	1214
Filippus Simonsson	Mother was half-sister of Inge I	Crozier	c. 1185	1204-7	1217
Skule Bårdsson	Half-brother of King II	Birchlegs	c. 1189	1217-40	1240
Knut Håkonsson	Son of Håkon the Crazy	Birchlegs	c. 1208	1239-61	1261
Håkon Magnusson (Håkon V)	Son of Magnus VI	Birchlegs	1270	1299-1319	1319

<i>SWEDEN</i>					
<i>Name</i>	<i>Ancestry</i>	<i>Kindred</i>	<i>Birth</i>	<i>Reign</i>	<i>Death</i>
Birger Bengtsson <i>Birger the Smiling</i> (brósa)	Bengt Snivil	Bjälbo-kindred	Unknown	1174-1202	1202
Johan Sverkersson (John I)	Son of Sverker II	Sverker-kindred	Unknown	1202-06	1222
Jon jarl	Unknown	Sverker-kindred (?)	Unknown	?	1206
Knut Birgersson	Son of Birger the Smiling	Bjälbo-kindred	Unknown	1206-8	1208
Folke Birgersson <i>Folke jarl</i>	Possibly son of Birger the Smiling	Bjälbo-kindred	Unknown	1208-10	1210
Karl Bengtsson <i>Karl the Deaf</i> (döve)	Son of Bengt Snivil; brother of Birger the Smiling	Bjälbo-kindred	Unknown	1210-20	1220
Ulf Karlson <i>Ulf the Dreadful</i> (fase)	Son of Karl the Deaf	Bjälbo-kindred	Unknown	1231-48	1248
Birger Magnusson <i>Birger jarl</i>	Nephew of Birger the Smiling	Bjälbo-kindred	c. 1210	1248-66	1266

Appendix

Appendix 6: List of Norwegian claimants to the kingship, 1130-1241

<i>Name</i>	<i>Claim</i>	<i>Party/faction</i>	<i>Active claimant</i>	<i>Election</i>	<i>Foreign support</i>	<i>Church support</i>
Sigurd Magnusson <i>Sigurd Slembe</i> (slembedjakn)	Alleged son of Magnus III	N/A	1135-39			
Sigurd Sigurdsson <i>Sigurd Markus-fostered</i> (Markusfostre)	Illegitimate son of Sigurd II	N/A	1162	X		
Olav Gudbrandsson <i>Olav the Unlucky</i> (úgæfa)	Daughter-son of Eystein I	<i>Hattesvein</i>	1166-69			
Eystein Eysteinsson <i>Eystein the Maiden</i> (meyla)	Son of Eystein II	Birchlegs	1174-77			
Jon Ingesson <i>Jon Kuvlung</i> (kuflung)	Son of Inge I	Crozier	1185-88	X		
Inge Magnusson <i>Inge Crozier-king</i> (Baglar)	Alleged son of Magnus Erlingsson	Crozier	1196-1202	X		X
Sigurd Magnusson	Son of Magnus Erlingsson	<i>Eyskjeggar</i>	1193-94	X	X	
Håkon Folkvidsson <i>Håkon the Crazy</i> (galinn)	Daughter-son of Sigurd II	Birchlegs	1204			
Erling Magnusson <i>Erling Stonewall</i> (steinveggr)	Son of Magnus Erlingsson	Crozier	1204-7	X	X	X
Filippus Simonson	Nephew of Inge I	Crozier	1207-17	X	X	X
Guttorm Ingesson	Illegitimate son of Inge II	Birchlegs	1217			
Sigurd Erlingsson <i>Sigurd Ribbung</i> (ribbungr)	Alleged son of Erling Stonewall	Ribalds	1219-26			
Knut Håkonsson	Nephew of Inge II	Ribalds	1226			
Skule Bårdsson	Brother of Inge II	Birchlegs	1240-41	X		

Appendix

Appendix 7: List of Norwegian fylki by *lögþing* districts

Frostathing (red):

1. Naumadælafylki
2. Sparbyggjafylki
3. Eynafylki
4. Veradælafylki
5. Skeynafylki
6. Strindafylki
7. Stjórdælafylki
8. Gauldælafylki
9. Orkdælafylki
10. Uppdalr
11. Norðmørafylki
12. Raumsdælafylki

Gulathing (yellow):

19. Sunnmørafylki
20. Firðafylki
21. Sygnafylki
22. Hórdafylki
23. Haddingjadalr
24. Valdres
25. Rygjafylki
26. Egðafylki
27. Setrsdalr

Borgarþing (blue):

13. Vingulmörk
14. Ránafylki
15. Vestfold

Grænafylki

16. Pelamörk
17. Grænland
18. Naumadalr

Heiðsævisþing (green):

28. Raumafylki
29. Haðafylki
30. Heinafylki
31. North Guðbrandsdalr
32. South Guðbrandsdalr
33. North Eystridalr
34. South Eystridalr

Háleygjaland (35) did not belong to a *lögþing* district.